

The rise of secessionism in Catalonia

A study of the shift in nationalist discourse from an identity
perspective

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Abstract

In 2017 Catalonia held a referendum for independence, after years with an increasingly pro-independence social and political climate. The shift in the nationalist discourse from devolution to secession and increasing support for independence inspired this thesis where the aim is to explore the dynamics behind the change from an identity perspective. With a framework of social identity theory and social representations of history, a critical discourse analytical method is used. Presidential speeches have been studied in order to understand strategies of mobilization in the name of nation and national identity. Guided by the strategies of “Identity Entrepreneurs”, the findings show that widespread support could be gained by the inclusionary profile of the nationalist movement, maximising mobilisation in a diverse society. Furthermore, that the actualization of historical narratives, both by circumstances and political elite, awakened the sense of threat from Spanish repression and activated conflict and contestation between the Catalan and Spanish identities. Finally, the consequent process of “Othering” the Spanish state and communicating a preferred Catalan identity, led to dual identification becoming increasingly difficult. Providing understanding as to why there was an increasing amount of individuals identifying as exclusively Catalan and supporting independence.

Key words: secession, catalonia, social identity theory, identity entrepreneur, spain

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1 Introduction

The referendum for independence held in Barcelona during the autumn of 2017 put a blinding spotlight on Catalonia, Spain and the complex political situation that arose. Barcelona and the Catalan society have for long been associated with tolerance, openness, a prominent economic force within Spain as well as a society built on strong democratic traditions with pro-European sentiments. Catalan nationalism is often viewed in the same terms of inclusion and civicness, put in stark contrast to its Basque neighbors where nationalism is commonly perceived in more ethnic terms, associated with the infamous separatist terror organization "Euskadi ta Askatasuna" responsible for hundreds of deaths by bombing sites throughout Spain (Conversi 1997:163). The Catalan nationalism is argued to have its foundation in a civic tradition, based on promoting and protecting the Catalan identity by preserving the language and culture, without resorting to violence. Secession has not been a goal supported by the majority of the public, instead a focus on linguistic and cultural rights as well as political autonomy has been enough for the vast majority (Balcells 1996; Conversi 1997). However, during the 2010's support for Catalan secession began to grow, not only by the traditionally independence advocating political left but from parties in government position. A general shift in attitude could be seen, from the traditional demands for political autonomy to supporting an independent state. This culminated with the referendum held in October 2017 when the Catalan president Carles Puigdemont declared Catalonia's independence, unleashing political havoc and a new political crisis (BBC 2017). The development in Catalonia isn't an isolated event, sub-state nationalism is present in many parts of Europe. Scotland, Wales, Flanders, Corsica, The Basque Country and Catalonia are all examples of nationalism present and active within the wider framework of a state. All with a prominent identity, where different fractions and different nationalist agendas, strive for varying degrees of autonomy to outright secession (Henley 2017). Based on this, questions were raised regarding nationalism, national identity, our process of identification and how these can be related to each other in nationalist mobilisation.

1.1 Purpose and research question

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the dynamics at work when nationalist movements change agenda and intensity. Due to the complex nature of such a

phenomenon, a specific “point of entry” is needed, which in this study will be the importance of national identity. Such a perspective allows us to investigate further how identity can play an important role in the mobilization of people for a political cause. This can contribute to broaden the understanding of not only the Catalan nationalist movement but how identity in general can be constructed and filled with meaning in order to serve a specific agenda. By exploring the process of self-identification with a group and a common collective identity, understanding can be reached as to why nationalist sentiments in different times and contexts can be intensified as well as weakened. Thus, the aim is to understand why people at different times in different contexts, in various strength and number, support different nationalist agendas and thereby how nationalist sentiments can be “triggered” by circumstances as well as actors. By studying how actors can be a part of shaping and awakening sentiments that strengthen our identification we can see how this influences behavior and support for the nationalist project. What factors could help to explain the shift in agenda and support in Catalonia and how can this be related to the Catalan collective identity? These thoughts and questions have led me to my research question;

- *How can the shift in the nationalist discourse in Catalonia; from devolution to secession, and the increased support of independence, be understood from an identity perspective?*

The research question is of great importance in order to specify my overall purpose as well as to guide my research (Teorell & Svensson 2007:22). By raising the question presented, more specific subqueries are needed in order to encompass the relevant areas and make the question more accessible, therefore I have structured my thesis by the further questions:

- *How can identity entrepreneurship and social representations of history be used to describe the mobilization of the Catalan identity?*

- *How can the framework of social identity theory and self-categorization explain the shift towards a more exclusive Catalan identity and a new nationalist discourse?*

1.2 Selection and delimitation

In order to adapt the scope of the research to the given timeframe, the time and information which will be analyzed needs to be selected accordingly. This thesis will be focused to the Spanish modern history, and the time after Spain’s

democratization. Catalonia has a rich history and the "roots" of the nation can be traced back to the beginning of the 9th Century and the nationalist movement back to the 19th Century with the movement *Renaixença* (Balcells 1996; Conversi 1997). While recognizing this, due to limitations of time and space, the time period treated will set out from the fall of the Franco regime and the transition to democracy in the end of the 1970's until the year 2017 when events culminated with the referendum. This still somewhat extensive timeframe is motivated by the importance of the relationship established between the Spanish state and Catalonia after Franco's rule ended, that continues to play an important role in the politics and power struggles between Spain and Catalonia. With this limitation the research will be focused to the time in which Spain was a democratic state, thereby providing more similar contextual ground for an analysis on recent events. Moreover, it provides a background to the Catalan identity and the context in which the modern nationalist movement developed.

