

Party Candidate Selection Processes and the Gender Regime in Spain

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Introduction

Although Spain has gone through one of the most rapid feminization of office at all levels of political representation it has been absent of almost all scholar research that gauge the motivations and facilitating factors as well as the relevant actors in quota reform processes. The paper aims at filling this gap by combining institutional and feminist approaches following the call by scholars on gender and politics (Krook, 2006a; Lovenduski, 2005; Kenny, 2007).

Power relations entrenched in institutions reflect, structure and reinforce an asymmetrical allocation of privileges between men and women (Kenney, 1996: 455) which maintain a particular 'gender regime' (Connell, 2002: 142). They do so in both formal and informal ways (Krook, 2006a). Access to political office is one of the most gendered practices (Thomas, 1994). Levels of female candidates and elected representatives are, on the one hand, related to supply and demand factors, which affect the recruitment process at the individual candidates' level (Lovenduski and Norris, 1993; Norris and Lovenduski, 1995; Rao, 2005). While supply-side factors are inherent to the individual characteristics candidates bring to selection processes (resources, motivations, etc.), demand-side factors have to do with party selectorates. On the other hand, systemic factors such as socioeconomic characteristics, electoral rules, district magnitude, party systems or types of party do also affect women's chances to get elected (Welch and Studlar 1996; Norris, 1997; Rule and Zimmerman, 1994; Mateo Díaz, 2005).

However, the impact of the organization of the state on gender politics has scarcely been researched. Rosenthal (1996) explores gender-based political leadership styles in different U.S. state legislatures. Rankin and Vickers (1998) analyze feminist activism in three Canadian provinces. This is especially relevant as orthodox ideas about the restrictive impact of federalism have been questioned in the last couple of decades. Federal systems might facilitate the adoption of innovative policies (Gray, 2006). Federal features can shape the political opportunity structure favoring women's demands and "playing the two-level game" can advantage feminists (Banaszak, 1996; Chappell, 2002).

The interaction between federalism and descriptive representation has not received much attention. Matland and Studlar (1996) attempted a comparative examination of gender representation at the sub-national level, focusing on socio-

economic variables (not federal system variables). Rosenthal and Huckaby (2003) examine the descriptive representation of women in 202 sovereign sub-national legislatures in 10 stable democratic federal systems looking at issues of federation design, constitutional protections of women's rights, and social and cultural issues are central. They demonstrate that federal structures are not neutral in their potential for women's empowerment. And MacAllister (2001) has shown that "nationalist parties are mindful to promote the national variable to such an extent that other form of self-identity (gender, age, ethnicity and sexuality, for example)"; therefore strategies for promoting women are more difficult to organize¹. In a similar vein, Vickers (2002: 248) argues that male leaders within nationalist movements fear that if women pursue their gender interests their support for other causes might weaken.

In this paper we seek to explore the interaction of gender representation as well as other features entrenched with the gender regime in politics with the different tiers of government in Spain in order to examine how party strategies may be affected by the multi-level division of the country (national, regional, and local).

Spain has undertaken a deep political decentralization process since 1978. The devolution process has transformed the previous unitary state into a quasi-federal state composed of 17 regions (the so-called *Autonomous Communities*) (Lijphart, 1999: 189; Powell, 2001). Regions have their own representative and executive institutions, creating an extra level of party competition.

The State of the Autonomies has territorialized the party system fostering regional identities and encouraging the emergence of regional parties, not only in the historic nations of Catalonia, the Basque Country, and Galicia but also in other regions, which have projected themselves into national politics too (Pallarés and Keating, 2003).

Multi-level systems allow for a diversification of the political and electoral arenas in which a party competes. This can translate in a corresponding adaptation of a party's strategies at different levels (Downs, 1998: 35). The multi-layered aspect offers new opportunities for action, in particular, electoral rules and electoral laws (Lancaster, 1999). The creation of the State of Autonomies opened 1,139 new seats in all seventeen regional parliaments for each election. In numerical terms, the regional political elite triples the national one. Regional elites play a great role in setting the political agenda,

¹ See also Russell et al. (2002).

raising issues to which mass media and citizens will pay attention and they usually constitute the nursery from which national political leaders emerge (Coller, 2008: 6).

The rest of the article is structured as follows. The second section establishes the sequence of events in the adoption of quotas that led some actors with particular motivations to initiate the path to reform. It does so by examining party policies as well as legislation. The third section analyses the evolution of women's representation at the three tiers of government since 1979 to date. The analysis pays attention to the relation between the three levels and women's access to office. We also explore the differentiated behavior between parties with a statewide basis and nationalist parties. Furthermore, the paper examines informal practices used by parties and some elements that reinforce a particular gender regime such as turnover rates or the sexual distribution of political tasks. The fourth section concludes and presents the main findings of the research.

2. A path to reform

2.1. From party quotas to parity democracy

Case study research has acknowledged the decisive role played by party feminists within the main left-wing party, *Spanish Socialist Workers' Party/PSOE* (Astelarra 2005, Threlfall 2007, Valiente 2005, 2008, Verge 2006). Nonetheless the party that pioneered the introduction of quotas was the *Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya/Party of the Socialist of Catalonia (PSC)*, a party federated with PSOE which acts as its sister party in Catalonia. In both parties feminist caucuses were created by the late 1970s. The promotion of women in political posts was one of their aims. By the time, feminist caucuses were quite reduced in size so the role of individual women in leading the lobby activities towards this goal can not be neglected (Threlfall, 2007: 1080; Verge, 2009).

As suggested by Krook (2006b), horizontal emulation is easier between countries that share historical ties so the strategy fits a particular context. In Western Europe party quotas are most common and this is what party feminist pressed their male peers for in Spain. Amongst European countries, France was the most influential one. In 1979 the PS invited sister parties (including both PSOE and PSC) to the launching of its quota campaign for the European elections. Spain resembled France much more than the Scandinavian countries so the Spanish party feminists got inspiration to replicate

this measure in their parties. In 1982, the PSC introduced a quota of 12 per cent of partisan and representative offices for women. There was only one woman amongst the conference delegates so the party feminists lobbied the delegates with the complicity of the party leader in order to convince them to vote the quota proposal. The strategy used by party feminists consisted of arguing the quota did not stand a good chance to pass but it would raise the party conscience on equality in representation. Surprisingly, the proposal received 53 per cent of the delegates' vote (Balletbò, 2004: 149-55).

