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Castells in the Construction of a Catalan Community: Body, Language, and Identity amidst Catalonia's National Debate

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy

in

Anthropology

by

Aida Ribot Bencomo

Committee in charge:

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2020

The dissertation of Aida Ribot Bencomo is approved, and it
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Chair

University of California San Diego

2020

DEDICATION

To Joan and Raúl

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

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VITA

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

**Castells in the Construction of a Catalan Community: Body, Language, and Identity
amidst Catalonia's National Debate**

by

Aida Ribot Bencomo

Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology

University of California San Diego, 2020

Professor Kathryn A. Woolard, Chair

Since 2010, Catalonia has undergone a series of sociopolitical, economic, and cultural
crises that have sparked a national debate over sovereignty. In the same period, the *casteller*
phenomenon has also grown to almost double the number of *casteller* teams. *Castells* or human
tower building is a cultural activity dating to the 18th century that has undergone changes in
recent decades and has become an emblematic expression of the Catalan society.

This study explores two *casteller* teams in Barcelona's metropolitan area from an anthro-
pological perspective in a context of socioeconomic crisis and national debate over sovereignty.
Although the relationship between *castells* and the increased support for sovereignty in Catalonia

might seem evident, this study takes a more nuanced ethnographic approach to understand what motivates a socially, economically, and ethno-linguistically diverse population to join these teams. The increased interest in *casteller* activity raises many questions, of which I highlight four: 1) what brings people from diverse backgrounds to participate in *castells*; 2) what meanings do participants themselves assign to the activity; 3) how are different semiotic practices mobilized to negotiate a collective identity that is relevant to them; and 4) how may the notion of community at *castells* contribute to or reflect a re-imagination of the larger Catalan society in the context of the independence debate.

The dissertation demonstrates how participants learn and engage with different semiotic strategies that construct a sense of community. I show how participants use and regulate their bodies and physicality at *castells*, their linguistic practices and experiences with language, and the formation of local identities rooted in the streets and plazas. Finally, I also address how these experiences are instrumentalized for political action and how participants respond to political and economic challenges within the *casteller* community. This study reveals that even within a hierarchical team organization, these practices support collaborative and relatively egalitarian relationships among members that challenge traditional boundaries and stereotypes in Catalonia based on class, language, and origin. It shows how collective identities are negotiated physically, linguistically, and spatially to construct a meaningful community for an increasingly diverse population in Catalonia.

Chapter 1

Introduction

> "els castells es fan precisament gràcies a la
> diferència, si tots fossim iguals no funcionaria"
> *"Castells are built thanks to diversity,*
> *if we were all the same, it wouldn't work"*
>
> Macià, Vilatèxtil

Castells is a cultural practice dating to the 18th century in Catalonia. In this practice, sweaty bodies climb up and stand on each other's shoulders to form tower-like structures supported at the bottom by a mass of crowded, stacked, yet ordered moving bodies. At the very end, a tiny child shinnies up seven or eight levels of shaking bodies amidst awed onlookers, who stand expectantly in crowded plazas, to stand at the top of that humanly-made tower, raising her hand in a quick salute to cheers and applause. The child then descends the tower even quicker than she went up.

In 2010, UNESCO designated *castells,* the construction of human towers as an 'Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.'[1] The UNESCO declaration states that:

> Human towers are recognized by Catalan people as an integral part of their cultural
> identity, transmitted from generation to generation and providing community mem-

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[1]This type of institutional recognition started in 2003.

1

bers a sense of continuity, social cohesion and solidarity(...) The knowledge required for raising *castells* is traditionally passed down from generation to generation within a group, and can only be learned by practice". (UNESCO)

UNESCO portrayed *castells* as a stereotypical Catalan phenomenon that provides a cultural identity to a large or broad community: the "Catalan people." Its definition also emphasized the historical, public, active, collective, and social aspects of this phenomenon in building a sense of "social cohesion and solidarity."

Just seven years after the UNESCO declaration, *castells* are "*per tot arreu*" -everywhere-, as one participant exclaimed. You can find *casteller* themes in banking advertisements, business workshops, academic journal covers, television ads, and political demonstrations, to list just a few. *Casteller* participation has been steadily growing for the past 10 years, locally in Catalonia and internationally, both in the number of increasingly diverse people involved in it and in the emergence of new teams (15% increase from 2007 to 2012, 65% from 2012 to 2019)[2]. Some of these new teams are actually located in non-traditional *casteller* towns and neighborhoods, indicating that the public visibility has increased. Not only can you see *Diades castelleres* or Sunday *casteller* exhibitions in dozens of Catalan towns every week all year long but also *casteller*-themed images promoting non-*casteller* activities like the ones mentioned above.

The increase in participation and visibility of *castells* has occurred during a sociopolitical and economic crisis in Catalonia, Spain, and much of the West. The Catalan sovereignty movement has grown in the last 10 years, partly due to the economic crisis, and most *casteller* teams have been supporting the massive independence-oriented demonstrations organized by civic associations during the Catalan National Day, for example. This support has motivated some participants and critics of *castells* to challenge the association of *castells* with the national movement (see Botella 2019) and its seemingly "pan-Catalan" representation. Also, a few scholars have recently started analyzing the *casteller* phenomenon from a nationalist perspective (Vaczi

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[2]Number of teams belonging to the Coordinadora de Colles Castelleres de Catalunya: 2007 (54 teams), 2008 (54 teams), 2009 (55 teams), 2010 (56 teams), 2011 (59 teams), 2012 (62 teams), 2013 (70 teams), 2014 (88 teams), 2015 (92 teams), 2016 (100 teams), 2017 (99 teams), 2018 (102 teams), 2019 (102 teams). www.cccc.cat

2016, Giori 2012, Weig 2015). These scholars provide promising insights about this association from a historical and anthropological perspective. This dissertation, nonetheless, examines the nuanced semiotic processes that construct and give meaning to this activity from the participants' perspective and acknowledges the larger and multifaceted picture of this phenomenon. I take on this new perspective to touch on previously unstudied aspects of *castells* in the contemporary era, such as the bodily practices, the use of language, the construction of local identities, and finally, the political and economic challenges that the community faces today.

Although the *casteller* practice is now regarded as essentially Catalan, it has not always been so, nor has it ever supported sovereignty movements overtly before. *Castells* has not always been recognized as the image of 'social cohesion and solidarity' that it enjoys (and is also challenged for) today, nor has it always been instrumentalized by companies, partisan politics and civic organizations alike ('team-building' workshops for national and international companies, nationalist movements, banking promotions, etc.). Though Catalan proponents of UNESCO's declaration portrayed *castells* as representing the Catalan community, it is unclear who or what kinds of people this contemporary community looks like, who or what kinds of people build this community, or who is legitimized to do it. The Catalan sovereignty movement has increased greatly in popular and institutional representation in the last 10 years, with people from different socio-political and ethnolinguistic background supporting it. While I do not intend to provide a response to the national debate nor is it the focus of this dissertation, *castells* is being portrayed as an iconic representation of the 'Catalan society' and its cultural identity, which inevitably reflects on the national debate.

I argue that in order to understand the *casteller* phenomenon today, it is essential that we look at this practice from a dynamic perspective that also takes into account how it has historically changed from its origins to the current situation. UNESCO's definition of *castells* today has little to do with how this practice looked when it emerged, and who or what it represented in the past. This dissertation, therefore, provides a more holistic (and much needed) approach to the *casteller*

phenomenon of today through its multiple practices as lived, performed, and experienced by their participants. This approach slightly differs from an enlightening study of Catalan rituals (Erickson 2008), within which *castells* was one. In it, Erickson examined how "sensory experience" and "aesthetic sensibilities" were "intertwined with ethical orientations, media representations, and institutional practices" in order to construct and shape inclusive relations with immigrants (2008: 1). One of Erickson's main points was that the "ethical orientations produced through ritual carr[ied] beyond ceremonial contexts, tending to facilitate practices of solidarity and constructive engagement when conflicts occur[red]." (ibid: 2). In this dissertation, I do not approach the current *casteller* phenomenon as a platform from which participants change their individual or collective identities and dispositions in everyday life. Instead, I explore how participants' identities are accomplished in actual performance within *casteller* activities.

Besides portraying a more complete view of the elements that form this cultural practice, this ethnography also shows the tensions and debates currently occurring within the *casteller* community amidst a changing socio-political and economic landscape in Catalonia. Ultimately, this dissertation shows that participating at *castells* offers many an opportunity to establish meaningful relationships with others while constructing, in a very hands-on and accessible way, a sense of community and collective identity. The bodily and linguistic practices used at *castells,* together with the claims to local space, reflect the cooperative and collaborative values that, despite not being perfect, promote egalitarian relationships that challenge class, gender, and ethnic differences amongst participants.

The historical discussion of this chapter revolves around three theoretical perspectives that deal with some of the main topics in the later chapters. I will give a short overview of each here and will be returning to these and other relevant theoretical approaches in the analytical chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6.

One of the main topics of discussion in the historical section revolves around the relationship between bodies, physicality, class, and *castells*. In this discussion, I show how *castells*

originated in a rural localized context, where only peasants and the working classes participated. I explain the conditions of this participation and how this relationship contrasted with the emergence of a social class (the bourgeoisie and upper classes) in the Barcelona area. These classes favored other sporting and cultural expressions because, in part, they aligned with specific bodily uses, aesthetics, and values that provide forms of cultural capital. The idea of shaping one's body as a project to achieve a form of cultural capital is one characteristic that Bourdieu associated with dominant classes (1980). The cultivation of one's appearance and tastes are forms of (re)production of social action that shape the *habitus,* that is, those dispositions that provide "schemes of perception, thought and action" and "a world view"(Bourdieu 1980: 54). The body is thus a central element that makes visible the dispositions and oppositions to that world view when different class-based approaches of the body are displayed: "preferences in education, clothes, make-up, cars, where and when to holiday, sports, and medicine are marked by the class-based *habitus*" (Shilling 2004). Bourdieu distinguished two classes, the dominant (or bourgeoise) and the dominated (working) class, with each having a different approach to the body and also different chances to acquire the most symbolically valued physical capital. "People's capacity to accumulate value *across* the various dimensions of social and economic life" (Shilling 2016: 84) is what also promoted the reproduction of inequalities in Bourdieu's view.

Regulation and (self)discipline are other central elements in the discussion of the body in today's *casteller* phenomenon because there are contrasting expectations about how bodies should look, perform, or be displayed in different situations and positions, for example. Foucault's notion of 'biopower' is also pertinent in the discussion. He described it as the "power that exerts a positive influence on life, that endeavors to administer, optimize, and multiply it, subjecting it to precise controls and comprehensive regulations" (1978: 137). For Foucault (as well as for Bourdieu), body discipline becomes a process internalized by the individual and integrated into the everyday life that normalizes governance or subjugation (ibid).

Today, participants learn to value *casteller* positions differently as they participate in a

casteller team. *Pinya* participants (or the ones at the base) are considered part of the team just as those performing in trunk positions, but the body discipline required to perform in each is different. This creates a sense of distinction that is not necessarily based on class or gender, for example, as happened in the past (see historical section below). Although Foucault's perspective centered on how states or governments regulate the understanding of body through discourse, the approach is interesting in the context of *castells* today, where tensions and discussions about participants' fitness between base and trunk positions reflect contrasting views about the body and its regulation in the contemporary era. The learning process also happens amidst contradicting discourses between the importance of the individual and the collective body and its capacity to embody a set of *casteller* values. The way that participants use their bodies in *casteller* practice may tell about specific values based on other power dynamics.

The analysis of the body is often intertwined with spatial relations. When theorizing about social control, Foucault also referred to architecture as one technology used by governments to create and organize individuals (1975). In the historical discussion, I show how the Catalan bourgeoisie not only changed their activities to fit the social and cultural values of the time but also how urban spaces were mobilized to fit their new tastes and aesthetics. This emerging class chose to perform new activities in spaces far from the city centers, which contrasts very much with how *castellers* today engage with the cities and towns they see themselves representing. In the 19th century, this move allowed the bourgeoisie to distinguish themselves and to shape their class identities. This kind of "spatial tactics", that is, "the use of space as a strategy and/or technique of power and social control" (Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003: 30) is often studied as a tool used by the dominant classes (in Bourdieu's terms). However, in the discussion later in the dissertation, I show how the mobilization of certain urban spaces might often create tensions over control and power, even when it comes from the popular classes. The relationship between *castells* and space is worth examining because it is from this relationship that participants perform and construct their *casteller* identities as belonging to larger communities.

6

In the contemporary context where *castells* is becoming a quintessential Catalan activity and where participation of national and international immigration is increasing inside teams, it is also important to examine the role of language in this process. Catalan language has been the most recognized element of Catalan identity, not birth nor blood (see Azevedo 1984, Vallverdú 1981, Woolard 1989, 2016, Marfany 1995, Crameri 2008, among others). The historical discussion in the following section provides an overview to understand how and why the Catalan language became a semiotic tool to index (national) identity and why this identity was mobilized amongst certain social classes more than others in the past. By looking at the role of language in *castells* today, I intend to provide a first approach to the linguistic practices inside teams, with an emphasis on how participants (learn to) interact during tower building and how they socialize through language to become *castellers*. In a bilingual context such as Catalonia, both Castilian and Catalan have traditionally represented or iconized (see explanation below) different social communities based on ethnolinguistic origins since the return to democracy (Woolard 1987). However, longitudinal studies find that speakers no longer base this differentiation on origin or birthplace but rather on "choice" and "personal styles" (Woolard 2016: 230-231). Despite the political and civic efforts to 'normalize' the use of Catalan language after nearly 40 years of prohibition during Franco's dictatorship, Castilian has usually been found in the last decades to be the language of preference for informal exchanges (those happening outside institutional contexts like classrooms), especially amongst younger generations, in highly urbanized areas in the metropolitan area of Barcelona (Pujolar 2001, Vila 1996, Generalitat 2013). The two teams analyzed in this study belong to urban settings in that area and the fact that the majority of participants in the teams are young gives another reason to study how languages are used in *castells* today.

The study of language ideology has also been crucial (especially in the context of a language minority such as Catalonia) to explain how speakers represent, rationalize, and express "self-evident ideas and objectives" (Heath 1989: 53) about the relationship between language (structure) and members of a community (Schieffelin, Woolard, and Kroskrity 1998, Silverstein

1979), "together with their loading of moral and political interests (Irvine 1989: 255). Ideologies of linguistic purism have been an ongoing topic of investigation within linguistic anthropology, especially in research focused on language variation and multilingualism (Hill 1985, Woolard and Schieffelin 1994, Schieffelin, Woolard, and Kroskrity 1998). In such contexts, language differentiation (Irvine and Gal 2000) is often treated by the speakers as representing the essence or nature of different social communities and identities (Irvine and Gal 2000, Schieffelin, Woolard, and Kroskrity 1998), which are valued differently as well. This semiotic process of 'iconization' goes beyond just indexing or 'pointing at' a particular community to take the linguistic variable as "depicting the social group's inherent nature or essence" (Irvine and Gal 2000: 37).

Defenders of language purism often take prescriptive (linguistic) aspects of languages, which are usually in standard forms, to defend the existence of a community. Within this logic, if the language varies, shifts or enters in contact with another variety, it may call into question the mere existence and legitimacy of such community, especially when claiming national sovereignty (Blommaert and Verschueren 1998). The process of iconization has been central in constructing national identities in the past and today (Bourdieu 1984, Irvine and Gal 2000, Schieffelin, Woolard, and Kroskrity 1998, Urla 1993, among others) and in identifying the "right" variety that represents such national community. In national minority contexts like Catalonia, "language activists often find themselves imposing standards, elevating literate forms and uses, and negatively sanctioning variability in order to demonstrate the reality, validity, and integrity of their language" (Schieffelin, Woolard, and Kroskrity 1998: 17), especially when language has become iconic of a specific ethnic and national community. Bourdieu's account[3] on language standardization in France, for example, showed that language also served as a mechanism for institutions and the dominant

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[3]In The Production and Reproduction of legitimate Language (1984), Bourdieu explained the historical process by which the French language came to be the legitimately official, authoritative, and valued language at the expense of the diverse regional dialects before the French Revolution. This shift was promoted by the "symbolic violence" coming from institutions in which regional dialects were socially devalued and "defined in opposition to distinguished or literate usages" (1984: 47). Aristocracy and upper classes that could access the linguistic capital promoted this shift and exacerbated class distinctions even though popular classes ended up taking this symbolic domination in their everyday practices, that is, they ended up internalizing the domination of standard forms by reproducing the judgements, practices, etc.

classes to produce class distinction and reproduce inequalities, and that language standards (just as language purism) are historically and socially constructed rather than a natural process. By examining the linguistic ideologies underpinning the language practices at *castells*, we may have a better understanding of how participants build their social relations and express membership in the *casteller* community. It is also worth examining how those participants who do not identify ethno-linguistically as Catalan may (or not) include themselves in the team through language.

The historical discussion below shows how *castells* originated, enjoyed a golden age while it solidified as a cultural practice, and then suffered a decline of popularity in the face of another cultural expression: the *sardanes* dance. This all happened in a context of rapid changes in Catalonia, where an emerging and empowered Catalan bourgeoisie and their political and economic aspirations also contributed to the formation of a Catalan class culture at the time. The use of the body, the physicality, or the spaces used for the performance of certain activities were mobilized to produce class distinction. Although I do not focus on the literature on Catalan nationalism, it is important to note that while many nationalist movements adopt ethnically exclusive positions, Catalan nationalism has been usually characterized by a kind of civic (inclusive) approach that welcomes newcomers. The discussions in the later chapters on bodily and linguistic practices and on the use of local spaces in the construction of *casteller* identities show how and why some social and political actors today have taken *castells* to represent the civic and inclusive aspects of their Catalan national project.

1.1 General historical context of *castells*

1.1.1 *Casteller* early performances

Industrialization in Catalonia began in the 18th century when cotton production and the *indianes* (or calico textiles) industry formed the basis of the Catalan industrial revolution (Sanchez 2013, Vicens Vives 1958, Llonch 2004). The Peninsular Wars between the Spanish Bourbons and

the French Napoleon's empire (1807-1814) and the independence of some American colonies by the end of the 19th century challenged the importation of colonial raw products to Catalonia. It is in this context when the first *castells* or their earlier and most similar activities started being reported. Although the exact origins of *castells* are not clear,[4]. most historical accounts on *castells* agree that it is a practice that evolved from other performances in the Valencia region of Spain, like the '*muixeranga*' [mujʃe'raŋga] and the '*ball de valencians'* -Valencia dance- by the end of the 18th century (Bofarull 2007, Cervelló 2017).

These two performances shared features that are common to what we now know of *castells*. For example, the *muixerangues* were acrobatic choreographies originally from the Valencia region that also formed tower-like structures. The vivid colors and patterns of *murixerangues*' uniforms and its acrobatics defined this performance as festive and choreographic Bofarull 2007). However, the number of participants was minimal, as only a few had the skills to perform such physical feats, more closely related to circus acrobatics. The structures they built were also different depending on the towns or regions of specialization. For example, *muixerangues* could build bell-shaped structures, columns made of two people called *gegantets* 'small giants', or just human towers not higher than three levels.[5] The *ball de valencians* is a performance that evolved from the *muixerangues* at the end of the 18th century and that the southern Catalan region of Valls, an area that borders Valencia, also took. This dance combined characteristics from the *muixerangues* such as the tower constructions and aspects from the Tarragona area, including the style of clothing and music (Bofarull 2007). Both *muixerangues* and *ball de valencians* participated in festivals around Catalonia in honor of religious saints (Cervelló 2017). This performance eventually formed tower-like structures, and a closing act that was usually danced as performers left the stage. Although the groups in Catalonia were still called *ball de valencians* for most of the 19th century, the dancing part was eventually lost in Valls by the mid half of that century, and the

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[4]Most of the disagreement comes from tracing back the original performance that gave shape to what we now know as 'castells'. Some studies compare the structures and other aspects of its performance with the acrobats from Magreb, tracing them to the 16th or 17th century (Bofarull 2007

[5]see picture in appendix A.

groups there started focusing on building towers only as this press note reports:

> **Todo el dia de ayer recorrieron las calles con el tamboril y la gayta , los gigantes y el baile de valencianos. Los componentes de este baile, ni bailan ni son valencianos. Su patria es Valls... y de allí han venido ad hoc, y lo que hacen no es baile sino castillos de hombres, porque Valls es pueblo famoso en castillos de hombres** (...). (Diario de Barcelona 1840, Julio 2: 25772)
>
> *All day yesterday they went down the streets with the tambor and the bagpipes, the giants and the Valencian dance. The performers of this dance do not dance nor are Valencian. Their origin is Valls... and from there they came, and what they do is not a dance but towers with men, because Valls is a famous town for human towers (...)*

Castells and social class

Most of the theories about the origins of *castells* place the first teams in the early 19th century in Valls, a southern Catalan town in the province of Tarragona that had an important economy based on agriculture and the textile industry. One of the first *casteller* teams in Valls was "*la colla de pagesos*" - the peasants' team– and the other group was formed by artisans and textile workers in "*la colla de menestrals* -the artisan's team- (Ferrando and Tarés 2003, Soler 2009, Bargalló 2001). The two groups were often referred to as *Xiquets de Valls* in several festivity programs of different towns, even though they identified as clearly different teams. The teams in Valls eventually grew in competition and rivalry as they became supporters of opposing political ideologies by the midst of the century: the "*carlins*"[6] who supported the absolutist politics of the Old Regime in Spain, and in opposition to liberalism and parliamentarism. The different political and social views between the two groups were the founding aspects for the fierce competition between them today. This competition was such that, for example, members of a family could not be spread among the two teams, and marriages were banned if the families belonged to different teams, as I was told by a Vallenc inhabitant and *casteller* participant. Later on in Tarragona city, there was another team called "*la colla dels pescadors*" (the fishers' team) that also built towers together with a local peasant team, but the general consensus is that they were still considered a

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[6]the name comes from the King "Charles V".

team of *ball de valencians* and that it was not until the end of the 19th century that Tarragona city had its own *casteller* team.[7]

The names of the teams tell us about the people who were included in this activity in terms of social class: men in the primary sectors of the workforce, where physical strength was usually necessary. The early competition between the two team in Valls emerged from different social sectors that eventually supported opposing political views: the peasants formed the team (today, called '*Colla Vella dels Xiquets de Valls*' -literally, *"Old Team of the Children of Valls"*) that eventually supported the Old Regime, and the artisans and industrial workers formed the team now called '*Colla Joves Xiquets de Valls*' (literally, "Team of the Young Children of Valls") that supported progressive policies. Men usually formed the tower trunk and younger men or children often crowned the tower. Women's role at that time was "*inexistent i exceptional*" (García 2013: 25)[8] until the mid 20th century.

In a historical and anthropological study on the changing model of *casteller* teams in the mid 20th century, Soler (2009) examined some of the aspects that defined the typical 'traditional' and 'modern' teams in Tarragona. Although his focus was specific to the two main Tarragona city teams (not the original ones in Valls), the characteristics of the traditional model extended to those early teams. In his study, Soler found that these teams had very few people in their groups because only the more skilled participants of trunk positions and those with the official shirt were counted as members of the team. The bulk of people needed at the base to support the tower structures was drawn from the audience and locals of the towns where teams participated. However, this amateur, temporary, and improvised way of participating did not grant membership in the team as it does today. *Casteller* participants (that is, those that performed in trunk positions) were paid for each exhibition or at the end of the season by city councils, associations or private donations (ibid). The fact that the amounts they earned could actually complement their regular wages as workers and peasants made them become 'real professionals' (Suárez-Baldrís 1998:

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[7]http://www.xiquetsdetarragona.cat/index.php/la-colla/hisoria/tarragona-dos-cents-anys-de-castells.html
[8]See Jordina 2018, for a review of women's participation at *castells* today.

85). Both peasants, artisans, and textile workers were (working-class) participants that needed a main source of income (be it from the land or industry). The compensation could only be possible if teams remained small in participant numbers, so many teams -even by the mid 20th century- still supported the practice of counting as formal members only those few in the trunk of the tower (Soler 2009). Exhibitions were presented in different towns in the summer, with many participants spending weeks and months away from home. Traditional teams were also defined by the fact that certain families ran those teams in a nepotistic system. Many positions of responsibility in the team such as the *cap de colla* -head of the team- were held by members of the same family, so these positions were passed down from generation to generation (ibid). On the whole, early teams did not generally include middle-class, managerial employees or owners of industries, and this remained so until about the mid 20th century.

1.1.2 *Casteller* 'golden age': a local phenomenon amidst the Catalan industrialization

The first *casteller època d'or* - golden era- happened around the 1850s, when the two teams of Valls toured different cities of the Tarragona region between July and September (Bargalló 2001). Several press reports explain that towers of eight and nine levels were exhibited in different towns (ibid, Diario de Barcelona 1851, 27 Sept). Building towers of eight and nine levels requires a considerable amount of people participating in the *pinya* positions -the base- and this suggests that a lot of people outside the team had to help during those exhibitions[9]. The fact that the two teams toured consistently during the last half of the century (Dalmau 1981: 89) suggests that *castells* was in high demand for summer festivities in the Tarragona region (which included Valls) to the point that one of the teams could reach a nine-level high tower (see Diario de Barcelona 1851, 27 septiembre, p 5700), which is today a very difficult type of tower. All of

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[9]Let us not forget the Vall's teams -as other teams would do- remained small in its effective numbers, as this was a way to ensure economic profit for each participant.

these accounts situate and confine the *casteller* phenomenon in the southern region of Catalonia, despite some scattered exhibitions in Barcelona city. (Diario de Barcelona 1858, 11 enero).

The formation of the Catalan bourgeoisie: sports, body, and social space

Parallel to the consolidation of *casteller* activity as a local phenomenon in the southern region of Catalonia by the peasant and working class, a new social class emerged and expanded, especially in the Barcelona area. With the liberalization of the industrial sector from the second third of the 19th century, food and metallurgical industries emerged in Catalonia, but the one that became most significant and had the most influence there -economically, politically, and socially- was the textile and wool industry. This industrialization was concentrated around Barcelona (as opposed to the traditional *casteller* region of Tarragona) and benefited both the Catalan grand bourgeoisie and the upper-middle classes. By the end of the 19th century, these classes were already enjoying significant economic power that allowed them to own property and to be in places of decision-making, like city councils, prompting the development of cultural movements. Hobsbawn (1983) reminds us that especially in periods of rapid socioeconomic changes, people experience a need to create or produce traditions that build on a narrative of continuity with the past[10]. This socioeconomic growth and power were reflected in changes in Catalan society that affected the understanding of urban spaces (Pujadas 2001, 2012, Segarra 1995), cultural expressions, and national identity (Brandes 1990).

For example, Pujadas again (2012) found that during the second third of the 19th century (1830s -60s), Barcelona's main manufacturing areas at the city center of *Las Ramblas* did not have sewage or right sanitary conditions. This pushed the Catalan bourgeoisie who lived close to those areas "to seek ways to improve hygiene and health" (2012: 1966). Pujadas argues that this motivated a change in Barcelona's urban planning to address the needs and demands of this emerging class. Private spaces like gymnastic halls were created far from the immediate city center

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[10]"a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature" (1983: 1)

14

to "improve urban hygiene" (ibid). These facilities served as points of entrance and interaction with foreign sports such as soccer,[11] cycling or athletics (ibid: 1967). The transformation of urban spaces outside the city center led and helped transform the cultural practices of the time. Open-air activities also served similar purposes[12].

The emerging upper classes favored new activities like the above mentioned (Bargalló 2001: 21) and served to distinguish them from the working classes. Sport, music concerts, or theater became popular among the Catalan bourgeoisie at the expense of traditional folklore (García 2013: 26, Bargalló 2001). The body and its use were also key elements in developing a different aesthetic during this change. During the late 19th century, upper-middle classes were interested in the hygienic and health aspects of physical activity, but this interest later turned into activities that promoted leisure and recreation instead (Pujadas 2012: 1968, 1970). Here the shift in the understanding and value of bodies became associated with class, as the body is the object of management and discipline to construct a social distinction (Elias 2000, Bourdieu 1984). Although there are no ethnographic accounts of *castellers*' use of the body in those early teams of the 19th century, their origins, the degree of physicality needed, and the fact that many depended on the extra sources of income from this practice to complement their main wages suggests that the use and training of the body for *casteller* practice was viewed as an instrumental tool out of a necessity and typical of dominated classes in Bourdieu's view. The fact that only those participants who went up the tower were considered *castellers* suggests that the popularity and continuity of *castells* depended in part on their physical ability to build towers, which required the body to be fit. This could explain, in part, why the emerging bourgeoisie at the time was not interested in participating in this phenomenon and took another cultural practice that fit better with their class values.

The introduction of other foreign sports such as tennis, golf, polo or horse-riding empha-

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[11] The two main Barcelona soccer clubs were founded in 1899 (FC Barcelona) and 1900 (RCD Espanyol).

[12] "Beginning in 1862, such exhibitions [theatricals, circus, and semi-public activities] were common activities in Barcelona, and several acrobatics and gymnastics shows emerged and enjoyed considerable success among the bourgeoisie" (Pujadas 2012: 1968)

sized the exclusive aspect of sporting clubs in Barcelona that encouraged moving the activities, its facilities -and the people who participated in them- far away from the more and more crowded and working-class city centers (Pujadas 2012). In this elitist model, there were affordances for developing a social life[13] with those of the same social class. The Catalan bourgeoisie found new areas to develop new aesthetics that combined "sport, nature and hygiene" (ibid: 1973). The nature of most of these sports emphasize the individual performer and a refined use of the body (in terms of physicality or clothing, for example) while practicing them. These sports were obviously open only to a specific social class that could afford to play them. The fact that a certain class had the freedom to choose how to shape and display their bodies was already a marker of social dominance as opposed to an immediate or instrumental use of the body that came from necessity (Bourdieu 1984).

At this time, *castells* was not yet an inclusive and participatory activity, nor a sport in which participants could shape their bodies. *Castells* was still a local phenomenon with very specific associations attached to rural areas (compared to the urban Barcelona of the time), peasantry, and working classes. Thus, it likely did not align with the tastes and appearances of the powerful emerging urban bourgeoise of the bigger cities like Barcelona (or even Tarragona).

Not only did participation in physical activities produce differentiation between the working class and the bourgeoisie, but it also encouraged another division that was already taking place between members of the latter that had started from economic and political disagreements (Vicens Vives 1958, Jutglar 1966). Therefore, the "*alta burgesia*" - grand bourgeoisie, were those industrialists who owned the large factories in Catalonia, and they continued favoring the original elitist sports that had been brought to the cities. The growing "*classes mitjanes (altes)*" -(upper-) middle classes-, were highly educated people holding liberal professions such as doctors, lawyers or architects (Marfany 1995), and took up other activities such as soccer.

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[13]coffee shops, reading rooms (Pujadas 2012:1970)

The emergence of *catalanisme*: language (ideology)

So far, we have seen how the *casteller* practice remained local throughout the 19th century in the southern region of Valls, and how industrialization (especially in the Barcelona region) prepared the ground for an emerging bourgeoisie that distinguished itself, among other things, with their regulation of bodily practices in sports activities that did not include *castells*. Parallel to these two phenomena, and while *castells* was still enjoying its golden age, a Catalan cultural movement had been forming in the second third of the 19th century with *La Renaixença* or Catalan Renaissance (1833-1892). Inspired by the Herderian view of language and nation, this literary and cultural movement focused on creating and supporting institutions that favored and regimented the use of the Catalan language as a means to construct a national sentiment. Cultural activities that were considered intellectually stimulating (*Jocs Florals*, literary gatherings, poetry contests, etc.) flourished during that time and during the first years of the 20th century, but traditional folkloric activities often deemed 'vulgar' were dismissed.

> Les societats catalanistes procuraven tant com podien que l'esbarjo que s'hi oferís fos respectable, seriós, i educatiu o 'cultural', com les vetllades literàrio-musicals (Marfany 1995: 263)
>
> *Catalanist societies ensured as much as they could that the break that was offered was respectable, serious and educating or 'cultural,' like the literary and musical evenings (Marfany 1995: 263)*

Even within this cultural movement, there was a contention of voices over the role of Catalan language. On one side, there were supporters of Catalan as a literary, cultivated language that used its archaic forms. On the other, those who supported Catalan as it was spoken in everyday life. Josep Anselm Clavé is one of the most popular writers and artists who defended Catalan in the press or in popular theater. Eventually, these two trends were intertwined with the popular works of Jacint Verdaguer and Angel Guimerà. Although supporters of this movement did not become obsessed with the linguistic *form* until the early 20th century (Marfany 1995), the two perspectives struggling for recognition and legitimacy evidenced underlying language

ideologies regarding the Catalan language.

Catalan was the common language of everyday life during that period amongst popular sectors, who used it instrumentally and without an active political or national purpose (Anguera 1997). However, although language was indeed a central aspect in the cultural movement of *La Renaixença*, there are no accounts of the linguistic practices used inside the *casteller* teams of the 19th century. Catalan at that time was still not institutionalized or standardized, and there were considerable differences between its written and oral uses. For example, Catalan was not regularly used in the press or in written exchanges by the political elites and middle classes in general until the end of the 19th century, when the national movement emerged (see Fradera 1992)[14]. The early cultural movement of *La Renaixença* opened then a debate over the role of Catalan language in the larger society and its relation to the later national movement.

1.1.3   The *casteller* decline and the emergence of political Catalanism

The so-called *època de decadència* of *castells* -the decline period- as reported by several studies (Bargalló 2001, Bofarull 2007, Miralles 1981) happened between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. During that period of time Catalonia experienced the burst of several movements in various socio-political and cultural spheres that redefined and created some new understandings about its culture, its society, its language and its idea of nation.

La Renaixença had started a cultural movement called '*catalanisme*' -'Catalanism' – and the people who supported it called themselves '*catalanistes*' -Catalanists. The Catalan identity was brought to the fore not only through cultural means of representation like the language but also through a political one. The disagreement with the Spanish liberal and centralized State at the end of the 19th century sparked different political movements that supported the idea of a 'Catalan nation' with nuances in their approaches. The political facet of this cultural movement called

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[14]Most of the press reports about castells found during that period are in Castilian, as was the general tendency in most newspapers and literary production in Catalonia.

18

catalanisme polític- political Catalanism- was lead by the (petit) bourgeois class in Catalonia, which included property owners, lawyers, doctors, shopkeepers, engineers, architects, students, and so on, that is, middle-class men holding mostly liberal professions (Marfany 1995: 49-54, Solé-Tura 1974). However, there were progressive and conservative positions with respect to the alternative types of relationship between Catalonia and Spain, although most of them defended the decentralization of the Spanish State and the autonomy of Catalonia. These positions included discrepancies in the role of upper and bourgeois classes in the making of the nation. Those who lived in urbanized centers rejected traditional and regionalist perspectives such as the role of traditions, the family and the rural areas. The conservative and ecclesiastic sectors defended this naturalized perspective of the Catalan nation (Balcells 1996, Solé-Tura 1974). This conservative trend is more associated with the general Romantic ideas of nation and land, common to many European nationalisms in the 19th century. Marfany showed us how Catalanism was particularly prone to the use of naturalist metaphors and discourses in which Catalanist qualities were to be found in the land (Marfany 1995).

The rhetoric of opposition between the 'natural' and the 'artificial' as representing the two national realities (Catalonia and Spain) has been used in different aspects of the cultural and political construction of the Catalan identity since then with varying results. This view has promoted essentialized ideas about nationalism or national identity that have supported ideologies of linguistic purism, authenticity, and naturalism that are still relevant in today's discussion on language and political ideologies (Woolard 2016). For example, studies on language use in democratic Catalonia have shown that the notion of artifice that was primarily associated with Spanish nationalism and the components that shaped it (language, cultural practices, etc) in the 19th century have been associated with Catalan language in the contemporary era rather than with Castilian (Woolard 1989). Despite the different trends and visions of Catalanism within this political movement at the end of the 19th century, it was mostly the upper Catalan classes who led and supported it. These did not represent the social sectors that participated in *casteller* teams

at that time, which were the peasantry and the working classes. Although the national idea of the Catalan society became more and more inclusive of white-collar workers in a broad sense in time, it still excluded in general terms the grand bourgeoisie, the peasantry, and urban working classes (Marfany 1995: 58).

The Catalan middle classes of the late 19th and early 20th century thus set the foundations for new aesthetics, distinct from the grand bourgeoisie's values[15] and also from the urban working class, and peasantry. In this new aesthetics, *catalanistes* developed a taste for measure and control or *seny* - common sense. The concept of '*seny*' encapsulated the values of these middle and upper classes, as they had to participate in public life in a controlled manner (Noyes 2003: 88-90). Catalanists thus had to actively show a sense of distinction in as many daily aspects as possible, and especially in cultural practices as these were the central aspects that shaped this movement. This measure and control contrasts with some of the Spanish aesthetics found in Spanish cultural icons such as flamenco dancing or bullfighting, in which physical strength, passion, courage, sensuality or individuality are valued, highlighted, and sought. Becoming a *Catalanist* was regarded as something feasible for many because the focus was on practice, on performing, on experiencing and on living in a certain way (in contrast to an essentialized, nativist view) that facilitated an identity. The possibility of performing a national self through cultural practices became part of the kind of Catalan nationalism of that period. These new aesthetics permeated cultural practices as in the use of Catalan language (in literature events), music & dance (in choral groups or *sardanes*), and physical activity (in the mountaineering associations[16]), among others. Although the *Catalanist* movement was founded in the Barcelona area first, it quickly reached other parts of Catalonia where industrial life was developing like in Tarragona.

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[15]Catalanistes often criticized the ignorance of the grand bourgeoisie (see Marfany 1995: 281)

[16]Mountaineering associations became popular because part of the rhetoric on the performance of national identity was based on the land. People had to engage with nature and away from the urban centers.

1.1.4 Early 20th century: *casteller* decline and the emergence of *sardanes* as a national symbol

Soon after the golden era of *casteller* activity, the *sardanes* dance became a national symbol together with the emergence of Catalanism, which replaced the interest and actual public exhibitions of *casteller* teams. *Casteller* practice in the Tarragona region declined considerably during the last years of the 19th century and especially so during the first third of the 20th century. Proof of this decline is usually reported from the number of exhibitions and the complexity of the towers that could not reach eight[17] levels, for example (Bargalló 2001). The decline of the *casteller* activity in favor of other practices that best suited the emerging *Catalanist* society in Tarragona (and in Catalonia, in general) was evident from 1902 when the *sardanes* dance displaced *casteller* performances in the main town's festivities. *Castells* and other folkloric performances such as *diables*[18] or *bastoners*[19] were not performed during Tarragona city's main festivities. *Sardanes* -a dance that had become emblematic of *Catalanism* just recently (Mainar i Vilalta 1970, Marfany 1995, Brandes 1991)- was performed instead. In this dance, participants form an inwards-facing circle while joining hands and they combine a series of counted steps and jumps to add movement to the circle.

Sardanes and social space

The *sardanes* dance was originally popular in the northeastern region of Catalonia only, and then it was iconized to represent Catalanists values and the Catalan culture. The would-be mayor of Tarragona defined it: "*[la sardana] és seriosa en son desenrotllament, és valenta en sa forma, és dolça en sa música i és democràtica en sa composició*" -'[the *sardana*] is serious in its development it is brave in its form, it is sweet in its music, and it is democratic in its composition"

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[17]The height of the tower is often a measuring tool to assess the health of the activity: the higher and more complex, the more people involved, which evidences the popularity and centrality in the public life.

[18]literally 'devils' this is a firerun with participants dressed with fire and devil-like images.

[19]stick dancers

(Dalmau 1981: 318). In 1905 people complained about the decision to include only *sardanes* and not *castells* in Tarragona's festivities. According to them, *castells* had been a part of the traditional performances of the region for decades and they should have remained in the program. In a newspaper letter addressed to the group responsible for promoting *sardanes* in the Tarragona *ateneu*[20] -public cultural association– one Tarragona citizen explained:

> (. . .) En veure el programa de les festes de Sant Magí, (. . .) que ço més popular que ens queda, ço més de casa, els "Xiquets de Valls"[21] eren oblidats, I en canvi un grup de gent jove, com sou vosaltres, plens d'entusiasme, això sí, se *gastava* un centenar de duros per a fer venir de comarques llunyanes una colla empordanesa, I nostre ajuntament contribuïa amb una trentena de duros, a que enguany, en lloc de la gralla, s'ensenyorís (. . .) el flaviol [22] I la tenora [23] (. . .). (Lo Camp de Tarragona, 18 August 1905, In Dalmau 1981: 315)

> *(. . .) When I saw the program of the Sant Magí festivities, (...) that the most popular thing we still have, the thing closest to home, the 'Xiquets de Valls' [casteller team] was forgotten, and instead a group of young people like you are, full of enthusiasm, for sure, was spending a hundred duros [old Spanish currency] to make an Empordanese team [a team from Empordà, a northeast region of Catalonia] from far away to come, and that our city council contributed with thirty duros to make visible the flaviol and the tenora [typical sardanes instruments] instead of the gralla [typical casteller instrument] this year.*

In response to these complaints, the would-be mayor of Tarragona defended the decision because he felt that its citizens had been "denationalized" (Dalmau 1981: 319). He complained that people with economic resources had been introducing the Spanish bullfighting tradition (ibid). In order to counteract these activities, the mayor defended:

> Deixeu. . . que el jovent d'avui s'incorpori de bell nou a l'ànima de Catalunya i es lliuri de tot a la Sardana, encara que hagi de realitzar algun sacrifici en allò que sia peculiar I propi nostre. (Dalmau 1981: 319)

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[20]These cultural associations proliferated at the time and were popular amongst working classes because they offered educational resources in a time when there was a lack of formal institutions. These places also became the sites where the Catalanist class culture developed.

[21]A Casteller team from Valls.

[22]Catalan wooden type of flipped flute instrument used in cobles, the type of Sardana music.

[23]"a double-reeded oboe-like wind instrument, considered to be a descendent of the shawm" (http://lameva.barcelona.cat/culturapopular/en/festivals-and-traditions/festival-characters-and-elements/tenora)

Let. . . today's youth assimilate at once to the soul of Catalonia and dedicate them-
selves entirely to the sardana, even if a sacrifice is needed in what is peculiar and
particularly ours. (Dalmau 1981: 319)

In his response, the mayor urged the youth to embrace the *sardana* because it was the 'soul' of Catalonia, which was considered to be a solution to the "denationalized" citizens who were supporting Spanish activities. He also acknowledged losing their own traditions like *castells* as a requirement to achieve this goal. The response shows that *castells* were not, in fact, regarded as the "soul" of Catalonia or its essence, but rather a tradition only particular to the region of Tarragona, which allowed for its sacrifice. *Sardanes* was becoming a tradition representing Catalonia whereas *castells* was being cast as a regional one.

The mayor further challenged the complaining citizen's local and national identity in an attempt to establish a boundary based on the acceptance of this dance: "*Sou tarragoní de cap a peus i ferm catalanista, és veritat, però la condició de fill de Tarragona us porta moltes vegades en ales del vostre sentimentalisme exaltat (. . .) Vós sou un catalanista?* -'You're a Tarragona citizen from head to toes and a solid Catalanist, it's true, but the condition of son of Tarragona leads you many times to your exalted sentimentalism (. . .) Are you a Catalanist? (Dalmau 1981:318).

This exchange shows at least two interesting points. On the one hand, it highlights that having an 'exalted sentimentalism' is criticized as something that works counter to the *Catalanist* aesthetics and manners of speaking or behaving. The measured and controlled expressive emotions were one characteristic that *Catalanists* pursued in order to portray a sense of rationality in their lifestyle. This had to be reflected in their verbal and written exchanges, too (remember the obsession with literary events). On the other hand, the mayor blames his "condition of son of Tarragona" for this sentimentalism to question whether or not he really is a *Catalanist*. This highlights the fact that spaces (in this case, a town or region) are also subject to semiotic processes of iconization in the representation of identities. Being a "Tarragona citizen from head to toe" leads to a sentimentalism about what is "particularly ours" that poses problems to the fulfillment

of a *Catalanist* identity that seemed to go beyond local boundaries. The mayor's concern aligns with dominant perspectives on nationalism and national identity that accept replacing local or regional identities to construct national ones, as a rational (and modern) way to locate and gain political power.

Sardanes vs *castells*

Thus*, sardanes* became one of the quintessential performances of Catalonia in the early 20th century (Marfany 1995, Anguera 2010, Brandes 1990, 1991) as it became a platform to represent the values of the *Catalanist* bourgeoisie that were also open to other classes[24]. From their perspective, *sardanes* represented the "new," modern Catalan values, its culture, and its ethnically[25] marked identity (Brandes 1991) and *Catalanists* had to embody the values of this dance to construct their national identity. Nonetheless, it was not only that the activities and their values had to align with the values of those who enjoyed them, but many of these had to be *performed* and experienced in the first person and in collectivity in order to build or transform the individual; *Catalanists* wanted to participate because, in active participation, they could find their national self. As Brandes noted "Catalan identity (...) demands above all acting and identifying oneself as Catalan. Neither genetic inheritance nor mere residence automatically qualifies a person, at least from the cultural point of view, for group member" (1991: 66).

As *sardanes* became an quintessential representation of Catalans at the beginning of the 20th century*,* it made other activities such as *castells* and some of its characteristics invisible or erased from the national imaginary[26]. Giori (2014) described the tensions between the bourgeois class's expectations and what *castells* represented at that time and wondered if those were

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[24]Marfany described *sardanes* as: "Ring without head and tail, where everybody hold their hand in sign of love, where everybody can enter and leave freely and it can always grow with the addition of new dancers; dance of the public square, of the community, open to everybody, the poor, the wealthy, the elderly, the young ones, men and women; vigorous and sporting dance, healthy; serious dance, methodic, elegant, essential to the people that even within amusement it keeps its dignity" (Marfany 1995: 326)

[25]in a social sense (Barth 1969) rather than a biological one.

[26]I draw from the semiotic process that Irvine and Gal discussed (2000: 38).

24

contradictory:

> és possible que els castells no representessin, en aquell moment, les condicions del catalanisme ascètic i burgès, a diferència de la sardana? És possible que el vessant esportiu i arriscat dels castells no encaixés amb el sentit d'home mesurat i estudiós de l'ésser català ideal d'aquesta època? És possible que el món casteller hagi estat massa conflictiu per [a] (...) la necessitat de cohesió i front comú del nacionalisme català?" (2014: 162-163)

> *is it possible that castells did not represent like sardanes did, at that moment, the conditions of the aesthetic and bourgeois catalanism? Is it possible that the sporting and risky aspect of castells did not fit the sense of a measured and educated man of the Catalan ideal of that time? Is it possible that the casteller world had been too conflictive for the (...) need of cohesion and common goals that the Catalan nationalism had?*

Although I do not believe that the sporting aspect was a particular problem (see soccer's success, for example), the physicality required both in *sardanes* or in hiking is very different from the one in *castells*. The body posture in *sardanes* is straight; it cannot bend, become wobbly or look flexible; the movement has to be precise and refined, and the participants have to hold hands while their bodies are separated from each other. The neat, calculated, and refined use of the body in *sardanes* contrasts very much with the (apparently) messy, shaky, sweaty use of the body that sustains (and is sustained by) and endures (and is endured by) others in *castells*.

The festive model in Catalonia during the early years of the 20th century changed to incorporate activities (chorales, mountaineering, concerts, soccer, etc.) that appealed to that empowered social class (Cervelló 2016) that was becoming wider and more inclusive and that was distancing itself from the grand bourgeoisie. The liberal political movement (in a classic sense) that evolved from the cultural *Renaixença* also encouraged the participation of citizens in civic associations (*ateneus* -public cultural associations-, cooperative businesses, casinos, etc) and political parties like the politically conservative *Lliga Regionalista* or *Societat Catalana* (Molas 1973). The participatory character of this cultural (and then political) movement, therefore, was key to incorporate broader sectors of the Catalan population, mainly from (upper) middle classes at first, but increasingly working-class with time.

It seems that *castells* were not regarded by the Catalan upper-middle classes as an activity in which they could (or were willing to) participate or support, in part because it also clashed with the festive (and participatory) model that was emerging. Let me remind you that *casteller* teams of that period were not socially inclusive (each team was run by a family), the number of participants was very limited to a few men in trunk positions, and most of them (if not all) belonged to working classes and peasantry. These earned a supplemental salary, which made participating at *castells* a necessity for some. *Castells* was still very much associated with the southern region of Tarragona, to rural areas and to working classes, and these groups were generally excluded from the kind of participatory cultural and political *Catalanism* of that period.

1.1.5   Mid-20th century and current period

The forty years of dictatorship in Spain (1939-1975) did not help *castells* to expand its activity, though it was not banned either: it was part of what the dictator's regime referred as "**sano regionalismo**" - 'healthy regionalism' (Geniola 2014, 2017), which served to limit as well as preserve the practice.[27] This sense of 'cultural regionalism' supported by the dictatorship regarded *castells* and other cultural performances from diverse national regions such as the Basque Country as 'folklore.' The term folklore usually defined "neutral," symbolically empty, and un-politicized activities that provided an "emotional element" that did not endanger the Spanish national unity and its national practices (Ortiz 1999: 488, Vaczi 2016). These activities were understood within the perspective of uniting the Spanish people under the dictatorship (Ferrando 2016). García's point about the festive model in Catalonia during the dictatorship fits the understanding of cultural performances from other parts of Spain as 'emotional elements'. He argued that festivities during that time were "*pensat com a aturada laboral per a l'oci que no pas com a espai participatiu per a la ciutadania*" -'thought of as a labor break for entertainment and not as a participatory space for the citizens' (García 2013: 26). Towns that had two teams

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[27] A Casteller team even got to exhibit their towers in Madrid with Franco hosting the event.

saw how these merged into one single team during the Civil War (1936-9) and right before the dictatorship because people were imprisoned or in exile. Nonetheless, some new *casteller* teams were founded between the late forties and sixties. That was the case of the Castellers de Vilafranca (1948), currently one of the top teams in Catalonia. Although some teams that were founded in the 1930s started incorporating aspects that would eventually lead to a change in the casteller model, most of them still reproduced the aspects of the 'traditional' one (Soler 2009). New internal (Catalan) immigration moving mainly from agrarian contexts such as the south of Catalonia to larger and more industrialized cities also promoted the formation of new teams in the Barcelona area. Actually, many of the current teams in this area were founded by people coming from Tarragona region or their descendants. Additionally, during the last years of -and after- the dictatorship, the Spanish society pushed for more democratic means of participation and representation in the form of neighbors' associations and civic centers (Radcliff 2011). In Catalonia this was generally promoted through changing the festive model to incorporate elements that combined different semiotic meanings. As García noted:

> amb la fi de la dictadura, els nous ajuntaments democràtics van afanyar-se a restaurar el sentit de pertinença de la societat i van trobar en les festes majors un aliat important. Moltes ciutats van apostar per un doble model: reforçar els elements contemporaries (concerts, balls I esport) I importar l'imaginari festiu més tradicional (*castells*, correfocs o gegants).(Garcia 2013:21)
>
> *with the end of the dictatorship, the new democratic city councils urged the restoration of the sense of belonging in society and found in the main festivities an important ally. Many cities supported a double model: reinforcing the contemporary elements (concerts, dances and sport) and importing the most traditional festive imaginary (castells, fireruns or giants)*(Garcia 2013:21)

Although the *casteller* activity still remained relevant in the traditional region of southern Catalonia, this ongoing change was also visible in the creation of teams in non-traditional areas like Barcelona and in the way *casteller* teams organized and defined themselves. In the case of Castellers de Barcelona (founded in 1969), it was the first team founded in a large urban setting and it already incorporated features of modern teams (like the elimination of payments, for example).

The yearning for a more participatory and democratic society at the end of the dictatorship and the beginning of democracy, and the fact that some *casteller* teams already embraced a new model pushed many of the old teams to change too. The expansion of *casteller* teams and the change of model allowed diversification of roles and means of participation beyond heavily physical and technical positions at tower trunks,[28] beyond families who run the teams generation after generation, or beyond specific social sectors. Thus *castellers* embodied a changing set of values - that were suddenly embraced rather than downplayed.

The 'modern' *casteller* model, as described by Soler (ibid) included people from a broader range of social classes that represented the social sectors of the urban and industrialized places. Exhibitions served to recruit people to their teams. Participants had a more diverse socioeconomic background, and it was easy to find people in liberal professions. The new social profiles were often highlighted by members of teams. For example, the team 'Nens del Vendrell' called these new members *castellers de corbata* -'necktie *castellers*' (www.nensdelvendrell.cat). According to this team, a group of students and professionals from the town wanted to support and give a push to the team after some years of *casteller* decline (measured by the lack of participants and complex towers). This team is one of the historical ones (founded in 1926), and it was the only one that implemented 'modern' aspects in the sixties like the inclusion of other social classes, amateurism, the democratic means of participation, etc. The reference to the tie is relevant because it was still considered an element of class distinction, indexing middle class, educated people[29]. The head of that team at that time showed proudly how this aspect had to be recognized as something positive:

> **nuestros 'castells' estan formados por hombres de todas las clases sociales (. . .) hoy aquí mismo, en un piso estaba el patrono y en el de arriba uno de sus obreros, y ambos se han abrazado al saber el triunfo.** (Jan Julivert, Diario Español 1970)
>
> *Our 'castells' are formed by men of all social classes (. . .) today in here, there was*

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[28]Some people believed that from that moment there was a process of '*tecnificaci*ó' or specialization of other positions like the pinya, the top part, the *folre*, etc

[29]English also uses clothing-related expressions to refer to class distinctions like blue or white-collar worker.

the boss in one floor, and in the one above there was one of his laborers, and both have hugged each other when they learned about the victory. (Jan Julivert, Diario Español 1970)

Although this expression was particular to this team, it suggests that the inclusion of this broader social sector was not common at the time, even in other spheres in society. Over time, the rest of the teams also began including people from various social and economic positions and this diversity became especially common with the new teams that were founded from the eighties onwards in larger cities. The reasons of this growth and diversification of participants are still unclear today. However, it coincides historically with a revival (started around 1960s) of a Catalanist civic movement in defending the Catalan culture again (especially language and music) in the face of a dictatorship that was showing some signs of weakness and that kept on integrating Catalan culture within its idea of a single and united Spain. For example, the civic cultural association of Omnium Cultural (founded in 1961[30]) and the musical movement of *'la Nova Cançó'* brought a modernized view of Catalan values and everyday life through its culture (in literary events, lyrics, etc) to a wider and younger generation. This new context might have pushed *casteller* teams to redefine their own activity as a form of inclusive cultural revival. The fact that teams stopped paying their participants and that the internal organization of teams offered more democratic means of participation (like electing the people forming technical groups) and inclusion (like identifying *pinya* participants as *castellers* as well) may be some of the consequences of this change. Other roles were also added in teams' organization, including those in charge of the logistics or in charge of the communication to the press or between teams. Positions were elected through more and more democratic means, like voting by a show of hands or by paper, instead of someone designating the next person for the position. Responsibilities were also limited in number of years and thus stopped being hereditary or lifelong (Soler 2009).

The fact that participants did not earn any supplemental salary from the activity helped many teams in recruiting more and more participants, especially for the *pinya* positions, where

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[30]It was prohibited shortly after (1963) and reconstituted as a legal entity in 1967.

a large amount of people is required. This promoted the incorporation of wider sectors of the society, such as women and young people. The participation of women in positions of high responsibility in the trunk has been crucial for the improvement of *casteller* technique, as may informants stated, allowing the teams to build higher towers with trunks that generally weigh less than when men used to fulfill those positions. Young people have also been a central part of this new generation of teams. As Soler explains in the analysis of different teams during that time, in many of them "*el nucli impulsor el formen els joves amb una experiència prèvia en el món associatiu i que ja estan treballant per la recuperació de la cultura popular*" -the driving core is formed by young people with previous experience in civic associational life who are already working in the restoration of the popular culture (2009: 27). All of these changes were not sudden nor did they not encounter opposition, especially in the traditional teams. Participants in positions of leadership in some of those teams already saw that the changes were needed. In an article in 1977, an important member of one of the traditional teams of Tarragona stated:

> Són ja història els dies en què els castells els feien els pagesos o els homes de la mar. Avui la societat ha canviat. (. . .) Avui cal (. . .) deixar de banda tot sentimentalisme, personalisme I triomfalisme. Qui cregui que només poden fer castells els qui parlin català va equivocat. Qui afirmi que els castells són cosa d'homes de pèl en pit, entenent per això que la força bruta és la quinta essència dels castells, s'equivoca també (Manel Sanromà, *Diario Español* 25 setembre 1977)
>
> *The days in which peasants or fishermen built castells are already history. Today the society has changed. Today it is necessary to leave behind all the sentimentalism, personalism and triumphalism. Whoever thinks that people who can speak Catalan are the only ones who can build castells is wrong. Whoever affirms that castells is something for hairy chested men, understanding by this that brute force is the quintessential aspect of castells, is wrong too.*

It is interesting to see that already by the late seventies, there were voices supporting the transformation of *castells* in terms of class, gender, and language. However, the association of *castells* with strong, peasant (or sea) and working-class men has remained in the collective imaginary of Catalans today. It would take some more years for *castells* to flourish and be recognized as the kind of activity that Sanromà was asking for. Additionally, he also criticized an

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apparently generalized idea that only Catalan-speaking citizens were the ones socially legitimized to participate at *castells*. Although there are no studies that offer a linguistic profile of *casteller* teams, Sanromà's statement in the late 70s suggests that the only participants at that time (and probably before) were those born in Catalonia who were Catalan speakers (not those born in Catalonia and Castilian speakers). His point evidenced both the need to open up and make *castells* inclusive to a wider population with diverse social and ethnolinguistic background.

In the decade of the eighties, the main public Spanish television *Televisión Española* (TVE) started broadcasting *castells* (1985*)*, thus bringing this activity to thousands of families in Catalonia. Soon the autonomous public television *Televisió de Catalunya* (TV3) took on that responsibility in 1991, coinciding with the expansion of *casteller* teams in the Barcelona area. Right before the nineties, the *casteller* phenomenon was not growing,[31] especially in traditional areas (South Catalonia) where smaller teams had been forming. Many of these teams disappeared in the eighties, and others were formed in non-traditional areas (www.cccc.cat). Some of the new ones took some time to establish themselves, partly because of the lack of *casteller* history and tradition in these areas. In the nineties, the modern *casteller* model seemed to have been secured, and even more teams were founded[32]. The expansion and consolidation of the new teams reached a point where they could compete with traditional teams. As Soler (2013) recognized in his article "*el 1981 els castells són encara una activitat bàsicament d'ambit local (Camp de Tarragona I Penedès); el 1998 ja són una activitat d'àmbit nacional*" -in 1981 *castells* was still a local activity (Camp de Tarragona I Penedès); by 1998 it was a national activity.

However, while the visibility of *castells* increased in the nineties, with more teams in highly urbanized regions or with television programs dedicated to the activity, its popularity increased slowly and without much attention from cultural or political elites. It was a challenge for any founders to start *casteller* teams in non-traditional areas where the activity had no history, in places where it had never been popularly known (or institutionally supported), areas with

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[31] the lack of participants affected their performances and complexity of towers.
[32] the two teams I analyze in this dissertation come from that period of time

high immigration percentages, and with higher mobility than in the southern region of Catalonia. In the collective imaginary, *castells* was still rooted to a geographically, culturally, class, and gender-specific population. Certainly, teams had to break with some of these associations in order to attract people and part of that change, I argue, implied approaching this practice within the reality of local towns and neighborhoods and as part of the larger Catalan community, which raised the interest of a wider population.

1.1.6   Recent *casteller* 'boom'

The teams founded in the mid-nineties grew in popularity, technique, and visibility throughout the first years of 2000s. This was the making of the next *casteller* golden era or what some participants called *'boom casteller,'* which was about to happen. By the mid-end of 2000s, many of these groups had 'matured' and solidified as *casteller* teams, and became medium or large-sized teams. They were consistently able to build towers of at least 6 levels[33] or more and had numerous exhibitions planned every year.

The city of Tarragona has been hosting since 1932[34] a contest where the best *casteller* teams (in terms of towers achieved) gather to compete. Up until 1996, all the *casteller* teams in Catalonia were invited to participate, but from that year onwards, and because of the growth of *casteller* teams, the contest invited only those with the best results[35] shortly before the event. The contest groups together teams during multiple days (and events) according to their levels. This inevitably makes participation in certain days less valued than in others and brings lots of tensions amongst teams to enter in the group of the best positioned (see more in chapter 2). As more teams were founded, more competition was generated. Teams required larger and larger numbers of participants if they wanted to build higher towers. Competition "*amb matissos*" -with nuances-

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[33]The *Coordinadora de Colles Castelleres de Catalunya* decided that a group that reaches towers of minimum 6 levels can be considered a casteller team. This decision was aimed at regimenting the consideration of new teams in this new era.

[34]This events was annual until 1952, when it became a bi-annual contest.

[35]These can be seen in a public ranking.

(Guille, CCCC) is an important aspect of *castells,* but this is usually dramatized/surpassed during *casteller* contest. Many of my informants told me that the *casteller* contest did not accurately reflect the kind of competition that this practice usually promoted. These "nuances" are usually erased during the *casteller* contest because teams do not help others in the *pinyes*, the competition is individualized and harsh (people booing), and they win prizes in the form of money.

The way teams decide to compete also varies from team to team, with the best example in the team of Minyons de Terrasa. This team is located in one of the non-traditional Casteller regions, that is, closer to Barcelona, and although it competes with the two or three best casteller teams, Minyons consistently rejects attending castellers contests in Tarragona. When participants are asked to explain this decision that is ratified over and over every time, they say it is because they do not believe in the fierce competition in that contest. They believe in competing with each team throughout the season, not in one single day. Other examples of nuanced kinds of competition are found in teams that have few participants, and that cannot reach certain tower levels the way that medium or large teams can easily. Macià, a senior member of one of the teams analyzed in this dissertation described the "*dues actituds*" -two attitudes- that you may find among *casteller* teams: "*l'actitud més folclòrica*" -a more folkloric attitude- where teams' levels vary and they build towers of six and seven levels, and "*ja està, s'ho passen bé, fan castells*" -that's it, they have fun, they do *castells*. The other attitude is the one in which teams build every time higher and better towers and do not settle for what they have (Macià, 51 years, 2014).

This comparison highlights the different perceived motivations of teams and associates the 'folkloric' aspect of this cultural expression with lack of competition. This apparent lack of competition probably also exemplifies the non-threatening aspect that the Franco dictatorship saw in *castells* during the dictatorship: a folkloric activity that people do for its own sake, without other ideological motivations. This attitude is often criticized by fierce defenders of competition that stigmatize it as "*humiliant*" -humiliating- to the *casteller* community (see chapter 6). The debate about where is the right amount of competition is still open and evolving today. Questions

arise around the goal of *castells*, is it to build higher and complex towers at any cost? Is it to construct a collective conscience? Does competition produce a collective identity?

In the last 10 years, there has been an increase of 82% of *casteller* teams in Catalonia from 2010 to 2019. According to some senior participants at *castells*, the popularity of this cultural practice skyrocketed in 2010 primarily due to two factors: UNESCO's recognition of *castells* as 'Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity' and the socioeconomic crisis that forced people to find alternative, cost-free ways of entertainment. I argue that these two factors would actually become the breeding ground for a larger identity negotiation in Catalonia at multiple levels and that diverse social actors used *casteller* practice as one way of responding to it.

The idea of proposing the activity of *castells* to UNESCO for candidacy came in 2007 from the editors and journalists working in the magazine "*Revista Castells,*" one of the leading magazines about *castells.* One of them was the former director of the Catalan Government's Language Policy under CIU, a conservative national party, and was described to me as someone with a "*visió molt institucional, molt patrimonial, molt 'catalaneta'*" - very institutional perspective, very patrimonial, very bourgeois Catalanist. The proposal was first made to the *Coordinator de Colles de Catalunya (CCCC),* the coordinating entity of *castells* in Catalonia (1989) , and the Catalan government, since the latter is responsible for cultural issues in Catalonia.[36] The Catalan government endorsed this proposal,[37] perhaps with political interests mixed up in the process, as *casteller* practice was emerging as a potential symbol of a new Catalan national project. The Catalan government had to first propose the candidacy to the Spanish *Consejo del Patrimonio Histórico*,[38] the entity that would finally decide which candidates would be officially proposed to UNESCO from a pool of proposals around the different autonomous communities.