2 Theory

2.1 Nationalism in a framework of social identity

The shift in the nationalist discourse in Catalonia will be analyzed with tools provided by a framework of social identity theory and social representations of history. Coming from a school of social psychology originally, it now belongs to the relatively new field of political psychology. The complex nature and dynamics of nationalism, and the amount of research already dedicated to this field, motivates further complementation to the subject which can be benefited by a more interdisciplinary approach. Nationalism is known to conjure up passionate emotions and has in the past led individuals to commit discriminatory and violent acts in the name of nation and nationality. For this reason, social psychology can be an appropriate complement to gain insight into some of the processes at work when people start acting as a collective whole.

2.2 Social identity theory

Social identity theory was developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner (1979) and documents how social categorization based on group affiliation can act identity shaping. An in-group, for example individuals with the same nationality, form a common social identity that you strive to improve, while the out-group is ascribed negative characteristics which can lead to prejudice and discriminating behavior. This becomes a framework for our behavior and the group identification becomes of emotional importance. Two groups identifying as rivals will then compete over a positive social identity (Tajfel 1982:24). In order to understand why and how identities challenge each other and ultimately can lead to the construction of a nationalist or separatist agenda, it is necessary to move away from a static understanding of identity. This can be done by looking closer at the relationship between identity and mobilization, to understand support for different political projects and agendas (Reicher & Hopkins 2001:8). Michael A. Hogg further describes how feelings of uncertainty associated with the self-image can motivate why individuals associate with different intensity to the named group. Uncertainty can lead to search for meaning within different ideological movements that can

help to control and protect yourself from these feelings (Hogg 2007:69). Feelings of uncertainty in relation to the own identity can provide incitement to seek security within a safe collective identity. Nationalism and religion are two examples of ideologies who can provide this type of safety, a stable point in a changing world (Kinnvall 2004:747).

2.2.1 Identity entrepreneurs

In addition to the human reaction of uncertainty, there are according to Reicher, Haslam and Hopkins (2005) actors who consciously and deliberately aim to change self categorization from an individual to group level, "Identity entrepreneurs". They communicate desired group characteristics of the social identity that they represent (Reicher & Hopkins 2005:552). This type of leadership can affect the social identity and translate the desired group identity to reality by collective action (ibid., 549-550). The strategies of identity entrepreneurs can be divided into three categories, category boundaries, category content and category prototypes that together influence the mobilization project (Khan et al. 2017). Nationalism, and speaking to the nation, in turn becomes an efficient tool for mass mobilization. By representing a group and a social identity, you're given the opportunity to define the social identity you claim to represent, providing tools to change the social reality. The success of such a change, is dependent on the resistance the group meets and also if there is a shared social identity in place between the leader and the followers that the leader can claim to represent (Reicher et al. 2005:563).

2.3 Social representations of history

Liu and Hilton (2005) argue that history can be identity constructing and depending on how it is socially represented it can be determining for relationships between groups and their behavior. The historical narrative gives meaning to the group identity, what it has been and what it can and should be (Liu & Hilton 2005:537). Rights as well as social and political legitimization are adjusted to contextual preconditions and can be efficient in providing emotional resonance with the people. Different elements can then be used and appropriated to the current political agenda (ibid., 2005:539). Specific social representations of history can furthermore strain the interplay between different national and regional identities, if the perception of events differ it can create a more antagonistic relationship them in-between (ibid., 2005:546).

3 Method

This thesis will use a methodological approach of critical discourse analysis (CDA) in order to investigate the new nationalist discourse in Catalonia: This, combined with my chosen theories of social identity and social representations of history, provides a further analytical tool to clarify my conclusions. A discourse analytical perspective offers a wide type of analysis, exploring relations of power, how they are constructed and furthermore how this produces an understanding of our reality. Accordingly, discourses shape power, identities and relationships between subjects, by this construction of reality (Wodak & Meyer 2009:3). Discourse analysis enables us to study societal phenomena with the language in focus, seeing it not only as a reflection of the social reality but as an active part of shaping it, implying an understanding of how different power relationships and power structures can influence and affect how we speak and act (Bergström & Boréus 2014:354). The use of language in speech and writing can be understood as a form of social practice, implicating that contextual factors such as situation, institution and social structure frame the discursive event, as well as it shapes them i.e. making the relationship co-dependent since discourse is socially constitutive and socially shaped (Fairclough & Wodak 1997:258). The narrative concept is an important part, where the narrative constitutes a story, that can be used for people to make sense of the world (Fairclough 2001). CDA focuses in detail on what is being written and said, in order to integrate this into the overarching social practice (Bergström & Boréus 2014:391). By looking at the presidential speeches in a detailed manner, this will be related to the social and political context that is being studied, in order to make visible conflicts about values and power and ongoing identity construction. As previously noted, the critical discourse analysis allows analytical conclusions about how language interacts with the surrounding social structure. Extracts will help exemplify what exactly is analyzed through the framework provided by social identity theory. Regarding validity and reliability, the intersubjectivity within CDA has been discussed as a problematic part due to the openness of the analytical tools that are associated with CDA (ibid., 2014:405). This demands that interpretations are thoroughly motivated and that the strategy of reaching different conclusions throughout the study is clearly described. To make this clear the analysis uses extracts and citations to clarify what the arguments are based on.

3.1 Material

A discourse analysis requires consideration of the studied material's sender and recipient. Who is issuing them, who is receiving them, and how can this affect the content? Since the content is dependent on past and current social events, it is also subject to influence of different power relations between affected individuals and groups. For this thesis, several speeches conducted by Catalan presidents will be analyzed, due to their position of power and as chosen spokespersons of the Catalan nation. The choice of speeches is however restricted by the language barrier and due to this, those transcribed to English have been chosen. They range from speeches on the traditional celebrations of St. Jordi (Mas 2014; Mas 2015; Puigdemont 2016), to the national day "La Diada" (Mas 2014; Mas 2015; Puigdemont 2016) to speeches specifically on independence (Mas 2015; Puigdemont 2016). Of course, it is in all research optimal to study all relevant material, and for every study a decision has to be made regarding if the aim is to gather information broadly or deliberately choose and motivate a narrow choice. Depending on this the study can be separated into an idea- or actor-focused approach (Bergström & Boreus 2014:219-220), which requires reflection on the consequences of the different options available. Since great weight is put into who is the sender and the thought recipient of my studied material and considering the choice of theory, material from primarily one actor, the president, will be studied. This, because it is of great relevance for the usage of social identity theory and identity entrepreneurship, as presidency ultimately means to be a leader and represent the nation.