It took six more years for PSOE to have its first quota approved. As women were not gaining candidatures, the women's caucus, raised to the status of a Secretariat of Women's Participation at the Federal Executive board, published statistics on the gender distribution of office to show the acute imbalance between female party membership and female public officials. This document analyzed too the experiences of other European social democratic parties which were also members of the Socialist International, via the party feminists participation in the Socialist International Women's section, the Socialist International Women (SIW) (Threlfall, 2007: 1081). Furthermore, in 1986, the Women's Secretariat conducted a survey in which party members were asked about their support for positive actions aimed at increasing women's representation and about the potential reform of the party constitution to include a gender quota. The questions were supported, respectively, by 87 and 67 per cent of members (Verge, 2006). After an intense campaign by party feminists aided by members of the Women's Institute (WI), the central-state women's policy office, whose directors and advisors belonged (or had belonged) to the party², on January 1988 the PSOE approved a 25-per cent quota in party offices and electoral candidatures (Valiente, 2005: 181).

By then, the PSC had already enlarged the quota to 15 per cent (in 1987) with the aim of increasing it one per cent yearly until reaching 18 per cent –which was the party's female membership. In 1987, the *Partido Comunista de España*/Communist Party of Spain (PCE) adopted a quota of 25 per cent for women.

The notion of equality and representation embedded in these three quota reforms was that women's exclusion from partisan and representative political posts constituted a democratic deficit (Verge, 2006). This same believe was permeating Spanish

² Women's political representation was one of the highest priorities of the Women's Institute (WI) since its inception in 1983. This can be checked in the three Gender Equality Plans passed in the period 1993-1996. PSOE led the central-state government from 1982 to 1996. It went back to government in 2004.

population: 61 per cent of those surveyed agreed that quotas helped fight women's discrimination and supported their introduction by parties (CIS, 1988).

In the following years party quotas were expanded. In 1990, *Izquierda Unida/United Left* (IU), the multiparty left-wing coalition established by the PCE, increased the quota to 35 per cent. It was also in 1990 that PSC adopted the 25-per cent quota. One year later, *Iniciativa per Catalunya Verda/Initiative for Catalonia Greens* (ICV), IU's sister party in Catalonia, granted women 30 per cent of candidatures, including winning positions. This specification was incorporated too by PSOE in 1994, as it was obvious that the party's target was not being fulfilled. The party conference also approved a motion imposing the commitment to achieve parity in four years time. In addition, would women's membership in a constituency be higher than 25 per cent, the reserved positions would add an extra 5 per cent. It meant the introduction of an informal 30 per cent quota - the same adopted by PSC in 1996. Nonetheless, party quotas did not immediately produce the desired results. Men kept the safe positions so in 1993 women represented only 17 per cent of PSOE's MPs and 22 per cent of IU's MPs at the Congress of Deputies, and 15 per cent of PSC's MPs at the Catalan Parliament. MPs at the central-state or regional parliaments (as well as councillors at the local level) are elected by proportional representation under the D'Hont system with closed and blocked party lists. Therefore holding a seat is a function of the position in a closed electoral list.

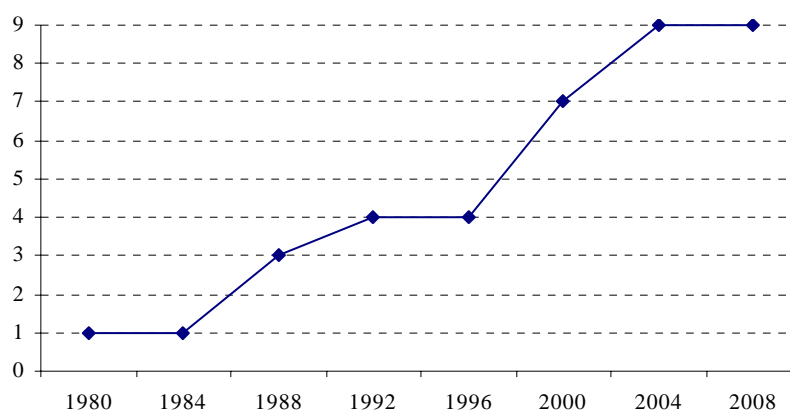
The most important step towards equality took place on the second half of the nineties when several parties assumed parity democracy. As Krook (2006b) shows, domestic debate on the adoption of a quota often has international and transnational dimensions. In the Spanish case, domestic policy entrepreneurs were effectively aided by one international event which justified support for policy innovation. In 1995 Socialist women that managed the Women's Institute and those in charge of equality policies within the Minister for Social Affairs engaged in the preparation of the United Nations Women's Conference (1995) which set the Beijing Platform of Action. In that very same year, while Spain held the temporary presidency of the EU, the IV Plan of Action on Equality of Opportunities came into effect. Given that states were urged to implement measures to make equality effective, party feminists could pressure again their organizations for new efforts on women's representation (Jenson and Valiente, 2000: 100). Simultaneously, the WSI urged for gender democracy in its XVI congress

celebrated in New York in 1996 and claimed that parties which did not democratize the gender ratio within their own ranks were not truly democratic³.

In 1997, IU and PSOE set up a quota system in which any sex is entitled neither less than 40 per cent nor more than 60 per cent of representation in any party committee and candidature. PSC followed suit in 2000 and ICV in 2002. PSOE's, PSC's and ICV's party electoral board, in which the Women's Secretary is included, can invalidate those lists that do not respect the aforementioned proportions. Female representation significantly boosted in these parties and, as a consequence, in the lower house.

