1. Introduction

In Catalonia, during last years, the drawing up and execution of some urban plans have developed situations of conflict between the public administration and the citizens. The proliferation of these conflicts, related with the use and the management of the territory, has entailed the sensation that social unrest among the agents acting on the territory is increasing. Moreover, the appearance of some publications in form of books and press articles, but also the organisation of some courses and conferences has contributed to develop this perception.

The conflicts, understood as states of tension in the relation among administrations and citizens, among strong and weak power, explode when do not exist a convergence of objectives and purposes between both actors. In addition to this, in most of cases, it entails the creation of a revolt condition that is realized with the constitution of associations or citizens’ committees (Lagomarsino, 2002). As Indovina explains (2004) conflict is an “aspect absolutely fundamental inside of the process of planning”. Here he refers to the conflicts of interest that are present in any community with objectives and opinions differentiated. In this diversity, the urban plan has always been a consensus document and during its process of elaboration, contrasts and divergent interests have been driven to agreement situations with the management of politicians, because “social consensus has also been a desideratum of urban planning” (Esteban, 1999).

Even if that is a current theme in Catalonia, in the whole Spanish State do not exist many studies carried out from Geography that focus on the analysis of the urban proposals and the disputes provoked. Because of this, we consider interesting to think about this type of conflicts from the geographical point of view.

The aim of this research is the study of the factors that facilitate the explosion of the urban planning conflicts, and the identification of the actors that intervene. In that sense, we will analyse the causes, both the specific of the Catalan context and those more structural and connected to the characteristics and dynamics of the contemporaneous society. On another hand, the research aspires to understand how the different social collectives attain to participate in the process of urban planning through the conflict; how they organize to do it and which strategies of mobilization and discourses are created. The attention will be stopped...
also on the study of the reaction of the local public administration in front of these situations of protest and on the actions they undertake to resolve them.

From the research that has been done, we can guess that the labelling of these mobilization as NIMBY (Not In My Backyard) syndrome is overly limited and at the present do not correspond anymore to some of the opposition articulated by citizens. The literature of the collective action of social movements gives us interesting theoretical and methodological instruments to face the study of this complex phenomenon. In that sense, we have noticed that the green movement and the neighbour movement appeared during sixties and seventies in Catalonia are the families of movements that have fostered the new social movement defending the territory. Analysing the more recent conflicts we can highlight a progressive phenomena of networking among the opposition groups, but also a thematic opening that origins new forms of collective action. Without this signifies the conversion of the green movement or the neighbour movement, we are in front of a new form of collective action that cohabits with the previous one and takes part of the same cycle of protest. That means we can talk about an incipient movement defending the territory in Catalonia that would have the origins at the end of nineties, when both green movement and neighbour movement entered on a period of confluence with the appearance of the alter-globalisation movement, which gets off a new cycle of mobilization in Catalonia.

2. Some ideas of context: why do conflicts explode?

The phenomenon of local oppositions tied to the use of the territory is a spectre that prowls around, since long time ago, all the developed countries. From the United States to Japan, passing through Occidental Europe, that provokes fears, observations and researches. From its global connotation we can deduce that this phenomenon do not only answer to conjuncture causes, specific from the Catalan context, but also to general directives of changing contemporaneous societies.

2.1. A global phenomenon

One of the most distinctive elements of the general tendencies of contemporaneous societies is the called “revival of local” (Bobbio, 1999; Nel·lo, 2003). It has often been analysed by the studies about the Globalisation and the polarisation global-local. The progressive disappearance not only of physical borders, but also of administrative and communication borders, due to the process of Globalisation, the development of new technologies and the forms of production is configuring more integrated territories. The facility of movement entails a territory each time more inter-related, but the specific characteristics of each place become more important (Harvey, 1990). As a result, local singularities are reborn as an incentive to attract flows of investments and to strengthen its competitive specificities.