3.2 Thesis structure

Initially in chapter 4, an empirical background will be presented reviewing the case specific details of the Catalan context such as the immediate history in the political framework of Spain (4.1) and a brief history of the Catalan nationalist movement (4.2). This will highlight important aspects of the previous struggles that affected the perception of the national identity as well as the nationalist movements agenda. Continuing on the next section (4.3) will treat the factors that through previous research have been given significant meaning in setting the new nationalist climate in Catalonia and how this triggered identity politics and a shift in identification. After this, the analysis will follow in chapter 5, where the theoretical framework will be incorporated. The thesis will end with a conclusion (6).

4 Empirical background

In this empirical section a background will be presented in order to deepen the understanding of the social and political context of Catalonia set in the framework of the Spanish state.

4.1 Democratization after Franco

During the Francoist dictatorship from 1939 to 1975, Spain was defined through centralism, conservatism, Catholicism and with a hegemonic Castilian culture. When Franco died in 1975, a process of political reform was initiated, and a new Spanish Constitution was put in place 1978, where the state welcomed regional differences and recognized the Spanish regions with various degrees of political autonomy (Guibernau 1999:93). The previously abolished Catalan government “Generalitat” was recovered and in 1979 the new Catalan Statute of Autonomy was sanctioned (Guibernau 2013:373). Jordi Pujol became the leader of the Convergence and Union coalition (Convergència i Unió (CiU)) and became the first Catalan president in the democratic elections of 1980. This initiated a process of nation building, where institutions and language were reestablished and promoted after years of political and cultural repression, thereby beginning the construction of a novel Catalan identity (Guibernau 2013:374). After Franco, the country evolved from a rural to an industrial society, with the wealthiest areas concentrated to Catalonia and the Basque Country. One of the most challenging aspects in the Spanish society was the response to the historic nationalities that had been repressed during Franco in the conservative centralist politics committed to a homogenous image of Spain. In 1978, the Spanish Constitution was drafted, offering a more integrative political model recognizing the different existing nationalities and regions within the Spanish state. This model of devolution created the system of autonomous communities within Spain that consisted of both “fabricated” communities as well as historic. With this a conflict was risen concerning the meaning of the term nationality and nation, and where both the central state and the communities were seeking nationhood. The consolidation of the nation would create the legitimacy that citizens seek in order to accept the political representation (Rodon & Guinjoan 2018). In 1979 the Catalan Statute of Autonomy was introduced and ratified under the Constitution, in which the collective identity of Catalonia is expressed through its collective life, institutions and relationship with the rest of Spain. With this, a specific Catalan identity is recognized as well as constrained by the Statute and the Constitution, and

independence cannot be aspired without a change in the Spanish Constitution (Guibernau 2013:378).

4.2 A review of Catalan nationalism

While recognizing the existence of a historic pre-modern Catalan nationalist movement, this overview will contain characteristics of the nationalist movement after the Spanish democratization. Beginning as a movement for cultural recognition after Franco, navigating as a primarily linguistic national movement where the status of the Catalan language was the primary motive for political struggle unaccompanied by claims of ethnicity (Olivieri 2015:1613). In the words of Guibernau “a progressive social movement defending democracy and freedom against Franco’s dictatorship” (Guibernau 2013). Working towards a sufficient amount of political autonomy and self-government within Catalonia was for long the incentive and the majority objective. The economic side regarding for example fiscal balance has always played an important role in what people have expressed dissatisfaction with and nationalists have voiced the need for concessions on behalf of Spain so the unjust treatment of Catalonia ends (Serrano 2015; Blas 2013). Protection of the Catalan language, culture and nation has been at the heart of the nationalist project and the language and symbols of Catalonia have been important in terms of mobilization (Conversi 1997: 147). The modern Catalan nationalism emerged in the 60’s, and since then it has never been majorly secessionist in its character, it has simply concerned itself with the level of autonomy within Spain, ranging from autonomy to federation (Crameri 2015:104). Iconic Catalan leaders such as Jordi Pujol have defended devolution (he has however since then changed his view to supporting independence) (Guibernau 2013:380). The power struggle with Spain has taken different forms, but it has remained a big influencer and a “primer” of the societal climate (Olivieri 2015:1611). This has played a part in how the movement has set the agenda, and with more direct confrontation with the central government of Spain during the 2000’s the nationalist movement seems to have changed along with it. These events will outline the content of the next section.

4.3 Opening for a re-activation of identity politics

After the brief review of the political context in which the nationalist movement emerged after democratization as well, as the previously ascribed characteristics of the Catalan nationalist movement, this section will contain a review of events argued to have contributed to a new climate making independence a mainstream goal. These events have been perceived as “triggers” of the new nationalist

climate, since they opened for an activation of identity politics with increasing contestation between the Spanish and the Catalan identity (Olivieri 2015). In light of the economic crisis of 2008 the dissatisfaction of the Spanish economic policies grew bigger within Catalan society, resulting in an increased dissatisfaction with democracy. Guibernau identifies three main factors to the rise of secessionism in Catalonia, first the lack of response by the Spanish government of José María Aznar (2000-2004) to demands of greater autonomy in Catalonia, second the challenging and rejection of the 2006 Statute of Autonomy, after it was sanctioned by the Catalan parliament. Third, the financial arrangements and the rejection of a fiscal pact. The combination of these events and the emotions that they triggered are, according to Guibernau, crucial for understanding the rise of secessionism (2013:381).

