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Cultural Heritage and Identities of Europe's Future



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WP7_D7.1: Case Study Report_Diablesses

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The aim of this report is to summarise the ethnography that we carried out from April 2019 to January 2020 with a group of “she-devils” (*diablesses*, a Catalan popular culture group) based in a city in the surroundings of Barcelona. A qualitative methodological approach was selected for the research, involving non-participant and participant observation, informal conversations, semi-structured interviews with young people and key informants, and the subsequent empirical analysis.

Through our research questions, we focused on cultural heritage in-the-making and alternative expressions of youth culture, taking the public space as its setting. Interesting findings emerged from the research in relation to key discussion points about the construction of youth culture, how culture and tradition is inherited, and multiple intersectional identities. Identity was analysed by addressing its different aspects: age, gender, local/regional/national identity, family heritage and group identity. Finally, the research focused on what lies behind the youth’s activities, based on the different debates that they themselves held as to the opportunity of using their public visibility to express and vindicate social and political rights, especially centred on women’s rights, feminism and the political situation of Catalonia.

The discussion section of this report contributes to ongoing debates on youth culture, gender issues and identity. To sum up the most important conclusions, we can say that there is a ‘family cultural heritage’ which shows continuity in the transmission of cultural practices, especially, but not exclusively, in the field of local popular culture. Popular culture is associated with local and national Catalan identity; however, there is also sympathy towards a global identity: being a “citizen of the world”, skipping over Spanish and European identities. The use of public space and the street is a simulated transgression, although it becomes an invitation for the cultural participation of citizens in a space that is organised and protected by public institutions. Lastly, being a group exclusively composed of women does not imply a disappearance of prejudices and gender stereotypes, neither in the public nor in the private sphere.

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the last decades, enthusiasm and citizen involvement in local festivities has greatly increased in many towns and cities of Catalonia. Many people of all ages go out to the streets to take part in activities that are jointly organised for the local festivities, attending in crowds to watch the traditional parades and shows headed by giants, fire-breathing fantasy animals, and devils. Among these experiences, the preference is clearly for fire, with a special delight in *correfocs*¹. It is impossible to imagine a local festivity without a *correfoc*. In a city located within the conurbation of Barcelona, there is a group of “devils” exclusively made up of women –an exception in a world of men– with 35 years of existence. This group is the object of the present ethnography.

This study aims to answer several questions: Who is behind those she-devils? Why do these young women spend their free time becoming devils that dance under the fireworks? What sort of social interactions take place both within the group and with other groups/actors of the city? What is the role played by culture in this case study? And by the public space and the streets as a central place of their external activities? Addressing the study of a group like this offers an opportunity to examine different cross-cutting issues, such as gender, the meaning of popular culture, and identities, but also processes of cultural heritage in-the-making and alternative expressions of youth culture. At the same time, it allows us to approach the use of public space, as well as the intergenerational interactions between young people and older members of the group.

2. METHODS

2. 2.1. SELECTION OF WP7 SITES

This ethnographic case study deals with a Catalan popular culture group made up only of women, called *diablesses* (she-devils). The criteria for selecting this group are:

¹ Literally meaning “run fire”, this is a parade where a group of devils or fantastic fire-breathing creatures dance around and burn the fireworks attached to their pitchforks, accompanied by the rhythmic sounds of drums, emulating hell. The fireworks are set off among crowds of spectators, who try to get as close as possible to the devils, dance with them or run away from the fire. It forms part of the popular culture of Catalonia. See an example in the following [link](#); however, a description will be provided further on.

1. Local and Catalan national identities and cultural heritage are reflected by the activities carried out by the group. It is a good example of a cultural group rooted in the tradition of Catalan popular culture.
2. The group is composed exclusively of women, many of them young women in their 20s and early 30s, in a context where this kind of cultural group tends to be made up of men.
3. The main activities of the group are carried out in a context of (re)appropriation of the public space (although with the authorisation and supervision of the public authorities).

The *diablasses* group is based in a city of some 128,000 inhabitants within Barcelona's conurbation, where 63% of the population was born in Catalonia, 19% was born in the rest of Spain and 18% was born in the rest of the world, composing a very diverse population in terms of use of languages and cultural practices. There is a high rate of unemployment, especially among the young.² The city can be divided into the city centre, where most of the Catalan-speakers live, and the surrounding neighbourhoods, created in the 60s and 70s, to host the immigrants coming mostly from the south of Spain, where today they still make widespread use of Spanish among its inhabitants.

The expression of culture promoted by this group has its roots in Catalan culture. Since the democratic transition in Spain, there has been a movement for the recovery of traditional expressions of Catalan culture, especially those present in local festivities, which have gained a lot of popularity within the community and have become an important part of local culture. The *diablasses* is a self-organised and horizontal group, although it belongs to the city council's network of traditional culture groups. Anyone who wants can apply to join the group, but the profile of participants in our case-study is very homogeneous. The women involved are for the most part Catalan-speakers, belong to the middle class and have an important family cultural background; many of them are also very active members of other groups.

3. 2.2. ACCESS & DATA COLLECTION

Before accessing the group for our fieldwork, one of the members of our research team contacted one of the group's members. After this, the group had to tell us whether they wanted

² Source: IDESCAT, 2020.

to participate, and once their interest was confirmed, the city council had yet to authorise our contact with the group; finally, we were required to sign an agreement and obtain accident insurance for the protection of the researcher.

The fieldwork started in April 2019 and finished in January 2020, with a particularly intense period from April to July 2019, which is the time of year when the group has more intense activity. Entering the field was easy, as the group members were thankful about participating in the research. They therefore made our research easier by taking the time to answer questions, explaining how things work, lending a costume, giving a crash course on pyrotechnics, etc. The first weeks were devoted to gathering in-depth knowledge about the dynamics of the group and its members, in order to select the key informants and potential candidates for the interviews, as well as participating in some of their activities. Most interviews took place from July to October, with two others done in January 2020.

One of the possible handicaps about the chosen group was that it included women of many different ages (21-61 years). For that reason, the research focused on young people up to 30 years old: 6 people aged under 25, and 4 aged under 30 were chosen for the interviews. In selecting the interviewees, we considered especially their age and their years of involvement in the group, their family background, and their cultural and social involvement with the community.

As regards the interview contents, we kept the original research questions that were proposed by the Work Package coordinators and added a few local questions that dealt particularly with identity and women's issues. None of our questions was refused by the respondents. We conducted 13 interviews: 10 interviews with young people and 3 with key informants; two group interviews, the first one with technicians from the city council and with two of the founding members of the group. The duration of the interviews was from 36 minutes to one hour and a half, with a total of approximately 11 hours and a half, of recorded conversations. All interviews were transcribed and anonymised.

As to fieldwork diaries, we attended 25 activities with the group, for each of which a corresponding field diary was written. Furthermore, we also collected visual material (brochures, pictures and videos) provided by the group, and the researcher also took pictures and videos herself.

