1 Introduction

In autumn 2014, within a time span of less than two months, two referenda of independence are to be held in Western European states. On 18 September 2014, all inhabitants\(^1\) of Scotland above 16 years will be asked the simple question "Should Scotland be an independent country?". And on 9 November 2014, all Catalan inhabitants from 16 years on (as well as Catalans living outside Spain if they register) might vote on two subsequent questions: "Do you want Catalonia to be a State?" and "If so, do you want Catalonia to be an independent State?". In both regions, approval for the independence movement is rather high, but while in Scotland the public debate is perceived as a doubtful 'what happens if?', Catalonia rides on a wave of 'party-mood' with a great hurray for the prospective secession. Current opinion polls illustrate the different levels of approval: In Catalonia, approval rates for independence increased dramatically from roughly 20% in 2010 to above 45% in 2014.\(^2\) In Scotland, recent polls indicate approval rates between 32 and 41%.\(^3\) Furthermore, the difference becomes very obvious when looking at recent elections for the European parliament (Sanjaume, 2014). At the European elections on May 23, 2014, parties supporting the independence movement in Catalonia received over 55 per cent of

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\(^1\) This is meant literally: Franchise extends to roughly 400,000 non-Scottish voters living in Scotland.

\(^2\) Polling results from CEO – Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió, Metroscopia and CIS (Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2014/07/22/actualidad/1406048711_733501.html, last access 17.08.2014). According to a poll of the 'Generalitat' in April, 57.6% would vote 'Yes' in the first question and 81.8% of those for the second question which corresponds to an approval for independence of 47% (http://premsa.gencat.cat/pres_fsvp/docs/2014/04/30/11/11/adb297aa-ed31-4ce4-9e1c-539bCc7cbe4b.pdf, page 43-44, last access 17.08.2014).

votes in Catalonia\textsuperscript{4}, while parties supporting the independence movement in Scotland reached only 37 per cent of the votes in Scotland.\textsuperscript{5}

To be sure, the planned referendum in Catalonia is literally neither a referendum, nor is it held on independence. First, as the Spanish government keeps opposing the option to hold a genuine referendum, politicians and public lawyers in Catalonia struggle to find an interpretation of the existing Catalan statute of autonomy in line with the Spanish constitution to hold what they call a 'consultation'. A corresponding law is about to be passed by the Catalan parliament. Second, the question wording does not straightforwardly ask voters whether they want Catalonia to become independent; rather, the sequence of questions seems to suggest whether Catalanians claim the right to decide whether or not Catalonia should be an independent state. But clearly, should a majority vote yes in that consultation, the facts would need to be interpreted as if the Catalanian people had voted for independence. In Scotland, in contrast, the referendum is a proper referendum, and the Scottish government has been granted the right to conduct it on its own terms. The question wording is straightforward. Should a majority in Scotland vote 'yes' in the referendum, then Alex Salmond would have the task to negotiate terms of independence with David Cameron. A White paper issued in November 2013 describes the time frame and policy options for the road to independence.

Contrary, however, to what one might expect at first sight, the dubious political and legal circumstances of the consultation in Catalonia do not impede approval for it. Rather, the Catalanian independence movement was able to gain much more momentum in the past months than the Scottish. In our paper, we are addressing this puzzle looking for possible explanations. A first superficial impression of newspaper and internet headlines suggests that the 'yes' campaign in Catalonia is far more emotional than in Scotland. So is this the key to success? We argue that in part it is. Applying social-psychological (Fazio, 1990) and sociological theories of 'frame selection' (Esser, 1996) as a link between attitudes and voting behaviour, we explain the different levels of willingness to vote 'Yes' as a function of individual activation of cognitive and attitudinal frames in decoding situational signals. While unconditional and uncalculated approval of nationalism as one frame is activated mainly at

\textsuperscript{4} Votes cast for ICV, ERC and CIU were taken into account.
\textsuperscript{5} Votes cast for SNP and Greens were taken into account.
an emotional level, to the degree that people start calculating the potential costs and benefits of independence, the likelihood increases that they vote against independence.

2 Secession referenda and devolution

The upcoming secession referenda lend themselves for comparison with either other moves for independence (Qvortrup, 2014) or with other referenda in the same regions not necessarily aimed at independence (Harvey, 2011; Wyn Jones & Scully, 2012). Comparison with other moves for independence is rather obvious because in 2014, altogether three independence referenda will have been held in Europe, with the referendum in Ukraine leading to secession of the Eastern region and giving rise to continued fights between Ukrainian and Russian-friendly troops. If the Scottish and Catalan referenda had the prospect of similar instabilities at the European continent, this would be a serious reason to be worried. We regard, however, the referenda in Scotland and Catalonia as distinct from Ukraine, because they are a next step in a history of devolution of autonomous competences from the center to the regions. With a nearly worldwide trend of increasing political competences of substate units (Marks, Hooghe, & Schakel, 2008) and of acknowledging autonomous rights of ethnic, linguistic or other minorities (Kymlicka, 2007), the upcoming referenda might simply be another step in an ongoing process without being its final step (Kymlicka, 1998). In this perspective, considerations about the specific normative status of secession movements are of minor importance (Moore, 1998; Lehning, 2005). That is, we will not question the justifiability of national self-determination and secession. Rather, we are interested in the conditions for success of the independence referenda, learning from the comparison of two closely related processes taking place at almost the same time and under similar conditions, yet displaying a number of relevant differences. In analyzing those similarities and differences, we highlight the conditions that make success in a democratic independence referendum more likely.

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6 The Catalan government makes no reference to the Ukrainian referendum, while listing other referendums for independence in Western States, first and foremost Scotland 2014, but also Montenegro 2006, Quebec 1995 and 1980, Slovenia 1990, Jura in Switzerland 1974, Malta 1964 and Iceland 1944. See http://www.cataloniavotes.eu/they-also-did-it/, last access 17.08.2014.
3 Voting behaviour as a function of attitudes and their activation – Framing in independence referenda

Essentially, the puzzle that we observe when comparing the two referenda processes is that approval for independence seems to be clearly higher in Catalonia than in Scotland. This is surprising in so far as chances for success are prima facie higher in Scotland: after all, the central government under David Cameron agreed to extend the powers of Scotland so that they have the legal right to prepare and conduct the referendum in their own jurisdiction (Tierney, 2013). The Scottish referendum has been prepared for a longer time, and estimations about future scenarios are farther elaborated. Assuming that the act of voting or answering a question in a poll is a reliable indicator for what the person would do in the referendum, analytically the puzzle boils down to the question how those acts of behaviour are influenced or guided by the persons' attitudes. Basically, this relationship is very simple: if a person wants its region to become independent, then he or she votes 'yes', if not, 'no'. But the premise 'a person wants its region to become independent' is not as unambiguous as it may seem. For some it may be a matter of conviction, of a nearly moral nature, like attitudes towards abortion or death penalty. If you truly feel to be a Scot or a Catalan, then you straightforwardly want your region to become independent. Many people in both regions, however, would argue in a more differentiated manner, that they prefer independence given certain circumstances. Feelings of national identity can be split, and even when they are exclusive they are not a reliable indicator for a secessionist vote (Serrano, 2013, p. 541). Pro-union reports try to downplay secessionism demands in Catalonia using shared identities (Spanish and Catalan) as indicator for the incorporation of Catalan society within the Spanish state.

