Triggering the Paradox of Repression

A reflection on the outcomes of transformative events and framing strategies in Catalonia

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Abstract

This thesis aims to provide a better understanding of the relationship between repression and social movements' dynamics by looking at a particular case study, the Catalan independence movement. Using Sewell´s conceptualization of events as transformative occurrences and considering social movements as strategic actors and framing agents, this thesis attempts to bring together structure and agency in the understanding of the backfire of repression. The thesis argues that, on the one hand, the day of the independence referendum in Catalonia (1-O) became a transformative event by generating moral shock and inclination to further political action among participants of the movement. At the same time this event opened up new political spaces which participants channeled that motivation to take a more active role in the movement after the 1-O. On the other hand, it is argued that social movement activists and participants strategically framed the 1-O and subsequent repressive events to their advantage in two ways: first, by making associations between current episodes of repression and the times of Franco dictatorship and second, by framing repressive events as yet another symptom of the inherent injustice of the Spanish state. These findings illustrate how both events and social movement activists and participants can "trigger" the backfire of repression.

Table of contents

Acknowledgments 2
Acronyms and Abbreviations 3
Introduction 5
Chapter 1 - Analytical Framework 9
1.1 Previous research on the repression-mobilization nexus 9
1.2 Structure and agency: Political process theory and the repression-mobilization nexus 11
1.4 Transformative repressive events and moral shock: outrage, empowerment and new political spaces 13
1.5 Repression management 16
Chapter 2 - Methodology 20
2.1 Research Design 20
2.2 Research Method 20
2.3 Limitations 25
Chapter 3 - Background of the Case Study 27
3.1 Background 27
3.2 Brief catalogue of organizations 29
3.2 Timeline of events 31
Chapter 4 - The transformative effects of the 1-O: Outrage, Empowerment and new political spaces 32
4.1. Moral Shock 33
4.2 The politization and empowerment of citizens through newly opened political spaces: the CDRs 34
4.3 Collective awareness of self-efficiency 37
4.4. Renewed collective identity and heightened solidarity 38
4.5 Conclusion 39
Chapter 5 - Repression management by social movements: Framing repression 41
5.1 "Setting the stage": histories of repression 41
5.2. Bringing bystanders on board through diagnostic framing 46
5.3 Conclusions 49
Conclusions 51
Bibliography 55
ANNEX 1 – List of interviews 60

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

1-O - Day of the independence referendum (1st October 2017)

ANC - Catalan National Assembly

CDR – Committees for the Defence of the Referendum/Republic

PP – Peoples Party

"Repression is being so helpful to the Catalan independence movement. We have all awakened, they have come to beat us and as that hurts, we have all awakened, and many consciences have been awakened. Many people who were on the sofa watching Sálvame Deluxe have said, no, you have to sign up for the CDR. The repression is doing very well to the movement."[1]

"I think it is sad, it is incomprehensible above all that a state as big as the Spanish, so powerful, does not have the minimum emotional intelligence to understand that the only thing that repression is doing is making the movement grow. If you want someone to stay in your home, I do not think it is a good solution to insult him or beat him up. I do not think repression, or violence, is ever a good way to get someone to stay by your side. I think that is what we are seeing, amazed and what makes the independence movement grow. In every vote that has taken place, it has gone up, little, but the number of people who support the cause continues to rise."[2]

"Repression can never be valued positively... I am now thinking of a tweet that I read the other day that said something like "that was what you were looking for", sure, now we are masochists and we want to be beaten, that is ridiculous. It is true that repression is not positive, but as always, anyone who struggles to achieve something, has to try to get advantage of it. Unfortunately, repression has a part that can be positive... it can have two faces, it can discourage and throw back people, but also on the contrary, we can have people who, in front of this, refuse to step back, and say that they defend the "yes" more strongly"[3]

[1] Author´s interview with Ariadna, CDR participant, in Barcelona (#9, 12 Apr 2018)
[2] Author´s interview with Andreu, CDR participant, in Barcelona (#5, 19 Apr 2018)
[3] Author´s interview with Angels Folch i Borrás, member of the ANC National Secretariat, in Barcelona (#5, 14 Mar 2018)

Introduction

On the 1st of October 2017, a referendum for independence was held in Catalonia. Despite having being declared illegal weeks earlier, hundreds of thousands of people woke up before sunrise to go cast their ballots. Many of them even occupied the polling stations the night before to protect the vote from the government crackdown. When the police showed up to close some of the polling stations and seize the electoral material, people grabbed each other's arms and stood still. The rest of the story does not need to be told anymore. Images of Spanish police charging against voters flooded social media and national and international news channels. Old ladies bleeding, women being dragged across the ground, police agents crashing windows and using their batons against unarmed citizens became the storytellers of the day.

Of the 2,305 polling stations across the 947 municipalities in Catalonia, the Spanish security forces visited about 100 polling stations in 57 towns. However, thanks to social media, everyone else got to follow live how the events in these 100 polling stations unfolded while knowing that in any moment a police patrol could show up in their polling station. At the end of the day and after counting the ballots, the Catalan president announced through a television statement that the Catalan people had "earned their right to become an independent" state and that "democracy had won over violence".

The following weeks, Catalonia went through one of its most turbulent times of its history: two general strikes, daily demonstrations, a declaration of independence, the imprisonment of activists and part of the Catalan government, the Spanish central government temporarily taking over part of the Catalan´s autonomic powers and regional elections in which the pro-independence parties kept their majority. Half of the Catalan society has entered a state of permanent protest and it does not seem like they are going to step back.

The interview-excerpts quoted at the beginning of this chapter show different participants and activists of the independence movement trying to make sense of the situation. All of them consider that repression has been (or can be) beneficial for the movement, it can have unintended consequences and boost the movement. This is what some scholars call "the paradox of repression", that is, when repression creates unanticipated consequences that authorities do not desire. But how does this backfire effect work?

Scholars have for decades tried to disentangle the relationship between repression and mobilization and although neither empirical studies nor theories of the impact of repression on social movements are conclusive, statistical empirical evidence for the

backfire effect is growing (Chenoweth and Stefan 2011). However, the ways in which this backfire effect is triggered remain unclear.

Some studies focus their attention in the transformative character that specific repressive events can have on social movement participants. Following Sewell (1996) and his idea of transformative events, Shulitzner argues that certain events, caused and characterized by repressive regime actions that come to the attention of many affected citizens within a short period of time can lead to cognitive, emotional and behavioural changes among social movement participants that eventually challenge power holders. Repressive evens can lead to moral shocks that in turn incline people to involve in further political action.

One of the limitations of past studies on the impacts of repression on social movements is that "researchers generally ignore the fact that upon being repressed, dissidents could change tactics" (Smithey and Kurtz 2018: 1), that is, studies fail to analyze the strategic actions of movement in order to tackle or respond to repression. This brings us directly to the fundamental discussion on structure and agency. Repression by the authorities affects social movements, but social movement organizations and activists are also able to "manage" repression strategically so as to shape the interpretation and consequences of repressive events to their advantage. This way, social movements can bear an impact and trigger the paradox of repression. One of the main aspects of repression management has to do with the most symbolic and cultural aspects of repression and repressive events. By framing repression in certain ways, social movements can manage its perception among social movement participants and bystanders, reinforcing the public outrage that is derived from repressive events. Moreover, repression can serve as way through which social movement can strengthen their diagnostic framing by portraying repressive events as a symbol of the inherent problems of the system.

The paradox of repression is a major aspect of power relationships between authorities and social movements that has not been fully researched. In the conclusions of their recently published volume dedicated to the paradox of repression, Smithey and Kurtz point to possibilities for future research, specifically to the need of more focused case studies of nonviolent resistance under repression, in order to further explore "the actual processes set in motion by repressive events and movement responses to them" (2018:314). Moreover, they argue that one important issue that is constantly debated but that has not been adequately researched yet within in this topic is "the relative impact of tactics, on the one hand, and context, on the other" (315) or, in other words, the interplay of agency and structure. Taking note of these remarks, I want to contribute this research agenda by looking at a particular and very recent case study, the Catalonian independence movement. By doing so, I will try to come up with a better understanding of the actual interplay of strategy and context within the paradox.

I will explore the way in which repressive events such as police violence the day of the independence referendum became transformative by causing moral shock and empowering social movement participants while at the same time, activists and participants themselves put in practice tactics to manage repression and its interpretation and trigger the backfire effect described in the paradox The following research question will be answered in that regard:

How has State repression affected the dynamics and development of the Catalan independence movement in Barcelona between September 2017 and April 2018?

The analytical framework of the paradox of repression will be operationalized using a double perspective. First we will use Sewell´s concept of "transformative events" to illustrate the structural side of this puzzle. Then we will look at Smithey and Kurtz's concept of "repression management" which focuses at social movement´s agency and strives from framing theory. This has lead to the following main sub-questions:

1. How have repressive events had a transformative effect on the Catalan independence movement participants and activists?

2. How have repressive events been strategically framed by the Catalan independence movement participants and activists?

In the following pages I will try to illustrate how these processes take place. In Chapter 1 will first review the literature on the repression-mobilization nexus. Then I will introduce and conceptualize the analytical framework of the paradox of repression. I will illustrate the two ways in which the paradox of repression can be activated: (i) through the effects of transformative repressive events, (ii) through the meaning making strategies of social movement activists and participants.

In Chapter 2 I will present my methodology. First I will introduce my research design and discuss its ontological and epistemological positioning. Later, I will describe my research method. For that purpose I will explain the different stages of data collection, the main data collection techniques employed, sampling methods, and some remarks I consider relevant regarding my fieldwork experience. Finally, I will outline possible limitations.

In Chapter 3 I will introduce the background of my case study. First I will briefly describe the origins and development of the independence movement and give a more detailed insight of the last events since September 2017. In order to allow the reader for a better understanding of the different organizations of the movement I created a catalogue of the main organizations, giving special attention to the ANC and the CDRs, as most of my interview respondents are participants or activists of those two organizations. Finally I will provide a timeline of repressive events and identify those who were more often highlighted by my respondents as being important moments.

The timeline also include other political developments before, in between and after repressive events that I considered relevant to keep in mind to better understand the processes described in this research.

Chapter 4 will try to answer my first sub-question by looking at one particular repressive event, the day of the independence referendum (1-O). I will analyze how this event presents the characteristics of a transformative event by looking at how it generated moral shock among participants. I will further explore the effects of this event by trying to identifying the patterns described by Shultziner in his conceptualization of transformative repressive events, namely the politization and empowerment of citizens through the opening of new political spaces, the collective awareness of self-efficacy and the effects on collective identity and solidarity of movement participants.

In Chapter 5 I will focus on the second sub-questions. I will analyze the ways in which social movements can manage the perception of repression. Using concepts of framing theory I will explore how the independence movement makes use of memories of repression in order to frame the current events in ways that force connections with the Francoist dictatorship in Spain. Subsequently I will describe how these same repressive events become a resource that the social movement can use to increase the resonance of its diagnostic framing practices by framing repression as yet another symptom of the inherent injustice of the Spanish state and associating repressive events in Catalonia with other episodes of content in other parts of Spain.

Lastly I will present my conclusions by assessing the findings of this thesis and discussing its implications for the wider theoretical and empirical debate.

Chapter 1 - Analytical Framework

In this section I will explain the analytical framework used to operationalize the research. I will develop particular concepts that I consider important to clearly define and understand in order to make sense of the collected data.

The analytic frame that will guide this research is inspired on social movement theory, and the recent literature on the repression-mobilization nexus, focusing on the so-called paradox of repression, which analyzes how repression (or repressive events) can lead to backfire. To understand the paradox of repression I will use concepts deriving from the political process and framing theory to see how repression, and more specifically, repressive events, can generate changes in the movement´s goals and behaviours, while at the same time, social movement organizations and activists, can strategically frame repression to their advantage.

What do we mean by the "Catalan independence movement"? Diani (1992) defines a social movement as a "network of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in a political or cultural conflict, on the basis of a shared collective identity". I argue that the three requirements comprised in the definition ((i) network of informal interactions between individuals groups and organizations; (ii) engagement in a political or cultural conflict; (iii) sharing a collective identity) are all met in the case of the Catalan independence movement. Although political parties and most recently, the local government of Catalonia, have been essential in the development of the movement, I believe that, in order analyze the paradox of repression the focus should be limited to the civil society organizations and grassroots initiatives of the movement. The strategies and dynamics of political parties and local governments often respond to different goals and are served with different tools than those of civil society making its integration in the analysis too complex for the aims and extension of this particular research project.

