

# From National Holiday to Independence Day

## Changing Perceptions of the “Diada”

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## Article

# From National Holiday to Independence Day: Changing Perceptions of the “*Diada*”

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**Abstract:** Issues related to Catalan secessionism are central to current debates on European integration, nationalism, and territorial politics, and the Catalan independence movement has become famous for its large annual demonstrations on Catalan national day, the *Diada*. This paper represents the first attempt at a thorough empirical investigation of the most important political event in Catalonia combining historical and ethnographic analysis that covers the current modern period from 1977 to 2019. This paper uses a mixed-methods approach to study the *Diada* mobilisations with two different main approaches determined principally by the availability of sources. We investigate the recent period of activating the *Diada* since 2012 using qualitative interviews, ethnographic data, and social media analysis. For the more distant periods of the *Diada* celebration, we use a more classical historical approach centred on discourse analysis of print media and public discourses. We find that there has been a marked shift in the perception and organisation of the *Diada* in recent years. We conclude that when civil society organisations are in charge of the *Diada* celebration, the result is a more politically charged event that mobilises a much larger proportion of the population than when politicians and political parties organise the celebration. Further, when political parties are in charge, the *Diada* not only mobilises far fewer people, but usually takes on a much more cultural and festive character compared with the explicitly political *Diada* demonstrations organised by civil society actors since 2012.

**Keywords:** Catalonia; civil society; memory space; commemorations; mixed methods; nationalism; protest; social media; Spain

## 1. Introduction

Anniversaries are one of the classical types of *lieux de mémoire* that the French historian Pierre Nora lists in his main work of the same name (Nora 1984–1992). Due to their value as representations of history, the power to define commemorations very directly represents instances of the production of history. They constitute multiple sites to which certain values, meanings, and emotions are attached and around which the struggle to define history takes place<sup>1</sup>. Over the past seven years, the celebration of the National Holiday of Catalonia on September 11, the *Diada*, has grown into a popular mass demonstration that has, once again, become a channel for political demands, as it was in the transition to democracy in the late 1970s after the death of Dictator Franco. During the more than 30 years

<sup>1</sup> For discussions of the process of creation of commemorations, see Trouillot (1995) and Zerubavel (2003). For a critical discussion of Nora’s concept and of its relation to national master narratives, see Humlebæk (2018).

between these two periods in time, the celebration of the *Diada* was taken over and institutionalised by the regional Government and the political parties in Catalonia. Thereby, the National Holiday, paradoxically, lost most of the popular support and mobilisation potential it had had just a few years before. The number of participants in the celebrations in Barcelona has thus fluctuated from over a million in 1977, dropping to a few tens of thousands over the period from the early 1980s to 2011, to again exceed one million participants several times since 2012.

In 1976, just over nine months after Franco's death, the *Diada* celebration was activated by a wide range of organisations and still illegal political parties, and it was linked to the central demands of the transition to democracy in the Catalan context, namely democracy and self-government. These thoughts were easily merged into the historical significance that the *Diada* had had since its invention as a memorial day in the late 1800s. Since 2012, the *Diada* has again been activated especially by the civil society organisations that have made secession from Spain their main goal, and the demands associated with the celebration are therefore their political demands for independence. They are thus not completely in line with the predominant interpretations of earlier periods of politicisation of *Diada*, yet the organisers chose this anniversary for their demonstrations of the movement's popular support. Giori argues that this is because civil society organisers did not want the demonstration to be a "reactive" event against any current political issue, but a proactive one that could cover mobilisations on a number of autonomy-related issues (Giori 2017, p. 289).

Now, the *Diada* has been celebrated eight times since its reinvention in 2012, and a certain fatigue seems to be spreading in relation to the mobilisation power because, among other things, the demands around which the celebration has been constructed have not materialised. The question remains how the organisations behind the successful mobilisation will try to maintain the popular mobilisation around the *Diada* or whether the celebration in a kind of bound cyclic movement returns to earlier participation levels. In this article, we will examine the apparent paradox that when civil society organisations are in charge of the *Diada* celebration, the result is a more politically charged event that mobilises a much larger proportion of the population than when politicians and political parties organise the celebration. Further, when political parties are in charge, the *Diada* not only mobilises far fewer people, but usually takes on a much more cultural and festive character compared with the explicitly political *Diada* demonstrations organised by civil society actors since 2012.

We investigate the recent period of activating the *Diada* since 2012 using qualitative interviews and ethnographic data in order to examine how activists and participants perceive the *Diada* and how the present perception is related to their memory of past commemorations. In particular, we want to gauge to what extent civil society organisations or political parties are driving the mobilisation around the *Diada*.

## 2. State of the Art

Issues related to Catalan secessionism are central to current scholarship on European integration, nationalism, and territorial politics. Moreover, the debate about nationalities and nationalism is directly related to a more general debate about citizenship, diversity, and collective rights. The terminology used, however, is both unclear and heavily politicised, such as the distinction between a "nation" and a "region". Catalonia is thus sometimes described as a "nation without a state" (Keating 2001) and Catalan nationalism as "regional nationalist" (Keating 1988). The most common term in the literature, however, is "minority nationalism" (Lynch 1996; Elias 2009; Keating 2014; Griera 2016). This term works for two reasons. It shows how sub-state polities stand in a relationship to a larger whole, in this case the majority nation, and it tells us that the parties who support this ideology represent, or aim to represent, national collectives who desire statehood. Catalan politics is heavily impacted by Spanish politics; however, many of the Catalan political parties would want it to be otherwise. To some extent, the recognition of such regions as nations is predicated on the larger, majority nations' approval (Guibernau 2013, p. 369). However, as Burchardt notes, the question of who constitutes majority and who constitutes minority is quite ambiguous in stateless nations (Burchardt 2017, p. 699). Although the

people who identify as Catalans are certainly a minority within the Spanish state, they are a majority within their own territory.<sup>2</sup>

In fact, Keating has specifically described the independence movement in Catalonia as one of the “new nationalisms of Western Europe” due to its non-essentialist, inclusive, and staunchly non-ethnic character, clearly distinguishing them from far-right movements or ethno-nationalist politics (Keating 2008, p. 334). He has argued in favour of reconceptualising nationalities as “nonspatial cultural communities and endowed with various forms of nonterritorial rights” (Keating 2004, p. 373). Guibernau has even gone so far as to term the Catalan pro-independence movement “emancipatory nationalism” for its focus on democratic self-determination and progressive politics. Guibernau argues that those Western liberal democracies in which state and nation are not coextensive and where strong minority nationalist movements have emerged, such as Catalonia, Flanders, and Scotland, are examples of an emerging type of “deepening of democracy” (Guibernau 2013, p. 327). Although some authors, such as Thomas J. Miley, have argued for seeing Catalan linguistic identity as an ethnic component (Miley 2007), there is a wide consensus in the literature on Catalonia that ethnicity and ancestry have little to do with being Catalan (see for example Brandes 1990; Desfor Edles 1999; McCrone 2007; or Dardanelli and Mitchell 2014). The Catalan language can work both as an ethnolinguistic marker of inclusion or, as others have suggested, as a vehicle for the integration of foreigners and non-nationalists into a wider “Catalan culture” (Conversi 1997, p. 4). The dynamics of this socio-linguistic process are best explored in more specific texts (such as Woolard 2005; Conversi and Jeram 2017; or Wilson-Daily et al. 2018).

Specifically for the *Diada*, very little has been written on and, to our knowledge, this paper is the first attempt at a thorough empirical investigation of the most important political event in Catalonia, combining historical and ethnographic analysis that covers the current modern period. The *Diada* has been mentioned *en passant* in other works (such as Conversi 2002; Llobera 2004; or Crameri 2014, pp. 75–82), and Llobera made an analysis of the *Diada* from the 1970s to the early 1990s (Llobera 1996), but no sustained analysis of the political evolution of the event from its reinvention until the present epoch yet exists. Likewise, Michonneau has written an interesting historical account of the creation of the anniversary and its early celebration, and Anguera has written a couple of extensive accounts of the *Diada* from the origins in 1886, but none of them includes the period beyond the Civil War (Michonneau 2001, pp. 165–77, 229–51; Anguera 2003, 2008).

Nevertheless, Rubio has made an interesting comparative rhetorical-discursive analysis of the official speeches of the regional presidents on the respective national days in the Basque Country and Catalonia and, as such, comes close to our object of inquiry. However, the analysis only covers the period from 1980 to 2004 and thus omits precisely the important changes of the last decade and a half (Rubio 2015). Further, although Pablo Giori argues, as we do, that the *Diadas* since 2011 have clearly been taken over and organised by civil society actors, such as the Catalan National Assembly (ANC) and Òmnium Cultural (Giori 2017, p. 286), his analysis of the *Diada* goes a different route than ours and focuses more on cultural elements such as Catalan human towers or *castellers* during the event. Lastly, Rodon et al. (2018) have performed a novel and illuminating social media analysis using Twitter data from the 2016 *Diada* but did not include a historical analysis of the evolution of the *Diada* or qualitative, ethnographic data on the contemporary understandings of the *Diada*.