4. 2.3. DATA ANALYSIS & ETHICAL ISSUES

The analysis of the data collected during the fieldwork was carried out via manual coding. The procedure of data analysis started with the summarisation of ten of the fieldwork diaries and ten interviews. From this analysis, the topics and issues of research started to emerge. At this stage we used a very descriptive approach. Each of the diaries and interviews were treated as a single unit of information. Performing the analysis in this way allowed the researcher to identify the topics that were important to highlight for each of the units. But at the same time, it provided the basis for an extended and deep comparison.

In terms of ethical issues, no problems were encountered during the research. All participants were informed of the project, and all of them agreed to participate in the research by signing a consent form. None of the participants refused to participate. The interviews were carried out in a face-to-face setting, in order to ensure privacy and avoid any influence from the group.

A process of anonymisation to prevent revealing the identity of the respondents has been employed, by giving the respondents a pseudonym and avoiding mentioning places and other information which could reveal their identities. As it is a unique and special group, it might still be identified, but it will not be possible to identify the personal identity of the respondents. All the interviews were transcribed, and all of the information was stored in a protected cloud repository in order to prevent identifying the informants.

3. FINDINGS

5. 3.1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The context of the *diablesses* group is found in traditional and popular Catalan culture, particularly in one of the most traditional and widespread expressions of this culture: the *Festa Major*³, which is celebrated every year for a series of days in every town, village and city in Catalonia. It is the local festival par excellence, one that manages to create and recreate the community, identify it and give it projection (Soler i Amigó, 2005). It generates internal solidarity in face of the outside world, and a feeling of social inclusion within the community.

³ Translation: "Great Festivity".

Popular festivals are institutions deeply ingrained in the culture in its entirety, and they are a manifestation of one's culture (Contreras i Hernández & Prat i Caròs, 1984).

The tradition of *Festa Major* has been known in Catalonia since at least the 13th century, having evolved up to the present. As some authors have stated, it is a dynamic and lively festivity which modifies its programme according to the will of the participants and society (Delgado Ruiz, 1992; Soler i Amigó, 2005). At the centre of the festivity is the community: it is the community that builds the festivity and adapts it to its will. Thus the popular festival can have very traditional roots and at the same time be a new creation; its most important feature is the fact that it is addressed to the people, and it is regarded by them as a part of their own being (Colomer, 1978). This has to do with identity, because, as Frigolé (2005) argues, identity, whatever its kind, is not just something that one feels or thinks, but something that must be manifested openly and publicly.

The Spanish democratic transition was a turning point for the *Festes Majors*, as it led, among other things, to a recovery of the festivities. There has been a recovery of lost elements and the incorporation of new ones, some of which come from the local tradition or are legitimised by local legends or symbolic elements, while others are totally invented (Contreras i Hernández & Prat i Caròs, 1984; Grau, 2009). This recovery is linked to identity, since the *Festes Majors* were threatened with disappearance during Francoism. As Frigolé (1978: 220) (in Contreras Hernández, 1978) states, "Displacement, the marginalization of local cultural elements, automatically turns them into unique symbols and signs. Elements that were part of culture in the broadest sense, of socio-political structure and that did not have a special image significance as a result of their displacement become ethnic symbols and signs".

To give an example, in the city where our research is situated a radical change took place by the end of the 70s, which led to a rupture with the *Festa Major* model. However, Francoist elements were maintained, since the point was to recover what for years had been hidden, despised and censored. Under the motto "*Les Santes*⁴: let's make it a *Festa Major*"⁵, a group

⁴ *Les santes*, "The saints", refers to the two patronesses of the city where the research is placed, and is the name given to the local festivity.

⁵ Our own translation of "*Santes, fem-ne festa major*". This was a youth movement that emerged in the late seventies during the process of the Spanish transition to democracy. A group of young people in their twenties wanted to recover the festivities, they wanted to get the festival back by making it more popular and participatory. They recovered some figures from the past and created new ones.

of young people laid the foundations of what would become the festivity as it is today, creating events, recovering figures, etc. (Vidal Federico, 2005).

What did change radically during this decade was the introduction of fire in the *Festes Majors*: almost non-existent until then, it began to proliferate everywhere. Although the first written notice of “devils” in Catalonia dates back to the Dancing Talks⁶ of the year 1150 (Amades, 1982), during the democratic transition there came about a transformation of their activity into *correfocs*, probably the greatest invention of the Catalan *Festes Majors* in the last quarter of the twentieth century. A *correfoc* (literally “run fire”) is a festive street event in which participants parade amidst and under the sparks of fireworks borne by devils, dragons and other figures of the fantastic sort. This is a new creation, but somehow derives from the concept of recovering the age-old practice of playing with fire, very present in festive uses (the dictionary explicitly defines it as a street game) (Palomar i Abadia, 2011; Palomar i Abadia & Sugranyes, 2009).

Although the democratic transition brought about the possibility for women to join the different popular groups as full-right members, it was not easy to be accepted as such, and it is a fact that influence and the decision-making processes are still in the hands of men (Roca Samon, 2019). It is in this context that the group of the *diablesses* was born. Under the slogan “*desire to party, delight by fire*”, they first appeared during the city’s *Festa Major* in the summer of 1985, and have been acting ever since, gaining a place in the *Festa Major* year after year. However, the group had already been created two or three years before. First of all they had to recruit the girls, and afterwards take decisions like those regarding the design of the dresses, then proceed to elaborate and sew them, before requesting permission to the city council and establishing the necessary agreements for carrying out their activity, as well as learning how to burn firecrackers, and so on. The idea started with four young girls in their twenties who wanted to join one of the popular culture groups of the city. But they found it was almost impossible, especially for women. At that time, the members of these kinds of groups were invariably men, most of them paid by the city council, so it was not on a voluntary basis. It began to be voluntary with the rise of the popular movement described before. There was only one “run fire” group in the city, called the *Momerota*, which was furthermore very new, created

⁶ Literal translation of “*Balls parlats*”. This is a representation of the fight between good and evil, the devils and the angels. Their activity nowadays consists of theatrical performances with verses criticising the status quo.

only in 1979; but when the women tried to join, they were told only men were accepted. After going to different *correfocs* in other cities and enjoying their devils shows, they decided to create a group of female devils, which would be the only one in Catalonia and would remain so for a long time (nowadays there are two other groups composed exclusively of women). As mentioned above, “*they were not trying to recover any genuine tradition, because there was no historical evidence in the city of the presence of devils. What the group wanted was to help innovate the programme of Les Santes with a contribution that would mean a bold step towards festive participation, far removed from the festivity understood as a show (Festa Major Programme 2000).*”⁷

The main activity of the *diablesses* group takes place during *Les Santes*, although they also appear in different traditional celebrations like Saint George and some neighbourhood festivities, and sometimes they are invited to join *correfocs* in other places. The group is made up of 35 women, aged 18 and upwards with no upward age limit (at the time of our ethnography the eldest member was 61 years old). Their activity, the *correfocs*, is mainly carried out during the local festivities in the streets. Their performances consist of parades, in which they dance, disguised as devils, and burn fireworks fixed on their pitchforks, accompanied by sounds of rhythmic drums, emulating hell. They set off the fireworks among crowds of spectators, who try to get as close as possible to the devils, dance with them or run away from the fire. The people involved in their parades, apart from the members of the group, are the members of the music band that accompany the *diablesses* and the people who take part in the parade. The most important of these parades takes place at night on the 25th of July, where, along with the invited groups, a total of about 120 devils get together.