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[36]The Spanish State Department of Culture does not have much responsibility in regulating each autonomous community's cultural department.

[37]The Catalan parliament, with the support of all political parties represented in there, officially endorsed the candidacy.

[38]This entity works as a bridge between the Spanish administration and the autonomous communities and its role is to "facilitar la comunicación y el intercambio de programas de actuación e información relativos al Patrimonio Cultural Español" (http://www.culturaydeporte.gob.es)

UNESCO's recognition came as a boost to the Catalan culture and society, especially during a time of ideological, political, cultural challenge in Catalonia because of its sovereignty movement (see chapter 6). It is important to note that the Spanish candidacy also endorsed in the same year the **flamenco** dance, among others, and UNESCO also recognized it. **Flamenco** is a typical Andalusian dance that combines voice and percussion instruments. Different aspects of the **flamenco** dance have often been portrayed as opposed to aspects of typical Catalan cultural expressions like the Catalan dance of *sardanes*. Generally speaking, **flamenco** dance focuses on a single or a reduced number of performers (both musicians and dancers); its dance requires the person to use his/her body with a lot of short, energetic movements that show precision and discipline; it is a very emotional dance, and whenever various dancers perform together, there is barely physical contact (think of **sevillanas**, for example). **Flamenco** has often been portrayed as a typical Spanish dance, representing aspects of Spanish cultural identity and its people. Proponents of **flamenco** to UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity explained some of this performance as the following:

> The gamut of feelings and states of mind – grief, joy, tragedy, rejoicing, and fear – can be expressed through sincere, expressive lyrics characterized by brevity and simplicity. Flamenco *baile* is a dance of passion, courtship (...) Flamenco is performed during religious festivals, rituals, church ceremonies and at private celebrations. It is the badge of identity of numerous communities and groups, in particular the Gitano (Roma) ethnic community (...). Transmission occurs through dynasties, families, social groups and Flamenco clubs.

The recognition of both **flamenco** and *castells* in the same year is interesting because the descriptions offered a contrast worth analyzing. As I showed at the very beginning of this chapter, proponents of the *casteller* candidacy very much highlighted the aspect of a cultural identity recognized by the "Catalan people" whereas, in the **flamenco**, it did not specify the kind of identity nor what communities (other than the Roma) it represented. It seems ambiguous in the description or at least not clear enough if **flamenco** can provide a sense of de-ethnicized identity to other non- ethnic communities. In fact, this debate has recently sparked with the

rocketing popularity of a Catalan-born flamenco singer and dancer Rosalía. Many have accused her of 'cultural appropriation" (Maldonado 2018). She does not belong to the Roma ethnic community, but sings flamenco styled songs and uses socially typified Roma clothing style in Spain in her appearances and video clips (like polyamide tracksuits, large golden earrings and rings, long nails, heavy make-up, among others). She also uses *caló*[39] expressions in her songs to represent the Roma language (Terrasa 2018). From UNESCO's description of **flamenco**, it seems that this dance has a more "sacred" motivation because it is performed during church, rituals or private events, thus narrowing down its public visibility and its capacity to appeal to broader sectors of the society. Finally, the way both performances are passed down is also worth noting because the description suggests that knowledge of **flamenco** is commonly passed down in much more reduced and hierarchical social spaces like families, dynasties or clubs, whereas in the case of *castells*, proponents only talked about the fact that is is "transmitted from generation to generation". The UNESCO statement does show that *castells* and flamenco dance both involve a learning process, but only with *castells* it highlights that "knowledge (...) can only be learned by practice".

The aspects of both flamenco and *castells* have been instrumentalized lately by different partisan sectors in Catalonia in order to open a debate about the Catalan culture: what is Catalan culture? what does it include? who does it represent or for what purpose? For example, one of the popular right-wing political parties in Catalonia -*Ciutadans (C's)*- proposed in 2018 that the Catalan parliament state that flamenco has helped build the Catalan identity (LaSexta 2018). UNESCO's recognition helped reinforce a contemporary discourse on social inclusion that *casteller* defenders have been supporting for a long time, and that politicians and civic associations like *Omnium Cultural*[40] and the *Assamblea Nacional de Catalunya*[41] are now using

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[39]One of the languages that comes from Romani. Caló is used in the Iberian Peninsula under different forms like 'caló español', 'caló catalán', 'caló portugués' or 'erromintxela' (in the Basque Country). It is formed because of close contact with a dominant language, in this case Spanish (Kenrick 1995)

[40]Focuses on the support of Catalan and other cultural expressions.

[41]Focuses on the political process undergoing in Catalonia.

to represent the Catalan community within the national sovereignty process.

The association of *castells* with a national(ist) Catalan community is new, and other public and private entities like business companies, banks, universities, schools, etc. are also mobilizing aspects of and images associated with *casteller* practice for their own purposes (team building, cooperative skills, solidarity, etc). In a board meeting at the end of the season in one of the teams analyzed, one member explained some of the petitions they had received to perform during the following season. One of these petitions came from a popular theater of the town that hosted a typical Christmas cantata/performance (*els pastorets*). This cultural entity had asked the team to build a *casteller* pillar at one point in the story, right when the Catalan national anthem "*el cant de la senyera*" was played. According to this member, the cultural entity always had a *sardanes* team play this role but this time they preferred *castells* because *sardanes* was "*una mica aborrit*" -a bit boring. In her comment to the fact that they had to perform during the Catalan national anthem, she said immediately recognizing: "*és un moment bastant patriòtic, sí…*" -it's quite a patriotic moment, yes...". This anecdote just shows how during my time in the field, *castells* was still being instrumentalized to represent a national symbol that *sardanes* had formerly represented and enjoyed in the past. It also evidences the novelty of this new association and thus the relevance in examining this phenomenon in detail today.

1.2 Research questions and organization of the dissertation

The revival of *casteller* participation, its expansion, and visibility in Catalan public life in the last 10 years raises many questions regarding the nature of its participants and its significance today. The new sociopolitical context in Catalonia, in which this revival is framed, is also of enormous importance to understand the *casteller* phenomenon. Amongst the many questions that this topic raises, I focus on and intend to respond to the following ones:

1. What brings people from diverse backgrounds to participate in *castells,* and what meanings

do participants themselves assign to the activity?

2. How (and what) are different semiotic practices mobilized to negotiate and challenge a collective identity that is relevant/meaningful for participants?

3. How may the notion of community at *castells* contribute to or reflect a re-imagination of the larger Catalan society in the context of national debate?

This dissertation reveals how participants today learn and engage with different semiotic practices to end up constituting a sense of community. The use of the body, the physicality, the linguistic practices, or the construction of local identities in relation to the places they see themselves representing offer a different perspective on issues such as hierarchy, individual power, class division, Catalan language uses, or national identity.

In chapter 2, I provide an overview of *castells* (structure, levels, people performing it, etc) and its administrative organization at a team and Catalan level. I describe the two field sites and the methodologies used during fieldwork. I also provide a social and linguistic profile of each of the teams analyzed. In chapter 3, I examine how participants use and regulate their bodies and their physicality at *castells*. I look at the bodily practices used when building towers, the tensions, and contradictions that arise from differently-valued positions. I also look at how participants learn to become members of the community through clothing and beer drinking, which are two activities that require a group component to become meaningful. This chapter, thus, shows how *castellers* embody the notion of '*fer pinya*'. The linguistic discussion in this dissertation (chapter 4) looks at the strategies used for tower building by participants holding seemingly diverse power positions in the team. I look at the different linguistic experiences as lived by ethno-linguistically diverse participants and the ideologies underpinning them. This chapter provides a very first approach to language use and experiences at *castells* to understand the role of language today in negotiating identities and membership to the team. In chapter 5, I provide ethnographic evidence to how teams perform and display their local casteller identities rooted in the streets and plazas of

locales they see themselves representing. This chapter shows the biggest difference between the two teams analyzed, which relies on the way they construct their local identities. Finally, this study also addresses how some of the aspects shown in the previous chapters are instrumentalized for political action and in a time of economic challenges for teams due to their popularity and expansion (chapter 6). I offer a unique view on how participants respond to and engage with the recent *casteller* participation during the many mobilizations for Catalan sovereignty. The chapter also evidences unresolved tensions over alternative ways of financing the *casteller* practice and its role in expanding the practice outside Catalonia and its meanings for participants. This research, therefore, offers a nuanced perspective on the phenomenon of *castells* because it shows the richness of this practice in promoting cooperative, collaborative, and egalitarian relations among its participants. The study also shows an ongoing discussion and tensions over questions regarding the individual and the collective, the role of *castells* amongst increasingly neoliberal practices, its commodification and impact, its iconic national representation, and its social, linguistic, and cultural sustainability in the present time.

Chapter 2

Castells, Methodology, and Field Sites

2.1 A closer look at *castells*

2.1.1 The fundamental and technical aspects of a *castell*

Castells is an activity distinctively found in Catalonia. The best and most recognizable translation of *castells* in English is 'human towers' (www.cccc.cat, UNESCO), although the Catalan word *'castells'* literally means "castles." Human tower exhibitions must always be accompanied by a small group of musicians who play the *gralla* and the *tabal* (both specifically *casteller* wind and percussion instruments). Men, women, and children of various ages and backgrounds participate in *castells*. Participants in this practice call themselves "*castellers*" or "*castelleres*" for male and female participants, respectively. A single team is called a "*colla*" (pl. *colles*), which is a Catalan word for an ambiguously bounded group or a team.[1]

The actual tower construction is divided into three parts: the *pinya* or base *(*literally "pinecone"), the *tronc* -trunk-, and the *pom de dalt* -top. The *canalla* or children are usually the ones who form the last -and highest- parts at the top, which are the *dosos* -the twos-, the *aixecador*

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[1] The first entry of the term 'colla' in the Catalan dictionary IEC2 states that a colla is a "Nombre de persones aplegades deliberadament per a un fi" -number of people, deliberately gathered for a purpose.

-raiser- and the *enxaneta* -the crowner. Adults and young people can perform in the various levels that form the trunk positions. In order to build vertical constructions that may range from three to ten levels high, participants in a wide range of ages and sizes form a *pinya* first, with tens or hundreds of people joining in to create this horizontal structure that supports and sustains towers. When towers are exceptionally high (in towers of 9 or 10 levels) it is common to include a *folre* -a 'lining' or second, smaller base- on top of the *pinya*, and sometimes the *manilles* -a third, even smaller base – on top of the *folre* [see figure below for a visual representation of the main parts of the *castell*]
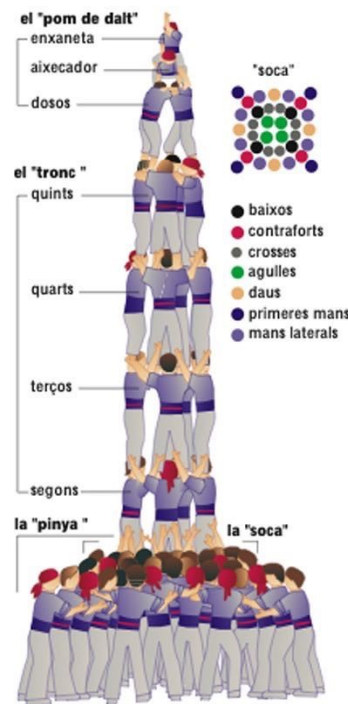
Figure 2.1: Most of the main parts or structures that define a *castell*. Image retrieved from Enciclopèdia.cat

The process of building *castells* includes three stages: "*carregar-lo*" building it up, "*coronar-lo*" -crowning it-, and "*descarregar-lo*" -dismantling it. Each stage requires varying amounts of time, people, and organization to be successful and to facilitate the attainment of the other parts. Building *castells* is thus an orderly, structured, and linear process that clearly has a beginning, a climactic moment, and an ending. There are three basic types of towers depending

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of the number of people involved in each level: *pilars* -columns- are formations consisting of one person per level; *torres* -towers of two- consisting of two people per level facing each other; and finally *castells* -towers-, that includes three or more people in each level. Each of these constructions may have several height levels, measured by the human component in each. Thus, towers' height is not popularly recognized by metric units such as meters, but by the human levels they build: a "*pilar de quatre*" -a column of four- is a column that is four-people high.[2] The way participants and *casteller* connoisseurs refer to towers is simplified as the following: A "*tres de nou*" -three of nine- is a tower of three people per level, with nine levels high, and its abbreviated form in writing is "3d9". When *folre* and *manilles* are included in the construction, these are also added both orally and in written forms as "*tres de nou amb folre i manilles*" -three of nine with second and third base- or "3d9fm".

2.1.2 Organization of *casteller* practice and its structures

Castells are usually practiced in rehearsing facilities that are often ceded by the city council, but oftentimes teams need to find unconventional spaces like churches when municipal spaces are not available (Tirallongues de Manresa https://www.tirallongues.cat/). These places may be old or refurbished factories or premises, but they must have high ceilings so that towers can fit. Team members need to practice regularly if they want to achieve higher and more complex constructions. They always *assajen* -'rehearse'- and never "train," the latter being an expression very commonly used in sporting activities in Catalonia. Although the commitment required in a sports activity is often very similar (or the same) to the commitment that people have in *castells*, this gives us an idea that castellers do not define its activity within sporting terms. Current *casteller* practice is organized in "*temporades*" or seasons that run from January to early December. Depending on the seasonal goals and level of expertise of a team, members rehearse two to three times per week at times that may range from 7:30 to 11:00pm during week days

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[2] In writing this is often abbreviated as "p4"

(Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, for example). The '*diada castellera*' is the official Sunday exhibition and it takes place almost every Sunday of the season at various town plazas around noon,[3] although during the hottest months like July or August, the time is moved to 6pm to avoid the sun, heat exposure and added risks related to sweat and grip.[4]

In any regular Sunday exhibition, there are usually three teams performing three towers in *rondes* -rounds-, that is, each team builds or attempts to build one tower at a time while the other two teams' members who are not performing either patiently watch or help in the *pinya*. One of the teams usually hosts the Sunday exhibition in the city or town where the team is located and invites the other teams to participate. Hosting teams need to pay some money to each invited team, the price of which is set at each team's discretion based on the level of each team. Thus, a team that builds towers of 7 levels is usually cheaper than a team that builds towers of 9 levels. From my experience doing fieldwork, I learned that many participants are not aware of these economic transactions, nor the amounts or prices set for each team. The differences in the budget of each team usually determine the possibilities of exhibitions in the season (either hosting or performing as an invited team). This aspect is crucial in this cultural activity because it affects the public visibility of the team, which affects the potential new members, the possibility of building higher and more complex towers, and the possibility of receiving more money through sponsors and public subsidies.

The whole process of building human towers is meticulously organized, and nothing is left to improvisation. The administrative organization of teams is usually divided between technical and non-technical aspects. The "Technical groups" rehearse and prepare -both physically and mentally[5]- the participants who hold specific positions in the various parts of the tower. The

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[3] The current time of regular exhibitions (Sunday noon) is a tradition that is maintained. In the past, exhibition were performed at this time for religious reasons, since citizens and members of teams attended Sunday mass right before that time.

[4] Members of both teams argued that this was a safety measure because during hot months, people's feet became more slippery due to sweat and that would become riskier (especially for kids who have to climb all the way up), resulting in more potential tower collapses and injuries.

[5] This is especially so with children who often get nervous before exhibitions.

groups have a *cap* or head, and each group can include 10 people or less. The names of the groups may vary from team to team, but most of them have about the same kind of technical groups. For example, most of the teams have an "*equip de pinyes*" -the *pinyes* technical team-, who gather all the names of participants who join the rehearsal and assign spots in the *pinya* based on size (see chapter 3). Other groups that are common in *casteller* teams are the "*equip de troncs*" -trunk's technical team, the "*equip de canalla*" -'children's technical team' or the *gralles* -gralles team-. Additionally, the *cap de colla* or head of the team and their assistant managers "*sotscap*"(one or two usually) is the role that holds the maximum responsibility on a technical level, meaning he or she proposes the season's goals, rehearsals, and exhibitions. This person has to work with other technical groups to assess decisions. He or she directs each performance and holds human and technical responsibilities, which makes him/her one of the most socially valued roles of the team and the representative face of how well or badly the team is performing. In the Non-Technical groups, it is common to find those teams that work in different areas necessary to make *casteller* teams function. These may also differ in size and number depending on each team. There are areas in social (*equip de lúdica*" -ludic team, *equip de benvinguda -welcoming group*, or groups responsible for social activities for children, bar, or festivities, etc), economics (treasury, sponsors, merchandising, subventions, etc) or communication (community manager, *xarxes* -social media, website). Finally, there exists the role of 'president' of the team, who holds an administrative role. None of these voluntary positions are paid. People participating in or coordinating these groups are elected in assembly every year or two in the groups analyzed. Informal groups, meaning those not in the official structure of the team are also common in *casteller* teams. Their organization is usually run through social media platforms like Whatsapp and have no official leader or regulation. Within these groups, I found 'youth groups' or groups specific to tower positions. *Casteller* members are included informally in these groups by other members themselves, whenever someone in the group finds someone belonged to them. For

example, I was straightforwardly added to the youth[6] groups in both teams by members of those groups. I did not know they existed, and after asking so many questions the first weeks, someone thought it would benefit me being in that group.

One of the main *casteller* goals is to build higher and more complex towers. Each team's achievement throughout the season has a numerical value or score that then someone on the team has to add to a common ranking. Scores serve to position teams in comparison to each other in the *Ranquing Estrella*, a *casteller* ranking sponsored by the beer company Estrella Damm. This ranking is also used to decide who participates in the bi-annual two-day *Concurs de Castells* -*casteller* contest- celebrated in Tarragona. This contest takes place in September or early October during a weekend, right after the teams have already performed the majority of their season exhibitions. The *Concurs de Castells* selects 42 teams from the ranking, and the selection is based on the three best performances out of five exhibitions during that period of time[7]. To have a better position in the ranking means to be able to participate in the actual contest, and to be able to participate in the day when the best teams participate, that is, on Sunday.

The competitive atmosphere in the contest is fierce, and many argue that this does not represent the kind of competition that the *casteller* tradition encourages during the regular season (see also Erickson 2008). For example, unlike Sunday exhibitions during the season, in this contest teams do not help each other when performing. Additionally, all participating teams receive payment, increasing in amount in each position. The first place team may be awarded 16.000 euros ($18,000 approx.). Participating in the contest, therefore, has multiple benefits for teams: it makes them visible, they can compete in a different way, and they all get money for it.

Finally, since 1989, there is a coordinating body of *casteller* teams called *Coordinadora de Colles Castelleres de Catalunya* (CCCC).[8] The motivating purpose in the formation of this

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[6] There was not a clear definition of who belonged to youth groups, but my observations found that participants could not be part of the 'canalla' or children's group. Most of the youth members were over 18 years old and reached more than 30 years old. None of them were married or had children.

[7] The ranking takes into account all towers performed by all teams from September 1 of the previous year to August 31st of the year of the contest (www.concursdecastells.cat).

[8] Volunteers from different actual teams form the working group, with a president, vice-presidencies, treasury or

entity was to "*vetllar pels interessos comuns de les colles castelleres, per fomentar el món casteller i, sobretot, per fer que els riscos inherents a l'activitat que duen a terme quedessin garantits sota la cobertura d'unes pòlisses adequades.*" - To safeguard the common interests of the casteller teams, to promote the casteller world, and above all, to insure that the risks inherent to the activity are covered by appropriate insurance policies (ww.cccc.cat). The entity also aims at providing resources and solutions to issues that any team may encounter from its development to its consolidation, and that may exceed a team's capacities either because they are new and small or because of growing participation.

Besides the focus on safety and prevention, this entity is responsible for promoting good communication and dialogue with *casteller* teams and other entities like sponsors, television image rights, insurance companies, etc. They also established the "*valors socials del fet casteller*" -the social values of the *casteller* phenomenon-, a document with basic guidelines about what *casteller* practice should look like in promoting its social prestige (http://www.cccc.cat/que-fem). Several projects have developed through the years, from the protective helmet for children, to safety workshops among teams, to projects aimed at the inclusion of new people to teams. This entity receives money from the Catalan government, Barcelona and Tarragona councils, and the city council of Valls. In 2018, the total amount of income received by the CCCC was 690,700.29 euros (approximately $760,000), of which 271,989.43 euros (39,4%) came from public administrations[9], but these numbers vary depending on the year and the private sponsors; that is, they are not always increasing.[10] Although the historical teams (many mentioned in chapter 1) first opposed the formation of the CCCC or belonging to it, most of them now are part of this coordinating body, which has almost 100 teams included. Part of this initial mistrust was that the CCCC has regulated and standardized the activity to make sure every team played with the same "rules." For example, the entity regulates that new teams can only be officially

committee members typical of many entities. The responsibilities are renewed every 3 years.

[9] http://www.cccc.cat/data/files/pdf/transparencia%202018.pdf

[10] In 2017, for example, the total amount received was of more than 782,000 euros.

considered as such when they can build a minimum of a 6-level tower. This organization also decides (technically in agreement with teams) how worthy some constructions are in order to rank teams according to their achievements. For example, a 3d9f is valued higher than a 4d9f because it is more complicated to stabilize the former when there are fewer members in each level. The role of the CCCC is lately being criticized by some for how it is managing the issue of image rights that are ceded to private or public television corporations.

2.2   Methodology

I started my ethnographic study in January 2016 and concluded in December of the same year. Although I had carried out a total of 4 months of pilot research in the previous years, most of the discussions in this dissertation focus on the 2016 fieldwork period. In order to understand the current phenomenon of *castells* in the Barcelona area, I conducted research in two different *casteller* teams. Although I mainly engaged in participant observation, one of the most well-known anthropological methods used to collect qualitative data, I also used other methods for data collection pertaining to traditions in the social sciences, more generally. Thus, I recorded semi-structured interviews, compiled audio-visual materials of *casteller* activity and interactions, archival work, and media data (TV, newspaper articles, the Internet). In my interviews, I offered images, videos, and newspaper articles to elicit discussion around some topics (see annex) sometimes this task was done in small groups. Finally, I collected 304 questionnaires from adults[11] (134 from the first group and 170 from the second one). Although my initial strategy was handing out all the questionnaires at once in several rehearsals, I ended up handing them personally to those who wanted to participate in the study, which were the vast majority.[12] This was a way to make sure participants who were willing to participate filled out the questionnaire

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[11] Only those who were +18 participated in the survey, which inevitably leaves aside an important group of children worth analyzing in future projects.

[12] Only three people rejected participating in it, one being a sporadic visitor to the activity.

and asked me any questions they had. The process was prolonged and took most of the months spent in each team. When I started fieldwork in 2016, I held a comprehensive understanding of 'participant' that included people who regularly came to and were physically present during rehearsals and exhibitions. These participants could be engaged with tower building in a more or less active way, and they could also be supporting family members but not participating in tower building for various reasons (injured, not interested, tiredness, etc.). Others participated in the team by providing help at the bar like preparing sandwiches or helping with the organization of events under various forms. In order to compare my broad understanding with that of the participants themselves, the survey mentioned above was passed to each individual participant who was present in any *casteller* rehearsal or exhibition for 6 months. They were asked to answer basic questions about their age, occupation, time spent in the team, languages spoken at home and during rehearsals, their relationship with *la colla*, among other questions. This self-reported survey served as a starting, quantitative point to ascertain the biographical, social, and linguistic situation of each individual participant and to compare it with the ethnographic evidence.

The work of participant observation involved attending and helping organize all rehearsals every week for a period of 12 months. One interesting point about participant observation in this study is that I was treated as any other novice right at the beginning of my involvement with the first team. As an ethnographer, this was an unusual ethnographic experience because I got to share and experiment the learning process of becoming a full member just as other adult novices did. This means that my approximations as a novice where actually shared and very close to to others' experiences. At *castells*, there was always a constant influx of adult novices who were much like me and who were all made "members" in the same way I was made a full member.

Participation also entailed attending and organizing special events, organizational meetings, lunches, dinners, and all Sunday exhibitions, among others. By taking a multi-modal approach (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996, 2001, Norris 2011), which not only takes into account the linguistic dimension, but also the visual and the social, I have been able to consider multi-

ple semiotic resources (Halliday 1978, Hodge and Kress 1988, Barthes [1964] 1977) used by participants and other actors to construct social meaning out of *casteller* practice. The activities or practices used at *castells* serve participants there to construct and perform their identities. Scholars have long argued that social identities are constructed upon linguistic and social performance and interaction, and that people may use different meaning-making tools beyond spoken language in order to do so (Goffman 1974, 1981; Halliday 1978; Gumperz 1999; Goodwin 2000; Haviland 2003; Scollon and Scollon 2003; Kress 2009, among others). This point emphasizes the performative aspect and approach of identity construction. Identities and social meanings are produced in life through performance; people enact and perform them. The meaning of action is not based on a pre-existing variable nor it is a reflection of who people are; the meaning of action is performed.

Difficulties encountered during the study

The exact number of participants in any *casteller* team in Catalonia is hard or almost impossible to know since participation and people's engagement levels vary depending on the year, season, and events. One possible way to know the number of participants is by counting the people who have signed a health insurance statement & coverage specific to *casteller* activity, since each team is required to have as many participants as possible insured. However, this method may show a higher number of participants than the people who actually participate assiduously in any form possible - from going to rehearsals/exhibitions to coordinating events with other teams to helping with team's logistics such as transportation. The fact that the two teams analyzed were each, by the time I started fieldwork, a '*colla de nou*' implied that that teams already had a good amount of members. A *colla de nou* is the distinction that teams gain when they achieve building towers of nine levels, which requires a lot of practice and human resources.

Participation in *castells* is voluntary and based on the commitment that each individual can provide on a daily basis. *Pinyes* Technical Teams had information about particular rehearsing

days in which they had to annotate either manually or automatically[13] the name of each and every individual that joined a rehearsal (and an exhibition). In general terms, and thanks to these mechanisms, we can know that participation in both teams could range between 50-150 people during rehearsals, varying greatly depending on the stage of the season (January vs. June) or the day of the week (Monday vs. Friday).

The fact that each of the research sites comprised such large amounts of people was both beneficial and detrimental to the study. On the one hand, each of the teams was large enough to provide a diverse and extended set of ethnographic data and examples to understand the complexity and nuance of the human component in the teams. On the other hand, it was difficult as an ethnographer to grasp all the sensibilities with the same degree of depth. Because of my estimated age (which actually only one person asked by the end of the season), I was immediately placed in the youth groups in both teams. Although I got to know and interact with many other people outside these groups, I participated and helped organize events that were often led by the youth groups or that young people participated in more often, which were the majority. This is not surprising if we take a look at the age chart of each team (see in appendix B).

Another limitation I found during fieldwork was the fact that participating in rehearsals/ exhibitions did not allow me much time for observation <u>without</u> participation. Especially during rehearsals, I had attempted to stay away from participating in order to annotate different kinds of information that are usually better grasped when not involved. This meant not putting on the sash or not wearing the team shirt, which participants did not "accept" despite most of them knowing that I was doing research there. For them, my presence had to be mobilized once I was at the facility and denying my physical participation in towers while being physically present in the facility was frowned upon. More than once I encountered comments like "*què fas que no t'enfaixes*?" -what are you doing not putting the sash on?- or "*va! Que necessitem mans*" -come on! We need more hands. Those times when I insisted that I really needed some time before

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[13] Participants signed up on a device installed in the rehearsing facility when they arrived.

joining the practice, some made funny or confused faces. For this reason too, I had to hand out questionnaires in between tower rehearsals (so I could rehearse while 'escaping' to ask people to fill them out). Handing out surveys during the exhibition was "no-go," especially when they knew I was around during rehearsals. I had tried passing around surveys on those occasions, but people were seemingly tired or celebrating. Some told me they preferred to fill out the survey the following day during rehearsals, and others straightforwardly rejected my request (although they accepted some days later during rehearsals).

Transcription conventions

Throughout this dissertation, in-text original words and expressions in Catalan will be in italics. In-text original Castilian data will be in bold. There will be an English translation right after each Catalan or Castilian expression and most of times it will be between single quotes and -'hyphens'-. E.g. "llengua" –'language'- // "**lengua**" –'language'- Other italicized words or single quotes will be used in the English analysis in order to emphasize or mark specific concepts or words.

Original Catalan dialogues and quotes shown outside of the main text will be in unmarked forms (no italics nor bold). Original Castilian utterances will be in bold. English translation will be in italics. Additionally, the following conventions apply in dialogues:

(( )) time elapsed between turns

[ ] simultaneous speech or actions

( ) own comments needed for clarification

(...) Whatsapp comments unrelated to main interaction

Last notes

This research conforms to the University of California's IRB requirements for the protection of human subjects, particularly confidentiality. Although the vast majority of my informants

and general participants had no issue in revealing their own real names, their roles, and the team's real name, some of them felt more comfortable sharing their personal and team's experiences if the team's real names were not revealed. Thus, I decided to use pseudonyms for all participants involved in this research project. I do reveal the participants' real age, gender, profession, and other general non-identifiable data that ensures privacy inside and outside the team. I also chose to use pseudonyms when referring to the two main research sites. However, I use real team names whenever these are important in the discussion and do not imply an identification of the teams analyzed (either by pointing to or ruling out other teams).

Finally, I would like to highlight the use I make of some terms throughout this dissertation:

1. I may refer to the teams with the Catalan name '*colla*' (or '*colles,*' in plural) or 'team' interchangeably.

2. I mostly refer to the base of towers as '*pinya*' (sg.) or '*pinyes*' (pl.)

3. I use interchangeably the form 'participant' or '*casteller/a/s/es*' (masc sg/fem sg/masc pl/fem pl) to refer to *'casteller* participant.' Whenever gender or number is relevant in the discussion, I will note that.

4. I use the grammatical singular number when I refer to 'castells' as a *casteller* phenomenon or practice. However, I use the plural form whenever I refer to actual towers.

2.3   Field sites

I chose to focus on two field sites deliberately and based on pilot research carried out in 2014. Carrying out the ethnography in two sites instead of focusing on one single team has provided a contrastive data set that allows me to analyze differing, shared, or overlapping practices and discourses that inform the topics of discussion in this dissertation. The primary motivation of using two field sites, thus, was not necessarily to make a comparative study between the two, but

rather a study that incorporates diverse views and represents better the arguments used in this dissertation. The two teams serve different communities: one in a small city and the other in a neighborhood of a large city. Although I initially expected to find many more differences between the two teams due to the difference between 'city' and 'neighborhood' and the communities they serve, my time doing fieldwork and the time after showed that the two teams were actually pretty similar, with some exceptions that are addressed in chapter 5.

The two teams analyzed in this dissertation belong to what is commonly known among participants as "*zona no tradicional*" -'non-traditional area', that is the Barcelona area or any area not belonging to Tarragona (where *castells* are originally from) and El Penedès, the site where one of the best teams is located. Non-traditional-area teams such as the ones analyzed in this dissertation were founded between the 80s-90s, and their history and trajectory differ very much from the early ones seen in chapter 1 (e.g., they included women, participation was not salaried, etc.). The category of '*zona (no) tradicional*' not only delimits the geographic region where teams are originally from, but also indexes or points to the quality and perceived authenticity of teams. Various informants referred to the teams belonging to the 'traditional area' like playing "*una altra lliga*" -another league- because of their feats (very hard to achieve for the majority of other Catalan teams) and the way participants commit to the practice and competition: "*ells ho viuen*" - they live it, commented a participant in a Whatsapp conversation.

The two *casteller* teams analyzed in this dissertation serve two distinct Catalan communities -one in a smaller city, the other in a neighborhood of a large urban area. The *Castellers de Vilatèxtil* (or Vilatèxtil team here onwards) and the *Colla del Mediterrani* (or Mediterrani team in subsequent references)[14] use the names of the city and neighborhood where they are located, thus suggesting they belong to, and/or represent these sites. The two *casteller* teams were similar in size, in years of experience (founded around the late nineties), and in the level of *casteller* achievement and status. The two teams represent two places that have been historically

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[14] I will also refer to these teams as 'Vilatèxtil' or 'Mediterrani' only, unless a disambiguation between place and team is necessary, in which case I will make it explicit.

associated with Catalan-born working and middle-class sectors. The two locales (the city and the neighborhood) are self-identified and recognized distinctively as Catalan, although stereotypes emphasize socioeconomic differences and realities present today. The city is historically known for including large numbers of Spanish-speaking working class immigrants from Spain in the 60s and 70s. The neighborhood is known for the place of tourists, world travelers, hipsters, and young people. The two teams were chosen because despite representing two distinctively Catalan locales, they served different communities (an entire city and a neighborhood) and had different ways of constructing and performing (Catalan) local identities. Below you will find a more detailed description of each team's demographics in 2016.

2.3.1   Vilatètxtil demographics

The city of Vilatèxtil is one of the many in Barcelona's industrial red belt.[15] It is currently home for around 200,000 inhabitants. The town was amongst the ones that received the highest numbers of Spanish national immigrants coming mainly from urban and agrarian regions of Spain during the mid-20th century (Murcia and Andalusia). These communities were Spanish speaking whereas the original Vilatèxtil population was predominantly Catalan speaking.[16] The population increased from 60,000 inhabitants in 1950 to 190,000 in the eighties. Spanish immigration in the fifties and sixties changed the shape of the town, as new neighborhoods were constructed around the town's center to accommodate these populations. The economic drive of the town also moved from the textile industry to the mechanical and metallurgic industry after 1975, as happened in many other towns nearby. The current immigration that this town receives is mainly international and working class, as is generally true in Catalonia and Spain. The largest international communities today come from Morocco, Bolivia, Romania, and China. Vilatèxtil is

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[15] this makes reference to the Socialist political parties that used to govern in the municipalities around Barcelona after the dictatorship.

[16] Other waves of immigration early in the 20th century had been internal from other parts of Catalonia or from the Valencia community, which was also Catalan/Valencian speaking.

currently a middle-working class town near Barcelona city, where national immigration stands around 19%[17] and international around 12% (2014). The town has a relatively young *casteller* tradition since the team started in the early nineties.

The *Castellers de Vilatèxtil* reached the category of '*colla de nou*' when they achieved one of the highest and most difficult towers in 2014, that is, building a nine-level tower with three people on each level (3d9f). This achievement usually serves to define any team as a "*colla de nou*" -'team of nine'- just because they reached that particular amount of stories. Each achievement that the team has made since becoming a "*colla de vuit*" -'team of eight'- and then a *colla de nou* has brought challenges to the team's organization because of increasing participants. However, becoming a *colla de nou* represents an achievement that very few teams have enjoyed, and this achievement was still recent enough to challenge the entire organization's discourse, image, and decisions while I carried out fieldwork in 2016 (more to be developed in the coming chapters). The executive committee is elected every two years in assembly after different candidacies are presented. These candidacies propose a new president and a cap de colla -head of the team (technical)-, with other proposed members to fill out the technical positions. The way this was organized is in the process of changing. For example, during a board meeting early in December of 2016, someone proposed that new candidacies be sent/proposed in December or one week in advance of the vote, so that that new team could be presented early in January.[18] They also confirmed voting "*amb cartulina i mà alçada*" -with card and a show of hands.

As a medium-sized team and a *colla de nou*, Vilatèxtil is becoming larger and more competitive: it rehearses three days per week at an old factory that has been recently upgraded to manage the recent increase of participants. The population in this team is mostly local, meaning most of them now live in Vilatèxtil and were born in this town. Besides the Catalan-born participants, there are immigrants from other parts of Spain who have been living in Catalonia

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[17] IDESCAT

[18] Someone commented that the last time that there was an assembly of this kind (to elect the new candidacy), there attended 90 people.

for more than 30 years and have children and grandchildren participating there. Transnational migrants are a minority that is slowly increasing. Among them, there are participants with origins ranging from Holland to Argentina [see origin chart in B]. In terms of social class, this team includes a majority of working-class participants (including factory and service workers, low administrative, and mid-level technicians) and middle-class participants (including businessmen, property owners, self-employed, professionals, and highly skilled technicians)[19]. There were practically no examples of participants belonging to the 'corporative class[20],' the most dominant type of global classes defined beyond the national scope (see more in Subirats 2012, 2013), but there were some unemployed, retired, and participants who neither worked nor were studying. In determining the class profile of the groups analyzed, I followed studies done in Catalonia that examined social inequality[21] (Miret&Garrido 2005, Pineda 2005, Subirats 2012, 2013, Solé 1979) from both an 'objective'[22] and 'relational'[23] perspective (Wright 1979, 2004) with economic/material terms. The Vilatèxtil team represents the whole city of Vilatèxtil, that is, there are no neighborhood teams that might compete with this representation. The information below, as noted earlier, comes from 134 participants who came to rehearsals regularly in the span of six months and responded to the survey.

Age[24] & gender:

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[19] Some of these positions are often included in a different category like 'cosmopolitan class' (Sassen 2007, Subirats 2013)

[20] "burguesía especuladora, vinculada a los organismos financieros y las grandes corporaciones. (. . .) Los capitales no son fundamentalmente invertidos en la producción de bienes o servicios, sino que son capitales especulativos desligados de la producción" (. . .) no está vinculada ni a los estados ni a los territorios nacionales, puesto que actúa en el marco internacional y en forma transnacional" (Subirats 2013: 165).

[21] The data I collected is based on the 'occupation' that participants reported in the survey. I did not pursue further on a personal level nor asked about participants income, for example.

[22] This perspective tries to address the question of "How are people objectively located in distributions of material inequality" (Wright 2004). This perspective uses the popular terms of 'working class' or 'middle class', among others.

[23] This perspective examines the questions of "What explains inequalities in economically-defined life chances and material standards of living?" (Wright 2004)

[24] see chart in appendix B

Out of the 134 surveyed in the VT colla, 83 had typically male names, and were recognized as 'men,' and 51 participants had common women's names and were recognized as 'women.'[25] The age groups that had the highest number of participants were those in the early 20s, 30s, and 40s. Although participants generally interacted across generational groups, after spending some time at la colla, I could see that participants had a tendency to talk and interact more often with a reduced number of people within their age groups. I divided the participants into five approximate age groups based on ethnographic observations and notes on how participants grouped themselves together, i.e., how often they talked, related, and engaged with each other when they were not building *castells*.

Dividing the entire team into age groups is tricky and can only be done after spending some generous time in the team. When I first started ethnography, my first impression was that people talked to everyone and that there were no actual separate groups. To some extent, this is true because young kids interacted with people of varied ages, just as people in their fifties interacted with people of various ages, and this level of intergenerational interaction is generally hard to see in other settings besides family. This may hint at why many *castellers* that I encountered talked about the group as being a 'family.'

I divided the participants into five age groups based. The youngest group in *castells* was the children's (*canalla* group), and they ranged from children who were 4 or 5 years old to teenagers aged 16 or 17. This group was not included in this study for IRB reasons, but it formed a bonded group that participated in many children and family activities (lunches, festivities, etc.). Children were 'trained' to climb up on top of young and adult participants and to perform in different roles and positions. They had older participants taking care of them and teaching them. The fact that they participated in the same activity as adults (even if the kind of rehearsal was

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[25] Since the focus of the research project was not on gender, there was no question in the survey as of how they would identify themselves in such terms. Here, I made a classic and binary classification of men and women only based on their proper names and on how they recognize themselves during interactions, but it does not mean these were the only categories they would use had participants had the chance to state their gender identity. I am aware and recognize the limitations of this classification and would propose changes in future projects.

often adjusted to their capabilities) made them interact very comfortably with people of different ages and backgrounds, which is often considered a sign of maturity and confidence when these grow up.

The second youngest group (and the first for the purposes of this study) was the 18-25 year olds (25%). In this group, there were many participants who were former 'canalla' members (the children's group). Also, there were many university students, some of them also participating in university *casteller* teams.[26] Therefore, this group is formed by both very experienced young people who have advanced technical skills and have known each other for a long time, and also new fresh members interested in expanding their social networks once they have started university. The next group (26 - 34 years old) includes young participants who mostly finished their college studies and were either working (most of them), in graduate school, or unemployed (23%). There were many new people in this group, meaning most of them did not come from the *canalla* and have not been on the team for a long time. Those new, very young members did not have trouble engaging, participating, and being included as members of the youth group. However, those who had been *canalla* in the past and were now members of *canalla* Technical Groups (many young women), struggled to be included and recognized as part of the youth group, which meant being included in the youth Whatsapp group and participating in the youth committees and activities. A young, popular, and experienced participant once said early in a rehearsal: "*podriem incloure-les ja, no*?" -we could include them already, couldn't we?[27] The two groups that I just defined were part of the *grup de joves* orthe youth group. Some of the participants who were 32-34 years old often questioned whether or not they should still belong to that group and expressed their willingness to be considered out of it. In this little group, there was a variety of people who were recently married or lived on their own but did not have children yet and did not want to take on

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[26] These teams are generally smaller and do not compete with regular teams. They have their own internal competition amongst other university teams.

[27] I was not aware of the full interaction that motivated this comment, but it revolved around the fact that they were already partying with them and drinking alcohol.

the responsibilities of the youth group.[28] The youth of *la colla* was in charge of the social side and some of the logistics of the team, which some of these older members wanted to exchange for responsibilities in the board group or just for no responsibilities. Because of the different views of the groups (both very young and older ones), I believe that the 'youth group' in Vilatèxtil in 2016 was having a generational move. The youth group is the one where I was 'automatically' assigned as most of the participants were around my age at that time, and the one within which I interacted the most.

The next age group comprised 35-42 year olds. Participants in this group -especially the younger ones- were mostly young couples that usually had small children[29] (around 5 -7 years old). Some of these participants -especially the older- were also the founders of the team because they were 20 at the time of the team's foundation. The regularity of this group in the rehearsals/exhibitions varied although the fact that their children knew each other usually motivated families to join in rehearsals and teams, more generally. These participants often found in *castells* a place where children were entertained in groups that made fun activities and were supervised by older teenage participants, as one mother of a 7-year-old child told me.

Another group of families was those with ages between 43-50 years old. These families usually had children in their teens or older. This was also a group where there were some new single and/or divorced participants whose intentions were sometimes questioned by senior participants.[30] In the group of 43-50 years old, some of the most experienced and senior participants were founders (or friends of founders) of *la colla* and their dedication and effort to keep the team together, well functioning, and advancing was tireless. They were the ones that tried to engage and motivate as many people as possible, especially adults around their ages

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[28] like participating in youth committee meetings, staying until late during events to help carrying in and out tables, chairs, etc. No one is really mandated to do such chores as everything is supposed to be voluntarily driven. However, from the youth's meetings, it is always encouraged to take more responsibilities in helping organize, thinking about new events or workshops, etc.

[29] Many of these children participated in tower as canalla

[30] One of the senior participants told me that Castells is not supposed to be a place to find a partner but that some people do join the group because there are a lot of different people and thus more opportunities for such search.

or older, in order to show that anyone of any age could participate in *la colla*. Many of these participants who had roles in the board committee also encouraged the youth group to organize activities inside and outside the *casteller* schedule. The organizing/executive board of the colla is mostly run by people around these ages, so they are the ones that have the most institutional power.

Finally, the group of +51 included those couples, families, and individuals who had adult sons/daughters, grandchildren, adult nephews, or nieces. Some of them were already retired and although people in this group often participated in the actual tower building, others -especially the older ones- tended to sit around, talk to people, have a beer, and just watch rehearsals. In this group, participants were usually experienced *castellers* who had been in the *colla* for a long time, and there were no new members around this age. They were a great social support to the team as they engaged with participants of all ages, helped at the bar, in the setting up of events, and in the spread of information about *castells* to the general public during exhibitions. They showed themselves as evidence that anyone could participate in the team in the "low-impact" positions of towers (4th, 5th, 6th row in the *pinya* for example) or just outside the actual tower supervising it, helping with its organization, taking pictures, explaining the tower formation to others, etc. This group evidenced the many ways people could participate in *casteller* teams even without building towers.

Birthplace[31]

Out of the 134 participants in Castellers de Vilatèxtil, 87% of them were born in Catalonia. Of these, the majority of them were born locally in Vilatèxtil (53%), followed by the ones born in different parts of the Catalan territory close to Barcelona (24%), which mainly represented people from nearby towns working and studying. Lastly, 23% were born in Barcelona city, which may show the strength of Vilatèxtil as a place that attracts people from the large city. The

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[31] See chart in appendix B

Catalan-born population in the Vilatèxtil city stands around 67%[32]. 8% of the team was from other parts of Spain (compare this to 20% of Spanish immigration in Vilatèxtil city), and 4% was born internationally (America, Asia, Europe), which is also similar to the 13% of international immigration in the city . Finally, 1% did not respond to this question. The different percentages in representation at the city level are similar to the ones at the team level, although the Catalan-born and Vilatèxtil-born numbers proportionately are higher in this team than in the city's population.

Time spent at la colla

The *Coordinadora de Colles Castelleres de Catalunya* (CCCC) recorded an increase in *casteller* teams of 65% from 2010 to 2015, which hints at a general higher participation throughout *casteller* teams in Catalonia. According to the data provided by the survey in regards of the year participants joined the team, it seems that Vilatèxtil had two peaks of participation entrance to the team around that time (2011 and 2013). These years coincide with the growing popularity of this activity and its higher visibility. These peaks also can be partly associated with the fact that in 2014, the team achieved towers of nine levels, which requires a reasonable amount of people to rehearse and practice.

Languages

I divided the languages used at *castells* as reported by participants into two categories: those languages used at home and those languages used during rehearsals or *casteller* activity. This division was aimed at providing an overall view of the groups that reported using a certain language and the difference (if any) with the languages reported using during *casteller* activity. Catalan (CT for short) and Castilian[33] (CS for short) were the two main languages of communication. The distribution in Vilatèxtil was as follows:

At-home language choice:

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[32] IDESCAT (2016)

[33] name given to standard form of Spanish from Spain.

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- Catalan-only was reported by 43% of participants,

- Bilingual forms of CT/CS (or vice-versa)[34] were reported by 39%.

- Castilian-only was reported by 14% of participants.

- Castilian - others (English) was reported by 4% of participants
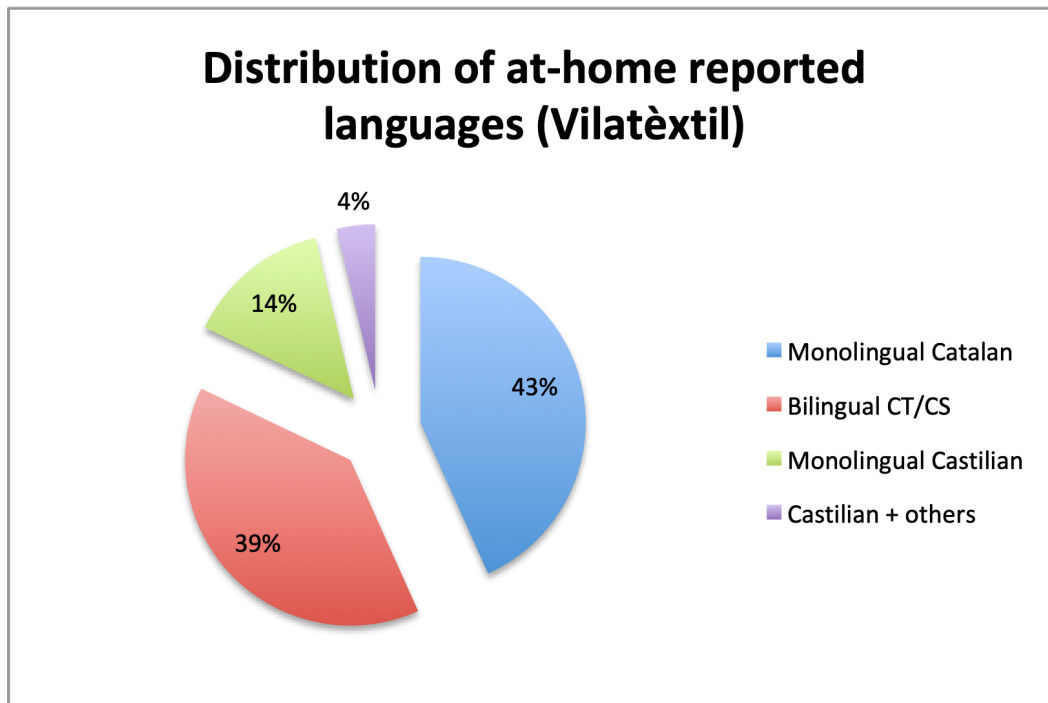
Figure 2.2: At-home reported languages used by Vilatèxtil participants

Participants who reported using only Catalan at home were in their majority born in Catalonia[35] (56 participants in total). Although there were some examples of Catalan speaking participants holding non-qualified jobs[36] like telephone operator, store clerks, salesperson or head of a warehouse, the vast majority of them held professional jobs, and had pursued or were

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[34] I will be worth considering for further projects any differences between reported forms of bilingualism that place Catalan or Castilian first. However, there is not enough evidence at this point to claim that this order actually means L1 and L2 or that participants reported it on purpose to mark it.

[35] Two more people reported speaking only Catalan at home: one from Holland who had spent 9 years in Catalonia and another who was born in Russia and who came when he was 4 years old.

[36] those jobs that do not usually require certification or formal education beyond secondary school.

pursuing higher education degrees.[37] Of those who reported using Catalan and Castilian at home in either of the modalities[38], 46 were Catalan born, and only 6 came from other parts of Spain, which were in their majority Spanish immigrants who arrived in Catalonia several decades ago as either adults or children. The positions that home bilinguals held were also varied, and although there were slightly more unskilled jobs, the majority also held professional/qualified jobs like the Catalan monolinguals. The majority of these Spanish-born participants had been in the Vilatèxtil team for around 20 years and are amongst the founding members. An interesting point to highlight is that none of these participants with Spanish origin had non-qualified jobs. In the case of Castilian monolinguals (19 in total), the majority were born in Catalonia, too (12), but some came from other parts of Spain (6), and there was only 1 person who was a recent immigrant, coming from Madrid. Only 17 people provided responses regarding their occupation, and although the majority held qualified positions, there was a substantial number who had non-qualified jobs (such as in transportation or warehouses). There were more (professionally) retired participants in the Castilian monolingual group as well. There were no noteworthy differences between those Castilian monolinguals who were born in Catalonia and those who were born outside it in terms of occupation. Finally, among those who reported using Castilian and other languages (in their majority English), 2 of them were born in Catalonia, and 3 of them were recent immigrants coming from Latin American countries (Uruguay, Colombia, and Honduras). Almost all of them held qualified positions or were studying in higher education.

This distribution of reported language use at home contrasts with what the participants reported using during *castells*.

During-rehearsals language choice:

- Catalan-only was reported by 51% of participants

- Bilingual modalities CT/CS (or vice-versa) were reported by 48% of participants

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[37] doctors, journalists, researchers, professors, teachers, civil servants, lawyers, administrative, university students, etc.

[38] I did not distinguish here between bilingual modalities where Catalan or Castilian was the first language.

• Castilian-only was reported by 1% of participants
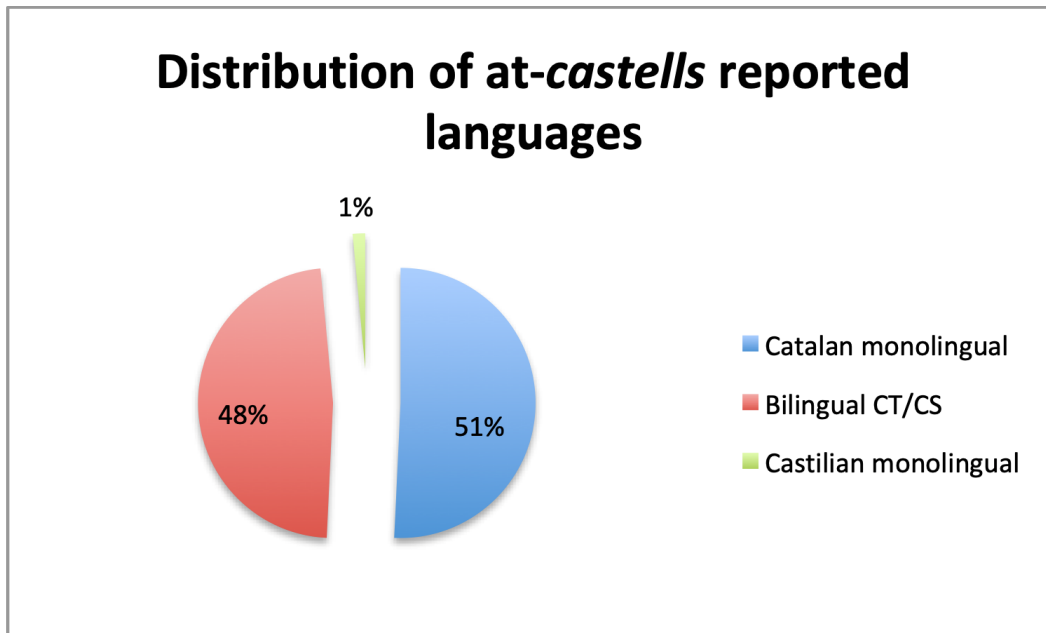
Figure 2.3: At-castells reported languages used by Vilatèxtil participants

With a quick glimpse, it is easy to see that despite the dominance of reported Catalan monolingualism at home, bilingual modalities were very much present in the participants' experience. Both tendencies (Catalan monolingualism and bilingualism) were increased during *casteller* activity. The vast majority of Castilian monolinguals became bilinguals at *castells,* and only very few became Catalan monolinguals. The comparison also shows that the diversity in language choice was reduced and simplified during *casteller* activity. English was absolutely missing during *castells* in Vilatèxtil. Catalan dominance (either monolingual CT or bilingual CT-CS) increases considerably.

2.3.2 Mediterrani demographics

The second team is located in one of Barcelona's most popular neighborhoods -Mediterrani-known for its associative fabric, cultural opportunities, and vivid streets that still aims at resembling the town annexed to Barcelona city by the end of the 19th century. Historically, this

neighborhood was known for its Catalan (generally) conservative inhabitants, and although it also experienced waves of Spanish immigration around the 60s, it seems that this had a less clear impact on the local population[39]. However, in the last decades this district has experienced an increase of international migration (as in other parts of Catalonia and Spain), but with a middle or upper class, hip, and touristic profile. This is creating challenges for the local neighbors who had been living in the district for generations.

Unlike the Castellers of Vilatèxtil, this team does not aim at representing the Barcelona city as a whole, but the district's values and culture as something different from 'Barcelona' (see chapter 5). Even so, the construction of a localized and distinct identity within Barcelona evidences underlying tensions about the representation, legitimacy, and the boundaries that define each team. The district's strong identity as something different from a 'Barcelona identity' also attracts people who support this perspective. The Colla del Mediterrani was formed in 1996, and as a medium-sized team, it also rehearses three days per week at a cultural space ceded by the district's council. The group also reached the level of nine (colla de nou) category in 2013. The Mediterrani team has a more extensive and more diverse ethnic, linguistic, and social participant body than the Vilatèxtil team, and thanks to the increase in popularity of *casteller* activity, it has also benefited from an increasing participation. The fact that Mediterrani works on constructing and protecting an alternative village-like image of the neighborhood also attracts an audience of thousands of young, hip and artistic people. These communities, which are often very temporary, seek to live in and experience "very Catalan" activities in "local," "authentic" Catalan places, which draws them to *castells*. In very general terms, people who currently live in the district form a diverse population in terms of origin and social class[40]. However, the district is not a typical residential neighborhood in Barcelona, where immigration rates are higher. On the contrary, the district's location -very close to the popular downtown Las Ramblas or Plaça Catalunya yet far

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[39]Other Barcelona districts received larger amounts of families and workers coming from other parts of Spain in the mid 20th century. These were characterized and impacted by immigration more forcefully than the district I studied.

[40] www.barcelona.cat (statistics of 2016)

enough to avoid the crowds- allows locals to organize their lives and interact with each other in a way that resembles small villages[41]. It is a place where you can still find families who have been living there for generations (although less and less nowadays), as well as students (both local and international), tourists, and (trans) national immigrants, and individuals who choose to move to and live in the district on purpose. Such a melting pot is, however, being endangered by the rental prices led by companies such as AIRBNB that end up expelling the families, individuals and groups with lowest economic resources (see more in chapter 5).

Age[42] & gender:

As with the previous team, participants were not asked to provide gender identity, and thus, my own classification does not reflect all the possibilities in terms of gender identity. My division only took into account the first names of the participants and the way they recognized themselves with me and other in interaction. Out of the 170 people in this *colla*, 100 were 'men' and 70 'women'

In the case of Mediterrani, the largest group of participants surveyed was that which included participants in their late 20s (26-31 years-old) (team's 31 %). The second largest group was those in their early 20s (21-25 years old) (team's 22%), and the third largest group was that in their early 40s, which was mostly made up of the team's founders. The social groupings that I found in this *colla* was very similar to the one found in Vilatèxtil. In this one, I could also see that participants from different age groups interacted with each other very easily. I identified six age groups in this team that responded to how often people interacted with each other, how they grouped together during rehearsals, exhibitions and, especially, during the times where no targeted or apparent *casteller* activity was involved (dinners, strolls, informal chats outside the rehearsing facility, parties, etc.). The classification are approximate as with Vilatèxtil.

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[41] Many activities organized from the district, know own neighbors, walk everywhere to do errands, local shops/services, etc.
[42] see chart in appendix B

Nevertheless, Mediterrani's age groups were not as defined as in Vilatèxtil. This means that the social boundaries between certain groups were much more blurred, especially within the largest age group.

The youngest group of participants in terms of age (without counting the children's group) was the 18-25 years old. In this group, some participants had been former '*canalla*' members, but in Mediterrani, these participants were not the majority of the group, which was the case of Vilatèxtil. This group included mainly university students, many of them also participating in university *casteller* teams. Therefore, in this group, there were participants who had pretty advanced technical skills because of their *canalla* experience (and thus had been *casteller* members for a long time), and because of their simultaneous participation in university team. Many members in this age group joined the team hoping to expand their social networks once they had started college programs as well around the Barcelona area. Particular to Mediterrani team is also the fact that many of these young participants lived (or were looking forward to living) in the district's neighborhood. Many lived in other districts, but after some time in the team they tried to move to another participant's apartment within Mediterrani. This created a sense of "home" for many of them whose families lived far away[43] and gave them an opportunity to hang out outside the *casteller* schedule, thus strengthening social relations. Sometimes participants within this group talked or referred to activities that they did together outside of the *casteller* schedule in the youth Whatsapp group.

The next age group in Mediterrani ranged from those who were around 26 years old to participants in their early 30s, but also included members in their late 30s and early 40s, most of whom were single. The boundaries of this group were blurred and certainly not as clear as the equivalent group in Vilatèxtil. This may suggest that other variables besides age were also socially significant when people grouped together. A smaller social grouping within this

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[43] many participants were students from Lleida, a region in the north-east side of Catalonia and did not live with their parents. Although this might seem common in the US, living far from family during college is not common in Spain/Catalonia.

largest group was formed by members who were 34, 35 or 39, who were married or had stable romantic relationships/partners either inside or outside the team. One of the reasons that would explain such fuzzy boundaries in social groupings within Mediterrani is that this team organized members in cohorts, especially when new members joined. These new participants were assigned a cohort or "*fornada*"[44] depending on the year they joined, and there are activities targeted for them as beginners (quiz shows, an afternoon to show technical skills and to ask questions, etc.). Part of the strategies for the inclusion of participant in a smaller, not age-related group involved printing out t-shirts that stated their belonging to a cohort or being added to the specific cohort Whatsapp group. This was especially helpful for new members who usually asked many basic questions regarding *casteller* activity, but after a while the groups often became useless as members started belonging to other teams (youth teams, groups by *casteller* role or position, etc). This transition evidences that participants created other informal groups by themselves that were socially significant for them and that did not associate them with novice roles. Although many participants ended up joining other groups based on similar ages and experiences (especially those in the first age group), they also remained close and regularly interacted with those they had met and shared the first *casteller* experiences, no matter their age.

The members of the two groups above were generally included in the "*grup de joves*" -the youth group- just as happened with Vilatèxtil, and membership was also materialized through the WhatsApp group. However, this group did not have responsibilities in organizing activities, festivities, board meetings for the youth, etc. In Mediterrani, the team worked in committees,[45] and these included people from different ages. People volunteered to be part of any committees whenever there was a specific need to constitute one. It did not go through a formal selection

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[44] Although there is an official entry of this word as 'promoció' or class year, it also refers to a batch of bread baked at one time (IEC2).

[45] Some of these committees are "la comissió lúdica" - the ludic committee-, "la comissió tècnica" -the technical committee-, "la comissió de festa major" -the annual district celebration committee- or "la comissió del codi ètic" -the code of ethics committee", among others. The team proposes committees along its daily needs. This means that some committees are formed for a specific purpose and then they disappear, but they are usually repeated over and over every year.

process, but rather people had to contact the person in charge of leading the group, and as long as there were available spaces, people joined. Members did not have to commit themselves to such committees every year or every time they were formed. This facilitated the cross-general interaction and work among participants and reduced the pressure to participate in organizational team just for belonging to that age group.

Another age group comprised participants between 35-42 years old. Participants in this group were mostly young couples that usually had small children (around 5 -7 years old or older), who either participate in tower building (*canalla*) or just came and played with others. Many of them -especially the older- were the founders of the team. Similar to Vilatèxtil, the regularity of this group in the rehearsals/exhibitions varied, but founder members were almost always around. Founders have usually been in different committees for years, and most of them still belong to the ones that involve making the most relevant decisions for the team (executive board, technical committee, Public Relations).

The two last groups in terms of age were self-identified and distinguished by the members themselves. Those with ages between 43-55 years old had family members in the team (usually children in their early teens). Parents in this group inconsistently attended rehearsals since children could attend on their own or just go with other friends. This was the case unless they belonged to a committee, had bonded with other parents of the same ages, or were actively participating in tower building. The boundaries of this group were also fuzzy because many argued that they belonged to a group called "*venerables*" -the venerable/respectable ones." When I asked about this group, participants (males in their majority) told me that they 'had to' be over 50 (although sometimes they were actually under 50) and had to enjoy drinking beer. Not everybody with these qualifications called him/herself as such though. Most of the members who self-identified as "venerable" were men and had been in the team for at least 6 years at the time of fielwork. The president of the team was one very proud member of *venerables*. I was also told by a younger *casteller*, not a member of the *venerables*, that besides the age and beer drinking,

participants in that group usually said among themselves (surely not to me) that to be included in the group, people must have had recent episodes of "*gatillasus*" or sexual impotence (supposedly due to aging). These variables suggest that the group identified itself by seniority in the team, a particular age, and gender. In this group (both the general age group and the self-identified one), some had already retired, but most of them were still working. Some participated as *baixos* -lower positions in the trunk-, and many participated in *pinya* positions and did a lot of work in organizing events or logistics. These members indeed drank beers before or after rehearsals and exhibitions together with younger participants, often worked as a group in preparing events, and also had lunch and dinners together outside the *casteller* schedule, I was told.

The last age group coincides with another self-identified group called "*els sempre joves*" -the-forever-young ones. Some of the 'forever-young' included themselves in the last rows of *pinya* positions or helped organize and support the team (cheering during exhibitions, encouraging people to experience the activity, etc). They were usually in their 60s, and they said that one of the distinguishing factors besides age was the fact that they did not drink beer, but "*cava*," a beverage similar to champagne, produced and very popular in Catalonia. However, I never saw them drinking *cava* during rehearsals or exhibitions. Unlike beer, "cava" is often regarded as a more refined drink in Catalonia. It is usually a bit more expensive than beer, and it is very common to drink it during family gatherings, celebrations of any kind or special toasts, but never as a drink that opens informal social interaction among friends (either publicly or in private). Interestingly, the majority of members in this group were women, and they usually helped in "*la paradeta*" -the little store- of the team, where they sold t-shirt, bandanas, jackets, pins, etc. The gender difference in this group also suggests a gendering of different forms of alcohol (in use, tastes, etc.).

70

Birthplace[46]

Out of the 170 participants in the survey of Mediterrani, 153 (90%) were born in Catalonia: 78% were born in Barcelona city, 16% in other Catalan cities nearby, and 4% were born in Lleida (mainly college students now studying in Barcelona). A final 2% did not respond to where in Catalonia they were born. It is important to note for further discussions that almost all the Barcelona born participants reported 'Barcelona' and not the neighborhood of 'Mediterrani'[47] as the place of birth. This shows that either most of the people were born in other parts of Barcelona or that even if some more people were born in Mediterrani, it was not commonly relevant enough for participants to consider its distinction in the survey.

