UNIVERSITÉ DU QUÉBEC À MONTRÉAL

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN SOCIAL MOVEMENT ACTION : THE ANALYSIS OF ALLIANCE FOR CHOICE – DERRIS'S TACTIS AND STRATEGIES IN NORTHERN IRELAND

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CONTINUITÉ ET CHANGEMENT DANS L'ACTION DES MOUVEMENTS SOCIAUX : ANALYSE DES TACTIQUES ET STRATÉGIES DE ALLIANCE FOR CHOICE – DERRY EN IRLANDE DU NORD

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AfC – Derry	Alliance for Choice – Derry
AfC – Belfast	Alliance for Choice – Belfast
AI	Amnesty International UK
BA	Belfast Agreement (also Good Friday Agreement, see GFA)
BFN	Belfast Feminist Network
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
CRM	Civil Rights Movement
DoJ	Department of Justice
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party
FPA	Family Planning Association
GFA	Good Friday Agreement (also Belfast Agreement, see BA)
IRA	Irish Republican Army
IRSP	Irish Revolutionary Socialist Party
NIWC	Northern Ireland Women Coallition
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland (formerly known as RUC)
RUC	Royal Ulster Constabulary
SDLP	Social Democratic Labour Party
SF	Sinn Féin
UVF	Ulster Volunteer Force

ABSTRACT AND KEY WORDS

ABSTRACT

On October 8th, 2014, the Northern Ireland Department of Justice (DoJ) set up a public consultation on amending the law on abortion in cases of Lethal Fœtal Abnormality (LFA) and sexual crimes. In the wake of this consultation, several organisations such as Amnesty International, Alliance for Choice – Belfast, the Women's Resources and Development Agency (WRDA) and the Belfast Feminist Network (BFN), mobilised to present a response to the consultation. In contrast to these organisations and to what they had themselves done in the past, pro-choice activists in Derry (Alliance for Choice – Derry) decided not to engage in a dialogue with politicians.

While they did not organise as a response to the consultation, activists were far from demobilized. Throughout the fall of 2014, Derry activists held several meetings and organised a solidarity vigil as well as an action for the International Day for the Decriminalization of Abortion. The two tactics they used for these awareness-raising actions, namely the shoes and the wash line, were pre-existing tactics, used twice during the fall of 2014 in the same city and within a short period of time. This case thus poses the question of continuity and change in social movements' contentious practices. Why did activists refuse to engage in lobbying as they have done in the past and decided instead to mobilise for awareness raising actions? Also, why did they reproduce two specific tactics in the fall of 2014? In other words, how can we explain variations in contentious action across time within a single organisation?

Based on ethnographic data collected during the fall of 2014 with Alliance for Choice – Derry, I argue that two mechanisms are at play in the group's refusal to engage in lobbying actions and the development of people-oriented tactics. First, the object shift mechanism (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001) captures how activists navigate their way in a non-responsive context (cf. Deiana 2013, Kriesi et al. 1995, Taylor 1989). Second, by bringing together both material and cultural factors, I argue that path dependency (Pierson 2000) allows to explain the group's decision to reproduce two specific people-oriented tactics.

By exploring dynamics of change and continuity in the repertoire of social movements, this thesis contributes to the debate on agency and structure in sociology. It also sheds light on the role of culture in mediating the relationship between structural constraints and the capacity of actors to negotiate within these constraints. Finally, this research project hints at some pitfall of the peace process in Northern Ireland and underlines the importance of studying feminist groups and gender issues in Irish Studies.

Keywords:
Social movements' Tactics and Strategies; Object Shift; Path Dependency; Culture; Structure and Agency; Derry; Northern Ireland; Abortion.

RÉSUMÉ

Le 8 octobre 2014, le ministère de la Justice en Irlande du Nord a lancé une consultation publique afin de modifier la loi sur l'avortement dans des cas d'anormalités fatales du fœtus (Lethal Fœtal Abnormality) et de crimes sexuels. À la suite de cette annonce, plusieurs organisations, notamment Amnesty International, Alliance for Choice – Belfast, the Women's Resources and Development Agency (WRDA) et le Belfast Feminist Network (BFN), se sont mobilisées afin de répondre à cette consultation. Contrairement à ces organisations ainsi qu'à ce qu'elles ont-elles-même déjà fait dans le passé, les militantes de Derry (Alliance for Choice – Derry) ont décidé de ne pas engager un dialogue avec les politiciens.

Bien qu'elles n'aient rien organisé pour la consultation, les militantes étaient loin d'être démobilisées. Pendant l'automne 2014, les militantes de Derry ont tenu plusieurs rencontres et ont organisé une vigile de solidarité ainsi qu'une action pour la journée internationale pour la décriminalisation de l'avortement. Les deux tactiques qu'elles ont utilisées pour leurs actions de conscientisation, nommément les souliers et la corde à linge, étaient des tactiques préalablement élaborées qu'elles ont choisies d'utiliser à deux reprises dans la même ville pendant une courte période de temps. Ce cas pose donc la question du changement et de la continuité dans la pratique contestataire des mouvements sociaux. Pourquoi est-ce que les militantes ont décidé de se mobiliser pour des actions de conscientisation plutôt que de s'engager dans du lobbying tel qu'elles l'ont fait dans le passé? Aussi, pourquoi ont-elles reproduit deux tactiques spécifiques pendant l'automne 2014? Autrement dit, comment pouvons-nous expliquer les variations dans l'action contestataire au fil du temps au sein d'une même organisation?

Grâce à une cueillete de données menée lors de l'automne 2014 avec Alliance for Choice – Derry à l'aide d'outils ethnographiques, je présente deux mécanismes qui sont en jeu dans le refus des tactiques de lobbying et dans le développement de tactiques orientées vers le grand public. D'abord, le mécanisme d'*object shift* (McAdam, Tarrow et Tilly 2001) nous permet de saisir la manière dont les militantes naviguent dans ce contexte fermé (cf. Deiana 2013, Kriesi et al. 1995, Taylor 1989). Deuxièmement, en combinant des facteurs matériels et culturels, je propose qu'un processus de dépendance au sentier nous permet d'expliquer la décision du groupe de reproduire deux tactiques orientées vers le grand public.

En explorant les dynamiques de changement et de continuité dans le répertoire d'action des mouvements sociaux , ce mémoire contribue au débat sur l'agentivité et la structure en sociologie. Il met aussi en lumière le rôle de la culture dans la médiation entre les contraintes structurelles et la capacité des acteurs à négotier à travers ces contraintes. Finalement, ce projet de recherche identifie quelques faiblesse du processus de paix en Irlande du Nord et souligne l'importance d'étudier les groupes féministes ainsi que les questions de genre dans le champs des études irlandaises.

Mots clés:
Tactiques et stratégies des mouvements sociaux; *Object shift*; Dépendance au sentier; Culture; Structure et agentivité; Derry; Irlande du Nord; Avortement.

INTRODUCTION

On October 8th, 2014, the Northern Ireland Department of Justice (DoJ) set up a public consultation[1] on amending the law on abortion in cases of Lethal Fœtal Abnormality (LFA) and sexual crimes. This consultation followed Sarah Ewart's case[2] that made the headlines in 2013 as she came out publicly about her story of carrying a child suffering from LFA and having to travel to England to terminate her pregnancy as abortion is still criminalised in Northern Ireland. In the wake of this consultation, Amnesty International launched its campaign "My Body, My Rights"[3] in Belfast on October 21st 2014, an international campaign with specific goals for Northern Ireland given this consultation. Similarly, pro-choice activists in Belfast (Alliance for Choice – Belfast) decided to get involved by organising a focus group in collaboration with the Women's Resources and Development Agency (WRDA) and the Belfast Feminist Network (BFN) as well as a public discussion meeting aiming at developing a response to the consultation.[4]

In contrast to these organisations and to what they have themselves done in the past, pro-choice activists in Derry (Alliance for Choice – Derry) decided not to engage in a dialogue with politicians. Far from seeing this as an opportunity to put their claims forward, Derry activists considered it insulting that once more elected officials,

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[1] See the Website of the Department of Justice for the consultation document and responses : http://www.dojni.gov.uk/consultation-on-abortion-2014.

[2] Listen about Sarah Ewart's participation to the *Stephen Nolan Show* on BBC Radio 5, aired October 11th 2012: http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01jmx4x

[3] See Amnesty International's press release (October 21st, 2014) : http://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/amnesty-launches-new-campaign-abortion-northern-ireland.

[4] Their response can be found online at : https://belfastfeminist.wordpress.com/2014/10/08/alliance-for-choice-and-bfn-response-to-abortion-consultation/

mostly men often disconnected from the reality of women in the population, were setting the terms of the discussion around abortion. They highlighted that this consultation was very restrictive and underlined the lack of a real choice for women since even in the case of LFA, medical specialists (and not women) have the final word on whether or not women can access abortion.[5] Derry activists therefore decided that they would consider submitting a document to the consultation, but that they refused, as opposed to Belfast activists, to devote additional time and resources to this type of political manoeuver.

While they did not organise as a response to the consultation, activists were far from demobilized. Throughout the fall of 2014, they held several meetings to respond to the Ms Y case[6] and organised a solidarity vigil on the 21st of August as well as an awareness raising action for the International Day for the Decriminalization of Abortion on September 26th. The vigil was held at the Guildhall Square[7] at night

[5] This was mentioned by the activists during a group discussion workshop on the topic held as part of the data collection for this research. With regards to the right to abortion, more information about the current legal framework will be provided below.

[6] For confidentiality purposes, Ms Y is the name given to a young migrant woman who came to Ireland in exile in April 2014. She discovered she was 8 weeks into her pregnancy once in Ireland and asked for a termination of pregnancy on the grounds of suicidal tendencies. While this is a legally receivable case, her request was refused and, in spite of a hunger strike, she was obliged to give birth to her child by caesarian section after 25 weeks of pregnancy. The case came out in the media on August 18th and many pro-choice activists, in both the North and South of Ireland, reacted by organising solidarity vigils for Ms Y. For more information see the *Irish Times* article online: http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/report-on-ms-y-case-to-include-journey-to-liverpool-to-seek-abortion-1.1991580.

[7] The Guildhall Square consists of the space in front of the Derry City Guildhall and is located at the North West end of the city, just outside the city walls. The Guildhall was originally built in the 1600s to house the town hall. The building was destroyed during the 'Great Siege' in 1689 and re-built in 1887 by "The Honourable The Irish Society on land reclaimed from the river Foyle at the cost of £19,000 (equivalent to £1.5 million today) and officially reopened in 1890 as the administrative centre for the Londonderry Corporation. The building was named in honour of its connection to the City of London and its guilds." (Derry City and Strabane District Council). Between 2000 and 2005, the building was also the seat of the Bloody Sunday Inquiry headed by Lord Saville. In 2012, the Guildhall closed its door for a major restoration project which ended in 2013. Since then, the Guildhall maintains its civic purposes by hosting the Derry City Council meetings, it is also used for several cultural events such as conferences and events. The Square in front of the Guildhall is also used for different type of

(6pm) and lasted for about an hour during which some speeches were made and flyers were distributed. Both the shoes and the wash line tactics were used. As for the International Day for the Decriminalization of Abortion, only the shoes were used and they were set up on the pathway between the two main shopping centers of the city (See ANNEX A for pictures of these actions). Some flyers about AfC – Derry and reproductive rights were distributed to passers-by as they were invited to have a look at the stories and "walk a mile in the women's shoes".

The fall of 2014 context thus showcases three striking elements. First, AfC – Derry activists refused to engage in lobbying politicians directly through the DoJ consultation, to take advantage of an opening of political opportunity. Secondly, this decision not to engage in lobbying is different both from Belfast activists' decision and their own previous lobbying actions in 1996, 2000 and 2008. Finally, the two tactics they used for their awareness-raising actions, namely the shoes and the wash line, were pre-existing tactics, used twice during the fall of 2014 in the same city and within a short period of time. Why did the activists refuse to engage in lobbying as they had done in the past and decide instead to mobilise for awareness raising actions? Also, why did they reproduce two specific tactics in the fall of 2014? In other words, how can we explain variations in strategic action across time within a single organisation?

