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Catalan diplomatic presence and actions in the Mediterranean

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Abstract
Paradiplomacy is the diplomatic practice of sub-state entities. Catalonia is often cited as one of the textbook examples of this form of diplomacy. From the outset, Catalan paradiplomacy had a clear focus on three geographical areas: 1) the European Union at large, 2) the Mediterranean region, and 3) Latin-America. Due to the regions' location, the consecutive Catalan governments developed a robust diplomatic policy aimed at the Mediterranean region as a whole and at positioning Catalonia as a bridge between the Mediterranean and Europe.

Keywords
Diplomacy; Paradiplomacy; Catalonia; Sub-state Diplomacy; Mediterranean Region

Resumen
La paradiplomacia es la práctica diplomática de las entidades subestatales. Cataluña se cita a menudo como uno de los ejemplos modelo de diplomacia. Desde el principio, la paradiplomacia catalana tuvo un claro enfoque en tres áreas geográficas: 1) la Unión Europea en general, 2) la región mediterránea y 3) América Latina. Debido a la ubicación de las regiones, los sucesivos gobiernos catalanes desarrollaron una sólida política diplomática dirigida al Mediterráneo en su conjunto y a posicionar a Cataluña como un puente entre el Mediterráneo y Europa.

Palabras clave:
Diplomacia; paradiplomacia; Cataluña; diplomacia subestatal; región mediterránea

The Generalitat seized the opportunities of the EU's Mediterranean policy, with the launch of the so-called "Barcelona Process" in 1995, as well as with the establishment of the headquarters of the Secretariat of the Union for the

Mediterranean in the city in 2008. Catalonia also heavily invests in a great number of transnational, interregional and cross-border initiatives within the Mediterranean region, both within the context of European territorial policies, and on its own account. Its network of civil, cultural, academic and economic actors in the Mediterranean region likewise affirms Catalonia's presence as a key player in the region.

In doing so, Catalonia wants to reaffirm its position as a "stateless nation", with a historical tradition as one of the Mediterranean region's key players. Just as other sub-state entities within the Mediterranean, Catalonia is once again taking up various economic, social and other links that so flourished in the region before the hardening of diplomatic borders.

However, paradiplomacy can turn into protodiplomacy, as the Catalan example showcases. The region's diplomatic activities are sometimes described as "protodiplomatic", referring to the autonomous community's endeavors to instrumentalize its diplomacy to gain external support for its nationalist and independentist political goals.

The ongoing political instability in the Southern Mediterranean, as well as the growing political and societal polarization within the Spanish context, highly accelerated by the 2017 independence referendum and its juridical-political aftermath, have however emphasized the limits of Catalan diplomatic voluntarism. It is still uncertain whether Catalonia will soon take up its successful Mediterranean diplomatic practice, or that this will only be a rather short intermezzo, starting from the early 1990s that has come to a slow halt.

This article will first present an historical sketch of the current Catalan diplomatic presence within the Mediterranean, after which an overview will be presented of the actors, instruments and practices of its diplomacy. Finally, we try to answer the question whether the successful Catalan paradiplomacy was only a short historical intermezzo that was halted by the more nationalist inspired practice of protodiplomacy .

1. Historical sketch of the current Catalan diplomatic presence within the Mediterranean

The unification of Spain under the Catholic Monarchs Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella of Castile at the end of the fifteenth century, and the development of Spain's colonial empire after the Treaty of Tordesillas, shifted the economic and political centre of gravity from the eastern Kingdom of Aragon to central Castile. Still, during the early modern epoch, Catalonia could maintain its own governmental structure of the *Generalitat.* This changed during the Spanish War

of Succession at the beginning of the eighteenth century, which ended in victory for the Bourbons over the Habsburgs. The *Decreto de Nueva Planta* (Decree on the Rebuilding) of 1716 marked the abolition of Catalonia's political institutions. At the same time, however, Catalonia saw a substantial demographic and economic boom, resulting in one of the earliest industrializations of Europe.

Because of the existing tensions between Spain's socio-economic and political institutions and the new reality of Catalonia's export-driven economy, a sense of its own identity grew in Catalonia, which gained a cultural and political dimension in the form of the *Catalanism* movement, a broad cultural, social and political movement advocating more autonomy or even independence for Catalonia (Ardèvol, 2000)[1]. After the Spanish defeat against the United States in 1898, resulting in the loss of its remaining colonies, *Catalanism* also became highly political with the advent and success of the Regional League (*Lliga Regionalista*). During the first half of the twentieth century, Catalan nationalism obtained a distinct left-wing character, which was only accentuated during the installation of the Catalan Republic in 1931, Catalan's short-lived autonomy after the adoption of the Catalan Statute in 1932, and the subsequent Spanish Civil War, which ended in the total abolition of all Catalan institutions and imposed censorship on the Catalan language (Richards, 1998, p. 127).

After the decease of Spain's dictator General Franco in 1975, Spanish society changed fundamentally. The socio-cultural movement of the *movida*, which rapidly spread from Madrid to the rest of Spain, had its political equivalent in Spain's transition to a liberal parliamentary democracy. One of the key characteristics of this new political reality was the conversion from a highly centralist state to a decentralized one. The new Spanish Constitution of 1978 saw the beginning of the typical Spanish system of devolution, which can best be described as asymmetrical federalism (Agranoff, 1999) among the seventeen autonomous communities. In this system, the different constituent units were granted a certain degree of autonomy, which was then negotiated with the central government in Madrid and laid down in a Statute of Autonomy, which was approved in 1979. Initially hailed by the historic nations of Spain (Catalonia, Galicia, the Basque Country and Andalusia) as a way to connect with their past autonomies, it is increasingly countered by the central government in Madrid's attempts to unify and standardize Spanish devolution arrangements in what regional nationalists have labelled '*cafè para todos*' (coffee for everyone, or the same degree of autonomy for every region).

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[1] *Catalanism* can be regarded as an emanation of the larger European Romantic movement, in which nationalism, cultural romanticism and a religious revival went hand in hand.

The provision of the Spanish Constitution states that foreign policy is the exclusive domain of the Spanish state. Catalonia's *Generalitat* nevertheless makes ample use of its competences as listed in the Statute, often stretching them to the limit in order to put Catalonia on the international map. This has been done in three consecutive phases, coinciding with the different Catalan political majorities: a centre-right nationalist (1980-2003); a centre-left nationalist (2003-2010); again a recent centre-right nationalist (2010-2015) and what one might call a government of national unity (since 2015).

One of the main advocates for and protagonists of Catalonia's external activities was Jordi Pujol, who was president of the *Generalitat* from 1980 until 2003. During his long-standing presidency, Pujol became the architect of Catalonia's foreign policy, forging it as an international public relations strategy, in which the president of the region became the embodiment of Catalonia (Paquin and Lachapelle, 2005, p. 84). When Spain joined the European Union in 1986, this was heralded by mainstream Catalan nationalists as an opportunity to further their economic, cultural and political aspirations (Keating, 2000, p. 32). Especially after the signing of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, Catalonia seized the chances offered by the new European reality, defined by the principles of multi-level governance and subsidiarity, namely the establishment of the Committee of the Regions, the creation of European funding and programs, and the possibility for regional governments to gain access to the Council of Ministers.

It is difficult to underestimate the role of former but now politically and legally disgraced Catalan President Jordi Pujol in forging Catalan diplomacy. For 23 years from 1980 onwards, he presided over the *Generalitat* in a highly personalized manner (Dowling, 2009). Catalonia's diplomacy was indispensable for the further development of both basic axes of *Catalanism* (Xifra, 2009, p. 70): the defense of Catalan identity; and of Catalonia's economic assets. For Pujol, securing Catalonia's place in the world went hand in hand with coping with the economic imperatives posed to a region like Catalonia by economic globalization. One of the key instruments used by Pujol was his 'presidential visits'.

Pujol's personalized style of engaging in numerous contacts with policy-makers abroad often resulted in the conclusion of international agreements of all sorts. The current diplomatic concepts and instruments of Catalonia's *Generalitat* largely find their origins in the Pujol presidency: the delegations abroad and signing of international agreements; the concept of the double export (the simultaneous export of economic and cultural products); a distinct cultural identity; the importance of so-called network and cross-border

diplomacy; and the reliance upon civil society. The Pujol administration always operated within the boundaries of the Spanish constitution. In this way, it repeatedly managed to occupy a key position at the negotiating tables of various Spanish governments.

Pujol's centrist party, CiU, did not manage to maintain its majority at the regional elections of 2003, which resulted in a left-wing tripartite coalition government, led by socialist Pasqual Maragall i Mira. Political tensions between the socialists and the nationalists of *Esquerra Republicana* resulted in an unbundling of Catalan diplomacy from 2003 to 2010, in which the *Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya* (PSC, Socialist Party of Catalonia) president became responsible for European policy, while the nationalist ERC vice-president acquired responsibility for Catalonia's external relations. The period 2003-2010 saw a gradual deterioration of the relations between Madrid and Barcelona, including on issues in the (para)diplomatic realm. Catalonia's *Generalitat* advocated a more assertive and nationalist diplomatic discourse, less focused on cooperation with the central government. The left-wing tripartite only managed to stay into power until the end of 2010, when the CiU, this time under the presidency of Artur Mas, regained control of the *Generalitat*.

Due to its deteriorating relations with the central government in Madrid (i.a. on the Autonomy Statute of Catalonia), Artur Mas decided to organize a (non-binding) Catalan self-determination referendum. It was held on Sunday, 9 November 2014, albeit in defiance of the Spanish government and the Spanish Constitutional Court. 80% of the 37% of Catalans that showed up voted in favor of Catalan self-determination. This prompted Mas to hold new snap elections, in order to obtain a strong(er) parliamentary pro-independence majority. The 2015 regional elections were won by the new party "*Junts Pel Si*". This was the Catalan political alliance and parliamentary group focused on achieving the independence of Catalonia from Spain, it was composed of the Democratic Convergence of Catalonia (CDC), the Republican Left of Catalonia (ERC), Democrats of Catalonia (DC) and the Left Movement (MES). Even though they did not win half of the Catalan votes, they obtained a parliamentary majority. Shortly after the government was formed, it resolved to hold a referendum on independence, which resulted in a major political and constitutional crisis in Spain. During this period, Catalan diplomacy became distinctly proto-diplomatic. The government actively advocated Catalan independence and sought to promote this idea to its external interlocutors. A campaign to gain support for the cause of independence was launched, mainly in a EU-context.