I will now proceed to discuss the literature on the repression-mobilization nexus to understand the foundations of the paradox of repression and its empirical relevance.

1.1 Previous research on the repression-mobilization nexus

Although the question on the relationship between repression and collective action has inspired multiple studies over the last decades, results have been overall inconclusive. Some scholars have emphasized ways in which repression can mitigate protest and reduce movement vitality because of the added costs associated with repression (Oberschall, 1973, Tilly 1978; Olzak, Beasley, Olivier, 2003) while others have claimed the opposite, that is, that repression increases the rate of protest and collective action

and facilitates movement organizing (Gerlach and Hine 1970; White, 1989; Khawaja 1994)".

The disagreement does not end here. A third group of scholars have argued for a non-linear relationship between repression and protest but even these accounts are problematic. Some scholars argue that the relationship between repression and protest takes on an inverted U shape; lower levels of repression might offer the opportunity to express grievances and thus motivate participation in protest events. If the repression becomes severe, the costs associated with participating in protest might be too high, eventually leading to movement decline (Gurr, 1970; Brockett 2005; Muller 1985; Weede 1987). Others, however, argue the reverse; repression is a threat to movement participants and initially deters protest activity. If this repression is determined unjust, the same repression can lead to the radicalization of a movement and facilitate further protest (Opp and Roehl 1990; Rasler 1996).

The previous review of the literature on the repression-mobilization nexus is a clear illustration of the paradoxical character of findings in the last decades. In the words of Zimmermann (1980: 191; quoted in Lichbach 1987:267), "there are theoretical arguments for all conceivable basic relationships between government coercion and group protest and rebellion, except for no relationship". More recently even this claim has been contested. Davenport and Inman assert that "repression has been found to have very single influence on behavioural challenges, including no influence" (2012:624).

What explains this conundrum? Several scholars have identified the shortcomings of past research on the repression-mobilization nexus. Chenoweth argues that there are three main limitations. First, many of the works attempting to establish general theoretical expectations are based on only a few cases of repression and dissent, meaning that their findings are difficult to generalize. Second, much of the literature examines dissent or mobilization in general but does not distinguish which form of mobilization is underway, or which kind of actors are mobilizing. Finally she argues that many studies emphasize the political environment —such as the level of democracy or the level of repression—and downplay the extent to which movement features—such as movement size, structure, and nonviolent discipline—may affect propensity for backfire (2018:27-8). Similarly, Gupta et al. consider that most arguments (about the dynamic interaction between government coercion and dissident activities) are made in isolation, without specifying precisely, the overall situation or context within which the decisions are made (1993:301-2). In other words, context matters and should be taken into account. However, context is not the only thing that has been overlooked by the scholarship; Davenport and Inman (2012) believe that researchers generally ignore the fact that upon being repressed, dissidents could change tactics. They argue that it is important to realize that social movements'

activists often strategize in the face of repression, and thus this will also have an impact in the effects of repression on mobilization. To put it simply, agency matters as much as context does.

1.2 Structure and agency: Political process theory and the repression-mobilization nexus

The best way make sense of these juggling results is to look for better analytical and conceptual tools that can help us understand the interplay of structure and agency in the repression-mobilization nexus.

Chang argues that "one helpful way to disentangle the relationship between repression and protest is to disaggregate a movement into its various parts and assess how repression affects individual components" (2008:652). In order to disaggregate mobilization, Chang uses the political process theory, which understands mobilization a product of three interactive factors: political opportunities, mobilizing structures and framing strategies (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996).

Different scholars have tried to refine the analysis of the impact of repression of social movements by looking at how repression affected each of these components. Some of the findings showed repression leading to increased organizational capacity of the movement (Loveman, 1998; Chang and Kim 2007). Other studies pointed out to changes in tactical repertoires (McAdam, 1983; Lichbach, 1987; Moore, 1998) and to the construction and development of movement frames (Davenport and Eads, 2001; Chang and Kim, 2007).

I believe that looking at this puzzle through the political process approach can result in a more detailed understanding of certain effects of repression on mobilization. As mentioned above, political process theory argues that dissent is largely a function of three factors: cultural frames, mobilizing structures, and political opportunity structure (e.g., McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996). The first provides the ideological motivation for claims making, group identity, and group action; the second provides the means for taking action; and the third provides the "perceived" opportunity within which groups can engage in contentious politics. As theorized, when these three conditions exist, sustained mobilization is likely to occur.

Although agency was for years underestimated in this model and the emphasis was originally placed on the prevalence of structural factors external to the movement (political opportunities) and their impact on mobilization, over the last decades, scholars have acknowledged the need of bringing agency back into the equation:

> "A number of factors have been added to political opportunities in recognition of the influence of non-structural variables but without being

> accurately theorized as non-structural. These include strategy and agency, which have to do with the active choices and efforts of movement actors as well as of their opponents and other players in the conflict, and cultural factors that deal with the moral visions, cognitive understandings, and emotions that exist prior to a movement but which are also transformed by it." (Goodwin, Jasper and Khattra, 1999:29)

In the same way that political opportunities can affect the frames adopted by the movement, activists also play an active role in strategically designing those frames to fashion particular understandings of the political context. Furthermore, opportunities need to be perceived as such in order to have an impact on mobilization, which will also depend on the framing strategies of the movement. The same applies to the movement's mobilizing structures. Although external structural factors can shape the mobilizing structures of a movement, activists and organizations can also make choices regarding their organizational strategies and tactics, which in turn can mitigate the effects of those structural factors. In this sense, the three factors of mobilization are in constant interaction (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald, 1996)

This reflects Giddens (1984) idea of the duality of structure and how, it is more useful to understand agency and structure as mutually constitutive rather than oppositional. In order to understand social reality, both are necessary. Individuals are constrained by the structures they are born into but they also have agency to modify those structures (Demmers 2017:127-8).

How is this linked to the repression-mobilization nexus? Over the years other scholars have increasingly looked at repression as one aspect of the political opportunity structure, which has a direct bearing on the ability of activists to garner resources, create movement organizations, and frame issues (della Porta 1996; Goldstone and Tilly 2001; Kriesi 1996). Repression, as part of the political context in which the movement operates, affects the movement's strategies. In this sense it could be logically argued that repression would automatically reduce mobilization by lowering the perceived opportunities for action. On a different note, findings by several authors have confirmed that decisions and strategies within social movement organizations bear on the impact of repression (Opp and Rohel, 1990). This means that activists can make strategic decisions in order to attempt to mitigate or transform repression to their advantage and thus, repression can backfire. This leads us directly to the analytical framework that inspired the research: the paradox of repression.

1.3 The paradox of repression

Although neither empirical studies nor theories of the impact of repression on social movements are conclusive, statistical empirical evidence for the backfire effect is growing (Chenoweth and Stefan 2011; Sutton, Butcher, and Svensson 2014)

In asymmetrical conflicts, when authorities use force against dissidents, especially those engaged in non-violent movements – the use of coercion often backfires (Smithey and Kurtz 2018:2). This phenomena has been labelled as the "paradox of repression", which, in a general sense refers, to those situations in which repression creates unanticipated consequences that authorities do not desire.

How and under which circumstances does this backfire effect happen? The paradox of repression must be understood from an interactionist perspective. On the one hand, repression and more specifically, repressive events can produce radical turning points that affect the emotions, goals and behaviour of social movements by changing the degree and sense of injustice and motivation for resistance of participants, while opening new political spaces in through which participants engage in further mobilization. On the other hand, social movement organizations and activists can strategically manage repression by framing repressive events in certain ways that further encourage increased perceptions of injustice and motivation for action. Thus, the interplay of structure and agency is inherent to our analytical framework.

We will operationalize the paradox of repression through two main concepts: "transformative repressive events" and "repression management". The first one reflects the structural part of our puzzle: repression or more specifically, repressive events have an impact on social movements. The second one incorporates agency to our equation: social movements can strategically manage repressive events. In the coming sections we will develop and operationalize these two sensitizing concepts.

1.4 Transformative repressive events and moral shock: outrage, empowerment and new political spaces

In order to understand the way in which the paradox of repression operates, it is necessary to define and operationalize repression in the first place. Repression has been defined by social movement activists as "any actions taken by authorities to impede mobilization, harass and intimidate activists, divide organizations and physically assault, arrest, imprison or kill movement participants or activists" (Stockdill, 1996:146). The repressive methods included in this definition include both overt violence by authorities (e. g. beatings, arrests or killings) as well as tactics of softer repression that are more difficult to be perceived.

In western democracies, repression is often a last-resource tool to which governments resort in order to tackle dissent. Soft repression methods are more likely to be deployed than hard repression, and therefore, when democratic governments resort to violence and overt forms of repression, it generally has greater consequences due to the negative way in which this kind of coercion is perceived. Furthermore, when democracies resort to hard repression, they often do so in specific points in time in which they consider it is appropriate or necessary to resort to such methods. For this reason I argue that, for the purpose of this research, a better way to understand repression and its effects is to focus on particular repressive events.

Several authors have argued that certain repressive events are likely to have transformative consequences on social movements and mobilization. Sewell (1996) defines transformative events as dramatic-symbolic events that substantially change the degree and sense of injustice and motivation for resistance in the population. Moyer et al. (2001) argue that such "trigger events" follow a period of organizational groundwork and precede a "take-off" of mobilization. Shultziner specified that one subgroup of transformative events are "transformative repressive events" which he defines as those transformative events "caused and characterized by repressive regime actions that come to the attention of many affected citizens within a short period of time and lead to cognitive, emotional and behavioural changes that eventually challenge power holders" (2018:53). Transformative repressive events can produce radical turning points in collective action and affect the outcomes of repression by causing moral shock and public outrage in a group. McAdam and Sewell believe that "the key feature of transformative events is that they come to be interpreted as significantly disrupting, altering or violating the taken-for-granted assumptions governing routine, political and social relations" (2001:112; original emphasis). In other words, transformative events turn the world upside down by questioning the assumptions that underpin the status quo and "altering the nature of the causal nexus in which social interactions take place" (Sewell 1996:843) These game-changing repressive events generate the perfect environment for movements to put in practice framing strategies that can play in their advantage and make repression backfire.

However, repressive events are not only setting the right conditions for successful framing to happen. Shultziner (2018) argues that transformative events are essentially a psychological phenomenon and as such, they have an impact on political consciousness, emotions and behaviour in the individual and collective level. In this sense, I argue that events themselves are not only game-changers but also minds-and-hearts-changers. In a similar sense, Jasper argues that emotions are part of our responses to events and that they also shape the goals of our actions. Furthermore emotions are "culturally constructed (and hence linked to cognitive appraisals)" rather than being "automatic somatic responses", as it was believed by sociologists in past

studies (Jasper 1998:399). In the constructionist view, emotions are constituted more by shared social meanings than automatic physiological states. Emotions are also tied to moral values, often arising from perceived infractions of moral rules (401).

As described above one of the consequences of transformative repressive events is that they generate moral shock and public outrage. Jasper argues that moral shocks have a strong emotional component and "occur when an unexpected event or piece of information raises such a sense of outrage in a person that she becomes inclined toward political action, whether or not she has acquaintances in the movement" (Jasper and Poulsen, 1995; Jasper, 1997). The word "shock" hints at the emotional power of these experiences.

Hess and Martin (2006) also emphasize the importance of a second factor for transformative events to generate backfire: information about the event or situation needs to be communicated effectively to receptive audiences that are substantial enough that authorities must take their outrage into consideration.

Shultziner (2018) found that although transformative events are of course unique in each case, there is a general similarity in their psychological impacts on social movements and their participants. In his research, he identifies the psychological characteristics of two events that involved backfire following an act of repression: the first official day of the Montgomery bus boycott in 1955 and the first day of the Soweto uprising in South Africa in 1976. He argues that repressive events can lead to a "collective awareness of self-efficacy" through which participants become "politicized" after "coming together in mass meetings and other new political spaces that suddenly open up in dramatic events". For many people this will be their "first experiences as activists" and they will be "compelled to rethink basic premises governing their lives" and to "redefine their values and hopes for the future" (62-3). Repressive events, by leading to the opening of new political spaces can have an impact on the movement's mobilizing structures. New organizations might emerge and become sites through which movement participants can channel their inclination to further political engagement after experiencing moral shocks.

