Marian Burchardt

Recalling modernity: How nationalist memories shape religious diversity in Quebec and Catalonia*

Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity

Max-Planck-Institut zur Erforschung multireligiöser und multiethnischer Gesellschaften

mpimmg

Marian Burchardt
Recalling modernity: How nationalist memories shape religious diversity in Quebec and Catalonia

Download: **www.mmg.mpg.de/workingpapers**

Abstract

In this article, I explore how nations without states, or "stateless nations" respond to new forms of religious diversity. Drawing on the cases of Quebec and Catalonia, I do so by tracing the historical emergence of the cultural narratives that are mobilized to support institutional responses to diversity and the way they bear on contemporary controversies. The article builds on recent research and theorizations of religious diversity and secularism, which it expands and specifies by spelling out how pre-existing cultural anxieties stemming from fears over national survival are stored in collective memories and, if successfully mobilized, feed into responses to migration-driven religious diversification. I show that while Quebec and Catalonia were in many ways similarly positioned before the onset of powerful modernization processes and the resurgence of nationalism from the 1960s onwards, their responses to religious diversity differ dramatically.

Author

MARIAN BURCHARDT is research fellow at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity. His research interests include religious diversity, secularism, transnational migration and globalization. His articles on religious dynamics in Europe and Africa appeared in *Sociology of Religion, Comparative Sociology, International Sociology*, and the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*.

Contents

Introduction

In this article, I explore how nations without states, or "stateless nations" respond to new forms of religious diversity. Drawing on the cases of Quebec and Catalonia, I do so by tracing the historical emergence of the cultural narratives that are mobilized to support institutional responses to diversity and the way they bear on contemporary controversies. Forming part of broader situations of super-diversity (Vertovec 2007), new forms of religious diversity are chiefly the result of massive waves of transnational migration, which have dramatically changed the demographic makeup and religious composition of national populations.[1] At the same time, religious diversity has engendered numerous institutional challenges for nation-states: inherited church-state regimes need to be revisited and reformed so as to enable the incorporation of religious minorities into institutional fabrics. Efforts to do so, however, have often engendered institutional or popular resistance, especially when they are seen to undermine the position of dominant religious traditions, dominant national cultures or dominant notions of national identity (Zubrzycki 2012). Adding to this complexity, these contestations take place in the context of the international Human Rights regime that draws national policy and lawmaking into the complex circuits of transnational legal mobilization and jurisprudence (Koenig 2015).

Stateless nations have one major factor in common: They have no sovereign power internally as well as externally. They are thus dependent on the larger nation-states of which they are part and have to ensure the conformity of their policymaking with national regulations. As a consequence, they lack the wherewithal to fully control the symbolic reproduction of the national community as they see fit. Guibernau (1999: 1) defined them as "cultural communities sharing a common past, attached to a clearly

---

1 Another important register of religious diversity are the new religious movements that emerge through religious innovation or secession from existing religious traditions (Beckford 2003). This paper, though, is limited to migration-driven religious diversity.

demarcated territory, and wishing to decide upon their political future which lack a state of their own." For long historical periods, this structural situation has given rise to powerful, widespread and deeply rooted sentiments of *cultural anxiety*. Grillo (2003: 158) suggested that "Neither cultural essentialism nor cultural anxiety are new (19th-century Romanticism and 20th-century anti-colonialism *inter alia* articulated the latter), but they now seem ubiquitous, and take many guises, permeating much contemporary political and media rhetoric in Europe among both 'majority' and 'minority' populations, and across political and religious spectra."

In stateless nations, however, the question of who is majority and who is minority is constitutively ambiguous: while – in broad cultural and linguistic terms – Catalans and Quebeckers are majorities within their region or province, which territorialize nationhood and belonging, they are minorities with respect to their surrounding nation-states (Spain and Canada). In stateless nations, concerns over migration-driven religious diversity are therefore inextricably bound up with "the national question", however, they are framed within different political factions. And if *cultural anxiety*, as Grillo has argued, has animated public sentiment and shaped political practice in independent Western nation-states, it seems particularly pertinent to ask what kinds of expressions and degrees it acquires in *dependent* nations in similar situations of religious diversification. The very fact that religious diversification does produce cultural anxiety in many Western societies suggests that the cultural significance of religion for concepts of nationhood is greater than secularization theories conceded, and that both evolve in tandem (see also Hervieu-Leger 1993; Bruce 2002).

Simultaneously, however, institutional regulations, political practice and popular discourses around religious diversity widely draw on the language of secularism and have revitalized legal and political debate on the "secular/religious divide" (Beyer 2013). I will therefore also explore the ways in which the notion of secularity is interpreted and mobilized in public contestations over religious diversity, and how it nourishes and underwrites cultural narratives of nationhood.

My basic argument is as follows: While Quebec and Catalonia were in many ways similarly positioned before the onset of powerful modernization processes and the resurgence of nationalism from the 1960s onwards, their responses to religious diversity differ dramatically. In Catalonia, religious diversity is actively promoted by government agencies of all sort, viewed as relatively unproblematic by wide sections of the populace and deeply integrated into local political practice (Griera 2012); and this to the extent that it has itself turned into a premise of the governance of migrant populations, who are more and more addressed as members of religious commu-

nities. The discourse on secularism is only prominent in political life amongst the Republican and Socialist left who promote an understanding of secularism as respect for religious diversity, e.g. "secularity for the sake of accommodating religious difference" (Wohlrab-Sahr and Burchardt 2012; Burchardt 2016). The main reason behind this is that government bureaucracies make active efforts to incorporate religious migrant communities into the nationalist project, a practice that is underwritten by the main narrative of Catalonia as a cosmopolitan immigrant society and enabled by the nearly complete absence of Catholic references in nationalist discourse. In Quebec, by contrast, religious diversity is less promoted and more privatized in that governmental authorities do not treat religious diversity in any particular way. In fact, while religious expressions are protected by both the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Quebec Charter of Rights and Freedoms, religious diversity is widely viewed as something to be contained. The main reason for this is that it is seen as a threat to the nationalist project, because the underlying concept of nationhood is much more indebted to ideologies of liberation from religious oppression and modernist aspirations to "overcoming religion". In the following section, I will situate my approach within the sociological literature in order to develop my theoretical hypotheses.

