

# Catalonia: Federalism or Secession?

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## Abstract

Is there a political space for a possible federal accommodation of the demands of self-government in Catalonia and how is it configured? In order to answer these questions, we address first the conceptualization of federalism, and then, from an evolutionary perspective, we focus on the “Catalan issue” and its institutional outputs. The general assumption, in political and media discourse, namely, that “being in favour of the independence process”, “wanting to separate from Spain” and “being nationalist” constitute a single argument and mean exactly the same, has served to conceal a debate that is very complex, plural and full of nuances. We pose an analysis that pivots on the identity question and the type of political-territorial solution, the importance of the different leaderships in the process and the party identification with respect to the constructive nature of the political preferences of the electors and their positioning on the issues.

## Keywords

Secession, Federalism, Political-Territorial Solution, Catalonia, Independence, Process

## 1. Introduction

In this article we will address the question of whether political space exists for an eventual federal accommodation to the demands for self-government in Catalonia today, or if the only way available is exit and secession. In order to answer this question, however, another one must be posed; namely: what we understand by “federalism”. The preconception with regard to what constitutes a federation is absolutely decisive, because it conditions not only the reading and interpretation of opinion polls regarding the “solution to the problem of Catalonia”, but, even more decisively, the very operationalization of the concept and its translation in the design of questionnaires. We will argue that the uncritical use of a reductionist and very problematic model of cooperative federalism has blocked

the actual possibility of forming an accurate picture of the opinions and attitudes of the electorate vis-à-vis a federal-type solution in Catalonia and in Spain. The criticism of this standard model and the elaboration of an alternative vision of federalism are behind the partially innovative design employed in the novel poll that serves as a basis for this research (*Post-electoral Study Autonomous Elections in Catalonia* 2015<sup>1</sup>).

## 2. For an Evolutionist Concept of Federation and Federalism

The predominant concept of federalism in the Spanish debate not only occupies a minority position compared with the hegemony of different variations of State nationalism and nationalisms against the State, but, when postulated, arises, more often than not, from a structural and static vision, very questionable from a theoretical, empirical and comparative point of view. We can synthesise the main characteristics of this hegemonic federal vision (present, for example, in the PSOE's *Declaración de Granada* of 2013, in many academic studies of Public Law and Political Science and in the media in our country) with the following features: 1) it is a structural and rigid vision, in other words, it contemplates a distribution of competences established in the “constitutional block” (Constitution and Statutes of Autonomy) which crystallises areas of competence invasion of which—via *encroachment* by central government or *shirking* by Autonomous Communities—gives rise to conflicts that are resolved *legally* via the Constitutional Court; 2) is a static conception, focused on the distribution of powers of the specific founding pacts (Constitution and Statutes), which leads to a constant concern with the legal “closure” and “ceiling” of decentralisation, formulated from a perspective of balance and lack of incentives for the transformation of the system, not apt at all to give an account of economic, social, political and institutional change in Spain and in the European Union; 3) it is a centralist federal vision, obsessed with cooperation (“cooperative federalism”) and the hierarchical and vertical coordination of the system from the central organs of the State; 4) it is a nationalist perspective of State, which by definition disregards (“one sovereignty”, “one nation”) the reality of a plurinational Spanish State; 5) finally, it proposes a symmetrical version of federalism, cambering to the maximum “equality of rights for all Spaniards”, neglects the capital dimension of experimentation in public policies and of the plurality of political preferences of the diverse electorates and the autonomous governments they result in.

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<sup>1</sup>From a point of view of content, apart from including the traditional contents of any post electoral study, this study incorporated thematic blocks addressing the identity question, the role of State and Catalan leaders, the independence process, as well as other aspects of to the Catalan and Spanish political system. Performed by our own research team in the days following the Catalan elections, between November 16 and December 23, 2015, this is a study structured into eleven thematic blocks analysing the population over eighteen years of age resident in Catalonia. The theoretical simple size of the study is 1400 interviews, under the most unfavourable assumption  $p = q$ , with an associated error of  $\pm 2.62\%$  and with proportional allocation by quotas of gender, age and province. The questionnaire was conducted by telephone via CATI (*Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing*) system.

In this article we will argue that, rather than this structural and static vision of federalism, far more appropriate, theoretically and empirically, is an evolutionist vision of federations. The evolutionary interpretation proposed here owes much to new trends of thought in social sciences such as the evolutionist theory of political behaviour (Alford & Hibbing, 2004; Bowles & Gintis, 2011), institutional evolutionism (Steinmo, 2010; Blyth et al., 2011; Lustick, 2011), historical neo-institutionalism (Thelen, 2004; Streeck & Thelen, 2005) and discursive neo-institutionalism (Schmidt, 2011). But it also connects with important research programmes on *adaptive* federalism (Simeon, 2001; Bednar, 2009, 2011, 2015) and with constructivist approaches to nationalism and ethnic identities (Shelef, 2010; Chandra, 2012; Máiz, 2003a, 2003b, 2012).

In fact, federalism is, from the point of view of comparative politics, a political system that has demonstrated an unrivalled degree of adaptation and resilience in very different social and economic contexts, as well as extraordinary variation in its institutional arrangements and temporal flexibility in order to address diverse circumstances, changes or crises. From this perspective a federation may be regarded as a stratified and overlapping set of rules, laws and actors that, the product of a continuous evolutionary process, is never completely sutured or definitively crystallised, and generates a considerable capacity of variation in space and of transformation (replica and innovation) in time. Thus, unlike the case of the structural vision, from an evolutionist perspective the assumption is that “A robust federation is flexible, not rigid” (Bednar, 2009: p. 15).

The evolutionist theory constitutes an *interactionist* paradigm (Mayr, 1982; Akçay et al., 2013); translated into social science: a priori it favours neither actors nor structures. From the federal point of view this translates into the fact that exclusive emphasis upon incentive structures gives way to a neo-constitutionalism mindful of actors and, above all, the interaction between actors, environment (social, political and economic context) and institutions at micro and macro level. In this manner, federal institutions form part of a complex and changing set of rules, laws, values and behaviours. It is this interaction which, from an evolutive point of view, prevents the conception of a federal system via the ontological fallacy of the simple sum of its constituent parts: there are *emerging properties* in the institutional whole that did not exist in the previous components (i.e.: the latter do not constitute, strictly speaking, their explanatory independent variables) (Blyth et al., 2011). Rules and laws, however, does not exhaust the functioning of the system that depends on the adhesion or criticism by the political actors. Diverse behaviours are possible, sometimes with expected and on other occasions with unexpected results, and all coexist and change within the same system. In the same way that in evolutive biology the phenotype is the result of the interaction between the genotype and the environment, from the adaptive perspective of the federalism proposed here, political interaction between institutional arrangements, actors’ strategies, competition or the overlapping of identities, decisions at different levels of government

etc. Represent the fulcrum of a conception of federations as indeterminate and contingent political *processes*, rather than *structures* crystallised once and for all (Nicolaidis & Howse, 2001).

Contemporary evolutionism is not teleological and neither does it postulate a necessarily efficient development of a perfect system (contrary to popular belief, it does not subscribe to the Spencerian thesis of the “survival of the fittest”). This translates, in the field under consideration, into the abandonment of the quest to construct a canonical, superior and universal federal concept or design, by means of the rigid establishment of certain indispensable features. The evolutive perspective, on the other hand, invites one to put aside the taxonomic impulse focussed on determining what is and is not “authentic federalism”, what kind of institutional arrangement fits into the federal category (in biology one would say “species”). In other words, it abandons the feverish quest to differentiate between federalism and “autonomy”, federalism and “quasi-federalism” or “federal arrangements” etc. The evolutionist vision postulates an idea of federation as a *complex adaptive system*, in other words, a political system endowed with an extraordinary capacity for experimentation and variation in time and space, as required by diverse specific contexts. All federations change historically and adapt to new structures of opportunity, via constant interaction between actors and institutions. And the result of this change is not a *via regia* to federation, ideal-typical, but a continuum of a wide range of federal developments and variations. Based on a hard core—formed by: 1) *shared sovereignty*, 2) self-government and co-government legally and politically guaranteed via 3) pact and political production of trust—very diverse factors act and have varying influence in each particular federation, in such a manner that the same variables impact in a different way in different contexts. Over time the variables themselves change, adapt and are affected by prevailing political processes (Steinmo, 2010: p. 11). Adaptative federalism shows itself, thus, to be particularly capable of reflecting the enormous variety of forms, mechanisms, designs and practices apparent in federal systems throughout the world (Watts, 2008).