Nationalist parties embraced party quotas later than non nationalist parties, irrespective of their leaning towards the left or towards the right. The left-wing *Bloque Nacionalista Galego/Galician Nationalist Block* (BNG) introduced the parity quota in 1998 and the centre party *Coalición Canaria/Canarian Coalition* (CC) did so in 2000. The left-wing *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya/Catalonian Republican Left* (ERC) followed suit in 2004, one year after the introduction of a women membership related quota, thanks to the sustained efforts by the women's secretariat since 1996. Finally, women from the centre-right *Partido Nacionalista Vasco/Basque Nationalist Party* (PNV) approved the parity quota on December 2007, having had during the seven previous years a quota equivalent to women's affiliation. In these parties, irrespective of female membership, women have traditionally had less organic power and women secretariats were only created along the 1990s. In 2004 nine out the twelve relevant parties (with sustained representation at the state-wide lower house) had assumed parity democracy (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Number of parties with gender quotas (1980/2008)

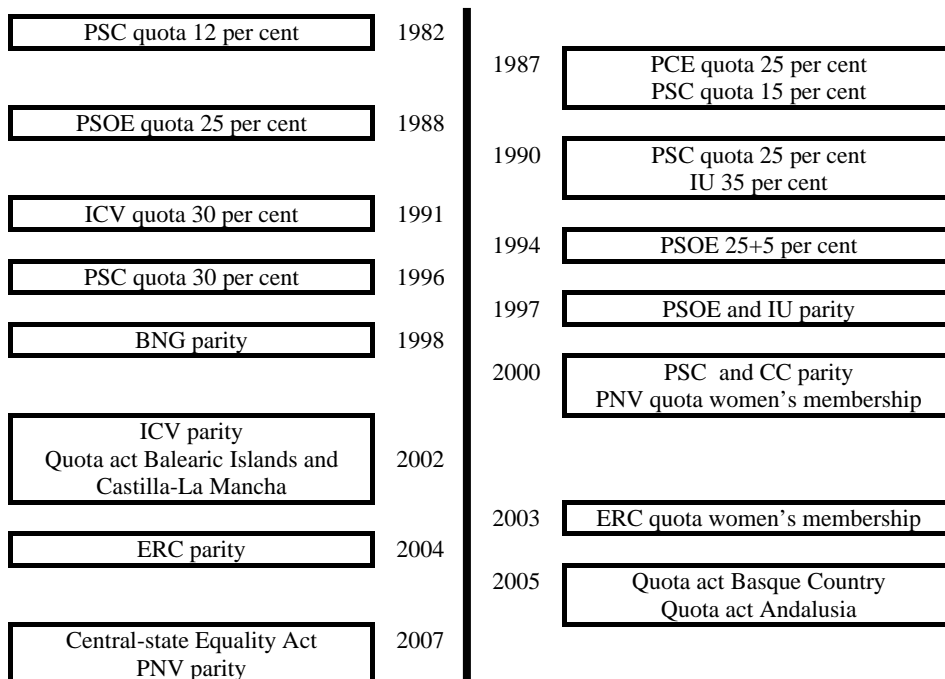


³ *Equality in the New Millenium*. PSOE and PSC women have occupied the presidency and the deputy presidency of the WSI several times.

Among those parties which do not embrace quotas we can distinguish parties that completely reject them, such as the right-wing *Partido Popular*/Popular Party (PP), and parties which prefer looser targets over positive action to attain equality in representation. These are the left-wing *Eusko Alkartasuna*/Basque Solidarity (EA) and the centre-right federation of Catalan nationalist parties *Convergència i Unió*/Convergence and Union (CiU) which adopted targets for women by the mid 2000s.

Different works show that it is common to find a ‘contagion’ or ‘diffusion’ effect among parties (Matland and Studlar, 1996; Kittilson, 2006; Freidenvall, 2003); that is, the adoption of quotas by a party or a set of parties induces other parties in the system to follow suit. This effect is found in the Spanish party system as well. Indeed, we have observed as well the application of an ‘informal quota’ by parties who reject their implementation but which were in need to catch up with women’s representation levels so as to prevent being seen as sexist organizations. This effect has also taken place between party quotas and legal quotas. Once there is a certain threshold of parties with gender quotas it is easier that laws reserving seats to women are passed; and, simultaneously, parties tend to adapt their organizational rules to legislation (Meier, 2004). For an illustration of the sequence of the introduction of quotas see Figure 2.

Figure 2. From quotas to parity democracy



2.2. The legal introduction of parity democracy

The first steps towards the introduction of a legal quota were taken from 1996 onwards. However, the chances of success were non-existent as, by then, the *Partido Popular*/Popular Party (PP) was leading the central-state government. The conservatives' notion of equality and representation is totally opposed to mandatory quotas for all parties as they consider that only merit should guide candidate selection processes. Besides, under conservative rule (1996/2004) political representation was a topic of very low priority for the WI (Valiente, 2005: 187).

On the one hand, in 1996, IU submitted a bill to increase women's presence in decision-making positions. However, the conservative government did not process it. On the other, PSOE, which had adopted parity in 1997, announced the submission of a bill on political equality in September 1998 but was finally put off until July 1999 in order to foster social debate and to obtain expert reports on its constitutionality based on the French and Italian experiences where their Constitutional Courts had annulled the quotas. Conservative MPs also blocked the discussion of the bill.

Under the second PP government (1996/2000) new efforts were made to have parity approved. On April 2002 three more bills were presented by the left-wing parties, IU, PSOE, and ICV, to reform the electoral law with the aim of imposing gender parity in party lists. The first party claimed for a margin of difference between men and women of one point, the second advocated a proportion of a minimum of 40 per cent and a maximum of 60 per cent of candidates of any sex, and the third defended zipper lists. These bills were supported by all opposition parties but rejected by PP.

Due to the state-wide parliament blockade to gender quotas, new windows of opportunity for women's representation opened at the regional level thanks to the multi-level design of the country. On June 2002, the regional parliaments of Castilla-La Mancha and Baleares, in which left-wing parties held the majority of seats, incorporated zipping into their regional electoral laws⁴. PP lodged an appeal to the Constitutional Court, suspending the implementation of these reforms until the sentence was issued. As a response, PSOE in both regions, as well as other minor left-wing parties in the Balearic Islands, decided to self-impose the zipper party lists in the 2003 regional elections and the result was an almost paritary parliament in the last case (37 per cent)

⁴ Electoral legislation is a central-state competence though regions can pass acts that affect elections in the meso layer of government, respecting the general dispositions of the national law.

and the most feminized parliament ever up to then in Spain: 51.2 per cent of women in Castilla-La Mancha. In this region, PSOE's strategy triggered a dynamic of competition with its direct rival, PP, whose parliamentary bench exceeded 60 per cent of women. In the other 15 regions PSOE stuck to its 40:60 per cent quota and almost all its parliamentary groups were parity after 2003. Following PSOE, PP also experienced a net increase in women's representation in the majority of regional assemblies.