Religious Diversity and Nationalism in Sociological Research

Within broader concerns over cultural diversity, religious diversity has acquired a new visibility and is now a major field of sociological study. Sociologists have explored how religious diversity plays out as a practice of social classification in situated encounters between ordinary people in everyday life (Stringer 2013), how different institutional spheres – both public and private – are religiously pluralized and make space to accommodate minorities' practices, and how religious diversity challenges images of culturally homogenous nations that underwrite nationalist visions (Zubrzycki 2009).[2] In some Western societies, this chiefly concerns Islam, while in others the scope of diversity is much broader. There are also comparative studies on sub-state nationalisms (Jeram 2014), but scholars have rarely explored the relationship between religious diversity and these nationalisms. This paper fills this lacuna.

---

2 On Spain and Catalonia see Perez-Agote (2010), Griera (2015) and Astor (2012); on Quebec see Beaman (2014), Coté, (1999) and Meintel and Mossiere (2013).

Scholars have proposed several, partially competing explanations for the ways migration-driven religious diversity is dealt with. First, there is evidence that inherited (religious or secular) conceptions of nationhood and institutional church-state regimes provide the primary framework for addressing religious diversity. Fetzer and Soper (2005) as well as Koenig (2005) have theorized national path-dependencies regarding the incorporation of Islam in Western Europe, while Casanova (2007) argued that there is a European "secularist self-understanding" that renders religious diversification problematic. Scholars participating in these debates also criticized the assumption of neat "national models" of church/state and integration and emphasized shifts over time (Bader 2007), messiness (Bowen 2007), bottom-up processes (Astor 2014) as well as the institutional particularities of regulations of religion in different domains (Becci 2013; Martínez-Ariño et al. 2015). In some way, therefore, the new literature on religious diversity in public institutions complements but also challenges research on the nation-state level by exploring how the functional and organizational logics of institutional spheres have consequences for minority practices.

While these explanations are also valid and matter for stateless nations, they disregard aspects that are central and specific to them. Chiefly, I pursue two interrelated hypotheses: first, I argue that the relationship and positioning towards the larger nation-state of which stateless nations are part inflects institutional responses (to the extend they fall within the legal purview of the sub-state nation); and second, that the cultural narratives that legitimate regimes of religious diversity reflect the particular historical trajectories of stateless nations and the dominant views on the dominating nation-state's influence on them. In the case of Quebec, this cultural narrative is built around the myth of "survival" and underdevelopment in a colonial situation, hard-earned liberation and modernity, as well being forced into the straightjacket of multiculturalism by Canada that degrades Quebec's status as a founding nation and undermines national cohesion. In Catalonia, by contrast, the narrative involves the notion of cultural and economic superiority and being forced into a conservative Catholic straightjacket culture through Spanish domination.

Importantly, some of the particularities of stateless nations I describe make them akin to scenarios of "cultural defense". Initially developed by David Martin (1978) and later taken up by Steve Bruce (2002), the notion of cultural defense suggests that religion is particularly vital in societies, which have historically been dominated by other nation-states or empires. Martin (1978) argued that religion is particularly likely to serve as a source and carrier of national identity in dominated nations if the majority religion of imperial powers is a different one. This has been explored with

regard to Ireland (Bruce 2002), Poland (Zubrzicky 2012), and Greece (Halikiopulou 2012). In particular, Bruce argued that where "culture, identity, and sense of worth are challenged by a source promoting either an alien religion or rampant secularism and that source is negatively valued secularization will be inhibited" (Bruce 2002: 30-31). Churches may fashion themselves as the main forces of protest against attempts "to impose alien cultural values and identities upon a reluctant populace" (ibid: 16). In other words, "An indissoluble union of Church and nation arises, in those situations where the Church has been the sole available vehicle of nationality against foreign domination" (Martin 1978: 107), and religion is "reinforced by the heightened self-consciousness of a threatened of dominated nation" (Martin 2005: 61). While clearly relevant to the case of stateless nations, this research was mainly oriented towards understanding (the lack of) secularization. My main interest here, by contrast, is on religious diversity. Significantly, the cases of Quebec and Catalonia differ in that there are differences between the majority religion in Quebec and Canada (traditionally Catholic Quebec versus Protestant Canada), but this is not the case in Catalonia (which is traditionally Catholic just as Spain). I will discuss the consequences of this later on.

Methodology

Methodologically, this study is conceived as a most similar case comparison. I take key structural similarities between both cases (Quebec and Catalonia), especially the fact of being stateless nations, as a starting point to ask what kinds of cultural narratives are mobilized in responses to religious diversity, how they are linked to nationalism and how we can explain observable differences.