The central government of prime minister Rajoy firmly opposed the validity of the referendum and promised to take every possible step to prevent it. The

referendum was held on October 1, 2017 amidst of considerable force used by the Spanish police and despite its suspension by the Spanish constitutional court. In the end 42% of Catalans entitled to vote cast their ballot, which turned out to be in favor of independence with more than 90% of these votes. On 27 October, then president of the *Generalitat* Carles Puigdemont declared the independence of Catalonia, after which the Spanish government invoked article 155 of the Spanish constitution in order to take direct control of the region. The first measures taken by Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy after the approval by the senate was to fire the Catalan President and his cabinet, dissolving the Parliament of Catalonia and scheduling fresh Catalan elections in December 2017. Owing to the combined performance of Puigdemont's *Junts per Catalunya* (JuntsxCat) and ERC, parties in support of independence maintained their majority in the election, meaning that it was mathematically possible for a pro-independence coalition government to return to power, despite their overall majority having been reduced by two seats. On 22 January 2018 Catalan Parliament President Roger Torrent officially proposed Puigdemont to be president. However, on 27 January 2018 the Constitutional Court of Spain ruled that Puigdemont, who had been living in exile since 30 October 2017, could not participate in any investiture debate via video conference or by getting another MP to read his speech and that he had to appear in person in parliament after receiving "prior judicial authorization". The ruling effectively blocked the investiture of Puigdemont who faced arrest on charges rebellion, sedition and misuse of public funds if he returned to Spain.

As the political impasse continued Puigdemont came under pressure to step aside. On 10 May 2018 Puigdemont nominated Quim Torra, the so-called "plan D", to be president. On 19 May 2018 Torra announced his new government of 13 ministers, two of whom were in jail (Josep Rull and Turull) and two were in exile (Comín and Lluís Puig). The Spanish government condemned the inclusion of jailed/exiled politicians as provocative and refused to approve Torra's appointments or to revoke direct rule. Faced with this opposition Torra announced a new government on 29 May 2018 without the jailed/exiled politicians. In one of his last acts, ousted Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy ordered that direct to rule be lifted as soon as the new ministers were sworn in. On 2 June 2018 the new ministers were sworn in at the Palau de la Generalitat de Catalunya, ending seven months of direct rule. A few days later, Mariano Rajoy's government did not survive a motion of non-confidence and was replaced by the socialist Pedro Sanchez. Catalan diplomacy came out of this period very battered. Not only had the protodiplomatic lobbying for recognition from foreign partners failed completely. Lines of communication

with the central government were also completely cut off. As a result, Catalonia was no longer able to influence either the negotiating process in the formation of Spanish governments or the Spanish decision-making process.

2. The practice(s) of Catalan Mediterranean diplomacy

In order to get a better grip on the concrete practices of Catalonia's Mediterranean diplomacy, we use the analytical model of Johnson and Hall, breaking diplomacy down into three major – essential – aspects: representation, communication and socialization. In overviewing these three essentials, the actors, models, strategies, practices and instruments of contemporary Catalan paradiplomacy will come to the fore.

3. Representation

The first dimension of sub-state representation is formalistic representation. This is the legal framework wherein the practice of sub-state diplomacy is demarcated, or the institutional arrangements that precede and initiate representation. Formalistic representation deals with the questions of which legal person is represented. These institutional arrangements can be found in the various regional charters or statutes, as well as in the constitutions of the countries to which our sub-state entities belong.

The establishment of official diplomatic relations – including the sending out of diplomatic representatives or the establishment of diplomatic representations – has always been regarded as a defining attribute of state sovereignty. It is no wonder, then, that states have been reluctant to recognize the right of their constitutive units to establish diplomatic representations. Yet as sub-state entities over time gained more autonomy or were assigned more policy responsibilities, the imperative to develop their own apparatus of diplomatic representation increased. A great number of Spanish autonomous communities established their first diplomatic representations prior to obtaining legal approval to do so. They sidestepped this politico-legal ambiguity by relying on semi-public or private consortia to represent only portions of their international agency, such as cultural and economic promotion. In this manner, diplomatic practice preceded the legal normalization of this practice.

The Catalan Statute of Autonomy of 2006 states that 'In order to promote the interests of Catalonia, the *Generalitat* may establish offices abroad' (art. 194). Moreover, the *Generalitat* also participates 'in accordance with the State, in designation of representatives in the framework of the permanent State

representation in the European Union' (art. 187.3), and 'the *Generalitat* may establish a delegation to better defend its interests before the institutions of the European Union' (art. 192).

Catalonia was the Spanish pioneer in Brussels. This was a result of the re-establishment of the long-forbidden Catalan parliament and government, the *Generalitat* in 1977, and the new statute of 1979 as part of the democratization process after the death of Spain's dictator General Franco. The new *Generalitat* understood that in order to enhance Catalonia's position inside the Spanish territorial context, it had to graft new-born Spanish regionalism to the emerging European regionalism, which would only gain momentum after the signing of the Maastricht Treaty and the establishment of the Committee of the Regions (see below). Catalonia opened its Brussels office in 1986, even before Spain became a European member state. This *Patronat Pro Europa* was conceived as a consortium with juridical personality, consisting of the *Generalitat*, the Catalan chambers of commerce, a number of Catalan banks, colleges and universities, as well as the municipality of Barcelona.

The Catalan structure was set up by the government of then President Jordi Pujol to avoid problems with the monopoly on diplomacy that was claimed by the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. To showcase its goodwill towards the Spanish diplomats, the *Patronat* continuously sought to cooperate with Spain's permanent representation in Brussels, unlike the Basque Country, which deliberately risked a constitutional conflict in this matter (Nagel, 2009). The Catalan Patronat Pro Europa was reorganized into a full-fledged diplomatic delegation by the centre-left government in 2005. It became the *Delegació de la Generalitat Davant la Unió Europea* (Delegation of the *Generalitat* to the European Union), directly dependent on the presidential cabinet.

The establishment of the Committee of the Regions at approximately the same time (1994) was a further impetus for the establishment of sub-national representations in Brussels. The Committee was designed – in line with the spirit of the Maastricht Treaty – to bring the EU's 'third level' (the first and the second being the Union and the states) into the deliberation of European legislation (Christiansen, 1996, p. 93), as well as to close the gap between the integration process and European citizens by bringing Europe closer to the local level. Various European sub-state authorities, especially by German Länder, had long been lobbying for the Committee, and its establishment has pushed the Spanish autonomous communities – especially Catalonia, Andalusia and the Basque Country – to develop a more political and less functional type of European diplomatic representation, one that does not so much deal with lobbying, interest promotion, information management, networking, liaison

among local and regional authorities and the EU (Huysseune and Jans, 2008, p. 5), but instead with representing the regional government, its population and its territory (Matia Portilla, 2003). According to Decree 325/2011 of the Catalan *Generalitat*, the delegations are responsible for the representation, communication, defense and promotion of the interest of Catalonia and the Catalan government, whereas the Andalusian delegate in Brussels only represents the regional Junta and not the region as such (decree 164/1995).

The case of Catalonia is also the most outspoken when it comes to emulating official diplomatic representation, which time and again has caused distrust from the central government in Madrid, especially from the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The right to open foreign delegations is affirmed in the Catalan Statute (art. 194), and according to the Strategic Plan for the external relations of the Catalan government, Catalonia's delegations are 'responsible for the regular representation of the government within their geographic area'. The first of these governmental delegations was the House of the *Generalitat* in Perpignan, just across the Spanish-Catalan border with France in the French region of Languedoc-Roussillon. This delegation has only increased in importance since the revamping of the Euroregion of the Pyrenees-Mediterranean and the *Generalitat*'s subsequent intensified cooperation with the Regional Council of Languedoc-Roussillon. It is also – together with the delegation in Alghero in Sardinia – one of the vanguards of Catalonia's language diplomacy, the international strengthening of the Catalan language in all places where Catalan or languages related to Catalan is spoken, such as French Roussillon, Valencia, or the Balearic Islands. This linguistic policy is highly contested by other Spanish regions. Valencia, in particular, regards this as the Catalans stealing all the attention from its own language. During the opening ceremony of the Catalan delegation in Alghero, then Minister of Foreign Affairs Carod-Rovira stressed the importance of this 'Catalan embassy' in bringing all Catalan speakers closer together:

> This is an important step in the reconstruction of the unity of all the territories that share our Catalan culture and language, in strengthening the cultural and linguistic ties, but also in offering better services to all our citizens. We not only want to give impulses to our culture, but also to our economy, our commerce, our transportation and services, in the service of our citizens.[2]

[2] '*La Generalitat abrirá "embajada" en l'Alguer*', in: *e-noticiés*, 31 March 2009 <https://politica.e-noticies.es/la-generalitat-abrira-embajada-en-lalguer-27667.html> (u.a. 30/12/2020).

The *Generalitat* of Catalonia has opened a number of full-fledged governmental representations during the last decade – in London, Paris, Berlin, New York, Rome, Vienna, Lisbon, Stockholm, Genève, Riga and Zagreb. This opening of diplomatic representations was one of the main realizations of the nationalist-leftist tripartite that governed between 2003 and 2010. Notably, the nationalist vice-president and minister of foreign affairs, Josep-Lluís Carod-Rovira, stressed the importance of a diplomatic network abroad as a means to set Catalonia on the international map[3]. A second surge was to be seen in 2019, when the Generalitat opened its delegations in Stockholm, Riga, Vienna and Lisbon.

