

## Nation and State Building as Collective Action: A comparative analysis of mechanisms and processes in Catalonia and the Basque Country<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

Nation and state building processes are necessarily linked with episodes of political contention in which collective action takes on a very important role. The nationalist collective mobilization, both in Catalonia and in the Basque Country, has been constant over the last decades. Interestingly, the end of the Basque violent cycle is coinciding with the activation of a new protest cycle in Catalonia that emerged within a strong polarization process. The comparative study of these contentious episodes can be carried out by means of the “dynamics of contention” model proposed by Charles Tilly, Doug McAdam and Sidney Tarrow. This paper will try to compare the rate and mode of activation of different mechanisms of contention both in Catalonia and the Basque Country. Firstly, when we apply the map of secession mechanisms to the cases under study it reveals a stronger activation of certain essential mechanisms in the Catalan case. Secondly, for certain political categories, it should be noted the diffusion process from the Basque Country to Catalonia, and later in Catalonia.

**Keywords:** collective action, political contention, nationalism, Basque Country, comparative analysis

### Resumen

Los procesos de construcción estatal y nacional están necesariamente conectados con episodios de contienda política donde la acción colectiva tiene un papel muy importante. La movilización de los colectivos nacionalistas, tanto en Catalunya como en Euskadi, ha sido constante en las últimas décadas. De

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<sup>1</sup> Editors' note: In this same edition of the *2014 Conflict*, an extended versión of this same research paper is included.

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manera interesante, el final del ciclo de violencia en Euskadi ha coincidido con la activación de un nuevo ciclo de protesta en Catalunya que ha emergido dentro de un fuerte proceso de polarización. El estudio comparativo de estos episodios de contienda se puede llevar a cabo a través del modelo de la “Dinámica de la contienda política” propuesto por Charles Tilly, Doug McAdam y Sidney Tarrow. Este *paper* intenta comparar la presencia y el modo de activación de los diferentes mecanismos de contienda tanto en el caso catalán como en el vasco. En primer lugar, cuando aplicamos nuestro mapa de mecanismos de secesión en los casos de estudio, este revela una fuerte activación de determinados mecanismos esenciales especialmente en el caso catalán. En segundo lugar, para algunas categorías políticas, se detecta un proceso de difusión de Euskadi a Catalunya y más tarde desde Catalunya hacia Euskadi.

**Palabras clave:** acción colectiva, contienda política, nacionalismo, País Vasco, análisis comparativo

## Resum

Els processos de construcció estatal i nacional estan necessàriament connectats amb episodis de contesa política on l'acció col·lectiva té un paper molt important. La mobilització dels col·lectius nacionalistes, tant a Catalunya como a Euskadi, ha estat constant en las últimes dècades. De manera interessant, la fi del cicle de violència a Euskadi ha coincidit amb l'activació d'un nou cicle de protesta a Catalunya, que ha sorgit dins d'un fort procés de polarització. L'estudi comparatiu d'aquests episodis de contesa es pot dur a terme mitjançant el model de la «Dinàmica de la contesa política» proposat per Charles Tilly, Doug McAdam y Sidney Tarrow. El present *paper* intenta comparar la presència y el mode d'activació dels diferents mecanismes de contesa tant en el cas català como en el basc. En primer lloc, quan apliquem el nostre mapa de mecanismes de secessió als casos d'estudi, aquest revela una forta activació de determinats mecanisme essencials, sobretot en el cas català. En segon lloc, pel que fa a algunes categories polítiques, es detecta un procés de difusió d'Euskadi a Catalunya i, més tard, des de Catalunya cap a Euskadi.

**Paraules clau:** acció col·lectiva, contesa política, nacionalisme, País Basc, anàlisi comparativa

## I. Introduction

The historical state-building processes that have taken place in Europe in recent centuries have been connected with intense contentious episodes (Tilly, 2004). These episodes can only be understood by analysing nationalism, understood as a political ideology and praxis. Nationalism, briefly, is the demand for sovereignty or the highest level of self-government for a political community, usually with the aim of acquiring or using the “State” form. It is nationalism that changes a human group into a “nation” with a desire for self-government (Anderson, 1991). Some authors have applied the variables of the classic agenda of social movements to the nationalist struggle. (Maiz, 2003, 2008; Hroch, 1985).

In so far as nationalism is a kind of political struggle within which similar processes and mechanisms can be detected in seemingly very different cases, we have opted in this paper for the theoretical framework provided by McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (Henceforth MTT, 2001). The strategy of paired comparison is a formula used in this seminal work, and it comes in very handy for analysing the Basque and Catalan nationalist struggle of the past few decades.

Along those lines, for a long time in the Basque Country and Catalonia there has existed a nationalist struggle over sovereignty between “the efforts of those members who identify themselves as the [Basque and Catalan] nation, which [...] does not control its own state, to acquire an independent state” against “the efforts of the [Spanish and French] governing organs to ensure that their definitions of national culture and interest prevail within their own territories”. (MTT, 2001)

Within the context of that great cycle of protest (especially Basque) spanning the period from the final years of the Franco regime to the present, the mobilization cycle initiated in the mid-nineties of the last century is especially relevant. The moderate nationalist forces' reflections on the re-centralization that took place under the autonomous community model (Letamendía, 1999), along with the limitations that the insurreccional model showed in the Basque case, gave impetus to a new mobilization cycle. In the catalan case, there was a shift from a historical schema of self-government traditionally based on accommodation, to the direct proposal of a secessionist scenario (Guinjoan & Rodon & Sanjaume, 2013; Guibernau, 2013). This shift is not so clear in the basque case.

## II. Map of secession mechanisms: Basque Country and Catalonia

The interaction between central and Autonomous Community institutions, on the one hand, and the clashes between partisan and insurgent political actors, on the other, defined a complex contentious episode, at once, transgressive and regulated (Zubiaga, 2012). We propose a *map of secession mechanisms and processes* whose degree of activation would be directly related to the existence of a secessionist process or one of partial state break-up and the creation of new states. In the light of this *map* it would be possible to comparatively analyse the recent Basque and Catalan processes of the demand for nationhood.

They have both been characterized as secessionist conflicts by various authors (Coppieters, 2010; Sorens, 2012). However, in this paper we relatively narrow down this broad definition, opting for the term “secessionist contentious episode”, and identifying it with a period of accentuation of the demand for nationhood wherein the question about the seat of sovereignty is placed at the centre of the public debate, and the secession option seems viable.

Our tentative hypothesis is that in the Catalan case certain mechanisms that enable us to speak of a “secessionist contentious episode”, at least since 2008, have been activated, whereas in the Basque Country, this has not happened, at least not yet.