Several authors such as Crameri (2015), Dowling (2017), and Della Porta et al. (2017) have noted the contemporary vitality of Catalan pro-independence civil society, although a minority of scholars have labelled the Catalan independence movement elite-driven and populist (Barrio et al. 2018). However, few have developed analyses specifically of the *Diada* and memory spaces. Kathryn Crameri (2015)

<sup>2</sup> According to the Catalan bureau of statistics, *Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió* (CEO), 79.9% of the population of Catalonia identifies as Catalan, with 34.2% also identifying to some degree as Spanish. Exclusive Spanish identities are at only 6.5%. This is in contrast to Spain in general, where 24.7% consider themselves exclusively Spanish (*Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió* (CEO) 2019, p. 16).

has thus argued that civil pro-independence associations such as the ANC are playing an increasingly significant role in Catalan politics, effectively putting pressure on the Catalan government (Crameri 2015, p. 104), and Andrew Dowling (2017) notes that the 2012 *Diada* was organised outside the structures of political parties by the ANC. Similarly, social movements scholar Donatella Della Porta has argued that the Catalan independence movement is a “paradigmatic example” of a campaign initiated by civil society, which institutional actors and established politicians have later attempted to co-opt. (Della Porta et al. 2017, p. 31). This analysis corroborates our argument that a range of actors both institutional and coming from civil society are attempting to activate and control the *Diada*. These differing understandings of the purpose of the *Diada* significantly change the nature of the celebration between the more cultural and the more political. Our focus on this interplay between civil society and established politics nuances claims that the Catalan independence movement is either fully elite-driven or fully bottom-up.

Our study thus contributes to the incipient but flourishing study of the Catalan independence movement and to the more established study of commemorations and *lieux de memoire* in Spain, addressing both a methodological lacuna and a thematic one. The combination of historical analysis and ethnographic data provides us with ample data to both trace the evolution of the *Diada* as a cultural and political event, and to perform a thorough and multifaceted analysis of how leaders and activists in the Catalan independence movement perceive it and activate it in contemporary Catalan politics, focusing on the interplay between civil society and more established political actors.

### 3. Methodology

This paper uses a mixed-methods approach to study the *Diada* mobilisations with two different main approaches determined principally by the availability of sources. For the period since 2011, we have data from ethnographic fieldwork, which we will prioritise in our methodological approach combining the ethnographic approach with social media analysis where possible. For the more distant periods of the *Diada* celebration, we will use a more classical historical approach centred on discourse analysis of print media and public discourses.

#### 3.1. Historical Analysis

The focus in this part of the analysis is on the discourse generated mainly by the social and especially the political elites, specifically on their quality of being those who elaborate the national discourse and decide on issues of commemoration. The aim is to analyse the representation of the *Diada* and the character of the commemoration. The processes on which this part of the study focuses take place particularly in the press and in political discourse. Despite some sceptical voices (Schlesinger 1991, 1993), social scientists have proven that the press is a central actor in the reproduction of national identity (Anderson 1991; Billig 1995; Eder et al. 2002; Roosvall and Salovaara-Moring 2010; Mihelj 2011)<sup>3</sup>. The approach will principally be discursive, analysing above all newspaper articles and the discourse of politicians as referred to in the media. The principal source used for this part of the study is the Catalan-based newspaper *La Vanguardia*, which has a bilingual platform. It has consistently held the largest audience of the Catalan newspapers and can thus be said to represent a socially dominant discourse<sup>4</sup>. Moreover, it maintains a relatively neutral stance concerning secession.

#### 3.2. Ethnography

For the second part of the analysis, this article draws on ethnographic data from more than twenty months of fieldwork from 2011 to 2019. The principal fieldwork periods were fourteen months

<sup>3</sup> For a comprehensive study of the creation of a Catalan public sphere linking nation and media, see Giori (2014).

<sup>4</sup> According to the latest data from 2019, it is the fifth largest Spanish newspaper (or third if sports newspapers are excluded) with 559,000 daily readers. See <http://reporting.aimc.es/index.html#/main/diarios> (accessed on 6 October 2019).

between 2011–2012<sup>5</sup> and three months in 2016, with many shorter trips in between and after, such as for the Catalan independence referendum on 1 October 2017 and the 2019 *Diada*. The main part of the ethnographic data draws on 23 semi-structured interviews and months of participant observation with Catalan independence supporters in Barcelona, most importantly Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (ERC)<sup>6</sup> or the Republican Left of Catalonia party members in the Barcelona neighbourhoods of Eixample and Sant Andreu and pro-independence Catalan politicians from the coalition Junts pel Sí<sup>7</sup>. These politicians included both local councillors or *consellers de districte*, members of the Catalan parliament, senators, and regional government ministers, also known as *consellers*. For a deeper discussion of methodology, see co-author Mark F. Hau's PhD dissertation, 'Negotiating Nationalism'<sup>8</sup> (Hau 2019). When citing these interviews, we have chosen to anonymise activists who appear only with a first name. Professional politicians appear with their full name, as we consider them public figures.

### 3.3. Social Media Analysis

In order to bolster our data for the *Diada*, we undertook a social media analysis on the pages Reddit and Twitter. We hoped to find respondents online who had a looser affiliation with parties or civil society organisations than our main interviewees did. On Reddit, a social news and discussion website with over 500 million monthly visitors, we invited users in both Spanish-language and Catalan-language fora<sup>9</sup> to present their thoughts on the changing nature of the *Diada*.

Twitter is a microblogging and social networking service with over 321 million monthly active users and is consistently one of the ten most visited websites in the world. We used co-author Mark F. Hau's Twitter profile with over 2000 followers to post the following poll<sup>10</sup>: "What do you think is the primary function of the *Diada*? Commemorating history or mobilising in favour of independence?"<sup>11</sup>

In the end, we deemed the number of respondents on Twitter too small to be of substantial use as data<sup>12</sup>. On Reddit, however, we received several medium-length, public replies, and a long discussion-chain between users who disagreed broke out on one of the boards. In addition to this, we also received a number of private messages from respondents who did not want their responses to be made public. As a qualitative investigation, it was thus a relative success and constituted a very economical form of data gathering. Because all respondents were anonymous, we only have personal details if the particular user volunteered them. We found strikingly similar trends in the statements of interviewees in Mark Hau's 2011–2016 ethnographic fieldwork and from our online investigation and therefore consider the inclusion of social media analysis a useful addition to methodological triangulation with our more substantial ethnographic data and historical sources.

<sup>5</sup> This fieldwork was funded by the University of Copenhagen for Mark F. Hau's MA thesis.

<sup>6</sup> ERC, short for Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya or the Republican Left of Catalonia, is a centre-left, pro-independence party that has gone from the fringe of Catalan politics to becoming the most voted party in under ten years. Arguably, it leads the political side of the Catalan independence movement.

<sup>7</sup> Junts pel Sí was an erstwhile pro-independence coalition between centre-left ERC and centre-right PDeCat/Convergència, along with several minor parties. It lasted from 2015 to 2017.

<sup>8</sup> The PhD was fully funded by Aarhus University with additional fieldwork funding from Augustinus Fonden, Knud Højgaards Fond and Oticon Fonden.

<sup>9</sup> Known as "boards". We posted in the boards r/Spain, r/Catalunya, r/Catalonia, and r/Barcelona.

<sup>10</sup> Posts on Twitter are limited to 280 characters, which is why we aimed for a simple poll.

<sup>11</sup> In Catalan: "Quina creus que és la funció principal de la #Diada? Commemoració d'història o la mobilització d'independentisme?"

<sup>12</sup> 629 people saw the tweet, but only 46 of these interacted with it. The poll was 67% in favour of mobilising politically, and 33% in favour of commemorating history.



## 4. The History of the *Diada*

### 4.1. *The Diada and the Post-Franco Identitarian Mobilisation in Catalonia*

The “*Diada*”, which is celebrated each year on the 11th of September, was declared “the National Holiday of Catalonia” by a regional law of June 1980<sup>13</sup> several years before the discussion of a Spanish national holiday was even taken up in the mid-1980s<sup>14</sup>. This difference in time demonstrates that Spanish nationalism and national pride was in trouble during the transition to democracy due to the uncomfortable inheritance from the Francoist dictatorship and the derived difficulties related to constructing a coherent national master narrative. Catalan nationalism, on the contrary, as the former victim of Francoist repression, had no problem in promoting the dominant vision of Catalan national identity and its particular kind of national pride as contained in the celebration of the *Diada*.

The law was actually the first law that came out of the newly constituted autonomous regional parliament, which is telling for the importance given to the issue of national symbols by the regional executive. The first regional elections were celebrated on 20 March 1980, and the Government, headed by Jordi Pujol, was formed on 22 April 1980 and less than two months later the law was voted on in Parliament.

Although Catalonia is not a “nation”, according to the Spanish Constitution, because that category is reserved for Spain, and Catalonia thus belongs to the second-best but ambivalent category of “nationality”, it was never prohibited for Catalonia to use the adjective “national” and thus establish “national symbols”. Maybe one of the reasons is that the corresponding adjective derived from “nationality” does not exist, but in any case, it strengthened the ambivalence of Catalonia’s status.

The date—11 September—is the anniversary of the fall of Barcelona to the troops of Felipe V, the Bourbon contender to the Spanish throne, in the War of Succession on 11 September 1714. The defeat meant the end of the relative autonomy that the region as part of the former Kingdom of Aragón had enjoyed within the Spanish kingdom until that date, but the present-day ideas of political autonomy and regions are very different from what was experienced by the Catalan elites in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century. It was only when nation-building was booming all over Europe during the late nineteenth century that the memory of the defeat was instrumentalised and the commemoration of it began. Seemingly, the anniversary of the defeat was commemorated for the first time in 1885 in Barcelona. During the first decade, the figure of Rafael Casanova, a political and military leader of Catalonia during the siege who was hurt in the battle of 11 September 1714, became a centrepiece of the commemorative activities. During the 1888 Universal Expo in Barcelona, a statue of Casanova was erected among seven other statues of important figures of Catalan history, and in 1897, a couple of organisations dedicated a floral offering to the monument to Casanova for the first time. In 1914, in the context of the bicentenary of the defeat, the municipality of Barcelona decided to move the statue to the crossroads between Ronda de Sant Pere and Carrer d’Alí Bei, where it is assumed that Casanova was hurt. In that same year, the anniversary became an official celebration sponsored by the then recently created Mancomunidad of Catalonia. In 1939, after the Civil War, the monument was removed into a storage facility, and only in 1977, after the restoration of democracy, was the monument returned to its pre-Francoist location (Cramer 2011; 2015, pp. 75–82).

