Nurturing Independentism Movements and Parties in Secessionist Contexts

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Abstract

This chapter analyzes separatist movements' ability to mobilize voters in favor of independence in contexts with an active secession conflict. The study examines this question in Catalonia between 2012 and 2017, during the climax of the secession conflict with Spain. Specifically, it focuses on the Assemblea Nacional Catalana, a pro-independence organization with over 500 chapters across Catalonia. To assess the organization's leverage, I draw on a dataset with information on the starting date of the chapters, combined with data on regional elections at the municipal level. Controlling for support to pro-independence parties in previous elections and accounting for the celebration of unofficial referendums in Catalan municipalities between 2009 and 2011, I exploit differences in the timing of the chapters' creation to assess whether and how these chapters influenced voting patterns during this period. The chapter also offers qualitative information on the goals of the organization. The chapter engages with a growing literature that investigates the outcomes of social movements on individuals' political attitudes and behavior. It also speaks to recent work that examines the intersection of movements and political parties and the dynamics of cooperation and conflict between them.

"Protests lack protesters, rebellions lack rebels, and revolutions lack revolutionaries."
Mark Irving Lichbach. 1998. The Rebel's Dilemma.

Does independence lack independentists?

1   Introduction

0n September 11, 2012, Catalonia's National Day, a massive demonstration with the motto "Catalonia, new state in Europe" filled the center of Barcelona. 1.5 million people participated in the demonstration demanding the independence of Catalonia. A year later, a human chain formed along 400 km, from *Le Perthus* in France (North Catalonia) to *Vinaròs* in the region of Valencia, south of Catalonia. Every year after, on September 11, people took to the streets with the same request.[1] These demonstrations were a day of celebration, partly an expression of collective identity (García, 2016), partly a demonstration of the movement's strength, i.e., people's support for Catalan independence.

The main organization behind these rallies, the Assemblea Nacional Catalana (from now on ANC or Assemblea), a highly structured secessionist social movement organization, was inaugurated in April 30, 2011.[2] The seeds of the Assemblea were planted on September 13, 2009, when a nonofficial referendum of independence organized by the civil society with the support of the local town hall was held in Arenys de Mar, an 8,000-people municipality

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[1] 2012: "Catalonia, new state in Europe." Local police estimated that 1.5 million people participated in the demonstration. 2013: "Catalan Way towards Independence." Local police estimated that 1.1 million people participated in the event. 2014: "The Catalan Way 2014." 1.8 million people participated in Barcelona's demonstration. 2015: "Free Way to the Catalan Republic" gathered 1.4 million people demonstrators. In 2016, rallies were organized in Barcelona, Berga, Lleida, Salt i Tarragona. On September 11, 2017, the demonstration, "the Holiday of the Yes," one million people demonstrated in Barcelona's center streets. The figures vary across different sources. The figures offered are the ones offered by the Barcelona local police. Òmnium Cultural, an organization created in the 1960s for the promotion of the Catalan language and culture, also had a crucial role in the organization of these and other rallies in favor of independence, especially since 2013.

[2] Dowling (2020, 7) has argued that the ANC "falls short of being a social movement." According to McCarthy (2022) minimal definition of social movement organization (SMO), we can define the ANC as an SMO. According to McArthy, an SMO identifies its preferences with a social movement or a counter-movement and makes efforts to implement those goals." The Assemblea is an organization within the broader pro-independence social movement that works to achieve the independence of Catalonia.

North of Barcelona. Between September 13, 2009, and April 11, 2011, "a core of stubborn, headstrong people," Pere Pugès, Enric Aïnsa, Miquel Strubell i Miquel Sellarès, decided to "push ahead the movement." To this goal, they first involved a group of forty people, which was expanded later to two hundred. By 2015, the organization had grown to have 40,132 members and 39,946 collaborators and sympathizers.

The Assemblea responded to a necessity to articulate many separate initiatives in favor of (Catalonia's) sovereignty" (Strubell 2013) and "to channel the social capital accumulated in the organization of nonofficial referendums organized in 559 municipalities in Catalonia" (Sellarès 2013).[3] The organization aimed to be "transversal and unitary" (MxI Road Map). It did not seek to substitute the institutions or political parties in Catalonia (Ainsa 2013, Sellarés 2013, ANC Road Map 2012-2013), but to mobilize a "social majority" in favor of independence. From the point of view of the founders, political parties and institutions were responsible for starting the political initiative which was necessary to achieve independence. The Assemblea was conceived as a short-lived organization responsible for producing a critical mass in favor of independence and delivering this critical mass to the pro-independence parties. At the same time, the Assemblea sought to push, accompany, and make accountable Catalan political parties in the "game" for independence.