This case brings our attention to the driving force behind the contentious practices of social movements. Earlier structuralist scholars (Kriesi et al. 1995, McAdam 1982, Tilly 1993) in the social movement literature have argued that collective action is

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events and is a common location for contentious actions in Derry. For more information, see the Derry City and Strabane District Council Website: http://www.derrystrabane.com/Subsites/Museums-and-Heritage/Guildhall.

driven by macro-structural forces, but recent works have increasingly focused on meso-level interactional factors (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001) and the role of group culture (Meyer 2006, Polletta 1998, Polletta 2006, Polletta et al. 2011) to better understand the interaction between claims, claimants and their contentious practices. For instance, in his recent study on Black insurgency in the United States, Bloom highlights that the "classic political opportunity theory does not adequately account for the fundamental interaction of social practice and structure" (Bloom 2015). Beyond this specific case, AfC's rejection of lobbying tactics and tactical innovations raises the question of continuity and change, both within social movements and beyond. According to Gary Alan Fine, the relationship between constraint and negotiation – put differently structure and agency – is what "determines how change is likely to happen" (Fine 1992: 94). He thus argues that "(o)ur challenge is to depict these constraints and negotiations and analyze how they affect social order – both the actions of individuals and the actions of clumps of individuals, such as classes, status groups, organisations and institutions" (Fine 1992: 95). This will be my objective in this thesis as I explore dynamics of tactical innovation and reproduction in AfC – Derry's repertoire.

More specifically, in Chapter 1, I outline the theoretical framework of this research project. Through a review of the literature on the political process approach, group culture and path dependency, I elaborate four hypotheses which guide my analysis of AfC – Derry's changing repertoire. Chapter 2 will then shed light on the dynamics of tactical innovation. Analysing the post-conflict context in which AfC – Derry acts as well as the activists understanding of this context will allow to understand the rejection of lobbying tactics and the development of small scale innovations. Finally, chapter 3 will focus on tactical reproduction. Building on a path dependent argument, I explore the interplay between financial and cultural factors in AfC's decision to use pre-existing tactics, namely the shoes and the wash line, for both their actions in the

fall of 2014. In doing so, I not only bring the concept of increasing returns (Pierson 2000) into the conversation on action repertoires, but also add to this theory by bridging it with Staggenborg's concept of critical event (1993) as well as Polletta (2006) and Meyer's (2006) contributions on narrative analysis.

About Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland is a particularly interesting context in which to ask questions of continuity and change. While the region has undergone drastic changes, including the end of an ethnic conflict and an important decrease of violence in the past 20 years, it nevertheless seems stuck in a conservative past. As Ann Rossiter highlights:

> We have been constantly reminded over recent years that Ireland has changed utterly, since the establishment of the Peace Agreement in the North and the emergence of the Celtic Tiger in the Republic. But when it comes to the right of women to choose, it is a place that is still in the dark ages, north and south of the border (Anne Rossiter, ASN volunteer).[8]

Indeed, in this region of the UK, women's fertility is strictly regulated making it a place where "women are able to exercise considerably less control over their fertility than their counterparts in most other western societies" (Coulter 1999: 111). With regards to abortion specifically, Northern Ireland (and the Republic of Ireland) is one of the few places[9] in Europe where abortion is severely restricted.

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[8] Source: Emma Campbell's exhibition: "When they put their hands out like scales". Visited on October 23rd. Exbition took palce through October 2014 at "Platform Arts, produced by Belfast Platform for the Arts. See: http://platformartsbelfast.com/event/late-night-art-october/

[9] Restrictions vary between the different countries with regards to the time limits for abortion requests, criterion women have to meet (or not) and the necessity for a health practionner's approval. Other than Vatican City and Malta, where abortion is illegal, Finland, Iceland and Poland have legislation that limits that availability of abortion, however less so than in Northern Ireland. For more information: https://www.loc.gov/law/help/abortion-legislation/europe.php

With regards to Derry in particular, the city is the birth place of the first Alliance for Choice group in Northern Ireland and a place where many of today's pro-choice activists have been active since the early 1980s and through the 1990s. Beyond its significance for abortion rights mobilisation, Derry also constitutes a microcosm of the Northern Irish conflict. As Wood argues, the city plays an important role in both the Irish Catholic and the British Protestant traditions. For instance, "Derry's Walls, the Apprentice Boys, the annual burning of an effigy of Lundy and the 1689 siege are all pivotal ingredients of the Protestant ideology" (Woods 1995[10]). On the other hand, the Catholic population, in majority in Derry and closer to the what is now the Republic of Ireland, has historically been mobilised from the Catholic uprising of 1641 to the 1968 Battle of the Bogside. Indeed, key events in the lead up to the conflict, including the Civil Rights March and Battle of the Bogside took place in Derry. As a hotbed for activism and a historically significant location in the North, a context dominated by both British and Irish nationalism, Derry is an interesting location in which to study pro-choice activists' ways to negotiate their presence and claims.

Before delving into the analysis, I present below a brief history of the Northern Irish conflict. This section will provide the reader with some background information about Northern Ireland and abortion legislation in the region. Doing so will allow to see the place (or the lack thereof) for women and women's mobilisation in Northern Irish society.

[10] Accessed online: http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/bibdbs/murals/woods.htm, retrieved on June 14th, 2016.

The Conflict

The Northern Irish conflict, the civil war commonly referred to as "The Troubles", is one of the most analysed topics about Northern Ireland (Coulter 1999). In spite of its predominance in the literature, the conflict is wrongly conceived as being rather recent and showcasing an opposition between two religious communities, Catholics and Protestants (Pragnère 2013: 21). In what follows, I expose the deep roots of the 20th century civil war that marked Northern Ireland and shed light on the nuances in political affiliation to question the underlying dichotomous identity categories that permeates most studies on the conflict.

a) Conflicting Identities: Between Religious and Political Affiliation

In his PhD thesis, Pragnère argues that the origins of nationalism in Northern Ireland go back to the 12th century and are directly influenced by the patterns of British colonization of the 16th and 17th century (Pragnère 2013). Indeed, while the south of Ireland was characterized by a limited settlement with absentee landlords, the north was more densely populated by English and Scottish from a variety of backgrounds, including artisans and peasants (Sales 1997: 2). This meant that internal divisions within the two communities were almost as important as divisions between them, so much so that there were several Protestants at the vanguard of the 18th century Irish Nationalist movement (Sales 1997: 2). This changed with the establishment of Northern Ireland as the 1920 partition[11] created a "deeply polarized [society] between

[11] As Bosi explains: "The British royal assent of the Government of Ireland Act, in December 1920, partitioned the island of Ireland into two political systems: an independent twenty-six county Irish Free state, from1949 the Republic of Ireland; and a six-county Northern Ireland formally dependent on the United Kingdom, but with its own Parliament at Stormont in Belfast" (2006: 95). The year of partition

two ethnonational communities: the nationalist minority (antipartioinist and Catholic) and the Unionist majority (partitionist and Protestant)" (Bosi 2006: 82). In spite of their majority status in Northern Ireland, the Unionists status was weakened on the island as a whole. Therefore, "[t]o secure their rule, the Unionist majority in Northern Ireland institutionalised discrimination against Catholics, while the police became a (virtually) Protestant force, with a wide range of emergency powers at its disposal" (Sales 1997: 3).

Partition in Northern Ireland created ambiguous identities, particularly regarding Protestants' Britishness since Northern Ireland is not part of Britain (but rather of the United Kingdom) and given England's inconsistent concern for Northern Ireland (McKittrick and McVea 2001, Sales 1997). Furthermore, Northern Ireland is actually part of the Ulster region which also encompasses counties in the Republic of Ireland. Even though the Irish identity fuels less ambiguity as they identify with a territory historically known as Ireland, there is still a wide variety of claims and points of view that constitute the mobilisation efforts attached to this identity: from constitutional nationalism to republicanism, with varying degrees of acceptancy of violence and participation in English institutions (Pragnère 2013: 39). In fact, Pragnère argues that, throughout the conflict as well as the peace process, the identification with the 'nation' was a "continuous process of re-negotiation" (Darby 1997; English 2003; Guelke 1988; O'Leary and McGarry 1993; Purdie 1990; Ruane and Todd 1998; Staunton 2001 in Pragnère 2013: 22). Therefore, it would be a mistake to conceive the conflict as the crystallization of pre-existing national identities. Rather, it should

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varies depending on the account from 1920 to 1921 since while the Government of Ireland Act was proclaimed in 1920, it only became law in May 1921. In this thesis, I use the 1920 date to discuss partition as, while it was not yet an official law, the act had immediate important effects such as short circuiting the Irish Civil war. For more information, visit the section on Partition in BBC's online article: "Northern Ireland: The Troubles":
http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/recent/troubles/overview_ni_article_07.shtml.

be viewed as a dynamic process which saw identities "as going towards more polarisation and essentialisation" (Pragnère 2013: 22).

Another common misunderstanding about the conflict, according to Sales, is its portrayal as a religious dispute. She states that:

> The two communities are defined in terms of religious affiliation and the terms 'protestant' and 'catholic' have been used as 'boundary markers' for the two groups. But these different political and national identities stem from the different historical experiences of colonialism, and from their relations to the state in Northern Ireland (Sales 1997: 2).

Most commonly, the two groups are referred to as "nationalists" and "unionists," with a few individuals from both communities identifying as "liberals." During the peace process, the different political identities entailed different visions of conflict resolution. Unionists saw nationalists' refusal to accept the status of Northern Ireland as the cause for the Troubles[12]. Their priority was to maintain the Union, that is, the Northern Ireland's participation in the United Kingdom (Sales 1997: 46), whereas for Nationalists, from conservatives to Marxists, saw Northern Ireland as an "unsatisfactory and even an illegitimate state" (McKittrick and McVea 2001: 2). The solution for the Troubles was thus a united Ireland (Sales 1997: 46). As for Liberal and Left-wing individuals from both communities, they urged reform through legislative change and economic regeneration (Sales 1997: 40).

Therefore, between religious and political affiliations, Northern Ireland showcases a wide array of views on the Northern Irish state, the Union and the island of Ireland.

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[12] This position is rooted in the idea that a United Ireland where Irish nationalists were in power would "attack their political, religious and economic interests" (McKittrick and McVea 2001: 1).

With this in mind, let us now turn to the 1960s mobilisation and the efforts for a solution of what has been coined as "the Northern Irish problem" (Sales 1997: 44).

b) The Prospects for Peace in Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland has experienced a significant decrease of violence since the Belfast Agreement (BA), commonly known as the Good Friday Agreement (GFA), signed in 1998.[13] This is the result of a long and arduous process characterized by a series of constitutional back-and-forth as a response to both civil rights and nationalist mobilisation throughout the second half of the 20th century.

By the early 1960s, several groups and organisations began to challenge the several discriminatory policies described above through a "'reformist', civil rights message that focused on constitutional objectives, with the intent to make the regional political system more open and fair" (Bosi 2006: 82)[14]. However, by the end of the 1960s, the unwillingness of the political establishment to respond to the Civil Rights Movement's (CRM) requests on electoral, housing and policing reforms along with influences of the new-left and student movements made the movement move "aggressively into the streets with a more radical, unconventional, but still nonviolent message" (Bosi 2006: 82). The CRM's message was further radicalized due to the Unionists reluctance to reform the system, to the coercive police tactics and a Loyalist counter-movement (Bosi 2006: 82).

[13] While the Agreement was signed in 1998, the multi-party talks begun in 1996 thanks to paramilitaries ceasefires. For more information, see "The Good Friday Agreement" on BBC's website: http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/events/good_friday_agreement

[14] The driving force behind this movement was the Northern Irish Civil Rights association (NICRA), an umbrella organisation which brought together several leftist groups in the region. Its main claims were "one man, one vote", the redrawing of electoral boundaries (i.e. the end of gerrymandering), anti-discrimination legislation, the instauration of a point system for housing allocation, the repeal of the Special Powers Act as well as the disbandment of the B Special force of the Royal Constabulary (RUC) (McKittick and McVea 2001: 440).