In the celebration, the 1714 defeat was interpreted not only as an end of the privileges related to the Kingdom of Aragón, but also as a moral rebirth and a new beginning. After becoming an official commemoration in 1914, the celebration was increasingly politicised and used to push political

<sup>13</sup> Law 1980/21392 of 12 June 1980 “por la que se declara fiesta nacional de Cataluña la jornada del 11 de septiembre”, *Boletín Oficial del Estado* (BOE), 239/1980, p. 22087.

<sup>14</sup> The discussion was only taken up in the mid-1980s, when the Socialist party had consolidated its power, and nevertheless, the issue was treated with delicacy through express parliamentary treatment of the law seemingly to avoid public disagreements. The law was passed in the autumn of 1987: Law 18/1987 of October 7 “que establece el Día de la Fiesta Nacional de España en el 12 de octubre”, *BOE*, 241/1987, p. 30149. For details, see Humlebæk (2004).

demands for autonomy (Michonneau 2001, pp. 165–77, 229–51). The years of World War I and immediately afterwards were troubled and unrestful times in Spain and in Catalonia in particular, and in 1923, the turmoil ended in the military dictatorship of general Miguel Primo de Rivera. He had actually been the head of the military region of Catalonia<sup>15</sup>, but despite initial promises of respecting the Catalan incipient autonomy under the Mancomunidad, his dictatorship quickly turned against manifestations of Catalan identity, and he banned the commemoration of the *Diada*. For the next more than five decades, the commemoration would alternate between prohibition during periods of dictatorship and permission during periods of democracy.

When the Second Spanish Republic put an end to the military dictatorship in 1931, the commemoration was thus permitted again, as the Republican regime from the beginning was closely linked to the political current of Catalan nationalism. More than a peaceful coexistence based on common interests, the relationship between the Republican authorities and the Catalan nationalist movements was characterised by a power balance that was constantly tested. During this period, the celebration was thus often accompanied by protests that called for increased autonomy and recognition of Catalan identity, which in turn were repressed by the government authorities. Under the Franco regime, the commemorative acts were banned once again and the monument to Casanova was removed, although its location continued to be the scene of illegal gatherings in memory of the date. The *Diada* thus continued to be celebrated unofficially in a more or less public way, and from the mid-1960s, the number of people participating in these unofficial and illegal celebrations grew noticeably.

#### 4.2. End of Francoism Activates the *Diada*

After the death of Franco, the commemoration naturally moved into the zone of the permissible again as did other manifestations of Catalan identity. In 1976, however, permission to celebrate the *Diada* only came at the last minute, and furthermore, it was not permitted to celebrate the anniversary in Barcelona, but only in Sant Boi de Llobregat, where Rafael Casanova is buried<sup>16</sup>. Despite the dislocation of the commemoration, between 50,000 and 100,000 people participated in the event. The autumn of 1976 represented uncertain times, and democracy had still not arrived. Under those circumstances, the dominant discourse tended to emphasise the relationship with Spain. An editorial of *La Vanguardia* on the *Diada* thus stated “una voluntad de ser y estar. De ser Cataluña y de estar en España”, which combines the two different variants of the verb “to be” in Spanish: both the permanent identity-related and the more temporary situational, meaning something like ‘to be Catalan and to be situated in Spain’<sup>17</sup>.

In 1977, with democracy restored through the June 15 general elections and with the monument to Casanova returned to its pre-Franco location, the *Diada* returned to Barcelona. The commemoration was converted into a huge demonstration of more than one million people defending Catalan identity and asking for a statute of autonomy (Llobera 1996, pp. 196–98). Apart from the foundational myth of loss and the related moral obligation to struggle for regaining the loss, what unified a large part of the Catalans across different political parties during these years was the demand for a statute of autonomy. The commemoration thus mixed Catalan nation-building of a cultural-ethnic character with more politically focused demands aimed at the Spanish government and political establishment. The newly democratised regime was still in flux and the Catalan political establishment unified in an attempt to consolidate the position of the Catalan demands for recognition within Spain. The following years the mass rallies continued but with reduced participation with respect to the 1977-precedent.

<sup>15</sup> The military regions were a geographically based administrative subdivision of the military forces in Spain that existed from 1705 until 2002.

<sup>16</sup> The organising committee and the government representatives negotiated until the end and only agreed on the celebration in Sant Boi on the eve of September 9. See “La «diada» del 11 de septiembre, autorizada”, *La Vanguardia*, 10-IX-1976, p. 21.

<sup>17</sup> “Hoy se celebra «el onze de setembre», voluntad de ser y de estar”, *La Vanguardia*, 11-IX-1976, p. 5.



In 1978, newspaper sources thus spoke of between 100,000 and 200,000 participants and in 1979 of some 400,000 participants<sup>18</sup>.

Since 1977, and parallel to the official demonstrations, more radical nationalist or separatist groups created their own commemoration, usually in the morning of the *Diada*, around the square Fossar de les Moreres. These manifestations had a clear anti-establishment orientation against both Catalan and Spanish political parties as well as against the Spanish Constitution and were used to congregate between 1000 and 10,000 people<sup>19</sup>. The name of the square alludes to the fact that it used to be a cemetery, and according to the nationalist legend, many of those who died defending Barcelona in September 1714 were buried there. This version of history has been cast in doubt by the historian Jordi Canal<sup>20</sup>, but as with the other *lieux de mémoire* related to the *Diada* and the self-conception of Catalan nationalist discourse, what matters is less the historical facts than the interpretation of them as well as the history of commemoration. In the late 1980s, the square was remodelled precisely to strengthen the symbolic content of the place with the then mayor, Pasqual Maragall, inaugurating a monument to “The Martyrs of 1714”.

#### 4.3. Self-Government Changes the Commemoration

Just before Christmas 1979, the new Statute of Autonomy was voted on in the Spanish Parliament, and 1980 marked a change in Catalan self-government with the inauguration of a constitutionally backed and democratically elected parliament. Self-government became reality and was institutionalised, and thus one of the central demands that for four years had united Catalans and parties across the political spectrum on September 11 was fulfilled and the commemoration began to change. The very first law, nevertheless, to be passed by the newly elected Catalan executive, as mentioned above, declared September 11, the *Diada*, the National Holiday of Catalonia in the following terms:

In times of struggle, the Catalan people used to mark a special day, September 11, as the National Day of Catalonia. A special day which, while representing the painful memories of the loss of liberties, on the eleventh of September 1714, and an attitude of struggle and active resistance to oppression, also embodied the hope of total national recuperation. Now that Catalonia is back on its path of freedom, the representatives of the People think that the Legislative House should sanction what the Nation has already unanimously decided.<sup>21</sup>

The law thus took up the cathartic argument of the defeat, combining the “loss of liberties” with “the hope of total national recuperation”. There is no contradiction in nationalist celebrations of moments of defeat, as Crameri remarks: “it serves various crucial purposes, such as explaining the decline of the nation while at the same time mobilising its members in a project to produce a better future” (Crameri 2014, p. 76). Adversity in the form of loss of autonomy and oppression was seen to have nourished an increasing awareness of regional identity and hopes for its recuperation.

Since the *Diada*’s institutionalisation in 1980, the elected President of the Generalitat, Jordi Pujol, took up the habit of the former political leader Josep Tarradellas to give a speech to the Catalan people.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, “«Onze de setembre», una diada en apoyó del Estatut”, *La Vanguardia*, 12-IX-1978, p. 1 and “Cinco años a través de un día”, *La Vanguardia*, 11-IX-1980, p. 7.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, “Manifestación de los independentistas catalanes”, *La Vanguardia*, 12-IX-1979, p. 6 and “Los independentistas celebraron dos mítines”, *La Vanguardia*, 12-IX-1980, p. 6. Besides these organised separatist manifestations, it also became customary for groups of people of separatist or radical nationalist orientation to gather around the perimeter surrounding the monument to Casanovas to be able to yell and boo at the official floral offerings of the other political parties and institutions. For a discussion of the roles of Casanovas and the alternative hero of the pro-independence movement, Josep Moragues, see (Crameri 2011; 2015, pp. 75–82).

<sup>20</sup> Canal questions that it could be the principal burial site of the defenders of Barcelona as well as noting the fact the people buried there during the siege were mainly patriots (Canal 2018).

<sup>21</sup> Law 1/1980, of June 12, “por la que se declara Fiesta Nacional de Cataluña la jornada del 11 de septiembre”, *BOE*, 239 (4-X-1980), p. 22087, available at <https://www.boe.es/eli/es-ct/1/1980/06/12/1> (accessed on 1 November 2019). The English translation adapted from <https://discovercatalonia.wordpress.com/2008/12/05/la-diada/> (accessed on 4 June 2019).

In these speeches during the 1980s and 1990s, Pujol generally interpreted the War of Succession and the defeat in 1714 through the prism of the will of the Catalans to survive as a people. Pujol often went beyond the heroism of the sacrifice to underline the pragmatic, hard-working character of the Catalans, asking rhetorically what happened on 12 September 1714. In his 1985 speech, he said:

I invite you every year to celebrate September 12, that is to say, the day after the defeat, the people of Catalonia decided to continue forward and reconstruct the country, not with arms, but through their own effort and work<sup>22</sup>.