On March 2004 PSOE won the general elections. Gender equality was one of the main goals included in the government program. As soon as it was elected, the Socialist government announced the preparation of a bill to promote gender equality in different policy areas such as expanded maternity leave, enforcement of gender equality in the workplace, new efforts to fight discrimination and sexual harassment, and political office. In order to show his commitment with gender equality in political office the president of the government, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, appointed the first parity cabinet on Spain's history (eight female and eight male ministers).

In the meanwhile two other regions reformed their electoral laws. In 2005 the Basque Country granted women a minimum of 50 per cent of candidatures in party lists (allowing then all-women lists), and at least 40 per cent of cabinet offices, and Andalusia introduced zipper lists.

Finally, on 15 March 2007, with the support of all parties in the Congress of Deputies but PP, the Equality Act was passed. Its "principle of presence", which reforms the General Electoral Regime Law, forces parties to incorporate a minimum of 40 per cent of any sex into candidates' lists in any election. This proportion must be respected too in each stretch of five candidates within the same list, applying then a double-quota on the initial positions of lists, those positions with higher chances to be elected. The law allows for more favorable measures for women in regional laws, supporting the legality of the Basque and the Andalusian laws.

The parity quota was first enforced in the local and regional elections of May 2007. As to local elections, cities under 5,000 inhabitants were excluded from its implementation. Nonetheless, from 2011 onwards, only those villages under 3,000 inhabitants will not have to comply with the "principle of presence". Non-compliance with the 40:60 proportion entails the withdrawal of the list.

The PP lodged an appeal to the Constitutional Court, which was rejected⁵. Public opinion is also clearly supportive of positive action: 75 per cent of respondents agree that gender quotas help decrease women's discrimination in public office and 61 per cent support the introduction of quotas (CIS, 2007).

3. The implementation of quotas

In this section we present various evidence of the evolution of women's representation at the three layers of government in Spain (local, regional and national). The aim is threefold. First, we seek to disentangle the barriers which prevent a higher female representation. Second, we will examine the impact of the gender quotas introduced by parties as well as the quota law passed in 2007. And, third, we will analyze to what extent the multi-level nature of Spain's political context is either an advantage or a disadvantage for women's advancement in political office.

3.1. The local level

As we will see, the local level has traditionally suffered from a deep under-representation of women. This is a generalized trend in democratic societies which is found even in countries with a tilted representation at the national lower chamber⁶. Explanations relate to demand and supply factors as well as to institutional features. Regarding demand factors, candidate selection processes are more decentralized at the local level (Randall, 1987), making complying with gender quotas more troublesome. Furthermore, the gender imbalance in party boards is more acute at this layer of government (Verge, 2008).

Supply factors do also have a stronger incidence at the local level. Local officials of towns under 2,000 inhabitants do not receive a public salary. As dedication to office is considered to be a part-time job, local politicians have an extra working day, which adds to family responsibilities. Furthermore, the size of the town determines the

⁵ Plaintiffs sustained that the electoral gender quota offended several sections of the Spanish Constitution regarding political parties (article 9), right of association and participation (articles 22 and 23), and articles 14 and which refer to equality. The Constitutional Court argued that public authorities must promote conditions which ensure that the freedom and equality of individuals may be real and effective, and remove the obstacles which prevent or hinder their full enjoyment, and to facilitate the participation of all citizens in political, economic, cultural and social life.

⁶ See data from United Cities and Local Governments at: <http://www.cities-localgovernments.org>

level of public social services provided to citizens, such as children or elderly care, which might liberate women from these tasks and ease their participation in politics⁷ (Iversen and Rosenbluth, 2006: 2).

Finally, some institutional characteristics harm women's prospects. In local elections, district magnitude equals the town size, that is, there is a single district. Intra-party competition over available offices is critical to female representation. In other words, district-level size explains variability (Alozie and Manganaro, 1993). The smaller the town (the fewer councillorships a town is assigned), the more difficult it is that the majority (men) shares power with the minority –women⁸. Simultaneously, party coalitions, very frequent at the local level, often means that party quotas prevail over gender quotas on the partisan allocation of candidates.

In 1979, female councilors represented only 3.2 per cent of elected officials. In 1991, more than one decade later, women secured 11.2 per cent of representation (see Table 1). The ascending trend has never been interrupted but it seems that the gender candidate quotas adopted by left-wing parties have not been very effective at this level nor the quota law passed in 2007. In the last election, representation of women in cities over 5,000, those in which the gender quota for party lists was mandatory, reached 39.4 per cent. But 6,700 out of the 8,000 Spanish municipalities have less than 5,000 inhabitants, so the gender quota was only implemented in about 16 per cent of municipalities - accounting for 85 per cent of the state-wide electoral census. Hence, the average for all municipalities was reduced to 31 per cent, a similar increase to that observed in the preceding local elections when no positive action was enforced. Towns under 5,000 inhabitants elected 27 per cent of women (FEMP, 2007a: 80).

Table 1. Women's presence at the local level (in percentage)

	1979	1983	1987	1991	1995	1999	2003	2007
Total	3.2	4.7	7.4	11.2	15.3	21.0	25.6	31.0

Source: Data from Ministry of Public Administrations (2006 and 2008).