The remaining 10% of the participants in the team is distributed almost equally between those born in other parts of Spain (3%), those born in other European countries (3%), and those originally from America (4%), which included people from the US and people from Latin American countries. The percentage of international participation -the sum of European, American, and Asian percentages of origin- in Mediterrani (7%) was a bit higher than in Vilatèxtil (4%). However, the Spanish representation was notoriously lower (3%) in Mediterrani when compared to Vilatèxtil team (8%), which reflects the different historical and social background of the neighborhood in comparison to the town of Vilatèxtil.

Time spent at the colla

Just as in Vilatèxtil, the Mediterrani team also experienced peaks of participation reflected in the year that most people reported joining the team during fieldwork. The years when the most people joined were 2010 (6 years before fieldwork) and i2012. This coincides with CCCC's reports of an increase of participation and also with several events in Catalonia at the political, economic, and social level (see chapter 6). Another tendency in terms of the time of entrance

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[46] see place or origin in appendix B.

[47] Only two people reported been born in the Mediterrani district.

to the team also showed that more than half the participants joined the team in a short period of <1-2 years before, which may suggest that membership in the team is somewhat volatile just as with Vilatèxtil.[48] The numbers show that there is currently a higher number of participants who joined the team since 2009-2010.

Languages

In the case of the Mediterrani team, I also divided the distribution of language used as reported by participants into two groups: those languages used at home and those languages used during rehearsals or *casteller* activity. Catalan (CT) and Castilian (CS) were also the two main languages of communication, although there were more linguistic varieties than in Vilatèxtil. I simplified the division of linguistic categories. The distribution in Mediterrani team was as follows:

At-home language usage:

- Catalan-only was used by 64% of participants.

- Bilingual modality of CT and CS[49] (or vice versa) was reported by 22% of participants.

- Castilian-only was reportedly used by 5% of participants.

- A multilingual use of CT and/or CS with other[50] languages was reported by 7%

- Monolingual use of other languages[51] was reported by 2%

- 1% (2 participants) did not specify the languages used but were born in Barcelona and answered in the surveys in Catalan.

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[48] This can also suggest the volatility of Casteller participation generally.
[49] Also including a Catalan sign language.
[50] These languages included Portuguese, Italian, English and Czech
[51] These languages included English, Euskara, and Italian.
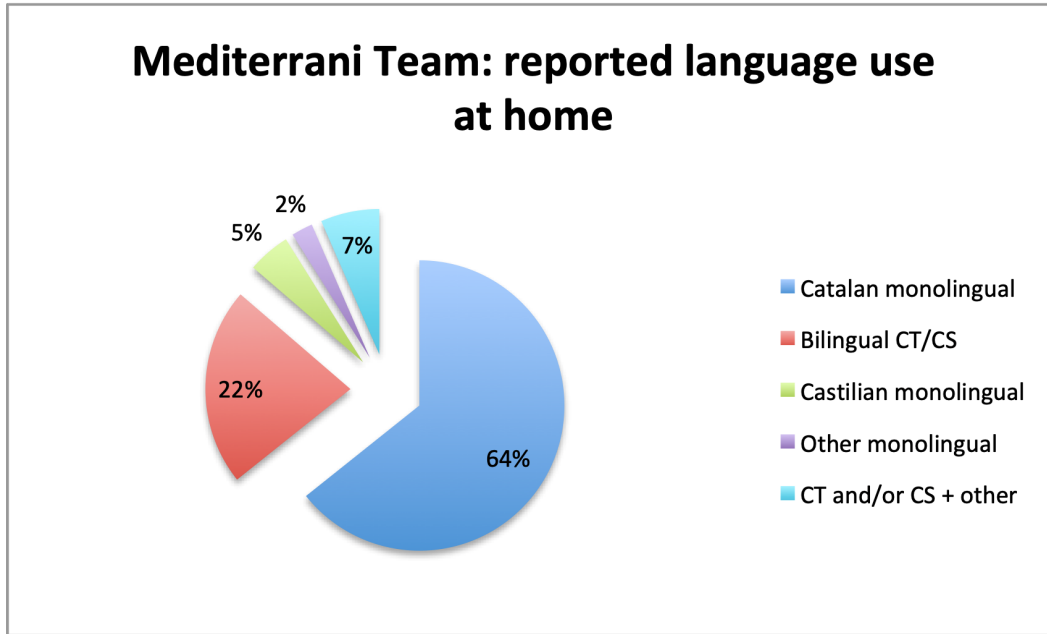
Figure 2.4: At-home reported languages used by Mediterrani participants

Participants in the Mediterrani team had a more varied linguistic repertoire at home than Vilatèxtil. This may reflect the contemporary position of the neighborhood in the more mobile, international, and cosmopolitan context of Barcelona city than in Vilatèxtil. Still, Catalan home monolingualism was clearly dominant (more so than in Vilatèxtil) and was reported by a majority of Catalan-born participants (103), followed by what I categorized as long-time immigrants[52] coming from other parts of Spain and internationally (3), and 2 were what I labeled as 'recent[53] immigrants'.[54] The majority of Catalan home monolinguals had qualified jobs or were studying in higher education (engineers, physiologists, doctors, consultants, bankers, undergrads, researchers, journalists, professors, teachers, odontologists, clerks). A few held unskilled positions or low/middle-level technical jobs (supermarket stockers, cleaners, accountants, nurses, waiters, tourist guides, services). Finally, there were some retired and very few unemployed.

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[52] Long-time immigrants are those that moved and have been living in Catalonia for more than 10 years.

[53] Recent immigrants are those who moved and had been living in Catalonia 10 years or less at the time of fieldwork (2016). Today, some would be included in long-time immigrants.

[54] It is worth noting that three of both categories of immigrants came from regions in Spain where Catalan language/dialects are used: Balearic Islands and Alicante.

The majority of participants who reported using bilingual modalities were also Catalan-born (34)[55]. These occupied very similar positions as the former group, with a vast majority holding qualified jobs or pursuing high education degrees and a few with less qualified positions. Non-Catalan born bilinguals held qualified jobs (web developer, fiscal consultant & economist, clerk). There was almost the same number of retired people (2) as with Catalan monolinguals. Castilian monolinguals formed a smaller group than in Vilatèxtil (5% vs 14%). Within this Castilian monolingual group, there were only 5 Catalan-born, 1 long-time immigrant from Spain (Vigo), and 2 recent immigrants coming from Spanish-speaking countries or regions (Argentina and Sevilla, Spain). The majority held qualified positions as well, but there was (in proportion)[56] a higher number of Castilian home monolingual participants with low/middle technician positions or skilled jobs like warehouse assistant. Participants who used only monolingual forms other than Catalan and Castilian at home were all recent immigrants[57] and held both qualified and unskilled jobs (doctor, English teacher, artisan, au-pair). Finally, there were some participants who reported using a variety of Catalan, Castilian and other languages (sometimes just Catalan or Castilian with that other language): 7 of these were born in Catalonia, whereas the other group of 4 people were recent immigrants. There were no long-time immigrants in this group. Within this group, there were also highly qualified participants holding jobs as doctors, professors, communication engineer, with the exception of one salesperson.

Below, you will find the distribution of the languages that participants reported using when they were at *castells*.[58]

- Catalan-only was used by 69% of participants,

- Bilingual CT/CS (or vice-versa) was reported by 21% of participants

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[55] One other participant was a long-time immigrant from Venezuela and two other participants were recent immigrants: 1 from Granada (Spain) and one from the Dominican Republic.

[56] Out of the 8 monolingual Castilian speakers, 3 held lower or unskilled positions. One person was unemployed.

[57] It would be interesting to know if currently these participants now have included Catalan and/or Castilian for their uses at home.

[58] Two participants did not respond to this question.

- Catalan and/or Castilian with other languages was reported by 7%

- Castilian monolinguals represented 2% of participants

- Other monolingual languages (English-only) represented 1% of participants
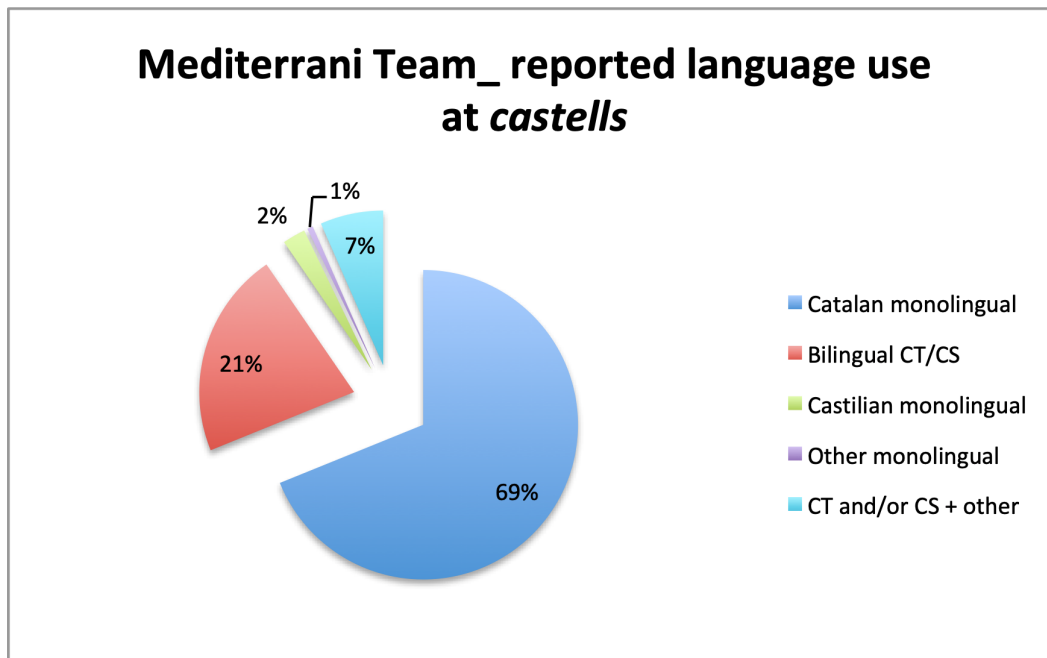
Figure 2.5: At-castells reported languages used by Mediterrani participants

Although the charts seem very similar, the interesting part of it is that many Catalan monolinguals at home became bilinguals during *castells* (around 22 participants made that move). Something similar happened with those who were bilingual at home, that is, many reported using only Catalan while they were at *castells* (see in appendix B different charts for the distribution of language change in both Vilatèxtil and Mediterrani teams).

2.4 Concluding remarks

Carrying out fieldwork was key in order to compare and contrast the quantitative data reported by participants with the observations, interviews, and interactions I encountered in

2016. In general, both Vilatèxtil and Mediterrani had a similar distribution of both middle and working-class participation. There were no apparent examples of participants who came from the corporate class. Unemployed and retired participants were clearly a minority (more so in Mediterrani than in Vilatèxtil). However, in Mediterrani, there were more participants holding highly qualified jobs or pursuing degrees and careers that required higher qualifications. There were no noteworthy class differences between participants who spoke different languages nor between participants who were born in Catalonia or elsewhere, as the latter (both long-time and recent immigrants) generally held highly qualified jobs as well. Even so, Catalan was still the dominant language both at home and at *castells,* both in Vilatèxtil and Mediterrani. Almost all other monolingual forms (Castilian, English, Italian, etc.) are reduced to the minimum or disappear during *casteller* activity, which shows the participants' tendency to use Catalan or Catalan-Castilian forms. English together with Catalan and Castilian was more common than monolingual forms of English in Mediterrani. Most of the recent immigrants who had Spanish or English moved to forms that included Catalan.

The two teams offered more similar characteristics than what I initially expected and the ethnographic evidence corroborated these similarities in the qualitative analysis. However, doing participant observation gave me a better grasp and more in-depth understanding of the many practices that *casteller* participants inside *castells* performed. These practices have been generally overlooked or unrecognized in the *casteller* studies, even those that take an ethnographic and anthropological approach. Discussions in chapters 3, 4 and 6 take ethnographic evidence from both teams equally to prove the main argument of each, and the discussion in chapter 5 shows how the two teams distinguished themselves from one another.

Chapter 3

Physicality and the Body at *Castells*: embodying "*fer pinya*"

3.1   Introduction

Both *casteller* and *non-casteller* participants have often referred to the *casteller* values of "*força, equilibri, valor i seny*" -strength, balance, courage, and good sense- to define what this practice is about. These comments have usually been used as the base for a metaphorical interpretation of the activity and the participants dispositions towards it. I was drawn to *castells* because I wanted to analyze the sociality of participants inside this practice. However, I was surprised to see the sheer physicality involved in precisely embodying those *casteller* values beyond or in addition to its metaphorical interpretation. The physicality at *castells* has generally been undermined and unrecognized by both insiders and outsiders (and even the ethnographer!) in both the activity and the *casteller* literature. It was thanks to fieldwork that I realized that issues such as the different bodily practices at *castells*, the management of physicality, or the management of risks were central in people's everyday engagement with and understanding of this cultural expression.

In this chapter, I analyze how participants embody the popular trope of "*fer pinya*" - 'making pinya' at *castells*. In particular, I look at three different bodily practices: participants' use of their bodies and physicality in tower building, the clothing required for this practice, and the beer drinking. I find these elements central in the bodily performance of *casteller* collective identity. I take Csordas' sense of 'embodiment' as "our fundamental existential condition, out corporeality or bodiliness in relation to the world" (Csordas 2011:137). Within this frame, the "lived experience" (Csordas 1994: 10) is a central element of the body, which is also understood as a cultural phenomenon (ibid: 3). Nonetheless, I approach embodiment in this chapter from a social perspective that highlights the interaction among bodies as a way to produce social meaning (Goodwin and Goodwin 1992, 2007, and not so much from a phenomenological perspective that emphasizes emotions, consciousness or sensory perceptions.

'*Pinya*' literally means a 'pinecone' in Catalan, and thus "*fer pinya*" would literally mean forming a pinecone structure. However, in *castells* (and generally in Catalonia) this expression usually translates to 'joining together' or 'uniting forces' in forming a group. This expression resonates with the classic concept of 'communitas' (Turner 1964, 1969), an outcome of a rite of passage. In particular, communitas takes form "when people engage in a collective task with full attention" and "sense [that] their life together takes on a full meaning" (...). Communitas is togetherness itself. (...) Communitas is exciting; it makes people able to organize and work together." (Turner 2012: 1-4). In an interesting analysis, Erickson's work on *castells* (2008) challenged the traditional anthropological perspective that claimed that ritual practice strengthened and consolidated social boundaries (Brandes, 1998; É. Durkheim, [1912] 2012; Noyes, 2003; V. Turner, 1974). He examined how ritual practice may dissolve such boundaries. Following Van Gennep's concept of 'liminal' or 'threshold' state ([1960] 2013), in which moments of more or less controlled aperture allow the incorporation of external participants into the practice, Erickson found that "ritual techniques do intensify a sense of social interior but at the same time, produce apertures in social boundaries, rendering them permeable" (2008: 9). In his analysis, Erickson

focused on how immigrant participants in a *casteller* team were integrated into the activity. He argued that egalitarian techniques[1] for de-centering established centers of power (social or ethnic), that is, techniques to dislodge the position of the dominant, were initiated from within such dominant centers to allow the incorporation of immigrant communities (2008: 53). My approach examines and focuses on the actual practices within *casteller* practice that may dislodge this center of dominance.

Embodying the trope of- "*fer pinya*" at *castells* implies enduring physical pain and uncomfortable situations, learning to be responsible for others, cooperating, and negotiating power differences, often in a context of tension. These practices often challenge established structures of power found in everyday life outside *castells*. The liminality present in tower building, for example, promotes "comradeship from person to person; creating bonds that are undifferentiated, egalitarian, direct, spontaneous, concrete and unmediated" (Turner 2012: 4). The practices inside this activity, at the same time, shapes the construction of a collective identity and a sense of communitas that incorporates socially recognized and differentiated styles and aesthetics (in gender or class, for example). In this chapter, I focus on participants' discourses, interactions, and experiences as well as my own field notes and experiences to understand how *castellers* learned and embodied the trope of '*fer pinya*' and the challenges they often faced to become *casteller* members.

I also engage with some aspects of communities of practice (CofPs) (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Etienne Wenger, 1998, Eckert 2000), described as "groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and who regularly interact to learn how to do it better as they interact regularly" (E. Wenger, 2006, p. 1). The aspects of CofPs also evoke egalitarian relationships of comradeship, equality, and inclusivity among participants. Although Lave and Wenger's approach (1991) recognized power differences in negotiating meanings based on the degree of participation ('peripheral' vs. experienced participants, for example), their perspective

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[1] "pluralism, protest, ecumenicalism, ritual, demands for justice, derision, revolution, independence movements, parody, guerrilla warfare, acts in solidarity, and strikes" (Erickson 2008: 52)

takes for granted the access (and progress) to full participation of all new members and disregards how experienced participants may monopolize the authority and legitimacy recognized to them. Thus, it is important to counteract the horizontal aspects that this frame often assumes with any possible vertical relationships within each community that often exploit hierarchy, power, and distinction.

The *casteller* phenomenon is an excellent case study worth analyzing because it addresses the typical aspects found in CoP: the *castells* brings together people from different backgrounds to build towers, share their knowledge on a peer-to-peer environment, and interact with people on a regular basis. However, the phenomenon also evidences the struggles within vertical relations that challenge this theoretical frame. *Casteller* participants who no longer recognize themselves as novices or peripheral participants often struggle for access to "qualified" tower positions that are fulfilled by more experienced and senior participants. At the same time, they and others deal with contradictory discourses about individual achievement and collective interest. These tensions between the individual and the collective were materialized in the vertical and horizontal relations in the construction of towers.

The horizontal and vertical relationships at *castells* were developed through the use and regulation of the body and its physicality in towers. For example, some participants disagreed over who deserved to fulfill a specific tower position based on different criteria (commitment to the team, physical fitness, etc.). As briefly commented above, there were often discourses around the importance of the base of the tower or the *pinya*, which concentrates the highest number of participants, versus the actual trunk, which has a more limited number of participants and provides a more individualized perspective of the practice. Many of these tensions were generated from the body (in their interaction, roles, positions, etc).

3.1.1 Why the body?

One of the most striking features of *castells* is how close and thus physical the participants need to get in order to build those towers. Body contact inside *castells* is frequent and well known among its members, but it can be surprising for outsiders who are not used to that.
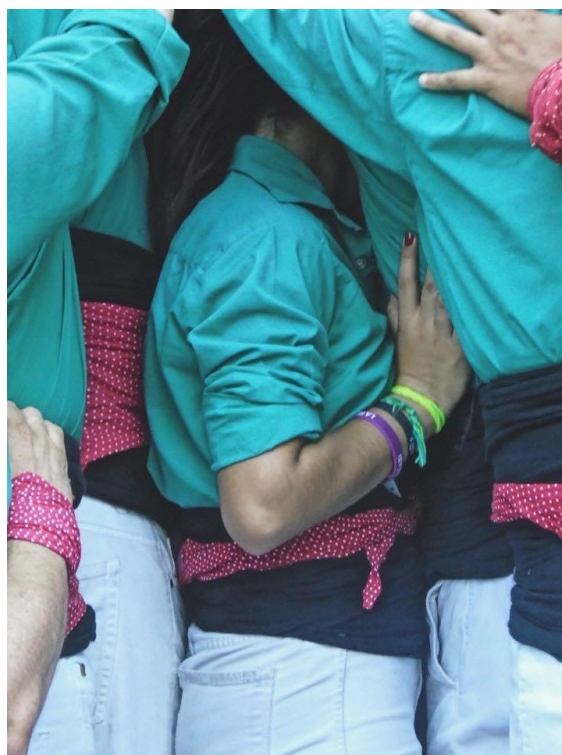
Figure 3.1: Castellers de Vilafranca (anonymous photographer from Castellers de Berga)

Examining the intense physicality and the bodily practices at *castells* is especially interesting in the context of Catalonia. None of the other emblematic cultural expressions in Catalonia mobilize the body to achieve the same level of continued and supported physicality as in *castells*. Mountaineering, choral groups, soccer, *sardanes,* or other folkloric activities (correfocs, bastoners, etc.) associated with Catalan culture require a minimal (if not completely absent) level of physical engagement with other members, and the use of the bodies themselves is refined in posture and expressed emotions[2]. On the whole, in cultural forms viewed as distinctively Catalan since the

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[2]Other cultural practices like correfocs or la patum promote a less refined use of the body but these have not been traditionally emblematic of Catalan culture until very recently.

19th century, there was an emphasis on a sense of containment (both mental and physical).

The *sardanes* dance, one of the most emblematic Catalan practices that became popular amongst the early Catalanist bourgeoisie of the late 19th century (see chapter 1 for details) and that remained popular right after Franco's dictatorship, uses some more bodily contact -holding hands- when people form a circle facing inwards. There is some minimal body movement required in this dance, but "the dynamic jumping intervals do not break the composure and straight posture" (Doerte, 2015, p. 441, see also Brandes 1990, 1991). The physical rigidity, discipline, and containment embodied in this practice have been symbolic of the kind of "refined" urban, Catalan identity of the late 19th century and late 20th century middle classes. Especially in the contemporary period, it has often been contrasted to typical Spanish cultural expressions such as flamenco dance or bullfighting that usually emphasize roughness, energy, and the individual. However, *castells* is interesting because it apparently breaks the class-based association of physicality in Catalonia. *Castells* brings together people from different backgrounds in willingly taking a practice that violates everyday norms and Catalan stereotypes.

Bourdieu (1984) analyzed the need for body control through the lens of class distinction. Dominant or privileged classes, according to him, valued a relationship with their bodies that was not instrumental, that is, a relationship that could be cultivated out of a clear human necessity: " there is the tendency of the privileged classes to treat the body as an *end in itself*, with variants according to whether the emphasis is placed on the intrinsic functioning of the body as an organism, which leads to the macrobiotic cult of health, or on the appearance of the body as a perceptible configuration, the 'physique', i.e. the body-for-others" (1978: 838). The mountaineering or choral traditions are examples that show the kind of relationship with the body that was valued by the Catalan bourgeoisie at the time: one with body control, that could be disciplined, one that did not respond to a necessity, and one that was not based on competition (Bourdieu 1978). Nowadays, *sardanes* does not enjoy much popularity, especially among the youngest generations, and its representation of the Catalan community seems to be displaced by

castells in terms of popularity and institutional attention. This cultural move suggests that the physicality at *castells* is positively valued today by a larger sector of the society (mainly working and middle classes) in this representation. Even the political elite values the physicality of *castells* today, as presidents of Catalonia and other well-known politicians have been seen in *pinya* positions. However, what we see at *castells* is not necessarily the formation of a bodily *habitus*[3] that participants engage with unconsciously. Participants join willingly *castells* to participate in a set of practices that are associated with specific values.

The body remains a central element in the analysis because it is through its performance and display that social meanings at *castells* are constructed and embodied. Several classic scholars have examined the body through the techniques and disciplines used to shape and educate the body (Elias, 2000 [1939]; Foucault, 1995 [1977]; Mauss, 1973; E. Turner, 2012). In this chapter, thus I intend to show a perspective on the experience of participants that shows how the body is used, regulated and transformed to negotiate a collective *casteller* identity that challenges class, gender, and ethnic boundaries.
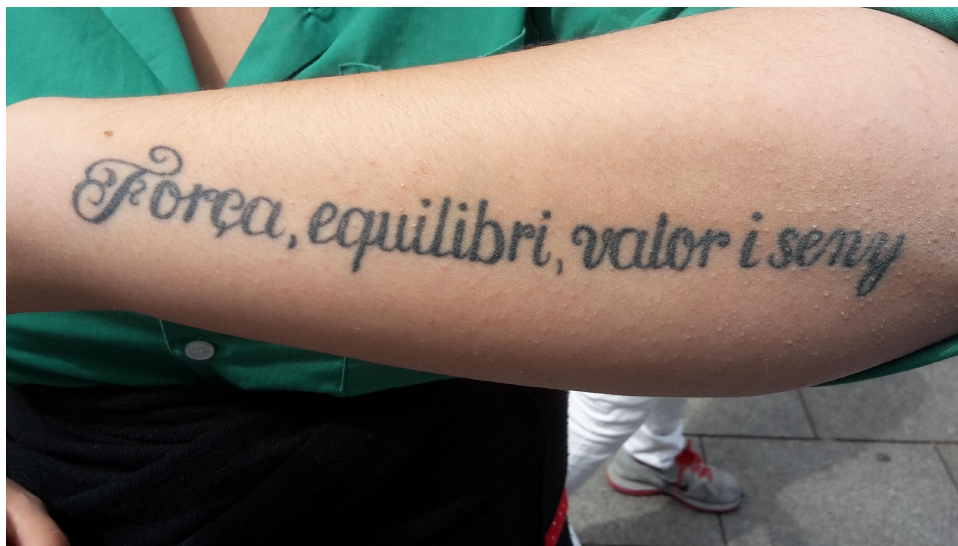
Figure 3.2: Participant in Vilatèxtil with the 'casteller values' inscribed on her body: "strength, balance, courage, and good sense." Aida Ribot, 2016

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[3]this refers to the unconscious physical embodiment of class culture or dispositions to understand the world in a particular way.

3.2 Body and physicality in tower building: *'fent pinya'* at *castells*

At *castells*, different kinds of body shapes and sizes are welcomed and valued to make towers possible. This diversity allows for a variety of roles inside the tower. The typical athletic and fit body and the kind of body discipline required in many sporting events is not required to participate at *castells*, and to hold roles of physical responsibility there. Some *castellers* explain that this is a surprising thing that they discovered once they joined the team. *Castells*, as a physical activity, is still associated with physical strength (see chapter 1). Because *castells* originated in small towns in the south of Catalonia with peasants as the bulk of its participants, some people still believe today that archetypical "peasant-like" members are the ones who participate. In this archetype, people have a considerable amount of physical strength and can be rough with one another. The image also associates this persona with little education, with uneducated working class status, and with a specific masculine gender.

Marta -a young participant of the Mediterrani team- came to where I was standing to ask me about my experience doing fieldwork. In this informal chatting between tower performances, Marta introduced herself as an architect, and she started reflecting on the prejudices against *castells* that she had before joining the team. In accounting for the source of her prejudices, Marta believed that "*és una activitat molt física, que requereix molta força"* -'it's a very physical activity that requires a lot of strength'. While saying that, she was also pumping her bicep in order to show what she meant by physical strength. She further stated that because of that apparent high physical requirement, she thought people would be "**basta**" -'rough or coarse'[4] -, which is an aspect that privileged classes avoid in their bodily practices (Bourdieu 1984). Marta's association of c*astells* with physical strength, and with lower classes is something that Bourdieu already addressed in his work on (sporting) bodies and social class (1978, 1984). Bourdieu proposed that

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[4]"jo em pensava que la gent seria molt més basta"

dominant and dominated classes had different ways of producing physical capital[5] because there is a need for distinction (ibid: 1984). For example, dominant classes "attribute to themselves spiritual and intellectual strength, and a self-control that predisposes them to control others" whereas dominated classes "attribute to themselves the strength of labor power and fighting strength -physical strength and also strength of character, courage, and manliness" (1984: 479).

In this case, Marta's preconceived notions of how the *casteller's* body ought to be or look aligned very much with Bourdieu's notion of how dominated classes see and value their bodies and dispositions. The alignment -or *habitus* - of the physical dispositions of the body with the *field* (1980) is, however, broken when Marta finds out that a prominent figure in urban architecture in Catalonia participates in one of the leading *casteller* teams. She explained that when she saw this person in an actual tower on television, she wondered *"com pot ser que aquesta persona que li tinc tanta admiració a nivell professional, a nivell intellectual, que és una eminència dins del meu camp pugui estar en una colla castellera?"* -'how is it possible that this person, for whom I have such an admiration professionally and intellectually, and who is an eminence in my area, could be in a *casteller* team?' This discovery made Marta reflect on her own prejudices to re-interpret they who was allowed to participate at *castells,* which opened the possibility of joining herself. When she actually started participating in the Mediterrani team, she found *"tanta gent, tan variada, i amb un nivell educatiu tan alt"* - 'so many people, so varied, and with a very high educational level.' By pointing to participants' level of education as surprising for her, Marta evidenced that, in her expectations, the physical strength that she associated with *castells* was also part of an expectation of finding low-class participants. Marta's epiphany broke the association of physicality with the low class as she realized that middle and upper-class participants also used their bodies and physicality to build towers.

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[5]Bourdieu understands physical capital as the (physical) attributes and skills valued in a specific culture/society. He sees this form of capital as belonging to the wider cultural capital.

Sporting bodies?

Participants' beliefs about how (certain) bodies should look at *castells* evidenced contrasting discourses that pointed to an ongoing question: is *castells* a sport? Octavi -the former president of the Mediterrani team- was chatting with me during a rehearsal. He and another participant - Agustí-, who usually is in charge of introducing newcomers to the team, explained to me the importance of getting people -especially parents who bring their children to the activity- to participate from the first day "*encara que no ho tinguin pensat*" -'even if they didn't plan to': "*és la millor manera de que acabin entrant a la colla*" -it's the best way so that they end up joining the team'. In their explanation, the team's former president highlighted the fact that many people usually think that one needs to be very strong and "*fibrat*" -ripped- to build towers because they think that *castells* are a sport and, as such, people need to be fit. Octavi immediately rejected this outsider perspective that defined castells as a sport by arguing that people in here were not fit. While he was saying that, he laughingly pointed to Agustí's belly[6] as an example of what he meant. Octavi added that this belief was also common because people usually thought they would perform in trunk positions, when in fact they would normally go to the *pinya*. Both Octavi and Agustí's comments highlighted and supported the mobilization of non-normative body shapes and sizes at *castells*, that is, they included those body types that were not commonly/popularly recognized as legitimate for this activity as possible bodies. Their comments also evidenced that they did not consider *castells* as a sport.

In a contrasting example, Jaume, a popular participant from the youth group in the Vilatèxtil team also disagreed with the idea of *castells* being a sport: "*fas esport [però] no és un esport*" -'you do sport, but it's not a sport'. The main reason he gave to reject the definition of *castells* as a sport was that people from different ages were mixed up: "*no hi ha cap esport al món en el que competeixi la gent de seixanta anys, o setanta o vuitanta amb els de quatre o cinc*

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[6]Agustí was a short, middle-aged man with a very big belly. His shoulders were wide, and he usually performed as "baix" -first level- in towers.

anys com passa a castells" -'there is no sport in the world in which people who are sixty years old, or seventy or eighty compete with those who are four or five years old as happens at *castells'*.

Another participant in Vilatèxtil said he considered *castells* a sport, but with a nuance. Cèsar believed it was an "*esport..de resistència*" -endurance...sport- and that this nuance was important because sports were usually associated with cardiovascular exercise and training. *Castells*, he added, is about "*aguantar*" -enduring- even if there is some cardiovascular exercise. Jaume usually performed in the visible parts of the tower, usually in the third level. His view on body fitness differed a bit from Octavi's. Jaume explained that "*amb una miqueta de forma física ja pots fer [castells]*" -with a little bit of fitness you can do[7] *castells*-, but he also acknowledged that "e*l que ajuda és, per fer [uns] bons castells, tenir un bon físic*" -In order to build [some] good towers, what helps is to be fit. In his comment, Jaume tightly associated fitness with being able to build "good" towers, and then recognized that this fitness was usually found in certain tower positions: "*la gent del tronc acostuma a ser la que està més en forma*" -people int the trunk are usually in the best shape. Jaume's rejection of *castells* as a sport was not associated with fitness (as with Octavi and Agustí).

Jaume was also known in the team for being very critical of those who were given the opportunity to go up to some trunk level and could not bear the weight properly, meaning they were shaky or could not hold onto the other people of their level appropriately. During one rehearsal, Jaume was standing next to me without participating in a particular pillar/column rehearsal. We were both looking at how it was being built when he suddenly started saying in a lower voice: "*ai, ai, ai, mira-mira-mira, per favor..per favor...!*" -my-my-my, look-look-look, please...please! I could not understand why he was saying that so I asked him what was going on and he just replied "*però que no s'aguanta els pets, home!*"-he can hold on no more, man! When I looked back at the participants rehearsing that pillar, I just saw what to me looked like the regular shaking and tension of people in towers; they were not about to fall or shaking excessively.

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[7]In Catalan, "fer castells" -do castells- may mean both building actual towers or participating in this activity. It is unclear which one he was referring.

However, Jaume was seeing one participant performing really badly. In later comments, Jaume made me understand that these scenes frustrated him because he was usually committed to staying fit by going to the gym regularly, and then he saw others that did not prepare themselves. Jaume's comments made me aware of his expert role at *castells* and the importance of body fitness for him as a regular participant in trunk positions.

Tower vs. trunk requirements

Octavi made an important distinction that Jaume also evidenced: while participants at the base of the tower might not have to be fit and enjoyed a diversity of sizes and shapes, participants in trunk positions were expected to conform to specific fitness standards and shapes according to the levels performed. Octavi's points highlighted the idea that those bodies in the visible parts of the tower (that is, the trunk of the tower) were not representative of the team's bodies and that everybody had a place in tower building. His comment also evidenced the distribution of new members (who were automatically placed in *pinya* positions) and expert or experienced members (who typically performed in the trunk). From my observations I noted that participants who had roles in the *pinya* were indeed more diverse in terms of fitness, shapes or experience. Many new members participated with senior ones, for example. The *pinya* is the first place where new participants were welcomed, rallied and included by a large group in a low-stakes environment. Participants' relation to their own bodies in the *pinya* did not seem regulated, competitive or individualized. There were fewer discussions about participants' fitness for a specific role when they performed at the *pinya* positions, and there was a general understanding that whoever was taller, or shorter or thinner would perform a specific role anatomically. These were believed to be static characteristics of the body that could not be shaped. Although there were specific and recognized roles inside *pinya* positions, these were generally believed to require way less technical skills, which opened to anyone to participant. This perspective of the body in the *pinya* promoted relationships of cohesion and equality in its difference.

Trunk positions were much more skilled. During my time in Mediterrani, I had the chance to learn how to climb up a column. Despite having spent nine months at *castells*, participating in diverse *pinya* positions, I never imagined the physical challenge of climbing someone up (my own first attempts after seeing so many participants doing it were certainly terrible). In these positions, participants had to be physically strong and fit, and my obvious clumsiness and weakness made me realize I needed to exercise more (even if I never intended to participate in trunk positions officially) because others performing in *pinya* positions could do it really well and easily...!. My own experience and observations showed that bodies in trunk positions were often regarded as less static or as something that could certainly be shaped (by practice, exercise, etc.). Within this perspective, there is a focus on the participant's individual responsibility to prepare and discipline their bodies to fit the appropriate position. This process evokes a relationship between discipline and competition with the body and with other participant's bodies, where more exercise and preparation made your body more suitable for certain positions.

Participants learned that there was room for a sort of upward mobility in the tower from trunk positions. C*astellers* may decide to train themselves in order to be included in the pool for holding specific roles of visibility and responsibility in the trunk. The constant learning and the idea of upward mobility in the tower (and in the team) were aspects that motivated many to participate at *castells*. Sergio, a participant from Extremadura, acknowledged that "**al principio es más el avance personal**" - 'at the beginning it's more about the personal progress'. He explained that as you begin feeling more comfortable in certain positions of less responsibility, "**te dan más posiciones concretas, (. . .) avanzas en el cordón (. . .) hay una recompensa constante, es como cuando estás en el trabajo y te van ascendiendo**" - 'they give you more specific positions, (. . .) you move on in the rows, (. . .) there is a constant reward, it's like when you are at work, and they keep promoting you'.

Body discipline was expected to open the opportunities to perform in socially valued positions in the trunk, although sometimes this expectation was not met (discussed below).

Participants in the trunk were much more limited in number, and their fitness for specific positions was usually scrutinized, which promoted a competition that was not found in *pinya* positions . In the trunk, each level required that participants have very similar sizes and shape to distribute evenly the weight and postures needed to balance the trunk. More than once, a head of technical group explained to me that he had to change someone because he or she was too heavy or shorter or more physically unstable in comparison to their fellow level participants (this seemingly created a risk to the entire construction). The body that is more "*tecnificat*" -skilled, regimented, or disciplined- is more socially valued and distinguished than the *pinya* body. The visibility, individuality, and limitation (in its numbers) of trunk positions offered a privileged and recognized social position to their performers. Many of these participants openly voiced their concerns more often and could also be involved in the decision-making process of technical teams in a somewhat informal way. This made them more authoritative than others and evidenced the contradictions in the discourse about the cultivation of the self versus the cultivation of the community in an egalitarian way.

Tensions over tower positions

The fact that the more experienced and senior participants regularly performed in those socially valued positions promoted the idea that full membership, legitimacy, and authority was gained through this upward mobility in tower positions. This often created problems for new participants who felt they 'had to' or 'could' move up in the tower in order to leave behind the status of novice, especially amongst younger participants. During my time at Vilatèxtil, there was an ongoing discussion and criticism towards a small group (4-5) of new participants who recently joined that season from another *casteller* team of a town nearby. Some of these new participants were already *castellers* at that team and left it because, according to my Vilatèxtil informants, they did not have opportunities to perform in trunk positions. Some of these new participants started practicing in trunk positions, whereas others who had been in the team

for some months were not invited to practice. This created a lot of friction and discussion around the legitimacy to access those positions and how the team organized the opportunities for diversely experienced participants. Paco (X) suggested in relation to rehearsals that "**se podría gestionar de alguna manera mejor para que todo el mundo se sienta más involucrado**" -it could be better managed so that everybody feels more involved. Cesc, another participant in the conversation explained that he did not feel "productive" when only the most experienced participants rehearsed in trunk positions, even in the lowest and easiest ones.

> **en tres horas de ensayo tendría que haber más tiempo (…) para probar castillos más pequeños, (…) con gente más nueva (…) Pero la gente nueva…..a no ser que tenga un don para hacer castillos o que venga de otras collas que tiene [la gente] ya otra trayectoria, es decir, que lleve años haciendo castillos -da igual en una u otra [colla]- tienen más suerte que nosotros en ese sentido.**
>
> *In three hours of rehearsal, there should be more time (…) to try lower towers, (…) with newer people (…) But new people….unless they are gifted to build towers or come from other teams with another trajectory, that is, that they have spent years building towers -no matter the team-, they are luckier than us in that sense.*

Cesc blamed their situation as not being lucky, but Paco expressed it in terms of "**amiguismo**." He criticized that he was not being given the opportunities to "**subir**" -climb up (in the tower)- despite attending all rehearsals since he joined the team 6 months before. It is worth noting that during my time at Vilatèxtil, no one ever invited me to practice or learn how to climb on top of someone as happened in the Mediterrani team.

In Vilatèxtil, practicing positions that resembled those in the trunk was only for those who actually performed in the trunk during exhibitions. This violates one of the aspects that facilitates the entrance of newcomers to any CofPs: "newcomers must be granted enough legitimacy to be treated as potential members" (Wenger 1998: 101). Participants almost never asked to practice those positions overtly during rehearsals but I witnessed discussions about it during interviews (both individual and group), and in social media platforms. In any case, I never dared to ask someone to teach me the strategies to climb on top of someone because nobody else did it except those very experienced members. This heavily contrasted with how Mediterrani approached

this issue. Upon my entrance to the team, I was approached by someone and was invited to practice climbing on someone. I quickly accepted that. This contrast showed that in Mediterrani, practicing trunk-like positions was not associated automatically with the participant's intentions, individual motivations, and ambitions. There was a diversification of roles during rehearsals and participants could generally try some out. This might explain why I generally saw and witnessed less tensions about roles and positions in Mediterrani than in Vilatèxtil.

Some months after the *casteller* contest of 2016 took place, where a new Chinese team made an outstanding performance as an invited team (see chapter 6 for more information), the Vilatèxtil youth group started discussing in WhatsApp what they needed to do in order to improve their performance. In particular, they discussed mechanisms to make participants committed to the team so that they could perform with the same ease. Marina, a young senior participant who was not a habitual performer in trunk[8] positions said: "S*obretot, provem a gent nova per troncs que hi ha molts que entrenen volent fer proves i no en reben cap o potser al principi si i despres ja se'ls deixa de fer. Donem aquesta oportunitat perque es quedin motivat*s" -above all, let's try new people for trunk positions, [because] many join in willing to do practice tests and don't get any or perhaps the do [get them] at the beginning and then they don't get any more chances. Another participant argued that what the team needed was more people in rehearsals on a regular basis; to which Marina replied "*Tenim gent a assaig, pero si no fan res s'avorreixen i marxen*" -we have people at rehearsal, but if they don't do anything they get bored and leave. Carla, another young senior participant, who was a regular at trunk positions, replied that people had to be willing to sacrifice for the collectivity. She posed herself as an example of someone who does not get what she wants but does not demand it either "*Jo tinc moltes ganes de pujar a la torre i no la pujo pq hi ha qui simplement ho fa millor per x motius*" -I really want to climb a tower [of twos][9], and I do not climb it bc there are those who simply do it better for x reasons".

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[8]Marina had performed in trunk positions multiple times but for some unknown reasons she was not a habitual performer during the time of fieldwork.

[9]tower made of two people per level. In Catalan there is a difference between 'torre' (made of two) and a 'castell' (made of 3 or more people).

She urged a different attitude from Marina: "*Mes agrair i actitud per aprendre i menys demanar q per demanar tots tenim boca*" -more about appreciating and a willingness to learn and less about demanding because we can all demand things. Carla was clearly upset with Marina's point about letting new people practice so they might try trunk positions. In her perspective, people had to conform to what they were good at, and it was not ok to ask for specific positions.

Recognizing having an ambition to participate in trunk positions was generally frowned upon in both teams because it contradicted one of the main discourses about the importance of the *pinya*, which is about the group and not the individual. Comments like Carla's were common although not in face-to-face interaction, and her discourse aligned in some respects with the one that the heads of Technical Teams mobilized when they explained their own decisions about the participants who performed in certain positions. Carla criticized precisely this type of people (those who demanded to perform in specific positions) because they often disappeared when they had to face the consequences[10] (like in a bad exhibition, a tower collapse, rough times at the team, etc). Sheila, another participant who was regular in trunk positions backed her by saying that the pinya was "*imprescindible*" -indispensable. She then argued in support of Carla that: "*No és gens fàcil adquirir experiència. I més si volem castells grans. Tenim dos opcions, repartir les proves a més gent i fer castells de 7, o apretar i fer castells de 9.*" -It's not at all easy to acquire experience. Especially if we want to build big towers. We have two options, broaden the practice tests to more people and build towers of 7, or push and do towers of 9. In her comment, Sheila evidenced the underlying assumption held by many, especially those who were already enjoying a recognized and privileged position in the team as trunk performers. Diversifying roles among more people implied building low-level towers (and thus becoming a *colla de set*), which was something that the team would probably reject.[11] Sheila did not state explicitly that the second option would mean keeping the experienced people as the main performers, but this was her implication. Only

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[10]"Ara, quan sha d donar la cara acostuma.a ser aquest tipus de gent la q no hi es, quines coses"

[11]The team was so proud of being a distinguished colla de nou, that is hard to imagine settling for something that had defined them in the past: it would be like going back.

by 'pushing' (which was cast as an alternative to distributing the roles more broadly), could they maintain the level they had at the moment. Sheila's point contradicted the logic of allowing more people to try out for higher positions, which would give them more participants and alternatives to perform in those positions.

These examples show several things: there was certainly a group of people that decided who 'received' practice tests regardless of the commitment of new, less experienced individuals to the team; newer members had trouble accessing the resources to perform in socially valued and individualized positions; overtly asking to change that was frowned upon; and those with privileged and distinguished positions defended the monopolization of those positions by invoking the team's competitiveness. Other participants in the conversation rapidly tried to de-escalate the discussion by drawing the attention to the *pinya*. A participant who had also defended having or bringing more people to rehearsals said "*els castells grans son soca no son tronc*" -big towers are all about the *soca*,[12] not the trunk. The relevance of the *pinya* became a recurrent element to counteract personal ambitions and motivations, when the underlying tensions between the two main elements of the structures became apparent.

Horizontal and vertical relations

The similar value of diverse body types at the base invites acceptance and inclusion of the wide spectrum of participants. This horizontal relationship contrasts with the similarity in shape and sizes, and the limitation of bodies in number at the trunk and its specialized roles. The characteristics of trunk bodies present a relationship of power, exclusivity and distinction, only possible and legitimized by the *pinya*. Cèsar commented that "*per fer els castells grans, el tronc és el mateix, l'únic que creix és la soca*" - in order to build a big tower, the trunk is the same, the only thing that grows is the pinya. His definition of a 'big castell' was a tower of 9 levels, and that is why he always explained that the key to building high towers was that people were

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[12]Although 'soca' is a specific part of a pinya, many participants used it as synonym of pinya.

94

conscious of the importance of the *pinya* because *"una persona sola no fa un castell,"*- a single person doesn't build a tower-, in reference to individualized roles. Although the two parts of the towers evidenced the contradictions and tensions of the two ways of conceiving the body and its interaction, the truth is that participants cooperated to make a *castell* possible. Despite the higher visibility and attention that the trunk received, it does nothing without the *pinya* (see examples in the conversation above). The different basis of cooperation resembles Durkheim's different perspectives on solidarity (E. Durkheim, 1964). Whereas 'mechanical solidarity' is the kind of cohesion based on people's similar roles and on making the individual invisible in pro of the collectivity, 'organic solidarity' bases its cohesion on people's differentiated roles, specialization, and interdependence (ibid). Although Durkheim proposed these to distinguish primitive and advanced societies in terms of labor division, the underlying idea can be applied to *castells*, as roles in this activity are also divided. In order to build towers, the two structures need an 'organic' cohesion that bridges the constant tension between vertical and horizontal forces. Members have to cooperate in order to make towers possible. There is generally a sense of interdependence between the two parts necessary to overcome conflicts and to reach the goal of the activity. This interdependence makes all participants cooperate with their bodies and roles and to create a cohesive, synchronized, and fluid tower.

The physicality required and involved in *castells* is one way of creating this organic cohesion that bridges contradictions. The tension and burden of the tower (physically and also in terms of responsibility) is distributed among participants through body contact. This is what I mean by physicality. When joining *castells,* participants learn (often very abruptly)[13] to allow their own bodies to be negotiated and managed by others. This management is very hands-on -literally- and it can be personally shocking. As one new member -Rafael- from the Vilatèxtil explained, his experience with the physicality of *castells* turned out to be therapeutic [14] for him

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[13] As Rafael commented, you may not realize how physical this activity is until you participate in tower building.

[14] Rafael further comments that this experience surprised him pleasantly because the its effects remain in him today: "tota la vergonya o la timidesa i tal....cap avall!" 'all the shame and shyness and so on...out!' . It is not clear, however, whether or not his overcoming of the lack of physical contact crosses the boundaries of the activity, that is,

from day one:

> En 12 anys [de relació amb la meva dona], l'única persona en qui jo podia tenir un contacte físic, una abraçada eh? només....és ella [la meva esposa] (...) i de cop i volta va ser com teràpia d'inundació FUM::! de no tenir contacte humà amb ningú:: ara tens 150 paios...suant (...) i ben apretats i tal...i va ser com fora tabús, fora qualsevol tipus de tonteria que tinguéssis.
>
> *In 12 years [of relationship with my wife], the only person with whom I could have physical contact, a hug, uh? Only her [my spouse] (. . .) and suddenly it was like a flooding therapy, FUM::! From not having any human contact with anybody:: now you have 150 guys. . . sweating (. . .) and very much cramped and so..and it was like 'taboos out, out any type of silliness that you had'*

Rafael's account showed how the kind of physicality present in this practice is rough and unrefined because it involves dealing with other people's sweat and lack of personal space, which are generally uncomfortable aspects for individuals in western societies. Other things that members have to deal with are other people's feet on one's shoulders or other people's breath. Physicality is needed to "*fer pinya,*" but physicality plays a different role depending on the positions in the tower. The kind of physicality that Rafael described was in the *pinya*. Similarly, Kate, a young american woman who had been in the Mediterrani team for two years remembered in an interview that the physicality she saw and experienced in *castells* was "oh my goodness! that was the most shocking thing for sure!" She explained the feeling she had the first time she was placed in the *pinya*: "standing there and someone is climbing on my back, and they're like..you know, pressing against you, and their leg comes up high on your leg (...) and I thought 'this is a very strange experience', 'where am I right now?', 'how in the world did I end up in this moment?'. Kate also explained that she got used to that as well as other people's sweat because she was there and experienced the whole process: "it's something gross but normal".

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whether or not in his everyday life outside castells, he has lost this "shame or shyness".

Being responsible for others

From my observations and experience, I noted how bodies were usually cramped together, pushing themselves against each other and protecting others. The way participants had to place their arms and hands when in the *pinya* evidenced how collective responsibility was constructed, for example. This physicality was unrefined and rough as there was no room (also literally) for the social conventions that regulate individual and personal space and its bodily consequences (the smelly feet, people's breath) outside the activity. This kind of physicality gives form to a collective entity with its own "bodily-made" structure. The breaking down of individual space also allows for a different, closer relationship among its members. In Rafael's example, he had only been able to physically connect with his wife (hugging, as he said), and now this connection is extended to a larger group of people, which allows him to re-interpret his relationship with other participants and with the tower itself. No wonder that a lot of participants described the team as being "family.", although Rafael's point suggest that it goes beyond that. The physicality that takes place in the trunk also required a continued contact although the spaces were less crowded. Participants depended on one another to contain the tension and weight of towers and were responsible for each other as well.

The physicality at *castells* is an aspect that is also instrumentalized by the teams themselves (and by other entities)[15] to attract new people to the activity, which suggests that the kind of physicality at *castells* is valued but somewhat transgressive or not often found outside the activity. Teams portray physicality under the image of joining hands, or cramped *pinyes* in their advertising [see photo below].

In Mediterrani, its slogan read "*Apropa't i Toca'ns. A la pinya hi ha lloc per a tu*" -'Get close and touch us. There is a place for you at the *pinya*'. The slogan shows that one's participation in the team was contingent on getting close to people and to actually touching the people involved. The fact that physicality was essential in the construction of towers probably

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[15]will be discussed in chapter 6

Figure 3.3: Promotional advertisement. Moixigangers d'Igualada. www.moixigangeuers.cat

diminished personal responsibility for the act of touching. Participants could cross some of the established socio-cultural norms in regards to individual physical boundaries in a safe context.

3.3   *Casteller* clothing

Recent anthropological studies on clothing have incorporated an approach that focuses on the body and its "agency, practice, and performance" to create "cultural processes that construct identity" (Hansen 2004: 369, see also Eicher 2000 and Taylor 2002). Outfits at *castells* have traditionally used a specific dress that is common and practical for its activity. You may recall that the early *casteller* participants were mostly peasants, fishers, and laborers (see chaperons 1).

Slightly or fully collared,[16] front-buttoned shirts were standard amongst peasants and working-class men during the 19th and early 20th century (Ventosa 2014). These men, especially those who worked the land, also regularly used a *faixa* ('f?i??) -sash- to warm up the lumbar area and to protect it when bending, and *espardenyes* or espadrilles as shoes.

Figure 3.4: Typical peasant clothing in Catalonia. Retrieved from Ventosa 2014.

The use of shirts and *faixes* have continued at *castells* as emblematic garments of this tradition, although these have been adjusted to contemporary pieces. Many of these elements thus point to the rural populations and the stereotypes associated with them like physical strength, masculine traits or, in general, the roughness of rural life. However, this and other clothing items

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[16]Fully collared shirts were not popular amongst these groups because they usually got stained with dirt and sweat. However, peasants used cloths to protect these areas.

that will be discussed below are mobilized in an urban setting by working and middle classes coming from diverse local, national and international origins.

Everyday items that participants wear during rehearsals are a shirt (full collared, with front buttons), a *faixa*, and a white-dotted-on-red *mocador* or bandana. The bandanas were used in different body places: around the wrists to help others with gripping, to wrap one's head to dry out sweat or to avoid hair being ripped off by other's feet , and to provide extra tightness to the *faixa*. Items that participants wore during exhibitions include white pants (any kind), the official team shirt or the t-shirt, the *faixa* and the bandanas. Today these team garments are strictly regulated by the CCCC. For example, official team shirts cannot have publicity on them, but other signs of individual or collective identity can be added (like a flag or an extra shield). *Castellers* in both Vilatèxtil and Mediterrani never talked about *"uniformes"* or uniforms when referring to their dress code, but instead of *vestimenta* or *vestuari* -outfit. This choice may evidence the associations that the word 'uniform' have with the military (Vagts 1959), with coercive means of collectively identifying local or national groups and with the suppression of individuality (Joseph and Alex 1972: 719). Many contemporary working uniforms also respond to a top-down decision and are usually associated with power relations and their differences.

It is possible that because of all the above associations, in a more or less conscious attempt, the *casteller* community generally avoids using the term uniform to refer to their outfit. However, the meanings and practices around this outfit indeed worked as a "legitimating emblem of membership within an organization" (Joseph 1986, p. 2). The use of uniforms has often been associated with masculine identities, especially when associated with the military (Vagts 1959). However, many ethnographies have evidenced that uniforms have played a significant role in organizing and negotiating gender and in constructing collective local identities based on that (Barnes and Eicher 1992, Fokwang 2015, Weiner 1989, Pancake 1992)[17]. C*asteller* dress code is one very emblematic characteristic of this cultural practice and is one of the tools that members

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[17]Waitresses, flight attendants, housekeeping staff are examples of communities that use uniforms.

use to build a collective identity, to self-regulate tensions over power differences, and to facilitate the physical practice amongst participants. Unlike the popular dance of *sardanes* or *flamenco*, outfits at *castells* (or *vestimenta*) are required and provide a mechanism for both men, women, old and young to index characteristics of the group that do not exploit conflicts that are commonly found through contemporary clothing styles in everyday life. In the official outfit of *sardanes* teams, for example, there is a distinction between men and women in the use of pants versus skirts[18]. This may be in part because *sardanes* allowed the entrance of women early in the 20th century and gendered dressing codes of the time were extrapolated to the dance. Men also wear a *faixa* -sash- whereas women often wear belts in the waist area[19], which suggests that the use of *faixes* points merely to a traditional aspect of the activity. Participating in *casteller* practice requires a practical outfit that benefits all members in any potential tower position (skirts or belts would not be practical or safe to use, for instance). Although there is clearly a pattern among dancers and teams, the official outfit in *sardanes* is generally gendered, less regulated and more diverse than in *castells*.

Figure 3.5: Sardanes team. www.portmasnou.com

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[18]Note that participation of sardanes did not require a membership with any team, and official clothing was not required anybody could join the circle.

[19]Other items common to sardanes dancers are often the espadrilles shoes. T-shirts, tops and colors vary depending on the team and men and women from the same team may also wear interchangeable colors (often the women's skirt has the same color as the men's shirt, for example.

Casteller outfit marked the degree of membership to the team. As Joseph and Alex noted, uniforms "reveal and conceive statuses, certify legitimacy" (Joseph & Alex, 1972, p. 719). Besides the exhibition or rehearsing outfit, it is worth noting that when performing *castells*, participants were explicitly told to remove their glasses (had to wear contact lenses), wristwatches and other decorative items such as earrings large enough to be pulled out or bracelets.[20] All of these could pose a severe risk to the participant's safety and to others in case of collapse. The absence of these particular items that often mark gender, class, or ethnic boundaries outside *castells* worked to create a sense of collectivity in which these boundaries were blurred. In the discussion below, I will focus on how shirts and *faixes* were used as semiotic elements to index or signify *casteller*'s membership and identity, and how this identity allowed a unique physicality in the activity.

3.3.1   Rehearsal clothing

One of the first things that any participant is told when entering a rehearsing facility to participate is that he or she needs to wear a shirt instead of a t-shirt. The reason I was given for that instruction in Vilatèxtil during my first day (both by one of my informants and by the person who guided me after that first day) revolved around a personal safety measure. Regular t-shirts usually have a seam along the shoulder that unites the back and front pieces with the sleeve, whereas collared, front-buttoned shirts usually have a third piece in the shoulder area that unites the back and front pieces together, with a seam that does not fall on top of the shoulder (see picture below).

Having a seam right on top of the shoulders may be more painful in the event another participant is standing on them. This rehearsal shirt could be of any color and pattern as long as it was a collared, front-buttoned shirt. It was not until some months had gone by that I realized

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[20]Thin necklaces, rings or items that remained somehow covered under the outfit or very tight to your body, and thus protected, were not called to attention.

Figure 3.6: Official shirt where no seam crosses the top part of the shoulder. Aida Ribot, 2018

that many participants' shirts during rehearsal (and even the official ones in other teams!) had the seam right on top and along the shoulder, and no one ever said anything.

Additionally, the team usually gave new participants a free t-shirt (not shirt) with the team color. This contradiction suggests that the reason I was first given about safety was not the only one or surely not the most important one. Broadcloth shirts were practical for their lack of elasticity (found in knit t-shirts), which helped participants hold on to each other, but that reason was never given. The contradictions showed that wearing a collared broadcloth shirt was in itself relevant enough to start being considered part of the team, as an item that indexes membership. I also realized that many participants had worn out shirts with holes, which could make the practice unsafe but was never addressed for such reasons. People usually did not pay much attention to

Figure 3.7: Castellers de Sants: rehearsal (retrieved from https://llucmiralles.com/Assaig-de-Castells-Castellers-de-Sants)

that although I did once hear someone jokingly scolding another participant for wearing a shirt that was very torn (a piece of the backside was hanging open). These were two senior participants who had spent some years in the team, and the one with the ragged shirt was the technical head of trunk positions.

3.3.2   Exhibition clothing

The use of rehearsing shirts contrasts very much with the exhibition shirt (official team's) or t-shirts. On the Friday before the first exhibition of the season, someone in the team asked me if I was going to come to participate in the *pinya*. When I said I was indeed planning on that, this person told me I needed to get a team t-shirt. This person guided me to the president, who had the keys to an office where there were boxes of dozens of t-shirts in the team color with its name

on the front. On the back was the slogan "*dona'm pit*" and the logo of several local and national sponsoring companies. The same happened during my very first week at the Mediterrani team, and in all exhibitions during that season, some participants in each team wore team t-shirts where private sponsors were commonly displayed.

Official shirts, however, had to be "*guanyat*" -earned, and marked an important step in someone's recognition as a member of the team.

Figure 3.8: Member of Castellers de Terrassa. Aida Ribot, 2014.

Everybody was eager to gain their shirts, which were considered the real outfit that showed that the team did not differentiate internally a person from its degree of novice bu which obviously marked distinction to outside people. Two times in the year the president of the team handed

out official shirts to new members, participants were usually very excited to see it. The board counted the times each new member had participated in rehearsals and exhibitions. Although nobody was ever able (or willing) to tell me exactly the number of rehearsals required, I received my Mediterrani official shirt after approximately 2 months, which means between 24 and 30 rehearsals, plus exhibitions. This number, however, could be higher. Alfons, a participant in Vilatèxtil, was upset that he had joined the team about six months ago, right after the last time when shirts were handed out, and he was still wearing the t-shirt during exhibitions. His discomfort suggests that the team's official recognition of his membership was important to him. Even if he had already felt an integrated member of the team, something was missing for him. Official shirts were sized but had to fit pretty loosely to let participants raise their arms or grab the shirt. There were no men or women's cut (just as with t-shirts). The content on these shirts was highly regulated by the CCCC (*Coordinadora de Colles Castelleres de Catalunya*) to avoid "*una image mercantil de les colles*" -a commercial image of the teams- (CCCC, Els Valors Socials). Thus, shirts needed to remain free from sponsors' names or general publicity in order to avoid fines from the CCCC itself. However, t-shirts were not regulated whatsoever. This was not frowned upon generally or interpreted as providing a corporate image of the *casteller* identity, because t-shirts were not taken to represent the casteller phenomenon the way shirts did. However, certain sponsors could trigger harsh criticism from other teams or citizens if its values and/or practices clashed or affected some communities (see more in chapter 6).

After the first official exhibition of the season in Vilatèxtil, new members who had earned the shirt were "*batejats*" -baptized. Members of the team poured water bottles and small water tanks on top of new members to soak them while the latter generally tried to avoid them. It looked more like a water game than a serious and solemn event. In it, the new group was the center of attention, and everybody else was recognizing them. As the name suggests, the *bateig* resembled some other religious rites of passage, in which someone becomes a full member of a congregation or a community through some practice that involves water. During my time in Mediterrani,

however, the small group who received the shirt (including me) never got to be baptized during our first exhibition with the official shirt[21]. When I told a close participant that that was my first day with the official shirt , he responded with surprise because he thought I had been on the team for longer. It was not until the very end of the season that a group of closer friends in the team volunteered to baptize me and others on the next occasion: 'You cannot not leave without being baptized,' they kept saying. The two examples show that although the baptism was an important ritualized event that recognized the status of full membership symbolically, it often happened that team members already accepted participants as de facto full members when these were wearing the official shirt since no other visible traces evidence who is (or not) baptised.

3.3.3   Summary: the semiotics of shirts

Shirts distinguished each and every existing *casteller* team: they give a specific collective identity and personality different from other teams, and the representative color is often taken to index or signify the group (e.g."els verds" is a popular way of referring to the team *Castellers de Vilafranca*). Official shirts were taken as an item that distinguished full *casteller* members from novices when it came to representing the team publicly. This means that being able to represent a team had to be earned by practice and recognized by others before it was displayed. However, *casteller* teams cared about the way new members were recognized publicly when these were not fully recognized within the team just yet. Both shirts and t-shirts had the same representing color, which helped new participants feel included and helped them "camouflage" their membership in the meantime. I use the word camouflage on purpose to highlight precisely the idea of *blending* or *resembling* the larger group by using specific representative colors. T-shirts served as a bridging mechanism that eventually led to full membership, but no one wanted to remain in that in-between (and often ambiguous) status because it points to an incomplete, unrecognized membership. The

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[21]This was one of the largest events I attended with Mediterrani. La Mercè is the Barcelona city main festivities and the exhibition included several team, which made it last for hours.

fact that both t-shirts and official shirts were the same for everybody (except for size differences) and had to be worn loosely did not revolve around gendered or age-related clothing styles that are commonly found in society.

3.3.4   The Sash

The other element worth analyzing for its semiotic relevance is the use of the sash, the *faixa*. All participants needed to wear a sash during *casteller* activity both at rehearsals and exhibitions. This piece is essential for those who physically participate in the tower building because it is believed to protect the lower back of participants, no matter the person's individual position in the tower. As Erickson also noted in his ethnography, "Putting on the *faixa* is a transitional ritual during which the diffuse atmosphere of eating, drinking, smoking, and talking begins to shift and focus attention towards making *castells*." (2008: 188). However, 'putting on the *faixa'* was in itself a practice that involved a social learning process that has not been given enough attention in *casteller* studies. Most of the informants who explained their first time at *castells* talked about the moment when "*em van enfaixar*" -they wrapped the sash around me- as an act that was decided for them and done by other people. All the participants who made reference to this moment recounted it as a pleasant and welcoming experience that facilitated their entrance to the team because they were immediately placed at the *pinya* right after that. The person or people who often guides and introduces any participant to the team is the one who helps put the sash on. However, this guided and protected way of introducing new participants to the activity is limited to the first day(s), and these participants often find themselves unprotected and adrift right after that.

