The Use of New Media and ICT by Social Movements in Contemporary Processes of Political Activism

Marc Perelló Sobrepere

http://hdl.handle.net/10803/664631

TESI DOCTORAL

Títol	The Use of New Media and ICT by Social Movements in Contemporary Processes of Political Activism
Realitzada per	Marc Perelló-Sobrepere
en el Centre	Facultat de Comunicació i Relacions Internacionals Blanquerna – Universitat Ramon Llull (URL)
i en el Departament	Comunicació
Dirigida per	Dr. Josep A. Rom Rodríguez Dr. Joan Francesc Fondevila Gascón

THE USE OF NEW MEDIA AND ICT BY SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN CONTEMPORARY PROCESSES OF POLITICAL ACTIVISM

Marc Perelló i Sobrepere
Universitat Ramon Llull (2018)

Acknowledgements

I would like to begin by expressing my gratitude to the two directors who have accompanied me in the course of this research: doctors Josep A. Rom and Joan Francesc Fondevila. Without their knowledge and guidance, this humble study would have not been possible. Still in the academic area, I would also like to thank those who made me think about writing a doctoral thesis at a time when I was not considering it: Joan Andreu Rocha, Enrique Martínez, Jaume Brufau, Carmen Parra and Gabriel Ginebra. Last but not least, I would like to acknowledge two more professors who influenced my choice of major areas of research: Benedetta Brevini and Livia Bornigia.

On a more personal note, I would like to thank my parents, Marta and Xavier, and my grandparents, Mercè and Joan, for always believing in me and helping me out in ways too numerous to list. My gratitude also extends to all my relatives. Although I cannot mention them all by name, they have had to put up with cancelled meetings, late appointments and the inability to see me for a long, long time. I guess the same applies to my friends as well, who have seen me disappear from the surface of the earth for protracted periods of time, only to resurface now and then to say, 'I'm almost finished', even when I was actually not even close to finishing.

I have combined the writing of this dissertation with my regular career in the business sector. The excellent work environments that I have encountered, together with the understanding of my workmates and bosses, helped me a lot in finding the time and energy to balance my personal, professional and academic life. I shall thank them too, while hoping that they all have finally learned the full name of this thesis – and, since we are hoping for things, I am also hoping that they will read it too.

Marc Perelló i Sobrepere
Universitat Ramon Llull (2018)

Abstract

The beginning of the 21st century witnessed the birth of social networks, which took personal and social communications to new heights. These new means of communication, supported by ever-changing information and communication technologies, allowed for the creation of new, multidisciplinary and multicultural spheres of discussion. In this context, new media usage by political activist movements has attracted the attention of the academic community over recent years. Recently, a new actor has appeared in this field: Catalonia. This autonomous region in Spain has witnessed the biggest demonstrations in Europe in recent times, with hundreds of thousands clogging the streets calling for Catalan independence. Our study focuses on the various theories of social movements and political activism, how do these relate to new media and new technologies, and how these apply to the Catalan case, while comparing the characteristics of the Catalan protests to others such as the Arab Spring, the Egyptian Revolution, the 15-M Indignados movement, or the Occupy Wall Street marches.

Keywords

Marc Perelló i Sobrepere
Universitat Ramon Llull (2018)

Resum

El començament del segle XXI va ser testimoni del naixement de les xarxes socials, que van portar les comunicacions personals i socials a noves fites. Aquests nous mitjans de comunicació, recolzats per unes tecnologies de la informació i la comunicació en un canvi constant, van permetre la creació de noves esferes de discussió multidisciplinàries i multiculturals. En aquest context, l'ús dels nous mitjans per part dels moviments activistes polítics ha atret l'atenció de la comunitat acadèmica en els últims anys. Recentment, ha aparegut un nou actor en aquest camp: Catalunya. Aquesta regió autònoma d'Espanya ha estat testimoni de les majors manifestacions a Europa en els últims temps, amb centenars de milers de persones obstruint els carrers de les seves ciutats per demanar la independència de Catalunya. El nostre estudi se centra en les diverses teories dels moviments socials i l'activisme polític, en com es relacionen amb els nous mitjans de comunicació i les noves tecnologies, i en com s'apliquen al cas català, mentre es comparen les característiques de les protestes catalanes amb altres com la Primavera Àrab, la Revolució Egípcia, el moviment indignats 15-M, o les marxes Occupy Wall Street.

Paraules clau

Nous mitjans, TIC, moviments socials, activisme polític, Catalunya, Espanya, xarxes socials, manifestacions, protestes.

Resumen

El comienzo del siglo XXI fue testigo del nacimiento de las redes sociales, que llevaron las comunicaciones personales y sociales a nuevas metas. Estos nuevos medios de comunicación, respaldados por unas tecnologías de la información y la comunicación en constante cambio, permitieron la creación de nuevas esferas de discusión multidisciplinarias y multiculturales. En este contexto, el uso de los nuevos medios por parte de los movimientos activistas políticos ha atraído la atención de la comunidad académica en los últimos años. Recientemente, ha aparecido un nuevo actor en este campo: Cataluña. Esta región autónoma en España ha sido testigo de las mayores manifestaciones en Europa en los últimos tiempos, con cientos de miles de personas obstruyendo las calles de sus ciudades para pedir la independencia de Cataluña. Nuestro estudio se centra en las diversas teorías de los movimientos sociales y el activismo político, en como se inter-relación con los nuevos medios de comunicación y las nuevas tecnologías, y en cómo se aplican al caso catalán, mientras se comparan las características de las protestas catalanas con otras como la Primavera Árabe, la Revolución Egipcia, el movimiento indignados 15-M, o las marchas Occupy Wall Street.

Palabras clave

Nuevos medios, TIC, movimientos sociales, activismo político, Cataluña, España, redes sociales, manifestaciones, protestas.

Marc Perelló i Sobrepere
Universitat Ramon Llull (2018)

8

Table of contents

PART I – PRESENTATION OF THE RESEARCH

Marc Perelló i Sobrepere
Universitat Ramon Llull (2018)

OVERVIEW OF PART I

The first part of this doctoral dissertation includes the Introduction to the subject of analysis and our motivations to investigate it and also its related topics. Afterwards, we focus on the methodology that was used to conduct the research. We begin with a description of the structure of the dissertation and an approach to the theoretical framework that we used. Then we move on to the methodology, to which we give great importance by emphasizing the different types of research that we used as well as the different methods of research deployed in the investigation. We also present the research objectives and hypothesis, and our assessment on the singularity of this research and its main topic.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

During the past decade, the world has experienced a series of protest movements throughout different cities and countries. What began as a violent spark in Middle Eastern countries against authoritarian regimes, moved to the West in the form of more peaceful demonstrations. If the protesters during the Arab Spring denounced their authoritative regimes, their counterparts in the Western countries, such as the US or Spain, denounced several democratic weaknesses in their own political systems. With very different objectives in mind, these demonstrations either dispersed as time passed by or evolved into some kind of political movement. In this dissertation, we investigate what these movements have had in common: new technologies.

Nowadays, it is difficult to separate our daily routine from technology. Whether or not you are a digital native, technology is part of your unconscious life, as much as breathing. Take a quick scan of your surroundings and you will probably see smartphones, tablets, personal computers and perhaps others digital objects – forms of technology that one can hardly live without. But there was a time, not too long ago, when technology was perceived as a mere entertainment medium. Its day-to-day possibilities were unexplored, let alone its capacity to conduct political discussions. But this is exactly what happened. Once we ran out of trivial topics to discuss on Twitter, the social network quickly became a forum for news debates, with a very particular orientation towards political activism.

Before this happened, media technology was a one-way channel of information. You could receive, but you could not send back – you could neither respond nor broadcast on your own. Print newspapers, radio and

television brought together, and sometimes divided, families, societies and countries. Some of these objects contained advanced technology; but again, it could only go one-way. So, instead of creating critical thinking, they created public opinion. A vast majority of people thought what the media told them to think. If one wished to discuss a topic, it had to be done physically and in presence of others willing to debate with you. There was no other way to do it.

This is when the Internet changed it all. It began as a military experiment, then it spread to big companies and, finally, penetrated the so-called middle class, which began to consume it massively in the late 1990s – and continues to do so today. This is the exact moment where it all changed: a huge point of no return for humanity. The earliest incarnation of the Internet took the form of two excellent communication tools: chat and email. These two services symbolized a revolution within the developed countries, particularly in the US, Canada and Europe, and later on in the rest of world, and changed the ways in which we had been communicating with each other for centuries. For the first time, you could engage in a live discussion without being there, without being in the same room as your peers – owning a computer was enough. But, as one may suppose, political discussion accounted for a small part of the overall Internet usage at that time. In fact, as we will further see in this investigation, scholars of the late 20th century did not see the potential for proper political debate via the internet or at least had a hard time buying into this idea. Meanwhile, those who did saw more perils than benefits.

At the beginning of the 21st century, however, political activists from different countries approached the Internet with different perspectives and began to explore its possibilities for live global discussion, in the hope of

provoking some kind of real change in their respective political regimes or social scenarios. The late 20th century's virtual communities evolved into a much more sophisticated, worldwide digital forum, and opened the way for a wider and more enriching type of discussion. A social event could no longer go unnoticed if the Internet population decided otherwise; and this gave many political movements a window of opportunity to be noticed, and ultimately, realize their agenda. In this new paradigm, social networks acted in two days. For those on the inside and living where the activism was taking place, it allowed for instant content sharing, social aggregation, and a much more planned form of collective action. Demonstrations could be organized in a matter of seconds, and the same networks were used to let the protesters know about any particular change within the movement. For those on the outside, namely, spectators all around the world who cared enough to watch and maybe even participate in digital activism, it allowed for a much more comprehensive scenario in which to become informed of everything that was missing from regular news broadcasts, avoid censorship and be part of a global consciousness while remaining seated in front of a computer. Nowadays, more damage could be done with a single computer than with the full might of the military.

In this regard, it is possible to claim that the Internet, and more specifically social media, have helped political activism to spread all over the globe. Sometimes, it spreads awareness, sometimes it sparks discussion; and, certainly, it attracts followers and detractors of activist movements – even if they occur in countries far away from our own. For the regular citizen, seemingly informed through mass media outlets and perhaps through other less mainstream media channels, it is practically

impossible not to know about the Arab Spring, the Egyptian Revolution, the Indignados movement or the protests known as Occupy Wall Street, all of which are included in this dissertation as case studies, to prepare the reader for the main case study: Catalonia. While the so-called Catalan case is far less known than its counterparts, it certainly has gained notoriety over the past five years, and even greater awareness during the final months of 2017 when half of the Catalan government took up exile in Belgium. This was the result of a very brief declaration of independence, following almost a decade of massive demonstrations on the streets of Barcelona. The most significant events that led up to the 2017 Catalan declaration of independence, as well as the events from the other case studies, are fully reviewed and discussed in this dissertation from various approaches, as is the framework theory on political activism and technology, which is needed to understand the phenomenon.

1.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND STRUCTURE

The theoretical framework of this doctoral dissertation is based on a documental investigation of secondary sources and a retrospective analysis with both qualitative and quantitative observations and comments. In this process, the work of around 200 authors has been used to support, review or comment on several scenarios and hypotheses. This work represents a mix of what we believe to be the most significant and detailed literature on our research topics to date. Most of the authors in question are renowned in their fields of expertise; therefore, their names and theories will mostly be

familiar to readers. Lesser-known yet prominent authors have also been given space in this dissertation, as we found their contributions to the existing literature highly pertinent to the various purposes of this investigation.

While we tried to gather the most important investigations on the aforementioned topics, the reader may be missing a particular author or theory. If this is the case, please acknowledge that one of the main efforts when setting out the theoretical approach was to read through a vast number of books and articles and focus on literature that was implicitly related to our hypothesis. In doing so, we may have overlooked some material in order to not overwhelm a specific topic or unnecessarily repeat the same argument more than necessary. What we did, we did with the best intention in order to facilitate a practical reading of the dissertation, without burdening the reader. We also avoided all kinds of redundancy and followed the rule about not saying something in two words if it can be said in one – provided that doing so did not alter the formality of the dissertation, while respecting all the commonly accepted academic procedures in this regard.

This dissertation is structured in nine parts. Each of these parts comprises different chapters and sub-chapters, all of which can be found in the index section. Each chapter aggregates various theoretical approaches under a single topic, and each sub-chapter delves deeply into each of the subjects that are being addressed.

The first part introduces the research, as well as the methodology used. The second part considers political activism in the context of studies by various authors, which we comment on and update if needed. The third part includes four case studies about some of the most notorious social

movements of the recent years that have had a major role in social media and online activism studies. Parts four, five, six and seven focus completely on the events surrounding the Catalan independence movement. Finally, the eight part presents the conclusions; and the ninth part lists all the references for this dissertation. At all times, this dissertation has been written following UK English grammar and structure, as well as uses the APA formatting approach for every reference.

The first theoretical framework of our dissertation is found in the current chapter. This chapter features introductory text, which is also used to explain the main topics of analysis that we will be further discussing, the singularity of our study, our objectives, goals and hypothesis, and the methodology used in order to approach our topic.

As we will further see, our dissertation falls into four different classifications of research, namely exploratory, descriptive, casual and correlative. Each of these is later explained in its own sub-chapter. We then continue to consider the explicitness of the quantitative and qualitative methodologies used, which are separately described with respect to their own literature. We also explain why we use one or the other approach, and when and how. In addition, each chapter comes with an introductory part, in which the subject of methodology is brought back in order to allow the reader to understand the formal approach of the chapter.

The theoretical framework of the subject to be addressed, political activism, begins in the second part of the dissertation, which immediately follows this chapter. The second chapter applies a retrospective approach to the influence of technology in political activism from its beginning to the present day. In these chapters, we gather, review and comment on an

extensive body of literature regarding the different topics that we discuss throughout the entire dissertation. While, for the most part, we have tried to maintain a chronological order when unveiling and discussing each piece of information, we sometimes jump back and forward in time in order to better illustrate the subject being addressed.

The topics that we discuss in our investigation relate to various fields of humanities; more precisely, they relate to the field of communications, which represents the main area of interest on this doctorate programme. We have studied the implications of various means of communication in areas such as information flows, social communication, new media, journalism, the digital divide, information technologies, communication technologies, content creation and narrative. We have also reviewed and discussed several theories located in different times and places, in order to create a general picture of our discussion topics.

The main field of this dissertation, that is, communications, is complemented by many references to other academic fields that are inherent to the topic of activism, and equally important in understanding our own work. These fields are sociology, anthropology and political science, all of which come under the umbrella of humanities. We also comment on a series of subjects emanating from these fields, which include but are not limited to social aggregation, collective action, virtual communities, social movements, participation, protests and protesters, demonstrations and authoritarianism. Therefore, we could speak of the second and third chapters as representing a compendium of the literature on the main topic, new media and political activism.

Part III applies a qualitative approach to four of the most relevant cases of political activism that we have seen in the past 10 years: the Arab Spring, the Egyptian Revolution, the Indignados movement (also known as 15-M) and the Occupy Wall Street protests. These movements are believed to be widely known to the general public, as they have monopolized many op-eds, columns, newsreels, debates and other types of output from the media. As the interest that these protests have generated is found among both the general public and academia, we were able to gather and comment on many available references regarding these events throughout the chapters.

Part IV, V, VI and VII and its different sub-chapters, and is entirely devoted to the main case study: the Catalan case. The theoretical framework within these chapters is less extensive compared to earlier ones, as the main topic of analysis, the Catalan case, is still in the early stages of investigation and therefore the available literature is limited to studies by only a few authors. As such, this part is characterized by a more comprehensive qualitative research method, which we apply in order to observe and comment on the context as it exists, relying on the many events that are depicted and further discussed in the light of the theories that have been studied in the earlier chapters.

Finally, we dedicated Part VIII to the resolution of our objectives and hypothesis. We also discuss the research limitations of the current and improvements for further investigations. It also includes an Epilogue with some last few words to stress the overall conclusions of this investigation.

Last, Part IX includes the many References used in this dissertation, all of which employ the APA format, as does the rest of the dissertation.

1.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Before we define our methodology, we would like to establish the research framework in which this dissertation has been conducted. In this regard, there are different research approaches depending on the information needs that one may encounter. The best-known approach is the one that focuses on the nature of the topic to be studied and considers the research as exploratory, descriptive, causal or correlational (Fondevila & del Olmo, 2013). These four types of research can be used separately or altogether in a single investigation; and, as we will further argue, we have made use of all four when approaching our subject.

1.3.1 Exploratory research

Exploratory research is the type of research is carried out on a subject that is fully or partially unknown, or little studied, or in which information is lacking. Its results constitute an approximate vision of the topic that is being investigated. It is usually conducted when one of the following circumstances prevails: a) the chosen topic has been little studied to date and there is no knowledge about it, allowing the researcher to

formulate precise hypotheses or offer a systematic description; b) when new phenomena appear in a given field of study, which are either not yet known with precision nor understood on the basis of existing theories. As stated by Merino Sanz (2010), this research modality is characterized by its flexibility and versatility. For the most part, Part IV of this investigation, which looks at the Catalan case, falls into this category. There is limited research when it comes to the Catalan sociopolitical scenario that led to political activism regarding calls for independence for Catalonia – and this is precisely one of the reasons and the main motivation as to why we decided to study it.

1.3.2 Descriptive research

Descriptive research involves non-experimental methodology and becoming acquainted with the prevailing situations, customs and attitudes through an exact description of the relevant activities, objects, processes and people. Its goal may be oriented towards the collection of data, but not necessary so. It can also identify the relationships that exist between two or more variables. In this type of research, knowledge is collected on the basis of a hypothesis or theory, with the information revealed and summarized in a careful manner. The results of the research are analysed in detail, in order to extract significant conclusions that contribute to knowledge. According to García Sanz and García Meseguer (2012), closed-scale observational research methods are included in this type of research.

The process in descriptive research is more formal and structured than in exploratory research. In this type of research, if numerical or

empirical tables exist, these are analysed quantitatively (Merino, 2010). This research approach is present in most of the chapters in this dissertation. As the description of objects, people and events is inherent to the study of humanities, we have addressed our varied topics in the same way, studying and relating human behaviours in different contents to enable us to understand political activism.

1.3.3 Causal research

Causal research is aimed at responding to the causes of events and physical or social phenomena. It aims to explain why a phenomenon occurs and under what conditions, or why two or more variables are related by establishing a cause-effect relationship between them (Hernández Sampieri, 2010; Hernández Huéscar, 2012).

Explanatory studies can deal with both the determination of causes (post facto research) and the effects (experimental research) through hypothesis testing. Their results and conclusions refer to the level of the depth of knowledge. As this type of research mostly focuses on the verification of causal hypotheses, it seeks to describe the causes that originate from the object of study, relying on laws and theories to try to understand the reality of the facts. We too have used this type of research, particularly in parts III and IV, which present the case studies.

1.3.4 Correlation research

In this type of research, the main objective is to determine the degree to which variations in one or several factors are related to the variation in another or other factors. The existence and strength of this covariation is usually determined statistically by means of correlation coefficients. It is convenient to bear in mind that this covariation does not mean that there are causality relationships between the values, since these are determined by other criteria, which, in addition to covariation, must be considered. It allows us to measure and interrelate multiple variables simultaneously in a natural observation of situations, as well as identify associations between variables. This is different from experimental research because there is no possibility of establishing independent variables or controlling them rigorously. Therefore, it does not lead us to directly identify cause-effect relationships, but to suspect them. As with casual research, we have also tried to establish correlation, particularly in Parts III and IV, which examine the case studies, and in the conclusions in Part V.

1.3.5 Research methods

Research methods are the procedures that are applied to achieve a dual purpose: to reach the objectives of the dissertation and to prove or refute the hypothesis presented in this work. It is essential to choose the most appropriate method that allows us to become better acquainted with the topic and its reality, to which we want to make a formal approach (Sierra

& Liberal, 2010). In this regard, there are two types of research methods: quantitative and qualitative. These methods are not incompatible with each other, in fact, they are complementary. We have, in this regard, used both of them. Both methods employ careful, systematic and empirical processes to generate knowledge (Hernández Sampieri, 2010).

Our fields of research (communications, sociology and political science) come under the umbrella of humanities, and more precisely the field of social sciences. The vast majority of dissertations in the branch of social sciences and humanities are characterized by qualitative investigations, and our dissertation is no exception. For the most part, this is a qualitative work, although quantitative research is applied as well, as we will further explain in later chapters. It must be noted, however, that, as mentioned, qualitative research occupies the greater part of this dissertation. Below is a comparative table of both methods, in which the differences of each technique in achieving the objectives of the dissertation and demonstrating the hypotheses of the work are set out.

Item	Quantitative methods	Qualitative methods
Object of study	Meanings, motivations, feelings and values	Cases, events and conditions
Epistemology	Relativist-perspectivist	Normative-essentialist
Mission	To interpret, understand, observe and describe	To explain by cause and to measure with precision
How the knowledge is reached	Inductive	Deductive

Table 1. Source: Sierra & Liberal (2010).

The role of each methodology within the research also varies depending on which methods are chosen to conduct the investigation,

thereby influencing the whole process of work. The following table illustrates the main differences between the methods.

Quantitative methods	Qualitative methods
The researcher is left out. These techniques usually work in groups: a principal investigator directs and controls the tasks performed by their team.	The researcher is completely involved in the process. In such techniques, it is preferable to work individually.
The analysis is designed a priori. The research process is standardized: we know what steps need to be taken and in what order.	The investigation process is not as closed. The researcher depends much more on the object of study; in fact, it may end up in a different place from the one originally planned.
The design of the sample is more or less objectified. This is done at the beginning of the process, following certain rules; it does not usually involve changes.	The delimitation of the sample depends on how the research is developed. However, it is necessary to be consistent with the previous findings.
Measurement instruments are quantifiable categories that are designed to measure specific aspects.	There are no unique measuring instruments. The information can be obtained and analysed in many ways, although it is necessary to establish previous criteria.
The researcher seeks to realize general laws and tries to go beyond the specific case.	The researcher starts from a general law that they try to prove in a specific case.

Table 2. Source: García Ortega (2010, p. 73).

1.3.6 Qualitative research

Qualitative research methods allow for a greater margin of manoeuvre than quantitative ones, since there are no strict rules when gathering information, as well as subsequent analysis and interpretation (Fondevila & del Olmo, 2013). They are used to try to understand unique and particular situations, such as the political activism case studies in our dissertation. Analysis in this type of research focuses on the search for meaningful observations and descriptions, and on how certain individuals or social groups live and experience certain phenomena or experiences, in order to comment on the theories that are being investigated (Rodríguez & Valldeorola, 2007, 2009). The conclusions in qualitative research relate to the specific case that is being studied; thus, they can hardly be extrapolated

to other cases. The most outstanding qualitative methods for doctoral dissertations are analytical research, ethnographic research and case studies (García & García, 2012); and our dissertation applies all three.

Analytical research

This is employed to study historical concepts and events through the analysis of a selection of documents, testimonies or material remains. In this research modality, the information is studied and synthesized to provide knowledge of the concept and interpret the events in the context in which they occur. Historical analysis is concerned with investigating theories and events that have some kind of relevance to a specific field of study by examining causes and consequences, and carrying out a synthesis that allows for reconstructing and explaining historical fact. This method is also known as historical-analytical research. We have particularly applied analytical research to our case studies, as well as more generally to the overall topic of political activism.

Ethnographic research

This consists of an in-depth description of the subjects in their environment or natural context, especially in their social structures and in the behaviour of individuals who are members of the society being analysed. Since our subjects include social aggregation and collective

action, this type of research is intrinsic to most of our chapters. Ethnographic research is based on the conviction that the traditions, norms, values and the environments in which subjects live are systematically becoming generalized. This generates a certain regularity that can explain individual and group behaviour in an appropriate way. Through the observation and analysis of the facts, the researcher can understand the beliefs, values, perspectives and motivations of the protagonists in the case in question. By using this type of research, we are able to understand political movements much better through the eyes of the many authors who have investigated them in the past decades.

Studying cases

The methodology behind case studies focuses on the analysis of a specific situation to understand and interpret the uniqueness of the cases being studied. The case is always defined in a time and place. Here, the researcher investigates a contemporary phenomenon in its real context, where the limits between the phenomenon and the context are not shown in a precise way, and in which multiple sources of evidence are used (Yazan, 2015). Furthermore, the researcher has a greater responsibility in the selection and interpretation of information, as we humbly assume for the most part of our dissertation. As in quantitative research, the objective of qualitative research is to quantify the magnitude of variables and relationships or to explain causal relationships; in qualitative analysis, the object of the research is to know a fact more thoroughly. As Hair, Busch,

and Ortinau, (2009) point out, such analysis constitutes a continuous and iterative process. This means that the topics are analysed as they are collected, which has direct implications for the collection of sources. It is basically an inductive method without categories or patterns, as opposed to quantitative methods. Given that our research focuses on a case that is still developing, the Catalan case, it was essential to finish the research early in 2018 in order to conclude the dissertation. The events related to the Catalan case, however, keep unfolding daily in new directions.

1.3.7 Quantitative research

Quantitative methods convert the object of study into numerical data, while emphasizing objective measurement and the need to use statistics. According to Hernández Sampieri (2010, 20), "in the quantitative approach the topics to be investigated are specific and delimited from the beginning of a study. In addition, the hypotheses are established previously, that is, before collecting and analysing the data." The application of these techniques implies the rigorous fulfilment of a series of phases. The quantitative analysis of the information collected with the instruments selected in the previous phase of the research process is carried out by employing statistical procedures. This means that the researcher must perform a set of operations such as categorizing, ordering, manipulating and summarizing the constructed data, in order to transform them into understandable and interpretable material. The process that allows for an analysis of quantitative data involves, in a generalized way: the organization and coding of information; data entry into the computer according to the program matrix; data debugging from maximum to minimum; and, lastly, the

elimination of atypical data, if it is shown that these are contaminating the possible results (Fondevila & del Olmo, 2013).

Even though the greatest part of our dissertation is purely qualitative, it also contains a quantitative chapter concerning Catalan political leaders' activity on Twitter. This chapter was included to illustrate the power of Twitter within the Catalan case and also to strengthen hypothesis that relates the use of ICT to the evolution of political activism. In this chapter, several politicians accounts are analysed in order to understand their significance and social impact as the most representative events of the Catalan case in 2017 unfolded one after another: the massive demonstration of 11 September, the referendum on 1 October and the declaration of independence on 27 October.

1.3.8 Mixed method

The mixed method approach, also called the multiple method or triangulation study approach, is considered to be the third research paradigm and represents an alternative to the classical approximations of quantitative and qualitative methods. Burke and Onwuegbuzie define the mixed method as a type of research where the researcher mixes qualitative and quantitative techniques, methods and approaches in the same study. This formula legitimizes the use of multiple approaches when responding to a research question and avoids any dogmatism that may restrict or hinder the researcher's work. It must be noted that this method does not replace either the quantitative method or the qualitative method, but rather makes

them coexist for the greater purpose of understanding and examining the topics that are being discussed. As we mentioned before, our dissertation is mainly qualitative; but, we have left room for statistical analysis in several chapters, as well as including a purely quantitative chapter.

The main advantage of the mixed method is that it offers broader and deeper perspectives, allowing the researcher to gather richer and more varied knowledge that provides greater strength and objectivity to the research. The philosophy behind the mixed method is based on pragmatism, which is understood as the search for practical solutions when carrying out research using the most appropriate criteria and designs for a particular approach, situation and context.

This implies a strong dose of pluralism, accepting the usefulness of qualitative and quantitative methods and seeking their complementation. In short, the mixed method allows us to switch from quantitative to qualitative analysis in order to create a more complete picture of the topic being discussed for the better understanding of the reader (Hernández Sampieri, 2010). Given that qualitative research dominates this dissertation, we have adopted the constant comparative method of qualitative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Comparative analysis can take account of specific topics, events or concepts. This method allows us to extract the essentials of the studied literature in order to correlate the varied theories that have been studied, as well as the case studies. In this method, the researcher simultaneously encodes and analyses the knowledge through continuous comparison. These variables are then integrated into a coherent theory (Galeano, 2007, p. 168).

1.3.9 Analysis of the results

Once a method has been applied in order to understand and observe the social reality that one wishes to investigate, conclusions are obtained from the analysis technique used. Therefore, in this phase, the results are presented for analysis purposes in a thorough and orderly manner, so as to meet the objectives of the research process.

According to the chosen method, results of a quantitative or qualitative nature are obtained. In the first approach, there is a great tradition of, and extensive production of data by, applying much more technical and sophisticated approaches. Regarding the qualitative approach, however, it can be said that it suffers from a lack of procedures that are sufficiently recognized by the scientific community, although in recent years it has experienced much development, especially in terms of techniques and instruments (Busquet, Medina & Sort, 2006).

In any case, whether a quantitative or qualitative approach is used, the quality criteria for data analysis must guarantee the consistent synthesis of information in the approach to the research problem, the hypotheses (if they exist), the objectives, as well as the nature of the information collected (García Sanz & Garcia Meseguer, 2012). For us, the conclusions are mainly qualitative and specific to the main case study in our dissertation: the Catalan case. In a more general sense, other comments are integrated in the extended conclusions regarding the overall theories of social movements, in a humble attempt to provide a well-structured update to an ever-evolving field.

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESIS

We have just acknowledged the continuous evolution of our discipline. New technologies, understood as tools for social change, are in constant progression, and thus any proclamation in this field may be outdated within a few years, and sometimes months. Nevertheless, we did our best to identify three plausible objectives and corresponding hypotheses. These objectives and hypotheses are as follows:

O1. To understand the degree of extent to which New Media and ICTs were an important part, if not the most important, in regards to the Arab Spring, the Egyptian Revolution, the 15-M Indignados movement, and also in the Occupy Wall Street marches.

H1. The most recent political activism movements owe its continuity and its internationalization to the new media deployed in the protests.

O2. To demonstrate a presumable uniqueness of the Catalan case in relation to other political movements and in regards to the most accepted theories in the social activism field.

H2. The nature of the Catalan case is unique in its own because of a series of social, political and historical connotations that defy the previously assumed theories on social activism in many ways.

O3. To demonstrate the social value of New Media and ICTs as a catalyser of political activism in spite of the origin of the messages.

H3. The Catalan pro-independence movement, political leaders and other activists, have exceeded the space, time and language barriers when

internationalizing their social cause to a broader public that has become quite sympathetic to the cause in part thanks to their constant activity through social networks.

It must be noted that we opted to leave out any direct reference to these objectives and hypotheses of the general text. Rather, these hypotheses are implicitly discussed throughout the dissertation, but not mentioned by name and abbreviation (O1/H1) until the conclusions chapter. This approach was adopted on the understanding that, being a qualitative dissertation, we wanted to stress overall critical thinking and discussion as a whole entity. That said, the hypotheses are extensively confirmed or refuted in the conclusions chapter, as is usual with this type of dissertation.

1.5 MOTIVATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND SINGULARITY OF THE STUDY

Our motivations for studying the relation between media and political activism go back as far as our bachelor days. At that time, we graduated with a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) degree in journalism, with a dissertation on the importance of communication in political utopias. Shortly after, we also graduated with a Bachelor of Advertising degree, with a dissertation on the importance of social media in Barack Obama's 2008 campaign, thus continuing with our interest in media and politics. Later on, we were granted a scholarship to study for a Master of Arts in humanities and social studies, in which we continued our study of communications through an update on Harold Innis' works, adapting his theories and legacy to the contemporary media landscape. Finally, a few years ago, we were awarded another scholarship to pursue doctoral studies in the field of communications.

This time, our interest in media and politics crystallized around the topic of political activism and the influence of new media influence in this context. During the next few years, in parallel to writing our doctoral dissertation, we have also authored and co-authored several articles and book chapters on the same topic: media and politics. These scientific papers were published in editorials, such as *IGI Global, Ibidem* or *Fragua*, and in scientific journals, such as *ALAIC,* the *IC Journal* or the *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social.* The Royal Flemish Academy, the Universitat de Girona and the Generalitat de Catalunya are also among the institutions that have published our research as well. At the same time, we have also lectured at different universities on media and politics, thus consolidating

our interest and motivation in continuing our academic research now and in the future.

In the early stages of this dissertation, the subject of political activism was to be studied alongside the Arab Spring and its ramifications. It was not until a later stage that it was decided to add the Catalan case as the main case study. This was decided for two key reasons. The first is the importance that the Catalan case has been gaining over recent years, whereas the Arab Spring and similar uprisings have been discussed in more detail already; therefore, we were minded that there was little scope for us to generate new insights into the Arab Spring while incorporating some new and valid theoretical discussions to the overall subject. Second, because we live in Barcelona, the epicentre of the Catalan independence movement, we were privileged spectators of the whole event. In turn, this granted us a unique position, that of a natural observer. We concluded that this privileged vantage point ought to give us the opportunity to make a substantial contribution to the subject of political activism.

To the best of our knowledge, this is also the first academic study that comprehensively addresses the massive demonstrations in Catalonia (2010 to 2017) in comparison to other contemporary political activism processes. Moreover, we approach the subject in a multidisciplinary manner, by referring to communications, technology and sociology, while creating a complete picture of the entire context. After five years of research, we finalized our dissertation in the summer of 2018. From the moment we began writing to the moment when we concluded the research, many new articles and books have surfaced, which have added new and interesting literature related to our topics. Please excuse us beforehand if you believe

that a particular author is missing – we did our best in updating our theories and comments with these new references throughout the research process.

The lack of investigation into this topic was definitely a motivation, but also a limitation at the same time. As there is hardly any literature on the Catalan case, this demanded serious effort on our part in order to put together a full account for the reader, which included many names, dates and events that sometimes may be hard to follow. Another limitation concerns the constant developments in the case and the fate of its protagonists: almost every week, there is a new intervention by the exiled politicians and their elected colleagues. In turn, these interventions provoke reactions from leading social activists and new protests are held. We had to apply the brakes at some point, which we did in the summer of 2018. Thus, events after this date are not discussed in this work.

Regardless of the ever-changing nature of the topic, we believe that we have accomplished a unique investigation that sheds light on a relatively new case study, as well as introduces new points of view that challenge previously conceived and assumed theories around social activism. This is, therefore, our best attempt at contributing new and valuable theoretical material to the ongoing discussion about political activism.

PART II – SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

OVERVIEW OF PART II

This section of the dissertation is divided into seven chapters. In these we explore the theoretical framework regarding the birth of social movements and the evolution of collective action in different societies and periods of time. We then continue to observe the evolution of social uprisings, this time with the addition of a new actor in the form of new information and communication technologies, and how these affected the evolving world of demonstrations, protests and uprisings worldwide. We also analyse the importance of ICTs in participation and organization of social movements, focussing on the role of New Media in this process.

2.1 INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND PARTICIPATION

John Locke was one of the first theorists to imply a major defence of human society at the national level against the power of the state and the inequalities existing in the marketplace. He understood the importance of social movements for the protection of the public sphere against the commercial and governmental interests (Rheingold, 1995). With his insight, Locke was commenting the tip of the iceberg of a subject that would gather a greater importance as decades passed by. The study of social movements began in the late 19th century. Gustave Le Bon (2009) appears to be one of the earliest known authors to tackle the issue (Earl & Kimport, 2011). Sceptical about politics, democracy, social engineering, and revolutions, he firmly rejected the idea that altering the social environment could bring about a change in the fundamental nature of humans (Earl & Kimport, 2011). For most of the 20th century, crowds and collective action were mostly associated with life-threatening social unrest, such as those violent riots springing from fascism and communism.

In this regard, it must be noted that it was the movement for equal civil rights for people irrespective of their race, class, gender, or sexual orientation, the one that marked a new beginning for the study of social movements, this time from a much more positive angle (Earl & Kimport, 2011). In a time like ours, where social movements flourish quickly, we believe that it is interesting to look at Le Bon's thoughts to realize the degree by which the situation has changed since then. Le Bon was known to hate individuals and crowds *involved in* social movements (Le Bon, 2009) about whom he opined the following:

> By the mere fact that he forms part of an organized crowd, a man descends
> several rungs in the ladder of civilization. Isolated, he may be a cultivated
> individual; in a crowd, he is a barbarian — that is, a creature acting by instinct. He
> possesses the spontaneity, the violence, the ferocity, and also the enthusiasm and
> heroism of primitive beings, whom he further tends to resemble by the facility with
> which he allows himself to be impressed by words and images – which would be
> entirely without action on each of the isolated individuals composing the crowd –
> and to be induced to commit acts contrary to his most obvious interests and his
> best-known habits. An individual in a crowd is a grain of sand amid other grains of
> sand, which the wind stirs up at will (Le Bon, 2009 [1896], 37-8).

As it can be observed from the text above, in the late 19th and the early 20th century, theorists such Le Bon (2009) or Blumer (1939) viewed social movements as a response to grievances, structural changes, or disturbances in the social order. Le Bon went further, perceiving them as irrational and wild. From the mid-1920s onwards, one of the most prominent authors on social movements and collective action was Lazarsfeld, who, back in 1948, conducted a two-year study on people's political preferences (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1968). In the same line of investigation, Katz (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1970) and Berelson (1954) also developed the basics of today's political communication theory. At the time when these authors investigated the subject, the mere act of voting alone was a major expression of participation in a democracy, with almost no other political engagement possible. Because of this, social movements are perceived by many authors as a response to the institutions of late modernity that constitute a more complex social base than that of older, class-based actions (Buechler, 2000). Maronitis (2013) and Mason (2012) point out that the lack of citizen's voices in most of the democratic procedures provokes political disorder, which then manifests in the form of riots, occupations, or even extreme political formations. Individual necessity appears in social

movements theory as another key element that triggers social movements (Buechler, 2000) into occurring in a wide variety of circumstances. According to Teorell (2006), individual needs and preferences should be translated into collectively binding decisions by means of responsiveness to the preferences and needs expressed through participation. These preferences and needs, moreover, should give equal weight to the interest of each citizen (Teorell, 2006). This unity in a social mobilisation comes as a result of the collaboration coming together of different citizens from different social classes and ideological positions (Maronitis, 2013).

Social movement theory evolved quickly over the years. While it addressed collective behaviour in the 1950s, in the 1970s, its focus was on resource mobilisation. In the 1980s, social movements also began to influence in another anthropological and sociological branch: social constructionism (Buechler, 2000). From that point on, power relations revolving around class, gender, or race helped people create social movements as we know them today. What all these theories had in common, is that social movement cultures have always been characterised by participation (Costanza-Chock, 2012).

As a matter of fact, we know that citizens are more willing to accept the outcome of those decision-making processes of which they have been a part (Teorell, 2006). Probably because of this intrinsic nature to participation processes, the concept of political participation unfolded in two directions between the late 1960s and the early 1970s. On the one hand, it adopted conventional political participation, which was promoted by the democratic system and its institutions, including voting at every election and becoming a member of political parties, trade unions, professional associations, or other similar associations. As mentioned earlier, this type

of participation has been referred to as conventional or traditional. This model of political participation offered very little to the general public:

> Citizens are still very much interested in politics, informed, skilled, and have political efficacy beliefs. But, for the time being, many of them chose not to take part in politics in a conventional sense. However, they are on "stand-by"; and if something would trigger them, they certainly would not have any problems getting their voices heard (Ekman & Amnå, 2012, p. 283-300).

On the other hand, unconventional participation, as the name suggests, includes those forms of representation that do not follow the pre-established path of participation. Going by this definition, sporadic gatherings or informal assemblies are a part of unconventional participation. Ever since the advent and popular use of computers, the Internet, and all the new information and communication technologies, these unconventional modes of political participation evolved greatly. Among the first parameters studied were petitioning, contacting politicians, and donating money for political causes (Anduiza, Gallego, & Cantijoch, 2010). This type of participation would apparently promote the equal protection of interests by citizens (Teorell, 2006). In order to be part of social participation, the Information and Communication technologies (ICTs) have built an enormous, virtual scenario, in which activists can share and learn among their social movement peers.

2.2 EARLY APPROACHES TO THE INTERNET

POSSIBILITIES WITHIN ACTIVISM

Man is by nature a social animal, as Aristotle once said. It is inherent to the human condition to come together and share thoughts and ideas. This process is known as social aggregation. It happened in the *ἀγορά* (agora : public square in Greek) during Ancient times, and it continues to occur in the Internet, our modern times agora. Social aggregation as a result of interests brining us together on the net happened well before the currently dominating social networks came into existence. Actually, before being called social networks, these were called computer-supported social networks (CSSNs), and they were mainly utilised for work and office issues:

> When computer networks link people as well as machines, they become social networks. Such computer-supported social networks (CSSNs) are becoming important bases of virtual communities, computer-supported cooperative work, and telework. Computer-mediated communication such as electronic mail and computerized conferencing is usually text-based and asynchronous. It has limited social presence, and on-line communications are often more uninhibited, creative, and blunt than in-person communication (Wellman et al., 1996, Abstract).

In time, the Internet transformed from a purely work-office type of network to a sharing-entertaining type. In this shift, the map of social engagement also changed, and virtual communities began to form. Social aggregation then began to interact with the information and communication technologies (ICT) that we will refer to all throughout this doctoral dissertation. These communities led to the creation of an early digital sphere of knowledge and interest sharing:

> Virtual communities are social aggregations that emerge from the Net when enough people carry on those public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace (Rheingold, 1995, p.XX).

Howard Rheingold's, from whose book *The Virtual Community* we have taken the above-mentioned definition, is among the most prominent theorists (Rheingold, 1995) to develop an early study concerning the impact of the Internet on the formation of communities with positive conclusions:

> These new media attract colonies of enthusiasts because CMC [computer-mediated communications] enables people to do things with each other in new ways, and to do altogether new kinds of things–just as telegraphs, telephones, and televisions did (Rheingold, 1995, p.XXI).

However, at that time Rheingold's views were far from being predominant among scholars. In this regard, authors Margolis, Resnick, and Tu, considered in a 1997 article the possibilities that the Internet offered in relation to political activism to be less exciting. In their text, the authors expressed scepticism as to whether the Internet could actually bring about a change in the way political campaigns are conducted and received (Margolis, Resnick, & Chin-Chang, 1997). They instead suggested that the Internet would probably simply reinforce the current framework of politics rather than modify it. Other researchers such as Pedersen and Saglie (2005) asserted that the Internet was indeed revamping politics, but its application still remained quite limited, at least in the early 2000s.

The earlier theorists argued that political activism resulted from proper organisation and mobilisation of resources (Zald & McCarthy, 1979) and thus it could exist without new media platforms. According to these

theories, a purely physical collective action did not need the digital world, and that a purely online collective action did not need physical presence of the protesters either (Earl & Kimport, 2011). As many citizens belong to a number of voluntary associations (Zald & McCarthy, 1979), going online was simply understood as an expansion of that association. From this point of view, the Internet would not replace human communications but it would simply add new levels of methods of interactions (Rheingold, 1995) and support personal and relational development (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2011). As the years passed, however, it became evident that information and communication technologies (ICTs), have drawn interest and engagement towards traditional politics (Anduiza, Gallego, & Cantijoch, 2010), and did in fact dominate modern societies, as we will further see in the subsequent chapters.

2.3 NEW MEDIA IRRUPTION IN POLITICAL ACTIVISM

New Media, understood as the most recent communication platforms and the technologies that make them possible, has been enjoying its importance in the ecology of activism for some years now (Weiss, 2014). In fact, by 2009, New Media had already become the most common gateway into activism (Brodock et al., 2009) and had forged a new type of political contestation (Weiss, 2014). The current technological paradigm prioritises online communication (Serrano Casado, 2012). The interaction possibilities provided by the Internet grants us practically unlimited access to information, both to general and specific information about the world that is available to everybody. As Innis (1950) did, we also believe that media is

not only a mere transmitter of information, but media actually forge the way we see and interpret reality.

In this context, new media has everything that political activism may need. Equipped with the potential to change the manner in which citizens think or act, mitigate or exacerbate group conflicts, facilitate collective action, spur a backlash towards regimes, and garner international attention for a given country, the new media is a perpetual presence in most contemporary social movements (Aday et al., 2010). In comparison to traditional mass media – which tends to be centralised, one-to-many in form, commercial, professionally produced, and owned by the state or some private body (DeLuca, Lawson, & Sun, 2012) – social media and new media are many-to-many types of communication, and they have acted as a counterweight to the propaganda by dominant traditional media (Iskander, 2011). New media has also given a boost to various mobilisation activities, thereby encouraging digital users to be more active (Hara, 2008) and engage in civic participation (Park, Kerk, & Valenzuela, 2009) and activities of all kinds (Pasek, Eian & Romer, 2009).

Among the tools that have helped shape some of the most contemporary forms of activism and social movements, we find social media. These platforms create new contexts for activists that do not exist in the world of traditional organizations. With social media, the grounds of possibility for activism have been multiplied and transformed (DeLuca, Lawson, & Sun, 2012), creating a better practice of democracy and also allow the society to regain control of its will and affairs (Giddens, 1994). Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube as the most prominent and famous examples. These new media platforms have characterised several political

episodes worldwide (Aday et al., 2010) and have preached about the freedom the Internet brings (Fernández-Savater, 2012) while witnessing the downfall of authoritative regimes.

As we have previously discussed, before the advent of the Internet, people needed a bigger and better digital space to engage in all types of discussions (Rheingold, 1995). The evolution of new media not only granted this platform and the tools accompanying it, but it also facilitated the evolution of the discussions taking place via these platforms. The tools (ICTs) and the platforms (new media) allowed information to reach almost every single spot on the planet, despite the difficulties of the involved logistics, all the while placing the citizen in the centre of the picture (Meraz & Papacharissi, 2013). ICTs have thus presented a novel approach for a greater interaction between individuals and groups in regard to their day-to-day communication, causing widespread changes in the building, sustenance and perception of social relationships (Serrano Casado, 2012), for instance strengthening the relations between individuals and catalysing collective citizen action (Valderrama, 2013).

The Internet also replaces traditional public spaces, thereby freeing individual of geographical restrictions (Serrano Casado, 2012). It is in this techno-social scenario that ICTs, particularly the Internet, have raised democratic expectations, particularly in countries with a strong democratic deficit (Nisbet, Stoycheff, & Pearce, 2012). Norris, who predicted that ICTs would have positive consequences for civic society, was one of the first authors to theorise the potential of ICTs (Norris, 2001). As we will discuss further in this research, her prediction did become a reality. Nowadays, there is no doubt among scholars that the Internet has become a public

means for online recruitment of activists (Usacheva, 2014). This goes on to say that the progress of the Internet and everything related to it has revolutionised the system of communications throughout history.