As a response, the British government promised a number of reforms during the 1960s to address these inequalities, but as Sales points out, "[t]he promised reforms were too little, too late, and the army was increasingly used to repress [what was perceived as] the Catholic revolt" (Sales 1997: 43). In 1968, the October 5th Civil Rights March, a new tactic of the CRM, "galvanised the movement and made it visible worldwide" (Bosi 2006: 92).[15] The effect was a re-emergence of the ethnonational cleavage since, "[f]or the nationalists, scenes of October 5th definitely eroded faith in the RUC and solidified and broadened opposition to the regime (Cameron 1969). No longer could the Northern Ireland establishement be seen as a neutral component of the political system" (Bosi 2006: 92). As Sales argues, "while the Civil Rights Movement claimed only the most democratic rights, these demands inevitably raised the question of power within a state whose very basis lay in sectarianism" (Sales 1997: 44). On January 4th, 1969, another march was organised by the CRM which was met with important state repression (Bosi 2006: 92). This would henceforth be referred to as the Battle of the Bogside,[16] a turning point in the development of the Troubles in Northern Ireland. The events of 1968 and 1969 thus gave rise to a revitalisation of the ethnonationalist master frame (Bosi 2006: 93).

Other key moments in the development of the conflict include the 1971 internments and the 1972 Bloody Sunday[17] (Sales 1997)(Sales 1997)(Sales 1997)(Sales

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[15] In fact, "some commentators have suggested that the events of 5 October 1968 (the violent repression of the Civil Rights March in Derry) were so momentous that that date should be acknowledged as marking the beginning of the present troubles" (Butler 1995: 1 in Coulter 1999:152).

[16] See also: see Pauline McClenaghan's "Spirit of '68: Beyond the Barricades" (2009).

[17] "Internment" is the term used to refer to internment without trial which happened mainly during the early 1970s, but also used by "the Unionist Government at Stormont in every decade since the creation of the northern state as a means to suppress Republican opposition" (The Museum of Free Derry 2005). Between August 1971 to January 1972, 342 men were imprisoned without trial (The Museum of Free Derry 2005). This repressive measure led to increased support for the Civil Rights Movement and the IRA as well as the popular uprising commonly known as "Bloody Sunday". On January 31st, 1972, Civil Rights marchers left from Creggan in direction to the Guildhall Square in Derry in protest to these interments. The march was banned by Stormont and barricades were set up by the British

1997)(Sales 1997)(Sales 1997)(Sales 1997)(Sales 1997)(Sales 1997)(Sales 1997)(Sales 1997)(Sales 1997)(Sales 1997)(Sales 1997). Following the Bloody Sunday episode, several attempts were made at solving the "Northern Irish problem," first with the prorogation of the Northern Irish Assembly at Stormont[18] in 1972 and consequently the implementation of Direct Rule from Westminster in London. Then, a power sharing assembly was re-stablished in 1973, but failed the next year due to a loyalist strike (Pragnère 2013: 40). A rolling, or partial, devolution was proposed in 1982, but also failed, this time due to nationalist abstention. This was followed by the Anglo-Irish agreement in 1983 which recognized a consultative role to Ireland (Pragnère 2013: 40), an important component for the future development of the Belfast Agreement (BA). The latter was negotiated following several cease-fires in 1993 and 1994 by the different paramilitary groups and its signature in 1998 is recognised as the official end date of "The Troubles."[19]

The peace process *per se* however continued beyond 1998 as difficulties in implementing the Belfast Agreement led to further negotiations and the signing of the St-Andrews agreement.[20] The strength of the BA – and the subsequent modifications

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Army in order to prevent the marchers from reaching their end destination. When the marchers met these barricades, paratroopers went in to make arrests and "(d)uring this operation, they opened fire on the crowd, killing thirteen and wounding 13 others" (BBC 2016).

[18] The Northern Irish Assembly is called Stormont and was abolished in 1973 under the Northern Ireland Constitution Act and replace by Direct Rule, that is, theadministration of the region by the British Parliament which sits at Westminster. Home rule was reinstated intermittently from 1973 to 2002, when it was officially reinstated following the post-conflict Agreements.

[19] Evidently, this is a very limited view of the development of the conflict. I refer the curious reader to David McKittrick and David McVea's book (2002) "Making Sense of the Troubles: A History of the Northern Ireland Conflict as well as Adrian Kerr's (2013) "Free Derry: Protest and Resistance" for more information on the conflict and on the resistance in Derry.

[20] As Deiana (2013) highlights, there were important challenges in the implementation of the Belfast Agreement (BA) which led to several suspensions of the devolved institutions between 1998 and 2007 (Deiana 2013: 403). Indeed, while the first election of Stormont was held in 1998, powers were not devolved from Westminster until December of 1990 and then suspended after only 11 weeks in operation. The Assembly was restored in May 2000, but then suspended again on October 14th 2002 which meant the return of Direct Rule from Westminster. This second suspension led to a series of

brought by the St Andrews Agreement – was its recognition of the multiple dimensions of the conflict through the establishment of a power-sharing assembly with the involvements of local groups, the settlement of cross-border issues between the North and South parts of Ireland, and the Anglo-Irish involvement (Pragnère 2013: 40). This peace process represented for many, as Sluka argues, the "single best opportunity for a real and lasting peace in Ireland to emerge since the war began over a quarter century ago" (Sluka 1995: 97). However, while it was crucial that both communities were represented within this new power-sharing assembly, the entrenchment of this duality within the institution makes reconciliation far more unlikely. Indeed, as Pragnère points out, "they [the power-sharing institutions] maintain the existence of two distinct blocks based on political allegiances; reconciliations may happen between political elites in such institutions, but there are little incentives for reconciliation between the populations of the two blocs" (Pragnère 2013: 41 – foonote 47).

This was forebode by Fearon and McWilliams as early as 1998 as they argued that these peace talks fit into a process which dates back to the Anglo-Irish Agreement which tried to contain the conflict rather than resolve it (Fearon and McWilliams 1998: 1253). Indeed, "[t]he GFA in its structural components, does not differ substantially from many of the ideas presented since the early 1970s," with three main differences: (i) the process by which it was produced, that is with elections to identify participants in the peace talks such as the Northern Irish Women Coalition (NIWC); (ii) the extra-structural components (i.e. the European parliament); and (iii) the public endorsement with a referendum (Fearon and McWilliams 1998: 1271).

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negotiations held at St Andrews in Scotland in 2006 and the return of Home Rule at Stormont on May 8th 2007. For more information on the St-Andrews agreement, see the education section of the Northern Ireland Assembly website:
http://education.niassembly.gov.uk/post_16/snapshots_of_devolution/st_andrews.

Beyond criticisms regarding the peace process and the agreement *per se*, several authors observing gender issues in Northern Ireland (Coulter 1999, Deiana 2013, Galligan 2013, O'Rourke 2014) have highlighted the absence of women in the accounts of the conflict and the peace process. As Rooney points out: "[w]omen do not make a difference to the description or to the analyses of the political history or conflict in Northern Ireland. They are generally viewed as not implicated in the 'man's war'" (Rooney 1997: 535). This absence of women in the literature on Northern Ireland reflects their exclusion from formal political life in the region (Rooney 1997: 536) where only nine women were ever elected at Stormont over 50 years of existence (Coulter 1999: 136)[21]. Indeed, as Coulter highlights, "[t]he process of exclusion of women from formal political life that seemingly operates at a global level is evinced with especial clarity within the more specific context of Northern Ireland[22]" (Coulter 1999:136). I explore this aspect in the next section, first by presenting what is defined as 'politics' in Northern Ireland and then by focusing on the absence of a gendered account of the conflict during the peace process.

[21] This number dates back to 1999. The most recent elections in May 2016 has seen the highest number of elected female MLAs (30 in total), with women making 27% of elected candidates. This represents a 50% increase of women MLAs since the last elections in 2011. For more information, see the Belfast Telegraph's article:
http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland-assembly-election/record-number-of-women-mlas-returned-to-stormont-34697269.html.

[22] Coulter also highlights that "commentators on Northern Irish affairs have invariably been content to write as though women simply do not exist" (Coulter 1999). This is particularly true for the literature regarding the conflict and its effect, where women are "assumed to be included or they are invisible" (Rooney 1997: 535).

Women's Issues and Politics in Northern Ireland

a) The Meaning of Politics

This subordination of women's issues in both the conflict and the literature on Northern Ireland presented in the previous section is directly related to the definition of 'politics' in Northern Ireland.[23] Indeed, Sales highlights that "(p)olitics [in Northern Ireland] has centered around community loyalties, thus giving little space for alternative agendas" (Sales 1997: 3). When it comes to their mobilisation, women thus tend to be divided along the lines of national or religious affiliation and while "Catholic and Protestant feminists may appear to have more in common with each other than with many of their coreligionists, [...] in what is defined as 'politics' in Northern Ireland, they are divided" (Sales 1997: 46). For instance, in their study on women's involvement in community organisations, Rooney and Woods found that women do not perceive their involvement in the community as political. They generally stated their concerns as having "more to do with people than politics". (Rooney 1997: 545). This particular definition of politics by women in Northern Ireland is doubled by the notion of political activity does not belong in the public domain, thus challenging the theoretical public-private dichotomy of political activity:

> One woman in the local feedback session of this study responded to a question about whether or not the work of her local group could be seen as 'political'. She said, 'no... we keep politics at home'. In a follow-up discussion it was obvious that this was an acknowledgement of political divisions within communities

[23] For instance, in his novel "Eureka Street" the author Robert McLiam Wilson provides an interesting take on the meaning of politics. He explains how Sara, a young women originally from England, wants to go back to a 'normal' version of politics: "There had been a lot of killings back then and she decided that she'd had enough. She wanted to go back to somewhere where politics meant fiscal argument, health, debates, local taxation, not bombs not maiming not murders and not fear" (Wilson 1996: 5).

> which, if admitted to the group, could wreck relationships and the work. It was also an acknowledgement of the subversive political activity which is not in the public domain in Northern Ireland (Rooney 1997: 547).

Similarly, in an interview conducted by Rosemary Sales, a manager of a women's center said: "We don't talk about politics here. We only talk about women's issues". We can thus better understand why, "[w]hen looking at women and politics in Northern Ireland the most obvious place to begin is with their absence" (Rooney 1997: 536). The peace process was no exception since even if it represented an opportunity for mobilisation, women's issues and arguably women themselves remained peripheral to the elaboration and implementation of the peace agreements in Northern Ireland.

b) Women and the Peace Process

The decreasing level of violence experienced on a daily basis during the 1990s in Northern Ireland represented an opening of opportunities in general, and for women's involvement in particular (Sales 1997: 202). Fearon and McWilliams explain that:

> In the wake of the 1994 paramilitary cease-fires, it was not just the governments that were cultivating new political processes. Several consultative conferences were convened, creating the space for women involved in these networks and groups to come together and to give voice to their aspirations for the community as a whole, and try to find ways in which these aspirations could be impressed on decision-makers (Fearon and McWilliams 1998: 1256).

However, while Deiana argues that during the peace process women were "unusually visible"[24] (Deiana 2013: 403), other authors such as Rosemary Sales have pointed out

[24]"Dr Mo Mowlam was the UK Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and Liz O'Donnell, as Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs, was a member of the Irish government delegation (Ward 2005: 3). Martha Pope, Senator George Mitchell's chief of staff, coordinated the involvement of the

that even if they have historically played the role of peace keepers in their respective communities, women were rather absent from the negotiations[25] (Sales 1997: 1). In fact, the Northern Irish Women Coalition (NIWC), a cross-community women's group, was created in 1996 due to the absence of women amongst the main parties involved in the peace process. The NIWC seized the opportunity of the establishment of a new regional parliament to put women's perspective forward within the realms of institutional politics. Throughout the peace talks, the NIWC argued that the equality debate should not be viewed in terms of the religious divide only, but "also should apply to gender, race, disability, and sexuality" (Fearon and McWilliams 1998:1261).