Most of these offices are conceived as Catalan Houses, incorporating both political and other representations, such as the cultural-linguistic Institute Ramon Llull, the Catalan Institute of Cultural Industries (ICEC), the agency for export promotion Acc1o, and Tourism Catalonia. They serve as bilateral diplomatic representations to the host countries, but also as an intermediate between the *Generalitat* and multilateral institutions that reside in the host countries, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Paris and the various multilateral institutions in New York and Geneva, with which the *Generalitat* cooperates in the context of its Multilateral Development Cooperation Strategy (such as the UNDP, UNRWA, UNIFEM and UNFPA[4], to name a few).

Catalonia's Foreign Policy Strategy explicitly advocates a diplomatic 'upgrade' for its delegations and delegates *vis-à-vis* the central state so that 'the delegations and their staff can make full use of the rights, immunity and privileges provided for in the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations' (p. 48). This clearly goes against the grain of the Spanish Constitution, which affirms that the Spanish head of state has the sole responsibility for diplomatic accreditation (art. 63) and that Spain is exclusively responsible for international relations (art. 149). According to Freres Kauer and Sanz Trillo (Freres Kauer and Sanz Trillo, 2003, p. 283), the chance of the Spanish government ever granting diplomatic status to Catalonia's representations (as is the case with the delegations of the Belgian regions) is virtually nil.

Of all the foreign representations, the governmental (or political) representations are only a small fraction. The economic (or commercial) representational network established by the regions clearly exceeds the political

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3 See 'La nueva "diplomacia" catalana', *El Pais*, 5 April 2010.

4 Respectively the United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Relief Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, United Nations Development Fund for Women, and the United Nations Population Fund.

one. Attracting FDI and supporting the internationalization of Catalan enterprises has always been one of the priorities of Catalonia's international engagement. The year 2008 saw the merging of the Catalan Consortium for Commercial Promotion (COPCA), the government body responsible for promoting exports of Catalan enterprises with CIDEM, the business development centre, into Acc1o. Acc1o is the Catalan government agency responsible for innovation support, business internationalization and attracting inward investment. Catalonia's strategic location makes it prone to positioning itself as an access point to international markets, especially in North Africa and Asia, and as an economic crossroad of the European Union and the African and Asian continents (Government of Catalonia, *Foreign Affairs Strategy* [hereafter FAS], 2010: 26). COPCA's former network of international offices formed the basis for the network of Acc1o business promotion centres. Besides offering support to the Catalan business community in the areas of foreign trade promotion and investment attraction, these 40 offices are also an integral part of the network of Catalan government delegations. According to the new foreign representation model (FAS, 2010: 49), the foreign Acc1o offices can also perform other 'diplomatic' tasks in those countries where other government or sectoral offices do not exist.

As well as political and commercial network, regions can also rely on other forms of regional representation. These can take the form of cultural houses abroad and tourist offices. Sometimes, particular cultural houses are housed in different buildings, and sometimes the regions practise so-called 'co-location'. This system of co-location is most outspoken in the case of the Catalan houses, which cluster the political, economic and cultural representational dimensions.

Once again, the Catalan *Generalitat* has taken the lead in setting up a number of these offices. First, Catalonia opened a number of tourist offices in 12 countries all over the world. The *Agència Catalana de Cooperació al Desenvolupament* (ACCD, Catalan Agency for Development Cooperation) opened four delegations: in Maputo, Managua, Bogotá and Dakar, but all of these had been closed in the aftermath of the economic crisis. Currently, the ACCD only has once again re-opened a number of offices, notably in Colombia, Mozambique and Morocco. The Catalan cultural centre Ramon Llull, which is affiliated with the *Generalitat*, owns offices in Paris, London, Berlin, and New York, whereas the *Institut Català de les Empreses Culturals* (ICEC, Catalan Institute for Cultural Industries) has offices in Brussels, London, Paris, and Berlin.

The *Generalitat* of Catalonia also leans on its diaspora community to develop and radiate further its international presence and visibility. Catalan

communities abroad are an integral part of Catalonia's presence in the world (Clavell, 2010, p. 239) and are – in the terms of the region's international strategy – 'agents of public diplomacy' up to par (FAS, 2010: 78) in promoting and representing the region and its interests abroad. To this end, Catalonia has set up a support mechanism, both financial (consisting of subventions, grants and online support) and institutional (in the form of the *Consell de les Comunitats Catalanes de l'Exterior* (Council of Catalan Communities Abroad)). This council is a quasi-parliamentary body, presided over by the president of the *Generalitat*, and consisting of representatives of Catalan communities abroad, members of the government and the Catalan parliament, as well as of Catalan political parties and other Catalan organizations, such as the Institute Ramon Llull, the *Institució de les Lletres Catalanes* (ILC) and the *Institut d'Estudis Catalans* (IEC).

Together with the Basque Country, Catalonia has the most developed system of diaspora diplomacy in Spain, not only because of political preferences but also because of historico-cultural reasons, as Basque and Catalan people living abroad frequently maintain a highly shared sense of belonging to a distinctive collective identity (Cornago and Aldecoa, 2008, p. 16). The more than 120 communities abroad, together with more than 200 internationally recognized Catalan organizations, an international network of over 160 universities that have a chair in the Catalan language, or Catalan studies in 28 countries, form the backbone of the Catalan diasporas. These diasporas can and must be – according to Ernest Benach i Pascual, president of the Catalan Parliament from 2003 until 2010 – the ambassadors of being Catalan:

> They also committed, firstly, to opening their doors to the host societies that welcome them now just as they have welcomed them from the first moment, to enable them to get to know Catalonia. Secondly, they committed to promoting their activities and Catalan culture among their members, and to local and international society using all means at their disposal; thirdly, to collaborating with other institutions and entities in local outside events and activities; fourthly, to exchanging experiences within that context and to working together to fulfil their objectives and to be ambassadors of 'being Catalan'; and finally, to exercising public diplomacy (Benach i Pascual, 2007)[5].

These 'ambassadors by vocation' (Buxaderasi Sans, 2006, p. 9) have recently been supported by 'special envoys' from the capital. Since 2006, a rotating pool

[5] 'Catalan communities abroad will integrate young people into their administrative organizations in order to guarantee generational succession'; Conference of Catalan Communities of the Southern Hemisphere, Santiago de Chile, 30 October 2007.

of graduate and undergraduate students have travelled to assist and support the Catalan communities abroad for a period of six months.

Symbolic representation is about the way in which a representative stands for the represented, or the meaning that a representative has for those being represented. Today, symbolic representation primarily relates to diplomats not only representing their sovereign – whether this is a head of state, a territory, or an elected parliament – but also certain ideas. In doing so, diplomacy can transcend the realist concepts of diplomacy as 'one of the lesser tools of foreign policy' (James, 1993), in that it is mainly a vehicle to represent national interests and national power. Without minimizing or disavowing the importance of representing interests and power, diplomacy throughout history has been not only guided by the raison d'état, but also by the raison du système (Watson, 1982), the system being both the international society of states and the international objective of a just, universal and stable peace (Macomber, 1997, p. 26), or simply the professional system of the diplomat's day-to-day business that is the corps diplomatique.

Representing ideas in the context of sub-state diplomacy, however, can also entail the externalization of the concepts of political autonomy and sovereignty for non-state entities, as well as the internationalization (to use a term that is continuously used by sub-state diplomats themselves) of the identity of their polity. Presenting and representing the 'fet català'[6], a practically untranslatable term for the Catalan cause, or Catalan being, is one of the main implicit goals of Catalan sub-state diplomacy (Guerrero i Tarragó, 2007, p. 55). The fet català is the combination of Catalonian activism, whether separatist or federalist, combined with consciousness about the history of Catalonia and the values of Catalan culture, language, the economy and social system. Catalonia's former President Pujol affirms that only a few European 'stateless nations' possess the same willingness to go abroad and inform the world about their cause:

> Very few are as consistent as ours. As regards fully fledged nations, there is the Basque Country and the two nations of Belgium, the Walloons and the Flemish. There are also the Scots and the Welsh. Scotland, despite the Act of Union with England, preserved many features of its nationhood, with its civil law code, an education system and a culture of its own. Apart from that, there are regions that are much less powerful from a national point of view. What makes them a nation is having a national consciousness and a language of their own (Pujol, 2011, p. 58).

[6] Literally 'fact', meaning singularity.

The Catalan cause converges with 'a certain idea about the Mediterranean, which has also to be disseminated in the international arena', as is the idea of French Mediterranean regions that differ in a great number of cultural and societal aspects from more northern regions of Europe.

4. Diplomatic communication

Language is not only an identity marker (Edwards, 2009); international recognition of a region also becomes one of the reasons that regions are going abroad (Keating, 1999, p. 13). This is most striking with regions with strong nationalist and even separatist movements or political parties, such as Catalonia, but is also applicable for regions with less outspoken nationalist movements.

This issue is most salient in Catalonia, where the language question has always been high on the political agenda, including the international one. Language is a political theatre in Catalonia, as a quarrel between the Spanish Minister of Education José Ignacio Wert and the Catalan *Generalitat* showed in 2012, when Wert proposed an education reform curtailing the Catalan language in Catalan schools and also enhancing the role of the Spanish language in other autonomous communities. This prompted vehement reactions from Catalan Education Minister Irene Rigau, who judged it inconceivable to adopt this piece of Spanish legislation, no matter the consequences, and the municipality of Bellreguard in Valencia declared the Spanish minister "persona non grata"[7], a diplomatic stance indeed. This political sensitivity about language matters finds its origins in the centuries-old linguistic conflicts within the Spanish state.

Catalan, a Romance language that is related to Occitan and Aragonese, originated out of Vulgar Latin during the early Middle Ages and reached its literary and cultural peak in the fifteenth century. After this so-called Valencian 'Golden Age', the importance of the language declined as a result of Spanish unification and the subsequent power shift from Catalonia-Aragon to Castile. The use of the Catalan language became forbidden on different occasions[8], but after the return of Spain to democracy its importance swiftly grew and it is now the official language – together with Spanish – in Catalonia, Valencia (where it is called Valencian) and the Balearic Islands. In Andorra, it is the only official

[7] 'El municipio de Bellreguard (Valencia) declara "persona non grata" a Wert por su trato a las lenguas cooficiales', *La Vanguardia*, 13 December 2012.