4.3.1 Rejection of Statute of Autonomy and "Pacte Fiscal"

As previously mentioned Spain developed the system of Autonomous Communities after democratization, which has been a central political aspect in post-Franco Spain after the democratic constitution passed in 1978. The "Convergència i Unió" (CiU), governed Catalonia since 1980 and successfully negotiated demands for Catalan autonomy with the Spanish central government. Political change came about after the elections of 2003, when CiU's governing after 23 years ended and the Socialist Party of Catalonia, the Initiative for Catalonia Greens and the Republican Left of Catalonia took over. The government shift resulted in a reformed draft of the Statute of Autonomy, sanctioned by the Catalan parliament in 2006 (Guibernau 2013:380). The reformed Statute aimed to gain further recognition of Catalonia as a nation and get more control over the tax revenues in the region. The initiative caused discomfort for the Spanish government who were reminded of the the historical conflict of center-peripheral nationalisms, and perceived this as a potential threat towards the Spanish state (Burg 2015:290). The Spanish government rejected the reformed statute, a not too surprising move seeing that States with several potential secessionist regions are likely to limit the concessions in order to not open for similar demands from others (ibid., 2015:291), where one of the most controversial changes was the article that referred to Catalonia as a nation, a phrasing that not only the Spanish government but other AC:s also objected to. Apart from this, the Statute treated fiscal concessions and preferential status of the Catalan language. Implementation of the revised Statue was then challenged by the Spanish Ombudsman and in 2010 the court ruling invalidated the draft and the updated articles on, for example identity status, language policy and regional governing. This caused widespread opposition and became an incentive for nationalist mobilization.

To obtain the bigger picture of the relationship between Spain and Catalonia it is important to mention the economy and to recognize the fiscal deficit between Catalonia and the Central Administration. The prosperous region experienced that

wealth and status was downgraded due to the financial agreements imposed by Spain, leading to increased support of the so called "Pacte Fiscal". The imbalance of contributing and receiving and the fiscal deficit of 8% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), has resulted in a permanent line of conflict however with increasing intensity after the Spanish budget of 2012 (Guibernau 2013:383). This aspect has played an important role as a cohesion element between citizens of Catalonia both identifying themselves as nationalists but also those who do not present themselves as such who are given a concrete legitimizer for secession (Burg 2015:292). It has however as mentioned, been a central theme of politics since the beginning of Spanish democratization, leading Blas (2013) to argue that this alone cannot be given too much meaning. Guibernau points out that the two most common factors for supporting independence are fiscal autonomy and greater prosperity and freedom, which at a first glance seem like rational arguments. But the emotional importance this holds, of being unfairly exploited and marginalized within Spain, should not be ignored and one could argue that these rational arguments more act as legitimizers for a conflict with far more symbolic meaning (2013:387).

4.3.2 A shift in identity – A shift towards independence

Much has been written about the role of identity in determining preferences for political options and people's stance towards devolution and secession. Statistical research has revealed that after the previously mentioned events that set a new nationalist climate in Catalonia, changes in self-identification occurred. The most prominent change being the shift of those who now feel "Only Catalan" (Guibernau 2013:388). At the same time, after the period that followed the rejection of the Statute and the fiscal pact, the percentage of people wanting an independent state rose, as well as the amount that would vote yes in a referendum. This, stands in direct contrast to the opinions of the Spaniards asked whom believe that no more power should be given to the autonomous communities and moreover do not back the right of these to become independent states (ibid. 386), which points to a polarization of identities. While these numbers are not the most recent, it still proves a point by describing the cementation of a new climate. It displays how more exclusionary identification can be related to the support for independence as well as how some events seem to have been meaningful in the development of this process. As mentioned, a significant change can be seen in the amount of people who identify as "Only Catalan", which has increased, while the amount of people who feel "as Spanish as Catalan" has decreased. Thus, a shift to more excluding identification seems to go hand in hand with a lesser presence of dual-identification (Rodon & Guinjoan 2018). To further explore these dynamics, the next chapter will look to the meaning of collective identity in this nationalist shift, and how one can seek to mobilize the nation to support a political agenda.

5 Analysis

In this chapter the findings of the study will be presented through the frameworks of social identity and social representations of history, to gain understanding in how a new nationalist movement gained and maintained support, while a new nationalist discourse was cemented in Catalan society. Previous research has shown the importance of identity in the nationalist discourse and motivated by this, the analysis will continue to explore the dynamics of mobilizing support based on identity. The backbone of the analysis will be the three strategies associated with identity entrepreneurship, the definition of the group, the meaning and purpose behind the mobilization and finally the leadership and how this communicates the preferred group characteristics within which the remaining analytical tools provided by social identity theory and social representations of history will be incorporated.

5.1 Boundaries of the Catalan identity

Rendering into the first strategy of identity entrepreneurship, it involves who is to be included in the group and what effect this has for the mobilization of the nationalist project. It touches on the conflict between maximizing mobilizing capacity as well as drawing the boundaries for the in-group and the Catalan identity. My findings shows that the Catalan nationalist discourses is set in an inclusive framework, where the major identity boundary is drawn in relation to the Spanish, making dual identification more difficult. Moving from criteria such as the Catalan language as a criterion for Catalan identity, to sympathy with the independence project as one of the most important factors for being Catalan, one can tell how an effort is made to appeal to a wider section of the population ensuring maximum mobilization opportunities.

5.1.1 Determining inclusion

”Native Catalans, adopted Catalans, and new Catalans coming from other places – whatever the case – are all protagonists in the present and future of Catalonia. When the hour to decide our future arrives, all Catalans will have the same power: the power of their vote [...] It is a movement that is not against anyone, based on the exercise of democracy, whose objective is to provide our country with more tools to progress and offer our citizens greater wellbeing” (Mas 2014b).

