

the iafor

journal of cultural studies

Volume 4 — Issue 1 — Spring 2019

Editor: Holger Briel



ISSN: 2187-4905

iafor

The IAFOR Journal of Cultural Studies
Volume 4 – Issue – I

IAFOR Publications

IAFOR Journal of Cultural Studies

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Sakae 1-16-26 – 201, Naka Ward, Aichi, Japan 460-0008

IAFOR Journal of Cultural Studies

Volume 4 – Issue 1 – Spring 2019

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ISSN: 2187-4905

Online: jocs.iafor.org

Cover: Kylli Kittus @kyllik-unsplash

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Table of Contents

Notes on Contributors	1
Editorial	3
Spain: For Catalonia! Christoph Menke and Alexander García Düttmann	5
The Whys and Wherefores of Spain's Current Political Crisis: Catalonia... Again Michael Strubell	7
Thinking About the Political Situation in Catalonia Montserrat Camps-Gaset	27
The Politics of the Peninsular 'Patric': "In Spain There are no Political Prisoners!" Cornelis Martin Renes	39
The Referendum for Catalan Independence and its Aftermath: A Personal Account Bill Phillips	53
Friend or Foe: An Analysis of the Contribution National Identity Hegemony Plays in the Acceptance of Asylum Seekers in Australia, Spain and Catalonia Amanda Collins	67

Notes on Contributors:

Montserrat Camps-Gaset received her PhD from the University of Barcelona with a thesis on Ancient Greek Festivals. She also has a degree in Theology. In 1989, she became Senior Lecturer at the University of Barcelona. In 1992 and 1993 she taught at the University of Leipzig. She has published many translations from Greek, English and German into Catalan and Spanish. Her main interests are Mythology, Early Christianity, Early Byzantine authors, and Classical Traditions, including folklore, women studies and national identity. She is a member of several societies for Classical Studies and for Literature, such as the Catalan Pen Club. Since 2008, she has been a member of CEAT's Executive Committee.

Amanda Collins is in her final year of studying for a Bachelor of Social Science majoring in Sociology at Southern Cross University, Australia. In 2018, based on the merit of her academic achievements, she was awarded a scholarship to complete an independent research project in Barcelona. She is an advocate for human rights who wishes to pursue a career in social research to expose issues of injustice and discrimination affecting populations in the world today.

Alexander García Düttmann After growing up in Barcelona, Alexander García Düttmann studied in Frankfurt am Main with Alfred Schmidt and in Paris with Jacques Derrida. Since 1992, he has lived in San Francisco, New York, Melbourne, and London, and has taught at Stanford University, The University of Essex, Monash University, New York University, Middlesex University, Goldsmiths College, and the Royal College of Art. In 2012, García Düttmann published *Naive Art: An Essay on Happiness* (August Verlag), a series of fragments set in San Francisco. Happiness, the author contends, lies in the creation of everyday habits that allow one to conceive of an idea and break with established conventions. In 2015, García Düttmann published *What Does Art Know? For An Aesthetics Of Resistance* (Konstanz University Press). In this book, he claims that art is a form of thinking and that for this reason it does not produce knowledge. Alexander García Düttmann has translated some of Derrida's works into German, and Benjamin's essay on Julien Green into French. He has also edited *Theory and Practice*, an unpublished seminar by Jacques Derrida on Marx (Éditions Galilée 2017). *What is Contemporary Art? On Political Ideology* (Konstanz University Press) appeared in 2017, *Love Machine. The Origin of the Work of Art* (Konstanz University Press) in 2018.

Christoph Menke is Professor for Philosophy at the University of Frankfurt. He studied philosophy and German at Heidelberg and Konstanz, where he received his PhD. His Habilitation followed in 1995 in Berlin and from 1997-99 he went on to teach as an Associate Professor at the New School for Social Research, New York. From 1999–2008 he was Professor for Philosophy at the University of Potsdam, moving to Frankfurt in 2009. Recent publications of his include: *Recht und Gewalt* (2011), *Estética y negatividad* (2011), *Die Kraft der Kunst* (2013) and *Kritik der Rechte* (2015).

Bill Phillips is a Senior Lecturer in the Modern Languages and Literatures Department at the University of Barcelona, Catalonia. Over the years he has lectured on almost all areas of literature in English, but poetry remains his principal teaching interest. He has published widely on poetry, ecocriticism, ecofeminism, gender studies, science fiction and crime fiction. Together with other members of the Australian Studies Centre, based at the University of Barcelona, he has recently been researching postcolonial crime fiction. Recent

published articles have been on crime fiction and religion, Australian crime fiction and immigration, the novels of Peter Temple and crime fiction as a global phenomenon.

Cornelis Martin Renes is a Lecturer in Literatures in English at the University of Barcelona. His main teaching areas have been English poetry and postcolonial studies with an emphasis on the antipodean settler states (Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa). He co-directs the Australian and Transnational Studies Centre (CEAT) at the University of Barcelona, which was recognised as an official Research Centre in 2000, and has been engaged in the organisation of yearly conferences on matters Australian and projects on Transnational literatures. He currently holds the positions of Lecturer, Co-Director of the Australian Studies Centre, and Chair of the European Association for Studies of Australia (EASA), and he maintains steady contact with Australian academia through visiting fellowships.

Michael Strubell (AKA Miquel) holds degrees in Psychology from the Universities of Oxford and Autònoma de Barcelona and an MSC in Psychology of Education (Institute of Education, University of London). After 7 years working in secondary schools, he was employed for 19 years by the Catalan government where he held several posts of responsibility. He then worked as a lecturer, as well as being secretary and then Director of the Chair in Multilingualism, at the Open University of Catalonia (Barcelona) until his retirement in 2014. He has been a consultant for the Council of Europe and OSCE on missions to a number of former Soviet countries to advise on national minority issues. He has conducted, directed and published research, largely in the areas of language planning and minority language communities, either with EU co-funding or under contract from the EU. Though having never been a member of any political party, he has been active in the past 15 years in Catalonia's democratic movement towards independence.

Editorial

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the special *IAFOR Journal of Cultural Studies*, Volume 4 – Issue 1 on Catalonia. At a time (April 2019) when all of Europe (and some parts of the rest of the world) is riveted by the Brexit spectacle, it serves well to keep in mind that Europe is undergoing other, perhaps even more fundamental, crises as well. I do not mean only financial issues (first Greece, and then Italy), but rather more deep-seated ones such as the now somewhat defunct Occupy movement, the, at the time of this writing, ongoing Gilets jaunes protests in France, and right-wing populist accession to the European parliament. Over the last few years, leading intellectuals have also intervened, with individuals such as Yanis Varoufakis, David Graeber, Thomas Piketty and, of course, Slavoj Žižek weighing in on how Europe is to govern itself.

Superseding and at the same time concretising these issues is the continuing constitutional and secessionist crisis between Catalonia and the rest of Spain. In November 2017, a number of Catalan leaders went into exile, others were arrested due to a Catalan independence referendum being declared illegal by the Spanish state. It took the Spanish judicial system until February 2019 to open court proceedings against these prisoners which brought back international news coverage of the crisis.

The *IAFOR Journal of Cultural Studies* is not a political science journal, and therefore it is not so much the purely political aspects which are of interest here. Rather, this issue examines the Catalonia topic from a cultural studies viewpoint. Discussions focus on philosophical bearings of the crisis and its working-through by means of historico-cultural and anthropological-personal interrogation and intervention.

In the first article, “Spain: For Catalonia!”, originally published in 2017 in the German weekly *Die Zeit*, Christoph Menke and Alexander García Düttmann philosophically link the crisis in Catalonia with a certain kind of thinking about overall democracy. They strongly reject a purely legalist approach to the subject and reclaim a wider understanding of democracy, encompassing and welcoming spaces coming from inside and necessarily outside of constitutional positionings. Their article functions as an important foundation for the other contributions to follow.

Michael Strubell’s “The Whys and Wherefores of Spain’s Current Political Crisis: Catalonia... Again” discusses the history of the conflict, something that has been swept under the rug of actionism on both sides. He delineates the historical meanderings which have always been present on the Iberian peninsula and differentiates various strains of Catalan culture from other regional practices, thus leading to the crisis of today.

In the next article, “Thinking About the Political Situation in Catalonia”, Montserrat Camps-Gaset introduces her readers to the more recent developments, starting with Franco’s death in 1975. Her text demonstrates that since then, the Spanish state has failed to implement the wishes of at least some of its subjects and introduced a worsening policy of autonomy, encouraging an at times violent backlash against justifiable opposition. Echoing the first article, she views the crisis as an opportunity to imagine a new European order.

Cornelis Martin Renes' "The Politics of the Peninsular 'Patric': 'In Spain There are no Political Prisoners!'" explores the Catalan independence movement vis-à-vis a Spanish legalist system which serves to impose its constitutionalist and monarchical order and removes the separatist cause from the political arena by criminalising it. For this Spanish nationalist discourse, he coins and then explicates the phrase "the Spanish *Patric*".

In the text "The Referendum for Catalan Independence and its Aftermath: A Personal Account", Bill Phillips gives a fascinating and very personal version of the days surrounding the referendum from September 2017 to January 2018. He provides insightful and eyewitness testimony of a people's wish to express themselves freely at the ballot box and how the situation escalated frightfully.

Lastly, Amanda Collins' "Friend or Foe: An Analysis of the Contribution National Identity Hegemony Plays in the Acceptance of Asylum Seekers in Australia, Spain and Catalonia" widens the issue by comparing one of the hallmarks of an open world – the way in which differing governments handle immigration. She examines the construction of each national identity and its influence on public perception of asylum seekers, comparing it with empirical data gathered during observation in Sydney, Australia and Barcelona, Catalonia. She finds evidence that sentiments held towards asylum seekers by members of a national community could be attributed to the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion originally created by a "national identity".

Holger Briel
Editor

Spain: For Catalonia!

Christoph Menke, Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany
Alexander Garcia Düttmann, Berlin University of the Arts, Germany

When does the confrontation between the government in Barcelona and the government in Madrid stop being an intra-Spanish issue? When one realises that the task at hand is neither contempt for the constitution nor a backwards-oriented issue of sectionalism that Spain has to suppress. And if one realises that Europe's self-understanding is at stake here, the confrontation becomes an issue of the self-understanding of a European democracy.

This is not only about contempt for the constitution. Because democracy can only be alive if it occupies a place inside and also outside of the constitution, the only place from where impulses towards changes in the constitution can come. As problematic as the relationship between an inside and an outside of the constitution can be in a democracy if democracy wants to shield itself from antidemocratic tendencies and pure arbitrariness, it is nonetheless also clear that a legalism denying the relation between an outside of the constitution and the constitution itself has already given up on democracy and put blind forces in the place of historical development.

Democracy is not a given. Politics are only democratic if they are prepared to reflect upon the drawing of borders between their interior and exterior and to negotiate them; that is to say to recognise their self-understanding as dynamic. Democracy only deserves to be called that if it is willing to expose itself to such dangers. When those who govern today's Europe from Brussels, Paris, and Berlin side with the Spanish government in the name of “unity” and “law”, they thereby position themselves against democracy. They suspect that the conflict in Catalonia is also a conflict about the principles of their own governance: the submission of politics under the existing status quo, the degradation of democracy to a powerless business, a business defined and regulated in advance (yet by whom?). They define Europe via the principle of stardom and against democracy. Thus, to side with Catalonia means to side with democracy.

The conflict in Catalonia is not just about backwards-oriented sectionalism. Whoever as a democrat witnessed the participation in the most recent Catalan referendum will not be able to deny his/her enthusiasm about the fact that so many young and old voters, belonging to all levels of society, refused to be intimidated and entered the election booths so as to protest against attempts at intimidation.

They waited patiently and peacefully, oftentimes for several hours, to cast their vote for or against a declaration of independence for Catalonia. As Kant declared, “enthusiasm is the idea of the good with affect.” In this instance, affect was sparked in the observers not so much by the impressive commitment to the project of independence but rather the inkling that this was about much bigger things, no matter whether the partisans of a Catalonian Republic were aware of it or not. It was all about a lively understanding of democracy, about a democratic praxis, which in the final analysis depends upon the conviction that Europe can

be more than the name for a politics working for the abdication of politics, can be more than a name for a neoliberal alliance with capital.

When today's European governors side with the Spanish state against Catalonia they reward Spain for the fact that in the past decade Spain, like almost no other European state, has shown itself to be a good European in this ill-conceived manner. The voting Catalans on the other hand had hoped for solidarity from another Europe. To be for Catalonia is to be for another Europe.

This is also about the question of identity, now urgently echoing across all of Europe, which one might disdainfully dismiss as an outdated question in order to hide one's helplessness or to try and settle it with an anti-foreigner stance. Catalans do not disseminate an ethnic understanding of identity but do fight against xenophobia. Isn't it time to reformulate the concept of a Europe of regions, which is of a conservative origin, into a potent instrument of a new progressive politics?

The refusal of the Catalan president to declare, or not to declare, the republic with an unequivocal yes or no eludes the rehearsed political rules of the game. This refusal is neither a sign of insecurity nor a mere ruse, but a brave move heralding a politics which refuses to follow the operative model and crumble under the pressures from the outside. This kind of politics aims at reopening a temporal space for an exchange so far not held. The unrestrained application of paragraph 155 of the Spanish constitution by the Spanish Prime Minister must on the other hand be seen as the act of a sovereign deciding on the state of emergency because he cannot endure the openness of the political space. In order to do so, Rajoy must reinterpret the brave opening of the political space which Puigdemont had effected (also against the expectations from his own supporters) as an unambiguous decision; he must declare Puigdemont the enemy so as to block off the possibility of politics.

Criticism of the Catalan independence movement aims at its mere economic selfishness, in whose name, however, it is then called to order along the lines of *realpolitik*. It is aimed at the private interests of its political leaders and the political naiveté of its young members. Yet if one thinks such criticism pertinent, one blinds oneself to the movement's democratic passion. One remains unable to confront the fact that the increasingly massive resistance against the Europe of the rulers who tolerate and support Rajoy, which is also a resistance against Europe's surrender to globalisation, is triggered by extreme-right populists and neo-Nazis who have entered the parliaments.

If one wants to oppose this fatal alternative, one has to come down on Catalonia's side. One should trust enthusiasm and not mistake it for fanaticism.

NB: This article was originally published in German in *DIE ZEIT* (Nr. 44/2017, October 26, 2017. [https://www.zeit.de/2017/44/spanien-katalonien-unabhaengigkeit-demokratie-europa.](https://www.zeit.de/2017/44/spanien-katalonien-unabhaengigkeit-demokratie-europa)) Translation by Alexander Garcia Düttmann, Holger Briel and Michael High.

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The Whys and Wherefores of Spain's Current Political Crisis: Catalonia... Again

Michael Strubell, formerly from Open University of Catalonia, Spain

Abstract

In recent years the media have been full of dramatic headlines on Catalonia. At the time of writing (July 2018) there is a serious institutional crisis unfolding daily. Extracts from media reports serve as a backdrop to this paper.

The paper seeks to provide the background needed to understand what has driven events as far as the current situation: a declaration of independence, an immediate takeover of direct rule, with dismissal of the Catalan government (now part in exile, part in pre-trial detention), forced – for many, illegal – elections, and every effort being made by Spain to prevent a majority in the new Parliament from forming a pro-independence government and implementing an independent state.

This means a brief overview of Catalonia's 1000-year history, with particular attention to more recent events, and especially since the long-standing dictator, Generalissimo Franco, died peacefully in his bed in 1975. The three-way fugue since 2010, of Catalan civil society, Catalan politicians and Spain's leadership (with the aid of the courts), will frame the latter part of the presentation.

Keywords: Catalonia, independence, Spain, politics

Introduction

“In 2010 Spain’s Constitutional Court issued a landmark ruling that inadvertently laid the ground for Sunday’s independence referendum in Catalonia” (Calamur 2017). “In the largest demonstration Barcelona has ever seen, 1.5 million citizens according to the Catalan Police marched in Catalonia’s capital after the banner ‘Catalonia, Europe’s new state’” (Pericay Coll 2012). “In a vote in the regional Parliament, Catalan lawmakers voted 72 to 63 to a plan for independence from Spain by 2017. The Spanish Prime Minister promised to halt the move for independence” (Gray 2015) “Spain is enduring the most serious challenge to its territorial integrity since October 1934, when the Catalan authorities rose against the democratically elected government of the second republic” (Dempsey 2017). “Apart from Brexit, this is Europe’s greatest challenge since the wars in the Balkans” (Adams 2017). The media are full of dramatic headlines on Catalonia.

This paper is based on the presentation I was invited to make at the 2018 IAFOR Conference on Global Studies in Barcelona. Had the venue been elsewhere, or had the Conference been a couple of years ago, it would probably have made little sense to present it. But events in Catalonia, as outlined in the abstract, have been making news headlines for the past few years. My task is to give you a brief overview of Catalonia’s 1000-year history, without which it would be impossible to understand the recent, sometimes dramatic events here.

It is structured in several parts: A brief history of Catalonia; The lead-up to the declaration of independence; October 1 and the aftermath; The sociodemographic context of the process; and, concluding remarks.

A Brief History of Catalonia

For anyone living in the New World, a thousand years may seem a very long time, but others might wish to point out that the Phoenicians, the Greeks and the Romans left their marks in what we today call “Catalonia” well over 2,000 years ago, and that Homo sapiens was known to have lived here 22,000 years ago (and the Neanderthals doubled that figure) [see figure 1]. What is today Catalonia was the main Greek colony in the peninsula, and the starting point for the Roman occupation. And Catalonia’s mountain passes saw Hannibal’s elephants cross them, as well as countless other invading armies, and waves of colonisation, in both directions.

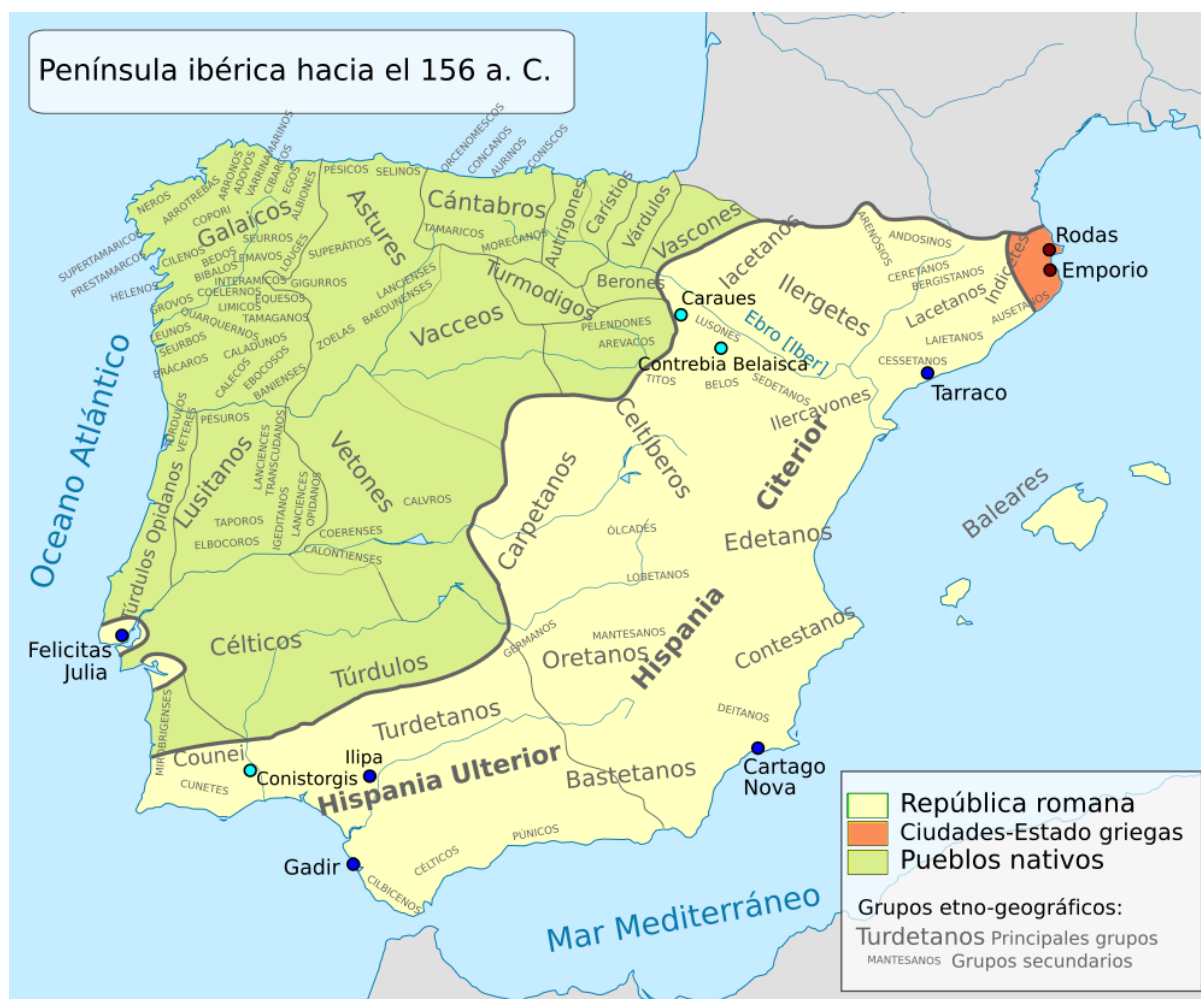


Figure 1. The Iberian Peninsula, ca. 156 BC

Source: From Iberia 156BC-pt.svg: Alcides Pinto (discusión · contribuciones) derivative work: Rowanwindwhistler (discusión) - Iberia 156BC-pt.svg, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=44018976>

The 1000-year figure has been chosen because that marked the creation of what today we could call an “independent state”, though in feudal times political structures had little to do with the structure of today’s democracies, however imperfect.

