

Abstract

Regional nationalism and consequent separatist tendencies have a significant impact on the territorial (dis)integration of many countries across the globe, and Europe is no exception. These processes contributed to changes in the traditional academic understanding of states as uniform, cohesive, and continuous political entities. Nevertheless, research on territorial and societal cohesion and continuity within regional nationalist movements has so far been neglected, even though this aspect seems to be key to the successful mobilization and goal achievement of separatist movements in heterogeneous democratic societies. This thesis aims to examine the limits of uniformity and continuity, that is, a time-space differentiation in political affiliations to secessionist regional nationalism in Catalonia, including the explanation of a time-space nonstationarity in the effects of factors behind the affiliations. Catalonia is an example of region with intense cultural and inclusive-assimilationist nationalism which proliferates within an ethno-culturally heterogeneous and segregated society. In the last decade, the region has shifted from a phase of everyday, “banal” nationalism to an explicit and dynamic nationalist mobilization, which has been brought about by (and further intensified) the deterioration of Catalonia–Spain relations. In order to contextualize this thesis’ objectives into a broader theoretical discussion, I contemplate, evaluate, and propose a reconceptualization of three traditional theoretical approaches to the construction of nations and nationalism. These are the theory of territorial and societal nationalization, the theory of permeability in national membership, and the theory of nationalist mobilization. The research design of this thesis is inspired by the principles of (herein innovated) geographically nested spatial analysis and makes use of a multi-scalar combination of territorial and individual data. Proxy response variables for measuring affiliations to Catalan nationalism are the vote for Catalan nationalist parties in regional elections for territorial data and preferences for Catalonia’s independence for individual data. The data are analysed using a range of global and local statistical methods. The findings obtained from quantitative spatial analysis were subsequently confirmed by *in situ* research in northern, southern, and metropolitan Catalonia during periods of both latent and mobilized nationalist performance. Even though a single-case study, this thesis uses multi-dimensional comparison to examine differences in affiliations to Catalan nationalism and factors behind them between three areas within Catalonia, between phases of banal and mobilized nationalism, and between five scales of data aggregation (individuals, polling stations, municipalities, comarcas, and provinces). Results indicate that support for Catalan

nationalism and independence has become fragmented and polarized in space during the unfolding of nationalist mobilization. This is a result of the ethnicization of affiliations to nationalism, which increasingly took place in this period. Present evidence disapproved all assumptions being postulated by the three conceptualizations of the nationalization thesis, including a newly proposed reconceptualization of (non)stationarity. This results from the failure of Catalan nationalism to integrate the Castilian minority group in Catalonia into the construct of Catalan nation as well as from the effects of place-specific contextual factors in northern and southern parts of the region. Unlike the nationalization thesis, the postulates of the nationalist mobilization model were corroborated. Higher ethnicization of nationalist affiliations indeed occurred during the periods of explicit secessionist demands. This analysis corroborated the long-term assumption that the ideology and the movement behind Catalan nationalism correspond to the premises of cultural nationalism. However, the integrative and assimilationist potentials of cultural nationalism have faded away in favour of ethno-cultural, exclusionary concept of nation since the unfolding of nationalist mobilization. This important finding as well as all the present evidence have certain limits, which result from the nonstationarity of the phenomena's occurrence and interaction across space and time. Within the Catalonia's territory, three supra-local territorial blocs, termed spatial modes, have been increasingly distinguishable since 2012. These areas are mutually distinct in terms of the intensity of support for Catalan nationalism, the strength of support polarization, the explanatory power of the ethno-cultural cleavage, the effect of nationalist mobilization, and the importance of local context. Abandoning the research approach of methodological nationalism enabled an in-depth explorative analysis of internal differences and revealed challenging theoretical implications. Despite this, the findings should not be considered universally valid until an extensive comparison of multiple cases of secessionist regional nationalisms in Europe and in the global scale is conducted.

Keywords

Catalonia, context, elections, ethnicization, independence, nationalist mobilization, nationalization thesis, polarization, regional nationalism, separatism, social cleavages, Spain, spatial nonstationarity, territorial fragmentation, time-space differentiation