Taking into account all this theoretical insights, we can define transformative repressive events as "dramatic-symbolic events, caused and characterized by repressive regime actions, that come to the attention of many affected citizens within a short period of time and lead to moral shock and a make those who experience them inclined to political action"

Transformative events and the moral shocks they generate seem to indicate one way the paradox of repression operates in practice: repressive events are able to generate such strong emotional reactions among movement participants that they become inclined toward political action. Moreover they can lead to the opening of new political spaces through which people channel that inclination to stay mobilized.

Although this can be a basis for initial mobilization, it is generally not enough to sustain resistance in the long run. McAdam and Sewell (2001) even argue that transformative events can also be negative in the sense of leading to demobilization or collapse, and that it is the interpretations assigned to the event by participants and observers which determine its transformative potential. In order to make repression backfire, moral shock has to be further induced by social movement activists through framing strategies that reinforce the perception of injustice. This leads us to our second sensitizing concept: repression management

1.5 Repression management

As I have outlined before, repressive events can have a psychological impact on social movement participants´ emotions, goals and initial behaviours because they generate moral shock and public outrage; however, a big part of that impact is reinforced by the strategic meaning making and practices carried out by of social movements and their activists.

Hess and Martin (2006) argue that the framing of repression by effectively linking it to the authorities and to broader cultural aspects that resonate with people´s identities are key in converting an event into a dramatic turning point against authorities. Whether repression crushes dissent or promotes mobilization depends on a variety of conditions but at least some are within partial control of social movements and activists.

"Repression management" is the term used by the scholarship to refer to the idea that social movement organizations and activists can increase the likelihood of the paradox of repression occurring through strategy and tactical choice (Smithey and Kurtz, 2018).

One of the first persons to make sense of this idea and develop methods to use non-violent action as a strategy for social change was Mohandas Gandhi. Before Gandhi, studies of non-violence action were mostly focusing on methods of passive resistance, where strategy did not play a big role.

Some years later, Gene Sharp (1973) came up with a new term for the phenomenon: "political jiu-jitsu". Jiu-jitsu is a martial art in which one uses the weight and momentum of his or her opponent in ones advantage to eventually throw the opponent. In the same way, political jiu-jitsu explains how with strategic non-violent action can use an opponent´s resources, needs or culture to one´s advantage. Martin

explains political jiu-jitsu as those occasions "when violence against nonviolent challengers is seen as so wrong or disturbing that it causes more people in the "grievance group" to become active, more third parties to become sympathetic, and even some opponents to change their minds or behaviour" (2018:16). The dynamics of political jiu-jitsu do not necessarily occur in every non-violent campaign, there are certain conditions and requirements that are needed for it to happen. Martin argues that one of them is to maintain the non-violent discipline so that violence from authorities can be seen to be unfair (2018:17).

Looking at the way the idea of "repression management" came to be, it can be observed that much of the attention is placed at the importance of the perceptions and meanings of repression. Social movements have to fashion interpretations of repressive events in ways that resonate with broader cultural elements and identities of the population in order to reinforce the generation of public outrage and motivate further political action. Smithey and Kurtz argue that "the paradox of repression is often more a cultural phenomenon than a political one, and its occurrence more a consequence of cultural process than straightforward political confrontation" (2018:164). Movement organizations activists can consciously deploy symbolically rich tactics in situations of repression to ensure that repressive events are interpreted in ways that favour the movement, enhancing the backfire effect of repression. In conclusion, "much of repression management is in fact the management of the perception of repression" (169; original emphasis).

In order to analyze the ways in which movements can strategically frame repressive events it is important to remember some basics of framing theory. Frames can be defined as interpretative schemata "that enable participants to locate, perceive and label occurrences" (Snow et al. 1986:464), "selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences and sequences of actions within one's present or past environment" (Snow and Benford 1992:137). Framing theory departs from social constructivism in the sense that reality is understood as socially constructed. Social movements, as well as authorities, the media and individuals are active creators of meaning. This is made possible through processes of "naming" grievances, connecting them to other grievances and constructing lager frames of meaning that will resonate with population´s cultural predispositions and communicate a uniform message to power holders and others (Snow and Benford 1992:136 in Demmers 2017:100).

If meaning is socially constructed, this requires agency and therefore, frames cannot just be understood as just fixed cognitive structures. Framing is a dynamic process carried out by individuals and groups to construct meaning. For this reason I refer to framing processes or strategies which can be defined as "conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action" (Snow and Benford, 1988).

The ability of movement activists to be successful in having their frame accepted by their potential audience is profoundly related to "frame resonance"; that is, the degree to which their preferred frame appeals to others in that it is credible, salient, and generally produces a positive response in the intended audience (Benford and Snow 2000: 218). This "re-appropiation of meaning" (Demmers 2017:101) is what Snow and his colleagues refer as "frame alignment processes" (Snow et al. 1986)

Benford and Snow (2000, 614) identify three core tasks in the framing process: the diagnostic, the prognostic, and the motivational, all of which social movement activists and participants use to manage impressions. In their words, movement adherents negotiate a shared understanding of some problematic condition or situation they define as in need of change, make attributions regarding who or what is to blame, articulate an alternative set of arrangements, and urge others to act in concert to affect change. A major aspect of the diagnostic process is the establishment of what William Gamson (1995) calls "injustice frames" that define movement participants as victims. Injustice frames are thus a mode of interpretation that often precedes "collective noncompliance, protest, and or rebellion" (Benford and Snow 2000, 614).

Drawing from concepts of framing theory Smithey and Kurtz (2018) identify some ways in which social movements can use framing to strategically manage the perception of repressive events and link them to cultural symbols and values that enhance resonance and can trigger the paradox of repression. I have provided a name for each of these strategies for easily referring to them in the analysis:

i. **Linking contemporary repression to memories of repression:** Activists can "set the stage" by framing their cause in popular ways, using symbols and linking repressive events to memories of repression in old struggles, enhancing the resonance of the frame by making people interpret contemporary repression as yet another affront and indignity.

ii. **Reinforcing injustice frames by linking repression to the injustice of the system itself**: Activists can take advantage of repressive events to reinforce their diagnostic framing practices. If activists make use of injustice frames to fashion understandings of their cause, repression will serve to strengthen those frames by dramatizing victimization in a way that movement participants cannot do by themselves. Moreover, activists can use repression to amplify their injustice frames by linking repressive events to inherent problems and injustice of the system itself. Repressive events are framed as symptoms of what is wrong with the system in the first place.

In my analysis I will try to identify whether these strategies have been deployed by movement activists in order to reinforce the moral shock effect of repressive events and link repression to broader aspects of culture that resonate among participants. All in all, I will look at how repressive events have been framed by different activists and organizations of the Catalan independence movement to trigger the backfire effects of repression and maintain mobilization.

Chapter 2 - Methodology

2.1 Research Design

One of the main goals of this research consists in understanding the paradox of repression as an example of the interplay of contextual and tactical factors, or in other words, the simultaneous impact of structure and agency. For this reason this research is ontologically interactionist.

Epistemologically, this research takes an interpretive stance because it looks at subjective interpretations, motivations and strategies of movements facing repression. The aim is to understand these emotional, cognitive and strategic processes. For this purpose I qualitatively analysed different data to identify emerging categories and develop explanations at the level of meaning, rather than cause. This allowed me to produce detailed descriptions and understandings of meanings, processes and context in order to offer an interpretation of the perspectives of the participants and activists of the movement.

The decision to look at the paradox of repression through a particular case study strives both from the suggestions for future research by different scholars exploring the complex relationship of repression and mobilization as well as from the limitations in terms of time and resources for this particular project. Smitey and Kurtz (2018) argue that there is a need of more on-the-ground case studies that focus specifically on repression to develop a better comparative historical basis to understand different aspects of the paradox of repression. The case study approach to social movement research provides important insights into the relations between events and movements. Granted, I am aware of the limitations of case studies and the fact that their "ad hoc approach to defining units of analysis and relevant connections makes them less than desirable as a basis for theorizing" (Kriesberg 1984:7). Nevertheless, the purpose of this research is not to establish a general theory on the repression-mobilization nexus but to contribute to understand a bit more which aspects of backfire are more general and which are more situation-specific.

2.2 Research Method

I have designed a research methodology in accordance with my interpretivist perspective, which considers repressive events to be socially constructed sites in which framing contests take place. I focus on how repression is experienced at the same time as constructed, communicated, and interpreted by a social movement, and thus my research focus is subjective and requires a qualitative approach. A qualitative research methodology will enable exploration of what emotions and social meaning have been attached to repressive events, and the perceptions of power that exist.

In this section, I will attempt to clearly illustrate the different stages of my research, explain my data collection techniques and sampling methods and outline possible limitations.

Stage 1: Background research

The first phase included the gathering of information via documental, news reports and social media analysis to map the main actors of the Catalan independence movement, as well as background information regarding the main repressive events and the subsequent episodes of mobilization that illustrate the backfire effect of repression. With this information I decided that the focus would be placed in two main organizations: the Catalan National Assembly (ANC) and the CDRs. More information on these two organizations can be found in the catalogue on Chapter 3.

After this first background research I also put together a timeline or chronology of repressive events that I considered had the potential to constitute transformative repressive events. This was later contrasted with the information gathered through in-depth interviews with activists in the field in order to make sense of which events of repression have had a greater transformative impact. The final timeline can be found in Chapter 3. It also includes other relevant events such as elections, main protests and other actions that could I considered useful for understanding the reactions and strategies of the social movement during and after repressive events.

Stage 2: Fieldwork

My data collection techniques are in accordance with an anthropological approach, as I use fieldwork research methodologies that include in-depth interviews, participant observation and content analysis of movement documents and social media posts and newspapers.

Barcelona was the obvious choice for the location of my research due to the city housing the headquarters of the main organizations of the movement as well as for being the site where mass protests generally take place and where more people were injured the day of the referendum. Moreover, Barcelona is a large city with many districts, which allowed me to get in touch with several CDRs since in large cities they are neighbourhood-based.

My primary research technique was in-depth interviews as this enabled a deep exploration of personal perceptions and strategies. Predominantly, I used non-probability sampling to identify suitable respondents who were active participants or activists of the Catalan independence movement. In total, I conducted thirteen interviews, and most lasted between forty minutes and an-hour-and-a-half, with some lasting longer, and others lasting slightly less. Interviews were conducted in very different locations around the city. I additionally had a countless number of informal

conversations with the local population and protesters in different rallies I attended. These informal conversations offered valuable snapshots into whether ideas were shared and important within social life.

Four of my respondents were members of the national secretariat of the ANC, namely the vice-president, the secretary, the press chief and one other elected member of the secretariat. I contacted all of them through email communications and these were the first interviews I conducted during my fieldwork.

The other nine respondents were active members in different CDRs in Barcelona and surrounding villages. Finding respondents from CDRs turned out to be harder than expected at the beginning. As we will describe later, the CDRs are a very informal network of organizations, whose participants do not require membership. There is no official leadership; they do not have a website or any kind of official contact details, apart from their twitter accounts. Although CDRs in different neighbourhoods constantly organize activities and weekly meetings, I was doubtful at the beginning of whether it was a good idea to show up in those meetings without having found a contact person first. These concerns derived from the tense political situation during the months of my fieldwork with regards to the CDRs. Two CDR participants had been arrested and charged with terrorism and sedition for allegedly organizing roadblocks protesting for the detention in Germany of the former Catalan president Carles Puigdemont. Ever since the CDRs became more cautious about whom they talked to, and many participants tried to keep their identities secret for fear of reprisals. Nevertheless, several protests events were organized in their defense and I decided to attend one of the rallies that took place in Barcelona to contact activists face-to-face and arrange new interviews. I prepared a cover letter introducing myself, explaining my research and providing a phone number and email address for further contact in case they were willing to be interviewed. After approaching dozens of protesters that showed interest in my research but did not want to be interviewed arguing that the situation had been very "delicate" lately and that their security was at stake, four people agreed to have an interview with me later on that week. The other 5 respondents of my sample were obtained through snow-ball sampling out of the previous interviews. A full list of my sample of respondents can be found in ANNEX 1.