[8] Notably in French Catalonia in 1700 after the Treaty of the Pyrenees and again after the French Revolution; in Spanish Catalonia after the *Nueva Planta* decrees at the beginning of the eighteenth century and more recently during the Francoist years (1936–1975).

language, while it has a semi-official status in the city of Alghero in Sardinia, Italy.

Defending and promoting the Catalan language has always been one of the priorities of the Catalanist movement, which in the nineteenth century began as a romantically and literary-inspired linguistic movement[9]. Only later did the defence of Catalan culture and language become intertwined with the aspirations for greater political autonomy, but language has always remained one of the cornerstones of Catalan political action, be it as part of the federalist and regionalist currents of Catalan nationalism, or the more independentist and pan-Catalan currents.

There is broad consensus on the value, importance and meaning of the Catalan language, including its defence against other languages (notably Spanish, but also French and English) and the value of its international promotion. The Strategic Plan of International Relations of the Catalan *Generalitat* sees the Catalan language as one of the defining traits of Catalan society:

> Catalan society has certain characteristic traits that enable it to be identified as a national community built on the foundation of a social structure, a culture, a language, a history and a geographic location that places it in a privileged position as a North-South crossroads between Europe and the Mediterranean (FAS, 2010, p. 16).

It is also an element of Catalonia's uniqueness:

> There is no other stateless culture with an international outreach and a cultural, scientific and industrial output and language of its own comparable to Catalonia. Catalan has the thirteenth highest number of speakers in the European Union, ahead of Danish and Finnish, and it has a number of speakers comparable to Swedish, Greek and Portuguese. Specifically, over nine million people speak Catalan, and over eleven million understand it (FAS, 2010, p. 17).

Promoting the Catalan language and culture thus form the crux of Catalan 'identity that characterizes us as a society open to dialogue, pluralism and diversity and with a clear aspiration to prosper and interact freely with other cultures from around the world to our mutual benefit' (FAS, 2010, p. 33). It will come as no surprise, then, that the international projection and promotion of the

[9] Prominent figures of this first generation of Catalanism were priest Jacint Verdaguer, poet Joan Maragall and writer Manuel Milàì Fontanals.

Catalan language is high on the region's diplomatic agenda, an endeavour for which the *Generalitat* is closely collaborating with institutional partners such as the Ramon Llull Institute, Catalan universities, or the Catalan observatories and communities abroad. The *Generalitat* has moreover been very active in a campaign to raise the status of its language as an official European language. Defending its own language abroad has made Catalonia an international expert 'in the defence of non-state languages and cultures and of linguistic and cultural pluralism', a role that the *Generalitat* wants to maintain to position 'itself as a privileged interlocutor for many other governments with similar interests' (FAS, 2010: 100). It is therefore no coincidence that the *Generalitat* invests in what it has labelled 'cultural paradiplomacy' (Petit, 2008), a diplomacy specifically aimed at the promotion and dissemination of cultural diversity as a governance model.

Diplomatic talk can also be conveyed through words, as well as via non-verbal means. Non-verbal means can be broken down into diplomatic signalling, the body language of individual diplomats, or the use of specific images to illustrate the message that a polity wants to externalize. Images of different sorts are of paramount importance for international and diplomatic intercourse, since they have a more direct appeal, also to a non-professional – that is, non-diplomatist audience – while at the same time bypassing the difficulties and ambiguities of the 'speaking in tongues' that comes with diplomatic talk (Hermann and Voss *et al.*, 1997). Spatial imageries are especially important in presenting the diplomatic Self in relation to all diplomatic Others. These spatial images are to be found in the official and non-official cartography that is used by sub-state entities. Cartographic representations of the world and the place of the Self therein relates to the mental maps of the sub-state diplomats (see below). Cartographic (re)presentation is never an innocent, let alone an objective or scientific endeavour. Maps, as the most used form of cartographic representation, are a means of seeing, displacing, but also of ordering space, particularly political space. In the words of Gerald Ó Tuathail, maps are all about organizing, occupying and administering political space (Ó Tuathail, 1996, p. 1).

First, the Foreign Affairs Strategy of the government of Catalonia puts the autonomous community's territory at the centre of a stylized globe and disproportionally enlarged. The same publication depicts a map of the priority countries for Catalan region's diplomacy, symbolizing Catalonia's position as a bridge or a mediator between the European Union and the Mediterranean.

Fig. 1. The cover of the Generalitat's Foreign Affairs Strategy with Catalonia as the centre of the globe

Fig. 2. The priorities of Catalonia's diplomacy: At the juncture of the Mediterranean and the European Union (source: website of the Generalitat of Catalonia)

The territory of the current Autonomous Community of Catalonia is but one part of the geopolitical representation of the *Generalitat*. By pulling the card of the Catalan language and culture, Catalonia figures among the European languages spoken by a medium-sized population[10]. Cartographic

[10] Official communication of the *Institut* Ramon Llull.

representations of Catalan speakers carve out a significant piece of the Spanish territory, as well as small parts of southern France, Andorra and the tip of Sardinia.

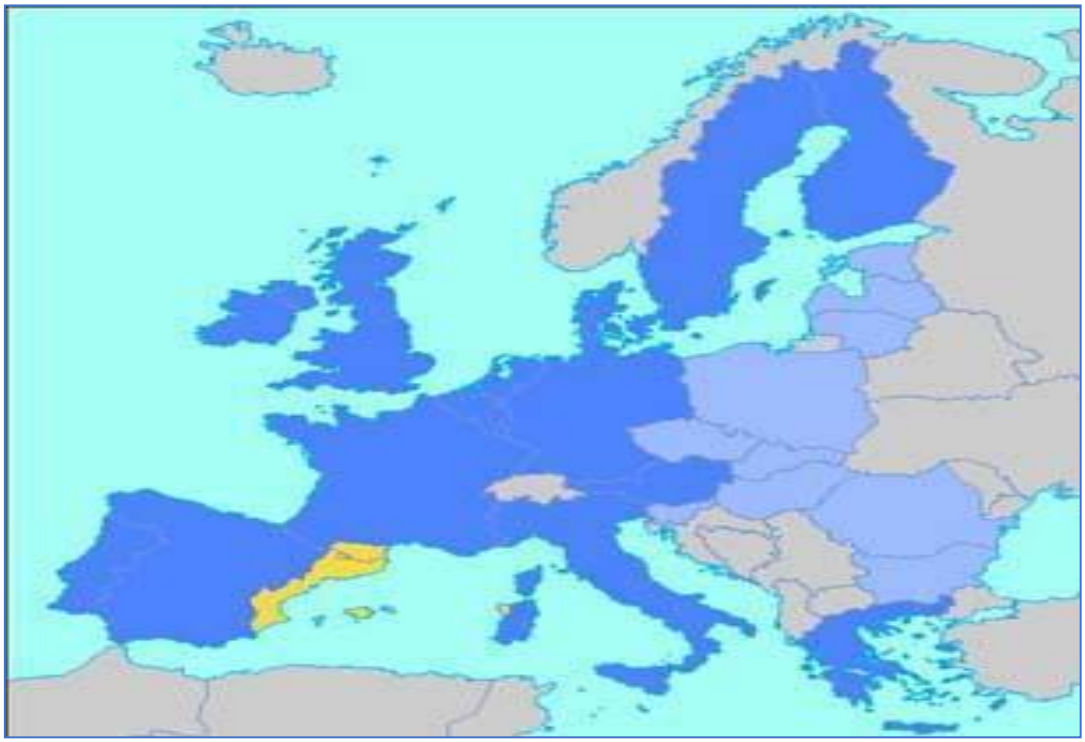

Fig. 3. The Catalan language as a medium-sized European territory (source: UCSD Social Sciences, 2010)

When preparing, developing and implementing foreign policy (strategies), statesmen, diplomats, civil servants and other policy-makers not only rely on objective and irrefutable data regarding their work terrain. More often than not, their actions are defined or even determined by their view of the world, as it is shaped by former experiences, education, social background and even unconscious psychological factors. Together these elements make up the so-called 'mental maps' of decision-makers.

Jordi Pujol, the long standing president of the Catalan *Generalitat* is considered the 'godfather' of Spanish sub-state diplomacy and Catalan foreign policies. Indeed, his presidency was one that particularly aimed at enhancing Catalonia's stature in the global realm. From the outset, Pujol recognized the importance of a foreign audience and external partners to achieve his domestic goals. He was not only the prime architect of Catalonia's diplomatic practices – including the establishment of diplomatic offices abroad, the signing of

international treaties, and embedding Catalonia in as many international organizations and networks as possible – but was also and still is one of the key political thinkers and even ideologues on Catalonia's place on the international map. Over the years, during his presidency as well as afterwards, Pujol turned out to be a prolific writer on diverse topics such as Catalan identity and history, Europe, the economic crisis, religion, spirituality and the importance of education. His latest publication is a comparative study of the place of Catalonia in Spain, in which he states the case for more autonomy within a Spanish context, as is the case in Canada for Quebec:

> At any rate, between independence and being the Spanish Quebec, many people would vote for the latter. But it may well be that for Spain the status of Quebec is as unacceptable as independence. While we await the day of a hypothetical officially binding referendum, the Catalans do have one clear objective: to strengthen ourselves internally. We need to strengthen our economy, our cultural creativity, our civil society. Without expecting any help or justice. Yet with the confidence we have in one fact: in Catalonia we have a country. There are people with initiatives. Now as well, despite the crisis and Spanish hostility. And if we have a country we have a future. And day by day the country will use its right to decide (Pujol, 2011).

According to Pujol, Catalonia's territorial location determines its political and diplomatic vocation. Catalonia is, on the one hand, more than other Spanish autonomous communities a European territory: from the times of the Carolingian Empire until the European integration policies, Catalonia has embraced the European values of democracy, economic growth and the welfare state:

> […] from its birth as a nation within the Carolingian Empire to the integration in the European Union, Catalonia has welcomed with more intensity than the rest of Spain all that it represents: democracy, economic growth and the development of the welfare state[11].