This situated the pro-independence SMO and Catalan-based parties in a close relationship in which the movement was responsible for the "articulation of interests/identities/ideologies, and the (pro-independence) parties were responsible for aggregating these preferences to build electoral majorities" (Tarrow, 2021). The relationship, however, combined labor specialization (horizontal hybrids) with interdependence (vertical hybrids) in the shape of a blended hybrid that departed from other models examined by Tarrow (2021). This way, cooperation, confrontation, and co-optation dynamics alternated over time.

This chapter examines the organization's mobilization leverage, one of the variables that,

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[3]See L'Estat de la questió. Mar 16, 2013. Quin paper ha de fer l'ANC d'ara endavant. An Interview with the Founders of the Assemblea Nacional Catalana. June 8, 2023 from https://youtu.be/6aWREGmYFfg) and Ainsa (2012).

as I will argue in another chapter, mediate the relationship between parties and movement. To this goal, the chapter looks into the origins of the Assemblea's branches between 2012 and 2014, and it assesses its mobilization leverage in the turnout and voting patterns of the population.[4] To assess the branches' origins and leverage, I draw on a dataset with information on the starting date of the chapters combined with data on regional elections at the municipal level. Accounting for the celebration of unofficial referendums in Catalan municipalities between 2009 and 2011 (see Muñoz and Guinjoan (2013)) and election results in previous elections, I exploit differences in the timing of the branches' creation to assess whether and how these influenced voting patterns during this period.

2 Mobilization in Secessionist contexts

Mobilization is an elusive concept with different meanings. Meyer's 2021, 23 defines mobilization as the process of "engaging people and getting them to take directed action in the service of some set of goals". McAdam (1982, 2013) emphasized the subjective nature of this process, which requires cognitive liberation, i.e., group awareness of the unfairness of a situation and the certainty that change can be achieved through collective action. In this same direction, Benford and Snow (2000) have argued that mobilization requires that a specific situation is framed as a problem, that the frame resonates, that people recognize and internalize this problem as something that deserves attention, and are willing to act to solve it.

Action can take different forms, from demonstrating to attending meetings to canvassing, engaging others in the movement, voting, etc. Some of these actions are more costly than others. The agents of mobilization, the promoters of the movement are the ones that assume greater costs in favor of the common goal. The mobilization targets are individuals who will be turned into adherents, sympathizers, rank-and-file members of the movement, or voters... These individuals represent the muscle of the movement.

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[4]Next iteration of the chapter will also examine preferences for independence using survey data.

Movements often operate under the logic that mobilization will ultimately deliver their requested demands. The more support a movement gathers, the larger its ability to influence politics. Despite this is an assumption with traction among activists[5] and scholars alike, the relationship between successful mobilization and goal achievement is still not fully understood.

Two main problems prevent the advancement of our knowledge on this issue. First, it is difficult to measure mobilization: who counts? And for what? Second, social movements can have an impact on many different interrelated elements, attitudes and preferences, the government's political agenda, or vote, but the mediating role of mobilization is not straightforward, as mobilization is only one of the activities in which movements engage, being lobbying or party financing another one(Hathaway and Meyer, 1993; Tarrow, 2021).

In the last two decades, scholars have shifted attention to analyzing movements' influence. A growing number of works have sought to examine the impact of social movement and protests in a series of outcome variables, including support for the movement, vote, policy-making, attitudes, social control or opinions (Amenta et al., 2010; Freelon, McIlwain and Clark, 2018; Giugni, McAdam and Tilly, 1999; Kolb, 2007; Madestam et al., 2013; Manekin and Mitts, 2022; Muñoz and Anduiza, 2019; Reny and Newman, 2021; Mazumder, 2018; Wouters and Walgrave, 2017; Wasow, 2020).

In 1975, Gamson analyzed mobilization by paying attention to two different outcome variables, which sought to operationalize the movements' success: acceptance and demands' advancement. In his analyses of 53 challenging groups that emerged in America between 1800 and 1945, he found that mobilization and acceptance were related, but mobilization and demands' advancement were not. More recently, Wallace, Zepeda-Millán and Jones-Correa (2014) and Madestam et al. (2013) have also looked into the size of the protests. Focusing its analysis on the relationship between group size and political efficacy, Wallace, Zepeda-Millán and Jones-Correa (2014) have identified a negative relationship between the

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two variables, which seems to support the substitutability logic present in the collective action theory. Madestam et al. (2013) have found an opposite effect for the impact of group size. Using rain as an instrumental variable of the size of the 2009 Tax March rallies in the US, the authors estimate the effect that mobilization had on voting and policy making. Relying on Skocpol and Williamson (2016), Madestan and his colleagues argue that larger rallies created the momentum needed for grassroots organizing, attitudinal change, and electoral gains in the direction desired by the movement.