I noted when Clara, a young participant in Vilatèxtil, hesitated to ask someone to help her put on the sash during her second or third time at rehearsals. She went to a box where the team had blue sashes and picked one of those and started looking around at the people in the rehearsal with the rolled sash in her hand. She did not move around the facility much or crossed it to where

we (and most of the people) were rehearsing and she did not interact with anybody nor did anyone interact with her. I assumed she needed someone to help her put on the sash and approached to offer myself: "*ei, t'ajudo?*" - She smiled and said "*ai, sí, si us plau*", -oh yes, please- with a little despair. I took one end of that sash and started unrolling it by distancing myself from her while she put the other end of the sash around her lower back and waited for me to tense it. I realized at that moment that I had a very similar experience during the first days in *casteller* activity, but in my case, nobody came to offer me help. I did not know if I had to ask anyone in particular or how to even ask for that. When I looked around, it felt as if everybody knew each other very well and was close to each other. I did not know anyone because my first informant and the person who guided me the first two days were not there yet. I finally asked someone very hesitantly to please 'help me', with a very low voice, as if I was asking for a huge favor to a complete stranger. The other participant looked at me seriously, did not say anything although agreed with a sound. The next few days felt the same: asking strangers to help me wrap. I learned that instead of asking for 'help', it was common to either not to say anything to the person whom you were asking (and just offer the *faixa* to the other person) or to just say "*m'enfaixes?*" -do you wrap the sash on me?" These examples showed a form of liminality in which the regular forms of interaction were suspended. Clara or my own example evidences that we were not yet incorporated into the new rules, in this transition to a new sense of community. Both our social insecurity on what to do and how to interact also evidences that new members are not automatically included or accepted into the team.

In the picture above, there is an example of how to put on a sash at *castells.* The process inevitably requires two people: while the participant on the left of this picture is tightening the sash on one end, the second participant (on the right) is wrapping the sash around his waist. At the second plane of the shot, a young participant helps tighten the end of the sash to the older participant.

Putting on the *faixa* was not only a ritual that shifted the attention to *casteller* activity as

Figure 3.9: Casteller participants putting on the sash. Aida Ribot, 2016

Erickson proposed. It was also a ritualized practice that enabled participants to become members of a group (the broader *casteller* community) by wearing it, and that enabled a kind of physicality among them that would be socially unauthorized or frowned upon outside *casteller* activity. A member of the Mediterrani team once commented that he was very surprised to notice that at *castells* people grabbed your waist when passing behind you or when moving you around and that this was expected, in contrast to touching other parts of the body. He pointed out that "*és una cosa que només faig a castells*" 'it's something that I only do at *castells*" and not in "real life" or "at work." His comment pointed to the fact that this kind of physicality only or mostly took place when participants had the sash on, which happened when they engaged in *casteller* activity. The clothing, and especially the sash, was a material piece that enabled the physicality among participants and the managing of people's bodies in the space.

Novice vs. regular member

As you may remember from Clara's example, she went to pick up blue sashes from a box. Teams usually owned and had some sashes in their rehearsing facility to lend to new members, and these sashes were any color but black. These *faixes* were shared among participants. However, official *casteller faixes* of all teams were regularly black for both practice and exhibitions, and each participant owned one. Other-colored sashes pointed to the status of novice (usually in the first or second rehearsal) and made it easy to spot them among the group to get to know them, help them or just ignore them I also witnessed and experienced.

Unlike official team shirts, participants were expected to buy and own a black sash as soon as possible, especially for exhibitions. Getting a black sash was also taken to signify the degree of commitment to the team and to the *casteller* community, in addition to the will to become a full member. However, this is something that the participants had to learn and were not told during the first day's orientation, when they were told about the type of shirt expected. During my first weeks at Vilatèxtil, I was wearing the team's blue sash for a long time because I did not see the necessity of buying the black one. This was partly because there were no exhibitions planned yet and because it felt unproblematic to me to wear a sash that showed I was new to the team. One day after some weeks, nonetheless, a close friend asked me while pointing at my sash: "*què fas amb aquesta encara?*" -What are you still doing with this one? I honestly did not know that using those blue sashes after the first 1-3 rehearsals (not even weeks!) was something frowned upon, and when I looked around, I saw only one other person who had just started that day wearing it. Other members who had started with me or after were already wearing a black sash. I felt I was being disrespectful to the team and committed to pay for the 20 euros (approx $22) black sash. The next day of rehearsal, another participant, who saw me with the black sash on, commented "*home, ja era hora*" -man, it was about time! [22]

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[22]I occasionally witnessed both in Vilatèxtil and Mediterrani that an experienced or regular participant was wearing a blue sash. When other team members saw them, they made fun of him or asked about it. This person always had to explain that he or she had forgotten or lost or left the sash somewhere else.

Figure 3.10: A new participant wearing a t-shirt and a blue sash (Retrieved from www.saballuts.cat)

These ethnographic examples evidence several points worth mentioning. Sashes, besides being a homogenizing and inclusive piece that indexed or pointed to membership in all the *casteller* community, could also mark the degree of membership in and commitment to a team or that broader community. Participants generally wanted to feel included and recognized as full members as soon as possible and, unlike official shirts, they could *buy* that status and recognition; they did not have to wait until the team decided they were members. Wearing a black sash even just one week after joining the team erased any visible signs of novelty to the team during rehearsals. The examples above also show that the boundary between 'novice' and 'expert' was pretty much up to the new person (he or she had to decide to buy one) and the team somehow expected that new participants took the initiative to show their commitment to the team. The only way I knew that the sash I wore meant something (being new to the team) that did not quite align with how others were seeing me (being a regular participant) was by having someone who informally suggested that. No member of the board or technical group told me officially to buy a black sash or that this was wrong or frowned upon. This also showed an unspoken tension around this topic as no one wanted to directly ask me to spend my own money on a piece of clothing that was so central in one's *casteller* participation.

3.3.5 Conclusion on clothing

The fact that everybody followed the same dress code while rehearsing or during exhibitions (even with the distinction of t-shirts) blurred or at least did not exploit individual differences in terms of class, ethnicity, gender or age. Only with the sash, participants had to make an economic investment which, in a way, could also be interpreted as an economic barrier, however low, to participation. Nonetheless, the purchase did not seem to bother any of the new participants that I have witnessed joining the team. On the contrary, it was a step that all of them seemingly took with pride. Judging from the outfit that proved to be both practically and symbolically meaningful for participants, it was also tough to differentiate *casteller* roles (those who go to

113

the trunk versus those who go to the *pinya*, for example). Although participants who performed in trunk positions had to pay closer attention to the tightness of their *faixa* or the length of their rolled sleeves, they did not have a special outfit or anything that distinguished them from others in the team. This contributed to the belief that any *casteller* participant could potentially perform in multiple positions and that roles were not static. Thus, the only relevant differences among participants that the *casteller* outfit highlighted were related to the degree of belonging, membership, and commitment to the team (shirts, t-shirts, faixa) and to the *casteller* community in contrast to the rest of the non-*casteller* population.

3.4   The body and physicality as a form of team-building: drinking together

One could naively think that every single participant in *castells* had a passion for building towers when they joined the team. Although many members explained that they had always liked seeing *castells* in the *plaça* -'plaza'-or on TV, the vast majority of them acknowledged they had joined the team for other reasons. Some participants explained that friends or family who already were *casteller* members had motivated them, especially if they saw each other during or after *casteller* public exhibitions. Others commented that their initiation to *castells* happened by accident as in the following example, where Abel and his friend found themselves without a place to party on a Friday night because all the bars had already closed:

> **Dando una vuelta por allí [el barrio] pasamos por delante del local de *castells* (..) no nos dimos ni cuenta que eso era un local de *castells*. Yo simplemente escuché música por la escalera y dije 'illo[23] vamos a entrar que esto está aquí hay un conciertazo de la hostia!' (..) bajamos las escaleras y había cuatro o cinco en la barra y digo 'eh, buenas,' esto:: poneis' una cervecilla?' (..) Yerai [un miembro de *castells*] me dijo 'mira, es que esto no funciona así, esto es una colla *castellera*' y me empezó a explicar (…) y me dijo 'hostia, mmhm::**

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[23]A shorter version of typical Andalusian expression "quillo", which comes from "chiquillo" -little boy.

meteros' (..)"[24]

While walking around there [the neighborhood], we passed in front of the rehearsing facility of *castells* (. . .) we didn't even recognize that that was a *casteller* rehearsing facility. I simply heard the music through the stairs and said 'man let's get inside that there is a huge gig/concert in here!' (..) we went downstairs, and there were four or five people by the bar, and I say 'hey, hi, well. . . can I have a beer?' (. . .) Yerai [a member of *castells*] told me 'look, this doesn't work like that, this is a Casteller team,' and he started explaining (. . .) and he said 'well, mmhm: get into this'

Abel's first encounter with *castells* was through beer, and this was not an isolated case. Both teams analyzed used different ways to secure current members and to reach potential ones, and offering cheap drinks was a common strategy. For example, during the main festivities of the Vilatèxtil town, the *casteller* team participated in a popular event that is always organized by the town's commission of popular culture. In this event, several cultural entities of the town (sporting, music, dance, etc) have booths offering drinks and/or food to participants. There is usually music involved and it is usually targeted to young populations. These booths serve to make the entity visible to attract potential new members and to earn some money from products. Booths or bars contributed to deepen the social aspect of *castells* as sometimes were decisive in welcoming new participants. Sergio, the Extremadurian participant in Mediterrani once said "**el rollo social tira mucho, sobretodo para alguien como yo, que soy de fuera y no llevo los *castells* en la sangre, o no lo(s) llevaba. . . ahora ya. . .**" -'the social deal works really well, especially for someone like me who is an outsider and doesn't have *castells* in the blood, or I didn't, . . . now [I do]. . . .'.[25] This social aspect of *castells* thus facilitated the entrance of participants like him or Abel. In the case of Mediterrani, the team had an actual removable bar in the plaza where they performed during the main neighborhood festivities. They served alcoholic drinks sponsored by particular beer companies (San Miguel, Estrella, Heineken, etc). All drinks were cheaper than in regular bars (see more about it below).

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[24]I chose to represent standard forms of orthography in the script despite the fact that the speaker used Andalusian Castilian. Making it orthographically is not relevant for the purpose of the argument now.

[25]The last part of Sergio's comment hints at the possibility that castells may be now part of his essence or part of something else closer to it. The fact that he corrects the tense of his comment to specify that he did not have it in his blood, suggests that.

Beer drinking was an important practice amongst adult participants that helped overcome tensions and contradictions among team members and among tower positions, but that at the same time created other contradictions. Many times I have witnessed participants interacting right after they rehearsed positions that required a high physical contact. If that happened right before the end of the rehearsal, they continued the interaction over the beer. For example, many first laterals used to talk with the first and second levels (the ones closer to the floor) because that is where laterals usually work (they hold the legs of the second-level participant while often facing the *baix* (first-level participant). Because they often need to interact among themselves during tower building, this interaction was often extended to the act of beer drinking. Tensions raised during tower building due to socially valued positions, temporary hierarchies, or the use of authoritative language (see chapter 4) were often diminished during beer drinking.

The fact that a self-identified group (venerables, see chapter 2) identified with cava (a sort of sparkling wine), suggests that beer drinking was associated with youth rather than with the whole team, even if this notion of youth was very broad since most of the people of all ages (except kids) drank beer. Beer drinking and *castells* is a surprising combination for an activity (*castells*) that requires balance and focus to avoid collapses and physical injuries. Amateur participants in sports like skiing, golf or bowling, in which beer or other alcoholic beverages may also be consumed, do not need to be physically responsible for others in the same way *castellers* have to be. The surprise is especially great when people's safety -and especially children- are at stake[26]. Participants learned how to drink at *castells* and learned that drinking together (moderately) is part of this cultural practice. However, beer drinking has become today very emblematic, public and encouraged in today's teams, especially amongst the younger generations who are bulk of participation and this has created some criticism among participants (see more in the following sections below).

Anthropological studies have examined how drinks are a kind of material culture that

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[26] I did not inquire about this issue to parents who had their children participants inside the teams.

needs to be embodied in order to have meaning, that is, drinks have meaning through the process of drinking (Dietler 2006, Manning 2012). Following Pierce's semiotic structure, Manning (2012) looks at drinks as signs, that is, as "something" that "stands for something to someone in some respect of capacity" (ibid: 6-10). In his ethnography of drinkers in Georgia, he thus examined the "production and consumption of signs" (coffee, gin, water, etc.) and found that beer, for example, was an unmarked drink caught in between the ideals of traditional Georgian masculinity that used another type of drink like vodka to celebrate and the modern and European image of production. Beer was found a drink for "non-ritual", "non-domestic", informal and plebeian masculine sociability (2012: 210). Other ethnographies have examined alcohol consumption as an element that "cements and lubricates social interaction" (Heath 2000) in the construction of collective identities and social cohesion (Douglas, Chatwin 2001, see also Bennet 1996, Milano 2001 Juchitan, Patico 2002). Wilson also noted "the sites where drinking takes place, the locales of regular and celebrated drinking, are places where meanings are made, shared, disputed, and reproduced, where identities take place, shape, flourish and change." (Wilson 2005: 10). Douglas' influential works (1987) provided a framework to examine drinking as a structured, patterned, and learned practice used to create boundaries of inclusion and exclusion (ibid: 4, 8, 12). Frake's ethnographic account on how to order a drink in Subanum (1964) also showed how participants in a drinking interaction have to learn the process of drinking from a straw to allow or enable a 'drink-talk' that can challenge social positions of power different from the ones established outside the drinking setting. Thus, participants who are skilled in 'talking from the straw' (by speaking in a certain way) were considered leaders. The following section will address beer consumption at *castells* from both a semiotic and a social perspective.

Beer consumption in the two *casteller* teams analyzed was very much spread throughout the adult participant group[27], no matter the gender, class, or ethnic origins. A lot of ethnographies on beer have found an association of this drink with masculine identities, spaces and manliness

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[27]The youngest generation who were allowed to drink -approximately 18-25 years old- were the ones who usually had the highest amounts of alcohol and who usually reinforced the idea of drinking beer as part of casteller identity

(Hall 2005 in Wilson, Marcus 2005, Pujolar, Manning 2012), despite other accounts that focus on how women are challenging these boundaries (see craft beer in Chapman, Nanney, Mikles-Schluterman, Slade Lellock 2018). Beer drinking at *castells* was the only recognized and encouraged legal drug consumption at *castells*. Although there were some participants who smoked tobacco outside the facility, this was not encouraged nor generally given attention, and these participants were clearly a minority. A few participants smoked joints outside the rehearsing facility as well, but I could only see that in special occasions (not on a daily basis) when there was a party (never before a rehearsal, for example). In after-rehearsal parties either in the rehearsing facility or outside it (in night clubs or bars) I never saw or heard anyone taking illegal drugs or talking about it. This does not mean that nobody took them, but it was not seen as part of *casteller* life. Even during the main festivities of the neighborhood, when many *castellers* usually got drunk, there was never a comment on taking illegal drugs or on someone who had taken them. Beer was the only accepted and recognized drink used to define *casteller* membership,

During a toasting one day while I was with the Mediterrani team, Antonia once said while clinking beer glasses "*aquest és el soroll dels castellers*" 'this is the sound of *castellers*.' Alcohol consumption is part of everyday habits in Catalonia, Spain, and much of the "wet" countries of the Mediterranean region (Heath, 2000, pp. 12-14, 92). Its use is normalized and often unproblematized among consumers because it is considered part of the food culture (Heath, 1995). The consumption of beer amongst *casteller*s is widely known even to people who are unrelated to *casteller* activity as an acquaintance suggested to me: " *Ostres, allà amb la cervesa!*" -wow, there with the beer!, said an acquaintance. The use of '*ostres*,' evidenced a degree of problematization in the association with beer drinking. In my own field notes, I have encountered dozens of references to *fer una cervesa* or f*er una birra*[28] -have a beer- either before or after performances and rehearsals. However, it was essential to know how or when to do it, or even who could do it.

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[28]this is a more colloquial use of beer.

As a cultural habit, alcohol drinking is central in the celebration of any town festivity, birthday, marriage, or just leisure time (Gamella, 1995; Heath, 2000) in Catalonia and Spain. Some studies on alcohol habits in different countries have divided its consumption by the type of beverage, and Spain is, in general terms, widely known for its consumption of wine during mealtime (Gamella 1995). In Catalonia, wine or cava[29] usually accompany the tables of (private) celebrations, e.g., Christmas night, a birthday, graduation, etc. whereas beers are considered appropriate for (public) leisure time, with a slightly celebratory convention. Beer is often accepted as the beverage for getting together with friends at bars or in the streets, and it does not need food to be consumed with. The most popular brands of beer consumed in Catalonia have been historically based in this region (Estrella Damm, and Moritz) and they offer the blonde, lager-types of beer with an alcohol by volume (abv) between 4.5-5.5%. This abv is not high compared to wine or *cava* (around 10%), and thus beer consumption in Catalonia -and in Spain- is regarded as an everyday beverage, not meant for getting intoxicated (see Pujolar 2001 for a similar finding), but for informally getting together with friends. Other beverages like coffee and tea are also common, but in a less celebratory setting. In recent years, gin-tonics have been popularized among hip, modern and young[30] drinkers but the beer still remains the easy and accessible beverage to many. The main sponsor of *casteller* activity is one of the most popular beer companies in Catalonia just mentioned above -Estrella Damm-[31] and the company keeps on renovating its contracts with the CCCC year after year. The fact that this beer company appears advertised in many *casteller* events (many of which are televised, such as the bi-annual contest) associates this drink with *castells* as a specific activity. According to the informant from the CCCC, it is believed that the beer company was pushed by the Catalan government to sponsor *castells* at the time when this activity was not very popular (more than 15 years ago). Now it finds itself in a privileged position because they are recognized by the community as the main sponsor. According to this contact, as a local company

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[29]white or rose sparkling wine, similar to French champagne. This beverage is emblematic of Catalonia as a refined drink for especial celebrations.

[30]although it is not a beverage used by first time drinkers and has some class connotations.

[31]It also sponsors many other cultural events and cultural practices like concerts, geganters, etc.

(it was founded at the end of 19th century in Barcelona), the company benefits from sponsoring the *casteller* values (like amateurism) and the lack of advertisement on official shirts because they want to transmit an altruistic and generous image of the company. Both the company and *castells* are associated with local cultural practices, identity, and historical continuity in a 'relaxed' way. This is actually also evidenced in the famous and expected television ads that the beer company makes every year right before summer. In their ads, Estrella Damm always portrays young beer consumers in their 20s or early 30s partying and on holidays in paradisiac and quiet beaches in Catalonia and the Balearic Islands, where Catalan is also spoken. The spot has become so popular that it is meant to mark the beginning of summer when it first appears on TV. The association with the land, the local beaches, the bohemian style of consumers (in clothing or in retreating to isolated places) promote an image that *castellers* generally receives positively.

Although *casteller* teams (or the CCCC) generally accept the funding from this company, this relationship has also been frowned upon or at least recognized as problematic sporadically by participants. Most of the few comments that I heard related to the apparent contradiction between an activity that promotes balance, strength, and focus and an activity that uses alcoholic beverage. During the time I was carrying out fieldwork, there was not any official complaint (even informally as a team) from any *casteller* team or group. However, three years ago, the CCCC closed a deal to include one of the largest water supply companies in Catalonia (Sorea) as a sponsor to help fund insurance policies[32] (see more in chapter 6). This year (2019) the deal also incorporated adding water fountains to some plazas where "main" exhibitions were performed (Tarragona digital 2019). According to the article, the idea behind this was to promote the use of tap water instead of bottled water. The representative of Sorea in the deal said that this company shared the values that *castells* 'represent' of "*cooperació, esforç i feina conjunta*" -cooperation, effort, and collective work- and they were interested in collaborating in an activity "molt arrelada i emblematica" -very rooted and emblematic[33]." Although this measure contrasts the use of bottled

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[32]40,000 euros (approx. $44,000) (Andrés 2019, Ara)
[33]https://castellscat.cat/es/actualitat/38/

with unbottled water (not necessarily beer-water), it showed a different image of institutional support, based on a product that is problematic to *casteller* practice.

3.4.1 Opening *casteller* activity

The act of drinking at *castells* is a social act that participants encourage and reinforce. In my field notes, I described a very typical scene happening in both Vilatèxtil and Mediterrani teams at the beginning of rehearsals:

> (Oct 21st, 2016) "Upon my arrival, I saw several people outside the facility having a beer from the 'paki'[34] [convenient store] [...] Outside, there was also a group of young people (about 15) [...] They are chatting, smoking, and drinking."[35]

This scene was repeated over and over on each regular rehearsal evening, and it included people of different ages, genders, and roles inside *castells*. Friends getting together over a beer in mixed-gender groups is very common in Catalonia, but it usually involves people from similar ages and situations.

Drinking beer before *casteller* activity (or during it), which often happened outside the facility, was part of the "backgrounded channel or infrastructure of communication, in particular for talk" (Manning 2012: 15). Drinking before *castells* was uneven amongst participants and it was not the center of conversation or attention. Drinking fulfilled a social function of bonding by supporting an ongoing interaction amongst participants similar to beer drinking amongst friends outside the *casteller* phenomenon (see 'phatic communion'[36] in Malinowski 1946). The above note was taken on a Friday when people usually came later to the rehearsing facility and when more people gathered outside the facility for longer while drinking a beer, many of them

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[34]refers to those stores usually run by Pakistani immigrants. The term is derogatory in English but it does not have the same negative connotation in Castilian or Catalan.

[35]"Al arribar vaig veure força gent a fora del local premente una cervesa del "paki". (...) A fora també hi havia un grupo de joves (com uns 15). Estan xerrant, fumant i bebent.

[36]"a type of speech in which ties of union are created by a mere exchange of words" (...) 'phatic communion serves to establish bonds of personal union between people brought together by the mere need of companionship and does not serve any purpose of communicating ideas' (1946: 314-6)

even *before* getting their *casteller* clothes on. Mondays or Wednesdays were clearly different because people did not gather outside the facility in groups as much before the rehearsal. For example, Mondays were really low on attendance compared to Fridays, and almost no one gathered outside the facility before rehearsal. On Wednesdays, on the other hand, more people usually came to rehearsals, which was also reflected in the number of people having a beer outside the facility. This suggests that both the participation and the beer-drinking before rehearsal were correlated activities that increased as the week went by.[37] However, many of those who gathered outside during Wednesday or Fridays had administrative roles (president, treasurer, etc.), that is, participants without technical responsibilities that pushed them to be inside the facility at all times. Also, there were a lot of senior and experienced members that were waiting for the team to rehearse more difficult towers. Because during the first one or two hours, children and many new members participate (they are given more space to try positions and experience with them), other participants felt they could use their time doing something else. For example, Pinto, one participant in Mediterrani who had been in the team for barely a year once commented to me during a rehearsal that "p*er estar en aquest cordó, me'n vaig a fer una birra*" -if I have to be in this row, I'd better go have a beer. Pinto was a short participant that usually played as *crossa* or in positions that were much more internal to the actual tower and demanded a high level of physicality. During that rehearsal, we were laced on the very outer and last rows of a *pinya,* and we barely had to push/press the people in front of us; we were in a position of very low responsibility in comparison to what he was used to. He felt as if his performance was useless. The habit of drinking beer outside the facility right before rehearsal (or during it) and the large amounts of people gathered there without even having changed their clothes to "*casteller* clothes" suggests that this specific act of drinking marked a boundary with *casteller* activity. It also often displayed the status of more experienced participants who waited until the more complex towers

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[37] Also, the rehearsing time for Mondays, for instance, was shorter (8:30-10pm) than Wednesdays or Fridays (8:30-11pm). These times are approximate and vary according to the types of towers/columns to be rehearsed and the amount of people coming to that particular day.

required their presence inside the facility. The fact that Fridays were the days when beer drinking was most visible and peaked among its participants at the beginning also suggests that drinking was connected to a notion of leisure, symbolizing the end of work time (Heath 2000) and the beginning of the weekend.

Critical comments about drinking beer (see below) always to the moments before or during *casteller* activity. Raül, the head of Mediterrani team, explained the reasons why he felt the team had a problem of "*rigor*" and "*excel.lencia*", he said:

> Hi ha massa gent fotent-se birres a les vuit i mitja a fora, massa gent (…) [hi ha] massa gent que beu massa (..) I se'n fa una apologia ademés, una apologia pública…sembla guai (…) és una cosa indignant! (…) Home clar, si tu vas a una (festa) castellera I et fots dos birres abans de la diada I una birra després de cada Castell de la diada, a l'últim castell de la diada arribes amb cinc birres a sobre…amb cinc birres a sobre és igual, no vas…no estàs en les teves millors condicions punt. És que és igual, amb dos birres ja no estàs en les teves millors condicions. (…) Ho veig una mica brut, hi ha molta gent jove que chuma també.
>
> *There are too many people gulping beers at half past eight outside, too many people (…) [there are] too many people who drink too much (..), and moreover there is a defense of it, a public defense…it looks cool (…) it's something outrageous! (…) Sure, if you go to a casteller Sunday exhibition, and you gulp two beers before the exhibition and a beer after each tower in the exhibition, you arrive to the last tower in the exhibition with five beers on top of you…with five beers on top of you, you don't go…you're not in your best conditions, period. It actually doesn't matter, with two beers you are no longer in your best conditions. (…) I see it a bit irrational, there are many young people who gulp too.*

Raül was very critical of the acceptance and normalization of beer drinking in *castells*. Although Raül also had beer regularly right after rehearsals and exhibitions, his critique had more to do with the time participants started drinking beer, how much they usually drank and who usually did it. His position as head of the team gave him enough authority to make such comments. His main -and understandable- concern was the fact that people drinking too much alcohol had their capacities lowered for physical activity. Beer drinking limits the team's possibilities, and it is morally "irrational" as Raül put it. The fact that rigor and excellence are challenged by beer-drinking shows a very different perspective on this bodily practice. Beer drinking may

123

challenge the competitive character of the phenomenon, the professionalization practices, and the human perspective of *castells* that takes care of people (see more in chapter 6). As I commented above, it is important to note that this and other criticism to alcohol drinking focus on the drinking before or during *castells*, and not on the celebratory act of drinking after building tower or performing in exhibitions.

3.4.2   Closing *casteller* activity

Similar to the opening time of *casteller* activity, participants gathered to drink beer even more massively at the end of each rehearsal, as a celebratory ending act that seemed to be expected by all participants. As Maria[38] commented regarding the involvement of two young new participants who had just started that very same day: "*ja s'han integrat perquè estan fent la cervesa post assaig*" 'they are already integrated because they are having the post-rehearsal beer.' This "post-rehearsal" beer seemed even more important for participants as the majority of participants enjoyed this moment on any of the three rehearsing days. They could release the tensions created during casteller building by commenting on how the rehearsals went, how good or bad someone did in a particular position, etc. The above comment also exemplifies what Douglas called "constructive drinking" (Douglas 1987), that is, a drinking practice the role of which serves to establish social relations. In acknowledging that the new participants were doing the after-rehearsal beer, Maria evidences that drinking is taken as an index of membership.The post-rehearsal beer also mirrored that 'end-of-work time' but within the *casteller* activity. Participant's association of *castells* with the notion of relaxed sociability and leisure is key to understand how they frame the activity and why the seeming professionalization of the phenomenon may threaten this view. The act of drinking after rehearsals (and exhibitions) was much more accepted and understood as a celebratory act that sustained and endured the communion of participants right

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[38]Maria was a single woman who consistently participated in castells. She often drank beers either before or after rehearsals and joined the team for dinners afterwards. She was a crossa and was highly esteemed by many experienced and older participants in the team.

after the feat.

3.4.3 Affordable membership

Beer drinking in the two teams examined was especially cheap when compared to drinking
at a bar or a restaurant. In the Vilatèxtil team, a "*quintu*" -'a fifth [of a liter]'- or 200ml of beer is
popular before and after rehearsals. It costs 0.90 euro (or approximately $1). In the Mediterrani
team, the popular measure was a "*mitjana*" -'a third [of a liter],' and it cost 1.20 euros (around
$1.30). Regular prices for these drinks in ordinary neighborhood bars [39] may range from 2.50
to 4 euros (approx. $2.77 to $4.50)[40], although convenience stores have cheaper drinks. The
Mediterrani team had a convenient store next to its rehearsing facility, and many people went to
buy canned beers there before entering the rehearsal. These were slightly cheaper than the bottled
drinks at the team's bar, although the bottle contained more quantity. One time, the president of
the team (who also had drinks from the convenience store) in a joking comment urged members to
'please' buy drinks from the internal bar and not from the convenience store. The rest of the team
laughed , and no other comments were heard about it, but the comment showed the underlying
tensions and contradictions regarding the role of participants in supporting financially the team.

The price at *castells* was thus pretty accessible to most participants, and most of the people
could afford to have at least one beer after rehearsals[41] and even buy others drinks. In this sense,
the lowest socioeconomic classes were able to socialize around alcohol more easily in *castells*
than in other places. As Heath explains "if a drink is an affordable luxury, it can be an emblem of
membership, or at least of earnest aspiration, with respect to a privileged group" (2000: 186). The
affordability of beer makes it easy for many people to aspire to become members; it is accessible.

The use of beer by the majority of team members reinforced the horizontal relationships

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[39]like Ramblas de Catalunya, for example.

[40]https://www.elperiodico.com/es/graficos/barcelona/cuanto-cuesta-cerveza-cafe-barcelona-16390/

[41]A participant from the Mediterrani team told me told me once that she knew of someone who had to quit Castells
because he couldn't afford dinners, beers, lunches.

that emphasize camaraderie, equality, and cohesion. Drinking *together* undermined socioeconomic and generational differences among its members as everybody enjoyed chatting amusingly with people of different ages. Part of this moral (and economic) support and acceptance of drinking beer at *castells* came from the beer company that sponsored *castells* in Catalonia as commented above, and part of it came from the teams themselves that encouraged this practice as part of the *casteller* activity. Because beer is one of the cheapest, non-mixed drinks that anyone in Catalonia can buy, it is also associated with working or popular classes. Although "**calimocho**"[42] is another very cheap and popular drink amongst these classes, it is often used by very young people to get drunk fast and easily, especially before entering nightclubs where alcoholic drinks are way more expensive.[43] This was certainly not the primary goal of beer drinking at *castells,* and I never saw *castellers* doing **botellón**[44] or drinking **calimocho**. In part, this was because *castellers* had a space where it was allowed (even encouraged) to drink cheaply without sanctions. The **botellón** is usually done in the streets and this is generally sanctioned and popularly frowned upon by neighbors. The fact that young people would have alcoholic drinks is a controlled environment and that it was socially accepted is probably one of the incentives for many to join *castells*, as I showed with the example of Abel.

3.4.4 Physicality, the body, and beer drinking

Alcohol drinking was not generally problematized as long as it was controlled, meaning not drinking too much, not *showing* yourself to be intoxicated, and doing it in a group. I never saw drunk participants before or right after rehearsals nor heard anyone commenting on the conditions of others in those settings, for example.[45] There were no chairs or tables to sit comfortably while

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[42]Mix of cheap wine and cola beverages.

[43]Participants who drink calimocho often get together right outside the club or in other spaces and form a "botellón", a gathering aimed at drinking cheap alcohol.

[44]explain

[45]It was common for many participants, especially in the youth group, to drink excessively when there were parties in the rehearsing facility for special events.

having that 'post-rehearsal' drink, as one would expect after hours of standing up rehearsing. However, drinking was not considered an act for relaxing the bodies but for making them interact. Drinking was supposed to be a collective, never an isolating, act.

Beer becomes one key element that also supported the close contact between *casteller* bodies outside the tower structure. However, it is the tower building, in the first place, that breaks the social conventions on individual physicality (see Hall 1966, 1968 for a perspective on personal space). After building towers, participants extended that level of physical communion to the drinking context and even if some people were not actually drinking alcohol, they were welcomed in the same way if they had participated in tower building. The physicality among participants was evident: people hugging, patting on each other's back, friendly kisses, etc. As Noyes also noted, "social life in the bar is directed towards establishing connections, to performing a solidarity embodied in tactile contact" (2003: 85).

Alcohol problematization

Soft drinks were not regarded as suitable for celebrating after a rehearsal or a public exhibition. Beer still indexes a category of adult in terms of class (working class), as opposed to wine or gin-tonics that point to more sophisticated, middle class and hip bodies. In contrast, soft drinks were regarded as an infantilized way of socializing, typical of children's birthday parties, for instance.

Unai: [al cambrer]... i un Nestea.

[To the waiter]... *and a Nestea.*

Oscar: un Nestea!....què ets....? És igual,[hahah...] no acabo la frase..

a Nestea!...what are you..? Never mind [hahah..] I don't finish the sentence.

Alicia: [ai deixa'l..!]

[oh leave him alone..!]

127

Alicia: aveure:::, aviam:: ((0.4s)) no tots serem uns borratxus com tu I yo

let's see:::, see:: ((0.4s)) we're not all gonna be drunkards like you and me

Oscar: *[continues laughing]*

Alicia: ha d'haver-hi de tot

it takes all kinds

Oscar: en aquesta colla? En aquesta colla lu raru és no ser un borratxu

in this team? in this team, the weird thing is not to be a drunkard

Alicia: [ha d'haver-hi de tot]

                        [there must be [people] of every type

Alicia: si no existissin bons nois com ell no existirien els (altres) tampoc

if there weren't good boys like him, there won't be the (others) either.

In the interaction above, Alicia went on to defend one of the members of the team who was being laughed at because he was not ordering alcohol. Unai is a participant who had been very committed to the team because he had engaged with the youth group and the logistics of the team. He was not particularly known for performing in any trunk position. He was shy and introverted and did not meet the typical *casteller* stereotypes[46] of braveness (seen in child participants, for instance), authority (in communicating with others in the trunk/pinya), alcohol drinking, self-confidence (in performing certain positions), or physical closeness with people who are not (yet) necessarily very close friends or family members.

An experienced member of Vilatèxtil who was in charge of *casteller* educational workshops at schools once told me that *castells* are a perfect place precisely for the people who are not like that because they learn and develop some of these traits. It is worth noting that these stereotypes are not recognized typical Catalan stereotypes, which have more to do with introversion, coldness, physical distance, and reduced groups of relationships.

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[46]being extroverted, alcohol drinkers, self-confident, warm, physically close, etc.

Figure 3.11: A bandana used by some *canalla* (children) where it states: "*sóc valent, sóc different, jo sóc casteller*" - I'm brave, I'm different, I'm a *casteller*. Aida Ribot. 2016

In defending Unai, Alicia explained that there must be people of every type, which is something that is usually heard in reference to body types and roles in the tower structure. It is also a discourse that Vanessa made reference to when she talked about the different roles in the organizational side of a team. In Vanessa's experience the key to make the team function is that everybody feels important and is a part of the team: "I*gual que diem que en els castells tothom té un lloc, si ets alt, si ets baix, si ets prim, si peses molt, si peses poc (. . .) a nivell social dins d'una colla la gent s'ho ha de sentir igual. Tothom té un lloc*" -'Just as we say that at the tower everybody has a place, if you're tall, if you're short, if you're slim, if you weight a lot, if you weight a little (. . .) at the social level inside a team, people have to feel it the same way. Everybody has a place'. The team has the responsibility to give everyone an equal place. The fact that Oscar commented as a common trait of participants to be 'drunkards' (and not just drinkers) showed that the drinking aspect inside *castells* was somehow exceptional, and could have a negative evaluation outside the *casteller* phenomenon (remember the comment I got from an outsider about *castells* "wow, there with the beer!"). Both Oscar and Alicia's identify themselves as drunkards despite the negative connotations.

The relationship between *castells* and beer drinking was most problematized in teams

that had reached the recognition of being *colla de nou*. This distinction had to be earned season after season, but in medium-sized teams like Vilatèxtil or Mediterrani, maintaining high levels of participation and commitment throughout the years (and participation cycles) was not an easy task. Part of the recent popularization of *castells* was due to the ways teams attracted young populations (with cheap drinks, free activities, and parties), but at the same time alcohol was regarded as an element that challenged and limited the *technical* growth and expertise of team's skills.

The concern about alcohol drinking was shared by the board of the Vilatèxtil team. They decided in May (4 months after the season had started) that the bar should not sell alcohol to participants when the most complex and risky towers were being rehearsed, that is during *casteller* activity. This act showed a contention over what beer drinking was for and about. The board rejected the role of beer when performing *castells* although it did not prohibit it before. The notice they posted in the bar's door read: "*per un assaig segur i saludable, de 21:30 fins acabar l'assaig servei sense alcohol I zona preferent de canalla*" -'for a safe and healthy rehearsal, from 21:30 until the end of the rehearsal [this] service without alcohol and priority zone for children'.

One of the board members said to me that there was not a '*colla de nou*' that allowed alcohol drinking during rehearsals.[47] He added that now that Vilatèxtil was a '*colla de nou*' (it had recently become so) the team had to be responsible for what it represented. This top-down decision was received with some hostility by some participants who criticized the change vehemently. The board expected the participants to embody 'being a *colla de nou*' by changing their practices towards beer drinking. The decision was reasonable for safety concerns, as these teams had taken on increased risks in building more complex and risky towers (that helped them earn the distinction of *colla de nou*). Despite some criticism, most participants agreed to delay their drinks until after rehearsal.

The recent *casteller* boom might also have been fed by the *colles* marketing efforts to

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[47]Actually, Mediterrani was also a colla de nou and some participants drank during rehearsals.
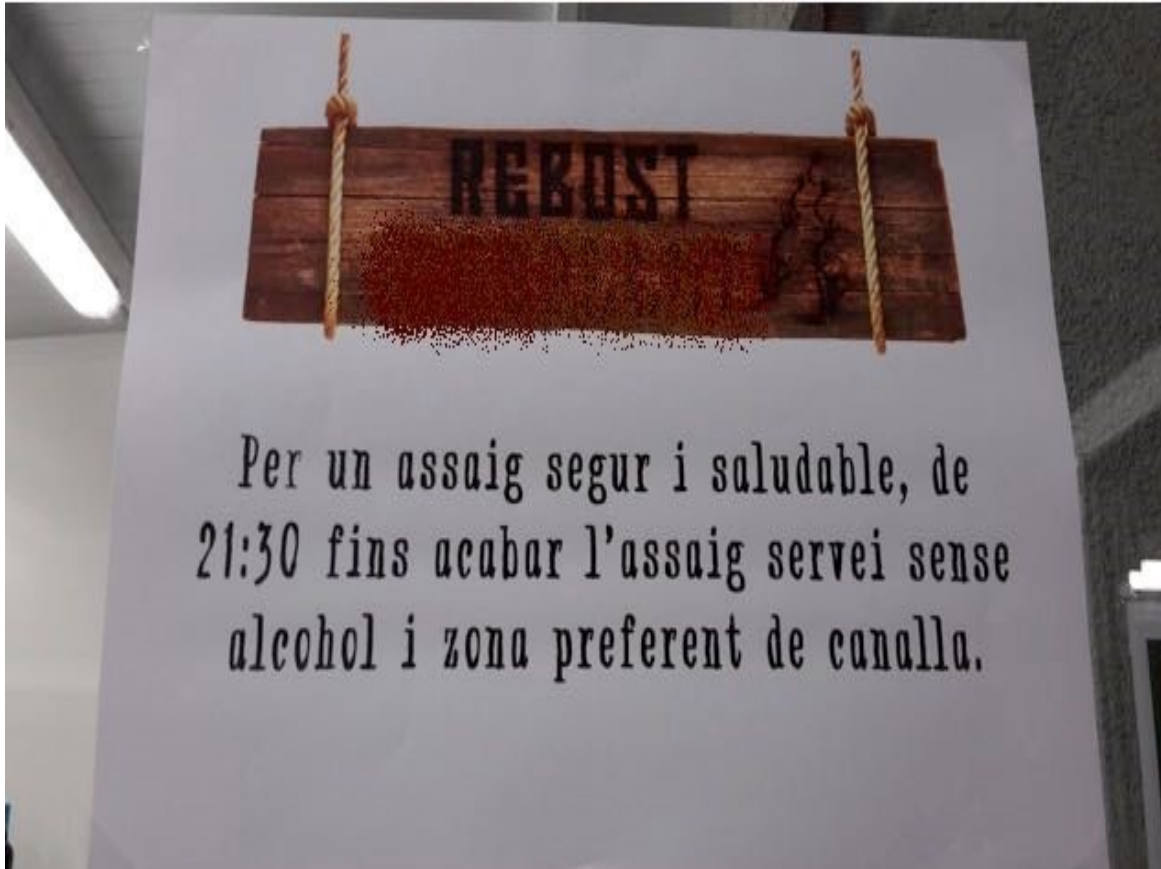
Figure 3.12: Vilatèxtil alcohol banner. Aida Ribot, 2016.

include more people, which have relied on alcoholic drinks. Although I do not have enough data to prove that this is in fact a new strategy, it is possible that new forms of beer drinking have emerged amongst new participants and that now teams need to regulate them. Also, the expansion of *castells* has implied covering more people under health insurance, which might have increased the price and margins that the CCCC pay to those private insurance. Financial and physical risk are probably behind this change of discourse.

The regulation of beer drinking also targeted the way castellers displayed their collective identity outside the *casteller* community. Whenever participants were wearing their *vestimenta*, they were representing the team and the *casteller* values, and this image had to be regulated in some cases. For example, one Friday night after the rehearsal in the Vilatèxtil team, participants engaged in a "*correbars*" - a pub crawl- around some of the downtown bars. The team was

participating in order to gather some money for the upcoming trip to Dublin, an international exhibition[48] that happened that year. In exchange, the pubs that agreed to collaborate with the team also received large amounts of people both inside and outside the facility, which helped increase the visibility of the pub. Right at the beginning of the *correbars*, some *castellers* from the board told us not to wear the official *casteller* uniform or representative clothing (like a sash). Since the activity was meant for the participants to drink around the town, the team did not want to be involved in any incident related to alcohol. The use of the uniform was regulated by the team members, especially the board, to ensure it provided the "right" image. Although alcohol seems part of the *casteller* practice, it also seems that there is no consensus about the degree or public display of it. The team did not officially support binge drinking of alcohol outside the facility (nor inside it) but facilitated the space for partying after the regular 'post-rehearsal' beer.

These examples showed an underlying tension with the relationship between the current *casteller* phenomenon and beer drinking. If *castells* were supposed to be understood as a recreational and folkloric activity, with only a weak focus on competition, then it made sense that moderate alcohol consumption was involved, just as it is in any celebration or festivity in Catalonia or in Spain, which does not involve drinking to excess. However, teams were reaching a certain level of complexity (being *colla de nou*), which implied more risks and competition as well as a constant need of human resources to maintain such status. Teams like Vilatèxtil urged a different understanding of the activity that associated it more with competition (and less with leisure) as one core aspect that is often found in (elite) sports. Within this new frame then, alcohol during casteller performance had to be at least regulated.

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[48]Some teams have lately accepted performing in international exhibitions hosted by the city council and other cultural entities.

3.5   Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I have attempted to show how participants embody the expression of "*fer pinya*" through different bodily practices at *castells*. Learning and using their bodies during tower building, in their clothing and in the beer-drinking were central elements in the development of membership in the community. These practices facilitated (despite intrinsic tensions) the interaction among participants in their diversity.

The *casteller* practices promoted the construction of an identity that valued bodies in their diversity and physicality, which promoted a sense of cohesion, inclusion, and solidarity. Even those who joined castells for motivations other than building tower or those who enjoyed the personal or individual challenge at first (like Sergio), acknowledged that the teams were now something like a family. These practices reinforce the idea that cooperation and collective effort is needed to overcome tensions, contradictions or uncomfortable situations. The practice of beer drinking provided an internal means to overcome tensions and contradictions found in tower building, but it also created new tensions that threatened the recent urge for competition amongst teams. Beer drinking was a ritualized practice that was learned, measured and only recently it became regulated. The popularity and expansion of *castells* redefined the recruiting tools of teams, which included offering alcoholic drinks. Although beer drinking as encouraged as part of a celebratory act, new forms of beer drinking seem to have emerged, and teams were starting to regulate its use. Drinking limit the performance of highly competitive teams and the regulation of this practice was thus framed within health and safety discourses, more commonly found in sporting activities.

The debate about the appropriateness of this practice evidences larger, underlying tensions about how the *casteller* community might be re-defining its roles today based on competition, for example. The collective identity that emerged from all of the bodily practices seemed accessible and affordable. The practices challenged and redefined readily available semiotic tools

used to identify class, gender or ethnic bodies: the body at *castells* was unrefined, rough and heterogeneous in its physical interaction and yet relatively neat and homogeneous in its public display.

Chapter 4

Linguistic Practices at *Castells:* constructing inclusive and egalitarian relations

4.1   Introduction

In the previous chapter I have shown how participants use different bodily practices involved in *castells* as accessible tools in order to empower individuals to construct a sense of belonging and collectivity from diversity. In particular, these tools provide opportunities to challenge social boundaries, stereotypes, and roles (in terms of personal space, body type, class, etc). Another fundamental strategy that many participants used in order to include themselves in this community was language, and in particular, the Catalan language. *Castells* is presented and regarded by both insiders and outsiders as a distinctively Catalan cultural practice (as opposed to Spanish, Valencian, or Aragonese, for instance). The historical, social, and cultural dimension within Catalonia has built this public recognition through time, with a specific association to traditional folklore, rural roots, and away from the interests of the Catalan national elites (see

Introduction and chapter 6).

One way of understanding and expressing Catalan identity has been through linguistic parameters (see *ius linguae* in Boix-Fuster and Sanz 2008), and studies have found that speakers who regularly use Catalan -including second language Catalan speakers- are generally considered Catalan members (Woolard 1989, 2016). Language and the cultural practice of *castells* merge in interesting ways, such as international advertisements for the Catalan language which use images of *castells* (see below). The first image belongs to an exhibition held at the University of Cambridge and sponsored by Omnium Cultural about the current state of the Catalan language. The exhibition demanded the Catalan language be given official status in the European Union. The poster's slogan emphasizes a high number of Catalan speakers who are also European and the image reinforces the association of the numbers of participants with the idea of collective building and cooperation. The second ad comes from a Catalan language program at UCLA and displays trunk members of a tower holding onto each other while an enxaneta is climbing. Although this chapter will not address the instrumentalization of *castells* (see chapter 6), the ads raise questions about why the Catalan language or Catalan language-related topics are being represented through *castells* and *casteller* images.

This chapter addresses the linguistic side of the *casteller* phenomenon. In particular, I examine the linguistic practices used during tower building and the linguistic ideologies of participants. The analysis shows the linguistic strategies used by participants in order to construct a sense of collectivity. These strategies reinforce or make visible the use of the Catalan language in situations or registers where the language has often been ideologically erased.[1] For example, Woolard found that Catalan language was still associated by Barcelona youth with elegance, refinement or weakness and not appropriate for "forceful and rough everyday uses" (2016: 226). In contrast, Castilian was deemed more appropriate for registers that involved coarseness, orders,

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[1] I borrow the use of 'erasure' from Irvine and Gal who defined this semiotic process as "render[ing] some people or activities (or sociolinguistic phenomena) as invisible. Facts that are inconsistent with the ideological scheme either go unnoticed or get explained away" (2000:38).

Figure 4.1: Poster for ELEN 2019

directness or harshness (ibid: 226-7, see also Pujolar 1997, 2001 for similar accounts). In contrast, the linguistic strategies used at *castells* show an alternative way of including and engaging diverse participants that, despite accepting a temporary hierarchical organization, often challenges established centers of power and social relations.

An increasing number of non-Catalan born participants have joined this activity in the last decade and this also raises questions about the motivations of participants who may not identify ethnolinguistically as Catalan, their relation to the Catalan language, and why they chose *castells*. One of the most straightforward responses I got from a Catalan second language speaker (L2) when I asked about the motivations to join the team was "*per què vull aprendre català*" -because I want to learn Catalan- and this response was repeated across participants. Although L2 Catalan speakers make up a minority in both teams, their social and linguistic insights about their experience at *castells* provide an especially interesting view of the way these individuals negotiate their social and linguistic identities in a new context. The metapragmatic comments on Catalan

Figure 4.2: Catalan language program poster (UCLA)

language from L1 Catalan speakers also show the language (and linguistic) ideologies present at *castells* and how ideologies are mobilized to negotiate notions of community membership.

Given the close tie between learning and using Catalan and participating in *castells,* the literature on language socialization helps explain how participants negotiate their *casteller* identities (roles, positions, power relations, etc) as it entails "socialization through the use of language and [the] socialization to use language" (Schieffelin and Ochs 1986: 163). Unlike the study of language acquisition, language socialization adds that learning a language is largely a social and cultural process through which the individual becomes a member of a community. The *casteller* teams present an interesting ethnographic case because we can examine how in a dominantly Catalan context (see chapter 2 and appendix B for language and social statistics) participants of diverse ethnolinguistic background learn to "become (. . .) competent member[s]

of society (...) through language, by acquiring knowledge of its functions, social distribution, and interpretations in and across socially defined situations" (Schieffelin and Ochs 1986: 168). Language socialization also examines the agency of children or novices to create (not just reproduce) meanings that underlie social relations (Ochs and Schieffelin 2011: 2).

One of the results of language socialization is the construction of new identities, which are performed through language use (Bucholtz and Hall 2005, Lee and Bucholtz 2015). However, languages do not provide an automatic identity to whoever uses them. Instead, the construction of identities is a process in which linguistic markers (languages, variations, accents, etc.) are ideologically differentiated[2] by the speakers to index (or point to) different social personae (Silverstein 1996, 2003; Irvine and Gal 2000, Irvine 2001, Eckert 2008). Some of these processes go beyond pointing to actually iconizing the relation between the linguistic variable and its speakers "as if a linguistic feature somehow depicted or displayed a social's group inherent nature or essence" (Irvine and Gal 2000: 37). Thus, learners also take up the ideological representations of this semiotic process "to enact specific social roles and identities" (bucholtz and lee, Ochs 1993). Although the focus of language socialization literature is usually *child* language socialization and first language, recent studies have expanded to the role of novices of all ages as well as second language socialization both in educational and other settings (Pujolar 2007, O'Rourke, Pujolar and Ramallo 2015, Duff 2011, Duff and Talmy 2011, Bayley and Schecter 2003, Cook 2008, Roberts 2010). My work adds to this literature by showing how adult participants of various ages and ethnolinguistic backgrounds socialize into *casteller* practice through strategies that both undermine novice-expert power relations and reinforce cooperation.

Another field of inquiry that is useful to understand the role of language in today's *castells* is language ideology. The field of linguistic (or language) ideology has provided the tools to understand the way speakers produce, contest and mobilize ideas about language and ideas about

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[2] Linguistic differentiation as presented by Irvine and Gal refers specifically to "the ideas with which participants and observers frame their understanding of linguistic varieties and map those understandings onto people, events, and activities that are significant to them" (2000: 35).

its speakers. In particular, language ideology analyzes the "representations, whether explicit or implicit, that construe the intersection of language and human beings in a social world" (Woolard 1989: 3). Studies on language ideology in Catalonia have shed light to the power of the Catalan language as a semiotic tool in the construction of ethnolinguistic identities, and particularly how ideologies change with context, such at the return of democratic institutions in Catalonia and Spain (Woolard 1989, Crameri 2008, Pujolar 1997, Pujolar i Gonzalez 2013, Woolard 2016, Frekko 2009).

A great deal of studies about language ideologies in Catalonia have focused on youth speakers and on classroom settings (Woolard 1989, 2016, Boix-Fuster 1993, Bretxa i Vila i Moreno 2012, 2014). In these studies, the school is usually the main context of reference through which speakers of both Catalan and Castilian build their relationships. Educational institutions like schools or universities have provided interesting case studies to examine the use of language and the role of language in negotiating power relations, social identities or forms of legitimacy. In contrast, other less institutionalized settings have also been examined in the last decade of scholarly research on the Catalan language (Bastardas 2007, Sabate Dalmau 2013, Garrido 2013, Pujolar 1995). In these studies, the focus has usually been on the (international) immigrant population and L2 Catalan speakers and the challenges they face in socializing as members of the Catalan community, often amidst a context of legal and social vulnerability (Codó and Garrido 2010). Lastly, studies on bilingualism in national minorities have examined the speakers' linguistic changes called '*mudes*' in different life events, like starting a family or changing jobs and the effects of such changes in their social identities (Pujolar and Puigdevall 2015, Ortega, Urla, Amorrortu, Goirigolzarri, Uranga 2015, O'Rourke and Walsh 2015).

Based on the research on ideologies and research on Catalan and Castilian language use patterns, I assumed I would hear more Castilian in specific situations and contexts during *casteller* practice. This assumption came from studies on bilingualism and language politics in Catalonia that had explored how speakers in the Barcelona metropolitan area used both Catalan

140

and Castilian depending on the addressee, the context or the activity and based on attitudes towards the use of each language (Woolard 1989, 2016, Bastardas 2012, Boix-Fuster 1993, 2009). Without knowing much about the actual linguistic practices of *casteller* participants, I assumed I would find participants using (more) Castilian during rehearsals (due to the more intimate setting), amongst peers (with the lack of power differences), and when shouting or giving orders (for its perlocutionary force in persuading, convincing, scaring, etc). In turn, I assumed speakers would use more Catalan during public exhibitions and with the audience (public display of *casteller* identity and role), as exhibitions are understood by participants as their "moment of glory" to present all their work to others. Also, because the *casteller* community was portraying its activity as welcoming to "new immigrants", I expected I would encounter more code-switching between Catalan and Spanish with non-native Catalan speakers (especially those who used Castilian as their first language). However, what I found was an activity that promoted the use of Catalan in a variety of situations that had traditionally been (linguistically and ideologically) restricted to Castilian.

In a multilingual context where two or more languages are in contact like in Catalonia, the perspective of language socialization together with language ideology can help us understand how participants become recognized members of the community in unexpected ways. It is through an analysis of the problems that participants face in the socialization process and the underlying linguistic ideologies that often inform language use that we can see how the negotiation and performance of identity takes place. The focus of this chapter is thus on language and on the specific strategies for using it that are distinctive and uniquely characteristic of the *casteller* activity. These strategies create a cooperative, inclusive, and egalitarian effect on participants.

4.2 The language in *castells*: tower building

The great majority of *casteller* participants used Catalan in their exchanges while building towers both in rehearsals and in public exhibitions (see charts in chapter 2 and in appendix B). Joining *castells* for the first time can be an overwhelming experience, regardless of language, because there are lots of vocabulary and expressions to learn from day one *necessary* to function correctly within the tower and the team. Among these are technical concepts in addition to names of other participants. However, language plays a central role not only because it is the tool used to learn the terms of art of *castells*, but because it is through language that participants learn the roles and (linguistic, social) values at *castells* in order to negotiate their identities.

Most of the *casteller* vocabulary is in Catalan only, although the language used to explain them varies depending on the needs of the newcomer and their teacher. Learning to use Catalan *casteller*-related words and expressions is fundamental to participation in tower-building. Even L2 Catalan speakers, who sometimes spoke Castilian or other languages at *castells*, used Catalan for most of the *casteller* terms. Based on my analysis of fieldnotes, what distinguishes words that remain (almost) exclusively in Catalan are their unique use in *castells* (like *enxaneta* - child crowner- or *folre* -second cast). As Sergio, a Castilian-speaking participant from Extremadura commented "**son términos nuevos, no busco la traducción**" -they are new terms, I don't look for a translation. This may suggest that *casteller* vocabulary is often taken as 'terms of art', not necessarily as 'Catalan', and that participants have to learn those in order to become *casteller* members but not necessarily members of the Catalan community. However, terms that could easily be used in other domains or had an easy translation in Castilian (like *baixos* -first level, for **bajo**) were sometimes translated into Castilian.

Both the Vilatèxtil and Mediterrani teams had ways to introduce the practice to *novatos* -novices or newbies- through more or less defined *grups d'acollida*[3] -receiving groups. A

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[3] The Catalan dictionary differentiates the terms "benvinguda" -welcoming- from "acollida" . The former is defined as a "congratulació" 'greeting/congratulation' whereas the latter is defined as "rebre" -receiving/welcoming- someone or "admetre a casa nostra, en la nostra companyia" -to accept to our home, in our company (IEC2).

participant from Vilatèxtil, Rafael, commented during an interview that one of the most gratifying and surprising experiences ("*no m'ho esperava en absolut"* - I did not expect it at all*)* on his very first day was the fact that he was immediately integrated into the team instead of "*anar voltant*" -walking around the *pinya*- or sitting and waiting for someone. Rafael's retelling used different codes to contrast roles. He contrasted his experience to what he imagined would be joining the local soccer team in which the new person just sits and waits for someone to come and talk to them: *(…) jo m'esperava doncs (…) com "jo vull jugar a futbol a l'equip del poble"* -'**pues siéntate ahí y ya hablará contigo quien sea**'[4] - *No. Va ser arribar i* "**deja tus cosas, que vas con Ismael**…*va ser immediat (…) Va venir l'Ismael i em va agafar per banda I em va dir* "**ponte aquí!**" -I was expecting then (…) like 'I want to play soccer at the town's team' - 'then sit down there and later somebody will talk to you'. No. It was arriving and 'leave your stuff because you're going with Ismael…it was immediate (…) Ismael came and grabbed ahold of me and said to me 'stand here.' " In his representation, Rafael re-imagined and represented the interaction using both Catalan and Castilian. Rafael's code-switching to distinguish speakers aligns with one of the functions noted in Gumperz's taxonomy of discourse strategies (1982); however, the switch in this representation may not necessarily correspond to the original language(s) actually used. Instead, the language contrast may serve to contextualize and distinguish actors. As Bailey noted, "speakers' juxtaposition of codes with divergent social associations within single speech exchanges (…) highlights speakers' creative powers to negotiate linguistic and social boundaries" (2000: 243). The fact that Rafael attributed Ismael's phrase in Castilian ("**ponte aquí**") may have affected the way he retold to me how he had imagined that conversation would go.. Ismael (58) was one of the few senior members of the Vilatèxtil team who regularly spoke Castilian to participants. The interesting take in this anecdote for Rafael, however, was the fact that Rafael immediately contributed to the rehearsal and the team with his participation in tower building.

The focus here is not so much on language choice or language policy in *castells*, as has

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[4] in voicing the response of this expected exchange, he uses a CS with Andalusian accent.

been studied previously in sociolinguistic studies in Catalonia. The focus of this chapter is rather on *how* participants used (and learned to use) the language(s) and communicative resources at hand to achieve not only a communicative competence (Hymes 1972) but also to negotiate their social relations and their sense of belonging to the team (identities, membership, etc). In Austin's theoretical frame, he used the concept of performatives to explain that utterances were not merely descriptive or used to report information, but created an action: "to utter the sentence (in, of course, the appropriate circumstances) is not to *describe* my doing of what I should be said in so uttering to be doing or to state that I am doing it: it is to do it" (1962: 6). The kind of linguistic practices used in tower building emphasize the performative aspect of language in the form of directive speech acts, that is, those acts aimed at making the addressee take or perform some action. As Ervin-Tripp noted (1976), the message that directives convey can be more or less obvious depending on the setting, on power relations between the speaker and addressee, and on the actual form of the directive (Ervin-Tripp 1976: 29). Although directives can be found in very diverse linguistic forms[5] (ibid), the majority of directives used during tower building at the *pinya* level and amongst tower participants took the form of imperatives,[6] many of them in the elliptical variant.[7] Imperatives are one of the most obvious kind of directives because they convey most of the information within minimal structures (often not an explicit subject or nor even a verb is used, for instance) that participants are expected to understand. For example, drawing from the classic example of 'pass the salt' in the context of a meal, if someone in the interaction merely says 'salt', the expected interpretation is that this means 'pass the salt', (usually) to the speaker, and that anyone can fulfill the request. In the section that follows, I will show other forms of directives to instruct participants in *castells*.

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[5] like interrogatives, statements, hints, etc.

[6] Imperatives usually have the verb as the (only) part of the utterance that contains the most information for the addressee to act: e.g. "Go", "Give me the pen"

[7] Elliptical imperatives are a type of directive used when "the necessary action is obvious" and thus "only new information -the direct or indirect object" is given (1976:30).

4.3 Linguistic practices in the *pinya* and amongst similar-role participants

4.3.1 Learning to speak up

In this section I am going to show how participants who performed in *pinya* positions and those who performed in similar roles or level in the trunk communicated while building towers. During my first day of fieldwork at Vilatèxtil, Pep, a senior participant, took me aside to teach me how I should put my arms, my body and how to interpret the directions *"(més) pit"* literally '(more) chest'*, "mans"* -hands- or "*caps avall*" -heads down, for example. Most of these words and expressions are basic technical words used in the *pinya* and knowing them is a must for every *novato* -novice/newbie- who always starts at the *pinya* positions. When someone says "*(més) pit*", he or she is requesting the person behind to -give a push- with their chest, so that the requester receives a force from behind that he or she can use to push the person in front. Usually, when someone requests this extra push, it is because he or she feels being pushed back.

As you may remember from chapter 3, the *pinya* or base needs to support the people in the first levels of the tower especially in counteracting the centrifugal force that comes from the weight of upper levels and that would collapse the bottom levels if not counteracted. Participants who request "*més pit*" never use the entire phrase "dóna('m) (més) pit" -give (me) (more of) a push- when building the tower[8]. The example of '*caps avall*' -heads down- shows very clearly the importance of knowing the expressions in *castells* for safety reasons. In this case, participants who are able to see the pinya and the tower from the outside are usually the ones who may shout it. This happens when they see people in the *pinya* lifting their heads up to see how the tower is being built.

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[8] This was the slogan that the Vilatèxtil used onat the back of its t-shirts in 2016. Below the slogan, a pair of white hands were drawn to indicate that this command meant pushing with the hands on the back of that person's t-shirt. The difference between the expression that uses the word 'chest' and the image that shows a pair of hand indicates the symbolic meaning of the expression. That is, "donar pit" not only means pushing with a chest whenever you're in a tower but also helping another person (by pushing with hands, for example).

The importance of learning to interpret and learning to use directives from the first day suggests a different way of managing power differentials in tower building. In addition to the perlocutionary effect (Austin 1962) of an addressee performing the requested act, directives are known to have other social effects such as indicating or contesting established power relations amongst participants themselves (see Goodwin 1980). Learning to use imperatives (even from the very beginning) was an opportunity for new participants to perform as members of the team. During that very first day of rehearsal, Pep told me that under no circumstances should I look up at the tower because it was very dangerous in the case that the tower collapsed. He taught me how to position my arms and my head so that I could provide protection to the person in front of me and the person behind me could do the same. Learning to interpret these directives was key to safely participating in tower building. What is most interesting about this first interaction in Vilatèxtil is that Pep told me explicitly that I had to "*demanar pit*" - ask for a push- whenever I felt I would move backwards because of the force of the tower weight[9]. Speaking up was expected whenever it was necessary for the safety of the tower or yourself, regardless of role. The power to call to protect the safety of the team was explicitly taught to all novices in the *pinya* on the very first day of participation. However, in other positions at the tower, explicit teachings about how and what to communicate were not made as consistently.[10]

Given the seeming power differentials between new and seasoned participants and the explicitness of the directives, there was potential for power imbalance. However, the fact that novices had to use the same directives undermined any possible power difference. Bald on record directives or elliptical imperatives like the ones used during tower building and the *pinya* unambiguously state the request, usually without minimizing the "threat" of imposition[11] (Brown and Levinson 1987).[12] However, the participants used strategies to mitigate power differentials.

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[9] At no point did he tell me that I could call out people who were looking up.

[10] I witnessed explicit instructions to fairly new members who were selected to practice different tower positions but these instructions never involved guidance about what to say or encouraged them to say it.

[11] Minimizing the imposition can be done by adding 'please' or the auxiliary 'do' in English, for example (Ervin-Tripp 1976)

[12] Only in some instances, I noted how participants asked for silence during rehearsals by using 'please': "silenci,

The fact that participants made requests using the objects (*pit*, *mans*, etc) instead of the verbs supports the 'situation-centered model' that Ervin-Tripp, Strage, Lampert, Bell (1987) discussed in their study. In their approach, they argued that the context of the activity was needed (rather than the speaker's intentions) in order for the hearer to interpret and cooperate with the requests. Although the study focused on children and second language learners, it highlighted the fact that often just the object is enough in well coordinated activities (Ervin-Tripp, Strage, Lampert, Bell 1987).

The use of bald on record or imperatives (both grammatical and elliptical) are communicative tools that have the potential to disrupt power dynamics during tower building and threaten the negative face of the hearer. The concept of 'negative' or 'positive face' comes from Goffman's concept of 'face': the "positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact. Face is an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes -albeit an image that others share (…)" (1967: 5), and thus a "social face" (10) that participants in any interaction usually try to maintain by acting consistently.[13] Using an interactional approach highlights the fact that any interaction is a potential threat to someone's positive[14] or negative face (Scollon and Scollon 1981: 171), what Brown and Levinson actually called Face Threatening Acts -FTAs- (1987). Bald on record directives or imperatives seemingly impose and threaten the interlocutor's 'negative face' or their "basic claim to territories, personal preserves, right to non-distraction, i.e. to freedom of action and freedom from imposition" (66). Imperatives are considered "brusque" (Brown and Levinson 1987: 95) and threaten the addressee's negative face[15], but this type of directives is used in certain situations when there is no intention to save or minimize someone's face like in a situation of urgency, in (metaphorical) entreaties like 'pardon me' (ibid: 96), instruction, in tasks or to overcome noise/distance in a

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si us plau' -silence, please, shouted the head of an invited team during a joint rehearsal.