According to Pujol, the Catalans showed a strong self-confidence and determination to maintain their language and culture in the face of adverse conditions. By implicitly counter-posing the 1714 defeat as the “blackest hour” of the Catalan culture and nation and the present, Pujol thus capably mixed an element of victimism with a mobilising emphasis on the strong civic spirit of the Catalans (Llobera 1996, pp. 199–201). If we analyse the way in which Pujol talked about Catalonia, it is clear that he did not openly contest the reservation of the term “nation” to Spain as defined by the Spanish constitution. He did not, however, use the constitutional definition of Catalonia as a “nationality”, preferring instead other terms such as “people” [*pueblo*] or “country” [*país*]<sup>23</sup>. Both terms are uncontroversial in Spain, but particularly the term “*pueblos*” refers to the vague idea of Spain being composed of a number of “peoples”, which is significantly lower than the number of self-governing regions but still imprecise.

The institutionalisation of the holiday and the satisfaction of various central Catalan demands, particularly self-government, deactivated the element of vindication that had figured prominently among the mobilising factors in the origins of the *Diada*. The satisfaction of these mobilising demands caused a relatively steep decline in the number of participants. The melancholic title of the following newspaper article on the *Diada* of 1987, on the 10th anniversary of the 1977 rally, is telling: “We were so many!”<sup>24</sup> The absence of central demands also caused a division between various manifestations as of 1982. The nostalgic memory of the unitary rallies of the late 1970s would thus remain as part of the DNA of the *Diada* as noted by the editorial of *La Vanguardia* on the *Diada* in 1984:

The memory of the large manifestation of 1977 evokes the unity that existed in Catalonia around demanding an Autonomy Statute<sup>25</sup>.

Lastly, the law of 1980 turned the *Diada* into a bank holiday, which also contributed to giving it a more festive and less vindictive character. The last manifestation where all the major political forces concurred in the same rally happened in 1981 and numbered between 70,000 and 100,000 participants. Interestingly, it happened under banners stating “We are a nation” [*Som una nació*], which seems to have been far less problematic than it would be in the future<sup>26</sup>.

From 1982 onwards, there would be no unitary manifestation, and instead there were only two or more totalling less than 50,000 participants. On the one hand, the official commemoration of the *Diada* had become more festive, a celebration with an official speech, floral offerings to Casanova, and a cocktail-party with dignitaries. On the other hand, the more political part of the *Diada* had

<sup>22</sup> Pujol, cited in “Pujol: ‘el pueblo de Cataluña debe reaccionar con calma, pero con claridad, ante el Gobierno central’”, *La Vanguardia*, 11-IX-1985, p. 16. Original: “Os invito cada año a celebrar el doce de septiembre, es decir, el día siguiente a la derrota, el pueblo catalán decidió ir adelante y reconstruir el país, no a través de las armas, sino a través del propio esfuerzo y trabajo”.

<sup>23</sup> In his 1984 and 1985 speeches, he thus used the term “nación” only once, whereas the term “pueblo” was used more than ten times on each occasion and the term “país” approximately half as many times. See “Para Jordi Pujol los grandes desafíos actuales son la autonomía la crisis y el cambio profundo”, *La Vanguardia*, 12-IX-1984, p. 17, and “Pujol: ‘el pueblo de Cataluña debe reaccionar con calma, pero con claridad, ante el Gobierno central’”, *La Vanguardia*, 11-IX-1985, p. 16.

<sup>24</sup> “¡Fuimos tantos!”, *La Vanguardia*, 11-IX-1987, p. 16.

<sup>25</sup> “Una fiesta”, *La Vanguardia*, 11-IX-1984, p. 5. Original: “El recuerdo de la gran manifestación de 1977 evoca la unidad que se produjo en Cataluña a la hora de pedir el estatuto de autonomía”.

<sup>26</sup> “«Som una nació», lema de pancartas en la manifestación de la Diada”, *La Vanguardia*, 12-IX-1981, p. 17.

been decentralised into various acts in which the political parties and organisations celebrated their own manifestations, with the participation of members and with the population as spectators. This commemorative format with only limited possibilities for popular participation lasted for the entire duration of the governments under Pujol until 2003.

The discourse of Pujol on the occasion of the *Diada* was not secessionist. Generally, he expressed happiness with the decentralised state and the possibilities of self-government that it gave to the Catalan politicians, but at the same time, he was chronically unhappy with the level of self-government and with the pressures that the Catalan autonomy was subjected to within the unstable Spanish system of decentralisation. Between the lines, the evaluation of the self-government was guided by a logic according to which the level of autonomy in Catalonia should always be progressing at a pace slightly greater than that of the rest of the regions in Spain, thus slowly increasing its asymmetrical advantages. Therefore, the speeches of Pujol very often cite tensions with the Spanish government, which to some extent is seen as a threat to the development of self-government, but very often, this discourse is coupled with a strong confidence in the capability of the Catalan executive to overcome these problems and achieve what it wants, one way or another. Generally, the term “nation” [*nación*] is avoided to describe Catalonia, and instead other, more inoffensive terms, such as “country” [*país*] or “people” [*pueblo*] are preferred<sup>27</sup>. Despite the institutional acceptance of Catalonia as an autonomous community within Spain that these speeches transmit, their actual content, however, remains centred on what can only be termed as nation-building, that is on building the community of values and identity markers that characterise the Catalan nation. The messages of his speeches to the Catalans are very often concerned with strengthening the Catalan people as a community with a distinct identity and securing self-government, as in 1987, when he centred half of the speech on the “ambition to proceed”<sup>28</sup>. This nation-building project is not coupled with an exclusive or ethnic conception of being or becoming a member; on the contrary, quite often he explicitly describes the Catalans not only as those who come from Catalonia, but also those who have moved there and made it their home. In 1987, he defined them as “the ones from home and those who have come to incorporate themselves and who are now also from home”<sup>29</sup>. Pujol thus uses the defeat commemorated in the celebration to mobilise the Catalans as suggested above by Crameri to strengthen their sense of community and identity and to warn them against becoming too content with the level of self-government achieved. However, even if the emphasis is clearly on nation-building in a rather traditional sense, the discourse of Pujol never evolves towards secessionism. He summed it up in the institutional message of the 1991 *Diada*:

Catalonia is a nation and nations have the right to self-determination. The Government of the Generalitat has always defended the right to self-determination within the framework of the Spanish Constitution and, therefore, has not made any secessionist claims.<sup>30</sup>

In sum, the category of nation is thus defended but only rarely used, and autonomy is understood as achieved within Spain. Moreover, this relationship is not questioned as such. The ambivalence regards the exact nature of this relationship and the conception of Spain, a discussion into which Pujol

<sup>27</sup> The most popular terms to describe Catalonia in the speeches of Pujol on the *Diada* during the decade of the 1980s are “country” (38% of total), “Catalonia” (36%), “people” (23%), “nation” (3%), and “patria” (1%). The only partial exception is in 1987, when even the title of the article insists on the fact that, according to Pujol, Catalonia is a nation, but even then, both “country” and “Catalonia” were used more often than “nation”. See “Pujol afirma que es la hora de avanzar y reitera que Cataluña es una nación”, *La Vanguardia*, 11-IX-1987, p. 15.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. Original: “los de casa y ( ... ) los que han venido a incorporarse a ella y que ya son también de casa”.

<sup>30</sup> “Cuarenta años de catalanismo a través de sus manifestaciones”, [www.lavanguardia.com](https://www.lavanguardia.com/politica/20170910/431129138583/catalanismo-manifestacion-diada-11s.html), 10-IX-2017, available at <https://www.lavanguardia.com/politica/20170910/431129138583/catalanismo-manifestacion-diada-11s.html> (accessed on 14 October 2019). Original: “Catalunya es una nació y las naciones tienen derecho a la autodeterminación. El Govern de la Generalitat ha planteado siempre el derecho de autodeterminación dentro del marco de la Constitución española y, por tanto, no ha hecho planteamientos de secesión.”

never enters. He concentrates on Catalonia and the above-described nation-building when trying to define how this conception might fit into an overall conception of Spain as a political community.

#### 4.4. Retreat of the Diada: Territorial Claims, Polarisation, and the 2006 Catalan Statute of Autonomy

The Pujol era gave way to the left-wing Tripartite Government headed by Pasqual Maragall, leader of the Catalan Socialist Party, the PSC, and participated in by the ERC and the left-wing coalition Initiative for Catalonia Greens<sup>31</sup>. The new government introduced a new ceremony to commemorate the *Diada*. As of 2004, the official reception was substituted by a commemorative act, which was open to the public but with no possibility of participation. The event was jointly organised by the Government of the Generalitat and the Parliament of Catalonia in the Ciutadella Park of Barcelona. Apart from a tribute to the official flag of Catalonia, *la Senyera*, and a parade of the regional police force, *los Mossos d'Esquadra*, a concert event was added in the park, which only strengthened the already festive character of the *Diada*<sup>32</sup>.

During the coming years, however, the *Diada* as a political event would slowly fade even more into the background and questions related to the Statute of Autonomy would take over centre stage. Helped by the new Spanish Socialist Prime Minister José Luís Rodríguez Zapatero's favourable attitude towards renegotiation of the Statute, a proposal was elaborated during 2004 and 2005 by Maragall's government and the proposal was finally voted on by the Catalan Parliament at the end of September 2005 with an overwhelming majority (Martínez-Herrera and Miley 2010, p. 26). The self-conception of Catalonia in the new Autonomy Statute was clearly that of a nation, as the term or the derived adjectives were used more than 100 times throughout the text. Right after the preface, the first article thus reads "Catalonia is a nation"<sup>33</sup>.