Being able to speak Spanish and Catalan allowed me to overcome any language restraints. I conducted all the interviews in Spanish or Catalan and later translated them to English. Furthermore coming from a foreign university turned out to be beneficial in terms of access since many activists were excited about the opportunity of talking about their perceptions and insights for a foreigner public.

Despite the initial distrust in the contacting process, all respondents but one allowed me to use their real names and record the interviews. In this sense, conducting

interviews with CDRs became to some extent an exercise of participant observation because it allowed me to see to what extent activists were taking preventive measures or feared reprisals.

My interviews were steered by a topic guide; however I always asked very open questions that allowed the respondent to select their own topics and narratives that they wished to discuss. Using a semi-structured interview technique enabled the respondent to direct the interview in new directions and I encouraged them to freely elaborate on any issues they considered important. At the end of each interview, I followed up on the topics and narratives that were unmentioned by the respondent, but selected by other respondents, to assess whether they had just been forgotten or had little resonance with the participant. This strategy meant I could assess what narratives each respondent considered the most important through their selection, and yet test awareness of other existing narratives.

To build trust with the activist community, I was very aware of how I positioned myself as a researcher. Not being completely fluent in Catalan language, I was mostly seen as an outsider and I was asked several times if I worked for any Spanish media agency. Hence, I continuously articulated my student status and research purpose to everyone I came across. Specially in the case of the CDRs, sincerely expressing my desire to better understand the activists struggle and the CDR phenomenon was especially useful for access.

To ensure my research was ethical, I communicated who I was, what I was doing, and my research intentions prior to every interview. I attained every participant's consent before commencing, and informed respondents that if there was anything they did not wish to answer then they could simply refuse without explanation. While most respondents gave me permission to use their real names, I have made the decision to keep the CDR respondents anonymous, because their names do not add considerable value, and this helps to prevent any unforeseeable future issues, thus the details of these respondents have been purposively reduced to maintain their anonymity replacing their names for fictious names. However, in the case of the members of the ANC national secretariat, who all agreed to be mentioned in the research by their real names, I considered relevant to include their function in the organization in the cases where it is significant to illustrate their influence.

In addition to interviews, I also carried out participant observation as a research technique. Upon my arrival, I went to a massive rally organized by the ANC in Barcelona. The protest was aimed at putting pressure on the pro-independence political parties to reach an agreement and keep moving towards independence. Around 45.000 people attended. This first immersion in the field was useful to experience the dynamics of a pro-independence protest, the kind of discourses

deployed by activists of the ANC during their speeches and the more recurrent phrases and slogans in the banners carried by participants and I could confirm that repression was a recurrent topic among protesters. Additionally, every Friday rallies to protest for the imprisoned politicians took place. Living two minutes away from the main square of Barcelona made me become accidental bystander of many of the rallies and protest events that took place almost on a daily basis during my stay. On different occasions I took photographs wrote field notes with my observations and recorded speeches.

Besides protest events I participated in two conferences. The first one was organized by a local social sciences research institute and it dealt with legal and political aspects of the "process for independence" since 2010. Although not totally related with my research it was a valuable experience to widen by background knowledge on the case. The second conference I attended was organized by the CDR in the area where I lived and dealt with issues of communication and the objectivity of the Catalan and Spanish media reporting events and developments of the independence movement. This was the first time I participated in the activities organized by a CDR and it gave me the opportunity to observe CDR participants discussing about issues they deemed important. It also allowed me to have informal conversations with participants before and after the conference.

Lastly, I decided to go one step further and attend one of the open weekly assemblies of the CDR in my neighbourhood. The previous day I sent a message to the CDR twitter account expressing my will to take part in the assembly but I did not get an answer. Being aware of the concerns of the CDRs since arrests of two of their participants I took care of addressing the persons who seemed to be coordinating the meeting that day and introduced myself. They allowed me to stay with the condition of not taking notes or recording. I also had to explain my research and the reasons why I was there to the attendants before the meeting started. This experience was incredibly valuable to observe the dynamics of the assembly, the socio-demographic composition of the participants, the kind of topics they discussed and the way they reach decisions to organize very diverse mobilization initiatives at the local level.

Finally, I conducted content analysis of several movement documents that I considered relevant to gain a better insight of the recurrent narratives in my interviews. These documents included official statements posted by ANC and the CDRs on social media (mainly twitter) after repressive events, the "roadmap" manifestos of the ANC after their internal elections, which contain the main goals and strategic lines of action for the following year. I used these sources to complement my interview sample, and further analyze the framing of repressive events by the ANC and the CDRs as well as the strategic measures that were communicated through those channels. Additionally I read local and Spanish media on a daily basis, before, during and after my fieldwork.

This was a great tool to inform me why some topics might have suddenly been brought up in interviews, as newspapers often have an influence over daily discourse.

Step 3: Data analysis

In order to answer the first sub-question (How have repressive events generated moral shock and new mobilizing structures for the Catalan independence movement?) I asked my interviewees about how they experienced different repressive events and tried to identify reactions such as those that derive from moral shock: outrage and inclination to further political action. At the same time I tried to reconstruct the emergence of the CDRs asking my interviewees about their first contact with the organization and the way they became engaged in them as well as other details about the organizational profile of the CDRs. Eventually I got to see the way they work first-hand through participant observation by attending one of their open assemblies. This will be analysed in Chapter 4. For my second sub-question (How have those same events been strategically framed by activists organizations of the Catalan Independence movement?) I asked my interviewees about more general perceptions of repression, their situation and their strategies and tried to identify frame alignment processes and re-appropriation of meanings. At the same time I analysed movement texts such as public statements on Twitter, roadmap documents and speeches and looked for patterns between these and my interviewees interpretations and frames.

Combining talk, text, and observation, as data collection techniques helped me to triangulate my research through accessing multiple perspectives and readings. However, especially in the second part of my research, when I try to identify framing strategies, triangulating to confirm facts, and for the sake of validity, was not of great importance for my research. If there was a belief that something happened in a certain way, which consequently shaped attitudes and emotions, and then it turned out that the event never happened or it was misunderstood, exaggerated or dramatized, then the significant point was that this interpretation and perception still existed. Therefore my research does not aim to understand exactly what happened during repressive events but the way repression was felt, perceived by activists and participants while at the same time being strategically framed and communicated by social movement organizations. Hence triangulation allowed me to explore whether an idea was considered real in social life, by assessing whether the idea was shared within multiple forms and between respondents.

2.3 Limitations

This study presents a number of limitations that should be taken into account addressed in future research. First, my limited sample of respondents does not allow me to make any generalizations with regard to my findings. Moreover, I could not

interview any activist of Ómnium Cultural, which has been for years, together with the ANC, one of the most influential organizations of the movement. Although I contacted some of their members I only got an answer once my fieldwork stage was over. Second, although I decided to leave political parties out of my analysis, it cannot be denied that in this particular case, and in the timeframe that I am looking at, the discourse of political parties and leading politicians was a key part of the framing practices of the movement, before, during and after repressive events. Third, the interviews were conducted some months after the repressive events and therefore, it is hard to know whether the memories of repressive events are reflecting the actual experiences of my interviewees or if parts of it have been forgotten or consciously or unconsciously modified and reframed. This made difficult drawing a line between initial and personal responses to repressive events and later (or even simultaneous) framing strategies.

Chapter 3 - Background of the Case Study

3.1 Background

The origins of the modern[4] Catalan independence movement can be traced back to 2010 when the Constitutional Court of Spain ruled that some of the articles of the 2006 Statute of Autonomy—which had been agreed with the Spanish government and passed by a referendum in Catalonia—were unconstitutional, and others were to be interpreted restrictively. Popular protest against the decision quickly turned into demands for independence. In 2012, the Catalan National Assembly (ANC) was founded and turned the movement into a mass phenomenon. The popular movement fed upwards to the politicians; a second mass protest on 11 September 2012 (the National Day of Catalonia) explicitly called on the Catalan government to begin the process towards independence. Catalan president at the time called a snap general election, which resulted in a pro-independence majority for the first time in the region's history.

The Government of Catalonia announced a referendum, to be held in November 2014, on the question of statehood, which was ruled unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court and turned into a non-binding "consultation".

On 2017, the new regional president, Carles Puigdemont, announced a binding referendum on independence in October that year.

The referendum that took place on the 1st of October (1-O from now on) was passed by a law issued by the Parliament of Catalonia and declared illegal by the Spanish Constitutional Court after a request from the Spanish government, who declared it a breach of the Spanish constitution. In early September, the High Court of Justice had issued orders to the police to try to prevent the vote, including the detention of various persons responsible for its preparation. Other measures included searching printing establishments, seizing referendum material, blocking websites for the referendum and deploying more than 4,000 police officers to the Catalan region.

Regardless of the attempts to stop the referendum from happening, the Catalan regional government, in collaboration with pro-independence grassroots movements, opened the polling stations. During the day of the Referendum, Spanish security forces began moving into some of the stations to prevent people from casting their ballots which lead to some violent episodes. Hundreds of people were reported injured and the media coverage of the event made possible the diffusion of images and videos that

[4] The movement has existed for decades, however, until 2010 independence was only considered an option by very few people.

rapidly spread across social media and international news channels, attracting truly international attention for the first time. Due to many irregularities in the administration of the vote, international observers declared that the referendum failed to meet the minimum international standards.

Notwithstanding this, the Catalan government declared the independence days later and right after that the Spanish government took absolute control of the region via the application of one disposition of the Spanish Constitution.

On 16th October, a judge of the Audiencia Nacional[5] ordered the pre-trial detention of Jordi Sanchez and Jordi Cuixart, the presidents, respectively, of the pro-Catalan independence organisations the Catalan National Assembly (ANC) and Òmnium Cultural. They were accused of the crime of sedition for coordinating the mass mobilization on the 29th as a response to the registries in Catalan governmental offices and the seizure of electoral material. Shortly after this, the main government officials were prosecuted, some of them were held in preventive imprisonment while some others managed to flee the country.

Since the referendum took place the main civil society organizations of the independence movement have organized several rallies to protest about the police violence on the day of the vote and demand the liberation of the imprisoned activists and politicians and the return of the exiled. Numerous campaigns have been launched to denounce the situation in Catalonia and the international arena.

Regional elections were called in December and the pro-independence parties obtained a tight majority that would allow them again to take over the executive. However, due to the current situation in which the main political leaders have fled the country or been prosecuted or kept in preventive custody, as well as some disagreement between the pro independence block has made impossible so far to form a government. On March 24th new detention orders were issued against the remaining pro-independence political leaders and extradition requested for those abroad leading to the preventive imprisonment of seven more officials. This led to several protests and roadblocks organized by several CDRs. At the same time some articles in Spanish newspapers as well as political figures made statements portraying the CDRs as violent and making comparisons with the urban guerrilla that carried out violent acts during the time of Basque terrorism (kale borroka). Shortly after, at the beginning of April, two members of the CDRs were arrested and charged with terrorism and sedition for organizing the roadblocks.

Not only the December election results, but the general mood in Catalonia, the subsequent protests and the statements by the main civil society organizations

[5] One of the High Courts in Spain.

supporting the independence, indicate that the situation might have now come to a point of no return and that a big part of the Catalonian population will never accept to go back to their status as a region of Spain.

Research on the Catalan independence movement previous to the Referendum in October has mainly tried to identify explicative factors for the increased support for independence in the last years. Drawing on literature on the political process theory, including analysis of political opportunity structures and framing, Bladé (2015) understands the Catalan independence movement as part of a bigger "cycle of contention" (Tarrow, 2011) that started with the economic crisis and the protests against the austerity measures imposed by the Spanish government. She also argues that the development of multiple organizations and networks since these protests, as well as the emergence of new frames representing a willingness of breaking up with the status quo, have served as a political opportunity for the expansion of the independence movement beyond the traditional discourses of Catalan nationalism.