They carry out their public activity in the street. A veritable occupation of the public space takes place, but it is well-planned, organised and protected by the police, as well as by special groups of volunteers who contribute to the control of their activities for safety reasons. It can be called an authorised occupation. It might seem to carry along with it a disruption of the established order, but, on the contrary, it follows the traditions and is an event organised, planned and devised by the local council and the community. In fact, doing their activities on the streets implies opening their activity to the city and inviting the inhabitants to take part.

⁷ “*Festa Major Programme 2000 Celebration of the 15th anniversary of the Diablesses*”.

Occupying the street is a way of opening culture to everyone, so anyone who wants to join can come around and participate, and anyone who does not want to see this is free to leave and go to some other street.

(Esther, 23 years old, Master's student, *diablessa*)

Their group opens the parade, followed by the other different institutional groups of the city. As an institutional group they depend entirely on the City Council and form part of the network of traditional culture groups. This means that they owe their budget, clubhouse, costumes and materials to the City Council, and they are also dependent on it for questions of security (decisions that they can or cannot take), authorisation processes and obligations to perform during specific festivities. This makes some of the members feel uncomfortable, as they do not have the autonomy to organise themselves, even though internally they are a self-organised group. There are other popular culture groups in the city (devils, giants, *castellers*) that are constituted as associations and have full autonomy; however, they have to look for their own budget.

Of the five traditional culture groups in the city that depend on the city council, all of them are mixed groups except for the *diablesses*. There is, however, a much greater presence of men than women. All members are volunteers, coordinated by the Culture Commission of the City Council. Entering or leaving a group is a process regulated by the city council through official regulations which establish how it must be done. Currently, it is done by means of a public waiting list that gets renewed every two years. Due to this fact, the groups feel somehow unnatural, and relationships are only established once one enters the group. Organising the different events is the responsibility of the Culture Commission; however, some of the *diablesses* elected by the group and council technicians work together throughout the year in different commissions in order to organise and evaluate the activities and festivities.

The local festivity of the city is held in honour of the city's patron saints, Santa Juliana and Santa Semproniana. It has taken place between the 24th and the 29th of July since the first half of the 19th Century. The festivity is structured into four blocks, and comprises customary performances that form an indisputable part of the celebrations. Some of these have survived through the years and centuries, such as the Office and Mass of Glory, the Passage, the Fireworks and the Sleep of the Giants. Others were created and consolidated after the

restoration of democracy. Since then, the festivity has been declared a Heritage Festival of National Interest and has been incorporated into the Catalogue of Festive Heritage of Catalonia.

3.2. EMERGING TOPICS/RESULTS OF ANALYSIS

The fieldwork carried out raises important issues within the framework of CHIEF's research questions. Among the emerging topics to highlight are the following: aims and motivations for becoming a *diablessa*, which links directly to their identity in its multiple faces; the concept of culture, and in particular youth culture; gender issues; issues of cultural heritage and the transmission of non-formal and informal cultural learning, and finally, political and vindictory motivations. The empirical findings bring a particular point of view to the project from the perspective of youth female culture in the field of popular culture.

3.2.1. What does culture mean?

When it comes to defining culture, most of the young people interviewed argue that this is a very broad term, and some of them found it difficult to give an answer. However, maybe because they belong to a traditional culture group, for most of them their first impulse was to identify culture with popular and local culture.

Well, I think that culture is about the habits or traditions of the people through the years. Popular culture, such as Sardanes⁸, is something that has been created little by little, it is something that has taken shape over time, and it has become part of that city or of the country.

(Marina, 30 years old, employed in a fast food restaurant, *diablessa*)

...for me culture is traditions, and in this case our city traditions, you see? And I think, that, in the specific case of our city, I think ours is a very traditional city in this respect, so here it's very difficult to break away from the customary ways, and in general, I think this encompasses music, cinema, the arts, right? It's like a package that is called culture.

(Alba, 29 years, employed as a Technical director, Artistic swimming, *diablessa*)

Some of them ascribe other aspects to culture that have to do with sharing good times with other people and learning from other approaches and experiences:

culture as a source of values, as a way to learn by enjoying and socialising.

(Arlet, 21 years old, Undergraduate student, *diablessa*)

⁸ A traditional Catalanian dance.

Culture gives me new points of view and the opportunity to see and know things that from my own perspective I might not be able to see or know.

(Esther, 23 years old, Master's student, diabllessa)

For some others, culture is related to one's identity, which in some cases implies establishing differences with other places or people.

For me culture is a representation, it is a huge representation of the State that you live under, or the population or the country where you live, it is a representation that makes you. So ultimately it also sets you apart from other places. In the same way that Catalan culture is different from the Spanish culture, Spanish culture is not the same as its neighbours and so on. For me, culture is the highest representation of a place, town, city, country, whatever it may be.

(Clara, 30 years old, Secondary school Sports teacher, diabllessa)

In sum, although the definitions of culture that emerge from the research are multiple and diverse, we find that they have in common the relationship they establish with their identity and the positive values they extract from the activity.

3.2.2. The aims and meanings of being a *diabllessa*

One of the main findings that emerged during the research was that the reasons behind participating as a *diabllessa* are multiple, and so are its meanings. Being a *diabllessa* goes far beyond dressing as a devil and going out to burn firecrackers. After sorting through the fieldwork done during these months, we can conclude that the fact of participating in the group of *diabllesses* has links with deep feelings in each of them, which will be exposed in the ensuing paragraphs. First of all, there is no doubt that their involvement has to do with their free time and their wanting to have a good time, as Clara states:

...being a diabllessa makes me happy... when I do things I do them to fulfil myself, and being a diabllessa fulfils me...

(Clara, 29 years old, Secondary school Sports teacher, diabllessa)

Apart from that, most of the informants state that one of the reasons for becoming a *diabllessa* is connected to their relationship with the city, a sense of belonging, and the pride of being an

inhabitant of the city; it is also related to their commitment with and responsibility towards the city and its festivities, and therefore also with the preservation of the city's traditions.

... the truth is that I get from it the pride of becoming part of one of the festivity groups of the city, with the reputation it implies; I think it's very good, very cool and very well seen from the outside.

(Ruth, 29 years old, self employed, diablessa)

...it is a lovely activity and it is a tradition, and someone has to preserve this tradition, because the fire activities that we do, as the only female group, should be preserved.

(Arlet, 21 years old, Undergraduate student, diablessa)

My motivation is to experience the festivity from the inside, and also to feel responsible a little bit for pushing it forward. You know, if there wasn't all this involvement from all those volunteers, all the things involved, all the preparations and everything, the festival would never come off and people could not enjoy it.