Catalonia, on the other hand, also has an important role to play in the Mediterranean, the real important border of Europe, since this is the border of economic underdevelopment, demographic explosion, migration, fundamentalisms and even terrorism:

> […] the most important border for Europe is not the East; it is the Mediterranean.

[11] Speech by Jordi Pujol at the conference *Catalunya, Europa i la Mediterrània*, 24 March 2009.

> It is here that we find the border of underdevelopment, of the demographic explosion, of migration, and even of various fundamentalisms that can turn into terrorism[12].

More radical in his stance towards both Catalan independence and the role of diplomacy in gaining this independence is former Catalan Vice-President Josep-Lluís Carod-Rovira. A former political prisoner under General Franco's regime, Carod-Rovira became the president of the separatist party of Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya. After the installation of the nationalist left-wing tripartite in 2003, Carod-Rovira became Catalonia's vice-president with a portfolio of diplomatic and foreign relations. Under his ministership, the erstwhile highly fragmented and dispersed diplomatic activities of the Generalitat underwent a process of streamlining, focus and professionalization. A broad national conversation was held on Catalonia's diplomatic priorities. Under the auspices of the Patronat Catalunya Mon, a private-public body representing both the Generalitat and the broader Catalan civil society, this national conversation resulted in the articulation of an ambitious foreign policy strategy. According to Carod-Rovira, this strategy is needed to strengthen further the region's diplomacy and nation-building policy, since 'Catalonia's world is the whole world. Catalonia has always viewed internationalization as an obligation and a responsibility, an opportunity and a mission which cannot be avoided if we wish to exist, since we only exist in relation to others'[13].

One of the key instruments for achieving the goal of Catalan independence through a more robust diplomacy of its own is the opening of real Catalan embassies[14]. A very revealing text to gain more insight into the mental maps of Carod-Rovira is the lecture that he gave at the London School of Economics in 2008 entitled 'The Role of Catalonia in Europe of the Twenty-first Century' (Carod-Rovira, 2009). Transforming the stateless nation of Catalonia into a new European state of Catalonia is the main objective of the region's diplomatic activities, but this does not limit itself to Catalonia in sensu stricto, but also to the Catalan linguistic and cultural community:

> The European framework is meaningless without Catalonia, and Europe is not complete without Catalonia. [...] The Catalan culture, the Catalan linguistic space,

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12 Speech by Pujol at the conference *Catalunya, Europa i la Mediterrània*, 24 March 2009.

13 Carod-Rovira, 'Introduction' to FAS, 2010, p. 11.

14 See, for example, 'Carod aprove charei vindica en Israel la utilidad de las "embajadas" catalanas', *ElMundo*, 17 November 2008; 'Diplomàcia catalane', *Directe!Cat*, 23 February 2011; and '¿Y tu también, Cataluña?', *ElMundo*, 27 July 2012.

includes part of the French state (northern Catalonia), a non-EU member (Andorra), the totality of Catalonia, Valencia and the Balearic islands, as well as a strip of territory in Aragon in the Spanish State, and an enclave on the Italian island of Sardinia (L'Alguer) (Carod-Rovira, 2009).

The third dimension of sub-state diplomatic communication is public diplomacy. Over the years, sub-state entities have become more active in the field of public diplomacy (see Criekemans, 2008; Huijgh and Melissen, 2008; and Duran and Criekemans, 2010), although some of them are being bogged down in the embryonic stages, where public diplomacy becomes merely a borderline activity of image-building (Huijgh, 2009, 1). Even more important for sub-state communication is the related phenomenon of cultural diplomacy[15]. This form of diplomacy turned out to be a very rewarding and uncontested way of being present in and presenting oneself to the world, connecting to Others and looking for common ground. Culture in *sensu lato* surpasses the confinements of politics, of state and other borders, foreign policies and governments. It would be too much to deal with here, let alone thoroughly analyze, this broad conception of culture, which can be used as a synonym for all that human communities have produced. Culture, in this sense, is related to evenly broad and multifaceted concepts, such as civilization(s), heritage, and communities, etc. Culture in the strict sense of the word deals with the artistic or creative products, or with concrete utterances, of a specific social group, such as gastronomic culture, festive culture, or folklore.

Cultural diplomacy can be found at the junction between culture in *sensu lato* and culture in *sensu stricto*. It entails the exchange of cultural features – whether real cultural products or ideas – between states and other polities as a means of diplomatic interchange. As Keating, Loughlin and Deschouwer illustrate, the existence or construction of a cultural identity goes hand in hand with its projection or instrumentalization in the diplomatic field, in order to inscribe oneself in a global or globalized context (Keating, Loughlin and Deschouwer, 2003). Cultural diplomacy has been a key instrument of state- and nation-building. Highly centralized or centralizing states in particular have made ample use of this diplomatic instrument in order to project the nation's identity and uniqueness to both foreign and domestic audiences (Gienow-Hecht and Donfried, 2010). Spain wasn't an exception to this rule. During the 19th and 20th

[15] The Report of the Advisory Committee on Cultural Diplomacy of the US State Department even goes as far as to label cultural diplomacy the linchpin of public diplomacy, 'for it is in cultural activities that a nation's idea of itself is best represented' (US State Department, 2005: 4).

centuries, the country developed a robust system of cultural diplomacy, aimed at strengthening the national identity, labelled "Hispanismo" (Nino Rodriguez, 2017). The promotion of this central Hispanismo became particularly poignant during periods of domestic turmoil, such as the Spanish civil war (Nino Rodriguez and Rospir, 2018).

As a counterpoint to this centralizing cultural program, Catalonia, developed its own system of cultural diplomacy, labelled the 'double export' (Bizoux, 2006), where cultural and economic exports go hand and hand and reinforce one another. Catalonia pursues an explicit public diplomacy strategy. Catalonia's leap onto the public diplomacy train was initiated by former President Jordi Pujol, who understood the importance of public diplomacy for a stateless nation such as Catalonia, in that it enforced both of the basic axes of political Catalan nationalism: the defence of Catalan national identity; as well as the promotion of Catalonia's economic interests (Garcia, 1998, *passim*). The centre-left tripartite that governed the region from 2003 until 2010 took Catalonia's public diplomacy to a new level. This was primarily an effort to institutionalize and streamline the erstwhile disparate public diplomacy efforts of the Pujol government (Huijgh, 2010, 141). To this end, implementing a public diplomacy strategy that projects Catalonia's image to the world is one of the axes of the *Generalitat's* overall diplomatic strategy. Public diplomacy is defined in the region's Foreign Affairs Strategy as 'the entire set of initiatives and actions taken by both the government and civil society with the aim of informing and influencing public opinion, both national and international, in line with the image that Catalonia wants to project' (FAS, 2010, 71).

A Directorate for International Promotion of Catalan Organizations Abroad was installed in 2006 within the Secretariat for Foreign Affairs to support all sorts of Catalan organizations going abroad (sports clubs, writers, theatre companies, but also trade unions and environmental activists, etc.), because these cultural, sporting and economic actors all represent the diverse interests of Catalan society abroad, while projecting a given image of Catalonia (FAS, 2010: 76). This image consists of Catalonia being a cultural nation, with a centuries-old highly developed distinct culture, which is neither Spanish nor French, but that is Mediterranean; a commercial nation with a different commercial and even economic logic than the rest of Spain; a sporting nation, of which our soccer teams are but one of the hundreds of internationally renowned sportsmen and women.

A specific quality of Catalonia's public diplomacy strategy is its inclusive character, in that the *Generalitat* actively seeks dialogue with non-governmental actors to formulate and carry out its objectives. International relations study,

observation and research centres such as the *Institut* Ramon Llull, CIDOB, *IeMed*, the *Patronat Catalunya Mon*, the *Casa Amèrica* and *Casa Asia*, as well as local NGOs, universities and private companies, are solicited to cooperate in forging the region's image and strengthening international awareness about Catalonia. As well as these non-governmental actors, the main players in Catalan public diplomacy are the governmental delegations and the Catalan diaspora, as it is organized in the Catalan *casals* (Catalan communities abroad), which are considered by the *Generalitat* to be civil society ambassadors of Catalonia abroad (Xifra, 2009, p. 71). All these societal actors come together with representatives of the *Generalitat* in the new 'Committee on the Brand Catalonia' (*Comité Marca Catalunya*), which is presided over by the *Patronat Catalunya Mon*.

The terms of reference of the already existing *Patronat Catalunya Mon* were considerably broadened and rebranded as "Diplocat", so that the public-private consortium now combines its previous objectives of networking, informing and promoting on and about Catalan society at home and abroad, with the former mission of the directorate to support Catalans and Catalan organizations when going abroad. In October 2017, the Spanish government decided to close the consortium in application of article 155 of the Spanish Constitution. It has now been reinstalled under the government of Quim Torra. According to the new secretary-general miss Laura Forester, Diplocat will be "exporting the image, assets and values of Catalonia abroad."

As mentioned above, Catalan language is one important dimension of the region's international brand. Together with culture, it is one of the assets of Catalonia's image (FAS, 2010, 79), which has translated itself into a linguistic policy, but also into a cultural diplomacy strategy. Catalonia's cultural diplomacy is being co-organized by the Secretariat of External Affairs and the *Generalitat's* Department of Culture. Catalan cultural policies consist of a number of partly overlapping areas, being heritage, language, creation, local involvement, associations and internationalization. The *Àrea de Relacions Internacionals del Departament de Cultura* (Department of International Relations of the Ministry of Culture) coordinates all aspects of the region's cultural diplomacy in a number of areas. The first is the increasing importance for the region of the Pyrenees-Mediterranean Euroregion, which not only broadens the scope of Catalonia's cultural policies, but also enhances its posture as a French-Spanish powerbroker. The region is also – together with Flanders, the Basque Country and Quebec – one of the most active lobbyists in EU and UN discussions on cultural diversity, especially within the Council of Europe and UNESCO. The *Institut Català de les Indústries Culturals* (ICIC, Catalan Institute of

Cultural Industries) takes care of the more economic dimension of the 'double export' of Catalan cultural diplomacy. Through its offices in London, Paris, Berlin, Milan and Brussels, the ICIC promotes Catalan cultural industries and products in the broadest sense of the word.