Due to the fact that the events are so recent, there is little academic research on this specific topic. Barceló (2018) looks at how targeted state violence the day of the Referendum has affected the secessionist movement by combining data of the local distribution of state violence to prevent an illegal self-determination referendum and the official results of the regional subsequent elections in December. Looking particularly at electoral mobilization he concludes that the support for pro-independence parties has not been systematically greater in those municipalities that were directly affected by targeted state violence compared to those that were not and that further research is needed. We argue that just looking at electoral mobilization is not enough to understand the actual effects of repression on social movement dynamics.

3.2 Brief catalogue of organizations

ANC

The Catalan National Assembly (ANC) is a non-partisan civil organisation aimed at pursuing the independence of Catalonia. It is managed by a National Secretariat formed by 77 elected members who coordinate the territorial, sectorial and foreign-based delegations. Since its inception in 2012 the ANC has consistently organised mass demonstrations for independence every year and has also played a significant role as a political facilitator by combining pressure on and support for political parties and the Catalan government.

Omnium Cultural

Òmnium Cultural is a Catalan association based in Barcelona. It was created on 11 July 1961 in the context of Francoist Spain when the institutional use of Catalan was forbidden. For years its goals have been focused on promoting the Catalan language and spreading Catalan culture. Over the years it has increased its involvement in broader social issues; in 2012 it committed itself to Catalan independence, specifically demanding the right of self-determination for Catalonia. Since then it has worked closely with the ANC to organize demonstrations demanding the independence.

CDRs

The CDRs or Committees for the Defence of the Republic (Catalan: Comitès de Defensa de la República), or CDR, previously named Committees for the Defence of the Referendum, are a network of assemblies that function on a local, regional and national level with the purpose to defend, at its creation, the Catalan independence referendum and later the Catalan Republic, from a pacifist and civil perspective. The assemblies include members of social and cultural organisations, pro-independence parties and citizens who seek to organise themselves against the repression of the Spanish Government in each town and district. The CDRs were born in September, 2017, as voluntary groups founded by a diverse collective of popular associations with the initial goal of collaborating with the realisation of the Catalan independence referendum (1-O), suspended by the Spanish Constitutional Court. After the referendum, the Committees were the promoters of constant demonstrations and had a key role in the organization of the general strike of October 2017

3.2 Timeline of events

2006

Catalan authorities agree to approve a **new Statute** for the region, which devolves more powers to Catatonia, including finance, health care and education. The Statute is approved by Catalan lawmakers and Spain's national Parliament .

2008

Spain enters a five-year **financial crisis** that prompts harsh austerity measures and economic recession. Many Catalans begin to believe their wealthy region would be better off on its own.

2010

28 Jun 2010: The Spanish **Constitutional Court** in Madrid **strikes down** key parts of the 2006. **Statute** after the People's Party collects signatures to bring it to the High Court.

2012

11 Sept 2012: First major **demonstration** in Catalonia in favor of independence (+1M) Since then, every September 11 there are mass marches for secession.

2014

9 Nov 2014: After Spain's Constitutional Court had ruled that Catalonia cannot proceed with a planned Nov. 9 independence referendum, the Catalan government turns it into a **non-binding consultation.**

2015

Sept 2015: Separatist parties win a **majority in regional elections** in Catalonia on a platform of pushing for independence.

2016

Jan 2016: Carles Puigdemont takes over as president of the Catalan regional government.

13 Mar 2017: The national government bans former Catalan President Artur Mas from holding public office for two years after holding the unofficial November 2014 vote.

2017

9 June 2017: Catalan government announces a new **independence referendum set for Oct. 1.**

7 Sept 2017: Spain's **Constitutional Court suspends the ballot** after a legal challenge from the central government in Madrid.

20 Sept 2017: Spanish **police storm and occupy Catalan government ministries** to search for evidence that the Catalan government is breaking the law by trying to hold a referendum. Thousands of **protesters take to the streets** in response. A dozen **Catalan officials are arrested** by Spanish police for organizing the independence referendum**. Police also seize 10 million ballot papers** during the crackdown.

29-30 Sept 2017: The national government vows to block the vote while Catalan officials vow to proceed with it. **Activists and parents occupy Catalonia schools** to be used as polling stations.

1 Oct 2017, day of the Referendum: Hundreds of people are injured as armed police descend on polling locations in Catalonia while voters cast ballots in the banned referendum. Catalan officials say about 90 percent voted for secession, with about 42 percent voter turnout.

3 Oct 2017: Huge protests and a **general strike** shake Catalonia as King Felipe VI condemns the Catalan government in a television address.

16 Oct 2017: Spain's national court orders the **imprisonment without bail of Jordi Sànchez and Jordi Cuixart**, the leaders of the two main pro-independence civil society organizations (ANC and Ómnium Cultural), accused of the charge of sedition for allegedly instigating the protests on 20 Sept.

21 Oct 2017: **Spanish government suspends Catalonia's autonomy** and says it will impose direct rule from next

27 Oct 2017: **Catalonia declares independence** from Spain in defiance of Madrid's efforts to prevent secession. Spain fires Catalonia's regional government dissolves its parliament and calls for regional elections.

30 Oct 2017: **Puigdemont arrives in Brussels**, Belgium, after fleeing Spain.

2 Nov 2017: A Spanish judge **sends nine former officials of Catalonia's government to jail without bail** for rebellion and sedition.

3 Nov 2017: A Spanish judge issues an **international arrest warrant for Puigdemont and four aides** who were last seen in Brussels. All five former officials are being sought for five different crimes, including rebellion, sedition and embezzlement.

21 Dec 2017, regional elections: Pro-independence parties maintain their majority.

2018

25 Mar 2018: German police arrest Puigdemont as he crossed from Denmark into Germany on his way back to Belgium.

10 Apr 2018: CDR activist arrested on terrorism charges for "organizing" roadblocks to protest the incarceration of pro-independence leaders.

Chapter 4 - The transformative effects of the 1-O:

Outrage, Empowerment and new political spaces

> "I was in a polling station on 1-O, organizing a little bit of everything. After what I experienced that day, the nerves, the cries of happiness and anger, after seeing the images and the violence… I was already a separatist, I have always been, but in that moment, you realize that you have to go one-step further. Being an independence supporter from your sofa is not going to help you to achieve your goals either."[6]

In this chapter, I will analyse how the day of the independence referendum can be understood as a transformative repressive event. I defined transformative repressive events as "dramatic-symbolic events, caused and characterized by repressive regime actions, that come to the attention of many affected citizens within a short period of time and lead to moral shock and a make those who experience them inclined to political action".

By looking at activists and movement participants' testimonies about their personal experiences and impressions that day, first, I will try to make sense of the emotional and cognitive impact of this particular event and understand how it encouraged some movement participants to take a more active role in the movement.

In the next pages I will illustrate how the day of the independence Referendum, became transformative by generating moral shock among movement participants and encouraging them to take a more active role in the movement. In order to do so I will look at activists and movement participants' testimonies about their personal experiences and impressions that day and I will try to make sense of the emotional and cognitive impact of this particular event and understand how it encouraged some movement participants to take a more active role in the movement. Furthermore, I will analyse how the events in the day of the Referendum made possible the opening of new political spaces, through the emergence of the CDRs, the Committes of the Defense of the Referendum (later re-named Committees for the Defense of the Republic). The CDRs became a site where participants of the movement had a first time experience as activists and became aware of their efficiency through self-organization which encouraged them to remain engaged in the movement.

[6] Author's interview with Arturo, CDR and Acampada x la Republica participant, in Barcelona (# 10, 18 Apr 2018)

4.1. Moral Shock

The quote that opened this chapter reflects the emotional connotations that many Catalans link to the 1-O. When I requested my respondents to share their impressions and experiences that day many pointed to the transformative effect it had in their activism and participation in the movement. Agustí Alcoberro, the president of the ANC explained how that day became a turning point for many people:

> "1-O was a very determining day for many people and the feeling was hmm, there were two feelings, the feeling of outrage, for what the State did, but the feeling of pride and victory, that we made the Referendum happen in spite of everything and that emotional change will mark several generations forever. When we think about how a historical memory is built, (…) there are dates that become a turning point for whole generation, in Catalonia the 1-O of 2017 marked a lot of people."[7]

In the experience of the respondents, the day of the referendum became "historical" for many Catalans and resulted in an "emotional change" of a whole generation. These words reflect the transformative effect of this particular event. Agustí Alcoberro described a double feeling: on the one hand, the outrage in the face of the repressive acts by the State, on the other, pride and victory for that "we" achieved.

The generalized sense of outrage or indignation is one of the aspects of the moral shock effect of transformative events. Shultziner defines "*transformative repressive events*" as those transformative events "caused and characterized by repressive regime actions that come to the attention of many affected citizens within a short period of time and lead to cognitive, emotional and behavioural changes that eventually challenge power holders"(2018:53). Although episodes of police violence took place only in some polling stations in Barcelona, images of the incidents were spread through social media and the news almost at the same time as the incidents were taking place. This enabled the moral shock to be experienced not only by those who were planning to cast their ballots, who automatically felt identified with the direct victims of repression, but also by the population in general both in Spain and abroad.

> "When at ten o'clock in the morning images started arriving via CNN or via BBC showing the police beating people like us, people who were in their polling stations like us, the whole thing started to take a completely different dimension, in a way that I even dare to say, became historical"[8].

[7] Author's interview with Agustí Alcoberro, Vice president of the ANC, in Barcelona (#1, 14 Apr 2018)

[8] Author's interview with Andreu, CDR participant, in Barcelona (#1, 19 Apr 2018)

The other aspect of moral shock is the inclination for further political action. This aspect is particularly interesting to understand the effects of transformative repressive events on mobilization (Jasper and Poulsen, 1995) and is one of the factors that can help triggering the paradox of repression. We argue that the experience of the 1-O led to inclination for further political action among the participants of the referendum in three ways:

4.2 The politization and empowerment of citizens through newly opened political spaces: the CDRs

We argue that the 1-O was a key date for the development of the CDRs as a relevant actor within the independence movement. The preparation and defense of the referendum at the grassroots level led to the opening of new political spaces that allowed many participants to have a first experience as activists and encouraged them to engage in further political action.

In order to understand the process of emergence and explosion of the CDRs we have to look back at the events on the 20th September.

> "On the 20th September I think that Catalan society really suffered a major shock, that is, seeing that they were coming to take over our institutions and seeing the way they came put us all on a very big alert, everyone was wondering what was going on. From that moment and until 1-O, I noticed in all the people, a determination that the referendum had to happen no matter what, we could not let them close that door on us, and we could not let them stop us from simply expressing ourselves. Since that day there was a very large mobilization and the Committees for the Defense of the Referendum began to be formed".[9]

During the weeks previous to the referendum, the central government started taking measures to impede the celebration of the vote. This measures came after more than two months of campaign in which the Catalan government and the civil society organizations had been trying to convince the citizens that this time, if they voted yes, independence would be possible. The press chief of the ANC at the time, explains how despite being aware that the central government would try to prevent the vote, they had to keep working as if that was not a problem, they had to make people stay positive and thus, they planned a very optimist and festive campaign with "Hello Republic" as the slogan.[10]

[9] Author´s interview with Ariadna, CDR participant, in Barcelona (#9, 12 Apr 2018)
[10] Author´s interview with Adrià Alsina, ANC Press chief, in Barcelona (#4, 19 Apr 2018)

Then September came and things started getting serious. On 20th September, the police stormed and occupied Catalan government ministries to search for evidence that the Catalan government was breaking the law by trying to hold a referendum. The images of the police entering the Catalan Ministry of Economy were broadcasted on the Catalan news from early in the morning and thousands of protesters took to the streets in response. That day it was made clear that the central government was determined in its will to stop the Referendum, but that the independence movement was also more determined than ever to vote. It is in this context that the Committees for the Defence of the Referendum, the original meaning of the acronym CDR start to emerge. Andreu, a CDR participant explained to me how due to the need to keep the polling stations open for the day of the referendum, neighbours began to organize to see how were they going to defend those polling stations.