From a more prescriptive perspective, Chenoweth (2013) has adamantly defended that 3.5 percent of the population is the minimum threshold non-violent movements need to succeed.[6] In their account, all nonviolent movements which had achieved their goals between 1900 and 2006 had at least 3.5 percent peak popular participation Chenoweth (2020).

Secessionist movements, however, operate in a very different framework from other social movements. When the goal is independence, the size of the group is key for goal achievement. If a pro-independence movement cannot mobilize a sufficient share of the population in favor of independence, the movement's end goal, independence, will not be achieved.[7]

However, this literature has approached the study of self-determination ignoring the social movement literature, and the ability of movements to mobilize the population in favor of secession. The excessive focus of this type of research on groups, implicitly understood as political parties, can be partly explained by political science's traditional negligence of social movements: "the phantom at the opera of public politics" Tarrow (2021). But beyond this, the lack of attention to the process of mobilization of the population is striking as the mobilization of supporters is instrumental in pressuring the state and political parties in favor independence, and legitimizing the demands for independence. Ultimately, many

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[6]Stephan and Chenoweth (2008) measure mobilization using the year in which participation in the movement campaign reached its peak. Participation in the campaign reflects the sympathy and support the movement gathers, which is, in these authors' view, instrumental for political pressure. The authors define success based on the movement's ability to achieve "its stated objective within a reasonable period (two years) from the end of the campaign."

[7]Achieving this majority does not guarantee either that independence occurs. Research on the state's responses to self-determination demands is broad. See, for example, Butt (2017), Coggins (2014), Cunningham (2014), Jenne (2007), Mylonas (2013) or Harguindéguy, Sánchez and Sánchez (2021), among others.

independence projects "fail" because they fall short of votes in sovereignty referendum: Quebec 1995, Scotland 2014, Puerto Rico 2017, Bougainville 2019, New Caledonia 2020, etc. Incomplete information, wishful thinking, or mixed objectives can certainly explain why the strategies of secessionist movements do not lead to independence (Griffiths, 2021), yet the inability of the secessionist organizations to mobilize larger sections of the population in favor of independence might be yet another potential and equally relevant factor. Here again, understanding the ability of social movements to widen their support turns essential.

3   Nurturing Independence or Performing it?

0n September 11, 2012, after the massive demonstration in favor of independence, took place in the center of Barcelona, a "delegation" of representatives of the Assemblea and the Association of Municipalities for Independence was received by the Catalan Parliament.

The delegation included the President of the Assemblea Nacional Catalana, Carme Forcadell, who delivered a speech in which she demanded that the Catalan government, the Catalan President, and the political representatives start the secession process from Spain. They also express their "commitment to make of today's September 11's demonstration an event that will have historical consequences."[8] In her speech, Carme Forcadell articulated the plans to achieve Catalan independence. These plans included the organization of a "consultation" in all Catalan municipalities in determining the level of support for an independent and sovereign Catalan state, a call for early elections, and the start of a new Parliament with the primary goal of holding a self-determination referendum. "If the Catalan people voted favorably, or if the Spanish state did not allow the free exercise of this right, the elected deputies would have to proclaim national independence and establish a Catalan sovereign state." The president of the Catalan Parliament, Núria de Gispert i Català, a member of the CiU's party[9], responded to Carme Forcadell congratulating the Assemblea

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[8]Reception of the Delegation of the Assemblea Nacional Catalana and the Association of Municipalities for Independence (AMI), organizers of the September 11's (2012) demonstration.

[9]The CiU ruled the region between 1983 and 2003 and returned to power in 2010. The CiU was a coalition

for its mobilization and promising to listen to the movement.[10]

By all measures, the *Assemblea* succeeded in all its goals. A consultation was organized in 2014. After it, the president called for early elections in 2015, and a new government and parliament were formed with the primary goal of holding a referendum. The referendum took place on October 1, 2017, and the Catalan Parliament proclaimed independence on October 27, 2017, five years and fifteen days after the Assemblea was received in the Catalan Parliament and enunciated its goals.