5. Socialisation

Socialization is the third dimension of any form of diplomacy, be it state or sub-state diplomacy. This can be done by either adopting or adapting to customary diplomatic norms, rules and practices; by engaging in bilateral or multilateral cooperation; or by joining international organizations and/or networks. By engaging with international Others, polities 'diplomatize' themselves in the world, and become practitioners of diplomatic norms and customs. Adhering to so-called diplomatic norms is illustrative of what Jozef Bátora calls the Janus-faced character of diplomacy. On the one hand, by virtue of representing the interests of a particular polity, diplomats are the emanation of particular sovereignty; on the other hand, they form a transnational group of professionals with a shared corporate culture, norms, codes, entry procedures, professional language and socialization patterns (Bátora, 2003, p. 1).

Above all, in – but surely not exclusively limited to – the European Union, sub-state authorities have been adopting a three-sided strategy to enhance their international stance, aimed at the national, the EU, and the international (or transnational) level. Each of these levels make up another stratum of the reterritorialization of sub-state diplomacy. The first stratum deals with diplomatic relations within the context (or the confinements) of the states of which sub-state entities are a constitutive part. Spanish sub-state entities come together nationally to deliberate in domestic multilateral negotiations with other regions and with the central state. Co-regional authorities and the central government thus form the first layer of the diplomatic Other of sub-state diplomacies. It is here that the territorial exclusivity of the state is being reshaped by sub-state actors that are constructing new patterns of political space (Zanon, 2011, p. 329).

The second stratum of reterritorialized sub-state diplomacy consists of dealings with the different EU institutions, such as the Committee of the Regions, but also of sub-state entitities' involvement in the many strands of EU-initiated territorial policies. These include the various cross-border, transnational and interregional programmes, as well as the new territorial constructs that are the Euroregions and the macro-regions. To achieve these

contacts, regional authorities are often obliged to make an institutional detour via their central governments or via other players.

The third layer consists of the various ways in which the other – mainly Mediterranean – diplomatic Others are being approached by means of network and organization diplomacy, as well as bilateral and multilateral contacts, also in the context of decentralized development cooperation or sub-state foreign aid. This is the place where regional authorities are at their most autonomous, in that they are not embedded in the national diplomatic frameworks, which still play a strong role in the first two layers, but act in their own right and in their own name. It is also here that Catalonia is at its most "Mediterranean", in that it is actually developing its own Mediterranean strategy aimed at the year 2030.

These three strata make up the concentric and overlapping circles of sub-state diplomatic socialization, in which sub-state entities engage with: (1) their nearby Others (the central state and co-regions); (2) the European Other (the various EU territorial programmes and groupings); and (3) the Mediterranean Others (geographic and functional international networks and organizations).

Spanish federalism, because of its asymmetrical nature, is less prone to establishing formal consultation platforms between the different governmental levels. Yet functional decentralization and ongoing European integration processes have resulted in the emergence of multilateral sectoral conferences, especially the *Conferencia para Asuntos Relacionados con la Unión Europea* (Conference on Issues Related to the European Union), a consultation body for the Spanish Ministry of Public Administration and the autonomous communities regarding EU issues, and by bilateral committees, of which three were initially established – one with Catalonia, one with the Basque Country and one with the Canary Islands (Martin y Pérez de Nanclares, 2004) – but which now encompass practically all Spanish autonomous communities. However, these intergovernmental structures have a distinct hierarchical nature, in which Madrid continues to decide when and where to meet, as well as which agenda is being set. Besides, the two intergovernmental bodies on decentralized cooperation – the inter-territorial commission and the sectoral conference – between the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the various autonomous communities suffer from the fact that these are only informal institutions that convene on a very irregular basis. The discernible difference between the elaborate system of French and Italian intergovernmental structures, on the one hand, and the modest and irregular Spanish model on the other hand is to be found in the political antagonism between the central state

and the various historical nations with strong nationalist political traditions, especially Catalonia and the Basque Country.

The EU offers various paths towards the socialization of paradiplomacy. Since the mid-1980s, European policies have been identified as a key variable in the empowerment of regions (Pasquier, 2009, p. 123). The process of European integration has challenged and is continuously challenging the foundations of Westphalian diplomacy, in that bilateral relations between the EU member states are increasingly conducted within a single European sphere, while the EU itself is transforming into a genuine diplomatic actor (Bátora, 2003, p. 21). By pooling sovereignty and advocating the governmental principle of subsidiarity, the European Union has also contributed to recognition of the political agency of regional authorities. A vast corpus of literature has treated the phenomenon of sub-state diplomacy through the lens of Europeanization, or the adaptation of EU member states to the institutional and policy requirements of the European Union (Graziano and Vink, 2007).

Indeed, the ongoing European integration has coincided with devolution processes within European countries. In the words of André Lecours, the EU has become one of the main opportunity structures that enable sub-state entities' diplomatic activities (Lecours, 2002, p. 12), making the Commission and the European regions objective allies in the context of the European integration process. Over the years, the European Union has been recognizing and supporting its regional governments as political actors, both domestically and internationally, via: (1) the creation of the consultative bodies of the Committee of the Regions and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe in 1994; (2) the recruitment of regional authorities as partners in implementing European structural policies within the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy of the European Commission; (3) the Committee on Regional Development, as well as the territorial interregional groupings of the European Parliament; and (4) the provision that EU member states can be represented in the Council of Ministers by representatives of their respective constituent units (Cornago, 2010, p. 20). This last provision, however, turns out to be more an exception than a rule.

Catalonia was initially – together with the German *Länder* – one of the great lobbyists for the establishment and broadening of the Committee of the Regions. This was done in concert with the Spanish Permanent Representative, illustrating the sometimes close cooperation between the Spanish government of Felipe Gonzalez and the CiU-governed *Generalitat*. The *Generalitat*'s expectations about transforming the Committee of the Regions' power were initially very high. During his presidency of the Committee of the Regions,

Pasqual Maragall even advocated a substitution of the European states with the reality of the European regions (Trouvé, 2010, p. 162). This initial Catalan enthusiasm gradually turned to scepticism, since neither its plea for the removal of municipal representatives nor for a clear political operationalization of the principle of subsidiarity have been conceded. Moreover, since nationalist and even independentist tenets have come to dominate Catalan politics, Catalonia increasingly adheres to Groucho Marx's quip that it does not wish to become a member of a club that would accept it as a member (Rubert, 2010).

Both the Committee of the Regions and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities are often portrayed as ineffective because of their disparate composition, consisting of representatives of regions, provinces and municipalities, and their 'entrenched internal divisions and functional overreach in the absence of any real influence' (Christiansen, 1996, p. 93). From a constitutional level, the Committee of the Regions has made some important steps forward, although it still remains the weakest of the European institutions. From a political point of view, however, as a means to mobilize regions on the international level and as a nexus of communication among sub-state levels of government (Loughlin - Seiler, 1999, p. 736), its value is of great importance for the further development of sub-state diplomacy in Europe, as a number of our interviewees have confirmed. Especially since the Treaty of the European Union and the Amsterdam Treaty have set out the policy domains in which the European Commission and the Council have to consult the Committee of the Regions, the Committee's policy scope has been considerably broadened. With economic and social cohesion, trans-European infrastructure networks, health, education, culture, employment policy, social policy, the environment, vocational training and transport, a great deal of the EU's activities are covered. Moreover, the Committee of the Regions has the right to refer cases on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality to the European Court of Justice.

Besides, with the installation of the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM), the Committee has taken a marked 'Mediterranean turn' during recent years. This Mediterranean focus can be considered a return to the situation prior to the adherence of Northern and Eastern European regional and local entities during the second half of the 1990s and the first decade of the 2000s. Jacques Blanc, the first president of the Committee of the Regions and then president of Languedoc-Roussillon, framed the establishment of the Committee in dichotomist terms:

> There was a clear debate between the North and the South [of Europe]. The South

> did win; people have accused me of being too much in favour of the South, but in reality, I think everybody won. […] In this context, the states keep their fundamental responsibilities, but they have to comprehend that there is a clear need for a real regionalization adapted to the institutional realities of each country (federal or decentralized). We have to consider that everything is to be gained by treating policy dossiers as close to the European citizens as possible. This is better understood, better accepted, better lived. […] I will use my weight as president of the Committee of the Regions to affirm the Euro-Mediterranean vocation of Languedoc-Roussillon. This is the real challenge for France. When there will be no Euro-Mediterranean equilibrium, the weight of Germany, of Northern and Eastern Europe will be such that there will only be a political imbalance (Blanc - Alliès, 1995, *passim*).

A second form of dealing with the diplomatic Others within a European context is the way in which Mediterranean regions participate in the different strands of the European Territorial Cooperation, the successor of the INTERREG programmes, aimed at cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation. These have proven very lucrative for all concerned regions. These programmes are often considered as merely flows of financial and other resources within the multi-level context of European structural funding. They have, however, done considerably more in shifting European governance in the direction of a centrifugal process, as Gary Marks already noticed in 1993:

> Instead of a centripetal process where decision-making is progressively centralized in Community institutions, in structural policy we see a centrifugal process in which decision-making is spun away from member states in two directions: up to supranational institutions, and down to diverse units of sub-national government; instead of the unambiguous allocation of decision-making responsibility between national and supranational governments, we see the institutionalization of contested spheres of influence across several tiers of government (Marks, 1993, p. 401).