The particular conjuncture of two left-wing governments in both the Spanish and Catalan parliaments, which favoured the passing of such a far-reaching political project as the new *Statut*, did not mean, however, that it was a peaceful period. The conservative People's Party (PP) never accepted losing the elections in March 2004 after its catastrophic handling of the terrorist attacks in Madrid on March 11, and the legislature became marked by a high level of political polarisation. In fact, the PP headed by José María Aznar had been governing in Spain for four years with an absolute majority with a Spanish nationalist project of furthering pride in the Spanish nation and national symbols. In terms of territorial politics, the PP legislatures between 1996 and 2004 had been guided by an agenda of harmonising the self-government arrangements of the decentralised state through a number of statutory reforms of the "second-order" regions. This was accurately perceived in Catalonia as anti-Catalanist politics, which meant that independentist sympathies were awakening already under the second Aznar term, favouring particularly the ERC.

The *Diada* in 2005 coincided in time with the run-up in the negotiations surrounding the Statute reform that was passed in the Catalan parliament less than three weeks later, and the subject dominated all the political discussions on the *Diada*, including the official speech by Maragall on the eve of the *Diada*. Despite planning a Statute, which clearly defined Catalonia as a nation, Maragall still preferred using other terms in his speech such as "country" [*país*] or simply Catalonia very much in line with his predecessor Pujol. He also talked about a fraternal relationship between the "peoples" [*pueblos*] of Spain<sup>34</sup>.

Zapatero, on his side, favoured an imprecise idea of a "plural Spain", and the Prime Minister contradictorily maintained that Catalonia was not a nation, which in fact coincided with the conception

<sup>31</sup> The real name of the coalition was Initiative for Catalonia Greens, United and Alternative Left [Iniciativa per Catalunya Verds-Esquerra Unida i Alternativa] or ICV-EUiA.

<sup>32</sup> See <https://web.gencat.cat/es/actualitat/reportatges/diada-nacional-de-catalunya/historia/celebracions-historiques/> (accessed on 13 October 2019).

<sup>33</sup> "Propuesta de reforma del Estatuto de Autonomía de Cataluña", *Boletín Oficial de las Cortes Generales*, B210-1/2005, p. 2.

<sup>34</sup> "Maragall confía en la 'generosidad patriótica' de los líderes para aprobar el nuevo Estatut", *La Vanguardia*, 11-IX-2005, p. 20.

contained in the constitutional text, and, at the same time, admitted Catalonia to have a national identity trying to accommodate the Catalan demands partially. After negotiations upon entering the Spanish parliament in November 2005, an agreement was arrived at between the Spanish Socialist Worker's Party (PSOE) of Zapatero and the conservative nationalist party of Catalonia, CiU<sup>35</sup>, which had governed the autonomous community for 23 years under Pujol, but which, at the time, was in opposition to the Tripartite Government. The fundamental deal regarded, among other things, the definition of Catalonia in the new Statute, which meant that a number of amendments were made to the original text. In the entire main section of the Statute, the conception of Catalonia was thus changed from what was clearly a nation in the original text to the constitutionally acceptable but also more ambivalent term of "nationality". Only in the Preamble to the Statute was one phrase left that referred explicitly to the conflict between different conceptions of Catalonia. The amended Statute was passed in the Parliament in Madrid in the spring of 2006. As the Constitution prescribes, it was afterwards passed through a regional referendum in Catalonia on 18 June 2006, which meant that the Statute became legally valid<sup>36</sup>.

The PP almost immediately filed a cause against the new Statute at the Constitutional Court, arguing that it was a kind of parallel constitution for which there is no legal room in the constitutional set-up of Spain. The recourse was critical of practically the entire Statute. However, PP primarily attacked *asymmetry* as the guiding principle for the relationship between the Spanish regions. The Statute clearly represented such asymmetry, which was in line with all Catalan nationalist claims since the restoration of democracy. The recourse against the Statute from the PP demanded recognition of the principle of symmetry (of rights of all Spaniards, etc.) as a guiding line, thus trying to "regain" territory for Spain.

Despite the fact that the new Statute was successfully negotiated and promulgated, the PP-led campaign against it created a lot of negative tensions in Catalonia, and in fact, the whole reform process and its judicial aftermath ignited the still ongoing conflict on the status of Catalonia within Spain. The period after the referendum on the Statute in 2006 therefore marked a difficult conjuncture in Catalan politics in which the *Diada* of 2006 took place. The Tripartite Government had broken up as a consequence of the amended Statute, new elections were called in November, and Maragall decided to resign, which marked the celebration of the *Diada*. In a different tone but still in the same vein as Pujol, he was "building community" with the Catalans in his good bye to politics. He actually mentioned the Statute as a proof that the Catalans recognised themselves as a nation, which in a way was true although that element was eliminated before the vote by the Spanish parliament<sup>37</sup>.

At the regional elections in November 2006, the "Triparty" constellation was able to continue in power, but there was a growing sentiment of distrust and dissatisfaction in Catalonia. The reissue of the "Triparty" government was a big disappointment to the Catalan nationalists of CiU and its leader Artur Mas. CiU had "won" the elections but still did not have enough seats to prevent a left-wing majority and therefore decided to strengthen their own cause through a "refoundation" of Catalanism in the project "The Big House of Catalanism" [*La Casa Gran del Catalanisme*], which was a sort of roadmap in which he suggested that Catalonia should have "the right to decide". This was still not a pro-independence movement as such, and the focus of this right to decide continued to be

<sup>35</sup> CiU was formed in 1978 by federating the two Catalan nationalist parties: Democratic Convergence of Catalonia (Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya or CDC) of liberal ideological orientation and the Democratic Union of Catalonia (Unió Democràtica de Catalunya or UDC) of Christian Democratic orientation.

<sup>36</sup> Despite the opposition from the PP and the ERC, it was voted with a comfortable majority: 73.2% voted in favour of the new Statute against 20.6% who voted no with a participation of 48.9%. The ERC had been among the original proponents of the Statute but felt that the result fell short of its aspirations and recommended its supporters to abstain in the referendum. The party also abstained in the final vote of the Senate on the Statute. The level of abstention may thus express some form of opposition, but participation was still significantly higher than in the 2007 referendum on the reformed Andalusian Statute, where it was less than 36%. For a detailed account of the process leading to the approbation of the reformed Catalan Statute, see Martínez-Herrera and Miley (2010), and Humlebæk (2015, pp. 186–91).

<sup>37</sup> "Maragall se despidió con el deseo de que del 1-N salga una Catalunya menos victimista", *La Vanguardia*, 11-IX-2006, p. 13.



the administration of infrastructure and other public investments in Catalonia. In any case, as time passed, the scope of this “right to decide” would widen in a continuous movement towards the “right to self-determination” and a referendum on independence.

The trial of the *Estatut* at the Constitutional Court in many ways marked a watershed that was to have profound influence on the entire political landscape of Catalonia. The hitherto predominantly pragmatic nationalism of CiU would slowly but surely evolve in a more uncompromising, secessionist direction, and the balances between the ERC and CiU would begin to shift. The *Diada* as one of the most important political symbols would also be affected. When we turn to the ethnographic evidence of Mark Hau, this change is part of the memory of various interviewees. According to several of them, the shift in support for independence had come about due to the political death of federalism in Spain. The process revolving around the *Estatut* had extinguished the hopes of many Catalans supporting autonomy and turned many towards independence, as retired schoolteacher Enric outlined for Mark F. Hau in 2016:

In very few years, everything has changed, and why? Because six years ago, people would have agreed to a reform of the Constitution, changing certain things and I don't know what ... Now, they've seen that this is impossible, that there is no way, that there are no possibilities for reform, and the blindfold has been taken away from their eyes ... I would also have accepted a federal state, six years ago maybe not, but fifteen years, maybe ... But with a clearly asymmetric federalism, obviously, not just one more autonomous community, but a clear and bilateral federalism, that is, between Catalonia and Spain. (ERC member Enric 2016)

It is thus reasonable to say that the events surrounding the Catalan Statute of Autonomy marked a turning point and laid the foundation for the mass mobilisations in favour of independence that we see today. This was made visible in spectacular fashion with the massive 2012 *Diada* demonstration, organised by Catalan civil society organisation the Catalan National Assembly, ANC.

Enric traced this evolution, noting how the civil society-organised *Diada* mobilisations had pushed the political establishment to action and prompted radical changes from 2010 to 2012:

The [*Diada*] demonstration in 2010, the slogan was “We are a nation”<sup>38</sup>. That's not clearly pro-independence. I think it was a demonstration organised by Òmnium Cultural supported by the pro-independence parties, ANC didn't exist yet. But then we had the demonstration in 2012, this mass demonstrations, and the slogan was already “For a new state in Europe”. The word “independence” wasn't there, but it was clear nonetheless. Convergència wasn't pro-independence at that point, but the roars from the crowd were clear, they were for independence. (ERC member Enric 2016)

Enric did not even specify that he was talking about the *Diada*, calling it simply “the demonstration”, as do many pro-independence activists. There is little doubt about the importance of the September 11 demonstrations, and many independence supporters use this day to gauge the strength of the movement. Enric also outlined several of the key actors in the Catalan independence movement, mentioning the huge civil society organisations Òmnium Cultural and the ANC. The ANC is an organisation of more than 80,000 members, which is officially non-partisan but informally linked to ERC and centre-left pro-independence views. The ANC is generally considered the leading organiser

<sup>38</sup> Enric may be mixing the relatively uneventful 2010 *Diada* with the large protest demonstration against the verdict of the Spanish Supreme Court on the Catalan Statute of Autonomy in the same year. Here, protesters carried banners with the line “*Som una nació*”—“We are a nation”.