Local oppositions and the explosion of many conflicts are closely related to the break-in of local identities, that born conflicting to the tendency of control of global flows. In front of the perception that the economic and territorial integration entails accelerated and uncontrollable changes, the locality becomes a refuge, a place that transmits security. The “refuge identity” (Castells, 1997) looks for deep and stable roots that give coherence to its own vital space. Castells (1997: 87-88) considers that these identities, most of times, “are defensive reactions against the impositions of global disorder and the rapid and uncontrollable change of rhythm”.

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Another of the structural causes related to conflicts that have as objective the territory is the mistrust in the institutional forms of citizens’ representation by the populations of democratic countries. The progressive distancing between processes of decision-making and citizens together with a low capacity of incidence of politicians on the decisions that affect the quotidian life of population has incremented the mistrust in the capacity of govern of the democratic institutions and their politicians. This fact, taken in conjunction with the progressive lack of interest of citizens’ respect to the politics, has been translated into a certain crisis of legitimacy of the democratic system in general. As a consequence, in conflict situations, citizens tend to draw up new forms of organization without replacing traditional politics forms, but they complement, enrich and even they put them in question (Blanco & Gomà, 2002).

The third structural cause we can enumerate makes reference to the environmental paradigm. Since Seventies, the environmental paradigm –understood as the whole ideas and values that influence our mode of thinking the society and the public in relation to the planet, as well as our individual responsibilities (Lewanski, 1997)- has been converted in a consensual value shared between the public opinion in general. In this sense, movements related to the defence of environment, or to a more or less local or more or less conservationist character, have grown all over the world. At the moment, nobody feels legitimized to maintain explicitly to let continue the process of degradation of environmental resources. Anyway, the environmental paradigm opposes the dominant social paradigm in the culture of industrialized contemporaneous societies which is represented by the imperative of the economic development and the growth of the wealth (Lewanski, 1997). For some sectors of the society the continuous increase of the produced and consumed goods agrees with the own fundamental interests.

2.2. The Catalan Context
Apart from these general dynamics described previously, we have detected other causes that explain to us the appearance of the urban planning conflicts. Among these conjunctural causes we will analyze, firstly, the lack of territorial policies in a territory more and more integrated. Secondly, we will focus the attention on the political context of the moment at which conflicts have been developed; and finally, the evolution of associations and committees defending the territory.

The lack of territorial policies is an important element in the urban planning conflicts among administrations and citizenship whereas the existence of supra-municipal directives is necessary for municipalities to frame their own town planning actions.

In Catalonia, once restored at the end of the Seventies the democratic institutions, urban planning competences were transferred to the Generalitat of Catalonia. The city councils considered with urgency the writing of new municipal urban plans like one of the first actions with the objective to replace lacks inherited. At the same time, the Generalitat was the one in charge to elaborate the “territorial plans” and between 1984 and 1995 it wrote up the General Territorial Plan of Catalonia, although at the moment it is not developed in his totality.

3 The decentralization process in Spain started with the Democratic Constitution of 1978 after Franco’s Dictatorship. The Constitution introduced devolution based on the principle of regional autonomy and created Autonomous Communities as the regional tier. The Government of the Autonomous Community of Catalonia, restored with the Constitution, is called Generalitat of Catalunya.

4 Catalan planning system conceives urban planning to municipalities and Generalitat of Catalonia is in charge to write different instruments of supra-municipal planning. The highest figure of planning is the General Territorial Plan of Catalonia, which defines the main objectives to reach a territorial equilibrium and gives general directions to actions that will be undertaken.
During these twenty-five years, then, planning has been basically done at the local level and within municipal limits, because only one plan at regional scale has been drawn up. The result of this situation is a general disorder in the articulation of urban systems, open spaces and infrastructures. In addition to this, the coordination between municipalities has not been promoted and a general frame to coordinate the urban planning activity of the city councils has been aborted. This tendency becomes more serious when, since as it has been said previously, the territory more and more is integrated and interrelated, and therefore a supramunicipal logic becomes more necessary.