At that time the local leading noble, the Count of Barcelona, controlled an area spanning the eastern, Mediterranean end of the Pyrenees mountains (and of the so-called *Marca Hispanica*). It was a buffer zone, a “march”, between the Franks to the north and the Moorish kingdoms to the south. His overlord – to which his family had paid tributes for generations, basically in return for protection from enemy attacks – was a Frankish king, Hug Capet, whose father had failed to come to the Catalans’ help when the Caliphate of Córdoba (the Muslims the time controlled nearly all of the centre and south of the Iberian peninsula) razed Barcelona to the ground in 985. In response, count Borrell II decided to stop paying the Franks their tributes as a vassal (Balcells, 1995. p. 3): in effect, then, in 988 AD he declared independence. Nearly 300 years ago, the historian Nott (1705: 30) had placed Catalonia’s effective sovereignty a century earlier, under Wilfred the Hairy: in 884 the Frankish Emperor

Conqueror southwards (Valencia) and across the sea (Balearic Islands) (Sapiens 2012). Each newly occupied territory was granted to a son, as a separate kingdom, though they later came under a joint leadership (and on accession, heirs would be required to swear not to split up Aragon, Valencia and Catalonia).

Each of these territories kept its mint and its tariffs, developed its own laws (Catalonia developed a widely-used Maritime law), especially civil law, and governing property ownership, inheritance and similar key issues.

From the mid-14th century, in each of the territories, institutions of self-government (always under the king) were set up, initially for tax-raising purposes. In Catalonia it was called the “*Diputació general*”, or “*Generalitat*”, and Catalonia’s government retains this name. Its seat of government, the Palace of the Generalitat, in the heart of the city, was established for this purpose in 1400 (in a large building that was soon rebuilt in an elaborate Gothic style).

Another dynastic alliance was forged in the late 15th century, between King Ferdinand of Aragon (including, therefore, Catalonia, crippled by successive plagues brought in from the east, mainly because of Barcelona’s trading economy) and Isabelle, the heiress to the much more potent Kingdom of Castile of the day. The Catholic kings brought virtually all of what is now Spain under a single, shared crown. Their grandson, Emperor Charles, had wide dominions in Europe, and a rapidly growing set of colonies in central and southern America (Balcells 1994: 21 and ff.). Of significance is Balcells’ remark: «Only as a normal nation can Catalonia contribute to the difficult building of Europe, which needs all types of contribution». (p. 28)

For several centuries thereafter the territories of the Kingdom of Aragon each retained their laws, currency, trade tariffs, etc. in the old “confederal” tradition (Elliott 2002 [1963], p. 78). Each new count of Barcelona had to earn allegiance, by negotiating updates in Catalonia’s laws, whereas the Castilian tradition was based on the divine right of kings: the Cortes did not pass laws (Elliott, 1984, p. 218). There was no “Act of Union” along the British model.

The Catalan Parliament, which met regularly with the king, though less so in the 17th century, consisted of three chapters: the military chapter, which brought together the representatives of the nobility; the ecclesiastic chapter, with the representatives of the religious hierarchy, and the royal chapter, with the representatives of the cities and towns of the dominion of the monarch (Elliott, 1984, p. 218). However, farmers and the urban middle classes were excluded (as were, needless to say, the former serfs, and the working classes) (Sapiens 2010). Members were appointed to chair this institution in rotation between the three chapters: and the current president of Catalonia is the 131st name on that long list.

This was retained despite a war – and a short-lived Catalan Republic – in the mid-17th century, in which the Viceroy, the Count of Santa Coloma, was assassinated, and the Castilian king, forced to choose, relinquished Portugal and retained (most of) Catalonia (Elliott, 1984, p. 450).

Home rule was wiped out at the (tragic) end of the War of Spanish Succession. The Catalans (spurred on by an agreement with England) in the main supported the Habsburg pretender, against the Bourbon pretender who was soon cast as a centralist with a uniformist, nation-

building plan that had, in fact, started in the previous century (Count-Duke Olivares and his raping and looting troops were and are not revered in Catalonia). Supporters of the Habsburgs – whose colour was yellow – were rounded up and hanged even for wearing yellow ribbons (Tedo 2018). And following the Treaty of Utrecht the Catalans were left to their fate by the Allies. The Bourbon pretender, Philip V (of Castile, IV of Aragon) took Barcelona after a bitter 14-month siege, on September 11, 1714 with French assistance. That date has since become Catalonia's National Day (. . . and many Catalans, to this day, call the WC “Philip's Place”).

The victorious king abolished Catalan institutions, brought in government on the Castilian model, and gave secret instructions to surreptitiously introduce Spanish into administration and other fields, instead of Catalan (Strubell, 2011, p. 126). He let households own a single knife, which had to be chained to the dining room table. He ended the healthy Catalan tradition of rotational terms of office and imposed life-long political appointments (for mayors, for instance) which effectively sowed the seeds of corruption, a scourge which still exists on a considerable scale in Spain.

And the Catalans since then have periodically protested against the continuing effort to assimilate Catalonia under the Castilians' conception of Spain, as exemplified graphically in an 1852 map [Illustration 3]. They wrote unheeded demands to monarchs in the 18th (1760) and 19th centuries (1885), and most recently, to prime ministers (e.g. BF/ACN 2013), Espada 2015). In 1919, at Versailles, in spite of the 18,000 volunteers Catalonia contributed to the Allied armies, the rights of the Catalans were once more overlooked. In 1924, in Geneva, Spain vetoed Catalonia's demands for liberty before the League of Nations (Consell Nacional Català, 1945).



Figure 3. “Political Map of Spain, 1854”

Source: (Torres Villegas 1985, p. 332)

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/e5/T.V.%281857%29_%287%29_MAPA_POLITICO_DE_ESPA%C3%91A.jpg

Catalans wrote to the United Nations (Consell Nacional Català, 1945):

Catalonia has been an oppressed nationality under the Monarchy, under the Spanish Republic, and under Franco. The removal of Franco alone will not solve the Catalan national problem, as it was not solved by the overthrowing alone of the Bourbon Monarchy.

In spite of being subjected to civil wars, military coups, and deeply-rooted derision for nearly four centuries, the Catalan people still exist. Some say this is a (little) miracle, a quirk of fate. Instead of being assimilated into Castilian (that is, Spanish) culture, language, traditions, the Catalans have survived (e.g. Strubell 2008: 2 . . . without being independent. I myself think that it is amazing the Catalans are not independent, like so many similar peoples across Europe.

This survival is partly because of the collective self-esteem of a growing urban middle class, centred around a thriving city, Barcelona, that did not reject its historical and cultural roots in the second half of the 19th century: rather, it delved into them and gradually rediscovered with amazement and pride a medieval history and a thriving literature which had been hidden for over a century.

The growth of Barcelona, in itself, is an interesting phenomenon. The old feudal laws in Catalonia that prevented Catalan farming families from being able to accumulate capital thanks to surpluses in production were largely abolished by an important ruling by the king, the “Sentence of Guadalupe”, in 1486, that put an end to several civil wars in Catalonia, and allowed farmers (those whose heads had not been lopped off in the process) to buy exemption from abusive feudal conditions (see Primer Congrés d'Història Moderna de Catalunya, p. 192). In some parts of Europe peasants did not achieve the same result until the 18th or 19th centuries (see Marfany, 2016, 25). Over the years, farmers claimed the right to become owners of their land, and even before that point, in return for the use of the land, they paid a fixed amount, rather than a proportion, of their harvested products. These two facts encouraged them to invest in improving the land (much of which is hilly): building terraces, digging wells, buying oxen and better tools, and so on. These improvements let them advance from a subsistence economy to producing and selling surpluses, which in turn led to expanding craft industries and greater trade through the market towns. As from the 18th century, in particular, agricultural production soared as did health conditions in general, and surplus labour moved from the land into Barcelona and other cities (as elsewhere in Europe). The seeds for the 19th century industrial revolution were thus sown in Catalonia.

Over history Catalans have learned to rely very little on the authorities in general, and the Spanish government in particular. Catalans are often said to have an anarchist streak in them. They built their own cultural organisations privately (the Liceu opera house, Palau de la Música Catalana, the Sagrada Família cathedral, the Hospital de Sant Pau, a host of smaller institutions such as theatres, club houses, etc.) and supported Modernist – art nouveau – Noucentista and avant-garde artistic movements (Eaude 2011), while it was the authorities in Spain that, in the main, paid for the Teatro Real or similar structures in the capital. In 1848 Catalans built the earliest railway funded privately for commercial reasons (Contel et al, 2011. 145), whereas the first railway in Spain, paid by the Spanish authorities, first and foremost allowed the queen to travel in comfort to her summer residence (in Aranjuez).

Catalans traditionally sought private employment and, to this day, the proportion of the working population that are civil servants is strikingly lower than in the rest of Spain. In July 2017 in Catalonia there were 2.23 public servants employed by the regional government per 1000 inhabitants, fully 20% less than the overall figure for Spain: 2.80 per 1000 (Malagón 2018; see also Confederación de Empresarios de Navarra 2015),

Yet the pressure on assimilation continued and even increased as the Catalans, dissatisfied with inefficient and corrupt government based 600km away and serving largely extractive rather than productive economic interests (that last to this day), demanded home rule, around the time that the Norwegians (peacefully) and the Irish (violently) were doing the same.

Two Spanish coups d'états in the 20th century, one a blood bath and a rehearsal for World War II, were largely attempts to keep the aspirations of the Catalans (the economic powerhouse of the whole peninsula) in check (Crameri, 2008: 21). Barcelona was bombed by the Axis forces on many occasions, as Churchill (BCNEnHorasDeOficina, 2013) was to recall in the UK Parliament on 18 June 1940:

«I do not at all underrate the severity of the ordeal which lies before us; but I believe our countrymen will show themselves capable of standing up to it, like the brave men of Barcelona, and will be able to stand up to it, and carry on in spite of it, at least as well as any other people in the world. Much will depend upon this».

As Generalissimo Franco's tanks rolled into Barcelona early in 1939, with the support of the Germans and the Italians, and the fearsome Moroccan cavalry, his leaders vowed to crush the Catalans once and for all. Tens of thousands of Catalans fled into France, leaving Catalonia partly decapitated. Tens of thousands of those that remained, with a clean conscience, were nevertheless rounded up and thousands of them were then shot by firing squads after show/mock trials or court-martials. Centralist, autocratic government affected all the population of Spain of course, but the Catalans lost more: their home rule, hard-earned in 1931 (Balcells, 1996, 94 and ff).

When General Franco died in his bed in 1975, the immediate resurgence of Catalan demands for home rule ("Llibertat, Amnistia, Estatut d'Autonomia") was largely instrumental in Spain for allowing the return from France, in 1977, of the exiled President of Catalonia, Josep Tarradellas, and for the 1978 Spanish constitution (several of whose main drafters were Catalan) containing provisions for ample home rule . . . across the whole of Spain. In the event 17 regions – many of which had never dreamed of having to solve their own problems! – were to formalise "statutes of autonomy". Catalonia's, adopted in 1979, allowed great strides to be made in many fields, including of course the advancement of education, culture and the Catalan language (Crameri 2008, Botella 1985). The main problem was initially (and still is) a longstanding acute net drainage of tax revenue (there are documented complaints about this as early as 1880 (see also Flos y Calcat 1896, [10b]):

«Nosaltres sabem guanyar diners, però la gent de Madrid té l'habilitat de fer-nos-els saltar de la butxaca, i tot els ahorros acumulats a Catalunya van a parar directament o indirectament a sostenir el despilfarro de la Cort» → «We know how to earn money, but the people of Madrid have the ability to make it jump out

of our pockets, and all the savings accumulated in Catalonia end up directly or indirectly sustaining the Royal Court's squandering». Almirall (1880)

Self-government irritated those who had called for a “No” vote in the referendum on the Constitution: particularly the Francoist sectors of “Alianza Popular” (Valdecantos 1978, El País 1978), which was to be refounded as the conservative Partido Popular.

Their successors were in power from 1996 to 2004, and from 2011 until a few weeks ago. During those periods their policy was one of consistently reversing devolution, of recovering central power.

The Lead-Up to the Declaration of Independence

Partly because Catalans felt their powers were being eroded, and partly because in nearly 25 years the text of the Statute of Autonomy had become outdated, in a period of rapid globalization, in September 2005, after months of negotiation, 89% of the Catalan Parliament passed the draft of a new Statute of a proto-federalist kind that was believed to fit in the Spanish Constitution. The only party left out of the agreement was the Partido Popular, who by then was being seen as an “anti-Catalan” party (CIS 2015; Vázquez & Olivares 2008; Gil Lara 2013; La Información 2016; Martínez 2013).

The events that led up to and followed the October 27, 2017 parliamentary declaration of independence would probably not have taken place . . .

1. Had the text of the draft Statute not been arrogantly chopped back by the Spanish Parliament;
2. Had it not been taken – after its ratification in a referendum in Catalonia in 2006 – to the Constitutional Court in what a leading jurist has called a “coup d’État” (Pérez Royo 2007);
3. Had the Constitutional Court not struck down significant articles in June 2010 (Tribunal Constitucional 2010), paradoxically rendering the Statute unconstitutional in the process, and triggering off a gigantic protest demonstration in central Barcelona;
4. Had the Spanish government moved to amend some of the articles removed by the Constitutional Court, instead of refusing to defuse the political crisis and appease the Catalans;
5. Had not the massive grassroots mobilization of pro-independence sentiment – channelled through numerous organisations sprouting up between about 2006 and 2010 (see Dowling 2014), and then spurred on by hundreds of local, unofficial referendums and the setting-up of the grassroots Catalan National Assembly, which now boasts over 40,000 members – spear-headed the independence movement. Note that the demonstrations organised every September 11 since 2012 are vast: for instance, one spanned 400 km, from one end to the other of Catalonia, in 2013; another formed a 13 km-long Catalan flag, its nine red-and-yellow stripes being made by people six astride wearing appropriately coloured tee-shirts, in 2014.

How did the politicians react? The moderate nationalist coalition “Convergència i Unió” had won all the elections between 1980 and 2003 (see Cramer 2008), when it was ousted by a

coalition of three parties (including Esquerra, the historic pro-independence party, which had never got more than about 15% of the votes). Following the Statute of autonomy fiasco, *Convergència* regained power in the 2010 election, and began to speak of a “national transition”. In the midst of a growing clash with central government, again in the hands of centralists, President Mas obtained a parliamentary mandate to renegotiate a reduction in the net amount of taxes leaving Catalonia every year, which amount to over €15 billion (€2,000 for every man, woman and child). He was snubbed by prime minister Rajoy, and promptly called and won a snap election in November 2012, though with a reduced majority, with a commitment to hold an official poll on independence. He reached agreement on a government programme for the legislature with the reinforced Esquerra, to build state structures: between the two, they held an outright majority. Being snubbed in the Spanish Parliament (for the umpteenth time) he couldn’t call a referendum with Spanish authorization, so they enacted legislation to call an official poll (the Act specifically said it WASN’T a referendum). Nevertheless, the Spanish authorities did not stand still, but rather waged a weapon-less war against Catalonia’s moves towards independence (Strubell 2016). They also challenged the legislation before the Constitutional court within hours of it being published and blocked the official poll. After an internal crisis between the main players, the vote went ahead, though spear-headed by tens of thousands of volunteers, and not formally through the administration. Despite fears the police would be sent in to prevent the poll, a massive majority of those that did vote (over 40% of the electorate) did so for independence.

A year later the main two independence parties formed a broad coalition («Junts pel Sí», that is, «Together for Yes») with the support of many civil society organisations, with the mandate – if it received a sufficient victory – to declare independence and negotiate the conditions with Spain in order to ensure a smooth transition. The election programme was not challenged by the Spanish government. But it stayed politically motionless, like a cobra, as events unfolded in Catalonia. In parallel it constantly sent laws, decrees, even resolutions, even debates to the Constitutional court in order to block them.

In that election, held on September 27, 2015 – with the highest turnout ever – the coalition won a historic 72 seats, to the opposition’s 63 and, given it did not reach 50% of the vote, it decided to hold a referendum on independence. Madrid refused to budge.

The ensuing Act (adopted in September 2017) laid down that the official announcement in Parliament of the result would be either a declaration of independence, or the calling of a regional election, depending on the yes or no vote. Another Act laid down the conditions for a legal transition from one sovereignty to the other. The opposition parties reacted vociferously (the coalition pushed legislation through very quickly, to prevent in-house filibustering and knowing that the Spanish government would immediately challenge it before the Constitutional court, thus automatically blocking the legislation yet again) but chose not to defend a single one of their amendments.

This was just weeks after the Barcelona and Cambrils terrorist attacks, hastily improvised after an explosion in their base which killed the leader of the group, a man purporting to be an imam in a Catalan town, who had served several years in prison for aiding illegal immigrants, and had amazingly had an expulsion order reversed. And he was, according to some sources, in the pay of the Spanish secret service, who visited him several times. Old

rumours of a false flag action to abort the referendum, which had been dreaded by Catalans for several months, obviously resurfaced with a vengeance (El Robot Pescador. 2016).

The month of September was marked by desperate (non-political) attempts by Spain to stop the referendum, announced for October 1, 2017. It sent in thousands of para-military police from across Spain, to the chant of “A por ellos!” (“Go get ‘em!”; for videos, see for instance <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Pa5GQ2FSM0>), who were housed in three cruise liners in the ports of Barcelona and Tarragona. It threatened members of the electoral boards with thousands of Euros in daily fines unless they resigned (which they did), it threatened any media publishing pre-referendum information, it raided printing presses, local magazines, publishing houses, warehouses, trying to track down the elusive ballot boxes, ballot papers, and other electoral material. Not a single ballot box was found.

On September 20th, without forewarning the Catalan police, Spanish police raided a number of Catalan ministries in search of evidence regarding the technical organisation of the referendum, and a number of top officials were arrested. During the day thousands, then perhaps tens of thousands, of people gathered outside the Catalan Ministry of Finance while it was being searched by court officials, in a peaceful protest. No-one was attacked or physically threatened. The only damage was to three marked police cars. The fact that they were parked in the street, instead of in the Ministry car park; the fact that they were left unguarded; the fact that they were left unlocked; the fact that they had weapons left inside them; all this lends support to the idea, voiced by Catalans and non-Catalans alike, that they were the spark for serious acts of violence which would have allowed the authorities to speak about a “rebellion”, or “sedition”, or a “tumultuous uprising”. All of this was absurd (I witnessed events on site, three times that day), but within a few weeks the two leaders of the main civil society pro-independence organisations (the two “Jordis”) were locked up without bail, and remain in prison to this day, awaiting trial.

PM Rajoy was assured that the so-called (since 2014) “illegal referendum” would not take place, and said so publicly. The unity of Spain, he said, was “sacred”. Literally (e.g. García & del Riego 2015).

October 1 and the Aftermath

On the day, October 1st, the ballot boxes and papers appeared out of the blue, and soon Spain’s attacks on non-violent voters by the police – who ignored the court order to confiscate material “without disturbing the peace” – were seen right round the world and shocked public opinion: how could this be happening in an advanced western democracy? But the vicious attacks on the computing system controlling that double voting was impossible, and that people voting were only those eligible to do so, lasted much of the day. Tens of thousands had spent the weekend in the polling stations to ensure they would not be sealed off. Hundreds of thousands packed the entrances until the count had been finished and delivered (for video, see MediaPro 2018).

That night, PM Rajoy publicly said that the “illegal referendum” had not taken place.

Those in power in Madrid over history only seem to accept full victories, and unconditional surrenders. That is how they lost the whole of the Spanish empire, by a host of unilateral

declarations of independence. Could they accept, in 2010 the Catalan Parliament law banning bullfights (a popular initiative led by an Argentinian), as the Canary Islands had done 20 years before, without anyone objecting? No, they had to take it to the Constitutional court, whose composition of bullfight-lovers may have been instrumental in its being struck down six years later.