Interestingly, the 1981 *Diada* celebrations also used the slogan “we are a nation”, “*Som una nació*”, but this was apparently not considered either overtly political or controversial at the time and was accepted by both centralist parties such as PSOE and PSC, as well as Catalan parties such as CiU and ERC.

of the *Diada* demonstrations, and several of Hau's interviewees argued that they were the civil society organisation in Catalonia with the largest organisational resources that enables them to mobilise large quantities of people for demonstrations and rallies.

The other main pro-independence NGO in Catalonia is Òmnium Cultural, a pre-Transition Catalan cultural organisation. Following the Spanish judiciary's imprisonment of the ANC and Òmnium Cultural's leaders Jordi Sánchez and Jordi Cuixart for rebellion in 2017 under Operation Anubis, Òmnium has grown to become the largest civil society organisation in all of Spain with over 160,000 members.

## 5. From 2012 and Onwards: How Is the *Diada* Perceived Today?

Since June 2012 and during the summer, the ANC has organised the "March towards Independence" [*Marxa cap a la Independència*] with multiple manifestations all over Catalonia. The march culminated in Barcelona on the Catalan National Holiday, the *Diada*, 11 September 2012, with approximately 1.5 million people gathered under the motto "Catalonia, a new state in Europe" [*Catalunya, nou estat d'Europa*]. The immense success of the demonstration and its peaceful character shook Catalan politics thoroughly, creating a rather distinctive before and after. The power of mobilisation demonstrated by the civil society surprised the established political elites, making them consider a change in their strategy.

A few days later, a handful of representatives of the ANC were received by the president of the regional government, Artur Mas, in his offices, and during that meeting, they suggested to him that the next regional elections should have "plebiscitarian" character and that a proper referendum should be celebrated in 2014. Less than two weeks later, Mas called new elections to the Generalitat to be conducted on 25 November. The argument for calling snap elections—in fact two years early—was precisely that the *Diada* manifestation had changed the political landscape so thoroughly that his mandate could not continue unaltered. He probably also hoped to capitalise on the rise of the pro-independence movement and the demand for a referendum, because those were demands heeded by CiU since 2006. As suggested by the ANC, the elections developed into a quasi-referendum on sovereignty, forcing all the participants to take a stand on the issue.

From interviews and talks with ERC members and independence activists during Mark F. Hau's ethnographic fieldwork from 2011 and onwards, it is clear that the 2012 *Diada* demonstrations were a watershed event for the Catalan independence movement. Many of Hau's interviewees were ERC party veterans who had resigned themselves to a position of political minority, and some had even built their political identities on this position. Now, they expressed both great joy but also a certain feeling of perplexed surprise by the relatively sudden success of their movement and the explosion of pro-independence sentiment in Catalonia since 2011. ERC members were well aware that the independence movement had radically changed, both in terms of the electoral performance of their party and in terms of attendance at pro-independence rallies and demonstrations.

However, as members and politicians sheepishly admitted, they had not actually organised any of the large *Diada* demonstrations. Instead, that had been the role of the civil society group ANC. Although ERC party leaders have been quick to take advantage of the new situation in Catalonia, they were not seen as the architects of it. Rather, activists and politicians alike painted a picture of parties following in the slipstream of civil society groups, trying to keep up.

When Hau first went to Catalonia in 2011, a key informant named Mireia who was a government employee and an ERC member, had stated that ERC's role as a "small or mid-range party" was to influence CiU and to pull other, more powerful parties towards independence:

Esquerra is, in its best moments, a mid-size party. All we can do is push a bit. (ERC member Mireia 2012)

Certainly, this has changed markedly. ERC has gone from 10 to 31 seats in the Catalan *Parlament*, and in the Spanish general elections of 2019, the party became the most voted for in Catalonia for the first time since its heyday in the early 1930s.

In 2016, when members spoke about the recent surge of support for independence, they often used the increased crowds at demonstrations and rallies, such as the *Diada*, in order to explain the gradual process that has mainstreamed independence in Catalonia, highlighting the event's enormous importance in the independence movement. The fortunes of the independence movement could seemingly be read in the *Diada*. Enric, having been an ERC party member for more than 25 years, explained the shift:

Well, I've always been pro-independence, but we were around 5–6% and we were 200 people in the demonstrations . . . We were very aware that although we wouldn't call it impossible, [independence] was an almost completely unrealizable dream. (ERC member Enric 2016)

As is clear from the official figures mentioned above as well, members noted the explosion in attendance rate for the *Diada* since 2012, and similar to Enric, they noted their surprise as well. Most of the people interviewed expressed that they had always supported independence but had resigned themselves to be in a minority position, seen as they were by other parties as radicalists on the fringe of Catalan politics.

From Enric's quote, it is clear that the changes in the number of people attending the *Diada* had also affected a deeper, more internal shift in the minds of independence supporters. Before 2012, when support for independence was low in Catalonia and few people turned out at pro-independence events, Enric and his fellow activists saw their political project as an unattainable ideal. Speaking in 2016, however, all of the around 50 independence activists Hau spoke to were convinced of the feasibility of gaining independence and spoke about it as a concrete goal rather than as an "unrealizable dream". The increase in numbers for this single event has thus caused a morale boost and significant changes in the self-perception of Catalan independence supporters, which speaks to the contemporary importance of the *Diada* in Catalonia. For many, the physical manifestation of crowds during the *Diada* naturalised the idea of Catalan independence, effectively pushing for increasing political demands of autonomy. This effect makes the *Diada* celebrations an important aspect of Catalan nation-building, which we elaborate on later in the article.

The *Diada* demonstrations were continually explained in Catalonia as bottom-up expressions of civil society. Speaking with one of the founders of the ANC, Anglo-Catalan university professor Miquell Strubell, he explained that although the ANC had organised the watershed 2012 *Diada*, its success came very suddenly and also caught them by surprise:

We knew something big was happening, because there was a lack of sufficient coaches in Catalonia to drive all the people to the demonstration. Before that [2012], the *Diada* had been about Lluís Llach<sup>39</sup> concerts and small numbers, nothing massive as this. (ANC co-founder Miquell Strubell 2016)

Several independence activists argued that CiU, traditionally the largest political party in Catalonia, was influenced by the massive crowds of the 2012 *Diada* celebration and had switched from a pro-autonomy position to supporting independence. As Enric stated in his narrative above, "the roars from the crowd were clear!" In the minds of many independence activists, the mass demonstrations in 2012 had pulled politicians along, rather than the other way around. Indeed, several Catalan political parties seem to have been unable to contain the force of this new, more political and civil society-driven *Diada*. The increasing popular demands for independence effectively split CiU down the middle

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<sup>39</sup> A Catalan protest singer affectionately known in the independence movements as the "Catalan Bob Dylan". In 2015, he was elected to parliament for the pro-independence Junts pel Sí coalition.

between those in favour of and those against Catalan independence, causing the largest and most powerful Catalan party for three decades to splinter. New leader Carles Puigdemont pulled the new, revamped PDeCat towards the centre and towards staunch independence support, rather than CiU's earlier, pro-autonomy position. Puigdemont became the face of the Catalan independence movement, and after his term as President, when the 2017 referendum on independence was held, he went into self-imposed exile in Brussels to escape the Spanish judiciary and the charge of violent rebellion levelled against him. It is clear that Catalan institutionalised politics have been heavily impacted by the increasing popular demands for independence seen during the *Diada* demonstrations.

### 5.1. Multidimensional Interplay between Civil Society and Established Politics

Arguably, the 2011 and 2012 *Diada* demonstrations changed the game of Catalan politics and reshaped the whole terrain of pro-independence. Since then, we have seen a much higher degree of civil society activism, and organisations such as the ANC and Òmnium have greatly increased their political influence. Hau's interviewees in Catalonia were tellingly involved in several of these organisations. They had overlapping memberships and similar platforms and shared a common goal of independence. Núria, a veteran member of the ERC helped to start at least two non-partisan, pro-independence organisations, and many other ERC interviewees were paying members of either the ANC, Òmnium, or both.

As Kathryn Crameri (2015) has argued, although civil associations have been the principal protagonists in the contemporary Catalan independence movement, it is not only a bottom-up phenomenon but actually "multidimensional" (Crameri 2015, p. 104). For instance, there has been a great deal of human spillover or personnel transfer from civil society to organised politics. Carme Forcadell is an interesting example of a high-level politician crossing over from civil society activism. She was a founder of the linguistic NGO *Plataforma per la Llengua*, sat on the board of Òmnium, and was President of the ANC until she surprisingly went from no official political affiliation<sup>40</sup> to being Speaker of the Catalan Parliament in less than a year in 2015<sup>41</sup>. More recently, current President of Òmnium, Jordi Cuixart, campaigned for Junts per Catalunya from his jail cell in 2019 to win a seat in the Catalan Parliament along with several other civil society activists. These examples speak to the increasingly porous frontier between civil society and political parties in the Catalan pro-independence movement.

Ferran Civit, MP for Junts pel Sí, is another example of such transfer. Ferran had earlier risen through the ranks of the ANC to become a member of their steering committee. He was instrumental in organising several *Diada* demonstrations, each one more massive than the last, with over 1.5 million people attending each year. During a two-hour interview, Ferran told of wanting to change the traditional way of organising mobilisations and demonstrations in Catalonia. Instead of mobilising *against* Spanish rule, or in opposition to specific linguistic policies marginalising Catalan, he stated that he wanted to focus on empowerment, on having a winning attitude. Ferran started his activist career in the ANC, working to organise a series of unofficial plebiscites, or *consultes*, on Catalan independence from November 2009 to 2011:

The *consultes*, that was the first great empowerment of Catalonia, especially for the independence movement. People saw they had the future in their hands, that if they related to other people, articulated a shared goal together, they could all work together doing a small part here, a small part there, a small part ... and the result was a big part ( ... ) the goal was to make the people the protagonists. Everyone should feel part of the history of this process and that if something happens, it is their responsibility and, above all, to their credit. (MP Ferran Civit 2016)

<sup>40</sup> Years earlier, in 2003, Forcadell had been a city councilmember for ERC in Sabadell.

