

Chapter 7

Citizen Mobilization and the “Right to Decide” Movement in Catalonia (2010–2014)

Joan Nogué

University of Girona, Spain

Jordi de San Eugenio Vela

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3390-8819>

University of Vic-Central University of Catalonia, Spain

ABSTRACT

For the purposes of this chapter, it is interesting to analyse the arguments that justify the secessionist cause in Catalonia and, in particular, whether this bottom-up social demand falls within the scope of the democratically admissible. Similarly, it is important to determine how the Catalan people’s ‘taking to the streets’ represents a concrete political response with which in some form the will of the Catalan people has conditioned and even precipitated the political agenda of the current government. What has happened in Catalonia highlights the new—and prevailing—role played by civil society in public affairs. Within this framework, new questions arise regarding the counterpower exercised by citizens through massive, peaceful, and recurrent social mobilizations, which can, as a whole, be considered a spontaneous manifestation of participatory democracy.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-3677-3.ch007

INTRODUCTION

Since 2005, Catalonia has experienced an unprecedented atmosphere of political tension and peaceful social protest (Miley, 2013). The Spanish Constitutional Court’s rejection of the *Statute of Autonomy for Catalonia*, the Spanish government’s refusal to establish a fiscal pact between Catalonia and Spain, evidence of a fiscal imbalance, the lack of state investment in the region, a symbolic people’s referendum on independence which took place in the town of Arenys de Munt, a few kilometres from Barcelona, on 13 September 2009, and the central government’s economic management over the Catalan Autonomous government has led to a process with a broad social impact that has surprised both Catalonia and the rest of the world (Cardús, 2013b; Boix and Major, 2013, Miró, 2013; Muñoz and Guinjoan, 2013).

We are witnessing an exceptional situation in Catalonia (Bel, 2013; Cardús, 2013a; Guibernau, 2013), which cannot be understood if we consider the usual patterns of political and geopolitical analysis alone. The distinguishing feature of this uniqueness lies in a social mobilization occurring from the bottom up and not from the top down, as is usually the case, together with the fact that we are facing a new kind of social movement that transcends mere economic and identity-related claims to demand new forms of participatory democracy. In this respect, the conventional Catalan politicians themselves are surprised, if not shocked, at what is happening on the streets.

With social discontent simmering for some time, it finally openly manifested itself on the National Day of Catalonia in 2012. That mass demonstration on September 11 was the culmination of a series of disagreements with the government of Spain (Bel, 2013; Guibernau, 2013; Serrano, 2013b; Pujadas and Xifra, 2014; Ordeix and Ginesta, 2014). Following the extraordinary success of the demonstration, the Catalan government called elections to the Catalan Parliament in order to transfer the citizen demands expressed mainly on the streets of Barcelona to the political sphere (Trépiér, 2013). Some authors interpret this election call as the starting point of the policy shift towards independence (Martí, 2013; Blas, 2013; Goikoetxea, 2013; Ordeix and Ginesta, 2014).

For the purposes of this chapter, it is interesting to analyse the arguments that justify the secessionist cause in Catalonia and, in particular, whether this bottom-up social demand falls within the scope of the democratically admissible.

Similarly, it is important to determine how the Catalan people’s ‘taking to the streets’ represents a concrete political response with which in some form the will of the Catalan people has conditioned and even precipitated the political agenda of the current government. What has happened in Catalonia highlights the new – and prevailing – role played by civil society in public affairs. Within this framework, new questions arise regarding the counterpower exercised by citizens through massive,

28 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/citizen-mobilization-and-the-right-to-decide-movement-in-catalonia-2010-2014/257977

Related Content

Corruption in the Public Eye: From Transparency to Publicity

Elitza Katzarova (2014). *Handbook of Research on Political Activism in the Information Age* (pp. 258-272).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/corruption-in-the-public-eye/110683

Memory, National Identity, and Freedom of Expression in the Information Age: Discussing the Taboo in the Zimbabwean Public Sphere

Shepherd Mpfu (2014). *Handbook of Research on Political Activism in the Information Age* (pp. 114-128).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/memory-national-identity-and-freedom-of-expression-in-the-information-age/110674

Impact of Mentoring and Support Programs on Academic Performance of African American Males: Analysis Through a Critical Race Theory Lens

Andrew S. Herridge and Montelleo DeLeon Hogley Jr. (2022). *Research Anthology on Racial Equity, Identity, and Privilege* (pp. 1069-1078).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/impact-of-mentoring-and-support-programs-on-academic-performance-of-african-american-males/296992

Feral Government?: The Limitations of Critical Success Factors in the Context of Major Government IT Projects

Annie Maddison (2016). *Politics and Social Activism: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications* (pp. 1375-1393).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/feral-government/140033

Bilateral Trade Between China and Other Countries: Role of "One Belt, One Road"

Liwen Ma, Ali Mohsin and Haseeb Muhammad (2022). *Journal of Comparative Asian Development* (pp. 1-15).

www.irma-international.org/article/bilateral-trade-between-china-and-other-countries/303675