

# ***Flamenco ¿Algo Nuestro? [Flamenco, Something of Ours?]: Music, Regionalism and Political Geography in Andalusia, Spain***

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*In recent years, flamenco has become one of the most prominent symbols of regional identity in Andalusia, Spain. The Andalusian Government has embarked on an ambitious project aimed at developing flamenco within and beyond the region. In this article, I explore how flamenco is being 'regionalised' at the institutional level, framing this process within the context of identity politics in Spain. Moreover, I consider the ways in which this process has been received among some Andalusians. Focussing on ethnographic research conducted with members of the Platform for East Andalusia (a sub-regionalist movement that contests the concept of a unified Andalusia), I examine responses to the development of flamenco, and in doing so problematise a fixed correlation between flamenco and a single understanding of Andalusian-ness. By drawing upon theoretical perspectives in political geography, I reveal a fragmented reading of the relationship between flamenco and regional identity in Andalusia. This research adds to a growing body of literature concerned with music and regionalism in sub-national contexts.*

*Keywords: Flamenco; Spain; Andalusia; Regional Identity; Regionalism; Political Geography; Music and Place; Music and Geography*

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## Introduction

In recent years, flamenco has become one of the most prominent symbols of regional identity in Andalusia, the southernmost region of Spain. Andalusia is one of seventeen *comunidades autónomas* (autonomous communities), possessing its own parliament and political autonomy. It also has the right to advance its own cultural representation, using existing symbols and traditions in the construction of a distinct regional identity. In this respect, flamenco is utilised by regional institutions as a powerful emblem of regional culture given Andalusia's prominence in the origins of the tradition. The Andalusian Government has embarked on an ambitious project aimed at developing flamenco both to unify the eight provinces of Andalusia and to represent the region abroad. In this article, I explore how flamenco is being developed at the institutional level, framing this process within the wider context of political autonomy and regionalism in Spain. Moreover, I examine critically the reception of flamenco among Andalusians themselves. Specifically, I draw upon ethnographic research conducted with the *Plataforma por Andalucía Oriental* (Platform for East Andalusia, PAO), a sub-regionalist movement that contests the very notion of a unified Andalusia. Here, I present a fragmented reading of the relationship between flamenco and regionalism in Andalusia. To achieve this, I invoke political geography to expand the boundary of theoretical discourse in ethnomusicology, especially as it relates to the study of music and regionalism.

Geographies of belonging (such as nationalism or regionalism) are central to ethnomusicological enquiry and many scholars, particularly in the last two decades, have demonstrated the power that music possesses in the representation of place and identity (Biddle and Knights 2007; Bohlman 2011; Stokes 1994). Traditionally, scholars have focused on the musical expression of local, national and global spaces. The centrality of the nation state as a key trope of analysis has waxed and waned, facing particular pressure as scholarly

discourse concerning globalisation and the ‘world music’ industry has gained more prominence in recent years (Corona and Madrid-González 2008; Frith 2000; Steingress 2002b). As a result, some scholars have sought to ‘reintroduce the national dimension in a productive and critical manner as the missing middle term of the local/global syllogism in order to reconsider how nation-states and social units like them might operate as [...] a “mediator” of the two outer terms’ (Biddle and Knights 2007: 2. Also see Bohlman 2011). However, the region and regionalism are often missing in discussions regarding the relationship between music and place, particularly in the European context. At times, the region is conflated with the local with little or no distinction being made between the two terms. Moreover, existing models of nationalism are not always sufficient when considering the political and cultural plurality of nation states. The global map of geopolitical divisions has become more complex and fragmented as nation states decentralise into smaller territories and/or join with larger political and economic supra-national regions (such as the European Union). In this article, I explore the role music plays in articulating regionalism in a specific European context – Andalusia.

When considering the relationship between music and regionalism, I argue that political geography provides a useful theoretical basis. In particular, I invoke the work of the political geographer Frans Schrijver (2006) and his monograph *Regionalism after Regionalisation: Spain, France and the United Kingdom*. In this book, Schrijver focuses on two interrelated processes: regionalism and regionalisation. Regionalism refers to regional identification and sentiment from the bottom up (amongst citizens). Regionalisation refers to the top-down process of decentralisation and the consolidation of regional identity at an institutional level. Schrijver examines regionalism after regionalisation in a number of European countries, exploring the extent to which citizens identify with their region vis-à-vis their nation. I invoke Schrijver’s theoretical model in the context of flamenco along with the

contributions of other political geographers (Paasi 2009; Terlouw 2012). I discuss the regionalisation of flamenco at an institutional level, as well as assessing how this process has been received by some Andalusians. In the Spanish context, Schrijver contends that regionalisation has been largely successful with most citizens identifying with their region and the nation state (2006: 81–169). I argue that the concept of regional unity in Andalusia can be problematic and at times disputed. Members of the PAO seek the recognition of two autonomous Andalusian regions (East and West) putting into question a fixed reading of regionalism in Andalusia. I contend that flamenco is a suitable vehicle for understanding these tensions, particularly given its powerful role as an ideological tool in the construction of a unified regional identity. By exploring responses from members of the PAO to the regionalisation of flamenco, I question whether flamenco *es algo nuestro* (is something of ours).

### **Music, Regionalism and Political Geography**

The relationship between music and geography is not new to ethnomusicological or geographical scholarship, and in both disciplines scholars agree that music has a close connection with place and a powerful role in the construction of place-based identities. In cultural geography music has received much attention, and since the 1970s a large body of literature regarding music has emerged (Carney 1990, 1998; Connell and Gibson 2003; Johansson and Bell 2009; Leyshon et al. 1995, 1998; Smith 1997). Nonetheless, the majority of the geographical literature on music focuses on American popular/folk music, British music or western classical music. Further, much research is restricted to the mapping of musical styles or the analysis of song texts for geographical imagery. Despite a few notable exceptions (Kong 2006; Waterman 2006), non-western musics and/or political geography have seldom been the focuses of scholarly enquiry. In the field of ethnomusicology

geography has always occupied a fundamental role in scholarly research. Nettl (2005: 320–38) argues that the discipline is inherently geographical and that ethnomusicologists frequently seek to make musical ‘maps’ of the world. Even so, in the existing literature geographical theory is normally implicitly invoked rather than explicitly foregrounded. In recent years, however, some music scholars have begun to centralise geographical paradigms in the study of music and place (Fiol 2012; Kearney 2007; Krims 2007).<sup>2</sup>

Regionalism has also received limited attention in ethnomusicology and cognate disciplines. In part, this may be due to the dominance of the nation state and the local/global syllogism as categories of spatial analysis. More recently, however, some music scholars have sought to re-address this imbalance by invoking the concepts of region and regionalism in a range of different cultural contexts, including Brazil (Lucas 2000), Cuba (Bodenheimer 2009), India (Fiol 2012; Grimes 2008), Japan (Gillan 2012), Marie-Galante (Emoff 2008) and the Republic of Ireland (Kearney 2007). These scholars have considered the ways in which music articulates imagined communities at the regional level. Other scholars have examined the ways in which so-called regional musical styles are sidelined in favour of a homogenous, national musical style (Grimes 2008). I add to this growing body of literature by discussing a case study of music and regionalism in the European context. Further, apart from the work of Fiol (2012: 449–51) none of these scholars has invoked political geography, leaving the notions of region and regionalism un-theorised.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Geography as a theoretical focus of study is rarely invoked in flamenco scholarship. However, in recent years some notable exceptions have emerged. For example see, Suárez Japón’s (2005) study of the geographies, contexts and spaces that flamenco inhabits, and Castillo Guerrero’s (2011) analysis of a specific geographical locality and its influence on song style.