Yet the Assemblea's ability to further mobilize the Catalan population to secure "a sufficient social majority for Catalonia's independence" (ANC 2012-2013 Road Map) is less obvious. In 2012, the Assemblea recognized in its road map that "the Catalan society (...) still had far too many people who were undecided, and these people needed reasons and arguments for supporting independence." The Assemblea sought to secure that "both turnout and the percent of pro-independence vote exceeded the 50 and 55 percent," a figure set by the EU for Montenegro. This was not only a goal set on paper. The leaders of the Assemblea repeatedly emphasized in the many acts they organized around Catalonia that widening the social majority was the most important strategic goal of the organization.

The Assemblea branches capitalized on the grassroots that had organized the unofficial referendums of independence in 561 municipalities between 2009 and 2011. These grassroots had been activated through different means, online and offline. Online recruitment through social media was complemented by other traditional means. Cars with loudspeakers toured the villages and towns of Catalonia, calling upon meetings where different people with diverse profiles and skills (web developers, carpenters, retired people) showed up to join the self-organized grassroots. While the grassroots organizing had the end goal of holding an unofficial local referendum, after the referendum took place in the municipality, many people

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of two parties, *Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya* and *Unió Democràtica de Catalunya*. When the *Convergència*'s leadership decided to support the independence process, the *Unió* abandoned the coalition.

[10]The fact that the representatives of the ANC and the AMI were received in the Parliament site, and three days later, the president of the Catalan Government, Artur Mas, welcomed them in the Generalitat Palace speaks about a context of open political opportunities, a determining factor in achieving a movement's goals (Opp, 2009).

continued to be involved "doing activities" (Ferran Civit 2022).

The Conferència Nacional per l'Estat Propi (National Conference for the Own State), the official opening of the Assemblea took place in Barcelona on April 30, 2011, twenty days after the last unofficial local referendum was held in Barcelona. 1,500 people participated in the event during which the organization's road map was approved. The road map stipulated the phases and the intermediate goals that had to be met to achieve Catalan independence. In the constituent phase, the Assemblea sought to "bring together as many convinced independentists as possible." To this goal, the organization had "to create a minimum of 240 territorial assemblies throughout the Catalan territory". These branches had to be formed in neighborhoods or districts in Barcelona, in every municipality with more than 3,000 people, and in the counties that had a lower population density (ANC Road Map 2012-2-13).

As an organization, the Assemblea came to be just at the right time. After the unofficial referendum of independence had been held in over 550 municipalities, the grassroots organizing changed its name. From "[name of the municipality] decide" to "[name of the municipality] for independence." The Assemblea offer an institutionalization platform, which would start to register membership and collect fees.

The assemblies organized events to train the ANC's members across the territory, and educate them on issues related to the fiscal sovereignty, energy independence. These members were the agents that would disseminate the ANC's missage. But the chapters' organizing went beyond this. The chapters sustained the organization's grassroots, went to the streets to campaign, and organized multiple symbolic events and acts to commemorate historic dates. "These municipalities had a very powerful activity agenda (...) On average, on a day, you could find ten events of all kinds linked to the Assemblea. Logically, on Friday and Saturday and also Sunday morning, these events could be multiplied by 20, 30 or 40 with some peaks... We did some campaigns when we reached 100 events a day" (Civit 2022)

To determine whether these actions and activities nurtured independence or just performed it, in this chapter, I adopt a strategy that focuses on the territorial expansion of the

Assemblea. Because the territorial expansion occurred in a step-wise process, that continued after the territorial assemblies surpass the 240 goal mentioned above, I can exploit differences in the timing of the creation of the Assemblea branches to estimate its impact on turnout and voting.

4   Hypothesis

In the empirical section of this chapter, I first seek to understand the factors influencing the creation and timing of territorial assemblies.

Muñoz and Guinjoan (2013) have shown that prior resources, expectations regarding the outcome, and diffusion were important factors in explaining the organization of the unofficial referendum of independence between 2009 and 2012.

Here I seek to account for the formation of the Assemblea branches by hypothesising on two possible logics: a strategic substitutability logic, and a strategic complementary logic. According to the first logic, the Assemblea would have targeted those municipalities in which support for pro-independence parties was lower. Therefore the organization could have a larger impact on the mobilization of previously unmobilized voters. However, because selective exposure and prior political predispositions operate at the individual level, it is unlikely that individuals who opposed independence *changed their minds*. Instead, the movement could be more successful in *melting the hearts* of people with ambivalent or moderate positions. At the aggregate level, this should translate into creating assemblies in those municipalities with larger proportions of left Catalan parties, traditionally more sympathetic with self-determination demands, and a solution to the conflict based on a referendum.