“According to a survey conducted by the Spanish Centre for Sociological Research (CIS) in February 2013, after the regional elections, 65.3% of Catalans feel Catalan and Spanish. Although both identity conditions are lived with different intensities, the majority—34.5%—report feeling as Catalan as they feel Spanish.” (FAES, 2014, p. 78)

Which identity of preference prevails, depends not only on enthusiasm for independence. “Nationalism is about differentiation, and this applies to interests as well as identities.” (Lecours, 2011, p. 270). While questions of national identity are always related to emotions, group interests require a rational appreciation of values. For those persons, their

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7 http://www.cis.es/cis/export/sites/default/-Archivos/Marginales/2960_2979/2970/Es2970Cat.pdf, last access 17.08.2014.
attitude towards independence depends on the conditions under which independence can be attained. What will happen to national health insurance, joint pension plans, the currency, the debt? Will the new country remain a member of the EU? Those are the questions that trouble people in trying to decide whether they are 'pro' or 'con'.

3.1 Two modes of attitude-behaviour relations (Fazio)

The above considerations imply that in order to understand differences in voting behaviour in the two regions, we need to understand in greater detail the process during which attitudes towards the subject matter are activated and subsequently guide behaviour. Research in social psychology pointed out that essentially two modes of attitude-behaviour-relations need to be distinguished: a spontaneous or automatic processing mode and a deliberative processing mode (Fazio, 1990).

If the spontaneous processing mode applies, then people act quasi-automatically, based on instincts, reflexes or routines, without explicit thinking. In this mode, people are able to (re-)act very quickly. This can be compared to physical reflexes, where the nerves are connected directly to the spinal cord without making a detour via the brain. The adequacy of a reaction depends on the correct decoding of the situation. As information processing happens very quickly, stimuli must be unambiguous and straightforward. If I stumble over a stone, my lower leg jumps forward, if something approaches my eye, I close my lid. Similarly, when asked "Should murderers be punished", most people would instinctively answer 'yes'. The activation of a scheme of reaction depends thus on how I interpret the situation. In order for attitudes to be activated instinctively upon observation of a certain situation, it is important that those attitudes be mentally accessible. In this respect, the relevance of 'priming' is pointed out by Fazio (1990, p. 79f.): the more often and the more consistently an object and an evaluation of this object are linked, the more readily the attitude can be activated and the more consistent expressed behaviour will be (ibid.). The spontaneous mode is a very efficient mode of action in highly routinized situations.

If, on the contrary, people apply the deliberative processing mode for coming to a decision how to act, then they increase the chance of taking the right decision, but it is a more costly and time-consuming strategy. Consequently, people will make use of it only if they feel that a situation is worth the investment of calculation, for example because the signals for interpreting a situation are ambiguous (Esser, 2001, p. 272) or because they perceive it as a
high-cost situation (Fazio, 1990, p. 91). The process of rational calculation is modelled by Fazio according to Fishbein and Ajzen's (1981) 'Theory of Reasoned Action', that is as an expected utility attributed to an outcome which is a function of the subjective evaluation of this outcome weighed with the subjective probability that this outcome will come about. The deliberative processing model requires the individual to have at its availability a whole lot of information and to process it correctly.

Fazio thus assumes that the spontaneous processing mode is the default option which applies as long as the individual does not perceive any information suggesting that a deliberative processing mode might be more adequate. But he does not provide a clear clue in which situation which mode applies in practice. Building on his insights, exactly the moment of switching between the two modes of processing was elaborated by Hartmut Esser (1996) in his 'Framing' model.

### 3.2 Frame selection and mode selection combined (Esser)

Esser develops Fazio's model further in distinguishing two processes of selection, whereby 'selection' does not necessarily imply a conscious decision. First, the frame of reference is selected (activated) which provides the interpretation of the situation for the individual. And second, the mode of information processing is selected (activated), which can be – analogous to Fazio – either spontaneous and automatic, or deliberative, conscious and based on a rational calculus of expected costs and benefits of different paths of action. Typically, the activation of one frame of reference occurs spontaneously and in distinction to one specific other frame which in a way negates the first frame of reference. The selection of the frame occurs the more automatically, the better the match between the signals and the actual frame. If, for example, a citizen of Catalonia reads in the newspaper: "Everything the Spanish government does is badly done – Rajoy should stop repressing the Catalan people and depriving it of its liberties."

8, then this signal matches perfectly with the 'independence' frame. If, however, he reads: "Rosell evaluates the Catalan independence as ‘human and

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8 “Todo lo que hace el gobierno español lo hace mal – que Rajoy deje de oprimir y de privar las libertades al pueblo catalán.” La Vanguardia, 02.01.2014
economic destruction’.\textsuperscript{9} then the match with the independence frame is less perfect. The chance of activating the independence frame depends thus, first, on the intensity and frequency of past connections between the attitude subject and a certain evaluation (priming); and, second, on the goodness of the match between signals a person detects when activating the frame and the frame itself.

Analytically distinct from the frame selection is the selection of the mode of frame processing, although in reality both selections may be made simultaneously. The choice of either an automatic processing mode (ap) or a rational choice mode (rc) depends mainly on the degree of (un)ambiguity of the signals detected when trying to decode the situation and to select an appropriate frame. Again, the better the match, the more likely is the ap mode. The more 'noise' in the signals, the more reflection and calculation need to be initiated to come at a decision. Once people enter the rc mode, however, then the frame selection is drawn into question, and a calculus is initiated to decide which frame is better suited to provide the script for action in a given situation. As Esser points out, the likelihood of changing the frame of reference (reframing) and of changing the mode of processing (reflection) increase both with the mismatch between signal and selected frame and with the expected utility that I could get from selecting another frame (Esser, 2001, p. 274f.). Reflexion, that is, change from ap to rc mode, does not necessarily entail reframing, however. Even after calculating and comparing expected utilities from two frames of reference in a rational manner, I can still conclude that the activated frame is better than the alternative frame. Only the chance of reframing increases dramatically under rc mode.