Given this wide agenda as well as the meaning of politics in the region exposed above, it is not surprising that the key contributions of the NIWC to the talks were not regarding the inclusion of women-specific provisions in the agreement, but rather the use of women's networks and current involvement in the community sector. Indeed, as Fearon and McWilliams describe, the two main contributions of the coalition was to (a) act as a trusted source of information due to their constant communications with external community and (b) use contacts in the community sector to lobby British and European parliaments (Fearon and McWilliams 1998:1259). The NIWC managed to get two seats in the Forum election talks (Whyte 1998) [26] as well as in the 1998 Assembly election, but lost in 2003. It dissolved in 2006 due to the collateral

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US delegation. Furthermore, the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition (NIWC) participated in the multiparty negotiations through their elected representatives, Monica McWilliams and Pearl Sagar" (Deiana 2013: 403)

[25] Indeed, Sales highlights that "(o)ne of the ironies of the 'peace process' has been the absence of women – the 'peace makers' – from negotiations (...) Women have largely been excluded from the political process in Northern Ireland, and therefore from a role in the peace process itself" (Sales 1997: 1).

[26] Delegates to the peace talks and the Northern Ireland Forum were elected in May of 1996. As Whyte (1998) explains: "[e]ach of the 19 new constituencies elected five representatives from closed party lists using the d'Hondt formula. In addition, each of the ten parties with the most votes across Northern Ireland elected another two representatives. The total number of potential delegates/Forum members was thus 110". For more information see: http://www.ark.ac.uk/elections/ff96.htm.

effects of the delays in implementing the Good Friday Agreement. Indeed, O'Rourke argues that:

> the delays and obstacles in implementing the agreement led to the polarization of politics in the region and significantly improved the political fortunes of the more-extreme political parties. That left little place for cross-community party organized on the basis of gender. [...] In May 2006, the party disbanded, noting that its members were active instead in the institutions established by the agreement (O'Rourke 2014)

The involvement of the NIWC, while it lasted, was the inclusion of a women specific clause in the Belfast agreement which affirmed the right of full and equal political participation for women, (Raccioppi and O'Sullivan 2006 in Deiana 2013: 403). However, beyond this statement of principle, it seems that little of the expectations of women materialised in the Northern Irish post-conflict society. For instance, with regards to abortion legislation, in spite of international pressure by CEDAW during the 1999 UPR[27] (CEDAW 1999 in Horgan and O'Connor 2014: 41) and the NIWC's demand to have the question dealt by the Department of Health (rather than debated in the Assembly[28]), nothing changed. This brings Deiana to conclude that:

> Despite inclusive aspirations and the (rhetorical) commitment to gender equality, the implementation of the [Good Friday] Agreement has inevitably failed to address the centrality of gender in the transition to peace and implicitly reproduced a stereotypical gendered notion of citizenship (Deiana 2013: 404).

In fact, in continuity with the period of the conflit, it seems that abortion, or rather its ciriminalisation, is one of the rare elements uniting both communities. Let me now

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[27] In its general recommendations, the UPR explained that "devolution of legislative powers to a Northern Ireland Assembly might result in the protection of women's rights being uneven across the UK" (CEDAW 1999 in Horgan and O'Connor 2014: 41).

[28] "W's Coalition sought to have the question of the 1967 Act referred to the Health, Social Services and Public Safety Committee, rather than being debated by the Assembly" (amendment supported by SF but rejected by a vote of 45 to 17) (Smyth 2006: 670-1).

discuss in more details the legal framework for this unique element which unites these seemingly irreconcilable communities.

c) Abortion Legislation in Northern Ireland

In most places of the world, religion plays an important role in maintaining the criminalisation of abortion. As Petechesky argues:

> Religious ideals of acceptable female behaviour are threaded through anti-abortion sentiment. Representing the reality of women's abortion experience becomes the 'fulcrum of a much broader ideological struggle in which the very meanings of family, the state, motherhood and women's sexuality are contested (Rosalind Petchesky 1986 in Campbell 2014).

This is particularly true in the case of Ireland since, according to Sales, the 1920 Partition created conservative regimes in both the North and the South[29] "in which the churches have had a powerful influence on state policy making" (Sales 1997: 3). Moreover, colonial relations in the North have allowed for the survival of particularly conservative forms of Catholicism and Calvinism,[30] with "on the one hand [...] the Catholic Church – fast becoming the most reactionary branch of Catholicism in

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[29] The terms North and South are common expressions to refer to the two regions of the border created in 1921. Even though the northest point of the island is actually in the Republic of Ireland, "the North" denotes Northern Ireland, part of the United Kingdom, while "the South" refers to the Republic of Ireland, independent since 1921. It is common for people who identify as Irish and/or Cahtolics and/or Nationalist, whether in the North or in the South, to use expression so as "the South" or "the North" to highlight that the Ireland is one united island, whereas people who identify as British and/or Protestants and/or Unionists usually use the term "Northern Ireland" and "Ireland" to refer to both regions.

[30] Sales argues that "[c]olonial relations have ensured the survival in NId of a particularly conservative form of Catholicism" (Sales 1997: 5). And while the Catholic church is often conceived as the main bastion of conservatism influding abortion legislation in Ireland, Sales highlights that "(c)alvinism has been as influential in this area as the Catholic Church" (Sales 1997: 128).

Western Europe – and on the other an equally conservative Protestantism" (Evason 1991: 14). As McWilliams argues:

> competing nationalisms of the conflict reinforced the conservative nature of the society and perpetuated patriarchal norms. 'The traditional link between nationalism (both orange and green) and their respective churches has ensured that the ultra-conservative view of women as both the property of, and the inferior of, men, remains strongly entranched in Irish society' (McWilliams 1993 in Fearon and McWilliams 1998: 1254).

As suggested above, this conservative view of women unites both communities as "[a]bortion represents one of the few issues capable of generating common cause among the diverse ethno-political factions that compete within Northern Ireland" (Sales 1997b:14 in Coulter 1999:112). This is why, when the Labour Administration swept power in 1997 and supported abortion, Coulter wrote it was a promise that they were likely to break. Indeed, abortion is deemed of secondary importance and likely to increase local political sensitivities, thus threatening the "prospect of a durable settlement" (Coulter 1999:113). The development of the peace process would only prove him right as the first motion to be passed in the newly established Stormont was not to extend the 1967 Abortion Act.[31] This leads Fegan and Bloomer to point to institutional resistance as the biggest challenge to change regarding abortion rights in the region.[32]

As for the UK government, it has been strategically silent on the issue. Indeed, the 1861 legislation has been maintained and the 1967 Abortion Act never extended in spite of the several episodes of direct rule throughout the 1970s and 80s (Bloomer and Fegan 2013b). Then, during the peace talks, Sales highlights how "[t]he Conservative government [in Britain], with its reliance on Unionist support, has had

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[31] From online video on the Vimeo channel of the Institute for Research in Social Sciences at the University of Ulster (IRiSS_UU) featuring Dr. Fiona Bloomer and Dr. Eileen Fegan. Retrieved on June 14th 2016 : https://vimeo.com/76944975.

[32] *Ibidem.*

no desire to embark on such a controversial move [as to extend the Act]" (Sales 1997: 134). Therefore, when Westminster got involved in Northern Ireland, it stayed far from the topic of abortion legislation, using the peace process as an excuse for maintaining the status quo. Indeed, McCann underlines that while she was Secretary of state for Northern Ireland, Mo Molan (Labour MP) stated that Westminster "avoided pursuing reform for fear of 'stiring up the tribal elders'" (McCann 2009 in Bloomer and Fegan 2013b: 116).

As a result of the Northern Irish opposition to and the UK's avoidance of abortion, the current legislation dates back from the 19th century. It was first legislated through the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act which "criminalizes both the person seeking an abortion and anyone trying to help" with a sentence of "penal servitude for life" (Bloomer and Fegan 2013b: 110). There was a first exception carved out in 1939 by an English court following a case which adds that a doctor acting "in good faith" may perform an abortion in a situation where there is danger or severe risk to the life or health of a women (Bloomer and Fegan 2013b: 110). This exception was maintained in the 1945 Criminal Justice Act. However, when the Abortion Act was passed in 1967 in Westminster, the conservative Unionist administration at Stormont refused to extend it to Northern Ireland. Therefore, the current legislation gives the final word to the doctor (Coulter 1999: 112) and while the law was amended by subsequent legal rulings named above (Coulter 1999: 111), there is still no clear provision for abortion, especially in cases of rape or foetal abnormality (Fegan and Rebouche 2003; Sie 2006 in Bloomer and Fegan 2013b: 111).

In 2001, the Family Planning Association of Northern Ireland (FPANI) took on legal proceedings against the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) to guarantee equal access to reproductive health care in NId, to which the

High Court responded in 2003 that "abortion is legal in NId 'where the continuance of pregnancy threatens the life of the mother, or would adversely affect her mental or physical health" (Bloomer and Fegan 2013b: 111). The High Court also included that the DHSSPS must provide within 10 years of their ruling guidelines for the application of the law. In 2012, just before they were about to be penalized for the delay, the DHSSPS published draft guidelines for consultation. It was the first time that any guidance was published on how to apply the legislation and it included that (i) two doctors – instead of only one as provided by the current legislation – be consulted and that (ii) conscientious objection may be used by doctors to refuse to perform the intervention (Bloomer and Fegan 2013b: 112).

According to many analysts, these guidelines, rather than help the application of the law, have made access to abortion even more difficult as "[t]he guidance [...] arguably interpreted the existing law *more* restrictively" (Bloomer and Fegan 2013b: 112). Eileen Fegan indeed highlights that the DHSSPS is "giving information designed to frighten the public, and frighten the women" .[33] Similarly, Horgan asks if the guidance is "aimed at *scaring* doctors in Northern Ireland" rather than guiding them (Horgan 2009 in Bloomer and Fegan 2013b: 112). Some authors have thus argued that given the legal confusion about terminations of pregnancies "even those women who might fall within the remit of common law cannot access abortions in Northern Ireland" (Bloomer and Fegan 2013b:111). However, in spite of this very restrictive legal and social context, abortions do take place in Northern Ireland. While numbers are difficult to access, it is estimated that between 250 and 500 legal terminations of pregnancies took place in 1999 (Coulter 1999: 112). However, most Northern Irish women who have an abortion travel to England. According to the

[33] From online video on the Vimeo channel of the Institute for Research in Social Sciences at the University of Ulster (IRiSS_UU) featuring Dr. Fiona Bloomer and Dr. Eileen Fegan. Retrieved on June 14th 2016 : https://vimeo.com/76944975.

Department of Health, "about 20 women per week travel to Britain to access abortion" (Department of Health 2012 in Bloomer and Fegan 2013b: 111), a solution accessible mostly for high-income women.

The above presentation of the conflict and its peace process as well as the legal framework for abortion highlights how the current inequality women face is not a collateral effect of an armed ethnonational conflict, leaving residues of "traditional ethno-gendered roles" (Ashe 2007). Rather, it is a gendered peace process and its resulting political institutions that actively reproduce inequality between men and women in Northern Ireland today. As Coulter states: "The rights of women living in the province will in all probability be sacrificed in the pursuit of the presumed greater good of a resolution to the Northern Ireland problem" (Coulter 1999: 113). These are key elements to keep in mind throughout the analysis of AfC – Derry's action repertoire that follows.

