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Place and local identity in the Europe of nations: Catalonia and its cities in Restoration Spain (1875–1923)

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Abstract

This article suggests that local places and civic identities were historically relevant in the period when national politics and cultures emerged in Europe but have largely not received due attention in the historiography. It argues that the production of the local is a significant factor for understanding the configuration of the nation and that it was tied to how communities—and the agents that constituted them—constructed their own subjectivity and negotiated their place in the social world. It first provides a review of recent historical studies on collective territorial identities to underscore the relative lack of attention given to the local dimension and identify approaches that can be applied to the study of local cultures. It then focuses on the case of Catalonia in Restoration Spain, showing how region-building dynamics and nationalisation processes coexisted and interacted with strongly assertive civic identities.

KEYWORDS

cultural memories, historiography, localism, nationalism, territorial identities

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1 | INTRODUCTION

The study of nationalisms, national identities and nationalisation processes has been one of the most prominent research areas in European history in recent decades (Berger & Storm, 2019). Comparatively speaking, far less attention has been paid to subnational identities. It is true that the study of territorial identities has come to actively incorporate regions in the past 30 years (Augusteijn & Storm, 2012; Núñez & Storm, 2019), albeit often as a secondary topic and with the ultimate aim of more accurately discussing the categories—and the processes of formation, socialisation and legitimisation—of the nation and the nation-state, which continue to take centre stage in academic research (and politics).

In contrast, scant attention has been paid to the political and cultural expressions of local places. The dominant view continues to be that local environments passively receive identities, serve as reservoirs for residual or reactionary identities or, in any case, what is expressed there is of little relevance for understanding important historical processes. After all, it must not be forgotten that modern nations and modern history as a field of knowledge have had a mutually constituent relationship (Berger & Conrad, 2015). The role of historiography in the construction and legitimisation of a national order and the hegemonic position that modernisation theories maintained in social thought during much of the 20th century are two factors that help explain the subordinate position that the study of local places has occupied in the field of history and the consequent relative lack of interest in the identities associated with these places. According to historical analysis anchored in modernisation theories, national cultures, identities and movements were attributes and mechanisms that were functionally adapted to modern societies that had undergone certain structural transformations and institutional developments (economic change; increased mobility, communication and exchange between different places; urbanisation; new forms of social stratification; political and administrative power becoming centralised in the state; etc.). The devaluation of subnational places and the identities and loyalties tied to them was seen as going hand in hand with these processes. Accordingly, the historical study of subnational places generally played a marginal and subsidiary role, and the growing professionalisation of historiography may have accentuated this tendency (Applegate, 1999; Cabo & Molina, 2009; Núñez, 2012).

It evidently cannot be ignored that what are known as the spatial turn and the cultural turn have contributed to the local dimension being viewed in a new light, at least theoretically speaking (Carasa, 2007; Confino, 2006; Núñez, 2006; Quiroga, 2014; Storm, 2019; Warf & Arias, 2009). Nevertheless, the local has been a significant focus of analysis in only a small fraction of studies dealing with collective territorial identities (Confino, 2006). Despite the scarcity of such studies, a number of researchers have observed that cities are able to generate their own narratives and memories and have pointed to the need to consider the cultures and forms of loyalty that are generated in these places and their complex, multidirectional and mutually constituent relationship with regional, national, transnational and global identities (Beyen & Deseure, 2015; Leerssen, 2015; Núñez, 2006, 2012; Núñez & Storm, 2019, pp. 348–351; Saunier, 1998; Whyte & Zimmer, 2011).

The local is understood in this study as the place that is directly experienced in everyday life, where the most immediate forms of interaction and sociability occur. It is the context in which one's self-perception and the human world to which one belongs are primarily shaped (Appadurai, 1996, pp. 178–179; Carasa, 2007, p. 14; Colomines & Olmos, 1991; Núñez, 2012, p. 24). The local will also be associated in this article with social formations on a smaller scale than the region and can refer to a variety of categories of place, though the focus here is on cities, and particularly medium-sized cities rather than large cities. The study of localities of this type can help to create a more complex and nuanced perspective, one that avoids the binary framing that has often opposed city and countryside in overly absolute terms, thus making it difficult to observe territorial identities other than national identities and to more thoroughly understand nationalisation processes themselves.

This article suggests—without wishing to reify or substantialise any group (Brubaker, 2002)—that local places and the identities associated with them had a presence and a significance that is not reflected in the relatively scant attention that the academic literature has given to the local factor in the politics and culture of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. At the same time, it seeks to demonstrate that there are aspects of historiographical innovation

in the discussion of national and regional identities that may be of use for examining local cultures and that some existing studies in the field of history, largely focused on cities, provide potential points of reference. It likewise argues that local places and identities were (re)formulated during this period, encouraged by the processes of nation- and state-building, in particular, and the emergence of modernity, in a broader sense. Finally, it posits that the construction of places and political subjectivities, on the one hand, and the formation of local identities, on the other, are closely interdependent processes and that the relationship between local identities and other expressions of collective territorial allegiance (such as regional and national ones) was not zero-sum but complex, multidirectional and contextual.