[13] 'Face' is socially constructed rather than an individual inherited aspect: "it is only on loan to him from the society; it will be withdrawn unless he conducts himself in a way that is worthy of it" (Goffman 1967: 10)

[14] the positive consistent self- image or 'personality' (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants" (Brown and Levinson 1987: p66)

[15] See all the different strategies for directives used in everyday communication in Ervin-Tripp 1976.

setting (ibid: 96-7).

Some studies found that bald on record directives were more common in those settings where there was a recognized (even if by one party only) rank difference, that is, in superior-subordinate relationship like those in office or instructional settings, surgical teams, etc. (see Ervin-Tripp 1976, Pufahl Bax 1986). People who hold positions of power or authority more often use these forms towards their subordinated peers, often without reciprocity, which is what we first see reflected in the use of directives with new members of the castelle team. Rafael remembered how Ignasi, the person introducing him to the *pinya* during his first day, instructed him how to position himself in the *pinya*: "**pon las manos así,** (. . .) **a[ho]ra aguanta**" -put your hands like this, (. . .) now hold on. Nonetheless, this was not problematic for participants. Sergio, the Extremadurian participant in the Mediterrani team, explained that at the beginning he felt supported and scaffolded in his learning process by being at the *pinya*: **"tu empiezas y todo el mundo te ayuda y te van explicando lo que tienes que hacer. Y te ponen en una posición atrás, que tú estás a gusto porque no tienes una responsabilidad grande y te sientes cómodo".** -'you start and everybody help you and explain to you what you need to do. And they put you in a position at the back, where you are comfortable because you don't have a great responsibility and you feel at ease'. Sergio's point also acknowledged the fact that his kind of explicit instruction was common at the beginning of participation in *castells*, when participants do not have much responsibilities. Starting in *pinya* positions was key for him "**para que vayas poco a poco cogiendo confianza**" - so that you can start gaining confidence- and to advance ('**avanzar**') to other positions that required more skills.

In addition to the imposition of bald-on-record imperatives associated with the power dynamics between new and regular *castellers*, bald on record directives have also been traditionally associated with solidarity strategies of politeness[16] (Scollon and Scollon 1981). In this sense, speakers assume a shared knowledge, and a relationship of solidarity and intimacy typical of

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[16] "Solidarity politeness tend to be short-lived, rapidly escalating systems in which the shared goals, interests, and attributes of members are emphasized" (Scollon and Scollon 1981)

positive politeness strategies (Scollon and Scollon 1981, Brown and Gilman 1960, Holmes 1992) that will not be disrupted by the FTA. These kind of speech acts are common among people who have an intimate relationship to one another (close friends, family members, etc) or in this case, team members working together.

Members of any community learn interaction rituals (Goffman 1967) from different semiotic resources to display their relationship with the community and its members. Although there are no ethnographic studies on the use of directives in social interaction in Catalan from an anthropological perspective, the fact that Pep and others felt the need to explicitly tell novices to use (elliptical) imperatives to demand support shows: 1) that there is an underlying assumption or recognition (by instructors) that unmitigated imperatives are culturally odd, not common or well regarded in everyday interactions amongst people who do not not know each other yet or amongst people who have a different socially valued status; 2) that there is a distinction related to the novice status (as opposed to a full participant), since this kind of instruction was not found explicitly in other, more experienced positions; 3) that it encourages novices to undermine the boundaries between different socially valued roles (including the novice-full participant status) through a specific communicative practice that challenges everyday uses.

During my first weeks at the Vilatèxtil team, I quickly learned the necessity of demanding an extra push (*pit*). However, the process was supported and scaffolded by other members in the row, just as Sergio commented about being in the *pinya*. When someone in front of me demanded a push, this person was talking directly to me and it meant that I had to react and push him with all my strength. At that moment, I repeated that very same call because my support to him left me unsupported. Participants usually repeated the call for an extra push one at a time[17] until the call reached the last person in the row. This way of demanding support formed a sort of a communicative "chain" of giving and receiving support in the form of a push. The fact that someone started first, that I had to repeat the call, and that I was told to speak up was an easy way

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[17] If the first call was very loud and people sensed more urgency, often repetition was not always needed since everybody at once reacted.

149

to challenge my own hesitancy towards commanding someone I did not know yet. It forced me, as a novice, to be an active participant modeled by others around me. This was a way of taking responsibility for others, too: "*tu tens el teu paper i és important perquè si deixes de fer força, qui tens davant pateix com mai a sa vida*" -you have your role and this is important because if you stop pushing, whoever is in front of you will suffer like never before-, stated Rafael in reference to *pinya* positions.

Some of the literature in LS focuses on how socialization often involves a lot of routines and repetition to facilitate agency from novices: "routines allow more competent members to adjust over time the scaffolding they provide for novices, who may assume increasingly active and self-regulating roles as they develop familiarity and facility with different aspects of the routine" (Moore 2011: 211, see also Kulick and Schieffelin 2004, Schieffelin and Ochs 1996, Peters and Boggs 1986). Repetition certainly scaffolded and encouraged the novice's capacity and autonomy to start the command when necessary. I sometimes led a call myself even after little time on the team, especially when I was one of the first people in the row (and thus received more outward force from the tower). Being closer to the core of the tower (instead of in the outer rows) seemed to give the participant more authority and responsibility for making the first call for help. because those participants were the first to notice when they were being slowly expelled from the tower forces/weight.

During my observations I noticed how the linguistic practices commented above were common in both Vilatèxtil and Mediterrani teams. These practices support the idea that the possible asymmetry of power and authority between recognized experts (or full participants) and novices at *castells* is expected to be undermined (by encouraging bald on record requests), even for participants without roles of high responsibility, as Sergio explained. The example also suggests that the seeming asymmetry of power does not necessarily come from the boundary between expert-novice but may come from the value of the different positions in the actual *pinya*/tower. These positions do not necessarily align with the expertise and novelty of participants.

4.3.2 Mediating communication

Participants who are inside the tower or in the *pinya* need to be learn how to mediate communication, too. In very sporadic occasions when there were not enough participants both in Vilatèxtil and Mediterrani teams, I performed during rehearsals and commercial exhibitions as an *agulla*[18] -needle- or *primer o segon lateral*[19] -first or second lateral. In these rare occasions, I had the chance to experience the linguistic practices used in these very internal positions.[20] In those rehearsals, I noticed that participants performing in the tower and participants who were in *pinya* positions but very close to the tower used directives most of the times. When the tower is being constructed, *pinya* participants are the ones who usually hold the (physical and emotional) pressure the longest as they are the first to be placed and the last to be dismantled. I perceived an increased tension in those positions among participants in the form of silence (they were clenching their jaws) and in the form of urgent elliptical imperatives when needed.

One evening, as I was performing as *agulla*, the three *baixos* surrounding me had to make sure, as usual, that the weight they received was balanced and in the right place. In one instance, a *baix* -someone in the first level- attempted to communicate with the person on top of him: the person on top had a shaky foot placed too far from his neck and touching the shoulder bone, thus putting an extra (and painful) pressure on his right arm that made it very hard for him to properly hold the other *baix*'s arm. This situation was dangerous not only for him (he could be injured) but for the entire tower as it risked collapsing. This *baix* suddenly said in a quiet but steady voice "*peu dret*" -right foot. Without explicitly saying it, the command would have been interpreted

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[18] In this position, I was placed on the floor level at the very center of an empty space inside the tower, surrounded by the three baixos forming a circle around me. I had to raise my arms in the air while holding my head down in between them. The agulla serves as another safety position in case the tower collapses and a participant from the tower falls through the inside of the tower. The position is also helpful to support someone on the second level in the event he or she leans forward.

[19] First lateral requires certain height and strength as you are the first person holding someone directly from the tower. Second or third laterals are right behind one another pushing and enduring the strength towards the first lateral so that all the forces go to hold the person in the tower.

[20] The positions that I regularly held during my ethnographic research were at the middle, and outer parts of the pinya.

as a request to the person on top to move the right foot closer to his neck. This *baix* seemed in distress (face tension, contained breathing). The use of bald on record (elliptical) imperatives in a situation of urgency is very common (Levinson and Brown 1987:96). However, it appears that the person did not hear the demand as there was some noise from outside the tower[21]. In seeing that there was no response from the person on top of this *baix*, another *baix* facing the one who had just shouted it first, slightly altered in a louder voice: "*X, peu dret*!". This particular repetition can be analyzed in conversation analysis as a form of repair initiated by a person other than the first speaker (Sacks, Schegloff, Jefferson1974). Repairs are "practices for dealing with problems or troubles in speaking, hearing, and understanding the talk-in conversation (and in other forms of talk-in interaction, for that matter)" (Schegloff 2000: 207). Schegloff, Sacks, and Jefferson acknowledge that although correction is generally avoided, (1977) in learning contexts where there are "not-yet-competent" members, other-correction (that is, corrections made by someone different from the first speaker in a conversation) is "one vehicle for socialization (. . .) for dealing with those who are still learning or being taught to operate with a system which requires, for its routine operation, that they be adequate self-monitors and self-correctors as a condition of competence" (Schegloff, Sacks, Jefferson 1977: 381). In this case, the second *baix* stepped into the conversation, perhaps because he felt experienced enough[22] or privileged to repeat that command or because the situation was urgent enough. The person who was standing on the shoulders of the first *baix* could finally hear and understand the urgency of what was being requested to him and in a very shaky and rapid move, he re-positioned his right foot. The fact that the third person in the interaction added a personalization in the repetition and that he shouted notably suggests that this was what he recognized as the problem of the communication: not hearing well because of the noise and not personalizing the demand, as none of the second-level participants responded with the first initiation.

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[21] people who are not in the pinya or are in the outer part of it usually chat while performing.

[22] I am unaware of the years that each *baix* had spent in the team and the experience they had at the time of this ethnographic example.

I have also witnessed situations where personalization was not needed, where the first directive was heard and responded to. In the example above, however, the second *baix* felt responsible for mediating in that interaction since he had the addressee in front of him, despite the height difference. This suggests that communication can happen across *casteller* levels and roles. It is likely that the first interaction failed[23] because the *baix* did not shout loudly enough and/or because he the addressee did not recognize the command as directed to him. Because this event happened early in the season, it is likely that at least one of the participants was not very experienced and that others (the third *baix*, in this case) helped to mediate upon seeing the physical distress and lack of response. This interaction happened in seconds and showed that some participants felt entitled to step in to repair the communication between participants in the tower. Although this repair could be interpreted as a challenge to egalitarian relationships, the third person showed that it was necessary to mediate whenever there was a problem. The mediation showed solidarity and responsibility for others in a moment of distress.

These examples contrast with a different personal experience during the first weeks in the Mediterrani team when there was a practice of *folre* (second cast). The Technical Group already knew I came from another team and they tried me in a position of responsibility that implied having someone on my shoulders. This was that I had an adult standing still on my shoulders. The person who was standing did not place his foot close to my neck but at the end of the clavicle. This is a very painful position for any person receiving the weight and a dangerous misalignment because the foot can easily slip down the arm, which will make the tower collapse. I had heard many times before during fieldwork (like in the previous example in Vilatèxtil) other participants complaining about misalignments on their shoulders in the form of imperatives, but I had never experienced one myself. The participants I had heard were all people performing in positions of higher responsibility that needed to endure a lot of physical tension/weight, and these were usually more experienced participants. I had also observed many times that people who had

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[23] Understood as the lack of response to the request either verbally or bodily, as the addressee did not react.

participants standing on top of their shoulders kept in silence the tension and pain while holding on for some minutes: they usually had a grimace of pain, with their jaws clenching and fixed looks to the front for focus.

When I came across a situation of pain like the one in Mediterrani, I chose the strategy of keeping silent and holding onto the pain. This choice evidenced that I did not dare to speak up because, in part, I did not recognize myself experienced enough to perform in that position, which required knowing how feet had to be placed, or knowing when it was ok (and expected) to speak up and when it was not. At no point did someone inform me that I had to command the person on top or that I had to make sure the weight was well balanced before there was too much weight on the tower. This also suggests that members of the team assumed I already knew how to behave in the tower and how to communicate. In a way, they were probably considering me (closer to) a full participant or at least not a very new one. However, despite having spent some months practicing *castells*, the fact that I was new to the team (I did not know the participants yet) and that I was performing in a totally different position made me react as a novice, probably because I still identified like one. My choice to remain silent also evidenced that I did not recognize the person on top of my shoulders as a potential novice too, who did not know very well how to position himself. Transitioning or shifting the status from novice to expert (or full participant in this case) is an interesting point worth examining because it highlights contradicting assumptions and expectations from the two roles.

Upon my face of pain and almost tears, another participant who was helping me counteract the tension[24] started telling me "*aguanta*" -hold on- and "*ja està*" -it's over- so that I would not falter and collapse. This person did not mediate in the interaction like in the example above just because I did not start it. He could not see the misplacement either. Although I did not have enough information at the time about who he was, he could have been someone relatively new to the team, too. This means that I also have to acknowledge the possibility that this person did not

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[24] by pushing and tightening his arm against mine.

feel entitled to shout out to the person on top of me because of his novice status. This person did not mediate verbally but cooperated bodily by pushing against me to relieve my pain. After that incident, I started observing how the feet were placed on shoulders of participants and realized that when these were not on the right place, participants complained and shouted out to the person to change it. I realized that my incompetence in not knowing when to speak up and whether or not doing that was appropriate led me to believe that all pain had to be silenced and endured. In other instances after this event, I made sure I was as comfortable as possible with the pressure and the weight I was receiving and I communicated with the person on top as well as helped others communicate. This last example shows that expectations were not always met, especially when there was no explicit guidance to a different role other than the regular *pinya* positions. Participants at *castells* had to learn to be responsible for themselves first in many cases, which meant recognizing and learning those postures, pressures, and pains that were (and were not) accepted in tower building.

As with the people in the *pinya*, bald-on-record directives were the norm amongst participants in the tower, mostly in the form of elliptical and grammatical imperatives. In the tower, although participants interact initially with the person on top of them, whenever this fails, others usually stepped in and mediated as much as possible in the interaction. Learning to communicate in the *pinya* or in the tower is a collaborative process (Rogoff 1990) that entails developing expertise or competence not only from the most expert/full participants who can instruct, but from potential novices who are also learning. The linguistic practices used among participants in the *pinya/*tower supports the classic perspective on the function of bald on record directives because the "S [speaker] wants to do the FTA with maximum efficiency more than he wants to satisfy H's [hearer's] face" (Brown and Levinson 1987: 95). The *casteller* use of bald on record imperatives between peers seems to assume that this kind of speech act will not jeopardize the participants' social relations because it is performed within the right context. The requests did not

155

try to soften the 'threat' in order to save the addressee's negative face by adding other words[25]. On the contrary, it was expected (and taught) that new participants had to accommodate to the communicative strategies of full participants as quick as possible. In the case where participants rallied other fellow *castellers* in general, some 'we' forms were used (*"aguantem!"* -let's hold on!*, "som'hi!"* -let's go!), but these were not very common unless there was a specially challenging exhibition. The fact that first time participants were taught and encouraged to interpret and use bald-on-record directives while in the *pinya* suggests that they had to share the collective responsibility no matter their experience, age, gender or status in the team, even if that responsibility was minimal at the beginning compared to positions that required more training. Anyone was expected to use imperatives in the most direct way with all kinds of participants (*novatos*, men, women, seniors, etc) despite not knowing them or having a close relationship with them. This suggests an expected reciprocal or symmetric use of bald-on-record that is not common is similar learning contexts in society (office, surgical, military, educational, etc), especially in situations of emergency. Although one of the examples shows that the learning process is not perfect and that novices may often hesitate, the use of unmitigated directives from below as well as from above shows a tendency to build a more egalitarian relationship amongst participants through language. The linguistic practices work to blur and challenge the boundaries (class, gender, seniority, etc) typically found in society that usually exploit hierarchical differences.

4.4 Linguistic practices amidst power differences

Both teams analyzed had a hierarchical organization, which meant that some participants held positions of recognized power and value different from others. However, some of the linguistic practices that the head of the team, assistants or technical members of the team used while building towers did not exploit power differences. For example, when building a tower, the

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[25] Words like 'si us plau' -please- or forms that use modals like 'podries. . .' -could you. . .' among many others are typical in Catalan for softening the negative face that is being 'threatened' by a request.

cap de colla -head of the team- is usually the person who structures and regulates the pace of the construction by giving directions to each of the levels that need to be built. Assistants can also help with this role whenever the *cap de colla* is also performing in the tower or whenever they split the responsibilities sporadically. In both teams, I witnessed a cooperative relation between the head (or assistant head) of the team with the participants who were in the process of building towers. In the following example, I show how participants holding positions of power within the team's organization showed a sense of cooperation in the process of decision making.

During one regular Vilatèxtil rehearsal, once the base of the tower was formed by the three participants who were at the floor level, a male assistant who had been a *cap de colla* called: "*terços*" -thirds! At that moment, three more people from the crowd that were standing outside the *pinya* suddenly started climbing the people in the *pinya* until they were able to walk through theirs shoulders. Once they reached the center of the *pinya*, they placed themselves on top of the three people standing on the floor, thus forming another level. The assistant asked a couple of participants how they felt in order to determine whether to continue or not. He did not utter any full sentence nor order them to tell about it. Instead, the assistant stopped the construction ('vale' -ok) and called their names assuming they knew what was being asked, which was a self-assessment from them so that the assistant could continue directing the tower. From the floor, the assistant asked them: "Vale. *Xavi?*" (Ok. Xavi?), Xavi nodded silently. "*Damià?*" —"*Bé-bé*"(good—good), responded Damià while nodding to the assistant. The assistant then called the next level "*Vinga. Quarts*" - Come on. Fourths-, and a different set of participants, who were already standing on top of *pinya* fellows, started climbing the third level. This scene was repeated for the next level that had to be rehearsed in that tower: *quints -fifths*. Assistant's questions to participants in the trunk operated as a sort of request for permission to continue building the tower. Had they responded with "no" or a head shake, as happened in other instances, the assistant or *cap de colla* would have called off the ascendance. In this example, the authority over the ascendance in the tower was shared between the head of the team and the participants

157

themselves, which showed a collaborative process in making the decision to build the tower.

Directives used at *castells*also came from these participants who held positions of power inside the team's hierarchy. In a different example in Mediterrani, a young assistant split the responsibility of a tower rehearsal with the official *cap de colla*. He used both subject and verb when he addressed the team and used the main instruction twice (*pugen-* climb up) to different audiences. The sequential analysis of the multimodal interaction shows us how the assistant oriented to different audiences and how participants interpreted the directives.

((LOUD noise in the facility))

Assistant: Va collons, pugen quarts! - [PUGEN QUARTS!]

Come on, damn it! Fourths go up! - [FOURTHS GO UP!]

Fourths: [Fourths start climbing up]26

((Less noise in the facility))

((2s))

Assistant: **Venga va.**

Come on.

((12s))

Head of team: ((veu calmada)) quints!

((soft/quiet voice)) fifths!

The first imperative that the assistant uses is "*va collons*" which is not very clear in the sequence if it is directed only to those who are supposed to climb up the tower, the rest of the team or both parts. In any case, this directive together with the expletive are used as an attention getter for everyone in the rehearsal since, right after that, the assistant starts directing the tower. The use of expletives have often been found to signal reciprocal solidarity relationships amongst speakers

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26 Overlap of speech in preceding line with actual action.

(Daly, Holmes, Newton, Stubbe 2004) but in this case, a participant who holds a position of power uses it. Instead of promoting a solidarity effect, its use suggests that is aimed at making everybody pay attention to what is to come next and respond accordingly. The verbal form "*pugen*" -they climb up/go up- before the names of the levels *quarts* or *terços* has information about person and number and it is in indicative present simple. Catalan (as in Spanish) has different forms to order something to a group of people[27] both including the speaker and excluding it[28] . However, the assistant uses a form (indicative, 3rd p.pl.) that is not common for directives and that shows a mitigated use of commands. The first time the assistant calls "*pugen quarts*", his body is slightly more oriented towards the tower, where the participants who have to climb up are waiting for his command. Although the verbal form used by the assistant is commonly found in referential use, for describing actions, its function is clearly identified by the climbers as a command since they start climbing up right away. However, the fact that the assistant repeats immediately and in a louder voice the same directive suggests that this command was not only aimed at the climbers but also at the rest of the team, with a different function.

The repetition of the same phrase (*PUGEN QUARTS!*) is done with a different bodily orientation slightly outwards of the tower. It seems that the assistant did not receive from the rest of the team members the kind of response that he was expecting from the directive. The directive is a command to the climbers but also a command to other participants to stop talking and get closer to the tower that is being rehearsed. The fact that the first time that he commands the fourths to climb up other people were still chatting and not paying attention to the rehearsals probably motivates him to repeat it in a louder voice, now towards a more specific audience (the rest of the team). We can also interpret the repetition as directed to others in the team because the fourths had already started climbing when the assistant repeated it. Right after this repetition, the rest of the team members there start being quieter, moving towards the tower, and putting their

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[27] Commands for the verb 'pujar' in indicative mood are: puja (tu), pugi (vostè), pugem (nosaltres), pugeu (vosaltres), pugin (vostès).

[28] A form to order a group of people in which the speaker excludes himself uses the subjunctive mood: "que pugin quarts" -may the fourths go up.

arms up for support. The fact that the repetition is louder also suggests that the command works as a sort of admonition to the participants who were not responding as they were supposed to. This example, also shows that participants need to be part of this community of practice to know how to interpret the directive: it is not describing what is going on in the rehearsal nor just a command to the people who climb up the tower. Instead, the directive is a command for different people aimed at making them respond in different ways.

Right after his shout, there was a sudden drop of noise, as the participants understood the admonition and the urgency to act upon the directive. The assistant encouraged the team by using "**venga va!**" (come on!), an imperative in Castilian. The code-switching, the falling intonation of this directive, and the the fact that he used it right after he had received the expected response from others suggests that he tried to mitigate the former threat (PUGEN QUARTS!) with a command (and change of code) that usually reinforces solidarity relations. Finally, the *cap de colla* took the lead and finished directing the tower by calling the next level in a much calmer tone (no use of vulgar language and no shouting) than his assistant. At that moment, all participants were already in the *pinya* paying attention to the tower and providing support. The *cap de colla*'s directive uses only a noun to continue directing the tower. The name of the level is also something that participants need to learn to interpret, although in his case, he did not seem to address the rest of the team but the climbers only.

Perhaps the decrease in background noise helped the *cap de colla* communicate with the participants without shouting, but in other instances I noted how *caps de colla* usually tried to project a steady, loud yet calm tone. Many studies have shown how paralinguistic features like tone, prosody, pitch of voice or bodily gestures are also common to build positive politeness strategies or to play with perceptions of (linguistic) politeness (Ofuka, Waterman, McKeown, Roach 2000, Culpeper, Bousfield, Wichmann 2003). Studies on Catalan language have found that pitch rise at the end of utterances, for example, decrease perceptions on politeness when requesting something (Nadeu and Prieto 2011, see also Astruc, Vanrell, Prieto 2016, Hübscher,

Borràs-Comes, Prieto 2017, Borràs-Comes, Sichel-Bazin, Prieto 2015). Both the assistant and the *cap de colla* mitigated the imposition of their orders by using indicative forms in third person plural that functioned as directives. However, the volume change in the repetition of one of the directives seems to be threatening enough so that the assistant needs to soften it in a different intonation after he receives his expected response. These practices seemed to soften both the expletive and the second instruction. In contrast, the *cap de colla*, mitigates the imposition by using a calmer intonation.

On the way down, a slightly different strategy was used by *caps de colla* and assistants that mitigated the imposition. The assistant at Vilatèxtil gave orders by using present participle forms, "*quints (...), baixant*" -fifths, going down- instead of '*quints, baixeu*' -fifths, go down'. He also used adverbial forms when instructing the participants down: "*dossos, avall*" - twos, down, which also makes the command more simple as it only gives information about the direction of the action. In a different rehearsal at Vilatèxtil, the female assistant also used present participles to direct the tower, but she used the verb at the beginning of the order, thus placing the emphasis on the action: "*baixant quarts*". These examples contrast with how both assistants and *caps de colla* instructed participants on their way up in the tower. When going up, participants waited to be instructed to start their action (ascending), whereas on their way down, many times, participants descended on their own without necessarily waiting for the instructions. This does not mean that participants did not ever follow the instructions on the way down but I have found several examples where, at some point in the descending, participants performed on their own. This suggests that what looked like instructions, in reality served as a descriptive tool, similar to "broadcasting" or a warning strategy to the rest of the team, especially the ones at the bottom of the construction.

In a different rehearsal at Vilatèxtil, a female assistant, who was the head of the *pinya* technical group, was using the first person plural form when she gave orders to the *pinya* participants: "*tanquem la pinya, si us plau*" -let's close the *pinya*, please.- or "*marquem pit*" -let's

161

push up our chest. 'We' forms like these implied a pseudo-participation of the speaker to the activity, often in downward rank interactions (Ervin Tripp: 48). Although she never participated inside the actual towers because of a physical disability, she included herself to the larger group when talking to the *pinya* and about the *pinya*.

The tendency to use 'we' forms when giving instructions to the *pinya* was also common in Mediterrani, both from male and female assistants, and *caps de colla*. This hints at the symbolic meaning of the *pinya* as the space where everybody is supposed to be included (physically or symbolically) no matter the role of each one.[29] An interesting point regarding 'we' forms is that these were more commonly used during public exhibitions than in rehearsals. In the former, these were also used for trunk participants: "*som'hi quarts*" -let's go fourths- or "*aguantem bé la mida aquesta, eh!*" -let's hold on to that measure, huh!- or "*no perdem això!*" -let's not miss/fail at it! The fact that 'we' forms were more often used during public exhibitions not only reinforces ideas about group inclusion and unity amongst its participants in the sense that they are "all" going up or down (no matter their actual role), but also defined the in-group body of participants in contrast to an out-group one (i.e. the audience).

In some rare occasions, the *cap de colla* gave personalized instructions to a single participant, but the commands used were not obvious to an outsider or someone new to *castells* . In a different rehearsal in Vilatèxtil, the *cap de colla* told one participant who was on the third level "*no te'l quedis*" -do not own it. As a participant in that *colla*, I did not understand what that meant or how participant(s) had to interpret it. At that moment, I asked the *cap de colla* why he was saying it and what it meant. As he explained, oftentimes a participant in the tower leans backwards by slightly lifting their chest and opening their arms because "*vol aguantar tot el castell"* -he wants to hold the entire tower'. This is something that happens when the participant does not want to "*tancar-se*" -closing yourself/crouching down- too much because of the weight of the tower. When a participant crouches down too much he or she risks collapsing, and thus

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[29] In turn, this understanding inevitably brings notions of indistinctness and low visibility that many tried to avoid.

collapsing the tower. To avoid it, sometimes participants counteract this force and open up their chest and body posture. The *cap de colla* explained that when someone opens too much, he or she "*desestabilitza el de davant*" -destabilizes the person in front- by pushing him/her forward, which again risks collapsing. The expression of "*no te'l quedis*" thus is a negative directive that commands the participant not to 'own' the tower by himself since it would destabilize others and make the tower collapse. After that, the *cap de colla* told him to "*dóna'l*" -give it (back). The second person singular informal form of command was not very common unless it was addressed to someone in particular to adjust his or her position to avoid risks. However, both the expressions of "*no te'l quedis*" or "*dóna'l*" were commonly heard every now and then. In the case of "*dóna'l*" I also had to ask specifically what it meant in that context, and the *cap de colla* told me he was telling the participant to give back the tower to the rest of the people who were in the same level. Note that the command does not have an indirect object, but it seemed implied in the command, according to what the *cap de colla* explained. This is an interesting example because besides showing the different forms of directives used by the *cap de colla* in different situations, it also shows how participants need to be part of the community of practice to understand how to interpret these commands. The example also shows how the cooperative practices are often articulated through certain commands by the *cap de colla*. At a symbolic level, it shows that even when a participant wants to avoid the collapse of the tower by counteracting the forces, this cannot be done individually because it has repercussions: making *others* collapse the tower. The fact that they use the expressions "not owning" or "giving" the tower (to others) shows one way individuals are expected and learn to relate and engage with the larger group. Second person plural forms *vosaltres* (you-plural) were not used in any of the instructions recorded or noted either going up or down the tower, nor during rehearsals and public exhibitions.

4.5   Linguistic practices outside *castell* building

I also compared the findings about the linguistic practices during tower building at *castells* with those practices used by participants outside the activity. In my findings I have also encountered several uses of bald-on-record imperatives in regular conversations for commanding or requesting without minimizing the impositions: "*repetim*!"-let's repeat!- in a toasting moment, "*no et posis nerviosa i continua!*" -don't get nervous and continue, during a story telling, "*comença a xerrar*", when requesting someone to explain something, etc. The fact that participants regularly used unmitigated bald-on-record directives with each other does not mean they did not know how to play with those to differentiate speakers. During a get together activity with some participants from Mediterrani, I asked them to allow me to record the conversation by placing my recorder in the middle of the table. Manel, one of my closest informants in that team, started mocking me by asking questions to another participant in the table as if he was the researcher himself and was interviewing him: "*senyor Dídac, expliqui si us plau la seva experiència al entrar a castells, el motiu, el per què i la seva opinió personal*" - mr. Dídac, please explain, your experience upon joining *castells*, the motivation, the reasons why and your personal opinion. In his impersonation, Manel used the formal form (V instead of T form) in the Catalan command "*expliqui (vostè)*" - explain (You, vous, **usted**). This form is very rarely used in everyday conversations in Catalan (and to some extent in Castilian, too)[30] with the exception of when addressing to the elder and of written documents addressed to institutions and vice versa.

In the classic study on the use of V/T pronouns, Brown and Gilman examined the relationship of (non) solidarity amongst participants holding diverse positions of power (1960). One of the main points stated that "In general terms, the V form is linked with differences between persons" (1960: 257). This does not necessarily mean a difference of power, but at least a distance between the speaker and the addressee that Manel uses in his mocking to show the

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[30] Unlike the regular use of so-called formal forms in Spanish in much of Latin American countries, everyday Castilian in Spain mainly uses tu/you forms.

lack of like-mindedness[31] between his character and the addressee in this interaction (1960: 258). Manel also used the mitigating *si us plau* (please/if you would) after the command, which shows a common deference strategy used in bald-on-record directives (Ervin-Tripp 1960). Manel's exaggeration in addressing the other person with what is popularly understood as the "formal form" (V), which I had never used during my fieldwork, evidences his disengagement with that voice (i.e. it is not his voice, but the person's he is imitating) (see Bakhtin 1981 on double voicing). What is most important for the purpose of the argument though, is that the linguistic play (using V forms, *si us plau*, etc) shows a conscious way of showing distance that contrasts with participants' regular use of unmitigated commands.

In another interaction among Vilatèxtil participants during lunch time after an exhibition, a member of the *pinya* Technical Group, Jordi, asked Oscar for a cigarette. Members of the Technical Group of *pinyes* in both teams analyzed enjoyed a socially admired and powerful position inside teams because they decided who performed in each position in the *pinya*. Despite not (always) performing in highly valuable positions themselves, they were central and popular members in the team, with participants confiding in them about their ambitions (in terms of tower positions to try), about how well/bad they and others performed and with participants including them in all social activities.

The asymmetry of power that comes from the moment they get to decide who is more suitable to perform in certain positions is often accepted and expected within tower building. Also, the way participants communicate with bald-on-record directives is also accepted within that setting. However, the communicative practices and the power differences are not always accepted outside tower building, and members may often challenge them. In the interaction below, Oscar at first rejected the request by using harsh and offensive expressions that would be completely inappropriate in any situation less than very familiar. Perhaps the age difference played a role although this was not great (the technical member was 22 years old vs the 27-year-

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[31] Brown and Gilman define the notion of like-mindedness as "ordinary" things like "political membership, family, religion, profession, sex, and birthplace" (1960: 258)

old Oscar). Although the two people involved had been at *castells* for 2.5 and 3 years each, they did not have a close relationship between them inside or outside *castells*[32]. The interaction showed two interesting points of discussion: 1) that Oscar uses speech forms that often signals a lot of closeness, especially within the *casteller* setting and also typical of very familiar settings and relationships, despite not having a close relationship at a personal level with Jordi, and 2) that Oscar rejects Jordi's communicative practices and authority over him when he is outside *castell* building.

Jordi: Oscar, passa'm un cigarru.

Oscar, pass me a cigarette.

Oscar: que et donin pel cul.

fuck you.

Jordi: va::::..!

come on::::!

Oscar: ja te n'he passat un abans.

I have already passed you one before.

((3s))

Oscar: te:::! Agafa, **maricón**!

there:::! Take one, faggot/dumbass!

In the interaction above, Jordi uses a bald-on-record directive (*passa'm*) to ask Oscar for the cigarette. Jordi could be using his position of power as a member of the Technical Group of *pinyes* to demand a cigarette. I have shown how this is usually a risky form of communication but that it is generally accepted and expected within tower building. These speech forms also serve to

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[32] I did not see them in smaller groups of closer friends besides the regular chats during or after casteller activity nor did they interacted regularly

create and build closer relations among the speakers. The fact that Jordi uses the form "*passa'm*" instead of a similar expression in Catalan like "*dóna'm*" -give me- may also be interpreted as way of not acknowledging enough Oscar's ownership of the cigarette, as if it was everybody's to ask for and pass around. However, Oscar reacts negatively to the command and challenges Jordi's position. Oscar insults Jordi and challenges his positive face in doing so. Pujolar (2001) found that swearing and verbal aggression were common amongst young men in the construction of 'simplified masculinities' (2001:45). These practices rely on verbal displays aimed at transgressing and challenging social conventions and authority within a playful context (see also Kiesling 2005, Goodwin 1990, and 'mock impoliteness' in Culpeper 1996). These practices build solidarity relationships and are usually performed among close relationships. In his turn, however, Jordi does not return the insult or challenge, but insists on the demand by begging Oscar, thus putting himself in a lower position and undermining his authority. Jordi's lack of insult to Oscar suggests that Oscar's insult was not necessarily taken as playful or as a solidarity strategy, perhaps because that was not the intention either. At the end of the interaction, Oscar agrees to give a cigarette to Jordi, by ordering him to take one. Oscar also uses a bald-on-record directive to offer the cigarette, suggesting that there is some sort of solidarity among them despite the offenses given. However, he keeps on insulting Jordi by saying "**maricón**" to him at the end of his offer. The use of Castilian (instead of Catalan) for insults is very common in Catalonia and has been found in other studies (Pujolar 2001, Woolard 206). The final insult is once again another challenge to Jordi's authority that shows Oscar's disagreement to the linguistic practices carried over to outside tower building and his reinforcement of everyday rules outside the activity. It is worth mentioning that both used bald-on-record directives in their interactions ('*passa'm*' and '*agafa*'), which also suggests that if there was any power asymmetry in their roles at *castells*, this was not overtly exploited in the conversation. It also suggests that the egalitarian speech style is often carried over outside the activity, although the consequences are more ambiguous and varied in the context where there is no tower building.

4.6   Attitudes on language at *castells*

Another issue worth examining is the relationship that both native (L1) and non-native Catalan speakers (L2) had with Catalan and Castilian. Since most of the L2 Catalan speakers had Spanish (any variety) as their first language, I will focus on them rather than on learners that had Italian or English as their L1. The vast majority of L1 and L2 Catalan speakers were young participants in their late twenties or early thirties, who were studying professional careers or working. L2 Catalan adult participants who had arrived to Catalonia recently were in a similar situation. Their particular case reflects the experiences of young working and middle class people arriving to Catalonia amidst an internal (and external) debate on Catalan identity in the streets and in the political arena.The purpose of this section is to provide a quick view of some relevant L1 and L2 Catalan speakers' attitudes and experiences around language(s) at *castells* that show the linguistic ideologies held by participants in today's *castells*.

The theoretical frame of 'new speakers' examines the "language legitimacy, authority and authenticity" (Jaffe 2015) of L2 speakers of minority languages. The sociolinguistic category defines those speakers who have learned a language -usually a minority one- outside their primary means of socialization such as schooling or family (Pujolar and Puigdevall 2015:170, Pujolar and Gonzalez 2013, Pujolar, González, Font i Tanyà, Martínez 2010). The motivations for learning the language vary across contexts and personal trajectories. For example, studies on Corsican or Basque language have shown the complexity of the analytical term of 'new speakers' itself, as notions of "new" and "native" speakers -along with other traditional categories- are constantly mobilized and ideologically re-shaped by its learners (Jaffe 2015, Ortega, Urla, Amorrortu, Goirigolzarri, Uranga 2015). In these studies, learners found themselves immersed in a sociolinguistic context where they had to renegotiate and contest language and speakers' authority and legitimacy.

In the Catalan context, studies on new speakers have focused on those "with Spanish-

speaking origins" who "used Catalan 25% or more of their time in everyday life" (Pujolar and Puigdevall 2015: 171). With L1 Spanish speakers forming the majority of the Catalan population, these studies have focused on how and when such speakers became new speakers of Catalan. The findings provided insights to specific life trajectories that switched the choices of language use. The particular turns in language choice in specific life events were defined as "mudes" or "the specific biographical junctures where individuals enact significant changes in their linguistic repertoire" (Pujolar and Gonzalez 2013: 138, see also Pujolar and Puigdevall 2015). Studies on the use of Catalan by nonnative speakers recently have showed that the ethnolinguistic boundaries that had traditionally distinguished Spanish and Catalan communities are blurring, as L2 Catalan speakers are using Catalan language more and more in their daily lives (ibid, Woolard 2016), also with accents and varieties that surpass traditional class distinctions and that make it difficult for any speaker (even native Catalan speakers) to make those ethnic and class distinctions.

Although Catalan was the most used language amongst participants in both *casteller* groups, there was space for code-switching and play between Catalan and Castilian (see examples above). Classic studies already found that code-switching in bilingual communities had actually a social meaning and implications (Blom and Gumperz 1972, Gumperz 1982), and that those meanings varied depending on the context and the audience involved (Woolard 1987). Languages may represent forms of in-group and out-group contrast, or as Gumperz called it, 'we/they' codes (Gumperz 1982). In Catalonia, this approach has been both proved and challenged. For example, Woolard (1987) showed that the use of code-switching in the professional comedian Eugenio's humorous monologues in the early democratic era in Catalonia did not play with or represent the typical social associations between Castilian (they-code) and Catalan (we-code). Other studies have shown that code-switching in everyday or institutionalized interactions with foreign immigrants often reproduce hegemonic views on communication that have exclusionary effects, especially on those groups that find themselves in a socially and legally vulnerable situation (Codó and Garrido 2010, Garrido 2013).

Explicit comments about language were generally scarce amongst L1 Catalan speakers at *castells*. However, the comments that I witnessed from this linguistic group (mostly in the Mediterrani team) referred to language forms and accents amongst their fellows. In contrast, explicit comments about the use of Catalan or the experience with the two languages in Catalonia were very common amongst non-native Catalan speakers who were learning the language. The content of comments also varied considerably. Whereas native Catalan speakers commented on accents and whether or not code-mixing was appropriate in certain situations, non-natives commented [33] on their own perception and experience on language learning in Catalonia, attitudes about Catalan and Castilian, and expectations about their participation in the team, which included linguistic and social inclusion.

4.6.1 L1 Catalan speakers

Learning how to participate in *castells* is a process that involves learning how to use (certain aspects of) Catalan both technically -while building towers- and socially -in other settings like dinners, informal chatting, beer drinking, etc. Participants were aware of this learning process, and the way to represent a novice at *castells* was through one of Barcelona's most recognizable accents, the 'xava'. '*Xava*' is the non-standard variety of Catalan heavily influenced by Castilian phonology that many Catalan speakers use, especially in the metropolitan area of Barcelona. The association between being a novice at the team and being a Catalan speaker who uses this variety was materialized during a joke in a youth Whatsapp conversation on the Friday before an important exhibition for the team (*La Diada de la Mercè*[34] or *La Mercè*). In the exchange, all of the participants were young native Catalan speakers who had gone through Catalan schooling and thus had and were expected to have literacy proficiency.

One of them proposed to have breakfast before the actual *casteller* exhibition as they used

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[33] L2 Catalan speakers both volunteered in naturally-occurring interaction to talk about language and responded to my interview questions.

[34] Barcelona festivity in September in the name of the patron saint of Mercè.

to do in the past.[35] The participants used Catalan with colloquial abbreviations and absence of punctuation or accent marks , as is typical of instant messaging.

A: "Es parla q plourà aquesta nit i demà" (Diada de la Mercè)

"Rumor has it that it'll rain tonight and tomorrow" (Mercè Festivity)

Toni: "<u>lo</u> q si podriem fer es esmorçar abans, no?" | "Es <u>algo</u> q hem perdut!!!"

"What we could do is to have breakfast before, no?" |"It's something that we've lost"

(…)[36]

Pinto: *"Toni, m'apunto. Dema a les 10:00 a (lloc)?"*

"Toni, I'm in. Tomorrow at 10:00 at (place)?"

(…)

Toni: "qui ets tu?" | "Ets nou a la colla!? No em sones… me semble [sic]<u>astupendo</u>!! El lloc de lany passat estava *tremend<u>o</u>*"

" Who are you?" | "Are you new to the team!? You're not familiar to me… I find it great!! The place from last year was awesome"

Pinto: "Sí, soc nou avui vindré per primera vegada a assaig, la **coya poza** la **facha** i camisa o le de **purtar** de casa?"

"Yes, I'm new today I'll come for the first time to rehearsal, does the team give the sash and shirt or do I have to bring it from home?

D: "la pots compartir amb el E"

"You can share it with E"

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[35] The interaction took place one day previous to La Mercè because during large events like this one, a lot of new participants usually join the team. This is thanks to organized campaigns by the team in which participants are encouraged to bring friends or family to the team for some weeks previous to the exhibition. Participating in the rehearsals precious to this large event is necessary to get a free team's t-shirt and to actually participate in the team during the actual exhibition.

[36] comments unrelated to the interaction.

Pinto: "E qui es aquest? El cap de **coya**?"

"E, who is this one? The head of the team?

In the interaction above, Pinto is the one who responds to Toni's proposal to have breakfast before the exhibition. However, Toni directly challenges Pito's recognition on the team by questioning who he is. Toni seems not to have Pinto's telephone number or recognize Pinto's message on Whatsapp and thus asks about Pinto's identity. Toni's challenge could be either interpreted as a joke or as a serious question, and I should at least leave the two possibilities open. Toni and Pinto actually have known each other and have shared rehearsals, exhibitions, and parties since Pinto joined the team six months ago. However, this was one of Pinto's first messages on the Whatsapp group since I joined the team (almost 3 months before). Toni might not have had him on his radar or in his contact list.

Despite the seemingly very face-threatening question of Toni ('who are you?'), it was common in that group (and also in Vilatèxtil) to ask for the identity of an unrecognized participant, especially a new one, so that the latter could introduce him/herself by giving the name. This is why I interpret Toni's question as a direct, common question and not a joke. In any case, Toni challenges the acquaintance with Pinto and his 'seniority' in the team.

Instead of saying his name straight away to sort out the misunderstanding, Pinto chooses to joke about his time in the team by saying he is new and that he will come to a rehearsal for the first time today. This was not Pinto's first rehearsal, and this is why we can understand Pinto's response clearly as a joke. Within this novice persona that he creates for himself, Pinto poses common questions that any first timer would ask ('does the team give the sash and shirt' or 'do I have to bring it from home?'). However, the most interesting part of Pinto's response is that he uses some linguistic forms that differ from others he had used in the past (or in the same conversation) to make a commentary. Pinto uses the Catalan words of *'colla', 'posar', 'faixa'* and *'portar'* and purposely transcribes them in eye dialect and what he understands would

172

be its pronunciation by non-native Catalan speakers or *xava* speakers. Thus, he writes "coya" (instead of the prescriptive form "colla") with the digraph <y>. The letter <ll> is prescriptively pronounced in Catalan as a palatal lateral approximant /ʎ/. The process of '**yeísmo**' is common amongst Castilian (and also Catalan) speakers whenever <ll> is found between vowels (as it is the case of the word 'colla'). In these cases, <ll> is pronounced [j] as in <u>Y</u>osemite. In general, the pronunciation of [j] in Catalan words that should normatively be pronounced as /ʎ/ is a clear marker of Castilian speakers or Catalan speakers with Castilianized phonology.

Similarly, Pinto wrote 'facha' instead of 'faixa', the latter being the prescriptively correct spelling of sash in Catalan. <ch> in Castilian represents the voiceless post-alveolar africate sound of /tʃ/ as in '<u>ch</u>eese' but standard Castilian does not have the voiceless post alveolar fricative /ʃ/ as in '<u>sh</u>ave', which is represented by the <ix> digraph in medial & word-final position in Catalan. In the case of "purtar", Pinto is marking the fact that, in Catalan, the vowel <o> in unstressed positions is neutralized to [u]. In standard writing, the digraph <o> remains in its written form and it does not pose problems of interpretation to readers. Pinto previously used the standard written form of another word that follows the same pattern "*m'apunto*" -I'm in- when he was not joking, which confirms that he actually knows how to write these words and that he chose to represent the a non-standard form. In his joke, however, Pinto exaggerates this neutralization by placing a <u> in the written form, which emphasizes the pronunciation of [u] that is typical of Catalan standard. In doing so, he is also showing the difficulties of many Catalan language learners/*xava* speakers to control and differentiate the written from the spoken forms.

Some of the phonological patterns of *xava* coincide with the ones Pinto recreates in his joking commentary (see more of '*xava*' studies in Ballart 1996, 2002, Pla 1995, Boix 1997). The origins of *xava* have been found in working class neighborhoods of Barcelona and its speakers ranged across (Castilian-speaking) immigrants, their Catalan-born descendants, and Catalan locals (Boix 1998). This Barcelona accent was eventually taken by upper-middle classes and humorous caricatures of it appeared on TV in the nineties (see character of 'Sandra Camaca').

173

Xava was generally regarded negatively by middle classes in Barcelona, who understood it as a deviation from the purest forms of Catalan[37]. However, its social acceptance has grown in the last decades amongst the popular classes who have used it to claim their local identity. Xava is today considered a very characteristic Barcelona accent.

Class distinctions between speakers of *xava* and standard Catalan have blurred (Pujolar 1997, Woolard 2016) but Pinto's joking commentary evidences that there is still a tension going on about who uses Catalan with Castilian phonology and whether or not it is appropriate in certain situations to do it. Pinto's joking transcriptions represent phonetically different realizations of the standard pronunciation of Catalan words. This linguistic differentiation (Irvine and Gal 2000) that he marks in the comments points to or indexes a specific social and linguistic community in Catalonia, I.e. Catalan speakers with a Castilian phonology. Pinto's comment suggests that there is a relation between being a novice to the team and speaking *xava*. Although the use of this variety challenges traditional ethnolinguistic boundaries and class distinctions, it is still ideologically rooted in Barcelona. In voicing this typified speaker jokingly, Pinto also distances himself from that persona and reinforced the idea that whoever enters the team is probably a linguistic outsider to Mediterrani and will need to learn about *castells* just as about standard forms of Catalan.

In a similar example, Francesc (27), a very popular participant at Mediterrani, mocked someone from the Castellers de Barcelona team who was talking through a megaphone after a Sunday exhibition in Barcelona. This exhibition was hosted by the Castellers de Barcelona themselves, a team that seemingly represents the whole city[38] despite rehearsing and belonging to a specific neighborhood. The Mediterrani team usually tries to build a different local identity and distance itself from other teams in the city, and in particular from what the Barcelona team represents to them (see chapter 5). In my notes, I wrote how Francesc started repeating some of the words that were being said and exaggerated the pronunciation. He was surrounded by two

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[37] Also, citizens outside Barcelona city reject these forms.
[38] Castelleres de Barcelona host the Barcelona's largest casteller exhibition during the Barcelona's main festivities.

more participants who also engaged with the mocking and pronounced some random words to imitate the accent. The main characteristic that they focused was the pronunciation of the full vowel /a/ in non-stressed positions. In Catalan, such vowels are prescribed to be pronounced with a schwa /ə/ and the pronunciation of full vowel /a/ is one of the most characteristic features of a 'castilianized' accent or *xava*. The small group ended up laughing out loud. Some studies have shown that because *xava* is more and more used by both L1 and L2 Catalan speakers, it is harder distinguish who is L1 and L2 (Woolard 2016: 302, Ballart 2013). Although comments about *xava* features like the above mentioned evidence a tension and a differentiation from standard forms, it is likely that the distinction is not constructed from a notion of first language (often associated with birth/origin) but rather from another notion like class or gender (see Ballart 2013).

In a different example, Lluís, the president[39] of the Mediterrani team, was explaining to the participants after the rehearsal that there were lottery tickets remaining to be sold.[40] Any *casteller* participant can buy tickets and sell as many lottery shares as possible to family and friends before the national lottery event takes place right before Christmas holidays. During his speech to the team, he was encouraging more people to buy tickets. Lluís reported using Catalan both at home and at *castells* in my survey, and he certainly used Catalan during all the exchanges that I witnessed. However, in this exchange, he proudly displayed as a Catalan speakers with non-standard forms, thus including those speakers within the Catalan speaking community and identity.

President: Encara queden "**tacus**"per vendre

There still are tickets to be sold

Others: (riuen)

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[39] this position is closer to an administrative position rather than a technical one.

[40] After most of rehearsals the cap de colla usually speaks to the team to explain how it went and to talk and remind about upcoming exhibition. The president usually joined the cap de colla to explain the logistics of some exhibitions (meeting time & place) and other activities organized by the team (dinners, lottery, festivity organization, etc)

(others laugh)

President: (rient) **eh queh** sóc d'Hospitalet!

(laughing) ***well,*** *I'm from Hospitalet!*

In the short excerpt above, Lluís addressed the team by using the form "tacus" to refer to "talonaris". The latter is the prescribed form in Catalan for "ticket books". "Tacus" comes from the Castilian "taco", which has nothing to do with food in this context but with a pile of things, which he uses to refer to the tickets. Lluís catalanized a borrowed Castilian word by changing the pronunciation of the last vowel /o/ to [u] and thus to sound more Catalan-like (remember the above example of 'portar'/'purtar'). However, this strategy did not prove successful as people in the audience started laughing at the word chosen.

Laughing in situations like the above suggests that somehow expectations were not met with the audience. It is likely that Lluís, as a member of the team and perhaps as someone who institutionally represents that team, was expected to provide a "better" Catalan alternative such as "*talonari*" -ticket (books)- or a word that did not show the typical borrowing from Castilian. Obvious borrowings from Castilian like 'tacus' are often explicitly penalized by others who prefer to provide a "more Catalan" alternative or the "correct" counterpart in Catalan. This kind of code-switching is often regarded as an over-tolerance to Castilian that is detrimental to the Catalan language and as evidence of the high influence and domination of Castilian on the speaker. Having lost face (Goffman 1955, 1967), that is, losing one's positive public image, Lluís tries to self-repair it by explaining why he came up with 'tacus' instead of other alternatives. He explains he comes from 'Hospitalet', one of the highest immigration cities[41] next to Barcelona known for its national, Castilian-speaking immigration who arrived massively in the 60s. In doing so, he aspirates the voiceless sibilant /s/ of "e<u>s</u> que" and makes a full /e/ sound in both vowels. The aspiration is a trait characteristic of Andalusian Spanish that has been adopted by

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[41] https://www.idescat.cat/poblacioestrangera/?b=6&lang=es

176

many Catalan and Castilian speakers outside Andalusia now. These linguistic forms are socially marked as Castilian and index Castilian speaking communities (see Pujolar 2001 for stylized Spanish). In this short interaction, Lluís's use of language evidences his linguistic and social identity (from a Castilian-immigrant neighborhood) and normalizes his roots with the institutional role of president of a typical Catalan activity. He then switches to Catalan to state that he *is* from that neighborhood. The fact that he uses Catalan to specify something like 'being from' seems his technique to reaffirm his Catalan identity, which includes coming from a city where Castilian and code-mixing is commonly used. It is worth pointing out that I did not witness any mocking or comments on the linguistic forms of any known L2 Catalan speaker in the team at the time of fieldwork. All mockery and comments were directed to L1 Catalan speakers only.

The critical stance towards Lluís in that particular interaction is something that I have found in other instances. In an informal conversation after an exhibition, a group of Vilatèxtil participants (about 12) were toasting beer bottles before lunch. Ramón, a participant from Madrid, was the one who proposed to do it and everybody followed. Part of this toast also included a short saying that is commonly used when toasting, but including Vilatèxtil-theme expressions. The original saying is commonly used in Castilian and does not include *casteller* expressions whatsoever. The original goes: '**arriba, abajo, al centro y pa' dentro**' -up, down, to the center and inside.[42] The Vilatèxtil adaptation uses Catalan only:

    Ramón: Buenu nens, salut e::h!

                Well boys, cheers hu::h!

  (. . .)

  [Glass bottles clinking]

 Participant 2: "carrega:::t, descarrega:::t"

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[42] An equivalent to English language is perhaps the following: "Through the lips and over the gums; look out stomach 'cause here she comes"

177

Crowned, dismantled

Participant3: "lero-lero::"

Participant4: "lero-lero:::"

Lero-lero[43]

Participant5: "[I] a brollador"

And to the water dispenser

Oscar: I al brollador. [...] És que som molt catalans i no podem dir 'sortidor'

An to the water dispenser [...] we're so very Catalan that we cannot say water dispenser

(0.5s)

Oscar: reivindico el meu dret a parlar el català malament.

I claim my right to speak bad Catalan.

At the end of the exchange, Oscar challenges the use of the Catalan word '*brollador*' over a much popular one '*sortidor*' that is equally accepted in standard Catalan. In order to do that, he uses double-voicing (Bakhtin 1983) in first person plural (we) to voice and (include himself to) the social and linguistic community obsessed with language forms. The most popular term is lexically closer to its Castilian counterpart '**surtidor**', and because Oscar makes reference to being "so very Catalan" as not to choose the popular term, it suggests that the choice is based on the purist idea of speaking 'proper' Catalan. Under this notion there are usually words that do not share etymological roots. Oscar's comment shows that despite existing two normative versions of a word in Catalan, the alternative that appears not to have a Castilian influence is often preferred. Actually, Oscar's last statement shows how he endorses the view that he is mocking by associating "*sortidor*" with 'bad Catalan', which means language too much influenced by

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[43] 'Lero-lero' does not have a translation in English as it is a celebratory chanting used in Vilatèxtil whenever the team achieves a milestone like crowning an especially difficult tower. This reinforces their sense of belonging to the team as they use it to cheer themselves after an achievement.

Castilian. As much as he is defending the use of 'bad Catalan', Oscar is reproducing, representing or commenting on purist ideologies on Catalan language.

4.6.2   L2 Catalan speakers

Most of the L2 Catalan speakers had Spanish as their first language. For most of them, participating at *castells* was an opportunity to access a form of linguistic capital (Bourdieu 1991) that had been hard to find outside the activity. However, not all of them experienced or had the same motivations regarding language learning.

The case of Ramón, Jorge, and Jasmine

Ramón (33), a working class participant from Madrid, explained one of the things that he most liked about joining Vilatèxtil, which was being able to use monolingual Catalan with other participants. His example is similar to other participants that had Spanish as their first language and who wanted to practice Catalan at all times while they were at *castells*.

> **(Ramon)** A aquesta colla (nova), de fet, hi ha una cosa que m'agrada molt, que jo vaig arribar parlant en català **porque yo** no vull que em parlin en castellà. **Que es lo que:: no, porque** això::: em va passar a Colstown (old team) y **yo** volia aprende a parlar en català, saps?, (...) Ho prefereixo [que em parlin en catala] per agafar la fluidesa. (...) Al meu pis, al meu barri, els meus amics i el meu entorn per així dir-**lo** és castellanoparlant, **bueno**, els meus amics són catalanoparlants entre ells però clar la gent em parla a mi normalment en castellà, saps.

> *In this (new) team, in fact, there's something I like very much [and it's that] I arrived speaking Catalan because I don't want people speaking to me in Castilian. Because that's what happened in Colstown [old team's town] and I wanted to learn to speak Catalan, you know? I prefer it [that they speak Catalan to me] in order to get fluency. (. . .) In my apartment, in my neighborhood, my friends and my environment so to speak, is Castilian speaking, well, my friends are Catalan speakers among them but, of course, people talk to me usually in Castilian, you know.*

Ramón had previously participated in a different team from the town where he is living

179

now but a small group split off[44] - including him- and came to Vilatèxtil. Ramón arrived in a working-class, Castilian-dominant town known for its national immigration without knowing any Catalan just as many other immigrants do, and most of his first social, educational, and professional encounters and interactions were developed in Castilian. However, he started learning Catalan in professionalization courses that he was taking[45]. The fact that Ramón already knew some Catalan when he joined Vilatèxtil (his second team) was a motivation for him to start fresh speaking Catalan to everybody. In Catalonia, it has been common for L1 Catalan speakers to accommodate to the interlocutor's first language, especially when Castilian, the 'dominant' language (Giles, Coupland, Coupland 1991 for general accommodation theory, Woolard 1989). The conversational code-switching strategy of solidarity has proved to unwittingly create and deepen social differences between both the two contrasting languages and their users (Garrido 2013).

Despite Ramón's efforts to learn and practice Catalan, his most immediate linguistic and social environment remained Castilian-speaking *to him*. Ramón made reference to a common situation in Catalonia when choosing one language over the other. He talked about "*tens el **chip** aquell*" -having that mindset- that is established by the people themselves after choosing the language of communication the first time two people meet. The choice of language depends upon various factors (language ideology), but whatever language ends up being chosen, it usually remains associated with a person forever. In his attempt to practice Catalan while he was in his first team or with friends outside it, Ramón had asked many of them to speak to him in Catalan but all his efforts were in vain as people kept on addressing to him in Castilian while speaking Catalan among themselves. This shows that it was not the friends' lack of linguistic skills that made Ramón unable to practice Catalan with them, but rather an ideological boundary that "prevented" him from practicing and accessing this linguistic market. An interesting point

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[44] the reasons given for such split were related to the fact that many members did not enjoy the same opportunities to participate in positions of higher responsibility in the tower (with different positions, roles, etc).

[45] He was taking 'formació professional', which included technical knowledge on a specific field and also courses on language that all students had to take.

about Ramón's case is that because others spoke to him in Castilian consistently, he did not produce Catalan.This suggests that Ramón somehow felt as a linguistic novice and needed to be guided or "authorized" by experts first to produce Catalan with them, which is what happened in his experience at Vilatèxtil. Ramón's example also highlights the lack of opportunities that some L2 Catalan speakers have in their daily encounters because of an accommodation norm (Woolard 1989) that still exist among Catalan speakers when they know someone who is more fluent in Spanish or other languages.

Jorge (22, Bogotá, Colombia) had a rough start in Catalonia when he arrived two years before. He arrived during his late adolescence and had a hard time adjusting because he could not find the right friends to go out with, and that made him stay at home all the time. He was on the verge of going back to Colombia until one of his friends in the music center he attended suggested going with him to *castells*. Jorge asserted that *castells* made him stay in Catalonia because he could find some true friends in there. Jorge knew about Catalan language because he had heard about it while he was in Colombia, but he never imagined that, in Spain, he would find lectures taught in Catalan only, for example. His mother, who was already living in Catalonia, was the first one to urge him to learn the language, and so he started taking some formal lessons at the *Consorci per la Normalització Lingüística*.[46] However, Jorge explained that his knowledge of the language ended up coming from informal sources, that is, his friends and *castells*.

> el català que sé i el català que parlo ara mateix és el català que **me** han ensenyat els meus amics… [y]a parlant amb ells **ya**….**ya** se't queda **ya**….**ya** the n'adones que aprens no perquè t'ensenyin a un consorci (…) si no pel que puguis escoltar o perquè…per el contacte que facis amb les altres persones.
>
> *The Catalan I know and the Catalan I speak right now is the Catalan that my friends taught me..and when speaking with them…you already get it…you realize that you learn not because a consortium teaches you (…) but because of what you could hear or because of the contact you make with other people.*

As many others, Jorge further explained that after some time in Catalonia, he wanted to practice Catalan with everybody and found *castells* as the perfect place to do that. Jorge's

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[46] This institution provides free Catalan lessons divided into levels for all non-native Catalan speakers.

comments supports the idea that Catalan is still a language of prestige found within informal or non-institutional settings (Schieffelin, Woolard, Kroskrity 1998, Woolard 2016). It is interesting to highlight from his comment below that many non-native Catalan speakers already had expectations about the language used at *castells*, even before joining or having any experience in it. Location is one of the aspects that speakers use to determine what language to use (Woolard 1989).

> Vaig començar, no sé, perquè tenia aquesta (mania) de practicar i a més de que als castells, com tota l'estona s'està parlant en català…llavors..no sé, quan vaig arribar **ahí yo** dic "perfecte, es eh::: el lloc precís per a:: parlar i per a practicar el català.
>
> *I started because, I don't know, because I had this (obsession) of practicing and moreover at Castells, people always speak Catalan there…then…I don't know, when I got there I say 'perfect, it's hem::: the precise place to:: speak and to practice Catalan.*

Similarly, an American girl, Jasmine, explained that despite living in Catalonia for some time, she wanted to join *castells* because *"és molt d'aquí, una cosa molt catalana"* -it's very much from here, something very Catalan. *Castells* is regarded as an activity ideologically rooted to a place (Catalonia) and to Catalan culture, a notion that has traditionally been associated with Catalan language. Most of Catalan language learners began their participation at *castells* having had experiences with the accommodation norm (Woolard 1989, 2016), in which Catalan speakers switched to Spanish whenever they noticed or assumed the addressee's linguistic background. In the case of Jasmine, for example, her Catalan born in-laws never spoke to her in Catalan and used English or French instead with her. She also had trouble using Catalan with her native Catalan-speaking husband, with whom she spoke English. In her case, her in-laws had already established that Catalan was not a language that they would use with her. As Woolard commented "Such habits, though based in ideals of "politeness" and almost unconscious, also serve to mark and maintain ethnic boundaries." (1989:73). What is interesting about these participants is that these experiences that could presumably exclude them from Catalan social and linguistic community did not prevent them from seeking activities and opportunities to push those boundaries.

During the last decade, *castells* has been presenting itself as an inclusive activity for

immigrants to access the linguistic and social capital (learning a socially prestigious language and getting to know locals in their local culture). Within the Mediterrani rehearsing facility, there were posters advertising Catalan linguistic exchanges for L2 speakers from the *Consorci per la Normalització Lingüística*. Also, there has been notably more media attention -both in television and in written press- to (newly arrived) immigrants participating at *castells* as an example of their inclusion to the Catalan culture and society. The fact that language is not the target of *casteller* activity and the fact that L2 speakers were surrounded by other Catalan speakers was attractive to many, as opposed to attending language classes in institutionalized settings where language is the focus of attention.

Jasmine, as many others in a similar situation, had taken those classes when she arrived but ended up dropping them because she did not feel she could practice outside the classroom setting with Catalan speakers. Because they expected and were willing to practice Catalan without much risk (not in educational or professional settings, for example), they always used this language in their interactions, thus opening their chances to other linguistic identities from which they had been previously deterred. Ramón, Jasmine or Jorge's examples reflect the experiences of other L2 Catalan speakers who struggled to find opportunities to develop their linguistic identities beyond the ones they already had as Spanish speakers. For them, it was crucial to practice the language at *castells*, as this became a 'space of linguistic assurance' where they could cultivate their added linguistic identities. The fact that other participants spoke to them in Catalan, as Ramón explained, or that they participated in a Catalan mediated activity, as Jasmine stated, was key for them be included in the *casteller* community, which at the same time, is associated with the larger Catalan community (see more in chapter 6).