CHAPTER I
THEORY, CONCEPTS, METHODS AND DATA

In order to explore issues of continuity and change in Alliance for Choice – Derry's contentious actions, I first review some relevant theories in social movement studies. I begin with the structuralist contributions of Kriesi et al. as well as the recent relational focus of the political opportunity structure (POS) approach by McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly regarding changes in contentious repertoires. Finally, I discuss the applicability of a path dependent argument to explain tactical reproduction and bring Polletta and Meyer's contributions about culture into the conversation. In the second section, I outline my conceptual framework as well as the methodology of this research project. But first, let us look in more details at the origin and development of the group under scrutiny, Alliance for Choice – Derry.

1.1 About Alliance for Choice

Alliance for Choice was created in 1996 in Derry by a group of pro-choice activists who saw during the United Kingdom election, an opportunity to advance the women's right to choose. Indeed, as one activist explains:

> We knew that Labour was going to power in England because all the opinion polls were indicating this, and the British labour had a clear policy and had had since the 1980s, of supporting the extension of the 1967 Act to Northern Ireland. And Tony Blair, who was going to be the Prime Minister had voted for the extension [of the 1976 Act when he was] in the opposition, Moe Mollon, who was going to be the secretary of state for Northern Ireland, she had voted for the extension as well when in opposition. So we thought *The Labour party is coming in, they're going to extend the Abortion Act, and we really need to defend it, to be there.* So we decided that we'd get rid of the women's group, the kind of consciousness raising group and that instead we would try to get, and we

> wanted to get this across the North, an Alliance that'd unite all pro-choice organisations that there were and that it would be specifically to campaign and support the 1967 Act. (Francesca, October 31st, 2014). [34]

The very creation of Alliance for Choice is thus based on activists' reading of an opportunity to extend the 1967 Abortion Act to Northern Ireland and on a strategic decision to engage with political parties at the Westminster Parliament for a legislation reform. The organization's self-definition is consequently one of an "organisation that campaigns for the extension of the 1967 Abortion Act to Northern Ireland." In spite of a certain assurance regarding the possibility of the extension of the 1967 Act, as suggested by Francesca's explanation of the creation of AfC, no concrete change occurred when the Labour government came into power in 1997. Another lobbying opportunity, however, led to AfC – Derry's mobilisation in 2000, still in the hope of extending the act, but this time in the midst of the peace process:

> There always seems to be activity whenever there seems to be a possibility of a change in legislation. When there was discussion in Stormont around 2000, around the time Stormont was first installed again [during the peace process], we tried to get that through as an amendment, the extension of the Act that is, and tried to talk to political parties and lobbied the government, and we went up there just to protest outside, but that got shut down. (Carole, October 10th, 2014)

Indeed, this effort was in vain as the first motion to be voted in the newly established Stormont Parliament in 2002 after the peace process was not to extend the 1967 Act on Abortion(Bloomer and Fegan 2013b). In fact, some commentators suggest that in the lead up to the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, "the [Westminster] government encouraged the political parties [of Northern Ireland] into a power-sharing coalition by agreeing not to extend the Abortion Act to Northern Ireland in

[34]All the names of the interviewees have been changed in order to maintain their anonymity. All interviews were conducted by myself during my fieldwork with Alliance for Choice during the fall of 2014. For further details on the selection of participants and their sociodemographic characteristics, please refer to section 1.4.2 of this thesis.

sensitivity to their shared religious beliefs" (Rossites 2009 in Bloomer and Fegan 2013b: 116).

Between 2000 and their next action which took place in 2008, activists continued to help women in a more informal way, by raising funds, facilitating access to the abortion pill,[35] and/or by organising trips to England where terminations of pregnancies are legislated under the 1967 Abortion Act, and thus, more accessible. However, when a debate about Human Fertilisation and Embryology, which included a discussion about the extension of the 1967 Act, was held at the Westminster parliament in 2008, activists renewed their lobbying efforts. As one activist said about the 2008 context: "It was an opportunity to lobby the government because of a debate in London, at Westminster, so an opportunity to ask to extend the abortion act" (Sophie, September 10th, 2014). They organised an action that aimed at making visible the forty women per week[36] that travel to England to access abortion in order to counter the "government's argument that there is no demand and that women don't require these services" (Sophie, September 10th, 2014). They thus gathered 40 women wearing white masks for a public event in the lead up to that debate and addressed politicians directly in front of the Stormont Parliament in Belfast. This time again, the lobbying effort did not lead to the extension of the 1967 Act to Northern Ireland. In fact, the debate on the extension never actually took place in Westminster. Commentators have said that "despite adamant denials, many are convinced that Labour made a dirty deal with the Democratic Unionists to keep abortion out of

[35]The abortion pill is the popular name for a medically-induced abortion in opposition to an in-clinic abortion. It is a drug also known as RU-486 that is often used by women who live in countries that do not offer safe and accessible abortion services. See Women on waves: http://www.womenonwaves.org/en/page/702/how-to-do-an-abortion-with-pills--misoprostol--cytotec

[36] Given the illegal nature of such trips to England, the exact number of women who travel to access abortion is unknown. Estimates, as can be found in Fegan and Bloomer (2013a), usually point to 20 women per week, but Derry activists found that number to be too conservative and rather argued that up to 40 women per week travelled to England to access abortion.

Northern Ireland in exchange for votes to squeak through Gordon Brown's 42-day detention bill" (Toynbee 2008 dans Bloomer 2013:7). It seems that the controversial nature of his bill led Gordon Brown to use what many call the "Orange Card," that is, the votes of Northern Irish parties,[37] usually more conservative than in other regions of the UK, in order to assure the passing of his bill.

The next public mobilisation by AfC Derry would only be in 2011, this time with a different approach. Indeed, in 2011 activists innovated and created for their action a wash line where different pieces of clothing were hung up with facts, statistics and pro-choice slogans printed on them. Through this symbol, activists 'aired their dirty linen in public' to counter the taboo and myths around abortion. Then, in 2013, activists decided to mobilise and organise events during the City of Culture.[38] As one of the activists said, "city of culture gave us an opportunity to kind of focus on some events like the Lumière thing" (Francesca, October 31st, 2014). This "Lumière thing" she refers to is an event which aimed at transforming "familiar city landmarks, buildings, hidden spaces, parks and waterways into a magical nocturnal landscape of artworks made from light that sets out to amaze, delight, and stop people in their tracks" (Culture Northern Ireland, 2013). While there was an official program with selected local artists for the Lumière event, activists from Derry decided to attend the event in their own way. It is for this occasion that activists first used the shoes tactic which contained different types of shoes with, attached to each pair, a story of a woman who has had an abortion and her reason for choosing to do so. This tactic was

[37]Sales indeed argues that given the drawing of political districts and unionists' willingness to participate in British institutions, unionists have had an "overwhelming control over the two seats in Westminster – they played little role but tended to align with the right conservative party (Sales 1997: 30).

[38] The UK City of Culture prize was developed by the United Kingdom's Department for Culture, Media and Sport inspired by the European Capital of Culture prize. The designation holds for a year and the first city to be designated 'City of Culture' was Derry in 2013 and the next one is Hull for 2017.

used to highlight the different reasons why women make the choice to terminate their pregnancy and to invite people to think about these reasons – to walk a mile in their shoes – before judging them.

The shoes and wash line distinguish themselves from previous tactics used by AfC in terms of goals, target and general approach to mobilization. Indeed, as activists have highlighted, perceived opportunities to extend to act led to lobbying efforts. In other words, they perceived the government, either at Stormont or Westminster, as a locus of change. However, the shoes and washline were innovations used in 2011 and 2013 without any specific opportunity to lobby the government, and as such were oriented towards the general population rather than politicians. Also, these actions did not aim at extending the 1967 Act but rather at raising awareness about abortion and sharing information of common misconceptions about abortion. It follows that the approach for these two tactics is better described as popular education than as lobbying and spoke more about decriminalization than extending the Abortion Act. When adding the information on AfC's creation and tactical development over the years presented above to the empirical puzzle exposed in the introduction of the thesis, we can see that the question is twofold: (a) How can we explain AfC – Derry activists' refusal to engage in state-oriented tactics, such as lobbying, and their people-oriented innovations? And (b) why were certain innovations reproduced over time? In other words, how can we explain change and continuity in social movements' contentious tactics? I explore below some theoretical contributions that provide provisional answers to this question and elaborate four hypotheses.

1.2 From Lobbying to Popular Education: Explaining Tactical Change

Structuralist Contributions: Understanding the Space for Women's Rights Mobilisation in Northern Ireland

The Department of Justice (DoJ) consultation launched in October 2014 (discussed in the introduction of the thesis) constitutes what the structuralist perspective would label as a political opportunity which usually facilitates mobilisation. Indeed, Kriesi et al. identify four mechanisms that act as bridges between the general structural setting and movement action, namely facilitation, repression, (the evaluation of) success changes and reform and threat (Kriesi et al. 1995: 38-40). The first one, facilitation, Tilly (1993) "lowers the costs of acting, [and] will therefore generally lead to increased levels of mobilization" (Kriesi et al. 1995: 38). It takes different forms, including direct channels of access to state's decision making processes such as "formal or informal consultation, possibilities for judicial appeal, or direct-democratic procedures; and finally, direct support by established actors such as political parties for movement campaigns" (Kriesi et al. 1995: 11), and thus includes initiatives such as the Department of Justice's consultation. However, these same authors also argue that the macro-structural context in which social movements evolve is not that straightforward and past mobilisation also affects the current space for collective action.

In their book *New Social Movements in Western Europe* (1995), Kriesi et al. analyse the long-lasting effects of past mobilisations using the concept of cleavage. They argue that "the relative strength of the old cleavages may be expected to restrict the possibilities of the mobilization on the basis of the new cleavage" (Kriesi et al. 1995: 4). They establish a typology for the mobilization potential of traditional cleavages which allows to determine the space for mobilization based on new social issues. For

instance, within the four types of traditional cleavages (center-periphery, where language and religion play an especially important role; religious; urban-rural; class), Northern Ireland is best explained by the center-periphery cleavage[39] within an incongruent system. This means that in spite of pacification efforts, it preserves strong collective identities based on territorial considerations and which "implies the continued existence of rather closed groups defined in terms of the center-periphery cleavage" (Kriesi et al. 1995: 110).

This offers a good reading of post-conflict Northern Ireland given that the peace process has aimed at pacifying the national cleavage in the region. Indeed, following the sectarian conflict between Irish Catholics and British Protestants which took place during the second half of the 20th century in Northern Ireland, peace talks were initiated in the mid-1990s resulting in the signature of the *Good Friday Agreement* (GFA) in April 1998. This treaty established a new political system in the region which offered a "framework for addressing contested areas such as constitutional issues, cross-border cooperation with Ireland and Britain, equality and human rights" (Wilford and Wilson 2006, Side 2009 in Deiana 2013: 402). This system is based on principles of consociationalism and thus led to the creation of "a power-sharing grand coalition of parties, along with group vetoes to reassure the Protestant and Catholic communities that important decisions would only be made with the consent of representatives of the relevant community" (Horowitz 2002 in Deiana 2013: 402).

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[39] As mentioned in the introduction, while the conflict in Northern Ireland is often characterised as religious, religion is the basis of a wider and more salient political identities which divide the region. Moreover, in the cases they studied, Kriesi et al. found that the religious cleavages that opposed Catholics and Protestants were "largely pacified by the mid-seventies" (Kriesi et al, 1995: 12) whereas in Northern Ireland the 1970s have been a period of high intensity due to the involvement of the British authorities, a key player in the center-periphery cleavage. We can thus understand how while religion plays a key role in Norther Irish society, the regional context has, just as other center-periphery cleavages, "given rise to regionalist and nationalist movements that have mobilized against the builders of the centralised nation-states" (Kriesi et al. 1995: 10).