3.3 Framing and mode selection in independence referenda

In the specific situations of the referenda in Scotland and Catalonia, there exist essentially two relevant frames of reference: pro-independence or pro-union. Activation of the 'pro-independence' frame will lead to a 'yes' vote, activation of the 'pro-union' frame to a 'no' vote. According to the theories presented above, the activation of one specific frame (independence or union) – and consequently the expected action of voting 'yes' or 'no' – depends subsequently on three conditions. First, priming plays an important role in enhancing the salience of an attitude/ frame so that it can readily be activated. During the

independence campaigns, political opinion leaders (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955) and information agents (Downs, 1957, p. 225ff.; Page, Shapiro, & Dempsey, 1987, p. 24) play a most important role in priming certain cognitive frames (Lecours, 2011, p. 270). Those agents are primarily political actors (political leaders, namely Salmond and Mas, Cameron and Rajoy, but also ministers, members of parliament and party spokespersons and, not to forget, campaign activists) as well as political commentators in the mass media (internet, television, newspaper) (for the relevance of those agents see Page et al., 1987, p. 35). By recurrently providing interpretations of the situation and linking specific attitude objects consistently to specific evaluations, those opinion leaders and communication agents generate the priming effect among their readers and listeners. Second, the match between signals and frame is essential for the selection of a frame. Such signals can be obvious facts or context factors (political, economic, historic, cultural). E.g. the fact that Cameron signed the Edinburgh Agreement in October 2012\(^\text{10}\) is in itself a strong signal for the independence frame (even the prime minister does not actively oppose the referendum). But then again, the interpretation of the facts provided by opinion leaders can change the meaning of a signal. To cite the same example, pro-Unionist actors would interpret the Edinburgh agreement in the sense that relationship with the central government is so good that there is no need for independence because everything Scotland might want can be negotiated within the Union. Thus, the facts themselves as well as the interpretations of the facts given by opinion leaders can be used as signals to decode the situation. Third, net expected benefit can also be relevant for the activation of one frame, if frame selection takes place in the rc mode. That is, once people start to calculate, the expected outcomes are weighed against each other. Economic information about resources, currency, debts, planned spending and taxing and social insurance become more relevant under the rc frame, but also ideological differences which might provide a utility for a voter, such as immigration, environmental protection or defense policy. If we group those three steps of selection along the two dimensions – frame and mode selection –, we can distinguish four groups of voters:

\(^{10}\) For a detailed account of the Edinburgh Agreement see section 5.2.3 below.
Table 1: Groups of voters according to frame and mode selection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Frame</th>
<th>Independence</th>
<th>Union</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>automatic processing (unconditional frame selection)</td>
<td>unconditional approval 'yes'</td>
<td>unconditional disapproval 'no'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rational calculation (conditional frame selection)</td>
<td>$U(i)&gt;U(un)$</td>
<td>$U(un)&gt;U(i)$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first two groups in the upper row have in common that they interpret the situation unambiguously according to one given frame. Priming and matching are good enough so that they stick to the ap mode, not questioning the frame selection. All the signals that they receive from the environment are processed in a way that reinforces (or at least it does not weaken) adherence to the selected normative frame. The two groups are distinct, however, in that the first group (in the upper left cell) sticks to the independence frame, while the second group (in the upper right cell) sticks to the unionist frame. We call thus members of the first group 'unconditional independents' and members of the second group 'unconditional unionists'. For each of them, the chosen frame represents a value in and of itself and thus need not be drawn into question.

For the third and fourth groups in the lower row, the initial frame selection may have resulted in picking either the independence or from the unionist frame. In any case, the imperfect match between signals and frame gave them reason to doubt the adequacy of the selected frame, which prompted activation of a rational calculation mode. Thus they started to differentiate and evaluate prospective costs and benefits of either option. If prospective costs of independence outweigh prospective benefits, they would vote 'no', if, on the other hand, prospective benefits outweigh prospective costs, then they would vote 'yes'. What is important, however, about those two groups, is that their decision is always conditional on a calculus of expected costs and benefits. If, for example, updated information contributes to alter this balance, they may switch from 'yes' to 'no' or the other way round. We thus call members of the third group (in the lower left cell) 'conditional independents' and members of the fourth group (in the lower right cell) 'conditional unionists'.

We do not know the distribution of those four groups of voters in the Scottish and Catalan societies. We know, however, that ceteris paribus, the group of 'yes' voters will be higher to
the degree that priming, matching and cost-benefit analysis privilege the independence frame over the union frame.

To sum up, people would vote 'yes' in the referendum either if they frame their decision unconditionally under the independence frame, because the match is good enough to stick to the ap mode; or if the match between signals and frame selection is imperfect, giving rise to an rc processing mode, yet the cost-benefit analysis points towards the independence frame. On the other hand, people would vote 'no' in the referendum if they were primed for a unionist frame and received signals reinforcing that frame, or if the cost-benefit analysis resulted in a higher expected utility of union against independence. In either case, in order to win an independence referendum, opinion leaders and communication agents play a most important role, first, in effecting the 'right' kind of priming (pro independence) by recurrently connecting independence to positive evaluations; second, in sending the right signals in interpreting situational facts so that the match with the primed independence frame is maximized; and third, in presenting expected costs and benefits in a way that a cost-benefit analysis suggests a higher expected utility for the independence option. From those considerations outlined above, we can formulate three hypotheses:

**H1:** The better the priming for independence, the higher the 'yes' vote.

**H2:** The more consistent the signals for the independence frame, the higher the 'yes' vote.

**H3:** The higher the expected utility for the independence frame, the higher the 'yes' vote.

We test those hypotheses by analyzing communications of major communication agents in the mass media and comparing the degrees of pro-independence priming, matching and cost-benefit analysis between Scotland and Catalonia. As votes in the past European elections as well as recent opinion polls are more positive towards independence in Catalonia than in Scotland, we would expect to find higher degrees of priming (positive emotions towards and evaluations of independence), matching (pro-independence interpretation of facts) and positive cost-benefit analysis in Catalonia than in Scotland.

4 **Data and operationalization**

In order to test the hypotheses formulated above, we apply evidence on the Scottish and Catalan referendum processes that we gained in comparative case studies using
documents and expert interviews. A systematic analysis of the frequency and evaluation of presenting major topics in the referendum debate by political opinion leaders (politicians and media) would be desirable in order to get a broader and more representative impression of the real priming and matching mechanisms. For the moment being, however, we restrict our analysis to exemplary evidence that we gained in our case studies. In a further version of this paper, we will be able to add the results from a communication analysis.

We operationalize the independent variables – priming, matching and cost-benefit analysis – in the following ways. Priming consists of the two categories frequency and consistent evaluation of communication, thus linking an attitude in a stable manner to an attitude object. Matching comprises all relevant situational factors that are perceived by an individual in a decision situation and that might influence the frame selection. In our case, we assume that the cultural and historical legacy, the legal situation of the referendum, party political constellations as well as the economic situation and prospects are the most relevant factors which together form a nearly complete picture of the decision situation pro or contra independence. The cost-benefit analysis consists in a comparison of the utility an individual receives in the status quo with the expected utility it might receive in the future in independence. Relevant elements influencing this comparison are thus the evaluation of the status quo, the discount factor on future utilities and the subjective probability that the future situation under independence will be better than the status quo.

5 Emotions in Catalonia, calculus in Scotland – empirical results

5.1 Priming

In both regions, the issue of the independence referendum has a constant and high media coverage and can safely be assumed to have a high saliency among the entire population. While the quest for independence gained momentum after the last elections in both regions in 2011, which brought in Scotland and Catalonia alike a surprising electoral victory to parties explicitly advocating independence, it had been a topic of discussion even before that.