Biological systems are rarely in equilibrium, and neither are political systems, which in our case could translate into “successful federations not usually being in equilibrium” (Bednar, 2015). Rather than a static federalist perspective typical of the structural vision, be it in the legal (“shielding” of competences in the constitutional block and judicial control of the CC), or politological sphere (models of equilibrium with absence of institutional incentives for actors to alter the current state of affairs), the evolutive vision offers a dynamic perspective, alert to change and open to contingency. Specifically, the evolutionist conception provides three classic mechanisms explanatory of change that are especially significant here; namely: *variation, selection and reinforcement* (Mayr, 1982). The variation is the result of political learning and innovation through trial and error, of the elimination via selection of certain institutional designs or arrangements and the retention of others that have proved to be particularly appropriate in specific

contexts and are, in this way, reinforced for the future of the system. The selection is a strategic process of filtering and cleaning institutional arrangements, although, in its implementation, repetition and inheritance is, however, always imperfect. There is no pure replication, but replication with variation (Hodgson, 2002), federations adapt not only to different contexts in space (variety), but also to different economic and social realities (change) (Simeon, 2001).

The evolutive perspective of federalism provides, moreover, a vision of endogenous and gradual institutional change, not exclusively exogenous and disruptive. From this angle, flexibility and even ambiguity in federal arrangements allow for more and better adaptation than rigidity, “closure of the system” or “shielding of competences”. Continuous interaction between the adaptive strategies of actors and selection and institutional and environmental reinforcement generate, as a rule, gradual, progressive changes. The evolutive perspective, dynamic and attentive to change, postulates that many modifications are not generally affected via structural transformations, far-reaching constitutional reforms, or in response to the impact of external crises (as argued by the models of “punctuated equilibrium” based on the work of Gould, 2002). Often by means of apparently minor or *ad hoc* modifications. The latter are implemented in very diverse ways: negotiations, partial agreements, interpretations or even constitutional omissions. On numerous occasions, federations, rather than via formal mechanisms like constitutional reforms, which seek to address all outstanding questions of distribution of competences and identity-related tension, proceed via more subtle informal political mechanisms (Watts, 2008). For example, it is very common for the evolution of federations to proceed via implicit constitutional changes, “constitutional changes without constitutional reform” (Colino, 2009; Colino & Olmeda, 2012), or even by recourse to “constitutional silences” (Foley, 1989; Simeon, 2001), or “agreed silences” (Erk & Gagnon, 2000, 2012) which strategically leave open conflictive questions. All of this is undertaken via very diverse mechanisms such as delegation of competences, interpretations, bilateral or multilateral partial agreements (“compacts”), with or without mechanisms of self-reinforcement etc. For all these reasons the evolutive perspective is more suitable than the structuralist one in legal or politological terms, to reflect the multidimensional process of continuity and change, formal and informal, in federations. Above all because it returns to centre stage a crucial aspect: *politics*, in other words, renegotiation and agreements, provisional solutions with multiple winners, rather than the simple application of the law and the judicialisation of the rich federal life, ultimately, rather than the “jurisdictional federal State” (Caamaño, 2014).

Stable federations tend to develop a series of “selection mechanisms” or federal safeguards that retain the mutations beneficial for the system and minimise or reject those that threaten the solidity of each specific federal project. For this reason, amongst others, a federation frozen in time is, in practice, a moribund federation (Bednar, 2011). Nonetheless, the number and the political and insti-

tutional priority of these safeguards differ(s) considerably, in an evolutive perspective, from the excessively monistic and reductive, typical of the structuralist or balanced vision, focused on judicial control of non-compliance with the original constitutional pact or successive (and scant) formal reforms. Indeed, in this latter perspective, there are two basic selection mechanisms: 1) *distribution of competences* between the two levels of government (Union and Member States) and 2) constitutional *jurisdiction*, concentrated or diffuse, exercising judicial control of invasions of competences. From an evolutive perspective, however, the number, variety the very priority ranking of safeguard mechanisms is very different; namely: 1) distribution of powers among the different levels; 2) the complex and non-centralised party system (with competition between forces at a State and non-State level) agregando and diversifying political preferences; 3) the political opinion and the federal political culture they provide, supplying citizens with values, attitudes and dispositions, the criterion of the permissible in the invasion of competences (remember *El Federalista* N° 46 and 51); 4) bilateral and multilateral negotiation, and the occasional inter-governmental conflict; and 5) finally, judicial control, in turn influenced by political culture and public opinion.

The evolutive vision underlines, moreover, a fundamental characteristic of federalism, which derives from the principle of shared *sovereignty*: the presence of a plurality of autonomous governments possessed of a solid space of competences, capable of experimentation and innovation (Ferejohn & Weingast, 1997). This is why the model of “cooperative federalism” poses, from the evolutive point of view, very serious problems owing to several of its characteristics: 1) its centralism (via the imposition of mechanisms of hierarchical coordination); 2) its chronic democratic deficit, resulting from “joint decision traps” (Scharpf) or “consensus traps” (Darnstädt); and 3) the way it blocks or hinders experimentation and accommodation of the diversity of autonomous public policies. In this context, the adaptative and evolutionist vision of federalism highlights, on the one hand, the fact that conflicts, the occasional invasion of competences, in short, “opportunism” (*encroachment* by the Union or *shirking* by Member States) is an inherent function of federalism. Furthermore, transgressions in the sphere of competences, within certain limits, improve the system’s functionality, because they permit adjustments, innovation, exploration of space for possible agreements, innovation in the redistribution of competences, adaptation to new contexts and varied intensity of preferences etc. In addition, the evolutive perspective favours the use of *opting-out* mechanisms and enhanced cooperation, such as for example the “right to be different” (*Abweichungsrecht*), which permits the non-application by a State, in specific circumstances, of a law of the Federation. Ultimately, the adaptative approach really leads to a sort of “competitive welfare federalism” (Keating, 2012) or “uncooperative federalism” (Bednar, 2015), in which States retain broad powers of experimentation, diversification and learning in public policies and fiscal autonomy, as opposed to the cooperative obsession with intergovernmental harmonisation.

That said, if the evolutive vision addresses federations' central capacity for experimentation, diversity and learning via various multilevel selection processes (Blyth et al., 2011), an additional problem of the structural vision—legal or classical institutionalist politological—resides in its holism, the obsession with a (forced) internal coherence of the system. The evolutionist perspective, however, opens spaces to address complexity, contradictions and imbalances, the inevitable unstable compromises between different subsystems and elements that arise in the process. Federalism is always “unstable by design” to quote Jenna Bednar's apt description, marked by its constitutive tension between self-government and coordination: sometimes the Union erodes the sphere of competence of States; on other occasions there is *free-riding* by States infringing federal competences (Weingast & De Figueiredo, 1998). Federalism, as a complex adaptative system, is accompanied by definition by internal conflicts or imbalances between the different institutional orders of which it is comprised. Every federal system, and the Spanish State of Autonomies is no exception, evolves via inevitable tension between processes of centralisation and decentralisation or, to put it another way, by means of trends and counter-trends of federalisation (decentralisation and asymmetry) and defederalisation (recentralisation and resymmetrisation) (Beramendi & Máiz, 2004, Máiz, Caamaño, & Azpitarte, 2010).