<sup>3</sup> In flamenco scholarship regionalism as a specific theoretical trope is seldom used. Nonetheless, in recent years there has been an increase in literature that examines the regional development and significance of flamenco as a political tool (for example see, Cruces Roldán 1996, 2002, 2003; Steingress and Baltanás 1998; Steingress

Generally speaking, political geography is concerned with the control and the contestation of territory and space as related to formal politics—such as governments and international relations—and informal politics—such as day-to-day social relations (Cloke et al. 2005; Painter and Jeffrey 2009). The ways in which regions are formed as territories and controlled by institutions, as well as expressions of regionalism within regions, are primary concerns for political geographers. The region can simply refer to a physical space defined by certain geographical characteristics (such as mountains or rivers). However, in the context of this article I am concerned with the region as a geographical territory that is invested with meaning; one that consists of interrelated ‘spaces’ such as the political, the social and the cultural (Knight 1982: 517). This type of region can normally be understood at two spatial scales: supra-national (that is, regions such as the European Union that comprise multiple states) and sub-national (that is, regions with or without autonomous powers that exist within nation states). While both spatial scales are often closely related, I primarily focus on the region as a sub-national territory.

Despite the acceleration of globalisation during the 1990s, region and regionalism have remained important buzzwords in the discourse regarding territorial politics (Paasi 2009). In fact, the concepts of region and regionalism have become more prominent in recent years (Paasi 2009; Terlouw 2012), especially as the number of autonomous regions has increased globally but particularly in Europe. The proliferation of regions can be attributed to several causes.<sup>4</sup> In part, the creation of autonomous regions may be a way of alleviating economic pressures on the nation state through the distribution of resources and governance

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1998a, 2002a; Washabaugh 2012). However, none of this research has offered ethnographic responses to the regional significance of flamenco, nor has it considered the ways in which flamenco reveals the fragmented nature of regionalism in Andalusia.

<sup>4</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the increase in regional autonomies and the rise of regionalism (especially in the European context), see Jones and Keating (1995), Paasi (2009) and Schrijver (2006).

to smaller territories (Keating 1995). This has meant that regional institutions have become prominent actors at wider spatial scales. They are now engaged in political and economic relations beyond the level of the nation state (for example in super-national regions such as the EU). Indeed, regions and the notion of regionalism are now an important part of EU policy (Paasi 2009),<sup>5</sup> as more regional territories vie for greater political power.

Consequently, regionalism (as a display of regional unity) has become more pronounced both within and beyond nation states. Regional governments seek greater recognition within their respective nations and aim to increase regional competitiveness on a global scale. Similarly, citizens increasingly view their identities in regional terms. At times, these regionalisms have transformed into regional nationalisms. Here, some institutions and citizens regard their autonomous regions as distinct nations in their own right, a process that in some contexts has resulted in calls for independence (such as in Catalonia and the Basque Country). My primary concern in this article is the role that music plays in expressions of regionalism at an institutional level and for citizens themselves.

To expand further upon the phenomenon of regionalism, I invoke the work of three political geographers: Frans Schrijver (2006), Anssi Paasi (2009) and Kees Terlouw (2012). Schrijver's (2006) monograph explores the presence of regionalism after the regionalisation of a region. The term regionalisation refers to the institutional processes through which regions come into being; that is, the decentralisation of a nation state into autonomous or semi-autonomous territories. Moreover, regionalisation also accounts for the construction and validation of distinct regional identities at an institutional level. Paasi (2009) describes regionalisation in another way. He calls this process the 'institutionalisation' of regions and

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<sup>5</sup> The regional turn in EU policy is best exemplified by the European Regional Development Fund. This budget is designated for the poorer regions of Europe and is aimed at reducing economic disparities across the Union. See Paasi (2009).

identifies four distinct but interrelated ‘shapes’ (2009: 134–36). First is ‘territorial shaping’ where the geographical borders of the region are institutionally recognised and enforced. Second is ‘symbolic shaping’ where regional institutions create and consolidate official regional symbols as a way of differentiating the region from the nation. This may involve the use of existing symbols or cultural traditions or the invention of new ones. Third is ‘institutional shaping’ where autonomous powers are used to create unique regional institutions that maintain and spread the other ‘shapes’. Fourth is the ‘establishment’ process where an autonomous region is recognised as a distinct territory at a national and an international level. The region as a political and social reality is also consolidated through the media.

In response to Paasi’s work, Terlouw (2012: 709) argues: ‘When these four shapes interlock they reinforce each other and generate institutionalised regions with a strong regional identity’ and also offers a distinct reading of the institutionalisation (or regionalisation) of regions. He discusses two different expressions of regional identity at the institutional level—what he calls ‘thick’ and ‘thin’ identities. A ‘thick’ regional identity is built upon the idea of a culturally-, historically- and territorially-unified region. Such institutional representations of identity draw upon the shared historical and cultural legacy of a region in order to develop a sense of belonging among its citizens. A ‘thin’ regional identity refers to the functionality, the economic status and the integration of a region. In the representation of a ‘thin’ identity, regional institutions focus on aspects such as economic development and European integration. During the process of regionalisation, culture is often a prominent factor. It is a powerful vehicle for the representation of a cohesive regional identity both within a region and beyond its borders. In the following, I show how flamenco is intricately involved both in the regionalisation process and in the development of ‘thick’



and ‘thin’ expressions of identity in Andalusia. First it is necessary to understand the historical context before addressing the institutional significance of the flamenco tradition.