The case of Abel, Jessica, and Sergio

Common to many L2 Catalan speakers in these groups was the fact that they had been living in Catalonia for 2-4 years, so they were not newly arrived immigrants that joined *castells*

amongst their first decisions. The *casteller* activity had been either unknown to them as Sergio commented during an interview (even after living in Catalonia for a while) or completely irrelevant to their lives. Abel, a middle class young participant from Granada, recognized that after some time living in Barcelona, he felt he did not really know the city and its local population, and that he wanted to discover the popular culture and the places where it took place (see chapter 5 and 6). Similarly, a young participant from the Dominican Republic spent two years in Barcelona studying in a master's program, but she felt very lonely in the city. Although she was married to a Venezuelan who had been living in Catalonia for 15 years, they lived apart for some time. Jessica joined *castells* together with her husband and her motivation was to take part in group projects and to practice Catalan. Sergio, on the other hand, did not mention the language as a motivation to join this activity. In general, these participants were motivated to become fuller and competent members of the society and despite being able to communicate and live in Spanish, they noticed that there was something missing in their relations and engagement with locals and the local culture. They believed that being competent member in the Catalan community required something else.

All of them recognized that because they knew Spanish (either Castilian or a variety of Latin American Spanish), they did not have problems communicating and relating to others in Catalonia. Abel did not think of actively speaking Catalan before joining *castells*. His new acquaintances in Catalonia were either Spanish speakers living in the Barcelona area or English speakers also pursuing studies there. When he started in the Mediterrani team, he became aware of the bilingual dynamics in Catalonia and the unconscious linguistic restrictions that he faced:

> **Si estás en un grupillo de cinco o seis personas y te hablan en catalán...bueno, en cuanto hablas ya suelen cambiar (al castellano), pero digo "no, no, no, no hablad catalán, (para) que yo lo entienda". Osea, hubiera entendido mejor el castellano que el catalán, pero quería obligarme y era el ambiente perfecto para hacerlo. (...) Al final las lenguas son utensilios, herramientas que usas cuando te hacen falta. A mí el catalán no me hizo falta hasta que empecé a relacionarme con gente catalán catalán (sic). Si lo aprendo es porque me hace falta.**

If you're in a small group of five or six and they speak to you in Catalan...well, when you speak then people usually change (to Castilian), but I say 'no, no, no, no, speak Catalan so (that) I can understand'. So, I would have understood Castilian better than Catalan, but I wanted to force myself and that was a perfect environment to do it. (...) In the end, languages are utensils, tools that you use when you need them. I didn't need Catalan until I started relating to very Catalan people. If I learn it is because I need it.

Abel noticed how others switched to Castilian every time he spoke and thus he had to tell them to keep speaking Catalan. In his experience with language at *castells*, he moved back and forth with its use. His willingness to learn and practice the language was due to the fact that he was relating to Catalan people and thus he 'needed' the language. This 'need' that Abel refers to was not a purely referential communicative need since he could have perfectly communicated with them in Castilian. This need to speak Catalan to them had more to do with an acceptance to the group, an integrative motivation (Gardner and Lambert 1972). When Abel started at *castells* as a novice, he was actively learning from expert members and taking part of another linguistic identity. Nonetheless, at the same time, he was also experiencing an identity that did not make him feel proficient enough, and thus vulnerable in some ways. In trying to show his Catalan skills during an interview, Abel switched to that language to talk about how he felt as a Catalan speaker.

es **por** la sensació(n) **que me transmite** a mi mateix, es com 'osti, semblo una mica estúpit' no? **Porque**:: sembla que no puc parlar bé (...) com jo em veig es com una mica le:::nt, com- comparat amb castellà...i em costa

It's because of the feeling that it transmits to myself, it's like 'wow, I look like a bit stupid', you know? Because it seems as I cannot speak it well (...) as I see myself is like I am slow, comp- compared to Castilian...and it's hard for me.

Abel had been participating at *castells* for two and half years. After some time, he gave up speaking Catalan and only used Castilian.

Ahora, yo hablo en castellano y me responden en catalán y ya se han acostumbrado a mí (...) Al final, yo podría hablar en catalán pero al final te expresas mejor en tu lengua materna.

Now I speak Castilian and they respond to me in Catalan and they have already got used to me. In the end, I could speak Catalan but you express yourself better in your mother tongue. (...)

His role as a language learner or novice was not pleasant to him and probably did not align with his role at *castells*. He actually enjoyed some positions of responsibility and seniority in the *pinya* and lower positions in the trunk. Abel felt now able to go back to Castilian once he had secured his relations at *castells* ("**ya se han acostumbrado**" -they got used to it). At the time of fieldwork, Abel used Catalan with people from outside *castells* if he needed to, but his belonging to the linguistic community was not threatened because the other participants already knew he could speak and understand Catalan. I believe this is particularly interesting in this discussion because it shows how an L2 Catalan speaker gained access and acceptance to a Catalan linguistic and social community by learning the language and, once he achieved it, switching to his mother tongue and still belonging to that community (he is part of the core youth group and participates in many *casteller*-related activities and non-*casteller* ones).

The case above is similar to Sergio, the Extremaduran middle-class participant who expressed his experience in language learning in the same way he explained learning *casteller* activity. He never went to language classes as he felt inclined to "**incorporarlo poco a poco**" -incorporating it little by little- because "**es como me parece bonito**" -it's how I feel it's beautiful. His comments on how he expected to learn the language were reminiscent of naturalist perspectives on language acquisition (Woolard 2016). Sergio used Castilian in his exchanges with other participants at *castells* just as Abel did but he used some *casteller* expressions like "*més pit*" -more push- or "*afluixa pit*" -loosen push. He also recognized using some Catalan in greetings and the fact that "**cuando más he aprendido ha sido en castells**" - I have learned the most at castells. However, Sergio distinguished this specific use of Catalan at *castells* from using Catalan regularly with his fellow participants. He argued that he had never '**lanzao'** -jumped into- to use Catalan, an expression that Jessica (Dominican Republic) also used to explain the opportunity of castells to use Catalan ('**lanzarme a la piscina y practicar el catalán** - 'jumping into the pool and practicing Catalan'). The reason why he had never jumped into using the language was 'because he had never felt pressured to do so'. In part, this was because he has

always been addressed in Castilian since he started because he could barely produce any Catalan back then. His situation is similar to Ramón's first team in which he met all his friends at *castells* in Castilian and they stuck with it after that: "**en castells todo el mundo habla en catalán entre ellos, a mí todos me hablan en castellano**", Sergio asserted. However, Sergio did not seem bothered by this pattern. On the contrary, his Spanish speaking identity had become so solidified and accepted in this context that he said he would be now more ashamed of speaking Catalan to other *casteller* participants than speaking Catalan to somebody else in the street. Similar to Abel, Sergio's experience as a Catalan speaker was not good because of his status of learner: "**tengo la manía de hablar rápido....cuando intento hablar rápido [en catalán) tengo que pararme a pensar y eso me pone de los nervios**" -I have the fixation with speaking fast... when I try to speak fas (in Catalan), I have to stop to think and that makes me anxious.

Abel, Jessica, and Sergio's examples represent a small group of *casteller* participants who, despite understanding and being able to produce Catalan, opted not to do it because it made them feel "slow", "stupid" or "nervous". Their role as novices at *castells* when they joined the practice, as happened with Abel, motivated some to start learning the language. However, once they became expert at *castells* (or at least not novices), they reversed their linguistic practices to remain Castilian speakers. In the case of Sergio, he experienced the accommodation norm but did not challenge those boundaries -perhaps because he did not notice them- as other L2 participants did. Their examples have two different interpretations that are not exclusive to each other. On the one hand, their linguistic and social identity as Spanish speakers living in Catalonia and participating in traditionally Catalan culture works at normalizing the presence of Spanish speakers like them in such contexts, thus showing a growing multilingual phenomenon. On the other hand, it evidences the symbolic dominance of Castilian and the attempts not to risk this position of dominance and 'security' by seeing themselves in a process of language learning that makes them feel uncomfortable.

4.7 Concluding remarks

The linguist practices used during tower building evidenced the teams' efforts to include all members in the process. The technical terms used at *castells* were a set of fixed expressions in Catalan that L1 and L2 Catalan speakers could easily learn and produce in order to become fully competent members of the team (and they actually did even if, in the case of L2, they refused to speak Catalan outside the activity).

During tower building, directives were the most common speech act. In those examples where there were no obvious power difference between participants (like in the *pinya*), these used elliptical imperatives and 'we' forms to communicate to each other, thus simplifying the language needed in moments of tension and choosing to use inclusive forms to cheer people on. These forms promoted relationships of solidarity and belonging, and encouraged novices to participate in the linguistic exchanges despite the seeming imposition and threat that bald-on-record directives signal outside *castells*. These practices both maximized the threat to undermine any possible asymmetries of power in the *pinya*/tower. In those examples where there was an expected power imbalance, the *cap de colla* -head of the team- or the assistant used different linguistic forms. These participants addressed the *pinya*/tower members 1) by using 'we' forms, particularly during exhibitions, 2) by using atypical linguistic forms for commands (3rd person pl, present indicative), and 3) by avoiding many times even the use of verbs in their commands (just calling the levels). Present participle and adverbs were used by *caps de colla* and assistants to warn the rest of the team or describe how the tower was being dismantled. On the whole, the linguistic practices used by those holding positions of power in the team tried to mitigate (or at least not to exploit) the asymmetry of power as well.

Participating at *castells* required participants to be responsible for their own and others' safety. Although it was common to receive explicit instruction as a novice, many times participants had to learn more on the go about how to react, command or just how to communicate with others,

188

even when communication failed. Whenever personal verbal forms were used, these were either in first person plural (we) or third person plural (they), rarely second person singular and certainly never the second person plural. Thus, power differences embodied in *casteller* roles were not exploited in individualized commands.

The linguistic strategies showed a way to engage in cooperative work within an expected hierarchical structure. Authority was shared and could come from below from the moment novices were told to command anyone in the team when they needed support, for example. Encouraging participants to speak up whenever they do not have a close relationship with other members was an effective way to include and empower new members to the team so that they felt part of it. Including all participants in what was being instructed and avoiding typical individual directives was an effective way of giving orders, shouting, and engaging in a rough and strong conversation. These findings challenge and contrast to generalized stereotypes about Catalan as a language not suitable for orders or forceful situations (Woolard 2016:226). It offers and example of communicative practices that construct more egalitarian relations and relations of solidarity that cross cut gender, social class or *casteller* status.

The ethnographic examples regarding L1 and L2 Catalan speaking identities and experiences showed that some L1 Catalan speakers in *castells*, especially those in Mediterrani, mobilized ideas about Catalan standard and non-standard varieties to construct a notion of membership. However, these ideas did not clearly or necessarily revolve around ethnic or class differences that have traditionally distinguished Catalan born speakers of upper classes and immigrant communities speaking Catalan from working class backgrounds. As other studies have also pointed out, the linguistic forms (as in xava) that were marked to distinguish non-*casteller* participants or novices are currently associated with urban citizens of the Barcelona area (upper, middle, and working class L1 and L2 Catalan speakers) and are not as stigmatized as they used to be. Non-standard Catalan forms like *xava* or other Catilian-influenced phonology were used to point to a novice status in the team, as opposed to standard forms used in the team. However, the

189

reality is that non-standard forms were also used at *castells* (from the president no less!) and defended as legitimate. Critical stances to and notions of authenticity based on pure linguistic forms (especially those not influenced by Castilian) show an ongoing tension and debates about the kind of Catalan language used in *castells* today. Standard ideology was still in the way for some members. The fact that only L1 Catalan speakers made those comments also shows the legitimacy and authority that they saw themselves having in order to engage in conversation with these issues. The Mediterrani examples suggest that some L1 Catalan Mediterranians built their *casteller* and Mediterrani identities based on a linguistic opposition that distinguished their team from Barcelona's team. This opposition is a central aspect of their identity and is part of a larger discussion on what Barcelona city, as capital of Catalonia and often the representing city of its urban side, means to Mediterrani neighbors and team participants (see more in chapters 5).

L2 Catalan speakers, despite being a minority in both teams, had interesting insights about language, too. The great majority of them joined *castells* after some time living in Catalonia and finding out that they wanted to connect with locals because they experienced isolation. Most of them saw in *castells* (unsurprisingly) a place and an activity to open their social networks and engage with local culture, something that generated a sense of belonging and inclusion in many of them. In order to do that, they felt the need to learn Catalan as a way to achieve it. Interestingly, most of L2 Catalan speakers who used Catalan regularly were working class Spanish speakers (both national and international) or working and middle class- L1 speakers of other languages (Euskara, English, Dutch), although the latter group has not been addressed in this discussion. Middle-class L2 Catalan speakers coming from Spanish origins seemed more reluctant to use Catalan regularly because their self-conscious lack of proficiency made them feel uncomfortable and communicatively limited.

The position of vulnerability contrasted with their expertise on *castells*, which included certain positions of unique responsibility and a high engagement with the youth group in the social side of the team. They did not identify as Catalans in their interviews but they felt part

of this larger community that accepted them as Castilian speakers once they had learned and used some Catalan. It is unknown at this point if it is a matter of time and practice that these participants will end up using Catalan and feeling more comfortable as Catalan speakers. None of the L2 Catalan speakers rejected their original identities as Spanish speaker or made attempts to replace them with a Catalan one. They felt comfortable making visible their origins and identities once they felt accepted by the team. On the whole, the attitudes and experiences of both L1 and L2 Catalan speakers also showed the relation between being a novice at *castells* while acquiring linguistic competence. It showed some of the linguistic ideologies underpinning these attitudes, experiences, and the contradicting expectations on language at *castells* today.

Chapter 5

Semiotic Spaces and the Construction of Local *Casteller* Identities

5.1   Introduction

In chapters 3 and 4, I have shown how participants learned to use and regulate their bodies and how they managed to communicate while they were building towers. These chapters showed the collaborative aspect of the bodily and linguistic practices used by participants that shaped their notion of collectivity and responsibility to each other. In these chapters, as well as with chapter 6, I showed ways in which both teams coincided, as both offered very similar ethnographic evidence that supported the main arguments. In this chapter, however, I show how the two teams analyzed differed from one another.

Most of the elements that shape the practice of *castells* need to be displayed for the benefit of an audience. The activity uses a physical space (plazas and streets), where *casteller* participants interact with the broader community (the neighborhood, the tourists, or the general public observing the feat). Although both the city of Vilatèxtil and the neighborhood of Mediterrani are strongly (self-) identified as 'Catalan' places by the general public in Catalonia, the teams that

represent them show two different ways of constructing their own sense of local (and Catalan) community. The territorial boundaries between Vilatèxtil and Mediterrani *locales* and personal trajectories may explain some of the differences between the two communities: whereas Vilatèxtil is a fully recognized city (both institutionally and socially), with clear political boundaries and a granted identity, Mediterrani is a neighborhood that belongs to a larger urban city, in which those boundaries and its territorial identity are fuzzy and not always fully recognized or distinguished. Also, whereas most of Vilatèxtil participants were born locally and lived in that same city, the great majority of Mediterrani participants reported being born in Barcelona (not in Mediterrani) and many did not live in the neighborhood. I found that the Mediterrani team performed and displayed its sense of local identity in a way that I could not see in Vilatèxtil, and thus much of the ethnographic evidence in this chapter concentrates on the Mediterrani team.

Participants at *castells* rehearse and perform human towers because eventually they will "*portar a plaça*" -'bring to the plaza'- those towers. When *castellers* build their towers in the plazas and streets, they seem to be "offering" the structures to the people and the institutions: "*és un acte o festa que oferim a la ciutat, obert a tothom, no és privatiu*" -it's an event or festivity that we offer to the city, open to everybody, it's not exclusive- said the former head of the Vilatèxtil team. Also, part of the connection that *casteller* teams make with the public is to encourage members of the audience to join the outer rows in the *pinya* during their performances. This usually gives the outsider the opportunity to experience first hand and perform, even if temporarily, as a casteller participant. Teams make significant efforts to recruit more participants to their fold and seek to be constantly connected with the communities they see themselves representing. Part of this is evident in their budget, as they invest a lot of money to make the team grow in participant numbers (see more in chapter 6). On more than one occasion in the teams that I studied, we were formally encouraged to bring one or multiple friends to a rehearsal (see images below). Also as part of a recruitment strategy, during the Barcelona festivities for *La Mercè*, the Mediterrani team gave us stickers to give away to the public that was opening its way for us to the plaza where we

Figure 5.1: Friendship Day in both Mediterrani and Vilatèxtil teams. The image on the left states: "Having friends is a gift" and invites participants to enter in a raffle for a gift. The poster on the right states "friendship day 2016" Bring a friend, free sandwich and soda. Aida Ribot, 2016.

had to perform. The stickers had the basic information about the team (name, address) and they encouraged the public to join the team and participate in rehearsals.

In this chapter, I examine how *castellers* construct and perform local identities rooted in the neighborhood and town they see themselves representing respectively. I draw from spatial semiotics theories in urban anthropology and social sciences to understand the different strategies that the teams used to claim these neighborhoods and towns as sites that were meaningful to them to construct their sense of local collective identities, often amidst increasing globalizing, neoliberal practices, and discourses. I will also focus on how participants and teams negotiate

their *casteller* identities through the relationship to, and practices with, the built environment (plazas and streets) and the symbolic meanings that these sites hold to them. This chapter will thus show how *castellers* localize, embody, and negotiate the meaning of this cultural practice in space and how they engage with the communities beyond the *casteller* one.

5.2   Social spaces: the streets and the *plaça*

Catalan culture -as most of the Mediterranean cultures- has mostly relied on places for public[1] performance such as parks, streets, or plazas. Most of the folkloric Catalan cultural expressions have never been kept private (*sardanes, diables, bastoners*, *correfocs* -fire-runs, etc). Public spaces are important settings to display and promote the activity to new potential members. Spaces (or their form) cannot be interpreted as separate objects of analysis from the activities (or content) that take place in them and thus shape them (Jacobs 2001 [1961], see also Sontag 2001 [1966]). As Bourdieu (1977) or Giddens (1984) long noted, people's action and participation in a given place may provide a meaning of such space, that is, action constructs (and also delimits) space. The meaning(s) constructed are not only social but can also be linguistic, ethnic, political, etc.

Lefebvre's (1991) triadic conceptualization of space made the human/social experience crucial to this kind of analysis. In his theory, he considered all space as social and thus socially produced (ibid). His model divided space into the "perceived," "conceived"[2] and "lived" spaces to argue that the production of spaces is a *process* that requires the three elements and aspects of space. It is the last type of space, the representational space (or experienced space), that is, "directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of 'inhabitants' and 'users' " [...] "This is the dominated -and hence passively experienced- space which the

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[1] "public" here meaning open to everybody and different from a private space.
[2] The 'representations of space' (or conceived space) refers to the "conceptualized space, the space of the scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers" (1991: 38). This part is the mental conceptualization of space

imagination seeks to change and appropriate" (1991: 39). Lefebvre's 'lived space' emphasizes the fact that the experience is crucial in the negotiation, construction, and contestation of spaces (be it linguistic, cultural or social). This is the one I will be focusing on in the analysis below. The focus on 'space' in this chapter is not so much on the aspects of the built environment, but on the locales "where human experience and consciousness take on material and spatial forms" (see 'embodied spaces' in Low 2003: 2. The notion of 'lived spaces' align with Low's 'social construction of space', which she distinguished from the social *production*[3] of space. I draw some of my analysis on the former (the social construction of space) because it allows us to examine "the actual transformation of space- through people's social exchanges, memories, images, and daily use of the material setting- into scenes and actions that convey symbolic meaning" (Low 1996: 862). *Castells* is a socially constructed phenomenon that shapes and is shaped by the streets and plazas where the activity and its participants interact. As Lefebvre put it: "space is permeated with social relations; it is not only supported by social relations but it is also producing and produced by social relations" (Lefebvre 1991:286). People and their varying degrees of participation in a given space may facilitate the engagement with not only the cultural practice itself but also the socio-political, linguistic, or ethnic dimensions of a given community.

Casteller public exhibitions in both teams studied happened in the plazas of all the towns where they performed on almost every Sunday noon.[4] The plaza is used as a site for institutional and civic representation and "also provides a physical, social, and metaphorical space for public debate about governance, cultural identity, and citizenship" (Low 2000: 32). *Casteller* teams use them to exhibit and offer their performances to the audience and authorities in representation of the town's or neighborhood's name. Performing in the main town or neighborhood plaza is one way to build the team's identity as belonging to and thus representing that town or neighborhood.

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[3] The social production of pace "includes all those factors-social, economic, ideological, and technological-the intended goal of which is the physical creation of the material setting. The materialist emphasis of the term social production is useful in defining the historical emergence and political and economic formation of urban space". (Low 1996: 861)

[4] During summer season, the casteller festivity (or Diada castellera) takes place in the evening to avoid the high temperatures.

These plazas are in downtown areas, where most of the shopping, cultural centers, and public markets are also located. The *places* (pl. form of *plaça*) and the streets in both Vilatèxtil and Mediterrani concentrate the highest numbers of people during leisure time, the weekends, and often at night too. City dwellers usually go out for walks, meet up with friends and family, eat, chat, do business, and generally spend time outside in what is considered the 'center' of the town as opposed to peripheral and suburban areas of the town.

5.2.1 Symbolic view of the construction of social spaces

The plaza has historically been a site of authority that also holds symbolic power, and the people constructing this power have usually used the spaces available to perform and display this authority. Bourdieu describes the notion of social space "as a system of relations" in which positions of power are located in different geographical spaces (1989: 16). The emphasis on the relational aspect of social spaces (see Lefebvre 1970, Löw 2008) is vital in understanding the process of the construction of space.

In a historical account of the development of class culture in Barcelona between 1490 and 1714, Amelang (1986) described the processes by which aristocracy in Barcelona distinguished themselves from the rest by using specific spaces during public festivities. He used the expression "retreat to the balcony" (ibid: 195) to explain this phenomenon:

> The balcony fulfilled the architectural requirements of the aristocracy's new attitude of distance from the street and other areas of promiscuous and uncontrolled contact with the "lower" classes. It provided a unique vantage-point from which the ruling class could observe and be observed. At the same time, it preserved the requisite of separation and lent direct spatial configuration to the hierarchy of high and low. (ibid: 208)

In this example, Amelang showed how upper classes used tools and strategies (in this case, spatial) in order to build their aristocratic identity. This practice -retreating to the balcony- served as a semiotic tool to shape their identity (in this case, that of the dominant class) and

distinguish themselves from the lower area or the street. This example shows the spatialization of behavior in everyday life (see Bourdieu 1977) as it shows how people "locate, both physically and conceptually, social relations and social practice in social space" (Low 1996: 861). Nowadays, public officials still often use the town hall's balcony when *castells* perform in a plaza during the main festivities of the town. Balconies remain a symbol of authority that reinforce the vertical relationships of power and domination between institutions and citizens, but my time in the field proved that the symbolic authority was not instrumentalized in the same way in all places. For example, during the main festivities in the Mediterrani team, where we participated in the Mediterrani institutional plaza, I could physically access the balcony to take pictures as a regular participant. I did not need any special accreditation as press or as the official photographer of the team. Nobody questioned my presence there although it is possible that there were no public representatives at that same time. In contrast, I tried to do the same during the Vilatèxtil festivities, and I could not access it. The reason the security guard gave me was that there were too many people on the balcony and in other offices with windows (from where some were taking pictures). Despite my insistence on waiting until there were more spots or telling the guard that there were already some free spots, I was not allowed under any circumstances to enter the town hall to access the balcony. This difference may show the actual functioning of a city hall in contrast to a building that did not have the same functions.

Although plazas have always been sites for contestation, we have witnessed very recently examples of plazas where people have challenged the power and authority they hold (e.g. 'Arab Spring' in 2010 or Chile in 2019). People have been crowding the plazas that hold a symbolic meaning for them, which are normally the ones where the main institutions reside, and thus challenging the political and economic status quo with varying results (see Harvey 1985 or Castells 1983). The main themes that Manuel Castells highlighted as common in many urban social movements were the demands for more 'collective consumption'[5] and the defense of

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[5] services such as hospitals, schools, transportation, etc.

cultural identity and political self-determination (Castells 1977: 445). Although Castells used case studies of the 60s and 70s, these demands and themes have been visible in many recent mobilizations like the above mentioned. In Spain, streets and plazas have also been historically instrumentalized as sites of contestation of power in the last decades (Radcliff 2011, 2016, Domènech Sampere 2010). In the late 15M movement of 2011 and following the Arab Spring of 2010, thousands of citizens concentrated in the main plazas of capital cities to protest against the economic, political, and social crisis in Spain that affected much of the Western countries in the 2008 crisis (Shihade, Flesher Fominaya, Cox 2012, Fosshagen 2014). In Lefebvre's sense (2003[1970]), the crowding of these plazas was an example of heterotopic spaces[6] ,where marginalized or misrepresented groups inhabit, coming together to unite differences and with affordances for collective action to re-negotiate centers of power and dominance.

The *casteller* practice has been regarded in the past as also challenging the space of the authority. It was reported that King Ferdinand VII passed through Valls in 1814 right after the Napoleonic wars and saw a *casteller* performance from the town's city council balcony. In seeing how easily the child got to the level of the balcony and crossed it, he stated "**que aquello era una magnífica escuela de ladrones**" -that that was a great school for thieves[8] (quoted from Ballester in Dalmau 1981: 76). In the formation of the *pinya,* diverse participants gather in high numbers in a very specific place to widen and strengthen the base of the structure, and in doing so, the bottom of that symbolic power that rests on the streets or the plaza's floor is also strengthened. As participants start building up towers, the gap that differentiates the symbolically dominant high spaces from the dominated low ones is reduced. *Castells* may often reach in practice the same physical height as the political authorities, which challenge the symbolic power gap between institutions and citizens. However, this apparent challenge or contestation to the symbolic power

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[6] also known as the 'place of the other' or spaces of difference.

[7] The original website slogan translates as 'madrid. takes the plaza'. Originals of the other slogans are as follow and in order: "democracia real", "no nos representan", "que se oiga por todo el mundo la voz de las calles".

[8] It is also reported a bit different by another author: "una escalera de ladrones" -a ladder of thieves (quoted from Grau i Serra in Dalmau 1981: 76)

(a)

(b)

(c)

Figure 5.2: 15M protests in **Plaza del Sol**, Madrid, 2011. Aida Ribot. In (a), protesters cheering a speaker in one of the interventions; in (b), banners hiding large adds that read among others "www.madrid.tomalaplaza.net," "real democracy," "they do not represent us," "let the voice of the streets be heard throughout the world" [7]; in (c), 15M protests in *Plaça Catalunya*, Barcelona 2011. El País.

was not exactly like that in the experience of participants. Only at the end of some exhibitions, teams often built their pillars so that *enxanetas* -the children crowning towers- of teams (both hosting and guests) got as close as possible to the balcony [see image below].

Members of the team who are on the authority's balcony throw a *casteller* sash to the *enxaneta* to wrap around his or her wrist and then they pull the *enxaneta* up and over the balcony. This act offers an example of how the already reduced gap is actually *bridged*, but not necessarily contested. The physical bridging of the symbolic power may display 'a field of social innovation' (Shields 1991) that supports the construction of a temporary sense of collectivity

Figure 5.3: Castellers de Barcelona (www.castellersdebarcelona.net)

beyond social barriers and that challenges the official order, hierarchies or boundaries (Bakhtin 1984). Vaczi emphasized this aspect about *castells* when she argued that "previously exclusive sets of relationships (child-adult, man-woman, local-immigrant, state-region, unity-diversity, allies-adversaries) are allowed to become nonexclusive sets producing ritual reversals (such as big men at the bottom and children at the top) (Vaczi 2016: 366). This amusing act for the *enxaneta* and the team is just an example of how *castellers* may include themselves (both physically and symbolically) and share the spaces of (symbolic) power, at least temporarily. This bridging enables a more horizontal/egalitarian alternative to engage with institutional power that moves beyond the high-low dualities.

5.3 The construction and performance of local identity

Performing in the plazas ties the *casteller* practice with specific values, groups, and communities involved to each other. In the next section I am going to show how *castellers* negotiate and construct their team's identities based on specific values, set of oppositions, and discourses that are attached to the communities they see themselves representing.

In the case of the Mediterrani team, there was a lot of effort in displaying an image of the small, family-run village for its inhabitants, where neighbors knew each other. This desired image contrasts with the darker reality that residents of Mediterrani and other very central Barcelona neighborhoods face with massive tourism. In those, thousands of tourists have been overcrowding and destroying urban amenities, and the living conditions have become unbearable for residents in some neighborhoods (Pareja 2019, Blanchar 2017). Mediterrani constructed its local identity in opposition to what Barcelona city represented to them. In the case of Vilatèxtil, their local identity was not so much reinforced and displayed, not based on territorial opposition.

One way of signaling membership in both Vilatèxtil and Mediterrani teams was by wearing their *casteller* official shirt (see in chapter 3), which included the team's badge or image in the shirt's pocket . In Vilatèxtil, this shield included the image of what the town is popularly known for, which is also included in the town's official shield. This incorporation of Vilatèxtil's image on the team's shirt clearly identified the team with the town. In the case of Mediterrani, the team's shield showed a popularly recognizable item that belonged to the actual plaza that had the same name as the team. Additionally, many participants in Mediterrani wore the official neighborhood's shield on their arms. This would be the equivalent to wearing Vilatèxtil town's official shield in addition to the team's shield, which none of the Vilatèxtil participants wore. Although the official Mediterrani neighborhood shield was not required in the outfit, it added an extra sign of identity for the person who was wearing it with the territory it represented.

Also at an individual level, participants could choose to scale up their representation by

adding a flag at the back of their shirts. This symbolically associated them with the territories and (imagined) communities (Anderson 1991) with which they identified. The only choices I witnessed participants wearing were the official Catalan flag or the *estelada* -the pro-independence-flag (unofficial)[9]. Spanish or European flags were never used. Despite being an individual choice, I found differing trends between the two colles, which suggests that the way the teams constructed their sense of belonging to a territory was done collectively rather than individually. For example, in Vilatèxtil, some participants wore a Catalan or an *estelada* flag on the back of their official shirts, although this was not generalized. In the case of Mediterrani, in contrast, almost no one wore any version of a Catalan flag (see the back of participants' shirts in the image below to appreciate the lack of flags). The rarity of the Catalan flag on these participants' shirts also contrasts with the use that *Castellers de Vilafranca*, the top 1 team in Catalonia, made of this symbol (in the second image below, you may appreciate the amount of flags in the back of participants' shirts)

The different use of display does not necessarily mean that Mediterrani or Vilatèxtil participants did not identify (or identified less) as Catalans or with Catalonia than Vilafranca participants did. On the contrary, both Mediterrani and Vilatèxtil participants were highly engaged with events supporting Catalan culture at a local level, and most of them supported and attended the September 11 demonstrations for Catalonia's sovereignty. Instead, the different trends suggest alternative ways of constructing (and then displaying) a *casteller* identity rooted in a place that does not necessarily scale up to represent larger territories or imagined communities.

The example above has shown how teams readily and collectively identified with their immediate towns and neighborhoods on their *casteller* shirts as the sites of representation (often more explicitly than others) and that scaling up this representation was not always true of all teams. In the following examples, I show how *casteller* teams negotiated and shaped the image they displayed of and to their communities. During the summer of 2016, there was a conflict

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[9] Very sporadically I saw someone wearing the LGTBI flag at the back of their shirts.

Figure 5.4: Above, Mediterrani members not wearing Catalan flags. Below, Vilafranca members wearing Catalan flags on their backs. Aida Ribot, 2016

concerning the *Castellers de Barcelona* team (different from Mediterrani team) because some of its participants wore a t-shirt with the popular lodging business Airbnb on its back as a sponsor. Wearing sponsors on the t-shirt (not the exhibition shirt!) is very common in many teams and in many cases, these t-shirts display banking names and businesses who support them economically without much hesitancy[10]. Airbnb was the center of attention at that time for illegally renting touristic apartments -it was negatively sanctioned by the city council- and for the problems that even the legal renting of apartments was generating in many neighborhoods (increase of renting rates, gentrification, noise and degradation of neighborhood's quality of life, etc). Many *casteller* teams, individuals, civic associations, and political figures criticized the decision of the Castellers de Barcelona to accept this sponsorship: "**actuar en el barrio Gòtic con esta camiseta es directamente un insulto a los vecinos que son expulsados cada día**" -performing in the Gothic neighborhood with this shirt is a direct insult to the neighbors who are expelled every day (resident quoted in Cabanes 2016). After all the criticism, the team decided not to use the t-shirt anymore and to cease any economic relationship with the company.

Figure 5.5: Airbnb sponsor on Castellers de Barcelona. Cabanes 2016

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[10] You may check back on chapter 3 the difference in meaning between team t-shirt and shirts in representing membership and why this difference makes sponsors on t-shirt an accepted practice.

Something similar happened with the Mediterrani team. In 2016, they were asked to participate in a banking television ad by one of the leading Spanish banks (BBVA). The slogan of the ad was "sumar multiplica[11]" - summing multiplies, in relation to the merger with (or better, the purchase of) the Catalan bank 'Catalunya Caixa'. Mediterrani's participation in the ad did not create as much media attention and criticism as the Airbnb sponsorship, but many in the actual team (and others) were against this decision and criticized it (despite the economic benefits that it entailed for the team). I was not doing fieldwork in Mediterrani when this happened, so I could not properly grasp the tensions and comments that some reported in later interviews with me about this issue. Abel, one participant from Mediterrani, said that the goal of the bank to display *casteller* images was to convey the idea of "**somos de los vuestros**" -we're on your side - but that *castellers* would not buy that (literally and metaphorically) to trust the bank: "**que pongan tu imagen de lo que tú haces (...) por amor al arte (...) como arma publicitaria para que parezca que el banco es más catalán...a mí no me hace gracia**" - 'that they put your image of what you do for the sake of it as an advertising claim so that the bank looks more Catalan...I don't find it amusing'. Another Mediterrani participant commented that if the team regularly accepted performing for businesses (see more in chapter 6), it should not be shameful to do it for a banking ad: *"es va fer molta vergonya, molta befa, quan Mediterrani va cobrar uns diners per fer un anunci del BBVA (...) i tampoc crec que fos tan vergonyós-* there was a lot of shame and mockery when Mediterrani earned some money to make the BBVA ad (...) and I don't think it was that shameful. This participant also added that he would prefer making ads for other entities like the Red Cross, which suggests that the BBVA ad (despite his acceptance) was not his ideal choice in representing *casteller* values at an ethical level.

The Airbnb incident and the banking situation evidenced contrasting ideas about the role of *casteller* teams in embodying a city's (or neighborhood's or community's) values in relation to practices (political, economic) that apparently threatened the very same communities. It also

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[11] These two words can be read both in Catalan and in Castilian. Only the rest of the information in the actual poster or televised ad can give the context of whether it is in Catalan or Castilian.

Figure 5.6: Banking ad www.bbva.es

highlighted the boundaries and limitations that were seemingly non-existent before this incident in constructing a sense of local identity that represented the community's identity and evidenced a growing tension with the idea of *casteller* activity catering mainly to tourists.

The construction of local identities in the teams varied greatly in Vilatèxtil and Mediterrani. In Mediterrani, the team used several strategies to construct a sense of local identity rooted in the neighborhood they represented that differed from Vilatèxtil. Mediterranians participated in discourses critiquing the local problems that the neighborhood had, which were part of a broader national and global debate. The construction of a local identity took a strategy that was visible and overt to participants and outsiders in Mediterrani. The process of distinction came in part because the number of *casteller* teams in Barcelona city has been increasing in the last decade to the point that some participants wondered if it was worth having so many different teams in the city. As a large, urban city with many neighborhoods, Barcelona has included different *casteller* teams throughout the mid and late 20th century, now in neighborhoods that have not

had a *casteller* tradition and that are associated with social sectors that have traditionally not been part of this practice (immigrants, upper classes). The first *casteller* team in Barcelona was founded in 1969 and used 'Barcelona' in its name. Most *casteller* teams use the name of the town or city where they were founded and the communities they serve to mark where and who they represent. Thus the foundation and name of the Barcelona team suggested the representation of the whole city and its people. However, although the Barcelona team does not seem to specify any particular neighborhood, it rehearses in and draws people from a specific neighborhood that is not typically identified with Barcelona. Except for some cases, most of the towns and cities with *casteller* representation only have one team. This usually facilitates the large number of participants needed to build higher towers. The emergence of a second or third team is usually the result of the expansion of large cities[12] and disagreements of various sorts and origin among participants (differences in technical aspects, goals, role of the team, friendships, etc).

Other Barcelona teams emerged in the 80s and 90s but used the names of the neighborhoods they represented instead of the name of the city. The interesting part of this is that just as city neighborhoods and the people who live there often become stereotyped and iconized (very clearly aligned with class), so do *casteller* teams and their participants. During fieldwork I overheard how participants made comments regarding other casteller teams' participants. For example, Eva (40) from the Mediterrani team, whispered to me very seriously that she had noted that in general more participants from a different team smelled worse "*fan més pudoreta a les camises*" -they stink in their shirts- than the ones in Mediterrani. The head of the Mediterrani team also mentioned in an interview that he never felt identified with the people of the team he had joined during his first *casteller* experience, which was not in Mediterrani. In this other team, he said that: "*el perfil social, en aquella època, era una mica quillo*" -the social profile in that time was a little gypsy[13] . He explained that he had a hard time finding people of his same

[12] In 2018, Barcelona had a bit more than 1,600,000 population and Mediterrani had 121,000 inhabitants (IDESCAT).

[13] This is not usually used to refer to people from a Roma background, but a clothing and speaking style (see Woolard 2016: 230, 233)

"*perfil social*" -social profile- when he was a "*universitari, petit burgès, d'esquerres*" -a college student, petit-bourgeois, leftist. In the Mediterrani team, he already had some friends with whom he hung out, which suggests that the social profile there was closer to his, and according to him, this facilitated his entrance into the team.

Both the Vilatèxtil and Mediterrani *colla* presumably represented the city/neighborhood and the people who lived there. During my fieldwork in both teams, I was added to the Whatsapp youth group. In these groups, participants posted reminders of *diades castelleres* or Sunday exhibitions and asked questions about time, place, or transportation for exhibitions. They also commented on other teams' successes in terms of tower achievements, attempts or final results. They shared pictures and videos with successful or failed tower attempts from Mediterrani and other teams and commented about them. This was also a place where sporadically people offered some temporary and on-demand jobs. In the case of Mediterrani only, the Whatsapp group was a resource for the participants to seek flatmates, rent rooms, sell or donate their own stuff, and find local services in the neighborhood. Most of the young people in the team lived in Mediterrani and nearby (despite not being born there) or wished to live there, many sharing apartments among them. The Whatsapp group allowed them to know about local, family-run, or historical shops and services like a hardware shop, a bicycle repair shop, a place to print on clothes, etc. All the requests that young participants made inquired about services in Mediterrani, not in any other Barcelona neighborhood, and they sometimes rejected or questioned going to big franchises.

As you may remember from chapter 2, the Mediterrani neighborhood has experienced unprecedented changes in the last 20 years. In particular, it has seen how the prices for apartments (both for renting and buying) have skyrocketed. This has pushed many long-time residents to move out of this neighborhood and to seek other places more affordable in other Barcelona neighborhoods. At the same time, tourists have been populating these apartments with the help of companies like Airbnb. This has led to the shut down of local services that are no longer needed because the consumers' needs have changed. This process of "touristification" has been studied

in other similar cities and neighborhoods (Van der Borg, Costa., Gotti 1996, Gutiérrez, García-Palomares, Romanillos, Salas-Olmedo 2017). The *casteller* team of Mediterrani, together with other cultural associations in the neighborhood, has been trying to reclaim the neighborhood from a social and economic situation that was seemingly threatening its authentic identity. Many felt that Mediterrani had to remain a different place from what Barcelona had become to Barcelonans: a place overcrowded with tourism that does not care about its inhabitants, and a place where the priority is tourist needs and expectations rather than the people who live there. For example, Abel, the Mediterrani participant from Granada, described the city of Barcelona as having two faces: one as "**cosmopolita**" -cosmopolitan- and "**inhóspita**" -inhospitable, aimed at the tourists and visitors where "**conoces gente de todos los lados menos Catalanes**" -you meet people from everywhere except Catalans; and the second face of the city as more "*auténtica*" -authentic-; the face you locate in the "**antros** " -taverns-, "**plazas**", "**asociaciones**" -associations- and in the "**cultura popular**" -the popular culture. Abel's characterization of the two faces of Barcelona echoes the discourses found in the Mediterrani team. However, cosmopolitanism is also regarded as a rather negative aspect that makes the city inhospitable for someone who wants to live there. Abel stated that he would have left the city had he not joined *castells* and met Catalans.

The description that Abel uses to define Barcelona resonates with studies of cosmopolitanism that criticize the fact that elites have access to the economic resources and the privilege to move around countries and to consume culture as a commodity (Vertovec and Cohen 2002, Calhoun 2003, Friedman 2007, Comaroff and Comaroff 2009, Woolard 2016: 152). This perspective emphasizes the idea that local culture is commodified or consumed. Abel contrasted that image of the inhospitable Barcelona with one that emphasized the spaces that usually contribute to community building such as taverns, public plazas, and civic associations. He linked the notion of authenticity with physical places. It was only in these spaces where he could find Catalans, as he stated. His portrayal of the "two Barcelonas" comes from his own experience as a city dweller there, first as an outsider who engaged superficially with the city's main attractions and people in

210

a similar situation as him, but not with locals; then as an insider who was able to create a new network with local friends, learning Catalan, and doing *castells*. Abel's characterization of the two Barcelonas seems to imply that these are actually two completely different and exclusive worlds, that one has to find the "authenticity" of Barcelona somewhere else.

Teressa, a 28-year-old participant in the Mediterrani team, pushed that representation further to explain what happened when these two seemingly independent worlds collided or blended. Having spent 20 years in the team and having lived in Mediterrani almost all her life up until now (she could no longer pay Mediterrani rents), Teressa felt that the "*personalitat*" -personality- of the neighborhood and the feeling of belonging to a town or village "*sentiment de vila*" -feeling of [being in/belonging to a] village- was getting lost. In particular, she mentioned that small businesses were closing and that a lot of "*gent de fora*" -outsiders- who do not "*arrelen*" -root- themselves in the neighborhood was a problem for that sense of being in a village. The example she used to identify this lack of rooting to the neighborhood was language. Teressa explained that she felt hurt - "*em dol*" - when she saw in the neighborhood a business called "welcome [to] Barcelona" (in English) and that she did not like seeing so many architects or designer offices showing their big, empty spaces to passers-by. She described a change in the neighborhood toward attracting English-speaking tourism and a trend to start hip, liberal profession businesses that can afford to rent big spaces at a time when small businesses like "*merceries*" -craft or notions store- cannot compete given the high rents. In her characterization of the Mediterrani neighborhood, Teressa showed some of the consequences of blending the two Barcelona faces or 'worlds': whenever there was no intention to "root" or participate in the "authenticity" of one of the worlds, this seemed to "eat" the second world. The insistence of Mediterrani participants on keeping all services and exchanges as local as possible was, therefore, aimed at countering what they saw as the dominant tendency to create "non-places"[14] (Augé 1992).

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[14] "If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place." (1992: 78)

The Mediterrani team and its participants contributed to the construction of a discourse that emphasized the localized sense of identity rooted in the neighborhood in clear opposition to what Barcelona city represented to them. This clearly contrasted with Vilatèxtil strategies in construction this sense of local identity. Although Vilatèxtil has historically had a territorial/administrative rivalry with another town because they both contended to be the capital city of the province, *casteller* participants never referred to it as a tool to shape their distinction[15]. The fact that this "rival" town has one of the most competitive *casteller* teams made Vilatèxtil participants not compare with them: "*són d'una altra lliga*" -they're from another league-, in reference to the idea that Vilatèxtil could not really compete with such a good team (the teams were not comparable to them). In fact, Vilatèxtil participants often measured themselves against Mediterrani, despite the differences in their communities. Most participants in Vilatèxtil (see chapter 2) were locally born, and their sense of belonging and recognition did not seem threatened by ambiguous territorial boundaries, allegiances or other communities as happened with Mediterrani. In Vilatèxtil, participants did not have a sense of social and cultural 'threat' that could jeopardize their casteller identity as representing the city. However, unlike Mediterrani, Vilatèxtil did not perform in neighborhoods outside the town's center. This helped create the association that participants in Vilatèxtil were mostly (upper) middle classes who have traditionally been linked with the town's center, as one informant outside of the casteller community suggested.

In the case of Mediterrani, where political boundaries and individual trajectories are not always clear, granted or recognized, both participants and the team itself mobilized resources to shape a local identity distinct from other teams that represented other neighborhoods. Most of the participants were born in Barcelona (not in Mediterrani), so their construction of a local Mediterrani *casteller* and citizen identity was more readily regarded as a choice that could be shaped and negotiated, regardless of the origin of the participants. The next sub-section focuses on

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[15] Today, people outside the casteller community from both towns may joke about which town is supposed to be the capital of the region (even if both cities now share it), but it does not go beyond that. Joking evidences the underlying tension in regards to this issue.

how teams and participants, especially in the Mediterrani, mobilized different images to perform and construct this sense of rooted local identity.

5.3.1   Distinctive, independent value

Some participants in this team proudly wore Mediterrani-themed t-shirts whenever they did not have to wear the official outfit for a performance. This was easily seen during the main festivities of this neighborhood when participants helped run the bar at the main plaza. One of the t-shirts read "Mediterrani is not Barcelona" and had a barcode on top of it, an illustrated example of commodification and counter-branding. This slogan emulated another one popularized in Catalan soccer stadiums in the past decade, where fans hung banners reading "Catalonia is not Spain." Both slogans used English instead of Catalan or Spanish, which suggests that the message was targeted at an English-speaking audience, like tourists in this case. The fact that the Mediterrani slogan read in English also assumed that locals would have a basic level of English language skills to understand the comment in reproducing the wide known first banner. Using English-language slogans in non-English speaking communities like the Mediterrani neighborhood (or Catalonia in general) often reproduces the "perception of the role of English as a global lingua franca" (Coupland 2013: 477) and it may evidence the communicative purpose and its addressee. This tendency is both sought and feared in both linguistic minorities (and majorities) in an increasingly globalized world (Bastardas 2007). As Bastardas pointed out, these glocal communities, but especially the minorities, face pressure for "*poliglotar-se per competir socioeconòmicament*" -to become a polyglot to compete socio-economically- and "*no perdre la propia identitat lingüística del grup*" -not to lose its own linguistic identity of the group ' (ibid: 38). The Mediterrani slogan is also ambiguous in the sense that it uses two place names that are also the names of *casteller* teams in Barcelona. Given that the t-shirt does not specify whether it refers to the neighborhood or to the *casteller* team, the slogan could be read both senses. But the fact that English was the language of communication suggests that the addressee is not necessarily

someone local. The second t-shirt that a participant wore during the Mediterrani neighborhood festivities read "*República Independent del Mediterrani*" -Independent Republic of Mediterrani. In this one, the slogan used the Catalan language, and it evoked a popular slogan of the famous Swedish warehouse IKEA "*benvinguts a la república independent de casa meva*" -welcome to the independent republic of my home. In this case, Catalan was used instead of English. Since the IKEA slogans were broadcast both in Spanish and Catalan, the Catalan use in the Mediterrani slogan did not necessarily challenge any previous linguistic uses of the original slogan. However, in a neighborhood where there are more and more English-speaking tourists and migrants, the slogan did challenge the linguistic repertoire of the neighborhood. The claim of Mediterrani's independence is similar to the recent demands of the Catalan government and a large sector of the Catalan society for Catalonia's independence within a republican system. This Mediterrani slogan, therefore, seems to play with a popular slogan of an international company like IKEA *and* with the recent political claims for Catalan independence. The use of the word "republic" suggests that the slogan is mobilizing concepts that have more to do with the territorial and political debate. The slogan seems to claim the independence of Mediterrani neighborhood from Barcelona *city*, not in the ambiguous way as we saw with the first example. In both cases, creators and wearers assumed the audience would understand the humor and make the intertextual connections to earlier slogans. The two examples show how some participants of the Mediterrani team identified with the neighborhood by circulating images of local independence and authenticity in contrast to Barcelona city (and possibly its *casteller* team). By drawing from and using semiotic tools like the use of English or the association with international companies like IKEA, they built their local identities as Mediterrani and not Barcelona, they evidenced the globalized frame of their lives within its locality. These types of strategies, however, are used precisely for "the intensification of the commitment to the local" (Hall 1999), rather than its fading. The concept of 'glocal' precisely highlights the 'heterogeneity' or the diversity of the local and its characteristics as part of the globalizing (or glocalizing) process (see Robertson 1994). The following examples show this

process.

One of the most striking visual materials that the Mediterrani team mobilized to assert local distinction and independence from other Barcelona teams was the circulation of a passport image when the team had a joint rehearsal with the *Castellers of Barcelona.* For this event, the Whatsapp group and official team's email sent an image that looked like an ordinary passport's front cover and had the Mediterrani identifying image in a shield. This one had a crown on top of it, and some wings on the sides (see image below). The text message that accompanied this image said: "*Aquest divendres agafa el passaport que baixem a Barcelona (…)*" - This Friday take the passport because we're going down to Barcelona (...). Geographically, Mediterrani is uphill from both the touristic center of Barcelona and the home neighborhood of the Castellers of Barcelona. The image of the passport was circulated through Whatsapp groups, emails, and other social media posts by the team again days before the La Mercè festivity, when the Barcelona team (not Mediterrani) hosted the main casteller exhibition in representation of the Barcelona city. This was obviously a hyperbolic joke since no one needs a passport to move around Barcelona, but it highlighted the local distinction and distance from Barcelona.

5.3.2   Historical and authentic value

Another example of how Mediterrani participants constructed their sense of neighborhood identity was by using popular culture referents. In particular, they used the Franco-Belgian comic series of "Astérix" ("Asterix i Obèlix" in Catalan) that was highly popularized in Catalonia amongst kids and youngsters with the French-Canadian television series. The main Catalan television channel (TV3) dubbed it in Catalan and broadcast those cartoons for years. For those who might not know or remember, the story revolved around a small village in the ancient province of Gaul (France) around 50BC that resisted the invasion of the Roman Empire with the help of two main characters who had extraordinary and magical powers (wit, physical strength, humor, etc.). The ups and downs of their efforts to counteract the unstoppable power of the
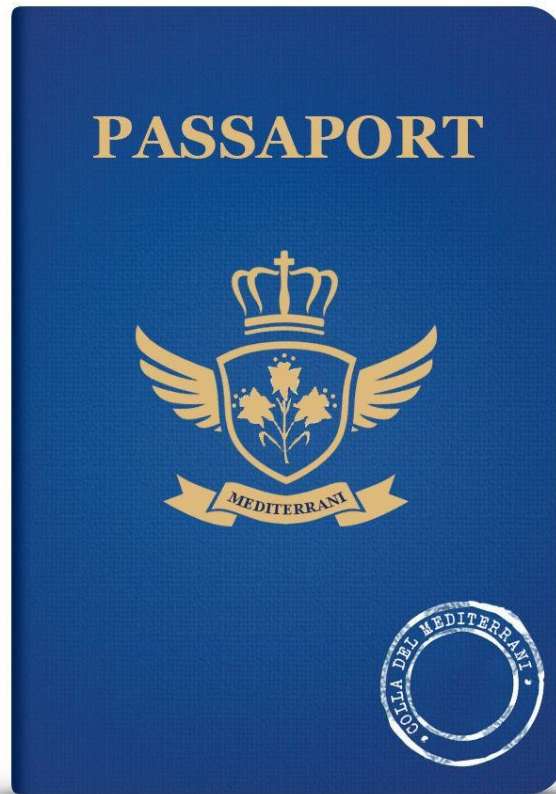
Figure 5.7: Colla del Mediterrani passport

Roman Empire filled each episode. The gated Gaul village is portrayed as small and circular, surrounded by four Roman villages constantly threatening to invade. The small houses of the village are made of clay, stones or wood, with roofs of straw, thus forming irregularly shaped constructions. There are also green areas with benches around the houses, and there is no obvious center of power in the form of an imposing building. The inhabitants of the village know and help each other and usually make village luncheons. This hut-like image of housing and the kind of natural, idealized French village contrasts with the large overpopulated city where Caesar lives and dictates orders. In the Roman city, the center of the power is represented in palaces that have large empty spaces, high ceilings, smooth marble floors, walls, and columns. The apparent domination and strength of the Roman Empire, with its hundreds of look-alike men forming legions, its calculated strategy, and its technological advance with arms always fails at controlling

216

the small Gaul town, despite the latter's clear disadvantage in number, physical and strategic preparedness, and weaponry. In contrast to the standardized Romans, the Gauls are portrayed as diverse, humorous people, each with different skills. The two main characters' abilities are often enhanced by a druid who uses natural and magical elements. All of the inhabitants contribute to more or less degree to counteract the attacks of the Empire.

During the festivities of La Mercè and the biannual Casteller Contest in 2016, the Mediterrani team advertised the events by using the same rhetoric and style as these popular cartoons. The posters for these exhibitions had a blue background with large white letters, and a font reminiscent of the cartoons, with a slogan that reads "Gals Mediterranis" -Mediterranian Gauls, with a hashtag before it and the wings from Asterix's helmet at the top. Right below this first slogan, there appeared the main title of the poster. This one said: "*primer Barcino, despres Tarraco*" -first Barcino, then Tarraco- (see image below). These are the ancient names of modern Barcelona and Tarragona, which were strategic places for the Roman conquest of the peninsula. Here the slogan also describes the sequence of the competitive exhibitions that were to come, since the first exhibition was to perform in Barcelona during the La Mercè festivity, and then in Tarragona, home of the *casteller* tradition, for the biannual contest just one week later. The Barcelona exhibition serves as a preview of what is coming in the actual biannual contest.[16] Both exhibitions are considered important for the Mediterrani team because of the amount of local and international attention they get and because of the competition amongst teams. Drawing on the much-loved Asterix motif was also a strategy for rallying (new) participants to join in supporting the team during rehearsals and the actual events.

In the middle of the poster was a simplified map of Catalonia with a magnifying glass on the Barcelona area that showed the villages and names of the other Barcelona teams in ancient Latin. In the center was the Mediterrani team, represented by three huts and surrounded by a circular wall, very much like the Asterix village. The team's village was labeled 'invicta'

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[16] Some participants commented that this is often used as a strategy to scare other teams or look weaker for the contest.

217

(invincible or unconquered). Although Mediterrani was not really an "invincible" team, the image suggests that the neighborhood is still resisting the globalizing forces that others have succumbed. The map also depicts Tarragona (as "Tarraco") Roman arena. At the bottom of the poster appeared "#*orgull* Mediterrani" '#Mediterranean pride."[17] It is noteworthy that the pride they claim is specifically Mediterranean, not a more general Catalan, Barcelona, or *casteller* one.

Figure 5.8: Exhibition poster from Mediterrani

Although the general purpose of exhibition posters is to inform participants about the date and site of the exhibition with much less elaboration, this poster was particularly interesting because it showed how the team used the popular culture still present in most of the participants' minds to circulate images of nostalgia, resistance to domination, and local identity, but with a modern touch. Identifying themselves with the cartoon Gaul village and their fight against the Romans is also a light and humorous means to convey their message of distinctiveness.

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[17] In other versions of this poster, there was a small banner at the bottom where this last hashtag was included. It also said: "vine a fer pinya amb Mediterrani" -come to make pinya with the Mediterrani team-, the official slogan of the team.

Although Vilatèxtil also built its identity on a sense of authenticity, this was not so explicitly based on a political territory like the town, much less in opposition to another team or community. Vilatèxtil's quality was based on the team's accomplishment on becoming a "*colla de nou*" -team of nine-, as only a few teams had reached this level. Identifying as a *colla de nou* was relevant for its members to modify some of their practices, discourses, and display (see, for example, the alcohol ban on chapter 3), and the way they marketed themselves to the larger community during exhibitions to attract new members. In this case, they had merchandising that besides just bearing the name of the team, as is usually the case in all teams, it read "*som colla de nou*" -we're a team of nine. Another type of t-shirt that they sold was one with the *casteller* values on it (see image below). Unlike Mediterrani, I never saw Vilatèxtil participants displaying *casteller* identity themes and values that exploited any opposition with another team or city, although I have heard of and seen these t-shirts on non-*casteller* citizens.

Figure 5.9: Vilatèxtil merchandising. Aida Ribot, 2016

Finally, as part of the work on distinction and independence, the Mediterrani team encouraged a discourse of authenticity rooted in the space they claimed as theirs. In particular, this discourse revolved around a recently developed insistence on calling the neighborhood a

'*village*.' One of the first corrections I got when I started doing fieldwork in the Mediterrani team was the way I was referring to the neighborhood. This was especially so amongst the youth groups of the team. As I was explaining my project to some of the participants during the first days of my fieldwork in this team, a young senior participant cut me off to tell me laughingly that I could not use the word "*barri*" -neighborhood- to refer to Mediterrani. Instead, I should use the word 'vila' -village. The group that I was speaking with told me that many people really disliked hearing the term 'neighborhood' because, on the one hand, they did not consider Mediterrani to be (just) a neighborhood, but rather a formerly independent village; and on the other hand, they thought that by using the term 'neighborhood', people were promoting the loss of Mediterrani's authenticity: "*perd identitat*" -it makes it lose identity.

As is true of a number of other current Barcelona neighborhoods, Mediterrani was originally a separate town that became annexed to Barcelona city by the end of the 19th century. However, the insistence on the use of "village" and censorship of "neighborhood" is actually a relatively recent trend. It is aimed at promoting the idea that Mediterrani is something different, more authentic and distinguishable than any other Barcelona neighborhood and a different political unit. Ironically it appears to follow the global logic of branding and evidences the tension and contradictions of this identity construction. I found proof of the novelty of this trend among some older participants in the team from the '*venerables*' group (around 50 years old). They had been living in the neighborhood for all their lives and stated that they were surprised because they had never heard about this usage before. They usually referred to the place by its proper name, 'Mediterrani.' This suggests that the trend was promoted and supported by the younger generation and by outsiders of Mediterrani. Teressa, the young senior participant mentioned above, confided to me that among the administrative board of the team, they played a game in which each time someone said the word '*barri*,' this person had to pay a fine. She did not disclose the amount, but said that it was a way to reinforce the use of 'village.' This game was based on the popular "swear jar" and thus promoted a negative connotation of the word "*barri*" as if it was

comparable to a swear word. Teressa linked this recent trend of protection or what she called the "*boom* Mediterrani" 'Mediterranian boom' to the apparent loss of identity of the village in the hands of hardcore tourism. Therefore, it is plausible that the trend appeared recently as a counter-strategy to oppose the homogenizing effects of a universalizing cosmopolitanism (Briggs 2005), and to promote the distinctive, historically rooted authenticity that many thought once defined the district. At the same time, the trend is equally likely to be part of the kind of cultural branding and commodification that Duchene and Heller (2012) analyzed, among others, and that will be addressed in chapter 6.

5.4   Claiming urban spaces of representation

During my fieldwork, I realized that institutional plazas (those where the town halls are placed) were in general stereotypical representations of the neighborhood or city's social and public core. *Casteller* performances usually took place in those institutional plazas, especially when there was an exhibition to celebrate a team's anniversary or the main festivities of that town or neighborhood. However, sometimes this was not the case, and other spaces were used for *casteller* activity. In this section, I am going to show how *casteller* teams engaged with the spaces where they performed in order to construct a sense of belonging and representativity of the practice with the city and neighborhood. I will also show how other activities besides tower building complemented some of the teams' claims to spaces in a way that offered contradictions and tensions to some aspects of their discourse, especially in the case of Mediterrani.

In towns or cities where there were more than one team like in the case of Mediterrani, plazas often marked and shaped *casteller* allegiances, limitations, and authority. While I was doing fieldwork in the Vilatèxtil team, we went for a Sunday exhibition to Vilafranca, a town that is famous for having one of the best *casteller* teams in Catalonia. Some of the most popular *casteller* televised events are hosted in the main plaza of that town, where the town hall is located.

Nonetheless, and to my surprise, we were not performing with that team but with the second team of that town, which I did not know existed until then. We arrived at a small plaza in the middle of that town. It was long and rectangular rather than square, with different areas, benches and trees and surrounded by the town's narrow streets. It looked more like the typical small neighborhood plaza where neighbors bring their children to play, walk their dogs or just sit to chat with each other. It was clearly not the famous plaza I had seen on TV. I asked several participants from Vilatèxtil why we were not performing in the city council plaza, and all of them told me that only the first team performed there. While in the Sunday exhibition, I overheard a fellow Vilatèxtil participant comment on a text message he received from a friend who was in the first team of Vilafranca. This fellow apparently had commented to Vilafranca friend that we were performing with the second team, and the Vilafranca friend replied that 'that plaza was for losers' in reference to the internal competition they had with the second team of the town. The friend's comments showed that the plazas often signified a team's achievements (how good or bad teams do, the authority they hold to represent certain plazas, the institutional support they receive, etc). These achievements at the same time legitimize in turn both the plazas and the team's own activity as members of the broader *casteller* community. The public relations officer of Mediterrani and founder of the team once said in reference to the types of towers that are chosen[18] to be built in plazas: "*depèn una miqueta de la plaça en la que actuis (. . .) Hi ha places amb més solera i menys solera i la solera es guanya amb els castells que s'hi fan en aquella plaça: castells que et puguin fer les altres colles o castells que pugui fer la propia colla*"- it depends a little bit on the plaza you perform (. . .) there are plazas with more traditional character and with less traditional character and the traditional character is earned with the towers that are built in that plaza: towers that other teams may build to you or towers that your own team may build. His comment shows that the kinds of towers that teams build do not necessarily depend on the capacity of the team to perform them, but on the plaza where they perform. Said differently, if a team performs in a plaza

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[18] Usually, the head of the team together with other members of technical groups decide on the types of towers.

that has a traditional character, it will bring 'better' (meaning higher, more complex) towers that will also draw more people (both to the *pinyes* of each team and to the audience). In the particular example of Vilafranca, the plaza that the second team regularly used did not have any institutional representation or authority in contrast to the popular (and institutional) plaza that usually hosts the first team's feats. This could be read as an immobile aspect of what plazas mean and represent to castellers. However, and according to the Mediterrani PR, the traditional character of a plaza can be earned, and thus the meaning of the plaza changed to have more "solera", if teams bring good towers. This idea supports the competitive discourse and aspect of *castells* in the contemporary era.

In the case of the Mediterrani team, they performed in different spaces around the neighborhood. On the one hand, they exhibited and hosted regular Sunday exhibitions in streets and plazas all around the neighborhood. On the other hand, they performed in the neighborhood's institutional plaza, a site where the historical neighborhood's administrative building is placed. During the time when I was in Mediterrani, which was the second half of the *casteller* season, the team did not host many regular Sunday exhibitions in their neighborhood. However, a quick look at their calendar of 2016 reveals that all the regular exhibitions hosted by this team (three in total) took place in other plazas and streets of the neighborhood. The "special" events, as I may call them, in which Mediterrani did perform in the local institutional plaza[19] (four in total) happened during the neighborhood's festivities, the team's anniversary, or the team's end of season festivity. These events celebrated the team's continued existence, its identity, and its participation in the neighborhood.

Casteller participants in the Mediterrani team enjoyed and appreciated performing in the local institutional plaza, as the plaza is officially called with the exact same name as the team and participants referred to it as "*la nostra plaça*" -our plaza with great pride. The fact

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[19] Although the administrative building has some legal competency on some neighborhood's issues such as cultural programs, civic centers, and other services, it does not have full independence to govern itself, as Barcelona city council does. This was perhaps evidenced when I was able to access the building as explained early in this chapter.

that this plaza has the historical building where the former city council operated (before the Mediterrani neighborhood was annexed to Barcelona city) makes it especially important for them. This local Mediterrani plaza contrasts with Barcelona city's (and *casteller* team) official 'Plaça Sant Jaume', where both the city hall and the Catalan government are located. Some 'special' exhibitions by the Barcelona team (like its anniversary) were performed there. The most obvious example of this distinction is found during the La Mercè festivities (Barcelona's *festa major),* when every year the Castellers de Barcelona host the event. Although I do not know for sure whether or not the Mediterrani team *could* actually host an exhibition there, the truth is that at least during 2016 it never did. During my time at Mediterrani, I did not hear or note any comments or complaints regarding the 'impossibility' of hosting a Sunday exhibition in Plaça Sant Jaume. On the contrary, many of them were proud of having another plaza that they could call their own and that distinguished them from the Barcelona team. This selected use of spaces strengthened and tied the association of the Mediterrani *casteller* identity with the meaning of the local institutional plaza and its neighborhood (either because they did not have the choice or because they chose it to be like that). As Gupta and Ferguson put it: "the identity of a place emerges by the intersection of its specific involvement in a system of hierarchically organized spaces with its cultural construction as a community or locality" (Gupta and Ferguson 1992: 8).