The first part of this article provides a brief, exploratory and non-exhaustive review of recent trends in historical research on collective territorial identities. In addition to the literature focused on Spain, this review will cover the historiographies of three other Western European countries, France, Italy and Germany, which include works that are relevant to the questions raised in this article and have had differing amounts of influence on discussion of these topics in the historiography of Spain. In each case, the focus will be primarily on studies that deal with the last three decades of the 19th century and the first quarter of the 20th century. This time frame has been deliberately chosen because it was a key period in European history with regard to the invention of mass-produced traditions, the nationalisation of culture and the forging and socialisation of regional identities (Hobsbawm, 1983; Leerssen, 2006; Storm, 2010).

The second section focuses specifically on Spain during the Bourbon Restoration (1875–1923). Within this historical context, special attention will be paid to Catalonia, which makes for an interesting case study for multiple reasons. Firstly, it was a territory characterised by the existence of contrasting realities that was unevenly affected by the emergence of modernity. Secondly, it was a regional area that was increasingly articulated around Barcelona but maintained a significant network of medium-sized cities that have played a notable role in shaping modern Catalonia (Casassas, 2009, pp. 129–158). Lastly, a noteworthy distinctive culture and identity and a strong regionalist movement were articulated there, and a segment of Catalan society promoted an alternative nationalising project to that of Spain. In addition to presenting certain strongly assertive civic identities that generated self-referential *-isms*, this article will use a different strategy to look at local cultures. With the assumption that the uses and management of the past in the present are part of what constitutes group identities, it will examine one of the categories of *lieux de mémoire* (Nora, 1997, pp. 23–43) that was most common in Catalan cities—and has received the least scholarly attention—during this period: portrait galleries of illustrious locals. These series of paintings are a magnificent example of the capacity and desire of cities (including more modestly sized ones) to create and manage their own symbolic capital and project an image of the city and the local community—that is, an identity—both inwardly and outwardly.

2 | THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF TERRITORIAL IDENTITIES: SKETCHING A PANORAMA

2.1 | Centring the nation (and the region)

Academic historians' approaches to the study of nations and nationalism have been constantly renewed over the past 40 years (Breuilly, 2013; Özkirimli, 2010; Smith, 2010). The publication in the 1980s of renowned works by scholars such as John Breuilly, Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson, Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger and Anthony D. Smith was a turning point. Since then, the study of nationalisms and national identities has become an interdisciplinary research area. In the field of history, the literature has been enriched in recent years by the incorporation of innovative approaches that integrate perspectives from the cultural turn and the spatial turn, gender studies and postcolonialism (Berger & Storm, 2019).

While the study of nationalism has been the focus of much historical research, collective territorial identities at the subnational level have received comparatively little attention. Nevertheless, it is true that there has emerged a

notable interest in the study of how regionalism has been articulated politically and projected culturally, particularly in the past three decades. Such studies have often been closely related to research on nationalism itself. In an academic context marked by poststructuralism and the cultural and spatial turns, one of the fundamental reasons for looking at subnational entities and expressions has been to comprehend the complex ways in which these different spheres of collective life interact and thus better understand nationalisation processes—now understood as multidirectional and negotiated—by examining how different subjects actively build and appropriate the nation in various ways. The historical studies on regionalism cited here have considered it a phenomenon that is characteristic of modernity, used constructivist paradigms and methodologies to analyse it and convincingly questioned the association of the rise of nationalism with the decline of regional identities (Augustejn & Storm, 2012; Núñez & Storm, 2019; Storm, 2010).

Without the need to provide an in-depth literature review, it can be noted that certain influential Western European historiographies that are more or less comparable to that of Spain include relevant examples of the abovementioned tendencies. In the case of France, Weber's (1976) study had the virtue—among other merits—of questioning when the decisive phase of Francisation actually occurred and underscoring the continued existence of distinctive local and regional realities and dynamics during the 19th century. The author's analysis, which drew on the theory of modernisation, understood the nationalisation process essentially as a dynamic of unidirectional, top-down diffusion and held that integration resulted in assimilation and homogenisation, in that it did away with particularities and diversity (Cabo & Molina, 2009). Three decades ago, work by scholars such as Sahlins (1989), Ford (1993) and Lehning (1995) questioned this interpretive model and shed light on the active role of local communities and regions in the process of nation-building, the negotiated and open-ended nature of this process and the different outcomes that resulted from it. On a different but complementary note, Thiesse (1991, 1997) and Chane's (1996) studies on regionalist literature and educational institutions during the Third Republic showed that local and regional identities did not disappear during the decisive phase of nationalisation in France. On the contrary, according to these two authors, the cult and the strengthening of local and regional identities constituted a fundamental part of nation-building and a means by which the nation was brought closer to citizens and was imagined and consumed by them. More recent publications have emphasised how in France, often considered an archetype of the unified and centralised nation-state, the debate about decentralisation and the place of regions and other subnational entities in culture and politics was in fact present across the political spectrum in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Baycroft, 2012; Grenouilleau, 2019).