After October 1st, we now know pressure was applied by the leaders of the European Union for president Puigdemont (who is now in exile, having been held up by tipped-off traffic police as he drove through Germany) not to apply the law, once the resounding success of the yes vote had been announced on October 10th (bear in mind the Unionist opposition counted on it not happening, and called for a boycott). Puigdemont was apparently assured that in return Rajoy would be pushed, at long last, to the negotiating table.

However, in Spain there was a twin-pronged response which completely ignored all calls for dialogue.

1. Charges were laid against the whole of the political leadership of Catalonia (alongside hundreds of mayors, public officials, etc.) of rebellion, sedition, contempt of court and misuse of public funds. I have already mentioned social movement leaders.
2. On October 27, immediately after the Catalan Parliament had adopted the postponed resolution declaring Catalonia's independence, the Spanish government dissolved the Catalan Parliament, dismissed the Catalan government, and called Catalan elections. It had and has no Constitutional basis for doing so, as I hope the Constitutional court will have no choice but to admit.

Some members of the Catalan government went straight to Brussels to give a press conference, before receiving summonses to the “Audiencia Nacional” court in Madrid. Virtually all those that heeded the summons are in pre-trial detention. The rest are in exile, awaiting the decision of courts in Belgium, Germany, Scotland and Switzerland on requests for extradition (known in the EU as “European Arrest Warrants”). The future of the Catalan people's democratic movement to implement its independence depends very heavily on the trumped-up charges being thrown out of these courts abroad.

Spain carefully planned the 21st December election (as I say, illegally called: only the Catalan president has that prerogative) so that the independence parties would lose. They have actually admitted this in public. The leaders of the main electoral lists of the pro-independence parties were silenced (mostly being in prison), the Spanish media were grotesquely biased in favour of the “Unionist” parties (see Democracy Volunteers 2017) as they had been in the 2016 election (see Figure 4) (see also CAC 2015).



Figure 4. Coverage of parties on news programmes
(TVs based in Madrid: La1, T5, A3; TV based in Barcelona: TV3)
Source: Gutiérrez (2016)

They blasted Catalan policies quite unfairly (indoctrination in schools; public TV manipulating opinion and needing “cleansing”; the independence movement being led by “Nazis” and having to be “decapitated” . . . after creating a “social conflict” inside Catalonia); the “Unionist” parties purportedly received an obscene amount of money to spend on propaganda; and all this in the general climate – with the Catalan authorities and police force being controlled from Madrid – of intimidation by violent groups of ultra-nationalists apparently immune to any form of control.

In the event, and despite an even greater turnout than in 2015, the Catalan independence parties managed to retain an outright majority in the Catalan parliament: 70 out of 135 seats.

However, Spain has continued to put the spanner in the works of the parliament. Despite advice from the advisory Council of State and its own legal service, it managed to prevent president Puigdemont from defending his candidacy to renew his presidency; after this, his number 2, Jordi Sànchez, was denied the political right he has to attend the plenary to defend his own candidacy; the third candidate, Jordi Turull, was arrested shortly before the second round of voting; Jordi Sànchez, having received confirmation of his political rights from the United Nations Human Rights Committee, was again prevented from leaving prison; and only was the Parliament left free of political and court interference when it came to the fifth candidate, Quim Torra, who is the current president – but provisionally, until the rightful president can return. Torra is publicly committed to implementing the result of the October 1 referendum and the December 21 election, which means he may well end up in prison as well, unless the international community – better late than never – plays its firm hand in this matter.

How has Catalan public opinion taken all of this? Well, the number of people actually voting for independence has increased every single time: 2012, 2014, 2015, 2017 (twice!). (see Bambery and Kerevan 2018)

The sociodemographic context of the process

It is important to realise that the process has taken place against a backdrop of the very varied geographical origin of the population of Catalonia. The figures are astonishing and reveal both the extent of what some would call colonisation by people from the rest of Spain (particularly intense from 1950 to 1974), and the considerable degree of social and political integration that many of these families display. A recent survey (CEO 2018b) shows that almost a third of the adult population eligible to vote (and therefore, excluding foreigners) in Catalonia was born outside Catalonia (see Table 1).

Table 1

Data from CEO (2018b). Universe: Adults, Spanish citizenship, resident in Catalonia

C100. Would you mind telling me where you were born?	N	%
Catalonia	1030	68·7
Rest of Spain	367	24·5
Rest of the European Union	15	1·0
Rest of the world	88	5·9
I don't know	0	0
No reply	0	0

Furthermore, only one in four adults with Spanish nationality in Catalonia can claim three or four grandparents born in Catalonia! Over half have not a single grandparent born in Catalonia (see table 2). These figures might easily have led one to think that a bid for independence could not muster much support.

Table 2

Data from CEO 2018. Universe: Adults, Spanish citizenship, resident in Catalonia

C130. How many of your grandparents were born in Catalonia?	N	%
None	791	52·7
One	102	6·8
Two	227	15·1
Three	69	4·6
Four	300	20·0
I don't know	10	0·6
No reply	2	0·1

- Yet in that survey the item “P.31 *Do you want Catalonia to become an independent State?*” got 47% “Yes” replies, as against 45% “Noes”.
- Family geographical origin and self-attributed identity are as expected key [independent!] variables as regards independence.

- Among the subjects born in Catalonia, 59% were in favour of independence. Among the subjects born in the rest of Spain, 73% were against it.
- Among the subjects who describe themselves as Catalans living in Catalonia, 84% were in favour of independence. Among the subjects who describe themselves as Spaniards living in Catalonia, 92% were against it.
- Among those who said they preferred to answer the questionnaire in Catalan, 73% were in favour of independence. Among those who said they preferred to answer the questionnaire in Spanish, 69% were against it.
- Among the subjects who said they mainly watch TV3 (Catalan public television), 76% were in favour of independence. Among the subjects who said they mainly watch one of the four most popular channels in Spanish, 69%-82% were against it.
- Among the subjects who said they mainly read *La Vanguardia* or *El Periódico* in their Catalan-language editions, 58% and 62% respectively were in favour of independence. Among the subjects who said they mainly read *La Vanguardia* or *El Periódico* in their Spanish-language editions, 78% and 64% respectively were against it.

In an earlier survey (CEO 2018a), clear (but by no means absolute) cleavages were also visible in opinions on the Spanish government, the Spanish parliament, the European Union, the Spanish army, the Spanish police, the Constitutional court, even the Catholic church. Interestingly, among leftists there is much more support for independence than among rightists.

Concluding Remarks

Let me point out in conclusion that the motives for wanting independence (beyond the universal fact that all peoples have the right to freely determine their political future) and its probable consequences have been explained and discussed in literally hundreds of books and articles, and thousands of local debates and lectures, including hundreds abroad. As meticulously explained in a recent paper, the motives are much closer to a Lockean revolution of the US kind, than to an ethnic one (Vidal-Aparicio 2015). Many, many Catalans of whatever origin or language background, want good and fair governance.

I hope my paper will have helped you to understand the “wherefores” of Spain’s latest political conflict with Catalonia. There is a clear clash between Articles 1 and 2 of the Spanish Constitution: Article 1 lays down, among other things, the prevalence of democratic values, while Article 2 states that Spain is indivisible. Sadly, those in power in Madrid show no signs of realising that what is an entirely political conflict needs to be solved by political negotiation round a table, and not in a jail cell.

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Thinking about the Political Situation in Catalonia

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Abstract

Catalan Separatism is, above all, a peaceful movement for self-government, defending the capacity for taking decisions as a nation, as a State, in an inclusive way. It defends sovereignty in all aspects, including income generated in Catalonia, and the distribution of wealth. The Spanish transition after 1975 failed to encourage the construction of a pluralist State, and the autonomic framework has proved to be unsatisfactory. The reluctance of some parties in the government to give more autonomy to Catalonia, especially in the last ten years, and to recognise it as a nation, has led to a significant increase in Catalan independence supporters. Extreme right-wing movements have emerged recently, defending the unity of Spain and attacking democracy, not only in Catalonia, and their sometimes violent riots are tolerated more permissively by Spanish authorities than actions in favour of Catalan prisoners on remand. The conflict is a challenge to the idea of Spain as it is now and also an occasion to think about what kind of political framework Europe offers to its members. Europe should perhaps offer more flexibility to communities having different languages and cultures, and therefore, the Catalan crisis is an opportunity to imagine a new European order.

Keywords: Catalonia, Europe, Separatism, Spanish transition

A Trend Towards Self-Government

When talking about Catalans, nationalism is perhaps an unsuitable word. In this paper, the preferred words will be self-determination, independence or self-government, which, to our mind, describe the situation in a more exact way.

Catalan separatism, to use a common word in Europe, is not an ethnic movement. It is certainly a movement with a national basis, but Catalan identity means especially using Catalan (Bastardas, 2018), which is the autochthonous romance language, as a vehicular cohesive language, in a context where many other languages are used. These languages have arrived in Catalonia over time (Castilian, usually called “Spanish”) or in recent times through immigration (Chinese, Russian, Arabic, Tamazight, and up to 300 different languages (GELA, 2016; Junyent, 2015). Identity means also a cultural tradition that does not exclude other cultures or religions, because, historically, Catalonia has been a crossroads.

Catalan separatism is, above everything, a movement for self-government, defending the capacity for taking decisions as a nation, as a State, of deciding which laws are the best for all the people, in an inclusive way. It defends sovereignty in all aspects, including finance, that is, income generated in Catalonia, and the distribution of wealth. It certainly concerns the economic relationship with Spain, which up to now has been very unequal, but it is not only a question of money and taxes. Self-government means deciding about financial income, but also deciding about other laws, about education, immigration policies, refugees, health policies, transport, and so on. without any external interference or asking for central Spanish government permission. In the last ten years, Catalonia has suffered from the constant interference of the central Spanish government, which reported to the Constitutional Court any significant law issued by the Catalan Parliament and declared many to be against the Spanish Constitution and, therefore, unacceptable. A good example is the law about energy poverty: the Catalan Parliament enacted a law to give a minimum of electricity or gas on credit to very poor families in winter, in order to prevent them from freezing. Given that this law applied only in Catalonia and not throughout the whole of Spain it was considered by the Spanish Court to be unfair and a source of inequality (ACN, 2016). Another very spectacular example of interference in the Catalan capacity for ruling is the long-debated law against bullfighting, which at the time attracted the attention of half Europe. Among the 17 autonomous regions of Spain, the Canary Islands was the only one to enact a law in 1991 against any kind of animal misuse in public festivals, shows or performances. That included, of course, bullfighting, which had not been performed in the islands for some years. The law attracted no attention at all from any side. In 2010, the Catalan Parliament forbade bullfighting (a law to become effective only in 2012). The Spanish central Government reacted immediately.

The historical origins of the Catalan nation are explained in Michael Strubell's paper in this issue, so I will not go into them. The political transition after Franco's death (1975) did not allow Catalonia to be officially called “a nation”. In the United Kingdom, for instance, Scotland is officially given the name of a nation. This is not a minor issue: the debate on the name was a long one, and some politicians refused at the time to call Catalonia or the Basque Country nations precisely because both regions might demand their independence in the future. As if the name made the thing, they agreed on an intermediate term which is both ambiguous and unsatisfying, the Spanish term “nacionalidad”, which could be translated into “nationality”, and which is referred to in the second article of the Spanish Constitution.

As an example of how significant the word nation is, let us recall Prime Minister David Cameron's announcement of the results of the Scottish referendum. He said: "They've kept our country of four nations together". Spanish public TV translated, into Spanish, "quieren mantener nuestra nación unida", "they want our nation to stay united", that is, four nations were translated as a single one. This is more than being lost in translation! (Anonymous, 2014).

The Failure of the Spanish Transition of 1978

Language repression and the minimisation (or humiliation) of Catalan identity has a long history, and though the democratic regime, since 1978, has certainly improved the situation, it has not favoured mutual understanding among the different Spanish nations, nor promoted coexistence or living together in mutual recognition and acceptance.

In many ways, the Spanish transition failed. Perhaps at that time it was the only possible thing to do, because the situation was very complex, but it was a process expected to develop later. Instead, a regression took place after fifteen years (Minder, 2018). It is important to remember that Spain is the only European State where fascism won the war (1936–1939) and where the dictator died in his bed. Instead of an equivalent to the Nuremberg Trials, after 1975, there was a general amnesty in Spain, both for the republicans and communists banned during Franco's time, but also for politicians involved in serious dictatorial decisions or actions. Two months before Franco's death, five political prisoners were executed. One year before, in 1974, a Catalan anarchist had been executed, Salvador Puig Antich, after a very obscure trial and despite many international calls for mercy. These cases, like many other ones, were never revised. Today, a Francisco Franco Foundation still exists, and for years received public grants. Thousands of corpses of Republicans shot by Franco's troops or in Franco's time are still buried in unmarked roadside mass graves. There are no real effective initiatives to find them or to exhume them to give the remains back to the families for a proper burial. Only a few actions here and there and a law of historical memory that never came into real effect. In June 2018, the Dukedom of Franco (Ducado de Franco) passed from his deceased daughter to his granddaughter (Martínez, 2018). We can also remember that, a few years ago, the interior Minister (of the Popular party, PP) gave, on two occasions (in 2014 and 2015), a medal to the Virgin Mary (Kassam, 2014; Keely, 2015). All that might seem to be unrelated to Catalan separatism, but in fact, it is. Catalonia does not feel comfortable in such a Spanish State (Contiguglia, 2018; Encarnacion, 2018). It is true that all these facts are especially relevant when Spain is under the rule of right-wing parties such as the PP, but it is also true that left-wing parties, when in Government, have never tried to change the situation and have never voted against such privileges. Federalism, another fashionable world, has never been taken seriously by any party outside Catalonia. It was the dream of some centre-left parties and of many intellectuals, and became the magical word brought into use whenever time the Catalan people complained about Spanish centralism. No political party or lobby has ever attempted to build a truly federal Spanish state.

A Conscious Lack of Mutual Understanding

After 1978, and later, the diversity of the Spanish population was not especially encouraged. Democratic Spain was not built on the basis of a mosaic of languages and cultures, but on the basis of concessions made by Castilian centralism: Pablo Casado (PP) said: "Hay que volver a la Cataluña muy española" (Press Conference, 2017). Now and then (and that means quite

often) Catalanophobia (or phobias against Basque or even the Galician language or people) appeared, without any serious attempt to fight them, through education policies, for instance. There was no pedagogy of a plural state, no promotion of Iberian languages, no real appraisal of Spain's diversity. Official languages were, at their best, seen as a "problem", and sometimes, in the case of Catalan, there were (and still are) serious attempts at breaking the unity of the language and undermining the status of Catalan as a literate, standard modern language. The linguistic varieties of Valencia and later Majorca were claimed by some to be different languages unrelated to Catalan (Pradilla, 2011; Terrasa, 2013). Therefore, the existence of a standard level of the language with dialectal variation, like in all modern languages, was threatened. No linguist would ever support such a thing and many international voices were raised against the amount of nonsense generated by the discussion (Strubell, 1994). In Spain, language was not a question for linguists or specialists: it was a political question, decided by politicians (from the Central government) and resolved by law.

In Spanish autonomous regions where two languages are official (Galicia, Basque Country and Catalonia), public servants are not always obliged to know both of them. For instance, although citizens are entitled to address judges in Catalan or Spanish and have trials and enquiries in either language, judges are not obliged to know Catalan to apply for a position in Catalonia. That leads to situations of inequality where people are forced to forfeit their right to Catalan when in court. The co-official character of both languages is often only theoretical.

It is necessary to remember that there are quite a few European universities where Catalan is taught as a Romance language, but only a handful of Spanish universities teach it, and certainly, there is no tuition of Catalan, Basque or Galician in schools outside the regions where they are officially recognised. It would be politically logical to promote the study of the linguistic diversity of the State, or at least to offer an optional possibility in primary schools or in high schools. Such a choice has never existed. Catalan people, like the Basque people, have been tolerated in a largely patronizing way. They were (and are) sometimes objects of scorn and laughter, sometimes required to be thankful for having co-official languages and a Parliament. Anyway, there has always been an enormous lack of information about Catalonia within the other Spanish regions. This lack of information has been consciously fostered, and we should not forget misinformation: fake news about the supposed banishment of the Spanish language in Catalonia, about the way Spanish newcomers are treated, about the capacity of living together in peace ... Catalonia has never had or wanted two segregated linguistic communities, Spanish was never forbidden. Sociolinguists around the world have stressed the peaceful way this bilingual community lives together. Some years ago, the PP, a right-wing party in opposition at the time, started a deliberate attack against Catalan schools and the use of languages, claiming that the Spanish language was being marginalised. The truth is all youngsters brought up in Catalonia end their compulsory schooling speaking both Romance languages fluently (TV3, 2018).

The lack of mutual understanding is not recent; this is a recurrent feature of the democratic period, with highs and lows. There was no pedagogy about an autonomic State and no construction of a plural State, even if the official discourse claimed there was. Nothing has been done to educate Spaniards in this plurality. It is not the fault of Spaniards themselves, the blame goes to the politicians, the intellectual circles, the successive governments, both centre-right- or centre-left. What happens now has a long history behind it.

A Peaceful and Inclusive Project

Catalan people, like the rest of Spain, lived through the Basque conflict in anxiety and distress. Catalans never agreed with the violence of ETA. Catalonia also suffered terrorist attacks, and there were demonstrations against the murderers (the Hipercor attack in 1987, or the terrorist attack in Vic in 1991). Catalonia has never supported this way of acting; the Catalan model has always been one of dialogue and pacifism. When ETA attacked, it was usual to hear, from the Spanish Government, whichever party it was, the phrase “nothing can be reached by violence, with dialogue, instead, everything can be discussed”. It has been a great offence to Catalans when, in the months after October, some opinion leaders and politicians (even former socialist ministers) said “what happens in Catalonia is far worse than ETA, it is far worse than terrorism”. In 2018, Rafael Hernando (spokesperson of PP) said: “El adversario son los independentistas, como el enemigo fue la ETA” (Anonymous, 2018). In 2017, Jaime Mayor Oreja said something similar (EuropaPress, 2017). In 2017, Eduardo Inda (director of OKDiario) said: “El nivel de violencia en Cataluña no se ha vivido ni en el País Vasco de los años mas duros. Porque allá podían matar algún juez o algún fiscal, pero tampoco mataron muchos” (Anonymous, 2017).

In 2014, Ramon de Veciana (spokesperson of Unió progressiva y Democràcia a Catalunya) said: “Dos nacionalismos comparten hoy portada: el de Mas y el de los condenados de ETA. De como los nacionalismos tienen un denominador común.” (Veciana, 2014; Estudis Catalans, 2015).

Well, one should tell the victims. How many sons, daughters, brothers or sisters of the victims killed by ETA would not prefer a ballot box full of votes instead of the corpse of their parents or siblings? It was both an offence to Catalan people and to the victims of terrorism. The fact that now there are political prisoners, jailed without being tried, under the accusation of rebellion or even terrorism, when other convicts are free on the street, shows that what happens in Catalonia is indeed worse than anything else. The unity of Spain is perceived as sacred, more sacred, it seems, than dialogue and common sense. Manuel Fraga (Alianza Popular) said, in 1977: «Esa unidad es sagrada, y ahí sí que no admitiremos trágala de nadie», (Romero, 2013).

All together, and for the other reasons explained in this issue, things have come to a point where in Catalonia there is a great “disaffection”, that is, a great distance from the Spanish government and from the Spanish State. Many people think: “Enough is enough”, to put it in a colloquial way. There is probably a lot of what might be called a “secondary” separatism, or a separatism due to circumstances, that is, people who, rather than being truly separatists, do not want to belong to the Spanish State as it is now and do not see any other solution but Catalonia’s independence. Ten years ago, genuine independence supporters were a small minority. Since 2010, the number has risen to almost half of the voting population, and it includes people of all geographical origins, social classes and political affiliations. It is a really transversal movement and has sprung from the population, not the political classes. After 2008, when the economic crisis seriously affected Spanish society, separatism took on a certain air of hopeful utopia which helped to maintain courage (to a certain extent) among a part of the Catalan society. Thinking of a new state and how it could be put into practice gave a reason for collective hope. Nevertheless, it was not wishful thinking, but real work: people became active in cultural associations (Omnium Cultural and Assemblea Nacional), made proposals, met in local committees, and created a general atmosphere of constructing a new

society that surprised the political establishment in Catalonia and was not taken seriously in the rest of Spain.

Catalonia's independence is a project of a new State including the whole country and all people. Sovereignty is the crucial word. It is not and it has never been an ethnic project, a nationalism with racist features: everybody is welcome. Catalonia has experienced several waves of immigration, coming from other Spanish regions or, in recent times, coming from non-European countries, mainly African. The reception of newcomers has been made in different ways. The Catalan population is of different origins, but nobody stresses geographical origin as an important feature (Saeed, 2017). Quoting the words of a former Catalan politician, Carod-Rovira:

The debate in Catalonia is not about identity. We are not discussing identity, we are discussing sovereignty. We are not arguing about who each person is, but about who should rule, and those who work and live in Catalonia are the ones who should rule in Catalonia.