The appearance and proliferation of the conflicts as well as of the different forms of organization of the citizens are determined by the current political environment, which facilitates the appearance of new forms of organization. The political conjunctures of change generate opportunities for the action. Among they emphasize the degree of opening of the political system, the degree of stability of political alliances, the availability of influential allies, the capacity of answer facing the problems and the development of public policies. From a general point of view, the political relief at the end of 2003 in the Generalitat, happening to the hands of the political centre-left forces after 23 years of a centre-right government, has tolerated different political opportunities. The plurality of institutions with competitions in planning subjects, as well as the variety of political colours that can get to be combined supposes an opportunity to create or to increase the situation of conflict. When a conflict between city council and local population explodes, both actors flirt with other institutions to look for coalitions, supports, to position themselves with more force before the adversary.

Finally, we have identified how organizations of citizens can produce propitious conjunctures to provoke the outbreak of conflicts. Often, the different opposition associations get in touch, exchange information and strategies and give mutual support in the respective vindications. That is to say, they at the same time create new opportunities since they increase the capacity of impact with respect to the administrations. Furthermore, at the same time they increase their area of influence and its resources as well as their strategies.

3. Different qualifications of citizens’ mobilization in urban planning conflicts

3.1. The NIMBY syndrome: a label arrived from the USA
In Catalonia, often, the citizens’ mobilization in urban planning conflicts has been qualified as NIMBY syndrome. NIMBY is an acronym appeared in the United States that refers to protective attitudes and tactician oppositions adopted by socials groups which react in front of the installation in their neighbourhood of services considered uncomfortable and unpleasant (Dear, 1992). NIMBY phenomenon appears around the installation of some services necessary for the cities, but considered harmful for residents, which admit the necessity but far from their houses (Bobbio, 1999). As a result, the geographical proximity becomes one of the factors that contribute to create the local opposition, in the sense that when the distance respect the installation increases, the interest of neighbours reduces (Dear, 1992).

The phenomenon of NIMBY has been so dominant in North America that many acronyms have been created around the proliferation of excluding feelings: NOOS (Not On Our Street) and LULU (Locally Unwanted Land Uses) are concepts quite general and descriptive that state some territory uses are not well seen from the local arena. The expansion of NIMBY to the green movement has brought the slogan NOPE (Not On Planet Earth). Some authors have showed the connection between the citizens’ mobilization and the politician behaviors and have created NIMTOO (Not In My Term Office) or NIMEY (Not In My...
Election Year). At a technical level it has appeared NIMO (Not In My Office), and the association of NIMBY feelings with the movements against economic growth have created CAVE (Citizens Against Virtually Everything). Finally, the regressive syndrome of “everybody stopped” moves from NIMBY to NIABY (Not In Anyone’s Backyard) or to BANANA (Build Absolutely Nothing Anywhere Near Anybody) (Dear, 1992; Faggi & Turco, 2001; Bobbio, 1999; Sancassiani, 2005; Nel·lo, 2003; Lewanski, 1997).

The organization of opposition groups in NIMBY syndrome is similar. All have the objective of protecting a social status ponderously reached, to avoid the decreasing of real state values or to prevent to be exposed to new risks. Anyway, one of the common causes of NIMBY syndrome is the lack of balance between costs and benefits of the installations. That means benefits of this type of installations or equipments are diffused among a large community, while costs fall on small groups of residents. For that reason, NIMBY label is often used when the foreseen intervention answers to general logics, which tends to consider the welfare of the whole society, while the opposition bases its arguments only on local considerations. At the same time, opposition groups follow only a selfish reflex, because they will accept the intervention elsewhere (Nel·lo, 2003).

In that sense, the NIMBY prospect seems to deny the possibility to see local vindications as a favourable frame to make comprehensive some supra-local dynamics that have their expression in concrete territories. Another important debility of the approximation of this phenomena of urban planning conflicts as NIMBY is the lack of historical prospect. The label understands that we are in front of an isolated phenomenon, that do not have connection among the different conflicts, and that start and finish with the project that they reject. The research has shown us how these conditions do not appear, but exists a willingness of coordination among mobilizations, the activists that leader the mobilizations have a long trajectory in some cases, although protest is cyclical, the organizations that have initiated mobilizations persist on time.