<sup>41</sup> Carme Forcadell is also jailed in pre-trial custody along with almost all of the pro-independence Catalan elite.

Ferran's explicit goal was turning the independence movement completely on its head, empowering the people and creating a bottom-up movement in opposition to established politics. Although linked to ERC, he worked primarily in civil society and spoke of the need to be present on a street level, to manifest a desire for independence physically. This process eventually led to the huge 2012 *Diada* demonstrations:

In 2012, we said, we have to make a *Diada* that is massive and transversal, to visualise what the surveys [on independence] say, that the majority was already in favour of Independence. We wanted to take it to the street, because if it's not on the street, it's just a piece of paper. It has no political weight, it is as if it were a science fiction or literature or anything else; it has to go out on the street. (MP Ferran Civit 2016)

Just as Enric read the fortunes of the Catalan independence movement through the size of the *Diada* demonstrations, Ferran heavily emphasised *the street* and physical manifestations of bodies when discussing the strength of the independence movement<sup>42</sup>. He was focused on space and on representing the increased support for independence shown in statistics through concrete mobilisations and demonstrations. The *Diada* then became both an important mobilising event and the physical representation of increasing support for independence.

Other progressive popular movements around the world heavily inspired Ferran's focus on civil society mobilisations. He referenced the 1988 national plebiscite in Chile on whether dictator Augusto Pinochet should continue in power. The successful "No" campaign won out, effectively ending the military dictatorship, and had done so by changing the connotations of the word "no" to mean something positive. The campaign song was filled with images of happy people dancing, children playing, and a big rainbow over the words "no". This, Ferran stated, was what he wanted to achieve with the *Diada* demonstrations: A wave of positivity and a desire for change in Catalonia. More practically, he mentioned being inspired by Mahatma Gandhi's Salt March and Martin Luther King's March on Washington during the civil rights movement. It was clear that Ferran was looking to empower grass-roots activism in the Catalan independence movement and to mobilise bottom-up rather than top-down. According to him, this process had been successful in that the massive *Diada* demonstrations had helped to push politicians to action and move electoral results:

[For the 2012 *Diada*] we managed to get, depending on the source, over one and a half million people on the street, in a population of seven million and a half. You see the percentage of people present . . . From that point on, we could see that the process of change had accelerated. In November of that year, there were elections, and there was already a majority in favour of holding a referendum or a consultation at that time in Parliament. Seeing how it had happened to us in 2012, for the following year in 2013 we were clearly aware that each mobilisation had to have two distinct objectives: on the one hand, it had to have a political purpose. If we organise such a mobilisation, it is not just to go out and then have nothing happen. We went out on the street in 2010, also in 2006 and 2007, and nothing happened. If we get out on the street, it is because we want something to happen later. (MP Ferran Civit 2016)

Ferran, coming as he did from civil society and the ANC organisation, saw the *Diada* demonstrations as providing the necessary bottom-up impetus and direction for institutionalised political actors to follow. He and the other organisers of the *Diada* demonstrations were acutely aware that they were not only organising a celebration of past historic events in Catalan history, but also that they had "a political purpose". They explicitly wanted to influence and guide the established political system and have arguably been successful in doing so. Another aspect important to them was the bottom-up,

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<sup>42</sup> For a more thorough discussion of pro-independence space-making see [Hau \(2016\)](#).



grassroots perspective, where demonstrators were seen as “protagonists of change”. Ferran and other civil society actors saw their goal as taking the power from politicians and putting it into the hands of the people, making regular people the agents of change rather than elites or politicians.

Speaking about the 2013 *Diada* demonstrations, Ferran noted that he wanted to push the establishment even further. Drawing inspiration from the German anti-nuclear power movement and the 1989 Baltic Way demonstrations for independence, Ferran Civit was one of the main organisers of the Via Catalana or Catalan Way, a human chain spanning the entire Catalan coast. The Via Catalana took place in 2013 on the *Diada* and mobilised over 1.5 million independence supporters through 30,000 volunteers, each organised into *trams*, or sections. By 2013, there was already a majority in favour of independence in the Catalan parliament, having been elected through the snap elections of 2012. However, many pro-independence activists felt the politicians were too hesitant and slow in setting a specific date and agreeing on a wording for a planned independence referendum, which was to take place in defiance of the Spanish government’s veto. In 2013, Ferran and his civil society team was there to push a more radical independence stance to the top of the agenda:

We said, “Listen, since we already have a parliament that wants to do this, we want a date and a question.” But the government and the parliament went, “Oh, I am afraid, I do not know.” They had to see the power of the people. (MP Ferran Civit 2016)

Ferran and the rest of the pro-independence civil society have thus spent consecutive *Diadas* organising massively attended demonstrations in order to push established politics towards a more hard-line stance on Catalan independence. As he and other organisers saw it, they were putting ordinary people at the centre of politics by showing elected politicians “the power of the people”. The huge demonstrations were spatial manifestations of pro-independence support designed on the one hand to mobilise, but even more so to showcase already existing mobilisation in order to change institutionalised Catalan politics from the outside, bottom-up. Indeed, the bottom-up or popular aspect to the Catalan independence movement was a key point for many ERC members and seen as characteristic of the movement. This was related to civil society, but some, such as ERC *senadora* Ester Capella, went even further, arguing that prior to civil organisations lay a popular movement capable of building these more institutionalised civil society networks. Even someone as involved in institutionalised, pro-independence politics as an ERC senator saw that the initiative and impetus for independence as a political project came from a popular movement, or what she termed “the citizenry”:

And here I believe that it is more bottom-up, that is, it is the society, the citizenry, which empowers its institutions to take steps towards independence. There is a very clear mandate from the citizenry.

*Q: Such as ANC and other associations?*

But it is prior to that, that is, the popular movement has the capacity to form associations<sup>43</sup> and through that create the necessary networks to make things change. (*Senadora* Ester Capella 2016)

For Ester Capella and many other ERC members, the *Diada* demonstrations and the popular movement for independence in general was related to and carried by civil society but drew upon an already existing foundation of networks and penchant for associations inherent in Catalan culture. Pro-independence activists spoke of civil society as a foundation of Catalan culture itself and considered *Diada* demonstrations expressions of this.

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<sup>43</sup> Lit., “to associate with itself”.

## 5.2. *Diada* as a Nation-Building Exercise

Beyond their value as vehicles for mobilisation and for showing Catalan political elites the strength of the popular support for independence, many ERC members also saw the *Diada* demonstrations as a concrete nation-building exercise. In this, many pro-independence activists consider the *Diada* to have a triple significance: it commemorates important historic events of the Catalan nation, it mobilises people in favour of independence and showcases the popular support for independence, and it helps to further a sense of community, strengthening Catalan identities. In Marshall McLuhan's immortal quote, "the medium is the message".

Quim Sánchez, local *conseller* for the Sant Andreu district of Barcelona spoke of how the *Diada* demonstrations, most notably those organised by Ferran Civit and his team, such as the Catalan Way, were quintessential Catalan projects that were only feasible due to the particular Catalan culture of *associacionisme*, or the culture of forming voluntary associations. Just as Ester Capella or Ferran Civit, he emphasised the already existing culture of civil society groups in Catalonia and used the local politics of his own district in northeastern Barcelona as an example.

Quim argued that the *Diada* demonstrations displayed not only a popular demand for independence but particular Catalan cultural traits related to civil society organisation:

It struck me, for example, when all these demonstrations of September 11th were organised for consecutive five years, one of the things that drew attention was right here in Sant Andreu. You can see that the people who were setting it all up were people who are accustomed to organising things, because they have been in parents' associations or in an excursionist group ( . . . ) The Catalan Way, ten coaches left from here filled with people, from Torras and Bages, and [the volunteers] had organised it all. Of course, you find yourself in a society that, precisely because it is complex and very socialised and organised, is also very efficient when it comes down to it. Probably this is part of the explanation for the huge [September 11] demonstrations, obviously firstly because people wanted to go out and be part of it, but also because they have always been very well organised. There is one thing that also draws attention: in this country we are perhaps exaggeratedly aesthetic, sometimes with the demonstrations, with the independence process ( . . . ) we want to be independent but, moreover, we want to do it the right way; truly we want to do it well. (*Conseller de districte* Quim Sánchez 2016)

When Quim spoke about the *Diada* demonstrations, he emphasised what he saw as the particular characteristics of Catalan society that had made it possible: the organisation, the voluntary experience, and the way people were socialised into civil society networks. He considered this part of a pro-independence "aesthetic", affirming that gaining independence was in itself not enough. It had to be done "in the right way", beautifully, democratically, and bottom-up. He hinted that he thought this was both a strength and a weakness, as the insistence on civil society and bottom-up political processes could potentially harm the efficacy of the movement. However, he maintained that, on the one hand, it could be done no other way, as Catalan society was characterised by these traits, and that, on the other, it *should* rightly be done in this way. There was then both a cultural and a normative, moral basis for his understanding of why the Catalan movement was focused on civil society and bottom-up mobilisation. The *Diada* mobilisations were also used to discursively draw boundaries with the rest of Spain, continually emphasising the particular strength of Catalonia's civil society.