Other than the mobilisation by AfC – Derry in 1996 and 2000, the involvement of women in theses peace talks was mostly centered around the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition (NIWC), a cross-community group created in 1996 due to the absence of women amongst the main parties. Monica McWilliams, one of the co-founders of the NIWC, reflects upon the women's movement in Northern Ireland at a time where peace talks were beginning, a "time in which the women of Northern Ireland, who have been so actively engaged in their various political and domestic struggles, can finally breathe a collective sigh of relief" (McWilliams 1995:13). The NIWC thus seized the opportunity of the establishment of a new regional parliament, allowed for by the decreasing level of violence in the region, in order to put a women's perspective forward within the realms of institutional politics:

> In the wake of the 1994 paramilitary cease-fires, it was not just the governments that were cultivating new political processes. Several consultative conferences were convened, creating the space for women involved in these networks and groups to come together and to give voice to their aspirations for the community as a whole, and try to find ways in which these aspirations could be impressed on decision-makers (Fearon and McWilliams 1998: 1256).

Some also saw in this process the possibility for women in Northern Ireland to gain the rights that other women in the United Kingdom have had since the Abortion Act of 1967 (Horgan and O'Connor 2014: 39). A few international organisations got involved in the debate including CEDAW through the Universal Periodic Review of 1999. [40] In its recommendations, CEDAW expressed its concerns about the devolution of powers regarding abortion: "devolution of legislative powers to a Northern Ireland Assembly might result in the protection of women's rights being

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[40] CEDAW stands for the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women. It is a UN convention adopted by the General Assembly in 1979. See the UN Women website for more information: http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/history.htm. As for the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), it is one of the Human Rights Bodies of the United Nations's Office of the High Commissioner and is defined, according to their website, as "a unique process which involves a periodic review of the human rights records of all 193 UN Member States". See their website for a detailed explanation of the UPR process:
http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/BasicFacts.aspx.

uneven across the UK" (CEDAW 1999 in Horgan and O'Connor 2014: 41). NIWC's contribution in the peace process led to the adoption of a women-specific clause in the GFA which affirmed "the right of full and equal political participation for women," an important aspiration of the new agreement (Racioppi and O'Sullivan 2006: 203-4).

As Kriesi et al. argue, this cleavage has shut out women's issues from public attention during the peace process since, in spite of international pressures and the NIWC's statement in the Agreement, women's demands have remained "peripheral in the subsequent outworking of the settlement" (Deiana 2013:403). According to Deiana (2013: 404-5), the peace process lacked an acknowledgment of the gendered impact of the conflict, in turn leading to an absence of specific measures to deal with such an impact. This, she argues, is true not only for the Good Friday Agreement (GFA), but also for the St Andrews Agreement in 2006 which aimed at filling in the gaps left by the GFA: "Following the principles of consociationalism, the negotiations were a process of (male-dominated) elite bargaining involving the representatives of the British and Irish governments and of the two largest parties, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and Sinn Féin" (Deiana 2013: 405). Thus, far from reconciling the two communities divided by thirty years of armed conflict and centuries of territorial contests, the peace process ingrained this division within the region's political institutions, rendering even more difficult mobilization around women's issues. For instance, the NIWC, while it managed to get two seats in the Forum election talks in the 1990s as well as in the 1998 Assembly election, lost the 2003 elections and dissolved in 2006, a collateral effect of the implementation delays of the GFA. Indeed, O'Rourke argues that:

> the delays and obstacles in implementing the agreement led to the polarization of politics in the region and significantly improved the political fortunes of the

> more-extreme political parties. That left little place for cross-community party organized on the basis of gender. [...] In May 2006, the party disbanded, noting that its members were active instead in the institutions established by the agreement (O'Rourke 2014)

Other authors observing Northern Ireland have held similar arguments about the problems of the peace process, including Nagle who analyses LGBT rights mobilisations in the region:

> Top down statist diplomatic efforts to bolster peace in Northern Ireland have thus largely concentrated on legislation which inevitably validates and freezes the hegemonic dominance of the two-community paradigm. This essentialist confirmation of difference has been given official sanction in the legislation known as the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) (Nagle 2008: 309).

This echoes what Kriesi et al. argue about a pacified traditional cleavage, that is, that it does not give rise to large scale mobilizations like it used to (for instance during the Troubles in Northern Ireland), "but [it] is still present in the sense that it shapes loyalties and political consciousness; it influences the way political issues are conceived, and is liable to shut out from public attention issues that are entirely unrelated to it" (Kriesi et al. 1995: 11). Therefore, while there would be some space for mobilisation around new post-pacification issues, the political institutions and debates remain framed in terms of the traditional cleavage. And indeed, "[w]ith decades of conflict and with formal politics predominantly focused on the constitutional status of the region, issues relating to family, welfare and community policy were neglected" (Deiana 2013:402). This relates to the very definition of politics in the discussed earlier since "[t]he identitification of 'politics' with the constitutional issue entrenches the division between a women's agenda and mainstream political debate" (Sales 1997: 169).

These theoretical considerations shed light on the challenges pro-choice activists in Derry faced in past lobbying efforts and in the current context. Indeed, the anchoring of the two communities within post-conflict political institutions explains why AfC – Derry's past waves of mobilisation failed and why, in spite of an appearance of opportunity, the women's right to choose was overshadowed by a persistent national cleavage:

> with the entrenchment of ethnic interests in the politics and political institutions of the post-Agreement Northern Ireland, the development of a gender equality agenda, and consequently of a more equitable form of citizenship, is often hindered by issues of equality between the two dominant communities (Deiana 2013: 404).

As for pro-choice mobilisation during the fall of 2014, this leads to the first hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1: Following Kriesi et al. (1995) and Deiana (2013), in spite of the presence of a facilitation mechanism (i.e. the Department of Justice's consultation on amending the law on abortion), I hypothesize that the persistent salience of the two-community framework restricts the space for mobilization around abortion in the fall of 2014. This hypothesis also provides an explanation as to why past efforts at lobbying by AfC – Derry have not picked up steam. This in turn could explain why activists chose to change tactics: the salience of the traditional cleavage overshadowed pro-choice activists' claims, thus forcing them to reject lobbying tactics and find new targets and tactics, such as the two actions they have organised in the fall of 2014. However, since the objective of Kriesi et al's argument is not to discuss innovation, we must turn to other authors to fully understand how innovations came about in AfC's repertoire. I discuss below McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly's

contributions regarding repertoires and tactical innovations through their most recent take on the political opportunity perspective.

Repertoires and Innovation: McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly's Contribution

When it comes to contentious action, McAdam, Tilly and Tarrow usually refer to the concept of repertoire as defined by Tilly (1978). The latter argues that "repertoires are learned cultural creations, but theydo not descend from abstract philosophy or take shape as a result of political propaganda; they emerge from struggle" (Tilly 1993: 264) .Tilly thus argues that actors are constrained by previous struggles in their choice of tactics that repertoires have the effect of limiting the actors' knowledge, memory and social relations necessary for innovation. It follows that new forms of action can only emerge from "deliberate innovation and strenuous bargaining" (Tilly 1993: 265). Recent developments in the political process model by McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly better account for innovations (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001) by focusing on the relational character between repertoires and opportunities, thus allowing for a more dynamic view of contentious action. The authors borrow from Tilly (1978) that contentious performances do not follow precise scripts as "they resemble conversation in conforming to implicit interaction rules, but engaging incessant improvisation on the part of all participants" (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001: 138). They further discuss innovation by positing that "small-scale innovations modify repertoires continuously, especially as one set of participants or another discovers that a new tactic, message or self-presentation brings rewards its predecessors did not" (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001: 138).

In this effort to explain not only innovation but also changes in contention, McAdam, Tilly and Tarrow (2001) identify four mechanisms to answer "questions about actors, identities and actions" (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001: 142), namely brokerage, category formation, certification and object shift. These "four identity-transforming mechanisms "recur in essentially the same form across a vast range of contentious politics" (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001: 157). The one most closely related to changes in contentious tactics is object shift, defined by McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly as an "alteration in relations between claimants and objects of claims" (2001: 144). It relates to repertoires because of its inherent interactional character: "Object shift matters precisely because repertoires reside in social relations, not within individual actors or identities; a shift of objects selects or generates distinctive forms of mutual claim making" (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001: 145). Finally, object shift is identity-related because: "No claim occurs without at least implicit identification of claimant, object of claims and relations between them" (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001: 157).

Object shift, according to the authors, can happen both in the short and long term. In the short run, shifts occur during "the strategic interactions of contention" (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001: 144) and "commonly alter the actors and the paired identities they deploy, but they likewise affect the forms of collective claim making that are available, appropriate, and likely to be effective" (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001: 144). In the long run, object shift happens outside of contentious interaction and, according to the authors is an effect of wider structural change. Indeed, McAdam et al. argue that, for instance, the process of parliamentarization will generally promote "repertoire changes from particular to modular, from small-scale to large-scale, and from mediated by local notables to either direct or mediated by political entrepreneurs" (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001: 144).

McAdam et al.'s contributions to identity-related mechanisms, and particularly object shift, speak to the case described above. AfC - Derry's changing attitude towards their pro-choice claims – going from extending the 1967 Act to the decriminalisation of abortion – and their general strategy – from state-oriented actions such as lobbying to people-oriented actions such as popular education campaigns – is reflected in the small-scale innovations developed by the group as of 2011. This perspective is all the more interesting as, in contrast with Kriesi et al.'s contribution, the object shift mechanism takes into account actors' agency without neglecting the effects of structural conditions. It also allows us to grasp how actors negotiate their way through these structural constraints. Indeed, to paraphrase Polletta (2012), actors are never entirely constrained nor free and thus our analysis of their actions must take into account both the structural context in which they act as well as their own potential for creativity, which brings us to the second hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2: Rather than looking strictly at the context and the way it restricts space for pro-choice mobilization as the first hypothesis proposes, the second one suggests that new tactics developed by AfC-Derry between 2008 and 2013 can be explained as small-scale innovations. Indeed, while exclusion from post-conflict institutions offers an explanation for AfC – Derry's rejection of lobbying tactics, the conversation metaphor of the repertoire sheds light on both the refusal to engage in the consultation and the innovations developed by the group. I thus suggest that the people-oriented tactics brought rewards to Derry activists the way lobbying tactics were developed through a trial-and-error process in trying to respond to the exclusion from post-conflict institutions.

Nevertheless, it remains unclear why the shoes and the wash line tactics "stuck", that is, why they were reproduced by the group over time. McAdam et al.'s response to

this would be that they brought more "rewards" than other tactics. But how can we determine whether activists decided to reproduce these tactics because they expected them to bring greater rewards? Also, could there be other factors than rewards, for instance material or financial concerns, which could account for tactical reproduction of certain tactics within AfC – Derry's repertoire? Hypotheses three and four below deal with these questions by merging two perspectives into a common explanation: path dependency and narrative analysis.

1.3 Path-dependency and Tactical Reproduction

The concept of path dependency underlies the perspectives discussed above. Indeed, when Kriesi et al. state that "the sediments of past political mobilization are still with us" (Kriesi et al. 1995: 4), they suggest that past mobilizations have long-lasting effects. Similarly, for the concept of repertoire as defined by Tilly, past mobilizations have a constraining effect on the choice of current strategies and tactics, but concretely, how does the past influence the present? While path dependency is used by many analysts, "clear definitions are rare" (Pierson 2000: 252). In what follows, I introduce two hypotheses which revolve around the concept of path dependency in order to explain tactical reproduction over time.

Path Dependency as Increasing Returns

In the wide range of definitions of path dependency, sociologist William Sewell provides a rather loose definition of path dependency, suggesting simply that "history matters" (Sewell 1996: 262-3 in Pierson 2000: 252). On the other hand, however,

James Mahoney provides a quite narrow and precise definition by arguing that "path dependency characterizes specifically those historical sequences in which contingent events set into motion institutional patterns or event chains that have deterministic properties" (Mahoney 2000: 507). Somewhere between these two ends of the spectrum, Pierson suggests to use Margaret Levi's idea of the tree rather than the path, suggesting that "[a]lthough it is possible to turn around or to clamber from one to the other – and essential if the chosen branch dies – the branch on which a climber begins is the one she tends to follow" (Levi 1997: 28 in Pierson 2000: 252). Pierson contends that this metaphor is captured by the concept of increasing returns, initially developed for the adoption of a given technology. He defines path dependence as a "social process grounded in a dynamic of 'increasing returns'" (Pierson 2000: 251). According to him, this definition captures two key elements of path dependency: (i) the costs associated with change and (ii) timing and sequence. About the adoption of a new technology, Pierson argues that:

> [w]ith increasing returns, actors have strong incentives to focus on a single alternative and to continue down a specific path once initial steps are taken in that direction. Once an initial advantage is gained, positive feedback effects may lock in this technology, and competitors are excluded (Pierson 2000: 254).