In fact, it seems insufficient and unsatisfactory to analyze the mobilization studied in this research exclusively from a NIMBY perspective. If these mobilizations are not considered as an isolated phenomenon, selfish, spontaneous and limited in time, it is necessary to study its roots and analyze the history of social Catalan movements to understand its apparition, characteristics and development. For that reason, we have to explain the origins and the evolution of two basic referents for mobilizations defending the territory: the neighbour movement and the green movement.

Both the green movement and the neighbour movement have been considered as expressions of new social movements. New social movements started to arise during Sixties, but in Spain, Franco’s Dictatorship delayed their appearance.

3.2. Last tendencies in the Catalan green movement
In Catalonia, participative ecological coordinated organizations at state level cohabit with organizations at a regional level and other groups that do not take part of these networks. One of the characteristic elements of Catalan green movement is the large number of associations, coordinators and independent committees that exit. This plurality of the movement is characterized by a tacit division of work (thematically and territorial) and by a collaborative climate.

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5 We consider the definition of social movements of Tarrow (1997:21): “collective challenges posed by persons that share common objectives and solidarity in an interaction maintained among elites, opponents and authorities”.
Since the end of the Eighties, the green movement is in a process of expansion and territorial dispersion. At the same time, collaboration among different ecological associations with other types of associations, through the constitution of civic committees to coordinate protests or impulse in common local projects is increasing. The existence of these platforms shows a process of enlargement of the ecological groups’ network to neighbour associations, trade and farmers unions, organizations of consumers, pacifist and anti-militarist collectives, and other non-governmental organizations (Tello, 2000). At the same time, together with this tendency of network enlargement, we can observe a change of strategy passing from the protest and reaction of concrete projects to the proposal of alternative projects. Although this climate of collaboration exists, Jiménez (2003) and Tello (2000) agree that it is predictable that conflicts among organizations of different area of territorial actions increase, because of possible contradictions between the global and local objectives.

Regarding the agenda of the green movement, Mora (2004) remarks new vindicative fronts: the energetic question, the alternative energy resources, the waste management, the critic of the big infrastructures, the communication routes, the pollutant industry, the non-controlled urbanization, the massive tourism, and the massive extraction of natural resources. It seems that has started a tendency of enlargement of themes managed by ecological groups, and progressively they create an integral vision of the problematic while working together with other types of associations.

3.3 The neighbour movement as embryo of the movement defending the territory?

The emergency and organization of the neighbour movement was during the Sixties. In front of the urbanization and services lacks in suburbs inherited from the Dictatorship, associations of neighbours were created and started to vindicate concrete problems. It was during the second half of the Seventies that the movement consolidated when the majority of urban interventions planned by the administrations involved the associations. The associated, with the help of professionals of urbanism, started to draw up alternative plans delivered to administrations. It is difficult to understand the impact that neighbours associations had in that moment without taking into account the implication of persons, cultural collectives, and professionals that consolidated the movement through the technical assessment and their contribution with a more global vision of urban problems.

With the establishment of the Democracy the movement entered on a period of decadence because of the loss of clear objectives in a new context, the entry of association leaders and professionals into the public administration, and new policies to improve quality of life in suburbs. Since the Nineties, urban movements reformulated their discourses and objectives, although urbanism has continued as the main theme of the neighbour movement.

If at the end of Franco’s Dictatorship the neighbour movement represented a node for urban movements, two decades later it had a secondary role since nowadays when exists a constellation of movements.

At an internal level, the neighbour movement carries some problems since the beginning of its crisis. For example: the lack of generational relief, the loss of members, the slow opening of new themes, the rigid internal functioning, etc. The weak situation of neighbour associations has definitively contributed to the creation of alternative opposition groups and citizens’ committees as new forms of organization of collective action.
4. The identification of the actors appeared in urban planning conflicts

Conflicts usually have their origin in a project or an urban plan that pretends to develop a specific area and that bursts into public light quickly, or by the public exhibition that plans must be put under or by its appearance in mass media. In most of the cases, the plan is written up by city council and the confrontation often establishes two sides. Next we will analyze each one of the agents who take part in this type of conflict, how they are organized, what roles adopt and what strategy establish.

4.1. Citizens’ committees

In most of conflicts the opposition is not promoted in first person by pre-existing organizations (local public administrations, political parties, civic associations or environmentalists) but that is sponsored by the mobilized citizens.