Besides, since federalism replaces the hierarchical and vertical principle of sovereignty (both of the federation and of the Member States) with the horizontal, competence-based principle of *shared sovereignty* (Rodden, 2006; Keating, 2012), the pyramidal vision of the distribution of power is replaced by another, networked, which illuminates a system of autonomous spheres en eventual friction, which requires efficient *non-hierarchical coordination* between the constituent parts. And this inevitable “institutional friction” is a major cause of the endogenous changes in complex institutional systems (Steinmo, 2010; Shelef, 2010). All of this means, from an evolutive perspective, that the adaptation of federal systems occurs in various directions and via diverse mechanisms that coexist simultaneously. Therefore, the model of adaptative federalism does not correspond with the ordered and stratified arrangement in layers of a *layer cake*, but with the more chaotic design of a *marble cake*, according to Grodzins's classic metaphor (Grodzins, 1966). The “dual” world of the airtight and hermetic distribution of competences, has never existed, neither is it plausible in the globalised and multicentric context of our times.

The interactive vision, mindful of the variation, selection and reinforcement of evolutionism enables a connection, in the analysis of federations, with the systematic questioning of the assumptions of the first institutionalism of rational choice (objective interests, fixed preferences, neutral institutional incentives), offers encouraging opportunities for the analysis of current federalism. Thus, the institutions do not constitute an exogenous dimension of the process, but rather an *endogenous* one (Rodden, 2006), they constitute an active part of the problem and direct, select and filter in one direction or another. In evolutive logic, atti-

tudes, values, schemas and cognitive frameworks are simultaneously and interactively situated in the minds of individuals and in institutional political structures. This generates both varied replications and reproductions of institutional guidelines, and creative conflicts and contingent innovations of the latter.

This evolutive perspective also has links with recent developments in the school of rational choice and, above all, in discursive neoinstitutionalism, increasingly critical of the vision *homo economicus* individual utilities maximizer. Specifically, the assumptions of the first version of the theory have been abandoned in an admission that preferences are neither coherent, discrete, stable nor equally intense (Steinmo & Lewis, 2007). Moreover, since preferences are formed on the basis of individual and group experience, in every federation, and in plurinational federations in particular: 1) different groups develop diverse sets of preferences in which a certain type of conduct, identity and collective demand predominates; 2) the predominance of certain collective preferences does not preclude the fact that there always exists a considerable variety of differences within one single group; and 3) individuals and groups possess multiple non-transitive preferences and identities, often in conflict with one another. Rather than the assumption of “objective interests” and “crystallised preferences” (Berman, 2001; Weingast & Katznelson, 2005), interests are always interpreted not only on the basis of their belonging to a broader set of beliefs and values, but also as the consequence of conflicting emotions (McDermott, 2004; McDermott, Fowler, & Smirnov, 2008) (resentment, empathy etc.). All of this is of crucial importance to evolutive federalism as it addresses the profound relationship, disregarded in the structural vision, which exists between federal institutions, the production of national collective identities and federal political culture.

The evolutionist vision of federalism possesses an additional virtuality, it closely connects two fields of research that have remained, in general, unrelated one to the other: the comparative study of federations and the constructivist analysis of nationalisms and national identities (Cazorla & Rivera, 2017). In an evolutive vision institutions do not “express” essential and prior collective and national preferences and identities, given in advance, for what is argued is that it is the very institutions, interacting with the actors, that select, filter and, ultimately, produce certain interests (adaptative preferences) and specific identities (overlapping or mutually exclusive, for example) and discourage others (Wimmer, 2013). Furthermore, the collective interests of national groups, their maximisation of opportunities for well-being, are enshrined in the beliefs vis-à-vis the world (nationalism) and in the values underlying what is considered to be “fair treatment”.

Besides, identities are not assigned in advance in history, but are built politically—successfully or not, with one political orientation or another (democratic and pluralist or racist and xenophobic)—via complex processes of coordination. In this evolutionist and constructivist perspective, as we saw in the previous chapter, it is not the nation, previously given in history, which generates, sooner

or later, nationalism as its inevitable political expression. It is nationalism which, in certain favourable contexts and in competition with other ideologies and political forces, constructs and diffuses a hegemonic version of nation (chosen from among the various ones possible) (Máiz, 2003a, 2003b). So, a nation is the indeterminate political process by means of which a group coordinates a set of beliefs with regard to its own cultural identity and whose representatives demand their own State—independent or federated—in order to defend their interests (Laitin, 2007). National cultures are important because they provide symbolic resources that facilitate coordination, determine interests, values and sympathies of individuals and groups, but *are always contested and plural*. It is necessary to distinguish, too, between 1) ethnicity, culture or collective identity, as the lens through which they are read and interpreted politically, 2) the economic interest of a group in a particular context. Ethnic-cultural and national identity provide a primary reduction of uncertainty, selected evolutionarily (Bar-kov, Cosmides, & Tooby, 1992), which facilitates orientation in the complexity of the social world. In so doing it exacerbates the *us/them, own/other* differences and emphasizes the dangers of exploitation, domination, injustice, domination, but does not as a matter of principle lead to secession as the only solution. There are no national interests par excellence, nor a political preference inherent to national identity: nationalism evolves ideologically in very diverse fashion driven by competition and internal and external tensions (Shelef, 2010). In plurinational States the political demands of internal nations are the contingent result of not only 1) identity-based construction of nations and 2) the economic, political and cultural interests of different communities, but of the interactive process between: 3) institutional arrangements (territorial model of State), 4) the policies (fiscal, linguistic, etc.) of the central government, and 3) the discursive strategies and *framing* of the competing leaders and parties (Hale, 2008; Máiz, 2012).

For this very reason, the conception of federations as contexts of dynamic accommodation, as *complex and adaptative political systems*, underlines not only the flexible process of experimentation and interaction between environment and actors. Adaptative federalism maintains that federal arrangements, as institutional realities, evolve when recognised and accepted by citizens (they only exist when there is a shared belief in their existence) and linguistically constituted. This suggests the relevance of federal political culture (in other words, interpretative support both cognitive and attitudinal) and not only of institutional designs (Máiz, 2013). Above all, what is required is federal *thinking*, a *supportive political culture*, that is, the activation of federal values and attitudes in the population, absence of which jeopardises, without a doubt, any federation. But the adaptative perspective draws attention to a deeper attitudinal dimension; namely: the political production of confidence that allows for relations of non-instrumental reciprocity (*strong reciprocity*), the development of social preferences and the minimal quantities of conditional altruism necessary for loyal cooperation between groups that does not depend exclusively on the ca-

capacity for sanction and retaliation (Sober & Wilson, 1998; Bowles & Gintis, 2008).

But in addition, the use of ideas conditions the process of evolutive change of institutional arrangements. In other words, on the one hand the content of a cognitive structure (national identity, grievance) determines the response of actors in a certain context of decision and, on the other, that cognitive structure is not endogenous and wholly traceable to the objective and material features of the context (economic interests) (Jacobs, 2015). And in a dual sense. On one side, ideas conceived evolutively as a discourse of coordination between different actors and multilevel scenarios, electoral or of public policies (Schmidt, 2011). On the other, and above all, ideas understood as creative solution to problems posed by the system (Lieberman, 2011). As occurs with *mutations* in biology, ideas provide a fundamental dimension of interaction between actors and institutions: beyond duality they suggest the structure/action *dualism*, the questioning of the system, and the postulation of alternatives. In an adaptative perspective, of endogenous change and variation, ideas (in our case alternative federal arrangements or designs) that are rejected at a given time remain available, if possessed of sufficient organisational support, as possible future courses of action. The beliefs and preferences induced are not fixed; they change as a result of the interaction between central government and the governments of the member states of the federation. Thus, are opened new windows of political opportunity so that new ideas can offer new “credible commitments” in the processes of selection of institutions arising from unprecedented critical circumstances (Weingast & Katznelson, 2005; Steinmo & Lewis, 2012).

### 3. Nationalism and Independence in Catalonia

With this evolutive vision of federalism new avenues open up in order to analyse the “problem of Catalonia” and its possible institutional solutions. The general assumption, in political and media discourse, namely, that “being in favour of the independence process”, “wanting to separate from Spain” and “being nationalist” constitute a single argument and mean exactly the same, has served to simplify and conceal a debate that is very complex, plural and full of nuances. Is being in favour of the independence process the same as proposing a territorial solution to the conflict which leaves Catalonia outside the Spanish State? Is secession the only possible answer? The results of our research clearly indicate the contrary.

