

Endogenous identities? How the independence debate is reshaping catalans' identity

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Recent political events have boosted a transformation of citizens' territorial preferences in Catalonia. A considerable segment of the population previously in favor of more autonomy for Catalonia within the Spanish state framework now have shifted towards secessionist stances, given that their former option was perceived as unfeasible. This rapid change gave rise to an imbalance between individuals' national identification and territorial preferences: people holding dual identities were becoming in favor of independence. More recently, this incongruence has started to fade as national identities are changing to match the new territorial preferences. The Catalan situation challenges the primordialist view of identity as a stable and exogenous element. Instead, it favors a constructivist approach in which identity is seen as malleable and endogenous to the political process. We study repeated cross-section samples of the Catalan population (2001-2014) and apply nonrecursive structural equation models to show how there is a reciprocal causal relation between preference for independence and national identification, and that the causal path from preferences to identity has been gaining ground in recent years. Finally we propose the design of a survey experiment to grasp the causal mechanism driving the change in national identification. We hypothesize that cognitive dissonance reduction is playing a crucial role. The experiment is oriented to activate the mechanism of dissonance between preferences and identity in the context of an online survey.