Being Catalan cannot be an inheritance nor an imposition. It's a decision, but one that does not force you to renounce other identities you may have brought with you, if you happen to have come from somewhere else (quoted by Vidal Aparicio, 2015).

In recent years, an association of pro-independence Spanish-speaking Catalans has appeared, called "Súmate" (www.sumate.cat), defining themselves as

Catalans of Castilian/Spanish language and culture, who, because of their family background and origins, have kept their cultural heritage, without abandoning their place in the Catalan national community.

The Appearance of Extreme-Right Movements

There is another important issue to take into account: the independence trend has exasperated a latent extreme right, which now acts openly on the streets. The extreme right movements against refugees, immigrants or other inclusive policies that have threatened Europe in recent years and have even reached some Parliaments were almost invisible in Spain, in part because of the lack of real opposition to the consequences of dictatorship in Spain, in part because some right-wing parties had included the heirs of Franco's friends. But when the Catalan independence movement reached its ignition point, several extreme right associations and groups rose in defence of the unity of Spain. The big problem is that, in many ways, the political reaction has been far more permissive with extreme right symbols or demonstrations (the pre-constitutional Spanish flag, swastikas, anti-immigration slogans, etc.), whether or not they included some kind of violence or rioted, than with separatist symbols or peaceful demonstrations. Two peaceful leaders of grassroots associations, (one with a baby) are in jail on remand since November 2017 without having caused any harm or incited any violent action (quite the opposite, they acted to avoid violence in a very crowded demonstration. It is extremely interesting to watch the documentary film about September 20 (Mediapro, 2018a) and about October 1 (Mediapro, 2018b). On the other hand, the assailants of a Catalan cultural centre, "Blanquerna", in Madrid in 2013, who caused many injuries, were convicted of violence and sentenced to prison were immediately let free, under the pretext that they

were fathers of young babies (Ferrer, 2017). As are Catalan prisoners, accused of terrorism and not yet brought to trial (Omnium Cultural, 2018). The extreme right has taken to the streets in defence of the unity of Spain, which does not mean, of course, that all unionists are extreme right-wing supporters. However, the extreme right is exclusively unionist; it fights against all kinds of national difference, languages or diversity, which includes, of course, immigrants or refugees (Streck, 2018).

What is really worrying is that many so-called unionists who would never embrace the ideas and aims of extreme-right groups, no longer hesitate to demonstrate alongside them, or to make political alliances with them. For some of them, the unity of Spain is more important than corruption, inequality, xenophobia, economic failure or human rights. When most of these groups speak of unity, they mean uniformity, that is, they attack the Catalan language or Catalan laws, and, as said before, they spread fake news about Catalonia across Spain to create a climate of Catalanophobia. It is sadly true that, in the rest of Spain, being openly against Catalonia wins many votes, since there has not been any real fostering of national diversity, as stated before. No political party wants to lose votes even if they have to discard the truth along the way.

Consequently, people who are not in favour of Catalan independence but who are democrats and see the gaps in Spanish politics have a very weak basis for feeling comfortable. It is true that there is some very faint support in the rest of Spain. It is also true that a new trend is gathering steam in Spain against the monarchy and in favour of a Spanish Republican State, (how Catalonia or the Basque Country would fit into that Spanish Republic, nobody knows). Many people who want social changes agree with the possibility of a legal referendum in Catalonia on its political future and, consequently, they would accept any result, but many others still deny the right of Catalan self-determination and claim the unity of Spain to be pre-eminent. The fact that many of these, however democratic, underestimate the force of extreme right movements is really worrying.

A European Challenge

For that reason, some people have been saying, since the beginning of the conflict, that the solution is not a purely Catalan one: it means a change in Spanish politics, not only of territory, but also of internal self-awareness (Ribó, 2017; Crónica Popular, 2019; Larsen, 2018). Indeed, we could go even further: the Catalan conflict raises questions about the meaning of Europe, of national states as they are, of regions and languages and certainly of population and immigration or refugee policies. Catalans have always said that they want to belong to Europe: Catalonia, a new European State. Nowadays, the European spirit is failing. To which Europe do Catalans want to belong? To a Europe that denies the right to learn and speak autochthonous languages, as happens in France, for instance? To a Europe that builds wire fences on borders and allows people to drown in the sea? Certainly not.

In the eighties, at the beginning of the European Union, there was a serious trend all over the continent towards a “Europe of Regions”, especially fostered in some Catalan circles. The different communities of France, the United Kingdom, Italy, Germany, Belgium or other countries which spoke non-official languages and preserved long lasting traditions, became hopeful of being acknowledged beyond the inflexibility of the great national states. There seemed to be a different frame of understanding, where ordinary borders would vanish, as they do in the Schengen Area, in favour of a more open, flexible and locally based system of

decision-making and the recognition of difference. This discourse has long been lost somewhere among the good intentions of a few politicians. Europe has based its strength on the balance between some very powerful states and has made very few changes to the idea of statehood itself.

Nowadays, one of the reasons for denying the right to self-determination for Catalonia is the fear of a wave of referenda spreading throughout the European regions. In fact, there has been already a similar movement in Corsica, apart from the (older) case of Scotland. If the problem exists (if it has to be seen as a problem!), it means that there is something in the European identity which has not been resolved and remains latent or repressed. The response of France to the diversity of languages and traditions in its territory has been unsatisfactory since the French Revolution, which brought so many profitable changes to the modern world. Spain, which since the 18th century took France as a model both for territorial policies and for cultural ones, has not dealt satisfactorily with the national diversity of the State, even if the past two centuries have been far more turbulent than in France. Apparently, nobody cares for the lessons taught by history.

Therefore, Europe cannot conceal any more the fact that there exist many communities that do not feel comfortable with the political distribution of power as it is now. In Catalonia, some unionist political leaders used an intellectual argument against separatists, according to which the idea of nation belonged to the 19th century and not to modern times (Peces-Barba, 2010). In 1986, a member of the Real Academia de la Lengua Española said that speaking Catalan is a limitation (quoted by Vicent Partal, 2018). Catalan nationalists were thus old-fashioned emotional romantics, opposed to the bright reasoning of modern enlightened intellectuals. Apart from other possible arguments against this point of view, ironically, it applies exactly to states as they are perceived nowadays. Modern European states and the idea of indivisible nations which some of them (like France or Spain) claim as the only model possible, are in fact a result of the 19th century and of the first half of the 20th. If nowadays they do not provide a useful frame for the people (or at least a considerable part of the people) living in them it means that they are not the best political solution. Imagining a united and cooperative Europe means, perhaps, taking into account the plurality and diversity of languages and communities and providing a suitable way of putting into practice their sensible demands. Denial and repression do not lead to any kind of progress in the long term. Europe is a mosaic of cultures rather than a union of states, and, whatever the political solution to Catalan independence is, it affects Europe not only in terms of accepting a hypothetical new State, but also in terms of rethinking its political organisation. The ancient idea of a Europe of regions should therefore perhaps be reconsidered.

Conclusion

The Catalan conflict, with all its faults, has shaken the foundations of the establishment, both in Spain and in Europe. A conflict, when it is not violent, is not bad in itself. Ideas and renewal appear only after crisis and conflict. There are many questions raised by the Catalan situation, questions on the meaning of legality when half the voting population oppose it, on the meaning of politics, when instead of negotiation and political action the Central government reacts with police, judges, trials and jail; on the meaning of the very idea of nation and state and, especially, on the meaning of freedom and democracy in Europe. It is not an isolated case: it is perhaps the reason to think positively about the construction of a new European order.

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The Politics of the Peninsular “Patric”: “In Spain There Are no Political Prisoners!”

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Abstract

“In Spain there are no political prisoners!” Rafael Català, the Spanish Minister of Justice under PM Mariano Rajoy, exclaimed in reply to a Catalan separatist’s demand that he address the numerous arrests that had been carried out after the October 1, 2017 referendum on Catalan independence, on the unlikely charges of corruption, rebellion, sedition and terrorism. The minister was cited by numerous Spanish news media on his denial as well as its corollary – Catalan separatists were bullying Spanish unionists in Catalonia. Yet, Catalan separatism is known for its democratic, pacific character, abstaining from acts of aggression, and this is what earned it the support of many inside and outside Catalonia after the central state’s violent interference with the referendum. It shows pacifism is not only a moral choice but also a strategic device to defend the Catalan cause in a context of structural power deficit which furnishes the Spanish state with most means of oppression such as police, army, judiciary and financial and economic control. I would argue that Spanish nationalist discourse covers up this power imbalance by recourse to a pseudo-democratic veneer which claims victim status but, in reality, serves to impose the Spanish constitutionalist and monarchical order, taking the separatist cause out of the political arena by criminalising it. A further look into events beyond the state of affairs regarding Catalan separatism may even reveal a structural male chauvinist strain in Spanish society which reinforces its authoritarian traits and that I have coined the “patric”.

Keywords: Spanish nationalism, Catalan separatism, historical amnesia, fascist legacy, male chauvinism

Introduction

The former Catalan president and *Pater Patriae* Jordi Pujol held that if you live in Catalonia, live its culture and speak the language, you *are* Catalan. This is a performative and inclusionary rather than an essentialist and exclusionary definition of identity, in line with a more realistic conception of the nation-state as a multicultural land of passage (Cat: “*terra de pas*”) recording the presence of Phoenicians, Romans, Arabs, Jews, Christians, Franks and Vikings. As the Irish novelist and journalist Colm Tóibín remarked about Pujol’s nonsense approach in matters Catalan,

Pujol’s style was crisp and brusque and businesslike. His speeches lacked flourish, to say the least. His aim at the beginning was, as he put it, to “fer pais” – make a country – from the ruins of the dictatorship that had maintained an open dislike for Catalonia and its culture. He defined a Catalan as someone living and working in Catalonia with a view to permanence, thus removing, or at least reducing, the concept of blood or race from Catalan nationalism. (Tóibín, 2018)

Originally from north-western Europe, I have lived, studied and worked in Barcelona for over thirty years so I may identify as Catalan, and do more so than as Spanish for that matter. I also increasingly feel European, whatever that means in this day and age beyond a “question mark” as Julia Kristeva observed in an interview with the Catalan journalist Xavier Vidal-Folch, in reference to the openness of our continental identity as process and always in the making (2008). Where do I stand in relation to my adopted country, a slashed ‘Spain/Catalonia’? In the following I will look at my positioning in the conflict of central and peripheral nationalisms in Spain as it affects Catalonia and argue that an important factor in my taking sides is the underlying battle for democracy and self-determination for the Catalan people, against a central state that is conditioned by the legacy of an authoritarian, absolutist past which forms part of a larger ethnic, classist, male-chauvinist network.

From Holland to Catalonia

Let me start by stating that I do not identify as a separatist per se for the social, political and economic trouble territorial fragmentation may bring. We only have to consider the heart-wrenching, genocidal break-up of the former Soviet Yugoslavia into smaller political entities and the way Balkanisation has long been the blueprint for this area under the enduring influence of the Eastern Question¹, to understand that nationalism can be as deadly as it appears to be life-giving for ethnic² minorities. Yet, despite this *caveat* I sympathise with the Catalan cause of independence for what it may provide in terms of democracy, cultural diversity and non-violent postcolonial deconstruction within the context of a Spanish nation-

¹ The Eastern Question was the reference to the imperial strife between the Ottoman and the Austrian-Hungarian empires, which went back to older conflicts and power balances between Europe and the Near East, and arguably continues in the contemporary debate of Turkey’s access to the European Union. This geopolitical and religious struggle affected countries in the south-east of Europe such as Hungary, Rumania, Serbia, Bosnia, Croatia and so on, and led to continental tensions. Indeed, WWI started in the Balkans when the heir to the throne of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, was shot by a Bosnian revolutionary engaged in a Serbian complot to free the Southern Slav countries from the Austrian-Hungarian Empire and form an independent Yugoslavia.

² I do not use “ethnic” in the common, traditional sense of non-European within a continental multicultural make-up but in an all-encompassing way, as culturally different from other comparable groups, that is, British versus Irish, German versus French and so on.

state anchored in an authoritarian past. Let me clarify why. I am an expatriate member of a relatively small European nation and culture, The Netherlands, with a territory as small as Central Catalonia (which does not include the French North Catalonia and the autonomous regions of Valencia and the Balearic Islands amongst others) while boasting 2.5 times its population. Even though it is hemmed in between the powerful national identities of the UK, Germany and France, the Netherlands is a nation-state with the benefits of a well-defined geopolitical organisation, so I think I have an empathetic understanding of the Catalan predicament. I have experienced the “blessing” of a nation, state and language occupying roughly the same territory: it creates a sense of safety, commitment and belonging in Benedict Anderson’s terms – “an imagined political community expressed as deep horizontal comradeship across time and space” (Anderson, 1991, pp. 6–7). In these terms, the Dutch may speak informally but affectively of “Holland”, to refer to their country as their home (“*ser pais*” or “being country”), while the Catalans insist on “making country” (“*fer pais*” as Jordi Pujol often had it (Tóibín, 2017)) because they have their nation-state as a project in process.³

The latter does not mean “Holland” is to be taken as a finished identitarian project, a non-conflictive, static, homogenous space of identification. Identity is always in flux and can never be fully fixed, but having an independent, recognized nation-space makes it easier to survive as a small culture. Thus, the Dutch are not that different from larger European cultures either. Like many European nation-states, The Netherlands has a well-integrated native, ethnic minority – the Friesians, with their own culture and a language incorporating Scandinavian and Germanic elements; Dutch is also under serious linguistic pressure from English⁴; we have issues with mass immigration and Islam; we have a large xenophobic party; the Netherlands was a powerful sea-faring empire in times past and so was Catalonia; and so there have been, of course, territorial issues such as Flanders, which formed part of The Netherlands culturally and politically until the Spanish Empire imposed its rule in the 16th century, as it later did on Catalonia in the early 18th century.⁵ And the latter takes us to the central and peripheral nationalisms in the Spanish peninsula, involving foremost the Gallegos, Basques and Catalans.

³ Catalan Separatists also speak of The Process (*El Procès*) to refer to the Catalan nation-building project, as yet a “historical nationality” rather than a nation within the Spanish constitution.

⁴ It can be annoying to hear my compatriots resorting to English expressions where good Dutch equivalents are available, and having to address waiters in English to facilitate communication while in Amsterdam, it is also a bit of a disappointment. Yet, I also understand that higher education and many businesses resort to English as the vehicle language because of its international projection.

⁵ The territorial confusion over the term “The Netherlands” in Spain is paradigmatic for the fraught character of nationhood as the expression of identity, language and territory. Literally meaning “the Low Countries” and translating as “Países Bajos”, the official Spanish denomination for the country, Spanish people often ignore whether Holland includes or does not include Flanders as they speak variants of the same language. They tend to think the terms “Holland” and “The Netherlands” do not entirely overlap, Holland being deemed the smaller territory, which in present usage is not the case. Rather, the term “Holland” is a synecdochic, perhaps politically-incorrect reference to The Netherlands derived from the two most powerful Dutch provinces in early modern times, North Holland and South Holland, which excludes Spanish-occupied Flanders, nowadays part of Belgium. The latter, in turn, is a conglomerate of three ethnic identities: Dutch-speaking Flemish, French-speaking Wallonian and German-Speaking Eastern-Belgian. What was formerly known as the Spanish Netherlands, from 1579 till 1713, were the Spanish-held provinces located in the southern part of the Low Countries, which roughly corresponded to present-day Belgium and Luxembourg but excluded the “Dutch republic” (Spanish Netherlands, accessed July 23, 2018 at <https://www.britannica.com/place/Spanish-Netherlands>).

The more we move toward Europe as our referential, supranational political structure due to the increasing globalization of people, goods and, above all, capital, the more the concept of the nation appears to lose usefulness and meaning; yet, as smaller regional contexts acquire profile and importance in reply to this process of national deconstruction in favour of a larger superstructure and identity, the more the old nation-state insists on erasing cultural difference by assimilation and reaches back to past models of identification. The imposition of an indivisible Spanish identity to integrate the national territory was first and foremost an imperialist issue that the Spanish Right solved by the sword rather than the word, applying the colonial expertise acquired abroad back home and vice versa. The Kingdom of Castile had its colonies in the peninsula and the Americas, and in the case of the 20th century, dictatorship resulted from the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939). After the new, illegal head of state, General Franco, had returned from his colonial exploits in Morocco and the Spanish Sahara to impose a fascist regime by force rather than vote. Francoist Spain ended up being a rather pragmatic “semifascist” regime that had moved from being openly repressive and totalitarian to more contained authoritarian by the time of the Generalissimo’s death in 1975 (Solsten & Meditz, 1988). This softening of profile made a peaceful transition to a viable form of democracy possible in the late 1970s, a process formally and definitively brought to a positive end after the unsuccessful coup d’état by Lieutenant-Colonel Tejero in 1981, the intervention of King Juan Carlos in favour of democracy and the landslide election victory of the Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE) in 1982.

Yet, this is not to say that Franco’s regime had been a painless experience: in Catalonia, many Republicans had been executed, put away or fled the country in the aftermath of the Civil War; the Catalan language was forbidden in its public; institutional uses and no longer taught in school (Miller & Miller, 1996, p. 13); women’s role in society was limited to the family sphere; the church was omnipresent; the judiciary and armed forces were in support of the regime; and leftist activism was purged. Significantly close to Franco’s death and with the regime on its last legs, the young Catalan militant anarchist Salvador Puig Antich was still executed in the Barcelona “Model” prison despite national and international protest and turned into a martyr for the separatist cause. In this context, Catalan culture had been under serious pressure and seen its survival threatened over a period of four decades, whereas Spanish culture thrived. Today the status of Spanish as a language and identitarian sign is very secure with a resilient pool of 46 million speakers in the peninsula alone and an additional 450 million in the Americas due to the process of colonization and its aftermath; so in the light of this and the above, how to understand and justify the current unionist outcry that Spanish is “oppressed” in Catalonia, a small nation of seven million where only half of the population speak Catalan as their first language?

Fascism and Historical Amnesia

To my mind, the latter, somewhat unsettling reversal of minority status owes a lot to political and historical amnesia in that it refuses to recognize the colonial, exploitative nature of the relationship between Spain and Catalonia resulting from a conflictive imperial past that grew out of the absolutist monarchy in the early modern period. This led to the enforced incorporation of Catalonia into the Kingdom of Castile in 1713, which in the War of Succession (1701–1714) failed to support the Bourbon candidate to the Spanish throne. Catalonia’s defeat, impoverishment, loss of rights and self-rule contrast sharply with Scotland, which joined the Kingdom of Great Britain in the same period after an affirmative vote in the English and Scottish parliaments in 1706. This procedure of consensus was recently invoked by British PM David Cameron in the Scottish 2014 referendum on

independence and it has facilitated the general acceptance of its outcome, thus avoiding the tensions inherent in the Catalan case. The latter runs up against the Spanish refusal to acknowledge popular expression by democratic vote with the argument that Spanish identity is overarching and indivisible. It is this relationship of submission to and censorship by Madrid that present-day rhetoric and political action has not been able to address satisfactorily. The “Ley de la Memoria Histórica” or Historical Memory Law passed by the socialist Zapatero government in 2006 seeks to recognize and compensate those that suffered persecution and violence during the Civil War and the following dictatorship, explicitly focusing on the many mass graves and unidentified deaths that still populate the (political) landscape as skeletons in the closet. Yet, the current self-identification of the Spanish Right with individual freedom, rights and democracy feeds on the culture of forgetting this violent past. Thus, the hysterical treatment of the language and identity issue in Catalonia with right-wing accusations of “Apartheid” by heavyweight politicians such as the conservative former vice-president Soraya Sáenz de Santamaría (Anonymous, 2018f) is nothing less than the projection of the Right’s barely-hidden authoritarianism onto those margins of the nation-state that do not identify with the imposition of a pan-Hispanic identity as the overarching political and cultural norm.

Rafael Hernando and Party Opinion

A few telling discursive examples may tease this claim out. Immediately after the Catalan Referendum, the controversial, bellicose spokesman of the conservative People’s Party (*Partido Popular*), Rafael Hernando, accused the Catalan government and people of fascist attitudes and behaviour, which he claimed would convert Catalonia in a powerful stage and platform for the return of Nazi ideology in Europe (Anonymous, 2017), arguing that one would have thought fascism had disappeared in 1945 with the demise of the Third Reich. Yet, it is historical fact and common knowledge that the Spanish Civil War was initiated by a fascist *coup d’état* with German and Italian support that brought down the legitimately chosen Second Spanish Republic in what became the foreplay to WWII. Rafael Hernando cannot be blind to the fact that the Franco dictatorship lasted until the latter’s death in 1975, seeing Spanish fascism outlive Hitler’s by 30 years. Neither can he be blind to the fact that the political heirs to the Franco regime are his own Partido Popular and the insufficiently purged state, church and judiciary in the over-lauded peaceful “La Transición” (transition) to democracy. And last but not least, he cannot be blind to the fact that the symbolic heir to the dictatorial regime is the Royal Family as the Body Politic, once in Italian and Portuguese exile but reinstated by Franco. This may explain why our Bourbon King Philip VI sided with the Central Government in defending the violent repression of the Catalan referendum for independence last October. As the mouthpiece of his party’s official position on matters of government, Rafael Hernando’s historical amnesia is worrying, and it signals that what he denounces is, in fact, too close for comfort.