Each case is analyzed by drawing on a theory-driven rereading of historical material as well as a variegated body of data collected during a total of 14 months of field research in both regions. Chiefly, I draw on three kinds of data: I) written documents including policy and legal documents, publications by religious, secularist or human rights organizations as well as manifestos published in the context of popular campaigns; II) qualitative, open-ended and problem-centered interviews (Witzel and Reiter 2012) with active participants of mobilizations around diversity and secularism, including religious leaders, secularists, politicians, administrators and legal experts working for governments and human rights commissions (60 interviews in

Quebec and around 70 interviews in Catalonia); and III) participant observations in key events surrounding controversies over religious diversity such as political meetings and public demonstrations. I coded and interpreted the material using the grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss 2009).

Transnational Migration, Diversity and Institutional Responses

The comparison between Quebec and Catalonia is a striking one: both nations were largely homogeneous religiously, namely Catholic, over long historical periods. However, the significance of Catholicism changed very rapidly in the wake of modernization processes ensuing from the end of (semi-)dictatorial regimes (Duplessis in Quebec, Franco in Spain) that were, or were viewed as being associated with foreign powers. In both regions, language (French, Catalan) is used as the primary medium for the reproduction of the imagined national community, whose strengthening is therefore a core component of nationalist politics and the subject of collective anxieties over the gradual disappearance of the national community. The integration of immigrants has therefore always been an important concern. While, since the early 20th century, Quebec has received immigrants from Europe and Catalonia from other Spanish regions, this immigration did not lead to major concerns over religious diversity. Only the most recent generations of immigrants strongly diversified religious demographics with the arrival of Orthodox and Pentecostal Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Sikhs and Hindus in both settings.

While in both cases (the Spanish and the Canadian), nation-state level regulations set the broader frame, both regions also developed their own repertoire of institutional responses. Starting from the mid-1990s onwards, Catalonia developed an active approach towards the governance of religious diversity that is widely considered to be, not only highly innovative, but also pioneering in the Spanish context. In 2000, the regional government formed the Secretariat for Religious Affairs. Initially, a conservative nationalist regional government created this agency in order to develop direct relationships between Catalonia and the Vatican. Soon after, however, it was charged with promoting religious diversity and monitoring issues related to religion both at the regional level and in concert with municipal authorities – again in the service of the national project. Moreover, the agency has the task to enhance the autonomous regulatory capacities of the region in religious affairs and to improve the Catalan language competences of religious leaders, which is also referred to as

"Catalanization". As Griera (2015) observed, this ties in with the fact that ever since its inception, and across electoral changes, the parties in charge of the agency have almost always belonged to the nationalist camp.

This government agency is, despite recent budget cuts due to Spain's ongoing economic crisis, by now thoroughly established and unique in the Spanish context. While comprising only a few employees, it exerts influence throughout the province by offering regular educational activities for civil servants and by working on issues of civil participation, migration and integration in Catalan municipalities. With the aim of putting the standing of religious minorities on par with that of the Catholic Church, one of the first steps on the diversity agenda was the signing of agreements with religious minorities in 2005 that officially recognized their presence and positive contribution to Catalan society; made them eligible for small funds to promote religious activities; and regulated the accommodation of minority practices in the fields of pastoral care and places of worship in hospitals, prisons, schools and cemeteries.

Importantly, in 2007, the Catalan government passed a new law that regulates centers of worship, provides guidelines for municipal authorities and obliges them to facilitate the process of finding a suitable site for religious communities in need of a communal space. Being the only major legal project involving issues of religion in Spain, since the signing of the agreements between the Jewish, Protestant and Muslim communities and the Spanish State in 1992, this initiative underlines the activist approach taken by Catalan governments during the last 20 years.[3] Parallel to that, the new Statute of Autonomy that regulates the relationship between the Spanish state and the region of Catalonia as well devolved competences over issues of religion to the Catalan government. All of these initiatives harken back to earlier forms efforts to promote religious diversity, especially the General Office of Cult Issues that existed during the Republican government in Barcelona in civil war times (Griera 2015).

However, the incorporation of religious newcomers has not been without problems. During the 2000s, Catalonia experienced a wave of protests against mosque constructions, and since 2010, several municipalities launched efforts to ban the Islamic full-face veil. Significantly, mosque protests were less driven by anti-Muslim sentiments than by fear of "territorial stigma", presumably engendered by rising numbers of migrants (Astor 2012), while anti-burka initiatives were widely seen not

---

3 Importantly, there have been protracted debates about religion and education and recurrent changes in the Education Law.

as a curtailing religious freedom but as protecting majority versions of Catalan Islam (Burchardt et al. 2015).

In Quebec, by contrast, while the provincial government has far-reaching competence over immigration policies, there is no comparable governmental line of action towards religious diversity although immigration of non-Western minorities predates that of Catalonia, and the conflicts surrounding religious minority practices have a much higher profile. The overall focus is on linguistic criteria, i.e. preference is given to migrants from Francophone countries. Within secularist discourse, this policy is often criticized as favoring migrants from Muslim majority countries whose devout, or at least above-average, religiosity threatens the hard-won liberation.

This is not to say that diversity is publicly ignored: the city government of Montreal pursues internationally recognized activities around cultural diversity and fares excellently on the Diversity Index of Intercultural Cities of the European Council. But these activities are *not* linked to religion. There are governmental and bureaucratic practices and regulations related to religion but they are not carried out under the banner of diversity but *laïcité*. A similar case can be made for practices flowing from the notion of "reasonable accommodation" that acquired much attention during the last decade. Reasonable accommodation involves the legal obligation of employers and organizations to accommodate people who are disadvantaged by providing exceptions to general rules if they lead to unjust treatment.[4] Cases are being assessed and adjudicated by the Commission of Human Rights and Youth through practices of tripartite civil arbitration. However, while employees of the Commission told me in interviews that only a small number of cases concern religion, practices of reasonable accommodation are popularly associated with it.