(Esther, 23 years old, Master's student, diablessa)

Nevertheless, as Esther sets out below, the roots of these feelings have a clear link to family cultural heritage and the transmission of these values from generation to generation.

...I have always experienced them (Les Santes) like that... of course, I don't know Les Santes except as experienced from the inside. I remember when I was very young my grandparents took me to see the giants because my parents were busy organising the festivity... my parents were always involved in the organisation of the Festa Major and, since I can remember, me and my brothers were also involved. I always carried them water, always at the centre of the festivity, doing whatever they needed, so we grew up experiencing Les Santes from the inside, and the diablesses was the group that always caught my attention, since I was predestined to become one of them.

(Esther, 23 years old, Master's student, diablessa)

Esther, however, is not an exception, since the majority of the women interviewed have relatives who were involved in some way or another in the *Festes Majors*, either as young rescuers of the festivity during the democratic transition, or as members of other groups, or just being active spectators regularly taking part in the festivity when they were children.

The *Festes Majors*, as explained above, takes place in all the towns and cities of Catalonia; despite being very similar, they are structured from the veneration of a local patron, each has

its own local characteristics, following their own rituals and activities. This fact brings together and promotes local identity, sometimes approaching chauvinism but also highlights and strengthens the Catalan identity, as most events are expressions of Catalan culture. Moreover, one of the interviewees stated that being a *diablessa* was a legacy she got from her father, who died when she was twelve years old. He was one of the members of the group “*Santes, let’s make it a Festa Major*” and one of the builders of the *Momeroteta*⁹.

RES: Being a diablessa makes me remember him, it’s a way of remembering him, experiencing Les Santes for him, it was his life....

INT: Is it like a legacy of his to you?

RES: Yes, exactly.

(Arlet, 21 years old, Undergraduate Student, diablessa)

Only two of them had had no previous contact with the festivity, nor were their families culturally active in the city festivities or in any other cultural activities. However, since their adolescence they have shown an interest in becoming part of it and have become active cultural promoters within their families, valuing the ideals, learning and benefits that culture can bring to one’s life.

If it wasn’t for me, they wouldn’t be doing anything. I’m the one saying let’s go to the cinema or to the theatre, look they’re doing a concert here. With the family it’s very difficult, but, well, I try to do something because otherwise they won’t do anything. Now that I have a niece, I’m going to sign her up for all sorts of things ... She’ll take all that in as child; and if I can, I want her to be in the dwarfs¹⁰, and later on in the diablasses.

ENT- And why do you want to transmit that to her?

RES - So that later on she can do things with it. Because I have not been able to do that at home, and I would have liked to have had the opportunity. But in my house nobody knew what all that was about. I believe that as long as she finds culture entertaining, she will not want to entertain herself with other things.

(Lucía, 24 years old, employed as a dental hygienist, diablessa)

Nevertheless, the great majority of the members of the group identify their family as their main source of cultural learning competences, given that most of them have very important links with culture as musicians, dancers, actors, librarians, and so on. Moreover, many of them

⁹ One of the figures of the city council’s institutional *correfoc*.

¹⁰ The dwarfs are the small beings who accompany the giants of the city, their bearers are children and they are a group that also depends on the city council

belong to the social and cultural entities of the city thanks to the fact that they come from families with local social or economic influence.

...for my family, culture is everything: the theatre, going to museums, traveling...

(Arlet, 21 years old, Undergraduate Student, diabllessa)

As it emerged from the fieldwork, along with the family heritage there is also a strong sense of local identity among the *diabllesses*. In this sense, responsibility and commitment with the city stands in six out of ten diabllesses interviewed, other values such as links with the city and the preservation of the Festa Major, are items identified as benefits of being a diabllessa, aspects related to local identity.

3.2.3. From local to global identity

All of the informants identify themselves first and foremost with their local identity. For most of them, this connection with their local identity –and for some also their Catalan identity– are the reasons behind their involvement in the *diabllesses* group.

I feel Catalan, and I couldn't think of living in any other place other than my city... I wouldn't like to be in any other group of devils and I wouldn't like to be in any other group of castellers. If we weren't Catalans, I don't think we would be burning firecrackers, making correfocs and building castells... I think it's important, because in the end everybody wants to know where his or her essence comes from.

(Clara, 29 years old, Secondary school Sports teacher, diabllessa)

What is more, for some members, being part of one of the popular culture groups of the city and participating in the local festivity are more important than a real identification with the group itself.

INT: What is it that you like about being a diabllessa?

RES: What I like is being part of one of the Festa Major groups, more than the fact of being a diabllessa. Being part of the festivity is more important than being a diabllessa. Over the years I have come to love being a diabllessa. (Adara, young woman)

The women who live outside of the city argue that involvement in the *diabllesses* provides them with a link to their roots:

I've been living out of the city for 24 years now, and this is what really connects me with my origins, my roots, and gives me peace.

(Laura, 54 years old, Primary school teacher, diablesa)

Some of them also associate their group involvement with gender identity.

If you are a woman, like fire and belong to this city, then almost by definition you've got to become a diablesa. (Ruth, 29 years old, self employed, diablesa)

In terms of country identification, there is a general identification with Catalan identity. But this is not as generalised as local identity. Also, some of them identify themselves secondly as citizens of the world. There is generally a feeling of denial towards Spanish identity, and none of them identify themselves as Spanish, even though all of them stated that they have Spanish nationality. More than that, not even the Spanish-speaking *diablesses* identify themselves with Spain, both of them skip ahead and choose world citizenship.

European identity does not come to them spontaneously, in most of the cases it is simply ignored. One has to ask them about it on purpose in order for them refer to it at all. When asked about their feelings towards Europe, the informants have no common view, because perspectives on Europe are highly diversified among them. Some of them have a positive perception, and they associate Europe with participation in the Erasmus programme or with family trips; however, some others have a very critical opinion, because they associate Europe with policies with which they do not agree, especially in relation to migration issues and the political situation of Catalonia.

ENT: Do you feel European?

RES: I don't know, with the whole political issue right now, I don't know. I do feel more European than other things. And sure enough I do on a physical level, and as part of a people, but not on a political level, not on the level of a shared feeling with people and such. I can have as much sister feelings towards a Norwegian as towards someone from South America. The fact is that this whole thing about "brothers in a place called world" is true, but whether this is Europe or not, well, it might be closer but it's just ...

On the political level... I went to Brussels¹¹ to demonstrate, and it was fine but it just didn't have any effect. And now I've been to Strasbourg¹² and it will have been for nothing... It's a really big disappointment. So I feel European on a human level, or out of brotherhood with other people. But on a political level it's really disappointing.

ENT- The policies that you don't feel comfortable with...

RES- I also went to a refugee camp during the summer I got my degree. At that time I hated Europe, it made me very angry. (...) When I got back on the plane I started crying, and I said: Why is that? Just because I have a European passport I can catch a plane and go back to my country, while they stay locked up in there like in a doghouse.

These policies don't represent me at all. So, am I European? Yes, I am European, but only geographically. And with respect to Spain it's the same: geographically and according to my ID, yes, but that is all.