Carlos Escuredo, also a local *conseller* for Sant Andreu, highlighted strikingly similar aspects of Catalan civil organisation, tying it to a cultural differentiation with Spain:

I believe that the movement of Esquerra [ERC] and the independence movement ( . . . ) is a very structured movement, in a society that is already very structured, because the Catalan society is already very structured. This does not happen in Spain, this type of civil society organisation does not happen in Spain. Here, everyone is part of an association, be it sports,

cultural, hiking, ecologist, etc. It's more similar to a Northern [European] democracy, where one's activism is not linked to a party, as in Spain, or to a particular movement like the 15M. On the contrary, here it is linked in a parallel line to politics, but in civil society. Activism is channelled through civil society, through for example la Plataforma per la Llengua [Catalan language organisation]. When it comes to language preservation, the gold standard here are not the political parties, it is la plataforma per la llengua, the gold standard in the defence of cultural values is not a party, it is Òmnium Cultural, you know? We organise in civil society; in Spain, that does not happen. (*Conseller de districte* Carlos Escuredo, 2016)

For most ERC members and politicians, civil society takes centre stage in their understanding of Catalan culture and politics. Institutional politics is an important tool, but the true value for ERC members is in civil society activism, which, as Carlos remarked, had been “the gold standard” in Catalan cultural issues such as language preservation. Members highlighted the already existing social networks that enable civil society activism and the penchant for collective action outside institutionalised politics in Catalonia. This was, of course, a way in which ERC members and politicians could emphasise the popular aspect of their movement and discursively align Catalan cultural traits with current political attitudes. This focus on *community* as the enabler of collective political action was also present in Ferran Civit's retelling of the outcome of the *Diada* demonstrations. In another interview, he had referred to the Catalan Way as a “symbolic sardana”, referencing a traditional Catalan communitarian circle-dance. In our talk, he dismissed this metaphor as being too essentialist and folksy, but continued to emphasise the bottom-up, collective aspect of his movement's political work:

When people come to thank you, you say, “No, no, don't thank me for anything, this is a choral work,” it is a collective *œuvre*. We may have designed the stage for the *œuvre*, for the play, but if you do not . . . , if the actors do not come on stage, the actors being the people who have participated in these demonstrations, it would not have served any purpose. We were backstage and we mounted everything and that came out very well, but if the public did not go on stage, nothing would have happened. (MP Ferran Civit 2016)

Ferran kept using performance metaphors but had now shifted from *sardanes* to choirs and stages. As he said, organisers and politicians were backstage, but the true protagonist is the “public on stage”. Because the Catalan independence movement seeks to represent a people and a nation, it makes sense that its members would emphasise this aspect of their political mobilisation, connecting organisational and moral considerations. It also means that the *Diada* is increasingly used by politicians and activists alike in the Catalan independence movement to showcase perceived differences between Catalonia and Spain and to present a specific moral vision of the Catalan community as a collective actor. This makes the *Diada* immensely powerful as not only a nation-building event, but as a symbolic and rhetorical tool used to argue in favour of Catalan independence.

### 5.3. Social Media: From Celebration to Demonstration

The online investigation we undertook for this article corroborates several of the points made by ERC members and pro-independence activists during Hau's fieldwork. Several online users mentioned significant changes to the *Diada* following the Constitutional Court's verdict on the *Estatut* in 2010 and the mass demonstrations on 11 September 2012. User “Erratic85” explained his memories of the *Diada* growing up in a small town in rural Catalonia in the 1980s and 1990s:

Before the surge of independence as a majority option in 2010, my memory of the *Diada* is that of a holiday like any other, with the difference that people hung *senyeres* on the balcony ( . . . ) my parents were leftist progressives, so there was very little or no Catalanism in the nationalist sense in our family. We hung the *senyera* from the balcony and had some lunch with other relatives. Nothing special, it was celebrated quite indifferently, I suppose like many other national days in other European countries. (Reddit user Erratic85, 2019)

This Reddit user notes a significant change in his perception of the *Diada* and one we might term “from celebration to demonstration”. Both elements were present in past and current *Diada* rallies, but the emphasis seems to have shifted significantly towards “demonstration”, following the ANC’s organisational revamp of the *Diada* from 2011 onwards. The celebratory element in the *Diada* was always somewhat discordant and paradoxical, because the *Diada* essentially commemorates the memory of a defeat. One user, “baez\_taez”, emphasised both the historical perspective and the negative or victimised element of the *Diada*: “In my village we always celebrated September 11th to remember the rout of 1714 which marks the loss of sovereignty of the Catalan people” (Reddit user baez\_taez 2019).

More recently, it would appear that some fractures have appeared in the *Diada* celebrations. Although attendance rates are still very high, they have perhaps dropped from over a million participants to 800,000 in 2019. This is still an impressive mobilisation, but several ERC members and other pro-independence activists mentioned a certain fatigue having to continue these immense mobilisations every year. They also expressed difficulties in maintaining a positive, joyful atmosphere following the police violence during the 1 October Catalan independence referendum and jailing of Catalan political leaders. The positive message that Ferran Civit and others had emphasised was more difficult to transmit following an arguable standstill in the Catalan independence movement. Reddit user Erratic85 spoke of this recent change in the tone of the *Diada*:

The 1 October and the imprisonment of the political prisoners marked a turning point. Since then, the demonstrations have become more sombre affairs, with people being dismayed and preoccupied, people who only mourn and lament what’s happening. All in all it’s sad to see how something so beautiful has died so easily. (Reddit user Erratic85, 2019)

Other pro-independence activists also noted this recent change in the affective connotations of the *Diada*. Some articulated that the *Diada* had gone from a sombre commemoration of a painful historical event to a more joyful celebration of political mobilisation. Francesc, a former Barcelona council member with the far-left PSUC<sup>44</sup> in the early 1980s and now member of Òmnium, argued that a return to a less cheerful marking of the *Diada* would be natural, as it was not an unproblematic, joyful occasion, but instead an event that carried historical baggage:

The *Diada* was never a day of celebration. It is a painful day, it marks a defeat. Even more so, it is the day Allende died<sup>45</sup>. More personally, it is the day my father died as well. We never celebrated. (Òmnium member Francesc 2019)

Several of the people interviewed, both online and in person, articulate a sensation that the independence movement is going through a crisis due to the imprisonment of Catalan political leaders and what they see as an increasingly hard line towards Catalan autonomy in the Spanish government. Activists find it difficult to articulate positive messages and maintain a more cheerful mobilisation for the *Diada* under these changing circumstances, and it may speak to yet another significant shift in the connotations of this important holiday.

## 6. Conclusions

The *Diada* is an event that has hitherto received little or no scholarly attention. In this article, we have attempted to remedy this with a combined historical and ethnographic analysis of the development of the *Diada* from its modern inception in 1976 until present day, 2019. We have shown

<sup>44</sup> Partit Socialista Unificat de Catalunya (PSUC) or Unified Socialist Party of Catalonia was a communist political party active in Catalonia between 1936 and 1997.

<sup>45</sup> Salvador Allende, democratically elected left-wing President of Chile, was killed during Augusto Pinochet’s CIA-supported military coup d’état in 1973.

how the connotations, discourses, and values surrounding the event have changed throughout its history. Although the *Diada* perhaps always held a paramount position within the Catalan independence movement, that movement was until recent times a more fringe pursuit. As the movement has grown to a much larger scope, there has been a corresponding change in how the *Diada* is celebrated, organised, and understood by participants. The surge in participation in recent years has largely been orchestrated by civil society actors such as the ANC and Òmnium Cultural, which have taken over the organisation of the *Diada* from the political parties that dominated it between 1980 and 2012. This shift from political parties to civil society has caused significant changes in how the *Diada* is perceived by its participants and by Catalan society at large, as well as in its capacity to mobilise people. Effectively, the *Diada* has gone from a politically controlled, cultural commemoration of history and the national character of the Catalans to a civil society-controlled, explicitly political mobilisation in favour of Catalan independence. This speaks to Kathryn Crameri's categorisation of the Catalan independence movement as a political co-creation that is both antagonistic and cooperative (Crameri 2015, p. 109), with institutional political actors and civil society associations working together yet competing for control.

Although the future of the *Diada* is difficult to predict, it is doubtful that the mass mobilisations in recent years can be sustained in perpetuity. The political crisis in the independence movement following the 2017 referendum has made it more difficult to sustain a positive, mobilising spirit for the *Diada*, and the lack of political gains in regards to further autonomy or indeed in any progress towards independence makes fatigue inevitable among activists. Focusing on demands with popular backing has mobilised and greatly increased participation, but there will have to be a noticeable progress towards the realisation of those demands within a reasonable period if participation is not to suffer. However, we should not be too quick in proclaiming the *Diada*'s demise as a mobilising event, as the number of participants remain well over half a million, making it one of the largest recurrent demonstrations in Europe. While the *Diada* is primarily organised by civil society, it will perhaps be able to maintain much of its vigour and cross-party mobilising force. However, should political actors such as ERC and PDeCat be successful in taming the event and using it for their own political platform, we may see the *Diada* returning to the smaller-scale, more cultural celebrations of Catalan history of the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s. In any case, the ebbs and flows of the Catalan political-territorial aspirations can be read effectively through the *Diada* celebrations, the number of people mobilised, the themes around which they were mobilised, and the ways in which mobilisation worked, which makes it an important site for the contemporary study of Catalan nationalism, the independence movement, and civil society mobilisations.

An additional important aspect of the evolution of the *Diada* celebrations is its increasingly international character, as actors from both civil society and established politics seek to gain access to foreign media through increasing use of English and inviting international guests. In this article we have focused on the *Diada* as shifting between established politics and civil society and on its recent spectacular growth in popularity within Catalonia with over a million attendees. However, of likewise importance is the attempt to attract new international allies outside Catalonia and Spain, an internationalising strategy that is also radically changing the *Diada*, and where further research would be particularly appropriate.

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