## **Flamenco and Regional History**

In Spain, regionalism has played an integral role in the political and cultural make-up of the nation state. The importance of regional identity has a long history, and struggles for autonomy and even independence have persisted for over two hundred years. During the mid-to-late nineteenth century, calls for a federalised Spain were particularly pronounced and lasted until the outbreak of the Civil War in 1936. This was followed by Francisco Franco’s (1892–1975) nationalist dictatorship (1939–75) where regional diversity was quashed and the dream of Spanish federalism was left in tatters. It was not until 1978 that Spain finally began the process of decentralisation, reinstating failed attempts during the First Republic (1873–4) and the Second Republic (1931–6).<sup>6</sup> Following nearly forty years of dictatorship, regional autonomy and cultural plurality went hand-in-hand with Spain’s transition to democracy, resulting in the recognition of seventeen autonomous communities. In Andalusia, regionalism was relatively slow to develop with a small yet consolidated movement only appearing in the late-nineteenth century. At this time, Andalusian regionalists were inspired by other Spanish regionalist projects and sought the recognition of a distinct identity and culture in Andalusia. During the Second Republic, the Andalusian regionalist cause gained far more prominence particularly under the influence of Blas Infante (1885–1936) the ‘father of Andalusian

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<sup>6</sup> During the Second Republic (1931–6), the historical region of Catalonia was the only territory to gain political autonomy with its autonomous status being approved in 1932. However, this law was abolished when Franco came to power.

regionalism' (*el padre del andalucismo*). In 1981, Andalusia gained its political autonomy with the first elections being held in 1982.<sup>7</sup>

The legitimacy of a distinct and a unified Andalusian culture and history is frequently debated. For Andalusian institutions and regionalists (both in the past and in the present), the region possesses a long history and a unique culture; a 'thick' regional identity so to speak. Andalusia's *raison d'être* is usually linked to narratives regarding its multicultural history. The south of Spain, in particular, has played host to a diverse array of cultures including *gitanos* (Gypsies), Jews, Muslims, Phoenicians and Visigoths. Andalusia's Islamic heritage and the territory referred to as al-Andalus are often viewed as integral to the development of Andalusian culture and ultimately the concept of a unified regional identity.<sup>8</sup> However, some historians and critics argue that any expression of a unified identity was not present until the late-nineteenth century. Even at this time the notion of a cohesive Andalusian identity was in doubt. The historian Antonio Cortés Peña (1994, 2001) contends that the notion of a distinct Andalusian character was an invention. It was created by foreign travel writers and spread as the common denominator of Spanish-ness before it became associated with regionalism in Andalusia. While Cortés Peña's view is critical, Romanticism and the representation of exotic, predominantly Andalusian stereotypes (such as gypsies and flamenco) were pivotal in

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<sup>7</sup> This is a very brief overview of the historical circumstances surrounding Andalusian autonomy. For a more comprehensive history see Cortes Peña (1994, 2001), Gilmore (1981), Moreno Navarro (1977, 1993) and Newton (1982).

<sup>8</sup> Al-Andalus is the name given to the Iberian Peninsula (particularly Southern Spain) when it was under Islamic occupation. Muslims entered Spain in 711 and occupied territory up until 1492. In reality, however, al-Andalus as a territory was not unified throughout this whole period. Nonetheless, the term al-Andalus is often conceptually overlapped with that of Andalusia, being viewed as an important epoch in the region's history. From this historical narrative arises the notion of *convivencia* (coexistence). This utopian ideal refers to an alleged peaceful co-existence between Christians, Jews and Muslims in Medieval Spain.

the construction of a Spanish national image. According to Cortés Peña, regionalists tried to reclaim Andalusian-ness from its conflation with Spanish-ness. They re-appropriated romantic stereotypes and rebuilt regional customs as distinct identity symbols. In his own words: ‘European romantic travellers [...] initiated the “popularisation” of the Andalusian image [...] an image that was going to serve as a mirror in that many Andalusians began to regard themselves as a people with unique defining characteristics’ (1994: 216).<sup>9</sup>

One powerful identity symbol around which a unified Andalusian identity could be built was and still is flamenco. While flamenco is often correlated with Spanish stereotypes more generally (particularly outside of Spain), it is most commonly associated with Andalusia having evolved predominantly in that region. Flamenco is often seen as the musical by-product of centuries of alleged exchange and intermixing between myriad cultural groups (Manuel 1989), especially *gitanos* and *moriscos* (Muslims who were converted to Christianity following the collapse of the Islamic occupancy of Granada in 1492). Traditionally, *gitanos* are considered to be the main tradition-bearers of flamenco, a narrative that has dominated flamenco discourse for many years (Manuel 1989; Mitchell 1994; Washabaugh 1996; Steingress and Baltanás 1998; Steingress 1993). This discourse has its origins in the song collections and writings of Antonio Machado Álvarez (1848–93) otherwise known as Demófilo (Machado y Álvarez 1881) who viewed the *gitano* as the archetypal folk figure of Andalusia and flamenco song as the representation of an authentic *gitano* folk-poetry (Steingress 1998b). During the first two decades of the twentieth century, Manuel de Falla (1876–1946) and Federico García Lorca (1898–1936) also sought to revive and preserve ‘traditional’ flamenco that they believed had lost its integrity in the commercial theatres of Spain and foregrounded the tradition’s supposed *gitano-andaluz* (Andalusian gypsy) origins to construct flamenco as a transcendental, universal folk-art capable of embodying the

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<sup>9</sup> All translations from Spanish are my own.

deepest expressions of the human condition (García Gómez 1998; Steingress 1993).

However, it was Antonio Mairena (1909–83) a *gitano* singer and writer from Seville who perhaps best exemplifies the *gitano* perspective. For Mairena, flamenco was an intrinsic part of *gitano* ethnicity, and he believed that it emerged privately in *gitano* families between 1800 and 1860 (Mairena and Molina 1967; Steingress 1993). Such a view detached flamenco from its Andalusian associations and instead foregrounded *gitano* ethnicity above regional identity, a belief that still holds currency today.

While the *gitano*-centric view has gained a prominent place in flamenco discourse, historically the tradition has also been associated with representations of Andalusian identity. Moreover, *gitanos* themselves are Andalusian and as such it can be difficult to disentangle a *gitano* origins narrative from an Andalusian one. In the late-nineteenth century, the linguist Hugo Schuchardt (1842–1927) studied the Andalusian dialect through flamenco song and criticised Demófilo’s *gitano*-centric thesis, arguing that an ‘authentic’ *gitano* poetic tradition did not exist. Instead, he believed that flamenco was a uniquely Andalusian form of song-poetry that had gone through a process of *gitanoisation* due to Romanticism and nationalist ideologies based on the exaltation of the folk hero (Steingress 1998b), a thesis that Demófilo later accepted. Yet it is important to recognise that Demófilo’s elevation of *gitano-andaluz* song was linked to his own wider desire to uphold the notion of Spanish federalism through the representation of regional cultural diversity, a political position that had gained popularity towards the end of the nineteenth century (Baltanás and Rodríguez Becerra 1998). This position continued in the writings of Falla and Lorca, as they also viewed flamenco as a sonic representation of Andalusian identity and the quest for Spanish federalism. It was under the patronage of Blas Infante, however, that flamenco was fully aligned with the Andalusian regionalist cause. He viewed flamenco as the musical product of Andalusia’s multicultural past and placed particular importance on the supposed *morisco* origins of the tradition

(Infante 2010[1929–33]; Steingress 1998b: 138–41). For Blas Infante, flamenco was arguably a political tool in the struggle for Andalusian autonomy. These attempts to ‘regionalise’ flamenco were thwarted with the onset of the Civil War in 1936 and Franco’s ascension to power in 1939. During the years of the Franco regime, flamenco was reconstructed as a Spanish tradition and disconnected from its regional associations, being readapted as a tool for tourism.