While most Catalans (49.5 percent)<sup>2</sup> explicitly declare themselves in favour of the independence process, only just over 30 percent support a territorial solution envisaging a Catalonia actually independent of the Spanish State. And this apparent contradiction, which politicians and the media tend to ignore, needs to be explained by means of more profound and nuanced reasoning and analysis which we will attempt to provide here.

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<sup>2</sup>See total column results Table 3.

The fact that only 57.9 percent of the Catalans in favour of the independence process think that the best territorial solution for Catalonia is its independence from the Spanish State begs two questions (**Table 1**). The first: what is the territorial solution favoured by Catalans who are in favour of the *process* but do not want a territorial solution that leaves them outside the Spanish State? The second: what is the profile of those citizens who, while in favour of the *process*, have such different aspirations?

The citizens themselves answer the first question directly, as we can see in **Table 2**. The fact is that the federal model would satisfy 23.6 percent of those Catalans who are in favour of the independence process; and another 15.1 percent aspire to an autonomous model with more competences or with a tax status similar to the Basque Country or Navarra (**Table 2**).

In other words, almost 40 percent of the Catalans who declare themselves in favour of the independence process aspire to a territorial solution that fits into the concept of adaptative federalism—plurinational, non-cooperative, non-centralised, asymmetrical—that we summarised in the first section. It would appear, then, at first, that there is room for a plural and creative debate via which to address the question of Catalan independence.

However, politics are important, and can open or close doors. Political actors, the media and society itself, both Catalan and Spanish, have tended to construct the idea of a certain homogeneity of nationalism based on ethnicity-identity and considerable fragmentation of the territorial solution based on radical taxonomical diversity of the signifiers “autonomy”, “federalism”, “quota”, “agreement”, etc., and the exacerbation of the differences between the meanings corresponding to these signifiers. However, in our interpretation, clearly constructivist and evolutive, both the supposed homogeneity of nationalism and the Catalan fragmentation vis-à-vis the territorial solution are the contingent products of political-electoral competition and are actively constructed from frameworks that depending on the competition homogenise or fragment these signifiers.

In the descriptive analysis of the results of our research two fundamental factors are evident: 1) That the citizens of Catalonia have alternative, different and plural options when it comes to addressing the Catalan territorial conflict. 2) That those differences also exist among those who are in favour of the independence process and that, in this case, they are related to four factors: 1) seniority (time) in separatist sentiment, 2) the action of political leaders, 3) the relationship with parties and 4) the campaign themes. Let us consider these in greater detail.

#### 4. Plurality of Options

Indeed, the results show us, categorically, that the Catalans are very plural when speaking of the most suitable political-territorial solution for Catalonia. There are those who wish to construct a Catalan State independent of the Spanish State (see first row **Table 1**), those who wish to remain in Spain within the current

**Table 1.** Type of political-territorial solution most suitable for Catalonia.

	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Its independence from the Spanish State</b>	411	29.4
<b>Its permanence within the State of Autonomies</b>	229	16.3
<b>Its permanence within the Spanish federal State</b>	245	17.5
<b>Its permanence within a federal State that recognises Catalonia as a nation</b>	108	7.7
<b>Its permanence within the State of Autonomies, but with a higher level of competences</b>	148	10.6
<b>Its permanence within the State of Autonomies, but with a similar tax status to the Basque Country and Navarra</b>	155	11.0
<b>Its permanence within a centralised State</b>	38	2.7
<b>DK/NA</b>	67	4.8
<b>Total</b>	1399	100.0

Source: own figures based on the *Post-electoral Study Autonomous Elections in Catalonia 2015*.

**Table 2.** Type of political-territorial solution most suitable for Catalonia according to stance with regard to the independence process.

	In favour	Against	DK/NA	Total
<b>Its independence from the Spanish State</b>	57.9	0.8	5.5	29.4
<b>Its permanence within the State of Autonomies</b>	0.9	35.6	4.4	16.4
<b>Its permanence within the Spanish federal State</b>	12.3	22.6	23.1	17.5
<b>Its permanence within a federal State that recognises Catalonia as a nation</b>	11.3	3.6	8.8	7.7
<b>Its permanence within the State of Autonomies, but with a higher level of competences</b>	5.5	15.7	14.3	10.6
<b>Its permanence within the State of Autonomies, but with a similar tax status to the Basque Country and Navarra</b>	8.7	11.4	26.4	11.0
<b>Its permanence within a centralised State</b>	0.3	5.4	2.2	2.6
<b>DK/NA</b>	3.2	5.0	15.4	4.8
<b>Total</b>	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: own figures based on the *Post-electoral Study Autonomous Elections in Catalonia 2015*.

autonomous model (see second row **Table 1**), and others, who want to remain in Spain but with changes of varying degree (see rows 3 - 6 **Table 1**). These three basic groups are not politically or socially homogenous, but it is true that some have internally constructed their political homogeneity better than others.

**Table 3** shows that while practically all the first group (secession) is in favour of independence process, practically all the second is against (permanence in the State of Autonomies). These are the two antagonistic stances, that of rupture and that of immobilism; but ultimately, these two groups have something in com-

mon, which politically is very important. Namely: they have constructed sufficiently solid frames of interpretation (*frames*) and have made confrontation and polarisation the axes of their political action, the appeal and capacity to mobilise of which is based upon their own inflexibility.

The alternative options, which form the third group, are however more plural. Some express their desire for “autonomy with greater competences”, others demand “autonomy with a tax status similar to the Basque Country or Navarra”, and others prefer to speak directly of a “federal State”. What these three options have in common is that most of the Catalans who favour them are against the independence process (although evidently there are differences between the majorities). There remains however a fourth option within this third group, formed by those wanting “a federal State that recognises Catalonia as a nation” but within Spain. Those subscribing to this option are, by a vast majority, in favour of the independence *process*, but seek a territorial solution that would enable Catalonia to continue *within* Spain.

In this light, reducing the debate to the continuism or rupture, autonomy or independence dichotomy, is but evidence of the failure of one policy and set of political actors and the correlative triumph of others, because it is clear that in the population there is a greater plurality than the dominant options being offered by political parties and leaders, and a greater complexity than that which today can be encompassed and channelled by a highly polarised political competition.

This third group is a heterogeneous group, as we shall see now from its profiles, but above all, it is the group that as well as representing the enormous diversity of plural societies, would decide the result in a hypothetical referendum. The problem is that this diverse, heterogeneous and complex group, far from finding a formula of political *integration* that merges that complexity, is forced to choose, because of its dispersion, between immobilism and separatism, because these are the hegemonic stances that have constructed a political-discursive framework that conforms to the competition and the strategy of the dominant nationalist political actors in Catalonia and Spain (**Table 4**).

**Table 3.** Stance with regard to the independence process according to type of political-territorial solution most suitable for Catalonia (all data in percentage).

	Its independence from the Spanish State	Its permanence within the State of Autonomies	Its permanence within the Spanish federal State	Its permanence within a federal State that recognises Catalonia as a nation	Its permanence within the State of Autonomies, but with a higher level of competences	Its permanence within the State of Autonomies, but with a similar tax status to the Basque Country and Navarra	Its permanence within a centralised State	DK/NA	Total
<b>In favour</b>	9.6	2.6	34.7	72.2	25.7	39.0	5.4	32.8	49.5
<b>Against</b>	1.2	95.6	56.7	20.4	65.5	45.5	89.2	46.3	44.0
<b>DK/NA</b>	1.2	1.7	8.6	7.4	8.8	15.6	5.4	20.9	6.5
<b>Total</b>	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: own figures based on the *Post-electoral Study Autonomous Elections in Catalonia* 2015.

**Table 4.** Profiles of the population groups based on the type of political-territorial solution most suitable for Catalonia (all data in percentage).