For the purposes of the comparative work that we are undertaking, on the above-mentioned map we have placed those mechanisms into four categories: (Fig. 1)

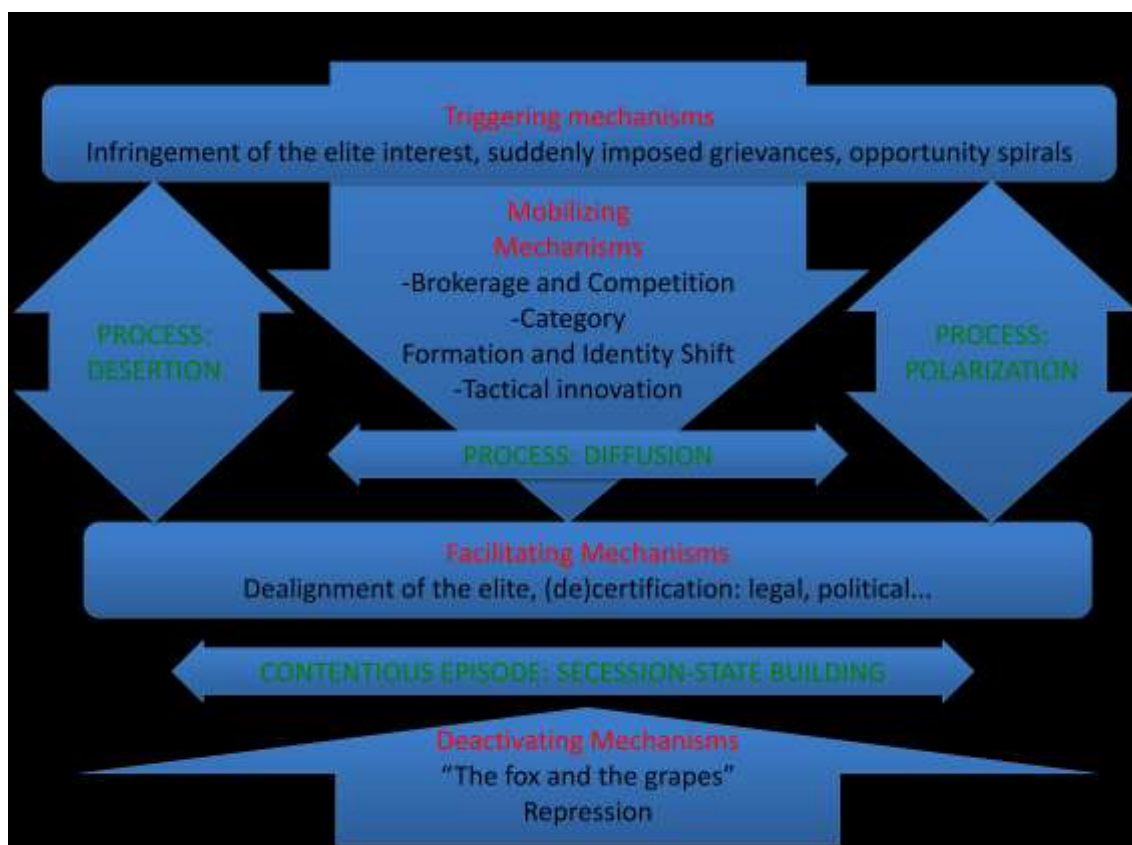


Fig. 1: Mechanisms and Processes in a Secessionist Contentious Episode.

-Catalysing mechanisms, which are instrumental in triggering a secessionist contentious episode. Some of the main ones are: the sudden imposition of grievances, the infringement of the interests of elites and the opportunity spiral.

-Mobilizing mechanisms, which enable secessionist mobilization to develop: Social and political stances are articulated by means of brokerage and competition; new discursive and, eventually, socio-political places are formed, by means of category formation and identity shift; and uncertainty is created by virtue of tactical innovation in instruments of mobilization and protest.

-Facilitating mechanisms that assist the consolidation of the secessionist episode, basically through the de-alignment of elites and the certification of the process carried out by external agents, particularly international ones.

-Finally, in the opposite sense, we should make reference to the deactivating mechanisms that impede the development of the secessionist contentious episode: we refer to the adaptation of the subject of the demand to repressive contexts and/or to alternative political proposals made by the kin-state.

One of the weaknesses of conflict dynamics analysis is the difficulty of empirically measuring the activation of the mechanisms (Mahoney, 2001; Oliver, 2003; Koopmans, 2003). Even more hypothetical is confirmation of the causality or connection between those mechanisms and wider-ranging processes (Stinchcombe, 2005). With regard to causality and to the value of narrativity as opposed to correlations between variables, there are authors who defend the ontological worthiness of process-tracing, wherein an analysis of the mechanisms may be relevant (George and Bennett, 2005). In this sense, we defend the explicative function of the comparative narration between the Basque and Catalan contentious processes in accordance with the map of secession mechanisms.

1. Opportunity spiral, infringement of interests of elites and sudden imposition of grievances.

Secessionist contentious episodes in Catalonia and the Basque Country have been able to be determined by various environmental mechanisms which, obviously, do not function as elements wholly outside the actors' cognitive processes.

Maybe the "opportunity spiral", understood as an environmental mechanism, is the one that is most on the fringe of the actors' strategies, although these opportunities are irrelevant unless they are appropriated as such in the latter's discourses and praxes.

From the nineteen eighties onwards, various factors activated a spiral of opportunities for stateless nations to demand sovereignty, and broke the taboo of the indissoluble unity of constituted states: The acceleration of economic and cultural globalization, which broke down state borders; the European construction process; and the end of the cold war and the consequent changes to borders in Europe (Guibernau, 1999: 11; Keating, 1996).

Furthermore, global processes through which power was given back to the regions and other sub-state entities created or reinforced, in turn, “internal opportunities” which, in a spiral feedback process, have altered non-state nationalist actors’ opportunity structures. Decentralization in Spain and the deployment of institutional autonomous community structures in the Basque Country and Catalonia, despite the cutting back of competences, have strengthened the democratization process (for the Basque case, Goikoetxea 2013). Thus the process of Autonomous Community institutionalization can be understood as an internal opportunity, in so far as it has given visibility to a Basque and Catalan *demos*, to a political subject which logically is going to defend and demand a growing sphere of power of its own.

But there exist other external opportunities with an obvious internal impact. The global paradigm shift in political action by the anti-system left, the traumatic experiences of the Yugoslavian war and the global anti-terrorism context following the 2001 attacks, have reinforced the tendency for secessionist demands to be led in accordance with democratic, not insurrectional, parameters (López, 2010). The end of ETA’s armed activity is also an opportunity factor without which the secessionist contentious cycle would not have been activated easily. In the Basque case, however, the difficulty of managing the consequences of the conflict is retarding the effect which that circumstance might have of intensifying sovereignist demands.

As regards the mechanisms of “infringement of the interests of elites” and “sudden imposition of grievances”, the differences between the Basque and Catalan processes are more palpable. The first mechanism relates to the fact that the interests of the cultural, political and economic elites are prejudiced by the continuance of a certain situation—in this case, the nexus with Spain—and the importance of this fact for the contentious episode. The non-existence of any real fiscal autonomy in the Catalan case is a relevant factor which, in a situation of economic recession, has accentuated the disaffection of the Catalan socio-economic and political elites. In the Basque case, however, the existence of the Economic Arrangement, which grants wide-scale fiscal autonomy to the Basque chartered territories, has saved the Basque elites’ interests from being particularly affected.

