

August 30th

Spanish Policy Agendas, 1975-2006

Report on research goals and work in progress

The Spanish Policy Agendas project (1977-2006) is based on Baumgartner and Jones (1993, 2004) analysis of policy agendas. It uses the coding system developed by Baumgartner, Jones and Wilkerson in the policy agendas projects as a means to go beyond case studies and define indicators that make possible to systematically analyse policy agenda across time and issues, and to develop comparative studies of policy dynamics across countries. One of its goals is to integrate qualitative and quantitative methods and give a more comprehensive explanation to questions such as why some issues are the object of considerable debate within one political system but are ignored in another; or why some issues attract considerable attention across countries despite considerable differences in political systems and previous policy choices. The priority of the Spanish project is to develop a comprehensive and far-reaching database documenting the objects of policy action and political debates from the end of Franco's Regime (1975) to present.

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Status of the project: Initial phase

1. Initial phase:
 - a. Definition of research goals and the list of indicators, verification of data already available (databases, survey data), identification of funding institutions, preparation of the documentation for grants and other funding, studying the coding system developed by Baumgartner, Jones and Wilkerson in the policy agendas project.
2. First phase: development of the database according to the indicators of parliamentary activity defined below initially for the period 1996-2006. The analysis of this decade permits to analyse the impact of the political process in the Spanish agenda.
 - a. In 1996 the conservative party wins the elections by a relative majority after fourteen years of socialist government. This generates a change of administration, and of the composition of the Parliament and its commissions which have powerful effects on the political agenda.
 - b. In 2004 the socialist's government wins the elections generating an important breakdown in the Spanish political process.

- c. This period is also interesting for the analysis of the impact of the national mood upon policy agendas, especially after the terrorist attacks.
- 3. Second Phase: coding of period 1996-2006.
- 4. Third phase: development of the database for the period 1977-1996.
- 5. Four Phase: coding of the period 1977-1996
- 6. to be defined.

List of Indicators /data sources you are currently using and planning to collect in the future.

The first challenge of the Spanish Policy Agendas project (1977-2006) is to determine which indicators of government activity are more relevant. We first focus on the analysis on parliamentary activities and more specifically in the following indicators:

- 1. **Government bills** (*Proyecto de Ley*)
- 2. **Law Proposition** (*Proposición de Ley*)

The Spanish Constitution recognizes legislative initiative, or the right to initiate procedures conducive to the approval of laws, to the Government, Congress, Senate, the Assemblies of Self-governing Communities, and to no less than 500.000 citizens, through accredited signatures. In the case that the initiative comes from government it is labelled as *Proyecto de Ley* (Government bills). The Government is, in fact, the entity that presents the most initiatives concerning all these subjects. In other cases it is labelled *Proposición de Ley* (Law Proposition).

- 3. **Bills.** Primary legislation enacted by Parliament. Once the law is debated, voted and finally passed in the Congress and Senate it must submit immediately to the procedures of Royal Assent and promulgation by the King, and to its later publication in the Official State Gazette (*Boletín Oficial del Estado*).

Table 1 gives information about legislative activity from 1977 to 2000, and gives details about the number of legislative initiatives presented by the government and by Parliamentary Groups and the number of bills finally passed. It clearly shows that most bills are introduced by the government and most of the initiatives presented by the executive are passed.

- 4. **Royal Decree-Law** (*Real Decreto-Ley*) dictated by the Government for reasons of extraordinary and urgent necessity, which must be accomplished directly by the Plenary Sitting of the Chamber within thirty days following its promulgation.

Table 2 gives detailed information about different types of controls of the activities of Government by congressional members (mainly questions and interpellations). **Questions** refer to specific activities carried out by Government whereas **interpellations** affect the conduct of the executive branch in matters of general politics, from the Government as well as any ministerial department, which are assumed to be reserved for subjects of general interest. In line with its large scope, the interpellations should be formulated in the Plenary meetings, whereas questions can receive a governmental response not only in this way, but also in the Committees, or in writing, which is published in the Official Parliamentary Bulletin. Moreover, **appearances** (*Comparecencias*) exist as an instrument of parliamentary control in which a member of

Government, authorities, or civil servants goes before the Plenary meeting or a Committee to give in-depth information concerning an issue. As table 2 informs there are more than 316.031 questions, interpellations and appearances from 1977 to 2006, which represent 95% of Parliamentary activity. According to existing analysis about Parliamentary activity (Capo 2003)¹ the database will only include oral questions in plenary meetings and commissions.

5. **Oral Questions to the government in Plenary meetings.** Members of the executive (President of Government, Ministries and exceptionally *Secretarios de Estado*) answers questions in the Congress from members of Parliament in Plenary meetings. .
6. **Oral questions to the government in commissions** Members of the executive (President of Government, Ministries and exceptionally *Secretarios de Estado*) answers questions in the Congress from members of Parliament in Commissions.

