

Europeanisation and the in(ter)dependence of Catalonia

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ABSTRACT

The European Union has transcended many of the old prerogatives of national independence, bringing about interdependence among member states. Within the latter there are also sub-state communities which simultaneously claim both self-government and 'more Europe'. The future intent of this political process in the Old Continent is to make territorial subsidiarity consistent with home rule within European-framework legislation and continental institutions. The first part of this article focuses on the idea of a closer European Union based upon the implementation of territorial subsidiarity, as well as on the challenges posed by democratic accountability, multi-level governance, and the preservation of the European Social Model. The second section illustrates some of these challenges in practice through an analysis of how the meaning of independence has developed in a 'stateless nation' such as Catalonia. In Spain, the lack of territorial accommodation, together with a long-standing centre-periphery controversy, has fuelled claims for secession by some Catalan nationalists. The conclusions consider how 'cosmopolitan localism' can optimise both independence and interdependence of stateless nations like Catalonia in the global context.

Keywords: Catalonia, cosmopolitan localism, Europeanisation, independence, multi-level governance, subsidiarity.

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INTRODUCTION

Interdependence in Europe is leading to the removal of internal borders, the establishment of supra-national bodies, and the multi-tier articulation of governance. Europeanisation should be seen as a process that squares the principle of geographical subsidiarity with self-government within the democratic framework of European legislation and institutions. In this paper, the analysis takes both the 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' implications of European supra-na-

tionalising trends into account. Catalonia's in(ter)dependence highlights the interrelationship between both of these two apparently dichotomous political developments, which have deep implications of the restructuring of political life in Europe. The wake of the economic crisis (which started in 2007/08) has raised grave doubts about the ability of Europe's nation states (which are formally independent) to implement their own economic policies against the background of globalisation.

The first part of this paper looks at the challenges facing the so-called stateless nations (such as Catalonia), European subsidiarity, multi-tier governance, and maintaining the European Social Model (ESM). The conceptual review of Europeanisation and decentralisation affects the practical reconciliation of independence (understood as the exercise of self-determination) with interdependence within a supra-national system (the EU). The next section analyses the latest political developments in Catalan nationalism and its restated secessionist goal. The considerable rise in social acrimony seen in Catalonia reflects the surge in the number of citizens who identify themselves solely as Catalans and not as Spaniards. The concluding comments examine how ‘cosmopolitan localism’ could help optimise both independence and interdependence processes in Europe within the broader frame of the new World Order. Such an approach implies fostering society’s interests in a way that strengthens the sense of local development while participating actively in supra-national contexts (Moreno, 2000).

EUROPEANISATION AND DECENTRALISATION PROCESSES

Events occurring as the world moved into the third millennium—especially the financial crisis in 2007—have revealed the limitations of the nation state as a sovereign actor in the global economy. Functional models of majority democracy (such as Britain’s, based on ‘command and control’, or France’s Jacobin top-down approach) have proved insufficient to meet the new challenges of economic globalisation—a process that has developed in parallel with Europeanisation (Loughlin, 2007). In this respect, the EU’s institutionalisation should be considered as a hotch-potch of policies that markedly condition the formal sovereignty of the member states (Piattoni, 2010).

The constitution of a United States of Europe should not be seen as the final aim of Europeanisation. The neo-functional school of thought has adopted a vision whereby universal progress requires a kind of integration—equivalent to aculturation or

assimilation—similar to the ‘melting pot’ found in the United States (Glazer and Moynihan, 1963). An alternative approach is integration that is not based on standardisation but instead accepts the historic, psychological and social features of a plural Europe. From this pluralist perspective, European convergence can only be articulated by taking into account history and the cultural diversity of the mosaic of people making up Europe (Moreno, 2003).

One should recall that this principle says that political decisions should be taken democratically at a level that is closest to citizens. Thus the purpose of subsidiarity is to limit the power of central authorities in supra-national bodies and nation states, assuming the principles of proximity and proportionality in governance. In addition, subsidiarity seeks to hinder the over-proliferation of controls and powers exercised by each tier of government. It therefore facilitates co-ordinated management of the growing interdependencies in a multi-level Europe. Institutional trends in the so-called unbundling of territoriality meet citizens’ expectations in various spheres (Hooghe and Marks, 2001; Kazepov, 2008).