In Catalonia the independence movement is closely linked to the negative ruling of the constitutional court of 2010 with regard to the reformed Catalan autonomy statute of 2006.
The declaration of 14 crucial articles (especially the recognition of Catalonia as a nation) of the autonomy statute as unconstitutional was an affront for many Catalan citizens, because they had actually voted in favor of the reformed statute – it was the “will of the Catalan people”. For the supporters of the reform, the ruling meant that Catalan vote was not accepted by the Spanish State.

In Scotland, the SNP had always campaigned for independence (see e.g. the SNP Manifesto 2011: 28). But only after its 'landslide' victory on 05 May 2011 and the reelection of Alex Salmond as First Minister, the SNP felt sufficiently backed by the population in its aim to lead Scotland to independence. Still, the SNP was somewhat taken offhand by its own victory:

“But Scots surprised themselves by the strength of their support for the SNP in 2011. The Nationalist landslide raised the question of independence in a form with which the Scottish voters are unfamiliar: as a practical possibility. By lending their support so massively to a party of independence, the Scottish people began to realize that they may have crossed a kind of Rubicon.” (Macwhirter, 2013, p. 16).

After the early parliamentary elections in Catalonia in 2011, the governing CiU would have needed 18 seats more to win the majority in the Catalan parliament. The Republican Left Party of Catalonia ERC supported the second investiture of CiU-leader Artur Mas under the condition to fix a question and a date for the referendum. Both parties signed a so-called “pact of governability” with the aim to convoke a referendum on Catalonia’s future, to prepare the “national transition” and to strengthen the economy. These concessions to ERC caused internal tensions with the two coalition parties of CiU (Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya and Unión Democrática de Cataluña). Thus, although the newly formed government quickly announced the intention to hold a referendum within the current legislative term, stressing the “right to decide” of Catalans over their political future, there, too, the political leaders seemed a bit overwhelmed by the pace at which things developed. Both governments were driven by their own electoral victory into the announcement of a precipitated referendum, leaving them hardly three years to work to keep their promise, which is – after all – not much time.

Since then, both governments worked hard to keep the topic alive in the media and the ongoing public and political debate. The SNP government kept the debate alive by

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11 “Acord per la transició nacional I per garantir l’estabilitat parlamentària del govern de Catalunya”, 19 desembre 2012.
repeatedly issuing discussion or white papers accompanied by intense media coverage. In this vein, in January 2011, Salmond published a 'consultation paper' titled 'Your Scotland Your Referendum' which elicited 21,000 written responses. On 15 October 2012, the 'Edinburgh Agreement' was signed by Alex Salmond and David Cameron. In the course of the year 2013, a number of policy papers were published, culminating in the publication, on 26 November 2013, in a huge event in Glasgow, of the White Paper 'Scotland's Future: Your guide to an independent Scotland'.

Catalan politicians picked three topics as central to the debate in their public statements (see also Desquens, 2003): first, the economic topic stressing Catalonia's role as net-contributor to the Spanish welfare state, while arguing that Catalonia is strongly hit by the economic crisis and could react better to future challenges of employment market as an independent state; second, the education topic blaming Castilian paternalism and interference in the Catalan schools via required minimum quota of Castilian classes in Catalan classrooms; and third, the historical topic that draws a picture of an oppressing and tyrannical Spain and describes Catalonia as a victim.

A regular and intense exposure of citizens to the issue of the independence referendum can thus safely be assumed. It is, however, less clear, how those communications are evaluated. The Scottish debate seems quite well balanced between 'pros' and 'cons', giving the public no clear signal that independence is doubtlessly superior to a continuation of the union. The 'Yes Scotland' campaign as association of supporters of independence and 'Better Together' as association of opponents of independents represent both sides of the debate. Clearly, the government runs an offensive 'pro'-campaign. But the media as well as the Scottish Parliament or the Programme "Future of UK and Scotland" provide balanced information with topic-wise lists of pro- and con-arguments, thus contributing to a high level of information, but not necessarily to a consistent attitudinal priming. As the official communication is generally well balanced between pro and con-arguments, it cannot be expected that an unambiguously positive evaluation be attached to all communication. Priming on the issue of the independence referendum in Scotland is thus split. While the

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12 For events and dates see the timeline of the official referendum website of the Scottish government: [http://referendum.scot/timeline/](http://referendum.scot/timeline/) (last access 09 August 2014).

degree of exposure to the issue is high, evaluations are mixed. It can thus be expected that voters will be split in the initial frame selection between the independence and the union frame, depending on the kind of evaluation to which they were more exposed.

In Catalonia, media communication is less balanced and independence seeking parties and associations of citizens like ANC (Asamblea Nacional de Catalunya) clearly dominate the public debate. Until the formation of “Societat Civil Catalana”\(^\text{14}\) in April of this year (2014), there was no visible pro-union campaign in Catalonia comparable to the Scottish ‘Better Together’-campaign. The late appearance of the opposition campaign shows the disequilibrium in the Catalan public debate on independence. What is more, the climate of public opinion is so clearly pro-independence that people report they dare no longer declare publicly that they are against independence. Universities and schools as opinion-leaders are strongly lopsided in favour of independence with teachers teaching their pupils pro-independence songs and university councils declaring entire universities as supporters of the independence movement.\(^\text{15}\) Opinion leaders and communication agents in Catalonia are successful in priming pro-independence, because they transmit a positive message of viability of a new Catalan state within Europe that gives hope to people suffering from the effects of the economic crisis. The Spanish central state serves as a scapegoat for the financial crisis and the unemployment rate in Catalonia. In combination with historic narratives (Lecours, 2011, p. 283) confirming the besiege experience of the Catalan nation and the fiscal exploitation of the Catalan territory political leaders seem to achieve a lot of support for the consultation process.

In Catalonia, thus, priming is far more consistent towards pro-independence than in Scotland, a finding in line with our first hypothesis.

5.2 Matching

In order to test the goodness of match of the signals that an individual can detect in the decision situation, we describe relevant structural factors defining the situation and discuss in which way they are open for interpretation by opinion leaders and information agents. Some factors provide straightforward a perfect match with the independence frame, others

\(^{14}\) http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2014/04/26/actualidad/1398535986_428894.html, last access 17.08.2014.

\(^{15}\) Private information provided by an interview partner.
can be interpreted in one way or another, while others again match the independence frame badly and encourage reflexion, i.e. the change from ap to rc mode.

5.2.1 Cultural and historical factors

Traditional features of group identity – language, race, ethnicity or religion – always play a role in discourses of group autonomy and in justifications for independence requests. They are, however, far more prominent in the Catalan discourse than in Scotland.

The Gaelic dialect may be cultivated in the poems of Robert Burns, but it never was treated as a distinctive trait of Scottishness. And Scottish folklore is not what the SNP fights for in its independence campaign.

“Modern Nationalists largely avoid using Scottish history as an organising principle of their movement, something visitors to Scottish SNP conferences find almost as surprising as the absence of kilts. They come expecting to hear of William Wallace and national liberation, but all they hear about is corporation tax, keeping the pound and remaining in NATO.” (Macwhirter, 2013, p. 22f.)