As for the “sudden imposition of grievances”, this mechanism relates to the cognitive effects that certain events have on large swathes of the population, and predispose them to adopt one or other political stance.

In the Catalan case, for instance, the fiscal deficit and the lack of investment by the central state have functioned as grievances which, while they have been known about for some time, in a situation of deep economic recession have suddenly emerged as insuperable affronts. However, from a political viewpoint, this mechanism was definitely activated with the Spanish Constitutional Court’s judgement on the Catalan Statute of 2006, which cut down its contents after they had been approved by two parliaments and through a referendum by the Catalan people (Pérez & Sanjaume, 2013; Guibernau, 2013).

In the Basque case, this mechanism’s activation has been very weak, or one could say non-existent. There has been no clear objective prejudice that could be construed as a grievance by both nationalist families, the one, moderated, led by the PNV (BNP), and the one clustered around the nationalist left. There did not exist, as in Catalonia, any obvious general economic prejudice or a shared political plan that had been wrecked. The opportunity to turn the



rejection of the proposed new statute defended by Lehendakari (President) Juan Jose Ibarretxe in February 2005 into a grievance was lost because, even though the statute was backed by the majority of the Basque Parliament, it was not unanimously supported by the BNP, nor by the nationalist Left. The Spanish government's anti-terrorist and penitentiary policy, which could also have been turned into a grievance, affected almost exclusively the nationalist left and its sympathizers. Under these circumstances, such a mechanism was unlikely to be activated.

In short, the map of secession-catalysing mechanisms shows much stronger activation in Catalonia than in the Basque Country.

## 2. Category formation and other related mechanisms.

The secessionist movement, like any other social movement, emerges with discourse- and protest-categories that break with the status quo<sup>4</sup>.

“Category formation” is an essential cognitive mechanism both in change/the emergence of new identities, and in polarization. McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly define it like this: “the creation of a set of sites that share a border which distinguishes all of them as a whole and relates them to at least one set of sites visibly excluded by the border”(MTT 2001:143).

In both the Basque and the Catalan case, nationalism has adopted a demand-discourse that resonates with a dominant democratic frame, remote from essentialist approaches (López Bofill, 2009; Zabalo, 2004; Ibarra, 2005; Blas 2012).

According to Tarrow, the invention and diffusion of new terms and concepts within contentious action takes place in critical situations, survives and spreads

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<sup>4</sup> This issue is addressed in another article, which is part of the four-year collaborative project led by the Peace Research Institute Oslo “Imagined Sovereignties: Frontiers of Statehood and Globalization”, funded by the Norwegian Research Council: Zubiaga, M. (2014) *Basque Sovereignty and Contention: evolution of the mechanisms and processes of the nationalist collective action in the Basque Country*.

to the extent that it resonates symbolically with dominant frames (Snow & Benford 1988) within a given cultural space. Finally, it survives to the extent that it shows strategic modularity, that is, the capacity which that concept has of adapting to different contexts without losing its strategic value (2012: 161).

In this connection, we can affirm that the term “sovereignism” and, more recently, the “right to decide”, as a concrete expression of the former, have become discursive inventions with an undoubted capacity for expansion. (Vilaregut, 2012) Both concepts arise in a conflictual context –originally the outcome of unilateral exercising– as an adaptation of the right of self-determination to non-colonial democratic spaces –Quebec–, and extend to the Basque Country and Catalonia since they are attuned to a dominant democratic master frame with which the discourses of all the nationalist forces, including ETA, were hitherto connected (Letamendía, 2013).

Finally, the modularity of the concept of “sovereignism”, and its strategic adaptability, are beyond doubt: the success it has achieved in the Basque Country and Catalonia as an articulating node for various discursive *topoi*, has made it possible to create a new social enclave –an us/them–, that surpasses the old “nationalist/non-nationalist” central theme by favouring Basque and Catalan demands for nationhood. (Ollora, 1996; Zallo, 1997; Zubiaga, 2002 and 2012)

In direct connection with this “category formation”, there arises tactical innovation in the repertoire of mobilization –“consulting with the citizens”–, which extends coherently with the democratic discourse. (Guinjoan & Muñoz 2013).

And, secondly, the sphere of relational mechanisms: the various degrees and moments of activation of the mechanisms of brokerage and competition between the two great nationalist ideological families, both Basque and Catalan, are decisive for understanding the scope of a contentious episode. Indeed, the

formation of those new categories has depended to a large degree on the existence of brokers who, by using their political imaginations, have facilitated the transversal circulation of ideas and the connecting up of unconnected or unmobilized places – that is, brokerage (MTT, 2001: 142).

In the Basque case, nationalist trade unions ELA and LAB played a prominent role as brokers from 1995 onwards (Elorrieta, 2012). However, brokerage in the Basque case has perforce been a mechanism of limited scope. Basque civil society has consolidated into a militant subjection that is more compartmentalized and less susceptible to transversality as an inevitable consequence of a violent conflict.

In the Catalan case, the brokerage activated by different individual and collective actors has been much more powerful, and the organizational appropriation has been on a wider scale.

Finally, another important mechanism is that of competition. The political actors who struggle for hegemony within a particular political space define their strategies in constant interrelation with their competitors. In the Catalan and Basque cases, there exist spaces of competition, principally, in the nationalist and pro-Spanish spheres, separately. Transversal inter-party competition is less prominent. For the purposes of the secessionist episode, the main spaces of competition are those existing between the PNV and the nationalist left, in the Basque case, and between ERC and CIU, in Catalonia.

The fundamental difference is that in the Catalan case, nationalist forces have become aware of the limitations of the transversal strategies, for all that they have enabled it to come to power in the Catalan Government from time to time. Such a strategic analysis tempers the mechanism of competition and reinforces the options for secession.

In the Basque case, following a period of illegalization of the nationalist left (2003-2012) which led to an exceptional pro-Spanish majority and a Basque Government presided over by the PSE with support from the PP (2009-2012), an internal mechanism of competition within Basque nationalism was strongly activated, making it difficult to gather the necessary strength to fuel a secessionist episode.

### 3. De-alignment of elites and certification.

Once a secessionist episode has been initiated, there are certain facilitating mechanisms that tend to strengthen stances which seek a new political status. The switching of loyalties by certain elites, which de-align from their traditional stances, is a relevant dynamic for these purposes. The true extent of such de-alignment can only be ascertained empirically, by identifying the main elites and the evolution of their political commitment.

In the case of the Catalan economic elites, certain authors remark upon a clear-cut division between different sections of the bourgeoisie: “the employers’ representatives of small and medium enterprises, on the one hand, and those of big companies, on the other (Palomera & Gual, 2013).

In the Basque case, bearing in mind that this mechanism is detected once the contentious episode is initiated, for the time being no appreciable de-alignment of the economic or intellectual elites is observed. With a few exceptions, the elites maintain the discursive and ideological alignments that they have held in recent years.

As to the mechanism of certification —or validation of the collective actors and their activities by external authorities—, we can distinguish between an internal ambit, relative to the actors directly involved in the contentious episode, and an external one, relating to the validation of the actors by agencies, in principle, external to the episode (MTT 2001: 146).