José Maria Aznar and the Atocha Attack

Rafael Hernando’s line of reasoning has much in common with the reactionary former Spanish President José Maria Aznar’s, who lied to the Spanish nation about the perpetrators of the bloody, traumatic terrorist attack at the Atocha train station in Madrid on the day before the general elections of March 12, 2004. Peripheral nationalism has been used time and again by successive central governments to favour their support and election results, but to no avail this time. Aznar had developed close ties with the Bush and Blair administrations in their War on Terror and was served a violent reaction by Al Qaeda that neither he nor his

cabinet could spin. By blaming the terrorist organization ETA instead and thereby violent peripheral nationalism in the Basque Country, he dug his own political grave. Social media inside and outside Spain quickly put an end to his government's manipulation of the truth, which ousted him in the ballots the following day. Since his undignified deposition, which was emulated by President Mariano Rajoy's fall from parliamentary grace only a few weeks ago, José Maria Aznar has become an important player in the shadow, heading the influential reactionary think tank FAES.⁶ As such, he denounces what he deems to be a Catalan *coup d'état*, an unlikely but revealing distortion of reality in that the pacific passive resistance of the Catalan independence movement does not bear comparison to the violence and aggression that illegally enthroned Franco's fascist regime in 1936.

Mariano Rajoy and the Corruption of Government

Aznar's intervention was informed by the self-same historical denial and political amnesia as Rafael Hernando's, and executed at an opportune moment: President Rajoy had just been ousted from power as a motion of censure prospered after several high-ranking PP members had been sentenced for fraudulent party funding and corruption. Rajoy and his team followed party tradition in miscalculating heavily when they thought the Gürtel⁷ sentence would be less condemning, and its effects could be contained. With PP's corruption at the highest levels proven before the law, its leader could not stay on any longer and his place was taken by the social Democrat Pedro Sanchez after Rajoy had lost a confidence vote. The political outlook of Spain changed dramatically only hours after the national budget was approved after Parliament's manipulation; it transpired that legal players close to the PP had managed to withhold the Gürtel sentence until the very budget was passed with Basque peripheral-nationalist support that was to guarantee Rajoy's government's stability for the next two years. This foul scheme included one of the judges on the case delaying depositing his vote, which bought Rajoy sufficient time to negotiate with the Basques and secure their support for both the Spanish budget and direct rule of Catalonia through the continued imposition of the Constitutional Article 155. The connivance between politics and the judiciary was blatant, as it has been throughout the Catalan Question at large. Judge Llamela, in charge of the judicialization of the Catalan fight for sovereignty, has been bending the interpretation of the law to suit Rajoy's purposes and politics – and thus has harvested a negative international response, which has allowed former President Puigdemont and other Catalan politicians to evade international search warrants and continue in exile. The fact is that Spain has actually had two recent PP governments falling over corruption, abuse of power, and manipulation and fabrication of the truth, which is onerous regarding the quality of Spanish democracy and those who uphold its prestige most fiercely and firmly – Spanish unionists.

Forever at odds with what he considers Mariano Rajoy's permissive attitude towards Catalan independence, José Maria Aznar favours a hard-line engagement with Catalan separatism by the full imposition of direct rule through the state of exception, and uses Rajoy's political demise as an opportunity to impose his creed. Nevertheless, Rajoy was, in fact, far from forthcoming towards Catalonia in his politics and decisions. He imposed direct rule while translating all separatist action into punishable felonies and treason; reducing the political to the judicial; and bending the law to his essentialist, reductive vision of Spain. Thus, he

⁶ Fundación para el Análisis y los Estudios Sociales (The Foundation for Analysis and Social Studies).

⁷ The so-called "Gürtel" case involved a group of businessmen and PP politicians in the orbit of entrepreneur Francisco Correa Sánchez, whose surname "Correa" translates as "belt" in English and "Gürtel" in German, thus giving his name to the illegal financing and corruption scandal. On May 24, 2018, the court condemned many of them for fraud, money laundering and bribery (Vázquez, 2018).

marketed a pseudo-democratic discourse of individual citizen rights and freedom by looking at separatism in isolation, taking the Catalan Question out of its larger, peninsular political context, casting Spanish ID in Catalonia as a victim of cultural oppression, and captaining the nation-state's consequential intervention. Ultimately, this criminalization and judicialization have sent democratically chosen representatives and leaders such as the former vice-president of Catalonia Oriol Junqueras to jail and forced others such as the Catalan former president Carles Puigdemont to flee the country.

Pablo Casado and Party Leadership

If Rajoy's approach was considered "too soft," what will await Catalonia if/when Aznar's sycophants come to power? The PP spokesman prior to Rafael Hernando and close friend of Aznar's, Pablo Casado, has just become the party's next leader in a calculated turn to the far-right that bodes little good for Catalan independence initiatives. Casado, a glib, quick-witted politician, has successfully assimilated the unionist victim discourse that the fast-growing new populist party *Ciudadanos* (Citizens) first promoted in Catalonia and later successfully marketed nationally. As a young politician born into democracy and so without the "hang-ups" of the past – he is 37 years old and considered "*desacomplejado*": without any complexes – Casado is unlikely to pursue the exorcism and redemption of Spain's fascist legacy, rather the contrary: he is "a politician who speaks of peaceful renewal but represents the most conservative essence and principles of a party with a serious identity crisis. A sharp swerve to the right" (Anonymous, 2018d). His rookie status and election not only reveal a preference for more extreme positions in Spanish identity politics but also a return to traditional male leadership. In what set out to be a battle for power between two female heavyweights completely changed face when in the party's primaries Casado beat María Dolores de Cospedal, current Secretary General of the People's Party and a loyal adept to Aznar's ideas. He left her far behind in third position while almost equalling the voters' support for the former vice-president Soraya Sáenz de Santamaría, who he then beat with an ample majority in the final round. As Natalia Junquera reported, there was no serious intention to promote female leadership:

The new leader of the People's Party [...] denied that "being a woman" was a "merit" or an "electoral argument", and this was the view that imposed itself during the primaries. Santamaria and her allies had presented this issue as an important factor in the vote. "Denying that it would be an extraordinary achievement that a woman became the People's Party's and Government's leader is tantamount to denying reality," [as one of them] said. (Junquera, 2018)

Sáenz de Santamaría, unlike Casado, is not considered a hardliner even if she recently argued that Catalonia's treatment of Spanish(ness) was a form of Apartheid. Yet, if we have a look at Spain's political and cultural history, the opposite comes closer to the truth and we may find Catalan to be the victim of linguistic blackballing as early as the post-1713 period.⁸ We may assume that these conservative politicians' positionings are not isolated, coincidental cases of political amnesia but that, pronounced by key conservative party leadership, they express the denial and erasure of the authoritarian past as a structural problem of conservative Spain, which can only manage its haunting by projecting its sins onto its political opponents. I

⁸ "After the defeat of Catalonia following the siege of Barcelona (1713) in the Wars of the Spanish Succession, the Catalan language was discouraged by an increasingly centralised state, it became increasingly dialectalised and archaic" (Webber & Strubell i Trueta 1991, as cited in Miller & Miller, 1996, p. 115).

would even argue that, conditioned by the balance of powers in the late 1970s, this denial and projection were the necessary conditions upon which Spanish democracy was founded, as it was a project that needed a clean slate and so the Spanish Right to believe itself democratic, free and egalitarian in order to prosper.

Rafael Català and Political Prisoners

So when in April 2018 the then Minister of Justice, Rafael Català, baffled and outraged the independence movement with the statement that, “In Spain there are no political prisoners!”, he was promoting the judicialization of Catalan politics and ignoring the numerous arrests of Catalan politicians and activists on unlikely charges of corruption, rebellion, sedition and terrorism which, as has already become judicially evident, lack substance and cannot bear up to the standards of international law regarding extradition. By taking Catalan activism out of the terrain of the political and criminalising it, the minister equated Spanishness with acceptable, normal behaviour and Catalanness with deviance, which he tied into the fabrication that Catalans were bullying Spanish unionists (Anonymous, 2018a) – that is, the Catalan separatist as the violent, dangerous, savage Other. Yet, Catalan separatism’s non-violent character belies the latter, and this precisely earned it the support of many inside and outside Catalonia after the state’s aggression against the referendum. As Colm Tóibín wrote, “Unlike Northern Ireland and the Basque country, Catalonians have sought to win the argument using constitutional methods.” (2018).

Random Coincidences in the News?

Revealing separatism as a call for democracy, it shows pacifism as a successful moral and strategic device to defend the Catalan cause in a context of structural power deficit which furnishes the Spanish state with most legal, political, military, financial and economic means to maintain a situation of – some might argue: neo-colonial – control and oppression. Right-wing Spanish unionism covers this power imbalance up with a pseudo-democratic discourse of victimhood, which denies the authoritarian past, reinstates the Spanish constitutionalist order, and refuses dialogue and negotiation by criminalising it. We will have to see to what extent the new socialist central government, relatively unburdened by the undemocratic fascist heritage, yet bent upon imposing a centripetal unionist notion of territorial solidarity, will play different cards and encourage solidarity and respect as a two-way street. As this is yet another question mark regarding the new central government, the synchronicity of some random pieces of news apparently unrelated to the Catalan state of affairs, circulating in the Spanish media in late spring – early summer 2018 and causing widespread popular and political outrage, may hint at the very conservative nature of the structures that form the backbone of Spanish society, further revealing its ingrained race, gender and class tenets.

Quim Torra and the King

The new Catalan president after Puigdemont, the polemically-outspoken separatist Quim Torra, would not decide until the very last moment whether he would go to the opening of the Mediterranean Games in Valencia – the geographical and political core of so many of the corruption scandals that have affected the People’s Party PP over these years, but also part of *Els Països Catalans*, or the Greater Catalonia. This was to avoid having to shake hands with King Philip VI, who had made himself most unpopular among many Catalans with his rigid, irate defence of essentialist nationalism, justifying state violence over democracy on the day of the independence referendum (Anonymous, 2018g). King Philip’s reaction was considered

undignified by many Catalans and at odds with King Juan Carlos's defence of democracy during the 1982 coup d'état, which had won the Royal Family enduring support after the monarchy was restored by Franco.

The King's Brother in Law

The King's brother in law, Iñaki Urdangarín, Basque and born into the entrepreneurial elite, was condemned for fraud and corruption for his involvement in shady business projects in the Balearic Islands (also part of the Greater Catalonia), in which he had abused of the privileges bestowed by his newly acquired aristocratic title, the Duke of Palma. He was allowed to serve his six-year jail sentence in a prison of his choice, enjoying the extraordinary privilege of private, isolated quarters in a females-only prison in Avila. This while Catalan politicians were kept captive as ordinary prisoners in jails far removed from Catalonia without being sentenced or transferred to prisons closer to home (fortunately, the approximation to home has now been implemented by the new socialist government). In the meantime, it has transpired that Urdangarín can very soon apply for and be conceded conditional liberty (Anonymous, 2018h), which, if achieved, would make his jail sentence largely and unjustly symbolical. This also coincides with the confession of one of the king emeritus's many ex-lovers, Corinna zu Sayn-Wittgenstein, that suggest Juan Carlos's deep financial implication in the Nóos case and his son-in-law's imprisonment as a smokescreen to protect the Spanish Royal Family (Escobar Marti, 2018).

The Rapist "Manada"

The case of "La Manada" (The Gang) in Pamplona, on the linguistic-cultural frontier between Basque and Spanish in the autonomous region of Navarra, sees five young men from Seville, in their twenties, some with penal antecedents and others with connections to the state police force, avoid prison after having gang-raped an 18-year-old girl during the famous Pamplona Fiestas in 2016. This obviously happened against her will, but the judges produced a male-chauvinist sentence on sexual consensus which exonerates the perpetrators and allows them to go unhindered after paying a symbolic bail of 6,000 Euro a head. Apparently, this is not the first sexual crime in which the accused have been implicated and they are having another court sentence pending, making their abusive sexual behaviour structural (Anonymous, 2018e).

The Altsasu Incident

This sees eight young Basques beat up two "guardia civiles" or paramilitary police in Alsasua, a small town halfway Pamplona and Vitoria, and also the locality where the Basque terrorist organization ETA was founded six decades ago, on the Basque-Spanish linguistic and cultural interface. The aggressors were condemned to jail sentences up to thirteen years for terrorist violence against the Spanish nation-state. The ETA background of the village is significant: the Franco regime promoted migration to Alsasua from other parts of Spain to break Basque resistance demographically but was only partly successful. Harking back to the times of the dictatorship, a well-armed garrison of the Guardia Civil still patrols and controls the area, which makes the pub fight more than random and coincidental (Aduriz, 2018).

Valtònc rap

We could tease out the mutual connections and overlaps among these pieces of news in considering the Mallorcan rapper Valtònc and his three-year jail sentence for apology of terrorism and disrespect of the Crown because of his politically-charged songs regarding Catalan Independence, capitalism, fascism etc. He has had no choice but to flee the country and follow ex-president Puigdemont's suit, making Belgium his country of residence, so as to avoid imprisonment (Anonymous, 2018b).

Conclusion

These five stories coinciding in the Spanish media bring me, somewhat unexpectedly, to the popular science fiction film trilogy *The Matrix* (1999–2003), written and directed by the then Wachowski brothers within the doom scenario of the new millennium. The *Matrix* trilogy is a dystopian vision of the future in which the human species is colonized by a massive computer network that feeds on the human body's heat and brain impulses and immerses the mind into a soothing virtual reality to make bodily exploitation possible. This network is called "the matrix" as it configures a "nurturing" environment in which virtual reality invades all and enslaves the human being. While on the one hand a matrix is a mathematical disposition to solve problems and so applied in computer science and practice – as the trilogy shows – as a site of growth and development, the term is also related to "matriz" in Spanish and "matriu" in Catalan for "womb", which genders the concept. Interestingly, the then Wachowski brothers have since the trilogy transgendered to sisters; signing off their latest, successful TV series *Sense8* as Lilly and Lana Wachowski. It comes as no surprise that *Sense8* (pronounced as in "sensate") presents an outspoken utopian vision of future society based on a highly empathetic deconstruction of gender, as well as class and race.

Similarly, the five stories could in conjunction be read as part and parcel of a larger mainstream discursive grid which ties ethnicity, gender and class structurally together into an accommodated, male, Spanish "patrix". Such a "patrix" would self-servingly control and soothe a citizenry kept ignorant with a fabricated discourse on democracy, solidarity and individual and group rights and identity. In Shakespeare's early-modern play *Hamlet*, the ghost of the dead Danish king haunts the corrupt Body Politic and stands for the need to return to ethnically-pure, upper-class, male-sanctioned rule to achieve national normalcy. This blueprint for rule could be seen to reach out from the past and attach itself upon the political cadavers of the ousted presidents Aznar and Rajoy as well as upon the scandals involving the Crown. The play's famous quote "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark" harks back to a discourse that feels obsolete and passé, yet this "patrix" shows unexpected, ongoing resilience in this age of territorial and identitarian redefinition.

It is within the latter reactionary framework that Pablo Casado convinced his party that he would be their best leader. Pledging loyalty to the monarchy and the constitution, he promised as one of the main points of his agenda to start a vigorous campaign in support of traditional family values that would curtail the current, liberal abortion legislation of 2010 and return to the restrictive Law of 1985, which only allows abortion if the woman's health is in danger, if the foetus is deformed, or if the child is the result of rape (Junquera, 2018). There is little need to say that such a regression would severely limit a woman's control over her womb and by extension, her own body. For as much as we may consider Spanish society gynocentric, an accommodated, authoritarian Spanish "patrix" keeps imposing itself on a more egalitarian "matrix" of which Catalonia forms part. Catalonia appears to be structurally

caught up in a conflict between the mainstream and the margins that, ultimately, conflates and complicates ethnicity with gender and class issues.

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The Referendum for Catalan Independence and its Aftermath: A Personal Account

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Abstract

This account does not claim to be academic in nature – though all of the events described and statements reported can be found online on media websites – but is, rather, a personal description of the extraordinary events which occurred in Catalonia from September 2017 to January 2018. It includes digressions describing the significance of football, road networks and other regions in Spain, but above all it provides eyewitness testimony of a people's wish to express themselves freely and democratically at the ballot box. The Spanish government's brutal response has led to the country's gravest crisis for decades, with the monarchy seriously questioned, the constitution beset and Europe glowering disapprovingly from the north.

The situation is by no means resolved with ten members of the Catalan government and two independence lobbyists now on trial for rebellion, sedition and misuse of public funds, and six members of the Catalan government in exile in Belgium, Scotland and Switzerland.

Key words: Catalonia, referendum, political prisoners, exile

Protest

Deeply fearful that the Catalan referendum on independence would go ahead, on September 20, 2017, Madrid ordered the *Guardia Civil* to raid a number of Catalan government offices and arrest senior civil servants. One of these government offices was the Catalan Finance Ministry. As a consequence, 40,000 people gathered outside the building. I was one of them. I heard the news on the radio in Sabadell, where I live, twenty kilometres to the northwest of Barcelona. I immediately went to the railway station and took a train to the centre of Barcelona. From their conversations, it seemed that everyone on the train was doing the same. Some had flags, but most looked as though they had done as I did; heard the news, left their homes, and caught the train.

Protesters made no attempt to enter the building but over the course of the day the two Land Rovers in which the *Guardia Civil* had arrived, and were left outside the ministry building, were vandalised. Towards midnight the leaders of the independence lobbies *Omnium Cultural* and the *Assemblea Nacional Catalana*, Jordi Cuixart and Jordi Sánchez, managed to convince most of the peacefully demonstrating crowd to go home but despite guarantees from the Catalan Police that they would be safely escorted from the building the *Guardia Civil* decided to hunker down for the night in the now deserted offices. That evening mass demonstrations took place all over Catalonia. We had a crowd of 6,000 in Sabadell. The *Guardia Civil* finally emerged to a virtually empty street at around 6 o'clock the next morning.

On the same day, elsewhere in the city, Spanish Police attempted to enter the headquarters of one of the independence parties in search of independence campaign material. They tried to do so without a search warrant or any other judicial document and were refused entry. MPs, party members and sympathisers gathered in front of the building and there was a standoff throughout the day with the people resolutely refusing to respond violently to police provocation. Serious questions arise: Why did the Spanish police attempt to raid a political party headquarters without the appropriate authorisation? Why did they remain there all day in full riot gear including guns for firing rubber bullets, which are illegal in Catalonia? Is it a coincidence that they chose to besiege the most radical of the independence parties' headquarters?

Two days later the Spanish government hired three ferryboats at a cost of 300,000 euros a day to house 6,000 *Guardia Civil* and Spanish Police drafted in from all over Spain. Many of them had been given rapturous send-offs from their hometowns throughout Spain by people waving the Spanish flag and yelling "A por ellos" which means "Go get them". Meaning go get us, the Catalans.

That weekend I went with my wife to Perpignan in France, where we visited the village of Elna and its famous maternity hospital where pregnant Spanish women, fleeing from the Spanish civil war, were given refuge and a safe place to give birth. There were quite a lot of Catalan tourists there as it was a holiday in Barcelona on the Monday.

The Referendum

Meanwhile, the Spanish government, and the then Spanish prime minister, Mariano Rajoy, insisted the referendum would not happen. They claimed that all the ballot papers and all the ballot boxes and all the referendum publicity had been confiscated. But referendum posters

kept appearing, and more and more flags and stickers distributed. It was then announced that all of the polling stations would be sealed up by the police on the Friday night and through the weekend until Monday, to prevent the referendum taking place. As polling is usually held in schools, these were occupied on the Friday by parents, teachers and children who stayed there until voting began on Sunday morning. Our polling station, where I live in Sabadell, was in the Youth Council building. We occupied it on Friday evening, but I didn't stay the night either Friday or Saturday as there were hundreds of people there and I like a comfortable bed. But I got there at 5 am on Sunday morning, along with about 100 other members of the *Comité de Defensa del Referendum*. These committees, made up of local people, sprang up spontaneously all over Catalonia, to prevent polling stations from being closed down by the police.