	Its independence from the Spanish State (29.4)	Its permanence within the State of Autonomies (16.3)	Its permanence within the State but with some changes (46.8)
<b>Gender</b>	Female (51.2 )	Female (65.9)	Male (54.3)
<b>Age group</b>	30 to 49 (43.4)	30 to 49 (40.3)	30 to 49 years (39.7)
<b>Level of education</b>	Higher education (40.2)	Primary Education (26.5)	Higher education (34.4)
<b>Occupation</b>	Employed (60.1)	Employed (35.9)	Employed (48.2)
<b>Level of income</b>	From 1801 to 2400 (16.8)	From 1201 to 1800 (18.7)	From 1201 to 1800 (15.2)
<b>Vote in 2015</b>	Junts pel Sí (76.8)	Ciutadans (41.0)	Junts pel Sí (29.5)

Source: own figures based on the *Post-electoral Study Autonomous Elections in Catalonia* 2015.

## 5. The Option in Favour of the *Process*

The effect of this bipolarisation we have indicated has been two-fold: it has resulted in the growth of the pro-independence movement in recent years in Catalonia and has exacerbated Spanish nationalism and the negative attitude towards Catalonia in the rest of Spain, and more specifically in more centralist territories<sup>3</sup>. But neither do all these Catalans, who amidst this immobilism-separatism polarisation have lent their support to the independence process, share a homogenous view of the territorial solution, let alone one that coincides with the stance of the traditional advocates of independence. As we have pointed out, four factors, at least, are related to the position of citizens with regard to the territorial solution they prefer: the seniority (time) in separatist sentiment; the action of political leaders; the relationship with the parties and the themes of the campaign. Let us analyse these in greater detail.

### 5.1. Time and Separatist Sentiment

The solidity of identity-secessionism depends upon how long a person has supported the secessionist cause. Indeed, the length of time during which Catalan citizens have felt themselves to be pro-independence is a key variable in order to understand their interpretation of this sentiment, to the degree that there appears to exist one “essential” kind of independentism and another “strategic” independentism, both equally substantive (it is not a question of intensity, there is no “light independentism”), but fastened to different anchors, therefore, varyingly open to dialogue and agreement.

The difference is so extreme that while 78.5 percent of the traditional supporters of independence do indeed pursue the separatist solution, in the case of the

<sup>3</sup>One only needs to look at the CEO data of percentage “in favour” of those who want Catalonia to become an independent State (all data in percentage). December 2014—44.5; February 2015—44.1; June 2015—42.9; October 2015—46.7; November 2015—46.6; 1st wave 2016 (22 February-8 March)—45.3; 2nd wave 2016 (22 June-8 July)—47.7.

new advocates, who have defended independence for only a year, this percentage falls to only 13 percent. **Table 5** shows, moreover, the absolute linearity between the point at which citizens identified themselves as pro-independence and their desire to secede from the Spanish State.

Barely 20 percent of traditional pro-independence Catalans seek a territorial solution that involves remaining within the Spanish State. But this figure rises to almost 40 percent when we refer to those who describe themselves as pro-independence for over 5 years (**Table 5**); increases to 45 percent for those who have advocated independence since only five years ago; and it climbs to 70 percent for those who have done so for three years and to nearly 80 percent for those who have been pro-independence for only a year.

Clearly, the amount of time spent campaigning for independence is a fundamental variable to define a solution to the *process*, but it is also true that the leaderships of the political organisations that support independence and articulate the interpretative frameworks from which the narrative is constructed, are formed in the main by long-time advocates of independence.

And it goes without saying that the relationship between these two variables and nationalist identity is clear. This can be verified without resorting to any sophisticated tests; one need only look at the position on the nationalist scale of each of these groups, as is shown in **Table 6**.

## 5.2. The Leaders

With regard to this question it is necessary to comment upon some arguments that are fundamental in order to understand the relationship between leaders

**Table 5.** Type of political-territorial solution most suitable for Catalonia according to length of time supporting independence (all data in percentage).

	Always	Over five years	For five years	For three years	For a year	DK/NA	Total
Its independence from the Spanish State	78.5	61.7	51.6	23.4	13.0	10.0	57.9
Its permanence within the State of Autonomies	0.0		0.0	3.1		8.0	0.9
Its permanence within the Spanish federal State	5.0	0.0	15.6	20.3	39.1	36.0	12.3
Its permanence within a federal State that recognises Catalonia as a nation	7.5	27.7	14.5	18.8		2.0	11.1
Its permanence within the State of Autonomies, but with a higher level of competences	3.1	4.3	0.5	15.6	17.4	22.0	5.5
Its permanence within the State of Autonomies, but with a similar tax status to the Basque Country and Navarra	5.0		12.9	14.1	21.7	12.0	8.7
Its permanence within a centralised State		4.3					0.3
DK/NA	0.9	2.1	4.8	4.7	8.7	10.0	3.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: own figures based on the *Post-electoral Study Autonomous Elections in Catalonia* 2015.

**Table 6.** Average of nationalist sentiment according to length of time feeling pro independence.

	Average	Standard deviation
Always	8.48	2.063
For over five years	8.63	1.169
For five years	7.76	1.614
For three years	6.75	2.271
For a year	6.43	2.366
DK/NA	5.05	2.455
Total	7.85	2.71

Source: own figures based on the *Post-electoral Study Autonomous Elections in Catalonia* 2015.

and citizens, vis-à-vis the territorial solution to the problem of Catalonia. The first of these has to do with the fact that while the leaders of the Catalan parties exercise their leadership from a purely Catalan point of view, the leaders of the parties operating at a State level exercise their leadership from both a Spanish and a Catalan perspective; and this means that the construction of their messages is directed at different recipients. A Catalan leader issues messages first and foremost for Catalans; a leader of a party operating throughout the State, even if it is Catalan, issues messages for Catalans and for citizens in the rest of Spain. And this means that the Spain–Catalonia polarity strategically constitutes a framework of competition which favours, within Catalonia, the Catalan parties and leaders, who exercise their leadership and issue their messages from an exclusively Catalan angle. Obviously, the Spanish parties that favour this strategic framework of competition do so because they understand that the political benefits they obtain in the rest of the Spanish territory compensate for their deficit in Catalonia, but perhaps are not so aware that, as they reinforce that strategic framework, they encourage and strengthen certain stances taken by citizens regarding the territorial solution.

A second argument related to the conclusions indicated previously refers to the consistency of the change of position of citizens in relation to the change of position of leaders. In this sense, citizens that were closer to Artur Mas<sup>4</sup> than to other nationalist leaders and declared themselves to be pro-independence had been so for a very short time. In other words, they changed their stance when their leader changed his. But it is also true that this change is not endorsed by an option in favour of a territorial solution beyond the Spanish State, to the extent that Catalan citizens who fulfill the above conditions (affinity with Artur Mas and recently pro-independence) separating from the Spanish State. Put another way, citizens are mature and politically sophisticated to the degree of also behaving in a strategic-instrumental manner in following leaders.

<sup>4</sup>More information about Catalan and Spanish political parties and leaders in **Table A1**, appendix.

### 5.3. The Relationship with Parties

The third factor we have indicated, the relationship with parties, does not refer in an academic sense to *identification* with parties but to the manner in which voters have followed the political parties in the construction of the *process* and have moved from one leader to another precisely on account of the double reading (election-plebiscite) these elections offered. For this reason, we have chosen for this part of the work the variable *vote as remembered* and not the variable *affinity*.

In **Table 7** it is abundantly clear that Junts pel Sí (JxSí) and Candidatura d'Unitat Popular (CUP) options represent practically all the citizens who want a territorial solution placing Catalonia outside the Spanish State. However, one observes that even in these electoral options, the percentage of citizens opting for secession does not exceed 60 percent and over 35 percent in both cases aspire to alternative solutions to separation *tout court*.

The remaining party options have no separatist component, not even CatSíQueEsPot (CSQEP), but the plurality of options with regard to the territorial solution continues to be the element that defines all of these parties. Only in the case of the Partido Popular (PP) is the clear majority option that of remaining within the State of Autonomies (53.8 percent), although here too, indeed, it is worth noting that 25 percent of citizens would prefer a federal model.