In general terms, one needs to conceptualise political communities that are constituted by citizens and have certain systemic features, whether at the supra-state, national or sub-state level (Easton, 1965). In today’s public life, independent implementation of cultural policies involves fitting in with citizens’ multi-level identities. These identities are a blend of collective affinities that legitimise different tiers of governance (supra-state, state and sub-state) and their democratic accountability (Berg, 2007). Autonomy [self-rule], decentralisation and subsidiarity try to accommodate these institutional responses to the state’s inner diversity and pluralism. These local and regional settings (and in some cases, stateless nations) tend to be based on features of ‘identity’, history, language, and traditions that are reflected in given interests, electoral systems, and channels for representing different elites. In post-dictatorship Spain, various political ‘communities’ [self-governing regions] were set up under the 1978 Spanish Constitution. The

name given to these was *Autonomous Communities*. Despite a certain institutional heterogeneity and diverse programme preferences by their governments, all of them took on an in(ter)dependent character and expressed a common aspiration to a bottom-up approach to Europeanisation.

In Catalonia, demands for the effective decentralisation and subsidiarity of cultural policies and greater exercise of political power were not only demanded by nationalist parties but also by federalist and regional ones. Various lower tiers of government were unwilling to accept rationalising intervention by elites and centralised bureaucracies when it came to exercising self-government. In a post-sovereign era, progressive transnationalisation and renewed interdependencies, sub-state governments in Spain and throughout the EU as a whole, enjoyed the financial and political security conferred by supra-state community institutions (Keating, 2001; Moreno and McEwen, 2005).

Citizenship is the fruit of a combination of identities stemming from supra-state, national and sub-state identities (Faist, 2001). Europeans' multiple identities are a continuous variable of geographical affinities anchored in common human rights and principles of solidarity. Both civil and political spheres have expanded in the middle tier of government in EU member states. Demands on and the exercise of such civil and political rights have affected social citizenship at the regional level (Jeffery, 2009).

Geographical subsidiarity is inextricably linked to the second guiding principal of Europeanisation, namely democratic accountability. There can be no political development in Europe if decisions are made behind closed doors, as has occurred in some member states. Democratic participation and the involvement of citizens in public life are vital for preserving the ESM. This must be conceptualised as a political project articulated through the values of social equity (equality), collective solidarity (redistribution), and productive efficiency (optimisation), resulting from contemporary processes of conflict and collaboration in Europe; the ESM promises 'social citizenship' (the

right to a decent standard of living, social welfare, and paid employment) and as a general strategic aim, the ESM pursues continuous, sustainable economic growth based upon social cohesion (Moreno, 2012).

Multi-level citizenship not only implies incorporating many attributes of European nations (whether stateless or not) but also integrating them in a common axiological base of a hybrid (and often highly mixed) nature. All this makes up the values underpinning ESM, which legitimises the redistribution of resources and life opportunities that characterise European welfare systems and that make trans-national solidarity possible (Gould, 2007).

Political interdependence and convergence in the EU does not rest on the establishment of internal frontiers or watertight fields of governance, as was the case of the co-existing system of sovereign states that emerged from the Peace of Westphalia (1648). Europeanisation implies that all European citizens, are subject to European Community Law, which now makes up over half of the legislation affecting their daily lives. The battle against tax evasion (to mention a crucial policy following the onset of the economic crisis in 2007/08) reveals the inefficiency of state controls and the need for a common approach (the European Commission, 2013). In keeping with the subsidiarity principle, it is counter-productive to hinder or limit the self-government of sub-state political communities. Nevertheless, it is unrealistic to expect legitimation of Europe unless there is a redistribution of incomes among its component regions (Ferrera, 2008).

Whether decentralisation restricts the redistribution of incomes and solidarity is a moot point. Scholarly debate on the subject continues to rage. There are also no clear-cut empirical findings supporting the idea that positive outcomes from redistributive measures would detract from the macro (European or state) levels. Meanwhile, the policies should be managed at the micro level (municipalities and regions). With regard to public spending in multi-tier systems of government, there is a body of research covering influencing factors and their redistributive effects, such as in the case

of social and welfare programmes or services (Hicks and Swank, 1992). There is a long track record of this literature, which has often argued that decentralisation usually limits growth in public spending. Following this argument, major regional and government rescaling may lead to greater negative effects than any other institutional variable, whether because of corporatism in decision-making or due to the features of the electoral/presidential systems involved. Yet federal countries such as Australia and Canada, with a long history of public sector involvement, show a positive correlation between public spending and income redistribution (Obinger, et al., 2005). Nevertheless, one should always distinguish between redistribution and distribution when it comes to public resources.