(Maria, 25 years old, nurse, diablessa)

Most of them believe there exists a feeling of brotherhood between European citizens and towns, but they do not agree with the policies taken by the European Union, especially concerning migration and refugee policies and with the desire of Catalan autodetermination, and both issues finally meet with the defense of human rights . Others see Europe as a fake construction for which they have no sense of belonging, and therefore state that having a common culture is impossible.

Res: (...) I travelled in Europe, and I think that between towns and cities they do have things in common, and yet, maybe because I don't experience it as something close to me, this hasn't got to me. Or maybe it's just that the people I've met haven't managed to make this come across to me. In the same way, when I go abroad I tell people that I am a castellera, and that I am a diablessa, and that I am Catalan, yes... and all that we've lived through, I want the people know it... so European culture, does it exist?

(Clara, 30 years old, Secondary school Sports teacher, diablessa).

3.2.4. Political and social claims

Concerning politics, the city council has explicitly forbidden the display of political symbols of any kind during performances of any of the institutional groups, as the Head of culture states:

¹¹ A demonstration took place in Brussels on 7 December 2017 to make known the pro-European leanings of the Catalan people and to call for the European institutions to become involved in the Spanish-Catalonian conflict.

¹² A demonstration took place in Strasbourg on 2 July 2019 in support of the exiled and jailed leaders' right to become members of the European Parliament.

Imagine if today we let people wear political symbols and tomorrow one of the volunteers decides to wear a swastika. If we allow some symbols, we have to allow all symbols.

... the diablasses represent the city, and the city has a plurality of political ideas, so we don't allow any of these in here to avoid leaving any behind.

(Assumpta, Head of festivity services and territory of the Municipality).

However, within the group there are multiple opinions about politics and whether they should or should not make use of the group and its public position for making political claims. The main two claims they refer to are: on the one hand, gender issues; and on the other hand, the political conflict in Catalonia and the politicians and activists in favour of Catalonia's self-determination who have been jailed or exiled since 2018/2019.

For me it was tremendously exercising to waive my right to claim in favour of my political rights, because these have to do with my culture, the Catalan culture, and that is exactly what we are doing here.

(Laura, 54 years old, Primary school teacher, diablessa)

Some of them argue that culture has no relationship with politics, and that they have no right to use the public platform of the *diablasses* to vindicate their own personal ideas. However, they do not agree about what is political and what is not, and consequently as to what can or cannot be vindicated.

I think it should have nothing to do with politics, each one of us must do what she wants. Because we are only volunteers, nobody is paying us, we do it because we want to. I want to wear a purple bow¹³ and you want to wear a yellow bow¹⁴. Politics is one thing, but I think feminism is not political, I don't see it that way, or it shouldn't be that way, because it's about rights. I think they are different things... each one of us is who she is on the inside, but within the group you are who you have to be, and you have to be respectful with everyone... Yes, I agree to wearing the "No is no" badge.¹⁵

(Lucía, 26 years old, dental hygienist, Diablessa)

...culture is everything apart from politics, although politics have an effect on culture. So, when politics have an effect on culture, anything can be claimed, even

¹³ The symbol of the defense of women rights.

¹⁴ A symbol in connection with the defense of Catalonia's political prisoners, also used to show support for a series of individuals who have pushed for Catalan independence and faced legal consequences for it.

¹⁵ "No is no" is a campaign to raise awareness against sexual violence in public leisure spaces; it is promoted by the Spanish government and applied throughout the Spanish Territory.

if you represent an institution and, as a member of this institution, you are not allowed to...

(Ruth, 30 years old, self employed, diablessa)

However, most of them think that, being women and belonging to a female-only cultural group, they should use their influence to claim for women's rights and feminism.

The problem is that as an institutional group we cannot display anything of a political nature.... As a woman I would do it, because at the end of the day we are claiming for something that is ours. I don't want to get into the issue of political prisoners, but in what concerns us directly, I think we should participate. In the end it is culture, and we are showing culture in our city.

(Marina, 30 years old, employed in a fast food restaurant, diablessa)

Yes, indeed, there are rules to follow; however, I also think that we should break the rules and give visibility to this fact, we have to wear the bow, yes, it's clear!

(Arlet, 21 years old, diablessa)

Given the rules set by the City Council, on not using political symbols by members of the groups that are part of the Festa Major, there are many *diablesses* that feel uncomfortable about this rule and think that maybe they should break it. Although as explained above there are two main demands, the issue of Catalonia and the issue of women, many of them think that due to the nature of their group, they are almost obliged to make a claim; and the other issue, despite having a clear relationship with its activity, understood as an expression of Catalan culture, is in the background.

3.2.5. “Fire women”: gender claim through cultural action

Being a group exclusively made up of women, the issue of gender was bound to appear in the research. This is actually a relevant multi-faceted issue that becomes a necessary axis in our reflections. Especially so given the fact that the group's own history stems from gender differences, as the willingness of a few women to join a group of “run fire” and their impossibility to do so led them to create their own female-only group in a masculine world. Its very existence is a claim to women's courage. The more so because in their parades they stage the struggle between good and evil, yet they themselves somehow represent evil, at a symbolic level, since women represent the evil side, at the risk of reproducing gender stereotypes.

One of the findings of our research is that, despite the characteristics and origin of the group, and contrary to what one might imagine, they do not identify themselves as feminists. Some of

them do, individually, but not as a group; they do not pretend to be, nor show themselves as such or try to avail themselves of it. The debate in defence of women's rights is permanently present, but only with superficiality. The express prohibition from the city council to voice any demands like those mentioned above has kept the debate mostly enclosed within the personal sphere, being manifested outwardly only by some of the girls who, very often with the disapproval of other members of the group, defend their values by joining some campaign in favour of women' rights and wearing a badge or a purple bow. Debate, reflection and action go no further than this.

To give an example of the above, during the last months of our fieldwork they started working on a project involving a great number of women to celebrate their 35th anniversary. Ruth explained it like this:

It is not a protest activity; however, it will be a very powerful activity in terms of gender, as it arises from the political moment that woman is experiencing now, she is positioning herself and she is becoming empowered.

(Ruth, 29 years old, self employed, diablessa)

They call themselves *dones de foc*, which literally means “women of fire”, an expression that carries implicitly the idea of courage, strength, passion and, in some sense, even a sexual connotation. They also use it as a team scream before the start of a performance, in order to give themselves energy and power and communicate this to the rest of the city. But this expression is not only used to refer to themselves, they also use it as a hashtag on social networks (Instagram and Twitter), where they post their day-to-day activities, announce and invite fans to exhibitions, publish pictures and videos, etc.

In fact, by projecting these values of courage and strength, some of them think they can become a reference for future generations in the fight against gender stereotypes.

ENT- Can you contribute something else to the city by being a diablessa?

RES - As a reference for the younger generations, for girls, yes. We are all women filled with fire, and this puts us in the category of women fighters, outside of gender stereotypes ...