**Table 7.** Type of political-territorial solution most suitable for Catalonia on the basis of the vote in 2015 (all data in percentage).

	JxSí	C's	PSC	PP	CUP	CSQEP	UDC	Other	DK/NA	Total
Its independence from the Spanish State	60.0		0.8		60.2	1.6			20.2	31.0
Its permanence within the State of Autonomies	1.0	38.5	27.9	53.8		19.8		50.0	15.6	15.8
Its permanence within the Spanish federal State	9.3	15.8	25.6	24.6	12.4	44.4	52.9		14.7	17.4
Its permanence within a federal State that recognises Catalonia as a nation	11.6	1.8	3.1		15.0	2.4	5.9	50.0	11.0	7.9
Its permanence within the State of Autonomies, but with a higher level of autonomy	4.1	17.6	21.7	9.2	5.3	7.9	17.6		17.4	10.1
Its permanence within the State of Autonomies, but with a similar tax status to the Basque Country and Navarra	9.3	11.3	14.7	1.5	2.7	18.3	23.5		12.8	10.5
Its permanence within a centralised State		9.0	1.6	6.2	1.8	1.6			3.7	2.6
DK/NA	4.8	5.9	4.7	4.6	2.7	4.0			4.6	4.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: own figures based on the *Post-electoral Study Autonomous Elections in Catalonia 2015*.

The case of those that vote Ciutadans (C's), a party that flies the centralist flag and represents the majority of Catalans who would like to return to a centralised State, though these make up only 10 percent of all its voters, is evidence of the political complexity of de Catalonia and the need for both new parties and old to rethink their positions. Certainly, almost half the Ciutadans voters seek a territorial solution that leaves them as they are, and some, a minority, suggest a return to a centralised model. Belonging to this third heterogeneous group, who desires more flexible federal solutions than the extreme ones offered by the current political scenario (secession or recentralised State of Autonomies).

#### 5.4. The Issues: Mistreatment and Economic Interests

Citizens who are in favour of the independence process and indeed opt for separation, cite as a fundamental reason for their stance “the Spanish State’s mistreatment of Catalonia”. But what is important is not the reason itself, what is important is that the reason is not discriminante but that it is common to all Catalans who are in favour of the *process*, regardless of whether they opt for the separatist territorial solution or for any other. The fact is that the idea of mistreatment has spread among Catalans who are in favour of the *process* and we can only understand the stance of these citizens if we understand their motives.

The idea of mistreatment is an idea that is as politically constructed as any other of the ideas that it framed political competition, but by the same token as *real* and mobilising as any other of the elements that impact upon competition. And it is so widespread that it is common to all the alternative territorial options to immobilism.

Constructivist logic has taught us to understand that in this age of generalised information and communication, structural anchors have given way to the political and endogenous construction of preferences. In the sphere under consideration, this has been translated into a de-essentialisation, strictly speaking, a *de-ethnification* of nationalist politics. To the extent that, in the absence of significant socio-demographic differences in the profiles of citizens, the differences are very consistent when it is a question of constructing and expressing their political preferences.

The second reason cited by Catalans for being in favour of the *process* is the belief that the economic future of Catalonia is better outside Spain. The fact that these are the first two reasons both for those who indeed seek separation from the Spanish State, and for the groups that desire an alternative solution to the current one but within Spain, demonstrates two things: the first, that strategic issues have prevailed over essentialist and ethnic-cultural ones in the grounds for forming a decision; the second, that these strategic grounds (issues) generate frameworks common to a huge majority of the people of Catalonia which transcends the schism nationalists-non- nationalists or even that of left-right.

**Table 8** shows clearly how the idea of mistreatment and that of a better future outside Spain have prevailed over traditional reasons such as historical grounds,

anti-Spanish sentiment or even the right to decide. The real reasons are now practical and strategic, and do not oblige citizens to adopt essentialist stances, which allows for the creation of common frameworks from which nobody needs to feel excluded. And for this reason, options are so heterogeneous even among those who votes for the same political party; and for this reason, it is also possible to create and mobilise that space of national community between voters of such different political options.

**Table 8.** Grounds in favour of the independence process according to the type of political-territorial solution (all data in percentage).

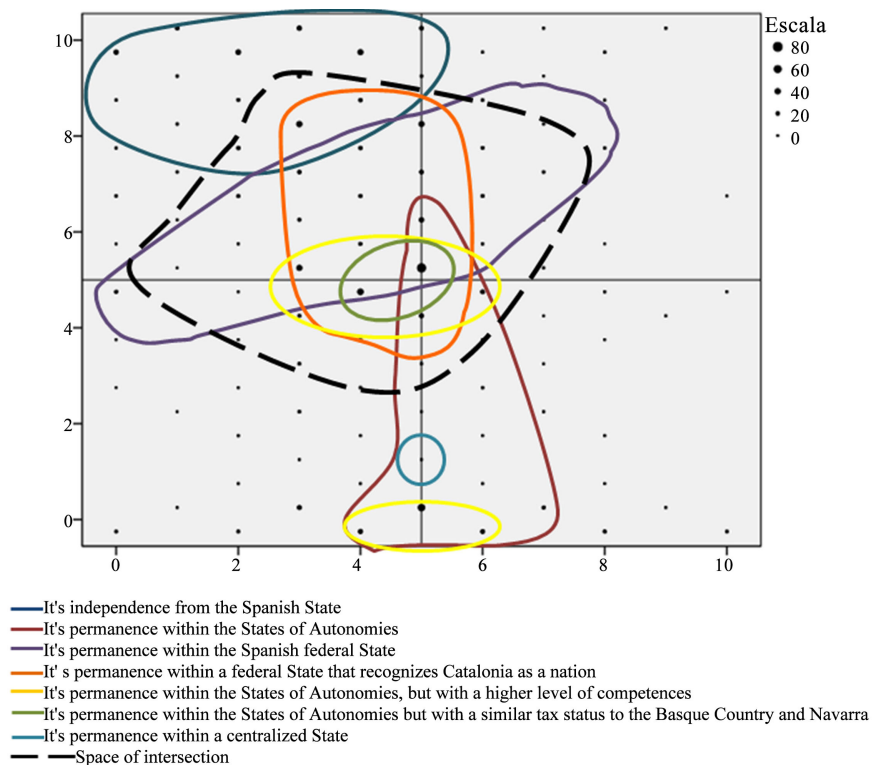
	Its independence from the Spanish State	Its permanence within the State of Autonomies	Its permanence within the Spanish federal State	Its permanence within a federal State that recognises Catalonia as a nation	Its permanence within the State of Autonomies, but with a higher level of competences	Its permanence within the State of Autonomies, but with a similar tax status to the Basque Country and Navarra	Its permanence within a centralised State	DK/NA	Total
Because I believe Catalonia to be a nation	39.4		14.1	23.1	13.2	13.3		31.8	30.1
Because I do not feel Spanish	25.4		0.0	9.1	0.0	1.7			15.9
Because I believe that Catalonia has not been treated appropriately by the Government of Spain in recent years	69.1	28.6	44.7	76.9	67.6	63.3		56.5	65.4
Because I want Catalan society to have the right to decide	34.2	0.0	22.4	34.6	18.4	23.3		18.2	30.1
Because there are historical grounds that support it	26.2	42.9	10.6	16.9	10.8	11.7	100.0	9.1	21.0
Because I think that the economic future of Catalonia and of Catalan society would be better outside Spain	48.4	71.4	27.1	52.6	63.2	56.7		9.1	46.6
Others	5.7		7.1	3.8		1.7		13.6	5.2
DK/NA			4.7						0.6

Source: own figures based on the *Post-electoral Study Autonomous Elections in Catalonia 2015*.

## 6. Spaces, Positions and Alternatives

These four elements, about which we have spoken, functioning together in political competition, have enabled the creation of that space of strategic *national community* which, as we have seen in the diverse spatial representation of previous chapters, has moved Catalan citizens to positions further to the left and more nationalist than those they previously occupied. Nonetheless, those positions, having no essentialist character, give rise to diverse territorial options and create a common, if heterogeneous space, in which alternative options to separatism and immobilism can move.