The struggle for independence cannot either be fuelled by a threat to Scottish culture and tradition. Among the devolved competences are education and training as well as social services. In 1997, after 18 years of conservative government in London and a strictly neoliberal policy of privatization and shutting down heavy industries by Margaret Thatcher, a feeling of liberation prevailed among Scots. For throughout this period, a majority of Scots had voted Labour, and the industrialized parts of Scotland, Glasgow in particular, had been heavily burdened by Thatcher’s policy. This experience may have been akin to feeling besieged by a foreign power, helping the 1997 devolution referendum with a 'never again' mood. In 2014, however, after 15 years of Scottish parliament and government, of which eight years were under Labour government and seven under the SNP, and a conservative government in London which even agreed to give Scotland the power to hold its own independence referendum, Scottish people cannot even remotely feel suppressed by an alien power.

The ideological reason behind the Scottish independence movement is less a distinct culture or nationality, but rather a different political vision about how to build a good society. The Scottish government propagates free education, extended health and social services, a more open immigration policy, environmental protection and a sustainable energy policy (Whitepaper, ch. 4, 5, 7 and 8). It can, however, not fully realize those policy aims as long as
London reserves the right to decide on most of those issues\textsuperscript{16} and as long as policy decisions in London to cut back expenses for social services reduce the Scottish budget.

In Catalonia in contrast, traditional identity markers such as the own language, the own culture, historic narratives of a Catalan statehood and the experience of besiege under the Franco-regime play an important role in public debate. Historical reference is made ("Espanya contra Catalunya: Una mirada històrica 1714-2014\textsuperscript{17}") to the last battle fought by Catalonia during the War of the Spanish succession (Spain and France defending Phillip V, territories of Aragon kingdom including Catalonia defending Charles III) in 1714, when Barcelona capitulated to the Franco-Spanish army. It is argued by the Catalan pro-independence parties that afterwards Philip V abolished the Catalan State and the rest of the Crown of Aragon and ruled them under Castilian absolutist law. This represents the birth of Spain as a unitary State. Thereby, the independence date is connected to history, insinuating there had been a Catalan State 300 years ago. Also, the experience of besiege under the Franco-regime is rhetorically reactivated since the so-called 'failure' of the Autonomy Statute reform\textsuperscript{18}. Furthermore, the lack of recognition of Catalonia as a nation after the ruling of the Constitutional Court in 2010 is argued to be an affront against the Catalan will as expressed by the referendum on the reformed autonomy statute.

Cultural and historical factors obviously have the potential to create strong feelings of belonging and identity among the population. While the Scottish government deliberately avoids those points of reference and tries to build support by arguing for a highly rational cause – the idea of a better society -, the activation of historic experiences in Catalonia supports an emotional attitude towards independence, giving preference to an ap mode.

5.2.2 Legal factors

In both Scotland and Catalonia the 'regional constitutions', i.e. the Scotland Act and the Catalan Statute of Autonomy, provide no devolved competence to conduct a referendum of secession. The competences of the devolved governments extend only to consultations of

\textsuperscript{16} Reserved matters according to the Scotland Act include, among others, benefits and social security, immigration, defense and nuclear energy.

\textsuperscript{17} The center of contemporary history of the Catalan government organized a correspondent symposium in December 2013 provoking a debate on historical manipulation in favor of the independence campaign. \url{http://chcc.gencat.cat/web/content/0-web_aec_chcc/chcc/espanya_contra_catalunya.pdf}

\textsuperscript{18} See \url{http://www.cataloniavotes.eu/why-a-referendum/}, last access 17.08.2014.
the population. 19 Both regions, in consequence, sought to gain the right from the central government to conduct a proper referendum on their own terms.

In Scotland, the discussion on how far devolved powers extended, took place in 2012. In the famous 'Edinburgh Agreement' on 15 October 2012, 20 Alex Salmond and David Cameron came to terms. The 'Section 30 Order' devolves to the Scottish Parliament the competence to legislate for a referendum which must be held before the end of 2014 (Tierney, 2013, p. 362).

In Catalonia, however, the process still goes on. The first attempt by the Catalan Parliament to receive the right in the Scottish way by appealing to the central government was rejected in April 2014 by the majority of the Spanish parliament. As a second attempt, on 17 July 2014, a first draft of a 'Law on Consultation Votes' was approved by the committee in charge in the Catalan Parliament and is currently being checked by the Catalan Council for Constitutional Guarantees in order to be certain they approve a text in line with the current legal framework. 21 But still, the fate of this Law is open.

The conditions of the referendum are also most similar between Scotland and Catalonia as laid out in the respective laws – the Franchise Act (passed in August 2013) and the Independence Referendum Act (passed in December 2013) in Scotland and the Law on Consultation Votes (still pending) in Catalonia. The Scottish Acts, being drafted and passed earlier on, set the conditions for the referenda, thereby respecting the rules on how to hold a referendum as set out in the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act (PPERA). 22, The conditions are by and large mirrored in Catalonia. All people who are resident in Scotland, including EU and commonwealth citizens, from 16 years on have the right to vote. In Catalonia, voting age is the same. Immigrants may vote if they have lived for at least three

20 In the Edinburgh Agreement, the governments of Scotland and UK have agreed to promote an Order in Council under Section 30 of the Scotland Act 1998 in the United Kingdom and Scottish Parliaments to allow a single-question referendum on Scottish independence. The Order would put it beyond doubt that the Scottish Parliament can legislate for that referendum. (Source: http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/Government/concordats/Referendum-on-independence, last access 03. August 2014).
22 The PPERA was passed in November 2000 as a consequence of the first series of referenda held in the UK and established the Electoral Commission as the main oversight body for elections and referenda alike (Select Committee on the Constitution, 2010, p. 8).
years in Catalonia. Furthermore, Catalans living outside Spain are allowed to vote if they register, but Catalans living in the rest of Spain won’t be able to vote. A possible interpretation for this asymmetric franchise rule might be that the supposed identity attachment is expected to be stronger when living outside Spain and weaker when living together with “other” Spaniards – thus admitting more expectedly positive votes.

The question wording was a matter of intense political debate in both regions. For Scotland, Cameron made it a condition for the Edinburgh Agreement that there should be a straightforward question to be answered with ‘yes’ or ‘no’. A third option proposing extended rights of autonomy for Scotland short of independence (‘devo-plus’ or ‘devo-max’, as it was termed in public debate) would presumably have been very attractive to the Scottish electorate and was championed by Salmond as well. But Cameron, probably foreseeing that the exclusion of this third option would increase the chance for a ‘no’ majority, made it clear in the Section 30 Order that there should be only one question with two responses explicitly on the issue of independence (Tierney, 2013, p. 364). The question wording in the Catalan referendum/consultation is twofold: 1. “Do you want Catalonia to be a State? 2. If so, do you want Catalonia to be an independent State?” It is the result of the need to agree between the independence parties CiU and ERC. While ERC had advocated a clear question (“independence, yes or no?”), CiU enforced the staged question. The effect of the twofold question on the voting decisions of Catalans is not clear, but it makes it easier for the Catalan government to edit it as a mere consultative referendum. It also serves the strategy to increase the yes-votes to gain legitimacy in the eyes of other European member States the recognition of which appears to be decisive in the Catalan process.