At half past seven a car slipped into the car park and a couple of young men quietly brought large, rectangular black objects wrapped in plastic into the polling station. The ballot boxes and the ballot papers had arrived. Shortly afterwards a couple of Catalan police – the *Mossos d'Esquadra* – came to visit. “Are you holding an Autumn festival,” they asked. They then told us that the referendum was illegal and wanted to know who was in charge. “We all are,” we replied. Then they wandered off and stood guard about 100 yards away for the rest of the day. Polling opened at 9.00 by which time there were hundreds of people waiting, and then the news came in of the attacks on polling stations in Girona, Barcelona and one of the polling stations near ours, in Sabadell, where the Speaker of the Catalan Parliament, was due to vote.

Within an hour about 2,000 people were lining up to vote just at our polling station. I don't know how many were on the electoral roll, but I suspect about 90% in our area voted, a good third in response to the violence perpetrated by the Spanish police. Later in the morning some of us went to visit the polling station attacked by the police. It was a primary school and the police had smashed the glass entrance to get in. They left empty-handed because the people inside had had time to hide the ballot boxes on the roofs of neighbouring buildings. By the time we got there the international observers had turned up and were taking photographs. They were absolutely shocked by what they had seen in Barcelona and Sabadell.

Back at our polling station, at about two o'clock we were suddenly ordered to gather around the entrance as the Spanish police were on their way. I was standing near the front with my daughter next to me. My heart was beating furiously. But either the police decided to move on, or thought we were too numerous and they left us alone. They left many of the places they attacked during the day empty-handed, unable to get through the crowds of people peacefully defending their ballot boxes, hands in the air, despite being bashed with batons, shot at with rubber bullets or sprayed with tear gas.

Everyone was following events across Catalonia on their mobile phones. There were images of the *Mossos d'Esquadra* remonstrating with the Spanish police; the firefighters, in their red uniforms and yellow hard hats stood, as they had promised, between the attacking police and the peacefully protesting public, taking baton blows to the head and body, but not fighting back. A senior fire chief said that the task of firefighters was to protect life. He had thought, he added, that that was the police services' mission, too.

As the afternoon wore on, sporadic raids on polling stations continued in Barcelona but then we heard that the Spanish police were fanning out across the Catalan countryside and attacking isolated villages. They smashed up polling stations, beat up villagers and made their

getaway with ballot boxes containing handfuls of votes. According to the Catalan Department of Health, 1,066 people needed medical attention, 23 of whom were over 79 years old. One man lost an eye (Benito, 2017).

When the polling stations closed at eight o'clock everyone expected the attacks to be renewed, but nothing happened – we have learnt recently that a shocked Angela Merkel telephoned Mariano Rajoy, the Spanish prime minister, and told him to stop the police violence (Corporació catalana de mitjans audiovisuals, 2018). After the count the ballots were taken by car to the town hall where the town council had organised a party and installed a massive screen broadcasting Catalan television as the count was announced. There were 2.2 million votes cast, about 43% of the electorate, 91% of which were in favour of independence. About a third of polling stations didn't open and an unknown number of votes were lost to police action. Spanish Prime Minister, Mariano Rajoy appeared on television to say the referendum had not taken place and that the police had acted with great restraint.

In the week following the referendum we learned that the ballot boxes had been kept hidden in the village of Elna, in France, in the Maternity hospital (*ara.cat*, 2017). No wonder there were so many Catalans there that weekend – they were picking up the boxes and distributing them around Catalonia where they were kept hidden in churches and people's homes. We also learned that the then Catalan president, Carles Puigdemont, when he left home to vote, was pursued by a Spanish police helicopter so his security team drove him under a bridge where he switched cars and managed to evade his pursuers in the sky.

The Catalan police, the *Mossos d'Esquadra* were furious at the Spanish police, describing them as drug-crazed and out of control. The Spanish police, meanwhile, accused the *Mossos d'Esquadra* of disloyalty and failing to obey orders. Their complaints against the *Mossos* have been taken up by the Spanish courts and their chief, Major Trapero, already a Catalan folk hero for his handling of the terrorist attack in Barcelona in August 2017, is now being prosecuted for sedition and leading a criminal gang (i.e. the *Mossos d'Esquadra*). It is now known that the imam responsible for the terrorist group was an intelligence asset of the Spanish secret services, a fact they kept to themselves.

October 2. The news is full of stories showing how the ballot boxes had been protected from the police; some contained nothing but empty envelopes. In one town they filled the boxes with bags of macaroni. In another town the counting of the ballots took place during mass, with the priest and the congregation singing patriotic Catalan hymns (Catalunya Religió, 2017).

General Strike

October 3. A one-day general strike is called, probably the most successful in Catalan history as it had the support of everyone from the unions, to the Catalan government, to the heads of business and industry. In Sabadell we were asked to gather in front of our polling stations and then march to the town centre where 25,000 of us converged at midday. With a population of 200,000, it was the biggest demonstration ever seen in Sabadell. The local forestry and rural agents converged on the town in their yellow vehicles, lights flashing and sirens blaring to join the demonstration in support of the strike. The firemen brought along their biggest tenders with their telescopic ladders extended into the air as high as possible. The crowd cheered them after their defence of voters during the referendum and the speaker of the Catalan parliament, Carme Forcadell, who lives in Sabadell, turned up to thank them

personally. The demonstration was repeated in the evening in the squares and streets surrounding the town hall. There were massive demonstrations in every town and university campus in Catalonia.

That night, King Philip VI of Spain made a speech in which he exclusively addressed those opposed to Catalan independence: “I know very well that in Catalonia there is also much concern and uneasiness with the conduct of the regional authorities. For those who feel that way, I tell them that they are not alone; that they have the support and solidarity of the rest of Spain, and the absolute guarantee of our Rule of Law in defence of their freedom and their rights.” This was interpreted as the monarchy’s approval of the police violence on October 1st against the Catalan people. In the following days a number of the biggest businesses in Catalonia announced that they were moving their headquarters to other parts of Spain, in response to threats and promises by the Spanish government. Like a lot of people we decided to boycott those businesses and change our bank accounts and utility companies to those which have remained in Catalonia. The workers’ committee at the Seat car factory in Martorell, a town to the south west of Barcelona, announced that the company had received threats from the Spanish government, including a telephone call from Philip VI, urging them to move their headquarters out of Catalonia. Being a subsidiary of Volkswagen, they weren’t particularly bothered by blustering from Madrid and refused to move.

October 16. The two leaders of the main independence lobbies, Jordi Sánchez and Jordi Cuixart, are imprisoned without trial and without bail for their actions on September 20, when 40,000 people protested outside the Catalan Finance Ministry as it was being raided by the *Guardia Civil*. They are accused of “inciting a tumultuous uprising intended to impede by force or other illegal means the application of the law.” Documentary evidence, however, clearly shows the two Jordis (Sr Alone, 2018) not only restraining the crowd, but eventually getting them to disperse. We now know that the two Jordis acted as intermediaries between the *Guardia Civil* and the protestors (and one of the reasons they became so anxious to clear the street was because, quite late in the day, the *Guardia Civil* revealed they had left a number of firearms in their unlocked vehicles (Sr Alone, 2018, from minute 32). The Jordis are, nevertheless, on trial for rebellion. As far as is known, no disciplinary measures have been taken against the *Guardia Civil* for leaving weapons unattended and it is assumed they were acting on orders with the intention of deliberately provoking an incident in which the guns would be used by the crowd, thus justifying a military occupation of Catalonia by the Spanish armed forces.

The response to the Jordis’ imprisonment was a loud session of saucepan banging from windows and balconies across the country and the next day there was a stoppage at 12 o’clock and then a silent demonstration in the evening in Barcelona. 200,000 turned up, but other silent demonstrations were held all over Catalonia, including in Sabadell where I stood silently, candle held aloft, together with my daughter, and a friend of hers and several thousand fellow Sabadellencs. Unfortunately, the wax from the candles at the Barcelona vigil dripped in such quantities onto the tarmac that the streets had to be closed to traffic for nearly 24 hours as the city authorities cleaned it up.

Independence

October 27. The Catalan Parliament votes for independence. We went to Tarragona that night. The *castellers* (human castles) and *diables* (firework-wielding devils) were out, and the national anthem, “Els Segadors” was sung, and we all celebrated our independence.

Tarragona was beautiful, a UNESCO world heritage site with squares and streets filled with bars and restaurants. The tourists took pictures of the locals having their Friday night fun. We all knew it was only for a few hours. By 10:00 pm Rajoy had announced direct rule. In Barcelona neo-fascists attacked a school, children ran away screaming, a teacher was punched in the face, Radio Catalunya had its windows smashed by Spanish nationalists.

Rajoy also announced that there would be a Catalan parliamentary election on December 21st. He is convinced that the independence parties will lose their majority and sense will return to the Catalan people through the election of a loyalist, unionist pro-Spanish government.

October 29. *Societat Civil Catalana*, an extreme right wing unionist group, calls a demonstration. 300,000 turned up according to the police, though the organisers and the Spanish press claimed there were a million people there. Thousands were bussed in from all over Spain, many of them members of neo-fascist organisations. Immigrants were attacked, Franco's anthem, "Cara al sol", was sung along with fascist salutes and shouts of "Viva Franco". A pitched battle broke out in Plaça Catalunya between rival neo-fascist football fans – the chairs from Bar Zurich, a well-known gathering point for tourists, flew thickly through the air. The resurgence of Spanish fascism has become quite serious, with outbreaks not just in Catalonia, but also in Valencia and Madrid.

Prison and Exile

October 30. It has been announced that Catalan president Carles Puigdemont and ministers Clara Ponsatí, Toni Comín, Meritxell Serret and Lluís Puig have gone into exile in Belgium.

November 2. Those who stayed behind are summoned to Madrid and summarily locked up: Catalan Vice president and finance minister Oriol Junqueras, and ministers Carles Mundó, Jordi Turull, Josep Rull, Raül Romeva, Joaquim Forn, Dolors Bassa and Meritxell Borràs were sent to prisons in the Madrid region. Carles Mundó and Meritxell Borràs were later released on bail, but the speaker of the Catalan Parliament, Carme Forcadell, was later imprisoned. They are accused of rebellion, sedition and misuse of public funds. They have been refused bail and have not yet been brought to trial.

November 5. Catalan President Carles Puigdemont and the four Catalan ministers exiled in Brussels appear before the judge in response to Spanish demands for their extradition. The Belgian official who released the news that the five would have to give themselves up to the Belgian police before appearing before the judge was left speechless by the Spanish reporter who hoped they would all be handcuffed. "No," the official finally replied, "we only do that with dangerous prisoners in this country." It turns out that the nine members of the government who were sent to prison in Madrid were handcuffed, placed in a police van without seat belts, and then driven off at high speed in order to bounce them around in the back of the vehicle.

Spain's then chief prosecutor/grand inquisitor, José Manuel Maza, later argued that if the jailed politicians had immediately renounced their heretical views on independence, they would have been let out on bail. In other words, they are in prison for their ideas, and not for any crime they have supposedly committed. Should they swear allegiance to the Spanish flag and constitution they may hope to be released.

Meanwhile, back in Brussels, the five testified for six hours and were then allowed to go free, pending further deliberations, on condition they remain in Belgium.

Resistance

The saucepan banging continues every night at ten o'clock, and there are sporadic demonstrations and road blocks and the closure of railway lines across Catalonia. Meanwhile the extreme right is gaining in confidence secure in the knowledge that the Spanish authorities will do nothing to check them. On Saturday night neo-fascists marching in Mataró, a town up the coast from Barcelona, beat up a young man as he walked out of his building. He had refused to shout “viva España”. He was taken to hospital.

November 8. Today there is a general strike. It is the beginning of a nation-wide civil disobedience movement organised by the CDRs. The *Comitès de Defensa del Referèndum* sprang up spontaneously on September 28 after the Spanish government threatened to close the polling stations on October 1. The *Comitès*, made up of local residents, organised the occupation and defence of the polling stations and were key to ensuring that the vote went ahead. They were also essential to the success of the October 3rd general strike. After the Declaration of Independence, they became *Comitès de Defensa de la República*. They have managed to bring Catalonia to a standstill by blocking sixty major roads and railway lines. They've organised this in complete secrecy and the police have once again been caught wrong-footed. As a consequence of the complete breakdown of the road network the police are unable to send in reinforcements to break up the roadblocks. So much, once again, for the Spanish secret services, already in disgrace for failing to discover the whereabouts of the ballot boxes prior to the referendum. All of the major roads and motorways around Sabadell have been closed down and so, predictably, it is chaos all over town as the municipal police direct the traffic round in circles. I went with my daughter on our bicycles to the motorway to join in the roadblock but by the time we got there they'd moved on and occupied the Sabadell-Barcelona railway line. Not that it mattered much; the students from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona had also cut off the motorway just a few kilometres further down. In the west of Catalonia, the farmers are out with their tractors again and have brought Lleida to a standstill.

Demonstrations

November 10. Tonight it is Sabadell's turn to host a demonstration by *Societat Civil Catalana*, the extreme right-wing Spanish unionist lobby. They've taken to calling demonstrations in towns which have a large number of people born outside of Catalonia and who came here in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s to find work, mainly in the textile industry; at one time they made up nearly half of the Catalan population. Many of these workers, now retired, strongly identify with their roots and see themselves as Spanish rather than Catalan. Some don't. Their children and grandchildren increasingly don't.

The protestors began attacking members of the media. At independence demonstrations you see no law enforcement; unionist concentrations are different. There were nearly as many municipal and Catalan police in the town hall square as demonstrators, and rightly so, as it turned out. A woman from a German news agency was specifically picked on because the crowd mistook her for a reporter from Catalan television. She was very distressed, though, and the police decided to evacuate the press rather than risk further incidents.

November 11. A major demonstration in Barcelona is called in support of those in prison. We caught the train from Sabadell at 3:50 pm; it was packed. I've never been on a train so full, it must have contravened railway regulations. I had to haul my daughter aboard before she was left behind, but we kept packing them in as we proceeded towards Barcelona. No-one complained; we were all there for the same purpose. In recent years the local services of the Spanish national railway company RENFE have been managed from Barcelona but with direct rule from Madrid this is no longer so. Consequently, no extra trains were laid on.

The police say there were 750,000 – it was probably double that (Vilaweb). The independence organisers no longer bother to announce a head count of their own as the demonstrations are so self-evidently enormous. We were on a very wide boulevard – Marina – three kilometres long, packed like sardines – I've never been on a demonstration before where we were jammed so close together. But even if there were only 750,000 of us, that's over 10% of the entire Catalan population. When it began to get dark there was a spontaneous decision to turn on mobile phone lights. This is a response to the embarrassing incident in Barcelona on October 16, when the streets of Barcelona became covered in candle wax. Hundreds of thousands of mobile phone lights all shining together makes a very impressive sight.

The Threat of Martial Law

Friday 17. Marta Rovira, acting head of the political party *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* (Catalan Republican Left) while Oriol Junqueras languishes in a Madrid gaol, has claimed that various sources warned the Catalan government that if it continued on its march towards independence there would be blood and deaths, real bullets would be used rather than rubber ones, and the military would be deployed. She argues that this was the reason they did not resist the imposition of direct rule and did not call on the people to defend the Parliament. Madrid has been quick to deny this – Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy, government spokesman Íñigo Méndez de Vigo and Spanish government representative in Catalonia, Enric Millo, have all described Rovira's words as "filthy lies" while at the same time admitting that they would not be taking her to court for defamation. Apparently one of the sources – confirmed – is the Catalan Ombudsman, Rafael Ribó. Another – unconfirmed – is Íñigo Urkullu, lehendakari (president) of the Basque Country. Other sources, such as Luis González Segura, a lieutenant expelled from the army in 2009 for reporting his superiors for corruption, argues that Rajoy and the Madrid government have been so repressive towards Catalonia in order to *avoid* a military coup – indeed they may well have warned the Catalan government of military intervention not as a threat, but because they knew they wouldn't be able to stop it. According to González Segura, the military gained enormous power, especially over the monarchy, after the failed coup in 1981 in exchange for not supporting the uprising. As a consequence, rather than being purged of Francoist elements and ideology, these have remained, mainly to enrich themselves through corruption.

Direct Rule

November 30. Direct rule is becoming ever more invasive. The so-called third sector is not receiving any funding leaving many people in desperate need without any support. At a more ludicrous level the PP has managed to get the colour yellow banned, it being the colour of the ribbons worn to remind us of the political prisoners. The big display fountains below Montjuïc in Barcelona are no longer allowed to be lit up with yellow – though other colours are permitted.

The Spanish parliament has voted by a large majority not to authorise a judicial investigation into the police violence on October 1 as they claim the whole thing was falsified by the Catalans who “led the police into a trap”. It now emerges that the Spanish government fed images of violence from other incidents to its tame media in order to then point out that they were false. By extension, they are saying, all such images are therefore false. Presumably, this is only really for Spanish domestic consumption as so many people, press agencies, and the foreign observers, saw the violence at first hand.

Belgian Justice

December 4. The Belgian magistrate deciding whether to extradite the Catalan government-in-exile has postponed his decision until December 14. Meanwhile, the Catalan media has been banned from using the following expressions: *government in exile*, *ministers in exile*, *ministers in prison*, *president in exile*, *vice-president in prison*. The argument being that with the imposition of direct rule from Madrid the Catalan government no longer exists and so it is misleading to use expressions that suggest it still does. Consequently, every time there is an item on Catalan television news about the government in exile or in prison a statement is read out explaining that they have been censored and are not allowed to refer to “government in exile, ministers in exile, ministers in prison, president in exile or vice-president in prison.”

Tuesday, December 5. In Brussels, following the Belgian judge’s postponement of his decision until December 14, defence lawyers are increasingly confident that the decision will go their way as the authoritarian and partisan nature of the Spanish judiciary becomes daily more evident. Consequently, this afternoon, Supreme Court judge, Pablo Llarena, has dropped the request for extradition but retained the Spanish arrest warrant. He will simply arrest President Carles Puigdemont and ministers Toni Comin, Lluís Puig, Meritxell Serret and Clara Ponsatí if they ever return to Catalonia. Llarena claims that the extradition request was made before he took over the case and it is perfectly normal for changes of this kind to occur. Actually, it is a very obvious and public rap on the knuckles from Brussels.

Yellow

Persecution against the colour yellow continues. Police raided a number of Catalan ministries in search of Christmas trees decorated with yellow ribbons. In the ministry for the environment workers replaced the confiscated ribbons with signs saying “there was a yellow ribbon here.” The police later returned and removed the signs. In protest the workers finally decided to shroud the tree in black plastic.

Inevitably the confiscation of yellow ribbons has led to a mass ribbon-tying all over the country. The bridges crossing the motorway which runs past Sabadell were absolutely covered with them last Sunday and the CDRs (*Comités de Defensa de la República*) which have sprung up in Catalan ex-patriate communities around the world have covered bridges much, no doubt, to the annoyance of the local authorities.

Wednesday, December 20. The concern now is whether yellow ribbons can be worn by voters on polling day. The electoral commission has banned their use by those overseeing the voting at polling stations (selected from among the electorate by lot), but it remains unclear whether voters can wear ribbons or even wear the colour yellow at all. I suspect this may cause some problems tomorrow depending on the ideology of the people selected to manage the vote in each polling station.

Catalan Parliamentary Elections

December 22. The three independence parties, *Junts per Catalunya* (34), *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* (32) and the CUP (4) won a combined total of 70 seats yesterday which gives them an absolute majority in the 135 seat Catalan Parliament and the likelihood that they will repeat the alliance they had before. The *Partido Popular* managed to get four seats in the election – down from eleven. This puts them in rather an embarrassing position given that they are still maintaining direct rule from Madrid. They are resolutely denying that their election fiasco has anything to do with it; apparently the two things are entirely unconnected.

Neither the unionist opposition nor Madrid are planning on going quietly, though. Today a Madrid judge fined Santiago Espot 7,200 euros for “offending the king and outraging Spain” during the 2015 cup final between FC Barcelona and the Basque team Athletic de Bilbao. The Spanish cup is called the King’s Cup and so the monarch turns up every year to watch the final. If either Barça or Athletic are in the final their fans whistle during the national anthem. If both teams happen to meet in the final there is twice as much whistling as normal. However, you only hear the whistling if you’re at the ground or tuned in to the Catalan (and, I assume, Basque) media. The Spanish media does not broadcast the whistling. Poor Santiago Espot, who was not even at the match, was found guilty of encouraging people to whistle on social media. The same year the Spanish government also managed to pressure UEFA into fining Barça 30,000 euros because the *estelada* (Catalan independence flag) had been exhibited in the crowd during the Champions League final between Barça and Juventus in Berlin. The following year UEFA fined Barça 40,000 and 150,000 euros for allowing fans to display the *estelada* during Champions League matches. Barça appealed to TAS (*Tribunal Arbitral de Sport*) in Switzerland and UEFA backed down recognising that flag flying was all part of the game – no-one has complained, for example, that Real Madrid has managed to annex the Spanish flag for itself and encourages its fans to display it at matches. The final was finally played in Madrid between FC Barcelona and Sevilla. Skips were placed at the various entrances to the ground and Barça fans were forced to take off any yellow clothing, including shirts and blouses, and throw them away. Bags were searched and any yellow items found were also confiscated.