> "Because the emergency was to keep the schools open[11] so that we could vote, we need something that is more practical, than the ANC, something that is more on the street. My first contact or my first visual photo of the CDR without knowing what a CDR was at that moment, is an assembly that is spontaneously organized in my polling station, which was the school where I had studied as a child, the day before the Referendum. I saw many neighbors, some of them you would expect them to be there, others surprised you find them there. The night before the referendum is the first time that I visualize that in a palpable way, in which I see neighbors organizing themselves in an assembly in the school to decide how will they keep the school open and how they will respond when the Mossos[12] come if they come etc."[13]

Other respondents also narrated how they first got to know the CDRs the night before the referendum[14]. That night, neighbour assemblies concentrated in the polling stations and some stayed overnight to prevent the police from closing them, they initially adopted the name of Committees for the Defense of the Referendum. Several respondents explained how, during the night, activities and workshops were organized to keep the festive mood on and to have an excuse to maintain the schools open.[15] Everyone got the chance to participate and collaborate in their own way, having a first time experience as activists in this newly opened political space. Furthermore, most of the people didn't even know if they were going to have ballots and ballots boxes the morning after and therefore, the defence of the polling stations

[11] Local schools are generally used as polling stations for elections in Spain.
[12] Catalan police body.
[13] Author´s interview with Andreu, CDR participant, in Barcelona (#5, 19 Apr 2018)
[14] Author´s interviews with Ariadna, Sergi, Joan and Eduard.
[15] Author´s interview with Andreu, Ariadna and Sergi.

became a "symbolic reaffirmation of power and determination", a "way to defend one´s dignity" despite the adverse circumstances.[16]

> "CDRs are basically self-organized people. Therefore, the CDRs are possible because there are a lot of people that are convinced to vote but also that previously assumed a commitment to the Referendum's organization itself. Unfortunately, neither I nor anyone else is going to give you more details[17], but in the end the Referendum, since if it had been organized directly by the government it would have been extremely vulnerable and could have been closed weeks before, what it is decided is to opt for a popular organization. This popular organization generates a series of complicities that in the end end up leading to what we call CDRs today"[18]

After the Referendum, the CDRs renamed themselves as Comittees for the Defenese of the Republic and organized new assemblies to find ways to implement what they believed the people had voted for in the Referendum: and independent Catalan Republic. Andreu, who started being actively involved with the CDR in his neighbourhood the day of the Referendum, explains how there was no need of recruitment or promotional activities:

> "The first assembly after 1-O is amazing and illustrates very well the transversality of the movement. There are people of all ages and political backgrounds. I believe that for many people the day of the Referendum became an act of real sovereignty and therefore a breakup with the constitutional framework of 1978 at a personal and intimate level. The first assemblies are packed, I remember going to assemblies with 150 or 200 people"[19]

After the events of 1-O, many ordinary citizens whose only previous experience had been attending mass rallies organized by ANC or Òmnium Cultural became politically activated and realized that they could do more things than they had been doing until

[16] Author´s interview with Andreu, CDR participant, in Barcelona (#5, 19 Apr 2018)
[17] Due to the investigations that were taking place at the time of the interviews regarding the involvement of Catalan government officials and leading activists on the organization of the Referendum, there was a generalized reservation to share details of the existence of a plan or policy. Most respondents emphasized the spontaneous collaboration of people defending the polling stations, however nobody really seemed to know who or how coordinated volunteers to guard the ballots and ballot boxes.
[18] Author´s interview with Adrià Alsina, ANC press chief (#4, 19 Apr 2018)
[19] Author´s interview with Andreu, CDR participant, in Barcelona (#5, 19 Apr 2018)

then, and the CDRs become the perfect space for that. The CDRs became a "need"[20] and a "tool of self-fulfilment"[21].

In conclusion, the preparation and defence of the Referendum at the very grassroots level led to the opening of new political spaces, the CDRs, through which many citizens had a first time experience as activists. Many participants felt empower by this experience and were compelled to take a more active role in the movement after that day.

4.3 Collective awareness of self-efficiency

At the beginning of this chapter, I have described how moral shocks lead to a double reaction, on the one hand, the feeling of outrage and indignation, on the other the inclination for further political action. I have described how the preparation and defense of the referendum by grassroots initiatives led to the opening of new political spaces through which people could participate and become real activists for the first time. Furthermore, as the Vice President of the ANC expressed, the feeling of indignation was accompanied by a feeling of pride and victory for making the Referendum happen in spite of the adverse circumstances.[22] According to Shultziner, this collective awareness of self-efficiency is a common effect of transformative repressive events (2018:61).

That collective awareness of self-efficacy was expressed in many of the interviews with movement participants as being one of the most satisfying realizations after the 1-O events. Andreu explained that after the previous weeks in which the central government had ordered the searching printing establishments, and eventually seized referendum material and blocked the websites and the electronic systems created for the referendum, people did not really expect having ballots and ballot boxes the day of the referendum.[23] Another respondent explained the feeling of satisfaction when the ballot boxes appeared the morning of the referendum:

> "Around 8 o'clock the ballot boxes appeared, suddenly, and there was a very positive state of excitement, because nobody actually knew how it was going to happen. Mr. Puigdemont said, there would be ballot boxes and such, but of course, we did not really know if they were hidden inside, or outside, or if there were going to be there at all, we did not know! So when we saw them appear there was a feeling of ... I will not say of triumph,

[20] Author's interview with Sergi, CDR participant, in Barcelona (#11, 11 Apr 2018)
[21] Author's interview with Arturo, CDR and Acampada x la Republica participant, in Barcelona (# 10, 18 Apr 2018)
[22] Author's interview with Agustí Alcoberro, Vice president of the ANC, in Barcelona (#1, 14 Apr 2018)
[23] Author´s interview with Andreu, CDR participant, in Barcelona (#5, 19 Apr 2018)

> because of triumph now is not the right word, but of tranquility and a satisfaction of thinking, well, things are coming together"[24]

The feeling of self-efficiency was further reinforced by the realization that the Referendum was successful due to the self-organization of ordinary people, without being coordinated by the government or big organizations such as the ANC:

> "Until 1-O, the institutions were the ones who had been doing more things and taking the risks, but as of 1-O it is the people who have taken the ball and had to mobilize, I think that is very nice and it has become an example or try out of what the Catalan republic has to be. Democracy is in danger in the world if individuals do not realize that it is part of their responsibility, not only to defend it, but to improve it." [25]

Through the experience of the Referendum, participants saw themselves actively and effectively defending their democratic rights, "no longer feeling powerless or complacent regarding their situation and their ability to achieve political change" (Schultziner 2018:61). The same people who had actively participated in the defense of the Referendum, felt compelled to "continue fighting" because the CDR organization to defend the vote had demonstrated that "when simple people get organized, things can be achieved"[26]

4.4. Renewed collective identity and heightened solidarity

> "Since 1-O, if there is something that people are happy about, it is that, in a sense, they have met their neighbors. When I see people who I used to just say hello to, now I stop and talk, because you met that night at the polling station and ended up talking all night, you know? This is giving to the people the chance to get closer, to become a community and to be more social as a way to overcome the isolation that one often feels in a city as big as Barcelona, this is bringing life back to the neighborhoods." [27]

Shultziner argues that another characteristic of transformative repressive events is the creation of a new group identity and heightened solidarity among those who resist. By sharing the experience of resisting, participants might come to see that they have issues, interests and/or sympathies in common with other individuals whom they may have previously perceived as dissimilar. (2018:63)

[24] Author's interview with Sergi, CDR participant, in Barcelona (#11, 11 Apr 2018)
[25] Author´s interview with Andreu, CDR participant, in Barcelona (#5, 19 Apr 2018)
[26] Author´s interview with Eduard and Joan, CDR participants, in Barcelona (#6, 16 Apr 2018)
[27] Author's interview with Eulalia Subira, ANC secretary, in Barcelona (#3, 21 Mar 2018)

The quote that I used to open this section reflects how since 1-O, people are more in contact with their neighbours because they got to know each other the day of the Referendum. Other respondent commented how during the night before the Referendum, she was in constant contact via WhatsApp with acquaintances, colleagues, friends and family that lived in other neighborhoods or towns nearby to find out how the situation was in each polling station, corroborate that there was enough people to defend the station and come to assist them otherwise.[28]

When I asked my respondents to talk about their experiences on 1-O many used the terms "we", "us" or "our".[29] We see how personal experiences are felt as collective experiences at the same time as experiences of violence from others are felt as personal:

> "We have woken up, they have come to beat us and because that hurts, we have all awakened, a lot of consciences have been awakened."[30]

Although there was a pre-existing strong collective identity in the independence movement, the way the events unfolded in the 1-O gave that collective identity further meaning, making people come closer at the neighborhood level and taking pride of their joint efforts of resistance.

4.5 Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have tried to outline the transformative effects that dramatic events can have on a social movement and their participants. I argue that the day of the Referendum became a transformative repressive event because it generated moral shock among the participants of the independence movement. This moral shock was experienced through a double feeling of outrage and empowerment that boosted their will to engage in further political action. Moreover the fact that the Referendum had to be organized and defended by means of the initiative of citizens at the grassroots level, opened up new political spaces through which many participants experienced activism for the first time. These newly opened political spaces, led to the consolidation of the CDRs which further channeled the initial will of many citizens to take a more active role in the movement after the moral shock of the 1-O. Finally, the feeling of empowerment was further heightened by the collective awareness of self-efficiency and the renewed collective identity and solidarity of those who resisted.

Repressive events have an impact on social movements affecting the perceptions, goals and behaviors of those who experience them. The paradox of repression, can to some extent, be triggered by particularly dramatic events. However, this is generally not

[28] Author´s interview with Ariadna, CDR participant, in Barcelona (#9, 12 Apr 2018)
[29] Author's interviews with Ariadna, Sergi, Andreu and Xavier.
[30] Author´s interview with Ariadna, CDR participant, in Barcelona (#9, 12 Apr 2018)

enough to sustain mobilization in the long run. In the following chapters we will look at how social movement activists and organizations strategically make use of repressive events and the moral outrage they cause in order to boost mobilization and prompt the backfire effects of repression.

Chapter 5 - Repression management by social movements: Framing repression

In Chapter 4 I have analysed how repressive events can become transformational by generating moral shock and new motivations for further political engagement. Furthermore, I have looked at how new political spaces opened up as a result of this, and became channels through which participants could channel that initial empowerment and inclination to action.

These transformations are only one side of the paradox of repression. Some authors argue that it is the interpretations assigned to the event by participants and observers which determine its transformative potential (McAdam and Sewell, 2001). Moreover, the past research has shown that social movements and their activists also have an impact on the outcomes of repression (Opp and Rohel, 1990). Social movements can "manage" repression through tactical choice and strategy in order to maintain mobilization and convince people that their cause is worth fighting for. Smithey and Kurtz (2018) argue that the paradox of repression is often more a cultural phenomenon than a political one. Activists can "manage" the most symbolic aspects of repressive events and influence the frames that are used by participants to make sense of these events and their situation in general.

Movement activists and organizations can "set the stage" in which repression takes place, by framing it in ways that relate to ideas of justice and injustice. By linking repressive events to widely recognized narratives, social movements can increase the motivation of participants to stay mobilized and also activate bystanders that perceive resonance between their identity and the frames proffered by movement participants.

In this chapter I will focus on particular strategies used by the Catalan independence movement to manage the perception of repression. I will try to identify framing strategies that have been deployed movement activists in order to reinforce the moral shock effect of repressive events and link repression to broader aspects of culture that resonate among participants´ identities, memories and problems. All in all, I will look at how repressive events have been framed by different activists and organizations of the Catalan independence movement to trigger the backfire effects of repression and maintain mobilization.

5.1 "Setting the stage": histories of repression

The first strategy we observed in our case study emphasizes the importance of borrowing powerful symbols and narratives that resonate among movement participants and the general public.

Some weeks after the referendum, the presidents of the two main civil society organizations the ANC and Omnium Cultural, were sent to preventive prison without bail for allegedly coordinating mass mobilizations on the 20th of September. Since the very first day of their imprisonment, the movement began referring to them as political prisoners. These are two fragments of the speeches held by the vice presidents of the ANC and Omnium Cultural during one of the first rallies after the imprisonment of the two activists.