When comparing the effects on attitudinal matching that the legal conditions of the referendum may have on citizens in Scotland and Catalonia, in spite of major similarities two effects stand out: First, the referendum in Scotland has a solid legal base, with the competences having been devolved explicitly from the central government. While this could be interpreted as a success of the pro-independence movement, quite the opposite effect occurred. The Edinburgh Agreement took emotional pressure from the independence movement, because people got the impression that the central government had no interest in suppressing Scottish wishes and was open for negotiation. The Spanish government chose the contrasting role, strictly opposing any Catalan attempt at legally conducting a
referendum, but thereby igniting an emotional debate and uniting and strengthening the pro-independence powers by providing them with a clear-cut enemy. Second, the question wording, which presumably has a most important effect on the framing process, has ambiguous effects. While the unambiguous formulation in Scotland sends a clear signal for activating either the independence or the unionist frame in an ap mode, the Catalan question offers a lower threshold for a ‘yes’ if people are undecided, i.e. if they act in the rc mode rather than in the ap mode.

5.2.3  Party political factors
Party politics are an important factor for defining the situation. It is regionalist parties who drive the quest for independence of a part of a multilevel state. They may find themselves more or less in opposition to regional branches of statewide parties as well as to parties at the central level (Toubeau & Massetti, 2013; Detterbeck, 2012; Swenden & Maddens, 2009). We thus compare the role and strength of pro-independence parties relative to opposition parties as well as the congruence or incongruence of government coalitions at different levels of government. In terms of intra-regional party competition, the dynamics of the referendum process were primarily driven by the electoral successes in 2011 and 2012 of independentist parties who actively promoted the issue. In reaction, the social-democratic parties which had traditionally been strong in both Scotland and Catalonia, crumbled between the strong electoral competition of regionalist parties on the one hand and the need for loyalty with their statewide party organization on the other, while conservative parties lost appeal due to their consequent attachment to a unionist programme.

In Scotland, after four years of minority government, the SNP gained the absolute majority in the 2011 elections with 69 out of 128 seats. While Scotland traditionally had voted Labour, the SNP campaigned in the past years as filling the social-democratic gap that had been left by Tony Blairs ‘Third Way’. Indeed, inspection of election results shows that SNP gains go mainly at the expense of Labour seats (Hassan & Shaw, 2012, p. 219). In particular since 2007 the role of Scottish Labour has become increasingly complicated with MSP's trying to steer somewhere in between loyalty with UK-wide Labour policies and catching up with increasing demands in Scotland for more autonomy (Hassan & Shaw, 2012, p. 300ff.). Conservatives traditionally play a minor role in Scotland, but in contrast to Labour, they struck deals with the SNP on a case by case basis during minority government, and after the
2011 elections they managed to gain greater independence from the UK-wide party organization. Liberal Democrats were punished by the voters in 2011 for not entering a coalition with the SNP and the Greens in 2007. And the Greens hold a few seats in Holyrood, but play only a marginal role.

Table 2: Seats by Party in Scottish Parliamentary Elections

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNP</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Democrats</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greens</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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In Catalonia, the governing party coalition CiU had traditionally followed a moderate course of claiming more autonomy. After its attempts to negotiate with Madrid for more autonomy and a better position for Catalonia in the fiscal redistribution system had failed with the fiscal pact, (which had been meant to give Catalonia the same rights to collect its own taxes as enjoyed by Navarre and the Basque country), it changed its course from a moderate to an independence seeking nationalism. Following the giant manifestation for self-determination\(^23\) of Catalan citizens on the National Day of Catalonia called “Diada” (11. September 2012) organized by the Assemblea Nacional Catalana (ANC), CiU-leader Artur Mas convoked early elections, hoping to profit from this process by offering the consultation of self-determination. But instead he lost part of his electoral support to the radical nationalist independence party ERC. Therefore, CiU had to make concessions to ERC because the party needed its support to continue governing. Both parties then signed a governability agreement (pacto de gobernabilidad) and the date for the referendum was fixed for 2014. Presently, however, the credibility of the CiU as advocate of the Catalan national interest is strongly shaken due to the corruption scandal about Jordi Pujol, former leader of CiU and political father of Artur Mas, which was first reported in the Media in July 2014.\(^24\)

The current referendum process also affects the opposition parties. Especially PSC, the independent Catalan branch of the socialist PSOE, experienced an internal party crisis: While the PSC (in Catalonia) campaigns somewhat ambiguously in favour of the consultation but

\(^{23}\) “Catalunya, nou estat d’Europa”.

\(^{24}\) Jordi Pujol admitted that he had maintained secret foreign bank accounts for 34 years. He was Catalan president for 23 years (1980-2003).
against independence, the statewide organization of the socialist party (PSOE) in contrast opposes both (consultation and independence) and aims at a federal reform of the Spanish state in order to solve the Catalan question.

**Table 3: Seats by Party in Catalan Parliamentary Elections**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Convergència i Unió (CiU)</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partit Socialistes de Catalunya (PSC-PSOE)</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partit Popular (PP)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iniciativa per Catalunya Verds- Esquerra Unida i Alternativa (ICV)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (ERC)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solidaritat Catalana per la Independència</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ciutadans-Partido de la Ciudadanía (C’s)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidatura d’Unitat Popular (CUP)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
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In terms of vertical concordance, both regions display very similar features, too: While in the early years of requests for autonomy concordant social-democratic governing coalitions at both levels prevailed, this changed around the 2010: at the regional level, then, more radically independentist parties increasingly gained votes, while at central level, conservative parties returned to government. While in particular in the UK, in the early years after devolution the relative smoothness of everyday politics was attributed to the concordance of Labour governments in London and Edinburgh, the ideological incongruence prevailing since 2010/2011 did not hinder an accelerated move towards independence. Rather, it may in a way have contributed to it. This effect is more straightforward in Spain, where the complete rejection of the independence process by the central government is continuously interpreted as ignorance of the “will of the Catalan people” by the pro-independence leaders. A similar effect was avoided by David Cameron’s accommodating strategy. In terms of political ideology, however, a majority of Scots feel deeply alienated to the neo-conservative and neo-liberal economic and social policy that is dictated from London. In this sense, incongruence between the governments may also have contributed to fuelling claims for independence.
Table 4: Multilevel Congruence of government coalitions in UK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UK Legislatures and party in government</th>
<th>Scottish Legislatures and party in government</th>
<th>Congruence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010-today =&gt; Cons. – Lib Dem</td>
<td>2011-today =&gt; SNP</td>
<td>2010-today: no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Multilevel Congruence of Government Coalitions in Spain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spanish Legislatures and party in government</th>
<th>Catalan Legislatures and party in government</th>
<th>Congruence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2010-2012 =&gt; CiU</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-today =&gt; PP</td>
<td>2012-today =&gt; CiU</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of quality of matching, horizontal party competition as well as vertical government incongruence between pro-independence regional parties governing in Scotland and Catalonia and pro-union statewide parties forming regional oppositions, but conservative governments at central level, force the pro-independentist parties to take a clear stance and to invest considerably in persuasion of people. In this sense, the party political situation provides a good match with the independence frame for most voters.