These associations can be traced to the so-called "accommodation crisis" during which several religion-related cases turned into media spectacles and the well-known *Bouchard-Taylor Commission* was subsequently charged with investigating them. Popular anxieties over immigrant religion were also taken up in several law projects such as Law 91that was meant to regulate full-face coverings and, more importantly, the *Charter of Quebec Values* initiated by the independentist *Parti Quebecois* in September 2013. Part of the *Charter* was the banning of all ostentatious religious symbols for public sector employees and the elevation of *laïcité* as a principle of the Quebec Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

---

4 On reasonable accommodation see Beaman (2014).

Governmental Poster advertising the Charter of Quebec Values.

The debates around the *Charter* were paralleled by mass mobilizations of (mostly secularist, nationalist and feminist) supporters, and (multiculturalist and "pluralist") opponents. Interestingly, in these mobilizations both camps made claims on *laïcité*,

Public demonstration in Montreal in favor of the Charter of Values; photograph taken by author in 2013.

the first mainly in the name of national unity and progress, the latter in the name of individual freedom. Demonstrations organized by Charter supporters had a decidedly nationalist atmosphere that was visible in the huge number of Quebec flags.

The controversies were therefore less about *laïcité* vs. religion than about different *interpretations* of *laïcité*. While none of these proposals actually became law, the controversies surrounding them reveal much about important cultural anxieties. In particular, I argue that the popular support the notion of *laïcité* enjoys is an outcome of dominant understandings of Quebec's entry into modernity as *liberation*, which are stored in collective memories. But what are the historical sources of these understandings?

Public demonstration in Montreal against the Charter of Values; photograph taken by author in 2013.

Cultural Survival: History and Collective Memories

Cultural anxieties in stateless nations are certainly not unfounded. In Catalonia and Quebec, they are nurtured by historical experiences of the, sometimes brutal, suppression of specific cultural traits and the (partial) lack of political authority to institute measures that safeguard their cultural identity. Quebec has lived under the tutelage of British imperialism and colonialism since the conquest in 1753, and later became part of independent Canada. During much of this history, French-Canadians were – in economic, political and cultural terms – second-class citizens.[5] Economic assets as well as political power were concentrated in the hands of the British. Importantly, from the beginning of French colonialism in North America there has been an extremely close relationship between the Catholic Church and the state. These ties were reinforced after the conquest: While most officials of the French state and the commercial middle classes left the colony to return to France the clergy stayed and guided them into and through their long existence in British bondage (Guindon 1967: 30). Throughout the 19th century, the clergy was also highly loyal to the Crown because they had observed the fate of the Catholic Church in France under and following the Revolution in 1789. Deployed by British colonialism as an instrument of indirect rule, the Catholic Church was the dominant social institution in rural Quebec and also sided with the British rulers in political uprisings during 1830s called the "Patriots' Rebellion". While ending as failures, these rebellions were inspired by Republican and partially anticlerical ideas that are still mobilized as central narrative resources in contemporary secularist discourse.

In the early 20th century, the processes of urbanization, industrialization and proletarization of rural French-Canadians were paralleled by renewed attempts to liberalize French-Canadian society. However, eventually the Church retained its powerful position well into the 1960s. Economic depression in the late 1920s led to the semiauthoritarian *Union Nationale* regime of Maurice Duplessis, which repressed civil and political liberties and defended Catholic traditionalism, both in the name of anti-communism.

It was in this context that Quebec nationalism became the main source and political instrument of emancipation and liberation. The death of Duplessis in 1959 then ushered in a process of dramatic modernization, which was later described as the

---

5 On the intricate history of the terminology linked to "French-Canadian" and "Quebec" see Zubyzycki (2013). I use "French-Canadian" for the era until roughly 1960, and "Quebec" for the followed periods.

"Quiet Revolution", a notion that occupies a dominant position in Quebec's collective memory today and that has itself turned into a powerful myth (Bouchard 2013).

With the "Quiet Revolution" traditionalist Catholic nationalism was replaced by leftist, modern secular nationalism that became the seedbed of the independence movement. It signaled the end of the *Ancien Régime*[6]; the massive acceleration of urbanization and industrialization; the building of a modern bureaucratic welfare state; far-reaching reforms in education, healthcare, and social welfare; and the nationalization and industrial development of hydro-electricity, which became the infrastructural nation-building project *par excellence*. Significantly, state-formation implied the diminishing influence of the church and clergy who hitherto controlled healthcare and from whose ranks most teachers had been recruited (Guindon 1967). The Quebec state was transformed into a developmental state, which took on the great vision of transforming Quebec into a modern industrial and consumer society and catapulting Quebec society into political and cultural modernity. Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, the Duplessis regime was interpreted as the *grande noirceur*, i.e. as a historical period defined by social and political repression, foreign control of the economy, continuing state-of-siege mentality, and anti-communism. Intensifying industrialization and trade unionist backlash against Duplessis' anti-communism measures, especially the infamous 1937 *Padlock Law*, also explain the left turn of nationalist mobilizations during the 1960s. Parts of Quebec's left strongly identified with other modernist nationalist movements that led anticolonial struggles for independence. This identification was made possible through the construction of the Quebeckers as an essentially colonized, if not enslaved people, as is powerfully illustrated in Pierre Valliere's controversial pamphlet *White Niggers of North America* published in 1968.