### **The Regionalisation of Flamenco**

Immediately following the transition to democracy, flamenco found itself in a difficult conundrum. A tradition that had once been associated with Andalusian regional identity had come to represent the inequalities and injustices of a nationalist regime. In light of regional autonomy, how was the Andalusian Government to deal with such a political association? The anthropologist William Washabaugh argues: ‘During the 1980s, social history and cultural patrimony were given relatively weak roles to play in establishing and legitimating these regional autonomies largely because [...] regional history, having been part of the problem, could not figure into the solution’ (2012: 83). He continues to say that the regional significance of flamenco remained largely isolated from the institutional domain, even if it did inform the self-representation of Andalusians. However, as Washabaugh shows flamenco has now become the object of unprecedented institutional support. It is viewed as a heritage style that is ‘being used to oppose the political interests that it once served’ (2012: 5). In his monograph Washabaugh discusses this process of ‘patrimonialisation’, tracing the institutional development of flamenco over the past 150 years. In particular, he explores current institutional developments proposed by the regional government (2012: 81–104). These governmental initiatives reflect his wider belief that flamenco is conceptualised by Andalusian institutions as ‘heritage-transmitted-from-the-past’ (2012: 10). It is represented as

a backward-leaning cultural object that embodies Andalusian history and identity. This representation of flamenco is founded upon a number of historical forces that have shaped the ways in which it is developed at an institutional level. However, by drawing upon contemporary flamenco cinema and studio recordings, Washabaugh makes a case for a forward-leaning understanding of style; one that embraces the future of flamenco and by extension the future of Andalusia.

I do not wish to engage in discussions of style here. Rather, I seek to build upon Washabaugh's examination of the institutional development of flamenco as a prominent symbol of Andalusian identity. Since the 1990s, a number of scholars have sought to raise the recognition of flamenco as heritage at a political level (Cruces Roldán 1996; García Plata 1996; Steingress 1993, 1998a). This scholarly initiative has, in part, stimulated an increased awareness of the cultural significance of flamenco among governmental institutions. This awareness has culminated in the integration of flamenco across the Andalusian public domain, with a number of departments of the regional government capitalising upon the tradition. The institutionalisation of flamenco reached its zenith with the creation of the Andalusian Institute of Flamenco (formerly known as the Andalusian Agency for the Development of Flamenco) in 2005.<sup>10</sup> This body of the Andalusian Department of Culture and Sport is charged solely with the development of flamenco within and outside of the region, co-ordinating the activities of other governmental departments such as the Department of Education.

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<sup>10</sup> See <<http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/cultura/iaf/opencms/portal>> [accessed 2 October, 2013]. On this website one can also find digital copies of the magazine *La Nueva Alboreá* [*The New Dawn*]. This governmental publication provides a wealth of information regarding the institutional development of flamenco through the Andalusian Institute of Flamenco. It is also worth mentioning the *Centro Andaluz de Flamenco* (Andalusian Centre for Flamenco), an institution based in Jerez that is devoted to the research and collection of flamenco-related historical documentation.

The creation of the Institute was closely followed by another significant event—the inclusion of flamenco in the revised Andalusian Statute of Autonomy in 2007. In Article 68 of the Statute, it is stated that the Andalusian Government has ‘exclusive competency [responsibility] regarding the knowledge, research, development, promotion and diffusion of flamenco as a unique element of Andalusian cultural heritage’ (Junta de Andalucía 2007). As a result of this inclusion, flamenco is being developed in a number of ways including more performance circuits, investment in flamenco festivals (within Andalusia and beyond), educational initiatives, research and promotion. The development of flamenco, therefore, has become increasingly centralised with the Andalusian Government controlling the majority of flamenco’s infrastructure. For example, many large-scale festivals such as *Flamenco Viene del Sur* (Flamenco Comes from the South) and the *Bienal de Flamenco de Sevilla* (Flamenco Biennial of Seville) receive large sums of institutional investment. When I conducted research in Granada, a concern that many flamenco musicians had was that these ‘megafestivals’ attract the majority of the funding causing a decrease in smaller, more localised festivals and a decline in work/funding for a large number of artists.

I take Washabaugh’s analysis as a starting point for my own consideration of the relationship between flamenco and regionalism. I examine the institutionalisation of flamenco in light of recent developments in Spanish identity politics more generally. I also offer an alternative reading of the institutional development of flamenco by drawing upon theoretical approaches in political geography (described above). I argue that the institutional development of flamenco is linked to what the political scientists Michael Keating and Alex Wilson describe as a ‘second wave of decentralisation’ (2009: 537). This refers to recent developments in the context of regional autonomy in Spain. As a result of lingering issues regarding identity and autonomy left over from the transition in 1978, a number of Spanish autonomous communities have sought amendments to their statutes and greater

symbolic/cultural recognition. Revisions to regional statutes (like in Andalusia) have instigated the further decentralisation of powers such as health care and European integration (Keating and Wilson 2009: 549; Delledonne and Martinico 2011: 895–7). In terms of culture, a number of regional governments have turned to prominent cultural symbols to increase awareness of the regional diversity of Spain. Here, the notion of *hecho diferencial* (distinctiveness or distinguishing fact) has become important in current expressions of regional identity and autonomy. The term refers to cultural elements (such as music, language and folklore) that are used to consolidate regional identity and to distinguish regions from Spain (Delledonne and Martinico 2011). Such elements have been included in regional statutes of autonomy, thus aligning the cultural with the political. In the Andalusian context, flamenco is viewed as an *hecho diferencial* and as a result has been recognised at the level of the regional statute.