> "The presidents of ANC and Omnium are political prisoners and hostages of the Kingdom of Spain"[31]

> "Not even the Franco regime was shameless enough for locking the president of the Omnium in prison (..) we will go out every day to demand the release of the political prisoners and to claim a democracy that is in danger "[32]

Ever since the 1-O, this has been one of the most powerful and echoed frames of the movement. By framing the 1-O and subsequent repressive events in a way that make people recall the times of the Franco dictatorship, these events removed the boundary between the present and the past. Smithey and Kurtz argue that "the preservation and appropriation of histories of repression can prepare activists and publics to interpret contemporary repression as yet another affront and indignity" (2018:172). These frames are not new; they have always been part of the Catalan traditional nationalism toolkit, but never since after Franco died had they been so resonant.

This frames are reproduced by movement participants in the way they describe how they experienced particular repressive events. One of my respondents narrated how the attitude of the police on the day of the Referendum reminded him of the times of Franco:

> "The attitude of the police, was really ... apart from the fact that they look scary, because of course they look like Robocop[33], with all this paraphernalia that they wear. They were not visually aggressive, but with an attitude of tremendous anger. Silently, they did their job and gave a

[31] Fragment of the speech of Agustí Alcoberro, vice president of the ANC, during the protests organized after the imprisonment of the presidents of ANC and Omnium, 17 oct 2017: El Independiente, Sánchez y Cuixart "son presos políticos y rehenes del Reino de España", 17 Oct 2017.

[32] Fragment of the speech of Marcel Mauri, vice president of Omnium Cultural, during the protests organized after the imprisonment of the presidents of ANC and Omnium, 17 oct 2017: in El Independiente, Sánchez y Cuixart "son presos políticos y rehenes del Reino de España", 17 Oct 2017.

[33] *RoboCop* is a 1987 American cyberpunk action film about a superhuman cyborg law enforcer known as RoboCop

> worthy image of a fascist police. I've lived in Franco's time, I've been in demonstrations, and a good bit the same feeling".[34]

For this respondent, resisting before the Spanish national police threw him back in time to his youth and the demonstrations he attended against the Franco dictatorship. As one could expect, this frames are particularly resonant for those people who lived the dictatorship.

After one of my interviews with a CDR participant in a café in Barcelona, an old woman showed up. My respondent introduced her as Sole. I firstly thought it was his mom or even his grandmother but then they told me how they had met in a demonstration and became friends. My respondent explained how he admired this old lady and her determination to protest and denounce the injustices as she did back at the time. "She was chased by *los grises*[35] when she was younger" he said. Although I did not have the time to interview her, we had a quick chat and Sole told me how in the last months she had realized that things were coming back to how they were with Franco, and that she felt the urge to do something and that way she started participating in a CDR. This shows how old people have felt identified with these frames in a different way than younger participants that did not experienced the dictatorship in their lives.

In order to further blur the boundary between the present and the past, repression needs to be framed in a way that not only makes older participants recall memories of past times, but also that convinces younger participants that current repression is not just a reflection of how the State used to be, but a sign of how it still is. One thing that respondents keep repeating is that they "expected" the State to respond repressively.

> "We trusted, no, we trusted no, sorry, we expected, that the Spanish State would act in a repressive manner, but we did not expect it to do so with such brutality."

Other respondent argued that what repression has shown is that the Spanish state is repressive in its nature, and therefore, that repression can be "expected" because although Franco died, many of the people who supported Franco at the time, are still holding power positions in the Spanish institutions.

> "Somehow, the conviction is not that suddenly the Spanish state has become repressive to face us, somehow the conviction is that the Spanish state has always been repressive in nature. Franco died but the Franco regime did not die. There is a series of judges, above all, and that is very clear now, that were there when Franco alive and they are still there There

[34] Author's interview with Sergi, CDR participant, in Barcelona (#11, 11 Apr 2018)
[35] Colloquial for Francoist police

> are people like Martín Villa, who was a Francoist torturer, who is part of the National Police; Pérez de los Cobos, who led the coordination, or the lack of coordination, of the 1-O of the National Police and the Civil Guard[36], is a man who showed up dressed as a legionary when the coup d'état took place, that is documented, he volunteered to assist Tejero[37] in his coup d'état ... I mean, what I mean is that the Spanish state is rotten with people who were already there when Franco was in power, Franco gave power to the king, it is also documented by telling him, the only thing that matters is that you maintain the unity of Spain, and that is what has happened in recent months, all this has been confirmed. What has been shown is that the most essential basic precepts of Francoism are the real limits that exist in this State, that the monarchy or the unity of Spain, that is above democracy, democratic values, human rights, social and civil rights. In other words, Through repression, the state has managed to turn the independence cause into a cause of rights, a cause of democracy really."[38]

This quote reflects the many ways in which current repression can be portrayed as yet another sign that the authoritarian character of the Spanish state during the dictatorship is still alive, or in the words of the respondent, "Franco died but the Francoist regime did not". By emphasizing the fact that certain power holders making decisions regarding the way to handle the situation in Catalonia were part of the social elite of the Franco dictatorship, social movements can frame repressive events as the *modus operandi* of those actors and the state in general. This same strategy is used to portray the party in government as a successor of the regime.

> "It is a total dictatorship like when Francisco Franco was in power. Let's recall that a minister of Franco was the one who founded *Alianza Popular* that later became PP and those are the one in government now."[39]

By framing repressive events and repression in general as a natural characteristic of the Spanish state, participants convince themselves and others that Spain has never been a democracy that its institutions are "rotten" and governed by the "heirs" of the dictatorship and that repression is their tool when people express their disagreement with the status quo.

> "We are in a country, Spain, which is cutting back on freedoms, but it is nothing new. It is something that has been occurring throughout the history of the Spanish state and somehow seems a vice of the elites who

[36] An special Spanish national police body.
[37] Antonio Tejero Molina is a Spanish former Lieutenant Colonel of the Civil Guardl, and the most prominent figure in the failed coup d'état against Spanish democracy on 23 February 1981.
[38] Author´s interview with Andreu, CDR participant, in Barcelona (#5, 19 Apr 2018)
[39] Author´s interview with Mateu, CDR participant, in Barcelona (#5, 18 Apr 2018)

> persist in power, times change, dictators die, but certain elites persist in power, maintain their ways of functioning and that do not seem to understand democracy, they understand power as a game of their own and not as a responsibility towards the citizens."[40]

Movement activists do not invent negative characterizations of their antagonists, rather they focus attention on amplified selected beliefs and characterizations that have been associated historically with a particular group, organization or in this case, a particular regime.

These kinds of frames are also present in the official statements organizations issue after repressive events. The CDRs in several of their twitter communications use similar expressions to frame repression as an example of the survival over years of elements of the dictatorship. As an example we can quote the final paragraph of an official communication posted on twitter through their central account:

> "Let's break the chains and the oppression of this State, prison of peoples and people! Against the regime of 78, against its Francoist monarchy, against the coup d'etat of the Kingdom of Spain! Today 23F, the day in which a colonel of the Civil Guard carried out a coup in 1981, we reaffirm ourselves in the nonviolent struggle and civil disobedience against their unjust laws that imprison us, blocking this superior court of justice of Catalonia, full of injustice and shame"[41]

Movement activists and participants are not the only ones framing repressive events. The state, in order to maintain its legitimacy engages in framing contests as well to fashion understandings of events that oppose those spread by movements. The kind of frames the State has employed to justify its actions in Catalonia draw on legal principles such as the rule of law and the Constitution. However, symbolically these frames are less appealing than those used by the movement. Although I cannot engage in an analysis of the framing contests between the movement and the State, I find interesting that even these counter frames of the state can be reframed and linked back to themes of the dictatorship. One of my respondents, when asked about is opinion regarding the fact that the Spanish state is making sure that the rule of law prevails because the Referendum was declared illegal answered:

> "I believe that here the Spanish State has confused what is the rule of law. With Franco we also had a State of laws, with him there were also laws, quit pulling my leg. One thing is the rule of law, which is not only the laws, but who makes them, how they are done, how is dialogue reached to do

[40] Author´s interview with Andreu, CDR participant, in Barcelona (#5, 19 Apr 2018)
[41] Posted on Twitter by @CDRCatOficial, 23 Feb 2018:
https://twitter.com/CDRCatOficial/status/966981153386319872

> them and to preserve the rights of social minorities, homosexuals, Catalans, women, the elderly ... That's what it is the Rule of Law is, the rule of law is a state of politics, not a state of repression."[42]

To sum up, by framing repression and repressive events in a way that make people recall the times of the dictatorship, and portraying the State and the institutions as "heirs" of the Franco regime, movements can reinforce the resonance of their frames and further delegitimize power holders.

5.2. Bringing bystanders on board through diagnostic framing

Benford and Snow (2000:614) identify three core tasks in the framing process: the diagnostic, the prognostic, and the motivational, all of which SMO actors use to manage impressions. In their words, movement adherents negotiate a shared understanding of some problematic condition or situation they define as in need of change, make attributions regarding who or what is to blame, articulate an alternative set of arrangements, and urge others to act in concert to affect change. A major aspect of the diagnostic process is the establishment of what William Gamson (1995) calls "injustice frames" that define movement participants as victims. Injustice frames are thus a mode of interpretation that often precedes "collective noncompliance, protest, and or rebellion" (Benford and Snow 2000:614).

In the last years, the Catalan independence movement identified the Spanish state as the problematic condition that did not allow Catalonia to pursue its democratic right to self-determination. Ever since the 1-O and, as described in the previous section, repression by the state has strengthen that diagnosis, giving the movement the opportunity to reinforce injustice frames by making associations between repressive events and authoritarian practices that remind participants of those employed during the Franco dictatorship. Diagnostic framing involves identifying not only aspects of the system that need to change but also the linkage between the repression movement participants have suffered and the inherent problems and injustice of the system itself (Smithey and Kurtz 2018:174). In this sense, particular repressive events can be framed as symptomatic of what is wrong with the system in the first place.

Repression can make the diagnostic framing of social movements much stronger, in a way that they even resonate among bystanders that might have not considered that there was some sort of problem with the system until then.

> "The issue of then political prisoners is a subject that mobilizes many more people than the issue of independence, because people experience it on a

[42] Author's interview with Sergi, CDR participant, in Barcelona (#11, 11 Apr 2018)

> sentimental level, on an affective level, this is as if a relative of yours was in jail, that's how Many people are living, and non-politicized people have mobilized because they believe it is an injustice that these people are in jail, that is, the batons on 1-O and the prisoners afterwards have made the movement grow. If we won the 21D elections it was for the political prisoners, I think that was a definitive argument."[43]

This remark by the vice-president of the ANC shows how repressive acts can turn in the advantage of a movement. When the ANC organized rallies against the imprisonment of activists people who might have not felt identified with the independence cause, became activated because considered that action to be an injustice. In the opinion of Alcoberro this might have been the reason for the pro-independence parties to win the regional elections in December. By the time of the elections not only the presidents of the civil society organizations but also several members of the government had been imprisoned and the electoral campaign touched upon this issue. This other respondent expressed a similar idea:

> "The date of the imprisonment of "the Jordis"[44] is key. Because the Jordis were not politicians, they had nothing to do with... If they were the ones who dispersed the mobilization at the end of the day and they were the ones that were making the people stay calmed. So it seems very unfair because they have always defended that everything the movement does has to be peaceful. So I think that was a point in time when a lot of people said, "I am joining". In fact there are many "independentistas"[45] who are not in this for the independence, but who have joined because of the circumstances of repression, because of the beatings and what is happening now"[46]

Furthermore, the injustice of the Catalan situation was linked to other struggles by diagnostically framing the Spanish State as the root of all those problems. This meant that the movement stopped framing the situation as injustice against Catalans to start framing it as injustice against everyone. By framing repressive events as a symptom of the inherent injustice of the system, it is not even necessary anymore to be fully in favour of the independence of Catalonia in order to join the movement. Sometimes it is not even necessary to be Catalan.

In many occasions, CDR participants described the emergence of the CDR phenomenon as a way to respond to the "exceptional circumstances in which there is a

[43] Author's interview with Agustí Alcoberro, Vice president of the ANC, in Barcelona (#1, 14 Apr 2018)
[44] Referring to Jordi Sanchez and Jordi Cuixart, the activists imprisoned.
[45] Participants of the independence movement.
[46] Author´s interview with Ariadna, CDR participant, in Barcelona (#9, 12 Apr 2018)

threat of basic civil, political, social and human rights"[47]. One of my respondents explained how he has started a new initiative which he called "itinerant CDR" whose objective is to go to other parts of Spain to help people that are also experiencing the injustices of the Spanish State in different ways. He organizes weekend trips for people, mostly CDR participants in Catalonia, who want other parts of the country and join and support other groups in denouncing different situations of injustice.