According to the second logic, the Assemblea would have targeted those municipalities in which support for pro-independence parties was higher. These are municipalities where non-material resources, including human and social capital, and political opportunities, i.e., open political opportunities, favor the formation of these branches. Here we should pay attention,

for example, to the percentage of votes for pro-independence or Catalan nationalist parties. The larger the critical mass of pro-independence voters in a municipality, the easier it should be for organizers to gather the human capital needed to create a territorial assembly.

Information collected in interviews with members of the Assemblea suggests that an important number of the earlier members of the organization had participated in the organization of the unofficial referendum of independence (*consultes)* that took place in 58 percent of all Catalan municipalities. Table 1 confirms the extent to which this relationship is also held at the aggregate level. The territorial assemblies were created in 72 percent of the municipalities where a *consulta* was held between 2009 and 2011. Clearly, the Assemblea could capitalize the social and human capital the *consultes* had previously mobilized. Still, the Assemblea created delegations in 44 percent of the municipalities which did not hold *consultes*, i.e., in 18 percent (174) Catalan municipalities.

Table 1: **T**erritorial Assemblies by *Consultes*

	No Assemblea	Assemblea	Total
No Consulta	55.84	44.16	*394*
Consulta	27.75	72.25	*555*
Total	*374*	*575*	*949*
	39.30	60.59	100

In a second step, I analyze whether the creation of the Assemblea increased turnout and and whether had any impact on the vote for pro-independence parties in the localities where it was created. If the mobilization implemented by the Assemblea was just performative, only addressed to consolidate the mobilization of existing independentists, then we should find no effects on the support for parties supporting a pro-independence platform. On the contrary, if the territorial assemblies, through regular meetings and grassroots organizing, were able to mobilize previously un-mobilized sectors of the population, then we should observe an increase in the share of support for the pro-independence parties in the municipalities were territorial branches were created. This would prove the ability of the organization to achieve

its goals, as the social majority could not only put pressure on political parties, but it could also legitimize the secession process and sustain it.

5 Data and models

The data for this chapter is structured at the municipality level, and it includes information on 949 municipalities. The data builds on an existing database by Muñoz and Guinjoan (2013) with information on the local unofficial referendums that took place in Catalonia over a nineteen-month period between September 2009 and April 2011. I add to this data information on the results of the elections to the Catalan parliament in 2012 and 2015, and information on the date the territorial chapters of the Assemblea Nacional Catalana were created.[11]

Two phases are considered here. The formation phase covers the period before the 2012 regional election took place, and the expansion phase, from September 12, 2012, to September 27, 2015, again before the 2015 regional elections. These two phases roughly correspond to the first, second and third phases the Assemblea had stipulated in its first road map.[12] By the end of the expansion period, all counties had at least one territorial assembly. The figures below show the number of territorial assemblies that were created over time and in each of the phases referred above.

Taking advantage of the variance in the dates of the assemblies' creation, I can estimate first what factors account for its origin in the two phases described above, and next the impact that the territorial assembly had in the 2012 and 2015 regional elections.

The creation of territorial chapters across Catalonia is modeled as a function of the occurrence of the unofficial referendums between 2009 and 2011, turnout in the previous

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[11]I am thankful to Jordi Muñoz and Marc Guinjoan, and to the Assemblea Nacional Catalana for generously sharing their information with me.

[12]Constitution Phase from April 11, 2011, to March 12, 2012, Consolidation Phase from March 13, 2012, to September 11, 2012, and Phase to achieve the social majority, from September 12, 2012, to 2014. The next two phases, the final and posterior phases, were not dated in the original Road map.
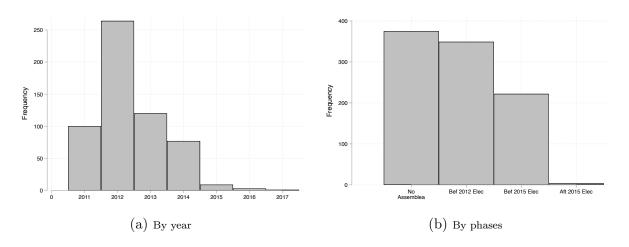
Figure 1: **T**erritorial Assemblies created between 2012 and 2018.