Citizens form in committees spontaneously, for example, after the announcement of the writing of an urban plan that tries to urbanize a zone of a municipality. That fact, for example, is considered detrimental by citizens and they understand that the model of development of the municipality must take another direction. Citizens’ committees exert a leader role within the opposition groups and are those that promote the protest since they root easily in the social weave.

Citizens organize themselves with the aim of becoming an audible interlocutor for the administration so they create a committee or association in signing a manifesto in order to try to modify (introducing its proposals) or to abolish the plan. Therefore, this kind of organizations are destined to dissolve once has finished the fight, or because they have been able to influence in the content of the plan or because this one has been written up without listening the protests.

In this situation, committees of citizens have been often stigmatized like NIMBY. As we have said previously, they are associated to a preservative behaviour and egoistic motivations, in the sense of opposition to the general interest and to fragmented actions. But in all the conflicts committees do not develop a protest based on these arguments, in many cases, the opposition tries to modify the plan with arguments not so local and considering the general interest.

The citizens’ committees adopt flexible and diverse forms of coordination among them, but the majority usually make decisions in assembly and act like pressure groups. Although in many cases they adopt a reactive character since the object of their mobilization is to avoid the damage that they think it would be derived from the decisions that the administration tries to take, we can say that type of attitude is rather characteristic of an initial phase of the conflict. In some cases, we have detected that in advanced phases of the conflict, citizens try to enlarge their arguments with more universal values so contributing to legitimize their position and accepting to enter on negotiation processes since they recognize that this strategy can contribute more benefits in the long term (Buso, 1996; Della Porta & Diani, 2004).

Citizens who take part of these committees are able to answer with arguments of technical and scientific base and to debate a determined project with the pertinent language with politicians and municipal technicians. Anyway, as we will see ahead, they usually look for support in independent experts in advising and legitimating to their speeches in order to strengthen their position. Also, they make contact with active local ecological associations
creating complex relations of interchange in which associations offer organizational resources and information, whereas committees make available human resources for protest actions. In addition, they look for an ally in local mass media to expand their influence area and to reinforce themselves as another actor in the conflict.

Citizens’ committees tend to highlight their distance with respect to the politics world and emphasize their independence although they do not doubt in using institutions and political parties in order to enter the process of decision making and to modify the urban project. In this sense, we can say that they tend to replace political forces as the only true and legitimate form of representation of the interests that are considered harmed by decisions of the local government.

4.2. The neighbours associations
As we have seen, in Catalonia the neighbour movement has a long tradition. During the Seventies, the associations of neighbours (of a block of houses, a street, or a district) were protagonists in the relations with the local administrations as representatives of the citizenship. During the Eighties, the writing of new urban plans was essential for the urban recovery of inherited cities of the Dictatorship. The writing of these was raised like one of the first actions of democratic city councils because of the pressure that exerted the citizens with their vindications.

During the elaboration of these urban plans, associations of neighbours had an important role in the public discussion, because city councils made efforts to spread information and to foment the participation of organizations and public in general in conferences, round tables and informative sessions (Ferrer & Sabaté, 1999). It was an urbanism engaged in a dialogue with the same society where often the neighbour associations transmitted the voice of the citizens.

Unlike the committees, these associations have a structured and hierarchic organization. Elections are made to choose a president and a secretary and vowels are chosen. Citizens pay a quota, so associations usually have more economic resources than citizens’ committees. Then, the president is the legitimated representative of those citizen partners. As result, is seen by local governors like valid interlocutors and mediators among politicians and citizenship.

With the proliferation of the citizens’ committees, the fragmentation of the representation of the citizens is higher and sometimes neighbour associations continue to appear (or they are recognized) as valid interlocutors. The proliferation of new types of citizens’ organizations apart from the neighbour associations shows that citizens mobilized do not trust on associations of neighbours, which have lost the legitimacy in appearing like the unique representatives of the citizens.