The discursive imbrications of colonialism and the need for liberation with notions of Catholic backwardness were already addressed in the manifesto *Refus Global (Total Refusal)*, published August 9 1948, by the vanguard art collective *Les Automatistes* under the leadership of painter Paul-Emile Borduas. The text is shot through with accusations against the Catholic Church and Catholic culture as being chiefly responsible for Quebeckers' repression. In the context of a broad interpretation of Quebec history it states:

---

6 Guindon (1967) argued that the idea of Quebec having had an ancient regime is itself an invention.

"We are a small and humble people clutching the skirts of priests who've become sole guardians of faith, knowledge, truth and our national heritage; and we have been shielded from the perilous evolution of thought going on all around us, as our well-intentioned but misguided educators distorted the great facts of history whenever they found it impractical to keep us totally ignorant" (Borduas 2009 [1948]: 3).

Even though the group had contacts with the Christian left and communists in Montreal and participated in political and cultural discourses, its main aims were artistic and intellectual innovation. In the meantime, however, the *automatistes* have increasingly been seen as actors of the Quiet Revolution, and in current public debates around secularism and religion in the public sphere, *Refus Global* is referenced as the main testimony of cultural liberation. Within Quebec collective memory, the manifesto was transmuted from an artistic into a secularist document and became another central narrative resource in contemporary secularist discourse.

Historically, all of these developments fostered the understandings of the *articulation* of laicization and national independence as liberation and set Quebec on a pathway of secular progressivism. It is this emphatic notion of secular modernity that Quebeckers draw on when demanding the privatization of religion, a secular public sphere and that limits expressions of religious diversity.

Nationalism without Religion?

Similarly, Catalonia was integrated into the Spanish Bourbon Monarchy in the context of regional power struggles. With the end of the Spanish War of Succession in 1714, it fell under the reign of Spain, as a consequence of which Catalan was abolished as an official language. The war ended with Barcelona being under siege between March 1713 and September 11, 1714. The violence linked to the siege is stored in Catalan collective memory as September 11 became the national holiday. During the second half of the 19th century, however, Catalonia experienced a strong wave of industrialization. In the wake of the general boosting of Catalan self-esteem and inspired by the broader romantic nationalist revival occurring in Europe during that period, Catalan nationalism was revamped and transformed into a modern intellectual project that later became a political project. Works like Valentí Almirall i Llozer's *Lo Catalanisme*, Victor Balaguer's *Historia de Cataluña y de la Corona de Aragón* and Prat de la Riba's *La nacionalitat catalana* became powerful testaments of

this new nationalism used history as evidence for Catalonia's nationalist ambitions. After Franco's victory in the Civil War, however, Catalan cultural identity was again massively oppressed (Guiberneau 2004).

Precisely 300 years after the War of Succession, a huge illuminated LED clock installed above the *Plaça del Ajuntament* in the center of Barcelona's famous gothic quarter, counted the days, minutes and seconds that remained until Catalans were called to manifest their opinion regarding the political independence of the Catalan nation on 9 November 2014. Overshadowed by aggressive political rhetoric and increasing animosities between the government of Catalonia and Spain's central government in Madrid, nationalist campaigns organized in the run-up to the referendum turned into a new milestone in the ongoing controversy about the relationship between Catalonia and Spain. Campaigns drew on a wide array of tactics of identity politics in order to demonstrate what was distinctly Catalan: the Catalan language; the commitment to Europe, democracy, and human rights; a unique history as a Mediterranean nation; a set of particular folkloric practices (*la sardana, els castells, els gegants*); and their progressive values, openness to the world and cosmopolitan orientation. Already during Franco's rule this image was opposed to Spain that was seen as Catholic, centralist, authoritarian, and traditional. Whereas around ten years ago Guibernau (2004: 4) found this well-defined contrast to have weakened, current nationalist mobilizations have revitalized at least parts of it.

Yet, within this peculiar mix of ethno-cultural parochialisms and political-philosophical universalisms that ideologically underwrote mobilizations, religion did not figure prominently: neither pro-independence politicians nor grassroots campaigners mobilized markers of religious identity. The Catalan nation to be voted into political sovereignty seemed to have neither a religious identity of its own, nor a majority that would cast its history in the idiom of shared faith, or make ceremonial reference to religion as a past identity from which the modern universalist nation had emerged.

This absence of religious politics is all the more surprising given the bloody history of conflicts related to religion. Catalonia has witnessed the most violent clerical-anticlerical confrontations in modern European history (Delgado 2012). Following increasing anticlerical mobilizations during the second half of the 19th century, they first culminated in the *setmana tràgica* ("tragic week") in 1909. Protesting against a conscription campaign of the Spanish army, Barcelona's working classes directed their anger not only against the military and industrialists, but also against the Catholic Church whom they saw as their allies. As a part of their protest, they burnt convents and profaned sepulchers. In the context of the Spanish Civil War, thirty percent

of all Catholic priests in Catalonia were killed. Numerous churches and monasteries were torched and torn to the ground, and in many cities or city quarters the material patrimony of Catholicism was literally eradicated.

While it was often noted how critical engagements with Spain's violent past and ensuing collective amnesia was the price paid for the peaceful transition to democracy and national reconciliation, the causes and consequences of the lack of collective memories for Catholicism on the one hand, and religious diversity on the other, have not yet been addressed. One major reason for this was the ambivalent role of clergy as both perpetrators and victims of violence during the Civil War, leading to far-reaching public silence about the role of the Catholic Church during the subsequent Franco dictatorship. While this is true for both Spain and Catalonia, there is distinct dynamic around collective amnesia among the Catalan Catholic-oriented bourgeoisie. During the Civil War, the conservative Catalan bourgeoisie were attacked from two sides: as conservative Catholics by Republican forces, and as Catalans by Spanish nationalists. In the absence of unquestionably positive points of reference in history and in the absence of memories to be mobilized on the behalf of projects of secularism, Catalans later oriented themselves towards international society and the models of diversity they found there.[7] In my interviews, both Catholic leaders and policy-makers confirmed this finding, adding that the lack of collective memory on Catholicism is part of the explanation of its absence in Catalan nationalism. As I show below, this contrasts strongly with Quebec's story.