While in the Québécois and Scottish secessionist processes, a mutual certification of the opposing actors has come about, in the Spanish case such a mechanism has not been activated at the present time. The central institutions of the state and the main systemic parties –PP and PSOE–, do not recognize as legitimate the Catalan institutional position that demands the right to decide and the position of the parties that, in the majority, support it. Interchange is not, however, completely closed, since, at least, there exists a mutual validation of the representativeness of each of the actors.

In the Basque case, we cannot properly speak of a certification mechanism linked to a secessionist episode but, at any rate, the state position is similar, or even more accentuated, inasmuch as the chief secessionist actor –the nationalist left–, has been legally certified as such very recently, following years of illegalization.

The external certification or recognition and validation of the actors and their demands by international authorities, has become in the Catalan case one of the main aspects of the, in this case, diplomatic political struggle (Guibernau, 2013).

In the Basque Country, the quest for international certification by the independentist actors, is linked not with a potential secessionist process, but rather with the final resolution of the violent conflict.

#### 4. Change of object and repression.

Finally, the activation of other mechanisms may limit the scope and development of a secessionist episode. The object of the demand can vary over time, and the actors tend to adapt it to the expectations that, at any one time, they hold with regard to the episode. They can also seek a moderation of the demand (escalation) to widen their bases (Della Porta & Tarrow, 1986).

The evolution of all these psychological mechanisms, both individual and collective, is inseparable from other mechanisms, such as that of “repression”: “efforts to suppress either contentious acts or groups and organizations responsible for them” (MTT 2001:69).

Direct repression lacks legitimate coverage in a state under European law in the presence of a demand made in strictly civil and democratic terms; so, in the Catalan case, repression mechanism has to adopt other less obvious modes, such as the hypothetical vetoing of the potential accession of an independent Catalan state to the European Union.

At the present time, with not long to go until the potential holding of a sovereignist consultation in Catalonia on 9th November 2014, new intermediate offers that might activate a change of the object of demand by the Catalan institutions and sovereignist citizens do not seem viable. Time will tell whether a likely constitutional reform in Spain could be enough to diminish the scope of this contentious episode (Muñoz Machado, 2014).

In the Basque case, repression of the sovereignist demand has been facilitated by ETA’s armed activity. Its persistence has given the central state legitimacy to be able to use anti-terrorism legislation as a general means of contention, applicable not only to ETA, but also to whomever might seek to achieve their sovereignist objectives by other means.

### **III. Diffusion processes.**

The Dynamics of Contention gives special importance to what the authors call “solid processes”, that is, the creation of new actors and entities, polarization and a scale shift related to diffusion.

In the scenario we are dealing with, a double secessionist contentious episode, to the extent that it is accompanied by the possibility of the creation of new

political entities, the identity shift is transmuted into what we call “desertion”, a process through which the identity true to an original state entity, becomes political loyalty to a new institutional subject split from the previous one. Such a process has been analysed as a mechanism that occurs on the level of elites (elite defection) in respect of a particular regime (Wood, 2003), but in secession scenarios, possibly their scope –gauged by opinion polls–, will be greater.

Such desertion is unthinkable without an acute polarization process wherein there occurs “the enlargement of the political and social space between the claimants present in a contentious episode and gravitation toward one, the other, or both ends by certain formerly uncommitted or moderate actors” (MTT, 2001:322). Without the activation of such a process, secession and the creation of new states is unthinkable.

Thirdly, the internal and external diffusion process can be studied in depth in the Catalan case and makes it possible to compare, if only partially, the two contentious episodes, Basque and Catalan.

Knowing the factors and causes that affect the process by which localized patches of mobilization turn into a wide-ranging contentious episode is possibly one of the biggest challenges for a student of collective action. (Tarrow, 2005, 2010, 2012)

We would define diffusion as “*a political process in which actors at different levels (strategically) adopt and adapt foreign examples to make national and transnational claims and to change legal and institutional settings, build alliances and exert pressure.*” (Roggeband, 2010; Scheiberg & Soule, 2004).

In this paper we continue the research proposal that Tarrow makes in the latest paper cited when he defends that apart from the “event” of diffusion, it is necessary to analyse, firstly, the mechanisms present in that diffusion process;

secondly, the relevance of the interaction between movement and institutions; and, finally, the need to distinguish the horizontal diffusion of the “scale shift”.

Tarrow (2010) distinguishes between three types of diffusion. Each of them has different potentials and limitations.

<b>Types of diffusion</b>	<b>Mechanisms/values</b>	<b>Features</b>
Relational	Attribution of similarity Trust and emulation	Limited range, strong networks
Non-relational	Theorization Far and wide spread	Simplification, weak networks
Mediated	Brokerage Fast spread	Change or adaptation

Source: Tarrow (2010), (adapted)

According to Tarrow, relational diffusion is based on the pre-existence of contacts between actors whose mutual trust enables the easy attribution of similarities and almost automatic emulation. The scope is limited, since it relies on stable rather than dynamic networks. Non-relational diffusion is founded on a certain degree of simplifying theorization that expands extensively by technological means, although in this way the creation of powerful networks is not facilitated. Finally, mediated diffusion can be quick, since it is brought about by “professionalized” brokers who connect up enclaves and actors that tendentially will be able to change and/or adapt the method of mobilization to suit themselves.

As we suggested in the previous paragraph, in our case, diffusion refers to a particular category –“the right to decide”–, and to a certain innovation in the repertoire of mobilization connected with that category: citizen consultations related to the secessionist demand, whether local or general in scope.