Also beginning primarily in the 1990s, historians working on Germany and Italy have shown some interest in the study of regionalism. With regard to Germany, Applegate's (1990) case study on the Palatinate showed how regional and national identities are interdependent and mutually strengthen one another. Confino (1997) examined the case of Württemberg, analysing the process through which citizens of the Second Reich came to conceive of the nation as an extension of their immediate surroundings. Green (2001), focusing on the decisive decades of the German unification process, studied how Hannover, Saxony and Württemberg (re)built their statehood using policies that included favouring distinctive identities that did not conflict with the emergence of a German national culture. In Italy, the turbulent politics of the Republic at the end of the 20th century were accompanied by renewed academic interest in the regional question (Levy, 1996). Other noteworthy studies on Italy include the work of Cavazza (2003), which, while primarily focused on the years following the Great War, demonstrates that the cult of *piccole patrie* and regionalism were inherent to the post-unification process of nation-building.

In the case of Spain, research on territorial identities conducted in the final decades of the 20th century principally centred on the study of so-called peripheral or substate nationalisms and discussion of the idea that Spain experienced a weak nationalisation process. To a certain degree, the weak nationalisation thesis was indebted to the theory of modernisation and discourse originated by Regenerationist intellectuals in the late 19th century, in the context of Spain's end-of-the-century crisis. It is based on the idea that Spain's path to modernity was in part unsuccessful and anomalous and is therefore not entirely comparable to that of Western Europe's more successful countries. In this context, the supposed continued existence of local and regional identities was linked to the partial failure of the nationalisation process in Spain (Archilés, 2017; Calatayud et al., 2009; Colomines, 2001).

In the past quarter-century, the nation-building process and nationalism in Spain have become well established topics of academic research (Pérez, 2017), and it has been increasingly argued that the nationalisation process in Spain was in fact somewhat or significantly comparable to what occurred in nearby countries (it was a nationalisation process 'as strange as any other', as Archilés & Martí, 2002, put it). In recent years, there has also been greater interest in the construction of regional identities. This can be seen in publications such as the volumes edited by Núñez (2006) and Forcadell and Romeo (2006), as well numerous case studies with different scopes and aims, primarily published in the past 25 years, including studies on Cantabria (Suárez, 1994), Aragon (Forcadell, 2006), Valencia (Martí & Archilés, 1999; Piqueras, 1996), Mallorca (Vives, 2017), Navarre (García-Sanz, 2012) and Galicia (Beramendi, 2007). With regard to Catalonia and the Basque Country, where nationalising projects that competed with that of Spain were developed starting in the late 19th century (Marfany, 1995; Smith, 2014; Termes, 2000), the collective Catalan and Basque identities that were constructed in the mid-19th century have been regarded as a form of regional patriotism that was compatible with Spanish patriotism (dual patriotism), whose *raison d'être* was in part to negotiate how each territory (and its elites) fit into the framework of the Spanish liberal nation-state (Fradera, 1992, 2006; Molina, 2006 Cf. Rubio, 2003, 2016). Although regional identities in some cases resisted cultural uniformisation, proposed anti-centralist reforms to the institutional architecture of the state and laid the groundwork for subsequent processes of national affirmation alternative to the Spanish process, these and other case studies generally concur in emphasising that nation- and region-building were more or less interdependent processes and that regionalism could act as a vehicle for the Spanish nationalisation of the population (Núñez, 2001).

2.2 | The (incipient and promising) study of local places and identities

The focus on regions has not been accompanied by much interest in other subnational places and the identities associated with them. In the vast majority of cases, researchers have tended to disregard forms of collective territorial identification at the local level. Within this array of largely overlooked places and territorial identities, those tied to cities have received a relatively greater amount of attention. However, the recurrent association of cities with modernity and the recognition that they produce sites of memory and self-referential narratives and play a significant role in mediating with other spheres of territorial identity have not been enough for historical research to pay more than occasional attention to local places and identities (Núñez & Storm, 2019; Whyte & Zimmer, 2011). Nevertheless, the historiographies that will be discussed here include studies that point to the interest and potential of this little developed area of research.