(a) By year

(b) By phases

elections, and vote share for pro-independence parties in the prior elections. Controls are added for the population, the number of associations in the municipality, and the percent of the population born in Catalonia.[13] This latter control is of relevance to my hypothesis. If the substitutability logic was present, the assemblies should have been formed in those municipalities with more population from other regions of Spain, traditionally less favorable to independence (see, for example, Hierro and Queralt (2021)). On the contrary, if the complementary logic was present, we should find assemblies formed in those municipalities with more population born in Catalonia.

6   Analysis

Table 2 present some very naive correlations that unravel the strategy used by the Assemblea in the formation of the territorial branches of the Assemblea across Catalonia. Because I am not only interested in the formation of these branches *per se*, but in its timing, I have divided the analysis into two groups to better understand what factors lie behind the formation of the assemblies before the 2012 regional elections, and between then and the 2015

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[13]The percent of the population coming from other regions of Spain is notably high due to a massive migration process that occurred between the mid-forties and the mid-seventies. Many of these immigrants arrived in Catalonia in search of job opportunities in underdeveloped regions in the rest of Spain.

regional elections. Interestingly, the results suggest that two different logic were at play in each of these two phases.

Table 2: **P**redicting the formation of the Assembleas across Catalonia

	Before 2012			Between 2012 and 2015		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(1)	(2)	(3)
Consulta	0.153***			-0.083+		
	(0.039)			(0.042)		
ERC vote$_{t-1}$		0.743*			-0.086	
		(0.307)			(0.357)	
CiU vote$_{t-1}$		0.298+			-0.104	
		(0.164)			(0.198)	
Turnout$_{t-1}$			-0.073			0.493
			(0.226)			(0.301)
PSC vote$_{t-1}$			-0.426*			0.437
			(0.204)			(0.411)
ICV/Podem/Comu$_{t-1}$			-0.496			1.139*
			(0.399)			(0.549)
Pop Born in Cat	0.002	0.002	0.003	-0.001	-0.001	-0.000
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Associacions$_{pc}$	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000
	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Population (log)	0.124***	0.149***	0.148***	0.001	-0.012	-0.009
	(0.018)	(0.019)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.017)	(0.018)
Constant	-0.879**	-1.218***	-0.933**	0.206	0.361	-0.231
	(0.319)	(0.325)	(0.318)	(0.348)	(0.335)	(0.413)
County FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	946	946	946	946	946	946
Clusters	42	42	42	42	42	42
R-squared	0.444	0.433	0.431	0.205	0.199	0.205

Note: OLS. Standard errors adjusted for county clusters.
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, + p<0.1

In the first phase, the Assemblea benefited significantly from the mobilization of resources carried out by the grassroots movement behind the unofficial referendums (the *consultes*). Results suggest that a complementary logic operated in the first phase when territorial chapters were formed in those municipalities where support for the old pro-independence party ERC, and the Catalan nationalist coalition CiU was higher. Notably, the size of the coefficient for the ERC vote share is more than two times the coefficient of the CiU vote share.[14]

The complementary logic loses traction after 2012. In the second phase, territorial assemblies were created in those municipalities where unofficial referendums were not held. The positive and large coefficient for ICV/Podem/En Comú speaks about the importance of the substitutability logic in the expansion phase of the Assemblea, when efforts were made to attract to the independence camp municipalities in which there was a significant percent of the population with moderate voters in the center-periphery dimension, voters who were most likely in favor of organizing a referendum of independence in Catalonia.

Now, did the formation of the territorial chapters of the Assemblea in 575 municipalities across Catalonia translate into an increase in support for independence?

To gauge the impact of these territorial assemblies, I look at both turnout (Table 3), and vote (Table 4), and pay attention to the 2012 and 2015 regional elections in Catalonia[15]. Table 3 shows that the *consultes* had a small but significant effect, equivalent to an average 0.5 percent increase in the 2012 elections. The territorial assemblies, on the contrary, did not contribute to increasing turnout, neither in 2012 nor in 2015.

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[14]Here is important to note that the CiU only adopted a pro-independence stance after the September 11, 2012, massive demonstration organized by the Assemblea, in Barcelona, and the Spanish government, and after the conservative Popular Party, at the time the government party, decided not to negotiate a better financial relationship with Catalonia.

[15]The appendix includes the tables without the controls for results in previous elections.

Table 3: **P**redicting Turnout in the 2012 and 2015 Regional Elections.