2.4 HOW TECHNOLOGY STRENGTHENS PARTICIPATION
AND ORGANIZATION

We have observed how technology is one of the most important elements in the process of participation and people moving closer for a political outcome. In fact, having a strong connection between the leaders of organisations will facilitate a better outcome of those organisations (Usacheva, 2014). A badly organised movement, on the contrary, can prove to be a complete failure. And while a demonstration will not depose a dictator per se, it certainly will boast a muscular network that will eventually erode the regime in power. In order to achieve this, a plural participation in the organisation of political activism proves to be the key step, and it is in this point where ICTs gain an extra amount dose of importance in participation and organization of activism. Every second, 11 new people join social media. The number of users of social networks has actually increased 13% in the last year (2017) to reach 3,196 million worldwide, according to the latest report by We Are Social and Hootsuite (2018). Social networks are certainly at the core of our daily routines right now and political activism is no stranger to that context.

ICTs permit major political participation on part of both individuals and groups and deliver the appropriate arrangement to establish and consolidate mobilisations, among many other political activities (Zeynep & Wilson, 2012). Organising without organisations now seems possible (Earl & Kimport, 2011). As for the existing organisations, it must be noted that social networks do not replace associations; they reiterate their importance and grant them a new type of life (Howard, 2011). ICTs do in fact turn what is vertical into something horizontal. In other words, they eliminate

intermediaries, making social movements more transversal (Usacheva, 2014). In this regard, Usacheva says the following:

> ICT can be used effectively to create and maintain strong, centralized organizations. Studies have shown, however, that ICT also represents an effective instrument for the establishment and operation of decentralized networks that make it possible for those included in them to express their views openly and, if necessary, to organize the virtual or physical communication of activists and mobilize the necessary resources (Usacheva, 2014, p.7).

According to the most accepted theories in this regard, even when the protesters assume no leadership of the protests, or claim that the organisation is horizontal, there must be someone setting in place the horizontal hierarchy, from beginning to end (Zeynep & Wilson, 2012). With the help of ICTs, the protesters learn about each other and about the protest itself with the help of interpersonal communication tools, with both physical and virtual engagement (Zeynep & Wilson, 2012). In fact, in the activism cases that we will review, more traditional methods of communication beyond social media were also employed, including regular phone lines and face-to-face meetings to disseminate information with respect to the ongoing protests (Zeynep & Wilson, 2012).

The collaboration between ICTs and political activism have quite a few precedents to the ones analysed in this investigation. For instance, a group known as the Zapatistas in Mexico confirmed the power of information and communication technologies as far back as 1994 (Castells, 2004). The Zapatistas were pioneers in using the new information and communication technologies. They challenged the political and military sphere, going on to start what is considered to be the first informational guerrilla warfare (Castells, Yazawa, & Kiselyova, 1995). The Zapatista rebels used ICTs to

propagate the land rights of indigenous populations (Hussain & Howard, 2013). The study of the Zapatista movement marks the beginning of modern scholarly investigation on ICTS used for socio-political purposes (Adrienne, 2001). Another of the earliest examples of the use of ICT in protests is the Citizen Network for the Abolition of Foreign Debt in Seattle, USA, in 1999, which sought to create awareness of the consultation regarding the condonation of foreign debt (Llistar, 2001). A few years later, blogs about war, political analysis, and the extensive use of ICT in coordinating and convening protest activities also boosted global protests against the invasion of Iraq in 2003 (Tilly, Wood, & Esteve, 2010).

Various studies by Adamic and Glance (2005), Hindman (2007), and Hargittai (2008), among others, show that hyperlinks in political blogs lead to one another, especially between that share the same political ideology. In the past, these references have helped in the creation of a digital public sphere and public opinion on issues such as the war. In 2007, mobile phones and blogs played a key role in the protests against the Burmese military and the protest of the civil administration against Musharraf in Pakistan, not to mention against the installation of a chemical factory in China. Meanwhile, the video service YouTube was the means chosen by the Canadians in 2008 to launch a massive campaign for arranging funds for an Indian school (Tilly, Wood, & Esteve, 2010). In 2011, Chilean students spent over six months demanding free, quality education, a demand that garnered considerable media attention. Their protests sparked the interest of media and domestic and foreign political analysts, particularly for their use of the media (Valderrama, 2013). Already in 2006, when the 2011 college students were in high school, ICTs had started to expand, drawing interest from society and generating expectations (Torres & Costa, 2010).

In 2006, students in Chile widely used their Fotolog accounts to make their demands heard and denounce police abuses, connecting across more than 4,000 miles of geography, including Easter Island in the Pacific, via ITCs (Torres & Costa, 2010). The Chilean media started to perceive the power of mobile phones, e-mail, and early social networks such as Fotologs in the sharing of ideas and opinions (Aguilera, 2011).

A key evolution for ICTs was the switch from one-to-one communication to many-to-many. The one-to-one communications marked the beginning of the interaction within electronically devices. Examples would be SMS (short message system), e-mail, and phone calls. Nowadays, communication means are oriented to one-to-many or, in a bigger sense, many-to-many types of communication: this includes chats with multiple users, forums, groups, and social networks, among others (Zeynep & Wilson, 2012). In this regard, the social connectivity and interaction between people changed with the expansion of the Internet and dedicated many-to-many platforms such as Twitter and Facebook (Radsch, 2008). The users willing to participate in political discourse are mostly people who are already interested in that political topic and therefore trust Facebook and Twitter as sources of information (Idle & Nunns, 2011). It has been argued that a platform such as Facebook – which is not a political platform *per se* – may be a better place for hosting political debates (Zuckerman, 2008) even though activists such as Julian Assange and Edward Snowden have proven that Facebook and other platforms are actually under surveillance (Zeynep & Wilson, 2012). However, Earl and Kimport (2011) maintain that if the Internet is used appropriately, an eager use of information and communication tools may lead to more successful changes. Events can be organised with a single click from one's computer, entirely with the use of

online tools without the costs of external gadgets such as printing or mailing. Protesters can also create petitions for support and boycott and also online mailing campaigns within minutes and gather signatures to add to their causes. Contrary to some theorists who have insisted on blaming the disintegration of physical social communities and movements on technology (Maronitis, 2013), the truth is that virtual communities, nowadays reincarnated in social networks, are completely dominating the interactivity map of the Internet and helping social communities to come together in stronger ways. Authors DeLuca, Lawson, and Sun go a step further and actually deny the existence of a presumable physical-digital dichotomy that would supposedly affect the physical social communities:

> The embodied versus social media debate sets up an ideal dichotomy that does not exist, akin to the virulent debate on reality versus virtual reality. For us, there is no possible demarcation between the mediated and the real. Mediated worlds are real and reality is always mediated (by media, language, culture, ideologies, and perceptual practices). Similarly, for centuries, all social protests have involved bodies and media. Activists always use the tools at hand. In Paris, the May 1968 protesters used their bodies and cobblestones and posters and photographs. The Yippies at the 1968 Chicago Democratic National Convention used bodies and the porcine presidential candidate Pigasus and television and Mayor Richard Daley's obtuse pride. All protests are mixed media (DeLuca, Lawson, & Sun, 2012, p.485).

Amid a dizzying array of public screens, the ground of physical activism has fractured and multiplied into multiple decentred digital knots, thus creating a cacophony of pan-mediated social worlds. Furthermore, the ICTs did not only create an arena for sharing messages of outrage, but also a place for hope (Castells, 2013). The Internet has also been used for other campaigns beyond political ones, including targeting brands or institutional

organisations ICTs are thus used by ecologists, feminists, religious groups, and the like, in order to improve their influence in public spheres, irrespective of whether their purpose is related to politics. The impact of ICTs in all kinds of participation and activism movements and the changes that these ICT tools have make some authors believe that mass civilian mobilisations without social media, that is, solely with traditional means, are almost unthinkable nowadays (Usacheva, 2014).

2.5 THE NEXT STEP FOR ICTS: OVERCOME THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

While it becomes patent that ICTs is one of the main pillars of the human social structures of today, and that new media has helped in spreading social participation and collective action, several studies have also pointed out that the participation of people increase in direct proportion to their wealth. Some authors go further and opine that whether the participation takes place offline or via the Internet, traditional political activities remain the domain of those with a high income and education:

> Just as in offline civic life, the well-to-do and well-educated are more likely than those less well-off to participate in online political activities such as emailing a government official, signing an online petition or making a political contribution (Smith, Schlozman, Verba, & Brady, 2009).

Nowadays, the reach of the Internet is also determined by economic factors (Milner, 2006). This concern, known as the Digital Divide, is not new to researchers. For years, the economic growth of a country has depended on political institutions. Politicians decide on economics, which, in turn,

affect education programmes. The digitalization of education through ICTs is out of question (Maspoch, González, Crisóstomo & Pich, 2008). Hence, economics, education and ICT are intrinsically connected. The better for one is also the better for the other. The fact that some part of the population is left outside the reach of technological evolutions has certainly frightened scholars (Norris, 2001) and needs to be addressed as quick as possible.

In the mid-1990s, the term "digital divide" gained recognition as a way to describe the differences between the populations with and without access to the Internet. Originally, the digital divide referred primarily to the technology, with little or no focus on its social repercussions. We assume that this was partly because of social interaction by means of technologies for purposes other than entertainment had not yet started. Later on, digital divide began to be included in social studies as part of the social structure. Access to the Internet was then not measured just by technological parameters; it also depended on social factors such as education, finance, or literacy. Ever since, aspects such as age, gender, race, income, location, and social background, among others, have come to play an increasingly vital role in the expansion of ICTs. According to Norris, there are three dimensions to the digital divide: the social divide, which constitutes the gap between the "information rich" and the "information poor" in nations; the global divide, which is the gap between the industrialised countries and the underdeveloped countries; and the democratic divide, which distinguishes the passive users from the active ones, the latter mainly constituting of people using the Internet for reasons of civic participation (Norris, 2001). Technology remains a must for economic success, personal advancement, and better educational opportunities (Norris, 2001).

On the positive side, it is believed that the propagation of democracy may reduce the digital divide to a considerable extent (Milner, 2006). To overcome the issue of the digital divide, we must keep in mind that a movement that aims to represent the maximum possible number of people must also be able to disseminate their message across to the groups of the population less familiar with technology (Faraone, 2011). In this regard, Earl and Kimport argue that ICTs offer a wide range of possibilities for creating, organising, and participating in protests, that too at a very low cost. In fact, with the advent of new media tools, protesters do not need to be physically together in order to protest in unity (Earl & Kimport, 2011). It has been demonstrated that the participants of mass mobilisations possess structural inequalities in terms of class, race, and gender (Hargittai, 2008). Therefore, a movement with an aim to represent a huge majority of the society must be able to convey their message to the less tech-savvy sections of the population (Faraone, 2011). This means that the more economic resources the citizen has, the more they will be able to engage with new technologies and, therefore, with politics (Dutton & Blank, 2011). Due to the huge amounts of information and contents shared and enhanced via them, ITCs make social collaboration possible (Valderrama, 2013).

Sharing information is certainly a key element, not only when it comes to political activities but also in daily life. It is usually said that knowledge is power (from the Latin scientia potentia est), and this knowledge has usually been limited to in a small elite with complicated structures. Now, however, ITCs allows a new kind of public participation that decentralises power (Orihuela & Cambronero, 2006). Wireless communication has diffused faster than any other communication technology in history (Castells, Fernandez-Ardevol, Qiu, & Sey, 2007).

2.6 NEW MEDIA NARRATIVES: CONTROL OVER CONTENT CREATION

One of the most interesting aspects of ICTs and new media is how news stories are conveyed in all corners of the planet in a matter of seconds, transgressing all international borders. While it is often said that most social movements do not have a clear agenda (and this may well be why most of them do not fulfil their purpose), authors Meraz and Papacharissi believe that amidst the seemingly chaotic networks of protests, there are prominent gatekeepers arising from elite and non-elite media institutions –with activist or journalistic agendas, or even both– contributing to the labelling of movements as revolutions and thus influencing the development and outcome of these movements with a premeditated agenda (Meraz & Papacharissi, 2013). In this context, the media narratives concerning social movements become crucial to the development of the movements themselves and the consecution of their objectives (Micó & Casero-Ripollés, 2014). One of the most important means to achieve such an ambitious goal is storytelling, which involves narrating the event not only from and for activists but also for the entire world (Bell, 2010).

On account of the mass media becoming increasingly crucial in shaping the representations, images, and discourses related to social movements (Rovira-Sancho, 2013), members within the same movements take care of it. From the moment that activists become aware of the presence of television cameras, their public appearance is influenced by the image they want to build for themselves in the eyes of third parties (Rovira-Sancho, 2013). This is what Gitlin called the "everyone is watching"

syndrome (Gitlin, 1980). Both the protesters and the media will attempt to shape their movement in one way or another (Gitlin, 1980) and in this scenario, the dominant media platforms prove to be a key factor when it comes to the repercussions of mobilisations (Costanza-Chock, 2012). If the public is unaware of the social movements, the authorities can remain deaf to their demands in the absence of major consequences. In this regard, it must be noted that the media does not only define what makes the final cut and what does not, but they also have the power to interpret the content (Rovira-Sancho, 2013). Although the Internet, with its potential for many-to-many communication, changes the scenario previously monopolised by traditional media outlets and their practices, it is clear that for most of the population, the main medium for understanding the world today is still the mass media. This is why social movements depend on the will and the agenda of the mainstream media, especially television, which often either ignores such events or misrepresents them. Inevitably, the media become the standard of legitimacy of the protests and it is almost as if the media teach consumers to interpret social movements. A dependence is then established between media and social movements and may well lead to some kind of conflict (Rovira-Sancho, 2013).

A good example of what we have just laid out is the Occupy Wall Street movement, a movement that really invested in their visual narrative, with videos being recorded and uploaded often, not to mention on-wall projections. The recorded videos naturally expressed the feelings of the protesters, which in turn helped their audience empathise with them (Brunner, Nigro, & Raunig, 2013). The Occupy Wall Street protesters also popularised the concept of the human microphone. Since they were forbidden by the law to use actual microphones, a group of protesters would

repeat everything that the speaker was saying in order for the other protesters at the square to hear it (Jones, 2011). Beyond the online use of new media, the Occupy Wall Street protest falls in the transmedia since the protestors used offline techniques – posters, prints, leaflets – as well for propagating their ideology. They also held workshops where attendants could learn how to speak to the press (Costanza-Chock, 2011).

The relations between traditional media and social movements have always been tense, as authors Gitlin (1980) and McChesney (1999). A good example to illustrate Gitlin's words can be found in the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), a student activist movement in the United States demanding more democracy and participation. It expanded rapidly in the mid-1960s before dissolving at its last convention in 1969. Speaking of the march by the Students for a Democratic Society in Washington in 1965, Gitlin writes the following:

> What was the course of the media-movement relation in 1965? For their different reasons, the media and the movement needed each other. The media needed stories, preferring the dramatic; the movement needed publicity for recruitment, for support, and for political effect. Each could be useful to the other each had effects, intended and unintended, on the other (Gitlin, 1980, p.24-25).

When mass media owners do not want something be made public, they simply ignore it. Without visibility, mobilisations are doomed to nonexistence. However, the source of power for traditional media to consolidate its existence is advertising revenue (Rom & Sabaté, 2011, p.40), and that cannot be separated from the audience. If the traditional media were to keep a trending topic in social media out of their loop for too long, they would probably lose audience to alternative media.

The onset of the digital era made narratives concerning social movements reach new heights by providing them with new contributing members, audiences, authors, and platforms (Harlow, 2013). The narratives used before, during, and after protest events may help in the better understanding of social movements by its audiences, even by the members of the movements themselves (Polletta, 1998). In the end, thanks to these kinds of activism and protest narratives, traditional media would ultimately use the digitally generated stories in their own medium (Lotan et al., 2011). It is important to remember that even social movements are mediated; they remain rooted in the local population (Usacheva, 2014) which means that they need a narrative emanating from the activists themselves (Bell, 2010). Thus, stories and the act of storytelling dominate social movements, and narratives are incorporated into the heart of cultural processes.

Given their characteristics, social movements must rely on non-institutional means to achieve political influence and change (Davis, 2002), and the narrative they produce is one of these means. Collective knowledge in all its forms, i.e., language, communication, networking, ideas, and signs, has become the main force of a new type of narrative production (Douzinas, 2013). For instance, during the marches against Wall Street that denounced capitalist practices leaving out what they called the 99% of the population, protestors steadily produced and disseminated content in real time through the use of new technologies (Zeynep, Wilson, 2012). The narratives used in the Egyptian Revolution also certainly allowed for the formation of a global public sphere (El-Nawawy & Khamis, 2009). Some authors (Khamis & Vaughn, 2011) have noted that while the Arab media seemed to showcase both the governors and the opposition equally, creating a rational public debate, the government actually remained stagnant. If at all, the changes

that took place happened at a very slow pace (Seib, 2007). Such a contrast remains a paradox in the Arab media (Khamis, 2007). It must be acknowledged that the use of new media for spreading the revolutionary narrative in the Arab Spring was possible thanks to the low costs of mobile communications, which allowed these ICT tools to be used for political propaganda (Bailard, 2009). Social media in particular and digital media in general are in fact responsible for having created a narrative by means of which the Arab Spring spread from country to country:

> Social media is also the reason we have such good documentation of events. It is the reason that Egyptians had such live coverage of what was going on in Tunisia, and also the reason that Moroccans, Jordanians, and Yemenis had coverage of what was going on in Egypt, just as Libyans and Syrians had coverage of what was going on in those countries, and so on. In other words, it was social media that brought the narrative of successful social protest across multiple, previously closed, authoritarian media systems (Hussain & Howard, 2013, p.62).

The knowledge that the coverage related to protest activities can be and will be retransmitted already configures an arrangement of collective action of a specific kind. The idea that a mass audience acts as the observer of the movement strengthens the dramaturgical representation of the same (Rovira-Sancho, 2013). This is the reason why social movements also use the media to create a clear picture of their actions and also to highlight their protests (Weiss, 2014). Framing processes make social movements hang together and help to characterise the different parts of a social movement in coherence with the contextual storytelling (Benford & Snow, 2000). Framing allows emphasis of some elements of information in a communication process by making them more noticeable, meaningful, or memorable for the audiences. Finally, framing guides the abilities of the audience to think and draw conclusions (Entman, 1993).

Given that new media is intrinsically image-based, the Internet is quickly flooded with images, videos, and other real-time audio-visual content, through which an emphasis on the visual narrative is placed in social movements (Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993). This is also why the theatrical component is essential for the dissemination of the message that movements carry with them (Gusfield, 1994).

When the Indignados in Barcelona had the scholar Manuel Castells deliver a public speech at Plaça Catalunya, they knew exactly what they were doing. Besides the propagation of Castells' wisdom among the attendants, his figure – much respected not only in his native Catalonia but also worldwide – gave the movement a powerful ally to support their cause. Castells could have sent regards from his house, but he instead walked down to the plaza and spoke in public. The dramatisation of the message by a public figure is an ancient type of authoritative claim, but it has proven to be equally effective in modern times. Castells' appearance at Plaça Catalunya surrounded by the Indignados was widely covered by the Catalan and Spanish media. However, it had been published over the Internet much earlier. This underlines the fact that the Internet helps activists save time and money that they would otherwise have to invest in communication and coordination, but the need to stage the protest remains essentially the same (Earl & Kimport, 2011).

In spite of the many advantages of the Internet, it remains almost impossible for a social movement to exercise any control the perception of its projected image (Rovira-Sancho, 2013). Given the fact that most of the audience will still rely on traditional media to understand and interpret the movements, the protesters must characterise their protest in a way that

people can empathise with it. In this process of generating empathy, individual leaders come to the fore.

It is important to remember that even social movements are mediated; they remain rooted in the local population (Usacheva, 2014). This is why, from time to time, notorious figures emerge to express the anger of the masses as their representatives. These persons are generally defined as one-time spokespersons of a collective intelligence (Fernández-Savater, 2012). These spokespersons are often part of the protest narrative. Moreover, while social media often focusses on real-time protests, it must be noted that the messages carried over the Internet do not only concern themselves with the present, but also the past and the future, making these the key elements in protests (Giglio, 2011). For instance, we know that the protests that we have analysed were set in a context that the media had been perpetuating for years together (Zeynep & Wilson, 2012), and that before the revolution was sparked, there was a strong pre-revolution narrative doing the rounds among the audiences (Howard et al., 2011). It must also be noted that the audience that is willing to receive messages regarding a potential revolution or the actual revolution are an audience that is already interested in the revolution (Idle & Nunns, 2011).

2.7 TO WHICH EXTENT IS NEW MEDIA CHANGING POLITICAL ACTIVISM?

The role of new media in activism is often a topic of debate between those who ascribe a major role to it and those who dismiss its impact. For instance, Facebook and Twitter were deeply associated with the success of

the Arab Spring through allowing both online and offline mobilisation (Lim, 2012) and redefining the meaning of citizenship and democracy (DeLuca, Lawson, & Sun, 2012). We certainly believe that social networks facilitate the transformation of offline activism into online activism and vice-versa (Harlow & Harp, 2012). In fact, the research by Juris (2005) and Harlow (2013) suggests that online activism can be a precursor to offline activism, allowing collectives to form and movements to take shape that might in the absence of internet not have occurred at all. Some authors even support the idea that we are witnessing the branding of perpetual participation as a norm of on part of citizens through the use of social networks:

> Twitter and Facebook depend on individual and collective participation and creation, fostering a norm of perpetual participation (…) that norm creates new expectations of what it means to be a citizen and a person and a democracy. Possibilities of participatory media are beginning to be realized as people deploying decentered knots of social media create a kaleidoscopic collage of social worlds across a vast array of millions of public screens (DeLuca, Lawson, & Sun, 2012).

It seems safe to assert that the digital and physical public space have merged (Weiss, 2014) and also that a huge amount of people is making use of the new media platforms for political purposes (Bailard, 2009). In fact, shortly after the first uprising in the Arab Spring, many authors started labelling the events as the "Facebook revolutions" or the "Twitter revolutions". They asserted that thanks to these e-events, the crowds were given an opportunity to create, spread, and validate several activism events (Meraz & Papacharissi, 2013). Former U.S. National Security Council official Mark Pfeifle even recommended nominating Twitter for the Nobel Peace Prize (Snol, 2009). In today's society, tools such as Google or Facebook make it harder to safeguard one's privacy (Earl & Kimport, 2011).

Despite this fact, billions of people use them. Clay Shirky stands as one of the most notorious social media advocates (Shirky, 2011) and there are various theories favouring the role of new ICTs with regard to social movements (Serrano Casado, 2012). On the other hand, the role of Twitter in the Arab Spring – and more generally, the role of social media in social movements – has been dismissed by authors such as Esfandiari (2010). Gladwell (2010) and Morozov (2011). In both cases, there is quite a strong consensus that beneath the famous influence of social media, there are many layers of efforts at effective communication in the Middle Eastern countries (Zeynep & Wilson, 2012). It is undeniable, however, that new social movements are largely dependent on social networks, which is the reason behind their proliferation. The more a movement is able to convey its message over these new communication networks, the more the consciousness of the citizens develops, and the more the public sphere of communication becomes a contested terrain (Castells, 2013). Social media and the new media thus allow users to build massive networks between people with common interests (Ellison, 2007).

It remains clear that the innovative use of the ICTs for civic engagement and networked activism has opened a new window of research for scholarly activity worldwide. Some authors have pointed out the democratic potential of the new media, focussing on how activists from different countries make use of these media to replace authoritarian regimes with free democracies (Aday et al., 2010). Nevertheless, the link between the protests and the usage of ICTs has been disputed by some authors, who argue that the impact of these ICTs has been exaggerated (Gladwell, 2010). One of the arguments used in this regard refers to the fact that the propagation of these technologies is distinct in every country. For instance,

it is argued that countries such as Bahrain, with more population of Internet users than the United States, and other countries such as Yemen and Libya, which show very low levels of Internet engagement, have both experienced massive protests (Stepanova, 2011). In fact, some researchers such as Evgeny Morozov have argued that the authoritarian regimes have learnt how to tame the power of social networks and they even use them in their favour (Morozov, 2012). In a similar vein, Hussain and Howard believe that it would be an error of judgment to construct a technologically deterministic theory of contemporary democratisation (Hussain & Howard, 2013). This has generated a fierce debate concerning the positive and negatives aspects of the new media, focusing mostly on technology as a tool. DeLuca, Lawson, and Sun opine the following in this regard:

> The discussion of social media is too often simplified into a debate between techno-utopians and techno-cynics about how activists use the media. While some proclaim a brave new world of Twitter revolutions, others nostalgically defend the sanctity of embodied protests (DeLuca, Lawson, & Sun, 2012, p.485).

We believe this debate is too superficial, as it considers the new media as a mere technology. However, as we have pointed out in this research, the new media is much more than that. New media, along with social networks and new ICTs, constitute a motor of change in a society that completely transcends the technological aspect. Despite some pessimistic views (Di Gennaro & Dutton, 2006), the ICTs actually do motivate people to engage in political activities, not only those with an existing interest or experience in offline political activism, but also those uninterested in politics. In this pattern, it is noticeable that an experienced Internet user is more likely to participate in politics within the network itself (Borge, Cardenal, & Malpica, 2012). As a result of this, those who use blogs or social networking

sites for political reasons are much more likely to be involved in other forms of civic and political activism (Smith et al., 2009).

The decentralisation facilitated by the ICTs and by the Internet in particular detaches the user from the traditional hierarchies characterised as vertical, and more concretely, top-down. The new information and communication technologies thus allow for a horizontal type of information flow (Serrano Casado, 2012). Horizontal communication encourages massive participation, but at the same time, it increases the amount of information that the user has to process (Serrano Casado, 2012). It is because of these advances that we can conclude that citizen empowerment has been revitalised by the advent of the said new technologies. ITCs thus generate a full range of techno-social possibilities (Valderrama, 2013). At first, online activism aided to overcome the pressure on the physical world (i.e., repression or violence from authoritative governments) in the sense that there is a great difference in complaining from home than protesting on the streets (Usacheva, 2014).

Now, however, the physical world and the digital world act as complements to one another. The abounding anonymous citizenship in the network transcends political ideologies (Fernández-Savater, 2012). When they come together, these new social masses that originate in the Internet are so heterogeneous that it is almost impossible to identify and analyse them, thereby making it harder for the government to target and criminalise them (Fernández-Savater, 2012). Interaction between users is one of the basic characteristics of ICTs (De Kerckhove & Rowland, 1999) which sets the cultural experience (Lull, 2008) and transmission, facilitating the expression of feelings, emotions, and ideals (Turkle & Trafí, 1997). The digital world makes available a virtual space to share multimedia content

with people of similar interests and contributes to strengthening weak social networks (Cobo & Pardo, 2007). People now interact by means of what can be called a new model for democratic participation (Castells, 2004; Valderrama, 2013).

In this context, it would be naïve to overlook the fact that the democratic potential of information technologies could also backfire. In fact, in has so happened in the past that some authoritarian regimes quickly learned how to control the Internet so that they could use it in their favour. Therefore, in the activism field, the new media can be an ally or an enemy. Which side it favours depends explicitly on the message being conveyed. In the case of protests, the involved activists will project their message in such a way that the media can help to publicise it in a positive way to gain new supporters. In their turn, the media, or at least some media, will fragment the message under their own guidelines. The media may then turn themselves into an ally or an enemy. Thus, the control of information becomes the key with regard to social movements, activists, and protests. Diebert compares the eventual domination of cyberspace to that of the land, the sea, and the air:

> (…) these efforts to control internet content are growing in scope, scale, and sophistication world- wide. Moreover, the methods used by states to filter content demonstrate a systematic lack of accountability and transparency. Although at first glance these policies and practices may be attributed simply to the strategic interests of states to control information flows across their territorial borders, the policies and practices of internet content filtering—in particular the use of computer network attacks and offensive information warfare—suggest a much deeper geopolitical struggle over the internet's architecture that is only beginning to unfold. Just as the domains of land, sea, air, and space have all been gradually

colonized, militarized, and subject to inter-state competition so too is the once relatively unencumbered domain of cyberspace (Deibert, 2009, p.334).

In this regard, it has been evidenced that social media has its limitations when dealing with political issues (Khamis & Vaughn, 2012). The Iranian protests resulting from Iran's presidential election in June 2009 serve as an example of both the positive and the dark side of new media regarding politics. At that time, on the one hand, social networks allowed protesters to showcase their massive rallies against the government of Tehran. The government was led by Mahmoud Ahmadinejad at that time. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (born 1956) is an Iranian politician who was the sixth President of Iran from 2005 to 2013, later succeed by Hassan Rouhani. His government used the ICTs to locate, spy on, and imprison the dissidents (Aday et al., 2010). In turn, regimes like Syria and Bahrain invested in the creation of pro-government content on the Internet to mitigate the repercussions of the negative political discussion surrounding their mandates. There are also the cases of Saudi Arabia and the UAE following a closely guarded and systematic strategy of surveillance and punishment concerning online political discussions. Hussain and Howard demonstrate that digital media and ICTs can also aid authoritarian security forces in improving their management and coercion capabilities. For the same, they cite Saudi Arabia as an example, where e-governance and levels of connectivity are as qualitative and sophisticated as their censorship and management protocols. This is the reason why there has scarcely been a successful offline mobilisation in these countries (Hussain & Howard, 2013).

Oddly enough, Egyptian politicians as well as other Arab authorities decided not to exercise control over the Internet, wrongly predicting that if people got a change to vent their malaise online, they would never take to

the streets. The Arab Spring, however, proved this wrong. Only when the uprisings gained notoriety did some governments decide to take the necessary steps. It was, of course, too late for them. In fact, taking down the Internet backfired in these very countries. In Egypt, for instance, the cost of blocking the Internet accounted for $18 million losses per day (Hussain & Howard, 2013). Apart from the Arabic countries, a similar case of good-versus-bad use of new media can be witnessed in China. The Chinese officials have promoted the Internet to further their economic liberalisation plans, help the development of some areas, and fight corruption. However, they also exert strict control over it, and political discussions are regularly targeted and even repressed. Singapore follows a similar pattern, trying to be a tech-savvy society with political control over the Internet. The same goes for Cuba, the only difference being that Internet connection in Cuba is harder to get (Kalathil & Boas, 2010).

The Internet is being adopted at very different levels by every country. For instance, democracies tend to adopt the Internet much faster than authoritarian regimes. Governments have the capacity to speed up the adoption of ICTs by drafting policies in favour of change with regard to technology and its benefits (Milner, 2006). Conflicting cultural values are among the many reasons why a government would try to block cyberspace (Knoll, 1995). The control of the Internet clashes with economic growth: Singapore (Hogan, 1998), Malaysia (Abbott, 2001) and Egypt (Hussain & Howard, 2013) are recent examples of this.

On a more positive note, Deibert recognises that the netizens are not waiting with their arms crossed in this battle; they are calling for a non-regulated Internet (Deibert, 2009). Most Eastern governments such as the Chinese government see a danger in Western ideas, leading them to exert

strict controls over the Internet (Hogan, 1998). Therefore, it is quite important for the success of an uprising against an authoritarian regime that other democratic countries step in to defend the protesters' freedom of speech (Hussain, Howard, 2013). Even though a significant amount of digital content is beyond the reach of censorship (Deibert, 2009), this is becoming more and more complicated:

> A good example is China's targeting of the specific string of codes embedded in the URL of the Google cache function. The latter is a service provided by Google whereby users can connect to archived information from websites stored on Google's servers, rather than on the servers of the original website. The service was designed to provide a way to access information through redundancy, but it is also a very simple and effective way to get around content filtering. Since users connect to Google servers rather than to the blacklisted servers, they bypass the con- tent filters. Upon learning of this technique, China implemented a blocked string on their backbone/gateway routers that prevented any use of the Google cache function from within China (Deibert in Chadwick & Howard, 2009, p.329).

It is evident that social media tools have both enabled social movement leaders and empowered authoritative governments (Hussain, Howard, 2013). We believe that for the most part, the new ICTs have helped and are still helping to change the world in positive ways. Limiting the usage of the Internet among citizens would generally be viewed as a negative step on part of any government, as it happens already with authoritative governments. In light of this, protesters around the world will have to overcome these limitations, if they face them, to keep on spreading their messages. One of the aims of this thesis is, precisely, to demonstrate that the new media, along with new information technologies, have been key in the development and propagation of social movements that have gained geopolitical relevance in the past decade. We have shown that, despite

factors such as those described in this chapter, the new media has more positive effects than negative ones.

PART III – MAJOR CASES OF DIGITAL ACTIVISM

OVERVIEW OF PART III

During the spring of 2011, the world beheld an unexpected wave of protests and riots in many countries across the Middle East and North Africa, and even in Western countries. These democratic uprisings occurred one after the other, as if it were a chain reaction. In this case, it was a massive chain of democratic uprisings causing thousands of citizens of both democratic and undemocratic countries to take to the streets. In this chapter we analyse four of these demonstrations that we have chosen given its significance: the Aran Spring, the Egyptian Revolution, the 15-M Indignados movement and the Occupy Wall Street marches. The chapter ends with a comment on what do these protests have in common.

3.1 CASE STUDY: THE ARAB SPRING UPRISINGS

During the spring of 2011, the world beheld an unexpected wave of protests and riots in many countries across the Middle East and North Africa. These democratic uprisings occurred one after the other, as if it were a chain reaction. In this case, it was a massive chain of democratic uprisings causing thousands of citizens of both democratic and undemocratic countries to take to the streets. In the beginning, the protests were mostly nonviolent, although the groups of people in rebellion ended up facing the police on several occasions. Every time the police resorted to force to control the protesters, the rallies became more massive and the anger of the protesters escalated. This wave of protest was against long-standing dictatorships in countries such as Egypt, Libya, or Tunisia, where eventually, the dictators Hosni Mubarak (born in 1928), who was the Egyptian military and political leader who served as the fourth President of Egypt from 1981 to 2011, Muammar Gaddafi (born in 1942), commonly known as Colonel Gaddafi, who was a Libyan revolutionary and politician, and the de facto ruler of Libya for 42 years, from 1969 to 2011, and Zine El Abidine Ben Ali (born in 1936), who was the second President of Tunisia from 1987 to 2011, were deposed respectively. The protests were also replicated in Algeria, Syria, Jordan, Yemen, Bahrain, and the Palestinian Territories. In some of these cases, as in Syria, civil wars broke out as a result of the refusal of the president to renounce power.

The Arab Spring has its origins a little before the actual season of Spring. It was on December 18, 2010, when popular revolt erupted in Tunisia against the then president of the country, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. Shortly afterwards, a wave of revolutionary demonstrations (Hussain &

Howard, 2013), protests, riots, and civil wars arose in several other Arab and African countries, going on from 2010 to 2012, in the following order: Algeria, Jordan, Oman, Egypt, Yemen, Djibouti, Somalia, Sudan, Bahrain, Libya, Kuwait, Morocco, Mauritania, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Iranian Khuzestan, Israel, Palestine, and Iraq. Ever since, the world has witnessed many outcomes of the Arab Spring: five governments were overthrown (Tunisia, Yemen, Libya, and Egypt twice); five protests led to changes in the government (Jordan, Oman, Kuwait, Morocco, and Lebanon); and a major civil war broke out in Syria, causing more than 160,000 deaths. In reality, at the end of 2014, Syria accounted for more than 80 % of the total death toll from the Arab Spring, which totals to almost 200,000 victims.

Before the Arab Spring gained worldwide attention by means of social networks, the Arab protesters were already using online platforms of communication for their organisation. While it is true that Facebook and Twitter did not cause the revolutions *per se*, to ignore the strategic and intentional uses of digital media in them would be ignorant (Hussain & Howard, 2013). This premise is hold throughout the dissertation. In fact, the Arab Spring cannot be adequately explained through just the traditional literature on social movements theory, and requires new approaches to further explore the role of ITCs in protests movements (Harlow, 2013).

The activists from the Arab Spring uploaded the newsfeed themselves to their personal accounts on social media. These uploads were made possible thanks to the new ICTs such as smartphone and satellites. The protesters would record audio cuts and film several actions of the activists as well as the attacks of the repressive forces, and afterwards they would post them to Twiiter or Facebook, sometimes even to the dark net, hoping to avoid censorship from their own governments. Every day, these

activists would produce their own news feed and serve it to various international operators, an example of which would be Al Jazeera.

Literally "The Island", abbreviating "The Arabian Peninsula", Al Jazeera is a Doha-based broadcaster owned by the Al Jazeera Media Network, which is funded by the House of Thani, the ruling family of Qatar. Launched as an Arabic news satellite TV channel, Al Jazeera has since expanded into a massive network, including channels in English language. Al Jazeera gave a wide coverage throughout the Arab Spring uprisings. But before we explore the role of ICTs in the Arab Spring any further, we shall analyse the Al Jazeera effect in brief. It is important to note that the communicative context in North Africa needs to be understood as a complex ecology, not just as a result of a particular platform or device (Zeynep & Wilson, 2012), and that the most recent evolution of the Arab communicative system owes much of its notoriety to the satellite network Al Jazeera, which has actively contributed to the public sphere in the Arab countries (Lynch, 2006). Al Jazeera has given a boost to new voices in the Arab public sphere, allowing several perspectives and opinions to be broadcast nationally and internationally for the very first time (Nisbet & Myers, 2010). Al Jazeera has its own agenda-setting approach by means of which it gives voice to those who oppose the established elite in the North African countries (Seib, 2008).

The Al Jazeera network thus constituted a key piece in the circulation of the protesters' messages. While the penetration of Facebook, Twitter, and other social networks in the Arab countries had varied effects in terms of reach (Stepanova, 2011), the Arabic network enabled millions of households that tuned into their channel to see the same footage. With Al Jazeera and other satellite networks, it has been acknowledged (Khamis &

Vaughn, 2011) that the media actually did offer more than just one position, more than just the government's position. In fact, Al Jazeera and other channels are known for giving voice to their political opponents. However, these had no effect on the population or on the government themselves, who appeared to remain immune to potential changes (Seib, 2007). Al Jazeera quickly incorporated the social media within their traditional news production. Just like any other commercial network, Al Jazeera airs content from Twitter and Facebook, among other platforms (Zeynep & Wilson, 2012). The channel also proved to be an important medium for the voices of the opposition voices to have a place in public discourse (Hussain & Howard, 2013). Thus, it is possible to assert that Al Jazeera acted as a catalyst for the soon-to-be protests while using social media content created by the protesters themselves.

According to many studies conducted by the researchers quoted in this chapter, digital media played a noteworthy role in the Arab Spring, providing the fundamental infrastructure of a social movement unlike the others that have emerged in recent years in North Africa (Hussain & Howard, 2013). Hussain and Howard emphasise on the notion of community that the social networks brought to the Arabs:

> Social movement leaders and collective action networks shared strategies for direct political action, created regional and international news events that drew attention and sympathy from neighbouring countries, and inspired others to join and celebrate their causes (Hussain & Howard, 2013, p.116).

The protesters in the Arab Spring were not interested in the three major models proposed in political Islam (Hussain & Howard, 2013). These are: Al Qaeda's Salafi Jihadism, Iran's Shiite theocracy, and Saudi Arabia's rigid Wahhabism (Wright, 2011). They were not demonstrating in favour of

a particular politician, a single political party, or a concrete ideology. Instead, the people on the streets were mainly cosmopolitan young people disappointed with the political elites, who shared their common grievances online and offline (Ramadan, 2012).

> The causes of revolution are always complex, and the conditions under which revolts succeed are rare. For a revolution to succeed, the government must seem so unjust and inept that it is viewed as a threat to the country's future. A country's social, economic, and military elites must be alienated from the state and no longer willing to defend it, which was true with Egypt and Tunisia in the deposition of their dictators, but less so with Libya and Syria, and not so with Bahrain and Saudi Arabia (Hussain & Howard, 2013, p.118).

As one may correctly think, not everyone in the Arab Spring had access to a computer, but most of them did have access to mobile phones. We will later observe the important role played by this tool in the Egyptian Revolution, but let us first mention, as Hussain and Howard stress, how important mobile phones were as the key mediating instrument bridging the communication gaps between protesters:

> [Mobile phones] could be easily carried and concealed, could often be used to shoot and upload photos and videos, and could be recharged in the street. Given the high rates of mobile phone use, especially in the dense urban centres, it is safe to say that each person at the protests either had a mobile phone or was part of a group in which there were several mobile civic journalists and bloggers (Hussain & Howard, 2013, p.122).

In recent years, information technologies have opened up new paths to the democratisation and the entrenchment of civil society in many Arab countries (Hussain & Howard, 2013). When speaking of democratisation, however, Hussain and Howard note that many authors analyse the Arab world according to the standards set in place by Western democracy. They

opine that in actuality, Lebanon should be at the top in the context of Arab countries, and Saudi Arabia should be at the lower end. In other words, the standard should be set according to the most open democracy, which, in this case, is Lebanon. Each single Arab Spring country could be described by its unique combination of causal factors that have made them developed as they have (Hussain & Howard, 2013).

The information flow in the countries where the Arab Spring took place (and other Arabic countries) has stringent restrictions. The media outlets are controlled by the authoritative governments, all communications are under continuous surveillance, and citizens live in the fear of censorship and imprisonment (Zeynep & Wilson, 2012). These authoritarian regimes are defined as modern dictatorships. The rules of these countries have tamed political, social, and economic forces under their authoritative control (Masoud, 2011). An authoritarian regime does not only control the public sphere in the sense of propaganda, they also discourage any kind of interaction, the involved parties and contents of which are against their will. Since the government controls not only the access but also the content of communication, the citizens remain under a constant threat of imprisonment, torture, and other types of punishment. Social media has created new vulnerabilities in the most durable of authoritarian regimes (Zeynep & Wilson, 2012) and with the expansion of Internet, the activists saw a window of opportunity to exploit these vulnerabilities (Fahmy, 2010).

The Green Revolution in Iran is one of the most famous uses of new media in the Arab region prior to the Arab Spring. It showed the Arab people the power they could claim and exercise with the use of the new media (Zeynep & Wilson, 2012). The Iranian protests inspired the article *The Revolution Will Be Twittered* by Andrew Sullivan (2009, June 13) in *The*

Atlantic, a title that would later become prophetic of the course of the Arab Spring. It is maintained, however, that the majority of political conversations took place preceding major street protests. This supports the idea that virtual networks materialised before street protest networks Hussain, M. M., & Howard, P. N. (2013). In this regard, it is noticeable that maps and guides providing information concerning strategies and nonviolence goals to the would-be participants were distributed before the uprisings hoping that they would be followed (Hussain & Howard, 2013).

The importance of data generated through ICTs becomes central to understanding the shaping of political debates with respect to the Arab Spring (Howard et al., 2011). Based on a survey of participants in Egypt's Tahrir Square protests, it has been demonstrated that the usage of social media tools, particularly that of Facebook, has been crucial in shaping the individual decisions of the Egyptian citizens regarding the mobilisations. The same study concludes that the regime could hardly control the new ICTs, thereby proving to be a great advantage to the protesters. In fact, the spread of social media greatly increased the odds of massive turnouts in protests. Most protesters used Facebook to keep up to date on the development of the events leading up to the protests. It is the conclusion of several studies that social media revolutionised the media landscape before, during, and after the Arab Spring. Twitter, for instance, can be seen as a meritocratic network, as any message can come into the spotlight based on the users' will. Messages become popular according to the number of retweets or favourites they have, not by who wrote them. The merit lies in writing something that draws the attention of the mass. It does not necessarily have to be either real or accurate (Zeynep & Wilson, 2012).

In the Arab Spring, however, the messages that did the rounds on social media contained a high degree of truth, which meant they spread quicker like wildfire (Idle & Nunns, 2011). Thus, several studies conclude that social media effectively helps in the confrontation of authoritative governments (Bimber, Flanagin, & Stohl, 2005) as is the case of the Egyptian Revolution.

3.2 CASE STUDY: THE EGYPTIAN REVOLUTION

The Egyptian protests began on January 25 Revolution, following a popular uprising on the same date in 2011. It soon became named the Egyptian Revolution of 2011, and it was still yet to finish in the year 2015. Note that the successful uprising in Tunisia, which ended up with President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali leaving the country (Harlow, 2013) preceded the Egyptian Revolution (Harlow, 2013) acting as a catalyst for it (Attia, Nergis, Friedman, & Elhusseiny, 2011). Since then, the revolution has ousted two governments. First, it resulted in the overthrowing of Hosni Mubarak, and he was sentenced to life imprisonment. Then, the protesters propitiated the resignation of the first democratically elected president, Mohamed Morsi, due to an Islamist-backed constitution that led to a coup d'état by the Egyptian general Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. After the coup, el-Sisi resigned from his military duties so that he could contest in the 2014 elections, which he won. He then served as the president of Egypt.

The protests that took place in Egypt had been gaining momentum over several years (Zeynep & Wilson, 2012). Fraud in vote counting is just one of many examples that we find in Mubarak's last years in power, and

one of the many frauds that had to be publicly acknowledged thanks to the new ICTs. The digital conversations prior to the revolutions preceded major events on the ground (Howard et al., 2011). One-to-one physical communication was, on the contrary, seen as very dangerous, given that the protesters could not know whom they could trust and whom they could not (Zeynep & Wilson, 2012). Conversely, digital communication generated a higher level of truth among activists (Idle & Nunns 2011).

Some authors noted that a pre-revolution climax was brewing up in the Egyptian blogosphere, prompting them to conduct an intensive study of it long before the uprisings (Radsch, 2008). Long before the events in Tahrir Square, Egyptian bloggers had already denounced Mubarak's regime, with some of them ending up imprisoned (Zeynep & Wilson, 2012). These activists used their blogs to propagate their cause not only within their territorial borders but also beyond them (Fahmy, 2010). Because of this, it has been concluded that the conversations that took place prior to the revolutions were determinant for the revolution to start (Howard et al., 2011). For instance, the Facebook page *We are all Khaled Said* soon became a meeting point for discussions between activists and, most importantly, planning actions such as the Tahrir Square protests. It is thus proved that before the Arab Spring, the internet has been ripe with political activism. The quick expansion of Internet and the use of blogs allowed many activists to get to know each other better and meet at conferences outside their region (Zeynep & Wilson, 2012). It seems relevant to mention that only one week before the streets of Cairo erupted in protest, 26-year-old Egyptian activist Asmaa Mahfouz shared a video of herself on Facebook and YouTube, calling on her fellow countrymen to join her in protest at Tahrir Square on 25 January. Remarkably, Asmaa Mahfouz called for action not

only through the digital sphere, where she succeeded, but also in offline grounds, where she also succeeded (Harlow, 2013).

The protests themselves were quite inclusive; they picked up momentum after the death of Khalid Said, an incident that acted as a tangible focus for solidarity. Social media was then able to provide the medium and the tools for some to express their reactions to the incident and ponder over its causes. The participants rejected any attempts to associate the protests with any particular group or ideology. However, it was not the first time this had happened. In 2005, videos filmed with mobile phone cameras captured the scam concerning the counting of Egyptian votes, wherein Hosni Mubarak was seeming to have 98% of the votes (Hussain & Howard, 2013). This is with reference to the importance of mobile phones referred to earlier. In this regard, it must be noted that already in 2010, mobile phone penetration in Egypt was as high as 80%, and it was even higher in Cairo. In just a year – from 2009 to 2010 – this percentage increased by a huge 24%. The emerging ICTs in the Middle East provided for a new media context, as we mentioned in the chapter before, where people could document and share their news and various perspectives, giving birth to a greater Arab public sphere (Zeynep & Wilson, 2012). However, only 17% of the country's total population of 80 million had access to the Internet in 2010. By that time, Facebook claimed to have five million users, which is more than any other Arab country. Most importantly, three of those five million users were under the age of 25 (Carrington, 2011).