The development of flamenco can be understood according to the tenets of political geography. Invoking Schrijver's terminology, one can speak of the regionalisation of flamenco in general. The tradition is closely aligned with regional identity and is being consolidated within the institutional framework of Andalusia as the above examples illustrate. Moreover, the regionalisation of flamenco can also be understood according to Paasi's (2009) four institutional shapes. At the highest political level, the inclusion of flamenco in the Andalusian Statute of Autonomy can be read as a form of symbolic and territorial shaping. The act of claiming competency over flamenco consolidates it as a symbol of regional identity and shapes the geography of the tradition according to the borders of the Andalusian region. The inclusion can be viewed as a form of territoriality—an appropriation of culture for geopolitical ends. Further, the Andalusian Government has utilised its autonomous powers not only to include flamenco in its statute, but also to create the Andalusian Institute of Flamenco. These are examples of the institutional shaping of flamenco, and they highlight the



integration of flamenco across the public domain in Andalusia. Finally, the international (and especially European) development of flamenco through numerous festivals and promotional activities helps to ‘establish’ flamenco and the Andalusian region it is associated with on a wider scale.

The regionalisation of flamenco can also be understood according to Terlouw’s categories of ‘thick’ and ‘thin’ regional identities. The tradition is used to foreground the notion of a shared regional culture and history. It is a tool for unifying the eight provinces of Andalusia and for consolidating an imagined community at the regional level. By situating flamenco as a product of regional history and culture, it is used to reinforce the notion of a ‘thick’ regional identity. However, the international popularity of the tradition and its prominence as a culture industry means that flamenco is also used in the expression of a ‘thin’ regional identity. The regional government has capitalised upon the economic potential of flamenco, and through the Andalusian Institute of Flamenco it provides extensive funding to an expanding number of international festivals (particularly in Europe) and is also consolidating the role of flamenco in Andalusian tourism at home through a number of tourist shows and large-scale festivals as mentioned above.<sup>11</sup> As such, flamenco contributes to the economic development of the region and is an ambassador for Andalusian culture abroad. Yet, it is important to note that many local authorities (such as provincial and town councils) below the level of the regional government also recognise the economic potential of flamenco through touristic development. While arguably contributing to the wider image of an ‘Andalusian’ flamenco, these local developments are not necessarily a means of reinforcing a political identity but a way of bolstering local tourism and trade. Indeed, in Granada I discovered that local authorities appear to invest more energy in the local significance of

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<sup>11</sup> For more information on the types of festivals that the Andalusian Institute for Flamenco funds in Europe, see ‘Flamenco en Europa’ [‘Flamenco in Europe’] in *La Nueva Alboreá* (issue 22, 2012).

flamenco (both economically and culturally) rather than its development as a regional political tool.

International policies have also contributed to flamenco's role in the development of a 'thin' identity. In 2010 flamenco was inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO, and this declaration has strengthened governmental initiatives towards the development of flamenco both for Andalusians (as a 'thick' identity) and for the representation of Andalusia internationally (as a 'thin' identity). The UNESCO declaration is viewed by the Andalusian Government as an extension of flamenco's inclusion in the Statute of Autonomy. In this respect, the website for the Andalusian Institute of Flamenco states: 'With the inclusion, in Article 68 of the new Statute of Autonomy for Andalusia, of flamenco as a unique element of Andalusian cultural heritage and the declaration of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO on 16 November 2010, Andalusian public institutions reinforced their commitment to work to keep alive this distinct cultural symbol and to spread it abroad' (Andalusian Institute for Flamenco).<sup>12</sup> It is as yet unclear whether this quotation reflects the true reality of flamenco today and debates continue as to whether the institutional development has positively influenced flamenco's survival or not.

Whether for Andalusians (through the regional government) or for 'humanity' (through UNESCO), the regionalisation of flamenco is predicated on the notion of a unified Andalusian community. In a sense, it rests upon a precise fit between regionalisation (as a top-down strategy) and regionalism (as a bottom-up identity). In his research, Schrijver (2006) assesses the extent to which regionalism in Spain has coincided with the regionalisation process. He considers whether Spanish citizens possess a dual-identification

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<sup>12</sup> Available online <<http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/cultura/iaf/opencms/portal/SobreNosotros/>> [accessed 25 September, 2013].

with their region and with their nation. Apart from notable exceptions (such as Catalonia and the Basque Country), Schrijver argues that most citizens identify with both their region and their nation. However, his research is based upon a traditional centre-periphery model with the nation as the dominant centre and the region as the marginalised periphery. What if this centre-periphery model were moved to the level of the region? What if the centre becomes a regional centre of power? Andalusia is a huge territory with a heterogeneous cultural and historical identity. There are instances in which the very notion of a shared Andalusian identity is disputed. Since the transition to democracy, there have been accusations of a recentralisation in Andalusia where Madrid is replaced with Seville (the capital). It is this concept of recentralisation that underpins the ideological motives of the *Plataforma por Andalucía Oriental* (PAO). I am interested in how such a group responds to the development of flamenco, as a tradition that has come to embody what it means to be Andalusian. To what extent do members of the PAO identify with flamenco, and what do their responses tell us about identity politics in Andalusia?

### **Contextualising the Plataforma por Andalucía Oriental (PAO)**

Before addressing the ways in which members of the PAO view the regionalisation of flamenco, I will briefly contextualise the movement and its ideologies. Members of the PAO disregard the reality of a single Andalusia, seeking autonomy for the eastern provinces of Almería, Granada and Jaén. They believe that the process of decentralisation outlined in the Spanish Constitution has not been adequately fulfilled in the Andalusian context. Members contend that there are numerous political, economic, infrastructural, social and cultural inequalities between the west of Andalusia (particularly Seville) and the east of Andalusia.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> It is important to bear in mind that the notion of a unified 'East Andalusia' is itself problematic given the existence of numerous local loyalties that further fragment the concept of a cohesive identity, localisms that are

In the newspaper *Ideal*, the president of the PAO stated: ‘In the Andalusian case, autonomous “decentralisation” in reality has been a recentralisation, exchanging Madrid for Seville’ (31 December, 2012).<sup>14</sup> Besides these political motivations, members of the PAO contend that an autonomous East Andalusia is both a historical and a cultural reality. The PAO’s historical narrative stretches back to the Islamic period in Spain. The Kingdom of Granada remained an Islamic territory until 1492, even after the rest of Spain had been reclaimed by Christians during the thirteenth century. Once the city of Granada had been taken back by the Catholic monarchs King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, it remained a semi-autonomous territory separate from the Kingdom of Andalusia that had formed in the thirteenth century. Members of the PAO claim that the Kingdom of Granada remained autonomous up until 1833 when it was included in the region of Andalusia as part of wider calls to decentralise Spain. In terms of cultural narratives, members frequently refer to the diversity of folk traditions and customs in East Andalusia that distinguish it from the rest of the region.<sup>15</sup>

For a group that so vehemently refutes the notion of a single Andalusian region and a unified regional identity, I was interested in how its members received the institutional development of flamenco. I discovered the PAO through a forum entitled *Flamenco ¿algo nuestro?* (Flamenco, something of ours?). This very question resonated with many of the queries I had regarding the relationship between flamenco and regionalism in Andalusia. The

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also reflected in flamenco discourse and style. However, in this article I wish to focus on how Andalusian identity as an overarching identity category is disputed through the lens of the PAO and its claims to an autonomous east-Andalusian region.