	Consultes		*Consultes* & **Assemblies**	
	Turnout 2012	Turnout 2015	Turnout 2012	Turnout 2015
Consulta	0.005+	0.003	0.005+	0.003
	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.002)
Assemblea bf 2012			0.002	-0.000
			(0.003)	(0.003)
Assemblea bt 2012 - 2015				0.001
				(0.003)
Turnout$_{t-1}$	0.610***	0.524***	0.609***	0.523***
	(0.034)	(0.029)	(0.034)	(0.030)
Pop Born in Cat	0.001***	0.001**	0.001***	0.001**
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Associations$_{pc}$	-0.000	0.000	-0.000	0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Population (log)	-0.001	-0.004***	-0.001	-0.004***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Constant	0.254***	0.409***	0.258***	0.409***
	(0.024)	(0.023)	(0.025)	(0.024)
County FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	950	950	946	946
Clusters	42	42	42	42
R-squared	0.558	0.567	0.559	0.569

Note: OLS Models. Standard errors adjusted for county clusters in parentheses ∗∗∗ p<0.001, ∗∗ p<0.01, ∗ p<0.05, + p<0.1. The reference category for the Assemblies is "No assembly".

The formation of the territorial assemblies functions as a post-treatment variable.[16] For this reason, a model that includes the two variables will provide biased estimates. To calculate the unbiased estimates for both the *consultes*, and my variable of interest, the formation of a territorial chapter of the assembly before 2012 and between 2012 and 2015, I include in Table 4 two models. The first model (columns 1 to 5) estimates the effect of the *consultes* without controlling by the assembly. This model correctly estimates the "total" effect that the *consultes* have on the vote for pro-independence parties, i.e. the direct effect and the indirect effect through the assemblies. The second model adds two dummy variables for the creation of a chapter of the Assemblea in a given municipality. This model correctly esti-

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[16]See Table A-1 in the Appendix.

mates the direct causal effect of the *consultes* on turnout and vote. The difference between these two coefficients provides a measure of the additional impact the assemblies had on the vote, net of the *consultes* effect.

The *consultes* had a direct positive significant effect on the pro-independence vote both in 2012, and 2015. The magnitude of the coefficient was stronger in 2012 than in 2015 when explaining the total vote for pro-independence parties. In the municipalities where the *consultes* were held between 2009 and 2011, the vote for pro-independence parties increased by 3.3 percent points in 2012, and 1.2 percent points in 2015. When we pay attention to the specific parties, we see that the impact was 1 percent point for ERC and 1.6 for CiU in the 2012 regional elections, and 1.2 for JxSí in 2015.

The coefficients for the territorial assemblies in models 6 to 10 are biased upwards. The unbiased effect can be estimated by subtracting the direct effect of the *consultes* in the vote shares from the total effect of the *consultes* in the vote (models 1 to 5). The unbiased effect of the territorial assemblies in voting appear to be negligible.

These results suggest that the ANC was not capable to attract new voters to the pro-independence camp, at least, not in the period under consideration, through the formation of territorial assemblies. Despite the efforts made by the organization between 2012 and 2015 to expand the territorial chapters to those municipalities where former voters of ICV (ICV/Podem/Comun) were higher, and despite the grassroots organizing that happened in those years in each municipality, these chapters could not grow the share of pro-independence voters. A possible interpretation of these results points to the performative activism of these chapters, but qualitative evidence needs to be gathered to learn more about what lies behind these results.

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Table 4: **P**redicting Pro-Independence Vote

	Consultes					*Consultes* & **Assemblies**				
	Indy 2012	Indy 2015	ERC 2012	CiU 012	JxSí 2015	Indy 2012	Indy 2015	ERC 2012	CiU 2012	JxSí 2015
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Consulta	0.033***	0.012**	0.010**	0.016***	0.012***	0.032***	0.011**	0.009*	0.016***	0.012***
	(0.006)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.006)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.003)
Assemblea bf 2012						0.011*	0.006+	0.007*	-0.002	0.004
						(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Assemblea bt 2012 and 2015						0.005				0.004
						(0.004)				(0.004)
Vot ERC$_{t-1}$			0.619***		0.904***			0.616***		0.899***
			(0.062)		(0.032)			(0.062)		(0.031)
Vot CiU$_{t-1}$				0.744***	0.864***				0.744***	0.862***
				(0.033)	(0.026)				(0.033)	(0.026)
Indy vot$_{t-1}$	0.410***	0.882***				0.405***	0.879***			
	(0.072)	(0.027)				(0.072)	(0.027)			
Pop Born in Cat	0.009***	0.002***	0.002***	0.003***	0.001***	0.008***	0.002***	0.002***	0.003***	0.001***
	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Associations$_{pc}$	0.000	0.000	0.001**	-0.001**	-0.000	0.000	0.000	0.001**	-0.001**	-0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Population (log)	-0.008**	-0.001	0.006**	-0.008***	0.001	-0.009**	-0.002	0.005*	-0.007**	0.001
	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Constant	-0.040	-0.087***	-0.080**	-0.120**	-0.105***	-0.029	-0.083***	-0.075**	-0.121**	-0.101***
	(0.075)	(0.022)	(0.025)	(0.041)	(0.029)	(0.075)	(0.022)	(0.025)	(0.042)	(0.028)
Assemblea bf 2012 (Unbiased)						0.001**	0.001***	0.001*		
County FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	950	950	950	950	950	946	946	946	946	946
Clusters	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42
R-squared	0.825	0.830	0.422	0.666	0.781	0.826	0.832	0.426	0.666	0.783