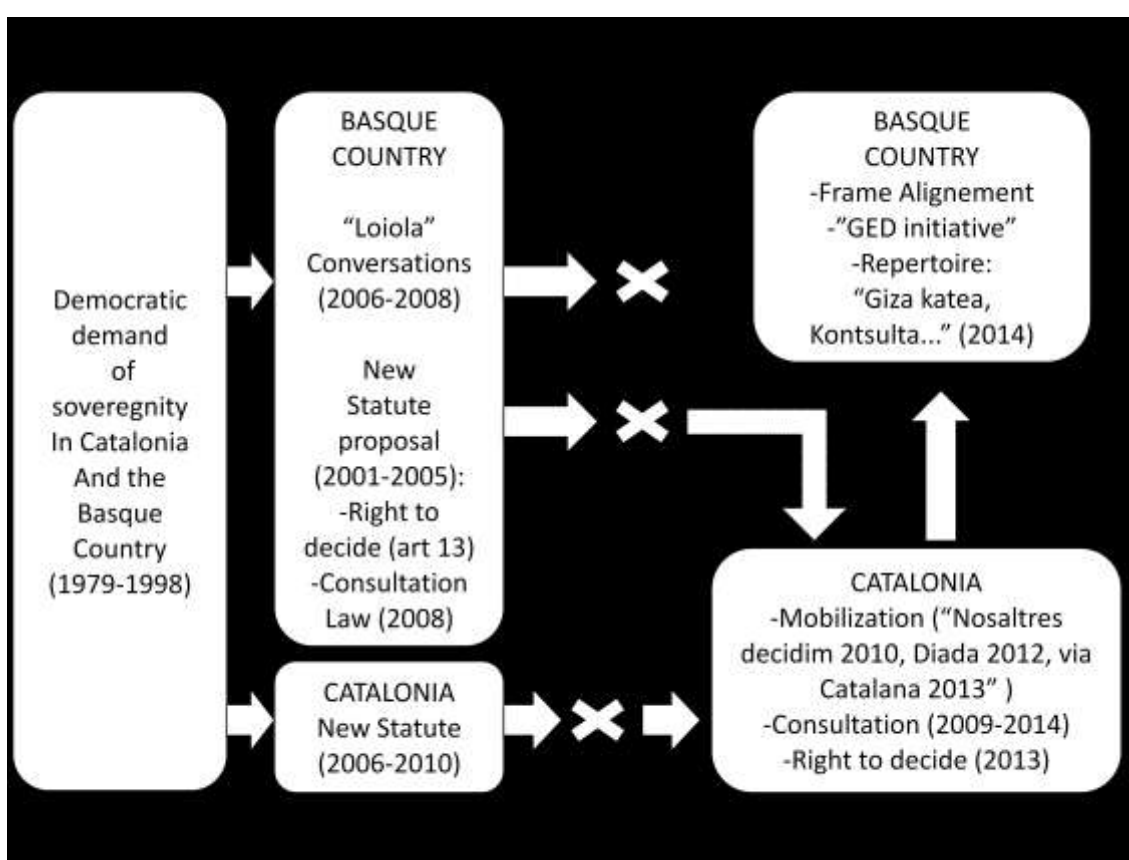
The first hypothesis in relation to Basque-Catalan horizontal diffusion is that it has come about basically in a non-relational way, although one cannot rule out



relational diffusion based on the trust existing within some well-connected Basque and Catalan nationalist sectors, or the mediation of certain individual brokers.

The second hypothesis relates to the fact that one can detect a kind of “back-and-forth diffusion”, a “return diffusion” which takes that category and tactical innovation from the Basque Country to Catalonia, and later from Catalonia to the Basque Country (Fig. 2).

Fig. 2: Diffusion of “the right to decide”



Indeed, non-relational diffusion through “theorization” of the “right to decide” and sovereignist consultations possibly stems from the Québécois experience mentioned above. Where our cases are concerned, this new way of putting the demand for sovereignty extends to the Basque Country in the first instance, and it is expressed in the cycle that opened up following the failure of the Lizarra agreement in 2000 (Zubiaga 2002). The proposed new statute advocated by

Lehendakari (President) Ibarretxe from 2001 onwards, expressly includes the term “right to decide” in its article 13, and the consultation law passed by the Basque Parliament in 2008 is a practical expression of that political doctrine. (Lasagabaster 2008). That consultation was appealed by the central State and never came to be held. Later on, the Loiola conversations, leading to the end of ETA, which were led by the *nationalist* Left and the PSE, with the PNV’s participation, include a good amount of that same philosophy, also frustratedly. (Murua 2010)

That same consensual logic was to frame the entire Catalan statutory process initiated in 2006. However, in this case the procedure and a large part of the content were adapted to the constitutional framework current in Spain, and adjusted to very wide consensuses, especially at Catalan scale.

The abrupt end to the Catalan demand for the recognition of nationhood gave rise to a process of polarization that broke with the earlier consensual or moderate logic. (Requejo 2010) These swings –between moderation and radicalization–, are common phenomena in long-range contentious processes. (Tilly & Tarrow 2006, cited by Tarrow 2010)

The milestones in this new, more radical Catalan mobilization process are widely known and are included in the previous table. What is relevant for the purposes of the diffusion process is that although the rupture of the consensual model did not have immediate continuity in the Basque Country, it seems that it caught on in Catalonia and that particular actors adopted the “right to decide/consultation” categories, already put forward within the Basque sphere, in order to start up an episode that was already beginning to be expressed in secessionist terms. It would be necessary to study this in greater depth, but the diffusion from the Basque Country to Catalonia is tendentially non-relational, based on the already known theorization of those concepts.

In 2005 there emerged a “Platform for the Right to Decide” (Plataforma pel Dret de Decidir – PDD), which took on the job of organizing the first mass rallies of 2006 and 2007. Following the PDD’s crisis, but with its collaboration, the first local consultations were organized (From 2009). The organizational process gave rise to the Catalan National Assembly (Assemblea Nacional Catalana – ANC), from 2001 onwards. The inter-party competition mechanism (ERC-CIU, in particular) is relevant for the purposes of understanding this organizational evolution. (Vilaregut 2012).

Finally, the return horizontal diffusion which brought back to the Basque Country the categories “right to decide/consultation”, although feeble at first, recently gave rise to the first notable mobilizations: the independentist consultation held in Etxarri Aranaz on 13th April 2014, and the human chain for the “right to decide” which, on 8th June this year, stretched from Iruñea to Durango, and, according to its organizers, included over 150,000 people. The social dynamic “*Gure Esku Dago*” (“it’s in our hand”) is the one that is currently leading the collective action related to the “right to decide”.

#### **IV. Internal diffusion within Catalonia: Brokerage and scale shift.**

In this section we shall refer in greater depth to the internal diffusion of mobilization in the Catalan case.

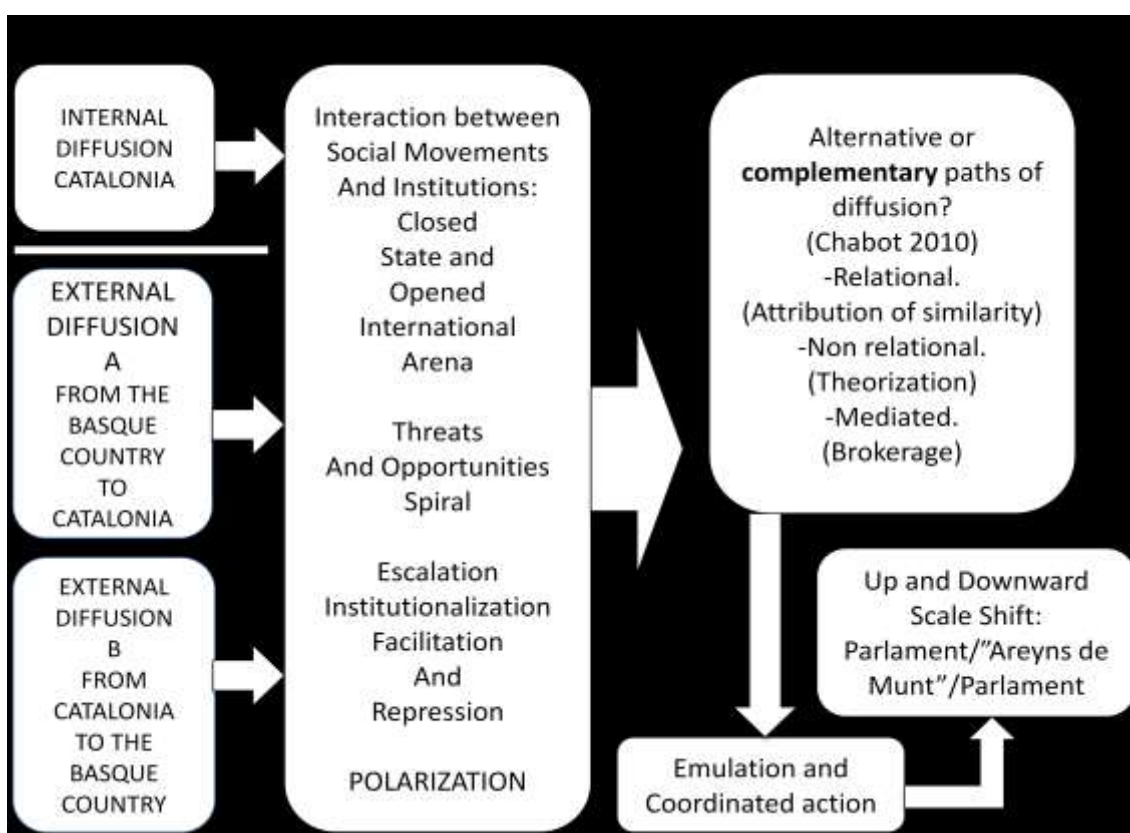
As Tarrow points out (2010:212) in the diffusion process the interaction between collective action and institutions is very important. This interaction has a clear impact on the movements’ repertoires and discourses. (Stobaugh & Snow 2010).