In addition to the structure of the state—or union of states, as in the EU’s case—redistribution can also be conditioned by internal diversity. In this respect, it has been argued that there is less redistribution in a state with a highly diverse society. Public decision-making and spending that recognise and accommodate internal diversity may destabilise composite, plural policies. The consequences may be: (a) crowding-out, with money, time, and energy spent on recognising diversity and the legitimisation of asymmetries; (b) the sowing of distrust between citizens living in different places or social settings; (c) mistaken diagnoses that highlight inequalities that particularly affect certain groups or regions within the polity.

The causal relationship between public spending and income redistribution has not been empirically demonstrated. Multiculturalism and the welfare state, for example, have been positively correlated in Canada’s case (Banting and Kymlicka, 2006). In reality, empirical studies bearing on the links between ethnic diversity in states, the production of public goods, and the maintenance of social cohesion have proven fairly inconclusive. About half of the studies conducted either confirm or refute the hypothesis that diversity has a negative impact on social trust (Schaeffer, 2013). Following the same line of argument, it has been observed that the determining factor in the legitimisation of social solidarity and redistribution of

public spending (including in highly diverse, composite societies) is state institutions, ability to create social trust (Rothstein, 2015).

For middling political communities in composite states, the institutional form taken by decentralisation is a key field for political and programme evaluation. There is some evidence that sub-state authorities tend to be more spendthrift in countries where spending is decentralised but where central government controls revenue and in countries where both income and expenditure is decentralised, sub-state authorities tend to spend less (Rodden, 2003). In Catalonia’s case (which is the subject of the second part of this paper), nationalist allegations on the lines of “Spain robs us” have sought to draw attention to the disproportionate amount of revenue raised in Catalonia compared with public spending in the region. Employing this argument, demands have been made for both the raising of revenue and expenditure to be decentralised, which is what happens in Navarre and the Basque Country.

It is worth recalling that the the Basque Country and Navarre enjoy special privileges vis-à-vis central government in which the two regional governments enjoy full control over all taxes with the exception of VAT (which is regulated by the EU). This fiscal pact gives these regions a great deal of say over how they spend their money and makes Basque policies much clearer and facilitates accountability. The Basque Country and Navarre are the two autonomous communities that do not contribute to the central government’s ‘kitty’, whose purpose is to ensure the provision of basic public services throughout Spain. This creates a comparative disadvantage for a wealthy region such as Catalonia, which makes a bigger contribution to Spanish centralised funds. It has been argued that this inequitable system is only sustainable because Navarre and the Basque Country make up only 8% of Spain’s GDP (Colino, 2012).

In Spain, public spending is considered by the country’s regions to be a key part of their self-governing status. Furthermore, the issue of local autonomy is a political hot potato when it comes

to sharing out revenues and expenses among the poorest and richest regions. Economic and financial adjustments are made to meet the Constitutional aim of providing a common level of basic services throughout Spain. Most redistribution systems in the world try to share out funding as fairly as possible—something that is a thorny subject and which leads to clashes between government tiers. In the case of Catalonia and Spain, the last few years have seen rising numbers of clashes and hostility.

In general, criticisms become sharper when middling tiers of government consider the redistribution criteria are too radical or arbitrary and that give poorer regions few incentives to put their finances in order. Poorer regions tend to demand higher public spending to catch up with their richer brethren. Yet redistribution of resources can also be made through large infrastructure projects, which are discretionary and may be criticised by the regions making the biggest net financial contributions. In contrast, some state spending and investment plans enjoy strong support and legitimacy, especially in those regions receiving the funds—for example social security and unemployment benefits.

THE RESURGENCE OF SECESSIONIST NATIONALISM IN CATALONIA

In Spain, as in other EU member states, Europeanisation and decentralisation processes work in tandem to affect a wide range of policy matters and imply varying degrees of independence and inter-dependence. Political preferences tend to be conditioned by global externalities. In Catalonia's case, many of the issues are linked to in(ter)dependence in the exercise of self-government and shared government. The latest political mobilisation in Catalonia questioned inter-regional financial redistribution criteria and claimed the right to secession from the rest of Spain. This section looks at how the meaning of independence has developed in the Catalan context and its implications for Europe and for decentralisation.

After a quarter century of regional self-government following the end for the Franco dictatorship, Catalan parties agreed that reform was needed to the Statute of Autonomy granted in 1979. On September 30, 2005, the Catalan Parliament passed a bill on a new Statute. No fewer than 120 Catalan MPs voted in favour (the CiU, PSC, ERC, and ICV-EUiA parties) and just 15 voted against it (from the Partido Popular; PP) and thus, the text was subsequently steered through the Spanish Parliament. The preamble to the new Statute of Autonomy defined Catalonia as a 'nation'. A majority of Catalans approved the Statute in a referendum held on the June 18, 2006.¹ The PP lodged claims that some of the articles in the new text were unconstitutional. So too did Spain's ombudsman and five autonomous communities (Aragon, the Balearic Islands, Valencia, Murcia, and La Rioja). On June 27, 2010, after over four years of deliberations, Spain's Constitutional Court declared various articles in the draft Catalan Statute of Autonomy to be illegal. It also stated that Catalonia's self definition as a nation had no legal effect.