Note: OLS Models. Clustered standard errors in parentheses $*** \ p<0.001$, $** \ p<0.01$, $* \ p<0.05$, $+ \ p<0.1$. The reference category for the Assemblies is "No assembly".

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A Appendix.

Table A-1: Territorial Assemblies by *Consultes*

	No Assemblea	Bef 2012 Elections	Bef 2015 Elections	Aft 2015 Elections	Total
No	55.9	15.4	27.8	0.8	395
	58.9	17.5	49.5	75.0	
Yes	27.8	51.8	20.2	0.2	554
	41.1	82.5	50.4	25.0	
Total	375	348	222	4	949

Note: *Consultes* took place between 2009 and 2011 in 58.4% municipalities.

Table A-2: Predicting Turnout in the 2012 and 2015 Regional Elections.

	Consultes		*Consultes* & **Assemblies**	
	Turnout 2012	Turnout 2015	Turnout 2012	Turnout 2015
Consulta	0.014**	0.010**	0.014**	0.010**
	(0.005)	(0.003)	(0.005)	(0.003)
Assemblea bf 2012			-0.000	0.003
			(0.004)	(0.004)
Assemblea bt 2012-15				0.006
				(0.004)
Pop Born in Cat	0.003***	0.002***	0.003***	0.002***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Associacions$_{pc}$	-0.000	0.000	-0.000	0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Population (log)	-0.008***	-0.008***	-0.008***	-0.009***
	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)
Constant	0.516***	0.676***	0.519***	0.679***
	(0.036)	(0.026)	(0.035)	(0.026)
County FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	950	950	946	946
Clusters	42	42	42	42
R-squared	0.558	0.567	0.559	0.569

Note: OLS Models. Standard errors adjusted for county clusters in parentheses $***$ p<0.001, $**$ p<0.01, $*$ p<0.05, $+$ p<0.1. The reference category for the Assemblies is "No assembly".

Table A-3: **P**redicting Pro-Independence Vote (OLS Models).

	Consultes					Consultes & Assemblies				
	Indy 2012	Indy 2015	ERC 2012	CiU 012	JxSí 2015	Indy 2012	Indy 2015	ERC 2012	CiU 2012	JxSí 2015
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Consulta	0.049***	0.055***	0.024***	0.013+	0.045***	0.047***	0.053***	0.022***	0.012+	0.043***
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.004)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.004)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Assemblea bf 2012						0.014**	0.022***	0.010*	0.003	0.020**
						(0.004)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.007)
Assemblea bt 2012-15							0.012			0.013
							(0.007)			(0.008)
Pop Born in Cat	0.009***	0.010***	0.003***	0.006***	0.009***	0.009***	0.010***	0.003***	0.006***	0.009***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Associacions$_{pc}$	0.000+	0.001*	0.001*	-0.000	0.000	0.001+	0.001*	0.001*	-0.000	0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Population (log)	-0.009**	-0.009**	.004	-0.009*	-0.003	-0.011***	-0.011***	0.002	-0.009*	-0.006+
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.003)
Constant	-0.051	-0.130*	-0.064+	-0.034	-0.188*	-0.037	-0.112+	-0.056	-0.028	-0.170*
	(0.073)	(0.061)	(0.034)	(0.083)	(0.074)	(0.072)	(0.060)	(0.035)	(0.084)	(0.071)
Assemblea bf 2012 (Unbiased)						0.002**	0.002***	0.002*		0.002**
County FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	950	950	950	950	950	946	946	946	946	946
Clusters	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42
R-squared	0.825	0.830	0.422	0.666	0.781	0.826	0.832	0.426	0.666	0.783

Note: OLS Models. Clustered standard errors in parentheses $***$ p<0.001, $**$ p<0.01, $*$ p<0.05, $+$ p<0.1. The reference category for the Assemblies is "No assembly".