Similarly, during regular Sunday exhibitions in Vilatèxtil, the team invited other teams to perform in the market plaza. This was a very central, large, and open space in the town where the public market is located but had no institutional representation or building. Actually, most of the Vilatèxtil Sunday exhibitions happened in the market plaza, even (and unlike Mediterrani) during the team's anniversary in June and during the Vilatèxtil town's event "Festa i Tradició," which included other folkloric troupes of Vilatèxtil such as c*orrefocs, bastoners* or *diables*. During the first hosting Sunday event of the season in March, which they called the "*estrena*" or opening, the team performed in the city council's plaza, but not the one where there are balconies from where authorities could stand; they used the rear plaza, which offered a lot of visibility to the public but

no institutional representation. Only during Vilatèxtil's town main festivities, the *casteller* team performed in the city hall plaza, with authorities looking on from the balcony.

In the case of the Vilatèxtil team, the use of the institutional plaza was reduced to the town's main festivities, not even the team's. This decision did not come from the team itself, but from the government that was operating in 2016. The former head of Vilatèxtil told me that they usually "*triem la plaça de la vila pq té una importància major, és cèntrica i hi sempre hi ha gent, públic*" -we choose the town hall's plaza because it has a greater relevance, it's central and there are always people, the public". However, in 2016, the Catalan socialist party (Partit Socialista de Catalunya -PSC) was governing the town and, according to the head of the team, the mayor "*no deixava que es fessin actes a la plaça davant l'ajuntament que no fossin per la Festa Major*" -[he] didn't allow events at the plaça in front of the town's hall except for the ones for the main town's festivities. Although I do not have the official version of the mayor, this decision suggests that the local government regimented the use of the institutional plaza to the point that it did not allow cultural activities to perform in representation of the city. The fact that team usually wanted to perform in the institutional plaza (and that they could not) suggests that the team's identity, which aimed at representing the city's, was restricted and could not be performed in that space. It also shows that they had to negotiate other non-institutionalized spaces, usually located in other central areas: "*Quan es tracta d'actuacions fora de les grans diades, busquem alguna altra plaça on ens convé perquè algun comerç o entitat ens paga algo de diners, o paga les ambulàncies, o algun pica-pica, o ens convé a nosaltres potenciar la zona i fer de reclam de nous castellers*"- when it's about performances outside special exhibitions, we seek some other plaza that is convenient to us because a shop or business pays us some money, or pays for the ambulances, or for snacks, or that is convenient for us to strengthen the area and to use as a way to get more *castellers*. The selective use of plazas evidences different motivations (from the institutions and the teams), strategies, contradictions, and limitations that shape and challenge *casteller* participation and identity display in public life.

Vilatèxtil technically represented an entire city, which implied representing the different neighborhoods, sensibilities, and social sectors. However, Vilatèxtil's construction of local identity went through a subtle engagement with Vilatèxtil's town center only, without performing in neighborhoods with different social realities (like those with higher immigration rates, or popularly known for their working-class population) or without including them in an explicit way in their campaigns. The lack of performances in the city's other neighborhoods has sometimes portrayed the team as representing only the central downtown area, which is popularly associated with Catalan-born, Catalan-speaking, and middle-class sectors, as an outsider once told me.

5.4.1 Shaping the social meaning of public spaces

Despite the legitimate use of public spaces for *casteller* performances, there were other activities performed by *castellers* that created some tension and that evidenced different ways of claiming public spaces and displaying local identity for Mediterrani and Vilatèxtil teams. Except for public exhibitions and some exceptional rehearsals, daily participation in any *casteller* team is confined to that facility. The lack of routine visibility usually works against their goals, as *casteller* teams need to gather more and more people if they want to build higher towers. Public visibility is important because it reminds neighborhood passers-by and tourists that there is indeed a *casteller* team. The more the team is outside, the more opportunities it has to explain what they are doing and recruit new people. Many participants acknowledged being interested in joining the team because they had seen performances in their own town's plazas. Cèsar explained that during the main festivities of Vilatèxtil's town, for example, he saw the team performing[20] at the city hall plaza. He already knew some members involved with the team, and the public activities that the team usually did besides building towers during festivities (like drinking booths) were decisive to him to join. Public visibility was crucial to reinforce the sense that a team belonged to the actual place (the neighborhood or the city).

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[20] "els vaig veure actuar a la plaça de l'ajuntament"

The Mediterrani team asserted local identity and the values I have shown in the previous sections by reinforcing the idea that Mediterrani plazas and streets belonged to that community only. However, as Mediterrani saw themselves representing the neighborhood -or village-, they also claimed those spaces as their own. The team used the neighborhood festivities or the team's anniversary to perform outside the rehearsing facility. During the Mediterrani neighborhood -or "village" - festivities, the team rehearsed and performed for several days in the plaza that had the same name and that 'belonged' to them, as some senior members commented. It was August and the plaza, like Barcelona at large, had many visitors. One night after the rehearsal, the team had organized a dinner in the very same plaza. For that, they hired tables and chairs and filled half of the plaza for the *casteller* participants to sit and have dinner. Other times, the team had organized similar dinners or lunches "*de germanor*" -brotherhood/bonding dinner- in their rehearsing facility or in a public school recreation are[21].

However, during the neighborhood's main festival and when the Mediterrani streets and plazas were the most crowded of the year, the team opted for a very public dinner. The scene was almost comical because, in that central plaza of Mediterrani, several aspects clashed. There were dozens of *casteller* participants sitting at the tables, helping to set them up, sharing the food, standing up, and helping others while chatting, laughing, and singing songs. This was happening at around 9-10pm when the plaza and the streets were full of tourists and residents walking by, drinking, dancing to music, and taking pictures of the plaza decoration. The scene of us eating in a group, in the tables that filled most of the plaza, while crowds were passing by so narrowly against our chairs became a tourist object of attention. One visitor approached us and asked in Castilian if he could join the dinner, and a Mediterrani participant sitting next to me told him that this was only for the *casteller* participants. A couple of members with whom I was having dinner also commented in petit comité that they did not feel very comfortable there because all the tourists

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[21] Having dinners or lunches in the street is common among many other Mediterrani associations that are organized by street names. However, these events usually happen during other times of the year when the streets are not so crowded. Also, because the decorations of each participating street took up so much space, other street associations could not easily assemble tables and chairs to dine together while the main festivities last.

and residents were watching us. The explicit answer to the visitor clearly established a boundary between *casteller*s and non-castellers, which also included other Barcelona or neighborhood's residents. When the Mediterrani team sat to have dinner in "their" plaça amidst tourists and residents, they were modifying the social and cultural meaning of that space. It was no longer any other public plaza where visitors and locals could enjoy while drinking, sightseeing or during the festival. The dinner contrasted the image of familiarity, closeness, and attachment to the local people and culture that the team defended in other discourses with one that excluded groups (even residents) that did not belong to the team. This appropriation of the public space also contrasts with the "non-exclusive" and "open to everybody" definition of *casteller* performances that the former head of Vilatèxtil team stated at the beginning of this chapter.

The scene also very clearly reinforced the visual and ideological difference between the physically and temporary mobile tourists and residents, who were just passing by and not really remaining on that plaza, and the fixity and permanence of *castellers* in that space when they were sitting on the tables occupying the plaza. Although logistically it would have been complicated to provide food to all the people who were passing by, the fact that the team organized a dinner in a public plaza on such a busy night not only reinforced their claim on that public space but also transformed it. The event is an example of how social acts and practices can change the meaning of a space. In this particular case, the plaza stopped being an open, public space that welcomes everybody to join and participate in *casteller*-related activities to become one that clearly established a membership boundary and an exclusive/private use. This evidenced tensions and contradictions of the engagement with the local community and the use of public spaces. The example of Mediterrani's dinner contrasts highly with Vilatèxtil's anniversary dinner.

After the Sunday exhibition during the team's anniversary festivities in Vilatèxtil, the team headed towards the rehearsing facility, which was at a walking distance from the city center. The team had a special lunch inside the rehearsing facility and although it was for the team members only, it did not display the same appropriation practices on a public space that Mediterrani did.

Even on the city's main festivities, when the mayor allowed the performance of Vilatèxtil team in the institutional plaza, the team offered a snack to the invited teams. In that case, the snack took place in a very small, sort of plaza, next to the main one, that belongs to the city hall and that is usually gated. Although that event was somehow private even if the gates were never closed, participants did not feel bothered or observed. Their retreat to that space marked some membership boundary with non-*castellers* but it did not claim ownership and authority over the use of the institutional public plaza.

The appropriation of public spaces was not only done by sitting on and claiming a space but also while moving around the streets. For example, right after the *casteller* exhibition during Barcelona's La Mercè festival, the Mediterrani team headed towards their rehearsing facility through the streets of Barcelona in order to have a party. Participants were playing music with *casteller* instruments on the way there, which included getting on the subway. The musicians were at the front of this *cercavila* -parade- leading the group, and participants following them informally started playing "performance games" while singing Mediterrani-themed songs that revolved around reaffirming one's identity with the team. For example, some of the songs/games asked who was from Mediterrani or asked the audience to follow and do something specific such as sitting (when the leading voice said and did so), jumping, dancing in circles, etc. The participants who led the performances and songs were mostly part of the youth group. Participants, in general, were euphoric, performing these games, dances, and songs for themselves and for entertaining the general public. The number of participants involved in the *cercavila* crowded the narrow and ancient streets of downtown Barcelona, and that attracted a lot of attention from passers-by who reacted to them both with astonishment and amusement. Many participants invited the public to participate, to walk along with them while dancing, singing, playing, and some of that public actually joined for a bit and engaged with the performance. The fact that everybody in the group was dancing and performing made some of those who were less used to publicly entertaining an audience less shy about it, but still I could notice some looks of

229

disapproval and hesitancy among participants. This act functioned as a sort of liminal state, where rules about decorum in the streets were suspended. The whole *cercavila* empowered participants to act and perform those dances/games in a way that they would have never done individually, outside the team. The fact that the team was dressed officially probably helped legitimize their behavior during this informal parade to themselves and to the audience who reacted in (positive) surprise to that event. In this example, *castellers* of the Mediterrani were claiming Barcelona streets on their way to the Mediterrani neighborhood as their own as well, which evidences a contradiction of allegiances and belonging (remember that Mediterrani shapes their identity in opposition to Barcelona and in relation to the local neighborhood community and spaces only). They were reinforcing a sense of collective identity and legitimacy beyond the rehearsing facility but also beyond the neighborhood's spaces.

The example of the *cercavila* is similar to *matinades* -early morning fanfares-, also carried out during the festival and very early on a Sunday morning. During this event, the Mediterrani team walked around the Mediterrani neighborhood with music to "wake up" the neighbors and stopped at the door of *castellers* who had prepared a small breakfast for the team. Although all members of the colla were encouraged to participate in the actual fanfare, only those who lived in the Mediterrani neighborhood could actually sign up to ask for the team to stop by their door. This was a potentially divisive event that could bring some tensions over the degree of membership of participants since many did not live in the actual neighborhood. This possible distinction in membership may also explain why a good number of participants wanted to end up living in the neighborhood and were constantly asking for or offering rooms for rent to each other. However, all c*astellers* were encouraged to participate in the fanfares or any other specific Mediterrani activity to support the traditions and the kind of lifestyle that made that neighborhood a 'village' for them. Let me remind the reader that the great majority of participants in Mediterrani were not born or were local residents of the neighborhood, and this did not discourage participants to identify themselves with and support the team as a choice. In Vilatèxtil, however, I only

witnessed one *cercavila,* after the team's anniversary exhibition. As usual, Vilatèxtil exhibited their towers together with two other teams in the market's plaza, but after that, they walked back to their rehearsing facility (without the other teams) to have lunch together. On the way back, the *grallers -gralla* players- played music at the front and the rest of the team followed. There were no games/songs to reinforce or display the team's sense of membership as it happened with Mediterrani, but it was the only moment (not even during Vilatèxtil town's main festivities) that the team made a *cercavila* and that this *cercavila* lasted at least until the rehearsing site.

The post-exhibition performances (*cercavila*, dinners, *matinades*, etc) in both teams that did not entail tower building were examples of how the teams engaged with greater or lesser degree to the larger communities outside their immediate groups. The claiming of public spaces such as streets and plazas through *dinners* or *matinades* also tied the *casteller* team as a collective group to the places being used. This tie, however, went beyond just purely *casteller* practice as it showed other activities that supported and shaped participants' and teams' sense of *casteller* identity as a local collective identity of the places they represented.

5.5   Concluding remarks.

In this chapter, I have shown how *casteller* practice is mobilized to construct local collective identities that are more or less connected to a larger community and spaces outside *castells* and the *casteller* one. While the rehearsing facility welcomed the development and inclusion of social relations among diverse team members, the open space of streets or plazas provided a site for extending those relations to a broader community. However, the way some teams used those spaces, particularly when *not* building towers, unwittingly marked membership boundaries between *castellers* and non-*castellers* to a point that some participants felt uncomfortable. At a symbolic level, the streets and plazas where *castells* are performed are the ground from where participants building towers may reverse or question some of the established society's structure,

231

values, and power relations with the institutions. The construction of towers shows ways of collectively bridging power relations (physically and symbolically) between institutions and the civil society, and provides a temporary balance of power and horizontal relations with those institutions.

The two ethnographic sites show different ways of building a collective sense of *casteller* identity that is very much linked to the spaces and communities they see themselves representing. The Vilatèxtil team did not so clearly rely on the local territory, that is, the city, to build its collective identity. The city was not mobilized by *castellers* as a site of opposition to perform their local identities. Their role as representatives of Vilatèxtil was clearly recognized and granted by just participating in the team. Participants and the team itself did not show any signs of insecurity over their identity because they did not have to contest any terrain. As stated at the beginning of this chapter, Vilatèxtil is an independent city that does not have to assert its identity as a distinct city; there is no insecurity over that. Their collective identity was closer to what Manuel Castells defined as 'legitimizing identity", that is, an identity that comes from the "dominant institutions" that creates the civil society and its organizing structures to legitimize an "undifferentiated, normalizing identity" (Castells 2010:8-9). In the case of the Vilatèxtil team, the construction of authenticity was not based on the community's distinctive character but on the team's own achievements. Their relation with the larger community they saw themselves representing was based on (non) institutional and popular yet very central spaces like the market plaza. This evidenced an identity located in the central areas of the town, in the Vilatèxtil community, and in their institutions.

The construction of collective identities of Mediterrani team was much more visibly and explicitly located in the neighborhood that the team saw themselves representing. Although Mediterrani performed in different plazas, the team chose the local institutional plaza to celebrate core events that were central to the team's identity. The discourses and images that circulated in the various activities (both *casteller* and non-*casteller)* suggest that they performed an identity

232

closer to what Castells called a 'defensive or resistance identity', that is, an identity that is "generated by those actors who are in positions/conditions devalued and/or stigmatized by the logic of domination, thus building trenches of resistance and survival" (Castells 2010: 8). These defensive identities are "culturally constituted, that is, organized around a specific set of values whose meaning and sharing are marked by specific codes of self-identification" (ibid: 68-9). This is important to bear in mind because although the Mediterrani saw themselves threatened by a logic of domination that justified the kind of identity work performed in the team, the Mediterrani neighborhood and identity is not generally regarded as stigmatized or devalued in Barcelona or in Catalonia. Mediterrani team exemplified the negotiation of a collective identity that aimed at being fully recognized and acknowledged as something different from what Barcelona city represented to them, which is stigmatized and sold-out to low-class tourism. Their strategies for local identification very forcefully went through claiming the public spaces by building towers but also through singing, playing, having dinner together, etc, in a nutshell, appropriating and "living" those spaces. Despite the appropriation of public spaces and the practices that unwittingly excluded the community, the construction of their local identity was readily available to anyone who chose to engage with and participate in their *casteller* community. The identity was not granted by the institutional authority of the neighborhood (as it happened with Vilatèxtil), but it was a choice that participants could make when joining the team. Mediterrani's insistence on distinction responded to its condition of not being institutionally recognized as distinct.The two ways of constructing local identities in the two *casteller* teams reflect some of the differences between representing a neighborhood and a city in the *casteller* community.

Chapter 6

The Instrumentalization of *Castells* amidst Popular Expansion and National Debates

6.1   Introduction

In November 2018, the Catalan parliament was discussing the topic of social "*convivència*" -living together[1] (Erickson 2008)- among Catalan citizens after the referendum and the political unrest. The main right-wing unionist political party Ciudadanos[2] (or C's) was accusing the government and pro-sovereignty parties of fracturing Catalan society with their nationalist agenda. The Catalan president then urged this political group to visit social, political and cultural spaces and events to see how involved and cohesive citizens were and thus question such fracture: "*vagin a conèixer els ateneus populars, les colles castelleres, la gent que es preocupa del seu barri, dels que estan lluitant per tirar endavant*" -go see the popular public associations, the *casteller* teams, the people who care about their neighborhoods, those who are fighting to carry on" (e-notícies 2018). The president's inclusion of *castells* as an example to support his argument for the social cohesion in Catalonia reflects the institutional perspective of the role of *casteller* teams today.

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[1]Other translations have used the term "conviviality" (Maisa Taha 2014, Welji 2018)
[2]This party represents anti-catalanist positions and endorses economic liberalism.

Carrizosa, the spokesperson of Ciutadans censured the president's comments by defining them as part of a "**retórica nationalista**" -nationalist rhetoric- and replied: "**Usted supone que (...) no me he ido a ver un...p::uñetero** *castell* **en mi vida!**" 'you assume that (...) I haven't gone to see a....'damn' *castell* in my life!" Many commentors on social media critiqued Carrizosa's use of the expression '**puñetero castell**", accusing him of despising and insulting the Catalan culture:

> @JoanSole_
> Parlar així dels castellers és insultar un pilar de la cultura catalana
> *Talking like this of castellers is insulting a foundation of the Catalan culture[3]*

While some argued that the president's suggestion indeed had a nationalist tone (Moliner 2018), others were critical that the suggestion presumed that the C's party was not familiar with *castells*. This particular view of *castells* as a site for promotion of nationalist sensibilities contrasts with the general and lately revived view of *castells* as emblematic of all Catalans:

> @CiberStEstRoure
>
> **Y el LERDO de Carrizosa diciendo "Puñetero Castell"? (Se ve que quería decir PUTO)[4] Y estos quieren gobernar para TODOS los catalanes insultando su cultura**?
>
> And the DUMB Carrizosa saying "damn Castell"? (You can see he wanted to say FUCKING) And these [people] want to govern for ALL Catalans insulting their culture?

A journalist and *casteller* participant himself characterized this debate as emphasizing the differences between "some and others" (Rius 2018). He spoke from his own experience at *castells* to assert that "*en els castells vam deixar de ser els 'uns' i els 'altres' per ser tots ciutadans d'un mateix poble. (...) I, en l'últim Ple del Parlament, els van fer servir per a tot el contrari."* -In

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[3]Other comments: @JosepCatt: "Aquesta és la proposta de CONVIVÈNCIA de C's" - this is the proposal of conviviality of C's'; "despreci absolut" (@LuCa) or "indignant" (@enricneuehaus)

[4]Some people in the media interpreted the use of "puñetero" as a self-censoring mechanism to avoid saying the word "puto" -fucking-, an expression that starts with the same letter in Spanish and that would have been even more offensive.

castells, we stopped being 'some' and 'others' to be citizens of one people. (. . .) And, in the last plenary session of the Parliament, they used them for entirely the opposite'. In his discussion of conviviality in Catalonia in a small town near Barcelona, Erickson (2008) defines *convivència*[5] as an "embodied practice" of "purposeful interaction" "toward egalitarian social relationships" (2008:41). One of the case studies that he examines focuses on host society-immigrant relations at *castells* (ibid: 1), characterizing them as a "performance of social integration" (ibid: 175) in which participants embodied the concept of *convivència*. This notion of conviviality, which highlights the idea of getting along despite differences is what Rius criticized as lacking in the parliamentary discussion. Both the parliamentary comments and Rius' criticism of them expressed an underlying tension around the recent mobilization of *castells* in the sovereignty movement, and thus its association with partisan politics.

During 2016, it became routine to see images of *castells* in banking and beer advertisements, comic magazines, and posters for tourism. An image of *castells* was even featured on the cover of an anthropological academic journal for a conference hosted in Barcelona during a conference in Barcelona (AIBR 2016). A photo of *casteller* participants' wrists sporting bandanas and interlocking to form a *pinya* appeared in Catalan banking advertisements [see below] and in ads on Catalan public television in 2015 and 2016. The banking ad appealed to the *pinya* trope to promote the supportive nature of the bank, and so convince potential clients to buy their products: "*sense risc, sense commissions*" -no risk, no commissions.

In August 2017, a drawing of a *castell* incorporating (ethnically, gender, class) diverse people appeared on the cover of the most popular and irreverent satirical magazine in Spain, '**el Jueves,**' after the Barcelona terrorist attacks. They ran the headline (in Spanish) "**Barcelona somos todos**" -We are all Barcelona- and added a black ribbon with a sentence that many used during those days in Catalan stating "*no tenim por*" -we're not afraid. In choosing the image of

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[5]"mutually negotiated shared occupation of public space as arranged by the residents themselves. Convivencia proceeds from aesthetic and ethical orientations based on a common commitment to a consensus model of sociability" (Erickson 2008: 243)

Figure 6.1: Banking ad:'sense risc, sense comissions'. Aida Ribot, 2016

castells (over other cultural expressions) to represent the unity and diversity of the people in such hard times, *castells* appeared as the comprehensive representation of the Catalan people.

The use of these *casteller* images for various purposes evidences an updated view of *castells* as a socially diverse, uniting, supportive, and modern cultural expression that does not exploit ethnic, class or gender differences. However, despite the prevalance of images appealing to unity, teamwork or cohesion that dissociates *castells* from folklore or even Catalanism, this dissociation had some limits. *Castells* have to remain a distinctively Catalan expression. For example, a participant of Mediterrani team shared the image below with the youth group. It was an advertisement in English (thus aimed at tourists) for the Poble Espanyol, a sort of small-scale thematic cultural center built in 1929 in Barcelona that has the goal of "*la voluntat de concentrar l'ànima d'Espanya en un sol espai*" -aims at concentrating the soul of Spain in a single space- (https://www.poble-espanyol.com/ca/el-poble/). Some *castellers* of Mediterrani responded with emojis: a "woman facepalming" [6] emoji , a "face vomiting" [7] emoji , and a meme where a young man holds a piece of white cloth upright, and the image has been captioned "**Tapen eso**" -cover that up. Finally, another participant remarked "*curiosa sinècdoque*" -odd synecdoche- in relation

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[6]"Used to display frustration or embarrassment at the ineptitude of a person or situation."
https://emojipedia.org/face-palm/

[7]"May represent physical illness or disgust, more intensely so than nauseated face".
https://emojipedia.org/face-with-open-mouth-vomiting/

Figure 6.2: El Jueves:magazine cover after terrorist attack in Barcelona, 2017.

to the fact that the ad depicted *castells* as a "popular Spanish festivity."

 The association of *castells* with partisan politics and ads exemplified at the beginning of this chapter is new and in part responds to the recent mobilizations and support of *casteller* teams during the massive demonstrations in the *Diada de Catalunya* (Catalan National Day) on September 11 for the past 7 years approximately. The *casteller* tradition has been caught in the middle of a socioeconomic, political, and cultural upheaval characteristic of late capitalism in an increasingly globalized context (Duchene and Heller 2012). This upheaval was exacerbated by the profound economic crisis of 2008 that brought an economic recession, producing tensions in the social and political spheres in Spain. In response, new political parties and popular sectors became powerful, for example— and grass-roots/bottom-up movements, like the 15-M, called into question what had been the status quo. In Catalonia, civic entities such as the *Assamblea*

Figure 6.3: Poble Espanyol poster in Barcelona subway. Aida Ribot, 2016

Nacional de Catalunya (ANC) and Òmnium Cultural[8] organized and mobilized the civil society in their demands for Catalonia's 'right to vote' in its quest for sovereignty. These entities, supported by tens of thousands of people, proposed a (new) nationalist project for Catalonia to overcome such upheaval and found in *castells* not only the perfect visual aid to represent it but also the perfect practice to embody it.

For several years since 2012, civic associations like the ANC and Òmnium Cultural have proposed to have *casteller* teams participate in the massive demonstrations during September 11.

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[8]This is a cultural entity dating back to 1961 responsible for ensuring the protection of the Catalan language and its culture.

239

Most of them agreed to participate, but this has generated internal tensions regarding the role of *castells* today and its legitimacy in representing the Catalan community. As Crameri stated in relation to cultural politics, "tension is generated between supporting culture for its own sake and using culture for supporting other things (the nation's image, the economy, the ruling party's popularity, etc.)" (2008:2). For example, Pilar Barriendos, a member of a group that removes yellow ribbons[9] from public spaces called "*brigada de limpieza*"[10] -'cleansing brigade'- and an ex-member of the anti-independence political party Ciutadans explained in an interview that the sovereignty movement had appropriated *castells*: "**Ya no puedo ver 'castellers', los han politizado**" -'I can no longer [bear to] watch '*castellers*', they have politicized them' (JMFrancas 2018). Only very recently, the leading magazine about *castells* -*Revista Castells*- published an article where the author challenged both the recent participation of *castellers* in the massive demonstrations for the Catalan National Day and the call by the civic institutions to bring *castells* to these events:

> El moviment independentista ha de saber que hi ha molt pocs símbols de Catalunya i de la cultura popular catalana que tinguin el nivell d'acceptació que tenen els castells. I és per això que ha de plantejar-se si val la pena perjudicar aquest atribut tan excepcional pel fet d'incorporar els castells a una manifestació. (Botella 2019)
>
> *The independence movement has to acknowledge that there are few symbols of Catalonia and the Catalan popular culture that have the level of acceptance that castells have. And it's because of this that it has to consider whether it's worth harming this exceptional attribute by incorporating castells in political demonstrations.*

Disdainful comments against *castells* are still rare and only encouraged among public figures to support their political discourse. However, they are part of a broader national debate taking place in Catalonia, in which the traditional civic and political understandings of Catalanism (see Introduction), national identity, and Catalan culture are being challenged. Up until very

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[9]yellow ribbons are used by political and popular sectors alike in defense of Catalan politicians and civic leaders who have been imprisoned since 2017. Yellow color has become problematic in certain settings and people use ribbons on their personal outfit, in balconies or institutional settings to express the defense of their rights and their amnesty.

[10]this is the name given to groups of people who "clean" the streets of yellow ribbons. They are against the use of political expressions such as this one in public spaces.

recently "cultural Catalanism translate[d] into a wide range of political options and [could] involve either an active interest in the culture or just a broad support for the idea that Catalonia is 'different' because of its culture" (Crameri 2008: 21). Therefore, some of the questions that arise in this debate revolve around who *casteller* practice belongs to, whether or not *castells* are being politically instrumentalized, and if so, for what purpose. The national debate in Catalonia inevitably reflects on *castells*, as this cultural practice has become lately emblematic of Catalonia and the Catalan people.

Only a few academic articles have addressed the recent association of *castells* with the national debate. For instance, Giori (2012) examined the relationship between *castells*, the festive models in Catalonia, and Catalan nationalism up to the 80s from a historical perspective. In his nuanced analysis, the author argues that cultural and political processes have both been implicated together in creating a situation where *castells* are "**la última alianza cultural del catalanismo**" -the latest cultural alliance of Catalanism. He thus includes *castells* and *sardanes* as cultural practices that have fed the civic and institutional construction of nationalism. In this analysis, he argues that "**hay una correlación cultural (…) entre hacer castells y hacer nación, entre pensar castells y pensar nación y entre sentir castells y sentir nación**" -there is a cultural correlation (…) between building *castells* and building the nation, between thinking about *castells* and thinking about the nation, and between feeling *castells* and experiencing the nation- (2012: 29-30). Giori points out that this correlation is not calculated for the purpose of political yield, but I would argue that this is now changing.

From a different perspective, Weig (2015) has analyzed the *moving* bodies at *castells* and in *sardanes* as a "bodily commentary" that both mirrors and generates political ideologies (2015: 435). In her comparison of the two phenomena, Weig claimed that *sardanes*' movement highlights the individual identity of its dancers, whereas in *castells* this individuality is lost (see chapter 1 for a general view of *sardanes*). Thus, the *sardana* type of bodily movement, which had typically mirrored the social and political attitudes of Catalans of the late 19th and 20th century,

involves a frozen state in politics (2015:442). In contrast, the bodily movement in *castells*, which extends both upwards and outwards, reflects the claims for "geopolitical" expansion in line with the pro-independence movement within an increasing neoliberal context of competitiveness (2015: 445, 447). Weig urged *castellers* to "go beyond Catalan nationalism" to create an alternative understanding of community based on new and democratic values (2015: 446, 447). Despite the interesting insights, the view does not pay enough attention to how *castellers* are already at work constructing meaningful practices for their community.

Similarly, Vaczi (2016) explored the politicization of *castells* through "its associational nature and performative values" (ibid: 356), from an anthropological perspective. For example, the author explains how the emblematic "psychosocial" (ibid: 360) Catalan values of "*seny*" -common sense- and "*rauxa*" -madness-[11] also needed in *castell*-building have been used to support or to counter pro-independence discourses. In particular, she states that the madness required for building the highest and most complex towers is instrumentalized by *independentistes* in order to justify a change in contemporary politics in Catalonia, which for a long time has prioritized *seny* (362-3). Vaczi also examined the features that are making *castells*, rather than other emblematic Catalan performance models like *sardanes*, soccer, or fire festivals, a national symbol as of late: a perfect combination of "togetherness of intense body contact, of the street and the family, the amateur status of performers, and collective self-subsistence [sic]" (2016: 365). Vaczi highlights the reversal of women and children's roles in castells (who are placed at the top of towers) as an essential feature to "create a liminal state of unity and enjoyment" (367) needed in a time of geopolitical uncertainties. Giori, Weig, and Vaczi provide an interesting perspective on why *castells* seem to be the perfect cultural performance to express or support the recent national agenda from different perspectives, but they leave aside people's actual experience and resonance with it. The insights that they provide reflect an important, yet limited understanding of the way that everyday *castellers* practices can be taken to represent the national project. Additionally,

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[11]The two concepts have traditionally been used in politics as an essential aspect of a Catalan identity. However, 'seny' has usually been the dominant trend in politics until recently. (see Vaczi 2016: 360-3)

there is not enough information in the recent literature on *castells* about how participants engage

with the national debate and other challenges within teams that often go unnoticed at first sight

(like the professionalization of the activity, its financial struggles in a time of expansion, etc.).

The debate I witnessed during fieldwork was still open, without clear answers on the

relationship between *castells* and politics, for example. In a context of national crisis, debates

about this topic were inevitable among Catalan society, and *castellers* were no exception. However,

and to my surprise, the national debate was far from being a central topic of discussion among

participants except during specific dates like Catalan National Day or the Day of Hispanity.

This is surprising because it challenged my own assumptions about the political motivation of

participants in joining *castells*. Additionally, the literature that has addressed this issue has

also contributed to a perspective (perhaps unwittingly) in which the *casteller* community and

castells as a cultural expression have become a political (or politicized) body aimed at supporting

the national agenda of late. This chapter adds a more nuanced, bottom-up perspective on how

casteller participants and teams negotiated and responded to the instrumentalization of *castells*

on various levels, particularly the political and the economic. The tensions and debates around

the role of *castells* or their future evidenced larger phenomena over which they have less control

(such as globalization, economic liberalization, etc.). Their experience and response -even if

contradictory at times- reveals the uncertainties of a rapidly changing sociopolitical situation in

Catalonia, and the semiotic changes that are progressively redefining Catalan identity, culture,

and Catalanism.

6.1.1   Contextual background: the political and the cultural

The symbolic association of *castells* with the Catalan pro-independence movement is

the result of a process of semiotic shift that has been forming since roughly 2010. This re-

semiotization of *castells* as a representation of political aspirations has also raised the debate

about whether or not *castells* is politicized, has been highjacked, and/or represents the Catalan

culture and people in its diversity. In 2012, the then president of the Catalan government, Artur Mas, defined *castells* as symbolically representing the political situation of Catalonia. After attending the 24th Casteller Contest in Tarragona he said : *"Els valors del món dels castellers es poden traslladar al moment que està vivint Catalunya: força, equilibri, valor, seny, i una gran pinya, una gran base perquè això tiri cap amunt"* - 'the values of the Casteller world can be translated to the moment that Catalonia is living: strength, balance, courage, good sense, and a large *pinya*, and grand base to allow this to rise'. Mas was the head of the conservative nationalist political party *Convergència I Unió* (*CIU*, now revamped as *PDCAT*) and as such represented an institution that had been governing Catalonia for decades, since the return of democracy.[12] This fact has marked the way politics have been performed in Catalonia, with an emphasis on "*seny*" - good sense- and "*pactisme*" -pactism (see Vaczi, Woolard 2016, Crameri) with the Spanish central government that so much characterized that political period for Catalans. According to Crameri, the relationship that CIU had with cultural policy was one that did not seek the promotion of social inclusion amongst different sectors of the population, but rather one that sought national unity at a political level (Crameri 2008: 28). Despite its openly nationalist background, this political party had never, up to that point, supported the political option of independence.[13] Two separate but related events sparked the shift in national discourse of this political party towards a pro-independence one. This political shift has promoted a distancing from the cultural performance that traditionally represented the CIU brand of nationalism (*sardanes*), to highlight another performance (*castells*) as the representation of the new Catalan nationalism.

On a political level, in 2006 Catalonia passed a referendum supporting the changes of its *Estatut* (short for *Estatut d'Autonomia de Catalunya*[14]) -Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia. The center-right 'Partido Popular' (PP) -which was then the opposition party in the Spanish government- led an intense campaign before and after the referendum urging citizens all around

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[12]Former president Jordi Pujol had been governing Catalonia for more than 23 years (1980-2003).

[13]This political option has traditionally been relegated to the left, pro-republican party of Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya.

[14]explain what this is (the first one, the second, now the third)

Spain to first support a nation-wide referendum on the *Estatut* (instead of a referendum just held in Catalonia), and after that, took a stance against the passing of the *Estatut* and labelled it unconstitutional (Europa Press 2006). One of their main concerns was that in the preamble of the text, a section that is not legally binding, there was mention of Catalonia being a 'nation.' Other concerns regarded tax, language, and judiciary issues (Plaza 2009, RTVE 2010). The *Tribunal Constitucional de España*[15] (*TC*) -Constitutional Court of Spain- heard the appeals and reviewed the revised Statute. While the mention of 'nation' in the preamble was kept because it had no real legal value (Lazaro 2010), the TC emphasized that national symbols were part of a "**nacionalidad integrada en la indisoluble unidad de la nación española***" -nationality integrated in the indissoluble unity of the Spanish nation (BOE 2010:273). Additionally, the TC rewrote and interpreted other articles as they saw fit (Lázaro 2010a, Lázaro 2010b, Salgado 2010, Brunet I Calvet 2010, Editorial 2010 la Vanguardia). This created a deep sense of frustration in a large sector of Catalan political and civil society (Pérez Royo 2017), channeled through a massive demonstration occurring just days later in Barcelona (Belmonte 2010, editorial la Vanguardia manifestación). Under the slogan "S*om una nació, nosaltres decidim*" -'we're a nation, we decide', people voiced their unease with the ruling of the TC after the voting population had previously approved the text in a referendum. Although the steps taken by the TC are common in any statutory reform, the fierce and disproportionate[16] campaign on the part of the *Partido Popular* against the reformation of the *Estatut* translated the TC decision into something more than just a legal pronouncement. A large part of Catalan society read it as the decision of a politicized court that extended the political interests of Madrid, especially the view of those on the conservative side. The demonstration was supported by people from almost all points on the political spectrum who have parliamentary representation in Catalonia, showing a united and robust voice of disagreement towards the decision, despite the many ideological differences among

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[15]Authority that supervises and interprets the Spanish Constitution (1978).

[16]Other autonomous communities have also reformed their Statutes of Autonomy, some even adding a reference to their 'nation' in the preamble as well. However, no media or political campaigns were carried out against the text or against popular participation.

these groups. After this demonstration, the political and social discussion about sovereignty and about the right of the Catalan people to vote in a referendum became more widespread, cross-cutting different social and political sectors, showing an open and explicit stance towards these two questions. The support for a referendum on Catalonia's independence (82% of popular support in 2017) and for an eventual Catalan state increased since 2011 (El País 2017).

On a cultural level, in November of 2010, just a few months after the TC ruling and demonstrations, *castells* were recognized by UNESCO as "Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity." By that time, *casteller* teams had already begun to flourish around many Catalan cities and towns, and the *casteller* practice was increasing. At the same time, some fatal accidents during just the previous years had shocked the community and damaged its image outside it. Although fatal injuries are rare, the accidents opened the debate about safety measures -especially for minors-, but also helped create a view of *castells* as an unsafe activity done by a "*grup de salvatges*" -'group of savages' (quoted in Toni Bach, El Periódico 2016). UNESCO's recognition brought "*prestigi i visibilitat*" (Guillem Soler, El periódico 2016) and helped dissipate the image of 'savagery' by providing institutional support that highlighted a character of cohesiveness among participants and supporters (ibid). In a way, in the years previous to 2010, *castells* were still regarded as an activity that very few people participated in, although it enjoyed a general acceptance amongst the population. Long-time participants in both Vilatèxtil and Mediterrani said that this institutional recognition fueled higher participation in *castells* and *casteller* teams, leading to the current moment (Morales 2016). One of the safety measures that was introduced as mandatory for children at the top levels of towers was the *casc cranial* - hard helmet. When this measure was proposed and tried some years before its mandatory implementation, *casteller* teams were forced to position themselves as for or against the helmet. Although there were some reservations to its use because it was not something traditional, all teams ended up accepting its use. The decision highlighted the *casteller* community's defense for the protection of the actual people (rather than the tradition) from suffering unfortunate events that had already shocked the

viewing public. UNESCO's recognition gave value and visibility to the *casteller* activity as a tradition, but the *casteller* community had to place value and visibility on the human side of its activity by recognizing the fragility of the bodies and by protecting them. Among the social values that the CCCC states about the *casteller* practice is one that aims at offering "*una imatge responsable i assenyada del fet casteller*" -a responsible and sensible image go the *casteller* practice- by "*adoptant en tot moment les decisions que permetin garantir la seguretat dels nostres castellers*" -adopting at all times the decisions that allow to ensure the safety of our *casteller* participants. (CCCC, Valors Socials). Both UNESCO's recognition and the mandatory implementation of the helmet (urged by the CCCC) helped modernize the image of *castells* as an activity that cared for its tradition but above all, cared for its participants.

The two sides of the story show that political and state-implemented mechanisms (Statute reform) frustrated and limited the national recognition of the Catalan community. However, this frustration was partly overcome by UNESCO's international recognition of the Catalan community through a *cultural* practice. The inability to recognize Catalonia's needs at a political level, made visible an increasing undermining of the role and weight of nation-states like Spain (Appadurai 1996) to manage other (new) nationalist projects or cultural policies in an increasingly globalized new economy (Heller 2003, Heller and Duchene 2012). This challenge has been used by different sectors in Catalonia to build a discourse on Catalanism and sovereignty that emphasizes the civic (in contrast with a political), bottom-up, democratizing, and cooperative aspects of the political demands beyond the constraints and characteristics typical of classic nation-states (see Bloomaert and Verschueren 1998, Gellner 1983). This has been key in order to reject the classic understanding of nationalism that has "often been associated with xenophobia, racism, discrimination, and backwardness and regarded as a political doctrine opposed to the cosmopolitan ideal" (Guibernau 2013: 14, also Kymlicka 2001, Brett and Moran 2011). This particular and ethnocentric form of nationalism "fosters unequal relations and tends to promote illiberal and undemocratic forms of government" (Guibernau 2013: 22). Both *Òmnium Cultural* and the

ANC have taken many characteristics from *castells* to represent precisely a re-defined notion

of the new national project, not based on ethnicity, but on civic and ethical relations between

the diverse population. Their campaigns have often addressed the international community

(rather than the Spanish one) as another strategy to portray Catalonia and its people as European

and modern (see similar accounts in Woolard 2016: 193). Many of these elements sought in

this redefinition constitute what some scholars have characterized as a type of 'cosmopolitan

nationalism' (Guibernau 2013, 2004, Nilesen 1999, Benhabib 2006) that values and develops

the potentialities of individuals[17] only when conceived as part of a collectivity (Guibernau 2013:

33). Therefore, this 'cosmopolitan nationalism' that has often been also labeled 'cosmopolitan

Catalanism" (Guibernau 2004, 2009):

> defends the right of nations to exist and develop while recognizing and respecting
> internal diversity. It rejects the territorial expansion of nations and shows a commit-
> ment to increasing the morality of the nations' citizens by promoting democracy,
> social justice, freedom, equality, and mutual respect concerning cultural and other
> differences. (Guibernau 2013: 34)

The instrumentalization of cultural expressions for the construction of national identities

is not new (see Savigliano 1995, Kitiarsa 2013, Marfany 1995). This instrumentalization has often

implied a commodification of cultural products, that is, a re-formulation of the cultural values

within the tenets of consumption. In a context of late capitalism, it is worth paying attention to

how discourses regarding cultural commodification operate in everyday construction of identities

and power relations.

In this chapter, I examine the reactions and perspectives of *casteller* participants to the

instrumentalization of *castells* for political and economic purposes. In particular, I look at the way

participants discuss their relationship with the political sovereignty movement and the specific

economic practices that are emerging within the *casteller* community. The chapter reveals that the

current situation creates tensions and anxieties around the role of *castells* today as it challenges

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[17]Nielsen and other authors, for example, support a universal egalitarianism from a liberal national perspective in which individualism and individual rights are the norm (1999).

some of the traditional tenets and characteristics of this practice. The debate around the role of *castells* in this new-found context shows the tensions around particular practices that the community is exploring due to its new commodifiable and quintessential (pan)Catalan character, which mirrors how the community understands and shapes the reality of the world they live in.

6.2   The civic and the political

Since approximately 2010, *casteller* teams have appeared in political mobilizations that have promoted different political demands. For example, in June 2014, the historical civic association of *Omnium Cultural* enlisted *casteller* teams to actually build towers in several Catalan and European cities like London, Paris, and Berlin. The slogan of the campaign read "Catalans want to Vote. Human Towers for democracy" (see figure below). Here, "vote" referred implicitly to voting on sovereignty, as Catalans have voting rights and political representation in Spain.

The campaign presented a poster in different languages like English, German, French, Portuguese, and Dutch, each highlighting the city where these languages were officially spoken. The mobilization aimed at building towers because, according to *Omnium*, castells were the most internationally recognizable cultural icon of Catalonia since UNESCO's recognition, and it symbolized Catalans' yearning for a new future (www.omnium.cat). The call proposed a way to construct a different political future without specifying its form (republic, nation-state, etc.): "*junts fem pinya, aprofitem la diversitat i cooperem per aconseguir, amb l'esforç de tots, un futur millor*".-together we make *pinya*, we benefit from the diversity and cooperate to achieve, with the effort of everybody, a better future. In choosing *castells* for this event, the organization wanted to mobilize some of the most recognizable concepts and discourses (like '*fer pinya*') of a relatively small community (*castellers*) to iconize a broader community: that of Catalans. Thus building a human tower was equated to building a future, and the future could only be built

Figure 6.4: Omnium Cultural poster of international event, 2014

through a collective effort, cooperating to make *pinya*. The main target of this campaign was

an international audience, and it mobilized different Catalan *casteller* teams in those cities to

make their call visible. Providing an attractive, European and modern view of Catalonia and

Catalanism internationally is a process of national branding (Urry 2003, Billig 1995) that had

already started with the Barcelona Olympics in 1992, though even then there was disagreement

about the use and role of language and of cultural images to create this brand (see DiGiacomo

1999, Woolard 2016: 153-4). More recently, Woolard found that the Frankfurt Book Fair of 2007

made visible the still ongoing tensions and debates in Catalonia around how to define the Catalan

culture and how to project an image of modernity of Catalonia in the 21st century (2016: 201).

In this example of national branding, the Catalan government chose to "minimize the kind of folkloric images commodified as national authenticity" (ibid: 201), thus providing "less of the *barretina*"[18] stereotypes and more contemporary images of Catalan culture (ibid: 202). This example is relevant because it contrasts with the fact that now *castells*, a traditionally folkloric performance, is being portrayed precisely as a national icon, but with a modern (in the sense of progressive), hip touch. This rebranding of the Catalan community has taken a very recognizable and historically rooted cultural expression to represent its features. The juxtaposition of modernity and cosmopolitanism with folkloric, historical and local images speaks to the concept of "rooted cosmopolitanism" (Appiah 2005, 2006). The *casteller* community has also seen how many groups of expats in international cities founded *casteller* teams. The incorporation of expats has strengthened the links between *casteller* teams and Catalonia by creating a larger audience to view and associate *castells* with the territory. Similarly, internationalizing the political demands has been a strategy that many thought key to surpass the political (and now judicial) limitations of the Spanish State.

Since 2011, the *Assamblea Nacional de Catalunya (ANC)*[19] together with *Òmnium Cultural*, have been mobilizing thousands of people for the *Diada de Catalunya* -Catalan National Day- in the afternoon of September 11.[20] In 2016, around 60 teams participated in the September 11 mobilizations. Different slogans, visual themes, and massive performances were used in order to call for such mobilizations: "*Catalunya, nou estat d'Europa*" -Catalonia, new European state (2011), "*La Via catalana*",[21] -the Catalan Way- with a human chain of 248 miles long from

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[18]Woolard defined it as a "red Phrygian cap" (2016: 202). The expression popularly refers to the traditional, folkloric, rural, and often essentialized Catalanism.

[19]The ANC was founded in 2011. According to the organization "el objetivo es unir el independentismo desde la sociedad civil" (https://assemblea.cat/index.php/historia/?lang=es)

[20]This is an official festivity that commemorates the defeat of Barcelona against the Bourbon King Philip V of Spain during the War of the Spanish Succession in 1714. This defeat meant the suppression of the Catalan laws as Catalonia was a Principality within the Crown of Aragon. Both the Principality and the Crown of Aragon supported the House of Habsburg and rejected the absolutism of the Bourbon tradition. The 1714 defeat then also meant the incorporation of Catalonia to the Crown of Castile, and meant the suppression of the principality.

[21]the name made reference to the well-known "Baltic Way" of 1989.

north to south of Catalonia (2012), "*Ara és l'hora*", -Now it's the time- with a demonstration between two Barcelona streets that ended in the same point, forming a V-shape[22] (2013), "*Via lliure a la República Catalana*" (2014) -Free Way to the Catalan Republic- (2015) , "*A punt per la República Catalana*" -Ready for the Catalan Republic- (2016)or "*la Diada del Sí*" (2017)- The festival for Yes. Although in recent years the numbers of participants appears to have been waning, in previous years the city police and the government reported nearly one million people had participated (La Vanguardia 2014). Also, a festive and non-violent environment persisted throughout all of them, as policie reported in their social media channels.[23]

The target in these demonstrations was less focused on the international audience than on the local population, securing a powerful image of empathy and solidarity among Catalans, "*sento unió*" -I feel union-, a Mediterrani informant told me during the 2016 September 11 demonstrations. Although some *casteller* teams had been participating in the institutional morning celebrations of this Catalan national holiday before 2011, others did not attend any special events during that day except for a regular *casteller* exhibition if it happened on a Sunday. Thus in previous years, the Mediterrani team, together with two more Barcelona teams, had participated in the memorial at the *Fossar de les Moreres*.[24] Since 2011, Mediterrani and Vilatèxtil, together with all other *casteller* teams, have been building towers during the afternoon demonstrations mobilized by *Òmnium Cultural* and the *ANC*.

Casteller participation in these mobilizations has been evident. The ANC directly called all the *casteller* teams to ask them to participate in these massive demonstrations. Both Mediterrani and Vilatèxtil teams had asked their members in assembly whether or not they wanted to participate, because some participants wondered if this was a political matter.[25] In Mediterrani,

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[22]V for 'vote', victory.

[23]"Cap incident destacable a la concentració de la #Diada2018. Gràcies per la col·laboració i civisme de tots els participants en el dia d'avui i gràcies també a tots els companys que vetlleu per la seguretat de tots" (No notable incident in the mobilization for the #Diada2018. Thank you for the collaboration and civism of all participants today and thank youto all colleagues that safeguards the safety of all).

[24]In this event, they built towers and offered a flower crown to the monument that commemorates the people who died during the Barcelona siege in 1714 while singing the Catalan national anthem at the end of the ceremony.

[25]Since I was doing research with the Mediterrani team when the September 11 demonstration took place, most of

Figure 6.5: Omnium Cultural and ANC poster for Catalan National Day demonstrations, 2016

the team also debated the limits of their participation. The issue at hand was whether participation in the festivities constituted a political act. For example, they asked their members if the *enxaneta* should unfold an *estelada* -pro-independence flag- during the performance in the Sept 11 demonstration. The *casteller* community, represented by the CCCC, identifies itself as not belonging to or supporting any political party: "*Les colles castellers som obertes i inclusives (. . .) tothom hi pot aportar alguna cosa sense que es doni cap tipus de diferenciació per raó de gènere, edat, condició social, raça, origen i creences polítiques i religioses.*" -*casteller* teams are open

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my data comes from this team.

and inclusive (...) everybody can bring something to it without any distinction based on gender, age, social condition, race, origin, or political and religious beliefs' (Els valors socials, CCCC 2012: 2). Similarly, many teams and members informally described *castells* as being "*apolític*" -apolitical[26]. At the same time, neither the CCCC nor the two teams analyzed ever used this term in any of its official statements, statutes or codes of ethics[27].

For some, apolitical meant not participating in or supporting any event proposed by a political *party* or *politician*, for others it meant not partaking in any event with a political motivation, even if this came from civil society. Here emerges the debate for my interlocutors: was the *casteller* participation in the September 11 mobilizations a form of political participation or an apolitical act? Is defending the right to vote and the independence an apolitical or a political issue? Answers and references to this debate were varied. Àlex, a participant from the Mediterrani team, argued that those mobilizations were "*un acte completament ciutadà, no és polític*" -entirely the act of a citizen and not political. In his elaboration, he said that there were no politicians around, which suggests that his interpretation of the term 'political' referred to belonging to a political party or being a politician. For Manel, also from the Mediterrani team, the participation of *castells* during these mobilizations was not political because *castells* were part of the Catalan culture, and like any other cultural performance, he said, they should be present in any *Diada*. Manel's comments make reference to the idea that the Catalan culture, in its diversity, has usually appealed to a broader Catalan society, including newcomers and tourists, no matter their political positions. His position echoes what Crameri called 'cultural catalanism' (2008) and the general consensus that Catalonia is different because of its culture (language, traditions, etc). Within this broad consensus, different political positions are welcomed. Thus, categorizing *castells* as part of the Catalan culture as Manel did was his way of showing a notion of "common sense" in the

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[26]The main Catalan dictionaries ambiguously define 'apolitical' as "no polític" -not political-, "que no li interessa la política" -not interested in politics - (DLIC, DIEC) or "Dit de qui no intervé en política o bé de qui no està polititzat" -said of someone who does not intervene in politics or who is not politicized- (Enciclopèdia de la Llengua Catalana).

[27]The Mediterrani team, however, does note in their code of ethics that they will not perform for any political party or event proposed by a political party.

political demands, not corseted within a particular political party.

Octavi, the former president of the Mediterrani, explained in 2014 that the team had been asked many times to go to different demonstrations such as one supporting abortion policies or another supporting Catalan schools.

Figure 6.6: Teams have been seen in events in support of particular collectivities like the LGTBI community, who have lately suffered attacks in their centers (eldiarion.es 28/1/19)

In response to comments they got about separating *castells* from any of these social or political stances, he explained that "*com a colla ens hem de posicionar (…) també ens hem de mullar com a societat, i com a societal sóc jo com a Octavi, però com a societat també sóc Colla del Mediterrani (…) a vegades com a colla també ens hem de posicionar*" -as a team we have to position ourselves (...) we have to go out on a limb as a society, and as a society it's me as Octavi, but as a society I'm also the Mediterrani team. (...) sometimes we have to go out on a limb as a team too. In his comment, Octavi was showing that the personal/individual stance was also the group/collective one and that the latter was also part of the society, and so had to take a stance. Most of the participants who supported the *casteller* participation in the demonstrations emphasized the civic approach (versus a partisan one) of this support even if they acknowledged

255

that it was a political stance.

Many participants believed that *castells* had some characteristics that fitted very well with the national project. Some of them extrapolated their personal experience and understanding of the group to a broader, national community. Macià, a former head of the Vilatèxtil team, explained that the current politial moment in Catalonia was like a team that had to build a tower because:

> els castells es fan precisament gràcies a la diferència (. . .) si tots fossim iguals no funcionaria (. . .) ha de ser la gent diferent per funcionar (. . .) n'hi han d'haver-hi de petits, n'hi han d'haver-hi de grans, n'hi han d'haver-hi de baixos, n'hi han d'haver-hi d'alts, n'hi han d'haver-hi que pesin, que seguin corpulents, n'hi han d'haver-hi de prims (. . .). Doncs això ho extrapoles a tot, fins a tot (. . .) amb la manera de pensar, hi han d'haver-hi més agossarats, I hi han d'haver-hi de més prudents, hi han d'haver-hi joves I hi han d'haver-hi gent amb experiència I aquest conjunt és el que permet que una colla funcioni, no tan sols que faci bons castells si no que els faci I els continui fent. (Macià, Vilatèxtil)
>
> *Castells are built thanks to diversity (. . .) if were all the same, it wouldn't work (. . .) people must be different so that it works (. . . .) there must be people who are little, big, short, tall, heavy, stocky, thin (. . .) Well, then you extrapolate it to everything, even (. . .) to the way of thinking, there must be daring people, prudent people, young people, people with experience and this is what makes a colla to function, not only in that it builds good castells, but also that they continue building them. (Macià, Vilatèxtil)*

Emilio, a 70-year-old Argentinian who had recently moved to Catalonia,[28] explained that he liked "**el espíritu casteller**" -the *casteller* spirit/essence. He defined that as the idea "**que se pueden conseguir cosas haciendo esfuerzos todos juntos (. . .) un castillo, un gobierno, un país se hace cuando ponemos todo lo que podemos poner nosotros (. . .) Si estamos todos juntos, vamos para arriba com en un castillo (. . .) Los castellers representan el esfuerzo común. -**It is possible to achieve things by making an effort altogether (. . .) a tower, a government, a country is made when we all join forces (. . .) if we are all together, we go up like in a tower (. . .) *castellers* represent the collective effort. The head of the Vilatèxtil team also acknowledged

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[28]His daughter had moved several years before so he moved as well to be closer.

and supported the instrumentalization of *castells* as a representation of Catalonia, only if the goal was to construct together "*un país més just, més digne*" -a fairer and more decent country.

Participants who were not born in Catalonia were unsurprised to see *casteller* teams attending sovereignty mobilizations, and some believed it was a political participation without problematizing it. Anabel, a Basque participant in the Mediterrani team, argued that "*està totalment vinculat el món casteller amb la independència o amb la mentalitat d'una ideologia (…) I això és com **blanco y en botella**, tothom que s'apunta a castells no els sorprèn*" -The casteller world is totally linked to independence or to the mentality of an ideology (…), and this is crystal clear, everybody who joins *castells* is unsurprised". She also mentioned that because of this *vincle* -link- she felt comfortable participating at *castells*; she felt at home: "*em sento identificada amb aquest vincle amb Catalunya, m'agrada (…) he buscat expressament això [en els castells]*" -I feel identified with this link with Catalonia, I like it (…) I have sought this on purpose [in *castells*]. Anabel came from another national minority in Spain, the Basque Country, and she was used to seeing (and also supported) political demands and events in the Basque Country similar to the ones she had experienced in *castells* in Catalonia. Similarly, Sergio, an Extremadurian participant, asserted that "**en Cataluña, hablar de castells es como hablar de Cataluña. Para ellos es algo may interioriado**" -in Catalonia, talking about *castells* is like talking about Catalonia. For them, it is very internalized -. Sergio normalized the political discourse that (like in the example of the former president Artur Mas above) associated *castells* with the national debate. He did not include himself as part of the community ("**ellos**" -they) but defined *castells* as something belonging to all Catalans and representing them collectively. Despite not identifying himself with the community, Sergio supported and participated in those demonstrations. Both Anabel and Sergio's experience is reminiscent of the kind of support and involvement that many participants who did not live or were born in the Mediterrani neighborhood gave to Mediterrani-centered activities lead by the team, like *matinades*, lunches, festivity decorations, etc. (See chapter 5): they understood it was necessary, it was not problematized, they were included as participants

(not just those from the neighborhood), and they chose to do it. Sergio added that "**ese sentido de pertenencia a un grupo aquí [en Cataluña] es muy fuerte, en el resto de España no, es mucho mas individualista**" -that sense of belonging to a group here [in Catalonia] is very strong, unlike in the rest of Spain, which is much more individualistic.

In comparing the positions of *castellers* with regards to the independence movements, Sergio defined those who were not interested or against it as people closer to capitalist, political and sporting values, which seem to be associated with profit rather than cultural and traditional ideals : "**si te gusta la cultura serás casteller y si te gusta la cultura serás independentista**", if you like the culture you'll be *casteller,* and if you like the culture you'll be independentist- he argued. In contrast, "**si te gusta como un deporte [en vez de como cultura y tradición] simplemente y si votas al PP y no eres independentista…ya es raro que estés en una colla (…) entiendo que no quieras el pack completo**" -if you like [*castells*] as merely a sport [instead of as culture and tradition] and if you vote PP[29], and you're not an independentist…it would be weird that you're in a team (…) I understand that you don't want the full package. Sergio's position, which I found in other participants, showed an unproblematic association of *casteller* participation with the sovereignty movement because it was based on cultural terms (not on blood, partisan politics, class, etc).

In a different response, Abel, from Granada, said that he had participated in the Catalan National Day shortly before (2010) *ANC* and *Òmnium* started organizing the massive mobi- lizations. He explained that when he participated, the demonstration seemed something more "**espontáneo**" -spontaneous-, with people meeting in the streets claiming their political demands. Abel's participation in a September 11 mobilization coincided with the one right after TC rul- ing in 2010, which gathered a highly diverse population with cross-cutting political ideologies. Although Abel understood and respected the *casteller* participation in these mobilizations ("**me parece una reividicación justa**" - I feel it is a fair demand) because he said it was part of the

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[29]Partido Popular, the center-right conservative party at both autonomic and State level.

Catalan culture, he decided not to participate in more political events, including the Catalan National Day. His reasons included the fact that these had been appropriated by political parties, were now highly organized (and thus less spontaneous), and there was less popular support[30]. Abel's disengagement with those mobilizations suggests that what started as something appealing to the larger society because of its spontaneity, its civic involvement, and its lack of elaboration, became more and more organized, repetitive, and with a clear involvement of the political parties supporting the civic-lead organization. It might seem contradictory that right when the two largest civic organizations (ANC and Òmnium Cultural) organized the massive demonstrations, was when Abel felt that the mobilizations were appropriated by political parties.

This is probably a common tendency visible in the later mobilizations: while the numbers were still massive, they are no longer skyrocketing as they once were. During my fieldwork in 2016, I could only find two participants, one from each team, who rejected and abhorred the *casteller* participation in any of these mobilizations. In their case, they just decided not to participate whenever it happened: "**me parece de chiste que yo tenga fotos en el facebook con mi camisa casteller y salgan por la tele en un acto independentista y que mis amigos me relacionen o que mi familia de fuera de Cataluña me relacione con esto, no, a mí no me parece nada bien**" -it looks like a joke that I have pictures on facebook with my casteller shirt and (some) appear on TV in a pro-independence event and that my friends associate me or that my family from outside (Catalonia) associate me with that, no, I don't find it right whatsoever- said Paco, a thirty-three-year-old participant in the Vilatèxtil team who moved to Catalonia from Linares (Jaén, Spain) when was 10. Although some did take critical positions regarding *casteller* participation in these political mobilizations, positions like Paco's were not representative of the majority of people's perspective, even among those who did not support the political calls on a personal level.

The main concern that participants had in both teams was whether certain events where

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[30]I believe he refers to diverse social sectors not pertaining to or aligning with the political elites.

castellers were called to participate represented the transversality, the diversity, and the apolitical character with which the *casteller* community had distinguished itself so proudly in the last years. Since prior to 2010 the *casteller* practice had never been endorsed by or associated with the political Catalanist elites, it had never been marked or iconized as the "official" image of Catalan nationalism shaped by the elites as had happened with *sardanes*. After 2010, with the recognition of UNESCO, the internal changes to modernize the activity (like the helmet), the political mobilization from a broad ideological spectrum to recognize the 'right to vote' and the political boundaries of Catalonia made *castells* represent a sort of 'national transversality' that served to include members of a broad social, political and economic spectrum into the community. The seemingly apolitical character of *castells* made this activity an appropriate, un-problematic Catalan cultural representation where the larger society could easily fit. Early participation of *castells* in these political mobilizations that promoted the 'right to vote' from the civil society seemed to include larger numbers of participants and a general acceptance. However, the political support to these mobilizations and the explicit support of a particular option (in favor of sovereignty/independence) challenged such acceptance and transversality. Although Spanish unionists and skeptical Catalanists might understand the campaigns as the same type of calls, there was a significant difference of interpretation among Catalans. The right to vote on the future of Catalonia in a referendum has been supported by more than 81% of Catalans (La Vanguardia 2014), whereas the support for Catalan independence has revolved around 40-50% (Rico 2019). Within *casteller* teams, this difference was also present, just as Vaczi noted when the head of the Barcelona team agreed to participate in the 2012 mobilization but did not agree with participatino in the following ones and thus resigned (Vaczi 2016: 365). Because the 'right to vote' apparently echoed the sentiment of larger sectors of Catalan society, the *casteller* community felt in general more supportive of its participation, just as Abel also supported participation during the early mobilizations.

Although the CCCC did not make any claims of being (a)political or not supporting

political parties and events motivated by them, it actually stated that "*les colles castelleres ens comprometem a seguir col.laborant a nivell institutional en totes aquelles qüestions que són d'interès comú."* - we the *casteller* teams commit ourselves to keep on collaborating at an institutional level regarding all those questions that are of common interest. The statement suggests that there must be a common benefit to be involved with institutions, without specifying how the common interest is measured or what are the institutions with which collaboration is promoted. The participation of the *casteller* community in several mobilizations, especially the early ones, evidenced their position in interpreting that these were somehow a common interest, it was "**razonable**" and "**coherente**" as Sergio stated. Another participant from Vilatèxtil stated that it was about defending "*drets bàsics*"- basic rights, which are elements of the kind of national cosmopolitanism that Guibernau (2013) expressed (see above). As the slogans and motivations for the mobilizations called for a specific option and thus the possibilities became limited, the demonstrations lost some support from larger society and from *casteller* participants alike.