The new ICTs surely ensured a major large-scale participation in political activities by both individuals and groups, and also provided the structure to organise mobilisations and other political actions (Zeynep & Wilson, 2012). Hussain and Howard explain the protests in Tunisia and

Egypt in six phases: the preparation phase, the ignition phase, the protest phase, the international buy-in phase, the climax phase, and finally, the follow-on information warfare phase:

> The most successful cases of sustained and peaceful protest, with deposed despots, were Tunisia and Egypt. Both cases exemplified a pattern that can be seen, with different degrees of strength, across the region: a preparation phase, involving activists' use of digital media across time to build solidarity networks and identification of collective identities and goals; an ignition phase, involving symbolically powerful moments which ruling elites and regimes intentionally or lazily ignored, but which galvanized the public; a protest phase, where, by employing offline networks and digital technologies, small groups strategically organized on large numbers; an international buy-in phase, where digital media networks extended the range of local coverage to international broadcast networks; a climax phase, where the regime manoeuvred strategically or carelessly to appease public discontent through welfare packages or harsh repressive actions; and finally, a follow-on information warfare phase, where various actors, state-based and from international civic advocacy networks, compete to shape the future of civil society and information infrastructure that made it possible (Zeynep & Wilson, 2012, p.103-104).

Among the most prominent users of ITCs to confront Mubarak's regime were religious groups, minorities, liberals, and others also opposed to the long-time ruler. However, until the Tunisian uprising, the physical protests in other Arab countries had remained fairly small-scale and under the control of their authoritarian governments (Zeynep & Wilson, 2012). Facebook began to grow popular among some Arab countries in the year 2009. The event amplified the political discussions that, at the moment, were mostly taking place on satellite TV and the blogosphere. The introduction of Facebook in Arabic also facilitated online communication between activists. While most bloggers already knew each other, Facebook

allowed more activists to be brought into the limelight and more groups consisting of like-minded individuals with the same political interests to be created. These activists used the new media tools to bring up poverty, human right violations, corruption cases, and torture, among many other controversial topics (Zeynep & Wilson, 2012). The expansion of the Internet and blogs came along with an increase of vigilance exerted by the governments, but that did not stop the activist bloggers from continuing their campaigns (Fahmy, 2010). Social media helped the debate to garner international attention, and the Egyptian bloggers initiated an authentic virtual global public sphere (El-Nawawy & Khamis, 2009). During the marches, these protestors steadily produced and disseminated content in real time (Zeynep & Wilson, 2012). Much of the early news of the protests reached the outside world through Twitter. The traditional media then picked up these stories (Lotan et al., 2011). Idle and Nunns describe the high level of interaction among activists on Twitter:

> Using the hashtag #Jan25 to enable anyone to join the conversation, and activists talked to each other directly using the @ reply function. Later on, once the revolution was in full swing, protesters used Twitter to announce new initiatives, like marching on the parliament building, and to boost their collective morale with reports of other developments around the country. But Twitter came into its own as a place to report on events. Initially, Egyptians were avid recipients of such reports coming out of Tunisia. Later their own accounts of the Egyptian revolution would help inspire uprisings across the region (Idle & Nunns, 2011, p.20).

It has become clear that, with the eruption of social media, online political debates increased (Zeynep, Wilson, 2012). In fact, the digital narration on social media channels of the protests indeed helped the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions to become a matter of great significance in the North African countries (Howard et al., 2011).

The Egyptian Revolution not only gave rise to a political struggle on the streets of Cairo, but it also triggered a communication struggle between the activists and the government (Khamis, Vaughn, 2011). On 28 January, 2011, the Egyptian government decided to shut off the Internet and other services such as mobile lines. Lasting about one week, the blackout was applicable in the entire country. The information concerning the revolution was then propagated through other means such as file transfer protocols (FTP) and older dial-up modems. For five days, all communications were blocked in Egypt, but that did not stop the activists from doing their job:

> The activists on Twitter were not only talking to their fellow Egyptians but to the international media and the world. They went to great lengths to get online during the five-day Internet blackout, when their tweets could not easily be read by other Egyptians. By telephoning friends abroad to upload their tweets, pooling their resources to get on to the one remaining internet service provider in Egypt (the one used by the stock exchange), or offering interviews to news organizations in return for access to their satellite internet connections, activists managed to ensure that the regime could not cut them off from the world (Idle & Nunns, 2011, p.20).

The blackout, however, proved to be an unsuccessful attempt at preventing protesters from disseminating information. In fact, some authors assert that the blackout led even more people into the real, live demonstrations in Tahrir Square. Then, on February 11, only a few days after the blackout, Mubarak resigned (Zeynep & Wilson, 2012).

The social media played a central role in determining the way the uprising was experienced in and out of the country. It was also central to the way the uprising was "mediated" and explained to the outside world. It is clear that those the users of social media believe that it had a role in leading to the debates and the consequent establishment of networks that facilitated

the organisation of the protests that began on 25 January. In marches and protests, Twitter and Facebook helped in putting together new strategies for the movement (Hussain & Howard, 2013).

The protesters not only in Egypt but in the Arab countries as a whole used the technology in their possession to disseminate their stories of fight and struggle. Most of these stories were uploaded on Facebook and Twitter, as these platforms allowed the activists to circumvent the censorship prevalent in their home countries. Facebook and Twitter, as well as other social networks, were eventually banned in different countries at different times to avoid the activists relaying the strong repression exerted on them by their dictators. It seems clear, then, that social networks work as homogenous cultural and social entities for democratic discussions. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that the he Arab protesters would engage in conversations with other political communities, particularly those belonging to Western countries (Kelly, Faris, & Palfrey, 2009). The activists of the Egyptian Revolution and the Arab Spring, as well as those in other parts of the world, actively used the tools provided by social media, especially Facebook and Twitter, not only to gain recognition but also to improve their organisation and strategies.

Studies have been presented to support the theory that social media was the drive behind the speed and outcome of the Egypt revolution, and it led to a great social revolution (Attia et al., 2011). Note that Hussain and Howard speak of a causal cause, which means that the ITCs were essential for the revolution to become a success (Hussain & Howard, 2013).

3.3 CASE STUDY: THE 15-M INDIGNADOS

The 15-M movement, also known as the Indignados, is a popular movement that brought together many people of different backgrounds to protest against the Spanish government and some of its law and policies. It took place during the demonstrations on May 15, 2011, in Plaza del Sol, Madrid, and the following weeks afterwards. It should be noted that the letter M in 15-M is often mistaken for being a reference to Madrid, where the initial protest took place, or to be the letter M in the word movement. Actually, it is the M from May (*Mayo* in Spanish), the month when the protest initiated.

After the initial protest, some people decided to camp at the plaza. Hundreds of people arrived from all regions of Spain to support the cause. The camp lasted for 28 days, until it was removed on June 12. It sparked similar reactions in various Spanish cities, and it had a particular replication in Barcelona, where people camped at Plaça Catalunya in order to demonstrate their anger against some of the current governmental policies in different areas. After dismantling the camp, the protests continued, and the Indignados still remain a movement today. However, just like we did with the case of the Egyptian protests, we would like to start our chapter by contextualising the protest in retrospect to see what led to the success of the 15-M Indignados movement.

The 15-M was not the first social movement in Spain to generate intense attention. One mobilisation shook Spain considerably in 2003. This was "NO To War" (*NO a la guerra*, in Spanish). Despite the disapproval of the Spanish people with regard to the invasion of Iraq, the Spanish president at that time, José María Aznar (People's Party politician who served as the Prime Minister of Spain from 1996 to 2004) sided with George W. Bush

(GOP politician and businessman who served as the 43rd President of the United States from 2001 to 2009) and Tony Blair (British Labour Party politician who served as the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1997 to 2007) in beginning the war unilaterally. "NO to war" was a demonstration that echoed through many cities in Spain. In this demonstration, people could already meet each other in public spaces and discuss problems that affected anyone (Fernández-Savater, 2012). It is noteworthy that "NO to War" became a success only after the traditional models of mobilisations were left behind. The leftist parties and media amplified the disappointment, disapproval, and anger towards Spanish participation in the Iraq War, but they were not responsible for the creation of those feelings. The leftist organisations suggested outlets for the anger felt by everyone, but they did not script the acts. Soon, protest chants broke out in the Spanish society like never before. "NO to War" politically activated a good number of pre-existing individuals and groups. The government, which at that time consisted of the conservative People's Party, ignored the social claim (Fernández-Savater, 2012).

Only a year later, on March 11, 2004, Spain would be subject to the greatest terrorist attack it had ever experienced, the train bombings in Madrid. The 2004 Madrid train bombings (also known in Spain as 11-M) were nearly simultaneous and coordinated bombings in the Cercanías commuter train system of Madrid, on the morning of 11 March 2004, only three days before Spain's general elections. The explosions killed 191 people and wounded 1,800. The official investigation by the Spanish judiciary found that an al-Qaeda-inspired terrorist cell was responsible for the attacks. Al-Qaeda blamed Spain for their participation in the Iraq invasion and also attacked the United Kingdom, the other country

supporting Bush's US military in the invasion, in July 7, 2005, with a coordinate suicide attack in London's public transport system.

The Government handling of the 11-M bombing attacks in Madrid was badly received by the Spanish citizens. Immediately after the Spanish government had finished its hugely criticized press conference where it detached the Madrid bombing from Spain's support for the Iraq War, the people started a campaign called "Pásalo" (Share it) via SMS to denounce the government's lack of truth and organize a protest. Only two days after the attacks, Spaniards came back to the streets. The "NO to War" slogan from barely a year before echoed everywhere. This time, people chanted "We were all in that train". It was called the 12-M (March 12) demonstration. Those who thought that the "NO to War" force of 2003 and 2004 had vanished were proved wrong. In the aftermath of the Madrid bombings, people expressed their anger and mourning independently of their race, political choices, and any other difference (Fernández-Savater, 2012).

Although the people had already organized multiple demonstrations everywhere in the Spanish territory, the government announced an official demonstration under the chant, "With the victims, with the Constitution, for the defeat of terrorism" (Fernández-Savater, 2012). While the Constitution had nothing to do with the events, the Spanish People's Party is known for bringing it up at any moment and under any circumstances, for no apparent reason except to awaken a feeling of patriotism, even if the occasion does not suit it. The government at the time, an absolute majority of the People's Party, used all its media power to divert attention from the massacre to the government elections on 14 March, and asked the Spanish people to keep supporting them in the midst of the general mourning. After a shock like the 11-M bombings, the media was unable to build any kind of public consensus

(Fernández-Savater, 2012) and the politicians of the People's Party took advantage of the situation and used all their media power to blame the terrorist group ETA for the bombings even after an al-Qaeda cell had publicly acknowledged it was behind the attacks. With this, the People's Party was trying not to lose votes to their opponents. In spite of their efforts, the People's Party lost the elections to the Socialist Party.

Another of the movements that led up to the 15-M was "V de Vivienda" (in English: V for Housing), which emulates the famous imagery of *V for Vendetta* – a graphic novel (later turned into a movie) written by Alan Moore. It depicts a post-nuclear war United Kingdom ruled by a fascist party. It this context, a revolutionary anarchist dressed in a Guy Fawkes mask, elaborates a campaign to bring down the government. The word House is *Vivienda*, in Spanish – hence the play on words for the name "V de Vivienda". The protesters were denouncing the impossibility of buying a house due to the endlessly high prices. The Spanish property bubble saw drastic increases in the price per square metre in just a few years. Even though housing construction was on the rise, which should have lowered the housing price (more offer, less value), the evolution of the price per square metre in Spain grew astonishingly from 1996 onwards. In order to buy a house, most people had to get mortgages that would last for 40-something years or even more. This unbearable situation for most of the Spanish middle-class sparked a famous series of mobilizations that happened in 2006 under the chant, "You are not going to own a house in your fucking life". During those months, an e-mail with this header circulated from account to account, inviting people to protest against the precarious salary conditions of young people, which inevitably left them without eligibility for buying a house. In this case, the mobilizations were

simultaneous. There was not a single meeting point, nor a major demonstration, but many at the same time. There was no organization behind the call, and no organized movements to serve as a reference point. It was something spontaneous, derived from the use of the Internet and e-mail accounts (Fernández-Savater, 2012). In the 15-M protests many subjects were treated among meetings in Plaza del Sol in Madrid and Plaça Catalunya in Barcelona. Among these subjects, there was that of housing, and some of the protesters wore the *V for Vendetta* masks as a reference to the demonstrations in 2006.

Another transversal demonstration, this time purely online, happened in 2009. It was called "Libertad en la Red" (Freedom on the Net) and it was a movement against the Law of Sinde, which is how the anti-piracy law was known at the time, named after the Minister of Culture, Ángeles Gónzalez-Sinde, who was Culture Minister of Spain from April 2009 until December 2011, under a government ruled by the Socialist Party (PSOE). The law was seen as a censorship over the net and thus was forcefully opposed by users all over the country with strong online campaigns. This modern opposition broke through the old dichotomies, such as left-right, with only one concern: the freedom of the Internet, which could be seen in the fact that, in activist groups ranging from Anonymous to some right-wing bloggers, the Internet was unanimously against the Law of Sinde (Fernández-Savater, 2012).

The last worth-mentioning demonstration that certainly influenced the 15-M movement was "Democracia Real YA" (Real Democracy NOW – from this point onwards, we will refer to the platform with its Spanish abbreviation, DRY). The protesters of DRY reject politics as they are currently defined and understood. Most importantly, in the Spanish context, they reject politics as they were granted in the Spanish transition to

democracy – the Spanish transition to democracy (Spanish: Transición Española) was the era when Spain moved from the dictatorship of Francisco Franco, after he died in 1975, to a democracy in the form of a constitutional monarchy. During the so-called Spanish transition, a parliamentary monarchy was elected by the Constitution of 1978, the one and only Constitution of Spain at the moment (Fernández-Savater, 2012). The Spanish political platform "Democracia Real YA" also remains an example of the fact that a political protest may not be only oriented to deposing the government in the office, but may aim for greater social and political change.

In addition to all these issues, the 15-M Indignados movement was also born from the bad economic politics that haunted Spain for many years. Even before the worldwide recession, the Spanish economy was sinking already. A square metre was reaching 3,000 euros when the crisis hit Spain in 2008. No one could buy a house, so there were thousands of empty flats and building all over Spain. At that moment, two crucial factors arose: first, the loans stopped, so the house sale numbers plummeted; and secondly, those who had their mortgages contracted already and could not pay them, mostly due to losing their jobs, began to be evicted. It is calculated that 292,261 houses were evicted from 2008 to 2012. The Spanish crisis was unexpected by the politicians in office, who alternated between the right-wing People's Party and the left-wing Socialist Party. The governors literally presumed to have one of the strongest economies not only in Europe but also on the entire planet. Indeed, Spain was getting richer in the late 1990s and the beginning of the 21st century. The costs of this growth based on massive construction were, however, diminished by the subsequent governments. For instance, prices increased, but salaries did not. The continued diminishment of the so-called middle class accounted for even

more anger when jobs were drastically reduced. All these causes and the aforementioned demonstration led to the 15-M movement.

The first manifestation of the 15-M took place in the central Puerta del Sol in Madrid. It was organized by the organization that we mentioned before *Democracia Real Ya!* (DRY). The demonstration concluded at dawn, when the police evicted the demonstrators from the Puerta del Sol. However, the next day, another 10,000 people returned to the square to occupy it again. In addition, there was a domino effect, and concentrations were replicated in dozens of Spanish cities. At night, only a few decided to remain camped at the plaza. There were enough of them to keep the flame alive, and make the next day hundreds of people gather again in the morning. In this sense, it must be said that the 15-M was clearly influenced by the Arab Spring and by the demonstrations against the crisis in Greece that had took place during the previous two years.

The convenors used many hashtags on social networks, which made it difficult to account for the total reach of all of them. Some of the most significant were #spanishrevolution, #democraciarealya, #nonosvamos, #15M, #notenemosmiedo or #yeswecamp. Through the hashtags the protesters asked for water and food and anything that might be necessary to them. Many citizens and neighbours attended these calls for help, and went down to the squares to offer them drinks, food, and even blankets to spend the night, among other utilities. The people generated certain tolerance, for example, to traffic cuts. Demonstrators avoided direct confrontation with the police, even after the police had dismantled various peaceful mobilizations (Fernández-Savater, 2012), which helped to present a peaceful image to the public opinion. Terms like citizenship, democracy,

participation and political representation were now in the eye of the public opinion to an unexpected wave of activism.

The DRY organization was key to the dissemination of the protest, as well as to its physical organization. The campers organized workshops and assemblies on various social issues. After Madrid's, the most noted camp in terms of people and repercussions was in Barcelona, in which the sociologist Manuel Castells was even invited to discuss the social situation The dissemination of the May 15, 2011 demonstration took place mainly on the Internet, especially on Facebook and Twiiter networks. Although many protesters tweeted from their personal accounts, the accounts that projected the protest the most were the collective accounts, coordinated by different people, and from which they reported everything: the evolution of the protest, the needs of the protestants, the result of debates, assemblies, workshops, and more. Everything had a place in these social accounts, which meant that they were widely followed and that the traditional media would take them as a reference when they had to inform about the protest. A website was specially made as well to propose and suggest new paths for the demonstration: propongo.cc. The website was also developed in order to facilitate the collection and discussion of proposals through an online computer application.

Some 15-M protests lasted for weeks, others lasted for months. The physical movement was losing strength gradually, but left behind a very vivid wake at the local level (municipalities) and at the level of networks. It is actually argued that 15-M left a huge footprint on Spanish activism since 2011 that has helped new waves of activism in the country (Micó & Casero-Ripollés, 2014). Three years later after 15-M, in 2014, the political party Podemos was born, and is now the fourth party in terms of seats in the

Spanish Congress. Podemos did pick up most of the ideals of 15-M, although there are also authors who think that Podemos falls short of the 15-M pretensions. These same voices think that the social discontent and the demands of 15-M can never be collected in a single political party, and define Podemos as a simple left-wing party inspired by the Greek Syriza, whose birth was also related to other protests, in this case, with the protests that took place in Greece between 2010 and 2012 after the economic crisis.

The 15 May (15-M) movement, nicknamed Los Indignados (The Outraged), was clearly inspired by the Arab Spring protesters (Maronitis, 2013). The 15-M offered chants such as "They call it democracy but it is not" and "They don't represent us", directed towards not only to the current Government officials but to the whole political system in general. The Spanish society was angry already, without the need for anyone telling them how to be. They were angry in 2003, when Aznar decided to join Bush and Blair for the Iraq War, and they were angry again in 2004, when, arguably because of that decision, the al-Qaeda bombed Madrid, leaving almost 200 people dead (Fernández-Savater, 2012). They were angry at the ground price rising to new heights, which sparkled the V de Vivienda protests. And also, they were infuriated at Germany's way of overcoming the crisis: austerity and budget cuts. In this regard, some authors have criticized modern politics for not taking care of the people, only the economic markets. The 15-M puts an exclamation mark on this context and pretends to fight it. The Indignados mobilizations were not only yelling their anger to an invisible government, they were putting into question everything that they had been told since the Spanish transition.

3.4 CASE STUDY: THE OCCUPY WALL STREET MARCHES

On September 17, 2011, a small group of activists took New York City's Zuccotti Park. It was the beginning of a movement that would shortly after becoming globally known as Occupy Wall Street protests. These marches were originally championed by the anti-capitalist publication *Adbusters*, supported by the group Anonymous, members of which uploaded and spread a video on YouTube calling for action (Costanza-Chock, 2012). At the beginning of the Occupy Wall Street protests, the media were indifferent to them, or even worse, they trivialized the whole issue (DeLuca, Lawson, & Sun, 2012). Some of these examples can be found in the *New York Times*, which ran stories entitled ''Wall Street Occupiers, Protesting Till Whenever'' (Kleinfield & Buckley, 2011) and ''Hippies and Hipsters Exhale'' exemplifying the early mocking in the media (DeLuca, Lawson, & Sun, 2012).

The blackout of the Occupy Wall Street movement by most of the mainstream media in the US was not replicated overseas. In this regard, the *Guardian*, *France Presse* and *Daily China* quickly picked up the story of its birth. In spite of the media outlets' efforts to ignore it, Occupy Wall Street began to receive significant mass media coverage only after police brutality against the participants was reported. A video of New York City Police Department (NYPD) Deputy Inspector Anthony Bologna pepper-spraying a group of unarmed young women was circulated first via social media and was later broadcast on multiple networks, which brought an initial wave of mass media attention to the movement (Costanza-Chock, 2012). One it gained recognition, the Occupy Wall Street movement did shake the elites of New York (DeLuca, Lawson, & Sun, 2012). The *New York Times* financial

columnist Andrew Ross Sorkin share a curious anecdote with his readers regarding to which extent should the Manhattan businessmen be worried or not:

> I had gone down to Zuccotti Park to see the activist movement first-hand after getting a call from the chief executive of a major bank last week, before nearly 700 people were arrested over the weekend during a demonstration on the Brooklyn Bridge. "Is this Occupy Wall Street thing a big deal?" the C.E.O. asked me. I didn't have an answer. "We're trying to figure out how much we should be worried about all of this," he continued, clearly concerned (Sorkin, 2011).

In spite of the mass media attempts to diminish the Occupy Wall Street movement, their persistence and methods ended up winning the game (DeLuca, Lawson, & Sun, 2012) in the usual news framing of the conventional press – news framing understood as the action of deliberately omitting different parts of reality and have many others extol to shape a story in such a way that best represents the position of the person who is editing the news rather than representing reality itself. It is said that they had learnt these methods from the Spanish Indignados and the Israel's social justice protests. The Israeli protests began in July 2011 and gathered hundreds of thousands of protesters all of whom had different social, economic and religious backgrounds opposing the ongoing increase in the cost of living and the worsening of public services education and health.

By the first week of October, the Occupy Wall Street demonstrations were the number one top story on most news coverage (DeLuca, Lawson, & Sun, 2012). Nobel Prize-winner and *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman noted after the first weeks of the demonstrations, "Inequality is back in the news, thanks largely to Occupy Wall Street". After nearly three

weeks of the on-going protest in Zuccotti Park, President Obama felt compelled to weigh in:

> I think it expresses the frustrations that the American people feel. We had the biggest financial crisis since the Great Depression - huge collateral damage throughout the country, all across Main Street. And yet, you are still seeing some of the same folks who acted irresponsibly trying to crack down on abusive practices that got us in the situation in the first place. I think people are frustrated (Towle, 2011).

It seems strange that the man who owes much of his campaign to social media – and so has advisers who understand it – took so long to acknowledge the power of Occupy Wall Street. After four weeks of camping at Zuccotti Park, Obama was still trying to play down the demands:

> I understand the frustrations being expressed in those protests. Both on the left and the right, I think people feel separated from their government. They feel that their institutions aren't looking out for them. The most important thing we can do right now is those of us in leadership letting people know that we understand their struggles and we are on their side, and that we want to set up a system in which hard work, responsibility, doing what you're supposed to do, is rewarded (President Barack Obama, to ABC News, in The Editors of Time, 2011).

In a relatively short time, the Occupy Wall Street movement went from being mocked and marginalized by mainstream media to becoming the most prominent political topic in the public discourse and among political elites (Deprez & Dodge, 2011). Social media helped the Occupy Wall Street protesters become the front line of news coverage (DeLuca, Lawson, & Sun, 2012). A spike in interest in Occupy Wall Street was also reflected in Google searches barely two weeks after the protests began in downtown Manhattan (DeLuca, Lawson, & Sun, 2012). After it had gained mainstream

recognition, hundreds of cities in dozens of countries saw similar Occupy movements being quickly replicated (DeLuca, Lawson, & Sun, 2012).

Within the Occupy Wall Street movement, the media quickly emphasized the technology available among the protesters. Some commentators attacked the protesters by stressing the apparent contradiction of being on an anti-capitalist demonstration while simultaneously reporting everything with iPhones (Costanza-Chock, 2012). We believe this is, however, a very banal critique to these protesters, probably aimed at hurting their public image only. Attending a protest, any kind of protests, and reporting it live from a smartphone when nearly half of the population has one, should be no concern at all. In this regard, many surveys proved the protesters had a high capacity of ICT usage.

According to the Occupy Research General Survey (OGRS, 2012), who answered participants on the mobilization, at least 7 out of 10 posted on Facebook regarding the protest:

74 %: Posted on Facebook

73 %: Had face-to-face conversations

69 %: Participated in protest camps

41 %: Provided food or services

40 %: Participated in workshops

18 %: Wrote on a blog

17 %: Lived or slept at the camp

08 %: Made a video

It must be noted that at that moment Twitter did not have the same impact as it does have now, and therefore the OGRS opted to focus their

survey on Facebook only – still, it proved the enormous implication of this particular social network in the development of the protests.

The Occupy Wall Street movement had its own gestural style of expression through live video streams with various camera angles and giant projections on public buildings (Brunner, Nigro, & Raunig, 2013). The videos of the protesters capturing images at Zuccotti Park are not only a source of valid information, but also demonstrate a multiplicity of sensations, through voices, sound and movement. The Occupy Wall Street protesters also popularised what is known as the human microphone. Because the laws in Manhattan would not allow the usage of microphones, megaphones or any technology for amplification could not be used, the protesters came up with a system that allowed them to amplify their message and reach all the protesters in the park (Brunner, Nigro, & Raunig, 2013). The human microphone works this way: a speaker shouts out loud a few words, and then the surrounding crowd repeats what he or she has said in unison. Their voices altogether act as an amplifier, allowing for the speech to be heard at a considerable range (Jones, 2011).

Right-leaning blogs defined the protesters as non-productive, degenerate, dirty, dangerous members of society who should not have a voice, hypocrites, the unemployed, members of the mob, uninformed, unable to think by themselves, hooligans, criminals, homeless people, and overall, a drain on society. The right-wing speakers also focused the problem on Obama, de-attaching it from Wall Street or capitalism. The name-calling and other attempts at framing the protesters had the sole purpose of diminishing their right to freedom of speech. The right-leaning speakers would end up criminalising protesters, diminishing their actual numbers at the mobilizations, and illegitimating their cause. In their turn, the

left-wing bloggers helped the Occupy Wall Street movement to make itself clearer by identifying its main objectives, which included the promotion of a more democratic and equitable society. Oddly enough, and in spite of the right-leaning blogs' hyperbole, none of the analysed left-wing blogs actually called for putting an end to capitalism, nor did they propose to bring in communism or anarchism – as some right-wing blogs accused them of doing (DeLuca, Lawson, & Sun, 2012).

On November 15, 2011, the eviction of Zuccotti Park was announced to the protesters, and then proceeded to occur. Although some protesters returned to the park on special occasions, they were fewer in number. The protest was officially dead without any major achievement in the policy field (Schechter, 2012). Evictions like those in New York, violence as in Occupy Portland, or the sheer effect of time, are cited among the reasons why the OWS movement did not last long (Pepitone, 2013). Wall Street is still running and the markets are still ruling the socio-economic life of Western countries. Regarding the events, economics journalist Martha C. White wrote the following a year after the protest:

> Did the Occupy movement make any kind of lasting difference in banking practices, financial regulation or ordinary Americans' lives? Measuring the effect of an amorphous social movement is difficult, and a look at the broader economic landscape is sobering. A year later, big, powerful banks remain big, powerful banks. Unemployment is still high, Americans' home equity and personal savings are depleted, and total student-loan debt tops a record $1 trillion (White, 2012).

Some more optimistic analysts speak of a probable "delayed effect" (Taube, 2013) that may be reflected in electoral campaigns. More directly about the movement itself, the lack of leadership, the wrong messages, and

the lack of an agenda are all named as possible causes for its failure in making a substantial change (Ostroy, 2012).

We believe that the dichotomy of rich versus poor that OWS presented did not succeed because of America's characteristics as a country. In the second half of 2014, the unemployment rate in the US was hardly at 7 %, while in some Arab Spring countries the rate was as high as 60 % for youth and 30 % overall. It is also difficult to sell a rich-poor message when US salaries are much above those of its European counterparts, let alone any comparison with the rest of the world. Maybe if the message had been labelled differently, more people might have acknowledged it. In spite of an apparent failure in terms of Wall Street itself, which remains the same, the Occupy Wall Street protests did inspire a wide international wave of replicas. The movement popularized the slogan, "We are the 99 %" (Gelder, 2011) which has since been replicated in protests from almost every socio-economic background. But more than just the slogan, it actually revitalized that 99 % of population in the face of the 1 % (who are the wealthiest in the world). The movement success in terms of local replicas is undeniable: there have been almost a thousand cities in almost a hundred countries that hosted protests modelled after the original in New York. However, the issue of the 1% still remains intact from the social agenda.

3.5 SIMILARITIES AMONG THESE PROTESTS

The social movements and their corresponding protests that we have just reviewed, share a few characteristics in common that we would like to stress in the following premises:

- P1. The protestors base their activities in the pursuing of social rights and usually blaming or attacking their government.

- P2. They tend to lack a formal organisation and a specific hierarchy with no apparent leadership.

- P3. They tend to gather together for sit-ins and occupations that last longer than a day.

- P4. Direct confrontation with police is usually involved.

- P5. The government in office openly mocks the protesters or ignores their petitions.

Premise number one regards the main motivation behind the protests that we analysed and is at the core of most movements: protesting against the administration that is currently holding the government office. Sometimes it is to demand new policy-makings, sometimes it is to demand a specific situation, and sometimes it is simply to show outrage. The growing discontent with the social and economic life in Arab countries, including Egypt, triggered the demonstrations in many countries such as Egypt, Libya, or Tunisia, and others that were less big, such as those in Algeria, Syria, Jordan, Yemen, Bahrain, and the Palestinian Territories. 2012).

The second premise refers to a formal lack of leadership or hierarchy of any kind. The political activism movements that we analysed, all coincide in not having a visible head or heads for the movement. The lack of leadership is also a technique which facilitates the job of the demonstrators and difficulties that of the police. Without an evident leader, these can be invisible to the police records and therefore it might make it more difficult for the police to suffocate the protest.

The third premise is a constant in uprisings. Because of the nature of these demonstrations, which may occur overnight after a small spark lights the fire, it is likely that spontaneous demonstrations may last longer than a few hours, and instead become sit-ins and occupations to last for days, weeks or even months. The third premise is much connected to the fourth: direct confrontation with police. In most countries, protests are tolerated and even have police protection as they are on route. In the countries were protests are asphyxiated by an authoritative regime, confrontation with the police is almost unavoidable. However, this type of confrontation also occurs in democracies when the protestors behave in a manner that is considered out of the law. It is the case with small groups at the Indignados and also at the Occupy Wall Street marches that perpetrated some uncivil actions that made the police charge against them, such as burning trash containers or launching objects towards the police.

Premise number five is at the core of most activism movements: the government either ignores or mocks the protesters by diminishing their cause and their achievements. The governments that have to face protests in their streets are hardly ever going to considerate the proposals of the political activists. They will try to generate a smoke curtain behind which to cover the situation and then try to de-activate the movement slowly but firmly. Premise number five is also the one that has been hurt the most by ICTs. New media allows to transcend physical protests and keep the demonstrators in a permanent mobilization online, where they can make constant noise much to the disapproval of the government officials.

While these patterns are the most common in social movements and protests (Smith, 1997; 2002; Snow, 2004; Milan, 2005; Constanza-Chock,

2012; Smith and Wiest, 2012), we believe, as we will review and comment in the following part of the dissertation, that the Catalan pro-independence movement, in which we are about to focus our investigation, challenges all the aforementioned notions about contemporary political activism, in ways that make us believe that the Catalan case is truly quite unique in the mobilization sphere.

PART IV – THE CATALAN INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT

OVERVIEW OF PART IV

This section of the dissertation focuses explicitly on the main case study, the Catalan case, to which Objectives and Hypotheses 1-3 are directed. In this section and its chapters, we observe, narrate and comment on the current political situation in Catalonia, the political outcome of the Catalan movement for independence, and how new media is assisting this social movement in pursuit of its political and social agenda. In order to create a comprehensive picture of the situation, we begin by explaining the historical context of Catalonia. We compare Catalan nationalism with other nationalist movements, as well as highlighting important differences between them. We then move onto the current situation, analysing the five biggest demonstrations to have taken place in Europe in the past decade: all took place in Barcelona, and all were in favour of Catalan independence. Throughout the chapter, we establish several connections between the growth of social media in Catalonia and the simultaneous growth of the pro-independence movement, and how new information and communication technologies, particularly social networks, have propelled the movement to new heights, both in terms of physical organization and digital aggregation.

4.1 CATALONIA AND THE CATALAN CASE FOR INDEPENDENCE

Catalonia is a small region in the northeast of Spain bordering Andorra and France. It can be compared to Switzerland in terms of area, population and GDP (gross domestic product). It has its own language, Catalan, which is as old as Spanish; both hail from the 11th century and both evolved from Latin. Over 10 million people worldwide speak Catalan and over 13 million can understand it; it is the seventh most studied language in Europe, the eighth most used language on the internet and the ninth most spoken language in Europe. Catalonia had the first institution in Europe that resembled a modern parliament in 1283, over half a century before Britain established its own parliament. It also had one of the first constitutions in Europe in 1283 as well, six centuries before Spain established its first constitution in 1812. Barcelona, the capital of Catalonia, has the largest port in Spain, making Catalonia a leading region in foreign export. In addition, Barcelona's airport leads passenger traffic in Spain, despite not being an international hub as is the airport of Madrid – the Spanish government actually prevents Barcelona's airport from growing any further precisely because they prefer Madrid's airport to be the front and foremost. Catalonia is also the most visited region of Spain and specifically, Barcelona is the third most visited city in Europe, trailing only behind London and Paris. With these credentials, it seems logical that most Catalans view themselves more as a country than a region. However, as we will see in this chapter, Catalonia's desire to be a new state within Europe is not the result of current contextual circumstances, but an inherent desire in the mind of most Catalans, who over centuries have built their own sovereign institutions against the imposition of foreign governments, and have used a varied

range of means of communication to stimulate such an idea, like the Catalan Constitution of 1283. Following the events of mid-2010, when the Spanish courts denied the possibility for Catalonia to be recognized as a nation in the Statute of Autonomy, and which we understand as a point of no return for Catalan politics, we observe the impact of Catalan politics until mid-2018, both nationally and internationally, during a time when the Catalan pro-independence movement reached new heights for its cause after violent police charges, the imprisonment of some politicians and the exile of some others during the years 2017 and 2018. In this chapter, we will discuss the socio-political relationship between Catalonia and Spain, in regards to the Catalan independence movement and how did this movement spread its cause with the new technologies of information and communication, and more particularly with new media. We begin by contextualising the reader with some historical notes necessary to understanding the Catalan claim. We then review the seven most important demonstrations in Catalonia's recent history, six of which were in favour of independence and having had all of them an attendance of between one and a half and two million people. We also explain the participatory process of November 9, 2014, and the referendum of October 1, 2017, in which a huge majority of the voters backed the option of Catalonia to become an independent state, and the international repercussions of both events – a repercussion that was amplified by journalists and activists worldwide.

4.2 HISTORICAL APPROACH

The Catalan claim for independence cannot be understood without considering the historical roots of Catalonia, for which the following lines are

completely dedicated to this issue, hoping that the reader will get a comprehensive picture of the historical past of Catalan politics.

In the 11th century, the Catalan counties of Barcelona, Osona and Girona united to form a single political entity that would later be known as the *Principat de Catalunya* (Principality of Catalonia). Shortly after, in the 12th century, the Count of Barcelona Ramon Berenguer IV and Queen Petronilla of Aragon were married. As a result of their union and that of their territories, the Kingdom of Aragon and Catalonia came into being; note, however, that both Aragon and Catalonia kept their original and independent institutions, even after the union – something that has been argued to be a prove of Catalan institutions being independent from Aragon. Also, the king and queen's son, Alfonso –known as Alfonso II in Aragon and Alfonso I in Catalonia, a symbolical appreciation of Catalonia's independence during this period– inherited the kingdom and respected the powers and institutions of each region, even thought for the most part, it must be noted that the official kingdom title used in the majority of official documents was simplified Kingdom of Aragon.

In the 13th century, the Catalan Courts were established as the policymaking body of Catalonia, which they remained up to the 18th century. According to the American theorist Thomas N. Bisson (1986), the first Catalan Courts date from 1238, much before than any similar body was stablished nowhere in Europe. Assembled 26 years before the English courts (1264), the Catalan courts are considered to have been the first political chamber with effective popular participation in Europe after the fall of the Roman Empire (Keane, 2009). The first Catalan Constitution was promulgated in 1283, while the last dates from 1704, only 10 years before

the surrender of Barcelona to King Philip V. For comparison, Spain did not have its first own constitution until 1812, six centuries behind Catalonia's.

The Catalan constitutions regulated all aspects of public life and established the liberties and privileges of the entire Catalan nation. In its continued revisions, the Catalan constitutions were known for their democratic features; these included that no one could be judged without a fair trial and that no one could be compelled by the king to go to war. Catalan constitutions were also pioneers in establishing unique mechanisms for citizen participation in political life, something almost unthinkable elsewhere in the world at the time. The Kingdom of Aragon and Catalonia evolved, conquering several Mediterranean territories to forge one of the most powerful kingdoms of the Middle Ages. Years later, in 1469, Ferdinand II of Aragon married Isabella I of Castile; now the kingdoms of Aragon and Castile formed a single Hispanic monarchy, but even then, Aragon and Catalonia retained their independent political institutions.

The year 1700 marks a singular point for Aragon, Catalonia and Castile's aspirations. On that year, King Charles II died without an heir and Philip of Anjou, of Bourbon, currently residing in France, was chosen to be his successor. However, other European royal houses did not want him to rule the Spanish monarchy, as it would grant the Bourbons too much power. Therefore, the English, Dutch and the Portuguese supported a rival claim to the throne: The Archduke Charles of Austria. This sparked the War of the Spanish Succession, which lasted from 1701 to 1714. The Catalans, who sensed that a Bourbon king would centralize the state (as had been the case in France) sided with Charles of Austria. The Archduke was welcomed to Barcelona in 1705 with the aim of taking over the crown. However, the sudden news of the death of his brother, Joseph, rendered Charles the heir

of the Holy Roman Empire in 1711. All at once, the idea of having a Bourbon as King of Spain for the purposes of balancing power no longer seemed like such a bad idea and as a result, the English, Dutch and the Portuguese withdrew their forces and signed the Treaty of Utrecht, ending the war in 1713. However, the Catalan legions resisted until September 11, 1714, when military assault on Barcelona marked the end of the War of the Spanish Succession – nowadays, September 11 is officially recognized as the Catalan National Day, in which hundreds of thousands celebrate the Catalan nation, language and traditions. Following the withdraw of Charles of Austria, Philip invoked the right of conquest over the Crown of Aragon and suppressed the institutions, privileges and the ancient charters of Aragon and Catalonia. All states were now to be ruled only by the laws of Castile. Philip's Government of Spain emulated that of centralized France, fostering major outrage among Catalans for years to come.

4.3 CONTEMPORARY APPROACH

The collapse of the old absolutist regimes during the 19th century and the establishment of other political regimes did not lead to a revival of the constitutional system of Catalonia and other states of the Crown of Aragon. Instead, Spain remained a centralized political system. The late 19th century and early 20th century were turbulent times for Spain and Catalonia. The monarchy was abolished in 1873, seeing the establishment of the First Republic, which lasted for only a brief period and the monarchy was restored in 1874. With this, Spain became a Bourbon monarchy again until 1931. On April 14, 1931 the monarchy was abolished and the Second Republic instituted. Like the first, it did not last long. In 1936, General

Francisco Franco rebelled against the Government of the Second Republic, initiating a bloody civil war that ended in 1939, when he proclaimed himself the Head of State. Up to 1975, Spain was ruled by Franco's highly conservative dictatorship, which was especially repressive for Catalonia (Guibernau, 2000). Following his death and according to his wishes, the monarchy was re-established, and Juan Carlos I of Bourbon became King of Spain. King Juan Carlos restored democracy and the first elections of a new era took place in 1977. One year later, the Spanish Constitution, still effective today, was approved –the Constitution did not meet the expectation of Catalan nationalists but it was either that or chaos. Following the approval of the new Spanish Constitution, 17 autonomous communities were created, replacing the old regions. One of these was Catalonia.

As soon as the Catalan Government, the Generalitat and the Catalan Parliament were restored in 1980, the first law they enacted was to declare the day of 11 September as the National Day of Catalonia. Ever since, a significant part of parliament's policy-making has focused on recuperating the national symbols of Catalonia, such as its language, culture and traditions, most of which had been lost during Franco's oppressive dictatorship (Barbieri, 2012). In 2004, the Catalan Parliament began the process of approving a new Statute of Autonomy that would culminate the efforts made by the Generalitat during the past two decades to recover the regular use of the Catalan language and grant the region a considerable amount of sovereignty. In spite of being approved by the Catalan Parliament and then by Spanish Congress, as well as the Spanish Senate, and finally by the Catalan people via referendum, the new statute was watered down by the Spanish Constitutional Court following a petition by the People's Party, at that time in the opposition seats in the Congress. This precise point

in Spanish-Catalan relations, right when the new Statute of Autonomy was cut by the Spanish Constitutional Court, is to us the point of no return in which the flame of the pro-independence movement gains presence in public opinion in an unstoppable manner, as we will further investigate. Actually, the fail to recognize national the demands of Catalonia regardless of any Spanish government has been recognized as a valid reason for an eventual secession of Catalonia from Spain (Costa, 2003).

The People's Party (*Partido Popular*) won the majority in the Spanish General Elections of 2011 for the lower and upper chambers but could only secure a mere 10% of the total seats in the Catalan Parliament Elections in 2012, and even less (4%) in the Catalan Parliament Elections in 2017. As a matter of fact, the presence of this party in Catalonia is quite residual, given their constants attacks to the region. As of 2018, the People's Party in Catalonia had only one Mayor from 946 possible and four MPs from 135 possible. The animosity in Catalonia against the People's Party can be explained, beyond their choice to re-centralize power in Madrid, by the fact that many of its members have family ties with people who had served in key positions during Franco's dictatorship. The *Partido Popular* has strongly opposed any new sovereignty concessions to Catalonia and has denied all negotiations to a possible agreed-upon self-determination referendum such as that granted to Scotland by Britain recently. What makes the People's Party so residual in Catalonia is also what makes it the most voted party in Spain. As noted by many journalists in the past decades, the People's Party has developed a vicious rhetoric of its own, for the most part compromised of inaccurate or directly false premises regarding the Catalan politics, that they use in political rallies and more recently in their everyday speeches in order to convey new voters for their party.

Not only every single step by the People's Party in the past years, but almost every political decision since the reign of Philip V has in one way or another diminished Catalan matter, and thus fostering immense anger among the majority of the Catalan population, which may now well be one of the biggest catalysts for establishing a new state.

4.4 A NATION WITHOUT A STATE

We would like to begin with a brief approach to the political status of Catalonia over the centuries. Starting in the 11th century, the Principality of Catalonia (in Catalan, the *Principat de Catalunya*) established its own laws and institutions for self-governance among its then territories: the regions of Barcelona, Girona and Osona (later, more regions would also join the *Principat*). In the 12th century, the Principality of Catalonia united with the Crown of Aragon following the marriage between the Count of Barcelona Ramon Berenguer IV and Queen Petronilla of Aragon. In the 13th century, the Catalan Courts, or the General Courts of Catalonia, came into being (in Catalan, the *Corts Catalanes* or *Corts Generals de Catalunya*). The Courts were the policymaking body of Catalonia until the 18th century, when the institution was abolished by the Castilian King Philip V, grandson of Louis XIV (*le Roi-Soleil* of France). The General Courts of Catalonia promulgated the first Catalan constitution in 1283 – six centuries earlier than the first Spanish constitution in 1812. The last Catalan constitution to emanate from the *Corts* was in 1705, nine years prior to the fall of Barcelona in the War of Spanish Succession on 11 September 1714, a day that changed the path of the Catalan nation forever.

Philip V was the first of many governors, up to the present day, who in some way or another attempted to unify the Iberian Peninsula into a single state, Spain, with a single nation, Spanish. However, the Catalan singularities remained alive and today the majority of Catalans are in favour of seceding from Spain and constituting a new state within Europe. This is why *Catalunya* is often depicted as a nation without a state (Guibernau, 1999) a key notion for understanding the Catalan case and the singularities of Catalan nationalism. In this regard, theorist Montserrat Guibernau offers an accurate differentiation between the nationalism exercised by nations that have a state and nationalism in nations without states. She defines nations without states as follows:

> Nations which, in spite of having their territories included within the boundaries of one or more states maintain a separate sense of national identity generally based upon a common culture, history, attachment to a particular territory and the explicit wish to rule themselves (Guibernau, 2010, p.138).

Nationalism in a nation with a state is used to consolidate and strengthen that state. Conversely, nationalism in a nation without a state challenges its legitimacy and often, but not always, seeks to construct a new state. In this regard, most academic studies have pointed out that the national identity of individuals (Serrano-Balaguer, 2010) is a major explanatory variable of the support for independence (Paterson & McCrone, 2002). Historically, nationalism has had different approaches, which we will now examine. Our purpose is to demonstrate that Catalan nationalism acts in a different way from other pre-established forms of nationalism that have been studied in contemporary times and more extensively, to show that Catalan independence activism is radically different to contemporary activism found elsewhere.

Some of the most well-known theories pertaining to nationalism do not hold a positive view of it. In this regard, Kedourie maintains a hostile attitude towards nationalism and defines it as a form of politics unconcerned with reality. He also blames intellectuals for *falling* for Romanticism and mentions Herder and Fichte as examples of a romanticist approach to nationalism. Kedourie also sustains that propaganda and the control of education are essential factors for spreading nationalism and believes the masses to be completely controllable (Kedourie, 1993).

The Catalan case, however, seems to prove Kedourie wrong. As we have previously observed, the Catalan territories have suffered significantly from foreign laws (Castile, Aragon, Madrid) under very different circumstances (monarchies, dictatorships, democracies), all of these laws embracing strong Spanish nationalism that spread propaganda and facilitated control of the Catalan identity. Repressive factors include, for example, the prohibition of the Catalan language, the abolition of the Catalan institutions and the establishment of a Jacobin-style state, with centralist laws and a radial conception of communication. However, Catalan nationalism remained intact during these phases of history. This has not been in vain; since the restoration of the Catalan Government (the Generalitat) in 1980, Catalanist parties have held the majority presence in parliament. If the theories of Kedourie were to be applied to the Catalan case, Spanish nationalism would have caused Catalan nationalism to end long ago – which did not.