The Constitutional Court's ruling reflected a centralist bias, especially because many of its members were closely aligned with the PP. Criticism of the ruling in Catalonia boosted disaffection with Spain's central institutions and strengthened nationalist forces in the region, especially those advocating secession. The celebration of Catalonia's national day on September 11, 2011 featured a massive demonstration on the streets of Barcelona.² When the president of the Catalan government went to negotiate a fiscal pact with Spanish president Mariano Rajoy, his aim was to get the same kind of deal for the region as the Basque Country and Navarre. The PP-led government's response was a resounding 'No'. Hence, distrust between the Spanish and Catalan governments soared.

1 The voter turnout was 48.85%, of which 73.90% voted for independence, 20.76% against, and 5.34% were spoiled votes. Abstention exceeded 50% of the electorate, indicating that under a third of voters actively voted for independence.

2 As tends to happen in Spain, the figures for the number of demonstrators varied wildly, from 1.5 million according to the local police to 2 million according to Catalan government sources. Meanwhile, the Spanish government delegation in Catalonia set the figure at a paltry 600,000.

A renewed call for independence spread the length and breadth of Catalonia. Nationalist parties and civil associations effectively mobilised the growing number of politically discontent Catalans. The ill-feeling was expressed in ‘identity’ terms and the notion that Catalonia was not part of Spain and did not want to belong to it either.

The economic crisis, which began in 2007/08, encouraged the PP to embark on recentralisation policies, which only heightened tensions in Catalonia. Critics argued that decentralisation policies pursued through the Spanish system of autonomous communities actually reflected administrative scattering and the use of mechanisms that had been used in a more or less hybrid form in other advanced Western democracies (Gagnon, 2009; Requejo and Nagel, 2011).

Pro-independence nationalists conveyed the idea that Catalonia would be economically a lot better off on its own. Here, one should take into account that Catalonia’s GDP (some 200,000 million) is greater than that of Portugal. With a population of 7.5 million (roughly 16% of the total for Spain), Catalonia would only be a ‘middling’ country in the EU but in economic terms, it would be one of its most advanced. The nationalist mobilisation sought to maximise the ‘window of opportunity’ presented by the economic crisis, insisting that an independent Catalonia would end exploitation by the rest of Spain. The allegation that Spain was robbing Catalonia was thrown together with the idea that independence lay within the region’s grasp.

Dual identities and exclusive identities

Following the Constitutional Court ruling, the percentage of citizens in the region who considered themselves ‘solely Catalan’ rose markedly. According to surveys carried out in 2013, the numbers of those placing themselves in the ‘exclusive geo-ethnic identification category’ soared in comparison with the responses to the so-called Moreno Question³ in the mid 1980s (see Table 1). From this, one can deduce

that the huge rise in the number of the region’s citizens identifying themselves exclusively as Catalan has taken place over the last few years and is largely of a reactive nature. Many who saw themselves as solely Catalan felt humiliated by the Spanish government’s refusal to negotiate decentralisation and conferral of greater fiscal powers (Moreno, 2014).

Following Scotland’s official referendum on independence (held on September 18, 2014), Catalan nationalists decided to hold their own public consultation. Although Spain’s Constitutional Court declared the consultation illegal, the Catalan government held an informal straw poll (a referendum in all but name) on November 9, 2014. No less than 80% of those casting a vote chose independence (that is to say, those answering ‘Yes’ to the two questions on the ballot papers).⁴ However, the voter turn out was 37%.

At the end of 2015, various nationalist parties supported the holding of ‘plebiscitary’ elections. The idea was that the Catalan government would formally (and unilaterally) declare independence if the number of MPs made up a majority. Here, one should note that several parties had explicitly presented manifestos with a joint commitment to independence. The results of the elections held on September 27, 2015 were less than clear-cut. The turn out was high at 77%. While 53% of the MPs elected were pro-independence, they only represented 48% of all citizens eligible to vote. The new parliament began a process of secession (euphemistically termed ‘disconnection’), stating its intention to declare a Republic of Catalonia. A few days later, Spain’s Constitutional Court ruled the statement null and void. The election of a new Catalan president (Carles Puigdemont) was the result of two pro-independence forces in the Catalan Parliament (Junts pel Sí and Candidatura d’Unitat Popular). The picture was further complicated by elections in Spain on December 20, 2015 and on June 26, 2016. The difficulties the two pro-secession groups are having in enlisting parliamentary support suggest growing uncertainty over what may happen in the future.