A Trip to Bilbao

It was with some trepidation that we drove across the border into Aragón on December 28, *dia dels Sants Innocents*, destination Bilbao. This was the fourth time in two years that I had been to Aragón but it was the first time I had seen it decked out with the *rojigualda*. There were whole streets of balconies covered with the Spanish flag demonstrating the extraordinary upsurge in Spanish nationalism that the Catalan crisis has triggered. We had coffee, bought our wine, kept our heads down, and got back on the road. Before long we were past Osca and heading into the Pyrenees. The motorway was excellent, well-paved, with almost no traffic and, above all, free. Unlike Catalonia, most motorways in Spain are either toll-free or very cheap. The reason usually given is that Catalonia was the first region to build motorways – logically – because it is the gateway to the Iberian Peninsula and the route for both lorries and tourists as they head south and west. Back then, in the 1960s, there was insufficient state money to pay for their construction and so they were privately built. Although they are now decades old and, in theory, they were paid off years ago, they remain the most expensive in Spain. If you complain to a Spaniard about this you will get the instant reply: “Typical Catalans, always after more money.” This argument obviously ignores the

fact that it's mainly the Catalans who have to pay the tolls, but there is some truth in it as the roads were built with private Catalan capital and the franchise was regularly updated during the *Convergència i Unió* years with the excuse that money was needed for maintenance and new roads. Salvador Alemany, president of Abertis, the private company which manages most of the Catalan motorways, was Artur Mas's closest and most influential advisor when he was president of Catalonia. When, not so long ago, it was revealed that the new network of motorways surrounding Madrid, and partly built by Abertis, was running at a serious loss because it was needlessly built alongside already existing two and three lane *autovies*, which are free, it was proposed that the tolls be raised on the Catalan motorways to compensate for the loss. Catalan motorways do not have *autovies* running alongside them, just ordinary roads. The loss of life in Catalan towns and villages from articulated lorries avoiding road tolls has been a serious issue for years.

As we climbed higher into the Pyrenees it began to snow harder and harder until it started to settle on the road. The temperature dropped to -1°C. Fortunately, we descended into Navarra before getting caught and we all breathed a sigh of relief. Navarra is, officially, bilingual – Spanish and Basque – and we felt the tension ease. Navarra and the Basque Country are the two regions of Spain which have a special constitutional deal with Madrid. They are described as “foral” communities which gives them a great deal more autonomy than any other region of Spain – they were the first to have their own police forces, but most importantly, they enjoy a large degree of economic independence. They are required to pay a fixed contribution to the common Spanish exchequer (army, diplomatic corps, etc.) but retain control over both the raising of taxes and their own expenses. In exchange they are less likely to receive any special or extra payments from Madrid but given that they are the two richest regions of Spain, they don't really mind. All of the other regions, including Catalonia, pay their taxes directly to Madrid and are then given back what the government deems necessary. It is in this way that Madrid has been able to squeeze Catalonia (population 7,523,000) to subsidise the poorer parts of Spain while at the same time holding back money in retaliation for the Catalan independence process. One of Catalonia's demands has been that it should enjoy the same fiscal system as the Basques (population 2,190,000) and Navarrese (population 640,647) but this is seen as deeply selfish by the rest of Spain. Last year, Rajoy's minority government was unable to pass the 2018 budget and so offered the Basque country – Spain's richest region per capita – a 4,245 million euros bribe in exchange for Basque Nationalist Party (*Euzko Alderdi Jeltzalea-Partido Nacionalista Vasco*, EAJ-PNV) votes. I obtained this figure from the Galician newspaper *La Voz de Galicia*. What particularly annoys the Galicians (population 2,719,000), one of the poorest parts of Spain, is that the bribe amounts to half their own annual allowance from Madrid. The Basques were getting 4,245,000 euros on top of the 11,486,000 euros they had already budgeted. The deal was set to go ahead but then on October 1st scenes of Spanish police bashing up old ladies in Catalonia hit the screens (Basque TV showing a different version from Spanish TV). The current Basque *Lehendakari*, Iñigo Urkullu, was no longer able to support Rajoy given the Basques' sympathy for the Catalan cause and the budget remains unpassed. The Spanish government justified the attempted bribe by explaining that this was how a well-behaved region was rewarded by the central government, unlike the disloyal and disobedient Catalans whose income was already being curbed by Madrid in the spring of last year just as the Basque bribe was being mooted.

We saw our first *estelada* (Catalan independence flags) in Navarra, but the Basque country was covered in them. In fact, there were more Catalan flags and *estelades* than either *ikurriñas* (Basque flags) or Athletic de Bilbao flags. Athletic de Bilbao football club is the

Basque equivalent of FC Barcelona but with an important difference – all its players must be Basque. Like FC Barcelona, it is not a corporation, but is owned and run by club members. As we travelled around Bizcaia (province of Biscay) we saw more and more Catalan flags and *estelades* and, of course, the total absence of the Spanish *rojigualda*. This was all very heart-warming, of course, but over 800 people were murdered by the Basque terrorist group ETA between 1959 and 2006, including 21 shoppers at the Hipercor supermarket in Barcelona in 1987 and six policemen in Sabadell in 1990. I remember them both very clearly. In June 1987 we'd gone to Andorra for the weekend and read about the bombing in *El Periódico* the following day (June 20, 1987): "ETA nos masacra" said the headline. "ETA is massacring us." It was the shock that ETA would do that to us, the Catalans. We were supposed to be on their side. And then in 1990, we were playing cards at home. Gin rummy. I heard a bang and said to my wife: "Something's happened." Almost immediately afterwards we heard sirens coming from every direction. They went on and on. The policemen had been in a van setting off to provide security at a football match at the Nova Creu Alta, Club d'Esports Sabadell's ground, about two kilometres from where we lived at that time. The frequently repeated demand from Madrid in those days was that there could be no negotiations while the violence continued.

As we drove back from the Basque country the scenery changed from lush Atlantic vegetation to the semi-desert of Navarra and Aragón. Both Euskadi (the Basque Country) and Catalonia are oases between Spain and France. North of the Basque country in France, les Landes in Aquitaine, was historically sandy, marshy moorland – now reclaimed – while the region north of Roselló, or French Catalonia, is bleak, windblown and sparsely populated. What are now the cross-border countries of Euskadi and Catalonia, both divided between north and south by a Spanish-French frontier, were once communities united not simply by their common languages, but by their isolation. For many, the Pyrenees are the eternal, natural frontier between Spain and France. Historically this is anything but the truth. The 1985 European Union Schengen agreement to which both Spain and France are signatories abolished the frontier separating the two countries and the local communities are rapidly growing together once again as the example of the Catalan village of Le Perthus/El Pertús demonstrates. Perched on the Pyrenees next to the motorway, they cater to the passing trade and it is quite impossible to know where one country begins and the other ends. The Spanish say that Catalan independence will lead to the building of walls as indeed will happen if Spain vetoes Catalan membership of the European Union. But Catalonia wishes to remain part of the European Union and to be a signatory of Schengen. Only Spain talks of building walls.

Post Script

July 12. The German court rules that Catalan President Carles Puigdemont cannot be extradited for rebellion since a rebellion did not occur. He may possibly be extradited for misuse of public funds since a referendum did occur, and must have been financed somehow.

July 19, 2018. Spanish Supreme Court judge, Pablo Llarena withdraws, for a second time, the euro-orders requesting the extradition of President Carles Puigdemont (in Germany) and ministers Clara Ponsatí (in Scotland), Meritxell Serret, Toni Comín, Lluís Puig (in Belgium) and Marta Rovira (in Switzerland). The reason is, that if extradited for misuse of public funds only – a relatively minor charge – they cannot be tried for anything else related to the case. This would lead to the ludicrous position of trying the six Catalan ministers, Oriol Junqueras, Jordi Turull, Josep Rull, Raül Romeva, Joaquim Forn, Dolors Bassa, the speaker of the

Catalan Parliament, Carme Forcadell, and the two independence lobbyists Jordi Cuixart and Jordi Sánchez for rebellion, but not the President and the other ministers.

February 2019. The trial of Jordi Cuixart, Jordi Sànchez (in prison since October 16, 2017), Oriol Junqueras, Joaquim Forn (in prison since November 2, 2017) Jordi Turull, Josep Rull, Raül Romeva, Dolors Bassa, Carme Forcadell (in prison since March 23, 2018), Santi Vila, Carles Mundó and Meritxell Borràs (released on bail) has begun.

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Friend or Foe: An Analysis of the Contribution National Identity Hegemony Plays in the Acceptance of Asylum Seekers in Australia, Spain and Catalonia

Amanda Collins

Abstract:

With the vast number of people currently seeking asylum, this research sought to understand what determines the reception of asylum seekers and rationalises the treatment of asylum seekers by a nation. This is important to gain insight into how and why displaced people are dehumanised and criminalised when seeking asylum. The national identities of Australia, Spain and Catalonia are analysed, as is the influence of each national identity on public perceptions of asylum seekers. To achieve this, Benedict Anderson's understanding of nationalism being an imagined national community has been adopted. A literature review examining the construction of each national identity, and its influence on public perception of asylum seekers was carried out. Findings were then compared with empirical data gathered during observation in Sydney, Australia and Barcelona, Catalonia. It was hypothesised that sentiments held towards asylum seekers by members of a national community could be attributed to the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion created by a national identity. This was confirmed, as a difference in attitudes towards asylum seekers was evident in Australia, Spain and Catalonia resulting from the processes governments have chosen to develop such an identity.

Keywords: national identity, asylum seekers, othering

Introduction

The world is currently in the midst of a refugee crisis. According to the United Nations Refugee Agency (2017), in 2017 there were 65.6 million forcibly displaced people in the world due to conflict or persecution; or 28,300 people per day. With this volume of people requiring assistance, a responsibility lies with all eligible nations, such as Australia and Spain, to accept displaced people into their national community. Unfortunately, despite international agreements including the United Nations 1951 Convention relating to the status of refugees, and 1967 Protocol relating to the status, protection and resettlement of refugees, these nations are not providing the assistance they have agreed to (Casimiro, Hancock & Northcote, 2007; Davies, 2013; Fullerton, 2005). To justify these actions (or lack thereof), and the punitive treatment of asylum seekers, both governments have used language which dehumanises and criminalises those seeking asylum. During this process, the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion of the national community are moulded and reinforced.

This body of work will examine the “framing” of asylum seekers by governments and media in Australia and Spain. “Framing” is the process of presenting an issue in a particular way to encourage a desired reaction by the audience (Cohen, 2011). The extent of which these representations have created moral panic within each community and an anti-asylum seeker discourse will then be examined. Spain provides a valuable area of research due its “dual” identity, comprised of autonomous regions, which hold individual nationalistic values. Taking into consideration the influence of the central Spanish government, this paper will compare the national identity of Australia with that of Catalonia. It can be hypothesised that sentiments held towards asylum seekers by members of a national community are attributed to the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion created by a national identity. There should therefore be evidence of a difference in attitudes between members of the national community in Australia and Catalonia resulting from the processes governments have chosen to develop such an identity.

Methodology

For this body of work, a critical literature review was conducted to examine previous research on the national identities of Australia, Spain and Catalonia. Focus was directed on the differing views of the Australians and Catalans towards the diaspora who wish to settle in their lands. The literature review examines existing data on the representation of asylum seekers by governments and media in Australia and Spain. The influence of these representations on shaping national identities and public perceptions are critically analysed. This brings an understanding of how and why people are criminalised and dehumanised when seeking asylum, and illustrates the justification process of punitive processing procedures. By comparing contrasting national identities and their influence on perceptions of asylum seekers, it is possible to extrapolate new connections between the role of government, a national identity and public opinions. By identifying contrasting and supporting features within the literature, new connections and possibilities for analysis can be explored (Bouma & Ling, 2010), which allows for greater understanding of the influence of nationalism on populations to be discovered.

Observation was carried out in Barcelona and Sydney to gather empirical information surrounding national identities and asylum seekers. Observation was chosen for the purpose of gathering first hand qualitative data which would either support or oppose the findings in the literature review (Denscombe, 2010). By directing attention during observation to

instances of intentional or unintentional social inclusion or exclusion, trends within populations became evident and open to examination (Bouma & Ling, 2010). Expressions of nationalism and ethnic grouping could be witnessed firsthand (Denscombe, 2010). This contributes to the development of a critical understanding of zeitgeist that the present-day population of these countries have towards those seeking asylum.

Theoretical Framework

A number of social theories were drawn upon to guide this study. Firstly, nationalism was understood from Benedict Anderson's (1983) perspective as an imagined community (cited in Haralambos, 1996; Padawangi, 2016). A nation is essentially a shared identity which has been socially constructed using mythologies and symbolism by the political elite (Haralambos, 1996; Klocker, 2004). It is imaginary in the sense that most members will never meet one another but are bound by a deep sense of comradeship and belonging. The media is therefore an essential tool for governments to fabricate and reinforce these binding factors of a national identity across vast distances (Haralambos, 1996). While a national community is sovereign, with membership determined by the political elite (Haralambos, 1996; Padawangi, 2016; Stephenson, 2007), it is concomitantly limited, as it is spatially bound (Archiles & Marti, 2001; Haralambos, 1996; Padawangi, 2016). The political elite being the "spatial managers" (Klocker, 2004) use maps to draw imaginary boundaries (Delanty, 2003), which work as "symbolic representation of spatial realities in legitimising power, domination and subordination" (Padawangi, 2016, p. 330). This simultaneously penetrates the imaginations of community members, and functions as a visual guide to structure communities (Padawangi, 2016). A perceived threat to a nation, therefore, may not only be in the guise of a physical attack, but an attack on what a nation and its members perceive the national identity to be.

The second theory to influence this research was moral panic. Moral panic is achieved by "framing" a problem in a way which generates an emotional response within a community (Finlayson, 2007) by members who may not be directly affected (Cohen, 2011). The political elite are highly influential in shaping attitudes within an imagined national community, not only as they draft and administer policies and laws, but by having greater access to the media (Every & Augoustinos, 2008a). Government representatives, acting as "moral entrepreneurs", share in the ideologies and values of the general public (Roach Anleu, 2006). Issues surrounding asylum seekers are "framed" in a particular way to encourage an interpretation of events and the subsequent audience's response (Cooper et al., 2016). The political elite "control flows of information" (Cooper et al., 2016, p. 79), determining media reporting, and influencing prejudicial attitudes of the public. This redefines boundaries of behaviour and opinion (McRobbie, 1996). The use of moral panic surrounding a "national discourse" is a pervasive and effective way of discussing issues of race, ethnicity and immigration (O'Doherty & Augoustinos 2008). For this reason, asylum seekers have long been regarded as a feasible cause for moral panic (McKay, Thomas, & Blood, 2011). Once something has been "framed" to threaten the nation, extreme measures can be taken to protect the nation's sovereignty (O'Doherty & Augoustinos, 2008), security and identity (Every & Augoustinos, 2008b).

Finally, the theory of "Othering" contributed to this research. Othering is the process by which a group who share a sense of commonality (Williams & Korn, 2017) identify and segregate those who are different from the mainstream (Johnson et al., 2004). The mainstream group then rejects those who are different. This creates a binary construct of the

“self”, being the dominant group, and the “other”, who is seen to pose a threat to the “self” (Klocker, 2004). The “self” then asserts domination or subordination (Johnson et al. 2004) against those without power, suggesting that the “other” must conform to pre-existing defining qualities or be excluded (Klocker, 2004). Othering, therefore, can lead to marginalisation as a part of identity formation (Williams & Korn, 2017).

Australia’s National Identity

“In Australia, ‘whiteness’ permeates the national imaginary” (Every & Augoustinos, 2008b, p. 577), and as such, Australia’s national identity cannot be seen to exist outside of the common discourse of race and racism (Every & Augoustinos, 2008b). A distinctive Anglo-Celtic (Haralambos, 1996; Klocker, 2004) Christian core dominates Australia’s imagined national community (Castles et al., 1992), despite being a religiously and ethnically diverse (Melleuish, 2015) “classical immigration country” (Castles, 1987). There is an imbedded fear of racial invasion within Australia, which threatens the nation’s identity, sovereignty, security (Every & Augoustinos, 2008b; Leach & Zamora, 2006; O’Doherty & Augoustinos, 2008), order and control (Casimiro, Hancock, & Northcote, 2007; Papastergiadis, 2004). The fear of the non-white “other” has been perpetuated throughout Australia’s history (Every & Augoustinos, 2008b). Firstly, the “White Australia” policy openly promoted its racial aspect (Casimiro, Hancock, & Northcote, 2007; Leach & Zamora, 2006), selecting immigrants based on racial, linguistic and cultural similarities (Casimiro, Hancock, & Northcote, 2007). This was followed by an assimilation policy throughout the first half of the twentieth century, which demanded that Indigenous and ethnic minorities dissolve existing ties with their culture and be absorbed into the “host” Anglo-Celtic Christian culture (Casimiro, Hancock, & Northcote, 2007; Haverluk, 1998; Jureidini, 2002; Marchetti & Ransley, 2005). This position had obvious inherent flaws due to the racial and ethnic foundations of Australia’s national identity, so immigrants were selected who were more readily able to achieve the outcome of a homogenous Australian community (Casimiro, Hancock, & Northcote, 2007). In 1988, then Prime Minister John Howard continued this concept with the “One Australia” policy, which, like the “White Australia” policy and the Assimilation policy before it, aimed to reduce non “white” immigration (Stephenson, 2007). Historically in Australia, the threat of “yellow peril” brought with Asian immigrants has been the primary cause of fear (Castles et al. 1992; Jureidini, 2002; Leach & Zamora, 2006; Stephenson, 2007), though the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion have shifted and changed across time (Delanty, 2003). In the current era fear has been reinvigorated (Every & Augoustinos, 2008b), particularly since 2001 (Every & Augoustinos, 2008a), of being “swamped” (Casimiro, Hancock, & Northcote, 2007; Every & Augoustinos, 2008b) by “fanatic” and “terrorist” asylum seekers (Casimiro, Hancock, & Northcote, 2007) “flooding Australia’s borders” (Casimiro, Hancock, & Northcote, 2007; Papastergiadis, 2004). The development and effectiveness of this discourse will be examined and compared with findings in Spain and Catalonia.

The Spanish Civil War

The Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) had an enormous impact on the Spanish community at large. The war was one of political ideologies, class, religion and nationalism (Holguin, 2015). Dictator Francisco Franco campaigned to annihilate all forms of regional cultural expression through the creation of a drastic form of centralism (Conversi, 2002). As Holguin (2015) explained that, when looking at historic events, it is easy to trivialise real trauma inflicted on human beings, and when taking a rigid perspective on civil war, to forget that conflict continues after the war presumably ends. During the Civil War and early post war

years, tens of thousands of Spanish civilians were executed by paramilitaries and dumped into unmarked mass graves (Dacia, 2013). There were as many as 200,000 lives lost during this time (Alfredo, 2012). People were denied their rights to burials and public mourning (Holguin, 2015). Over half a million people were placed in concentration camps and subject to forced starvation, beatings and torture, of which 90,000 people died (Alfredo, 2012; Holguin, 2015). Women were raped, and thousands of babies were stolen from “socially undesirable” women between 1939–1950 (Holguin, 2015), sharing similarities with Australia’s “Stolen Generation” during this time (Marchetti & Ransley, 2005). These acts meet the definitions of inflicting terror, conflict and persecution (Holguin 2015). During the Civil War and following dictatorship, Spain was a refugee producing country, rather than a “host” country, producing over three million refugees (Jubany-Baucells, 2002). The shellshock of the terror inflicted by the Franco regime continues long after Franco’s death in 1975 (Holguin, 2015) with the denial and suppression of this past, particularly by the right wing Partido Popular (PP) political party (Humlebæk, 2010).

The Case of Spain and Catalonia

Spain is made up of many nationalities which function within the visible Spanish boundaries (Conversi, 2002). Therefore, like Australia, Spain is ethnically pluralistic, the primary difference being ethnicity is regionally bound, with each state maintaining individual traditions, language and culture (Villarroya, 2012). The central Spanish government must therefore appear to promote multiculturalism and multilingualism, especially in the post Franco era (Hoffmann, 1999). Spain’s transition to democracy (1975–1986) sparked unprecedented nationalist regional mobilisation, transforming it from one of the most centralised regimes (Conversi, 2002) to a decentralised system with autonomous states (Schech, 2013). This raises the geopolitical issue of whether the Peninsula is federal or confederal, which “threatens the cohesion of the state” (Maiz, Caamano, & Azpitarte, 2010, p. 63). Madrid’s reservation to endorse the change from centralism was met with mass uprising across most Spanish cities. Catalonia was the largest region to mobilise (Conversi, 2002). In September 1977 one million people marched in the streets of Barcelona under the banner of “liberty, amnesty, Status of Autonomy”. This was the largest demonstration in post-war Europe (Conversi, 2002; Jimenez, Sanz, & Lopez, 2016). Catalonia, which held autonomy prior to the Civil War (Holguin, 2015), was the first to be granted autonomy under the new decentralised government (Martinez-Herrera & Miley, 2010).