(Maria, 25 years old, nurse, diablessa)

Despite this willingness, a series of gender stereotypes have come to light in both our observations and interviews; yet, generally speaking, there is a positive self-perception of their own strength and capacity to work on gender equality, which we find in the dynamics and relations of the group with respect to other groups.

During a meeting in which we don't get to a decision, and people start saying that "we can't agree on anything because we are women" and it's like, come on!! Please, don't! Maybe we don't agree because we're all very different, or for any other reason... but we have to break with the idea that this happens because we are all women. Another stereotype is saying that we have a very tidy wardrobe because we are women – please, don't!!! That's why I think it's important to work on it from the inside, at least a little bit.

(Esther, 23 years old, Master's degree student, diablissa)

Another highly relevant gender issue that emerged from a great number of the interviews has to do with sexual safety. Some women mentioned experiences of abuse and lack of respect during the performances, involving being touched by members of the audience. Their performances take place mostly at night, during festivities in which alcohol and drugs are highly consumed by their public. Although the whole group performs the activity at the same time, they are for the most part acting on their own, and the public generally want to step under the fire very close to them. In this context, some of the girls have had experiences of being touched or lifted up without their permission, with the danger this implies given that they are handling fire.

Int: Have you found yourself in a complicated situation... because of being a woman?

RES: Yes, we go to correfocs where people are aware that we are all women, and no matter who you are, a diablissa will always be seen as a woman, so touching of buttocks and things like that have happened. It happened to me and I hit the guy on his head with the pitchfork, I got very angry. Later on I saw how he went after another diablissa during the same correfoc, it's such a chaos...

And then during the "No n'hi ha prou"¹⁶ we, the diablisses, get to open the show, and we are free for the rest of the show. So once we finished I decided to take off my cloak and join the show, so I went outside and was dancing when a group of guys started to touch my buttocks, and it was so uncomfortable, so I went back

¹⁶ An activity that starts at 2:00 am at night, very crowded and in a very reduced space. It is not a *correfoc*, but it also involves fireworks. The *diablisses* are the first group to act, and they act twice.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T4ua_O1yBm0

inside. Instead of facing them, I just went inside because they were a lot of guys. I felt so uncomfortable! But I didn't do anything, there were so many people that ... Now I'm angry I didn't have a better reaction, I could have gone up to the safety team and they would have turned them away or something.

(Maria, 25 years old, nurse, diablissa)

Another issue that arose is family conciliation. The culture committee's regulations formally state that, for security reasons, pregnant women are not allowed to parade. If they are pregnant they must inform the commission, and they will be given a leave of absence, without being replaced or losing their place in the group, until they are ready to act again. In the cases we observed, this depended on the time of year when they gave birth, but some women resume their activities 2 or 3 months after giving birth. Nevertheless, the commitment of some of them is so strong that even in that state they take up new charges in different commissions. In informal settings, children are usually present during the different activities; but what is especially interesting is their presence during meetings: children of any age were seen to attend the meetings, and it is seen as a normal fact, and they prefer attendance with children than that someone can miss the meeting. So far as has been observed, this is not as usual among other male or mixed groups, at least with respect to the city.

Another issue is an ongoing conflict they have with a male devil's group from the city. That group wants institutional recognition on a par with the *diablasses*. However, as the *diablasses* have stated, they have shown some reprehensible behaviour against them, which includes pulling off their cloaks or tripping them down during the *correfocs*, posting articles on social media criticising their activity, and so on, and this has led to a conflict in which the other institutional groups of the city have sided with the *diablasses*.

I think the main conflict with the devils' group is due to our being the only group that it is exclusively for women, for the first time ever, and we don't want them to take that away.

(Adara, 25 years old, diablissa).

3.2.6. The *diablasses* group: homogeneity, interaction, learnings, and views on cultural diversity

Their way of understanding people and cultures, in this case, has to be taken as a whole and in relation with the members of the group. Being a homogenous group, the cultural background

of almost all of the women is very similar. They live/used to live in the city centre¹⁷ and speak Catalan as their mother language. Most of them are/used to be involved in other cultural activities, such as *castellers* (human towers), amateur theatre, political or social activities, informal education, leisure, etc.

Most of their surnames are Catalan, which implies a Catalan background stretching back for generations, and their relatives or family members are closely linked to the city's economic, social, cultural and political activities. Only two of the members of the group have Spanish as their mother language. Only a few do not live in the city centre. But the remarkable thing is that not a single one of the members comes from a foreign country or is a second generation migrant, despite the fact that 18% of the city's population was born outside of Spain. There is therefore a clear relationship between language, location in the city, and Catalan identity. Exclusion (the Catalan/non-Catalan dichotomy) is sometimes expressed through the way language is used, or by their place of residence.

When I joined the group I felt very out of place, I didn't know the places where we were supposed to meet and had to google everything up, I felt ashamed because everybody knew the places, the names of the shows, etc. while everything was new to me, and I felt everything was being taken for granted. It felt odd to see that everybody already knew each other...

(Marina, 30 years old, employed in a fast food restaurant, *diablessa*)

During the interviews, there was only one instance of someone spontaneously referring to other cultures and talking about including people of diverse origin, not only in the *diablesses*, but in other traditional culture groups of the city as well.

It would be nice if, apart from being a feminist group, there were also all kinds of women. I think they don't know how to join. I hope and wish there were Moroccan people here (...) I hope and wish they were willing to join, but they don't join because they can't. When you go to the correfocs you see a lot of women (Moroccans, etc.). I think the funniest correfoc I've done up to now was the one in (name of a neighbourhood with a high percentage of foreign population), it was spectacular, we had a great time, awesome, and they got so involved ...

¹⁷ The city centre is mostly inhabited by autochthonous people, that is, Catalan-speaking people. During the 50s and 60s, internal migrations led to a growth of the neighbourhoods located around the city centre, especially welcoming people from the rest of Spain. With the arrival of extra-community migration, people tended to settle in these neighbourhoods. The city centre is still identified as a place where mostly autochthonous Catalan-speaking people live.

(Lucía, 26 years old, dental hygienist, diablessa)

Some of them argue that joining the group is open to anyone, and in fact it is. However, there are many people who not only don't know how to sign up for the waiting list, they are not even aware that they can join. So, access is not easy at all. You need to know the paths to get there and feel very motivated to join. This fact means that it is generally accessed by people from the same families and related to each other. Aware of this situation, in December 2019 there was an attempt by the city council to motivate the citizens of all neighborhoods to universalize access to the different groups through a campaign at the local level, however, it is not yet known if it has had an effect, as it is a waiting list, for when vacancies are generated.

I didn't know that anyone could join. When I saw the people in the dwarfs' group, I used to think they might be the children of someone (with influence). What happened in my case is that when I volunteered I saw that two girls from my neighbourhood were playing the drums with the diablesses, and I said, if they are here it means these are not the daughters of anybody... and that was when I started looking for a way to join the group.