In this connection, democratic discursive frames and the formation of categories such as “the right to decide” or tactical innovation in popular consultations in Catalonia can only be understood if we bear in mind the presence of local and regional institutions with favourable political majorities. In this case, the relative openness of the international arena in respect of democratic demands for

sovereignty, the state impasse and Catalan institutional openness, give rise to a spiral of opportunities and threats that feeds the secessionist episode.

As is pointed out in the classic work by Della Porta and Tarrow (1986), the cycles of moderation (consensus) and radicalization (polarization) that we referred to earlier bring into play different strategies on the part of the movement and the institutions. All of them are clearly detectable in the Catalan contentious episode (Fig. 3).

Fig. 3: Dynamics of diffusion: Basque Country/ Catalonia



-Moderation in the demand and the modes of protest (escalation) is portrayed in the shift from directly demanding national independence to the “right to decide”, or in the abandonment of non-conventional tactics and the use of mass, but regulated (carefully controlled), mobilizations, such as the recent big demonstrations.

-The shift from mobilization framed by institutional routines to disruptive grassroots protest, is reflected in the combined use of institutional action and citizen mobilization in the street by the Catalan secessionist movement.

-And the correlative facilitating and/or repressive responses by the institutions (facilitation and repression) can also be detected in our case. The help that social mobilization receives from Catalan local and Autonomous Community institutions is combined, in some cases, with repression of any mobilization that spills over from the regulated channels.

But in addition to interaction with institutions, the diffusion of collective action is in response to other factors, more directly related to the dynamics of the movement itself.

In the Catalan case relational and mediated diffusion are combined (Chabot, 2010; Vasi, 2011). These pathways of diffusion are not alternative, but complimentary. When pre-existing, in this case Catalanist, political networks are strong, relational diffusion, based on the attribution of similarities and institutional equivalence, is uppermost. For example, the diffusion of citizen consultations throughout Catalan geography can be explained by those mechanisms that underpin emulation and, in many cases, coordinated action. This process has been led by the PDD, mentioned above (Vilaregut, 2012)

However, as we can see, even relational diffusion is reinforced by the mediation of brokers who act as mediators. Ion Bogdan Vasi (2011), based on the papers by Gould and Fernández (1989), proposes a classification of types of brokers and of brokerage relationships. This typecasting depends on two factors: the sub-group to which the actors belong, and these sub-groups' ability to mingle.

Thus, he identifies five ideal types of brokerage: *Liaison brokerage*, when the actors are in different groups; *representative brokerage*, when a member of the sub-group has the role of conveying the information or negotiating exchanges

with external parties; *gatekeeper brokerage*, when an actor takes resources from outside and distributes them to the members of their own group; *itinerant brokerage*, when the broker belongs to a different group from the actors to whom they are conveying the information; and, finally, *coordinating brokerage*, when all the actors involved form part of the same group.

Furthermore, the capacity for miscibility also influences the propagation of social movements; thus, as Vasi points out, organizations have this faculty if they disperse easily in other ones, and if we add to this ability, being ideologically compatible and being connected by interpersonal bonds. The paradox of diffusion is that “contention cannot spread widely if brokers do not connect diverse groups and groups with low miscibility” (Vasi, 2011:12)

The hypothesis in our case is that, brokerage in the service of Catalan secessionist mobilization has combined connecting highly-miscible (Catalanist) groups, with other, less connected ones, resulting in relatively rapid and extensive diffusion of the struggle. This has been due to certain brokers who, being part of the movement, have acted first as “coordinators”, and then as “representatives”.

-Methodological approaches to measuring the mechanisms: sociogram of brokerage at the demonstration of 11th September 2012.

The difficulty of measuring brokerage is pointed out by McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly themselves, who have proposed qualitative methods such as field-ethnographic research (MTT 2008) wherein they investigate attitudes, recognized contacts, and the transfer of resources between actors.

Although the density of networks can be operationalized quantitatively (Diani, 1992, 2003), along the same qualitative lines as mentioned above, our intention is to analyse the relationships between the nodes and their positioning on the