Another author expressing adverse thoughts concerning nationalism is Tom Nairn, who relates the expansion of nationalism to the uneven spread of capitalism and stresses that nationalism is a movement disseminated from the elites to the masses. He also defines identity in

nationalism as something mythical (Nairn, 1977). As with Kedourie, Nairn's theories do not work in the case of Catalonia. With regard to Nairn's latter example, Catalan nationalism is not "mythical". It does have a mythology, but it is not mythical in a greater sense of this word. Catalan nationalism, identified as the reason for Catalans being self-governed, dates back to the constitution of the *Principat* (Principality of Catalonia) in the 12th century, along with the establishment of the Catalan Courts shortly after. The desire to be self-governed has remained intact ever since.

Catalan nationalism may have its roots in traditions, laws and wars, but definitely not in mysticism. Catalan nationalism also has nothing to do with the uneven spread of capitalism. The Catalan territories have remained rich for many centuries, it being one of the most active Mediterranean merchant territories and contributing to the industrial revolution in southern Europe. Today, the Catalan GDP is also among Europe's highest. Even more important than these reasons, is that the current Catalan drive towards independence is a bottom-up process, not an elite-to-masses process, as Nairn proposes in his nationalism theory. Prior to 2012, the Catalan ruling party, *Convergència i Unió* (CiU) had not even considered a possible independence, not even a Referendum on the matter. The subject of independence was to them something that the young bases of the party dreamt of, but nothing more than that. A dream that was to be lost once the young would grow up and replace the elders in the control of the party, and therefore let go the idea of independence altogether in favour of a much more pragmatically political views to negotiate with Spain. CiU remained an autonomous, centre-right party, until the large-scale demonstrations of 2010 and 2012, which saw CiU officially advocate for a Catalonian state, but only after being pushed by Catalan society to do so, which demonstrate the

bottom-up process of Catalan nationalism. Only after the massive demonstrations with millions on the streets, did CiU took the determination to support an eventual Catalan state. In fact, the CiU's previous governments led by Jordi Pujol had always talked down any idea of independence, instead fostering strong Spanish-Catalan collaboration (Crameri, 2011).

Continuing with theories of nationalism, Anthony D. Smith has suggested that nationalism is intrinsically mythological and based on flawed exaggerations of history (Smith, 1998). Similarly, John Breuilly considers that nationalism aims to create a single identity on which to base its control over the masses (Breuilly, 1994). Once again, neither theory can be applied to the Catalan case. Regarding Smith's assertions, it must be acknowledged that Catalan nationalism lacks mythological aspects, barring the few legends and heroes intrinsic to every country, but these are not relevant to the Catalan pro-independence movement. Likewise, the sovereignty of Catalonia is not based on a flawed history. In fact, the national day of Catalonia, September 11, is not a happy-ending celebration but a reminder of a bloody defeat: the surrender of Barcelona in 1714 and the final capitulation of a centuries-old country and its advanced institutions. Catalan nationalism is neither looking to create a single identity – as Breuilly states the aim of nationalism do be – but instead encourages a transversal approach to the self-governance aim that exists between all ages, social classes and races. Catalan nationalism is not exclusive but inclusive and the Catalan identity is a multicultural context that was created over the course of almost a dozen centuries. As a matter of fact, the Catalan pro-independence movement and also its political representatives aim for a Catalan state in which the Spanish language remains official and co-existing

with the Catalan language. Therefore, the single-identity argument from Breuilly cannot be applied to the Catalan nationalism either.

All of the above theories, while addressing nationalism from the perspectives of different contexts and disciplines, remain intrinsically alike: nationalism is bad *per se* and cannot be a plausible political choice. However, as we have seen, they cannot be applied to the case of Catalonia, which is neither a mythical nor a conformist process, but has been a constant and essential element of Catalan politics through many centuries. It has also been proposed that some of the aforementioned authors may have a bias towards a contemporary type of nationalism due to their provenance (Keating, 2000). It has also been noted that none of the aforementioned authors have studied the mechanisms of nationalism in nations without states, only in nations that do have a state (Guibernau, 2000). Because of this, we conclude that neither of the aforementioned theories are valid when investigating the characteristics of the Catalan nationalism. We will return to this point in the Conclusions section.

PART V – CATALAN INDEPENDENCE ACTIVISM RISES

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Following the application by Right of Conquest of the Nueva Planta decrees by order of King Philip V and ever since, anti-Catalanism has remained a constant in the history of Catalonia. After the fateful Succession War, Catalonia has experienced several episodes of institutional, political, administrative, military, cultural, linguistic, economic and social repression. Counts, dukes, kings, dictators and even democratic heads of state have dismissed Catalan claims of sovereignty for centuries, not only for Catalans, but also for the territories of Aragon and Valencia (all of which belonged to the former Crown of Aragon). While Aragon and Valencia have in recent times not claimed their historical rights (something that has much to do with their conservative and socialists' governments), Catalonia has continued to rethink its relations with Spain, even after successive Spanish Governments have regularly attacked the autonomic powers of Catalonia. This restless attack has been defined using two terms: anti-Catalanism and Catalanophobia (Ferrer, 2000) – these aspects did nothing but awaken nationalism in Catalonia even more.

In this regard, People's Party (PP) former leaders, José María Aznar and Mariano Rajoy, and current leader, Pablo Casado, have been accused of fostering anti-Catalanism in order to obtain more votes from the hard-core conservative target electorate – an idea often raised by political journalists and analysts. Actually, it is quite usual to see the Spanish government launch an attack on political Catalanism as a smokescreen when they need to hide their own political failures. Their strategy, however, has had collateral effects in Catalonia, and in fact, it has proved to be counter-productive for Catalonia (Dowling, 2009). Aznar and Rajoy's politics of

confrontation while serving as Prime Ministers of Spain (Casado is still in the opposition) have indeed increased the number of pro-independence people by thousands. Proof of this can be found in the reaction to Rajoy's refusal to negotiate an improvement of the Catalan economic system in 2011, and his re-centralization of education with a new and controversial law in 2012. After all the negatives from the Spanish governors, the proportion of those in favour of independence grew from 42% to 54%. In spite of this, neither Rajoy nor his party show any intention of changing their politics towards Catalonia – we will later get back to this topic. Of significance is that of the total 946 municipalities in Catalonia, only one small town, of approximately 300 inhabitants, has a mayor from the People's Party, which is also indicative of the weak and negative perception of this conservative party in Catalonia (Culla, 2009).

Had the Spanish politics explicitly recognized the Catalan autonomy and granted it the possibility to have its own fiscal institutions, the situation might be now very different. It must be stressed that for many authors, Catalan identity does not necessary exclude Spanish-ness (Balfour & Quiroga, 2007). In fact, Catalanism does not invoke an anti-Spanish sentiment at all (Pes, 2004). It simply is a pro-Catalonia movement and is not against anyone. Actually, many Catalan scholars and personalities, including the former Presidents Artur Mas and Carles Puigdemont, have stressed that in an independent Catalonia, the Spanish language would still be taught and that the Spanish government would be the most interested in maintaining import and export activity rates with Catalonia.

It has also been proposed that a key element in the awakening of the Catalan nationalism and the growing support for independence can be found in the long-running centre-right government of former president Jordi

Pujol and his party *Convergència i Unió* (CiU), who ruled the country for six consecutive legislatures starting in 1980, beginning with the first legislature after Franco's death (1975) and the official restitution of the Generalitat (1977), and until he lost to socialist Pasqual Maragall in 2003. In this regard, author Kathryn Crameri believes that Pujol's strategy of squeezing concessions from the Spanish government bit by bit may have accelerated the support for independence insofar the tiny bits of sovereignty given from Madrid to Barcelona were always considered insufficient for Catalan nationalism (Crameri, 2011). Still, Pujol's party CiU did play a decisive role in the Spanish Congress in helping different parties attain the Spanish presidency. When the two main parties, PP and PSOE, could not achieve an absolute majority, CiU's congressmen gave their support to them (they called CiU the *key* to governability). This pact worked first with the centrist Unión de Centro Democrático (UCD) in the late 1970s, then with the leftist and socialist Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE) from 1993 to 1996, and finally with the rightist and conservative Partido Popular (PP) between 1996 and 2000. This gave political Catalanism an unprecedented influence, not seen since before the Spanish Civil War (Dowling, 2009) but at the same time, it fostered the conscience that Catalonia could and should aim for more independence of Madrid. The ideology of these Spanish political parties did not matter to the former Catalan President Jordi Pujol, whose sole purpose was to achieve the best deals for Catalonia, regardless of the party ruling in Spain.

For some years, the formula worked well for him and his party. However, in 2000, the People's Party, led by José María Aznar, won by an absolute majority and did not require CiU's votes, which led to four consecutive years in which Catalonia did not receive almost any

concession. In fact, during those years the relation between Catalonia and Spain worsened, and CiU began to lose votes in the Catalan territories, as a punishment for having collaborated with the People's Party in Spain for so long. In this scenario, CiU won the elections to the Catalan Parliament of 2003 like the they had in the past years, but three leftist parties (PSC, ERC, and ICV) united their representatives and governed under a three-party coalition from 2003 to 2007, and again from 2007 to 2010, repeating the same coalition formula. This alliance was known as the *tripartit*, the president was the socialist José Montilla, and this period is known as post-Pujolism (Saez, 2005) as a reference to former president Pujol, who had been in the office for 23 years.

The *tripartit* initiated and achieved (with the support of CiU) a new statute of autonomy for Catalonia. On September 30, 2005, the Parliament of Catalonia approved the new Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia. This new statute replaced the previous Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia of 1979. The Spanish Congress accepted the new text for consideration on November 2, 2005, and they approved it on March 30, 2006. The Spanish Senate also passed it on 10 May 2006, but only after a substantial modification of the text, e.g.: it removed the term *nation* from the initial definition of Catalonia – which promoted some early indignation in Catalonia. The Spanish MPs did not want to recognize Catalonia as a nation because that would effectively be an automatic recognition of Catalonia's right to self-determination (Guibernau, 2000). Finally, Catalans approved the statute in a referendum on 18 June 2006, with 73.9% of the votes in favour. The statute became fully effective on August 9, 2006. It was the umpteenth time that Catalonia had tried to fit its singularity (its own traditions, language and institutions) into a supposedly plural and friendly Spanish state.

Nevertheless, the conservative party, the People's Party (PP), at that time in the opposition, had appealed to the Constitutional Court of Spain to invalidate most of the chapters and titles of the new statute. Their action led to an unprecedented scenario in a democracy: a statute approved by the majority of the democratically elected Catalan Parliament, then by the democratically elected Spanish Government, and finally approved in a referendum by the majority of the Catalan people, was being held in suspension due to a petition filed by a party – the People's Party – that did not even rule the Spanish government at the time and whose representation in the Catalan Parliament was as low as a 11.89% of the total seats. Furthermore, some of the magistrates of the Spanish Constitutional Court should have left their positions some time ago, since their terms had expired, and new ones should have been appointed in accordance with Spanish law – but this just did not happen. Now, the statute was in the hands of an out-dated court that did not adhere to its own legislation. This unusual situation created an enormous outrage in Catalonia, which simultaneously shaped a massive increase of Catalan nationalism.

The summer of 2009 marked three years after the People's Party had filed against the statute, and the Spanish Constitutional Court had not yet issued a verdict (Evans, 2013). The situation caused a lot of delays in policymaking, and the long wait became a tedious anxiety. On November 26, 2009, an unprecedented event in the media landscape occurred in Catalonia. The twelve most read newspapers of the country, including those from its largest cities, after Barcelona, (Tarragona, Lleida, Girona, Sabadell and Terrassa), launched their editions with the same op-ed entitled *La dignitat de Catalunya* (The dignity of Catalonia). These newspapers, in spite of having completely different owners and opposed ideological orientations,

were brought together by the atypical situation generated by the leading parties in Spain and expressed their shared concerns for the political future of Catalonia. It was not a request for independence; it simply denounced an unbearable situation, and as far as we know, this was at the time an unprecedented event in western journalism.

The final verdict on the statute from the Spanish Constitutional Court came on June 28, 2010. They declared 14 of its 277 articles to be invalid, while another 27 would require a restrictive interpretation. As soon as the verdict was made public, Catalan society filled with outrage yet another time. A court whose members mandates had already expired had just revoked a democratically approved law under the petition of a political party that barely represented one tenth of the Catalan population. The people were ready to protest in ways that neither Spain nor Catalonia had seen before. The peak of the Catalan movement for independence then occurred from 2010 to 2018 that we are going to divide in two phases: from 2010 and 2014, and from 2015 to 2018, due to significant changes within the movement in between those years.

5.2 MASSIVE DEMONSTRATIONS IN CATALONIA

Long before the word *indignados* (outraged) became an international term representing the collective anger towards states and politicians (Hessel, 2010) the Catalans had a similar expression for defining their frustration concerning the Spanish government: *el català emprenyat* (the outraged Catalan). The term was coined in 2007 by the renowned Catalan journalist Enric Juliana i Ricart, currently the associate director of *La*

Vanguardia, the most read newspaper in Catalonia and third in Spain. Oddly enough, the term came into existence before the 2008 economic crisis had affected Spain or any other country. Even more surprising is that *La Vanguardia* is a right-wing and monarchic newspaper whose owner is a Spanish Catalan noble, the Count of Godó, whom one would never suspect of promoting independence. In fact, the editorials in his newspaper have long requested that the Spanish Government listen more closely to the Catalan claim in order to reduce the overall anger and pro-independence movements. The truth is, however, that the Spanish Government, regardless of its political inclinations, has always diminished Catalan matters. After repeated denials on behalf of successive Spanish Governments to ensure a greater regional quota of power for Catalonia, citizens began to organize themselves in a civic, peaceful and substantial manner. There is no doubt that the desire for independence has been compounded by a verdict on behalf of the constitutional court, which brought irreversible consequences for Spanish, Catalan and European politics, consequences that no-one could have predicted at the time. Five key events marked the Catalan case between 2010 and 2014. The 2010 Catalan autonomy protest, the 2012 Catalan independence demonstration, the 2013 Catalan Way, the 2014 "V" and the participative process of 9 November 2014. We will now examine each of these five events. During our review, we will reference the primary organizers of the events, i.e., the independent organizations *Òmnium Cultural* and *Assemblea Nacional Catalana*.

Òmnium Cultural (Òmnium) was founded in 1961 and its original purpose was to promote the Catalan language and spread Catalan culture. Over time, the association has gained political influence after vowing to establish a new state for Catalonia. *Assemblea Nacional Catalana* (ANC)

was founded much more recently, in 2011 and its main objective has from the very beginning been Catalonian independence. As of 2018, Òmnium has 120,000 members and ANC has 40,000.

Òmnium and ANC are behind the largest and most peaceful rallies of the decade in Europe (Crameri, 2016), which have gathered millions of people together in a common cause. This enormous response is also responsible for the course changes that have taken place in Catalan politics. Both organizations had and still have very charismatic leaders, key to the development of the civil movement for independence in Catalonia. In most of the demonstrations that we are about to review, Òmnium leader was Muriel Casals, a Catalan economist very much implicated in the spreading of the Catalan language, culture and traditions. Casals deceased in 2016 after a bike accident, at the age of 70. She was replaced briefly by Quim Torra (as of 2018, the current President of Catalonia), and then by Jordi Cuixart, who was preventively jailed in October 16, 2017, following the Spanish state attorney's accusation of sedition for the October 1, 2017 Referendum. The same fate occurred to Jordi Sánchez, the leader of ANC until his imprisonment in 2017. He was preceded by Carme Forcadell, who became the President of the Catalan Parliament after the 2015 elections, and was also preventively jailed in 2017. These leaders were compelling enough to gather millions of the streets of Catalonia in a sustained manner, year after year, as we are about to review and comment.

5.2.1 July 10, 2010: The Catalan Statute of Autonomy Protest

Following the final verdict of the Spanish Constitutional Court in 2010, which rejected many chapters of the Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia of 2006, after an appeal filled by the conservative Partido Popular (People's Party), the civic association *Òmnium Cultural* registered a demonstration for July 10, 2010 under the chant "We are a nation. We decide". The demonstration was to begin at 6pm and its route consisted of two of the main streets in Barcelona: Pàsseig de Gràcia and Gran Via de les Corts Catalanes. The demonstration was heavily communicated on the internet and social networks, where the word spread. Òmnium set up a webpage (now inactive) with all the information regarding the protest: Somunanacio.cat. The manifesto of the demonstration could be read on the website as well as various details of the event, such as timing and location, and also the entities that embraced the protest. In this regard, it is noteworthy to comment that over 1.600 independent associations supported the demonstration, including four out of the six political parties represented in the Parliament of Catalonia, which represented more than 85% of the votes at the last parliamentary election), the two main workers unions (CCOO and UGT), and even F.C. Barcelona (Rico, Martinez, 2010). Òmnium also encouraged replication of the event worldwide. Here it played a very important role the International Federation of Catalan Entities (FIEC), which also spurred and assisted in the coordination of events worldwide. Some of the largest were in Berlin, London, Brussels, New York, Buenos Aires, Los Angeles, Dublin, Montreal, Quito, and Vienna, among others.

Òmnium also prepared a television commercial to raise awareness and encourage Catalans to attend the demonstration. The video featured the participation of numerous personalities from various sectors such as culture, politics, science, sports and media. The spot became very effective, as can be concluded from the final turnout, but also because they received many requests from other cities in Catalonia asking for guidelines on how to join the event. As a result, Òmnium, along with other collaborating organizations, coordinated the arrival of almost a thousand buses from all over Catalonia to the city of Barcelona. To boost real-time participation in social networks, the organizers also encouraged the attendants to act as journalist and report the event live through their cell phones, which, at the time, was something completely new. The company Guifi.net made possible (in an altruistic way) that the entire route of the demonstration would have a free wireless connection for everyone to report in real-time. Because of this, some of the 350 accredited journalists remarked the pioneer *2.0"* character of the mobilization. Thousands of messages inundated Twitter and two of the most used social networks at the time, Flickr and Foursquare, were also involved in the live propagation of many social contents regarding the demonstration and its participants.

The communicative efforts previous to the demonstration had a positive effect on and the turnout exceeded all projections: the main streets and the ones surrounding these were not only packed hours before the scheduled time, but the demonstrators could not even move because the streets were full from the beginning to the end of the route. At 8 pm, the "head" of the demonstration, which included the main Catalan Presidents and MPs, current and past, was still in Pàsseig de Gràcia. It was impossible to move a single foot. *Òmnium Cultural* reported a total of 1.5 million

attendees; Barcelona's police, the Guàrdia Urbana, lowered the total to 1.1 million. With either figure, the demonstration proved to be a massive success. As a consequence, the Catalan president at the time, José Montilla (PSC), called for a meeting with his Spanish homologue, José Luís Rodríguez Zapatero (PSOE). Although they belonged to the same party (PSC is the Catalan branch of PSOE), they could not find a solution for the situation. The situation would take its toll on PSC shortly after. In the October 2010 elections for the Catalan presidency, Artur Mas (CiU) swept away José Montilla (PSC). Artur Mas promised to achieve an economic agreement between his government and the Spanish administration to regulate the taxation and financial relations between the two governments. This economical accord – similar to the Basque Economic Agreement – would supposedly stop the fiscal deficit from which, at that point, Catalonia had been suffering for many years. A fiscal or budget deficit occurs when a territory receives from the central government less funds than the actual amount that they have paid in taxes. Due to Catalonia's rich industry in many areas, Catalonia is a net contributor to Spain (also to the EU, of which Spain is not). Because of the Spanish economical distribution system, its richest parts, such as Catalonia, end up receiving much less funds from the government budget than they actually should if the distribution were fairer, or if they had their own treasury.

Many scholars (Pont, 2012) and economists (Sala-I-Martín, 2014) have sustained that Catalonia has been subject to economic discrimination regarding the Catalan Fiscal Deficit with the Spanish State (Pons-I-Novell & Tremosa-I-Balcells, 2005) something that makes Catalonia lose all its economic potential (Guinjoan, 2013). The Catalan minister of finances, Andreu Mas-Colell, calculated the so-called fiscal deficit (what Spain owes

to Catalonia) at around 16,000 million euros per year. His studies, that were later validated by other academic peers, can hardly be doubted. Mas-Colell enjoys worldwide standing (Johansson, 2004) due to his work in microeconomics (Liner, 2002). He was a faculty professor in Berkley and Harvard prior to returning to Catalonia and joining politics at the request of the former president, Jordi Pujol.

Another American-Catalan economist to theorize the most on the fiscal deficit is Xavier Sala i Martín, who is a professor of economics at Columbia University, and has been a professor at Yale University and Harvard University, where he got his doctorate. He has been recognized with a Distinguished Teacher in Graduate Economics award three times at Columbia and Yale, and he is, along with Elsa Artadi, the author of the Global Competitiveness Index, used since 2004 by the Global Competitiveness Report published by the World Economic Forum, an index that ranks 142 countries by their level of economic competitiveness. With these credentials, hardly anyone dares to oppose his studies. As a matter of fact, it is the field of Economics where the independence cause has gained notorious echoes, given that even the Spanish Economy minister of both signs (conservative and socialists) have agreed that there is a fiscal deficit with Catalonia. However, the Spanish officials have lowered the fiscal deficit to only ten to thirteen thousand million. The difference between these numbers and Mas Colell's lies in the equations used to calculate the deficit. In any case, the deficit exists and is acknowledged by the Spanish government who, so far, have done nothing to correct it. Catalonia's contribution to the Spanish coffers (19% of the total Spanish income) heavily outweighs the percentage it receives from the central government (below

14%), due to which the fiscal deficit has been a constant argument in contemporary Catalan nationalism (Guibernau, 2000).

To use an economical argumentation to favour an independent state is not something new. There is evidence that economic conditions are a key factor in sociological processes (Inglehart, 1990) and also that such conditions may influence self-sovereignty argumentations (Martin, 1994). In Catalonia, the leading economists (Boix, 2012) and even philosophers (Cardús, 2010). have taken on the economical grievance and proven its effects on the Catalan economy (Guinjoan, 2011). Even the Spanish government has publicly acknowledged that a great fiscal deficit is occurring between Spain and Catalonia – although to present date no action has been taken in order to arrange for a better economical treatment. Therefore, it can be asserted that the growth of the pro-independence discourse has much to do with the persistent fiscal deficit in Catalonia. The Spanish austerity policies have also shaped many views in this matter (Muñoz, Anduiza, & Rico, 2014). When Mas petitioned for a fairer fiscal distribution to Zapatero, his petition went unheard, and he was not able to obtain any agreement from the Spanish president neither in 2010 nor in 2011.

By the end of 2011, Mariano Rajoy, leader of the People's Party (PP) swept away Zapatero (PSOE) from the Spanish presidency. The PP achieved an absolute majority and started a series of political counter-reforms. Despite Zapatero's continual refusal to deal with the fiscal pact, the Catalan president, Artur Mas, tried yet again to reach an agreement, this time with Mariano Rajoy, who energetically refused it as well. As a result, a new demonstration was scheduled for the upcoming September 11, 2012.

5.2.2 September 11, 2012: The Catalan Independence Demonstration

After the success of the 2010 demonstration by Òmnium –worth remembering that was prepared in less than two weeks– the independence supporters began to organize themselves in new-born associations. The biggest of these was Assemble Nacional Catalana (in English: Catalan National Assembly) in March 2012, seeking the solely purpose of Catalonian independence from Spain. There is quite a consensus that September 11, 2012 became a turning point for Catalan politics, although no political analysts could probably have guessed it at the time. The newly founded (April 30, 2011) association Assamblea Nacional Catalana (*Catalan National Assembly* - ANC) set a demonstration for the Catalan National Day, September 11 that would become the precedent to many more to come. ANC has since been at the core of every major pro-independence campaign. In January 2015 the association had 40.000 members, and 40.000 volunteers, for a total of 80.000 enthusiastic supporters that have been able to mobilize millions of people altogether for many years in a row, the first time being on 11 September 2012.

If the motto in 2010 was "We are a nation. We decide" in a reference to the word *nation* being deleted from the final version of the Catalan Statute of Autonomy, for 2012 the slogan became more explicit: "Catalonia, new state in Europe". This time, the turnout was almost 2 million people according to its organisers, 1.5 according to the police. Whether you use one number or the other, it remains as one of the biggest demonstrations in Catalonia, and one of the greatest in Europe. As with the demonstration of July 10, 2010, this demonstration was also covered live by citizens on the most known social networks. Thousands of messages were shared before,

during and after the demonstration. On Twitter, for instance, the hashtags #11s2012 and #freedomforcatalonia quickly monopolized the trending topics. ANC set up a stage at the end of the march from where to speak to the demonstrators about various issues regarding the protest and the following steps. A special green card was printed and distributed for the demonstrators to hold it in the air as a metaphor of a yes to independence. Some attendants brought the card printed from home, some others were given one at the event. The aim was to take a panoramic picture with as many green cards as possible to symbolize the advancement of independence. Òmnium did not organize the demonstration with ANC but instead they arranged a concert at the end of the march with many known artists, both Catalan and Spanish, titled "Party for Freedom 2012".

There were 400 hundred accredited journalists from hundreds of worldwide media outlets. The Spanish Public Television (TVE) was highly criticized for blurring the news in their prime-time newscast: the demonstration was the fifth story in the initial summary and the twelfth story in the news program. The next day many journalists, both Catalan and Spanish, criticized the decision of TVE and other Spanish media outlets (such as the right-wing newspapers ABC and La Razón) that almost hid the news in their print and online editions. The lack of objectivity from the Spanish media also received critics from Le Monde and other international outlets. Globally, the repercussion was greater than it had been for July 10, 2010. Hundreds of media outlets, including the major news agencies, newspapers and television stations worldwide covered the event extensively. Since then, most of the renowned media outlets in Europe and the United States have dealt with the issue of Catalan independence many times and not only for 11-S demonstrations.

Some Catalan political representatives went to the rally reluctantly in regards to the terminology used for the demonstration such as nation, new state or independence. But at the same time, they knew that if they were not in those demonstrations they would be completely disconnected from society and out of the debate that was taking place in the public sphere. There were 400 hundred accredited journalists from hundreds of worldwide media outlets. The international impact was greater than it had been in 2010, and since then, most of the renowned media outlets in Europe and the United States have dealt with the issue of Catalan independence many times. In spite of the massive turnout and the international echoes, the Spanish government did not move a millimetre from their initial position: they would not negotiate on the economic distribution system and the fiscal deficit – a core argument in Catalan political activism, as we reviewed in the chapter before this one.

In the time that Artur Mas travels from Madrid to Barcelona by high-speed rail, social networking has already rendered its verdict: #tenimpressa (meaning: We're in a rush [to leave Spain]). This was the hashtag (repeated many times) that used much of the Catalan netizens for sentencing the Spanish state. It was the hundredth time that the Catalan government had tried to negotiate with the Spanish state and they continued to deny any concession to Catalonia. Understandably, people were tired of this situation in which the Catalan government accused the Spanish government of abusing its power and its absolute majority to deny all requests to Catalonia. After that failed encounter between Rajoy and Mas, the debate is no longer speaking of more regional concessions or the alleged fiscal agreement. It speaks of something else: a Catalan state.

People begin to talk openly and massively about independence. This led to the Catalan president Artur Mas to make an unprecedented move. He dissolved the Parliament and called for new elections, barely two years after the start of his first term. He explained that he had won the elections by promising the fiscal pact. Unable to do so because of the Spanish government's reluctant position, he then declared a new objective: the constitution of a Catalan state. This was also a turning point for his party, CiU, which had never declared itself as a party that sought independence. The elections took place on November 25 and Artur Mas won again. Although his party lost some of its MPs, the overall turnout secured two thirds of the chamber's seats to parties that were favourable to establishing a Catalan state or at least to consult the Catalan population about the matter via referendum. Mas used this new gained (and now shared with others – mainly ERC) force to start negotiations with the Spanish government. Once again, it proved unsuccessful. Advised and pressured by the most conservative sectors of his party, the Spanish president Mariano Rajoy closed all doors to any concession in terms of economy or autonomy.

In order to keep track of the efforts of the Generalitat to reach an agreement that never materialised, the Catalan Government added new websites to its internet presence, including Govern.cat and President.cat, to showcase their full activities and become a more transparent administration as opposed to the Spanish government. The new sites were available in Catalan and English, in line with other attempts made by the Generalitat to internationalise the Catalan claim. In spite of the massive turnout for September 11, 2012, and the international echoes, the Spanish government did not move a millimetre from their initial position: they would not negotiate more autonomy for Catalonia. The Catalan government accused the

Spanish government of abusing its power and its absolute majority to deny all requests to Catalonia –in opposition to Westminster that has always had a constant and cordial dialog with Scotland.

5.2.3 September 11, 2013: The Catalan Way

The year 2013 did not start well for Catalonia. The Spanish government had been continuously reducing the Catalan budget, which led to unprecedented situations. For instance, the pharmaceutical sector faced months of delays in payments for medicine. The Catalan government did not have the money to pay to pharmacies (among other public services), because the Spanish government had not yet paid the Catalan government what they owed them. In an attempt to be seen by many as a mockery and a humiliation, the Spanish government forced their Catalan counterparts to publicly beg for the money several weeks in a row, until they finally released the budget to them. Oddly enough, this operation was presented as a *rescue* by the Spanish government to the Catalan government. The Catalan MPs were outraged because of this and fiercely pointed out that the money that Spain was using to supposedly *rescue* them was actually and only a small part of the total amount that the Spanish government has owed them for years. This situation brought the fiscal deficit debate back to the fore.

The Spanish ministers publicly acknowledged Catalonia's disadvantageous situation but denied that the total amount was 16,000 million, as was suggested by the Catalan government. However, they did not bring any other amount to the table, nor sought to prove it in any other way, unlike the Catalan minister of finances, Andreu Mas-Colell, who had

presented a detailed study proving the budget deficit. It was not until 2017 that the Spanish government acknowledged a fiscal deficit of 9.900 million, although the method they used to count the final number was heavily criticized by experts on the subject, such as the aforementioned Mas-Colell and Sala-i-Martín. The Spanish fiscal balances are actually kept away from public knowledge, even from the regional governments. Politicians from People's Party, particularly those who rule in the regions that are most benefited of the unequal distribution that Catalonia complaints about, strongly opposed the release of the fiscal balances, as it would give yet another favourable reason to the Catalan independence activists.

During these political discussions, the Catalan society came together yet again to organize another massive demonstration. This time, however, it would be a little different. Instead of another huge demonstration in Barcelona, they would organize a more complicated challenge: a human chain. It was called *Via Catalana* (Catalan Way), and it was held again on the National Day, September 11. The Catalan Way was inspired in the Baltic Way held on August 23, 1989, when two million citizens of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania formed the Baltic Way human chain linking the three capital cities to demand the independence of the Baltic States from the Soviet Union. Ever since that event, nothing of similar characteristics had been seen in Europe or elsewhere.

The Catalan Way of September 11, 2013 was massively successful, much like the precursor demonstrations in 2010 and 2012. The human chain followed the ancient Roman Via Augusta along the Catalan coast, from the top in Le Perthus in France, down to Alcanar, the last town before the Catalan border with Valencia. It was a 400 kilometre (248 miles) human

chain in support of Catalan independence. Catalonia's Department of the Interior estimated the number of participants at about 1.6 million.

The organization logistics show yet another reason why Catalan activism stands on its own with many differences from previous contemporary demonstrations. Oppositely to all the demonstrations we analysed in the previous part of the dissertation, the Catalan demonstrations are not impulsive or sporadic but well-organized by means of information and communication technologies. In this regard, the protesters had to register to a website to organize along the way and avoid sections without participants. The website welcomed each person to choose a section over an interactive Google Maps. Four days before the Catalana Way all the sections were full, and open enrolment continued because regardless of the chosen section. Over half million people registered, even though those who showed up actually tripled this number up to 1.6 million – according to the Catalan government and ANC. The operators of telecommunications services together pledged to increase the 3G signals, anticipating crowds of people would use their mobile devices, and also because in September 11, 2012, there were many coverage problems due to the demonstrators being massively using their devices at once.

Most people attended the protest with their own car, sharing it with others, or by bus – more than 1500 buses were arranged for the occasion, more than for any other event in the country, ever. Each section had three organizers: a head of section in charge of volunteers and two together and align the protesters. These organizers received news live via telephone and the radio on how to proceed. Organizers established that all participants should be in section 16h (4pm) in the afternoon to avoid traffic problems and

begin to prepare the chain, which began at 17:14h (5:14 pm) in a reference to the year 1714, when Philip V vanished the Catalan rule and imposed Castile's administration to Catalonia, Aragon and Valencia. Until 18h (6pm) millions hold hands on that sunny and warm 11 September 2013, leaving behind a historical festive event with live coverage from around the world. In some sections there was so much participation (especially in urban sections) that more than one human chain was formed in parallel to the original one so that everyone could participate in the protest. Eight hundred volunteer photographers (one per section on average) took over 100.000 photos of all the sections. The pictures were later put together in a single picture that can still be seen online (gigafoto.assemblea.cat). Demonstrators can find themselves as the web allows moving the picture between the sections of the demonstration.

As happened in the previous demonstrations, there was massive live coverage, nationally and internationally. The event remained an international trending topic on Twitter for the entire day, and thousands of items of multimedia content were uploaded live to the internet on Youtube, Facebook, and others. Catalonia was again the front story for many international media outlets. Many presidents, heads of states, and MPs from different countries have been questioned about the Catalan claim ever since. In order to be politically correct, worldwide politicians and institutions, such as the European Parliament, can do nothing but politely – and sometimes mechanically – declare that this is an *internal affair* of Spain and thus needs to be discussed in Spain. This correctness has become ridiculous to many other politicians and journalists around the world. The Catalan Government spokesperson, Francesc Homs, joked about the so-often-repeated answer to these types of inquiries saying that the Catalan

claim must be the most international *internal affair* ever, clearly indicating that the Spanish government's diplomatic moves to minimize the claim have only had the opposite result. One noticeable example is a document that Spain's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, José Manuel García-Margallo, sent to the European embassies to diminish the independence claim. In his text, he used quotes from Twitter to prove how inconvenient the Catalan independence would be for everyone involved. The report had no solid basis and was merely collecting feelings as reliable opinions. Logically nobody considered the report, which drew criticism even from within Spain, and burst into Margallo's office as a wild boomerang. The inability and unwillingness shown by the Spanish politicians to naturally discuss the Catalan independence as a serious matter, as proved by all the previous failed attempts, also had an impact on the international press, with many op-eds asking the Spanish government to let the Catalans decide their future. This proves yet again one of the central points of this research: the negative reactions on the part of the Spanish government towards the Catalan claim have forged previously unseen heights of support for independence. While the Spanish politicians speak of the Spanish State and the Spanish Constitution as one that recognizes pluralism, the truth is that it does not, given the re-centralisation policies continuously exercised by the Spanish Government regardless of their ideology (Requejo, 2010).

5.2.4 September 11, 2014: The Catalan V

The year 2014 marks 300 years since the fall of Barcelona during the War of Succession in 1714 (as we have previously presented the historical context, we will not extend it further here). For this anniversary, the Catalan

society believed it had to organize something spectacular. While the public administration prepared the multiple acts of the commemoration of the tercentenary, the ANC (*Assemblea Nacional Catalana*; National Assembly of Catalonia) prepared another display of force alongside *Òmnium Cultural*. Two years previously, these organizations and the people that they gathered had clogged the streets of Catalonia's major city and capital, Barcelona. In 2013, the demonstrators occupied 400 kilometres of the Catalan coast from end to end. What could be the next challenge for drawing international attention? Both *Òmnium Cultural* and the ANC designed a demonstration displaying astonishing accuracy, which is how the idea of using the massive V letter came about.

The demonstration, held on September 11, 2014, was called Catalan Way 2014 or Catalan V and was organised by "Now is the time" (in Catalan: *Ara és l'hora*), a joint campaign sponsored by the associations ANC and *Òmnium Cultural* in support of the Catalan self-determination referendum of 2014. Two massive *senyeres* (a *senyera* is the formal name of the Catalan flag: five yellow stripes interspersed with four red stripes) were created by demonstrators wearing red and yellow t-shirts and forming a giant human mosaic throughout the Diagonal and the Gran Via. The two streets came together at the vortex in Plaça de les Glòries, forming a giant V, symbolising victory, vote, and will (in Catalan: *victòria*, *votar*, *voluntat*). The mosaic area (the road, not counting the sidewalks) was 11 kilometres in length and about 200 000 square meters in area.

As with the Catalan Way in 2013, the Catalan Way in 2014 was also divided by segments. At the moment of registering (www.araeslhora.cat) people could choose from 68 sections. Each of the Catalan *comarques* (a *comarca* in singular or *comarques* in plural is a group of municipalities,

roughly equivalent to a US county or a UK district) were represented in one or more segments. Also represented were Valencia, Balearic Islands, the Pyrenees and the Northern Catalonia (the territory ceded to France by Spain through the signing of the Treaty of the Pyrenees in 1659 – the area corresponds approximately to the modern French *département* of the Pyrénées-Orientales). To divide the protest into sections worked well for the human chain in 2013 so they repeated the plan for 2014 in Barcelona. This way, the organizers wanted to ensure a balanced distribution of protesters along the 11 km route and avoid collapses like those demonstrations in 2010 and 2012, when the influx of people exceeded all the expected projections. Registration could be done individually or in groups of up to five people. If there were larger groups that wanted to sign up together all at once, the organization recommended getting in touch with the nearest territorial branch of the ANC or Òmnium to ensure that they would be put together in the same section. Over 1500 buses from all over Catalonia arrived to take part in the demonstration. ANC and Òmnium had 7000 volunteers all along the 11k route to help everyone find their place at the protest, in yet another spectacular logistic deployment for the protest.

Two days before the protest, the ANC and Òmnium stated that half a million people had registered to attend the event. As with the demonstration in 2013 (the Catalan Way), it was expected that at least half of the eventual attendees would not have registered for whatever reason but would still show up to the demonstration – and this was exactly what happened on the day of the demonstration. The turnout exceeded projections yet again: 1.8 million attended the demonstration, according to police officials. This time, neither the ANC nor Òmnium released attendance figures so as to avoid conflict with the police and to avoid being accused of

exaggerating the final attendance count. Additionally, both the ANC and Òmnium had an empirical argument: they calculated that they needed between 1.5 and 2 million people to fill the entire 11 kilometres in length and about 200,000 square meters in area. The total figure depended on how many people could fit on a square meter. Given that the streets that formed the giant mosaic of the V were so crowded that one could hardly move – for the most part there were more than four persons per square meter and areas for walking (outside the flag mosaic) were also packed with standing people participating in the protest. Because of what we have reviewed, it seems correct to assert that the challenges posed by the demonstration was more than fully achieved.

As with the demonstration in 2013, this year another Google Maps was set up in order to allow people to see which sections needed more people and have them sing up for those or any other that they wanted to attend. ANC and Òmnium also launched a special app for the demonstrators on Android and iOS so that everyone could have live instructions as well any other important information before, during and after the demonstration. There were loudspeakers all along the demonstration route so that everyone could hear important announcements and also the final speeches from the vertex in Glòries. At 20:14h (8:14 pm) –which symbolizes the year 2014, 300 years after the defeat of 1714– people were encouraged to tweet all at once so that they would create a V also in a Twitter-map, and so they did. In fact, Twitter was crowded with pro-independence hashtags both nationally and internationally during all the day. Several helicopters (of the organization, the press and the police) followed the event from the air. The organization was releasing photos and videos on social networks in real time so that everyone could share them.

The organizers remarked that the Catalan V had been one of the biggest and most peaceful mobilizations in European history. It must be noted that the organization of both the Catalan Way (2013) and the Catalan V of 2014 took place almost entirely on the internet and included making available information about previous demonstrations, the call-to-action, registration, assignment of locations, organizing volunteers, etc. Clearly, the *Via Catalana* in 2013 and in 2014 would not have been completely understood without the new technologies of information and communication.

5.2.5 November 9, 2014: The You Decide Participative Process

Following the enormous turnout for the Catalan Way in 2013, the President of the Generalitat of Catalonia raised the bar in terms of his pro-independence policies. On December 12, 2013, after weeks of negotiating with other political forces, he announced the date and the two-part question for a non-binding consultation. The date: November 9, 2014. The two-part question: *Do you want Catalonia to become a state? If so, do you want this state to be an independent state?*

During the first months of 2014, the Catalan Parliament commissioned several of its members to write the Catalan Consultation Law, which provides the legal framework for holding the 9-N consultation. Throughout 2014, the Spanish Government maintained that they would not allow any type of consultation regarding self-determination, effectively closing all doors to negotiation in spite of the Catalan efforts to reach an agreement. Catalan politicians regretted that Mariano Rajoy did not act more like David Cameron, who had recently authorized the Scottish

referendum. Despite having all the propagandistic tools of the Spanish state against them, the Parliament of Catalonia passed the law on September 19, 2014 by 106 favourable votes (CiU, ERC, ICV-EUiA, PSC and CUP) and only 28 against (PP and C's).

In spite of this strong support among Catalan MPs (80% favourable votes), the Spanish administration still refused to authorise the consultation. Under the new law, fully titled "Law of Public Consultations and other forms of citizen participation", the Generalitat of Catalonia officially called the Catalan population to a non-binding consultation on November 9, 2014. Shortly after, the Spanish Government appealed to the Spanish Constitutional Court, who invalidated the consultation. The Catalan Government then decided to approach the call in a different manner: it would no longer be a non-binding consultation, because the constitutional court had suspended it; instead, it would become a participative process. The Spanish Government appealed this process to the constitutional court as well and the magistrates suspended it like they had with the original consultation. Unable to share the reasons why the Spanish state rejected such a democratic process as the mere act of voting in a participatory process, the Catalan Government continued with their preparations for the participative process of November 9, 2014.

The fear of the Spanish Government regarding allowing Catalans to vote was highly noticeable. The official reason for denying the vote was that the Generalitat did not have the competence to hold consultations – something that still has to be resolved by the constitutional court. The unofficial reason, according to Catalan representatives, was that they feared an overwhelming *yes* victory in terms of independence. On one hand, to block the consultation, the Spanish government appealed to the current

legislation (the Constitution of 1978); on the other hand, to authorise the consultation, the Catalan side appealed to freedom of speech and the very first act of a democracy, the voting process.

These were two very different ways of looking at the same matter: while the Spanish Government used their law as an excuse to stop the consultation, the Catalan Government used their law to authorise voting. The Generalitat of Catalonia even went a step further and announced that they would denounce the abuse of power by the Spanish Government in front of the United Nations, the European Parliament, the European Commission, the European Council and to the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, arguing that the situation had become unbearable following the Spanish Government blocking every single initiative of the Catalan Parliament to hold an official referendum. The Catalan government therefore asked the aforementioned international institutions to find a resolution that would allow Catalans to express their will. The fact that Artur Mas and his government stood still with his plans to go ahead with the participative process caught off guard his Spanish counterparts, who really thought he would back off. Nevertheless, participatory processes in Europe are booming and most institutions and politicians look favourably on them, which, if anything, falls favourably on the side of Artur Mas and his government and strengthens the reasons to do it.

The participatory process went ahead and took place on November 9, 2014. In spite of the Spanish Government's threats up to the actual day of the event, public schools opened punctually at 8 am: there were polls, ballots and electoral colleges. From early in the morning, queues formed with individuals meaning to exercise their right to vote, despite rumours that at any time, the police could interrogate attendees and take possession of

polls and ballots under the request of the Spanish Government. These threats did not materialise, and the participatory process lasted until 8 pm, the closing time of the electoral colleges. About 600 national and international journalists were accredited to follow the event live, more than in any other election. The turnout to the participative process exceeded all projections, with over 2.3 million votes, almost as many votes as for the latest elections in Catalonia in May 2014 for the European Parliament Elections. The results were as follows:

1. Do you want Catalonia to become a state? Y/N 2. Do you want this state to be independent? Y/N		
Option	Votes	%
Yes – Yes	1.861.753	80,76%
Yes – No	232.182	10,07%
Yes – Blank	22.466	0,97%
No	104.772	4,54%
Blank votes	12.986	0,56%
Invalid votes	71.131	3,09%
Total	2.305.290	100,00%

Table 3: The results of the November 9, 2014 participation process. Source: Generalitat de Catalunya.

The Catalan Vice-President, Joana Ortega, announced the results after midnight, at around 12:30am. The *Yes-Yes* to independence vote had won by an overwhelming 81% of the total votes. The turnout was of 37% of the electorate, a non-negligible figure when considering the numerous legal obstacles that the Spanish state made to stop the referendum. For example, the annulment by the justice of the referendum, twice, and the many threats made by the Spanish politicians and the media close to the Spanish

Administration, who spread false news, or as they are commonly known, fake news, that the police could take the data from the voters to sanction them later or even arrest them at the door of the polling stations. The conservative People's Party (PP), with an absolute majority in the Spanish government, insisted on detracting the results even though they rule over Spain only with the votes of the 30% of the Spanish electorate, a lower figure than the one they now attempt to reject. For comparison, the 18 September 2014 Scottish Independence Referendum had a major turnout of 84.59% – more than any other election in Scotland. It must be noted, however, that the Scottish referendum was official, while the Catalan one was a non-binding public process, partially design to draw international attention to the situation in Catalonia (Giannino, 2017). Catalan government representatives also commented that if the referendum had been recognized by Spain, as the United Kingdom had recognized Scotland's, the turnout would have been much greater. Also noticeable is that referendum on the treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe was held in Spain on 20 February 2005 with an also relatively low turnout of 40% and no Spanish official diminished the turnout at that time, without question the results of the referendum.

As a participative process, the 9-N had strong democratic foundations. Beyond the legal framework provided by the Law of Public Consultations, the Government of Catalonia even had international observers watch over the entire process. To avoid any accusations of subjectivity, the head of the observers was Ian Duncan, a British MP who had opposed Scottish independence. Duncan declared that the Catalan participative process on November 9, 2014 had met all the required democratic needs and expressed his wishes that the Spanish Government

would someday allow a binding referendum, just like Duncan's own government had with Scotland. Catalan politicians echoed this call; however, the only answer that came from Madrid was another dismissal: the Spanish state would not recognize the results of the November 9 participation process and would study legal reprisals against the organizers. On February 25th, 2015, the Constitutional Court unanimously confirmed the unconstitutionality of the consultation of 9-N. The Spanish government then began legal actions against the Catalan government.