(Lucía, 26 years old, dental hygienist, diablessa)

The one aspect that breaks the homogeneity within the group is age and experience, an aspect that is linked to a series of interactions that contribute a lot of richness to the relationships between the members of the group. On the one hand, it gives rise to some conflicts between the most veteran and the youngest, as the veterans will often use their expertise to justify their own opinions about the decisions to be made, and often resort to the argument that young people join the group just for the pride of being a *diablessa*, even if they are actually afraid of fire. This is an attitude resented by some of the younger ones.

I think there's a problem specifically regarding in this case I think it happens to coincide with an age issue, but I think it's also about the veterans, because the older ones have agreed among themselves that they are the most veteran, but sometimes they don't see things quite well, the things that the youngest are proposing or thinking or doing ...

(Esther, 23 years old, Master's student, diablessa)

However, the younger ones recognise a very positive virtue in the learnings and the historical and experiential contributions that the more veteran members pass on to them. The veterans also often express a calm and tranquil point of view, capable of slowing down some of the

impulses of the youngest that could bring problems to the group. In addition, they frequently provide reflections and arouse debate about the meaning of their activity, the relationship with culture and identity, and their responsibilities towards the city and the city council as volunteers.

...because those who have been diableses for a longer time are the ones who know how it works, although I understand that they lead the way a little bit every time we learn from them, but that's what it's all about, to learn little by little...

(Arlet, 21 years old, Undergraduate student, diablesa)

4. DISCUSSION

Popular culture has traditionally been identified as the culture of the people, and it has often also been defined in opposition to the culture of the elites (Busquet i Duran, 2004; Llopart, Prat & Prats, 1985). Storey (1997: 60) (in Busquet i Duran, 2004) states that popular culture is the “authentic” culture of the people. However, there are some authors who “believe that popular culture is threatened by mass culture, suffering a process of degradation or impoverishment” (Busquet i Duran, 2004). The case selected for our ethnography illustrates clearly how popular culture is alive and fully in force. As our case study shows, there exists a diverse group composed of 35 women, mostly young women, who spend their free time thinking, planning, organising and carrying out a popular culture activity in which thousands of people take part almost devoutly, and mostly young people are invited to participate and invade the streets with a cultural purpose.

The reasons that have led these women to become *diableses* are many. As we saw in the previous pages, identity and feeling of belonging come up as the main reasons. However, identity has to be seen in its multiples faces: age, gender, local/regional/national identity, family heritage, etc.

Part of their identity can be situated within *youth culture* following Feixa (2008), as the way in which young people's social experiences are expressed collectively through the construction of differentiated styles, both through leisure consumption and through the use of interstitial spaces of institutional life. If we abstract from the local and focus on the globalised world (Castells 2010), as Feixa & Nilan (2009) state, it is not clear whether the global is eclipsing the local, since in this case we can see that “the local”, and what lies behind the local, has become

extremely important for the participants: “the local” has become their roots, their identity and also, for most of them, their family heritage. In this sense, we share with Nilan (2012) and Feixa & Nilan (2009) the rejection of the concept of *global adolescent* that some authors have put forward. Alongside the ethnographic studies carried out among *youth local cultures*, it has been revealed that young people build their identity on a local scale, incorporating perhaps either traditional or modern elements. It could be said that something similar is happening in this case.

Thus, to go further in understanding why young people come together to construct what is identified as *youth culture*, we may consider that young people not only socialise and meet in accordance with family articulations of sex, class and neighbourhood, but also in accordance with race, ethnicity and religion. In this sense, this process (of seeking security in an insecure world) involves the inclusion of a limited number of members according to similarities, and the exclusion of many more based on their being identified as the “other” (Nilan 2012). Given that the group under analysis is not a natural group, since the procedures for joining and leaving are regulated by the city council, the process of identifying as a member of the group emerges not from experience but from the imagination, perhaps from an idealisation, from the values behind the activity, or from how I construct my own image as a *diablessa* and how others think of me as a *diablessa*, from the feeling of belonging to the city – or whatever one can think of.

This gives importance to the idea *popular culture* would like to stand for, in face of a lack of evidence to justify an existing ethnic unity, “legitimizing elements of the difference, of particularity, recovering from history what might have existed”, for example the *correfocs* (Guisado, 2005). Due to this legitimation, “the other” has no place, not only among the *diablesses*, but also in any of the other institutional groups of popular culture in the city. This happens despite the context mentioned above of a globalised world and a city with some 40% of its inhabitants born outside Catalonia. It could be said that there is no intercultural communication, no intercultural exchange, apart from some youths taking part as spectators on exceptional and limited occasions. The “other” will remain “the other”, popular culture will remain what its forgers want it to be; and by not letting in new contributions from outsiders (understood as different people) it will be a culture that is static, impermeable and, as mentioned above, the contrary to what popular culture should actually be.

With regard to interaction, there are two spheres. On the one hand, there is the private sphere, where both similarities and above all differences arise. Here takes place the emergence of that fact pointed out by Bourdieu (1990) of young people wanting to create their own rules and codes, their own style and value system; and the case we studied is no exception, with the generation of spaces of confrontation and a hierarchy struggle between the younger and less experienced girls and the older and veteran women. This is an illustration of what Feixa (2008) identifies as a cultural minority in a subaltern position with respect to a hegemonic or parental culture.

On the other hand is the public sphere, represented by the street, which is where the youths find their senses of belongingness, their space in the city and the recognition of the other inhabitants of the city. Identity is located neither in the heart nor in the head of people, but in the various contexts and public settings that each society regards as relevant for the presentation, exhibition and meeting of different types of people and entities, following a double order: that of the life cycle of individuals and that of work and festivities (Frigolé, 2005). This is the place where their political opinions can be aired, even if prohibited by the city council, and where some of them transgress the norm to show a lesson and let everybody see their transgression, which again exemplifies their subaltern position, as mentioned before.

When they are on the streets dressed as *diablasses*, their traditional concept of women is transformed. As explained in the previous pages, devil is a concept that emerges from the dichotomy of good and evil and the moral need to distinguish between them, the devil incarnating the evil side (Rofes Guerrero & Rofes, 2015). As some of them state in the interviews, when they act in a *correfoc* they are playing with fire, they have the control and thus have the power. There is somehow an inversion of roles, between the feminine and the masculine, since only they can incarnate the devil and, thus, the power is given to women. This, however, happens only within a symbolic sphere, since the reproduction of power and abuse from men against women, as expressed by some of the informants during the fieldwork, is unfortunately still present. But it is in such cases where *sorority* (Legard y de los Rios, 2006) appears and emerges as one of their most appreciated values. Thus, *youth culture* is not the only agglutinating element within the group: gender also has its place. This, as stated previously, is what motivated most of them to join the group in the first place, and whenever there is a quirky situation, they find mutual support in the group. But although both these

elements give the young women feelings of belongingness, they are not the only ones to do so; as we have already observed, local identity also adds to this feeling.

Local identity is seen by the *diablesses* as their primary identity. Some of them skipped ahead and identified themselves as citizens of the world, but some others –in fact the majority– identify themselves as Catalans, some of them even arguing that being a *diablessa* made sense as part of their identity. As Prats (2015) states, identity is a social construction, and every social construction reflects an existing hierarchy within the referential society.