In cities over 5,000 inhabitants, only four parties elected at least 40 per cent of women (see Graph 1): PSOE-PSC (43.5), PP (40.2), PNV (40.2) and BNG (40.6). On

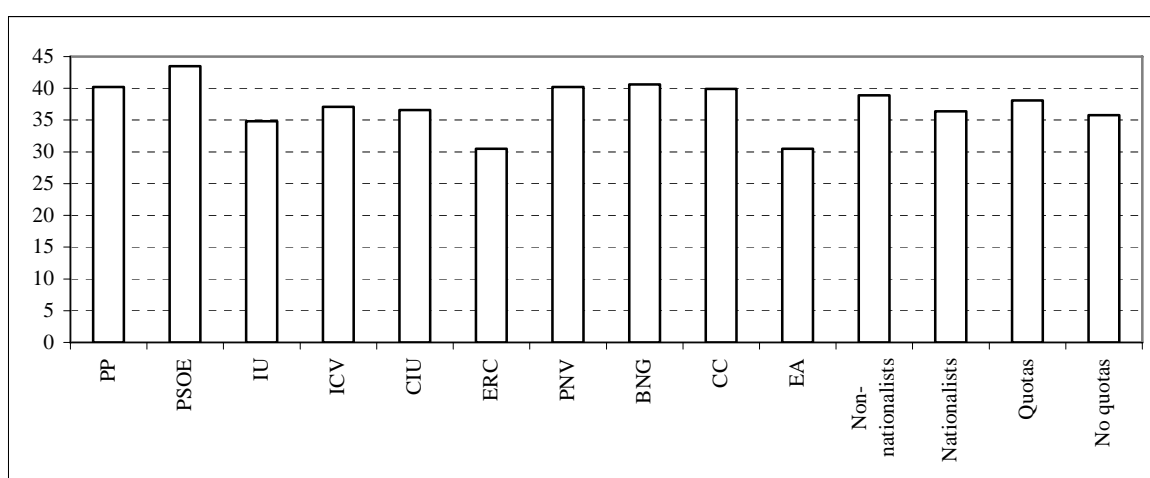
⁷ Female party membership decreases with town size too.

⁸ The number of offices (councillorships) that corresponds to each town follows this scale: up to 250 inhabitants, 5; from 251 to 1,000, 7; from 1,001 to 2,000, 9; from 2,001 to 5,000, 11; from 5,001 to 10,000, 13; from 10,001 to 20,000, 17; from 20,001 to 50,000, 21; from 50,001 to 100,000, 25; and over 100,001 inhabitants, one more office for each extra 100,000 inhabitants or fraction.

average, state-wide and non-nationalist parties perform better than nationalist regional parties (38.9 versus 36.4). Parties with self-imposed quotas do also perform better (38.1 versus 35.7).

The quota law could not stop some discriminatory practices. On the one hand, winning positions are still reserved to men: Women placed in the first three positions averaged 33.8 per cent (non-nationalist parties 34.7 per cent, and nationalist parties 33.2 per cent). Parties with gender quotas reached 34.3 per cent and parties with no quotas 32.7 per cent. Only PSOE almost reached parity (39.3 per cent).

Graph 1. Women’s representation by party in towns over 5,000 inhabitants (percentage)



Source: Own elaboration from Ministry of Interior (2007).

On the other hand, turnover still affects women disproportionately. 46 per cent of local officials were elected for the first time in 2007. The turnover rate for women increases to 61 per cent while men’s shrinks to 40 per cent (see Table 2). Women’s turnover is particularly high in smallest towns, almost 66 per cent, which might probably reinforce the supply arguments presented above. It is no coincidence that almost 4 out of every 10 female councilors is not married (either single, divorced, or widow) whereas only 2 out of every 10 male councilors have this marital status. In the same vein, 52.7 per cent of men in public office have two or more children while only 40.6 per cent of women have a family of this size (see Table 3). So, women participate more when they are younger⁹.

⁹ Amongst councilors aged 18-25, women represent 44 per cent; amongst those aged 26-45, 37 per cent; amongst between 46-65 years, 24 per cent; and, amongst those over 65 years, 10 per cent (Spanish Ministry of Public Administrations, 2008).

The turnover rate also seems to affect the chances candidates for mayor have, and this is highly relevant as nowadays only 15 per cent of mayors are women: Just 82 per cent of elected mayors in 2007 were already mayors or local councilors in 2003 (the percentage augments to 90 per cent in cities over 5,000 inhabitants). Winning the election when not being the incumbent is even tougher for women: only 6 per cent of female newly elected mayors versus 11 per cent of male mayors (FEMP, 2007b).

Table 2. Turnover rate at the local level by gender (2003/2007)

	Women	Men	Total
Under 5,000	65.8	40.8	46.2
5,000-19,999	45.5	31.0	37.7
Over 20,000	49.5	40.1	43.4
Total	61.0	40.2	46.0

Source: FEMP (2007b).

Table 3. Marital status at the local level by gender (2007)

	Not married	Married w/ 0-1 child	Married w/ 2 or more children
Men	24.5	23.2	52.7
Women	37.6	21.8	40.6

Source: FEMP (2007b).

Furthermore, we observe a horizontal segregation of female and male councilors with government responsibilities. Table 4 depicts the consolidation of a particular allocation of tasks which segregates political responsibilities by sex. There are informal practices that define appropriate-gender jobs at the time of assigning responsibilities according to the importance and prestige conferred to each policy area. It seems that men identify the areas of infrastructures, public works and finance as the hard core of politics. In the roles of care and provision of services women find correspondence with their family roles, so the gender division of labor is reflected at the public sphere: social services and education departments are predominantly administered by women (61.6 and 56.3 per cent). Men more than triple the presence of women in the areas of economy and finance (71.9 versus 28.1 per cent) and public works (82.9 versus 17.1 per cent). Equality departments are basically run by women (90.9 per cent).

Table 4. Sex division of labor in local councils (2007)

Departments	Male (%)	Female (%)	Ratio F/M
Economy and finance	71.9	28.1	0.4
Citizenship participation	44.9	55.1	1.2
Social services and health	38.4	61.6	1.6
Public works and transports	82.9	17.1	0.2
Education and culture	43.7	56.3	1.3
Environment	78.0	22.0	0.3
Equality	9.1	90.9	10.0
Total	100	100	---

Source: FEMP (2007b), page 69.

3.2. *The regional level*

Using Dahlerup's (1988) terminology, women's representation at the regional level, the meso-level of government, illustrates a trend from skewed assemblies at the beginning of the 1980s (5.6 per cent in 1983), to balanced ones in the most recent election (42.8 per cent in 2007), as Table 5 shows.