European territorial policies have slowly transformed the European political landscape by softening existing state borders and by enabling the emergence of new geographies, which often come down to the re-emergence of old geographies. Moreover, more than by their actual, and thus quantifiable, policy effects and results, these new geographies have to be conceived (and are conceived and represented as such by the policy-makers of our Mediterranean regions) as an instrument of diplomatic discourse. The new geographies become 'powerful linguistic tools for political agitation of a very diverse sign' (Cornago, 2013, p. 200), as a means to carve out a new geopolitical position *vis-*

à-vis the state and other political actors. Especially the various cross-border and transnational programmes of the European Territorial Cooperation, which have just entered their fifth terms, as well as the Euroregions, are the arenas where sub-state entities can impose themselves as new diplomatic actors within new political geographies. Note, however, that this is not an exclusive European, Mediterranean or Euro-Mediterranean phenomenon, but a global one that has only increased since the end of the Cold War, when transnational and cross-border policies came (back) to the forefront of international relations, to the detriment of traditional state-only international and diplomatic relations (Risse-Kappen, 1995, p. 3). Sub-state entities not only carved out a place of their own within the transnational and cross-border European territorial policies, but also fulfilled a bridging function between the EU, the national governments and lower-tier entities such as provinces, departments and municipalities.

Catalonian involvement in the different European Territorial Cooperation schemes is an extension of the region's bilateral and network diplomacies to link cultural identity, political autonomy and economic development. It is also a means to make the ideas of the greater Catalan cultural sphere tangible (Jouni, 1998, p. 92-93). According to the new Autonomy Statute, Catalonia will seek to 'promote cooperation and establish appropriate relations with the European regions with which it shares economic, social, environmental and cultural interests' (article 197.1). The region participates in the cross-border cooperation programme Spain-France-Andorra and the transnational cooperation programmes MED and South-Western Europe. For the Catalan *Generalitat*, being involved in territorial cooperation is not only a means to sidestep the Spanish state and to tap into various flows of European funding, but also (and even more importantly) an instrument to reassert its political as well as cultural primacy within both the Mediterranean and the Pyrenees. As early as the mid-1990s, Manuel Castells already saw Catalonia's goals within the European Territorial Cooperation as the integration in and even domination of a broader political entity, which is not primarily the European Union, but rather 'various networks of regional and municipal governments, as well as of civic associations', that represent a new form of social and geopolitical organization that is breaking the 'tenuous shell of the modern nation-state' (Castells, 1997, p. 50).

Together with the French regions of Languedoc-Roussillon and Midi-Pyrénées and the Spanish regions of Aragon and the Balearic Islands, Catalonia is active in the Pyrenees-Mediterranean Euregion. These EU-funded interregional cooperation programmes were often preceded by the so-called historical ones, which were foremost generated by the regions themselves. The

Working Community of the Pyrenees is one of the oldest networks in the region, consisting of the French regions of Languedoc-Roussillon, Aquitania and Midi-Pyrénées, the Spanish regions of Catalonia, Aragon, Navarra and the Basque Country, and the principality of Andorra. Within the Euroregion, the working community of the Pyrenees and the cross-border cooperation Spain-France-Andorra, Catalonia is involved in dozens of initiatives and projects with the regions north of the Franco-Spanish border. The goal is to bring the 'Catalan Lands' closer together via concrete cooperation in various policy domains, and thereby asserting the pivotal position of Catalonia within both Spain and France (Häkli, 2002, p. 81).

The third face of the diplomatic Other of sub-state entities is to be found in their involvement in international networks and organizations, as well as in the establishment of their own bilateral and multilateral policies and the development of systems of decentralized cooperation.

As well as adhering to various forms of European territorial policies, membership of international networks and organizations can prove a very effective way of paradiplomatic socialization. While initially concerned with entering transnational, cross-border or interregional organizations, Mediterranean regions are now increasingly seizing the benefits of 'network diplomacy'. Network diplomacy is just one of the features of our so-called network society, the social, political, economic and cultural changes that resulted from the spread and acceleration of technology, information, communication and transport (Castells and Cardoso, 2005). Decentralization, or devolution, has been a political prerequisite of the current network society, whereby national governments have gradually left large parts of their responsibility for regional development to regional or decentralized governments (Ansell, 2000, p. 312).

Networks are ideal tools for regional authorities to establish direct links with other regions or states, with European and international institutions, and to defend their interests without direct interference from the central government. Globalization and the information revolution are empowering decentralized networks that challenge state-centred hierarchies. Networks distribute influence and power across traditional boundaries, allowing powerful interest groups to form and reshape rapidly (Metzl, 2001). These networks may be of a general nature or instead have a more 'single issue' character. The first regional networks appeared in the 1950s, but it was not until the mid-1980s that the phenomenon took a steep flight, mainly driven by the regional policy of the European Communities, the information, communication and technology

revolutions, and experimentation with new modes of governance, of which vertical and horizontal models of multi-level governance are the most conspicuous. Memberships of interregional organizations has proven quite useful for regional authorities in finding their international voice, in coming together with other regional authorities, and in acquiring and exchanging diplomatic know-how and practices.

Catalonia initially stood out as an advocate and practitioner of network diplomacy. Its Foreign Affairs Strategy still lists enhancement of the region's international position as one of the priorities: the promotion of 'participation in interregional cooperation networks as platforms for outreach and lobbying on behalf of Catalonia's interests' (FAS, 2010, p. 67)[16]. However, the heydays of Catalonia's network diplomacy seem to have become a thing of the past. Although the *Generalitat* still considers that 'taking part in those associations is still worthwhile for the sake of maintaining a permanent network of contacts with regional authorities' (FAS, 2010, 67), it is only one of the – increasingly less important – means to achieve the real strategic foreign policy goal: the recognition of Catalonia as a full-fledged diplomatic player, side by side with other European states.

It is particularly in the area of development cooperation that important steps were and are made by Mediterranean regions, as well as other sub-state entities worldwide, to advance their own diplomacy and foreign policy, since cooperation assistance is a central argument used by regional officials to justify the existence of paradiplomacy (Lecours, 2008, p. 5). More than state-induced foreign aid, regional development cooperation assents to the so-called 'New Aid Approach', whose basic principles are mutual partnership, local ownership, empowerment, participation and a long-term development practice (Waeterloos, 2008, p. 6)[17]. This mutual partnership and concurrent accountability has shifted foreign aid away from the uneven relationship

[16] To this end, Catalonia has become a member of, *inter alia*, the Committee of the Regions, the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR) and its commissions and working groups, the Assembly of European Regions (AER), the Conference of European Regions with Legislative Power (REGLEG), the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR), the meta-network of FOGAR (the Forum of Regional Governments and Global Associations of Regions), the Working Community of the Pyrenees (CTP), the Four Motors for Europe, the Global Network of Cities, Local and Regional Governments (UCLG), the Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development (nrg4SD), and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities within the Council of Europe.

[17] The concrete interpretation of this 'New Aid Approach' can be found in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005); see: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/11/41/34428351.pdf> (u.a. 30/12/2020).

between the donor and the receiving country towards a more diplomatic relationship between equal partners. Foreign aid, in this sense, is about the relationship between governmental and non-governmental actors and not about patterns of dependency (Lancaster, 2007, p. 13). All six of the regions studied in this thesis have developed a model of multi-stakeholder policy, whereby the regional government cooperates with, oversees and assists other local authorities (provinces and municipalities), non-governmental organizations and private bodies that are active in the sphere of development cooperation.

Spanish regions enjoy more freedom to establish their own foreign aid, which is legally set out in the various statutes. In Catalonia, article 51 of the Statute states that: '(1). The *Generalitat* shall promote a culture of peace and actions that foster peace in the world. (2) The *Generalitat* shall promote cooperation actions and policies for the development of peoples and shall establish emergency humanitarian aid programmes', while article 197.3 affirms that 'the *Generalitat* shall promote development cooperation programmes'.

The *Agència Catalana de Cooperació al Desanvolupament* (ACCD, Catalan Agency for Development Cooperation) was established in 2003 in order to coordinate the already existing cooperation programmes of the *Generalitat*. It is responsible for Catalan development cooperation, including peace-building policies and humanitarian aid. Catalonia has elaborated a triple-action spherical scheme, whereby the work of the ACCD is divided into four geographic spheres, namely the Mediterranean, sub-Saharan Africa, Central America (including the Caribbean) and South America. In addition, Catalonia has selected eleven priority countries and peoples (*països i pobles*), of which three are situated within the Mediterranean: Morocco; Palestine; and Western Sahara.[18]

Bilateral relations are the most direct diplomatic contact between a diplomatic Self and its diplomatic Other(s). As the etymology of the word indicates, bilateral diplomacy is a one-on-one relationship, a two-way street of international contacts, a true dialogue (stressing not so much the etymological but rather the ontological kinship of bi-lateral and dia-logue) between polities. Bilateral relations – as the closest thing to traditional diplomacy and next to the opening of diplomatic representations abroad – have a distinct symbolic value in the development of sub-state diplomacy (Lecours and Moreno, 2003, p. 270). It is then no surprise that sub-state entities were initially not allowed, or were even strictly forbidden, to enter into bilateral relations with other polities, let alone with other states. Over time, however, states have become far less

[18] The other eight priority countries are Mozambique, Senegal, Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Bolivia, Colombia and Ecuador.

reluctant to recognize sub-states' right to establish bilateral contacts with others. A clear legal normalization of an already existing diplomatic practice is at play here, since gradually – perhaps inescapably – sub-state entities did engage in bilateral diplomacy. This bilateral diplomacy, which could take the form of state-region, region-region, or region-other polity character, is central to the emergence of the international political agency of sub-state entities:

Because these relationships are not contingent on foreign states recognizing regions as international actors, they offer great potential for the autonomous development of regional governments' international legitimacy, an outcome that in turn fosters these same transnational relationships (Lecours and Moreno, 2003, p. 276).

An important feature, albeit not indispensible, of bilateral diplomacy is the formalization (or normalization, or socialization) of the various bilateral relations by means of international contracts. By signing an international treaty, the other party formally acknowledges relations with the sub-state entity. As Catalonia's bilateral policy lacked prioritization and focus during the presidency of Jordi Pujol (Bizoux, 2006, p. 104), the centre-left government set out the priorities of Catalonia's foreign policy as articulated in the Foreign Affairs Strategy of 2010-2015 (FAS, 2010, pp. 54-59), a position that is being uphold by the new Catalonian government of Artur Mas. Europe and the Mediterranean are the places of interest for Catalonia's diplomacy, and Catalonia's bilateral diplomacy has been defined along four lines: the neighbouring countries; economic relations; the international projection of Catalonia; and sustainable human development.