6.2.1 Castellers on the October 12 Día de la Hispanidad

Since 1987 the October 12th is an official holiday in Spain called "**Día de la Hispanidad**" - Day of the Hispanity. This is the equivalent of Columbus Day in the US, and it "**simboliza la efemérides histórica en la que España, a punto de concluir un proceso de construcción del Estado a partir de nuestra pluralidad cultural y política, y la integración de los reinos de España en una misma monarquía, inicia un período de proyección lingüística y cultural más allá de los límites europeos**." -Symbolizes the historical period when Spain, before concluding a process in the construction of the State from our cultural and political plurality, and the integration of the Spanish reigns under a single monarchy, initiated a period of linguistic and cultural projection beyond the limits of Europe (Ley 18/1987). For this day, the Spanish state hosts different military-centered events. The Spanish president, the presidents of the autonomous communities, and other State figures are invited to those events. Also, the monarchy is present

261

during the celebration as the monarch Felipe VI is the head of the army. The main institutional event is a parade with the Spanish armed forces. They all salute the monarch as they march orderly by. In the parade, war aircrafts also fly over and draw Spanish colored flags in the sky, and there is an official homage to the Spanish flag. On the whole, this is a day when the Spanish State shows its military force and pride to commemorate its history (www.defensa.gob.es). People often travel to Madrid to see and support the events, but many others demonstrate in the streets against this celebration . In recent years, some representatives like the Catalan president or the head of the left-wing Spanish party Podemos, Pablo Iglesias, have also declined invitations to such celebrations, and offered a critical perspective of the celebration, traditionally framed as a patriotic event: "**Patriotismo es garantizar derechos para todas y todos, no tratar de ocultar tras banderas la falta de empatía. Patriotismo es cuidar, no tratar de imponer el miedo. Patriotismo es solidaridad y democracia**." (@Pablo_Iglesias_) -Patriotism is about guaranteeing rights for all, not about hiding the lack of empathy behind flags. Patriotism is about taking care, not about imposing fear. Patriotism is solidarity and democracy.

In Catalonia, most of the city councils and general population no longer host celebrations, make institutional statements supporting this day or take the day off. Instead, they open the town halls and businesses as on any other day (El Periódico 2017). Since the political pro-independence movement started getting more and more powerful in the last few years, the Hispanity celebration has become the space for many to defend Spanish national unity as a response to the massive Catalan Diada demonstrations. During the Hispanity celebration in 2016, some anonymous people used social media to send out a call for volunteers to build *castells* during the 12-October demonstration. The call used an image of the *pom de dalt* - top part- with an *enxaneta* -child crowner- holding a Spanish flag. The message of the call read in Spanish: "**12 de octubre 2016. Buscamos voluntarios para castellers**." The poster and the call seemed quite improvised, with a likely photoshopped image of the Spanish flag (see Vaczi 2016 for a similar account) and an ambiguous sentence that suggested they were looking for volunteers "**para [*hacer de*] castellers**"

-to play *castellers*. Judging from this expression, it seems that they did not really want or need actual *casteller* participants, but just people who could make one (perhaps assuming some sort of experience in actual *castell* building).

Figure 6.7: Poster for 12-O Día de la Hispanidad. 2016. Retrieved from: legionurbana.org

Someone in Mediterrani shared the posted picture through the Whatsapp youth group. The reactions of the Mediterrani participants read as follows:

A: "No pot ser...ho han fet per buscar brega, no?"

This can't be...they do it to seek trouble, no?

B: "Suposo...pero els comentaris de la penya feien bastanta gracia"

I guess, but the comments of the people were quite funny

C: "A mi no em sambla tan anat de l'olla que algú vulgui fer un pilar"

I don't think it's so crazy that someone wants to build a pillar

D: 'A mi tampoc. Els no independentistes I espanyolistes també tenen lloc al món

casteller. Per molt que sigui una tradició d'aquí"

Me neither. Non-independentist and Spanish nationalists also have a place in the
casteller world, despite it being a tradition from here.

E: "La pregunta és si els espanyolistes tenen un lloc per a ells"

The question is if Spanish nationalist have a place for them

(…) "Com?"

What/How?

E: "Que es com si vinguessin taurins a les manis indepes. Potser algú no ho entendria
o malinterpretaria [com] una provocació. Espero que no però mai se sap"

This is as if bull-fighting fans came to the independence demonstrations. Maybe
someone would not understand or misinterpret it as a provocation. I hope not, but
you never know.

The participant responses showed that even if it was an unexpected call and some did not
really believe it to be genuine at first, there were no monolithic positions regarding it. The debate
was open for them to discuss whether or not *castells* could be performed in an event that was
not supporting the political position of Catalan sovereignty or the right to vote, but its opposite.
In this regards, two very popular members of the team were the ones who openly proposed that
the idea was not that crazy. In particular, D proposes that the *casteller* world should have a
place for 'non-idependentist' and 'Spanish nationalists.' It is interesting to note that he describes
those not supporting Catalan sovereignty positions in these two different categories. D's position
supported the *casteller* tenet that the activity should welcome diversity no matter the political
alliances (just as the Valors Socials of the CCCC promotes). Another popular participant in the
conversation questions whether Spanish nationalists actually have a space for them in their events.
In his explanation, he seems to suggest that Spanish nationalist or bullfighting are not really likely
to be compatible with castells, and in the same way, castells are not likely compatible with the

Hispanity Day.

Other comments around this issue mocked the fact that the *enxaneta* holding the Spanish flag in the picture was not wearing the hard helmet, a measure that had been mandatory since 2012. The conversation followed:

A: "Potser la foto es dabans dels cascos pel tema dels drets I aixos"

Maybe the photo is from before the helmet regulation, for the issue about image rights and so...

B: " '**Con Franco no había cascos!'** "

With Franco there weren't helmets!

C: "Segur, deu ser de lepoca del propi 12 octubre"

Sure, it must be from the time of October 12 itself.

In the conversation, the participants associate the lack of the safety measure with the time when helmets were not mandatory. The other two participants who follow agree to the idea that the picture must be old (even if the implementation of the hard helmet was fairly recent) and make references to particular past times (including 1492). The expression "**con Franco esto no pasaba**" or "con Franco se vivía mejor" are popular expressions still used by supporters of the regime who criticize contemporary problems today. In this case, the participant used these widely known expressions as an 'echoic mention'[31] (Sperber and Wilson 1981) to set the primary text (Basso 1979) from which two semantic intentions develop (Bakhtin 1983:11): one aligning with the typified persona who supports this discourse, the other opposing it. The participant uses this strategy to provide an ironic commentary on the first discourse and thus distances himself from it. The double voicing exaggerates as a response to the first comment, which only highlighted

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[31]sharing a set of assumptions and expectations among participants of an interaction in order to interpret and understand an ironic utterance or parody

the possibility that the picture was taken in a recent (but politically democratic) past, and shifts the reference to the period of the Franco dictatorship. In the following response (C), exaggerates the datedness of the image even further, mockingly associating the lack of the helmet with the time the holiday celebrates, the 'discovery of America' in 1492. Both exaggerations work to portray the call as retrograde, backwards, and belonging to undemocratic times and systems. The group who made the call eventually got some volunteers and was able to build a pillar of four people high during the 12-O demonstration in Barcelona. The three participants who were at the visible part of the column wore red and yellow shirts, forming the colors of the Spanish flag. The *enxaneta* at the top -with a hard helmet- also lowered a Spanish flag, which contrasts with the Catalan flag that is usually used for this purpose. Despite the visual and symbolic contrasts, it did not provoke much discussion among participants, the larger *casteller* community or in the media.

6.3 Commercialization of *castells* and the negotiation of its role today

Just as the *casteller* community has lately been in the spotlight for its connection with the sovereignty movement in Catalonia, it has also exposed tensions regarding its cultural and economic sustainability due to its increasing popularity. As we know, *casteller* teams and their activity have expanded considerably in Catalonia in the last few years. This has usually been received positively by teams since more participation enables higher and more complex towers. Both Vilatèxtil and Mediterrani teams achieved the coveted status of "*colla de nou*" -team of nine[32]- in the last few years, when they had higher numbers of participation. The increase in participation and general interest in *casteller* activity has also exported this practice beyond Catalonia, and now some (non) European cities also have a *casteller* team, most of them founded

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[32]This is the common name given to teams who reached nine levels. it is believed that once they have achieved this recognition, they have to work to consolidate it.

266

by Catalan expats. However, this increase in popularity and participation has also posed economic, social and ethical challenges for many teams and for the broader *casteller* community. In this section I aim to show how participants of both Viltèxtil and Mediterrani engage with these challenges that are re-defining the meaning and role of *castells*.

One of the reasons that many senior participants at *castells* gave for the recent spike in participation was that joining a team and participating was free. Many believed that the economic crisis of 2008 -that hit more forcefully in Spain in 2011- pushed many families and individuals to seek free forms of entertainment. Nobody associated this change with the possibility that individuals and families were also looking for meaningful ways of connecting to people in harsh times like those during the economic downturn. Participating at *castells* is indeed free: nobody is required to pay a membership fee of any kind in order to join or maintain the status of participant in the team. Teams pay for the rental of the rehearsing facility, shirts, t-shirts, snacks, subsidized beers, discounted dinners, and lunches, (oftentimes these are totally free) and transportation to exhibitions by train or private bus. This is a considerable amount of money that participants do not have to cover. However, as seen in other chapters, there are some economic costs to the individual associated with participation: buying a rehearsal shirt, a *faixa,* or bandanas are amongst the obvious expenses. Other expenses are not that obvious but are a central part of the social side of *casteller* practice: paying for after-rehearsal beers, paying for dinners before, during or after rehearsals depending on the team, paying for (discounted) post-exhibition lunches[33], anniversary or other special lunches[34] or dinners[35] with the team. These, as one participant who coordinated the social area in Vilatèxtil commented, are essential to *castells* because in the end it is a human group. Many of these expenses are at very discounted prices, and both Vilatèxtil and Mediterrani used a system of vouchers during many of these events. Discounted prices are possible thanks to the multiple sponsors and subsidies that teams receive.

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[33]Sometimes the price of these lunches is fully covered by the hosting team.

[34]Like 'calçotades' a Catalan typical get-together lunch around Jan-Mar in which people grill and eat a type of scallion together with 'butifarres' -sausages- and other meat.

[35]Like Christmas dinners or dinners after soccer matches.

Although yearly or seasonal budgets were supposedly public in both teams, meaning anyone could technically request to see them, I only managed to access one of the budgets, and this access was granted on the condition that I "*tractar amb cuidado aquesta informació*" -treat this information carefully. This suggested to me that teams generally did not like sharing this information very openly, as it might compromise (and make comparable) information about sponsors, subsidies, and how each team divided the amounts for events, exhibitions, etc. For example, city councils and other public institutions contribute money to support the "*manteniment de la colla*" -the team's continued activity (Robert). This amount varies depending on the history of a team and its size, and in places where there are several teams in one city or town (like in the case of Mediterrani team), it can pose some tensions. Besides public and private sponsors and auspices, both Vilatèxtil and Mediterrani teams promoted optional fee contributions from their participants. In the case of Vilatèxtil, paying a membership fee varying with age (from 20 to 35 euros) allowed the participant to vote in group decisions (different from the board) that had to be taken collectively. In this particular case, and unlike Mediterrani, fees marked the deegree of membership in the team.This was the case when the team decided to approve the budget for the international exhibition, in which the team had to ask for a bank loan and participants had to cover a smaller amount for that trip. That decision was made by a show of hands after a rehearsal in which members who paid the yearly fee had a yellow card and showed it. In the case of Mediterrani, although this fee was also optional, it did not make any difference in terms of decision-making. In several group meetings, whoever was present and wanted to vote could do just that. The budget of one of the teams analyzed was approximately 103,000 euros (approximately $113,000), which included the money this team received for exhibitions (approx. 29,000 euros or $32,000), and subventions and collaborations (approx. 20,000 euros or $22,000), among other items. The sum of expenses budgeted for 2016 was around 103,000 euros too, which included paying other teams for exhibitions (this particular team ended up earning money because it paid less than what they received for that item), transportation (10,000 euros

or $11,000), bar expenses, and rehearsing facility rent with electricity, cleaning, and insurance (approx 12,000 euros or $13,000), among other items. A surprising item budgeted as part of the general expenses was one about "*fer créixer la colla*" -make the team grow-, in which the team invested the highest amount of their resources (around 27,000 euros or almost $30,000). Within this line, there was specified "social events, social outings, communication, children's group, or fees to associations" (like the CCCC). This kind of economic investment supports the idea that "*fer créixer la colla*" is indeed a central task in a medium-sized *casteller* team and that this is planned and purposeful. The fact that the team expenses practically covered the budget may also give us a sense of the margins that this and probably other teams had. One of the pieces of information that I was not given after asking was about the amount that each team requests for participating in Sunday exhibitions, as this amount varies depending on the "*nivell de la colla en general*" -general level of the team (Robert, PR Mediterrani), meaning being a team of eight, team of nine, etc. The price, according to the same person, also varies depending on the time within the season since at the beginning (Jan-Mar), teams will usually build lower towers, often with smaller teams, and they will demand less money than by the end of the season. Teams "play" discreetly with all these numbers and variables in the negotiation to gain larger margins that can cover the costs of events, other Sunday exhibitions, and the general costs of having more and more participants. The increase of participation in *casteller* activity, thus, is generally beneficial for the team and for tower building but presents economic challenges for them, especially if they do not achieve certain tower levels.

One additional problem in the *casteller* community, especially the small teams, is the price[36] that they have to pay to cover their participants' insurance (Andrés 2019) in the event of a collapse.[37] It is through the CCCC that teams receive insurance from a private company that covers injuries during *casteller* activity and that includes, among other things, having two

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[36]The fee that teams had to pay to the CCCC in 2016 was around 550 euros/year (tax included) and it did not vary from team to team; all teams payed the same amount no matter their size to cover their participants.

[37]It is not a private or individual health insurance for each participant, but one specific to casteller activity.

ambulances ready during every Sunday exhibition for as long as the exhibition lasts.[38] The president of the CCCC acknowledged in an interview that, in the past years, teams were having a hard time covering all costs (not only those for insurance) and that the CCCC had to find other sponsors (public or not) and measures that helped reduce the economic burden imposed by the CCCC (ibid). The president urged making "*el món casteller econòmicament sostenible*" -the casteller world economically sustainable- among all the teams.

One of the ways both Vilatèxtil and Mediterrani earned extra money to cover their expenses was through '*actuations commercials*' -commercial exhibitions or workshops, which were requested by businesses, schools, or other private entities. These hired a particular team to perform in their facilities or nearby in front of their workers or students during workdays (usually in the afternoons and usually during off rehearsing days). Many of the companies who hire *casteller* teams to perform in their meetings, do so because they often host international meetings and want to show something "from here" (Robert). The services often produce "commodifiable experiences" to tourists, employees, or participants that provide a sense of authenticity (MacCannel 19760). According to Robert, the public relations director of Mediterrani, these exhibitions provided and covered most of the non-public financial support that the team usually gets: "*en el nostre cas, el gruix d'ingrès d'actuacions no ve de les actuations regulars (. . .), ve de les actuations comercials*" - in our case, the bulk of exhibition income does not come from regular exhibitions (. . .), it comes from commercial exhibitions. Not many participants usually attended these exhibitions, however, or found them worth joining. Part of this disaffection towards commercial exhibitions was the fact that they took place during the working day or during non-rehearsing days. In all the commercial exhibitions that I attended while I was in the Mediterrani team, towers were not usually higher than six levels, which requires far fewer participants and poses far less risks of collapse and injuries to participants. Thus, teams generally tried to protect their participants from overexposing them to *casteller* activity by aiming at lower towers, not meant for competition but

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[38]During one Sunday exhibition, teams could not start building towers until the two ambulances were present.

for display: "*els hi diem [a les empreses] que els farem una mostra*" -we tell them [the companies] that will do a sample exhibition. As the PR of the team commented "*lu que motiva a la gent [participants] és actuar en actuations que ja anteriorment han tingut castells grans, sobretot de la zona tradicional, i amb colles que estan com a mínim en el mateix nivell que tu (…) en amunt*" - what motivates people [participants] is to perform in exhibitions that in the past had big *castells*, especially from the traditional area, and with teams that are at least in the same level as you are (…) and above. The fact that many experienced participants were dissuaded from attending commercial exhibitions also opened up the possibility for many new (and less experienced ones) to perform in positions of responsibility that were not usually assigned to them, as happened with me in a couple of these instances. Among participants in Vilatèxtil, these performances were also popularly called "*les prostis*" in reference to prostitution. This way of understanding the paid workshops and commercials shows that, despite accepting them, there was still a sense of illegitimacy about the events, as if one was selling oneself. Due to the lack of participation in many of these exhibitions, teams usually had to encourage members to participate. This was not done in typical posters as happened with Sunday exhibitions, but with Whatsapp messages to all the team or in team meetings. Robert, for example, commented that when they showed the money that the team received through this kind of exhibitions, people usually did not have any problem accepting this role. However, the fact that he pointed this out and added that "*no tenim cap problema*" -we don't have any problem- suggests that there is indeed an underlying tension or hesitancy around this type of exhibitions, despite its general acceptance for practical reasons.

The general acceptance of on-demand exhibitions from private sectors, which were economically profitable for the team, contrasts with *casteller* businesses that have formed to offer commercial performances as well. Another of the social values that the CCCC pointed out in their website was that *casteller* teams had to ensure the amateurism of *casteller* participants ("*garantint l'amateurisme del casteller*") in the development and maintenance of this cultural expression (Valors Socials CCCC). Questions about professionalization, representation, and

profit were at stake and evidenced a blurred boundary between what was considered a practical instrumentalization and acceptable commodification of *casteller* resources for the team and an unethical one for individual benefit.

A company called "Team Towers" (teamtowers.com) worked as a mediating entity that offered a variety of *casteller*-related activities to the companies that requested their services. These activities range from just a demonstration of *castells*, in which Team Towers reaches out and provides an actual team, to coaching, and workshops where employees can perform and build short towers. In these workshops, Team Towers generally gathers individual *casteller* participants from different teams who are able and willing to work.[39] The purpose of this *casteller* business is to "**ayudar a desarrollar valores y competencias clave para el trabajo en equipo en personas y organizaciones**" -to help develop key values and skills for teamwork among people and organizations. During a Whatsapp conversation amongst the youth Vilatèxtil participants regarding this type of businesses, one of them commented that he was once hired by the TeamTowers company and had earned 50 euros for 3h. If *casteller* participants can be hired and paid individually, it reveals a practice that is (at least closer to) a professionalized one. One participant wondered if these were "**trabajadores castelleros**" -casteller workers- and could make a living from it. This professionalized and lucrative image seemingly clashes with the amateurism that the CCCC wanted to ensure. Another participant responded to this comment positively ("*ah que way. On s'ha de firmar?*" - Oh that's cool. Where do we sign up?). This comment, which was backed up by another participant in the conversation, shows a turn common in capitalist societies to monetize skills, time invested or the commitment to all kinds of activities.This opened up an ethical debate about the role of *castells* today in the Whatsapp group. The debate showed competing positions regarding these practices, and the way participants believed these affected or challenged the essence, significance, and understanding of the activity.

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[39]I am at this point unaware of how this company reaches out individuals (a general call in their website, a participant list, etc).

Figure 6.8: "Aixequen set pilars pels presos polítics durant la diada castellera de la Mercè". Vilaweb 24/9/18

Another example that Vilatèxtil participants commented about as similar to Team Towers was the case of Castellers de Vilafranca. This *casteller* team is one of the top-ranked teams in Catalonia, and it has a business called "Green[40] Towers." This business advertised itself in a very similar fashion as the above case.[41] Unlike Vilatèxtil or Mediterrani's commercial performances, who exhibited towers in their team's name, the Castellers de Vilafranca's brand used a different name for its business. Similar to Vilatèxtil and Mediterrani, and unlike Team Towers, Green Towers use participants of their own team.

Vilatèxtil participants engaged in a discussion about whether or not this kind of business was as legitimate as the commercial performances that both Vilatèxtil and Mediterrani usually did. Apparently, and according to them, in these *casteller* businesses, participants must be18 or older (even the *enxaneta*), and each of them is individually paid. In a televised event in which Green Towers appeared dropping a company's banner, neither the *enxaneta* nor the other members of the team wore their green official shirts from Castellers de Vilafranca. This was perhaps part of

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[40]The Castellers of Vilafranca wear a green shirt and are popularly known as "els verds" -the green ones-, thus the "green" name on the brand.

[41]"oferim a empreses, universitats, escoles, equips esportius i grups diversos, un ampli ventall d'activitats relacionades amb els castells i que s'adapten a les necessitats de cada col·lectiu." -we offer a wide range of casteller-related activities to businesses, universities, schools, sporting team, and diverse groups that adapt to the needs of each collectivity. (https://www.castellersdevilafranca.cat/2012/01/25/green-towers/)

the strategy of separating the team from its business brand[42]. In this particular case, the group was not performing as a *casteller* team or as Castellers de Vilafranca, but as a private business team, so the CCCC could not sanction them for displaying a commercial banner. This highly contrasted with the practice of dropping a non-profit banners in representation of a community and/or in support or defense of certain movements (Catalan flags, LGTBI flags or banners like the one demanding the release of political prisoners in Catalonia, more recently).

In the Whatsapp discussion below, two young and very experienced *casteller* participants argued for and against *casteller* business.

Carla: Pq a [sic] Vilatèxtil tmbe ha actuat per empreses privades i guiris

Because Vilatèxtil has also performed in private companies and [for] tourists

Sheila: Però com a colla oficial, no?

But as an official team, no?

Carla: Si. Que es pitjir [sic]. I lenxaneta deixant anar una pancarta amb la publi

Yes. Which is worse. And the exaneta dropping a banner with the ad

Sheila: No és el mateix. No ho trobo pitjor

It's not the same. I don't find it worse

Carla: En comptes d dur una empresa que fa una colla amb majors dedat. Li donem la pancarta a un nen i que la mostri. Ah i tots amb camisa de la colla. Que be.

Instead of bringing a company that builds a team with adults. We give the banner to a child to show it. Ah and everybody with the team's shirt. How good.

(. . .)

Sheila: Però no és mateix Carla.. Cobrem per a la colla, per pdoer [sic] pagar el nostre local, el transport, etc etc. (. . .) No per lucrar-nos.

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[42]One of the participants commented that the CCCC usually sanctioned teams for displaying advertisements in official exhibitions.

But it's not the same, Carla. We get paid for the team, to be able to pay our own

rehearsing facility, transportation, etc., etc (. . .) Not to profit ourselves.

Carla: Ja. Si. Pro be q lenxaneta ensenya una pancarta amb publi duna empresa. Es publicitat.

I know. Yes. But the enxaneta shows a banner with a company's ad. It's publicity.

Several issues emerged and intersected in this discussion, in which both sides share a number of points in common. On the one hand, Carla was defending the role of these businesses as doing something clearly different from *casteller* activity. In the conversation, she kept correcting others who interpreted these groups as either "*colla castellera*" or "*empressa castellera*" -casteller business. She rejected both definitions but could not give an alternative except for "*una empressa que ofereix castells*" -a company that offers *castells*. The apparent contradiction evidences that the boundaries that usually define each activity were not at all clear. What Carla defended was that only adults could participate and that participants did not even wear their official shirts in those performances. This was especially important for Carla when the *enxaneta* had to drop a sponsor's banner or publicity of the company that was hiring the demonstration, for example. In hew view, using children in commercial performances was problematic. Further in the conversation, Carla supported the idea that participants in these 'businesses' wore unconventional shirts with a color that none of the other *casteller* teams used.

On the other hand, Sheila was criticizing the fact that in these practices, individuals get paid instead of the whole team receiving the benefits from the exhibition. Profit from regular commercial performances in both Vilatèxtil and Mediterrani went straight to the team to benefit the entire group (extra money to cover events, merchandising, etc) and Sheila and another participant later in the conversation found that especially problematic. Carla seemed to agree with this point despite her insistence on the issue of using child. On the whole, there was an evident hesitancy about individually profiting from *casteller* activity and mobilizing children to

275

contribute to the company's publicity, which provides economic profit to the company in return.

The conversation turned to question the values of the Vilafranca team as it is one of the top teams, and most internationally visible, often presenting itself as the representative of *casteller* tradition in Catalonia (see images of Vilafranca participants' clothing in chapter 5, for example). A Mediterrani participant once told me that Vilafranca *castellers* were "xulos" -cocky-, especially during the Tarragona contest, and that not many people from other teams were fond of this team. I witnessed this disaffection when Vilafranca won the casteller contest in 2016 and celebrated the collapse of their rival team that automatically gave them the prize; hundreds of participants from various other teams turned to them and started booing them loudly. Part of this rivalry was about the fierce competition for building higher and more complex towers, which also included competition for earning more money to support the team activities. Sheila added to this discussion that the Vilafranca team "*No tenen cap tipus de pudor en prostituirse. Van ser ells que van proposar portar publicitat a les camises oficials (. . .). Que sóm un equip de futbol?*" -they don't have any shame in prostituting themselves. They were the ones that proposed wearing advertisements on the official shirts (. . .) what are we, a soccer team??'. Sheila's ironic final comment clearly opposed *casteller* practice to a sporting activity, since both amateur and elite sporting teams in Catalonia usually wear advertisements on their outfits. Generally, *casteller* participants did not understand this practice as sport, and the first example I witnessed about it was when a group of Mediterrani participants laughed about a comment someone made on the Whattsapp group about having to attend "*entrenu*"[43] -training. Instead, he was supposed to come to "*assaig*" -rehearsal. Associating *castells* with sports also entails an understanding of the activity as based on competition and this, nonetheless, is an aspect that many *casteller* participants actually defended as one of the core purposes of *castells*: "*els castells es fan per ferlos cada vegada mes alts*" -we build towers to build them higher every time-, said Carla while she added, "*si no, pa que assajem*" - Otherwise, why are we rehearsing? Other participants

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[43]This expression is very typical when referring to the commitment that many have to extra-curricular sporting activities.

supported these views. This premise contrasted with another participant's view, who stated that she participated at *castells* "*per mantenir la cultura. I que passi de generacio en generacio*" -to maintain the culture. And so it passes from generation to generation. These two views reflected two competing *casteller* models today: one that revolves around -and bases its practice on- competition, which constantly requires large amounts of people and economic resources, and one that aims at keeping the cultural practice alive through its historical and generational continuity, which does not necessarily require building higher towers or large amounts of participants. In the latter model, teams are much smaller and often do not- and cannot- aim to build higher towers. This model is often dismissed as 'folkloric', and participants of both Vilatèxtil and Mediterrani did not generally seem to support it.

In the ongoing discussion, another team was called into question. Carla, in defending the competitive *casteller* model, argued that she preferred that there existed international teams like the Castellers de Hanghzou than smaller Catalan teams that did not build high enough towers. *Casteller* expansion and popularity has also been materialized in the creation of such international teams. However, this expansion has always happened because of the influence of Catalans who have gone to work and live outside Catalonia and Spain[44] and has been regarded by the *casteller* community as something positive because it exports the values of this practice and the culture abroad, while retaining the Catalan association. However, for many, the emergence of a Chinese team like the Castellers de Hanghzou meant something different. This team was founded in 2009 by a Chinese businessman who owned a small textile colony near the Chinese town of Hangzhou, and thus was not founded by Catalan expats. The team included workers of that colony and was under the tutelage (*padrins*) of the historical Catalan team of *Colla Vella dels Xiquets de Valls* (or just 'la Vella') (www.collavella.cat).

According to the information on the La Vella website, the Catalan team had traveled back and forth to teach this new Chinese team how to build towers. With time, they have achieved

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[44]Since 2017, there is a casteller team in Madrid, founded by a mix of Catalans and local Madrilenians. It is part of the Cercle Català de Madrid.

the complexity that only a few teams in Catalonia have been able to. In 2016, they were invited to the Tarragona contest to perform on Saturday, when smaller Catalan and some international teams were also invited to exhibit their towers within a non (or less)-competitive environment.[45] However, to the surprise of many, the Hangzhou team built towers of nine levels at that event, proving they should be able to perform on the Sunday schedule together with the larger teams. Although it is common for many sporting teams in Asia to belong to a company, the fact that it was started by a businessman instead of a community based or non-profit group, and the fact that they managed to gather the number of people that many Catalan teams yearn for, sparked this debate. In general, "the commodification of that [national] heritage (. . .) lead[s] to tensions over who controls the newly marketable resources, how value is assigned to them, and how profits from them are distributed" (Heller and Duchene 2012: 12). In the case of *castells*, teams receive prize money that varies depending on the final position in the ranking of the contest (see prizes in annex). In the case of the other international teams, this tension was not present in the public eye or even internally, I was told. Although the Chinese team does not participate in regular seasonal exhibitions, their performance during the biannual contest made many applaud and fear them at the same time. In a medium-sized team that could only participate in the Sunday performance by a tight margin like Vilatèxtil, many in the discussion jokingly commented on the possibility of not making the list in the following contest because the Chinese team would take their seat:

> A: "Aprofitem aquest any. . . "
>
> *Let's enjoy/make the most of it this year. . .*
>
> B: "Si pj [sic] daki dos anys no se si i serem al pas k van els xinos xD"
>
> *Yes because in two years I don't know if we're going to be there at the speed of the Chinese lol*
>
> A: "Doncs això. Anirem a fer pinya als seus castells."

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[45]These teams are not in the casteller rànquing.

There. We'll go to fer pinya to their towers

B: "Si pensem fredament el concurs d dissabte es menys agobiant xxD"

If we think of it coldly/starkly, the Saturday contest is less stifling lol

All the participants in the conversation were astonished to see the Chinese team achieve towers of 8 and 9 levels in really good form: "*2d8f clavadíssim dels xinos!*" —2of8f super sharp of the Chinese- said one, "*clavat és poc, mare mega [sic] quina tècnica!*" —sharp is not enough, my goodness, what technique!- responded another. The fact that A suggests that Vilatèxtil will only go to the contest to *fer pinya* to the Chinese team also shows and reproduces the meaning of *fer pinya* as something less appealing than building towers, especially when only doing it for other teams. The feeling (or fear) of being replaced by an outside team resonates with Mediterrani participants fearing the take over of the neighborhood by non-locals and tourists (see chapter 5), and more generally, with larger global processes of (cultural, social, or economic) exclusion and displacement (Kearny 1995, Harms 2016). In the conversation, participants also wondered if the Catalan team who had helped create the Chinese team would regret it since they were performing so well. Also, this made someone in the group encourage the team to teach the Chinese population in Vilatèxtil to join them.

D: "La vella daki res es cagara en tot. Pq tela. Han creat un monstre"

In no time 'La Vella' will freak out. It's too much. They've created a monster

E: "y **mucho** xino aqui! ja sabeu a ensenyar aquests video als xinos d vlt i k vinguin xD"

"and lots of Chinese people here! now you know, just show these videos to the Chinese of Vilatèxtil so that they can come lol

In this short excerpt, the participant's comment evidenced the fear for the uncontrolled growth of the Chinese team, which he defines as a monster. In the second comment, the participant proposes a solution to this ' monster' and, instead of proposing to fight against it, he promotes inviting the Chinese communities of the town to join the team. This proposition suggests that these communities in Catalonia do not generally participate in *casteller* practice. It shows the general distance from them despite a seeming opennes to incorporate them. Although the comment finished with a laughing expression (xD or lol), which can be interpreted as not taking the proposition seriously or as hiding a serious comment behind plausible deniability, the participant chose a practical *casteller*-related reason to negotiate this fear about the uncontrolled situation and to welcome the community into their fold (their large numbers), that is, the participant did not resort to discourses of antagonism and exclusion, for instance.

The founding of the Chinese team invited comments around its legitimacy and a sense of *castells* becoming a de-territorialized cultural practice (despite retaining some Catalan connection). Part of the criticism regarding their legitimacy was that their organization or team could not promote the same values as the ones in Catalonia. As commented above, the fact that the activity was part of a company (as they were workers in a textile colony) suggested to many that employees had to participate to keep their jobs and suggested a 'professionalized' perspective of *castells.* One participant in Vilatèxtil said "*Potser es linici de la profesionalitzacio dels castells*" -perhaps it's the beginning of the professionalization of *castells*- to which another participant, who was a senior young one, quickly responded "*Llavors deixo de fer castells*" -then I quit castells. They joked about working hours, and conditions, reproducing stereotyped images about the Chinese laborers like being extremely industrious, silent, drawn to mobs or obsessed with making money (Beltrán and Sáiz López 2001). Because these discourses are common in Spain and in Catalonia, the Catalan team that guided the Casteller de Hangzhou wrote on their website about their experience and rejected many of the unfounded stereotypes about this team, especially

those that questioned the working conditions of workers in China.[46] In both the Vilatèxtil and Mediterrani conversations, there were mean comments about the lack of values of Casteller de Hangzhou: "*Ells mai sabran els valors que realment son els castells*" -they'll never know about the values of what *castells* really are-, which seemed to inauthenticate and delegitimize their belonging to the broader *casteller* community: "*faran castells pero no son castellers*" -they may build towers, but they are not *castellers*. In response to these statements, many others replied by saying that what they do is hard work and that they were an example to many teams: "*Quins valors David?? Treballar molt i be*" -what values David?? Working hard and well. This implied that the values of *castells* were precisely working hard and well, something that any team could aspire to and that was not particular to the Chinese team.

6.4   Concluding remarks

Castells are becoming so popular and visible that growing participant numbers require other mechanisms to keep the teams functioning (sponsors, competition, regulation, etc.), especially in times when public subventions are limited and do not (or cannot) cover most of the expenses. In a context of weakening state support, we find contrasting ideas about a seeming sport-ification or soccerization of *castells*, that is, a move that is redefining *castells* as an activity that has a fundamentally and fiercely competitive motivation, accepting all sorts of funding no matter the source, de-territorializing the activity (no longer rooted or with a connection to Catalonia and Catalan culture), oriented to an athletic body, driven by on-demand private sectors, and being paid: what kind of competition is good and representative of *castells*? What kind of funding is in line with the *casteller* values? What is the right public exposure (both local and international)? Is there a limit to its expansion? What should expansion look like?

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[46]The 'La Vella' website explained that the working conditions in this textile colony were unique in the area because they were similar to those in most European countries (www.collavella.cat). This does not overthrow the general stereotypes, but only defended this specific company.

The recent mobilizations during the Catalan National Day have both epitomized and challenged the legitimacy and representativeness of *castells*, especially during the last few years. Many believed that the recent *casteller* participation in these calls had to be read from a cultural and civic perspective and not from a partisan politics, even if supporting the demonstration was a political act.This view emphasized the civic aspect of *castells*, the freedom for someone to choose whether or not they wanted to participate, and the notion of 'common sense' typical in the consensus of cultural Catalanism (Crameri 2008). Many understood that there was a common benefit beyond the political positions at the individual level. For this reason, some participants even reacted positively to building towers during the 12-O demonstration, proving that *castells*, as a cultural resource, was accessible to anyone. This encountered some resistance that associated the 12-O celebration with backwardness, authoritarianism, or colonialism, which evidenced that for many, there was still a boundary in what *castells* could or should represent.

Chapter 7

Conclusions

The *casteller* phenomenon today is very different from the one that originated in the southern regions of Catalonia back in the early 19th century. The kinds of people involved, the ways of organizing, the meanings attached or their representations are amongst the many elements that have been redefined throughout its history. The *casteller* community transformed many of those elements in the last half of the 20th century; women were incorporated, participants were not paid, democratic means of representation were introduced, among other things. *Castells* has always been regarded as a folkloric practice of the Catalan culture. Nonetheless, the activity had remained under the "nationalist radar" as an apolitical expression of Catalan culture, alongside others such as *La Patum* or *bastoners*. The *casteller* phenomenon has not before been an emblematic Catalanist tradition, iconized as typifying its culture or its people. As Macià, a senior participant from Vilatèxtil put it: "*els castells mai han estat una cosa molt catalana*" -castells were never a very Catalan thing, in reference to its national symbol.

The political elites, and especially the conservative Catalan nationalist party *Convergència I Unió* (CIU) that ruled Catalonia for more than 20 years after the dictatorship, did not pay much attention nor mobilized *castells* as a symbolic representation of the Catalan society. Instead, the *sardanes* dance and its characteristic features were still the iconic representation of the kind

of cultural identity and Catalanism that the political class promoted, especially in contrast to Spanish cultural representations. Actually, it is worth noting that neither of the two representations (*castells* or *sardanes*) were the major focus of the cultural policy carried out by CIU during those years. Catalan language was the cultural expression that they mobilized to recuperate the cultural identity lost during the dictatorship (see Crameri 2008).

This kind of conservative (political and cultural) Catalanism, shaped by elites, aligned with (upper) middle class, Catalan aesthetics that included a taste for contained movements, refinement, *seny* (good sense), precision, and collective performance without much bodily contact or confrontation. These characteristics have often been used to define the Catalan character and identity, in stereotyped forms. In the popular culture, these and other stereotypes had been mobilized to define a Catalan identity in opposition to the Spanish one. The small Catalan donkey[1] had also come to symbolize in the 2000s the Catalan character, its aesthetics, and Catalan nationalism in contrast with the famous Spanish Osborne bull, which symbolized the Spanish as a masculine, strong, proud, brave and also nationalist character (Brandes 2008). Both the bull and the donkey humorously represented the two contrasting social, cultural, political, and linguistic communities. Such polarization strengthened the bonds *within* each imagined community (Anderson 1991) but also exacerbated the boundaries between them. As CIU finished its last mandates, "the diversity of Catalan society began to assert itself" (Crameri 2008: 14) and new scenarios opened up that appealed to a larger Catalan society.

In the last decade, *castells* have gained more visibility in public life and have increased in levels of participation considerably. Part of this popularity was due to UNESCO's recognition of this activity as 'Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity' in 2010, as well as to the modernization of *casteller* practices exemplified by the mandatory use of helmets for the children who climb highest, and to people's desire for low-cost leisure activities in the aftermath of the economic crisis. The unstable sociopolitical situation (in the midst of an economic crisis) that challenged the

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[1] Some associated characteristics were its stubbornness, timidity or physical weakness when compared to the bull.

284

legitimacy of the new Catalan Statute of Autonomy, which the Catalan populace had approved in a referendum, also created the conditions for an increased focus on *castells*. The massive protest against the Spanish Constitutional Court's overruling of that Statute provided a 'transversal' or crosscutting image of the Catalan society united against the seemingly centralizing politics of the Spanish State and the perceived general disdain from Spanish elites towards Catalan society and its institutions.

The cultural and political civic associations of Òmnium Cultural and the *Assamblea Nacional de Catalunya* (ANC) proposed a new national project for Catalonia led by the civil society, and they mobilized the *casteller* community for the representation of such a project. In so doing, these associations brought to light and mapped onto a national level the characteristics that were popularly identified with *castells* such as the cooperative and collective effort, the shared responsibilities, and the diversity of its members, among others. The instrumentalization of *castells* has worked to provide a symbolic image of a diverse Catalan community that has also been beneficial for the teams themselves.

This dissertation has examined how participants responded to such instrumentalization, both political and economic, the latter due to its popularity and expansion and its ability for use in the kind of local branding of distinction that had become a global economic trend. The dissertation has looked at how participants position themselves to define the boundaries of the role of *castells* today, and the threats and the challenges they see it undergoing in the current sociopolitical and economic context. In so doing, I have provided a first-hand view from participants on how they negotiate their understanding of what a *casteller* community means to them. As Sergio stated in Castilian "**ese grupo se convierte como en familia**" -that group becomes like family. Many people made reference to the fact that participating at *castells* was about building a community.

This dissertation offers an approach to how participants experience becoming *castellers* through different practices. It shows and analyzes the concrete ways by which participants acquire cultural knowledge and values within the context of *castells*. I show how participants learn to use

and regulate their bodies and their physicality at *castells*, not without challenges. They do so by learning how to position themselves in towers, how to counteract forces, how to access different positions, how to present themselves, how to gain collective recognition, how to overcome bodily contradictions and uncomfortable situations. *Castellers* learn through their bodies to endure and adjust to pain and pressure collectively and learn how to be responsible for others.

I also show how participants build a sense of cooperation and collaboration through their linguistic practices, in particular, how *castellers* communicate at *pinya* and trunk positions and manage different sources of power. Thus, elliptical imperatives, which in many contexts are viewed as one of the most face threatening speech acts, were common amongst *pinya* and trunk participants. So were 'we' forms, which were used in contexts where there were no obvious power imbalances (such as in peer to peer interaction) and encouraged solidarity relations. In contrast, participants learned to expect 'orders' from the head of the team when building up the tower. These orders did not take classic directive or imperative forms such as you forms (either in singular or plural) and often used 3rd person indicative forms ('they'). Present participle and adverbs were also common when giving an order in tower building. The temporary hierarchy and power imbalance were not exploited through language, but instead promoted an inclusive, cooperative way of participation.

Castellers had to learn how to speak up at *castells* when there were defective situations or when there was an unbearable pain. Learning to communicate allowed many to effectively give orders, shout, or engage in rough or strong exchanges when it was needed, and this could potentially challenge interactional boundaries typically found in society in terms of gender, age, class or origin. In fact, many L2 Catalan speakers had a linguistic motivation when joining *castells,* and although not all of them ended up speaking Catalan in their everyday interactions nor identified themselves as Catalan, they were included as full members. In this discussion, I also showed how certain linguistic practices indexed membership or novice status (like *xava* or Castilianized forms of Catalan), thus evidencing some of the linguistic ideologies underpinning

those discourses.

Besides the linguistic practices, I also examined in this dissertation how participants in both teams constructed their local identities in relation to the communities they saw themselves representing. The site and spaces where they exhibited their towers, the activities they carried out, the interaction with neighbors and tourists, and the general experience offered another perspective on how *castellers* negotiated and performed their collective identities (often in opposition to something else), their legitimacy, and their role in their community. On the whole, I have attempted to show participants' different practices at *castells* and the existing (and often unrecognized) contradictions and tensions within teams, as seen in each chapter. I have shown how *castellers*, in their performance, manage these tensions through their bodily and discursive practices. I have provided evidence of a collaborative, egalitarian, and multifaceted way of constructing communities with a specific identity beyond the political and nationalist one.

In recent years, *castells* have emerged as the emblematic image of the new Catalan community. Just as the bull and the donkey epitomized antagonistic national communities and identities (Catalan and Spanish) in the new millennium, *castells* are becoming an iconic representation of the new Catalan society. Its characteristics highlight the notions of community-building, hard work, historical activity and tenacity (represented by the Catalan donkey), but they also include bravery, physical (and mental) strength, pride, and youth (often represented by the Spanish bull). This is a recuperation of Catalan traits (like *rauxa* and earthiness) that had been erased in the classic nationalist stereotypes. *Castells* thus incorporates popularly recognized images, styles, and aspects from both stereotypes to its practice and reality.

These characteristics have been mobilized and instrumentalized to portray a similar image of the Catalan society that is voicing demands for more sovereignty from European institutions. In extrapolating the *casteller* practice and its aspects to a national community, civic associations have also highlighted the modern, democratizing, competitive, and thus European character of both. It is interesting that a political movement based on civic associations is challenging the

traditional notions of nation-state by proposing a modern and cosmopolitan one that is represented

by a historically, geographically, and socially particular activity like *castells*. This amalgamation

of indexical meanings is probably more appealing to the larger and more (ethnically, socially,

linguistically) diverse Catalan society. This is so much the case that even Spanish political parties

like Partido Popular (PP) and civic associations defending the unity of Spain in Catalonia (Societat

Civil Catalana) have recently used *casteller* images without permission in their ads[2] to appeal to

unity and a kind of Catalanness only within the Spanish institutional frame (see image below).

Figure 7.1: Societat Civil Catalana poster: "Spain represents: progress, Catalanness, equality, and ecologism".

[2] These were used for the call for the 2019 Día de la Hispanidad and for the electoral campaigns of PP.

Teams represented in these ads quickly demanded the withdrawal of their images for such purposes[3] (Tarragona Digital 2019). Today, *castells* is being associated with the type of urban, modern, hip, working and middle-class Catalanism of late, but its openness and inclusive character (and its political instrumentalization for the Catalan sovereignty movement) has also mobilized opposing political sectors to claim it represents them.

UNESCO's recognition of *castells* and the Catalan community and the fact that this practice was not previously associated with a political or cultural Catalanism facilitated the inclusion of different social sectors, and thus its legitimacy to represent the Catalan society from an 'apolitical' perspective. Some *castellers* even compared the construction of towers with the making of a nation, and they did so from the characteristics of this practice. However, the majority of participants did not extrapolate to the national level the symbolic meanings of tower building. Some of the characteristics of *castells* facilitate the access of diverse sociopolitical and ethnolinguistic sectors of the Catalan society to the community from a very hands-on perspective and allow them to construct that collective identity for themselves. I have shown concrete ways in which the body, language, social spaces, and politics connect. This complex and multifaceted phenomenon builds a sense of collaborative community in addition to national identity.

Today *castells* are becoming an institutionalized practice that is being challenged by the sociopolitical instability and economic struggles due to its non-profit and amateur character and increased popularity. The popularity of *castells* as an iconic representation of the Catalan culture and its people has also enabled the expansion of this activity within Catalonia and outside it. There are now more *casteller* teams in non traditionally *casteller* towns, cities, and neighborhoods. In recent years, other international cities have also witnessed the formation of *casteller* teams with the help of Catalan expats living and working abroad. Many of these international cities and

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[3] "Us EXIGIM que retireu de manera immediata aquesta foto per a la qual no teniu cap tipus de dret ni de permís. La nostra colla s'ha posicionat sempre al costat de la Llibertat, la Democràcia i el Dret d'Autodeterminació del poble de Catalunya." (@JovesValls) - We DEMAND that you withdraw immediately this picture for which you do not have any kind of right nor permission. Our team has always positioned itself besides Freedom, Democracy, and the Right to Self-Determination of the people in Catalonia. (@JovesValls)

institutions have also taken an interest in inviting Catalan teams to perform in various places, as it recently happened with UC Berkeley's *casteller* exhibition of Castellers de Vilafranca in October 2019. This increase in participation and visibility has usually been regarded positively by the *casteller* community because it provides human resources in the construction of higher and more complex towers. However, if *castells* is now being mobilized as the "flag-bearer" of a modern, democratic, competitive, uniting Catalan project within Europe, it is also (perhaps unwittingly and surely with controversy) becoming imbued with the logics of the market.

Castells is being taken lately as a commodity, that is, it is being regarded in economic terms and given a profit value. Companies now want to show *casteller* practice to their employees and even want them to participate to embody those characteristics actively. For this reason, businesses have formed to offer these services in a clear example of a liberalized economy. The increase in popularity is challenging the economic means that teams have to sustain a growing activity while struggling to avoid putting all the economic burden on their participants. The fact that the activity is mostly free to all members welcomes diverse sectors of society with different needs and incomes. At the same time, however, teams are pushed to seek other means of funding that public subsidies, membership fees, or local sponsors cannot cover entirely.

These challenges have created internal debates about the future of *castells*, its economic, and community sustainability[4] in a time (2019) that seems to be slowing down the recent popularity of this practice. At the same time, the independence movement is currently struggling against demoralization and fragmentation. Professionalization was generally understood by participants as threatening the amateur and collective benefit of the activity (in taking individual economic profit instead of the team benefiting collectively). The threat of professionalization also meant for many that the activity would become part of a job, and participants some sort of '*casteller* workers'. The debates and fears revolved around avoiding the association with sports despite its increasing competitive character, and avoiding the de-territorialization of its practice

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[4] in cities that are seeing how more and more teams are emerging.

despite its international expansion. The boundaries that separate and define the meaning and roles of *casteller* teams and businesses were still fuzzy in 2016.

It is possible that after the increase in popularity since 2010, which the media has also taken great advantage and challenges, now the interest in *castells* is focusing on the people that participate and their lives. Whereas in recent years multiple television programs about *castells* emerged, the media today is not so much interested in the *casteller* activity per se (its technical aspects, the competition, the exhibitions, etc) nor the tensions that it brings. Instead, it is switching the focus to the human side of the participants' realities and experiences; the media is now interested in "talking about *castells* without *castells*"(Planas 2019). As a journalist stated about a new TV program about *castells* in the Catalan channel: "*per fi a algú se li ha acudit convertir els castells en una cosa quotidiana com si fóssim un país normal.*" -Finally someone came up with the idea of turning *castells* into something ordinary as if we were a normal country (Planas 2019). Although Catalonia and the *casteller* phenomenon are unique cases that challenge the very notion of "normal", this ethnographic study shows that participants' experience in *castells*, their relations, interactions, and challenges correspond to a very human and ordinary desire to construct a meaningful sense of community.

Appendix A

Figure A.1: Valls 1921 (in Dalmau 1981, vol 1)
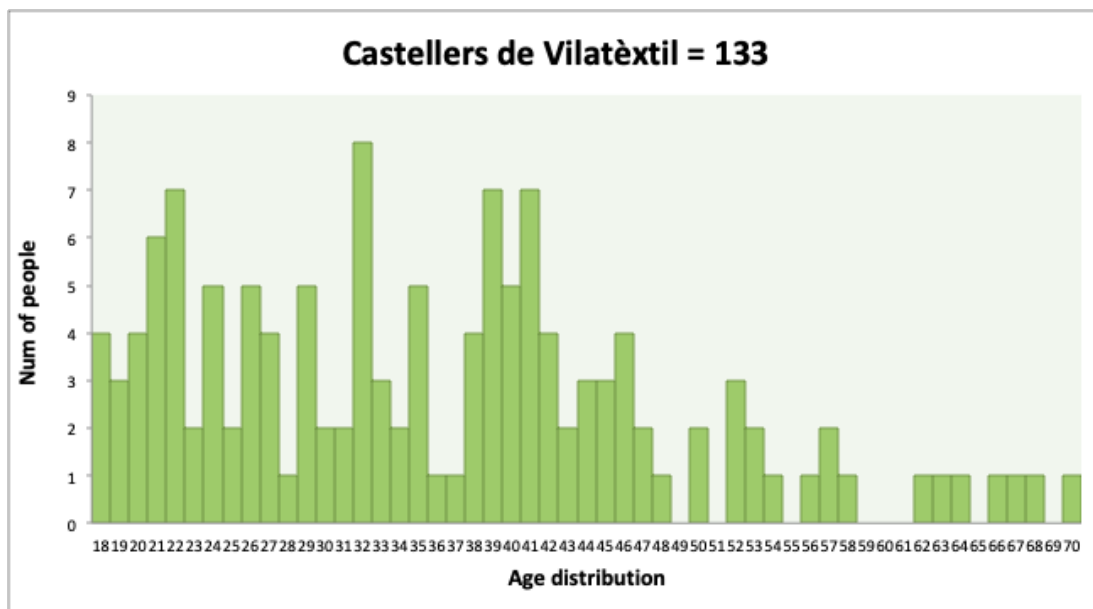
Appendix B

Figure B.1: Vilatextil age chart[1].

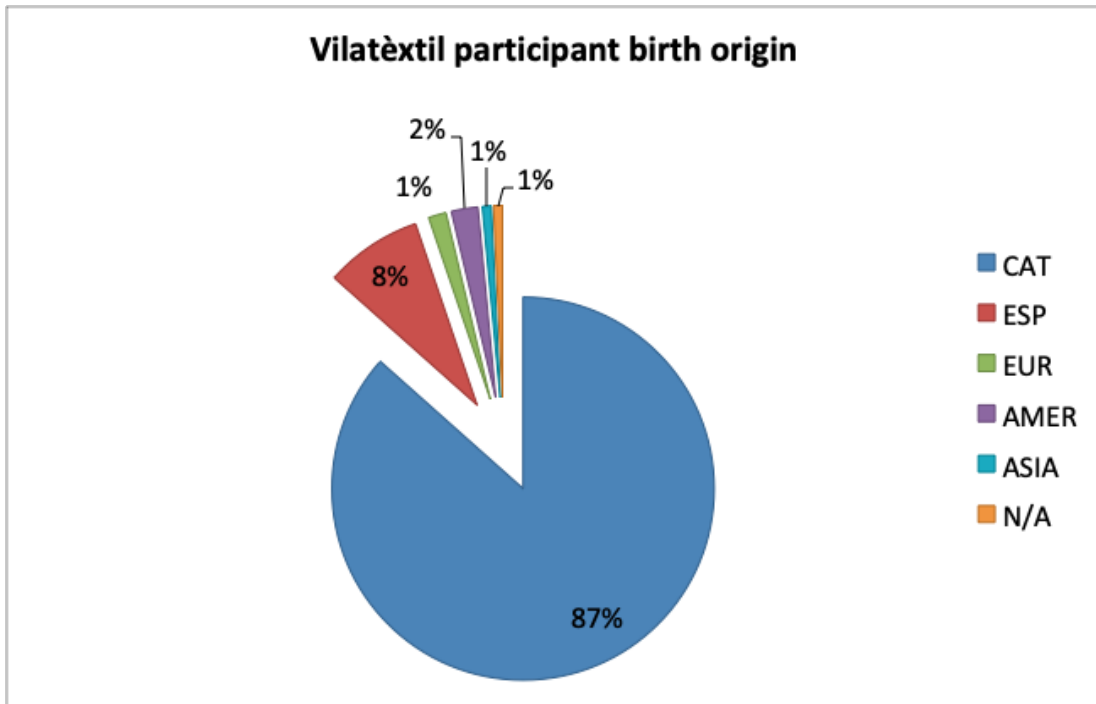[1]One participant did not respond to this question.

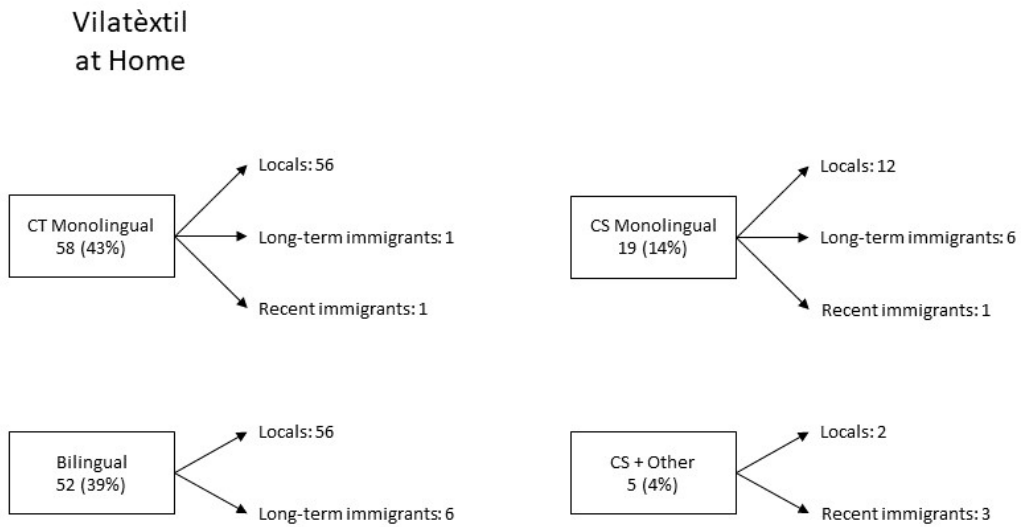**Figure B.2**: Vilatèxtil classification by birth origin.

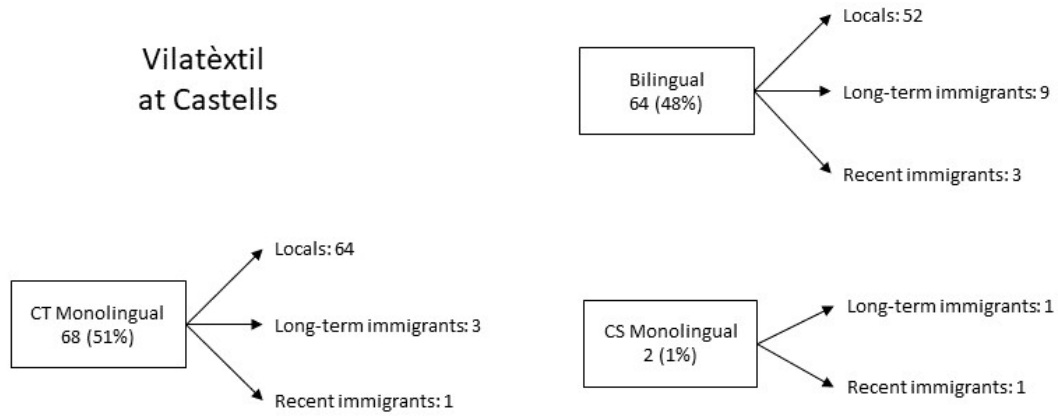**Figure B.3**: Vilatèxtil distribution of language use at home.

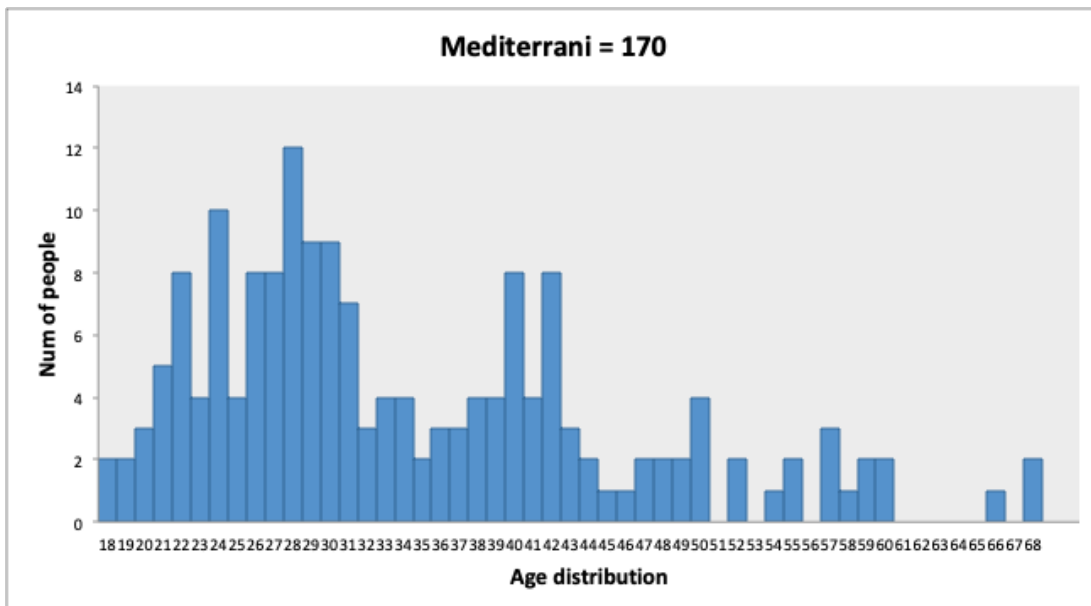**Figure B.4**: Vilatèxtil distribution of language use at castells.

Figure B.5: Mediterrani age chart.
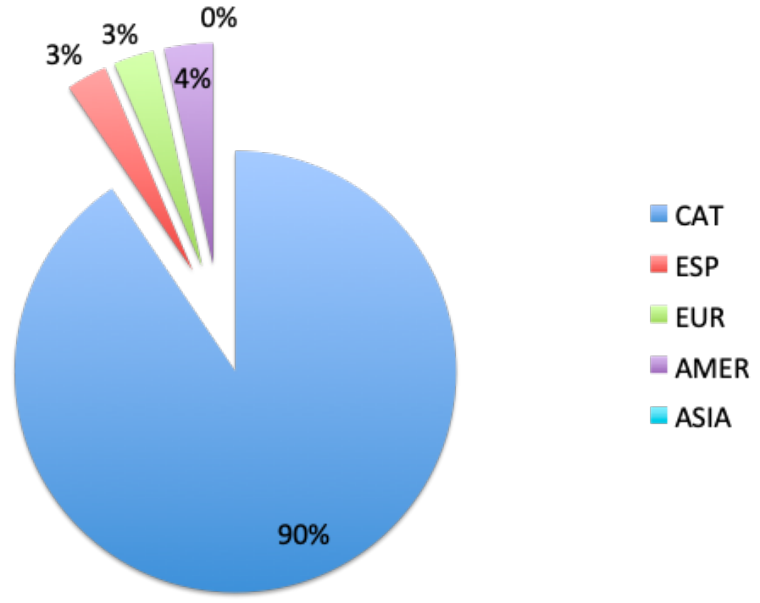
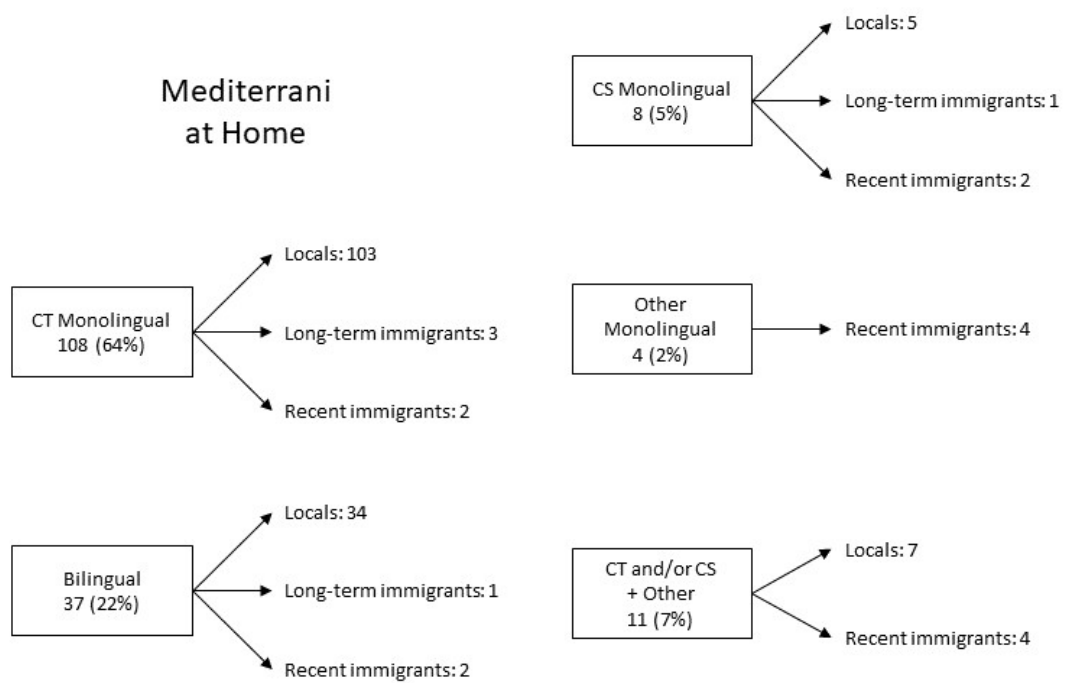**Figure B.6**: Mediterrani classification by birth origin.

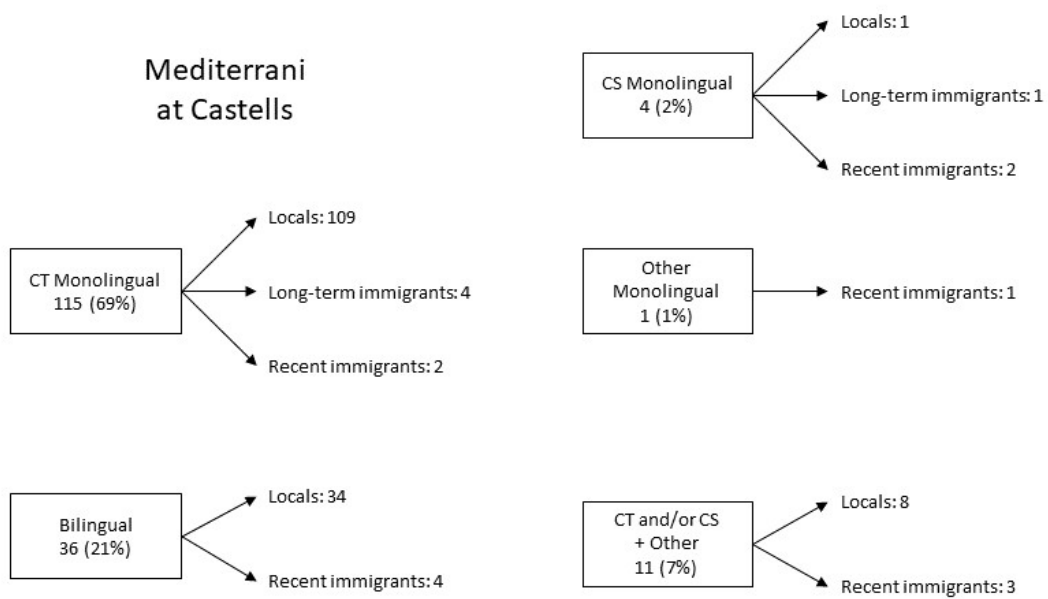**Figure B.7**: Mediterrani distribution of language use at home.

Figure B.8: Mediterrani distribution of language use at castells.

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