On the one hand, Asturias, Cantabria, Rioja, Balearic Islands, and Madrid pioneered the incorporation of women in regional assemblies in the first legislature. On the other hand, Cantabria, Castilla-La Mancha, Rioja, and Valencia reached parity one decade before the Equality Act was passed. In the V legislature (2003/2007) four regional parliaments had at least 40 per cent of women. As mentioned before, Castilla-La Mancha counted with 53 per cent of women, the highest percentage ever conquered at this level of government. Furthermore, besides the central government, six regional cabinets had a parity composition in the period 2003/2007: Andalusia, Asturias, Castilla-La Mancha, Galicia, Balearic I., and the Basque Country. The first four regions were governed by PSOE (as a single-party government or commanding a bipartisan coalition). In the Balearic I. the PP was in government. And the Basque Country is the only region with an equality law that imposes parity in cabinet composition.

Women's presence in regional assemblies follows the evolution of party quotas, although it never attained the proportion established. During the late 1980s and the 1990s only left-wing parties had adopted gender quotas so the impact on legislative assemblies was limited. In fact, there's no relevant correlation between the percentage of seats obtained by parties with quotas and women's presence¹⁰. However, up to the turn of the twenty-first century, there were two elections in which there is a qualitative

¹⁰ In 1999, $r = 0.165$ ($p > 0.1$), and in 2003 $r = 0.125$ ($p > 0.1$).

increase. The first is 1991 after the introduction of quotas by four parties (PSOE, PSC, IU, and ICV) when women's representation doubled (from 7 per cent to 14 per cent). The second moment is found in 1999 when there was a ten-point increase resulting, on average, in a critical mass of women of 29.5 per cent. Six regions elected between 30 and 40 per cent of women and Castilla-La Mancha and Valencia over 40 per cent of women. Remember that it was in 1997 that PSOE and IU adopted a gender quota according to which no sex can get more than 60 per cent of positions in party lists.

Table 5. Women's presence at the regional level (percentage)*

	1983	1987	1991	1995	1999	2003	2007
Andalusia	4.6	4.6	12.8	22.0	28.4	34.9	45.8
Aragon	6.1	1.5	7.5	8.9	29.8	31.3	38.6
Asturias	8.9	11.1	20.0	20.0	33.3	31.1	37.8
Balearic Islands	5.6	6.8	16.9	30.5	33.9	37.5	45.8
Basque Country	6.7	13.3	17.3	24.0	29.3	34.7	53.3
Canary Islands	1.7	1.7	6.7	13.3	28.3	35.0	45.0
Cantabria	8.7	7.7	7.7	15.4	35.9	41.0	43.6
Castilla León	3.6	3.6	9.5	20.2	27.7	36.0	45.8
Castilla-La Mancha	2.3	9.5	19.2	23.4	40.4	53.2	51.0
Catalonia	5.1	8.9	11.1	14.8	23.7	29.6	35.6
Extremadura	4.6	3.1	16.4	16.9	30.8	36.9	43.1
Galicia	1.4	1.4	11.7	13.3	16.7	33.3	39.0
Madrid	12.8	16.7	23.8	27.2	32.4	37.8	45.8
Murcia	4.6	0.0	11.1	15.6	20.0	31.1	33.3
Navarra	2.0	8.0	14.0	18.0	26.0	32.0	36.0
Rioja	11.4	9.1	21.2	21.2	33.3	39.4	42.4
Valencia	6.7	5.6	13.5	24.7	40.5	41.6	45.5
TOTAL	5.6	6.8	13.9	19.6	29.5	35.6	42.8

Source: Instituto de la Mujer (2008).

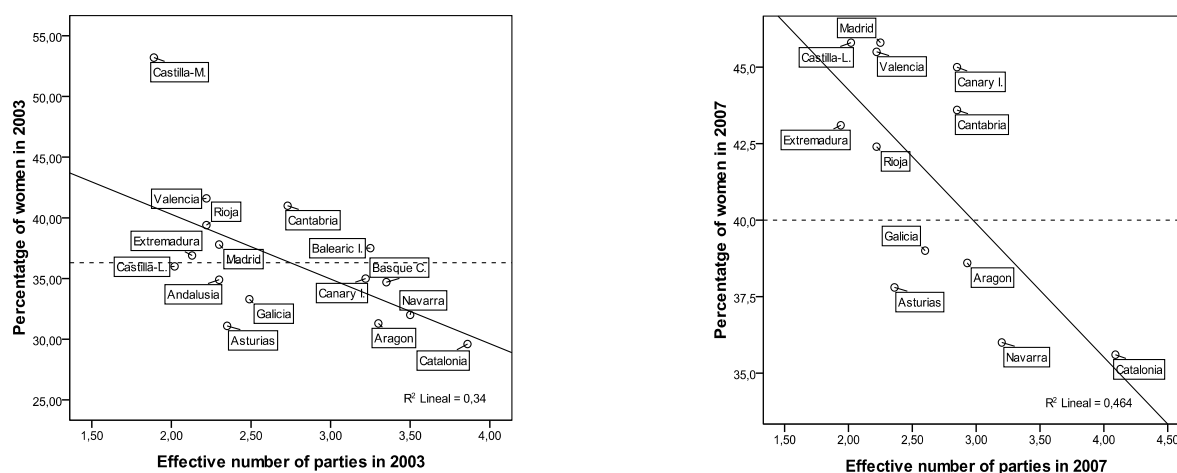
* Catalonia, the Basque Country, Galicia and Andalusia can set the time of their own elections, while the other 13 regions hold their elections on the same day, to coincide with local elections

The multi-level form of government has led to a multi-party competition in those regions with a strong national identity. The combination of two dimensions of political competition (ideological and territorial) has brought about a higher party fragmentation due to the presence of nationalist and regional parties. Simultaneously, party fragmentation harms women's chances to be elected. Competition gets tougher and men predominantly occupy the winning positions. A cluster analysis identifies three centroids for effective number of parties in 2003: (i) 2.13 (Andalusia, Castilla-La Mancha, Castilla Leon, Extremadura, Madrid, Murcia, Rioja, and Valencia); (ii) 2.81 (Asturias, Balearic I., Canary I., Cantabria, and Galicia); and, (iii) 3.50 (Aragon, Navarra, Basque Country, and Catalonia).

As we can see in Graphs 2a and 2b, a large proportion of regional parliaments which in 2003 or in 2007 performed over the mean regarding women's representation present a low party fragmentation (Laakso and Taagepera's index used in the calculus of effective number of parties). The correlation coefficient in 2003 for women's presence and effective number of parties is -0.473^* (and -0.583^* when the outlier case, Murcia, is excluded from the analysis). In 2007 we find a strongest correlation, once Murcia and the three regions using zippering are excluded: -0.681^{**} (it decreases to -0.404 when Murcia is included).