5.2.4 Economic factors

The economic situation is one of the major issues in both debates. Estimates about future benefits in case of independence are a forceful argument in the campaign. As is the nature of estimates and prognoses, however, they are burdened with relatively high imprecision. While at first glance, the economic situation seems to be a natural candidate for stimulating an rc processing mode following a cost-benefit analysis, the imprecision of estimates offers room for interpretation by opinion leaders, making even this aspect susceptible to an ap processing mode. Two aspects feature mainly in the public debate. First, the relative
strength of the region within the nation state at the status quo; second, the expected economic situation under independence. The European economic and debt crisis impacts furthermore on the real economic situation in both regions as well as on perception in the population.

Catalonia is relatively bigger and stronger in Spain than Scotland is in the UK. The Catalan population of 7,56 Mio. inhabitants amounts to 16% of the Spanish population (47,2 Mio.). Scotland has 5,3 Mio. inhabitants and amounts to 8,2% of the UK population (63,2 Mio.).\(^{25}\) Furthermore, Catalonia, with its booming modern industry is a growth motor for the entire Spanish economy. Under the current Spanish fiscal equalization scheme, Catalonia suffers a fiscal imbalance (i.e. the difference between Catalan contributions to Spanish revenues and Spanish public expenditure in Catalonia) of minus 8%-points on average (Bosch 2014, see also Desquens 2003).\(^{26}\) The failed negotiations on the Fiscal Pact in 2012 are used as an argument that the “third way\(^{27}\)” to solve the Catalan question is exhausted. In contrast, the fiscal balance is slightly positive (plus 1 to 1,5%-points) for Scotland, which is in part due to the outdated and relatively inflexible system of distributing fiscal funds according to the so-called 'Barnett Formula' (Trench, 2014).\(^{28}\) Public spending, public revenues and public debt per capita are slightly higher than in UK (Eiser & McGoldrick, 2014, p. 9).

The fiscal imbalance is the centerpiece of the economic argument in the Catalan debate for independence. 'Madrid nos roba' (Madrid robs us) is a recurrent scheme, and the expectation that Catalonia would be better off financially under independence is not doubted by anyone. Similar to other net payers in federal countries like Bavaria in Germany

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\(^{27}\) “La tercera vía” describes also the federal solution proposed by the PSOE as a constitutional reform. Catalan independence parties reject this option.

\(^{28}\) Depending on how the share of North Sea Oil of Scottish income is calculated, it contributes between 8 and 9% of the UK GDP, but receives 9,3% of UK public expenditures (see Government Expenditures and Revenues 2012-13, [http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2014/03/7888](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2014/03/7888), last access 16.08.2014. The Barnett Formula contributes to the imbalance, as the Scottish population share is still calculated with 10,3%, see [http://devolutionmatters.wordpress.com/devolution-the-basics/the-barnett-formula-and-the-financing-of-devolution/](http://devolutionmatters.wordpress.com/devolution-the-basics/the-barnett-formula-and-the-financing-of-devolution/), last access 16.08.2014.
or Lombardia in Italy, considerations of federal solidarity play a minor role, and the imbalanced financial flows are regarded as highly unjust and detrimental to regional wealth and development. This injustice is felt intensely, thus again even this predominantly economic issue does not necessarily contribute to an rc processing mode. Rather, by being dealt with in a highly emotional manner, it can just as well be interpreted as a signal for an ap mode within the independence frame. Furthermore, there are no precise estimates about financial disentanglements between Spain and Catalonia.\textsuperscript{29} Thus, even if an individual activated the rc mode, the current situation would make a positive estimation of the cost-benefit-analysis under independence highly likely.

In Scotland, economic discourses and expectations still circle around the North Sea Oil, although Salmond made quite an effort to de-emphasize the issue. As prognoses on the economic situation of Scotland after independence vary between scenarios where 100\% of North Sea oil revenues accrue to the Scottish government and others where the share is much smaller, everyone can pick and choose the numbers (s)he likes. If revenues are shared according to population ratios, Scotland would receive much less than if they were shared according to territory. The high insecurity concerning a future economic situation extends not only to North Sea oil revenues, however, but just as well to the currency question, debts, pension funds or social security (Eiser & McGoldrick, 2014, p. 7). None of the many expertises on the subject matter offers any definite numbers (how could they?), and people are acutely aware that in case of independence, their economic fate would essentially depend on negotiations with the UK government. This insecurity provides a clear obstacle to the independence frame and the ap mode.

"Darling’s aim was to reinforce the messages that have put No there, in particular the economic uncertainties, from currency to pensions, that many associate with independence. He didn’t really need to move beyond that message. Salmond and the Yes side are behind. They need to do something to shift the terms of the debate. But Salmond spent most of his time responding to that message of uncertainty and trying to offer viewers reassurance, both in responding to Darling’s cross-examination and audience questions." (Charlie Jeffery, commenting on the TV Debate between Alex Salmond, First Minister of Scotland (SNP) and Alistair Darling, Leader of the 'Better Together Campaign (Labour), in the State-of-the-Debate-Blog of the Research

\textsuperscript{29} A report of the Spanish Department of Foreign Affairs and a recently published report on the commercial relations between Spain and Catalonia go a bit more deeply. Both, however, pick up the potential boycott of Catalan products as one of the central topics. Generalitat de Catalunya, Consell Assessor per a la Transició Nacional (28\textsuperscript{th} July 2014): “Les relacions comercials entre Catalunya i Espanya”; Gobierno de España, Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores y de Cooperación (February 2014): “Catalonia in Spain. For Democratic Coexistence”.
The differential effect on the matching mechanism of the economic situation in both regions affects is even reinforced by the recent European fiscal and economic crisis which hit Spain in general far worse than the UK. The Catalan government exploits the deep impact of the crisis on Catalonia to convince citizens of the necessity of change. It is easy to connect independence with hopeful emotions of a better life when (young) people are desperate and without perspectives. This part of the Catalan population is reached by the arguments of unjust treatment by the central state, because they feel betrayed and have nothing to lose. In Scotland, in contrast, the crisis was felt less intensely and was never used as an argument for independence.

5.2.5 EU Membership

For both regions, the question whether they would remain/ would be accepted as/ could become EU members is of crucial importance for the credible viability of the independence option. Consequently, both regional governments have started intense lobbying exercises in Brussels, trying to promote the independence idea and to gain support from the European Union. European institutions have, however, so far not issued a clear opinion on their position towards the independence movements. In terms of prospective EU membership, the situations in Scotland and Catalonia display relevant differences. Spain is a faithful member of the EMU and thus prospects for Catalonia merely focus on its potential status, but not on questions of currency. For Scotland, in contrast, the situation is far more unstable. The conservative government in London currently campaigns for the upcoming national parliamentary elections (in 2015) with a referendum for leaving the EU. The rise of the Ukip party aptly expresses the potential among British voters for this option. If UK should really leave the EU, then all Scottish citizens would lose their status as EU citizens, too – an unpleasant perspective for the EU-friendly Scottish government. Next, if Scotland became independent and remained EU member, it might also try to join the EMU, thus opening an alternative to potentially complicated negotiations with rest-UK about a monetary union for the sterling pound. This alternative is, however, currently no option in public debate.