Some studies on Germany have focused on the local level, and particularly the city, in order to examine the questions discussed here. One such study is Jenkins' (2003) book on Hamburg, which analyses the implementation of an ambitious programme to reform civic culture and create new notions of community and belonging by modernising local traditions, memories and imaginations, in a context marked by changing historical conditions. Umbach (2005) has also looked at the city of Hamburg, alongside Barcelona, observing that municipal actors ascribed meaning to the local environment with the aim of negotiating their place and their relationship with the decision-making centres of the nation-state. Thus, local place in these 'second cities' did not passively receive the influence of the political regimes of the German and Spanish states. The author underscores that cities have the capacity to become the focus of legitimacy, identity and allegiance for large segments of the population. More recently, Zimmer (2013), focusing on three medium-sized towns in the second half of the 19th century, has examined how locals launched numerous projects aimed at rebuilding their sense of place in a local and global context marked by accelerated change and the dynamics of social and spatial dislocation. Challenging the traditionally dominant view, the author portrays modernisation as an open-ended process that involved the participation of locally embedded actors with varied interests and expectations who developed a significant role in physically and symbolically shaping their own lives.

In the case of France, there are also studies that counteract the portrayal of the nation-state as the only entity with historical agency. Scholars have focused on the local level to bring new perspectives to the study of how place

is produced, group identities are created and political cultures are formed. Saunier (1995)'s book on the city of Lyon establishes that local place is produced and instrumentalised within operations of political and symbolic legitimisation with a variety of objectives: establishing what the community should see as genuine or desirable, advancing the control of certain agents over the group and reinforcing local power and autonomy in relation to other places. Gerson (2003), Ploux (2011) and Parsis-Barubé (2011) have shown how the study and instrumentalisation of the past of *petites patries* played an important role in creating a sense of belonging, socially and politically reconstituting post-revolutionary societies and articulating the local and the national in the 19th century.

In Italy, a country with a strong, centuries-old urban tradition, a portion of the historical scholarship produced in recent decades has taken an interest in explaining the relationships between centre and periphery and state and civil society. This research has shown that the unification process and the choice of a unitarian and centralised model by no means meant the end of localism and that the role of cities and municipal identities has historically been more important than that of regions in Italy (Cavazza, 2012). The literature has underscored the continued centrality of local place in the modern world, the negotiated relationship and coexistence between the state and local authorities and leaders and the coexistence of *piccole patrie* and the nation. In recent years, different studies have analysed the imaginaries, myths and symbols that make up civic memory and the osmotic relationship between these local cultures and the national culture. Prime examples of this are studies devoted to Cremona and Mantua (Morandi, 2009), Venice (Franzina, 2013; Laven, 2011) and Florence (Gori, 2014), which indicate that artistic and historical heritage, monuments and urban place names were among the key elements in the configuration of a civic self-image and a sense of belonging in each city. They maintain that exhibiting these elements of representation and recognition was part of the negotiation process to determine the place that the local community and its authorities were to occupy within the broader framework of the nation.

3 | LOCAL IDENTITIES IN RESTORATION SPAIN: THE CASE OF CATALONIA

3.1 | Local characterology and its instrumentalisation

In the case of Spain, there has been a certain amount of emphasis on the idea that the country's politics were dominated by localism in the 19th century and much of the 20th century. Following Fusi's formula, 19th-century Spain is said to have been 'a country of legal centralism, but actual localism' (Pablo & Rubio, 2016). As has already been stated, the supposed endurance and strength of local life in Spain has been understood as correlating with a lack of national cohesion and as an anomaly on the path to modernity (Álvarez, 2001; Riquer, 1994). These recurrent affirmations and the debate surrounding them have not been accompanied by research that adequately addresses localisms and the supposedly exceptional strength of particularisms in Spain (nor have nationalisation processes at the local level been sufficiently addressed, with exceptions such as Archilés, 2002; Quiroga, 2017; and Salas, 2020).

Despite this telling gap in the literature, a few noteworthy studies do exist that must be taken into account, such as those devoted to Bilbao (Juaristi, 1999), Pamplona (Ugarte, 2004) and València (Reig, 1998; Viciano, 2004), and commemorative statue initiatives promoted by Basque provincial elites (Castells, 2010). Case studies on Vitoria (Rivera, 1990, 2007) and Castelló (Archilés et al., 2011) are particularly valuable. The former highlights the notable influence of *vtorianismo*, interpreting the presence of an idiosyncratic local cultural not as a residual expression of the past but as a phenomenon encouraged by certain civic agents to defend their interests both in local society and with regard to the relations between that society and centres of power that held influence over Vitoria. In the latter, the analysis of the local patriotism encouraged by republicans in Castelló allows relevant aspects of local identities to be highlighted, such as how they relate to other collective spheres and the contested nature of the process through which different social and political-ideological segments sought to impose their sense of the place as a key condition for laying the foundations of their hegemony.