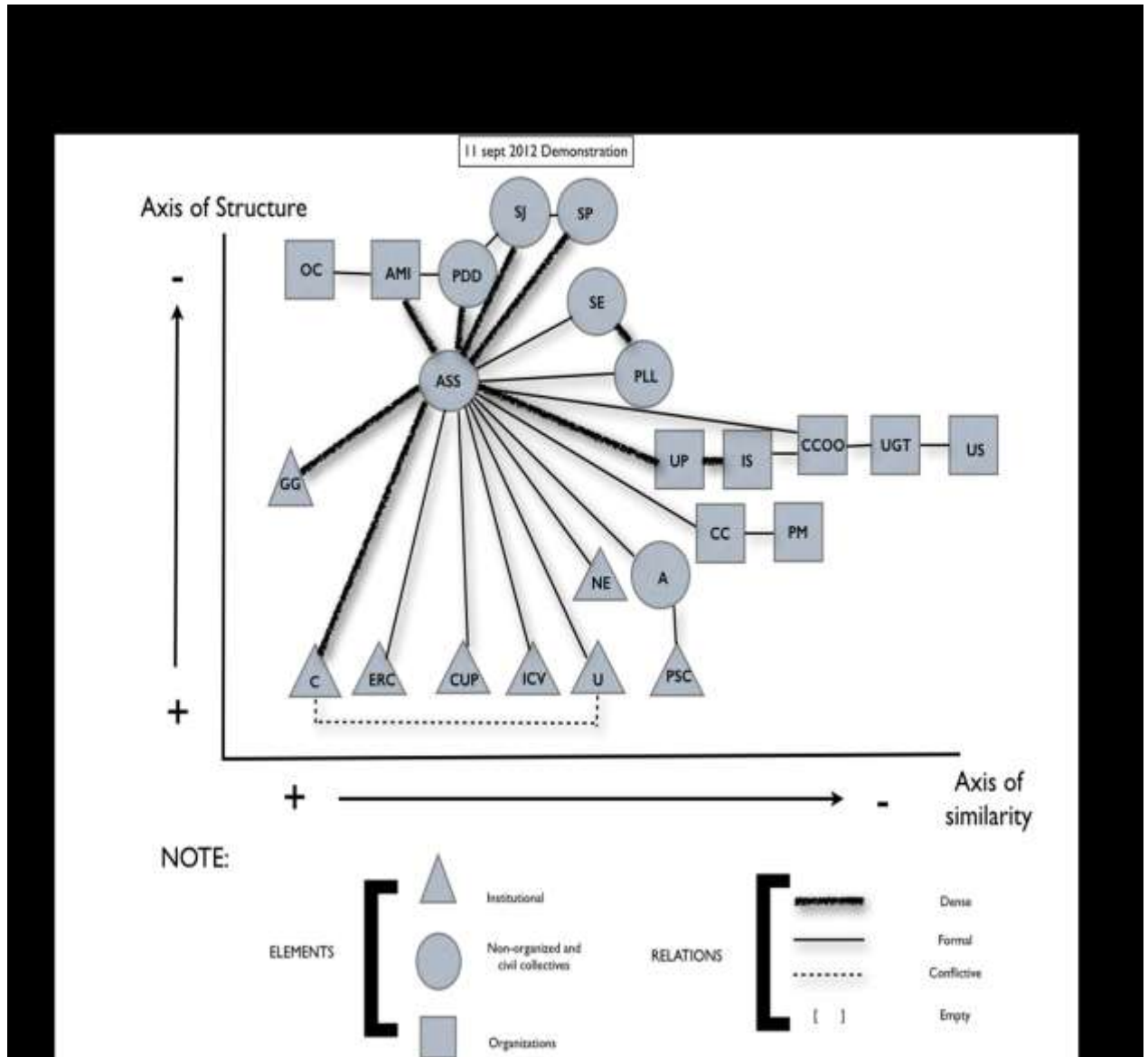
network using the qualitative technique of the sociogram (Villasante & Gutiérrez, 2006).

A suitable analysis of brokerage by means of the sociogram would have to be diachronic in order for us to ascertain the evolution of the network, how extensive and dense it is, the emergence of new brokers or changes in their functions, etc. It would also have to be based on a diversity of views. However, given the limitations of this research project, we have chosen a specific moment and gone to a single source.

Thus, by way of example, we present the results of the sociogram made from an in-depth interview with the President of the Catalan National Assembly (ANC), Carme Forcadell in July 2013, in relation to the mobilization of 11th September (Catalan National Day) 2012.

Using Villasante and Gutiérrez' ideas (2006) for making the sociogram, we opt to create two main lines along which the thematic study will be positioned: on one line we shall take a structural approach and on the other, an ideological approach. In this sociogram, made from the interview with the organization that led the demonstration of 11th September 2012, we analyse this organization's relationships with the institutional representatives, non-organized civil society collectives and other organizations.

Thus, one can observe the existence of three clusters of action: (Fig 4/5)





<b>Broker</b>	<b>kind of relation</b>	<b>Actor</b>
Assemblea Nacional Catalana	Dense	Government of Generalitat de Catalunya, Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya, Òmnium Cultural, Associació de Municipis per la Independència, Plataforma pel Dret a Decidir, Sobirania i Justícia, Sobirania i Progrés, Unió de Pagesos, Unió Intersindical
	Formal	Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya, Candidatures d'Unitat Popular, Unió Democràtica, Iniciativa per Catalunya Verds-Esquerra Unida i Alternativa, Nova Esquerra Catalana, SomEscola, Avancem, Plataforma per la Llengua, Cecot, Petita i Mitjana Empresa, Comissions Obreres, Unió General de Treballadors, Unió Sindical de Catalunya
	Conflictive	
	Empty	Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya

-The one situated in the institutional sphere, which brings together the parties that are, to a greater or lesser extent, close to the Assembly's demands and/or to the exercising of the right to decide. In this group, we remark upon the close relationship, described as "dense" by the Assembly, between the coalition in power in the Catalan Government and the organization.

-The sector of Catalanist collectives, some of them clearly independentist such as the "Plataforma pel Dret de Decidir" (PDD), "l'Associació de Municipis de la Independència" and "Òmnium Cultural".

-And, finally, a third cluster of action, the one that brings together the trade union collectives, which show various degrees of relationship and of affinity with the ANC's proposals. This is the case with particular trade union organizations,

especially, the “Unió de Pagesos” and the “Unió Sindical Obrera de Catalunya”. It’s also worth mentioning the relationships that the ANC establishes with state-wide trade unions such as CC.OO and the UGT.

In view of the connections that are established, we can affirm that the Catalan National Assembly (ANC) acts as a “coordinating broker” between the Catalanist and independentist social sectors with the institutional sphere and that of the political parties. Furthermore, it acts as a “representative broker” in respect of other sectors that cannot be understood as independentist actors *ab initio*.

In parallel, although it’s not noticeable in this sociogram, which is an overview done at a single point in time, during the months following the great mobilization and prior to the “Catalan Way”, the ANC is doing a social tour amongst its connections and is seeking to network with collectives that advocate grassroots demands such as the Movement of Mortgage Victims and the Movement of Victims of Preference Shares.

In the light of this strategy we can discern that the ANC is carrying out a brokerage action structured in several phases: an initial phase, which takes place during the early days of the mobilization, centred on putting into contact and articulating a mobilization amongst the closest sectors with an eye to the demonstration of 11th September 2012; and a second phase, centred on doing a social tour and broadening the spectrum of connections, and thus articulating a broader-based mobilization.

-One possible outcome of diffusion: Scale shift.

Diffusion results in a horizontal spread of mobilization and, in certain cases, it may manifest as a “scale shift”, both quantitatively and qualitatively. Scale shift is a broad process that, in addition to a mere spread in space and time, entails

a jump, either up or down, in the level of organizational coordination (Tarrow, 2010).

McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2008) propose a direct quantitative method of measuring scale shift, based on an analysis of protest events. Thus, the number of participants in the protest and the types of identities or organizational levels involved in it, would indicate the measurements of that scale shift (MTT, 2008:311).

In the Catalan case, the scale shift from a quantitative point of view can be measured from the data on the number of participants in the mobilizations that come within the secessionist contentious episode. Taking into account only the episode's big street demonstrations, and disregarding the actual number of demonstrators, upon which there is no agreement, the upwards trend is clear-cut.<sup>5</sup>

As for the qualitative scale shift, that is, the evolution in the degree and character of organizational articulation, we can clearly discern a continuous upward and downward scale shift phenomenon that articulates Catalan institutions, parties and social actors in a diverse way. Depending on the political climate, at times institutional-partisan leadership is at the fore, and at other times it is social leadership. And the organizational scale depends on that variation in leadership.