<sup>14</sup> Available online <<http://www.ideal.es/granada/20081231/opinion/plataforma-andalucia-oriental-20081231.html>> [accessed 26 September, 2013].

<sup>15</sup> For a more in-depth discussion of the political, historical and cultural claims of the PAO see Sánchez Badiola, (2010: 347–54).

forum was one of a plethora of other forums present on the PAO's website.<sup>16</sup> I took the opportunity to commence a virtual ethnography (Hine 2000) through the website, participating in the activities of the forum, distributing questionnaires, conducting online interviews and engaging in email correspondence.<sup>17</sup> These methods provided me with a range of responses from members regarding the institutional development of flamenco. My findings online were consolidated and expanded upon during fieldwork in Granada in 2010 and 2012. This 'multi-sited' ethnography (Hine 2008) enabled me to uncover the complex relationship between flamenco and regionalism in Andalusia. The conclusions of this research are organised according to the question *flamenco ¿algo nuestro?*. On the one hand, many members of the forum did not see flamenco as a symbol of their cultural identification. On the other hand, some members did regard flamenco as something of theirs revealing the contested ways in which the tradition is conceptualised.

### **Flamenco No Es Algo Nuestro [Flamenco Isn't Something of Ours]**

From research with members of the PAO a number of important narratives emerged that reveal controversial responses to the regionalisation of flamenco.<sup>18</sup> These narratives highlight a staunch belief that flamenco is not culturally relevant to some Andalusians. Some people reject the strong association between flamenco and a unified Andalusian identity. This

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<sup>16</sup> See <<http://www.andaluciaoriental.es/>> [accessed 4 October, 2013].

<sup>17</sup> I contacted 163 members on the PAO's website through its forums. From this number, I received 35 completed qualitative questionnaires. I also posted regularly in forums and completed around 30 interviews (online and in Granada) with members and non-members of the PAO. The research presented here is also derived from numerous personal conversations with a smaller number of members and attendance at members' meetings arranged by the PAO in Granada.

<sup>18</sup> It is important to note that, to the best of my knowledge, none of my informants from the PAO were flamenco musicians. For a closer examination of the ways in which the regionalisation of flamenco has been received by flamenco musicians specifically, see Machin-Autenrieth (forthcoming, 2015).

perspective is not new; some scholars have strongly contested the cultural essentialism associated with the Andalusian Government's development of flamenco, a process that centralises one cultural practice above others. The sociologist Gerhard Steingress has problematised the government's efforts and in place of cultural patrimony, he emphasises the transgressive nature of flamenco situating it as a universal art form that he believes can transcend so-called Andalusian nationalism (Steingress 1998a, 2002a; Washabaugh 2012: 37–52). In an important article that critiques the conflation of *lo flamenco* ('flamenco-ness') with *lo andaluz* ('Andalusian-ness') Steingress states: 'While it seems evident that the majority of the population considers it [flamenco] to be a consistent element of the Andalusian cultural system, this does not necessarily mean that they identify with it or consider it a "marker" of their identity as Andalusians' (2002a: 57). However, flamenco scholars such as Steingress have fallen short when it comes to ethnographic commentary regarding these issues. The PAO serves as an interesting case study for analysing the disputed relationship between flamenco and regionalism in Andalusia.

In my research, many members of the PAO validated Steingress's statement—they had no identification with flamenco whatsoever. In fact, at times it was difficult to conduct research with people who were completely ambivalent to the tradition. Most members did not have issues with the role of flamenco in Andalusian self-representation per se, even if many rejected it. Rather, they disputed the development of flamenco at the institutional level; its regionalisation so to speak. The process was viewed as a form of regional nationalism rather than simply a display of regional diversity. In response to a generic questionnaire I sent to all users of the PAO's website, one member stated: '[Flamenco] is an instrument to "unify" Andalusian identity. This is what happens now in Spain, similar to the indoctrination of Franco's Spanish nationalism, but now with regional "nationalism"' (questionnaire response, 2011). Significantly, this process was often referred to as *nacionalflamenquismo*. This term is

normally used to describe the role of flamenco in the construction of a Spanish identity during the Franco regime. The above quotation clearly demonstrates that for members of the PAO the process of *nacionalflamenquismo* has not changed, except the institutions that support it.

The notion of regional nationalism leads neatly to the issue of cultural ownership. Members questioned how the Andalusian Government can claim exclusivity over the development of a largely Spanish (and following UNESCO, a universal) tradition. This debate intersects with controversies surrounding the inclusion of flamenco in the Statute of Autonomy that arose in 2006. Prior to the inclusion there was strong opposition from the governments of Extremadura and Murcia towards the inclusion of flamenco in the statute, especially given the important role these regions have played in the development of flamenco (Machin-Autenrieth, forthcoming, 2015). There was also opposition from within Andalusia, including negative responses from flamenco musicians and aficionados. Members of the PAO argued that the government's claim to exclusivity violated the notion of regional diversity, a notion that underlines Spanish citizenship. How can one regional government appropriate a tradition that has foundations in other regions of Spain?

Members also questioned current governmental initiatives by highlighting the universality of flamenco, an idea now integral to the discourse about flamenco since its recognition as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. In an online interview with one member, it was repeatedly stated that 'flamenco belongs to its aficionados' and not to governmental institutions (online interview, 2011). Yet the debate regarding ownership is more complex. For some members of the PAO, flamenco does not belong to East Andalusia at all. Rather, they contended that flamenco originated in West Andalusia in the so-called golden triangle (*triángulo de oro*). This term is used to refer to the flamenco cities of Cádiz, Jerez and Seville, and is often cited as the cradle of flamenco. Some members argued that any

flamenco present in the cities of East Andalusia (such as Granada) is simply a form of cultural ‘imposition’ or the cultural property of *gitanos* in the area.

Cultural homogenisation also emerged as a prominent theme. For some members, flamenco was viewed as a tool for the sevillianisation of Andalusian culture—that is, the homogenisation of a diverse range of traditions and practices according to Sevillian standards. It is claimed that the regional government uses its political power to thrust flamenco upon the Andalusian territory. I frequently encountered resentment towards a number of governmental initiatives such as: plans to include flamenco in the educational system, the prominent role of the media in developing flamenco and the proliferation of flamenco festivals across the region. This issue also has an economic dimension. In a time of global economic hardship (where Spain has suffered immensely), members questioned how the Andalusian Government can warrant spending millions of euros on a tradition these members do not identify with. For members of the PAO a lot is at stake. As flamenco becomes more important, they see their own traditions fade away. Andalusia is home to a diverse array of unique music and dance traditions, some of which are in danger of disappearing. Members recognised that flamenco is not to blame for this downturn in cultural diversity. Rather, they believed that it is the only tradition the regional government invests in. While some local traditions are subsumed into the flamenco repertoire as lighter or folkloric styles, others struggle to survive in the shadow of the cultural ‘bully’ that is flamenco. For some members, this decline in local traditions consolidated the idea that flamenco is used to homogenise Andalusian culture in the unification of a disparate region.