One of the strengths of nationalism is the flexibility and the ability to present itself as a collective project of the nation. To construct this collective, there is a need to distinguish an us from the "other" and friend from foe (Guibernau 1999:90). National identity is based on self-categorization and social identity processes, meaning that it is not just individual understanding but also that of other people and institutions acting on similar or conflicting definitions, making who belongs to the nation a consequence of this contested topic (Khan et al. 2017). One could therefore argue that many times it is relevant to ask "Who does not belong?" in order to find out who does.

Catalonia, has made itself famous for an inclusive society. Jordi Pujol, a prominent Catalan icon and former president, once defined the criteria for being Catalan as "someone who is living and working in Catalonia and wanting to be Catalan" (Miley 2007:26). When drawing boundaries between in-groups and out-groups, nationalists tend to be defined in either ethnic or civic terms, however it is important to acknowledge that often there is a presence of both. As it is in the aim of an identity entrepreneur to maximize mobilizing capacity and include as many as possible for the project (Khan et al. 2017:479), boundaries are kept rather undefined in the political rhetoric. When it comes to nationalism in civic terms, citizenship is the basis for nationhood (Smith 1991), but regarding citizenship, most advantage people born within the national territory over those born outside, and also advantage those of national descent over those without national ancestors. Despite this, people with the agenda to mobilize to maximum capacity, are aware that it is beneficial to bring forward a formulation of national identity, enabling as many as possible to join the cause (Reicher & Hopkins 2001:155-156).

After studying the presidential speeches, it is clear what also has been stated in previous research, that Catalan nationalism compared to the often separated ethnic versus civic, is portrayed as inclusive and civic (Smith 2008; Özkirimli 2010). Ethnic elements are not brought forward in the speeches where rather the inclusiveness of Catalan society is highlighted, which goes in line with strategies of identity entrepreneurs wanting to include as many as possible in the group to maximize the mobilizing project (Khan et al. 2017:479). Thus, the nationalist movement has a wide appeal seeing the inclusive nature and the lack of ethnic connotations (Guibernau 2013:383). It should be noted however, that the perception of inclusion in society is another matter. Zeynabu Said, born and raised in Catalonia to a Catalan mother and West-Saharan father shares her impression, that despite speaking Catalan and being Catalan, she isn't perceived as such. For her, being white and having a Catalan name is required. Immigrants coming from other parts of Spain have also been known as "Xarnego", a derogatory label used for the non-catalan workers to differentiate them from the Catalans with "true blood" (Vilarós 2003). Despite the presence of such emotions, in Catalonia one is legally Catalan by citizenship (Benavides 2017) and in the presidents portrayal of the Catalan identity there is no distinction made by who is Catalan and who is not in ethnic terms. Looking at the Catalan history of open immigration policies and the vast amount of Catalans who have their origin outside of the Catalan territory

(Hierro 2015), it would in mobilizing terms be unstrategic to do so. By directing the speech to the Catalan nation, it instead appeals to all those whom identify with it (Reicher & Hopkins 2001:156).

5.1.2 Spanish or Catalan?

Catalonia being a part of Spain, always actualizes the question of identification in terms of to what extent you are Spanish and to what Catalan, or if you're exclusively one or the other. In previous research many have discussed this as a concept of dual or multi-layered identity where Catalonia previously has been known as a society where dual identities have been balanced and compatible (Serrano 2013:527). Miley (2007) mentions a "catalanization" throughout the Catalan elite, claiming that identification amongst the elite is less varying than amongst "the people". Political elite have shown less probability to identify as Spanish, resulting in the elite being more representative for the Catalan identifying part of society (Miley 2007:8). With politicians less prone to dual identification, this reveals an interesting background to the social identity that is being represented. Catalans have tended to construct their identity by categorizing themselves as different from other Spaniards, while Spaniards constitute their identity with reference to the differences with the Catalans (Cramer 2015:175).

"What we have now doesn't work. We do not say that Spain has to be the way the Catalans want it to be [...] Spain should be how it wants to be with its centralized government, monarchy, own priorities, and Catalonia should be how Catalans want it. To each his own, without imposing on the other". (Puigdemont 2016c).

National identity can be both exclusionary and inclusionary of other identity discourses (Olivieri 2013:1611) Self-categorization with one or the other collective identity, due to the way that they are compared, make them appear incompatible in terms of goals, values and history, which makes dual-identification harder. While a European identity and values often are brought forward in a positive manner and as stated by the president "Catalans are and will continue to be Europeans" (Puigdemont 2016). Building on the same argument, the compatibility of the Spanish identity and the European is more questioned while the Catalan and European more coincide and Catalonia has taken it upon themselves to help Spain "democratize, Europeanize and modernize" (Puigdemont 2016). Apart from the conflicting identities of Spain and Catalonia, a distinction between friend and foe is made by the unwillingness to support their political project;

"There are many dragons we must face in the world: ignorance, disease, unemployment, solitude, and other dragons such as the lack of respect for the dignity of our people or for our will to govern ourselves"(Mas, 2014a).

Clothing it in metaphors of dragons, it can be understood that the enemy, simply put, is one who does not respect the Catalan wishes for self determination and their right to hold a referendum. Looking at the context the obvious counterpart coming to mind is Spain or "the State", accentuating Spain's role as the enemy of the Catalan nation, which will be discussed further in the next section.

5.2 Actualizing a historical narrative

The second strategy of identity entrepreneurship is defined as category content, i.e. what it means to belong to the group and for what purpose mobilization takes place (Khan et al. 2017:479). This allows us to explore the main motivations and legitimizers for the Catalan independence movement reoccurring through the speeches. They have been separated into three themes, "Contested nationhood", "The threat of Spanish repression" and "The right to decide". The narrative that history provides can be crucial in understanding social identity and how we relate to different groups and challenges (Liu & Hilton 2005:537). This section will be focused on how the national discourse presented through the presidential speeches has built on a narrative actualizing contestation based on historical events by relating them to the present context. This includes how in- and out-group characteristics can be used in the competition for a positive social identity as well as how perceived threat from the out group can cause stronger identification with your own group. History can also serve as a warrant for social and political arrangement in the present and future (Khan et al 480, Liu & Hilton 2005).