Party fragmentation relates to the presence of nationalist parties in the regional assemblies, which reduces women's representation. In 2007, all regional assemblies but one with a proportion of women below the average do have a strong nationalist presence: Catalonia¹¹, Navarra, Aragon, and Galicia (see Graph 2b). This happens in both highly developed and less developed regions (in all these regions the GDP is above the EU-27 but Galicia).

Graph 2a (left)* and 2b** (right). Percentage of women and party fragmentation



* Murcia is excluded from both analysis as it behaves as an outlier.

** The Balearic I. and the Basque Country are excluded because zipper lists or a 50 per cent-quota was implemented.

As an average, women's presence increased in all assemblies from 2003 to 2007, but the distance between parliaments with nationalist parties and parliaments with no

¹¹ For an exhaustive analysis of the Catalan case see Verge (2008, 2009).

nationalist parties remained: from 34.3 to 39.6 per cent in the former, and from 38 to 41.9 per cent in the latter¹².

After the last regional elections held in May 2007, 11 out of the 17 regional governments have gender balanced cabinets, though the Equality Act does not impose the gender quota to the executive. Five of them (Asturias, Castilla-La Mancha, Extremadura, the Canary I., and Galicia) have an equal number of men and women in regional ministries, and in Andalusia and Extremadura women constitute, respectively, 57 and 61 per cent of the cabinet. We find a statistically significant variation ($p=0.055$) based on the ideology of the party (or the senior party in coalition governments) in cabinet. When the PSOE leads the regional government, cabinets include 45.6 per cent of women whereas when the PP is the governing party women's presence is reduced to 34.5 per cent.

3.3. The national level

The effect of quotas on parliamentary representation was not automatic though there has been a steady increase since 1979. As Table 7 shows, from 6.3 per cent in 1982 it grew up to 12.9 per cent in 1989 after the 25 per cent quota was passed by some parties. It reached 28.3 per cent in 2000, three years after the quota had been enlarged to 40 per cent, and it mounted to 36 per cent in 2004, when the quota was effectively implemented by left-wing parties (a delegate of the women's secretariat or herself by default joins the party electoral commission and holds veto power or the capacity to modify party lists which do not comply with the gender quota).

Table 7 illustrates the comparison between the main two state-wide parties, PSOE and PP, which account altogether for about 90 per cent of seats in the national lower house. In the 1989 and 1993 elections, with a considerably lower proportion of women candidates, the proportion of female conservative MPs was quite close to left-wing women MPs. During those years, PP allocated more women at the top positions than PSOE. Up to 1989 we find more conservative women candidates than socialists, but from this moment onwards the impact of the gender quota introduced in 1988 is evident. From 1986 to 1989 women's presence in party candidatures advanced two points whereas in PSOE there was a 200 per cent increase.

¹² Correlations are non significant as the number of cases (N) is small (17) and because variation in women's presence is reduced (in 2003, $r = -0.338$, $p>0.1$; in 2007, $r = -0.276$, $p>0.1$).

From 1996 onwards, the PP was overcome by left-wing parties with regards to the percentage of women in party lists and in winning positions. The approval of the parity quota in 1997 as well as its effective implementation took place when PSOE was in opposition: the party could not urge the government to reform the electoral law and do not comply itself with balanced representation. As to the PP, in 1993 the party almost doubled female representation and we observe another significant increase in 2000. The conservatives, who had already lost its comparative advantage in women's vote, could not blame left-wing parties for using the quota as a political marketing device if women's under-representation was so evident amongst its MPs.

Women's presence as heads of party lists has been marginal until 2004 when there was an important increase, though women are still less than a third of candidates leading largest parties' tickets at the constituency level.

Table 7. Women at the national parliament, 1977-2008

	79/82	82/86	86/89	89/93	93/96	96/00	00/04	04/08	08/--
PSOE	5.0	6.9	7.1	17.1	17.6	27.7	36.8	46.3	42.3
Share of W Congress	28.6	82.0	56.5	64.7	50.9	39.8	34.8	59.5	56.7
Party list	10.2	8.3	12.5	26.8	28.9	38.1	46.4	44.1	48.0
Winning position	2.3	1.4	2.9	16.2	14.9	35.2	32.2	40.8	44.5
Head of list	0.0	0.0	3.8	5.9	7.7	15.4	17.3	23.1	24.0
PP	11.1	0.9	5.9	10.4	14.9	14.3	25.1	28.4	30.5
Share of W Congress	4.8	9.0	34.7	21.6	38.2	22.4	34.8	33.3	37.0
Party list	15.1	9.9	13.0	15.3	19.3	23.0	30.9	35.8	45.1
Winning position	8.3	14.3	8.4	7.5	11.3	11.6	13.7	28.4	40.0
Head of list	1.9	1.9	3.8	11.5	9.6	13.5	15.4	26.9	18.0
Women in Congress	5.0	5.9	8.4	13.9	16.0	24.0	28.3	36.0	36.2
Women nationalist	0.0	4.2	5.9	5.6	6.5	20.6	12.1	18.2	29.1

Source: Verge (2006) updated by the author.

Nationalist parties have elected a skewed percentage of women in all elections. As it can be seen in Table 7, the percentage of nationalist women has always been much lower than the average. This reflects the traditional under-representation of women by nationalist parties. But low presence of women amongst these parties at the national level is also explained by institutional factors. Although the majority of nationalist parties obtain very good results at the regional level, the share of votes they receive at the national level is less abundant due to the dual voting pattern exercised by the Spanish electorate (state-wide parties are preferred over nationalist parties at the state-wide level) (see Pallarés and Keating, 2003). With the exception of CiU and PNV, nationalist parties obtain between one and three seats each so competition for the scarce

winning position is fierce within the organization, and we have already pointed at the inverse relation between competition for candidatures and women's presence.

Nonetheless, the introduction of the quota law has reduced the differential between nationalist parties and the average percentage of elected women at the lower house, the former reaching 29.1 per cent.