In Catalonia, within the legal and political framework of the Spanish monarchy, both the affirmation of the nation-state's dominance and Hispanicisation, on the one hand, and regionalist and autonomist political practices and the construction of a Catalan national culture, on the other, are phenomena that coexisted alongside strongly assertive local—civic—identities. Indeed, some studies, mostly modest in scope, have demonstrated the importance of localism in modern Catalonia and have shown that it is key to fully understanding the existence of diverse political behaviours and cultures (Cao-Costoya, 2019; Duarte, 2007; Santacana, 2004).

With regard to Barcelona, researchers have examined a variety of factors, including literature, architecture, nomenclature, public sculpture and the 1888 Universal Exposition, as monumentalising instruments that helped shape an ideal representation of the city. This image was related to the city's aspirations to hold a leadership role within Spain and the affirmation of its status as the capital of an imagined Catalan community that clearly extended beyond the strict provincial divisions of the liberal state to include territories that were not part of the province of Barcelona (Cócola, 2011; Domingo, 2011; Ganau, 2003; Jacobson, 2011; Marfany, 2017; Palomas, 2009; Reyero, 2017; Roca, 2018; Umbach, 2005). One noteworthy example is the book by Michonneau (2002), which examines the politics of memory that was produced and performed in public places in Barcelona from 1860 to 1930, with a particular focus on public sculpture. It highlights the active role played by civic agents in public commemorations—and the identities and definitions of the community that resulted from them—and demonstrates their importance as an instrument of symbolic domination in the service of the elite, who were waging a fight for representation within the local community and with regard to central authorities. According to Michonneau, Catalonia, with Barcelona at its centre, established itself as a relatively autonomous place of memory that initially tended towards regionalism but over time came to be predominantly Catalan nationalist.

The identities and political cultures of other Catalan cities have been partially addressed in studies with varying scopes. A few representative examples will be discussed here. In the case of Figueres, it is interesting to note that federal republicanism—which was the dominant political ideology in this city in north-eastern Catalonia—was especially influential in materially and symbolically shaping a collective self-image that presented Figueres as an advanced and cosmopolitan city, to a certain extent a prefiguration of the yearned for Republic. This self-image, which was adopted by large segments of society, was often contrasted with the dominant image of other cities in the province of Girona, such as the capital of the same name and Olot, which were seen as comparatively more conservative—definitively, as representing other ideological and cultural values (Pujol, 2013).

In Lleida, the locally oriented identity sometimes referred to as *lleidatanisme* (or *leridanismo* in Spanish, though some authors consider the two to be separate phenomena) was associated with the projection of the city's leadership over the province of which it was the capital. This self-affirmation stemmed in part from the awareness that Lleida, located in western Catalonia, was a secondary city and a peripheral territory in relation to the regional centre of reference, Barcelona. The attitude exhibited towards Barcelona was at times one of distrust. The exaltation of the local cultivated by certain segments of Lleida's inhabitants took on a frankly anti-Catalanist tone while encouraging allegiance to the Spanish homeland (Casals, 2019; Vallverdú, 1967). This same phenomenon occurred in another city, Tortosa, in southern Catalonia. Like Lleida, Tortosa was located relatively far from Barcelona, had historically been something of a border zone, had been the seat of a bishopric for centuries and exercised influence over an extensive surrounding territory. However, in both cities, there were also localist tendencies that existed in harmony with the Catalanist movement and did not include combative anti-Barcelona sentiments among their defining elements, which serves as a reminder that these local cultures must not be viewed as univocal. Even so, in the hands of the most conservative ideological sectors, the phenomenon of *tortosinisme* was tied to the desire of a segment of Tortosa's ruling elite to maintain their influence over local society and limit that of movements such as Catalanism and republicanism. The aim was to foster a sense among the local population that these movements represented otherness (Agramunt, 2012; Vidal, 2005).

One of the most vigorous and influential localisms in modern Catalonia was *vigatanisme*, centred on Vic, a prominent mid-sized inland city in the province of Barcelona that was a secondary administrative capital and the seat of a vast bishopric. While *vigatanisme* has yet to be properly studied in depth, it is telling that it is the only localism that