Equally important is the fact that Catalan anticlericalism was already decisively weakened before the transition to democracy (Dowling 2013). Three factors were crucial for this: first, with the Second Vatican Council the Catholic Church slowly acquired a more liberal image, even though the Spanish Church was the greatest opponent of the reform process. Second, from the late 1940s onwards, the Catholic Church took on an important interim role as a new carrier of Catalan national identity and Catalanism, chiefly by serving as a catalyst for the renewal of the Catalan language and publication and printing in Catalan. This contributed to soften leftist and working class opposition to Catholicism and helped to create new social and political alliances of opposition to the Franco regime. Thirdly, while during the 1930 and 1940s, the Church was already acutely aware of massive unchurching tendencies, especially amongst urban workers, and had responded through concerted evangelization campaigns, secularization further accelerated during the 1960s.

---

7   Astor (2013) makes this argument for Spain but I suggest it also holds for Catalonia.

While these developments diminished the importance of Catholicism for Catalan nationalism as a symbolic resource for constructing the boundaries of the national community, Catholicism continued to play a role by supplying symbols of resistance against Spain. Undoubtedly, the most important symbol is the monastery Santa Maria de Montserrat that always served as a center of Catalan-language scholarship throughout the last centuries and was home to numerous nationalist Catholic leaders. Within the collective catalogue of national memory sites, Montserrat therefore scores superbly although it represents more Catholic nationalism than the Catholic nation. In an interview, a former head of the Secretariat for Religious Affairs from the party of the Republican Left told me: "After Franco's national Catholicism, the Catholic Church always contributed to the maintenance of the Catalan language, and Montserrat with all its Catalan publications and the Catalan bishops made a great contribution to Catalan culture."[8] Importantly, she emphasized these positive contributions in order to clarify the continued importance of Catholicism within a framework of religious diversity.

In spite of this, the historical developments described above set Catalan society on a pathwayin which anticlericalism and secular/religious cleavages slowly lost their momentum and facilitated the rise of religious diversity as a form of governmentality. Moreover, in Catalonia the discourse of secularism is mobilized as a political tool to undercut and denounce existing privileges of Catholicism in state institutions. A former vice-president of the Catalan government who was the main political protagonist of the discourse on secularism during the 2000s, explained to me that

> "our policy was geared towards normalizing the relationships between the government and all the religious communities, also with secularist and atheists, to establish a Catalan model of secularism. […] All of this was necessary so as to articulate Catalan society as a distinct national society. Catholic bishops sometimes still don't understand that we are not going to make one law for them and another law for the other religions. For us, everybody is the same, and all are Catalan citizens".[9]

As I show below, secularism in Quebec, by contrast, partially served to reproduce the vestigial privileges of Catholicism.

---

8 Personal interview, 11 March 2013.
9 Personal interview, 23 April 2013.

Secular Nationalism and Catholicism as Heritage

While Catalans lack collective memories that could serve to sharpen the religious-secular divide and to politicize religious diversity, Quebeckers demonstrate profound investments in memory. Strikingly, this is true for both secularist and Catholic aspects of collective identity. During the hearings of the Bouchard-Taylor Commission, secularists presented memoirs that widely drew on the events described above. Similarly, during the electoral campaigns of the *Parti Quebecois* in 2012, the Charter of Quebec Values was generally justified as the completion of the *Quiet Revolution* and narratives of secularism were thus being remade. In order to illustrate this point, it is worth quoting at length from the *Declaration of Intellectuals for Secularism* released in 2010:

> Secularism is part of the history of Quebec. In Quebec, the defense of secular ideals is not new […] The idea of separation of state and church was also included in the Declaration of Independence of 1838 proclaimed by the Patriots […] Criticism of the religious yoke then found its way to the heart of the manifesto "Refuse Global," which prefigured the Quiet Revolution. In the 1960s, the secular movement promoted the French language claiming secular public schools. In 1975, Quebec adopted the Charter of Rights and Freedoms that recognizes the freedom of conscience and equality of religions, two essentially secular notions. And recently, the de-confessionalization of school structures was completed. If the idea of a secular state is prior to the Patriots, we cannot say that secularism is a defensive reaction to recently immigrated minority communities. The secularization of public institutions is made in the name of freedom of conscience and pluralism. Efforts to put an end to prayers in municipal assemblies and remove crucifixes from courts, municipal halls and the National Assembly are also based on these principles. In no event shall the rights of minorities be threatened by this secularization; on the contrary, many immigrants who fled authoritarian and theocratic regimes are strong advocates of secularism. Secularism is thus part of the Quebec historical landscape and the recent achievements that characterize it.[10]

Obviously for secularists, memory matters. However, while secular modernity usually operates as a discourse of rupture, here the focus is on *continuity*. Secularists commonly reject the idea that until the 1960s, Quebec was steeped in Catholicism and they argue instead that the Patriot rebellions during the 1830s, aimed at casting off the shackles of British domination, initiated republican *and* secular ideas. In an inter-

---

10 See   **http://www.ledevoir.com/societe/actualites-en-societe/285021/declaration-des-intellectuels-pour-la-laicite-pour-un-quebec-laique-et-pluraliste**;   accessed   30   January   2015; translation mine.