After the conclusion of the 2014 consultation, the pro-independence Catalan activism began to talk about the need to create some Catalan organizations that began to replace their Spanish counterparts, including: Tax Agency, Customs, Catalan social security, postal service, central bank, mercantile registry, foreign relations, migration among other offices and government departments. In regards to this, on March 11, 2015, the Parliament of Catalonia approved the Law on Fiscal, Financial and Administrative Measures, which established the creation of a Catalan Treasury that would begin to collect the taxes of the Catalans and this way avoid a direct tax delivery to Spain. As expected, the Spanish Government filed an appeal with the Constitutional Court to challenge the law and the Court annulled the law unanimously – as did with many of the Catalans laws approved in 2015, 2016, and 2017, adducing alleged unconstitutionalities for all them, and thus giving the Catalan Government very little room to develop further state departments to prepare for an eventual cession.

Because the Spanish government refused to acknowledge the 9-N results, and was reluctant to any negotiation that presented Catalonia as a nation, the Catalan President Artur Mas vowed to have a Parliament election used as a plebiscite election. The election was scheduled for

September 27, 2015. All the parties that participated in the polls had stated whether or not they support independence, and Artur Mas has asserted that each Parliament seat that his party would get should be counted as a *yes* to independence. The pro-independence parties, at the time holding a majority in the Catalan Parliament (CiU, ERC and CUP), had stated that, if re-elected, they would begin a *disconnection* from the Spanish state through the writing of a new Catalan Constitution with open participation from citizens and finally, a Declaration of Independence to be approved by referendum among Catalan people.

5.2.6 Catalan Elections of 2015

On January 14, 2015, a month and a half after the November 9, 2014 referendum, at a press conference, the President of the Generalitat de Catalunya at that time, Artur Mas, announced that the elections to the Catalan Parliament, corresponding to the 11th legislature, would be held on September 27, 2015, anticipating 14 months before its actual four-year-term deadline (December 25, 2016). Due to the differences between the position of the UDC leadership and that of the CDC regarding the Catalan case and how it was to be solved, the UDC's militant faction was surveyed on June 14, 2015, asking whether or not it would commit to continuing its path with the CDC and the pro-independence road map. If yes, there would be certain conditions, among them, not to violate the legality with unilateral declarations of independence or initiating constituent processes outside the scope of Spanish law. The UDC's militant faction decided to support the board's leadership, which opposed any unilateral activities, with an adjusted 50.9% in favour. Following the results, the CDC and UDC leaders held

various meetings about how to settle their participation in the Catalan process, during which the UDC's demands to comply with a framework of legality were not met. Therefore, the CDC and UDC leaders decided to end their long-time coalition and not run together at the September 27, 2015 elections (Gisbert, 2015). As a consequence, three UDC ministers of the Government of Catalonia at that time resigned from the cabinet and were replaced by CDC members.

The electoral campaign was considerably subjugated to the issue of the independence of Catalonia. According to the independence movement, these elections were considered as a plebiscite on the independence of Catalonia (Clavero, 2015). Since the Spanish Government did not want to recognise the 9-N Referendum, the Catalan President, Artur Mas, defined the elections as a "definitive consultation"; hence, the election would be referred to as a plebiscite by many people. Only the coalition Junts pel Sí (in English: Together for Yes – often written as JxSí), formed by the CDC and ERC, and the CUP (Candidature of Popular Unity, or Constituent Call) supported this idea. The political parties opposed to independence, however, saw the elections as early ordinary elections to elect a new autonomous parliament.

The pro-independence coalition JxSí won the September 27, 2015 elections with 39.6% of the votes and 62 seats. JxSí acquired these 62 seats with 1,957,348 votes, which meant that they were the strongest electoral force in all provinces, counties and most municipalities, despite not obtaining an absolute majority. The CUP, which was also pro-independence, received 8.2% of the votes and 10 seats. Altogether, they exceeded the 68 seats needed for an absolute majority, thus guaranteeing a majority for the pro-independence movement in the Catalan legislative

chamber. Adding the votes of both formations (JxSí and ERC) represented 47.8% of the total vote. It has been argued in the Spanish media that the other 52.2% of the votes (for the Cs, PSC, PP and CSQEP) were against independence. However, the political representatives of the CSQEP noted, on serval occasions (EFE, 2016) that their votes could be not be counted as a "yes" nor a "no", as their militant wing was polarised on the issue (Colomer, 2015) meaning that they would not encourage an even greater polarization. Formally, the CSQEP depends on Podemos (which evolved after Spain's 15-M movement) and have publicly vowed to support an official Spanish-approved referendum, but not for a unilateral one (Carvajal, 2017). Subtracting CSQEP votes from the total "no" tally of the total recount, as they requested, left the "yes" campaign with a victory in terms of both votes and seats.

On October 27, 2015, the day after the constitution of the new parliament, the parliamentary groups of JxSí and CUP, in the Catalan Parliament, registered a proposal "to solemnly declare the beginning of the process of creating an independent Catalan state in the form of a republic" (Parlament de Catalunya, 2017). The resolution was approved on November 9, a year after the referendum, with 72 votes in favour of the JxSí and CUP, and 63 votes against from the Cs PSC, PP and CSQEP (Orriols, Pruna, 2015). The negotiations for an investiture were very long, since former the former president and formal candidate of JxSí, Artur Mas, needed the votes of the CUP to be able to be invested as president. That said, the CUP had already stated from the start (Vicenc, 2015) of the campaign that they would not invest Mas, as they saw him as part of the old political system and often accused him of corruption. On November 10 and 12, an investiture attempt was held, but, as expected, Mas only received the

votes of the 63 deputies from the JxSí, which were insufficient to be invested as president with a simple majority.

This left Mas with very few option (González, 2016) and, after deliberating with his party and his family, he decided to withdraw his candidacy and throw his support behind another member of his party, Carles Puigdemont, who was the Mayor of Girona, one of the four capitals of the Catalan provinces, at the time (March, 2016) Puigdemont's name would eventually become very familiar to the public across Europe, as we will see. Puigdemont was invested on January 10, 2016 as the 130th President of the Generalitat de Catalunya (RTVE, 2016). As for Artur Mas, he devoted himself to the creation of a new party, PDeCAT, which inherited many of the members of the CDC. Mas was the President of PDeCAT until January 9, 2018, when he resigned to allow PDeCAT to move out of the persistent shadows of the CDC (Puente & Altamira, 2018).

5.2.7 September 11, 2015: Free Way to the Catalan Republic

The Catalan National Day, September 11, 2015, was marked by a celebration of the "Free Way to the Catalan Republic" (Pauné, 2015) organized by the platform, "Now Is the Time", a joint association between the ANC and Òmnium, among other pro-independence associations. This platform served as both an umbrella for those associations to work together and the claim for the campaign. As usual, the demonstration was first presented in the spring of 2015. Its goal was to take over the avenue known as Meridiana, one of the main arteries of Barcelona, with the maximum number of people possible, in an attempt to exceed the previous year's

numbers. The concentration (people had to stand still, rather than move) was to be long enough to reach the Catalan Parliament, where speeches were made about the desire of achieving independence as soon as possible (Colomer, 2015).

The demonstration took take place on September 11, 2015, as usual, and coincided with the first day of campaigning for the 27 September elections. As a consequence, the parties against independence questioned the legality of holding such a demonstration whilst in the middle of an electoral period, although their claim was denied by government agents and therefore dismissed. The organization invited 30 international personalities to the demonstration, including Susan George, Kai-Olaf Lang, Irvine Welsh, Michael Keating, Michel Seymour, Bardo Fassbender, David Farell, Rogers Brubaker, Sebastian Balfour and Ben Page, who are widely recognised in each of their respective areas of expertise, such as politics, philosophy, academia and the arts. The organizations invited them so that they would freely speak about the demonstration in their own country (EFE, 2015b).

Every year, the associations that organise the rallies ask for participants to register online, so that as many as possible can be involved. As of August 30, 2015, the campaign exceeded 250,000 registrations, resulting in more than 1,200 buses being hired to transport citizens from all over Catalonia to Barcelona. The final turnout always exceeds the registration limit because many people do not wish to register and do not know for sure whether or not they will attend until the day itself. To organise attendees and manage the event, the route was divided into 135 sections, one for each seat in the Catalan Parliament. Each section represented the principles on which an eventual Catalan Republic would be constructed: justice and social welfare, democracy, diversity, solidarity, territorial

balance, sustainability, culture and education, innovation and openness to the world. The event took place without incident. The public institutions estimated the number of participants to be between 550,000 (Delegation of the Government in Catalonia) and 1,400,000 (Urban Guard of Barcelona), while the organizers (ANC and Òmnium) estimated that the attendees numbered 2,000,000 (Pi, 2015).

The demonstration received notorious coverage in the international media. Several 24-hours networks broadcasted live the first available aerial views of the rally. Other generalist media such as the French public network and the British BBC, among others, sent a correspondent and were connected throughout the afternoon. Euronews noted the closeness of the September 27 Elections and how the demonstration was a *tour de force* for the pro-independence movement, also commenting on the latest surveys published days before by the Centre for Sociological Research in Catalonia, which pointed at the possibility of the pro-independence parties to attain an absolute majority. Newspapers from around the globe, particularly those in Europe, echoed the demonstration in their digital editions, among which were The Telegraph, The Guardian, Le Monde, Le Figaro or Wall Street Journal. Some of these journalists went a bit further and commented on the situation with a deeper approach, showing some empathy for the Catalan case and comparing the efforts of the pro-independence movement and political parties to that of the Scottish government.

The Catalan public TV broadcasted the event partially in its main channel, TV3, and entirely in its 24-hours news channel, 324. The Catalan public broadcasting journalists monitored the day on the social networks, noting that the hashtags that they had created for their viewers, achieved a great success. The last recount that was made public on the same night of

the demonstration, #11STV3 and #11SCatRàdio had gathered around 30,000 tweets, and #11STV3 had become Spanish trending topic for almost 4 hours and World Trending topic for a few minutes (Orozco, 2015).

The official hashtag for the demonstration was #ViaLliure11S and it achieved more than 70,000 tweets becoming World trending topic. The second most used was #Diada2015 and it accumulated 40,000 tweets. Finally, the third most used was #ViaLliure, that reached 18,000 tweets. In total, the three labels have brought together more than 128,000 tweets. The organizers (ANC) had also prepared a special hashtag for later that night, with the aim of becoming Word trending topic. The hashtag was #WeAreCatalonia and was unveiled to the public at 8:14pm. The hashtag did accomplish its objective and became #1 World trending topic that night. In total, more than 33,000 tweets were published with the hashtag #WeAreCatalonia, reaching over 67 million impressions. The twitter statistics made available also showed that only 13% of the messages came from Twitter web/desktop version, and that the remaining, an astonishing 87% came from mobile devices (Orozco, 2015). In total, the five most used hashtags accounted for 191,000 total tweets worldwide.

Every September 11 in Barcelona there are telephone network issues with 3G and 4G. Because there is more than five or even six persons per square meter in the pro-independence demonstrations, the telephone networks sometimes fall or collapses, as it cannot meet the demand of everyone in the protest. This year, the issue was solved with the FireChat application. Between September 9 and September 11, about 10,000 Catalans downloaded this application and was used no less than 130,000 times during those days (Borràs, 2015) in order to send information regarding the *Via Lliure* before, during and after the protest. FireChat, as

conceived by its developers at Open Garden in San Francisco, was originally meant to be an application to be used in case of catastrophe or natural disaster. It has instead become a renowned source for direct messaging and chat among protesters worldwide. FireChat is based on peer-to peer technology (P2P). FireChat allows mobile phones to connect to each other using a wide range of possible systems. The user does not have to configure anything, the application alone decides whether to use the internet, in case it has access to it, or to send the messages directly to another phone through Wi-Fi or Bluetooth. FireChat creates a mesh between all connected phones, the message will reach the destination through the other mobiles that make blind pointers and cannot read it, because it circulates encrypted between the sender and the receiver (Borràs, 2015). FireChat is often recommended by activists such as Julian Assange to overcome any type of power cut or censorship, as happens with many non-democratic countries involved in political activism. In this regard, FireChat was also used in recent protests in Hong Kong, Ecuador or Malaysia, among others, and continues to spread proving to be an effective ally for political activism worldwide, while continuing its noble original purpose to bring people together during catastrophes and emergencies. The strong muscle developed by the pro-independence activists internationally was also reinforced as the *Via Lliure* demonstration also reported on several protest events held by the Catalan diaspora in previous days in several cities around the world, including Amsterdam, Bangkok, Berlin, Bern, Brussels, Buenos Aires, Canberra, Dubai, London, Mexico, Montreal, New York, Paris and Santiago de Chile, among other cities.

5.2.8 September 11, 2016: A punt (Ready)

On September 11, 2016, Catalonia witnessed its sixth massive pro-independence demonstration after those in 2010, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015. This time, however, the demonstration was de-localized in the sense that it did not entirely take place on the streets of Barcelona, but in five different cities: Barcelona, Berga, Lleida, Salt and Tarragona (Vicens & Toro, 2016). Once more, the demonstration was arranged by the Catalan National Assembly and Òmnium Cultural (La Diada més descentralitzada, «a punt», 2016). The motto this time was *A punt*, which literally translates as *On point*, but actually means *We are ready*, depending on the context. Both translations were appropriate on this occasion, as the message was used to indicate that the Catalan people were ready to become an independent state. As mentioned before, after winning a clear majority in the Catalan Parliament for the first time ever in 2015, early in 2016, the pro-independence parties approved a project to achieve independence within 18 months, that is, by the middle of or late 2017, depending on when to start counting. The objective of the demonstration was to boost and show support for this plan and let the governors know that the majority of the Catalan society had sided with them.

As with previous demonstrations, the internet played an important role in this one too. Both ANC and Òmnium used their main profiles on social networks to promote the hashtag #apunt. The hashtag had variations for each of the cities that hold a demonstration, Barcelona, Berga, Lleida, Salt and Tarragona. These variants incorporated the name of the city in the hashtag, such as #apuntTarragona for Tarragona, and with the same mechanics for the rest of the cities. Because of this, a total recount of messages could not be done this time, but still, the main hashtag #apunt

became worldwide trending topic throughout the day. The fact that the demonstration was divided by cities also allowed for a better working of the telephone networks, unlike the previous years.

The number of participants who took part in the demonstrations, according to the organizers, was 1,030,000 people, although the Municipal Police lowered the figure to 800,000 (Ferret, 2016). In any case, the total sum was yet another achievement for the pro-independence movement. The pro-independence associations have shown no interest in battling whether the demonstrators were a bit more or a bit less – there is always going to be on how to count protesters at mobilizations – and instead they focused on the international repercussion on the event. The Catalan case was indeed gaining sympathies by the minute, and that was by far more important to the movement than the overall count of the protesters on September 11. The international media coverage did indeed look favourably on the demonstration, with some of them even going a step further and demanding the Spanish Government to listen to Catalan demands before it was too late for them to amend the situation.

In this regard, *The New York Times*' Spain correspondent, Raphael Minder, asserted that, "in the middle of the Spanish political blockade, the Catalans renew their call for independence" (Minder, 2016). The economics newspaper, *The Financial Times*, said that the demonstration left the Catalan pro-independence movement at a "crossroad", in the sense that, at this point, there was little left to do but to move forward with secession or leave the idea behind. The BBC, as did many other media outlets, focused on the total number of attendees (Catalan independence: Hundreds of thousands rally for break with Spain) which was more than the 800,000 recorded by the Municipal Police (it was more than a million, according to

the organisers). The Arabic version of the Arab television network, Al Jazeera, also noted that tens of thousands had descended on Barcelona, while "the independentist leaders try to bridge the differences around a secession plan" (Gea, 2016). Similar to *The Financial Times*, Al Jazeera stressed that the pro-independence movement was on a very definitive path towards independence. The French newspaper, *Le Figaro*, noted that the Catalan leaders had been trying to avoid direct confrontation with Madrid (Traillac, 2016) but that that would change in the following year. All the newspapers remarked on the strength of the movement after many years of protests (*Le Figaro*). The Italian newspapers (Olivo, 2016) noted the participation. for the first time, of the Catalan president, Carles Puigdemont, in the demonstration. "Next stop, independence", the newspapers said. Meanwhile, in Switzerland, *La Tribune de Genove* also noted that, after trying without success to obtain a legal referendum with the Spanish Government, the Catalan independence movement had opted for the path of secession (Grosse manif pour une Catalogne indépendante, 2016) which Catalan political leaders want to make effective next year, despite the legal blocking of the central government (Edwards, 2016) explained Reuters.

Another French newspaper, *Le Monde*, ran with the headline "Hundreds of thousands of protesters in Catalonia for independence", emphasising that the divisions between the independence parties were slowing down a process that should be completed in 2017. The German *Deutsche Welle* (Catalans hold mass demo for independence from Spain, 2016) pointed out that the Catalans "celebrate[d] a massive rally for independence" and drew attention to the slogan "Ready". The Portuguese newspaper *Publico* underlined the magnitude of the mass protest by indicating that the Generalitat wanted to convene the referendum on

independence in the following year (Centenas de milhares de manifestantes pedem independência nas ruas da Catalunha, 2016). The French weekly *Le Nouvel Observateur* wondered how the Spanish Government would deal with the pro-independence movement from now on. The coverage also includes a statement from Puigdemont: "We will insist on reaching an agreement with Spain." Following the demonstration, on October 6, 2016, the Catalan Parliament approved a resolution in which the Catalan Government was urged to hold a binding referendum on the independence of Catalonia by September 2017 at the latest (El Parlament aprueba un referéndum "vinculante" de independencia para septiembre de 2017, 2016). The motion was approved by the pro-independence parties, JxSí (the governing party) and the left-wing CUP, whose support was needed throughout in order to pass the necessary bills. The resolution also demanded a clear question for the referendum, with only two possible responses: yes or no – this was contrary to the 9-N participative process, which had three possible answers (yes, no or yes to a new relationship within Spain). On December 23, 2016, the National Pact for the Referendum was born, an agreement that brought together political institutions, political and social organisations, elected officials and individuals to oversee all the steps until the result of the referendum was announced. The pact, which included several work teams, kept in mind the idea of a consultation agreed with the state before taking any unilateral route (Vicens, Orriols, & Moldes, 2016), an option that the Catalan government has never ruled out.

5.3 THE CATALAN CASE ON PUBLIC MEDIA OUTLETS

The treatment that the Catalan claim received from Catalan, Spanish and international media outlet is quite different. According to a study by authors Micó and Carbonell (2017) it is difficult to find neutral media that speak of the Catalan question, whether we are talking about local or national media, or whether we are talking about international media. Most of the media outlets have a position on the issue. The independent entity, *Media.cat*, published an empirical report that measured the presence of politicians in favour of, against, or neutral to independence in the Catalan and Spanish media. In the Catalan public media, *Media.cat* (2015) analysed the morning political discussion programme *els Matins* (TV3), the night-time political discussion programme *2324* on 3/24 (TV3's 24-hour news channel) and public radio's morning political discussion programme *El Matí* (Catalunya Ràdio), concluding that 60% of the contributors were in the favour of the referendum, while 30% were opposed. An identical study was performed on their Spanish counterparts, including the TVE (Spanish public television) morning discussion programme *Los Desayunos de TVE*, the Canal 24H (TVE's 24-hour news channel) programme *La Noche 24*, and the RNE (Spanish public radio) programme *Las Mañanas de RNE*. In these cases, 100% of the contributors were opposed to Catalan independence.

Spanish public broadcasting had rather a good reputation when the left-wing PSOE was in power. The party modified the law, so that two thirds of the Spanish Congress had to agree on the appointment of TVE's president so as to avoid political manipulation by any government. However, when Partido Popular took over the Spanish Government in 2011, it modified the law so that a simple majority (its own) could decide on the TV3

appointment. Ever since, the right-wing Partido Popular has exercised control over TVE, which has repeatedly cast doubts over the credibility of the Spanish public broadcasting system, whose own workers' union has criticised the way in which some issues are reported, citing clear interference from Spanish officials. For instance, TVE's current president, Eladio Jareño, served as the Communications Director for Partido Popular in Catalonia before being nominated for TVE's presidency. Given this and many other irregularities, the Information Committee of the European Broadcasting Union excluded RTVE (to which TVE belongs) from European institutions, arriving at the decision that RTVE could no longer be trusted. TVE's workers' union were far from surprised, since they had themselves been denouncing the manipulation of information ever since Partido Popular brought in their own people to direct the public entity.

On the other hand, we find that the Catalan public broadcasting system has earned a much more credible reputation over the years. In spite of anti-independence political parties and associations trying to diminish this credibility by spreading false news regarding the system's presumed lack of objectivity, independent data indicates otherwise. According to the independent German company GFK, the leader in market studies, which audits all major networks, in March, TV3 received a qualitative evaluation of historic significance, with a score of 8.5 – such a score had never been awarded previously to any other network, neither Spanish nor Catalan, neither public nor commercial (Gutiérrez, 2018). Other studies, such as the aforementioned *Media.cat* report, also demonstrated that the Catalan public broadcasting system facilitates much more balanced political discussions than its Spanish counterpart (RTVE).

That said, political parties such as Partido Popular and Ciudadanos are campaigning to close down TV3, as they believe that the television network has promoted independence, even though they have never backed up their claims with independent evidence. If their claims were true, the Catalan pro-independence movement should have been leading in polls since the 1980s, when TV3 began to broadcast. However, that is not the case. Similarly, Catalonia did not have its first pro-independence government until 2015. In other words, if the anti-independence parties' claims had been accurate, TV3 would have helped Catalonia turn into an independent republic long ago. In any case, the lack of empirical evidence to support these claims means that any further discussion of TV3's credibility would be unproductive.

PART VI – THE CATALAN EVENTS OF 2017 ONWARDS

Marc Perelló i Sobrepere
Universitat Ramon Llull (2018)

6.1 SEPTEMBER 11, 2017: THE NATIONAL DAY FOR YES

The Catalan National Day of 2017 took place in the midst of much political tension between the Spanish Government and its Catalan counterpart (Caspersen et al., 2017). Shortly before the official campaign for the referendum initiated (15 September), the pro-independence movement chose the National Day to organise another remarkable demonstration on September 11. The demonstration was called La Diada del Sí (The National Day for Yes) (La mobilització d'aquest Onze de Setembre es dirà la "Diada del Sí", 2017). With an aim to claim independence for Catalonia, it took place between Passeig de Gràcia and Carrer Aragó de Barcelona. It was organised by the Catalan National Assembly with the collaboration of Òmnium Cultural. As in the previous years, the demonstration included a well-staged and planned performance. This time, the organisers wanted to create a "plus sign" (+) representing the opportunities of building a new state: the Catalan Republic.

To ease the organisational process, the demonstration was divided in 49 sections, with people from different Catalan provinces assigned to each. More than 1,800 buses were rented by the Catalan National Assembly. Transports Metropolitans de Barcelona and Ferrocarrils de la Generalitat de Catalunya also increased the number of trains for the occasion, while shutting some of the stations closest to the venue to avoid agglomerations of people. The organisers appealed the attendees to wear old shirts and even t-shirts from other social causes to symbolise the diversity of the motivations behind the desire to build a better state. On September 10, 450,000 personas had registered online. As happened in

every other year, the turnout doubled the registrations, given that not everyone who attended went through the registration process.

At 17:00h (5pm) four banners were deployed at each end of the plus sign. They moved towards the centre, converging at 17:14h (an allegorical symbol of the year 1714). The banners included messages in favour of democracy and peace. As the banners advanced, the protesters put on fluorescent yellow t-shirts created specifically for this event. The colour was chosen to honour the volunteers of the pro-independence movement, who often wear a yellow vest when they are giving instructions to protesters and coordinating the demonstrations in the streets. Following this performance, the saxophonist Pep Poblet played Pau Casals' song *El cant dels ocells* in honour of those who died during the 2017 Catalonia attacks. The mobilisation ended with speeches from the organising entities.

As has already been mentioned, the demonstration was supposed to be seen in the form of a plus sign from the air, suggesting the benefits of independence for Catalonia. That said, no aerial footage could be taken, because the Spanish Government had banned helicopters and drones from the flying zone (except for those of the Spanish Police). Television stations could not obtain aerial shots either; this was regarded by the pro-independence movements as an attempt by the government to censor the demonstration. For the first time, the organisers decided not to count the number of protesters present, as they wished to transcend such a numerical debate to a more profound one. Barcelona's local police numbered the attendees at 1,000,000 (La Guàrdia Urbana xifra en un milió de persones els assistents a la manifestació, 2017). This accounted for 200,000 more than the previous demonstration, showing the strength of mobilisation and the increasing support for the pro-independence associations. The social

networks were taken by the pro-independence activists who once again made the hashtags #laDiadadelSi and #11s2017 both the national and the international trending topic ranking on Twitter.

As with the previous years, the international Assemblies of the ANC again mobilized for September 11, in yet another showcase of organization force for a political activism movement. As described by the ANC itself, the celebration of the Catalan National Day abroad was a combination of protest, political and festive events. The Catalan diaspora in France met in the Champs de Mars in Paris, to recreate the choreography of La Diada and to celebrated an open picnic, where they discussed the political situation of Catalonia. In the capital of Europe, in Brussels' Parc du Cinquantenaire, right in the buildings of the European Commission, the Belgian ANC met to recreate the Diada as well, and event that was followed by the Belgian television. In its neighbour country, Luxembourg, the ANC also celebrated Open Day at the Catalan Centre of Luxembourg.

A similar act took place in Copenhagen, Denmark. Another powerful political act took place in London The British ANC organized a debate between academics, politicians and journalists on the referendum on self-determination in Catalonia in the British Parliament. Politicians from both unionist, Scottish and Welsh parties participated. The event also attracted the attention of the BBC. In Scotland, the ANC met with the *Castellers* from Edinburgh (human towers association) and hold various workshops to discuss the Catalan political situation. The Catalans residing in the capital of Ireland, Dublin, also met to commemorate the Day in front of the historic General Post Office, where the rebellion against British occupation began in 1916. At the other side of the Atlantic, Catalans who had emigrated to the

United States of America also met in New York, Chicago, Washington D.C., Dallas, Houston, Seattle, Minneapolis, Portland, San Francisco and Boston, among others. Still in the American continent, the Diada was also celebrated in Mexico and Chile, with notorious presence of people and the media.

Judging from the usual practice with the previous years' demonstrations as a reference, it was expected that the international media would report on the protest after it had happened. However, the anticipation in 2017 was so significant that some of the media began reporting on the event in the course of the same week. The British newspaper *The Guardian* recalled that, despite the fact that September 11 commemorates a major defeat in the history of Catalonia (referring to the incident in 1714), the protesters hope that an equally inspirational victory will not take long to arrive. *The Guardian* correspondent Sam Jones also pointed out that since 2012, gatherings on September 11, the National Day of Catalonia, had become demonstrations of a clearly independent character (Gea, 2017).

The Financial Times emphasised that the demonstration was being held only three weeks before the referendum, which could reinforce the vote for the *Yes* option, while explaining that an effective organisation of the referendum would partially depend on the response from the mayors of Catalonia, who were responsible for opening up the voting centres. In a similar vein, the French newspaper *Le Monde* referred to the pressure that city councils were under in terms of organising a referendum with the following headline: "In Catalonia, city councils under pressure due to the referendum on self-determination" (Morel, 2017). This explained that not all elected local representatives would follow the lead provided by the Catalan Government, fearful of legal retaliation from the Spanish courts. *Le Monde* also published an op-ed asking Madrid to find a political solution for

Catalonia (Indépendance de la Catalogne: faire entendre la raison entre Madrid et Barcelone, 2017).

The American newspaper *The Washington Post* focused on the right to independence barely a few weeks before the actual referendum. Al Jazeera dedicated some airtime as well as digital articles to the event, emphasising on the fact that Spain had been threating the leaders propagating independence and even publishing false news to undermine the pro-independence movement (Newton, 2017). Al Jazeera also criticised the Spanish Police for breaking into local newspapers offices – something the police had done with the unfulfilled hope of finding voting papers for October 1. In its turn, *Politico* published an article titled *What Spain will lose if Catalonia becomes independent*, which, by means of infographics, confirmed that Catalan GDP represented 20.1% of the whole of Spain's (data from 2015), that Catalan exports account for 25.6% of the total exports from Spain (data from 2016), and that 23.8% of foreign tourists who visited Spain in the previous year also travelled to Catalonia (What Spain has to lose from Catalan independence, 2017) among other statistics.

Politico also remarked on the strength of the Catalan economy in spite of the Spanish Government's efforts to claim that, after many years of pro-independence governments, it was in fact suffering – something that was not true. The French *Le Figaro* published similar data, stressing that, if granted independence, Catalonia could be a state similar to Belgium (Taillac, 2017). Some foreign journalists and international correspondents used their own social networks for live coverage of the protest, such as Raphael Minder (from *The New York Times*) and Michael Stothard (from *The Financial Times*), both of whom highlighted the peaceful character of the protesters and the overall demonstration.

6.2 BEFORE THE OCTOBER 1 REFERENDUM

The previous year, 2016, had ended with the commitment on the part of the Catalan Government to take the necessary measures in order to hold a binding referendum in 2017. The Spanish Government denounced this to the Constitutional Court of Spain (TC), who met on Friday 14, 2017, and annulled the resolutions approved by the Parliament of Catalonia last October that promoted the so-called 'constituent process' supporting, among other actions, the holding of a referendum in 2017. The Constitutional Court authorized the Prosecutor's Office to open a new criminal proceeding against the president of the Chamber, Carme Forcadell, and the members of the executive board, Lluís Corominas, Anna Simó, Joan Josep Nuet, and Ramona Barrufet for expressing possible contempt for the judgements issued by the court during the previous months. The Court asked the Catalan Parliament not to pass bills or resolutions regarding any type of moves towards the establishment of an independent state (Alvarez, 2017) but this did not stop the Catalan Parliament and its members from continuing to organise the 1-O Referendum.

In May, a series of well-known personalities from around the world expressed their support for holding a referendum in addition to making a call to Spanish and Catalan institutions to work together so that Catalan citizens could decide the course of their future and start negotiations based on the collective decision of the voters. The manifesto was entitled "Let Catalans Vote" (https://www.letcatalansvote.org) whose signatories included those of the Nobel Prize winners Rigoberta Menchú, Desmond Tutu, Ahmed Galai, Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, Dario Fo, and Jody Williams, politicians such as Gerry Adams and Piedad Córdoba, the actor Viggo Mortensen, and the

writer Irvine Welsh (Setze personalitats internacionals s'adhereixen al manifest "Let Catalans vote", 2017). In July of 2017, other internationally recognised celebrities such as the artist Yoko Ono, songwriters Peter Gabriel and Silvio Rodríguez, and former footballers Hristo Stoichkov and Eric Cantona signed the document as well (Yoko Ono, Stoichkov y Viggo Mortensen, a favor del referéndum catalán, 2017).

On June 9, the date of the referendum on the independence of Catalonia was officially announced at a ceremony held jointly by the government and some of the most controversial pro-independence associations, including the ANC and Òmnium (Pruna & Moldes, 2017). The Catalan President, Carles Puigdemont, announced that the referendum would be held on October 1 and that the question up for discussion would be as follows: "Do you want Catalonia to be an independent state in the form of a republic?" (with only two possible answers: yes or no). It was decided that the ballots would be printed in Catalan, Spanish, and Aranese. The Catalan authorities also emphasised that this referendum would be binding on the part of the government, unlike the November 9, 2014 participative process. Preparations for the referendum continued until autumn, when the climax was reached.

Two laws passed by the Catalan Parliament in September 6, 7 and 8, are key to understanding the events that followed. The first was the Law on the Referendum on the Self-determination of Catalonia (Catalan: *Llei del referèndum d'autodeterminació*), while the second law was the Law on the Juridical Transition and Foundation of the Republic (Catalan: *Llei de transitorietat jurídica i fundacional de la República)*. This initiative began on August 28, when the parliament's pro-independence majority, composed of the JxSí and CUP, presented a new legislative project (Cataluña presenta

la ley de ruptura en el Parlament, en directo, 2017) to the Catalan chamber, the main objective of which was to build a legal framework that would guarantee legal security for a proper succession from the respective administrations and the continuity of public services in what would be called a "transition process" from the then autonomous community of Catalonia to an independent Catalan state (Pi, 2017). Meanwhile, the Law on the Referendum on the Self-determination of Catalonia was meant to provide a legal framework for the Catalan Government in which to hold the independence referendum on October 1, 2017 as a binding self-determination referendum on the independence of Catalonia. The law was passed by the Catalan Parliament on September 6 after more than 11 hours of intense debate, with 72 votes from the pro-independence ruling coalition (JxSí and CUP) and the abstention of the CSQEP (11 votes) in favour of the law. The other 52 opposition parliamentarians left the chamber before the votes were cast. The law was suspended barely a day later, on September 7, by the Constitutional Court of Spain, which cited the lack of competence on the part of the Generalitat de Catalunya for organising a referendum as the main reason for the suspension of the law.

On September 8, the Catalan Parliament approved the other law that was of utmost importance to the process – the Law on the Juridical Transition and Foundation of the Republic. This law was passed in order to guarantee a new legal framework for the Catalan Republic to be eventually built as well as an orderly succession from the administrations and the continuity of public services during the transition process, should Catalonia become an independent state based on the results of the 1-O Referendum. This law would become the closest document to a constitution in the initial transition of Catalonia from an autonomous community to a state.

The law was passed by the Catalan Parliament on the same day, with 72 votes in favour (out of 135) from the ruling coalition (JxSí and CUP). This time, the CSQEP voted against the law (11 votes). However, like the previous time, the right-wing unionist opposition, Ciudadanos, and Partido Popular left the chamber before the voting could be conducted. The law was also suspended on September 12 by the Constitutional Court of Spain. In addition to suspending both laws, the Spanish Court warned the 948 mayors of Catalonia as well as 62 public officials of the Generalitat recalling that they could not participate in or facilitate the October 1 referendum.

Ignoring the Spanish court, the Generalitat de Catalunya began campaigning for the referendum with several media events held between September 15 and 29, as stipulated by the law. According to a report by the organisers, a campaign closing ceremony was held on the 29th in the presence of some 80,000 people – as many as the streets could fill. The meeting was attended by politicians from the Candidatura d'Unitat Popular (CUP), Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (ERC) and Partit Demòcrata Europeu Català (PDeCAT) - the PDeCat is the heir to the CDC (now disbanded), which was part of the JxSí coalition alongside the ERC. This was the beginning of the "yes campaign". Before the start of the campaign and during its course, the Civil Guard proceeded with a judicial order to close down several websites that promoted the referendum. Among them was the Generalitat's official site dedicated to promoting the October 1 referendum (Oms, 2017). The Catalan President, Carles Puigdemont, personally explained to the people the tricks to overcome the website's seizure through his Twitter account (Puigdemont explica en un tuit cómo acceder a la web cerrada del referendum, 2017). He even re-opened the website on a different server (Puigdemont desafía al juez y reabre otra web

del referendum, 2017) not once but several times, trying to avoid the Spanish authorities seizing control of the website. Since the Spanish Constitutional Court had declared it illegal for the Catalan Government to promote the referendum in any way, a group of people set up the website *empaperem.cat*, which made digital posters available to be downloaded and printed individually by citizens who wished to participate in supporting the referendum. The Spanish Police later also seized *empaperem.cat*, as well as the official ANC website, although replicas soon appeared. Digital organisations such as WikiLeaks (WikiLeaks allotja una còpia del web en què es pot consultar on anar a votar, 2017) and The Pirate Bay, as well as digital activists such as Julian Assange, Edward Snowden and Peter Sunde, offered their help in re-opening the websites and promoting them. In fact, Assange was very active on Twitter regarding the overall Catalan situation, tweeting dozens of times every day in English in favour of the referendum – almost every one of his tweets about independence resulted in thousands of retweets and interactions (Julian Assange treu pit per "ajudar a protegir" la web de l'1-O, 2017).

On 20 September 2017, the Spanish Police, under the order of the State Attorney General, initiated a police operation to stop the referendum (Carranco, 2017). Police officers stormed the Departments of the Economy, Institutional Relations and Foreign Affairs and Interior and Social Affairs of the Generalitat. The operation resulted in 14 detainees, including senior government officials and workers in Catalan regional institutions. Among the detainees were the Secretary General of the Vice Presidency, Josep Maria Jové, and the Secretary of Finances, Josép Lluís Salvadó (Pellicer, 2017). As soon as the first detentions occurred, people began gathering peacefully in front of the buildings from where the Spanish Police were operating.

Not much later, the Catalan National Assembly and Òmnium Cultural joined the gathering. The protesters crowded in front of two buildings: the headquarters of the Department of the Economy and the headquarters of the Department of Foreign Affairs. In other cities and towns across Catalonia, parallel demonstrations were held in protest against the intervention by the Spanish Police. Early in the afternoon, there were almost 40,000 people on the streets surrounding the Department of Economy, according to Barcelona's local police (Iborra, 2017). At the Liceu, the most famous Opera house in Bacelona, the crowd sang Catalonia's anthem, Els Segadors, shouting slogans in favour of the referendum prior to that afternoon's performance of the opera *Un Ballo in Maschera* by Giuseppe Verdi. The demonstration reached its peak later in the afternoon when people leaving work decided to join the demonstration. The throng at the Department of the Economy continued to grow until early in the morning, meaning the police officers were trapped in the building.

The turnout exceeded all predictions and, by the time the surrounding streets were closed off, they were already full. It was not until the early morning of the 21st, when people began to disperse, that the police finally left the building. On the same day, another gathering was convened in Barcelona in front of the High Court of Justice of Catalonia to demand the release of all detainees from the previous day (Ruiz & Sallés, 2017). College students abandoned their classrooms to attend the demonstrations, bringing traffic on several streets of the city to a standstill. Even F.C. Barcelona issued a statement condemning the actions of the Spanish Police – some officials associated with the club even suggested suspending their match schedule, an action that would have caused serious problems to the

main soccer competition in Spain, La Liga. But finally, Barcelona kept on playing as scheduled.

There were also international reactions to the detentions, particularly from members of the Houses of Lords and Commons in the UK Parliament, who asked Mariano Rajoy, in an open letter, to pose no more obstacles to the referendum on October 1 (https://www.appgcatalonia.org.uk). Scotland's first minister, Nicola Sturgeon, also declared on Twitter that "regardless of opinion on Catalonia, the jailing of elected leaders is wrong and should be condemned by all democrats" (Sturgeon, 2017) and that "the disagreement about Catalonia's future is political. It should be resolved democratically – not by the jailing of political opponents" (Sturgeon, 2017b). Combined, her tweets received more than 60,000 retweets and likes.

6.3 THE DAY OF THE REFERENDUM: OCTOBER 1 2017

The referendum on the independence of Catalonia (officially the Referendum on the Self-determination of Catalonia, also known by the 1-O abbreviation), which was a binding, self-determination referendum, took place all over Catalonia on October 1, 2017. It was organised by the Government of Catalonia, which was formed after elections in which those in favour of the referendum obtained a majority in the Catalan Parliament. However, the Spanish Government opposed it, citing accordance with the interpretation of the laws and the constitution of the country at that time.

The call for the referendum was officially suspended by the Constitutional Court of Spain the day after its approval, but the Catalan Government continued with its organisation, which was based on the Law

on the Referendum on the Self-determination of Catalonia, approved on September 6, 2017. As such, the referendum was convened in the midst of a clash with respect to current legalities. More than two million people voted, despite the scenes of serious violence triggered due to the Spanish Police shutting down polling stations. The first media reports, such as those from *The Times, The Guardian, The Independent, The Daily Telegraph, The Financial Times, Libération, Le Figaro, Frankfurter Allgemeine, Corriere della Sera, La Repubblica,* and *Publico*, as well as television networks including BBC, CNN, NBC, and ABC, focused on police charges made against the population to stop them from voting. They also stressed the open "crisis" between Spain and Catalonia, referring also to the injuries inflicted during the interventions by the Civil Guard and the National Police.

We can think of October 1 as a demonstration along the same lines as those that had occurred on September 1 in previous years, except that this one was de-localised in the sense that it took place simultaneously across Catalonia. The total electoral register comprised of 5,343,358 eligible voters over 18 years of age. The number of electoral colleges was 2,315, and the number of tables was 6,249. According to the Catalan government, the referendum met all the criteria that one could ask for in a regular election. The Referendum was also attended by several international observers. The first accredited international board of supervisors was organised by The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies. The board was headed by Daan Everts (who later denounced all the obstacles planted in the way of the referendum) and consisted of 20 observers from the USA, the UK, the Netherlands, France, and Poland, among other countries (Bayo, 2017). A second international mission, known as the International Electoral Expert Research Team, was headed by Helena Catt, who deplored the way

the Spanish Police acted against the voters. This team consisted of 17 observers from the UK, France, Ireland, and New Zealand, among others. Finally, there was another delegation composed of 33 parliamentarians and politicians from different countries. Known as the International Parliamentary Delegation on Catalonia's Referendum on Self-determination of October 1, 2017, its members were from political parties in Slovakia, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Latvia, Republic of Macedonia, Monaco, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

6.4 POLICE CHARGES ARE NARRATED LIVE

During the day of the Referendum, both the Spanish Police and the Catalan Police had orders to prevent schools where the voting had to take place from opening. This resulted in thousands of tweets and messages being shared by many among the pro-independence movement in order to let know their colleagues and fellow protestors of the exact moves of the Police and how to avoid them whilst protecting the voting stations. The movement became once more trending topic, both nationally and internationally, throughout the day, accounting for thousands of publications in Facabook, Instagram (particularly on Instagram Stories) and Twitter, with live connections from the different schools being attacked.

In order to prevent the seizing of the schools, those living in the vicinity of these schools, alongside the Association of mothers and fathers (AMPA) of each of the schools and the so-called Referendum Defence Committees (CDR), began to organise activities within the schools to keep

the police from preventing the police from stopping the activities (Capell, 2017). Some of these activities began on Friday after the final classes and included meals, television and film marathons, card games, and various challenges. The intention here was to keep enough people inside the schools until October 1 (a Sunday), when the referendum was to take place in those schools. In spite of their efforts, some schools were closed on the orders of the Spanish courts. The Catalan Police, Mossos d'Esquadra, had communicated that they would comply with the order of the High Court of Justice of Catalonia (TSJC) to prevent the referendum. They had declared that they would seize any type of material related to the referendum as well as close and seal all the electoral colleges. They claimed to be following the orders of the prosecutor's office and the TSJC. Thus, at the beginning of referendum day, the Catalan Police requisitioned some boxes and ballot papers and took over control of 227 schools. As a result of Mossos' efforts, another 400 voting stations were never even allowed to open.

However, it is now known that the Spanish Police had received different orders. On the basis that the Catalan Police had not been doing all they could to prevent the referendum from taking place, the Spanish Government had sent thousands of Spanish police officers to Catalonia in the days leading up to the vote: this was known as the Copernican Operation – it was later revealed that the Spanish administration had spent 87 million euros to prevent the referendum from happening. The Ministry of Interior, under the command of its minister, Juan Ignacio Zoido, assumed the costs. Political parties from the opposition criticised the operation for its costs and results. The referendum still took place and Spain's image around the world was seriously undermined. Throughout the day, the agents of the Civil Guard and the National Police Corps charged those who refused to

leave the polling stations with violent offences or prevented them from entering. In situations where the police officers had to break in to the polling stations, which, in some cases, resulted in damage to furniture, especially when it had been used by voters as a barricade.

According to the government of the Generalitat, on the day of the vote, 893 civilians were treated by the Medical Emergency System of Catalonia as a result of actions by the Spanish Police (García, 2017). The day after, when reports from other medical centres were received, the total number of those injured due to the force used by the National Police and the Civil Guard rose to 1066: five of serious nature, with one victim losing vision in one eye. Twenty-three of the injured were older than 79 years, and two of them were under 11 years. It must be noted too that some people suffered anxiety attacks as a resulting of witnessing the police charges broadcast on television. During the assaults on schools, rubber bullets – which are prohibited in Catalonia – were used, as was tear gas. The National Police and Civil Guard actions led to the closing of 92 further schools, while 319 colleges were closed by Mossos d'Esquadra and the Spanish state bodies. It is noteworthy, however, that the schools closed by the Catalan Police did not cause any human injuries. On the other hand, in contrast were the violent acts of the Spanish Police, which injured more than 1,000 people – such an act was widely denounced on the social networks.

Although the Spanish Government defended the tactics adopted by the police, international observers expressed shock, expressing that the purpose behind the violent police intervention was the prevention of a peaceful democratic process. The actions of the Spanish Police were condemned almost unanimously in Catalonia and internationally. The following day, most of the largest print newspapers and their digital editions

gave a thorough account of the police tactics as well as a condemnation of what had transpired. International politicians such as the Belgian Prime Minister, the Finnish Foreign Minister, the Slovenian Prime Minister, and numerous deputies condemned the repression via Twitter. CNN referred to "the shame of Europe" on its website on the same day as the referendum, at the same time providing live footage of the incident. Many Catalan politicians re-tweeted international media all throughout the day. Other than the BBC, more media outlets such as *Libération* expressed an opinion that the events of October 1 represented the defeat of Rajoy's politics. On the contrary, the European Commission expressed its support for the Government of Spain, reaffirming the illegality of the referendum (Pérez, 2017). It restated that an independent Catalonia would remain outside the European Union and called for both sides to leave the confrontation behind and initiate a dialogue – without condemning the Spanish Police tactics at all. The day after the referendum, the Spanish Police reported that 33 police officers had been wounded. A few days later, the Spanish Government raised this figure to 431. The claim was widely discredited, as it made no sense for the number of police injuries to increase from 33 to 431 over just a few days. In fact, this was seen by many as a move to justify the level of repression in the eyes of the international community.

Days later, Human Rights Watch, an NGO that monitors human rights around the globe, published an article condemning the police violence and describing it as excessive. It also included an account of the events of October 1 in its annual report on police violence (España: La policía utilizó la fuerza de manera excesiva en Cataluña, 2017). A report from the UN Human Rights Council on the freedom of assembly and association was released on 4 October, calling for an investigation into the eruption of

violence during the voting process on October 1. The Spanish Government promised a quick and independent investigation; however, six months after the UN petition, Madrid still failed to stay true to their word. In December 2017, Human Rights Watch published a report stating that the violence exercised by the Civil Guard and the National Police against the peaceful protesters could not be justified in any way. The NGO also asked the Spanish Government to investigate the allegations. The report was based on interviews with victims and witnesses. It also included photographic, audio-visual, and medical evidence, including a compilation of videos from various cities. Furthermore, shortly after referendum day, a website (https://spanishpolice.github.io) with 365 videos of repressive acts by the Spanish Police in Catalonia on October 1 was created.