can be found in the *Diccionari d'Història de Catalunya*. Among the various meanings of the term, the aspect that has generated the most interest is the definition of *vigatanisme* as a political, ideological and political movement that is locally based but broader in scope, characterised by Catholic activism, traditionalism, ruralism and Catalan regionalism (Figuerola, 1992; Fradera, 1985). Part of the early-20th-century Catalan intelligentsia equated *vigatanisme* with the most reactionary Catalan nationalism, and the antiliberal basis that it in part shared with Carlism has been underscored—though *vigatanisme* did not share Carlism's goal of putting a different branch of the Bourbon dynasty on the Spanish throne and had a more accommodating relationship with the liberal-capitalist status quo. Drawing on the intellectual outlook of the cleric Jaume Balmes (1810–1848) and the most conservative figures of the *Renaixença* cultural movement, *vigatanisme* is said to have modernised the strong antiliberal tradition found in rural and mountainous areas, redirecting it towards the growing Catalan regionalist movement. Criticising the liberal state's centralist design and uniformising ambitions did not necessarily mean repudiating Spanish patriotism (Fradera, 1985). The intellectual activity of such noteworthy figures as Jacint Verdaguer (1845–1902)—the most prominent Catalan-language poet of the period—and Jaume Collell (1846–1932)—the principal propagandist of Catholic regionalism—demonstrated *vigatanisme*'s desire and capability to decisively influence intellectual circles and Catalan politics and culture. It helped shape the notion that *Catalanitat*—the fact of being Catalan—was inseparable from Catholic Christian religiosity and strongly influenced the development of an alternative Catalan nationalism to the secular and liberal ideas of Valentí Almirall (1841–1904).

The more strictly local dimension of *vigatanisme* has received far less attention. Nonetheless, it has been observed that it became the core of the city's culture and politics and that, as it was predominantly expressed, it was tied to the desire of certain institutions and segments of society to lay the foundations for their own dominance over the local community. The press, talks, local research, literature and a variety of memorial and heritage initiatives were among the means through which an imaginary in which the city was symbolically capitalised and the leadership of certain segments of society, ideological concepts and values were established as normative came to be amply accepted by citizens. It is in this sense that the image that portrayed the city as the capital of the part of the country that best represented genuine *Catalanitat*, *la Muntanya* (the Mountains)—a symbolic territory presented as a moral reference point for a changing Catalan society that some saw as partially degenerated—must be understood (Cao-Costoya, 2014). Other cities such as Olot also claimed a similar position (Casacuberta, 2004).

The importance of the local as a factor in the politics of Restoration Spain can be clearly seen in the case of Vic. It is impossible to fully understand public life in the city without taking into account its specific characteristics and the resistance of local leaders to accept subordination and cede decision-making power to 'outside authorities'. In this regard, *vigatanisme* was also a form of strong political localism. For a number of years starting in the mid-1880s, municipal power was held by an alliance of notables with different political affinities. This alliance embraced a discourse opposed to factionalism and sought to neutralise competition for power at the local level. In addition, it claimed to be fighting the form of despotism known as *caciquisme* (which was understood as control imposed by 'outside' authorities) and did not hesitate to promote its own local candidates in provincial and Spanish elections, even when this meant some of these local notables came into conflict with the Barcelona-based leadership of their own parties (Cao-Costoya, 2014).

These forms of dissension were commonplace in the relations between conservative local and provincial leaders at the turn of the century. They can also be found within Catalanism, such as between the leadership of the *Lliga Regionalista* (the main Catalanist Party) and local leaders in Vic affiliated with this movement in the first three decades of the 20th century, when politics in the city continued to have a strong localist component despite the growing regionalisation and nationalisation of public affairs (Cao-Costoya, 2023a; Tornafoch, 2002). *Vigatanisme* provides a good example of the complex relationship between different territorial loyalties. In 1931, during the transition from the dictatorship of Miguel Primo de Rivera to the nascent regime of the Second Spanish Republic, when a differentiated system of political parties was being constructed in Catalonia, the cliché that depicted Vic as the quintessence of *Catalanitat* remained very much alive, but a notable Catalanist leader who emerged from this local milieu, Ramon d'Abadal (1888–1970), publicly lamented that some of his fellow local citizens ascribed a meaning to

vigatanisme that made it a close-minded, disgraceful form of localism that was an obstacle to the city's full incorporation into the Catalan nation (Cao-Costoya, 2023a).

3.2 | Producing self-referential memories: Portrait galleries of illustrious citizens as a prime example

As has been seen in the previous section, some cities in Restoration Spain produced their own specific identities. These identities were projected in public places through a variety of cultural practices and media that cannot be discussed in depth here, such as publications, talks, festivities, urban place names, public sculptures and museums. Among the media devices and social practices that helped build local cultural memories, portrait galleries of illustrious citizens stand out. These collections of portrait paintings (which were often hung in city and town halls) honoured outstanding local public figures and sought to keep their memory alive, a low-cost form of *pantheonisation* that was within the reach of municipalities with limited resources. They are a clear example of the proactive role of cities (meaning the various social and institutional actors found in cities) in producing and asserting their own models. Portrait galleries of illustrious locals show how memory is produced in smaller cities and towns and a collective self-image is projected both inwardly, to the local population, and outwardly (Cao-Costoya, 2023b).