The national Catalan identity was first seen to have emerged throughout the nineteenth century, gaining recognition as an alternative identity to that of Spain around 1900 (Archiles & Marti, 2001). Described as a “dual” identity (Conversi, 2002; Villarroya, 2012), the current conflict surrounding Catalonia’s independence indicates that the Spanish/Catalan case is rather one of “competing” identities (Etherington, 2014). Smith (1991) identifies two types of nationalism which can be applied to both Australia, Spain and Catalonia’s national identities: “ethnic” nationalism and “civil” nationalism (as cited in Every & Augoustinos, 2008b). “Ethnic” nationalism can be described as establishing unity and commonality through cultural and ethnic origins, such as that seen in Australia and Spain (Every & Augoustinos, 2008b; Fernando, 2010; Haralambos, 1996; Leach & Zamora, 2006); while “civil” nationalism creates unity through common values, rights and political systems, such as that in Catalonia (Every & Augoustinos, 2008b; Schech, 2013; Villarroya, 2012). “Ethnic” nationalism can easily foster xenophobia and racism, while “civil” nationalism is far more inclusive and liberal, promoting ethnic tolerance and acceptance of immigrants (Every & Augoustinos, 2008b). Catalonia focuses on “civil nation building”, with living and working

within the region being requisites of inclusion, rather than race or ancestry (Schech, 2013; Villarroya, 2012). The Catalan identity is predominantly linguistically structured (Hoffmann, 1999; Villarroya, 2012), the language first being recorded in 1176 and recognised as the official language of the region until 1716. Catalan is taught in schools and there is a language test for civil servants, this being the language used by all official bodies (Hoffmann, 1999). 50% of radio and audio-visual broadcasting must be in Catalan, and since 2010, by law a wide variety of films should be dubbed or subtitled in Catalan (Villarroya, 2012). This ensures the survival and promotion of the language (Hoffmann, 1999), and reinforces the “Catalan identity by giving greater visibility to its symbols” (Villarroya, 2012, p. 42).

Catalonia has deliberately created an inclusive national identity. This accommodates the wider community and the social integration and assimilation of migrants to the region (Olivieri, 2015; Villarroya, 2012). In 2008 16.4% of Catalan residents had been born outside of Spain (Villarroya, 2012), and in 2010, 60% of the population were born outside of Catalonia, or had parents born outside of Catalonia (Martinez-Herrera & Miley, 2010). The linguistic and cultural aspects of the identity deter political and social divisions between ethnolinguistic members of the community (Strubell i Trueta, 1998). Asylum seekers’ individual and cultural rights are promoted, even when these sometimes conflict with the Catalan identity (Schech, 2013). Measures such as the 2004 “Language and Social Cohesion Plan”, have been designed “to promote and consolidate the Catalan language as the key element in a multilingual, intercultural education model” (Villarroya, 2012, p. 42). The “Plan for Citizenship and Immigration” in 2005-2008 had similar objectives. It recognised cultural diversity and promoted social cohesion by outlining a set of programs, objectives and priorities, while defending the importance of the Catalan language to the region (Villarroya, 2012). On a community level, a cultural group named the Association of Castells maintain and promote the traditional cultural festivity of building human towers (Vaczi, 2016). The “Together we make a team” project was launched in 2009 to promote immigrant integration by encouraging them to taking part in popular cultural traditions (Villarroya, 2012). These measures, have however, been opposed by the central Spanish government (Olivieri, 2015).

Shaping Perceptions of Asylum Seekers

Australia and Spain have been represented as countries under threat, particularly since the 2000 election in Spain (Jubany-Baucells, 2002; Leach & Zamora, 2006) and the 2001 election in Australia (Every & Augoustinos, 2008b; Every & Augoustinos, 2008a; Leach & Zamora, 2006; O’Doherty & Augoustinos, 2008). Immigration policies designed to restrict asylum seeker’s rights and to keep irregular immigrants out (Schech, 2013) were central to both campaigns (Klocker, 2004; Leach & Zamora, 2006). The Spanish Partido Socialista Obrero Espanol (PSOE) promised to “work intensively to stop the flood of illegal immigration that assaults Spain”, while the conservative Partido Popular (PP) promised “to armour-plate the Strait”. They argued that legalising some “inmigrantes sin papeles” (immigrants without papers, that is, “illegal immigrant”) “would provoke chaos and an uncontrollable process of illegal migration” (Leach & Zamora, 2006, p. 57). In Australia, the Coalition government led their election campaign under the slogan “We decide who comes to this country and the circumstances under which they arrive” (Papastergiadis, 2004, p. 9). Popular public debate surrounded the objective of how to “keep them out” (Every & Augoustinos, 2008b). Inevitably this worked to create moral panic within the communities and reconstituted racial boundaries (McRobbie, 1996). Simultaneously, more overtly exclusionary, aggressive and oppressive asylum seeker processing procedures were justified (Every & Augoustinos, 2008b; Leach & Zamora, 2006). The Spanish government has

adopted “fast tracked” processing (Fullerton, 2005) and “push backs” (Spanish Commission for Refugees, 2017), while Australia began “off shore processing” (McPhail, Nyamori, & Taylor, 2016). These are not due processing practices and they violate international agreements by avoiding international obligations and violating human rights (Davies, 2013; Fullerton, 2005; Spanish Commission for Refugees, 2017).

The use of strategic “loaded” language (Cooper et al., 2016) since these elections has penetrated the Australian psyche, and to some lesser extent the Spanish and Catalan communities. Asylum seekers have been “framed” as “illegals” (Cooper et al. 2016; Every & Augoustinos 2008a; Klocker 2004; Leach & Zamora 2006; Schech 2013), and “economic migrants” by both Australian and Spanish governments and their media (Every & Augoustinos, 2008a; Leach & Zamora, 2006). There are obvious connotations which accompany the term “illegals”, these being that asylum seekers are linked to criminal activity (Van Acker & Hollander, 2003), the act of seeking asylum itself incorrectly “framed” as breaking the law. The term “economic migrant” has been similarly effective as it perpetuates a distrust of asylum seekers. Asylum seekers are perceived as deceptive, trying to enter a nation under false claims of escaping terror, conflict or persecution. They are “framed” as making a “lifestyle choice”; “stealing citizens jobs” (Every & Augoustinos, 2008a; Leach & Zamora, 2006); or “milking the system” (Jubany-Baucells, 2002). This makes asylum seekers' objectives questionable and to be seen with suspicion, along with their advocates (Every & Augoustinos, 2008a). In Spain, the moral panic surrounding asylum seekers generated during the 2000 election was evident and extended beyond “inmigrantes sin papeles”. A wave of unprecedented violence against immigrants occurred in Andalusia, Spain with the killing of two farmers and two youths, and at least twenty people injured in retaliation. This was sparked by the belief that asylum seekers were a long-term problem and would corrupt the morality and customs of Spanish society (Jubany-Baucells, 2002).

In Australia, the “queue jumping” (Every & Augoustinos, 2008a) analogy has been very effective. The queue represents a rational and fair democratic order for reception of asylum seekers, “framing” boat arrivals as trying to beat the system (Every & Augoustinos, 2008b). Australia identifies itself as the land of the “fair go” (Every & Augoustinos, 2008b; Haralambos, 1996), with generous, tolerant and empathetic characteristics (Every & Augoustinos, 2008b). Despite the lack of any “real” queue, the idea plays on the notion of fairness and orderliness (Leach & Zamora, 2006). Thus, “queue jumpers” are “stealing” the rightful place of “genuine” refugees, are “untrustworthy” (Leach & Zamora, 2006; Van Acker & Hollander, 2003), and taking advantage of Australia’s national principles (Every & Augoustinos, 2008b). This creates a binary construct of the “fair Australian” and the “unfair asylum seeker” (Casimiro, Hancock, & Northcote, 2007; Every & Augoustinos, 2008b), or the “deserving” and “undeserving” asylum seeker (Leach & Zamora, 2006; Van Acker & Hollander, 2003). Punitive treatments (Every & Augoustinos, 2008b) and the need to “send a message” to those planning to arrive by boat are then justified (Van Acker & Hollander, 2003).

The “boat people” analogy has been similarly compelling (Cooper et al., 2016; O’Doherty & Augoustinos, 2008). The concept of a “boat person” describes these asylum seekers as not belonging to “this land” or “this soil”, and therefore they remain outsiders to a nation’s imagined boundaries (O’Doherty & Augoustinos, 2008). Jupp (2002) argues that the use of lies, evasions and innuendos consistently demonise “boat people” and increases public hostility (as cited in Van Acker & Hollander, 2003). Most unnerving was the Australian government’s portrayal of “asylum seekers as serial child-abusers” (Leach & Zamora, 2006,

p. 58) during the 2001 election campaign. The “children overboard” incident is the most well-known, where “boat people” were wrongly accused of throwing their children overboard when confronted by the Australian navy (Every & Augoustinos, 2008a; Leach & Zamora, 2006; Van Acker & Hollander, 2003). Additional unsubstantiated allegations during this time included a child’s mouth being forcibly sewn shut, and the attempted strangulation of a child by “a potential illegal immigrant” (Leach & Zamora, 2006, p. 58). It is evident that these allegations serve the political agenda of creating moral panic within Australia’s imagined national community. “Boat people”, in this instance, were portrayed as abhorrent, hostile people with complete disregard to their children’s wellbeing, and lacking all sense of decency (Leach & Zamora, 2006). By tactfully using “story telling” techniques (Finlayson, 2007) to shape a holistic narrative of the characterised asylum seeker, a sentiment was generated within the population. Asylum seekers, and particularly those arriving by boat, were dangerous and would disrupt the harmony and safety of Australia’s community (Leach & Zamora, 2006). This makes their marginalisation not only conceivable, but potentially desirable (O’Doherty & Augoustinos, 2008).

Asylum seekers have been associated with “terrorists” (Every & Augoustinos, 2008a), accused of causing civil unrest (Leach & Zamora, 2006), and carrying out an “invasion” or an “assault” on both Australia and Spain (Agirre, Ruiz, & Cantalapiedra, 2015; Leach & Zamora, 2006; Van Acker & Hollander, 2003). Both nations have portrayed asylum seekers as “threatening” and “burdensome” (Every & Augoustinos, 2008a; Klocker, 2004; O’Doherty & Augoustinos, 2008) to social, cultural and economic stability (Cooper et al., 2016; Every & Augoustinos, 2008b; Leach & Zamora, 2006); to the nation’s sovereignty, security and identity (Cooper et al., 2016; Leach & Zamora, 2006; Schech, 2013; Van Acker & Hollander, 2003). A kind of siege is mentally evoked whereby a nation is portrayed as being vulnerable to the aggressive asylum seekers (O’Doherty & Augoustinos, 2008). This strange role reversal represents asylum seekers as a dangerous homogenous group (Leach & Zamora, 2006). Thereby, violence, inhumane and harsh treatments are sanctioned as legitimate responses to the threatening “other” as a part of a nation’s defence system (Every & Augoustinos, 2008b).

Effectiveness of Asylum Seeker Representations

It appears that the effectiveness of creating a social discourse excluding asylum seekers has been more effective in Australia than in Spain or Catalonia. There are a number of reasons which this may be attributed to, the first being the Spanish Civil War. Spaniards still recall family and friends who fled the Franco dictatorship (Fullerton, 2005) and the terror inflicted during that time. In the 1990s interest rose to exhume the bodies buried in unmarked graves. This was demonised by the Spanish government as trying to bring up ghosts of the past (Holguin, 2015), and breaking the “pact of silence” established by the political elite after Franco’s death (Dacia, 2013). In 2006 tempers flared and the “War of the Death Notices” began, with community members competing for obituary space describing how and when their loved ones died (Holguin, 2015). Resulting from this, the Law of Historical Memory was passed in 2007. This included financing the exhumation and reburial of people buried in mass unmarked graves (Dacia, 2013; Holguin, 2015). The remanent of terror inflicted on the Spanish people evidently still resonates across the broader community, with the exhumation of bodies continuing into the 21st Century (Dacia, 2013). This works as a continuous reminder to the Spanish people of the conditions those seeking asylum are fleeing, making their reception to asylum seekers more amicable.

Another differentiating feature is the lack of media coverage surrounding asylum seeker issues in Spain. While, as previously discussed, asylum seekers have been negatively represented by the central Spanish government, these issues are not as readily broadcasted (Agirre, Ruiz, & Cantalapiedra, 2015) as they are in Australia. Manuel Castells (2004) deduced the reason to be that the Spanish political players are trying to shape opinion, not through explicit messages in the media, but through the absence of certain content (Agirre, Ruiz, & Cantalapiedra, 2015). Thus, the government is implicit on “blanketing” issues surrounding asylum seekers. Agirre, Ruiz, and Cantalapiedra (2015) found job insecurity and a lack of interest or expertise of journalists to be contributing factors for the absence of media attention surrounding asylum seeker issues. There is also a lack of transparency, with no media access to detention centres. While carrying out research in Barcelona there was no media content on asylum seekers. This may, however, have been attributed to the media focus on Catalonia’s independence.

In Australia it has become evident that the anti-asylum seeker discourse has been further developed. Asylum seeker issues have been a “hot topic” within the media for over a decade (Cooper et al., 2016; McKay, Thomas & Blood, 2011). As such, asylum seekers as the “other” has been continuously reinforced in Australian’s daily lives (Wade, 2011). This has created ingrained boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. While conducting observation in Sydney, statements about asylum seekers such as “we don’t want them here”; “they’ll just steal our jobs”; and “they’ll kill us all” were overheard in conversations. Speaking in support for asylum seekers was often met with people rolling their eyes, turning away or making scoffing noises. It became evident in Sydney, that discussion of asylum seekers only spiked interest if the subject was about speaking out against the threatening “other”. In Barcelona this was not the case. There was a genuine interest in the wellbeing of asylum seekers, and a desire to discuss the challenges faced by those seeking asylum.

Lastly, Catalonia’s desire for independence from Spain is a contributing factor for a difference of perceptions within the Catalan community. Catalonia distinguishes itself as being different from Spain, with many Catalans considering the Spanish to be foreign imperialists (Brandes, 1990). With overtly exclusionary language used to describe asylum seekers by the central Spanish government, in attempts to differentiate themselves from Spain, the Catalan people seem to have rejected these negative stereotypes. In saying this, their conflicting perceptions from that of the Spanish community may simultaneously contribute to their desire of independence in the first place. Observational findings support this conjecture. The struggle over independence in Catalonia can be interpreted as an identity crisis in which each identity is asserting their ideologies and values. While this strengthens identities and the bonds between those who belong, it simultaneously segregates the “other”, rejecting the attitudes, values and beliefs which they carry. Throughout December 2017 in Barcelona, banners and graffiti for or against independence filled the streets. Yellow ribbons were spray-painted on sidewalks and walls, and yellow plastic bags were tied to fences in support of freeing the ministers still imprisoned following the referendum. People in the region showed discontent towards the Spanish government. The actions taken over the referendum were perceived as an insult to the vast history of the Catalan people. A majority of the public opposed the Spanish government and with this the Spanish identity.

Strubell i Trueta (1998) formed the opinion that the illegitimate suppression of the Catalan language and culture by the Franco regime fostered powerful links and inner strength within the Catalan community. This suppression may have sparked the desire for independence from Spain well before the current debate began. Olivieri (2015) identifies the year 2010 as the

beginning of major change within the region for support of independence. This was the year the Spanish Constitutional Court made a number of amendments to the Catalan Status of Autonomy. This included interpreting the term “nation” in the preamble to hold no legal standing. This made any true measure of self-determination for Catalonia devoid of legal status (Olivieri, 2015). In the same year Spain won the world cup, and with seven key players being Catalan, the state took this as a victory for Catalonia. Bull fighting was made illegal in the region as an act of rejecting the Spanish identity (Black, 2010; Olivieri, 2015), and the Catalan government created legislation requiring films to be dubbed or subtitled in the Catalan language (Villarroya, 2012). Another indicator of the shift away from the Spanish identity within the Catalan population is seen by the number of national flags hung in the region. Olivieri (2015) noted a 1:1 ratio of Spanish and Catalan flags in 2010 following the World Cup. This rose to 2:1 in favour of Catalonia in 2012 at the start of the European Championships. The conflicting nature of the Spanish and Catalan national identities reached a climax during this research following the referendum. In December 2017 observation accounted for 8:1 Catalan flags throughout the centre of Barcelona city.

The effectiveness of creating an anti-asylum seeker discourse within each nation can be measured by the volume of support generated within the populous for asylum seekers. To assist with the Syrian refugee crisis, in May 2015 the European Commission proposed a refugee reception quota, which was not received well by the Spanish government (Agirre, Ruiz, & Cantalapiedra, 2015). Of the 17,337 refugees Spain pledged to offer asylum to by September 2017, as of July 2017 only 744 had been granted asylum (Bris & Bendito, 2017). On February 18, 2017, a grass roots organisation named after the title of a Catalan song, *Casa nostra és casa vostra* (our home is your home) organised a rally in support of asylum seekers. Between 160,000 and 300,000 people marched in the streets of Barcelona. They called for the Spanish government to allow more refugees into Spain (Rosen, 2017; Wilson, 2017). In contrast, on June 17, 2017, 8,000 people marched in Madrid for the same purpose, wanting the Spanish government to keep its commitment to the European Relocation Plan (Aljazeera, 2017). The vast difference between the support generated in Barcelona and Madrid reaffirms the inclusive nature by which Catalonia's identity has been formed. Efforts to promote diversity and acceptance by structuring the Catalan identity linguistically and culturally has fostered welcoming sentiments within Catalonia's population towards asylum seekers. It was observed that there were minimal ethnic divisions within the Catalan community. In contrast with Australia, people of different race and ethnic backgrounds mixed together with no evident prejudicial attitudes. Women wearing hijabs and men wearing turbans blended into the Catalan community without even the slightest glance. During observation in Sydney the racial aspect of Australia's identity was evident. While it is a multicultural city, there is clear segregation between ethnic groups. Minorities such as Aborigines, Chinese, Arabs and Indians have congregated in areas across the city. When catching trains prejudicial attitudes were visible, particularly to Muslim women wearing hijabs and men wearing turbans. They were often looked upon with suspicious glances and avoided. People asking questions or striking up conversation primarily happened between members with the same racial features. The largest demonstration in Sydney was held on August 27, 2016, where 3,000–5,000 people protested for the closure of Nauru and Manus Island Detention Centres (Davidson, 2017). This demonstrates the extent to which the anti-asylum seeker discourse has penetrated the Australian culture, and the success of the Australian government and media manipulations. One could say that supporters for asylum seekers within Sydney are a minority group in themselves.

Limitations and Further Research

This research had a number of limitations. Firstly, as an undergraduate research project, ethics approval was not available. Collecting information was therefore restricted to a literature review and non-participant observation. Data was collected by watching and listening to conversations in Barcelona in December 2017 and Sydney between 2015 to 2017. Findings were also limited due to language barriers. The ability to speak Catalan or Spanish while in Barcelona would have been greatly beneficial to this study. A lack of time in conducting observation additionally contributed to limitations in this area. Additional qualitative research may be carried out to further develop findings on perceptions of asylum seekers in Australia, Spain and Catalonia. By conducting interviews with people granted asylum in each nation, knowledge of their individual experiences of social and cultural integration would be gained. By interviewing members of each community, a more holistic perspective would be developed of people's attitudes towards asylum seekers and the motivations behind these feelings. These findings could then be compared to discover if there is continuity between the experiences of asylum seekers and the sentiments of the population.

Conclusion

Comparing contrasting national identities has achieved a greater understanding of the influences affecting the reception of asylum seekers, and the subsequent treatment of asylum seekers by a nation. Australia and Catalonia's national identities have been shaped around different boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. From my observations it has become evident that many discourses in Australia are racially and ethnically structured, which has led to asylum seekers being "othered", and negative representations effectively permeating much of the Australian psyche. While Spain shares similarities with Australia, Catalonia has used its own language and culture to form an imagined national community. This has allowed for a more racially and ethnically inclusive identity. Compared with other regions of Spain, efforts of "framing" asylum seekers as the "other" by the Spanish government have been less effective in Catalonia. Catalonia thus illustrates that it is possible to create a national identity with the inclusion of asylum seekers.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Southern Cross University and Barcelona University for the opportunity to conduct this research project. Additionally, I would like to acknowledge my supervisor Angela Nunn who provided invaluable support and guidance throughout the research process. Finally, I would like to thank Fiona Fell and Maarten Renes for hosting me during my time in Barcelona and sharing knowledge which assisted in developing my understanding of the complexities of Spanish and Catalan nationalism.

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