### **Flamenco ¡Es Algo Nuestro! [Flamenco Is Something of Ours!]**

In my research, there were other members of the PAO who did identify flamenco as something of theirs. However, they refuted the concept of a single flamenco for a single



Andalusia. If the PAO disregards the very notion of Andalusia as a unified region, how then did its members classify Andalusia's most acclaimed musical representative? Here, a handful of members referred to the idea of a so-called *flamenco oriental* (eastern flamenco). It is necessary to state that this was a discursive strategy that does not clarify the geographical distribution of flamenco forms. Flamenco (in its three performance mediums of song, guitar and dance) comprises a plethora of stylistic forms, usually referred to as *palos* (Manuel 2010). These *palos* encompass a range of emotions, from the joyous and festive to the tragic and profound. There are key rhythmic, melodic, harmonic and kinaesthetic elements that characterise each *palo*. Moreover, different sets of *palos* may be subsumed into a larger group (or genre) such as the *cante jondo* (deep song) repertoire.

The gamut of *palos* is highly diverse in terms of its geographical distribution. Most *palos* are associated with a specific geographical location, the majority of which emerged in Andalusia with a number of distinct exceptions being found in regions such as Extremadura and Murcia. The term *flamenco oriental* was used by members to express the idea of *cantes de levante* referring to *palos* that are unique to the Andalusian provinces of Almería, Granada and Málaga and the neighbouring region of Murcia, particularly the *cantes de las minas* (songs of the mines) repertoire and other similar unmetered *palos*. Whether such a classificatory term is synonymous with a distinct flamenco tradition in East Andalusia is difficult to ascertain. In a sense its validity at a theoretical level is not significant. What matters is the discursive significance of such a term. *Flamenco oriental* references the idea that one type of flamenco belongs to East Andalusia, a component that is in some way distinct from the flamenco found in other parts of the region. While the notion of two Andalusias is not a political reality, cultural differences (in this case through flamenco) are invoked to present an alternative reading of Andalusian regionalism; one that is not founded upon the notion of a unified Andalusia. However, some flamenco scholars (such as Castillo Guerrero

2011) and my own field research (Machin-Autenrieth, forthcoming, 2015) have demonstrated the complex fabric of local loyalties and stylistic derivations that make up the flamenco world.<sup>19</sup> As such, it is difficult to compartmentalise flamenco into broad categories such as *flamenco oriental*. Nonetheless, what I aim to demonstrate is how the discourses surrounding flamenco can be used to dispute the idea of a singular Andalusian cultural unity that is frequently portrayed by regional institutions.

The term *flamenco oriental* also serves another purpose. The category subverts the dominance of the *triángulo de oro* in the classification of flamenco *palos*. The golden triangle (discussed above) is a powerful discourse in flamenco that privileges this geographical region of Andalusia. For many people, this area is the true homeland of flamenco from which everything else descends. This assumption raises questions regarding the history of flamenco more generally. Washabaugh (2012: 15–18) refers to the tree metaphor as a dominant model in the classification of flamenco style and history. In earlier flamenco scholarship, the genealogy of *palos* is often depicted as a tree with older *palos* (such as *tonás* and *soleá*) forming the trunk and the newer *palos* forming the branches.<sup>20</sup> While current flamenco scholarship has discredited the flamenco tree to a large extent, it is still a popular model amongst flamenco musicians and aficionados, and pictures of the flamenco tree frequently appear in flamenco clubs (*peñas*). Washabaugh believes that this metaphor engenders a rigid conceptualisation of the tradition that is rooted in the Andalusian past and argues that such tree diagrams present a unilinear view of flamenco history. While I agree with Washabaugh's assertion, I argue that these trees do not only present a unilinear understanding of flamenco

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<sup>19</sup> Some localities in Andalusia have their own distinct renderings of flamenco style. Examples might be distinct dance styles in Seville and Granada, and unique 'schools' of guitar playing in Granada and Jerez de la Frontera.

<sup>20</sup> For a number of these flamenco trees, see Washabaugh's online article 'Flamenco Trees' at <<https://pantherfile.uwm.edu/wash/www/flamtree.htm>> [accessed on 25 September, 2013].

history but also present a unilinear understanding of flamenco geography. Frequently, these flamenco trees are rooted in the *triángulo de oro*. According to this narrative, older *palos* originated in this location and from these base styles all other *palos* across the region emerged.

For members of the PAO, such a narrative is another example of the centralisation of Seville and the marginalisation of East Andalusia. As may now be apparent to the reader, the notion of the *triángulo de oro* served two opposing interests for members of the PAO. For members who did not identify with flamenco, it was used as a way of dissociating East Andalusia from the tradition. In this sense, flamenco is not an east-Andalusian tradition at all. Rather, it originated in a defined location in West Andalusia and has since been imposed upon the rest of the region. For members who did identify with tradition, however, the notion of a golden triangle is a disputed narrative that emphasises the marginalisation of East Andalusia in the musical domain. Importantly, this idea leaves the tantalising possibility of more than one flamenco; a pluralistic vision of the tradition that transcends the essentialist approaches allegedly perpetuated by the Andalusian Government. Of course the idea of more than one flamenco is purely discursive. Nonetheless, what such a discourse reveals is that flamenco is more than simply a unified Andalusian tradition. Aside from its association with other regions of Spain (such as Extremadura and Murcia), flamenco has a diverse geography within Andalusia itself. It presents the possibility that there is more than one way to be Andalusian through flamenco.

The issue of history also featured in responses from members of the PAO. In particular, I was presented with an alternative historical narrative that subverted the unilinear and geographically-bound narrative associated with the *triángulo de oro*. For a handful of members, flamenco was not west-Andalusian at all. Rather, it evolved in Granada and was spread to the west of the region where it formed the basis for many *palos* that developed in

the *triángulo de oro*. One of my informants in particular, the historian and former teacher Leonardo Villena Villena, proposed his own version of the historical development of flamenco. For him, flamenco was a result of cultural exchange between two socially-marginalised groups in Granada: the *gitanos* and the *moriscos*. Following the collapse of the Islamic Kingdom of Granada in 1492 and the christianisation of Muslims, Leonardo believes that musical styles emerged which were to later form the basis for flamenco. According to this narrative, *moriscos* during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries mixed with *gitanos*, as both were socially-ostracised groups. Leonardo believes that the *zambra* (a local form of flamenco unique to the Sacromonte neighbourhood of Granada) was the musical result of exchanges between these two groups. This particular form (which still exists today) allegedly provided the basis from which all flamenco emerged. Leonardo stated that the *zambras* ‘are the mothers of flamenco’, and from them ‘flamenco was born in Granada and conserved in Granada for centuries’ (personal communication, Granada, 2012).