We can easily conceive how the lock in of a certain technology and the exclusion of competitors could be applied to other decisions, both at the institutional or individual level. Indeed, Pierson argues that many relationships inherent to increasing returns are applicable to social interactions as well. For instance, Pierson takes the four features identified by Arthur (1994: 112 in Pierson 2000: 254) of a technology and its social context which generate increasing returns and applies them to social interactions. The four features consist of:

(a) Large set up costs creating a strong incentive to stick to the chosen option as both technology and "[n]ew social initiatives – such as the creation of organisations or institutions – usually entail considerable start-up costs" (Pierson 2000: 254);

(b) Learning effects which lead to higher returns when a given option is used over time, since "individuals as well as organizations, learn by doing" (Pierson 2000: 254);

(c) Coordination effects which occur when an increasing amount of people use a given technology, since "the benefits of our individual activities or those of an organization are often enhanced if they are coordinated or 'fit' with the activities of other actors or organizations" (Pierson 2000: 254);

(d) adaptive expectations that refer to the necessity to "pick the right horse" when making decisions that may have drawbacks later. Whether it is about the adoption of a technology or of a contentious tactic, "we adapt our actions in light of our expectations about the actions of others" (Pierson 2000: 254).

According to Mahoney, "once a given institution is contingently selected, the institution will be reinforced through processes of increasing legitimation, even if other previously available institutions would have been more legitimate" (Mahoney 2000: 523). This does not preclude change from occurring, but rather suggests that once it occurs, it is increasingly difficult to move away from this path. The moments when change occurs are conceptualized by Mahoney as "critical junctures."[41] These are characterised by contingency (Mahoney 2000: 509) and "the adoption of an institutional arrangement from among two or more alternatives" (Mahoney 2000: 513). These junctures are at the heart of Mahoney's path dependency theory because they are 'critical' in the sense that "once a particular option is selected it becomes progressively more difficult to return to the initial point when multiple alternatives were still available" (Mahoney 2000: 513). The concept of "critical juncture" thus

[41]The concept of critical juncture was initially put forward by David Collier and Ruth Collier (1991) in *Shaping the Political Arena*. David Collier supervised Mahoney's thesis.

seems useful to explain the timing of the shoes innovation and its effect on AfC-Derry's repertoire.

In sum, as Pierson argues, "Arthur's characteristics provide a foundation for developing hypotheses about when increasing returns processes are likely to operate in the social world" (Mahoney 2000: 254). And, while path dependency, as defined by Mahoney and Pierson, is concerned with formal institutions and social policies, we can nevertheless benefit from their input in the case of less-formal and more dynamic objects of analysis. Indeed, Pierson's discussion of the high cost of innovation as well as the coordination and the learning effects shed light on the activists' reproduction of pre-existing tactics during the fall of 2014. However, we will see that coordination effects do not aply in this case as they relate to the difficult alliance between both AfC groups. This brings us to Hypothesis 3.

Hypothesis 3: Following Pierson, I suggest that the increasing returns dynamic inherent to path dependency is applicable to tactical reproduction. I explore in Chapter 3 how the limited resources, both human and financial, as well as the learning effect influenced activists to use pre-existing tactics, namely the shoes and the wash line, in both of their actions in the fall of 2014.

However, two blind spots remain. First, how can we account for the fourth feature of increasing returns (i.e. adaptive expectations)? How and when do actors' expectations change regarding their tactics and how does that interact with the three other features of path dependency? Secondly, while the "critical juncture" concept reveals the importance of key moments in social movements' contentious practice, it remains unclear what effects these 'critical events' have on the different aspects of

movements, for instance, their repertoires, group culture and identity. Therefore, I turn to authors in the field of social movements who have studied objects conceptually closer to mine. In particular, I look at Polletta and Meyer's work on narrative analysis. I also turn to Staggenborg who has conceptualised 'critical events' as critical junctures in the social movement literature.

Critical Events and Narratives: the Constraining Effect of Stories

In an effort to explain the relationship between opportunities and movement outcomes, Staggenborg (1993) has explored the application of "critical junctures" to the analysis of social movements. Indeed, while she states that the role of events is well theorized in social movement literature, she argues "for the role of various types of 'critical events' in making movement issue more or less salient and in altering resources and opportunities for collective action" (Staggenborg 1993: 320). She goes on to identify six types of events, namely large-scale socio-economic and political events, natural disasters and epidemics, accidents, critical encounters, strategic initiatives, and policy outcomes (Staggenborg 1993: 323-32). An element inherent to her argument is the necessity to focus on the organisational level in order to seize how "[a]ctors' interpretations and organizational structures intervene between events and their outcomes" (Staggenborg 1993: 320). This is closely related to the 'adaptive expectations' feature of Arthur (1994 in Pierson 2000) about increasing returns. Indeed, as mentioned in section 1.3.1, Pierson discusses the salience of 'picking the right horse' as most collective action lacks a clear relationship between effort and effect (Pierson 2000: 254): "When picking the wrong horse may have very high costs, actors must constantly adjust their behavior in the light of how they expect others to act" (Pierson 2000: 258). This brings us back to the relational character of collective action underscored by McAdam et al.'s mechanisms in Hypothesis 2. Actors are

engaged in a conversation through struggle in which they must evaluate how their opponents will react and the impact their actions will have. The fourth hypothesis builds on these considerations and includes Polletta and Meyer into the conversation in order to explore what the analysis of group culture can tell us about the actors' adaptive expectations – how they make sense of 'critical events'.

Francesca Polletta (2006) has studied different ways in which group culture influences the practices of social movements. She looked at culture through narratives since she argues that it is the stories people tell on a daily basis that allow to share experience-based knowledge, to make explicit an organisation's norms or to define a group's collective identity (Polletta 2006: 13). Stories thus go beyond anecdotal instances as they allow not only to describe the actors' rationale, but also to "explain *why* activists construct the rationale the way they do" (Polletta 2012: 3, emphasis added). Additionally, stories can serve different functions, namely sense making, maintaining the status quo, and questioning inequalities (Polletta 2006:15-9). These functions are similar to a key element in Meyer's article, that is, the simultaneous challenging and reinforcing of norms, beliefs and values by social movements: "In organizing for the future, activists must make sense of the events of the past, explaining previous triumphs and defeats by constructing narratives that resonate with popular beliefs and shared values even as they challenge them." (Meyer 2006: 286) Meyer actually argues that, on the basis that "all versions of causality and responsibility can be contested" (Meyer 2006: 281), the story of 'who won' and more broadly the interpretation of past events are important outcomes of social movements that are often overlooked by social movement scholars.

A narrative-based analysis thus presents an entry point into what Pierson calls 'adaptive expectations,' that is, the actors' perception of the other players' actions.

Furthermore, bridging Polletta and Meyer's contribution with path dependency is coherent since they too highlight the importance of past events, or rather their interpretation, in determining current and future action. Indeed, Meyer establishes that reputations and tales of influence alike are constructed out of the "raw material that constitutes past events" (2006: 282-6). He also argues that whether these stories will hold depends on the work of political entrepreneurs who will use them (or not) to support their current agendas. It is Polletta who most clearly circumscribes the way stories condition future action as she states that narratives "make some courses of action seem reasonable, fitting, even possible and others seem ineffectual, ill-considered, or impossible" (Polletta 2006: 4).

In sum, Meyer, Polletta and Staggenborg's arguments are similar as they suggest to observe meso-level factors in order to seize the relationship between events and their outcomes. It follows that Hypothesis 4 explores Alliance for Choice – Derry's internal narratives and their relationship with two types of critical event.

Hypothesis 4: Together with the costs of innovation, learning and coordination effects (H3), I posit that narratives within the group have a constraining effect thus explaining the reproduction of people-oriented tactics. This hypothesis reinstates the contingent character of critical events highlighted by Mahoney. Indeed, I will explore how the Ms. Y case and the City of Culture event constitute respectively an 'accident' and a 'strategic initiative' in Staggenborg's typology (Staggenborg 1993). I will discuss how these two events are linked with the narratives of blame and success of AfC – Derry and how these narratives shape the activists' expectations of what constitutes a "successful" tactic.

Through these four hypotheses, I wish to shed light on dynamics of tactical *innovation* and *reproduction*. For tactical innovation, I first explore (H1) the effect of the traditional cleavage inscribed in post-conflict institutions (independent variable) on the choice of tactics (dependent variable 1). I then turn to (H2) the object shift mechanism (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001) to suggest changing relations between claimants, namely AfC – Derry, and the object of their claims – from extending the 1967 Abortion Act to the decriminalization of abortion – to explain the development of small-scale innovations (dependent variable 2).

These two dependent variables play a double role in this analysis as they serve as premises for the tactical reproduction process discussed in Chapter 3. Building on the rejection of lobbying tactics and the development of small-scale innovations, I argue that a path dependent mechanism is at play. The use of pre-existing tactics (i.e. the shoes and washline) during the fall of 2014 (dependent variable) is explained by features of increasing returns, namely costs of innovation, learning effects, coordination effects (H3) and adaptive expectations (H4). I separate this fourth and final feature from the others as its loose definition in Arthur's conceptualization demands for more attention in the case under scrutiny. Hypotheses three and four have a meso-level focus as they take into account the internal dynamics and interpretations of the group under study. Indeed, for H4, I further posit that narrative analysis is a good tool to account for the adaptive expectations component of increasing returns.

1.4 Definitions, Methods and Data

This research project is based on ethnographic methods which include theory-driven participant observation, semi-structure interviews, and a discussion workshop. Throughout the data collection process, which took place during the fall of 2014 in Derry, Northern Ireland, the goal was to shed light on mechanisms of change and continuity in social movements' contentious tactics. In this section, I first go over the main concepts and definitions inspired by the theoretical considerations in section 1.2 and 1.3 and then share the methodological underpinnings of this project.

Defining Movements and Concepts

One of the main approaches to social movement studies, the political process model, talks about social movements as either contained or transgressive "contentious politics", where the latter is defined as:

> episodic collective interaction among makers of claims and their objects when a) at least one government is a claimant, an object of claims, or a party to the claims and b) the claims would, if realized, affect the interests of at least one of the claimants (Tilly 2000: 137).

Put differently, transgressive contentious politics is a collective political struggle which excludes all political work which conforms to institutional rules and includes all non-conventional actions in contexts of wars, revolutions, rebellions, genocides, or social movements' activism (Tilly 2000: 137-8). At the heart of this definition is the idea that a social movement exists only outside the state apparatus and must have as target the state and its resources. This approach also suggests that the key elements in determining the emergence of a movement are the different political opportunities,

resources available for organisations and the framing of claims (McAdam 1982). While this approach is useful in understanding the emergence of a movement or group, given its emphasis on political institutions, it tells us little about (a) the movements' capacity to generate its own opportunities and (b) contentious action that is not targeted towards the state apparatus. It is therefore important to see how other authors have defined collective action since the actors in the case at hand have employed an array of tactics both with state and non-state targets.

Many authors (e.g. Melucci, Jasper, Calhoun) have suggested that social movements are not only concerned with political but also cultural issues. Calhoun defines social movements as:

> all attempts to influence patterns of culture, social action, and relationships in ways that depend on the participation of large numbers of people in concerted and self-organized (as distinct from state-directed or institutionally mandated) collective action (Calhoun 1993: 388).