"One must be familiar with our history in order to remember the profound depth of the Catalan people's democratic convictions. During times when people seem to undermine, deny or even deny our past as a country, it is more important than ever to commemorate what we have been and to remember the heroic defense of Barcelona and all of Catalonia three centuries ago" (Mas 2015a).

The skill in using iconic moments of national history and incorporating them into the narrative, can exemplify how some visions of social relations are promoted. In the Catalan case, the historicity and how this is promoted publicly is significant in understanding the strength of the identity, highlighting the antiquity of the people, language and political institutions of Catalonia. If national mobilization depends upon national identity then establishing identity depends upon embedding it within an essentializing historical narrative" (Reicher & Hopkins 2001, p. 60). Placing Catalonia in such an essentializing context, it accentuates the necessity for them to have the right to practice their governing as they have done for centuries. In other words, it accentuates what they have been and should be again and also how history can be used to legitimize and confirm the agendas set by identity entrepreneurs (Khan et al. 2017:480). This acts as a legitimizer for the

independence agenda, as the claims are not met within the framework of Autonomy.

5.2.1 Contested nationhood

The antiquity of the nation is an occurring theme, legitimizing claims to statehood, often in contrast to Spain who not until much later became a unified state. The inauthentic nature of the Spanish nation is compared to Catalonia's salience, accentuated based on cultural and institutional factors (Drew 2017). While there for Catalans is no question regarding their nationhood, it has never been confirmed by Spain despite being referred to as a "historic nationality" along with Galicia and the Basque Country (Guibernau 2013). The in some ways recognized and in others not recognized nationhood of Catalonia introduces a problematic reference frame for the political and social climate in Spain. As stated in the Spanish constitution;

The Constitution is based on the indissoluble unity of the Spanish Nation, the common and indivisible homeland of all Spaniards; it recognises and guarantees the right to self-government of the nationalities and regions of which it is composed and the solidarity among them all.-¹

The same article manages to both cement the indissoluble unity of the Spanish nation as well as recognize the nationalities of Spain, cementing a plurality of national identities. Furthermore mentioned in the preamble stating the presence of "Spaniards and peoples of Spain in the exercise of human rights, of their culture and traditions, languages and institutions". When Catalonia in 2006 worked to reform their statute, the famous phrase concerning nationhood stated:

[In reflection of the feelings and the wishes of the citizens of Catalonia, the Parliament of Catalonia has defined Catalonia as a nation by an ample majority. The Spanish Constitution, in its second Article, recognizes the national reality of Catalonia as a nationality.²]

The judging of this phrasing as unconstitutional by the Spanish courts has been given major importance in previous research related to the growth of the independence movement in Catalonia. Guibernau stresses the importance of the response given by the state towards the claims of nationhood from minorities within, in order to understand possible outcomes. For example Scotland and the British government's willingness to recognize Scotland as a nation and the allowance of a referendum can be put in contrast to the actions taken by Spain (Guibernau 2013:372). A group in which the members believe they belong to a

¹ The Spanish Constitution 1978: Section 2

² The Catalanian Statute of Autonomy 2006: Preamble

nation will seek this recognition, while the loaded term nation, means that the state often struggles to recognize the terminology on a group inside of its boundaries (Lécours 2010:270). Even though Catalan nationalism only recently took on the pursuit of independence (Gillespie 2015) the question of nationhood has been an underlying conflict between Catalonia and Spain and the definition of Spain as a nation was challenged by many other proclaimed nations (Reicher Hopkins 2001:69). Spanish and Catalan nationalisms seem to work in a reflexive manner (Guibernau 1999:92), as an example, walking through the streets of Barcelona where it is commonplace to display flags outside of your home, both Catalan and Spanish flags can be seen, however it is very rare they are displayed together (2015:1615). The unresolved nature enables continued group contestation and the rejection of the Statue can be related to this underlying conflict, where history can be influential in how a group reacts to a specific challenge (Liu & Hilton 2005). This can be related to status and affirmation of ones social identity, and a rejection of such symbolical meaning can in line with uncertainty theory provide a possible explanation as to why the rejection of the Statute in extension can lead to more forceful Catalan identification and a wish for further distance from Spain. This type of "invasion" threatens the Catalans status which in the terminology of Turner and Tajfel increases the likeliness of more intense group identification as well as presenting a motive to solve the issue (Cattini 2015).

5.2.2 The threat of Spanish repression

Identity entrepreneurs present rivaling agendas as incompatible and their own as compatible with the group they seek to mobilize, in other words presenting their option as acting in the best interest of the nation while rejecting other ways. History has been argued to provide an essential ingredient in providing people with an understanding of their identity as well as instilling a frame of reference for the future (Khan et al. 2017:480). In the Catalan case, grievances of the past from, for example repression during the Franco rule, appears thematically in the presidential speeches

"In the first part of the 20th century we fought hard to defend the Second Republic, which had restored our autonomy after more than 200 years, and the use of our language. Sadly the Republic was defeated by the forces of General Franco during the Spanish Civil War, and a dark period of Catalan history began again." (Puigdemont 2016a).