It is worth turning to academic literature to interrogate further this alternative reading of flamenco history, particularly as the supposed cultural interactions between *gitanos* and *moriscos* have become almost mythical. Many scholars agree that flamenco as a consolidated tradition only appeared during the mid-nineteenth century (Cruces Roldán 2002; Steingress 2001; Washabaugh 1996, 2012). Yet opinions differ on the earlier influences that formed the basis for the tradition. As Washabaugh (1996: 14–51) shows, competing histories abound that centralise one cultural group above others in the formation of flamenco. In reality, flamenco is a hybrid patchwork of different styles that emerged from a plethora of cultural influences in and outside of Southern Spain (Washabaugh 2012: 27–52).<sup>21</sup> In some research, *moriscos* are

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<sup>21</sup> Also important to take into consideration is the influence of Latin American (primarily Cuban) musical styles and rhythms. It is often believed that many of the rhythmic patterns that characterise flamenco *palos* have their origins in the Americas. Moreover, a distinct genre of *palos* has emerged referred to as *cantes de ida y vuelta*

attributed an important role in the genesis of early flamenco forms, not flamenco as a tradition itself. Indeed, early *fandangos* believed to be the cultural heritage of *moriscos* are often regarded as the basis for some of the *palos* in the flamenco repertoire (Cruces Roldán 2003). The flamenco scholar José Gelardo Navarro (1996) has examined in detail the supposed relationship between *moriscos* and the origins of flamenco. He believes that cultural exchanges between *moriscos* and *gitanos* during the sixteenth century specifically in East Andalusia were integral to the development of flamenco. Through the migration of *moriscos* and *gitanos* to West Andalusia, proto-flamenco forms that had already emerged in Granada formed the basis for the later development of flamenco in West Andalusia during the nineteenth century. As such, he claims: ‘This research leads us to question the topical idea that flamenco arose almost exclusively in the famous triangle formed by Cádiz, Jerez and Triana [Seville], an idea that attributes East Andalusia with the role of a mere extra in this birth’ (Gelardo Navarro 1996: 41).<sup>22</sup>

This scholarly perspective supports Leonardo’s narrative. For him, the *moriscos* of East Andalusia (and specifically Granada) are central to the origins of flamenco rather than peripheral. Debates regarding these historical origins will ensue for as long as flamenco is performed and consumed. What interests me is the significance of these debates in light of differing readings of regionalism in Andalusia. For Leonardo, such a historical narrative places emphasis on the role of East Andalusia (specifically Granada) in the development of

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(‘round trip’ songs) which draw direct influence from Cuban styles. For example, see Manuel’s (2004) study of the *guajira*.

<sup>22</sup> It is important to recognise that Gelardo Navarro’s thesis regarding the influence of *moriscos* on the development of flamenco in East Andalusia is not entirely accepted. Similarly, the notion of a golden triangle is largely a populist discourse and is rarely replicated in current flamenco research. Yet, I believe that his research is the first to critically examine the contribution of *moriscos* in East Andalusia and as such is important when considering the PAO.

flamenco, as a way of advancing a particular political position. This historical belief is reflective of a strong assertion that East Andalusia should be an autonomous territory, with its own historical and cultural identity. It underlines the idea that Andalusia is not a unified region culturally, historically or politically. In this context, flamenco is a ‘hot potato’ caught between differing conceptualisations of the Andalusian territory and different readings of Andalusian regionalism.

## **Concluding Remarks**

In this article, I have problematised the relationship between flamenco and regionalism in Andalusia. This discussion has been framed within the context of recent efforts by the Andalusian Government to develop flamenco as a prominent symbol of regional identity. Here, I have drawn upon theoretical perspectives in political geography to examine the regionalisation of flamenco and its integration across the public domain in Andalusia. The inclusion of flamenco in the Andalusian Statute of Autonomy in 2007 and its recognition as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO in 2010 have strengthened a regionalist project aimed at developing flamenco within and outside of Andalusia. This process, I have argued, can only be understood within the context of regional autonomy and identity politics in Spain. Recent developments regarding the status of regional autonomies in the country are important when considering the institutional appropriation of the flamenco tradition. However, I have shown that Andalusian identity is not a given. Regionalism in Andalusia can be a fragmented concept. Here, I have illustrated the ways in which flamenco is involved in disputed conceptualisations of the Andalusian region and of Andalusian-ness.

While some scholars have examined and criticized the institutional development of flamenco (Washabaugh 2012; Steingress 1998a, 2002a), there is a paucity of research addressing ethnographic responses to this process. I argue that the *Plataforma por Andalucía*

*Oriental* (PAO) offers a pertinent, albeit controversial, case study of the disputed relationship between flamenco and regionalism in Andalusia. I have focused on members' responses to the development of flamenco at an institutional level. On the one hand, some members of the PAO did not see flamenco as something of theirs. In this respect, they viewed the tradition as a form of cultural homogenisation and a vehicle in attempts to unify culturally the eight provinces of Andalusia. The regionalisation of flamenco was viewed as nothing more than a form of regional nationalism, a process that undermines the cultural diversity of Andalusia more specifically and the cultural democracy of Spain more generally. On the other hand, other members of the PAO did view flamenco as something of theirs. By highlighting issues of style, classification and history, they presented an alternative conceptualisation of the flamenco tradition; one that is not bound by a unified Andalusian ideology and one that can inform an east-Andalusian identity.

No citizenry will ever fully support the institutional development of some forms of culture above others, particularly when such development carries strong political weight. In this sense, responses from members of the PAO towards the regionalisation of flamenco are perhaps predictable given their views of the Andalusian region. Moreover, the PAO represents a tiny portion of the region's population, existing as a peripheral ideological movement that has little political power. Nonetheless, the views of the PAO's members are important for understanding tensions regarding identity in Andalusia today and the lingering presence of political and cultural disputes in the region. Music (and specifically flamenco) is an important gauge of such tensions, illustrating that a neat correlation between music and regionalism can be fragmented. In the Spanish context, flamenco articulates competing visions of regionalism in a country that is embroiled in debates regarding the representation of regional and national identities. How flamenco is received by some Andalusians encourages us to look beyond static readings of regional identity. On a theoretical level, the

region has become an important category of spatial analysis as nation states have diversified within their own borders. Just like the nation state, the region is a context in which disputed identities and unequal power relations are commonly found. I argue that music is a suitable vehicle for understanding these issues as the regional ‘map’ of Europe becomes ever more complex and disputed.

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