Besides the tactics adopted by the police during voting, there were several software problems caused as a result of attacks on the digital system. On the same day as the referendum, the Catalan Government activated a universal electoral register that allowed any eligible person to vote at any polling station. At each school and each table, there was an electronic system to verify the voters' details against the register and ensure that they had not previously cast a vote while consulting the entire register at once. According to some Spanish anti-referendum media outlets, this would have enabled any one citizen to vote several times in different centres without any hindrance. These outlets never offered any proof other than photos taken by some people at different voting centres holding their votes in their hands. It was later discovered that these people had requested to take pictures in different locations using the excuse that they had already voted. They actually wanted a picture taken as a kind of souvenir; they could later fabricate a story in which it seemed that they were actually voting more

than once without being challenged. The Spanish media, eager to discredit the referendum at all costs, reported these incidents as valid without corroborating or validating their stories. On the other hand, the Catalan Government officials reassured the public that the computer system would trigger an alert every time someone who had already voted tried to do so again. The Catalan media (indistinctly pro-referendum or anti-referendum) demonstrated, with testimonies, that the same person could not vote more than once – this was also confirmed by the international observers.

6.5 REFERENDUM RESULTS AND THE FOLLOWING GENERAL STRIKE

On October 2, the Generalitat de Catalunya made the results of the 1-O Referendum public. The results were as follows (100% scrutinised):

1. Do you want Catalonia to become a republic?		
Option	Votes	%
Yes	2,044,038	90.18%
No	177,547	7.83%
Blank votes	44,913	1.98%
Invalid votes	19,719	0.96%
Total	2,286,217	43%

Table 4: The results of the referendum held on October 1, 2017. Source: Generalitat de Catalunya.

The total number of eligible voters was 5,313,564. The Catalan Government later speculated that a total of 770,000 persons had not been able to vote because their electoral college had been closed by the Civil

Guard, the National Police, and Mossos d'Esquadra. Those who had already voted at schools – those acting as voting centres that were eventually closed – could not vote again at another location. Had their votes been counted, these voters would have brought the total participation closer to three million and. It would, therefore, have crossed the 50% threshold.

The following table compares the results of the November 9, 2014, participation process, and the October 1, 2017, referendum:

1. Do you want Catalonia to become a republic?		
Option	2014	2017
Yes	1,861,753	2,044,038
Yes-no	232,182	--
Yes-blank	22,466	--
No	104,772	177,547
Blank votes	12,986	44,913
Invalid votes	71,131	19,719
Total	2,305,290	2,286,217

Table 5: Comparison of the 2014 and 2017 referendums results. Source: Generalitat de Catalunya.

Given that a different question and a different electoral register was used in each of the consultations, and also because many thousand votes were sequestered by the Spanish Police in the 2017 referendum, it is not possible to extract any conclusion regarding the total participation of the two consultation processes. However, it is noteworthy that, in both cases, the "yes campaign" proved to be overwhelmingly victorious.

Meanwhile, a general strike was called for October 3, 2017 to denounce the repression exerted by the Spanish Police (Civil Guard and

National Police) during the referendum, which left over 1,000 wounded (Dalmau, 2017). For the first time in years, the strike was followed not only by workers' unions but also by many associations of all political colours. Moreover, the Government of Catalonia also partook in the strike. Union leaders called for a demonstration in most Catalan cities at noon as a sign of protest against the violence perpetrated by the Spanish Police. Some observed a minute's silence in honour of the victims, some marched through the streets for a longer time, and many others continued protesting throughout the day. Another demonstration was organised at 18.00, this time in the centre of Barcelona. Unions, political parties, and other entities discussed whether or not the strike should continue beyond October 3, although it was eventually decided that it would not. This was not the first time that the idea of bringing Catalonia to a halt for more than a day, or probably even for a week, had been floated in the public domain. However, nothing materialised in this regard, as the risks were too high, especially in terms of economic terms, not only for Spain but also for Catalonia.

In the early morning of October 3, major thoroughfares in Catalonia were brought to a standstill at several points: from the main streets (Avinguda Diagonal, Meridiana, Via Laietana) and roads of Barcelona (Ronda de Dalt, Ronda del Mig, Ronda Litoral) to the AP7 and AP2, the biggest highways in Catalonia. Moreover, travelling over the major interstate roads (C-31, C-32, B-10, C-16, C-17, C-25, C-28, C-37, C- 252, C-63, C-65, B-23, B-30, C-66, GI-514, N-145, N-154, N-340, N-240, N-260, N-420 and N-II) was almost impossible. Some of these roads were closed due to concentrations of protestors at specific intervals. These jammed roads thus cut off traffic in both directions. There were comparatively peaceful demonstrations on other roads as well, where protesters marched at a very

slow pace (Montañés, 2017). The strike was widely supported. Several traditional media outlets, such as TV3 (the Catalan public broadcaster), adhered to the general strike, which had not occurred in a long time, as did the commercial television channel 8TV. Catalunya Ràdio (a public broadcaster) and the commercial radio situation RAC1 also decided to join the strike, and they interrupted their regular programming. The newspapers *ARA* and *El Punt Avui*, both pro-independence, did not issue a print edition, although they did keep some services running in their newsrooms, so that they could publicise reports on the demonstrations via their websites.

As for the public administration, more than 70% of workers joined the strike. Overwhelming support was issued by public transport (TMB) as well: buses did not operate in Barcelona, and only minimum Metro services were provided. Dockers from the Port of Barcelona and the Port of Tarragona were in 100% support of the strike. Some large logistics centres such as Mercabarna (the biggest large-scale food trade market in all of Catalonia) as well as a large number of health centres also joined the strike. Meanwhile, in the education sector, the strike received virtually full support. Workers in large companies, banks, and shopping centres also joined the strike, although some of their employers did not officially or publicly take part. There was a majority support from the small business sector, with 88% of companies partially or totally closed due to employees exercising the right to go on a strike. Throughout the day, the demand for electricity dropped by 11.5% to a level that is typical during the summer holidays, further confirming the success of the strike.

The Catalan Police counted around 700,000 demonstrators in Barcelona and around 250,000 demonstrators in all other Catalan cities, bringing the total closer to one million, a number similar to those who had

turned out on September 11, 2017. The ban of the Spanish Government on helicopters or drones flying over the skies made it impossible to gather large-scale images of the demonstrations – images that Madrid wanted to avoid at all costs, just as they had done on referendum day.

On October 8, 2017, a demonstration in favour of Spanish unity transpired in Barcelona, with 350,000 people accounted for by the local police in the city. Members of Partido Popular, Partido Socialista and Ciudadanos joined the demonstration. The protest was widely criticised for failing to ban radical right-wing organisations (some of which honour Franco's regime on special occasions) and also for not acting against violent groups that had acted on their own, causing damage to street furniture (Piatrch & Castelló, 2017). Some of these radical groups caused another incident on October 27, when they attacked the building of the Catalan Public Radio newsroom at night with pre-constitutional flags and chants. These attacks received no condemnation from the constitutional political parties, something which the pro-independence parties strongly criticised. The pro-independence movements also noted that, when millions of Catalans came together to support their cause, there were no incidents of violence at all (Crameri, 2016). However, when a much smaller number of anti-independence protesters came together, the incidents were significant and of a violent nature, precisely because no control was exercised over the radical right-wing groups.

On October 16, 2017, sedition charges were filed against Jordi Sánchez and Jordi Cuixart, the leaders of ANC and Òmnium respectively, with both held on remand until their trial as precautionary measures solicited by the attorney Carmen Lamela (Serra & Ferrer, 2017) and later maintained by Pablo Llarena, the main judge in the case against Catalan independence

in the Spanish Supreme Court. As a result of this imprisonment and as a sign of protest, several people congregated spontaneously on Plaça Sant Jaume, which is home to both the Catalan Palace of the Generalitat and Barcelona's City Hall. More demonstrations followed on the same night all across Catalonia. The following day, another gathering, this time organised by the ANC and Òmnium, took place in Barcelona, with almost half a million attendees. This was a silent protest, with thousands of mobile lanterns and candles held aloft by the demonstrators, in yet another peaceful protest by the civil pro-independence movement.

6.7 DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

On October 10, 2017, during a session of the Catalan Parliament, Carles Puigdemont made a partial declaration of independence, pending a Spanish Government response and hoping for international mediation. During the two weeks following this declaration, the Spanish Government instigated the bureaucratic moves necessary to apply Article 155 of the Spanish Constitution to the Government of Catalonia in order to effectively remove and replace it. This process required President Carles Puigdemont to clarify whether or not he had declared independence on October 10.

The Spanish Government wrote to the Puigdemont twice, both times receiving an ambiguous reply from the Catalan President, thus leaving the door open to further dialogue with Madrid. The Spanish Government ignored the Catalan President's call for dialogue, assuming that Catalan independence had been effectively declared, which forced them to hold a

special session in the Senate on October 27, during which Article 155 would be discussed and applied to Catalonia.

Given the Spanish Government's attempt to accelerate the application of Article 155 and the lack of response to the call for dialogue, which was understood by the Catalan Government as an implicit denial of its petition of dialogue, Catalan members of parliament were called to a session on October 27, at 15.30, in order to approve the declaration of independence. The declaration was approved with 70 votes in favour, 10 against, and two abstentions, while 53 deputies left the chamber as a mark of protest, refusing to vote. Following the declaration of independence, some municipalities, such as Girona and Sabadell, withdrew the Spanish flag from their facades. The ANC and Òmnium called for gatherings in every Catalan town and city to celebrate the declaration, with the most prominent gatherings taking place in Barcelona. Meanwhile, in Madrid, in the Spanish Senate, the application to trigger Article 155 was being discussed; it was finally approved as the day came to an end, effectively removing the Catalan President, Carles Puigdemont, and all his cabinet from their positions and freeing them of their duties (Diez, 2017). Mariano Rajoy dissolved the Catalan Parliament and dismissed over 200 high-ranking officials. Immediately afterwards, the Spanish Prime Minister announced the call for autonomic elections for December 21 (García & Villarejo, 2017).

6.8 EXILE, DETENTIONS, AND ELECTIONS

On October 30, it was revealed that Carles Puigdemont and some of his cabinet had flown to Brussels and that they would be holding a press

conference on the following day. The press conference took place as announced, at which Puigdemont called for an international solution to the Catalan case. While he had received some international support, most of it came from politicians who were out of office, meaning they were unfettered from having to be diplomatic and would therefore not compromise their own state with Spanish diplomacy by taking Puigdemont's side, while also condemning the Spanish state for the lack of dialogue. However, when it came to politicians currently in office, Puigdemont only received open support (with many nuances) from the first ministers of Belgium and Scotland. After the conference, some of his cabinet returned to Spain, but Puigdemont himself and his ministers, Meritxell Serret (agriculture), Toni Comín (health), Lluís Puig (culture), and Clara Ponsatí (education), remained in Brussels. This decision marked the beginning of the exile of almost half of the Catalan Government prior to their dismissal due to the application of Article 155 of the Spanish Constitution.

On November 2, 2017, the vice president of the Generalitat, Oriol Junqueras, and board members Jordi Turull, Josep Rull, Meritxell Borràs, Carles Mundó, Raül Romeva, Dolors Bassa and Joaquim Forn entered a remand prison, pending a formal trial on charges of rebellion, sedition, and embezzlement in relation to the declaration of independence by the Catalan Parliament on October 27. The cause of the imprisonment later became the general focus of the whole pro-independence movement that had so far been led by the Catalan Government. Puigdemont and other members of his cabinet where also called to appear at the November 2 hearing, but a European arrest warrant was issued in their names since they had chosen to remain in Brussels (Liñán, 2017).

Puigdemont and his ministers hired the services of the globally renowned advocate Paul Bekaert, who was famous for his expertise in human rights and international conflicts. On his advice, they voluntarily presented themselves at a Belgian police station on November 5. Contrary to what had happened to their colleagues in Spain, the Catalan Government members in Brussels were released on the same day, on the condition that they should not leave Belgium pending the decision of a judge, who would decide whether to hand them over to Spanish justice (Schrever, 2017). This decision was celebrated in Catalonia; and, on November 7, both the ANC and Òmnium called for a demonstration in Barcelona on November 11. According to the local police, this demonstration attracted 750,000 people (Schrever, 2017). The Spanish judge from the Supreme Court, Pablo Llarena, who was in charge of the case, withdrew the European arrest warrant a month later on December 5, before the Belgian judge could determine whether to hand them over to Spanish justice and on which charges (Rincón, 2017). Llarena, however, kept the Spanish arrest warrant in place, just in case Puigdemont and his colleagues ever attempted to return to Spain. Should this happen, they would be immediately detained and brought before the Supreme Court.

Meanwhile, in the middle of this anomalous situation, Catalan parliamentary elections to the Generalitat were held on December 21, as ordered by Spanish Prime Minister, Mariano Rajoy, after the application of Article 155. The JxSí pro-independence coalition between the CDC and ERC was not repeated in the hope that a separate representation by the parties would attract more support. After all, the CDC is centre-right, and the ERC is centre-left. Therefore, the separation was understood to be a

positive move. Their promise was to form a government together once more if a majority was possible.

Puigdemont (in Brussels) and Junqueras (in prison) were inevitably unable to campaign for their political parties, Junts per Catalunya (including the PDeCAT, the former CDC) and the ERC respectively. The other pro-independence political party, the CUP, was led by Carles Riera. The neutral coalition, Catalunya Si Que Es Pot, gave way to Catalonia in Comú-Podem, led by Xavier Domènech and formed by members of the CeC, ICV, EUiA, and Podem (the Catalan branch of Spanish Podemos). On the side of the unionist bloc, Ciudadanos presented Inés Arrimadas, the PSC presented Miquel Iceta and the PPC (Partido Popular – the ruling party in Spain) presented Xavier Garcia Albiol. Some of the former government members jailed on November 2 were released so as to allow them to join the campaign, including every member of the former government except for Oriol Junqueras (former Vice President) and Joaquim Forn (former Minister of the Interior). The former leaders of the ANC and Òmnium, Jordi Sánchez and Jordi Cuixart respectively, were also kept in custody – where they remain even today, as of July of 2018).

The turnout for the December 21, 2017 elections was 81.09%, the highest in the history of parliamentary elections in Catalonia. The pro-republic bloc (JxCat, ERC and CUP) won with 47.5% of the votes and 70 seats, compared to the 43.47% of the votes and 57 seats won by the self-styled constitutionalists parties (Ciudadanos, PSOE, and PP). The Catalan Podemos, a part of the CeC coalition who expressed a desire not to be counted with any of the blocs, achieved 7.46% of the votes and eight seats. The most successful list in terms of votes, however, was that of Ciudadanos, with 25.35% of the votes followed by JxCat (21.66%), ERC (21.38%), PSC

(13.88%), CeC (7.46%), CUP (4.46%) and, in the last place, Partido Popular (4.24%). In this way, the pro-independence parties won the elections again, gaining an absolute majority in the Catalan Parliament for the second time in a row (the first was in 2015). Since their electoral victory, the Catalan pro-independence parties have been discussing how to form a government that can effectively realise the formation of the Catalan Republic. The Spanish Government has warned, however, that if the secessionist attitude continues, Article 155 would be enacted again. They have thus requested the Catalan pro-independence parties to govern and seek a candidate for the presidency in such a way as to respect the Spanish Constitution as opposed to continuing with pro-independence demands.

On March 25, 2018, the President of the Generalitat de Catalunya, Carles Puigdemont, was arrested by the authorities on the German side of the Germany–Denmark border. Supreme Court Judge Pablo Llarena had reactivated the arrest warrant for Puigdemont and other Catalan politicians who had gone into exile. Puigdemont, who was in Finland, was trying to travel back to Brussels by road, but he was intercepted by German police officers just before he arrived in Belgium. The exiled president of the Generalitat was taken into police custody in Neumünster Prison. On the following day, he was brought before the German justice system, which was awaiting a decision for his extradition to Spain - the last time the German authorities handed over a President of the Generalitat in Spain was in 1940, when the Gestapo stopped Lluís Companys, who was subsequently executed by the Franco regime. On Tuesday, March 27, the other exiled politicians, namely Toni Comín, Lluís Puig, and Meritxell Serret, voluntarily handed themselves over to the Belgian courts. The Belgian judge who heard them, however, did not take any preventative measures, letting them

escape scot-free free once more, as had happened with the previous warrant issued in November. The following day, Clara Ponsatí, who had moved to his official residence in Scotland a few days before, also surrendered to the British authorities. He was released on the same day on the assumption that no extra measures were needed. This decision challenged the Spanish courts once more, which had imprisoned the Catalan Government on November 2 before the organisation of any trial.

The attorneys of the exiled government, now in Scotland, Belgium and Germany, actively denied the causes under which the European warrant had been issued by the Spanish courts, and they were all convinced that the European justice would drop the causes for all the exiled members. On April, 2018, the Oberlandesgericht in the German state of Schleswig-Holstein ruled that Puigdemont would not be extradited on charges of rebellion and released him on bail. The German court would still continue to investigate the embezzlement cause. Puigdemont declared that he would move to Berlin to become a resident there, while actively campaigning for the Catalan Republic from his new home, until he could return to either Belgium or Catalonia. The of Schleswig-Holstein resolution angered the Spanish government and the Spanish media, who began campaigning and pressuring their German counterparts in a vain attempt to have the German court reconsider their resolution. A few weeks later, the Spanish courts actually send more documents to Germany, in order to demonstrate the charges of rebellion and embezzlement. And once again, the Schleswig-Holstein court promised to look into the matter and take a final decision soon. Meanwhile, in May, the Belgium court rejected the extradition of Toni Comín, Meritxell Serret and Lluís Puig under the premise that the European arrest warrant issued by Spain was incorrect, and therefore it did not meet

the necessary requirements for its processing. This meant that Toni Comín, Meritxell Serret and Lluís Puig were free, from that moment on, to move freely throughout Europe, but not in Spain, where the national arrest warrant is still active. Once more, the Spanish media outlet (both left and right-wing media) took it very badly, and began a series of attacks on Belgium. Yet the biggest strike was yet to come. In July 2018, the Schleswig-Holstein court made the decision to extradite Puigdemont to Spain only for the crime of embezzlement, ruling out any possibility to judge him for rebellion. Because of this, the Spanish Supreme Court rejected the extradition, as the sentence for embezzlement is far less than that of rebellion, and therefore not judging Puigdemont for rebellion would have made it very difficult for the Spanish court to hold the same charge for the rest of his imprisoned government. The European arrest warrant was dismantled altogether, setting Puigdemont in Germany, Ponsatí in Scotland, and Serret, Comín and Puig in Belgium, all free. However, the Spanish arrest warrant remains in effect, and Puigdemont and the other exiled members could still be arrested if they re-entered Spanish territory. Once the European arrest warrant was dropped, Puigdemont returned to his home in Brussels in order to continue the fight for independence from there, alongside Puig, Serret and Comín. Clara Ponsatí returned to her previous life in Scotland, as a full-time professor in the University of St Andrews.

6.9 ANALYSIS OF THE MAIN CATALAN POLITICAL LEADERS ON TWITTER

According to Idescat survey on ICTs in Catalonia in 2017, 18,5% of men and 22,4% of women actively comment on political issues on the

Internet. Because of this, we believe that it would be interesting to look at the behaviour of the Catalan political leaders on Twitter in specific dates of 2017, as Twitter is a proven successful manner of reaching their core audiences (Marqués, 2016). In the following chapter we will be analysing three key dates that changed the faith of the pro-independence movement (11 September, 1 October and 27 October 2017). We analyse tweets written by the leaders of Catalan parties at the time: Carles Puigdemont (JxCat), Oriol Junqueras (ERC), Inés Arrimadas (C's), Miquel Iceta (PSC), Xavier Domènech (ECP), Carles Riera (CUP) and Xavier García Albiol (PP), in addition to the then President of the Catalan Parliament, Carme Forcadell, and the Spanish Prime Minister, Mariano Rajoy.

Note that on 11 September 2017, Xavier Domènech (EcP) and Carles Riera (CUP) were not the parliamentary leaders of their parties, although they became such before the parliamentary elections of 21 December 2017. This is why, for social interest, we decided that they would be a better choice for our analysis, rather than their fellow colleagues who were still in charge on September 11, 2017, but did not run for their respective parties in the parliamentary elections on December 21, 2017.

The first table that we feature in this chapter indicates the total number of tweets, before dividing them into original tweets (self-written by the politician) and retweets (from other people). We do so in order to demonstrate the importance of Twitter in particular, and new media platforms in general, in the whole pro-independence movement. As we will further see, the use of social media brings greater advantages to the pro-independence movement in the sense that its followers are much more mobilized than their constitutionalist counterparts.

6.9.1 September 11, 2017

We begin with an analysis of 11 September 2017, Catalonia's National Day and the fifth pro-independence demonstration in a row to have taken place on this day (following the *Diada* from 2012 to 2017). The following graphic shows the total number of tweets posted by the various political leaders under analysis.
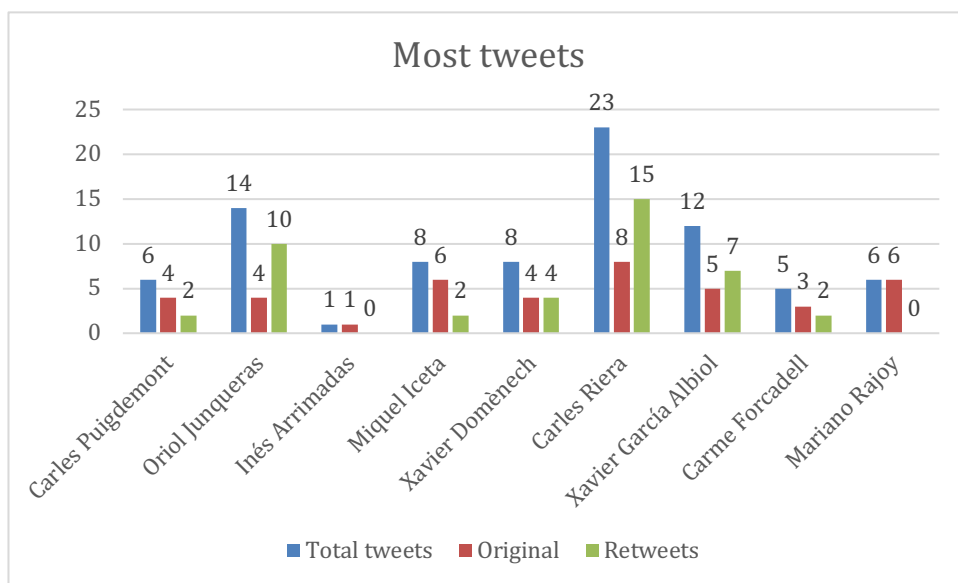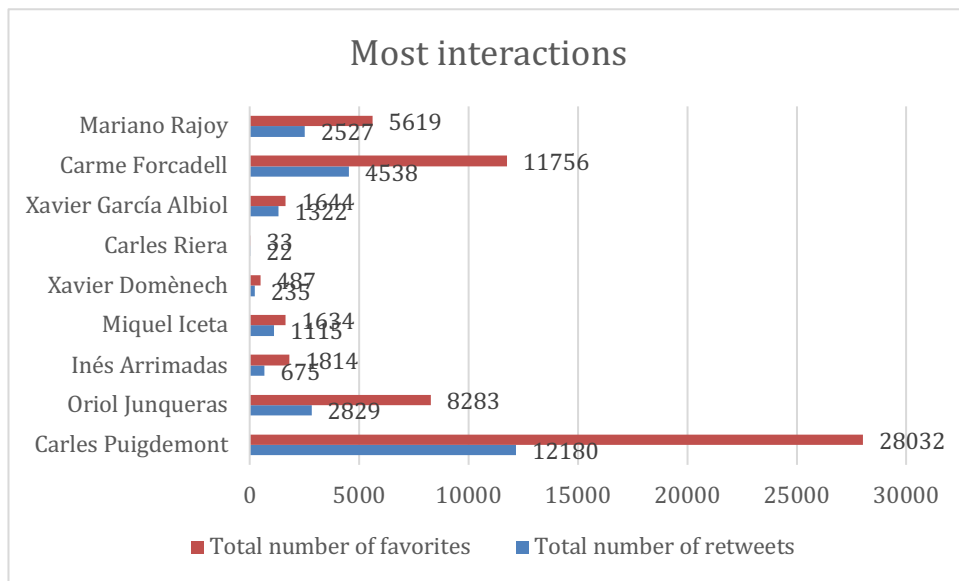

Graphic 1. Created by the authors. Source: Twitter[1]

On 11 September 2017, the most active Catalan politician out of all the candidates in the 21 December 2017 parliamentary elections was the left-wing Carles Riera (CUP), with a total of 23 tweets, eight of which were his and 15 of which were retweets from others. President Carles Puigdemont tweeted far less, only six times, and only two of these tweets were his own. Puigdemont's top tweet was "Thanks to all those who have

---

[1] Data were collected using the Twitonomy tool on 11 September 2017. Last revision: 30 March 2018.

made it possible again. Incredible! The best push for the referendum of #1Oct ✅ | #DiadaDelSí", with 5,006 retweets and 10,748 likes.[2] It was also the tweet that received the most interactions on that day.

In the next graphic, we analyse the total number of interactions, including both favourites (likes) and retweets, of the above-mentioned politicians on the same day (September 11). As we will further see in this chapter, the total number of Carles Puigdemont's interactions exceed those of Mariano Rajoy's, who, in spite of having twice Puigdemont's followers, has interacted far less.

Graphic 2. Created by the authors. Source: Twitter[3]

---

[2] Catalan: Gràcies a tots els qui ho heu tornat a fer possible. Increïble! La millor empenta per al referèndum de l'#1Oct ✅ | #DiadaDelSí

[3] Data were collected using the Twitonomy tool on 11 September 2017. Last revision: 30 March 2018.

The totality of Puigdemont's tweets on 11 September amounted to 12,180 retweets and 28,032 likes. Out of the politicians that we analysed, only former President of the Catalan Parliament Carme Forcadell, who is now in jail, comes close to Puigdemont with 4,538 retweets and 11,756 likes. On the other hand, Spanish President Mariano Rajoy could only manage 2,527 retweets and 5,619 likes, even though he posted two more tweets than Puigdemont, and even though he has more than twice (1.6M) Puigdemont's followers (700K).[4] This happens constantly with these two politicians, with Carles Puigdemont enjoying far more interactions than Mariano Rajoy when the two are compared on key days in Catalan politics – or at least on those days that we analysed.

The top tweet of Vice President Oriol Junqueras was a thank you message in English to Julian Assange, who had been very active in supporting the Referendum and the Catalan case overall. Junqueras tweeted: "Thank you, Julian, for shedding some light on the truth during such decisive days", earning himself 1,433 retweets and 2,966 likes. Assange's message itself got 14,247 retweets and 17,931 likes. The opposition leader, Inés Arrimadas, wrote: "Before the confrontation: union, good sense and coexistence. Soon we will celebrate in Catalonia a Diada that represents us all #caminemosjuntos", which got 675 retweets and 1,807 likes. Her words implied that the Diada had been monopolized by pro-independence parties and that she hoped for a different kind of Diada. Miquel Iceta's tweets were unavailable at the time of data compilation, so we could not count his tweets in the study – although he did tweet. Xavier

---

[4] Because the total number of followers changes every day, the numbers shown have been rounded up for practical purposes.

Domènech's top tweet was an extract from Els Segadors, the official national anthem of Catalonia. Xavier García Albiol tweeted a graphic that supposedly showed that the length of the demonstration was clearly shorter than the previous two had been (2015 and 2016), in what can be interpreted as an attempt to discredit the 2017 demonstration.

It is noticeable that the PP leaders of both the Spanish and the Catalan parties never acknowledged the significance of the massive pro-independence demonstrations. Carles Riera tweeted that "even the firefighters" had joined the pro-independence movements, as well as saying, ironically, "Colau, only you are missing". This latter tweet was in reference to Barcelona's mayor, Ada Colau, who now rules Barcelona after winning the local elections with a coalition including, among others, the Catalan branch of Spanish Podemos. The then President of the Catalan Parliament, Carme Forcadell, was very explicit: "A new demonstration of the people's strength. All in all, everyone will vote on 1 October!", adding an aerial picture of the demonstration. Finally, she opted for a more institutional kind of tweet: "For a day of freedom, coexistence and respect for all Catalans. A happy day", declining to make any comment on the thousands of people protesting in the streets.

6.9.2 October 1, 2017

The second date that we chose to analyse was 1 October 2017, the day of the Catalan Referendum. This day was particularly meaningful for everything that occurred during the days leading up to the Referendum, as well as for another event that occurred on the very same date, i.e., clashes

with the Spanish police in polling stations (schools) against peaceful voters. Most of the top tweets also refer to this aspect.
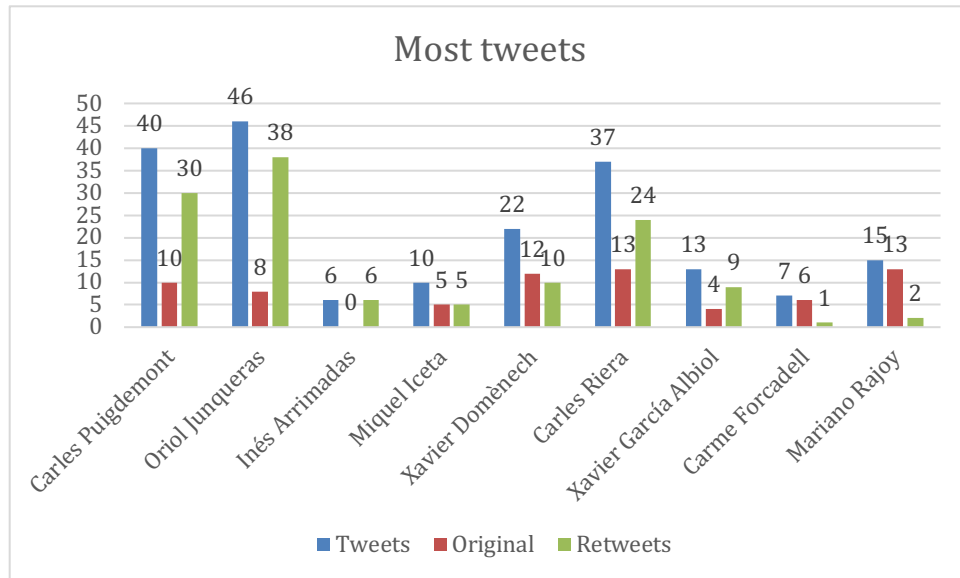
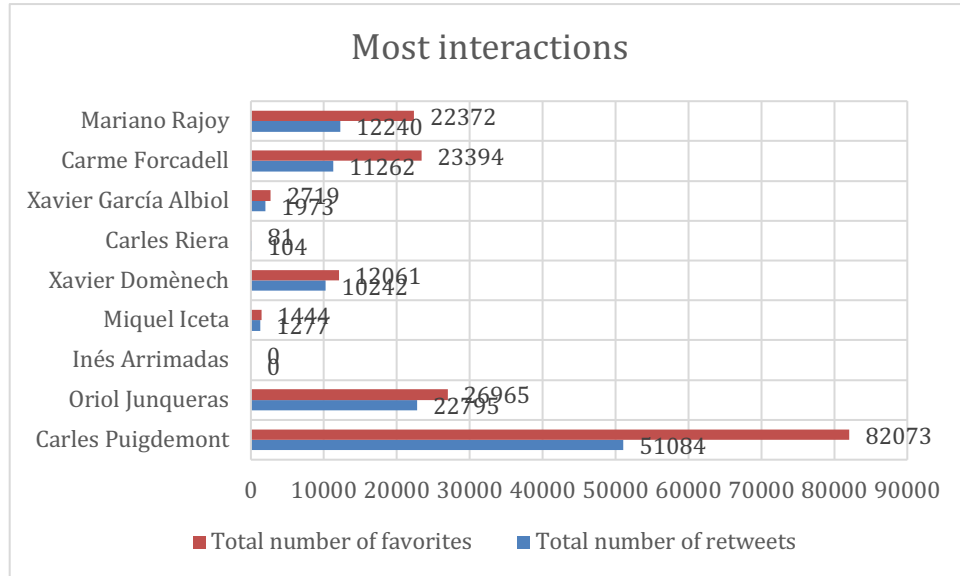*Graphic 3. Created by the authors. Source: Twitter[5]*

Of the three days analysed in this study, 1 October 2017 is the day that the politicians analysed posted the most tweets. It was certainly a day that shocked many due to Spanish police raids against voters in polling stations. It was this issue that clearly monopolized the entire day. Every politician that we analysed tweeted more than five times. For each of them, all five tweets concerned the Referendum in one way or another. As for the pro-independence leaders, most of these tweets directly address the violence of the Spanish police, receiving many retweets and likes.

On 1 October 2017, the most active Catalan politician was the left-wing Oriol Junqueras (ERC), who is currently in prison pending trial. He tweeted a total of 46 times, 38 of which were his own and only eight were

---

[5] Data were collected with the Twitonomy tool on 1 October 2017. Last revision: 30 March 2018.

retweets. Carles Puigdemont comes in second at 40 tweets, 30 of which were original and 10 were retweets. As we will further see, each of them accomplished a great amount of interactions. Also noticeable is Carles Riera, who usually does not tweet that much; however, on this day, he made an exception and tweeted 37 times: 13 were his own and 24 were retweets. The self-styled constitutionalist politicians, i.e., Arrimadas, Iceta, Albiol and Rajoy, were much quieter. In fact, the Spanish President had very little to tweet about, considering that he had spent most of September assuring the Spanish public that the Referendum would not take place – he even bragged that he had confiscated the ballots and ballot boxes.

However, he was proved wrong on 1 October by the many thousands of volunteers who had secretly kept the ballots and ballots boxes in their homes so that the Referendum could proceed under normal and regular conditions, as indeed it finally did. Junqueras' top tweet is in English, quoting CNN's headline "The shame of Europe" and providing a link to the article. This tweet alone gathered 5,499 retweets and 4,515 likes. His second top tweet is very explicit: "Help! Send information! Let the entire world know". He provides a link to the British newspaper The Guardian, which was asking for people's experiences of how the day was unfolding. Junqueras tweeted this at midday, when the Spanish police had already begun their violent raids of many schools. Finally, his third top tweet is a thank you message to Charles Michel, Prime Minister of Belgium, who had tweeted "Violence can never be the answer! We condemn all forms of violence and reaffirm our call for political dialogue", which earned him 17,066 retweets and 17,859 likes. In turn, Junqueras' quote of Michel's tweet got him 3,223 retweets and 3,857 likes.

Graphic 4. Created by the authors. Source: Twitter[6]

Carles Puigdemont's top tweet reads "To you, who have taught the world the civility of a peaceful people, who have resisted vexations and repression, I thank you #1Oct".[7] It actually continues on over five more tweets, in which he affirms the rights of the Catalan people before the repression of the Spanish state. Inés Arrimadas did not tweet anything or quote anyone; she only retweeted others' posts. Socialist leader Miquel Iceta, who had given no legal value to the Referendum, said that he, along with his national leader (Pedro Sánchez), disagreed with the acts of the Spanish police, calling for those involved to take responsibility.

Xavier Domènech, leader of the ECP, a party that includes the Catalan branch of Spain's Podemos, asked for Rajoy's resignation. Carles Riera (CUP) tweeted "Catalonia votes massively in peace, except for where the Spanish police have shown up". Xavier García Albiol, leader of the PPC

---

[6] Data were collected using the Twitonomy tool on 1 October 2017. Last revision: 30 March 2018.
[7] A vosaltres, que heu ensenyat al món el civisme d'un poble pacífic, que heu resistit vexacions i repressió, us dono les gràcies #1Oct

(the Catalan branch of Spain's Partido Popular), did not tweet about the Spanish police raid, instead focusing on attacking President Carles Puigdemont and Vice President Oriol Junqueras. Carme Forcadell, President of the Catalan Parliament, thanked everyone for participating in the Referendum and criticized the disproportionate level of Spanish violence. In his turn, Mariano Rajoy's tweets focused on diminishing the day, his top tweet being "My duty is to enforce the la - I am the President of all Spaniards. I thank the Courts and the FCSE for their commitment to the Rule of Law". His words earned him 2,071 retweets and 4,655 likes, much less than the tweets of Puigdemont or Junqueras, in spite of the fact that they each had half the number of Rajoy's followers.

6.9.3 October 27, 2017

In compliance with the Law on the Referendum, and a few days later than expected, Carles Puigdemont communicated on 10 October to the plenary session of the Parliament of Catalonia that he was assuming "the mandate of the people for Catalonia to become an independent State in the form of a republic". Immediately after, he proposed the suspension of the effects of the declaration of independence so that, in the coming weeks, a dialogue could exist between the Catalan and Spanish Governments. This declaration was met with scepticism, as Puigdemont used an ambiguous formula in his speech. Precisely because of this, the Spanish Government asked him twice, via formal letter, if he had actually declared independence or not. Both times, Puigdemont answered the letter while maintaining his ambiguous rhetoric, which prompted Rajoy's cabinet to initiate the

mechanisms for the application of Article 155 of the Spanish Constitution to Catalonia, which could mean the suspension of its autonomy.

On 26 October, the day before the Spanish Senate was due to discuss and pass the application of Article 155, Carles Puigdemont summoned a meeting with his Government members at the Generalitat to discuss whether to dissolve the Parliament and convene new elections, or whether lift the suspension of the declaration of independence and bring it into effect. Much has been written about this day: the secret meetings and calls, mediation offers from impartial and internationally renowned figures, etcetera. But the only thing to come out of it for Carles Puigdemont is that no one from the Spanish Government could guarantee him that, if he called for elections, Article 155 would be stopped and therefore not applied to Catalonia. Consequently, he opted to summon the Catalan Parliament on the next day, 27 October, to cast their vote on the declaration of independence. The resolution, which included the declaration of independence of Catalonia, was approved on the 27 October by a secret ballot method. Almost at the same time, the Senate in Madrid approved the application of Article 155 to Catalonia.
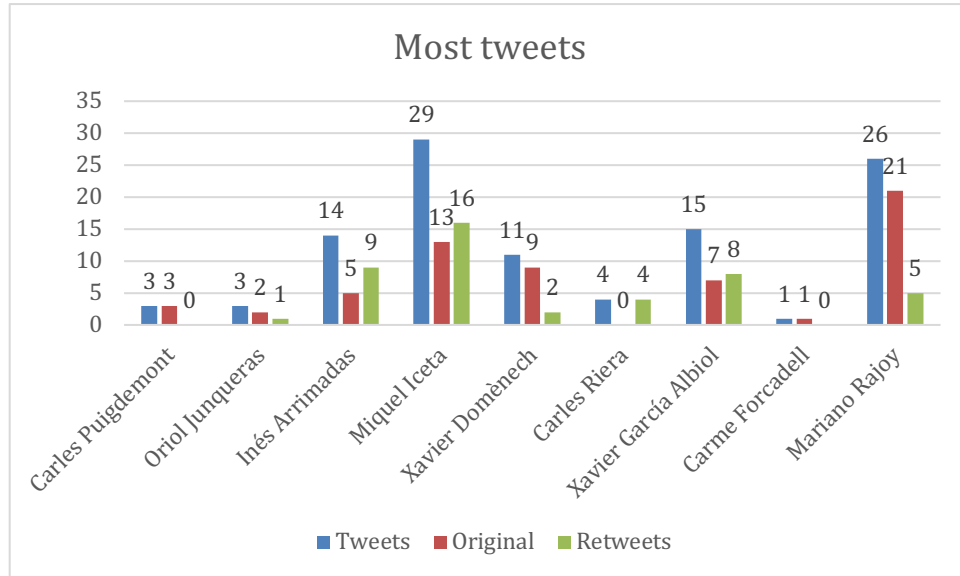
Graphic 5. Created by the authors. Source: Twitter[8]

On this day, there was a huge difference between the behaviour of the pro-independence leaders on Twitter and that of the constitutionalist leaders. Also, there was a huge difference in the total number of messages posted by Puigdemont and Rajoy. On the one hand, Puigdemont only tweeted three times, all of them being original messages. On the other, Rajoy tweeted a total of 26 times, 21 of these being original tweets and five being retweets. Oddly enough, Puigdemont's three tweets got more retweets and likes than Rajoy's 26 tweets.

---

[8] Data were collected using the Twitonomy tool on 27 October 2017. Last revision: 30 March 2018.
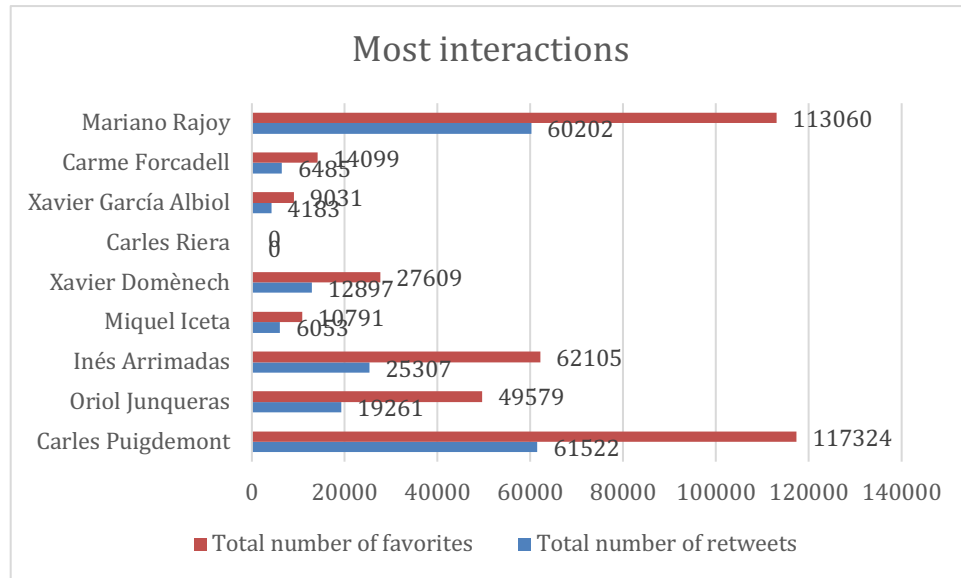
Graphic 6. Created by the authors. Source: Twitter[9]

Puigdemont's top tweet reads "Catalonia is and will be a land of freedom. At the service of its people. In difficult times and in times of celebration. Now more than ever". It got 36,151 retweets and 70,853 likes. Puigdemont's second most popular tweet of the day is a reply to Donald Tusk. The president to the European Council had tweeted "For the EU, nothing changes. Spain remains our only interlocutor. I hope the Spanish Government will favour the force of argument, not the argument of force", to which Puigdemont replied, in English, "As you know, Catalans always favour the force of argument. #peace #democracy #dialogue". This tweet gained 15,404 retweets and 26,479 likes. Puigdemont's third and last tweet of the day was another reply, this time to Charles Michel, Prime Minister of Belgium. Michel tweeted: "A political crisis can only be solved through dialogue. We call for a peaceful solution with respect for national and international order", to which Puigdemont replied: "Dialogue has been, and

---

[9] Data were collected using the Twitonomy tool on 27 October 2017. Last revision: 30 March 2018.

will always be, our choice to solve political situations and achieve peaceful solutions". His tweet earned 9,892 retweets and 19,867 likes.

Now, we move onto the Spanish President, Mariano Rajoy. While Puigdemont only tweeted three times, Rajoy tweeted 21 times; 26 if you count his five retweets. Rajoy's top tweet is very institutional: "I ask that all Spaniards remain calm. The Rule of Law will restore legality in Catalonia". This tweet got 31,190 retweets and 50,180 likes. While this number is a lot, it is still far from the figures for Puigdemont's top tweets, especially in terms of likes (Puigdemont's top tweet got 36,151 retweets and 70,853 likes). In spite of having double Puigdemont's followers, and despite having tweeted seven times more than Puigdemont, Rajoy came in (a close) second in terms of total retweets and total likes, as can be seen in Graphic 6. Rajoy's second tweet explains the approval of Article 155: "The Government takes measures to prevent the inadmissible kidnapping of the Catalans and the theft of part of their territory from the rest of Spaniards". This one got 3,836 retweets and 9,176 likes. Finally, Rajoy's third most popular tweet of the day explains the first measures to be taken by Article 155: "The President of the Generalitat, his Government and the general director of the Mossos will be stopped; Delegations will be closed abroad", with 3,327 retweets and 6,694 likes.

Vice President Oriol Junqueras is very explicit in his tweet: "Yes. We have gained the freedom to build a new country". He got 16,399 retweets and 37,434 likes. CUP leader Carles Riera did not tweet at all on this day. Carme Forcadell, President of the Catalan Parliament, was very institutional, tweeting "The @parlament_cat plenary approves the resolution on the declaration of the representatives of Catalonia", attaching a photo of

the resolution that had just been approved. Her tweet got 6,479 retweets and 14,083 likes. The leader of the opposition, Inés Arrimadas, acknowledging the newly announced Catalan parliamentary elections, tweeted "Catalans, let's vote massively in the upcoming elections to recover democracy, institutions and the future of our children", which got 7,661 retweets and 15,966 likes. Miquel Iceta also stressed the call for the elections in his top tweet: "On this saddest of days, due to the mistaken and irresponsible decision of the pro-independence parties, a ray of light: #21D Elections", with 1,910 retweets and 3,494 likes. The PP leader in Catalonia, Xavier García Albiol, tweeted: "After the coup d'état in Catalonia @marianorajoy will restore democracy and the courts will put the coup leaders in their place", which earned him 1,347 retweets and 2,781 likes. ECP leader Xavier Domènech blamed Rajoy for the fallout and asked for new pacts: "Rajoy definitively buried the territorial pact just as he broke the social pact. At the moment, broad alliances are needed to overcome this present". This got 4,811 retweets and 7,446 likes.

When observing the total number of tweets from the different tables, as well as the total number of interactions, it can be argued that the pro-independence leaders had greater support, in terms of retweets and likes, than their constitutionalist counterparts. In fact, one of the main hypotheses of this dissertation is that the pro-independence movement (including politicians, social leaders, demonstrations, etc.) has had a greater impact on day-to-day society and politics precisely because of how well its politicians shared information on new media platforms such as Twitter. The sole fact that Puigdemont enjoyed many more interactions than Rajoy despite his being a regional president and Rajoy a national one, and despite the fact Rajoy had double Puigdemont's total number of followers, is a clear

sign that the pro-independence movement has created a very strong network of supporters on the Internet, who are capable of projecting and catalysing the pro-independence movement to new heights with every new step that they take. The fact that Carles Puigdemont himself became the most mentioned politician in Spain in Twiiter throughout the year 2017, stresses the importance that social networks had on the development of Catalonia's independence activism movement.

PART VII – THE FUTURE OF THE CATALAN CASE

Marc Perelló i Sobrepere
Universitat Ramon Llull (2018)

7.1 THE SUPPORT FOR INDEPENDENCE GROWS STEADILY

The well-respected sociologist Salvador Cardús has claimed that the only solution for Catalonia's problems is independence (2010). As the years pass, it seems that more and more Catalans are thinking the same thing. Since 2005, the Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió (CEO) has been regularly asking people what they think Catalonia should be: a region [10] of Spain, an autonomous community (as it is now), a state within a federal Spain, or an independent state. In order to accurately conduct these polls, the CEO took a sample of 2,000 persons, who were representatively chosen from Catalonia's four main regions (Barcelona, Tarragona, Lleida and Girona) based on their sex and age (all of them were over 18). The final results were allowed an error margin of +/- 2.69. The results shown below are what the CEO calls its third-wave survey which is conducted in the last months of the year, usually in October, November or December. As years go by, strong progression towards the independence option:

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Independent state	12.9	15.9	17.3	17.4	21.6	25.2	28.2
Federal state	35.8	32.8	33.8	31.8	29.9	30.9	30.4
Autonomous community	37.6	40	37.8	38.3	36.9	34.7	30.3
Region	5.6	6.8	51	7.1	5.9	5.9	5.7
Don't know / Refuse to answer	8.1	5.9	6.0	5.4	5.6	3.4	5.4

Table 6. Source: CEO (Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió) Results from 2005–2011.