The referral to a dark age is common within the nationalist discourse, implying that there also has been a Golden age that one should strive to experience again (Smith 2008). In this case "the dark age" is a reoccurring phenomenon in the context of having been silenced and repressed by the spanish centralist government denying them their right to freedom. Moreover, there is a very important part in the Catalan/Spanish nexus which is repeatedly used, the democratic values that have characterized Catalonia for centuries, put in contrast

to the Spanish being associated with their non-democratic history as a military dictatorship and imposing homogenizing castilian culture. This polarization of characteristic values between the out-group of Spain and the in-group of Catalonia is an example of how positive values are reinforced and lifted in order to create and maintain a positive social identity in the competition with another (Tajfel 1982:24). Imposing a historical narrative in order to legitimize and validate claims, has been seen in other situations of increasing secessionist climate. Scotland as an example of a sub-state nationalist movement where independence has been on the agenda, can act as a further example of how historical events can provide understanding of the current situation based on not the actual current events but by relating them to an old dramatic grievance. Often one that has few equals in the terms of the emotion it brings out. A situation of less severe nature can then, by putting a continuity between it and present day, activate a similar "frame of survival" (Lynch 1992:367). As a result of the widespread opposition and persecution, much of the contemporary sociopolitical climate is a reaction against this turbulent period (Olivieri 2015:1613).

5.2.3 The right to decide

"Via Catalana" [...] it is a process based at all times of the exercise of democracy. It is a people's movement that has been the main driving force behind this road to independence. At all times it will be the people of Catalonia who express themselves and who decide. In this respect, it is worth asking: who is frightened of democracy? Who is afraid of citizens expressing themselves and deciding for themselves? Is someone who opposes this exercise of basic democracy truly a democrat?" (Mas 2015c).

One of the main themes behind the Catalan independence has been the "right to decide" and the right for the Catalan people to exercise self-determination (Cramer 2015). By instilling the conflict between Catalonia and Spain in a narrative of exercising democracy versus not exercising democracy, the democratic quality of Spain is indirectly questioned. This process of "Othering" the Spanish state, validates the Catalan need to separate from it. As seen above, once again the "Other" is constructed along the lines of someone denying Catalans their democratic rights, in this way indirectly referring to the process at work from the central government and the institutions of the Spanish state. With Spain as a relatively new democracy within Europe and the collective memory of the Franco-era still very much alive, one could argue that the indirect questioning of their democratic validity becomes an effective way to legitimize the Catalan political agenda as temporal continuity with the past can legitimize lessons for the present and the future (Khan et al. 2017).

"The Catalan nation is very much alive; we have a country and we are democratically, civically, and peacefully preparing ourselves to determine our

own collective future, which belongs to seven and a half million Catalans.” (Mas 2015b)

In the Catalan nationalist discourse, words such as protect and defend consequently come up when looking into the motivation behind the nationalist movement, highlighting the necessity of their political action as a reaction from another instigator. Previously the culture and linguistic rights were at the core of this protection, however in the new discourse probing for independence, it has moved on to the more fundamental value of democracy and self-determination. Being denied this fundamental right can arguably be linked to the legacy of Franco, and the need to protect the identity of the stateless nation from Spain (Olivieri 2015:1622). This goes in line with the Catalan nationalist discourse being constructed as a progressive movement, using dialogue and strictly non-violent in its nature. Once again, the rejection of the Statue of Autonomy is interesting to mention, since the democratically ratified Statue got challenged by the central government. Relating this to uncertainty theory and insecurity (Hogg 2007; Kinnvall 2004) the perceived threat to democracy and the right to govern negatively, influences the Catalan identity and the perception of the collective. This combined with the contextual factors can be forceful in nationalist mobilization and result in intensified identification with the group. And with continued referral to the past throughout the presidential speeches, historical narratives remind the group of injustices from the past, instilling a "frame of conflict" from which the behavior is adapted.

5.3 The president as a representative of the nation

The third and last strategy of identity entrepreneurship contains category prototypes, in other words a leader that carries the ability to represent the social identity one strives to mobilize. The leader then has the power to establish and communicate the preferred group characteristics (Reicher et al. 2005:552). What is representative of the Catalan national identity and within what framework should one behave to stay true to the collective identity?

5.3.1 The Catalan way

”The desire for freedom, to protect our people, to change for the better, to build, to hope, to have ambition, are some of the elements driving Catalonia’s political project to become a state. It is a legitimate aspiration, shared with many other countries that have become independent in the last few decades. None of them, incidentally, has wanted to go back to what they were. And now we, too, want our own opportunity and furthermore we want to do it our way, the Catalan way, in

an exemplary manner, democratically, with a sense of public spirit and respect, approaching it not as a problem but as an opportunity.” (Puigdemont 2016b)

Self-categorization theory states that group members will seek to act in terms of their social identity and they will seek out and conform to the position which best exemplifies that identity - the in-group prototype (Reicher & Hopkins 2001:167).

”Allow me to address you all for the first time as President of the Generalitat on our National Holiday to express my gratitude for this responsibility and commitment that is expected of me as president. A commitment to govern openly and through dialogue, qualities that have always defined our way of doing things as a country, which I will always use in order to reach the objectives that the citizens have called for in this legislature.” (Puigdemont 2016a)

Initially these statements encompass the preferred Catalan group characteristics of acting, ”democratically, in exemplary manner with public spirit and respect”, positive characteristics that can be expected from both the Catalan people and from the president as their representative. The in-group, as well as the leader sharing the same social identity, should share the same traits that characterize it (Reicher & Hopkins 2001:169) something that is accentuated in the speeches. It is interesting on this note, to mention the discussion about the movement as a topdown or bottom up process. Some scholars have argued the independence movement as a grass-roots project putting pressure on the politicians to change their agenda to new climate (Cramer; Gillespie), while other persist the initiation from the opportunist elite (Miley; Olivieri). This sheds light on how the population identifying with the collective identity of being Catalan, together with the leader chosen to represent this very social identity, are involved in a process of mutual influence that revolves around a partnership in a social self categorization, it is about the creation, coordination and control of a shared sense of ”us”, neither individual nor group is static, what ”us” means is negotiable and so too is the contribution that leaders and followers make to any particular definition of usness (Reicher et al. 2005). Talking about the ”right” characteristics, also puts an essentializing narrative on the Catalan identity, claiming some characteristics and ways of doing things simply are an essential part of being and feeling Catalan. One could argue that the typical ”Catalanism” that is being promoted in the official discourse is promoting only a certain type of Catalan, leading to identification in more exclusionary terms and once again actualizing the difficulty of being a good Catalan if you don’t accept the whole package of what it means to act as such. Leaders then play a double role, both as architects of nationalist movements providing historical and political arguments to sustain the character of the nation and legitimize its will to decide the political future. Mutually, they construct a discourse that undermines the current order within the state and offer an alternative route, thus acting as agitators and mobilisers of nationalist movements (Guibernau 2000:1003).