**Figure 1** shows us the situation of Catalan citizens on the identity-based and ideological axes and the relationship between these spaces and the territorial options preferred by each group. It is immediately clear that there are two options that have very closed and defined spaces, whilst the alternative options to separatism and immobilism occupy a relatively broad common space. This idea that is presented to us throughout the work leads us to contemplate the eventual possibility of a federal solution capable of giving voice to a plural community obliged to choose between extreme or static hegemonic positions. And it is precisely in that complex, heterogeneous, dynamic space where adaptative federalism would show its capacity to satisfy the aspirations of much of the population.



**Figure 1.** Territorial solutions based on the two-dimensional space: the identity-based axe (axe Y) and ideological axe (axe X). Source: own figures based on the Post-electoral Study Autonomous Elections in Catalonia 2015.

Finally, we shall see via multivariant models, what are the reasons or grounds that lead citizens to favour one or other type of political-territorial solution, using various models of logistic regression (see **Table 9** and **Table 10**)<sup>5</sup>.

**Table 9.** Logistic regressions according to type of political-territorial solution.

	Independence from the Spanish State	Autonomous solution	Federal solution
Age	−0.020** (0.008)		
Gender		−1.625*** (0.371)	1.721*** (0.385)
Income level		−0.223* (0.116)	
Level of education		−0.562*** (0.125)	0.524*** (0.125)
Remunerated assets		0.846* (0.375)	−1.025** (0.362)
Non-remunerated assets		1.659** (0.624)	−3.533*** (0.829)
Affinity with PP			2.089** (0.749)
Affinity with PSOE		1.438*** (0.434)	−1.492*** (0.442)
Affinity with PODEMOS			−1.203* (0.618)
Affinity with CUP	1.912** (0.650)		
Vote as remembered JxSí	1.004** (0.355)		
As Spanish as Catalan			1.385** (0.462)
More Catalan than Spanish			2.162*** (0.589)
Only Catalan	1.280*** (0.263)		
Because it is an issue that breaks the consensus and harmony existing in Spain		0.702* (0.362)	−0.772* (0.356)
Rating of handling of independence process by Artur Mas	0.228*** (0.065)		
Rating of handling of independence process by Oriol Junqueras			−0.186* (0.084)
Rating of position vis-à-vis independence process of Pedro Sánchez	−0.240*** (0.067)		
Self-positioning on the nationalist scale	0.202** (0.066)		
Self-positioning on the ideological scale	−0.229** (0.073)		−0.362** (0.137)
Length of time considering oneself pro-independence	0.399*** (0.104)		
Rating Artur Mas		−0.471*** (0.118)	
Rating Oriol Junqueras		0.481*** (0.120)	
Rating Lluís Rabell		−0.206* (0.103)	0.283** (0.102)
Rating Mariano Rajoy		0.289*** (0.085)	−0.312*** (0.090)
Rating Pedro Sánchez		−0.466*** (0.119)	0.389*** (0.108)
Rating Pablo Iglesias		0.184* (0.082)	−0.231** (0.098)
Rating Albert Rivera		0.377*** (0.099)	−0.328*** (0.097)
Constant	−3.086*** (0.784)	2.976*** (0.870)	−1.386 (1.079)
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.464	0.450	0.441
−2log -likelihood	426,450	251,882	261,642

Source: own figures based on the *Post-electoral Study Autonomous Elections in Catalonia* 2015.

<sup>5</sup>Preference was given to the construction of generalised linear models with logit linking function.

**Table 10.** Logistic regression political solution different from independence of those in favour of the independence process.

	Solution
Age	0.048*** (0.011)
Level of education	0.364*** (0.104)
Non-remunerated assets	1.111** (0.501)
Affinity with PODEMOS	1.383* (0.734)
As Spanish as Catalan	3.427*** (0.547)
More Catalan than Spanish	1.726*** (0.343)
Because I think that Catalonia has not been treated appropriately by the Government of Spain in recent years	0.629* (0.323)
Rating of position vis-à-vis independence process of Government of Spain	0.384* (0.154)
Rating of position vis-à-vis independence process of Pedro Sánchez	0.351*** (0.095)
Rating of position vis-à-vis independence process of Pablo Iglesias	-0.311*** (0.096)
Self-positioning on nationalist scale	-0.361*** (0.087)
Rating Artur Mas	-0.223** (0.074)
Rating Miquel Iceta	0.209* (0.095)
Rating Mariano Rajoy	-0.554*** (0.139)
Rating Albert Rivera	0.326*** (0.097)
Constant	-3.527** (1.252)
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.594
-2log -likelihood	292,570

Source: own figures based on the *Post-electoral Study Autonomous Elections in Catalonia* 2015.

An initial approach worked with the set of samples and defined the dependent variables based on the central question about which this article revolves, that is, what is the type of political-territorial solution that Catalans want for Catalonia. This question led to the creation of three dependable variants explanation of which we aim to explore and as has been demonstrated above is above all else plural: the option of those who prefer the independence of Catalonia from the Spanish State, the option that has been defined as “autonomist” and which reflects the preferences of those who favour maintenance of the *status quo*, or maintenance of the State of Autonomies with certain modifications and, finally, the federal option<sup>6</sup>. Initially considered in the three models as independent variables were a number of factors: 1) variables related to identification or relation

<sup>6</sup>The construction of these three dependent variables arises from the contrast, via the previous descriptive analysis, of the opportunity collectively to address in the options initially reflected in the original question. So that the “autonomist” option includes the three initial options of: “permanence within the State of Autonomies”, “permanence within the State of Autonomies but with an increased level of competences” and “permanence within the State of Autonomies but with a tax status similar to the Basque Country and Navarra”. The “federal” option includes the following options: “permanence within a Spanish federal State” and “permanence within a federal State that recognises Catalonia as a nation”. In such a manner that the construction of this category makes it possible to isolate voters who favour these three options and build on the basis of the original variable, three *dummy* variables.

with parties, represented via affinity with different parties or political formations; 2) leadership variables, both those related to leadership in the *process* and to the political leadership of the representatives of the different parties; 3) variables that reflect the impact of the two major political *cleavages* upon which the political space has been constructed—ideology and identity—<sup>7</sup>, 4) variables referring to the *process* and therefore, to the central theme about which these elections—interpreted as a plebiscite—in have revolved, and finally, 5) sociodemographic variables<sup>8</sup>.

Broadly speaking and before addressing in greater detail the explanation of the three models presented below, we should mention that the levels of explanation are more than acceptable<sup>9</sup>—around 50 percent of explanation of the variability of the dependent variable—, bearing in mind the complexity of the issue in question, and the plurality of electorates that advocate different solutions, especially in the case of the autonomist solution and the federal solution. And we should highlight the crux of this question, the sobriety and greater homogeneity presented by the model constructed for the pro-independence option compared with the two other models presented, a homogeneity that, as illustrated in the earlier descriptive analysis, reveals certain nuances.

As has been mentioned, the model that serves to explain the voters' choice of the pro-independence option for Catalonia in relation to the Spanish State fundamentally revolves around three questions: 1) identity represented via the importance of Catalan sentiment, self-positioning on the identity-based scale and the length of time during which the voter has felt pro independence; 2) the relationship with political groups or parties, via affinity and *vote as remembered* to the CUP and JxSí, respectively, as was reflected at a descriptive level and 3) the valuation of leaders in the context of the *process*, specifically the valuation of Artur Mas and the valuation of Pedro Sánchez. All the variables mentioned, except the position of the Socialist leader, contribute positively towards increasing the probability of opting for Independence as the most suitable political-territorial solution, leading to the definition of a very specific group of voters, linked on the basis of identity and politically speaking to the Catalan question and to the *process*.

Compared with this model, those drawn for the autonomist and federal option, are less frugal and therefore more disperse in explanatory terms. In both cases, the question of leadership assumes a fundamental role, along with identification with political parties operating at State level and consideration of the independence process as a clear line of fracture of the existing consensus and

<sup>7</sup>The importance of both leadership and of cleavages in these elections was addressed recently and in detail by other researchers to whom we refer (Jaráiz, 2017; Pereira, 2017).