> "What we want is to help other people who are also in the same situation, so we have called it itinerant, we are cooperating with the neighbors of Murcia who are protesting against the construction of the train tracks, the protests against pollution in Huelva, with the homeless people in Barcelona, we want to go to Altsasu… the goal is that, the goal is that instead of fighting separately, we have a common cause that is fighting repression and to make everyone that is having a bad time come closer. What we want to transmit to the people is that we have to fight together because what they want is to make us go against each other, they do not want us to fight together, because the State can control the Catalans, and the Murcians separately ... But if we are the Catalans, the pensioners, the unemployed, the evicted… all fighting together, we are much stronger. This is making people realize that it is not just us, but that they also have the same problems"[48]

The respondent made reference to all sorts of contentious incidents that have become controversial in Spain in the last months and frames them as symptoms of the inherent injustice of the Spanish state. In this sense, "repression" comes to be identified with generalized injustice and the Catalan cause is framed as just another example of State oppression. The same is expressed by other respondents who make correlations between the case and other controversial situations in which the State has restricted freedoms and rights of groups or individuals:

> "I believe that in the end what is happening to Valtonic, , to Pablo Hassel[49], to Junqueras to the boys of Altsasu, what is happening in Murcia, in Asturias with the miners ... all these struggles are the same, it is the result of an oligarchic state that exercises power to their advantage, if they have to repress you because it bothers them what you say or do"[50]

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[47] Author´s interview with Andreu, CDR participant, in Barcelona (#5, 19 Apr 2018)
[48] Author´s interview with Eduard and Joan, CDR participants, in Barcelona (#6, 16 Apr 2018)
[49] Valtonic and Pablo Hassel are two Spanish rappers who have been condemned to prison after the Supreme Court ruled that their lyrics contained defamations against the Spanish royal family and glorification of terrorism. See: Independent, Rapper jailed for three and a half years after criticizing Spanish royal family, 24 Feb 2018
[50] Author´s interview with Andreu, CDR participant, in Barcelona (#5, 19 Apr 2018)

By framing repression as a symptom of the generalized injustice inherent to the Spanish political system, social movement construct new meanings for their cause that might appeal to bystanders in Catalonia but also in other parts of the country if for whatever reason they feel disappointed or unhappy about aspects of the socio-political situation in Spain.

> "What is breaking Spain is not only that there are two or two and a half million people in favour of the independence in Catalonia. What breaks Spain It is a wall of shame in Murcia, evicted people, people sleeping in the street, poverty... they steal your money and give it to some banks, they tell you that there is no money for pensions and they buy planes or tanks, the politicians raise their salaries... That's what breaks Spain, when they tell you, you have to tighten your belt, but I'm going to raise my salary twenty-eight thousand Euros you say, man maybe this is not right. A bank bailout that we are paying and will pay back for many years, an external debt of thirty-six billion, with "b", which is the second largest on the planet after the US... That is what is breaking up Spain. The Spanish State is creating such an environment of injustice that it is not just about the Catalans or Murcia, it is about the pensioners, the feminists and issues of equality... When I compare Spain to Europe... I have been embarrassed and I have had to call some people´s attention in the subway because I think it is abhorrent the kind of things women have to endure sometimes. The problem of the State is not in Catalonia, Catalonia is used to cover all the other shit, but really they are creating such breeding ground that in the end even Andalusia will ask for independence."

This final quote by one of my respondents reflects how many different issues can be included in the injustice frames fashioned by the movement. From social and economic justice issues to feminism, every aspect that might generate discontent among the Spanish population is a symptom of the actual cause of the problem, the inherently unjust nature of the State.

5.3 Conclusions

Throughout this chapter I have described the ways in which activists and participants of the independence movement have framed repression and repressive events in order to increase their potential transformative effects and the likeliness of the paradox of repression being triggered. We have illustrated two main framing strategies.

First, by framing repression and repressive events in a way that make people recall the times of the Franco dictatorship, social movements can enhance the resonance of those

frames among older participants of the movement who remember their struggles back at the time can feel identified with those frames. Furthermore, by portraying the State and the institutions as "heirs" of the Franco regime, and repressive events as the modus operandi of the Spanish political system, movements can reinforce the resonance of their frames among the general population and further delegitimize power holders.

Second, by linking the Catalan cause to other struggles outside Catalonia and framing repressive events as yet another symptom of the inherent injustice of the Spanish state, the Catalan independence movement has amplified its diagnostic frames in order to appeal to bystanders both in Catalonia and other parts of Spain and reinforce public outrage and the transformative potential of those repressive events.

Conclusions

The main aim of this six month research-project was to better understand the dynamics of the paradox of repression by looking at a particular case study, the Catalan independence movement. In this sense, the main research question was formulated as follows:

How has State repression affected the dynamics and development of the Catalan independence movement in Barcelona between September 2017 and April 2018?

Additionally, the research was intended to shed some more light on the relative impact of tactics, on the one hand, and context, on the other, in order to bring together agency and structure in the understanding of the paradox. With this in mind, I proposed to answer the main research question by looking at the concurrent processes that transformative events and repression management set into motion. This led to two main sub-questions:

How have repressive events had a transformative effect on the Catalan independence movement participants and activists?

And how have repressive events been strategically framed by the Catalan independence movement participants and activists?

This thesis has tried to answer these sub-questions by, on the one hand, analysing the way the movement participants experienced one particular repressive event, the day of the independence referendum, and on the other hand, understanding the ways that event and subsequent episodes of repression were framed by movement activists and participants.

The day of the referendum became a transformative repressive event in the sense that it generated moral shock among the participants of the independence movement. This moral shock was experienced through a double feeling of outrage and empowerment that boosted their will to engage in further political action. Moreover the fact that the Referendum had to be organized and defended by means of the initiative of citizens at the grassroots level, opened up new political spaces through which many participants experienced activism for the first time. These newly opened political spaces, led to the consolidation of a new kind of social movement organization, the CDRs which further channeled the initial will of many citizens to take a more active role in the movement after the moral shock of the 1-O. Finally, the feeling of empowerment was further heightened by the collective awareness of self-efficiency and the renewed collective identity and solidarity of those who resisted.

Subsequently, activists and participants of the independence movement have framed repression and repressive events in order to increase their potential transformative effects. First, the independence movement activists and participants have framed repression and repressive events in a way that make people recall the times of the Franco dictatorship. By doing this, the movement enhanced the frame's resonance among older participants of the movement who remember their struggles back at the time and felt identified with those frames. Furthermore, by portraying the State and the institutions as "heirs" of the Franco regime, and repressive events as the modus operandi of the Spanish political system, the movement attempted to fashion those frames among the general population and to further delegitimize power holders. Second, by linking the Catalan cause to other struggles outside Catalonia and framing repressive events as yet another symptom of the inherent injustice of the Spanish state, the Catalan independence movement amplified its diagnostic frames in order to appeal to bystanders both in Catalonia and other parts of Spain and reinforce public outrage and thus the transformative potential of those repressive events.

By looking at a recent case-study, this thesis can contribute to the current debate on the dynamics of the paradox of repression and provide new insights on the usefulness of analyzing the implications and particularities of this phenomenon in a western-European democracy. Much of the theoretical aspects of the paradox of repression have been built from case studies focusing on authoritarian or hybrid regimes. I believe that it is equally important to analyze its impacts in democratic regimes in order to understand those dynamics.

Furthermore, this thesis has contributed to the theory by showing the need to look at both structure and tactics in order to better understand the relationship between repression and mobilization. By using this double perspective we have shown that repressive events are not just contextual factors that have an impact on social movements and mobilization but also tools that can be used by social movements in their meaning making practices. By pairing the concepts of "transformative events" and "repression management" in the same scenario (the Catalan independence movement) and looking at the processes they set in motion we have shown that both seem to have an impact in the repression-mobilization nexus.

Nevertheless, several aspects remain unclear. First, it is important to note that although examined separately, it is hard to draw a line between these two processes. The effects of transformative events and the framing strategies of social movements are in many occasions intertwined. The day of the Catalan independence referendum was an event for which many participants had prepared in advance. The different measures to crackdown the vote took by the Spanish government the previous weeks were clear

indicators that the State had no intentions to let that referendum happen. During these previous days as well as during the 1-O the movement had already been framing the event prospectively, which could have had an impact on the emotional, cognitive and behavioral effects of the event itself. Furthermore, the interviews with movement participants were conducted between 7 and 8 months after the event took place, and therefore their memories might have been affected by the frames fashioned by the movement in the last months, leading to distortions, dramatization or exaggerations of how they actually felt that day. Are the interviewed participants just framing that event as transformative or was the event transformative in itself? The answer is probably both, but further research on this puzzling question would allow for a better understanding of the relative weight of events and strategies on triggering the paradox of repression.

Other important limitation is that, for the sake of clarity, I just focused on the framing of repressive events by social movement participants and activists. However, repressive events are contested sites of meaning making and several actors participate in the framing contest. Apart from the social movement participants, the State, the media, bystanders, counter-movements and even international political actors such as the EU got involved in the meaning contests to define and assess the situation in Catalonia. Just by reading Spanish and Catalan newspapers daily during my fieldwork, I was astonished to see how the same situations could be interpreted in such different ways. I consider this aspect of the Catalan case is worth further research.

Finally, throughout this thesis I have limited my analysis to just one aspect of repression management by social movements, the one that deals with the the most symbolic aspects of repressive events and their perception. However, social movements have more ways to trigger the paradox of repression. Some examples are organizational tactics and non-violent strategies. As we saw in Chapter 4, repressive events led to the emergence of a new organization within the movement, the CDRs. This organization has a different organizational profile (decentralization, no leadership, immediate action) which has resulted more resistant against repression than the traditional organizations of the independence movement. This is one aspect of "repression management" that also deserves more attention. Further research should look at the implications of strategic organizational tactics for the paradox of repression.

I believe that further analysis of this line of research within social movement studies can provide relevant insights not only for scholars but also for policy-makers and activists. In the case of the Catalan independence movement, a more grounded understanding of the ways in which certain state decisions and actions can bring about unintended consequences and backfire, could inform policy-makers about the risks of

certain policies. Furthermore it can educate activists on the different strategies that can be used to put into practice non-violent resistance.

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ANNEX 1 – List of interviews

Interview Number	Name	Date	Personal information on research participant	Classification	Interview details
1	Agustí Alcoberro	14/03/18	Vice President of the ANC	Movement activist	Single interview conducted in Barcelona, recorded.
2	Angels Folch i Borrás	14/03/18	Member of the ANC National Secretariat	Movement activist	Single interview conducted in Barcelona, recorded.
3	Eulàlia Subira	21/03/18	Secretary of the ANC	Movement activist	Single interview conducted in Barcelona, recorded.
4	Adrià Alsina	19/04/18	Press Chief of the ANC until Feb 2018	Movement activist	Single interview conducted in Barcelona, recorded.
5	Andreu	19/04/18	CDR active participant	Movement activist	Single interview conducted in Barcelona, recorded.
6	Eduard Joan	16/04/2017	CDR active participant CDR active participant	Movement activists	Duo interview conducted in Barcelona, recorded.
7	Mateu	18/04/18	Acampada x la Republica participant	Movement activist	Single interview conducted in Barcelona, recorded.
8	Oriol	17/04/18	Member of ANC and	Movement	Single

			Ómnium Cultural	participant	interview conducted in Barcelona, recorded.
9	Ariadna	12/04/18	CDR participant	Movement participant	Single interview conducted in Barcelona, recorded.
10	Arturo	18/04/18	CDR and Acampada x la Republica participant	Movement activist	Single interview conducted in Barcelona, recorded.
11	Sergi	11/04/18	CDR participant	Movement participant	Single interview conducted in Barcelona, recorded.
12	Xavier	12/04/18	CDR active participant	Movement activist	Single interview conducted in Barcelona, recorded.