In reference to the conflicts, both groups of actors not always assume the same positions, sometimes share ideas and they appear like collaborators and accomplices, others differ and hold positions separated, and in others the neighbour associations do not take part of the conflict. Another distinction is the different temporary character that both groups assume: highly ephemeral ones, others have been perpetuated for thirty years, often with the same circle of leaders. Neighbour associations enjoy, then, of a position of privilege because they have access to city councils since they have been present in the urban scene for a long time and the relations that maintain with politicians are closed.
4.3. Local administration

Often, administrations recognize the lack of initiatives to prevent negative reactions by local communities and recognize that it is difficult to anticipate them. According to Bobbio (1999), the underestimation of the protest is one of the most persistent characteristics of the administrations. Local administrations tend to do not worry too much about conflicts that can generate their initiatives. Moreover, they trust excessively in the kindness of their own decisions, the technical studies and the force of the law.

In many cases, public administrators are surprised by a protest that they did not foresee or that thought they were able to surpass with facility. In the case politicians suspect that their decision can imply a negative feedback in citizenship, they choose to present the decision in the last moment and they stay “in silence” during the process of writing with the aim that the opposition raises later, when it is more difficult to vary the project. They forget that also in apparently calm situations, the conflict can appear at any time.

In conflict situations, the distance among politicians and citizens is translated in an attitude of not considering seriously neither the representation of citizens organized in committees nor the claims or proposals that they do. This fact increases the level of the protest and citizens try to convince local governors and municipal technicians, who tend to work without looking for interlocutors and debating those projects and plans that they write up.

Once the conflict has exploded, local governors tend to use the protest to des-legitimate it and to convince to the public opinion of the irrationality of the protest. The used arguments make reference to the little representation of who lead the protest, the low rationality of his arguments, the little technical consistency or the low reliability of the same protest.

As we have said, governors tend to give little importance to the protest since they think it is organized by a reduced number of agitators who do not represent the whole population, which supposedly would be silent. As a consequence, local politicians tend to not consider agitators, avoid to maintain relations with them and prefer to have contact with the associations of neighbours settled down for years. The result is the tension of the conflict, since citizens organize themselves to appear like an interlocutor to the administration. In most cases, when local governors realize that those agitators represent sufficient population establish conversations to approach positions.

In some occasions the protest has been used politically by some political parties. The opposition parties choose to give support the protest following their own aims. In these occasions, citizens also use to those political parties that offer support to them as an access door to the political scene. As a result, a reciprocal use occurs where both actors receive compensations.

4.4. The “independent experts”

We have observed a certain confidence in the value of science on the part of activists; since at the moment that begins the campaign tend to look for scientific arguments to legitimize their position. The interest by problematic in question and the search for advisers make citizens to learn and acquire scientific criteria since the technical character of the urban policies gives preference to those actors who are able to debate.
Committees tend to look for critical experts to contrast with them—in a consultative form—the project elaborated by municipal technicians. Thus, committees surround themselves by lawyers, architects, city planners, geographers, etc., in order to receive different opinions and to find arguments to refute the plan promoted by the administration. They receive advices and suggestions from counter-experts (in the sense they oppose the municipal technicians) (Lewanski, 1997). Lawyers help to design a strategy in the legal frame; other experts help to translate citizens’ desires into concrete proposals. As result, in a short time members of the committees acquire new technical knowledge that allows them to refute with founded arguments political positions.

Previously, we have described the relations of network that settle down between committees of citizens, ecological associations and mass media in terms of exchange of information and experiences, mutual support, joint design of strategies, etc. We have also noticed that relations between independent experts are settled down, which share points of view and experiences and that can be identified in conflicts of a specific geographic zone. Therefore, they also enter in that network of support and information exchange, and the label of “independent experts” is granted to them.

4.5. The mass media

The mass media exert as the canals through which speeches of the actors who take part in the conflict are announced. On another side, mass media appears like another actor since they can influence the development of the conflict and the strategies of the other actors. In relation to the opposition groups, the mass media exert a function of spreading (with a less technician language) their proposals and claims.