view, a former president of the *Mouvement Laïque Québécois* affirmed that before the repression that followed the defeat of the Patriots, the republicans had already installed religiously neutrality in public schools. Such arguments echo, of course, not only the centrality of secular schools for *laïcité*; they are also meant to corroborate the idea that Quebec's history was fundamentally distorted through British domination, that history actually proceeded as the gradual emancipation from this distortion, and that Quebec's being a part of Canada was a continuation of colonial domination by different means. Secularists see the confessional school system as an extreme manifestation of colonially-induced abnormalities, and its dismantling as another step of emancipation from it. The de-confessionalization of the public school system, just as the desired implementation of a more rigid form of secularism more broadly, is therefore understood not only as a logical continuation of the Quiet Revolution, but also in terms of emancipation from Canada. Notably, the majority of secularists are also sovereignists, and within secular collective memory, secularist and nationalist arguments feed into one another. Here, anticlericalism invariably doubles as resistance against British colonial domination, organized, as it was, through the instrumental participation of the Catholic clergy in British colonialism.

Simultaneously, however, wide sections of the Francophone populace also see secularized Catholicism as a legitimate element of nationalism. Famously, just hours after the releasing of the report of the Bouchard-Taylor Commission, Quebec's parliament voted unanimously in support of keeping a crucifix in the parliament hall, the removal of which the report had recommended. After secularization, Catholicism means not necessarily religious practice, but is increasingly an aspect of cultural heritage (Côté 1999; Zubrzycki 2012). On the one hand, framing religion as cultural heritage is a way of preserving certain privileges of historical majority religions and flag it as being hegemonic culture (Beaman 2013). On the other hand, however, Catholic symbolism is prone to be accommodated within an otherwise emphatically secular nationalism because the emphasis on Catholicism also supports national boundary work vis-à-vis Canada as being historically dominantly Protestant. The narrative confrontation of secularized Quebec Catholicism against Protestant Canada (by conservative Quebeckers) and of Quebec's secular public sphere to Canadian multiculturalism (by Quebec's secularists) merge in a powerful cultural configuration that limits political articulations of religious diversity. The absence of differences in terms of the religion of the majority population between Catalonia and Spain, by contrast, facilitates the near complete absence of Catholic nationalism.

Conclusions

In Quebec, Catholicism was always part of the concept of nationhood. These connections were carried by the Catholic Church as an institution that cultivated national sentiments into non-independentist, traditionalist nationalism. Because of these associations, however, modern post-Duplessis nationalism fashioned itself as being distinctly secular and identified itself with feminism, anti-colonialism, and other liberation movements. It is this secularist self-understanding that currently provides the major narrative resources for responses to religious diversity that favor the exclusion of religious symbols of (almost) all kinds from the public sphere. Simultaneously, the positioning towards Canada further supports this narrative: it is because multiculturalism is viewed as Canadian, and as aggressively pluralizing Quebec from the *outside*, that Quebeckers tend to favor a more "Republican", homogenized public sphere, because this allows them to reinforce national boundaries. Paradoxically, Catholicism as a heritage, and not as an institution or belief, is drawn into these secular nationalist dynamics.

In Catalonia, by contrast, the positive value generally attributed to religious diversity is (still) linked to the image of Spain as being more conservative, more Catholic, less European and less cosmopolitan. While Quebec tends towards having a defense posture towards minority religions, Catalan practices are geared towards enlisting them into the national project. The Catalan scenario is perhaps one of the clearest examples of how religious diversity becomes itself a premise of governmentality and of how governments can "diversify" their populations religiously if that serves to "homogenize" or "unify" them in terms of national identities. On a more theoretical level, I argued that the historical sources and foundations of both dominant national religions and secularism not only function as structural influences on configurations of religious diversity, but are also stored in collective memories and actively mobilized in contemporary debates. The relative power of collective memories of oppression and liberation and the ways in which boundary work vis-à-vis the dominant nation-state is linked to religion are thus two factors for explaining how stateless nations respond to religious diversity.

This study also suggests some broader conclusions for theories of religious nationalism. Contrary to what cultural defense theory suggests ,we see that within the cultural defense scenario of Quebec, secularization processes may create conditions in which not only religion, but also secularism itself, becomes a resource for national boundary work and contrastive collective identifications. Importantly, such a devel-

opment can only take place if secularism carries great historical legitimacy. In other cultural defense scenarios such as the ones found in Armenia or Greece, this is rarely the case. With regards to the question of how nationalism shapes responses to migration-driven religious diversity, however, which is my key concern in this paper, other factors come to the fore: the readiness of religious and national majorities to draw in and incorporate religious newcomers into their nationalist project, and the ways in which memories of collective suffering or liberation support or thwart such processes. In her study of power and freedom in late modernity, Wendy Brown (1995: 8) pointed to the "paradox in which freedom responds to a particular practice of domination whose terms are then often reinstalled in its practice. When institutionalized, freedom premised upon an already vanquished enemy keeps alive, in the manner of a melancholic logic, a threat that works as domination in the form of an absorbing ghostly battle with the past." One could be inclined to see in some moments of the contestations over secularity in Quebec as such ghostly battles with the past.

References

Astor, A. 2012. Memory, community, and opposition to mosques: the case of Badalona. *Theory and society*, *41*(4), 325-349.

Beaman, L. G. (Ed.). 2012. *Reasonable accommodation: managing religious diversity*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

Beaman, L. G. 2013. Battles over Symbols: The "Religion" of the Minority versus the "Culture" of the Majority. *Journal of Law and Religion*, *28*(01), 67-104.