In Catalonia (and also in the Balearic Islands), most particularly during the Bourbon Restoration period, many cities and towns started portrait galleries of illustrious citizens. These galleries were (and to a degree still are today) true local (and regional) *lieux de mémoire* (Nora, 1997), places where the presence of the past in the present was managed that gave concrete form to the iconic representation of the (local) *pàtria* and were usually home to a form of civic ritualisation designed to pay homage to fellow citizens who were deemed worthy of being remembered. As a cultural practice, it drew on the genre of biography, which was often intended to edify (Dosse, 2005), and was tied to the social expansion of portraiture in the 19th century. It also constituted a modern example of the age-old phenomenon of venerating illustrious men—the public celebration of people (predominantly men) who were presented as the ideal embodiment of the community and established as objects of admiration and model citizens. It is no minor detail that the creation of most of these portrait collections coincided with ‘statuemanía’ and what has been called the ‘invention’ of mass-produced traditions in the period beginning in 1870 (Aguilhon, 1978; Hobsbawm, 1983). These dynamics also occurred in Spain, where the last decades of the 19th century were a significant period in the forging of regional stereotypes (Storm, 2019), Spanish national culture (Peiró, 2017) and the Catalan nationalist cultural imaginary (Cattini, 2015). All this suggests that the articulation of local identities occurred at the same time as processes of region- and nation-building and was related to these processes.

Following the example of Barcelona, where a Gallery of Illustrious Catalans was created in 1871, a number of cities in Catalonia started their own portrait collections of illustrious locals: Manresa, Vic, Valls, Lleida, Tarragona, Vilanova i la Geltrú, Vilafranca del Penedès, Olot, Terrassa, Reus and Mataró. Girona's city council voted to create a gallery, but it never materialised. There were unsuccessful attempts in Tortosa. Other cities (including Igualada and Sabadell) instead opted for related practices that were simpler and less expensive (Cao-Costoya, 2023b). Nearly all the cities that have been listed shared two characteristics. Firstly, they had populations between 10,000 and 40,000 (with the exception of Barcelona). Secondly, they were administrative capitals. Most had long exercised leadership over surrounding territories because they were administrative capitals in the period prior to the formation of the liberal state. Some were also the seat of a bishopric (see Table 1). Portrait galleries of citizens were usually very locally focused, but in Barcelona, the memorial in question served to assert the city's leadership over Catalonia as a whole (in the Balearic Islands, the galleries in Palma and Maó similarly aimed to represent, respectively, the island of Mallorca and the island of Menorca, rather than just the city).

Sources: Burgueño (1995), Cao-Costoya (2023b) and Idescat, ‘Demographic Historical Series’, <https://www.idescat.cat/pub/?id=shd&n=1341> (accessed 29 January 2023).

TABLE 1 Galleries of illustrious citizens in Catalonia (1871–1923).

City	Population in 1920	Prominent administrative capital under the <i>ancien régime</i> ?	Seat of a judicial district (1875–1923)?	Seat of a bishopric (1875–1923)?	Gallery that became established?/ year founded	Was there a decision to create a gallery that did not become established or was a comparable initiative adopted?
Badalona	29.361					
Barcelona	721.869	✓	✓	✓	✓/1871	
Figueres	13.470		✓			✓
Girona	19.393	✓	✓	✓		✓
Igualada	12.512	✓	✓			✓
L'Hospital et de Ll.	12.360					
Lleida	38.165	✓	✓	✓	✓/?	
Manresa	27.305	✓	✓		✓/1883	
Mataró	24.125	✓	✓		✓/1920	
Olot	10.857		✓		✓/1915	
Reus	30.266		✓		✓/1915	
Sabadell	37.529		✓			✓
Tarragona	29.632	✓	✓	✓	✓/1897	
Terrassa	30.532		✓		✓/1915	
Tortosa	33.044	✓	✓	✓		✓
Valls	10.698		✓		✓/1891	
Vic	13.992	✓	✓	✓	✓/1890	
Vilafranca del P.	8.586	✓	✓		✓/1901	
Vilanova i la Geltrú	13.720		✓		✓/1898	

The choice of which figures were included in these iconic repertoires was evidently not accidental. Those who were honoured with the aim of making their memory live on as an example were meant to be an ideal representation of society itself. They were instrumentalised to articulate a public discourse that aspired to influence the community's present and future. It should be noted that women were entirely or almost entirely absent from these galleries. Barcelona's Gallery of Illustrious Catalans (and, to a lesser extent, the galleries in other cities in Catalonia) included a significant number of intellectuals and members of the liberal professions, emblematic categories of the new, emerging liberal society. It is no coincidence that there is a notable correlation between the presence of men belonging to these categories among the icons enshrined in galleries and the leading role played by intellectuals and liberal professionals in commemorative society (as promoters, officiants and among the public that took part in the social practice of memory), alongside municipal governments, elected municipal officials, civil organisations and the press.