In that sense, they help citizens’ committees to spread their message, to expand their area of influence, and sometimes extending the number of people who give support to them. The diffusion in form of news of the urban planning problems in which environmental criteria take part, of the location of certain equipment, or the type of adequate urbanization represents the diffusion of knowledge, values and criteria that without the conflict would not have been put on the table.

Nevertheless, the intervention of media can produce consequences in the opposite sense. The continuous appearance of this kind of news can produce apathy to those that “are tired to hear always the same”. In addition, media usually have interest in those more stirring cases, so this can entail a selection of conflicts. Therefore, all the committees will not find in mass media the same support.

In conflicts, the mass media exert a springboard role. At the moment that arrives to public light that a certain group of citizens is displeasured with the decisions of the administration, politicians tend to react quickly to avoid the boom that the continuous presence of the protests of the citizens in mass media can represent in terms of loss of confidence on the part of the citizenship, expansion of the conflict or loss of political legitimacy.

4.6. The environmentalist associations

During the last few years, environmentalist organizations have tended to institutionalize. In Catalonia, those with a local character have more impact in the urban planning conflicts.

They are associations that unlike citizens’ committees have a more structured organization that allows them to persist in the time, although sometimes have a lower capacity of mobilization. Normally, they have more economic and human resources so they can
establish a core group that develop a daily work and, in some cases, on salary. Lewanski (1997) visualize their organization with the metaphorical representation of the planet divided by half in which different “less and less hot” concentric layers in relation to their sensitivity towards the environmental subjects and to their disposition to mobilize themselves are distinguished. The centre is the hard bone that is made up by those more involved with the association, which exert a direction activity and usually they can decide what positions the association takes in front of different conflicts. Surroundings to this nucleus we found the circle formed by militants who participate actively in first person to activities organized by the association. Consecutively there is a third circle formed by partners who only contribute in material resources in form of the associative quota or in form of generic support. We could still find another structured circle less structured and made up by those supporters that regularly vote green parties and that can be punctually mobilized, without maintaining a permanent connection with the association.

This type of structure allows the association to develop a more constant work that another more ephemeral organizations, like the citizens’ committees. Environmentalist associations elaborate studies by their own, investigate and track activities of urban planning of administrations, interchange information (either with the committees or with other associations), incorporate experts to their structure, elaborate an own discourse and they try to take part in the elaboration of urban plans promoted by the administration.

5. Conclusions

5.1. How is structured the protest?
As we have seen, during the Seventies and the Eighties many of the citizens’ vindications were lead by neighbours’ associations and canalized, through political parties, towards the governmental institutions in order to be able to take part in the process of decision-making. At the moment, citizens go directly to the public sphere by means of protest forms trying to call the attention of mass media to show publicly their disagreement with the administration. The distrust in the parties and the crisis of the traditional forms of democratic representation causes that citizens only trust on the own capacities and they choose to organize themselves the protest. In addition, the weakening of the parties also influences the vindications of the citizens: they avoid basing their arguments on ideologies and they are satisfied with the fulfilment of the own vindications.

In any case, this critical attitude respect the institutional forms does not prevent that citizens, organized in associations or committees, enter to the public scene, trying to put pressure on politicians, participating in the urban planning process with political parties and governors. In addition, citizens’ use all the institutional channels to fulfil their objectives.

In most cases, when the conflict bursts, during a first stage of confrontation, neither the promoters of the urban plan nor the opponents show signals to accept negotiation. Some conflicts do not advance and continue in this first stage, because both proponents and opponents (or one of them) do not want to change their position and they do not admit to enter on a dialogue process. This type of attitudes occurs both on the part of the administrations that are convinced to carry out their decision, and on the part of who refuses the execution of the plan. This situation establishes as result a winner part and another loser.
Most of conflicts enter on a second phase when a process of public participation is opened to try to solve the conflict. Normally, when citizens realize that pure confrontation and local arguments are not sufficient for the modification of the plan, they try to change their discourse with less reactive arguments and more proposals in order to be able to demand their participation in the re-elaboration of the project. In this way, they can exert more pressure towards the politicians, who can offer (or no) the possibility of opening a dialogue and negotiation. Often, when the pressure is high and the mass media put the conflict into public light, politicians tend to settle down some mechanism of negotiation to arrive to a position of consensus between both parts.