5. CONCLUSION

The research revealed some fundamental issues that are intertwined and impossible to separate from each other. These are *youth culture*, *gender* and *identity* in the context of popular culture.

One of the most relevant conclusions is that, among the youth, local identity has a very strong power in the construction of their identity, doing away with the idea of a global or homogeneous youth. From the research arises also the idea that identity has multiple faces, and that each individual finds their own identification in what is meaningful for them. Finally, identity of whatever kind becomes one of the most important drivers for young people to participate in popular culture.

This ethnography has highlighted the fact that family heritage plays a very important role in keeping the *diablesses* together, along with all the values associated with it; but also in allowing the subsequent participation of young people in cultural, social and community activities. As can be seen from the sociodemographic profile of the interviewees found in the Annex, most of the young women involved in the *diablesses* also get involved in other cultural activities, not only during their free time, but also as professionals, since some of them have jobs that are related to culture: there is a dancer, a photographer, a synchronised swimming technical director, etc.

Gender plays an important and transversal role within the group, as it is one of their defining characteristics and differential traits. Being a group composed exclusively of women is for most of them one of the reasons for having decided to become a *diablessa*, and for others it is something to be proud of, even though feminism as a political claim is not part of their options.

The fact of being women-only and sensitive to gender issues does not shield them from prejudices and gender stereotypes. Nor does it drive them to use their public position to claim in defence of women's rights and break the council's rule of not speaking for their rights. Although most of them hold similar political ideas, this does not lead to a consensus that could provide them with a space for reflection enabling them to deepen on relevant issues and items of their reality, concerns and demands.

Local identity plays a very important role for young people, but when we broaden the scope of geopolitical identity, many of them jump from local identity to global identity, identifying themselves as citizens of the world, skipping over both their Spanish and European identities. On the one hand, perhaps because the type of activity that they carry out, forms part of traditional Catalan culture, and is set in the conflictive political context of Catalonia, in recent years, many of them identify themselves as Catalan. On the other hand, the construction of Europe is seen as too artificial to give them any feeling of belongingness or place regarding their identity.

Finally, as we saw before, the group does not make use of their public influence and visibility to vindicate or claim any political opinion. Debates can be opened within the group, but the decision to transgress the express prohibition of the city council is kept within the bounds of the individual sphere, causing some disagreement among the *diablasses*.

6. FUTURE ANALYSIS

The reflections unfolded in this ethnographic study open new opportunities for going further in the research of several issues with great potential. First of all, *gender* was only addressed briefly, despite the fact that it has emerged as a multifaceted topic with a wide range of subtopics to analyse. For further analysis, it would be interesting and necessary to explore three of these different subtopics, somehow closely related to each other, which can be key to improving the situation of women in the analysed context. First, gender stereotypes and prejudices. Second, the worrying existence of undesirable attitudes of abuse and episodes of young women being touched in a context of crowds and night time activities, which apart from being worrying and reproachable, need to be analysed by society as new (or unfortunately ever existing) abusive attitudes of men against women, as the research also has pointed out. And finally, the presence and role of women in popular culture, paying close attention to decision-

making processes, since, as mentioned before, and taking into account the research of Roca Samon (2019), it is still residual.

Another issue that emerges from the research has to do with youth participation in the institutional frame of traditional culture: are young people been given space to create, express and develop themselves, or is it just a question of strictly reproducing what the government gives them (as we saw with the expression of political views)? Are they transforming what is understood by popular culture (Hall, 1981) or not?

The research also opens another issue regarding the participation of people from different national backgrounds in traditional popular culture. As seen in the discussion, “the other” is still “the other”. However, if culture is alive and wants to adapt to the context, it has to do something about this.

Finally, one of the fields that could be very interesting to delve into has to do with the different learning processes that take place within this context. On the one hand, the processes of cultural transmission through the family indicate that there is a predisposition for a future link with community participation, whether cultural or social, and also as regards the local identity of young people. On the other hand, it would be interesting to analyse the processes of transmission of culture and tradition within the group, as it has been observed that they do play a role, but there has been no study deepening on what the entailing outputs may be.

7. POLICY RECOMENDATIONS

In the following paragraphs, there are exposed a series of policy recommendations that are drawn from the research carried out.

- Youth involvement in popular culture activities, such as the *Diablesses*, provides learning about local heritage and its roots, as well as an alternative way of actively living and learning cultural expressions.
- Popular cultures practices (such as the *diables*) are cultural experiences that have to be recognised and fostered as a way of promoting local traditional practices and intergenerational dialogue among youth and other participants.
- Increasing institutional support and recognition of popular culture to enrich and allow multiple avenues of learning provision for young people. In the case-study presented, local

authorities facilitate the promotion of popular cultural practices without interfering in their day-to-day activity and letting their participants learn values of cooperation and self-organisation.

- Women-only cultural spaces of popular culture can be promoted as places of learning on gender issues (e.g. male domination and abuse in the public space) and empowering women.
- Given the situations mentioned in relation to situations of harassment and sexual abuse, the development of actions and protocols should be encouraged in order to prevent them.

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ANNEX I: SUMMARY OF INFORMANTS' PROFILE

No	Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Country of birth	Citizenship	Occupation/ Employment	Family language	Languages fluent	Highest education qualification	Other cultural and social activities
1	Marina	Woman	30	Spain	Spanish	Works in a fast food restaurant	Spanish	Spanish, Catalan	Secondary education	None
2	Esther	Woman	23	Spain	Spanish	Studying a master's degree in Biomedicine	Catalan	Catalan, Spanish and English	University Degree (Biomedical sciences)	Scouts' leader, theatre
3	Arlet	Woman	21	Spain	Spanish	Studying Biotechnology	Catalan	Catalan, Spanish and English	Secondary education	Triathlon, youth leader
4	Adara	Woman	25	Spain	Spanish	Unemployed, studying a postgraduate course in information and design	Catalan	Catalan, Spanish and English	University Degree (Information sciences)	Sings in a youth choir, scouts' leader
5	Ruth	Woman	30	Spain	Spanish	Freelance, she has an event-planning company	Catalan	Catalan, Spanish and English	University Degree (Pedagogy)	None
6	Clara	Woman	30	Spain	Spanish	Secondary school Sports teacher	Catalan	Catalan, Spanish and English	Master's degree (secondary education)	Castellers
7	Núria	Woman	22	Spain	Spanish	Student, undergraduate education, and works as a dance professor	Catalan	Catalan, Spanish and English	Secondary education	Youth leader, dance and theatre
8	Maria	Woman	25	Spain	Spanish	Nurse	Catalan	Catalan and Spanish	Master's degree (Health emergencies)	Castellers
9	Lucía	Woman	26	Spain	Spanish	Works as a dental hygienist	Spanish	Catalan and Spanish	Advanced professional training (Oral and dental hygiene and Audio-visual production)	None
10	Alba	Woman	29	Spain	Spanish	Technical director, Artistic swimming section of a swimming club	Catalan	Catalan, Spanish and English	University degree (Nurse)	None