Portrait galleries gave concrete form to and were the site of a form of secularised worship that had the clear purpose of giving citizens a moral education and promoting local (and in some cases regional) patriotism. Exhibiting the city's 'greats' was meant to foster local self-esteem and establish models of virtue for citizens to consume. It was also a means of representing the community to the outside world. These galleries were a demonstration of and a vehicle for narratives and social practices that sought to instil—in the local population—values, beliefs, ideological principles and behavioural precepts, as well as strengthen the leadership of certain segments of local society. At the

same time, they aimed to help the city build a positive reputation and legitimate local institutions and authorities within the broader framework of provincial and national politics. It is apparent from the available evidence that the contents and purposes of these galleries were often in line with other media, such as nomenclature, commemorative public sculpture, historiography and other publications. This points to the need to adopt a multimedia approach when analysing how these cultural representations, which were key to the formation of collective identities, were constructed. The cult of 'great men' thus emerges as a fruitful topic of study for understanding how certain cultural forms—which also include music—have served as multilevel identifiers (Conversi, 2018).

4 | CONCLUSION

This article has shown that the study of local identities in the context of the emergence of national and regional identities largely remains to be developed as a research area. Despite this relative gap in the historical literature, a few general points can be put forth as provisional conclusions.

The evidence presented in this article points to the conclusion that in the Europe of nations, when nationalisation and regionalisation processes were growing stronger and the presence of each nation state was becoming more of a decisive factor, local places (and the identities associated with them) had cultural and political agency (Vives, 2012). Local places were relatively autonomous spheres with power and historical agency, realities that were not merely residual or passive (Rinaudo, 1986), though they also cannot be fully explained without taking into account their growing interdependence with other contexts within national (and also regional, transnational and global) frameworks that increasingly had the power to shape the local sphere (Appadurai, 1996).

The idea that local places and identities are natural or original categories must be avoided. It should instead be assumed that they were socially (re)produced in the context of modernity, an approach that has provided excellent results in the study of nations and regions. The production of the local is the result of the contributions of numerous 'internal' and 'external' social and institutional agents that participate, with differing degrees of consciousness and intentionality, in an open-ended and contentious process. Identity is a key element in these processes, because it is a struggle over classification—in other words, a struggle to impose a legitimate definition of the social world that involves recognition of the groups that are suited for social and cultural life and to exercise authority (Bourdieu, 2001, pp. 281–292; Saunier, 1998).

The historiographical review undertaken here has revealed the close relationship between certain phenomena that must therefore be considered together: the production of local identities, the construction of territoriality and the exercise of power. It is true that states' growing regulatory and nationalising capacity did not annihilate urban identities in the period examined here. However, this does not mean that local places did not encounter difficulties in self-reproducing as larger-scale social formations, including nation-states, increased their capacity to shape the lives of local groups under their control (Appadurai, 1996). It is likely that this change in the correlation of material and symbolic forces was seen as threatening the relatively autonomous existence of local place and therefore encouraged cultural representations and forms of identification intended to reproduce its subjectivity: They were means and strategies used by certain institutions and segments of society that wished to legitimate themselves and assert their agency within the broader frameworks in which social life took place (including that of the nation-state). In brief, certain segments of the population may have seen the affirmation of the local community through symbolic means as a suitable model for the political formulation of their interests and aspirations (Cohen, 1985, pp. 104–118).

That local identities were a response to the abovementioned processes would explain in part the timing that coincides with the construction of other territorial identities, such as national identity. The review undertaken in this article has also revealed other similarities, such as that both public institutions and civil society organisations and platforms were involved in the production of these different cultural representations and forms of territorial allegiance, with elites—and particularly intellectuals and professionals—playing a dominant role. There are also clear parallels in the means (such as the spoken and written word, symbols, monuments in public places and heritage-making

processes and civil rituals) that these agents used as the basis for articulating cultural memories, building community and conferring (or not conferring) legitimacy on the existing social order and authorities. The studies that have been analysed here suggest that local identities sought to respond to a more a generalised transformation that was not limited to the changes most closely tied to the construction of the nation-state. Rather, these identities participated in reshaping the sense and the limits of communities in response to the generalised upheaval caused by the series of interrelated processes associated with the emergence of modernity.

There is a need to examine in greater depth the relationship between local politics and local identities, which has received scant attention as a research topic (Terlouw, 2017). This article has provided a review of studies on different European countries and a more detailed critical examination of the case of Catalonia within the context of Restoration Spain, demonstrating that taking local identities into account can shed light on key questions as varied as the relationship between state and society, nationalisation processes and the attitudes and strategies adopted by groups in the context of the transformations that characterised the making of the modern world. Future research can help better explain how local allegiances and forms of identification were demarcated, combined and hybridised with other territorial identities, such as national identity, and with other *-isms* (ideologies and social movements). The local dimension must be introduced into discussions of the nation and the national so that these entities, and the processes that shaped them, are not reduced to abstract categories.

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