Level 1: Institutional initiative. (Top-down)

The Catalan government that came to power in the elections of November 2003, formed by the PSC-PSOE, ERC and ICV-EUiA, set about updating the

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<sup>5</sup> According to data from the Municipal Police Force of Barcelona: 1,100,000 people at the "*Som una nació, nosaltres decidim*" (We're a nation, we decide) demonstration of 10th July 2010; 1.5 million at the "*Catalunya, nou estat d'Europa*" (Catalonia, new European state) demonstration of 11th September 2012; and 1.6 million at the "*Catalan Way*", of 2013.

relationship with Spain through a reform of the statutory model (pertaining to the Catalan Statutes of Autonomy). This process had the support of the main opposition party, *Convergència i Unió*, which had just been voted out of power following 23 years of government by Jordi Pujol. The fact that the process had the support of the three parties who shared power and the main opposition party shows that the reform was undertaken in a situation that MTT (2001:122) describe as a “radical flank” one. There exists a consensus by the majority of political forces around a jointly supported (central) option that is reinforced by the fact that only the most radical positions, either to one side or the other, remain outside the consensus.

This phase when institutional-partisan leadership, which had already been relatively weakened following the CIU’s agreement with the PSOE and the tripartite government crisis of 2006, was to the fore, was maintained, but only just, up to the Constitutional Court’s Judgement of 2010, which limited the scope of the Catalan Statute of Autonomy.

#### Level 2: Social initiative (Bottom-up)

The crisis of 2006 gave rise to a new phase in which, with the ERC’s partisan support, a new phase of social mobilization that took over from the contentious episode, came about, given the institutional blockade. The “*Plataforma pel Dret de Decidir*” (Platform for the Right to Decide – PDD), already mentioned, which emerged in late 2005 in defence of the Statute of Autonomy passed by the Catalan Parliament, was to be an important agent during this period. (Vilaregut 2012). At the local level, are committed to tactical innovation and raised the local votes on independence (2006-2010). These proposals transfer the struggle back to the institutions, which are obliged to take a stance in the debate about these consultations. The growing mobilization culminated in the “*Som una Nació, Nosaltres decidim*” demonstration held in July 2010 with the participation of over a million people. In parallel a wide-scale process of articulation of movements in the Catalan independentist sector was started up:

the PDD grew weak, and meanwhile the ANC, a leading actor in recent mobilization, began to articulate itself (2012).

This led to the holding of the “*Catalunya, nou estat d’Europa*” (Catalonia, new European state) demonstration organized by the ANC on 11th September 2012, in which over a million people took part. From then on, the struggle was temporarily transferred to institutional level. One may say that the Catalan government itself actually facilitated the development of the social mobilization. The fact that the government appropriated the process is a sign that the action was taking place on both levels.

### Level 3: Combined initiative (Top-down/Bottom-up)

The elections of November 2012, called following the multitudinous demonstration of 11th September 2012, left the *Convergència i Unió* coalition government debilitated, and at the same time gave a major boost to *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya*. In this way, ERC was to become, almost naturally, the political ally of a government that did not enjoy a large enough majority to be able to go it alone. A governability pact (government formed with the support of minority parties) ensured the political stability of the legislature. One of the conditions of the pact, at the instance of ERC, was that a roadmap was to be drawn for a sovereigntist consultation, which it was finally agreed to hold in November 2014.

The repertoire of protest of citizen consultation that demands a Catalan decision-making subject, which was initiated locally and was socially-led, underwent a parliamentarization process characteristic of scale shift (MTT, 2008:311). This process is expressed by these two legal instruments:

-The “Declaration on the Sovereignty and right to decide of the people of Catalonia”, (2013), a document that laid the legal foundations for exercising the right to decide, by identifying Catalonia as a political subject.

-The draft “Law on non-Referendum Popular Consultations and Citizen Participation”, which will be passed by the Catalanian Parliament in September 2014, and will make provision for the consultation of 9th November, if it is held.

Thus, at the present time, the two levels of struggle alternate with one another: the institutional-partisan level, a seemingly blockaded scenario; and the social level, where collective action, such as the recent mobilization of 11th September 2014, is being maintained, all with a view to the consultation procedure scheduled for 9th November this year.

## V. Conclusions.

Briefly, we shall summarize this paper’s main conclusions. These are as follows:

1. When we apply the map of secession mechanisms to the cases under study it reveals a stronger activation of certain essential mechanisms in the Catalan case, especially those that we define as catalysing: the “sudden imposition of grievances” and the “infringement of the interests of elites”. Other environmental and cognitive mechanisms are common to both: the “spiral of opportunities”, “category formation” and “tactical innovation”. As is logical, the mobilizing mechanisms that act on the episodes have been activated in a diverse way: Brokerage is weak in the Basque case; competition, however, is highly accentuated. This is the opposite of what occurs in the Catalan case. Finally, facilitating mechanisms are absent in the Basque case, and the mechanism of repression, still hinged on anti-terrorist policy, plays a deactivating role.
2. The external diffusion of discursive categories and the main repertoires in this episode is transnational, and it operates in a back-and-forth

motion in the Basque and Catalan cases. The preferably non-relational diffusion, based on theorization, of the “right to decide” and “popular consultations”, follows a trail that possibly starts in Quebec, passes through the Basque Country, travels on to Catalonia and thence returns to the Basque Country.

3. Finally, the internal diffusion of the mobilization in the Catalan case, is supported by relational and mediated factors. In both cases the mechanism of brokerage is important, either as coordinating or representative brokerage. There are multiple people and organizations who act as brokers (PDD, Òmnium Cultural, etc.), but in the latest phase, from the great grassroots mobilization of 2012 onwards, the Catalan National Assembly (ANC) plays an important role.
  
4. Internal diffusion manifests as a scale shift, in the first place quantitative: The mobilized population increases. Moreover, the organizational articulation oscillates between the mobilizing moment (bottom-up) being to the fore, and the institutional moment (top-down) being there; and upon that synergy a qualitative scale shift is established, which finally parliamentarizes the collective demand in respect of the subject of sovereignty and popular consultation.

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TABLA DE SIGLAS:

	Government of Generalitat de Catalunya		Assemblea Nacional Catalana		Associació de Municipis per la independència
	Convergència Democràtica		Plataforma pel dret de Decidir		Òmnium Cultural
	Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya		Sobirania i Justícia		Unió de Pagesos
	Unió Democràtica		Sobirania i Progrés		Comissions Obreses Catalunya
	Iniciativa Catalunya Verds		Plataforma per la Llengua		Unió General de Treballadors
	Partit Socialista de Catalunya		SomEscola		Unió Sindical Obrera de Catalunya
	Candidatures d'Unitat Popular		Avancem		Cecot
	Nova Esquerra Catalana				Petita i Mitjana Empresa de Catalunya