The effects of those different circumstances on the quality of matching are ambiguous. Prospects for EU membership and Euro as currency are more straightforward for Catalonia
than for Scotland. On the other hand, given the high stakes of a possible EU exit of UK, independence might appear as an attractive option to safeguard EU membership for Scots.

5.3 Cost-benefit analysis

It is impossible to make a general cost-benefit analysis for the expected utility of two possible outcomes – independence or remaining in the union. Even economic factors are highly unclear and open for interpretation and emotional load. Furthermore, depending on their individual preference function, people may attach a high value to cultural, historical or party ideological considerations. Whatever the individual calculus may be, future benefits are burdened with a high insecurity, depending on individual risk adversity and discount factor on future payoffs (the 'shadow of the future').

In comparing utility from the current status quo (member of the union) with expected utility from a potential future state of the world (independence), the expected utility for independence relative to the utility for union increases if either the perceived current payoff is very low; and/ or the discount factor for future payoffs is low. The most important factor in such a calculus is however the high insecurity of future payoffs. This may lead in both directions. If framed correspondingly, and if the current situation is perceived as rather bad, a high insecurity may give rise to hope and speculation for a better future. If, on the other hand, the current situation is perceived as rather good, a high insecurity about the future may stimulate risk adversity and reluctance to change the situation.

Indeed, we find in Catalonia the combination of a subjective perception of a bad status quo (net payer position, deep impact of economic crisis) with a hopeful interpretation of potential consequences of independence, thus resulting in a higher expected utility of independence than a continuation of the status quo. In Scotland, we find the opposite combination of factors: people subjectively perceive their situation as rather good (no oppression, net receiver position) and public debate emphasizes the risks over the possibilities of insecure economic decisions, thus resulting in a lower expected utility of independence compared to a continuation of the status quo.

6 Conclusion

In trying to explain different approval levels for the independence option in the two referenda in Scotland and Spain in autumn 2014, we treat aggregate approval rates as the
result of individual decisions. In explaining those individual decisions, we apply a social-psychological model of attitude-behaviour relations as formulated by Russell Fazio and later by Hartmut Esser. In this model, we distinguish two modes of processing the information that people perceive in a given situation – an automatic processing mode (ap) and a rational choice mode. Following Esser, we assume that the ap mode is the default option of information processing because it is 'cheaper'. People would thus vote for independence if they had a stable pro-independence attitude and applied the ap mode. Conversely, they vote for remaining in the union if they have a stable pro-union attitude and apply the rc mode. To the degree that the match between the situational signals and the existing attitude is getting worse, the probability increases that we change from an ap to an rc mode, actively calculating the expected utility of both decision alternatives (frames of reference).

We identified three steps of moving from attitude to behaviour: priming, matching, and cost-benefit analysis, and investigated the likely effect of each of those steps on the selection of the independence over the unionist frame. We formulated three hypotheses and tested them by comparing situative conditions and their interpretation by opinion leaders between Scotland and Catalonia.

In relation to H1 we found that indeed pro-independence priming is far more consistent in Catalonia than in Scotland which is consistent with the higher pro-independence poll results in Catalonia. In Scotland, in contrast, media exposure of the population to the topic of independence is high. The rather balanced public debate, emphasizing with equal importance pro- and contra-arguments, fails to provide people with a consistently positive evaluation of the independence option. Consequently, polling results pro independence are lower than in Barcelona.

Second, in terms of quality of matching of situational factors with the frame initially activated (Hypothesis 2), we compared a set situational factors – cultural and historical factors, legal factors, party political factors and economic factors. We found that cultural and historical factors as they are given, but even more so in the interpretation by opinion on historic events or periods of repression, and on the ideological frame of building a better society instead, appeals more to a rc than to an ap mode, with the final frame selection still open at that stage of reflexion. Legally, the referendum is far better legitimised in Scotland than in Catalonia, which should make the match with the independence frame better in
Scotland. On the other hand, interpretation of the insecure legal situation by opinion leaders in Spain as expression of an oppressive behaviour by the central government promotes the independence frame as well. In both regions the pro-independence parties face strong opposition by statewide parties in their region as well as by conservative governments of the central state. This perceived opposition, however, makes a perfect match with the pro-independence frame in both regions. Economically, Catalonia is stronger than the rest of Spain, holding a position of net-payer which is consistently exploited by opinion-leaders to raise anti-Spanish emotions. The deep impact of the EU economic crisis is similarly interpreted that Catalonia would have been better off on its own. Scotland is a bit weaker in macroeconomic indicators than the UK as a whole, making Scotland slightly better off in the fiscal redistribution scheme according to the Barnett formula. There, the insecurity of financial disentanglements in terms of currency, revenues, debt and pension funds is emphasized by politicians from both sides, thus providing an imperfect match which encourages reflective change from an ap to an rc processing mode. The acceptance of independence by the EU, finally, is an important factor for both regions. While in Spain, the way to the EU might be more straightforward, for Scotland the upcoming British referenda on exit from the EU makes the combination of independence from UK and EU membership even more attractive. In this sense, the vague position of the EU towards independence can be evaluated as a positive match with the independence frame in both cases.

Thirdly, the cost-benefit analysis cannot be estimated precisely. The expected utility of a future state of independence will supposedly be higher than the current utility from the status quo within the union if

a) the status quo is subjectively evaluated as rather bad and

b) the shadow of the future is interpreted in a risk-friendly manner as an opportunity while the potential risks are de-emphasized.

Indeed, it could be shown that both factors differ between Catalonia and Scotland. People in Catalonia tend to perceive their current situation as relatively bad in consequence of the EU-wide economic crisis, but the high insecurity about prospective economic effects of independence is interpreted in a positive way – things can get no worse, but only better. In contrast, in Scotland, people judge the status quo as relatively good, which - in combination
with a risk-adverse interpretation of the high insecurity of prospective economic effects of independence – leads people in tendency to vote against a change of the status quo. Table 6 below summarizes the findings relative to the hypotheses as stated above. Indeed all factors promoting a vote for independence are given in Catalonia, while in Scotland the picture is mixed. This finding is consistent with the different levels of approval for independence as displayed in opinion polls in the introduction and confirms in tendency our hypotheses.

An emphasis on emotion seems thus a rational strategy for political opinion leaders if they want to win a referendum of independence, whereas an appeal to people’s rationality encourages a rational choice information processing mode which increases the chances for a vote for the status quo.

Table 6: Summary of empirical evidence with respect to hypotheses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Scotland</th>
<th>Catalonia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Priming</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>media coverage</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>positive evaluation</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Matching</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) culture and history</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) legal situation</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) party politics</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) economy</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Cost-benefit analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• bad status quo/ good status quo</td>
<td>good s.q. =&gt; -</td>
<td>bad s.q. =&gt; +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ambiguity of prognoses as opportunity/ risk</td>
<td>ambiguity as risk =&gt; -</td>
<td>ambiguity as opportunity =&gt; +</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7 References