"That the path we had followed up to that point, the attempt to find a fit for Catalonia within Spain, could never be a reality. That Spain had no political will to change. It raised a dilemma: to stop being Catalan, or to go for independence."(Puigdemont 2016c).

This clear articulation is the best example found within the speeches, stating that as a Catalan you are obligated to support independence. It is in other words not compatible with the Catalan identity to not support the independence agenda, you should in order to be a "good" Catalan also be an independentist. In terms of identity entrepreneurship it is a clear case of communicating meaning to an identity, setting a framework in which one is expected to behave. The flexibility of identity implies that their boundaries are consciously contested, and more specifically that these identities are sometimes forced into uncomfortable positions according to nationalist developments and their use in political demands. The conclusion based on this is that it requires negation of individual identities and adjustment to fit into the collective identity, as it is communicated and expected. Based on this, in line with social identity theory it actualizes how identification is consciously moved from an individual to a group level by the leader (Reicher & Hopkins 2001:552) forcing a choice between two identity discourses – Catalan or Spanish.

6 Conclusion

In this thesis the aim has been to answer the question of "How can we understand the shift in the nationalist discourse in Catalonia; from devolution to secession, and the increased support of independence from an identity perspective?" and in order to do so a framework of social identity and social representations of history has been used with a critical discourse analytic approach. Providing another view on the increased support for secessionism than solely looking to factors such as economy, fiscal matters and power agreements, the dynamics of independence support has been related to the construction of identity and narratives in the public national discourse as presented by the president. While not discounting the importance of the "rational arguments" for opening the climate for identity politics, the analysis has focused on describing how the president of Catalonia has used identity politics to shift the nationalist discourse into one, better fitting, for the independence project. Findings have shown how Catalan national identity has been filled with meaning and moreover how this meaning has legitimized and strengthened an already problematic relationship with the Spanish government. This has been done by actualizing historical conflicts and relating them to the present climate, as well as distancing the Catalan identity from the Spanish and making dual identification even harder. The rejection of the Statute of Autonomy, concessions for a fiscal pact and in general lack of recognition towards demands for more autonomy, can all be related to bigger underlying conflicts between Catalonia and Spain. Unresolved conflicts of nationhood, collective memory of the Spanish repression during Franco and the "right to decide", have been significant motivators for mobilization. The diversity of the Catalan society has also been taken into consideration with the inclusive mobilization strategy, adjusting to the diverse society and maximizing the support base for the political project. Finally, the group characteristics that the president communicates can describe how a more exclusive identification took place, and what characteristics and behaviors you are expected to adopt. The legacy of Franco's regime remains an important feature, shaping the identity discourses and scarring the collective memory of being Catalan, making any imposition from the Spanish central government a sensitive topic and the conflict between Catalan and Spanish identities easy to "activate".

The thesis was guided by two further sub questions to give additional clarity to my main research question;

- *How can identity entrepreneurship and social representations of history be used to describe the mobilization of the Catalan identity?*

Looking at the Catalan case through an identity entrepreneurship perspective has given insight as to how the contestation of identities can be actualized in the

main political discourse and how a chosen leader and representative of the nation can play a part in the construction of, or in this case awakening of an identity contesting climate. With the intensified perception of threat due to the confrontations with the Spanish government in the 2000's, dissatisfaction arose, and with leader of the nation instilling a historical narrative actualizing past grievances and relating them to the current context, we can with the help of social representations of history understand how historic events were crucial for identity construction and the separation of the Spanish and the Catalans. With social identity theory explaining the categorization of different groups, the more separated and conflicting they appear, the harder it appears to remain an individual with dual-identity. Negative values ascribed Spain differ in comparison to positive values ascribed to Catalonia actualizing a choice between the two rather than identifying with both. Spanish and Catalan identities, are not incompatible but made incompatible in how they are constructed. And by inserting a narrative of contestation between the two it seems increasingly hard to stand up for identifying with both, in order to be a good Catalan and staying true to identity such as it is portrayed in the current nationalist discourse

- *How can the framework of social identity theory and self-categorization explain the shift towards a more exclusive Catalan identity and a new nationalist discourse?*

Social identity theory has provided us with understanding for how the positioning of the Catalan identity in relation to another group can act identity shaping and cause further polarization between the two, making it harder to identify with both in order to maintain a positive social identity. With Spain being associated with backwards, undemocratic values and Catalonia with democracy at the core of society with antique political institutions, two different groups are identified, compared and given different meaning. The subject position of being Catalan in Spain, holds a very special relation to Spain as a state due to the historical context. After studying the material, one could argue that Catalan identity is constructed in the light of threat from the Spanish state, which is an ever-present point of reference. And when there is perceived threat insecurity is a natural consequence, causing individuals to turn to their group, changing self-categorization from an individual level to a collective one. In the Catalan case where this insecurity arose within the framework of autonomy and no more power concessions were given, the next step would naturally be independence in order to make sure your group and collective identity is protected and respected. In the relationship between Spain and Catalonia, there has since democratization been discussions and different opinions in the amount of political power that should be given to Catalonia. And this line of conflict continues to be present, whereas the nationalism due to its chameleonic nature has adjusted itself to the current context.

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