Becci, I. 2013. *Imprisoned religion: transformations of religion during and after imprisonment in Eastern Germany*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd.

Beckford, J. A. 2003. *Social theory and religion*. Cambridge University Press.

Beyer, P. 2013. Questioning the secular/religious divide in a post-Westphalian world. *International Sociology*, *28*(6), 663-679.

Borduas, P.-E. 2009 [1948] Total Refusal. The Complete Manifesto of the Montreal Automatists. Translated and introduced by R. Ellenwood. Toronto: Exile Editions.

Bouchard, P. 2013. The small nation with a big dream: Québec national myth (eighteenth to twentieth century), in Bouchard G. (ed.). *National myths: constructed pasts, contested presents*. New York: Routledge, 1-23.

Bowen, J. 2007. A view from France on the internal complexity of national models. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *33*(6), 1003-1016.

Breton, R. 1988. From ethnic to civic nationalism: English Canada and Quebec. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *11*(1), 85-102.

Bruce, S. 2002. *God is dead: Secularization in the West*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Burchardt, M., Griera, M., & García-Romeral, G. (2015). Narrating liberal rights and culture: Muslim face veiling, urban coexistence and contention in Spain. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 41*(7), 1068-1087.

Burchardt, M. 2016. Does Religion need Rehabilitation? Charles Taylor and the Critique of Secularism, in F. Zemmin, C. Jager and G. Vanheeswijck (eds.) *Working with a Secular Age*. Boston and Berlin: de Gruyter, 137-158.

Hervieu-Léger, D. 1993. *La religion pour mémoire*. Éd. du Cerf.

Casanova, J. 2007. Immigration and the new religious pluralism: A European Union/United States comparison. *Democracy and the new religious pluralism*, 59-83.

Côté, P. 1999. Culture séculière, culture religieuse, ethos civique et administration publique du symbole. *Social compass*, *46*(1), 57-74.

Delgado, M. 1992. *La ira sagrada: anticlericalismo, iconoclastia y antirritualismo en la España contemporánea*. Barcelona: RDA libros.

Dowling, A. 2012. For Christ and Catalonia: Catholic Catalanism and nationalist revival in late Francoism. *Journal of Contemporary History*, *47*(3), 594-610.

Fetzer, J. S., and Soper, J. C. 2005. *Muslims and the state in Britain, France, and Germany*. Cambridge University Press.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. 2009. *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Transaction Publishers.

Griera, M. 2012. Public policies, interfaith associations and religious minorities: a new policy paradigm? Evidence from the case of Barcelona. *Social Compass*, *59*(4), 570-587.

--- (2015).

Grillo, R. D. 2003. Cultural essentialism and cultural anxiety. *Anthropological Theory*, *3*(2), 157-173.

Guibernau, M. 1999. *Nations without states: political communities in a global age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

--- 2004. *Catalan nationalism: Francoism, transition and democracy*. London: Routledge.

Guindon, H. 1967 The church in French-Canadian society. *Canadian dimension*, 4(3), 29-31.

Halikiopoulou, D. 2011. *Patterns of secularization: Church, state and nation in Greece and the Republic of Ireland*. Farnham: Ashgate.

Jeram, S. 2014. Sub-state Nationalism and Immigration in Spain: Diversity and Identity in Catalonia and the Basque Country. *Ethnopolitics*, *13*(3), 225-244.

Koenig, M. 2005. Incorporating Muslim migrants in western nation states – a comparison of the United Kingdom, France, and Germany. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, *6*(2), 219-234.

--- 2015. Governance of religious diversity at the European Court of Human Rights. In Bolden, J., & Kymlicka, W. (eds.) *International approaches to governing ethnic diversity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 51-78.

Koenig, M and W. Knöbl. 2015. "Varieties of religious nationalism". In: Willfried Spohn, Matthias Koenig and Wolfgang Knöbl (eds.), Religion and National Identities in an Enlarged Europe. Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 146-162.

Martin, D. 1978. *A general theory of secularization* (p. 1536). Oxford: Blackwell.

---. 2005. *On secularization: Towards a revised general theory*. Farnham: Ashgate.

Martínez-Ariño, J., García-Romeral, G., Ubasart-González, G., & Griera, M. 2015. Demonopolisation and dislocation: (Re-) negotiating the place and role of religion in Spanish prisons. *Social compass*, *62*(1), 3-21.

Meintel, D., and Mossière, G. 2013. In the Wake of the Quiet Revolution: From Secularization to Religious Cosmopolitanism. *Anthropologica*, *55*(1), 57-

Pérez-Agote, A. 2010. Religious change in Spain. *Social Compass*, *57*(2), 224-234.

Stringer, M D. 2013. *Discourses on religious diversity: explorations in an urban ecology*. Ashgate Publishing, Ltd.

Vertovec, S. 2007. Super-diversity and its implications. *Ethnic and racial studies*, *30*(6), 1024-1054.

Witzel, A, and Reiter, H. 2012. *The problem-centred interview*. Sage.

Wohlrab-Sahr, M., & Burchardt, M. (2012). Multiple secularities: Toward a cultural sociology of secular modernities. *Comparative Sociology, 11*(6), 875-909.

Zubrzycki, G. 2012. Religion, religious tradition, and nationalism: Jewish revival in Poland and "religious heritage" in Québec. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, *51*(3), 442-455.

Zubrzycki, G. 2013. Aesthetic revolt and the remaking of national identity in Québec, 1960-1969. *Theory and society*, *42*(5), 423-475.