Once the Parliamentary activities are coded we will consider the following:

7. **Public opinion.** Since 1979, the *Centro de Investigaciones Sociologicas* (CIS) is measuring public opinion each month (except august) in relation to the political, social and economic situation of the country and its outlook for development. These surveys are labelled as Barometers and are aimed to monitor the opinions and attitudes of the Spanish society regarding current events and situations and future development perspectives. Most questions included in each month's survey deal with current events in the more strict sense (like the governing party's convention, the March 11 terrorist attack, etc.) or with a theme that is selected as the central one (like expectations for the incoming year, political culture, etc.). A small part of the questions are repeated over time, at different fixed intervals. Since the methodology used for these barometers is similar when it comes to their scope, universe, sampling procedure, sampling size, etc., the answers to these questions are comparable and give the corresponding temporal series. In this way, the barometers produce series of questions, monthly or quarterly, that deal with assessment of the current (1) political situation and its future evolution, (2) economical situation and its future evolution, (3) performance of the central government and of the main opposition party, (4) the voting intention for general elections, (5) voting predictions, and a scale of the ideological self-positioning of those questioned. These questions have been asked almost continuously and with very similar wording, since 1996 and therefore this date will be taken as a starting point to study and set up indicators. Since 1996 most results are published on the web page. As it will be detailed in a final proposal of the Spanish agendas project, one of the main research questions focuses on the impact of shifts in the national mood and the policy process on the evolution of the agenda. The data from the Barometers of the CIS will be especially useful to analyse this research question.

Once the final list of indicators is defined the second challenge is how to code all the data according to the coding system developed by Baumgartner, Jones and Wilkerson in

¹ Capo, Jordi (2003): "The Spanish Parliament in a Triangular Relationship, 1982-2000", *Journal of Legislative Studies*, volume 9, number 2, pp 107-129.

the policy agendas projects. The information provided in the agenda projects web sites and the collaboration from colleagues working in other countries is essential for the success of the codification procedure. Next step is to get involved with our data and the coding system in more detail.

Funding status and funding sources:

- Preparing documentation for applications in order to get financial and human resources.
- At this time (in collaboration and following the suggestion of Arco Timmermans) we are preparing the documentation for the ECPR Research fund for ad hoc meetings (due 30th September).
- Further we already presented an application for a national grant of the Ministry of Education (resolution is not available yet) that could be connected with the project.
- Besides there are a number of potential funding institutions for this type of projects in Spain like *the Instituto de Administraciones Públicas, Fundació Pissunyer, Fundació Bofill*.
- We already have got funds for a graduate scholarship starting this September 2006.

Table 1
Legislature Activity, 1977-2000

	Government's bill				Parliamentary Groups' bills			decree-laws	Total passed
	submitted	% total submitted	passed	% total passed	submitted	passed	others		
constituent 1977-1979	174	71,0	111	92,5	71	9		63	183
1979-1982	342	63,9	237	89,4	193	28		102	367
1982-1986	205	65,9	183	93,4	106	13	3	40	239
1986-1989	125	47,0	108	91,5	141	10	3	20	141
1989-1993	128	45,4	101	86,3	154	16	1	30	148
1993-1996	130	61,0	112	88,9	83	14	3	40	169
1996-2000	192	40,4	172	88,7	283	22	5	85	284
Total	1.296	55,7%	1.024	90,1%	1.031	112	15	380	1.531

Source: own elaboration from Capo (2003)

Table 2
Legislative and control activities by legislatures 1977-2006

	Constituent 1977-1979	1979-1982	1982-1986	1986-1989	1989-1993	1993-1996	1996-2000	2000-2004	2004-2008	Total	%
Governments bill	173	347	209	125	137	130	192	175	86	1.574	0,45
Parliamentary Groups bills	68	193	108	139	165	140	300	322	198	1.633	0,47
Other Bills Propositions	11	23	23	23	42	44	50	60	56	332	0,09
Decree-laws	63	73	40	20	30	40	85	42	31	424	0,12
Other	-	2	17	18	6	5	2	12	3	65	0,02
Total legislative activities	315	638	397	325	380	359	629	611	374	4.028	1,16
Urgent interpellation			143	177	198	136	199	337	193	1.383	0,40
Interpellations	129	389	67	37	27	6	4	1	1	661	0,19
Oral question plenary meeting	28	12	1.583	1.510	2.003	1.610	2.112	2.280	1.344	12.482	3,58
Oral question in committees	120	745	244	1.593	2.464	1.865	2.829	4.016	2.204	16.080	4,61
Oral question to the director of RTVE		28	408	713	747	585	778	805	479	4.543	1,30
Written question to the government	314	3.820	9.200	19.458	15.309	14.886	32.721	75.326	87.001	258.035	73,95
Written question to RTVE				84	356	364	358	223	2.495	3.880	1,11
Appearances of the government in plenary meetings	7	9	10	26	58	34	46	77	61	328	0,09
Appearances of government in commission	193	612	922	350	722	859	1.508	1.687	754	859	0,25
Appearances of public servants and other authorities in commissions				1.785	2.340	1.793	2.439	1.898	1.122	11.377	3,26
Other Appearances				112	580	1.026	659	589	602	3.568	1,02
Report request to the public administration	12	133	732	1.826	4.701	2.977	2.475	4.600	1.549	19.005	5,45
Report request to the Autonomous Government Public Administration				35	45		29	5	7	121	0,03
Report Request to the Local Public Administration				26	12		11	2		51	0,01
Report request to other public institutions				41	171	85	36	21	10	364	0,10
Other Report request					28	111	39	69	67	314	0,09
Non-legislative proposals (plenary meetings)	75	21	96	164	272	261	439	849	483	2.660	0,76
Non-legislative proposals (commissions)	51	421	128	245	514	692	1.800	2.396	1.710	7.957	2,28
Motions	35	75	37	194	145	108	175	242	135	1.146	0,33
Other	4	16	11	9	6	10	7	9	7	79	0,02
Total control activities	968	6.281	13.581	28.385	30.698	27.408	48.664	95.432	100.224	344.893	98,85
Total	1.283	6.919	13.978	28.710	31.078	27.767	49.293	96.043	100.598	348.921	100,00

Source: own elaboration from data of the Spanish Parliament