Usually we can see how, on the one hand, the isolation of the administrations and their politicians who, too much convinced of their decisions and of their legitimacy to exert their power, adopt overbearing attitudes in front of the citizens organized in committees. On the other, citizens’ only trust on their own to obtain their vindications. Both, citizens and politicians need the conflict and benefit from it: ones, to participate and to influence public decisions; the others, to react from an autistic attitude and to question its decisions.

With the analysis of the actors who take part in the urban planning conflicts, we can see that the organizational structure of the protest is based on interactions among the different opponents groups: environmentalist associations, citizens’ committees, neighbours’ associations, administrations, independent experts and mass media. Relations of friendship among members of the different groups are common. This fact allows to create a network of actors with close relationships through which they interchange resources and information, create alliances and design common strategies. Committees, independent experts and environmentalist associations with experience in other urban planning conflicts adopt a role of advisers for those committees that are in an initial phase and they help them to elaborate a discourse, a strategy and proposals.

These contacts among ecological associations and citizens’ committees have settled down “coordinating organizations”. This new kind of organizations, called by their own as “mobilizations defending the territory”, join different collectives and individual citizens. They have been created to coordinate the local actions in order to be able to act at a regional level. The “coordinating organizations” usually are organized in working groups that work following the guidelines agreed on the assembly. They are characterized to have a larger objective than citizens’ committees and have more capacity of mobilization than ecological associations. They are constituted with the aim of denounce the lack of territorial planning and promote a new model of territory development, less extensive and more comprehensive with natural spaces. Annually, they organize a meeting where citizens’ committees and ecological associations are also invited.

5.2. Towards a new movement defending the territory?
Since now we have talked about citizens’ mobilizations in defending the territory, understood as these forms of collective action that deal with the use and management of territory. From “mobilizations” we can move to talk about “movement” if these mobilizations take part of a larger process of mobilization. Such a process should try to create a common consciousness about those problems that face in different conflicts, as well as the objective of sharing strategies maintaining the autonomy of each collective (Alfama et al., 2006).

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6 Catalonia is regionally divided provinces and then in “comarques”, which are groups of municipalities. These organizations are coordinated territorially at that level.
On one hand, the willingness of organizing meetings, sharing experiences, establishing a certain level of coordination and the creation of an own discourse indicates we can affirm that the transformation of some sectors of the current neighbour and green movements exists. The embryo of this change would be represented by the “coordinating organizations” created by ecological associations and citizens’ committees. It seems it is too early to affirm that this represents the embryo of a new social movement, because the strategies of action used, the discourses elaborated do not differentiate too much from those of the green and neighbour movements.

On another hand, we can query about the utilization of the term “defence”, because more than a descriptive word of the supposed movement, we should understand it as a strategy more of these groups in order to create a framework of reference favourable to their interests. If you have to defend, it is supposed that it has been an attack, an aggression done by somebody aimed to hurt, in that case in your territory. In fact, it assumes that the group that promotes the mobilization considers itself as a legitimate spokesperson of the territory interests that are being damaged by the aggressor (Alfama et al., 2006). According to the perspective that studies the creation of frames of meaning, one of the main works in the collective action is that of creating cognitive frames orientated to legitimate its own action, expressing an injustice, pointing out a guilty, generating identity and promoting collective action as a change mechanism of the situation defined as unjust (Gamson, 1992). The label “groups and committees in defending the territory” is part of this strategy that do not exclude the use by this groups of technical, political, social or economic arguments to justify their positions and actions.

Finally, we can affirm that labelling these mobilizations as NIMBY seems to be overly limited. The complexity of discourses, strategies and relationships with other associations, experts or media of the current Catalan citizens’ mobilization in urban planning conflicts do not correspond to the NIMBY syndrome. On the other hand, the background of green movement and neighbour movement and its links with current mobilization have enriched discourses, strategies of collective action and have helped to create a dense network of fights. This do not suppose the disappearance or conversion of the green and neighbour movements, but we are in front of a new form of collective action that lives together with the others and takes part of the same cycle of protest.

Bibliography