<sup>8</sup>Tables 9 y 10 show the adjusted models and therefore, only the variables that have proven statistically significant for each case. The data reflects the coefficients of logistic regression. In brackets are the standard errors. Significant variables are only reflected in some models. \*p < 0.05, \*\* p < 0.01, \*\*\*p < 0.001.

<sup>9</sup>The global explanation values of the variability of each of the dependent variables are reflected in Table 9, being the pseudo R<sup>2</sup>, Nagelkerke's, in the three cases.

harmony in the Spanish State. With regard to identity and although this is absent in the case of the model contemplated for the autonomist option, it acquires a certain relevance in the case of the federal question, through a more moderate sentiment in terms of identity than that observed in the first model<sup>10</sup>. We should also underline the relevance in both models of sociodemographic variables, a fact absent in the previous model and revelatory of the dispersion and complexity of the electoral corpus that favours both options, autonomist and federal, as political-territorial solutions for the future of Catalonia and of Spain. A complexity that as we have already mentioned is also of a political nature and which is rendered patent by the relevance of the different political sympathies in both models, where there appears to be a confluence of voters and/or sympathisers from both left- and right-wing formations, with a common nexus, their State-wide presence.

A final question of considerable relevance with regard to the information provided by these two models—autonomist and federal—is the fact that, as one can clearly observe, in the results presented, the elements that are significant whilst practically the same in both, evince inverse relationships with the independent variables (see sign of the coefficients in **Table 9**). This contrast would be explained not only by the differential fact marked in each case by the electorates supporting both political-territorial options but, and above all, by the different construction of signifiers undertaken by the different political options, both parties and leaders, giving rise to differentiated positions of meaning and discursive spaces vis-à-vis the issue of identity. These different positions lead, to give an example, to party identification with the PP being significant in positive terms to explain the federal option and not being significant for explanation of the autonomist option. The latter includes not only the autonomist option of continuation of the *status quo*, but also the option that advocates autonomy with an improved tax status, which would result in this corpus of voters feeling closer to the unqualified federal option than to the autonomist option qualified in terms of more nationalism. So, it is not only the signifiers “federal” and “autonomous” which feature in a constructed contradiction, but also and above all, the adjectival use of these signifiers that have been employed with “issues” in the competition itself.

The models confirm, therefore, the questions posed at a descriptive level: the plurality of options, especially in the case of the autonomist and the federal, the importance of leaderships and their messages in the construction of the process, the relevance established by the relationship with the parties and finally the weight of the issues, in this case represented by the grounds that structure the positions against and in favour of the *process*.

But if one question assumes particular relevance throughout this analysis, as was noted earlier, it is the following: what explains the fact that, around 49.5

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<sup>10</sup>This question is reflected in the statistical importance of the options of Moreno’s question: as Spanish as Catalan and more Catalan than Spanish.

percent of voters declare themselves to be in favour of the independence process, and of these, only 57.9 percent advocate independence as a political-territorial solution for Catalonia? To provide as precise as possible an answer to this question, and though some questions have already been presented in a previous descriptive analysis, a final logistic regression model was built that attempts to define what are the elements that unite this group of the electorate (**Table 10**). In this model, the dependent variable is, therefore, the option in favour of a political-territorial solution different from independence, following filtering of those voters who previously declared themselves to be in favour of independence process<sup>11</sup>. In other words, what we are attempting to analyse are the factors which explain that some Catalans who claim to be in favour of the *process*, seek a territorial solution that does not separate them from Spain.

With a global explanation level of 59.4 percent, this position again revolves around the declared identity and the position of the leaders and, in this case, of the Government of Spain too with regard to the independence process. These are voters that, while they maintain the discourse of mistreatment or inadequate treatment of Catalonia by the Government of Spain, do not exhibit a clearly pro-independence identity, though they reveal themselves to be pro-Catalan. Pedro Sánchez's ratings during this *process* and the ratings as leader of Miquel Iceta and Albert Rivera contribute to increase the level of explanation and are, therefore, a reflection of the political plurality referred to earlier.

In conclusion, we can say that behind the decision to opt for one or other future political-territorial solution for Spain and Catalonia lie several fundamental factors: the issue of identity to a greater or lesser degree according to the type of self-government solution in question; the importance of the different leaders in the *process*, differentiating between the leaders of national and regional parties; and, finally, affinity or relationship with parties, which ultimately explains the constructive, endogenously political nature of the construction of the prior preferences of voters and their attitudes towards various issues. Consequently, and though these are internally plural groups, elements exist that allow for the construction of a common space, which leave them open to being interpreted collectively. All in all, despite the undeniable growth of independentism in relation to the *process*, we have shown the existence of a substantive political space for an adaptative and flexible federal accommodation—asymmetrical and plurinational—of Catalonia within the Spanish State. But this is a space that, given the nationalist polarisation between “independentists” and “immobilists”, has to date remained devoid of or at least has contained very few of the factors that politically have led to the successful construction of both hegemonic alternatives: discourse, organisation and leadership.

## 7. Conclusion

In this article we have seen that not all Catalans who are in favour of the *process*

<sup>11</sup>As variable independents we took into account the variables described for the previous models.

want the same thing in terms of a territorial solution for Catalonia, nor do all those against the *process* wish to continue as they are in a *recentralised* and *re-symmetrised* State of Autonomies (Máiz, Caamaño, & Azpitarte, 2010). We have seen that there exists a space of plural community, full of nuances, of citizens hoping for more creative and flexible, less static political solutions. And we have noted that viable solutions do exist, if appropriate political use is made of the heterogeneous space of confluence removed from the confrontation between Spanish sovereignism and Catalan sovereignism. Aspects linked to recognition, fair treatment, to negotiation and pact are fundamental in order to provide an outlet for the expectations of Catalans, but also the modulation of other tactically political factors linked to the party competition and which clearly stand out in the explanatory component of national identity.

Beyond the academic sphere, in the Spanish debate on the State of Autonomies, the result of a political contest aimed more at obtaining gains outside Catalonia than solving the Catalan problem, “autonomy” and “federalism” have become two mutually exclusive signifiers. Which means, as we have seen, that what is regarded as positive by those who desire a territorial solution in terms of autonomy is valued negatively by those who imagine it in terms of federalism (cfr. **Table 9**). The fact is that for many of those who are in favour of the *process* but want to continue, in another way, with increased self-government and recognition as a nation, in Spain, the elements that explain their position are clear, though they might not be simple at all. From our evolutive and adaptative tenets, we are given to think that there is space for accommodation in a model that responds to the plurality and the dynamism of Catalan society. However, that potential space is not established beforehand, but has to be constructed politically, initially by breaking the antagonism between autonomy and federalism, overcoming the sovereignist feedback between entre Spanish nationalism and Catalan nationalism, making recognition of the plurinationality of Spain and the negotiation of shared sovereignties the axis of a new negotiated feral relationship. An adaptative, plurinational and asymmetric federal model, like the one we have presented in the first pages of this article, not only enables us better to explain, in its implacable complexity, what is happening in Catalonia, but it may also help to find a solution in the necessary search for new ways of accommodating of national pluralism within the accelerated dynamism of Spanish society today.

### Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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## Appendix

**Table A1.** List of leaders and political parties of Catalonia and Spain cited in text.

Political Leaders of Catalonia	Political Parties of Catalonia
Artur Mas	Junts pel Sí (JxSí)
Oriol Junqueras	Junts pel Sí (JxSí)
Miquel Iceta	PSC (Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya)
Lluís Rabell	CatSíQueEsPot (CSQEP)
Antonio Baños	Candidatura d'Unitat Popular (CUP)
Political Leaders of Catalonia	Political Parties of Spain
Mariano Rajoy	President of Spain Government, Partido Popular (PP)
Pedro Sánchez	Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE)
Pablo Iglesias	Podemos
Albert Rivera	Ciutadans (C's)

Source: own figures.