First, France and Andorra figure among Catalonia's neighbouring countries, with which Catalonia not only shares a territorial border, but also economic, linguistic, cultural and social ties (FAS, 2010, p. 56). Catalonia's bilateral contacts with Andorra and the French regions of Languedoc-Roussillon and Midi-Pyrénées also complement its involvement in the Pyrenees-Mediterranean Euroregion, the Working Group on the Pyrenees and the various cross-border ties that exist between Catalonia and southern French regions. Portugal and Italy also figure among Catalonia's bilateral partners in the northern Mediterranean. Because of its proximity and historical and cultural ties, the southern Mediterranean region has always been a priority partner for Catalonia. This is particularly the case for Morocco, on account of the rapidly growing Moroccan community in Catalonia, numerous economic links, and collaboration between the ports of Barcelona and Tarragona on the one hand, and Tangier on the other hand.

A second strand of priority partners are the ones with which Catalonia has strong economic, commercial, touristic and financial ties. Along with France, these partners are the United Kingdom, Germany, the United States (particularly California, Massachusetts and New York), Brazil, China, Japan and India.

Third, a number of bilateral partners are important to project Catalonia as an international actor, because of the existence of common – mainly nationalist or regionalist – interests or because of the historic relations forged by Catalan communities abroad, especially in Latin America, where a substantial Catalan diaspora paved the way in the late 1980s and early 1990s for more institutional diplomatic contacts between the *Generalitat* and its Latin American partners. This is the case for Argentina, Uruguay, Mexico, Quebec, Flanders, Scotland, Guangdong (China) and Nuevo Leon (Mexico). Catalonia is still sustaining its contacts with other regional(ist) governments via its membership of a number of interregional cooperation networks. In the incipient years of its diplomacy, Catalonia felt the need to ally itself with other European regions wishing to ensure a place for themselves on the European stage (Bizoux, 2006, p. 72), and with which it has signed formal international treaties[19].

The last cluster of bilateral partners are the ones that are granted priority status in Catalonia's development cooperation policy, aiming both at promoting sustainable human development in impoverished countries and at strengthening the social fabric inside Catalonia, because of the high levels of migration from these countries (FAS, 2010, p. 59). Morocco, Ecuador, Bolivia, Colombia and Senegal figure among Catalonia's priority partners in the field of development cooperation (Government of Catalonia, 2010, p. 14).

Related to – and often overlapping with – their bilateral diplomatic relations, sub-state entities in the Mediterranean have increasingly elaborated their multilateral diplomatic activities and networks. The global shift from bilateral to more multilateral forums of diplomacy is one of the key elements of the so-called 'new diplomacy', one in which the advent and international recognition of non-central governments have been constitutive elements (Constantinou and Der Derian, 2010, p. 6). Indeed, sub-state entities have been vital for the emergence of recent broadened multilateralism, in that they have on the one hand established a wide range of multilateral institutions, but are also solicited by a growing number of multilateral organizations to partake in their activities (Adams - Luchsinger, 2012, pp. 16-18), with their international agency thus becoming 'an important innovation in multilateralism, which is opening the

[19] Notably with Flanders, Wallonia, Scotland, Wales and Quebec.

door to new forms of multi-level governance on a global scale' (Cornago, 2010, p. 33).

Catalonia's former Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Roser Clavell used the metaphor of the organic body to describe the role of sub-state governments in the current diplomatic landscape:

> What I mean by the capillary system is as follows: Within the human body, the largest transmitters of blood are the veins. In the multilateral system, these could be roughly compared to sovereign states. Capillaries, on the other hand, are smaller more agile transmitters, and have the capacity to reach the farthest extremes of the body. In the multilateral system, this could be roughly analogous to the devolved/decentralized governments, which represent smaller, more agile instruments to achieve more effective, and efficient, policy outcomes[20].

The multilateral diplomacy of Mediterranean sub-state entities has to be situated at different political levels. On the one hand, these regions participate in a growing number of EU or UN venues, such as the Committee of the Regions, UNDP or UNRWA. On the other hand, they have increasingly been involved in multilateral forums within the Mediterranean region, both at their own initiative and embedded inside the various EU-initiated Mediterranean multilateral schemes, such as the Barcelona Process (Bin, 1997). Moreover, multilateral diplomacy is regarded by sub-state entities as a means to surmount the budgetary constraints that have arisen from the economic crisis, which have particularly hit the Mediterranean area since late 2009.

Catalonia has, from the outset of its diplomatic relations, seized every opportunity to position and present itself as a reliable partner for multilateralism. Multilateralism found a place in the 2006 Statute, which states that:

> […] the Catalan government must take part in the international organizations with authority in matters of interest for Catalonia, particularly UNESCO and other cultural organizations, as set forth in the relevant regulations (Catalonia's Statute, 2006: article 198).

The *Generalitat* is also an active advocate – together with Quebec and Flanders – of the 'new multilateralism', which aims at addressing the shortcomings of the traditional multilateral setting, which still has a tendency to

[20] Roser Clavell, speech at the United Nations University (UNU) conference titled 'Decentralized Governments and the New Multilateralism', New York, 19 October 2009.

ignore the voices of non-central governments (FAS, 2010, p. 61). The Catalan government's multilateral strategy and activities have to be seen within the context of the new multilateralism:

> The expression 'new multilateralism' refers to the need to address those shortcomings in the system by building an effective, genuinely representative and legitimate multilateral system that ensures democratic global governance in an interdependent, multi-polar world affected by profound asymmetries (FAS, 2010, p. 61).

Development cooperation, culture and education are the most important theatres where Catalonia wants to (further) develop its multilateral diplomacy. This results in a synchronization with the region's Multilateral Development Cooperation Strategy, which was approved in June 2009, as well as with the strategic objectives of the region's cultural diplomacy, also of 2009.

6. The future. The Mediterranean

Although the political situation in Catalonia, and its relation to the central government in Madrid is very volatile and tense (to say the least), this has not prevented the Generalitat to draft an ambitious Mediterranean Strategy, since

> we have launched ourselves onto the world market, full of people and ideas, talent and knowledge, culture and commerce, while maintaining a character and a way of relating to others that is strongly Mediterranean (Alfred Bosch i Pascual, Minister for Foreign Action, Institutional Relations and Transparency in the preface of the Strategic Plan for Foreign Action and European Union Relations 2019-2022).

Through the Mediterranean Strategy of Catalonia MedCat 2030, the Generalitat intends to equip itself with a future roadmap for the development of a comprehensive Mediterranean policy as an integral part of its policies for foreign action and relations with the European Union.

The mail impetus for this strategy is the relaunching of the Mediterranean dossier in European policies, as well as to strengthen relations and exchanges among actors on both sides, and at the same time to bring more coherence to the government's foreign action within the framework of the sustainable development goals.

In the strategic notes on the Mediterranean policy, the region presents itself as an honest broker between the many diverse actors in the region since

Catalonia "has the advantage of its core position, from where it can act at different levels and in different fields, through the versatility of its instruments and a vision as basin that allows it to establish synergies and complicities."

For Catalonia, there are different areas of reference:

> the *Mediterraneanity* that corresponds to an internal space in construction, and the Mediterranean as a whole, as a space for associations and partnership. Still, in the European framework, the Mediterranean of southern Europe is constituted as an emerging space for innovation and competitiveness, while the western Mediterranean represents a near space to consolidate alliances and networks. A global strategy must deploy instruments that adapt to such context.

Although this renewed Mediterranean policy is still in its infant shoes, one cannot deny a clear ambition and voluntarism to put itself markedly and centrally on the Mediterranean map.

7. Conclusion

This article sought to give an overview of the diplomatic practices of the Catalan government in de Mediterranean region.

Over the years, the Generalitat has developed not only a diplomatic apparatus, but also a comprehensive Mediterranean policy. All the generic elements of a full-grown diplomacy are present in the Catalan paradiplomatic practice: representation, communication and socialization. These tools were all put in motion within the Mediterranean, with the particular aim to carve out a specific place for Catalonia in the broader region. Catalonia is presenting itself as a hub between the Northern and the Southern shores, and as an honest broker between the European Union and the MENA-countries.

From the outset, a key element in Catalonia's foreign policy has been the development of a distinct public and cultural diplomacy, including a robust domestic outreach. By doing so, there is a broad support within Catalan society on the importance to go abroad, and to enhance Catalonia's role in the Mediterranean.

However, an important caveat is in order here: the independence referendum, as well as the following political fallout, have revealed a marked division within Catalan society. On the one hand, we can detect a nationalist-independendist movement, mobilizing foremost in the more conservative hinterland. On the other hand, there is the more cosmopolitan milieus within

the Barcelona metropolitan area. Nationalist politics and policies have inevitably led to a societal polarization within Catalonia.

This same polarization can be found in the way Catalan diplomacy has been perceived by the central government in Madrid. During the presidency of Jordi Pujol, the *Generalitat* took care to engage in a non-conflictual mode of diplomacy, coordinating and collaborating with the Spanish ministry of foreign affairs. This resulted in a particular mode of paradiplomacy in the true sense of the word, where both diplomacies, the Spanish and the Catalan, existed side by side. From time to time, frictions arose, but never to the extent that the lines of communication were severed. Catalan diplomacy after 2012 gradually became proto-diplomatic. It became a political instrument aimed at gaining international recognition for the independence cause, without any concrete result, apart from an official visit of South Ossetia. Worse than the lack of diplomatic "success" was the total fracture with Spanish diplomacy, and the isolation of Catalonia, both international and domestic.

t still remains to be seen whether the Generalitat will be able to surpass this isolation in order to further develop its ambitious Mediterranean policy, which will probably amount to nothing without the consent and collaboration of Madrid. It remains to be seen whether Catalonia will return to the more fruitful paradiplomacy of yesterday instead of practicing the fruitless protodiplomacy of today.

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