---

[10] For understanding purposes, we would like to clarify that the word region, in terms of territorial division, means to have no concessions, such as Health or Education, who would fall under the total control from Madrid. Regions *per se* is what Spain had during Franco's dictatorship: a centralized stated.

From 2005 to 2011 the desire to become an independent state grew 15 points, from 12.9 in 2005 to 28.2 in 2011. This shows that, even prior to the massive demonstrations that occurred afterwards, there was a part of the Catalan society who were losing interest in the idea of becoming a federal state or to remain as an autonomous community. A 15-point percental change in barely six years, with no practical activity from Catalan pro-independence activists, is quite an achievement sociology-wise. It could mean that the Catalan themselves could be learning on their own about the benefits of being an independent state, without a concrete political organization actively campaign towards it. As we will see in the following table, the aim of becoming an independent state begins grows incredibly from 2011 to 2012, coinciding with the first of the massive rallies for independence organized by the pro-independence activists during the Catalan National Day, and maintains a consistent peak until 2016, when it stabilizes, while still being the most answered option.

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Independent state	44.3	48.5	45.3	40.0	38.9	40.2	40.8
Federal state	25.5	21.3	22.2	24.5	23.2	21.9	22.4
Autonomous community	19.1	18.6	23.4	24.6	24.1	27.4	24
Region	4.0	5.4	1.8	5	5.7	4.6	5.3
Don't know / Refuse answer	7.1	6.2	7.3	5.9	8.1	5.9	7.5

Table 7. Source: CEO (Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió). Results from 2012–2018.

From 2012 onwards, the independent state is the most favoured answer of all four possibilities, and continues to be so until the closure of this investigation in July 2018. From 2005 to 2018, the desire in the minds of the people for an independent state went from a mere 12.9% to an astonishing 40.8, with peaks as high as 48.5% in 2013. Taking the lowest

and the highest peak as a reference, this marks an increase of 35.9 points in less than ten years. This is an extraordinary figure from any sociological perspective. While it is true that the idea of supporting an independent state remains stagnant at around 40% since 2014, one must not forget that we are looking at a survey with four different answers: independent state, federal state, autonomous community and region. However, due to the constant growth of support for independence in other independent polls, the Catalan government had no choice but to raise the question, even at a time when they did not agree with this option.

When the CEO announced its plans to ask the Catalan citizens about independence in a clear 'yes/no' manner, the Spanish government did raise many concerns, as they thought it would show a prominent *Yes* option. The CEO kept its work schedule and asked about the independence option directly. The results can be seen in the following table.

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Yes	45.4	57.0	54.7	45.3	48.2	46.8	48.7	46.7
No	24.7	20.5	22.1	44.5	46.6	45.3	43.6	44.9
Don't know / Refuse to answer	29.9	22.5	23.2	--	--	--	--	--

Table 8. Source: CEO (Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió). Results from 2011–2018 on a binominal Yes-No answer: Do you want Catalonia to become an independent state?

The survey above shows that, given a lesser number of options, and more concretely a binominal yes-no option, an independent Catalan state has been the preferred option since 2011 and has not lose to the no-option in any of the third-wave CEO surveys. The highest peaks in the growth in support for an independent state come in 2010 after the Spanish Constitutional Court slashed the Catalan Statute in 2011 after Mariano Rajoy won the Spanish elections by an absolute majority, in 2012 after Rajoy refused to give more autonomy to the Catalan government, and in

2013 after the Spanish government opposed the inclusion of the Catalan language in the education system and rejected any possibility of an official referendum like the one that the United Kingdom had just granted to Scotland. Overall, our analysis proves that Rajoy and his government have perhaps been the most important cause of the independence movement's reaching new heights every year. If we add the effect of social networks to the political attacks and contempt of the Spanish government, the rise of the independence movement seems unstoppable. As we have seen, the growing support for sovereignty is an extremely complex issue, yet it appears that poor political leadership in Spain is clearly related to the growth of the desire for sovereignty in Catalonia.

The fact that most elected parties have publicly supported either independence or at least the possibility of a referendum (three quarters of the elected Parliament in the 2012 Catalan elections supported the referendum) has encouraged public opinion to perceive independence positively. A generational effect is also to be kept in mind: a wealthy generation is more willing to take risks (Muñoz and Tormos, 2012). This explains why the support for independence has grown in Catalonia, particularly among the younger population (Crameri, 2011). The media has also been conducting their own polls, and their results coincide with those conducted by the CEO. Whether the polls originate from Spain or Catalonia, the results in the past two years have always indicated a majority in favour of independence, ranging from 50% to almost 60%. Those who do not favour independence always register lower than 50%. Many Catalan politicians, scholars, and other influential people have cited the growing support for independence as the main reason why Spain will not allow them

to vote. It seems that no Spanish prime minister wants to carry the burden of running a referendum they know they would probably lose.

7.2 CATALAN ACTIVISM WITHIN EUROPEAN UNION BORDERS

Europe is no stranger to regional parties (De Winter, 2003), self-sovereignty demands (Bonet, Pérez, 2006)., separatism (Borgen, 2010) or the birth of new states (Colomer, 2006). Considering the strong support for the independence of Catalonia (voiced by more than half of the Catalan MPs), or at least, the support to an official consultation (supported by three quarters of the Catalan Parliament), the strategic location of the Catalonia (key to the Mediterranean corridor for infrastructure and transportation) and the economic strength of Catalonia (net contributor for both Spain and the European Union), it is expected that Catalonia will eventually become a new state. However, the question remains whether this new state will be an actual member of the European Union. This is one of the most commented topics against the independence of Catalonia – and part of the *discourse of the fear* mentioned before in this text. According to their arguments, an independent Catalan state would be automatically left out of the European Union after its secession from Spain and would therefore have to begin the process to become a European member from scratch. However, according to the European laws, this argument is too abstract for one single reason: there is not a precedent to this situation.

While the external and existing countries have a long and perfectly detailed process to become an EU member state, there is nothing stated on

how to proceed if the new state is formed after a secession from an existing EU state, which would be the case for Catalonia, and would have been the case for Scotland if the *yes* to independence had won their consultation – which they did not. Given this scenario, neither an institution nor an individual can actually assert what would be the process for a Catalan state on how to become an EU member. In this topic, one key issue is that of the nationality. It is important because regardless of the status of Catalonia as a state, it has been stressed that Catalan people would still maintain the Spanish nationality and therefore be a European citizen. Oxford professor Sionaidh Douglas-Scott maintains that Catalans would remain Europeans, a premised shared by other scholars – including us.

According to the current European treaties, and even the Spanish Constitution itself, Catalans are, by birth, of the Spanish nationality, which cannot be removed unless it is under self-request. Given this legal framework, the Catalans from a hypothetical independent state would still have the Spanish nationality and simultaneously remain within the EU citizenship. However, as with the case before, there is no precedent either. If the Scottish voters had leaned towards the independence, Scotland would have led the way for Catalonia and would have resolved many questions. But now, it seems Catalonia is closer to lead the way for Scotland and other potential states such as Flanders, the Basque Country, Padania, Alsace, and even Wales. Beyond the semantic battle involving laws and *what-if* hypothesis, there is but one undeniable geopolitical truth: over 20 new states were born during the 20th and 21st centuries: Norway, in 1905 after a referendum. Albania, in 1912, as a result of the weakness of the Ottoman Empire. Finland, in 1918, becomes independent amid the chaos of the 1st World War and the Russian Revolution. Poland, in 1918, after the Armistice,

becomes a country again. Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, in 1918, as a result of the 1st World War and the collapse of the Austrian Empire. The Baltic Republics, in 1918, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania declare independence after the end of the World War I. Stalin would later incorporate them to the USSR. After the dissolution of the USSR, the three republics declared independence again in 1990. Ireland, in 1921, after a post-war treaty on 1921. Iceland, in 1944, after The Act of Union agreement expired on December 31, 1943. In May 1944, Icelanders voted in a four-day plebiscite on whether to terminate the personal union with the King of Denmark and establish a republic. The independence was won, and the Republic was proclaimed. In 1964, Malta achieved its independence after intense negotiations with the United Kingdom. Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova, in 1991, after the dissolution of the USSR. Slovenia, Croatia and Macedonia, also in 1991, this time as a secession from Yugoslavia and after a referendum and a constitutional process. Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia and Montenegro, in 1992, like its predecessors, after the breakup of Yugoslavia. Slovakia, in 1993, after Czechoslovakia was dissolved into the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic. Finally, in the 21st century: Serbia, in 2006, Montenegro, also in 2006, and Kosovo, in 2008.

We have gathered in the following table the total number of countries that have become independent in one way or another during the 20th century, and three of them during the beginning of the 21st century, in order to illustrate that the eventual Catalan independence may not be out of place at all – if finally achieved.

State	Year	Referendum	Declaration of independence	EU Member
Norway	1905	X		
Albania	1912		X	
Finland	1917		X	X
Hungary	1918		X	X
Czechoslovakia	1918		X	
Yugoslavia	1918		X	
Poland	1918		X	X
Lithuania	1918, 1990		X	X
Estonia	1918, 1991		X	X
Latvia	1918, 1991		X	X
Ireland	1919		X	X
Iceland	1944	X		
Malta	1964		X	X
Ukraine	1991	X		
Belarus	1991		X	
Moldova	1991		X	
Slovenia	1991	X		X
Croatia	1991	X		X
Macedonia	1991	X		
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1992	X		
Serbia and Montenegro	1992		X	
Slovakia	1993		X	X
Czech Republic	1993		X	X
Montenegro	2006	X		
Serbia	2006	X		
Kosovo	2008		X	

Table 9. List of new European states from 1905 to 2008. Source: Self-elaboration.

While the opponents to the viability of a new Catalan state in Europe, including the Spanish government, speak of a supposed union in the globalised world as a pillar to deny the self-determination right to Catalonia, history insists on proving them wrong. In 1900, there were 20 states in Europe. Now, there are 51. Among the 31 new states, over 20 were newly formed – as we have just reviewed in the table above. None of these new states are the result of a merging but of a declaration of independence usually preceded by a referendum, which is exactly what the Spanish government is currently denying to Catalonia.

So far, European representatives have not openly spoken of the Catalan claim, saying that it is an "internal matter" that should be discussed within Spain, in an effort to remain neutral to the topic by the so-called political correctness. Many politicians, diplomatic, and even international think tanks, such as the Atlantic Council (US) and the Centre Maurits Coppieters (Belgium), have stressed that the possibility of an independent Catalonia is closer everyday due to Catalan cohesion and Spain's authoritative behaviour. In support of the Catalan independence it has been argued that Catalonia could perfectly survive outside the European Union, just by signing regular treaties like other European countries do (for instance: Norway). In this regard, the Assistant Secretary-General of the EFTA (the European Free Trade Association composed by Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein), Georges Baur, said that an independent Catalonia would fit the EFTA and would be economically viable given its enormous economical production.

In fact – we stressed it at the beginning of this chapter – the strategic location of Catalonia and its strong GDP, would make any state want closer relations with them rather than to exclude them. The viability of small

countries is in fact supported by many theorists such as Alesina and Spolaore (2003), Castellanos, Paluzie and Tirado (2012) and Colomer (2006). As for the relevance to the European Union, it has been mentioned that Catalonia would need to re-sign the petition in order to be in the EU.

In this regard, many scholars, including the American Xavier Sala-i-Martin, of Catalan origin, and currently part of Columbia's faculty, have stressed that Catalonia would be better in the European Union, but that in any case, those most interested in having Catalonia in the EU would be the EU members themselves. In other words, if Spain boycotts Catalonia's entrance to the EU, the strength of the Catalan economy could prevail simply by using the Euro currency and signing the main treaties, as is the case with Switzerland or Norway, who are not part of the EU but use its treaties. In any case, the Catalan government and the pro-independence parties have vowed to remain in the European Union, in line with the long tradition of *Europeanism* in Catalonia (Costa, 2002).

PART VIII – CONCLUSIONS

Marc Perelló i Sobrepere
Universitat Ramon Llull (2018)

8. FOREWORD TO THE CONCLUSIONS

The following comments are our humble attempt at concluding our research by shedding light on the objectives and hypotheses presented in the first part of this doctoral dissertation. Given that our framework was derived from the work of theoretical authors for the most part, our conclusions are completely qualitative. Please note that the following conclusions are entirely unpretentious. We understand and accept our position as junior researchers in a field that is new and still requires greater analysis. We have learned a lot, but there is also a lot more to be learned. We sincerely hope that our contribution to the topic, as modest as it can be, may be useful to the readers of this work, as well as to the fellow researchers who wish to continue our discussion.

8.1 ON OBJECTIVE AND HYPOTHESIS 1

Objective and Hypothesis 1 respectively state:

O1. To understand the degree of extent to which and information and communication technologies (ICTs) were an important part, if not the most important, during the Arab Spring, the Egyptian Revolution, the 15-M Indignados and Occupy Wall Street.

H1. The most recent political activism movements owe their continuity and internationalization to the new media deployed during the protests.

We conclude the following:

During the spring of 2011, the world witnessed an unexpected wave of protests and riots in many countries across the Middle East and North Africa. These democratic uprisings occurred one after the other, almost like a chain reaction. In this case, it was a massive chain of democratic uprisings prompting thousands of citizens in both democratic and undemocratic countries to take to the streets. In the beginning, the protests were mostly non-violent, although the groups of people in rebellion ended up being confronted by police on several occasions. Every time the police resorted to force to control the protesters, the rallies became even more massive and the anger of the protesters escalated.

This wave of protest was against the backdrop of long-standing dictatorships in countries such as Egypt, Libya and Tunisia, where, eventually, the dictators Hosni Mubarak (born in 1928), the Egyptian military and political leader who served as the fourth President of Egypt from 1981 to 2011, Muammar Gaddafi (born in 1942), commonly known as Colonel Gaddafi, who was a Libyan revolutionary and politician, and the de facto ruler of Libya for 42 years from 1969 to 2011, and Zine El Abidine Ben Ali (born in 1936), who was the second President of Tunisia from 1987 to 2011, were deposed, respectively. The protests were also replicated in Algeria, Syria, Jordan, Yemen, Bahrain and the Palestinian Territories. In some of these cases, as in Syria, civil war broke out as a result of the refusal of the respective president to renounce power.

We believe that the Arab Spring owes its sizeable and diverse mobilization to the rapid spread of complaints over the Internet (Hussain and Howard, 2013). The reach of ICTs in the Arab world has increased over

the past few years, although maybe not to the point where the situation can be compared to Western countries (Howard, 2011). Still, many authors contend that new ICTs have played a key role in the development of modern Arab societies (Zelaky, Eid, Sami and Ziada, 2006). The Internet in particular has seen rapid growth in Arab countries, particularly among young people (Abdulla, 2007). Social networking platforms such as Facebook have allowed for greater opportunities for critical voices to be heard from among the people, as well as for their efforts and acts, both in the past and the future, to be highlighted (Giglio, 2011). Activists from the Arab Spring benefited from smartphones, satellites and social networks in order to spread their message worldwide. More than that, it is argued by many authors that the penetration of new technologies in Arab countries has also opened new paths to the democratization and entrenchment of their societies. ICTs have thus helped create a public sphere that transcends Arab borders, escalating the revolutions into an international matter of public debate (El-Nawawy and Khamis, 2009). In this regard, it is undoubtedly the case that social media has set new standards for collective action (Bimber, Flanagin and Stohl, 2005).

One must note, however, that a common mistake reproduced in some studies that we have read is that the outcome of the Arab Spring is comparable to that of a Western country, and therefore does not meet the expectations of the writers. One cannot expect countries that have been under authoritative regimes over many years to switch to a political parliamentary system overnight. New media does work, but it does not wave a magic wand. Each Arab country is made up of its own unique and rich history, and cannot be described according to Western patterns. In this

sense, new media is certainly more than a spectator; it plays a full part, but as part of more complex machinery.

In the Egyptian Revolution, digital communications were key to the development of the demonstrations. Protesters did not trust each other in the physical world but, online, they could speak and comment freely. Thanks to ICTs, these protestors were able to get to know each other and sincerely aim for a revolution that could change the state of their country. These made the demonstrations transversal as well. Participants rejected being associated with a specific group or ideology; they simply wanted to democratically elect their president, regardless of whom it would be. In this regard, most authors agree that ICTs played a major role in gathering hundreds of thousands of participants together for political activist purposes.

The Indignados successful mobilized themselves, as well as set up some camps, in over 50 cities all across Spanish territory with little more than social networks (Maronitis, 2013), which they actively used to disseminate not only their daily agenda, but also to generate interesting discussions on all the topics that were being raised in physical demonstrations. The importance of social networks was identical to the previous cases. The protest and the camps were broadcast live on Twitter and Facebook. The social networks were much used by protesters in the physical space, but also by those who were not. Not only did social networks help to keep the movement alive, they also distributed the many ideas emanating from the assemblies that took place in the camps. In addition, without new media, the movement would have remained silenced by mainstream and traditional media, which looked at the demonstration as a simple protest that would eventually fade out with no consequences. However, the 15-M offers a singular case of a protest diaspora.

Finally, in the Occupy Wall Street marches, the influence of new media tools was, if possible, even more significant. The movement began to be treated with mockery by the major networks, even by those that one would have supposed to have supported the movement, the left-wing media, given that most of their views refer to left-sided ideology and political promises. The social networks, however, helped to keep the movement alive, and finally enjoy an omnipresence in the major networks and printed media. But what we believe to be more significant from the Occupy case study is the new media narratives that accompanied the protests, such as news-framing involving digital tools. The Occupy marches had the advantage of taking place after other similar demonstrations, such as those of the Spanish Indignados or the Greek protests against austerity. This helped the movement offer a precise narrative, in the knowledge that, to some extent, they could control what would be shared via the social networks and what would mainstream media would report about them – and yet the political activists had to frequently interact with journalists and the media if they wanted their visions to be transmitted to the public (Micó & Casero-Ripollés, 2014).

In light of what we have exposed, we can conclude that ICTs have impacted on interest and engagement in traditional politics and changed them in many ways (Anduiza, Gallego and Cantijoch, 2010). We could say that the likelihood of the success of social movements closely depends on the logistics involved in them; and if this logistics involves the support of new media tools, the likelihood of success increases. Beyond particular stories from specific protests, scholars agree that new media has helped in a greater sense to spread democratic ideas across international borders (Howard et al., 2011). Social action over the Internet combines the local,

national and transnational space (Olesen, 2005), such that the Internet has helped with the coordination of social movements (George, 2006). New ICTs thus facilitate the aggregation of interests and collective binding processes (Teorell, 2006). In turn, the sharing of interests and knowledge generates more informed citizens (Teorell, 2006). It is because of this that, without a doubt, we can assert that new media and ICTs are two of the main pillars of human social structures of today, and will continue to be so.

8.2 ON OBJECTIVE AND HYPOTHESIS 2

Objective and Hypothesis 2 respectively state:

O2. To demonstrate a presumable uniqueness of the Catalan case in relation to other political movements and the most accepted theories in the social activism field.

H2. The nature of the Catalan case is unique because of a series of social, political and historical connotations that defy the most commonly assumed theories on social activism in many ways.

We conclude the following:

Most of the social movements that we nowadays hear and read about, such as the ones we have reviewed and commented on in Part III of our work, have the following characteristics in common: (A) the protestors base their activities on pursuing social rights and usually involve blaming or attacking their government; (B) they tend to lack formal organization and a specific hierarchy with no apparent leadership; (C) they tend to gather together for sit-ins and occupations that last longer than a day; (D) direct

confrontation with police is usually involved; (E) the government in office openly mocks the protesters or ignores their petitions. These characteristics can be further subdivided into more specific ones, depending on the type of social movement and protest. The Catalan case for independence, however, challenges these premises about contemporary political activism, in ways that make it appear unique in the mobilization sphere, as we propose in our hypothesis.

Throughout this dissertation, we have sustained the premise that the Catalan independence movement has been different compared to the majority of other contemporary social movements. The single fact of having organized four rallies and a public consultation involving millions of participants with precision and no violence at all – the peaceful nature of the mass demonstrations organised by the pro-independence movement is sustained every year in every demonstration – (Crameri, 2016) as well as having overturned the polls in the matter of independence by tripling the support for independence in just a decade, is highly indicative that the Catalan independence movement is an outstanding case.

If we analyse some of the most recent social movements that have happened or are still happening worldwide, e.g., the wave of movements in the Arab Spring (North Africa), Occupy Wall Street in New York, the protest marches following the death of Michael Brown in Ferguson (US), the Chilean student protests and the #yosoy123 Mexican activist movement (Latin America), the pro-Tibetan marches and the Umbrella Revolution in Hong Kong (China), the London riots, the Greek Revolution and the Indignados in Spain (Europe), as well as the protests during the G7, G8 and G20 summits in different continents, some characteristics can be observed in most, if not all, of these social movements: distrust of the government in

office and of mass media, a desire for new politicians, a bottom-up process, a diffused agenda, a dispersed hierarchy that reflects a transversal movement, the lack of a traditional association, a core of young protestors, continued rallies and/or occupation of physical spaces, and even direct confrontation with the police. These patterns, while they cannot be generically applied to all movements, somehow consistently arise in the social movements' literature (Smith, 1997; 2002; Snow, 2004; Milan, 2005; Constanza-Chock, 2012; Smith and Wiest, 2012). Nevertheless, the strongest similarity that the Catalan independence movement has with the aforementioned activism cases and their characteristics is that of being a bottom-up process. Otherwise, the Catalan independence movement escapes the commonly accepted standards for this type of activism.

By comparing and contrasting what we have set out in the preceding chapter and contrasting it with the aforementioned patterns, the specific characteristics of the Catalan independence movement can be seen as involving: a context fostered not only by contemporary events but over centuries; protesters of different ages with no particular group overshadowing any other; recognizable leaders; a traditional hierarchy articulated through a traditional type of association; a clear agenda with goals and dates; a lack of violent episodes among protesters; and a notorious reciprocal support between protesters and the government in office (for Catalonia). The next table can be used for comparison purposes:

Most common characteristics of social movements	Singularities within the Catalan case for independence
The protestors base their activities on the pursuit of social rights and usually involve blaming or attacking their government.	Activists rally under one single objective: to become a new state. Social rights have a strong presence, although they are understood as a consequence of the main objective. The government (Catalan) is not blamed, but actually the protests take place to support Catalan political leaders in order to continue the pursuit of independence.
They tend to lack formal organization and a specific hierarchy with no apparent leadership.	The Catalan independence movement is well structured, with many organizations watching over the continuity of the movement, while its leaders are clear and visible.
They tend to gather together for sit-ins and occupations that last longer than a day.	Catalan activism is notorious for being precise and good natured. Rallies last no longer than a day, which probably explains why the turnouts are counted in the millions.
Direct confrontation with police is usually involved.	Catalan protesters have avoided confrontation with Catalan police at all costs. The only confrontations happened after the Spanish police charges during the 1 October referendum.
The government in office openly mocks the protesters or ignores their petitions	The Catalan government and the political parties that are part of it have either supported independence from the beginning or evolved to support it. While direct implication is not found in the protests so as to guarantee impartiality, the Catalan government does support the objective of the protesters.

Table 10. Differences between social movements and the pro-independence Catalan movement. Source: Self-elaboration.

We believe that these characteristics make the Catalan movement for independence relatively singular. As McAdam, McCarthy and Zald (1996) correctly pointed out, social movement theories are constantly changing and, as such, require continuous rewriting. We certainly believe that, as the Catalan independence movement stands out as a singular case, we should rethink the notions of protest movements and social activism.

In terms of the wider political context of this issue, we also believe that the government of Partido Popular headed by Mariano Rajoy (2011-2018) earned the questionable honour of having catalysed and aggravated the Catalan independence movement to the point where the low profile of the Spanish central administration in responding to the Catalan claim for greater sovereignty actually facilitated pro-independence movement efforts by disseminating the benefits of having an independent state. Because the Spanish state has failed at building a multinational state, secession has been argued to be a just cause and more concretely, a matter of ethnocultural justice (Costa, 2003). Had successive Spanish governors acted in a different way, the socio-political situation would probably be very different from what it is now. For instance, if a referendum had been allowed 10 years ago, the *no* option could easily have won out. Currently, however, the *yes* vote has been consolidated, even among those who once opposed independence and, over time, have seen how Spanish state policies leave no room for doubting independence as a goal. The successive negatives on the part of the Spanish government to grant Catalonia more self-governance have awakened dormant Catalan nationalism to the point of no return, where even a pro-autonomous government turned pro-independence overnight through the powerful force of social activism and public participation. It cannot be determined whether or not the level of

independence supporters has reached its peak, but it is safe to assert that the movement enjoys robust health and continues to influence the political agenda. Having exhausted all pathways of dialogue with Spain, always receiving *no* for an answer, the majority of Catalan society seems aligned in taking further steps that may well lead to the creation of a new state sooner than expected. If the movement succeeds and a Catalan state is formed, similar movements from other regions seeking independence (e.g., the Basque Country, Flanders, the Faroe Islands, Veneto or Scotland) may well attempt to follow the Catalan strategy, step by step, or at least, seek inspiration from it when planning their own upcoming moves.

Regarding Catalan nationalism

The arguments made by the supporters of independence, based on historical, political and economic motivations, and expanded through the means of mass communication, have to be understood within a larger framework: Catalan nationalism. Furthermore, we are certain that Catalan pro-independence activism stands out as a singular social movement built upon a remarkable type of nationalism. Given that our dissertation has reviewed the historical and social roots of the Catalan sentiment for independence, we believe that it is fair to establish a conclusion in relation to this more sociological aspect as well, given that new media has helped in the creation of a recent Catalan nationalism.

The term nationalism has evolved very differently in every country where it has had a political presence. In Europe, the term had a positive connotation after the fall of ancient empires, as it was seen as an intrinsic

part of the defence of nations and everything they represented to their citizens, such as traditions, culture and language (Kohn, 1944, 1955), but subsequently led to negative implications due to the rhetoric used by different authoritative regimes in the first half of the 20th century. Some authors propose today that there is a difference between the implications of nationalism and patriotism. While the term nationalism has been attached to empires and wars, the term patriotism has maintained its apparent positive connotations. If we take a look at the official definition of each term, however, there seems to be no such difference, unless one wishes to strengthen the negative connotation of the word nationalism. In Catalonia, however, the term nationalism has retained its original sense, as described in one of the most celebrated works in Catalan literature, *La Nacionalitat Catalana* (Catalan Nationality) by Enric Prat de la Riba, a 19th century politician, lawyer and writer. This conceptualization of Catalan nationalism has remained at the core of the independence movement, becoming a major explanatory force of the support it has received (McCrone and Paterson, 2002; Serrano Balaguer, 2010).

For the most part, nationalism theorists study nationalism as it emanates from an existing state and its implications. However, we believe that Catalan nationalism has to be understood in a different way. Guibernau (1999, 2000) speaks of Catalan nationalism as nationalism *without* a state. She argues that Catalan nationalism challenges previous and most well-known studies on nationalism by authors such as Elie Kedourie, Anthony D. Smith, John Breuilly and Tom Nairn. For instance, Kedourie (1971, 1986) maintains a hostile perspective towards nationalism and defines it as a form of politics unconcerned with reality. He blames intellectuals who support nationalistic ideas for falling for Romanticism, referring to the texts of Herder

and Fichte in his examples of nationalism. Breuilly (1982) also takes on nationalist intellectuals by stating that they seek control over the masses. While their views remain true to the example they give in their studies, it must be noted, as we did in the previous chapters that the growth of the Catalan independence movement was not associated with sentimentalism, but actually to a major acknowledgement of economic arguments, in turn creating an almost indisputable empirical case for independence, as noted by economists worldwide.

In turn, Nairn (1997) and Smith (1991, 1998) relate the expansion of nationalism to the uneven spread of capitalism, stressing that nationalism is a movement that has spread from elites to the masses. Regarding the first argument, it must be noted that Catalan territories have remained affluent for many centuries, being among the most active Mediterranean merchant regions, which led the Industrial Revolution in Southern Europe. Today, Catalan gross domestic product (GDP) is also among Europe's highest. As for the second argument, and probably the most important one, the current Catalan wave of support for independence is a bottom-up process, not one running from elites to the masses. Before the demonstration of 11 September 2012, the ruling party in Catalonia, Convergència i Unió (CiU), did not even consider independence as a possibility. In fact, it had always talked down any idea of independence, instead fostering strong Spanish-Catalan collaboration (Crameri, 2011). After the massive demonstration of 2012, however, the CiU publicly shifted its political agenda towards the construction of a new state for the very first time in 30 years.

Continuing with theories of nationalism, Anthony D. Smith has suggested that nationalism is intrinsically mythological and based on flawed exaggerations of history (Smith, 1998). However, as reviewed in Part IV of

our investigation, Catalan nationalism bases nothing on mythology; rather, it is motivated by a list of rational grievances that have occurred throughout the centuries in relation to the Spanish government's refusal to recognize the singularities of Catalan culture such as its history, traditions or language. While history is an important part of Catalan nationalism, history is not altered or exaggerated. As a matter of fact, Catalans acknowledge their successive defeats and even celebrate their National Day on 11 September, which commemorates the day in 1714 when Catalonia surrendered to the Spanish king in Barcelona.

Similar to Smith, Breuilly (1994) considers that nationalism aims to create a single identity on which to base its control over the masses. We find this premise a little too ambiguous in the sense that it could be applied to most governments, which, once in power, aim to change laws and policy-making to suit its own ideology. If Breuilly understands identity in terms of one's thoughts and beliefs, his premise cannot be applied to the Catalan case either. The Catalan pro-independence movement is acknowledged for respecting the singularities of each of the communities that are part of it. Many of the pro-independence activists have either parents or grandparents who come from other regions in Spanish and established themselves in Catalonia a long time ago, without losing any of their traditions or even the language. As a matter of fact, a participatory process that sought to draft an eventual Catalan constitution, concluded that the Spanish language should remain part of a new Catalan state, granting the rights of those who do not speak Catalan regularly, a position that is most favoured by the majority of Catalan independence activists.

The prominent role performed by the citizen associations Òmnium and ANC also illustrate the bottom-up process of Catalan nationalism, which

is, at all times, peaceful, as opposed to Smith and Nairn's 'from the elites to the masses' conception, which includes violence and repression. The Catalan elites, if anything, remained alienated from the independence movement until very recently, when the majority of business associations expressed their support for independence.

We believe that our analysis supports Guibernau's notion of Catalonia as a nation without a state. Furthermore, while nationalism theories and frameworks depicted by the aforementioned authors are very broad and remain valid today, it seems appropriate to comment that Catalan nationalism stands out as a rather singular case, with many key characteristics that enhance the notion of its singularity.

8.3 ON OBJECTIVE AND HYPOTHESIS 3

Objective and Hypothesis 3 respectively state:

O3. To demonstrate the social value of new media and ICTs as a catalyser of political activism in spite of the origin of the messages.

H3. The Catalan pro-independence movement, political leaders and other activists have exceeded space, time and language barriers when internationalizing their social cause to a broader public, which has become rather sympathetic to the cause in part thanks to their constant activity through social networks.

We conclude the following:

Marc Perelló i Sobrepere
Universitat Ramon Llull (2018)

ICTs have accelerated the independence debate, changing its focus from autonomic concessions to the actual possibility of Catalonia becoming a new state. While the reasons and arguments in favour of becoming an independent state have always been present and supported by an ever-increasing number of scholars and independent experts, it was not until the digital age that the enormous spread of pro-independence motivations occurred within the public sphere. To this extent, it is important to observe how new technologies have penetrated Catalonian society during the past decade. Catalonia has led on R&D investment ahead of Spain in recent decades (as can be seen in the following figure), which has certainly helped the region to be a leader in terms of ICTs as well. However, both Spain and Catalonia had to cut back in this area after the financial crisis hit Europe in 2008, especially Southern European countries. Spain compelled all its regions to contain their expenditure contrary to the wishes of many regional governments, such as Catalonia's, which had hoped to continue investment in R&D. In the end, however, the Catalan government had to reluctantly cut back on its investment in R&D.
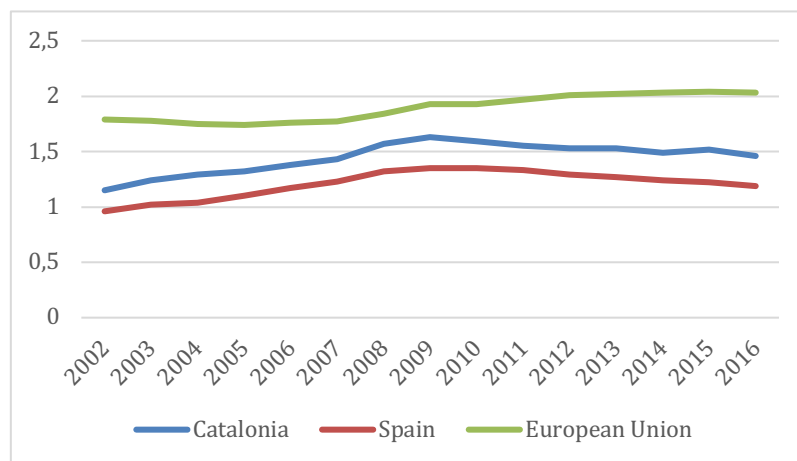
Figure 1. Gross domestic expenditure in R&D with respect to GDP: Catalonia, Spain and the European Union (2002-2016). Source: Idescat. Elaboration: own.

The following figure shows that Catalonia has also led on the digital integration of new technologies in Spain. As can be seen, Catalonia has always been ahead of Spain in this regard, with differences up to 10 points. Only in recent years has the gap between Spain and Catalonia been corrected, given that the Spanish government has favoured the adoption of the Internet with many programmes in the last five years.
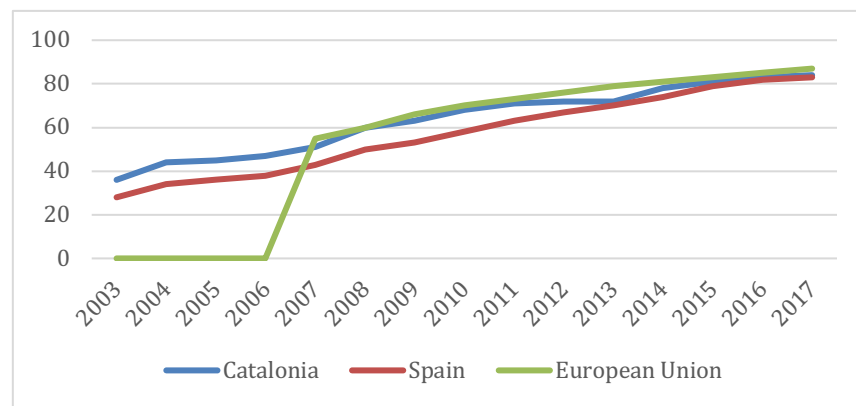
Figure 2. Number of houses with access to the Internet (in %): Catalonia, Spain and the European Union (2003-2017). Source: Idescat.

Catalonia's predisposition towards embracing new technologies has been acknowledged for a long time by developers everywhere. Perhaps because of this, nine of the 10 bestselling mobile devices in Spain during 2017 included spelling and spellchecking in Catalan, according to the *2018 Catalan Language Report* by Plataforma per la llengua, an independent body that studies the Catalan language in many contexts. Mobile devices made by Samsung, Huawei, Apple, BQ and LG have included spelling and spellchecking functions in Catalan; only Xiaomi has not. This means that five of the six companies that enjoyed the highest sales in 2017, representing almost 80% of the market (79.2%), offered the option of Catalan on their mobile devices. If we consider the sales of these first six companies, we can say that 89% of mobile phones on the market are

already in Catalan. The two main operating systems, Android and iOS, have the option of Catalan installed by default. The fact that Xiaomi does not have this option can only mean that the company deleted it on purpose for whatever reason.

It is also of interest that 73.3% of Catalan users employ Catalan to communicate with contacts through messaging applications, while 72.8% use it to communicate via social networks. These figures, although lower than those for users who employ Spanish (which exceeds 99% for both messaging and social networks), are significant if we consider that Catalan is the habitual language of only 36.3% of Catalans, with a further 6.8% habitually communicating in both Catalan and Spanish. The fact that only 60.2% of residents in Catalonia know how to write in Catalan, while the aforementioned study presents a higher number, may be because those who use the newest technologies are often from the younger generations, which also have the highest proportion of knowledge of Catalan: 76.8% of people aged 15 to 49 know how to write Catalan. The same applies to the pro-independence movement. While the *yes* option for independence polls highest overall in most surveys, support is even higher among those aged below 50, and even higher if we go below 35, showing a clear preference for independence among the younger generations.

We are certain that, without the power of the Internet and its impact on the dissemination of the independence ideal, the Catalan independence would not have the level of support that we can observe today. Twenty years ago, the independence movement was confined to a small group, which had little opportunity of engaging with peers in other parts of Catalonia. Ten years ago, the independence movement found its ideal space for discussing and expanding their ideas: the Internet. From this moment onward, the pro-

independence audience grew at an unstoppable rate, as did pioneering Catalan digital media entities, such as VilaWeb, Racó Català and Nació Digital. Nowadays, the independence movement is generating worldwide trending topics almost on a monthly basis, if not every week. It is reasonable to assert that new ICTs and social media platforms have changed the face of the Catalan independence movement forever.

Thanks to social networks, like-minded individuals were able to connect with one another, as well as with friends, family and other contacts. Users from all locations within Catalonia thus began to realize that they knew more supporters of the independence movement than they thought. For independence supporters, it was akin to the process of 'coming out'. Being a supporter of independence was no longer something rare: it became an ideal worth fighting for, while its popularity expanded, bolstered by a sense of pride. By the time the independence movement had gained a foothold in large traditional media venues, it had already become a dominant topic in the digital media space for some time. Due to this privileged position on the Internet, analogue media has to start paying attention to the independence movement as well. Almost overnight, the topic of independence went from having a kind of 'underdog' status to that a 'bandwagon' issue. It was not an elite or a top-down demand, nor an imposition; rather, it was simply a reflection: what had been dominating the digital sphere was now set to dominate traditional media as well. As a result, traditional media had to adapt to the situation; for example, the two most widely read newspapers in Catalonia had only one edition in Spanish, but had to start printing an edition in Catalan, prompted by the rise of Catalan media on the Internet, which was taking readers away from them. While the Catalan elites had a strong relationship with their Spanish counterparts and

therefore did not want to speak about the possibility of independence, let alone support it, they nonetheless had no choice but to consider it.

The first steps of the independence movement into large media venues began when traditional newsroom journalists thought it would be a good idea to give voice to what people were saying about the independence movement on Twitter and Facebook. In newspaper articles and television news programmes, journalists began to talk about the social media sphere as something that was an anecdotal phenomenon, as opposed to something to seriously consider. Over time, however, social networks have ceased to be anecdotal and have become a primary source of information and political content, something that has unquestionably helped to place the Catalan independence movement on the agenda of traditional media.

There are several studies on the use of social networks in Spain, but their findings do not concur with each other. Some affirm that, among the population aged 16 to 65 years, 86% have at least one account in a social network while other studies suggest the level is as high as 92%. Whatever the figure, it is very high and therefore validates the hypothesis that the population can be strongly influenced by social networks. In fact, 70% of social network users recognize that they are influenced by what their friends or political parties publish via social networks. Unfortunately, the last study that measured these factors explicitly for Catalonia was in 2014. At that moment, a study published by the communications giant Telefonica reported that 60% of Catalans were active on social networks. Among these, Facebook was the most used platform among Catalans (95% of those who were active on a social network were on Facebook). The use of social networks in Catalonia was found by this report to be particularly high among the youngest stratum of the population: 88.9% of Catalans aged 16

to 29 years belonged to a social network. Following Facebook in terms of usage was Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and Google Plus. Among those who belonged to a social network, 46.2% considered themselves to be very or fairly active online. According to a more recent Idescat survey on ICTs in Catalonia from 2017, 18.5% of men and 22.4% of women actively comment on political issues via the Internet. Regrettably, the study does not go any further in investigating what types of social networks they use or their political preferences, which would be very helpful for us in empirically corroborating our theories. Perhaps in the near future, a new investigation can be accomplished in this regard.

ICTs have also allowed for an even more important phenomenon than the disseminating information on the Catalan independence process, its motivations, reasons, leaders, actions, events and data: it has allowed all citizens to control a greater portion of the flow of information. In other words, in Catalonia, citizens are leading the independence process, not politicians. This is a highly novel concept in the realm of politics and in the context of the theory of nationalism. In the summer of 2014, the President of the Generalitat, Artur Mas, stressed that social networks had been extremely important to the Catalan independence movement, asserting that the Catalan political process started because civil society had both the *dream* and the technological tools to realize it. He also emphasized that social networks make provision for significant freedom of expression and the ability to verify information quickly, while stressing that, thanks to ICTs, the debate about the future of Catalonia remains open and transparent within real time. Indeed, everyone has access to the discussion: politicians, ordinary citizens, civil society groups, students, unions and businesses. Everyone can therefore consume information and decide whether or not to

support it. More recently, in 2018, the Catalan Minister of Digital Policies and Public Administration, Jordi Puigneró, declared that Catalonia must create a digital nation in the form of a republic until the Catalan Republic can be physically realized. Puigneró said that, without digital tools, it would not have been possible for the 1 October referendum to have taken place. He also said that all those involved in the referendum were in WhatsApp groups and similar platforms, which had enabled them to methodically organize schools, ballot boxes and the digital census.

In conclusion, one can say that the Catalan independence movement cannot be examined without addressing the influence of the Internet. The evolution of the Catalan pro-independence debate reached its peak as a result of ICTs, which had originated from within society and were later widely embraced by politicians. The convening power, organizational agility and rapid expansion of the movement were significantly impacted by new technologies. Joan Carreras, Joan Manuel Tresserras, Enric Marín and Saül Gordillo are among the authors who have commented on the importance of social networks to the Catalan independence movement and have made similar conclusions to those presented in the current work. In addition, we have proposed a qualitative relationship between the increase in the use of the Internet and social networks and the simultaneous increase in support for Catalonian independence. In this regard, we must acknowledge that we still need better tools and more thorough analysis to fully prove this relationship, but we certainly believe that our scrutiny can act as a starting point for future research.

8.4 EPILOGUE

The pro-independent movement deployed the means of mass communication highly effectively, encouraging millions to engage in public participation and prompting numerous political reactions. We would argue that the Catalonian pro-independence movement consistently gained momentum through the initiatives of the independence associations Òmnium Cultural and Assemblea Nacional Catalana, helped by the increasing use of new media technologies. We believe that we have effectively demonstrated the shift in the pro-independence movement, such as in term terms of its growth and evolution into a mass participatory process. The singularity of its characteristics, as we propose, challenge some of the most extended notions of modern social movements and social activism, e.g., how it has been accurately organized through formal associations, how it has maintained a peaceful character in spite of its massive scale, and how it has changed the political agenda resulting in three referendums being held between 2011 and 2014, and three elections to the Catalan Parliament between 2011 and 2017, and also a major redefinition of every political party in Catalonia.

It is because of the aforementioned factors that we maintain that the Catalonian movement for independence is among many case studies involving the use of new media for political activism; better still, it is in fact one that has made and will continue to make significant contributions to the public involvement literature. Independence supporters are following a clear and concrete road map, aimed at making continuous progress through the application of new technologies and highly organized public involvement. Furthermore, judging by everything that has happened so far, the odds keep

falling on their side. Irrespective of the next steps to be taken by the movement, the Catalan case remains a unique and highly interesting manifestation of public participation.

In conclusion, it has been asserted that the new civil organizations in Catalonia seeking independence, which are essential for increasing the presence of independence talks within public discourse, have organized themselves using websites and social networks and, in turn, left their mark as a dynamic community. This is very important to the movement, as pro-independence activism on social networks is undeniable. Once the public are aware of political situation in which they find themselves, understand how it is changing, and are able to propagate their ideas rapidly through new technologies, political change will begin to accelerate. This is why surveys show a significant increase in favour of independence, why some of the largest European demonstrations in recent memory have been able to happen, and why the largest political party in Catalonia decided in 2012 to change its course in pursuit of a new state. It is also why more than two million people defied the referendum prohibition on 9 November 2014 and again on 1 October 2017 in order to vote for what they believed in.

8.5 FUTURE OF THE RESEARCH

Media and politics are two topics that will probably be attached to one another forever. The influence that one has on the other is shaping the world that we live in on a daily basis. The previous pages are nothing more than a humble approach at structuring, commenting on and reaching conclusions about some of the theoretical aspects centred on political activism and new

media. Now that we have ended our research, we can look back and say that the overall process was as enriching as it could have been. We have nothing but gratitude for our directors and other mentors, who provided us with novel and exciting knowledge about the topics explored in these pages.

The Catalan case, not only in terms of the pro-independence movement, but also in other realms such as nation or language, still has much to offer. We have investigated a specific part of the Catalan case and opened up what we believe to be interesting paths for future research, such as the redefinition of political activism characteristics under the Catalan umbrella, or the empirical connections between new media and the growth of the Catalan independence movement, both nationally and internationally. It must be noted that, in the main, ours is a qualitative work. However, we believe that most of what we propose could be approached from a quantitative perspective as well, given the appropriate methodology and tools. We will do our best to find the most appropriate partners and means to do so, while we also encourage fellow scholars to continue this approach in order to validate or refute our hypotheses. All contributions will be welcomed and surely enrich the overall topic.

We are aware that our work is barely the tip of the iceberg of a much more complex and passionate subject, which is why we are making this dissertation available to anyone who wishes to use it for future investigations. As for ourselves, we aim to continue to study this topic further, as well as continue our personal development in the academic field. Thus, in the very near future, we will do our best to extend our investigations into media and politics from an academic standpoint, in the hope of make new contributions to the subject, which might modestly contribute to the scholarly field of communications and its ramifications.

Marc Perelló i Sobrepere
Universitat Ramon Llull (2018)

PART IX – REFERENCES

Marc Perelló i Sobrepere
Universitat Ramon Llull (2018)

Abbott, J. P. (2001). Democracy@ internet. Asia? The challenges to the emancipatory potential of the net: Lessons from China and Malaysia. *Third World Quarterly*, *22*(1), 99–114.

Abdulla, R. A. (2007). *The Internet in the Arab world: Egypt and beyond*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.