The quota law has failed to produce an effective paritary parliament. In fact, women's presence only augmented from 36 per cent in 2000 to 36.2 per cent in 2008. Hence, the introduction of the quota law does not constitute a critical juncture but a consolidation of the path previously taken. As the political context was already quite egalitarian, the contribution of the quota law to the increase of female officials was rather secondary, in tune with Meier's findings (2008), although one can not deny its symbolic effect and the normative support to equality it has installed.

In spite of placing more women in winning positions, the PSOE elected five less women in the last election, the same number of female candidates the PP won. However, as only 31.7 per cent of conservative female candidates were placed in safe positions, the proportion of women in PP's parliamentary bench was reduced to 30.5 per cent, the lowest increase of the party since 1996.

To show PSOE's commitment with gender equality, newly re-elected prime minister appointed again a paritary government with eight men and nine women, including an Equality Ministry, charged with ensuring fairness in the workplace and continuing the fight against domestic violence, a long-standing demand of the feminist movement. Another symbolic action was the nomination of the first woman to head Spain's armed forces. She was seven months pregnant. This served as an important image precisely because it conveyed normality¹³.

Women accumulate a lower political experience in office as they are renewed more frequently than men are. In the previous legislature 61.9 per cent of women did not repeat as MPs while this was the case of 53 per cent of male MPs. The quota law has not prevented this practice to go on. In 2008 turnover was lower for both sexes. Nevertheless, the gender ratio yields a stronger disadvantage for women, indicating that women are regarded as interchangeable candidates, which difficult the consolidation of women networks that could help break with the partisan and institutional gendered practices in candidate selection processes and distribution of tasks.

¹³ She delivered while in office and shared the maternity leave with his husband (she took six of the sixteen weeks of paid maternity leave established by legislation).

Table 8. Turnover rate at the national level by gender

	Women	Men	Total	Ratio W/M
2000/2004	61.9	53.0	55.9	1.16
2004/2008	56.1	45.6	49.4	1.23

Source: Own elaboration, data from Congress of Deputies.

As observed in the local level, supply factors, particularly family burden, also restrict women's chances to get elected: 82.5 per cent of MPs are married whereas only 59.4 per cent of women are (see Table 9).

Table 9. Marital status at the national level by gender (2004/2008)

	Not married	Married
Men	17.5	82.5
Women	40.6	59.4

Source: Survey to MPs carried out in autumn 2004¹⁴.

Women's representation has remarkably been higher at the national tier of government than at the local level (see Table 9). Conversely, national and regional elections have produced similar results with a slight advantage for the former. However, in the last legislature, regional governments led the incorporation of women in parliament. The application of the gender quota at the regional level was eased by the higher proportionality of the electoral system. The electoral law dilutes proportionality at the national level by establishing provincial constituencies with a minimum of two deputies per province, which favors the largest statewide parties and parties with a concentrated territorial presence. At the regional level, however, it is more proportional since constituencies are larger (Pallarés and Keating, 2003).

Table 9. Women's presence at all levels of government (percentage)

Year of National elections	1982	1986	1989	1993	1996	2000	2004	2008
National	6.3	6.3	12.9	15.7	22.0	28.3	36.0	36.3
Regional	5.6	5.6	6.8	13.9	19.6	29.5	35.6	42.8
Local	3.2	4.7	7.4	11.2	15.3	21.0	25.6	31.0
<i>Diff N-R*</i>	0.7	0.7	6.1	1.8	2.4	-1.2	0.4	-7.1
<i>Diff N-L*</i>	3.1	1.6	5.5	4.5	6.7	7.3	10.4	5.3
Year of R & L elections	1979	1983	1987	1991	1995	1999	2003	2007

Source: Own elaboration.

* Positive numbers indicate women's representation is larger at the national level.

¹⁴ Data owned by the research team of the project *Representation and the quality of democracy in Spain*, directed by Antonia Martínez.

Finally, as Table 10 depicts, incumbency at the local and the regional level is highly relevant for women's participation in national politics: 71 per cent of women MPs elected in 2004 had previously been a local councilor or a regional MP.

Table 10. Previous experience in office (percentage)

	Men	Women
Not been in office at lower levels	35.1	29.0
Been in office at lower levels	64.9	71.0

Source: Survey to MPs carried out in autumn 2004.

4. Concluding remarks

Conventional explanations for women's representation fit the Spanish case. Women's organizations inside political parties were the main domestic actor that first articulated the quota demand pressing their male peers for change. But we can not neglect the role of individual women in leading the lobby activities towards this goal. Party feminists were also helped by the central-state women's machinery. On the other hand, the domestic debate on the adoption of a quota had international and transnational dimensions which help explain success in introducing parity too.

The data presented confirms the existence of a gender regime that limits women's representation by establishing a hierarchy and a gender bias in the distribution of political responsibilities and by fostering a larger turnover of women. Besides, the more fierce competition for office is (the fewer offices are available), the less chances women have to get nominated as candidates.

Institutional change in two key moments improved the access of women to political office. The entry point took place after the introduction of a gender quota by left-wing parties and its subsequent contagion in the party system. The second moment of institutional change was the imposition of legal parity. Nonetheless, this last moment has not constituted a critical juncture but a consolidation of the path previously started. In fact, as the political context was already quite egalitarian, the contribution of the quota law to the increase of female officials was rather secondary, although one can not deny its symbolic effect and the normative support to equality it has installed. The issue of gender balance has gained a high profile in contemporary campaigns and cabinets are scrutinized under this criterion when they are appointed.

The gender regime found in party organizations has prevented the quota law

from watering down male dominance. Parties assign the lowest proportion of candidatures (40 per cent) to women, and men are ranked higher in the five top positions and overrepresented in winning positions, all of them key factors to attain an effective representation. Inequality is less marked in parties with long established gender quotas. Hence, legal parity does not blur difference across parties.

The paper has also shown that the multi-level context produces some relevant interactions with gender equality. On the positive aspects, the meso-level constitutes an important training ground for women before reaching the national level. Besides, the regional level has created new opportunities for innovation, in particular, when the national level presented hostility towards positive action. But there are also some negative features. The decentralization process has territorialized political competition and generated a higher party fragmentation with a significant presence of nationalist parties in some regions, both elements which are not advantageous for women's representation.

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