3 Formulated for the first time in the British academic world in my doctoral thesis (Moreno, 1986).

4 The sequence of the questions was: “Do you want Catalonia to be a state?” and “If so, do you want this state to be independent?”.

Table 1: Responses in Catalonia to 'the Moreno Question' "Which one of the following five categories would you place yourself in?" (1985 and 2013)

	1985 (%)	2013 (%) CEO	2015 (%) CIS
I consider myself to be solely Catalan	9	31	24
I consider myself to be more Catalan than Spanish	24	27	23
I consider myself to be Catalan and Spanish in equal measure	47	33	38
I consider myself more Spanish than Catalan	7	2	5
I consider myself to be solely Spanish	12	4	6
Don't Know / No response	1	3	4

CEO: *Centre d'Estudis d'Opinion* [Centre for Opinion Surveys]

CIS: *Centre d'Investigacions Sociològiques* [Sociology Research Centre]

Note: Percentages have been rounded

SOURCE: Moreno 1997, 2004 and Study 3113 (CIS, 2015)

CONCLUSIONS: TOWARDS A COSMOPOLITAN LOCALISM?

For from being consistent and uniform, European societies not only exhibit diversity but also have internal structures and rifts. They face challenges on how to incorporate (rather than assimilate) political communities with different collective identities. The articulation of these communities, through optimisation of political independence and inter-dependence, should avoid a unilateral approach. The challenge lies in how to foster democratic interaction between regions and tiers of government rooted in history while avoiding sterile confrontation.

In reality, bottom-up trans-nationalisation and top-down decentralisation have driven the growth of a kind of cosmopolitan localism in Europe. This reflects two (apparently opposed) social interests: (a) fostering a sense of citizen identity and 'belonging'; (b) active participation within a global context. Furthermore, citizens have shown themselves willing to fully assume complementary identities corresponding to different political spheres (municipal, regional, national, and supra-national); (Moreno, 2004).

Paradoxically, the EU supra-state has strengthened sub-state units, which aspire to greater political decentralisation. As in Catalonia's case, 'partner regions'

(as the EU would have it) take a proactive approach to self-government. Both processes involve bottom-up and top-down political adjustments in Europe that have allowed the spread of a kind of cosmopolitan localism that reflects both society's interest and fosters a sense of 'belonging' and taking an active role in a supra-state context. The result is growing communion between the particular and the general (Norris, 2000).

Regions such as Catalonia no longer depend on the kind of nation-building programmes pursued in the 19th and 20th centuries. Their entrepreneurs, social leaders, and intellectuals have adopted many of the initiatives and roles that in the past were undertaken and played by enlightened elites, which monopolised power and set up regional mechanisms for widening their sway from the centre to the periphery. Nowadays, the positions of influence are more widely geographically spread, allowing greater political intervention by sub-state tiers of government. Furthermore, policy-makers' careers are no longer inextricably linked to climbing the ladder in central government, where the plum jobs carrying most influence were to be had. Today, many political representatives pursue their careers in regional posts—something that does not preclude taking on state or supra-state jobs later on.

The cosmopolitan localism approach can be seen in middling political communities—generally in those regions that do not constitute independent countries (e.g., Catalonia, Scotland, or Flanders). Here, one should note that these regions are larger than some EU member states (e.g., the Czech Republic, Slovenia, and Luxembourg). There are also metropolitan areas of considerable size and importance (e.g., Brussels, London, and Milan). The latter seem to follow a pattern similar to that seen in mediaeval European political communities (the Italian city-states, the towns of the Hanseatic League, and Central European principalities. All of these, prior to the discovery of the New World, constitute a common institutional reference point in the EU and in the process of Europeanisation. This is

particularly true of the common interest in maintaining social welfare, which is the cement for ensuring an ever closer union (Moreno, 2012).

One should recall that the processes described above have occurred during the period of stability following the Second World War (excluding the regional wars in the Balkans in the 1990s). That said, one cannot rule out another European war given latent rivalries among nation states and the growth of religious fundamentalism and xenophobia. Hence, civilised ways of achieving centralisation and Europeanisation to reconcile political unity and diversity through the consolidation of a new cosmopolitan localism are needed.

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