Adamic, L. A., & Glance, N. (2005). The political blogosphere and the 2004 U.S. election: Divided they blog. In J. Adibi, M. Grobelnik, D. Mladenic, & P. Pantel (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 3rd international workshop on Link Discovery* (pp. 36–43).

Aday, S., Farrell, H., Lynch, M., Sides, J., Kelly, J., & Zuckerman, E. (2010). *Blogs and bullets: New media in contentious politics*. Washington, DC: Institute of Peace.

Adrienne, R. (2001). The Zapatistas online shifting the discourse of globalization. *International Communication Gazette*, *63*(5), 399–413.

Aguilera, O. (2011). Acontecimiento y acción colectiva juvenil. El antes, durante y después de la rebelión de los estudiantes secundarios chilenos el 2006. *Revista Propuesta Educativa*, *35*, 11–26.

Alesina, A., & Spolaore, E. (2003). The size of nations. *The Journal of Economic History*.

Alvarez, 2017. Retrieved from:

Andrés, N. S. (2006). Del 11M al 14M. Jornadas de movil–ización social. In La comunicación en situaciones de crisis: del 11-M al 14-M: actas del XIX Congreso Internacional de Comunicación, Facultad de

Comunicación, Universidad de Navarra, pp. 271–284. Ediciones Universidad de Navarra. EUNSA, 2006.

Anduiza, E, Gallego, A, & Cantijoch, M. (2010). Online political participation in Spain: The impact of traditional and Internet resources. *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, 7(4), 356–368.

Angus, I. H. (2000). *Primal scenes of communication: Communication, consumerism, and social movements*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

ARA (2016, March). Artur Mas fa un pas al costat i Carles Puigdemont el substituirà com a president. Retrieved from: https://www.ara.cat/politica/Artur_Mas-Carles_Puigdemont-investidura-Parlament-independencia-Junts_pel_Si-CUP_0_1501050078.html

ARA. (2017). Julian Assange treu pit per "ajudar a protegir" la web de l'1-O, Retrieved from: https://www.ara.cat/politica/Julian-Assange-treu-ajudar-protegir_0_1869413187.html

Attia, A. M., Aziz, N., Friedman, B., & Elhusseiny, M. F. (2011). Commentary: The impact of social networking tools on political change in Egypt's "Revolution 2.0". *Electronic Commerce Research and Applications*, *10*(4), 369–374.

Bailard, C. S. (2009). Mobile phone diffusion and corruption in Africa. *Political Communication*, *26*(3), 333–353.

Balfour, S., & Quiroga, A. (2007). The reinvention of Spain: Nation and identity since democracy. *The Journal of Modern History*, 983–87.

Barbieri, N. (2012). Why does cultural policy change? Policy discourse and policy subsystem: A case study of the evolution of cultural policy in Catalonia. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 13–30.

Bayo, C.E. (2017). Retrieved from: http://www.publico.es/politica/referendum-1-observadores-internacionales-denuncian-operacion-estilo-militar-1.html

BBC. (2016). Catalan independence: Hundreds of thousands rally for break with Spain. Retrieved from: http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-37334382

Bell, L. A. (2010). *Storytelling for social justice: Connecting narrative and the arts in antiracist teaching*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Benford, R. D., & Snow, D. A. (2000). Framing processes and social movements: An overview and assessment. *Annual Review of Sociology*. 611–639.

Benkler, Y. (2006). *The wealth of networks*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Berelson, B. R. (1954). *Voting: A study of opinion formation in a presidential campaign*. University of Chicago Press.

Bimber, B., Flanagin, A. J., & Stohl, C. (2005). Reconceptualizing collective action in the contemporary media environment. *Communication Theory, 15*(4), 365.

Bisson, T. N. (1986). *Medieval crown of Aragon: A short history*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Blow. (2011). Retrieved from:

http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/01/opinion/hippies-and-hipsters-
exhale.html

Blumer, H. (1939). Collective behavior. In R. E. Park (ed.), *An outline of the
principles of sociology* (221–280). New York: Barnes and Noble.

Boix, C. (2012). *Cartes Ianquis: Un passeig sense servituds per Catalunya
I el món* (1ª ed.). Barcelona: Contra Vent.

Bonet, E., & Pérez, S. (2006). Identidades regionales y reivindicación de
autogobierno. El etnorregionalismo en el voto a partidos
nacionalistas de Bélgica, España y Reino Unido. *Revista Española
De Ciencia Política*, *15*.

Borge, R., Cardenal, A. S., & Malpica, C. (2012). El impacto de internet en
la participación política: Revisando el papel del interés político.
Arbor, *188*(756), 733–750.

Borgen, C. From Kosovo to Catalonia: Separatism and integration in
Europe. *Goettingen Journal of International Law*, *2*(3), 997–1033.

Breuilly, J. (1994). *Nationalism and the state* (2nd ed.). Chicago: University
of Chicago Press.

Brodock, K., et al. (2009). Digital activism survey report 2009. Retrieved
from:

http://www.digiactive.org/wpcontent/uploads/Research4_SurveyRe
port2009. pdf

Brunner, C., Nigro, R., & Raunig, G. (2013). Post-media activism, social ecology and eco-art. *Third Text, 27*(1), 10–16.

Buechler, S. M. (2000). Social movements in advanced capitalism. *The Political*.

Busquet, J. [coord.]; Medina, A.; Sort, J. (2006). La recerca en comunicació: Què hem de saber? Quins passos hem de seguir? Barcelona: UOC.

Cabezuelo, L., Sierra, J., González, Liberal, S. (2010). El desenvolupament de competències disciplinars i professionals en els nous estudis de comunicació. Quaderns digitals: Revista de Nuevas Tecnologías y Sociedad, ISSN-e 1575-9393, Nº. 65, 2010.

Calhoun, C. (1998) 'Community without propinquity revisited: communication technology and the transformation of the urban public sphere', *Sociological Inquiry*, 68: 373–97.

Calhoun, C. (ed.) (1992) *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, Cambridge, MA/ London: MIT Press.

Cardús, S. (2010). *El camí de la independència* (2nd ed.). Barcelona: La Campana Edicions.

Carranco, R. (2017). Retrieved from: https://elpais.com/ccaa/2017/09/20/catalunya/1505885372_273143.html

Carrington, M. (2011). *Egypt Facebook demographics*. Retrieved from: http://www. spotonpr.com/egypt-facebook-demographics/

Carvajal, A. (2017). Podemos llama a los partidos a una asamblea a favor de un referéndum pactado y para hacer frente al PP. Retrieved from: http://www.elmundo.es/espana/2017/09/18/59bfac71e5fdea60338b4600.html

Caspersen, N., & Qvrotrup, M., & Turp, D. & Welp, Y. (2017). The Catalan Independence Referendum: An assessment of the process of self-determination. Quebec: Irai

Castellanos, A., Paluzie, E., & Tirado, D. (2012). *Dimensió dels estats I comportament econòmic a la Unió Europea*.

Castells, M, Yazawa, S, & Kiselyova, E. (1995). Insurgents against the global order: A comparative analysis of the Zapatistas in Mexico, the American militia and Japan's AUM Shinrikyo. *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, 21–59.

Castells, M. (2004). La era de la información: Economía, sociedad y cultura. *3*. siglo XXI.

Castells, M. (2011). *Communication power*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Castells, M. (2013). *Networks of outrage and hope: Social movements in the internet age*. John Wiley & Sons.

Castells, M., Fernandez-Ardevol, M., Qiu, J. L., & Sey, A. (2007). *Mobile communication and society: A global perspective*. Boston, MA: MIT Press.

CCMA. (2017). La mobilització d'aquest Onze de Setembre es dirà la "Diada del Sí". Retrieved from: http://www.ccma.cat/324/la-mobilitzacio-daquest-11-de-setembre-es-dira-la-diada-del-si/noticia/2800819/

Clavero, B. (2015). Plebiscito mediante elecciones en Cataluña. Retrieved from:
https://www.eldiario.es/contrapoder/plebiscito_electoral_catalan_6_433666664.html

Cobo, C, & Pardo, H. (2007). Planeta Web 2.0. Inteligencia colectiva o medios fastfood. Grup de Recerca d'Interaccions Digitals. Universitat de Vic. Flacso México. Barcelona/Médico DF.

Colomer, J. M. (2006). *Grans imperis, petites nacions*. Barcelona: Proa.

Colomer, M. (2015). Com funcionarà la Via lliure de la Meridiana? Vídeo amb les instruccions d'Ara És l'Hora. Retrieved from: https://www.ara.cat/politica/Meridiana-Via_Lliure-Ara_es_l-hora-11-S-Onze_de_Setembre-Diada-independencia-27-S-Republica_0_1423657835.html

Colomer, M. (2015). Els vots de Catalunya Sí que es Pot, amb el 'sí' o amb el 'no'?. Retrieved from: Retrieved from: https://www.ara.cat/premium/Catalunya_Si_que_es_Pot-independencia-27S-eleccions_plebiscitaries-Lluis_Rabell_0_1439256175.html

COPE. (2017). Puigdemont desafía al juez y reabre otra web del referendum. Retrieved from:

http://www.cope.es/noticias/actualidad/puigdemont-desafia-juez-reabre-otra-web-del-referendum_157768

Costa, J. (2003): 'On Theories of Secession: Minorities, Majorities and the Multinational State', a   Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy (Vol. 6, núm 2; pp. 63-90).

Costa, O. (2002). *L'imaginari imperial: El noucentisme català I la política internacional*. Barcelona: Alpha.

Costanza-Chock, S. (2011) *Se ve, se siente: Transmedia mobilization in the Los Angeles immigrant rights movement* (Doctoral Dissertation). University of Southern California, Los Angeles.

Costanza-Chock, S. (2012). Mic check! Media cultures and the Occupy Movement. *Social Movement Studies*, *11*(3–4), 375–385.

Crameri, K. (2011). 'We need another hero': The construction of Josep Moragues as a symbol of independence for Catalonia. National Identities, 13(1), pp. 51-65.

Crameri, K. (2016) Do Catalans have 'the right to decide'?: secession, legitimacy and democracy in twenty-first century Europe. Global Discourse: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Current Affairs and Applied Contemporary Thought, 6(3), pp. 423-439.

Culla, J. (2009). *La Dreta Espanyola a Catalunya, 1975–2008*. Barcelona: La Campana Edicions.

Dalmau. (2017). Sindicatos y entidades convocan una huelga general en Catalunya para el martes. Retrieved from:

https://www.elperiodico.com/es/politica/20171001/huelga-paro-general-cataluna-6325237

Davis, J. E. (2002). *Stories of change: Narrative and social movements*.

De Kerckhove, D., & Rowland, W. (1999). *Inteligencias en conexión: Hacia una sociedad de la web*. Barcelona: Gedisa.

De Winter, L. (2003). *Regionalist parties in western Europe*. London: Routledge.

Deibert, R.J. (2009). The geopolitics of internet control, in Chadwick, A. and Howard, P.N. (eds) Routledge Handbook of Internet Politics. New York: Routledge. 323-336.

DeLuca, K. M., Lawson, S., & Sun, Y. (2012). Occupy Wall Street on the public screens of social media: The many framings of the birth of a protest movement. *Communication, Culture & Critique*, *5*(4), 483–509.

Deprez, E. E., & Dodge, C. (2011, November 16). Occupy protesters inject income inequality into political debate. *Business Week*. Retrieved from: http://www.businessweek.com/news/2011-11-10/occupy-protesters-inject-income- inequality-into-political-debate.html

Di Gennaro, Corinna, & Dutton, W. (2006). The Internet and the public: Online and offline political participation in the United Kingdom. *Parliamentary Affairs*, *59*(2), 299–313.

Diani, M. (2000). Social movement networks virtual and real. *Information, Communication & Society*, *3*(3), 386–401.

Diez, A. (2017). El Gobierno aplica el artículo 155 para destituir a Puigdemont y sus consejeros. Retrieved from: https://politica.elpais.com/politica/2017/10/21/actualidad/150857246 6_221699.html

Dowling, A. (2009). Autonomistes, Catalanistes and independentistes: Politics in contemporary Catalonia. *International Journal of Iberian Studies*, *22*(3), 185–200.

Dutton, W. H, & Blank, G. (2011). *Next generation users: The internet in Britain*.

Dutton, W.H., Blank, G. [2011] Next Generation Users: The Internet in Britain. Oxford Internet Survey 2011. Oxford Internet Institute, University of Oxford.

DW. (2016). Catalans hold mass demo for independence from Spain. Retrieved from: http://www.dw.com/en/catalans-hold-mass-demo-for-independence-from-spain/a-19543727

Earl, J., & Kimport, K. (2011). Digitally enabled social change: Activism in the internet age. New York: MIT Press

Edwards, S. (2016). Retrieved from: http://www.reuters.com/article/us-spain-catalonia-idUSKCN11H0L2?il=0

EFE. (2015). Una trentena de personalitats internacionals assistiran a la Diada de la mà d'Òmnium. Retrieved from: https://www.ara.cat/politica/Omnium-convida-personalitats-internacionals-Meridiana-Via_Lliure-Diada-Irvine_Welsh-Susan_George-Kai_Olaf_Lang-Michael_Keating-Michel_Seymour-

Bard_Fassbender-David_Farell-
Rogers_Brubaker_0_1423657786.html

EFE. (2016). Coscubiela (CSQEP) llama a una "alternativa transversal" en
Cataluña. Retrieved from:
https://www.eldiario.es/politica/Coscubiela-CSQEP-alternativa-
transversal-Cataluna_0_470003327.html

Ekman, J, & Amnå, E. (2012). Political participation and civic engagement:
Towards a new typology. *Human Affairs*, *22*(3), 283–300.

El Món. (2017). WikiLeaks allotja una còpia del web en què es pot consultar
on anar a votar. Retrieved from: http://elmon.cat/politica/wikileaks-
allotja-copia-del-web-que-pot-consultar-votar

El País. (2017). Cataluña presenta la ley de ruptura en el Parlament, en
directo. Retrieved from:
https://elpais.com/ccaa/2017/08/28/catalunya/1503911879_087944.
html

El País. (2017). El 'caso Villarejo' a través de las informaciones de
Retrieved from:
https://politica.elpais.com/politica/2017/11/03/actualidad/150972324
5_829623.html

El País. (2017). Puigdemont explica en un tuit cómo acceder a la web
cerrada del referéndum. Retrieved from:
https://elpais.com/ccaa/2017/09/17/catalunya/1505641693_141932.
html

El Parlament aprueba un referéndum "vinculante" de independencia para septiembre de 2017, 2016. Retrieved from: http://www.rtve.es/noticias/20161006/parlament-catalan-aprueba-referendum-vinculante-independencia-para-septiembre-2017/1421120.shtml

El Periodico. (2015). Mas convoca elecciones para el 27 de septiembre. Retrieved from: https://www.elperiodico.com/es/politica/20150114/comparecencia-mas-junqueras-3852464

El-Nawawy, M. & Khamis, S. (2009). *Islam dot com: Contemporary Islamic discourses in cyberspace*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ellison, N. B. (2007). Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *13*(1), 210–230.

Ellison, N. B., Steinfield, C., & Lampe, C. (2011). Connection strategies: Social capital implications of Facebook-enabled communication practices. *New Media & Society*, 1461444810385389.

Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, *43*(4), 51–58.

Esfandiari, G. (2010, June 7). The Twitter devolution. *Foreign Policy*. Retrieved from: http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/06/07/the_twitter_revolution_that_wasnt

España: La policía utilizó la fuerza de manera excesiva en Cataluña, 2017. Retrieved from: https://www.hrw.org/es/news/2017/10/12/espana-la-policia-utilizo-la-fuerza-de-manera-excesiva-en-cataluna

Evans, H. (2013) 'Law and Legitimacy: The Denial of the Catalan Voice'. Brussels: Centre Maurice Coppieters.

Fahmy, N. A. (2010). *Revealing the "agenda-cutting" through Egyptian blogs: An empirical study*. 11th International Symposium on Online Journalism University of Texas, Austin. Retrieved from: http://online.journalism.utexas.edu/2010/papers/Fahmy10.pdf

Faraone, C. (2011). *Inside the Occupy Boston media struggle*. Boston Phoenix. Retrieved from: http://thephoenix.com/boston/news/128992-inside-the-occupy-boston-media-struggle/

Fernández-Savater, A. (2012). El nacimiento de un nuevo poder social. *Hispanic Review*, *80*(4), 667–681.

Ferrer, F. (2000). *Catalanofòbia: El Pensament Anticatalà a Través De La Història* (1st ed.). Barcelona: Edicions 62.

Ferret. (2016). La participació de la Diada es queda a la ratlla del milió. Retrieved from: http://elmon.cat/politica/la-participacio-de-la-diada-es-queda-a-la-ratlla-del-milio

Fondevila, J.F.; del Olmo, J.L. (2013). El trabajo fin de grado en las ciencias sociales y jurídicas: guía metodológica. Madrid: Ediciones Internacionales Universitarias.

Galeano, M. (2007). Estrategias de investigación Social Cualitativa. El giro de la mirada. Medellín, Colombia: La Carreta editorial

Gamson, W. A., & Wolfsfeld, G. (1993). Movements and media as interacting systems. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 114–125.

García Ortega, C. (2010). Tipología de métodos de investigación aplicados a un proyecto. En C. Marta Lazo (Coord.), *El EEES y el Proyecto Final en los Grados de Comunicación* (pp. 72-90). Madrid: Fragua.

García Sanz, M.P. y García Meseguer, M. (2012). Los métodos de investigación. En M.P. García Sanz y P. Martínez Clares (coords.). *Guía Práctica para la realización de trabajos fin de Grado y trabajos fin de Máster* (pp. 99-126). Murcia: Universidad de Murcia.

Garrison, W. A. (1992). The social psychology of collective action. *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*, 53–76.

Gea, A. (2016). Catalan separatists rally to push for break from Spain. Retrieved from: http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/09/catalan-separatists-rally-push-break-spain-160911155855196.html

Gelder, S. R. (2011). *This changes everything Occupy Wall Street and the 99% Movement*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

George, C. (2006). *Contentious journalism and the Internet: Towards democratic discourse in Malaysia and Singapore* (Revised edition). Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Giannino, D. (2017). The Catalan crisis is about politics, not constitutional law – and it requires a political solution. LSE Blogs. Retreived from: blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2017/10/01/the-catalan-crisis-is-about-politics-not-constitutional-law-and-it-requires-a-political-solution/

Giddens, A. (1994). *Beyond left and right: The future of radical politics*. Stanford University Press.

Giglio, M. (2011, February 21). The Facebook freedom fighter. *Newsweek*.

Gisbert, J. (2015). CDC y Unió dan por rota su alianza después de 37 años. Retrieved from:

http://www.lavanguardia.com/politica/20150617/54432871542/cdc-unio-rota-alianza-anos.html

Gitlin, T. (1980). *The whole world is watching: Mass media in the making & unmaking of the new left.* University of California Press.

Gladwell, M. (2010, October 4). Small change: Why the revolution will not be Tweeted. The New Yorker. Retrieved from: http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2010/10/04/101004fa_fact_gladwell

Glaser, B. & A. Strauss (1967). The discovery of grounded theory: strategies for qualitative research. New York: Aldine Publishing Company.

Gómez, E., & Galindo, A. (2005). Los estudios de Comunicación Mediada por Computadora: Una revisión y algunos apuntes. *Razón y Palabra*, *44*.

González. (2016). El 'no' de la CUP condena a Artur Mas a irse o convocar nuevas elecciones. Retrieved from: http://www.elmundo.es/cataluna/2016/01/03/568822fbca4741533e8 b45d5.html

Guibernau, M. (1999). *Nations without states: Political communities in a global age*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.

Guibernau, M. & Rex, J. (2010). The Ethnicity Reader: Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Migration. Polity Press: Cambridge.

Guinjoan, M. (2011). *Sense espanya: Balanç econòmic de la independència* (1.st ed.). Barcelona: Pòrtic.

Guinjoan, M. (2013). *Com Àustria o Dinamarca: La Catalunya possible* (1st ed.). Barcelona: Pòrtic.

Gusfield, J. (1994). La reflexividad de los movimientos sociales: Revisión de las teorías sobre la sociedad de masas y el comportamiento colectivo. In Los nuevos movimientos sociales: De la ideología a la identidad. *Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (CIS),* 93–118.

Hara, N. (2008). Internet use for political mobilization: Voices of participants. *First Monday*, *13*(7).

Hargittai, E. (2008) The digital reproduction of inequality. In D. Grusky (Ed.), *Social stratification* (pp. 936–944). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Hargittai, E., Gallo, J., & Kane, M. (2008). Cross-ideological discussions among conservative and liberal bloggers. *Public Choice*, *134*(1), 67–86.

Harlow, S, & Harp, D. (2012). Collective action on the web: A cross-cultural study of social networking sites and online and offline activism in the United States and Latin America. *Information, Communication & Society*, *15*(2), 196–216.

Harlow, S. (2013). It was a Facebook revolution: Exploring the meme-like spread of narratives during the Egyptian protest. *Revista de comunicación*, *12*, 59–82.

Hernández Huéscar, J. M., García Sanz, M. P., Mancheño Jiménez, M. A., y Sánchez Navarro, A. (2012). Trabajos empíricos. En M. P. García Sanz y P. Martínez Clares (Coords.), *Guía Práctica Para La Realización De Trabajos Fin De Grado Y Trabajos Fin De Máster* (pp. 247-284). Murcia: Universidad de Murcia.

Hernández Sampieri, R., Fernández Collado, C. y Baptista Lucio, M. P. (2010). *Metodología de la investigación*. México D. F.: McGraw-Hill/Interamericana.

Hessel, S. (2010). *Indignez-vous!* Montpellier: Indigène.

Hindman, M. (2007, June 11). Political traffic. [web log post]. Retrieved from: http://www.matthewhindman.com/index.php/2007061127/Web-Maps/Political-Traffic.html

Hogan, S. B. (1998). To net or not to net: Singapore's regulation of the Internet. *Federal Communications Law Journal*, *51*, 429.

Howard, P. N. (2011). *The digital origins of dictatorship and democracy: Information technology and political Islam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Howard, P. N., Duffy, A., Freelon, D., Hussain, M., Mari, W., & Mazaid, M. (2011). *Opening closed regimes: What was the role of social media during the Arab Spring?* Manuscript in preparation.

http://cadenaser.com/ser/2017/02/13/tribunales/1487012765_676715.html

Hussain, M. M., & Howard, P. N. (2013). What best explains successful protest cascades? ICTs and the fuzzy causes of the Arab Spring. *International Studies Review*, *15*(1), 48–66.

Idle N., & Nunns, A. (Eds.) (2011). *Tweets from Tahrir: Egypt's revolution as it unfolded, in the words of the people who made it.* New York: OR Books.

Indépendance de la Catalogne: Faire entendre la raison entre Madrid et Barcelone, 2017. Retrieved from: http://www.lemonde.fr/europe/article/2017/09/11/en-catalogne-les-mairies-sous-pression-pour-le-referendum-d-autodetermination_5183715_3214.html

Inglehart, R. (1990). *Culture shift in advanced industrial society*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Innis, Harold. (1950) *Empire and Communications*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Iskander, E. (2011). Connecting the national and the virtual: Can Facebook activism remain relevant after Egypt's January 25 uprising? *International Journal of Communication*, *5*. 13–15.

Johansson, D. (2004). Economics without entrepreneurship or institutions: A vocabulary analysis of graduate textbooks. *Econ Journal Watch*, *1*(3), 515–38.

Jones, K. (2011). *How it works at Occupy Wall Street 9/25/11*. Retrieved from: http://youtu.be/xIK7uxBSAS0

Juris, J. S. (2005). The new digital media and activist networking within anti–corporate globalization movements. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *597*(1), 189–208.

Kalathil, S, & Boas, T. C. (2010). *Open networks, closed regimes: The impact of the Internet on authoritarian rule*. Carnegie Endowment.

Katz, E., & Lazarsfeld, P. F. (1970). *Personal influence: The part played by people in the flow of mass communications*. Transaction Publishers.

Kavanaugh, A. L., & Patterson, S. J. (2001). The impact of community computer networks on social capital and community involvement. *American Behavioral Scientist*, *45*(3), 496–509.

Keane, J. (2009). *The life and death of democracy*. New York: W.W. Norton.

Keating, M. The minority nations of Spain and European integration: A new framework for autonomy? *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*, 29–42.

Kedourie, E. (1993). *Nationalism* (4th ed.). Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Kelly, J., Faris, R., & Palfrey, J. (2009). *Mapping the Arabic blogosphere: Politics, culture, and dissent*. Internet & Democracy Project, Berkman Center for Internet & Society.

Khamis, S. (2007). The role of new Arab satellite channels in fostering intercultural dialogue: Can Al-Jazeera English bridge the gap? In P. Seib (Ed.), *New Media and the new Middle East* (pp. 39–52). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Khamis, S. (2008). Modern Egyptian media: Transformations, paradoxes, debates and comparative perspectives. *Journal of Arab and Muslim Media Research*, *1*(3), 259–277.

Khamis, S., & Vaughn, K. (2011). Cyberactivism in the Egyptian revolution: How civic engagement and citizen journalism tilted the balance. *Arab Media and Society*, *13*(3).

Khamis, S., & Vaughn, K. (2012). We are all Khaled Said: The potentials and limitations of cyberactivism in triggering public mobilization and promoting political change. *Journal of Arab & Muslim Media Research*, *4*(2–3), 2–3.

Kleinfeld, N. R., & Buckley, C. (2011, September 30). Wall Street Occupiers, protesting till whenever. The New York Times, p. A1.

Kleinfield, & Buckley. (2011). Retrieved from: http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/01/nyregion/wall-street-occupiers-protesting-till-whenever.html

Knoll, A. (1995). Any which way but loose: Nations regulate the Internet. *Tulane Journal of International and Comparative Law*, *4,* 275.

La Vanguardia. (2016). El comisario Villarejo revela ante el juez la existencia de una 'Operación Catalunya'. Retrieved from: http://www.lavanguardia.com/politica/20160706/403005854115/comisario-villarejo-juez-operacion-catalunya.html

La Vanguardia. (2017). Yoko Ono, Stoichkov y Viggo Mortensen, a favor del referéndum catalán. Retrieved from: http://www.lavanguardia.com/politica/20170724/4361143188/yoko-ono-stoichov-viggo-mortensen-referendum-catalan.html

Lazarsfeld, P. F., Berelson, B., & Gaudet, H. (1968). The People's Choice: How the Voter Makes Up His Mind in a Presidential Campaign. (Second edition.) Pp. xxxiii, 178. New York: Columbia University Press, 1948

Le Bon, G. (2009). *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*. Auckland: Floating Press.

Lim, M. (2012). Clicks, cabs, and coffee houses: Social media and oppositional movements in Egypt, 2004–2011. *Journal of Communication*, *62*(2), 231–248.

Liñán. (2017). La Fiscalía pide la orden internacional de detención para Puigdemont y los consellers en Bruselas. Retrieved from: https://www.elnacional.cat/es/politica/fiscalia-ordre-detencion-internacional-puigdemont_208365_102.html

Liner, G. H. (2002). Core journals in economics. *Economic Inquiry*, 138–45.

Llistar, D. (2001). A la izquierda de Internet: Las redes ciudadanas y las nuevas formas de organización civil. *Comunicar*, *16*, 21.

Lluch, J. (2010), 'How nationalism evolves: explaining the establishment of new varieties of nationalism within the national movements of Quebec and Catalonia', Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity 38(3): 337–359.

Lotan, G., Graeff, E., Ananny, M., Gaffney, D., Pearce, I., & Boyd, D. (2011). The revolutions were tweeted: Information flows during the 2011 Tunisian & Egyptian revolutions. *International Journal of Communication*, *5*, 1375–1405.

Lull, J. (2008). Los placeres activos de expresar y comunicar. *Comunicar*, *30*, 24.

Lynch, M. (2006). *Voices of the new Arab public: Iraq, Al-Jazeera, and Middle East politics today*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Madison, L. (2011). Occupy Wall Street" reflects "broad-based frustration. Retrieved from: www.cbsnews.com/news/obama-occupy-wall-street-reflects-broad-based-frustration/

Margolis, M., Resnick D., & Chin-chang, T. (1997). Campaigning on the internet parties and candidates on the World Wide Web in the 1996 primary season. *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, *2*(1), 59–78.

Maronitis, K. (2013). Like, comment, share: Belonging and exclusion in the protest community. *IC RevistaCientífica de Información y Comunicación, 10*.

Marqués, J. (2016). Política y Propaganda. Medios de Comunicación y Opinión Pública. Barcelona: UOC/Dircom.

Martin, P. (1994). Générations politiques, rationalité économique et appui à la souveraineté au Québec. *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 345.

Mason, P. (2012). *Why it's kicking off everywhere: The new global revolutions*. Verso Books.

Masoud, T. (2011). The road to (and from) Liberation Square. *Journal of Democracy*, *22*(3), 20–34.

Maspoch, R., González, O., Crisóstomo, R., Pich, J. (2008). La Integració de les TIC en la docència: teoria i pràctica. Girona: Universitat de Girona. Institut de Ciències de l'Educació Josep Pallach.

McChesney, R. (1999). *Rich media, poor democracy*. New York, NY: The New Press.

McLuhan, M. (1964). *Understanding media: The extensions of man*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Meraz, S, & Papacharissi, Z. (2013). Networked gatekeeping and networked framing on# Egypt. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, *1940161212474472*.

Merino Sanz, M. J. (Coord.) (2010). Introducción a la investigación de Mercados, Madrid: ESIC Editorial.

Micó, J.L., & Carbonell, J.-M. (2017). The Catalan Political Process for Independence. American Behavioral Scientist.

Micó, J.L.; Casero-Ripollés, A. (2014). Political activism online: organization and media relations in the case of 15M in Spain. Information Communication & Society, vol. 17, núm. 7, pp. 858-871.

Milner, H. V. (2006). The digital divide the role of political institutions in technology diffusion. *Comparative Political Studies*, *39*(2), 176–199.

Minder. (2016). With Spain in Political Deadlock, Catalans Renew Calls for Independence. Retrieved from: http://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/12/world/europe/with-spain-in-political-deadl-catalans-renew-calls-for-independence.html?ref=europe

Montañés, C. (2017). Huelga general en Catalunya: últimas noticias en directo. Retrieved from: https://www.elperiodico.com/es/politica/20171003/huelga-general-3-octubre-2017-cataluna-directo-6326497

Morel. (2017). Retrieved from: https://www.ft.com/content/f3cb70de-9608-11e7-a652-cde3f882dd7b

Morozov, E. (2011). *The Net delusion: The dark side of Internet freedom*. New York, NY: Public Affairs.

Muñoz, J., & Tormos, R. (2012). Identitat o càlculs instrumentals? Anàlisi dels factors explicatius del suport a La independència. *Papers De Treball*.

Muñoz, J., Anduiza, E., & Rico, G. (2014). Empowering cuts? Austerity policies and political involvement in Spain. In S. Kumlin & I.

Stadelmann-Steffen (Eds.), *Feedback? How welfare states shape the democratic public*. Cheteltham: Edward Elgar.

Nació Digital. (2016). La Diada més descentralitzada, «a punt». Retrieved from:

https://www.naciodigital.cat/noticia/115535/diada/descentralitzada/punt

Nairn, T. (1977). *The break-up of Britain: Crisis and neo-nationalism*. London: NLB.

Nisbet, E. C., & Myers, T. A. (2010). Challenging the state: Transnational TV and political identity in the Middle East. *Political Communication*, *27*(4), 347–366.

Nisbet, E. C., Stoycheff, E., & Pearce, K. E. (2012). Internet use and democratic demands: A multinational, multilevel model of internet use and citizen attitudes about democracy. *Journal of Communication*, *62*(2), 249–265.

Norris, P. (2001). *Digital divide: Civic engagement, information poverty, and the Internet worldwide*. Cambridge University Press.

Norris, P. (2002) La participación ciudadana: México desde una perspectiva comparativa Cambridge: University of Harvard.

OGRS. (2012). In S., Costanza-Chock. Mic check! Media cultures and the Occupy Movement. *Social Movement Studies*, *11*(3–4), 375–385.

Olesen, T. (2005). Transnational publics: New spaces of social movement activism and the problem of global long-sightedness. *Current Sociology*, *53*(3), 419–440.

Olivo. (2016). Retrieved from: http://www.lastampa.it/2016/09/11/esteri/centinaia-di-migliaia-in-piazza-contro-madrid-catalogna-indipendente-la-prossima-estate-9lG80cM7UPKTDjYg7z5ztI/pagina.html

Oms. (2017). Retrieved from: http://www.elmundo.es/cataluna/2017/09/25/59c97a8822601dd2398b46a6.html

Orihuela, J. L., & Cambronero, A. (2006). *La revolución de los blogs: Cuando las bitácoras se convirtieron en el medio de comunicación de la gente*. Madrid: La esfera de los libros.

Orriols, N., & Pruna, G. (2015). El Parlament aprova la declaració rupturista i inicia el camí cap a la desconnexió. Retrieved from: https://www.ara.cat/politica/Parlament-aprova-declaracio-ruptura_0_1464453621.html

Ortega, L. M. (2017). La oposición concluye que existió la Operación Catalunya. Retrieved from: http://www.lavanguardia.com/politica/20170720/424260745684/comision-investigacion-congreso-jorge-fernandez-diaz-conclusiones-operacion-catalunya.html

Ostroy. (2012). Retrieved from: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/andy-ostroy/the-failure-of-occupy-wal_b_1558787.html

Park, N., Kerk, F. K., & Valenzuela, S. (2009). Being immersed in social networking environment: Facebook groups, uses and gratifications, and social outcomes. *Cyber Psychology & Behavior*, *12*(6). 729–733.

Parlament de Catalunya. (2017). Retrieved from: https://www.parlament.cat/document/activitat/153122.pdf

Pasek, J., Eian M., & Romer, D. (2009). Realizing the social Internet? Online social networking meets offline civic engagement. *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, *6*(3–4), 197–215.

Paterson, L., & McCrone, D. (2002). The conundrum of Scottish independence. *Scottish Affairs*, *40*, 54–75.

Pauné, M. (2015). Los principales actos de la Diada de Catalunya en Barcelona. Retrieved from: http://www.lavanguardia.com/local/barcelona/20150910/544363810 56/actos-diada-catalunya-barcelona.html

Pedersen, K., & Saglie, J. (2005). New technology in ageing parties internet use in Danish and Norwegian parties. *Party Politics*, *11*(3), 359–377.

Pellicer, Ll. (2017). Retrieved from: https://elpais.com/ccaa/2017/09/20/catalunya/1505896269_248253. html

Pepitone, J. (2013). Retrieved from: http://money.cnn.com/2013/09/17/news/economy/occupy-wall-street-fizzled/

Pes, À. (2004). Interés nacional I límits del nacionalisme. *FRC: Revista De Debat Públic*, *8*, 4.

Pi, J. (2015). El independentismo vuelve a mostrar su fuerza con la Via Lliure en plena campaña. Retrieved from: http://www.lavanguardia.com/politica/20150911/54436444905/via-lliure-participacion.html

Piatrch, S., & Navarro, C. (2017). La extrema derecha revienta la manifestación del 9 d'Octubre en València. Retrieved from: https://www.eldiario.es/cv/Cargas-policiales-agresiones-Valencia-manifestantes_0_695381257.html

Polat, R. K. (2005). The Internet and political participation exploring the explanatory links. *European Journal of Communication 20*(4), 435–459.

Politico (2017). What Spain has to lose from Catalan independence. Retrieved from: http://www.politico.eu/article/catalonia-independence-referendum-what-spain-has-to-lose/

Polletta, F. (1998). It was like a fever... Narrative and identity in social protest. *Social Problems*, 137–159.

Pons-I-Novell, J., & Tremosa-I-Balcells, R. (2005). Macroeconomic effects of Catalan fiscal deficit with the Spanish state (2002–2010). *Applied Economics*, 1455–463.

Pont, A. (2012). *Delenda est Hispania*. Barcelona: Viena.

Pruna, & Moldes. (2017). Retrieved from:

https://www.ara.cat/politica/anunci-data-pregunta-

referendum_0_1811218961.html

Publico (2016). Centenas de milhares de manifestantes pedem

independência nas ruas da Catalunha. Retrieved from:

https://www.publico.pt/mundo/noticia/centenas-de-milhares-de-

manifestantes-pedem-independencia-nas-ruas-da-catalunha-

1743829

Puente, A., Solé, O. (2018). Artur Mas dimite como presidente del PDeCAT:

"Doy otro paso al lado". Retrieved from:

https://www.eldiario.es/catalunya/politica/anunciara-martes-

renuncia-presidencia-PDeCAT_0_727577790.html

RAC1 (2017). La Guàrdia Urbana xifra en un milió de persones els

assistents a la manifestació. Retrieved from:

https://www.rac1.cat/info-rac1/20170911/431210039044/guardia-

urbana-xifres-manifestants.html

Radsch, C. (2008). Core to commonplace: Evolution of Egypt's

blogosphere. *Arab Media & Society*, *6*. Retrieved from:

http://www.arabmediasociety.com/?article=692.

Ramadan, T. (2012). *The Arab awakening: Islam and the new Middle East*.

Penguin UK.

Requejo, F. (2010). Revealing the dark side of traditional democracies in

plurinational societies: The case of Catalonia and the Spanish

Estado de las autonomías. *Nations and Nationalism*, 148–68.

Rheingold, H. (1995). *The virtual community*. London: Minerva.

Rincón. (2017). El juez retira la orden de detención contra Puigdemont y los 'exconsellers'. Retrieved from: https://politica.elpais.com/politica/2017/12/05/actualidad/151246788 9_946291.html

Rodríguez, D.; Valldeorola, J. (2007). Métodos y técnicas de investigación en línea. Barcelona: Universitat Oberta de Catalunya.

Rodríguez, D.; Valldeorola, J. (2009). Metodología de la investigación. Barcelona: Universitat Oberta de Catalunya.

Rom, J., & Sabaté, J. (2011). Llenguatge publicitari. Estratègies i creativitat publicitàries. Barcelona: Editorial UOC

Rovira-Sancho, G. (2013). Activismo mediático y criminalización de la protesta: Medios y movimientos sociales en México. *Convergencia*, *20*(61), 35–60.

RTVE. (2016). Puigdemont se compromete a "dejarse la piel" por la independencia: "No es hora de cobardes". Retrieved from: http://www.rtve.es/noticias/20160110/puigdemont-se-compromete-su-discurso-investidura-aplicar-declaracion-independentista/1282841.shtml

Ruiz, D., & Sallés, Q. (2017). Retrieved from: http://www.lavanguardia.com/politica/20170921/431444100135/ma nifestacion-arc-de-triomf-referendum-1-o.html

Saez, A. (2005). *El futur del nacionalisme: Cap a on va la política en el postpujolisme* (1st ed.). Barcelona: Columna.

Sala-I-Martín, X. (2014). *És L'hora Dels Adéus?* (1ª ed.). Barcelona: Rosa Dels Vents.

Schechter, D. (2012). *Occupy: Dissecting Occupy Wall Street*. New York: Cosimo Books.

Schrever. (2017). Retrieved from:

https://www.nytimes.com/es/2017/11/05/carles-puigdemont-se-entrega-a-la-policia-en-bruselas/

Seib, P. (2007). New media and prospects for democratization. In P. Seib (Ed.), *New Mediaand the New Middle East* (pp. 1–18). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Seib, P. M. (2008). *The Al Jazeera effect: How the new global media are reshaping world politics*. Washington, DC: Potomac Books.

Serra, & Ferrer. (2017). Presó sense fiança per a Sànchez i Cuixart. Retrieved from: https://www.ara.cat/politica/Trapero-Sanchez-Cuixart-lAudiencia-Nacional_0_1888611201.html

Serrano Casado, E. (2012). New technologies, social networks and media: Spanish revolution. *Revista Romana de Jurnalism si Comunicare-RRJC, 7.*

Serrano-Balaguer, I. (2010). La complexitat dels espais sociopolítics de Catalunya: Els tres cercles del sobiranisme. *Eines*, *11,* 37–47.

Shirky, C. (2011, January/February). The political power of social media: Technology, the public sphere, and political change. *Foreign Affairs*.

Hair, J. F., Busch, R. P. y Ortinau, D. J. (2009). *Investigación de mercados. En un ambiente de información digital*. México D. F.: McGraw-Hill/Interamericana.

Sierra Sánchez, J. & Liberal Ormaechea, S. (2010). Com afrontar un Projecte fi de grau en Comunicació. Els Papers de l'Abat, 10, 1-36.

Smith, A. D. (1998). *Nationalism and modernism a critical survey of recent theories of nations and nationalism*. London: Routledge.

Smith, A. W., Schlozman, K. L., Verba, S. & Brady, H. (2009). *The Internet and civic engagement*. Washington, DC: Pew Internet & American Life Project.

Snol, L. (2009, July 11). Twitter suggested for Nobel Peace Prize. *PCWorld*. Retrieved from:

http://www.pcworld.com/article/168273/twitter_suggested_for_nobel_peace_prize.html

Sorkin, A. R. (2011, October 4). On Wall Street, a protest matures. *The New York Times*.

Stepanova, E. (2011). The role of information communication technologies in the "Arab Spring". *PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo*, *159*, 1–6.

Sturgeon. (2017). Retrieved from: https://twitter.com/NicolaSturgeon/status/926121808658616320

Sullivan, A. (2009, June 13). The revolution will be Twittered. *The Atlantic.*
Retrieved from: http://www.theatlantic.com/daily-dish/archive/200

Taillac. (2017). Retrieved from:
http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2017/09/11/01003-
20170911ARTFIG00305--trois-semaines-du-referendum-catalan-la-
diada-pour-le-oui.php

Talbot, M. (2007). *Media discourse: Representation and interaction*.
Edinburgh University Press.

Taube. (2013). Retrieved from:
http://www.businessinsider.com/reconsidering-the-failure-of-occupy-
wall-street-2013-9

TDG (2016). Grosse manif pour une Catalogne indépendante. Retrieved
from: http://www.tdg.ch/monde/grosse-manif-catalogne-
independante/story/14397069

Teorell, J. (2006). *Political participation and three theories of democracy: A
research inventory and agenda. European Journal of Political
Research*, *45*(5), 787–810.

The Editors of TIME (2011). TIME What is Occupy?: Inside the Global
Movement. Time Home Entertainment.

Tilly, C, Wood, L. J., & Esteve, F. (2010). *Los movimientos sociales, 1768–
2008: Desde sus orígenes a Facebook*. Barcelona: Crítica.

Torres, R., & Costa, P. Uso e impacto de las redes sociales de Internet sobre las movilizaciones juveniles en Chile:¿ hacia nuevas formas de organización colectiva? *Medios, Edades Y Cultura, 117*.

Traillac. (2016). Retrieved from: http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2016/09/11/01003-20160911ARTFIG00148-en-catalogne-les-secessionnistes-montrent-leur-force.php

Turkle, S., & Trafí, L. (1997). *La vida en la pantalla: La construcción de la identidad en la era de Internet*. Barcelona: Paidós.

Ucelay Da Cal, E. (2008). Més que un club? Exploració d'un relat persistent. *Metropolis*, 71.

Usacheva, O. A. (2014). Civilian mobilization networks. *Sociological Research*, *53*(2), 3–17.

V.A. (2012). *Occupying Wall Street: The inside story of an action that changed America*. Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books.

Valderrama, L.B. (2013): Jóvenes, Ciudadanía y Tecnologías de Información y Comunicación. El movimiento estudiantil chileno. Revista Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales, Niñez y Juventud, 11 (1), 123 -135.

Vicenc. (2015). Els cinc arguments pels quals la CUP no vol investir Artur Mas. Retrieved from: https://www.ara.cat/politica/arguments-CUP-investir-Artur-Mas_0_1462053934.html

Vicens, & Toro. (2016). Retrieved from: La Diada, a punt: la guía. https://www.ara.cat/diada2016/Diada-punt_0_1648035328.html

Vicens, Orriols, & Moldes. (2016). Retrieved from: https://www.ara.cat/politica/cimera-pel-referendum-parlament_0_1710429083.html

Vilaweb. (2017). Setze personalitats internacionals s'adhereixen al manifest 'Let Catalans vote'. Retrieved from: https://www.vilaweb.cat/noticies/setze-personalitats-internacionals-sadhereixen-al-manifest-let-catalans-vote/

Villarejo, G. (2017). Mariano Rajoy convoca elecciones en Cataluña el 21 de diciembre. Retrieved from: https://www.economiadigital.es/politica-y-sociedad/mariano-rajoy-cesa-al-govern-trapero-y-el-diplocat_516663_102.html

Weiss, M. L. (2014). New media, new activism: Trends and trajectories in Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia. *International Development Planning Review*, *36*(1), 91–109.

Wellman, B., QuanHaase, A., Witte, J, & Hampton, K. (2001). Does the Internet increase, decrease, or supplement social capital? Social networks, participation, and community commitment. *American Behavioral Scientist 45*(3), 436–455.

Wellman, B., Salaff, J., Dimitrova, D., Garton, L., Gulia, M., & Haythornthwaite, C. (1996). Computer networks as social networks: Collaborative work, telework, and virtual community. *Annual Review of Sociology* 213–238.

White. (2012). Retrieved from:

http://business.time.com/2012/09/17/occupy-wall-street-one-year-later-did-it-make-a-difference/

Wievorka, M. (2012). Financial crisis or societal mutation? *Aftermath: The Cultures of the Economic Crisis*.

Wojcieszak, M. (2009). Carrying online participation offline: Mobilization by radical online groups and politically dissimilar offline ties. *Journal of Communication*, *59*(3), 564–586.

Wright, R. (2011) The Pink Hijab , The Wilson Quarterly, Vol. 35, No. 3, pp. 47-51

Xenos, M., & Moy, P. (2007). Direct and differential effects of the Internet on political and civic engagement. *Journal of Communication*, *57*(4), 704–718.

Yazan, B. (2015). Three Approaches to Case Study Methods in Education: Yin, Merriam, and Stake. The Qualitative Report, 20(2), 134-152. Retrieved from https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol20/iss2/12

Zald, Mayer N. & McCarthy, John 1980: Social Movement Industries: Competition and Cooperation Among Movement Organizations. En L. Kriesberg (ed), Research In Social Movements, Conflict and Change, vol. 3, Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1-20.

Zelaky, E., Eid, G., Sami, S. & Ziada, D. (2006). *Implacable adversaries: Arab governments and the Internet*. Cairo: The Arabic Network for Human Rights Information.

Zeynep, T., & Wilson, C. (2012) Social media and the decision to participate in political protest: Observations from Tahrir Square. *Journal of Communication*, *62*(2), 363–379.

Zuckerman, E. (2008, March 8). The cute cat theory. My heart's in Accra. [Web log]. Retrieved from: http://www.ethanzuckerman.com/blog/2008/03/08/the-cute-cat-theory-talk-at-etech/.