While certain elements of this definition are difficult to operationalise, for instance the definition of a "large numbers of people" and the conflagration of transgressive and contained contention (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001), it nevertheless adds to Tilly's definition as it allows scholars to consider movement targets and opponents more widely, including for instance cultural institutions or counter-movement sympathisers. Similarly, Joshua Gamson "found the dualistic model of protagonist and antagonist insufficient for understanding strategic rejection of alliances dangerous to movement image and goals" (Gamson 1997 in Taylor 1998: 677). For this research project, I keep the core of Tilly's definition which I broaden to incorporate Calhoun's cultural considerations and Gamson's critique of the political process' dualist lens. Therefore, a social movement will be understood as a "collective political struggle" (Tilly 2000: 137) that goes beyond but does not

preclude the daily political work done within institutional rules and includes all attempts to overthrow, modify or influence power dynamics and/or social, political, cultural or economic norms[42].

I derive four key concepts on the basis of this perspective:

(a) Repertoire of action: a set of tactics and strategies elaborated through time by a social movement group or organisation. If a repertoire is constructed through time, consequently a certain tactic or strategy becomes part of a repertoire if it is used more than once. Moreover, following McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, the concept of repertoire is conceived as being inherently relational, and thus elaborated and shared through struggle both with allies and opponents.

(b) Strategy and tactic: I use Turner and Killian's contribution to distinguish between strategy and tactic, with the former being "the overall movement plan, framework, or theoretical approach" and the latter " ... the means by which movement actors operationalize strategy" (Turner and Killian 1972 in Taylor 1998: 675, footnote 1).

(c) Tactical innovation: given the definition of the repertoire of action given in (a), an innovation is never created from scratched, but rather an appropriation or adaptation of a pre-existing tactic used for the first time by the group under study.

(d) Tactical reproduction: reproduction occurs when a particular tactic is used more than once by the same group over time. This definition implies a certain awareness of the reproduction by actors.

[42] There is no consensus within the social movement literature on what defines a movement. While I keep the core components of Tilly's definition for my own, it should be noted that several authors studying feminist movements have shown how some movement actors have played key roles inside and outside the state apparatus, thus challenging the mainstream conception of social movements' challengers as being outside (and against) the state. See for example Banaszak (2010) *The Women's Movement Inside and Outside the State*.

Methods and Data

This analysis is based on the data collected is the result of ethnographic fieldwork conducted during the fall of 2014. It is a case-based research (Small 2009) for which I relied on interviews and participant observation. I discuss below these data collection methods as well as their relevance for the identification of causal mechanisms.

Qualitative methods are characterised by Blee and Taylor as "data-enhancers"(2002: 109). Rather than condensing data in order to draw a general picture, qualitative methods allow to shed light on data that would otherwise be ignored (Blee and Taylor 2002: 109). As a qualitative and ethnographic research project, my objective is not to use *Alliance for Choice* as a representative case of a larger population, for instance social movements in Northern Ireland or pro-choice groups, but rather to identify mechanisms and processes that can inform and improve theory.

For McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2001), mechanisms do not produce the same effect, but operate in a similar fashion in different contexts: "each mechanism involves the same immediate cause-effect connections wherever and whenever it occurs" (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001: 127). Studying mechanisms therefore not only means looking at whether two variables are interrelated, but also at *how* they are interrelated (Gerring 2007: 163). This approach to variables recognizes the importance of time and space in cases under scrutiny. Ethnography is a relevant approach for the study of mechanisms and processes since, as Katz argues, "what ethnographic data shows, if it shows anything, is life in action; behaviour changing; people in the process of becoming; groups in the process of formation and transformation" (Katz 2002: 71) (Katz 2002: 71) (Katz 2002: 71) (Katz 2002: 71)

(Katz 2002: 71) (Katz 2002: 71) (Katz 2002: 71) (Katz 2002: 71) (Katz 2002: 71) (Katz 2002: 71) (Katz 2002: 71) (Katz 2002: 71) (Katz 2002: 71) (Katz 2002: 71). Mechanisms are also appropriate for the identification of path dependent processes since casual mechanisms not only hint to the inherent sequentiality of events, but are actually crucial to any path dependent analysis as "one cannot meaningfully assert that event A leads to event B, or that event B leads to causal event C, without some understanding of these mechanisms" (Mahoney 2000: 531). Let us know look more in depth at the specific ethnographic tools in sections (a) and (b) as well as sample methods in (c).

a) Theory-Driven Participant Observation

In opposition to field-guided participant observation, Lichterman suggests that theory-driven participant observation aims at responding to theory in a way that the former does not. As such, "a theoretically driven study can offer powerful insights on questions that interest scholars who may not be concerned otherwise with the participant-observer's subject of the study" (Lichterman 2002: 122). Litcherman refers to Burawoy and his *extended case method* to argue that with theory-driven participant observation, the researcher:

> 'extends' his [her] view of a case by theorizing it as a very specific instance of social and cultural structures or institutional forces at work. Participant-observers make these analytic moves into the macro by building on pre-existing theory (Lichterman 2002: 123).

Thus, when guided by theory, questions of 'how' are a way to understand, for instance, how institutional, social as well as cultural forces structure action. To

paraphrase Burawoy, it is about extracting the general from the unique (in Lichterman 2002: 123). As suggested above, in this research I am concerned with going from how to why, that is, "shifting from a focus on gathering descriptions of social life to the analytical re-organization of data into explanatory items" (Katz 2001: 444).

b) Semi-Structured Interviews

Conducting interviews is a pertinent way to validate intuitions and results since, as suggested by Blee and Taylor in their chapter on semi-structured interviews in the study of social movements: "such interviewing strategies make it possible for respondents to generate, challenge, clarify, elaborate, or recontextualise understandings of social movements" (Blee and Taylor 2002: 94). This type of interviews is done at the cost of a reduced capacity to systematically compare between interview responses. However, they allow for "greater breadth and depth of information, the opportunity to discover the respondants' experience and interpretation of reality and access to people's ideas, thoughts, memories in their own words" (Blee and Taylor 2002: 94). Along with participant observation and documentary methods, it is a particularly useful method when the goal is exploration, discovery and interpretation of complex social phenomena (Blee and Taylor 2002: 93). During interviews (see Annex B), questions on *how* were used in order to elicit explanations about the process of the adoption and reproduction of tactics and strategies by activists. As Katz explans, "'How?' is generally a better way to elicit responses useful for explanation because it invites a personally historicized, temporally formatted response, while 'why?' authorizes responses formatted in the atemporal and impersonal categories of moral reasoning" (Katz 2001: 445).

c) Sampling

During my ethnographic work with Alliance for Choice, I conducted six semi-structured in-depth interviews with core activists of the Derry group. The location of these interviews varied depending on the interviewees' preferences, ranging from a local café, to a pub or at home. On average, interviews lasted one hour and a half, with the shortest interview lasting forty-five minutes and the longest two hours and forty-five minutes.

The small-N character of this research is appropriate given my aim to identify mechanisms and processes at work. Indeed, according to Pires, it is vain to look for a sample representative of a larger population.[43] Rather, he suggests that these two level mesh and that "the empirical group takes the form of a unique level or a continuum with limited delineations"[44] (Pires 1997: 120). When discussing the construction of the empirical corpus he notes that:

> the key question for this type of sample (or working group) therefore is not, for instance : How many hospitals do I need to talk about all hospitals?, but rather : What are the characteristics and specific proceses of this system?; How do they work and what effects or functions can we draw?, etc. [45] (Pires 1997: 152).

[43]On the relevance of small-N samples, see also Small (2009) "'How Many Cases do I Need?' On Science and the Logic of Case Selection in Field-Based Research".

[44] Translated from French : "le niveau empirique prend la forme d'un seul palier où d'un continuum très peu balisé".

[45] Translated from French : "la question clé pour ce type d'échantillon (ou d'univers de travail) n'est donc pas, par exemple : Combien d'hôpitaux faut-il considérer pour parler de l'ensemble des hôpitaux ?, mais bien : Quelles sont les propriétés et quels sont les processus caractéristiques de ce système ?; Comment fonctionne-t-il et quels effets ou fonctions peut-on en dégager ?, etc. "

Below is a table of the participants' socio-demographic characteristics.

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Education	Employment Status	Employer Type	Community	Ethnicity	Religion
Sophie	35-44	F	Undergrad	Student and part-time work	For-profit (resto)	Neither	Human being in Western Society and its ills	None
Carole	45-54	F	Post-grad	Out of work (not looking for work)	-	Neither	German	Atheist
Elizabeth	25-34	F	Undergrad	For wages (on mat leave)	not-for profit	Protestant	Northern Irish	Atheist
Meaghan	25-34	F	Post-grad	Self-employed	State institution	Both	Irish	Atheist
Ruth	55-64	F	Secondary	Retired and chair of community center	not-for profit	Catholic	Irish	Catholic
Francesca	55-64	F	Post-grad	For wages	University	Neither	Irish (from the South)	Atheist

This sample was created through a snow-ball sampling method. My initial contact with Alliance for Choice – Derry was through Sophie whom I got in touch with through AfC's group email in preparation to the fieldwork. She introduced me to several other activists and kept me informed of the different meetings and events.The snowball sampling method implies that (a) sampling was purposeful and did not rely on random selection methods; (b) it aims the inclusion of particular experiences rather than representativity; and (c) it was done at different stages of the research (Blee and Taylor 2002: 100). This last criterion also applies to analysis and data interpretation as the researcher must be aware that ongoing analysis "may provoke changes in the study" (Blee and Taylor 2002: 110), including participants to add to the sample, questions to ask, topics to discuss, etc. This goes hand in hand with Lictherman suggestion of theory-driven participant observation where the researcher

is not looking unbiasedly at his site, but rather is searching for "more and more examples of [his or her] concepts in [his or her] field site" (Lichterman 2002: 130).

In this perspective of ongoing sampling and analysis, I added a discussion workshop with activists as a third data collection tool once on the field. The workshop distinguishes itself from a focus group because it served both as a tool for knowledge sharing with activists and data collection. The objective was twofold: (a) share preliminary results with activists and (b) ask questions about events and political decisions which happened after the interviews. I thus invited activists for an unusual meeting, presented them the main themes which emerged from my reflection using a participatory approach, collected activists' comments and asked open-ended questions about the advancements of the DoJ's consultation and their future actions. The organisation of such a workshop was made possible by the relationship of trust I built with activists throughout my fieldwork, thus allowing me to gather additional data and validate preliminary results. However, I am aware that my position as an outsider precluded me from information on certain topics, for example conflicts within the group and between the Derry and Belfast groups. This was somewhat counter-balanced by my status of a young, feminist, Canadian student. Indeed, as a feminist researcher from Canada, I was immediately perceived as an ally for activists, and as a young woman, I was rapidly taken under their wings. When in public, I was introduced by activists as "the student working with us in Derry" (Belfast meeting, August 19th, 2014) and when in the group, I was told to participate as I was an "honorary member of AfC now" (Anna, meeting of August 20th, 2014). This suggests that, as an outsider, I had at least one foot in and, it follows, that I had access to authentic and unfiltered data.

In conclusion, through theory-driven participant observation, semi-structured interviews and a discussion workshop, I conducted a case study aiming at identifying

mechanisms at work in the elaboration of strategies and tactics by social movements. Common to the use of this workshop, the interviews and participant observation is the desire to put forth activists' own words and experiences. The analysis below, based on the case of Alliance for Choice, will shed light on concepts of repertoire of action, tactical innovation and reproduction discussed above in the theoretical section. In doing so, I contribute to more general reflexions on continuity and change both inside and outside social movements.

CHAPTER II
THE DYNAMICS OF TACTICAL INNOVATION

In mid-afternoon on August 19th, 2014 I joined a few of Derry-based activists as they drove to a meeting in Belfast with the other AfC group. This meeting was convened by Belfast activists in response to an amendment to the Criminal Justice Bill brought to the regional assembly by Jim Wells, a Democratic Unionist Party member, as an indirect, albeit quite obvious, attempt to close the Marie Stopes International Centre in Belfast. As the anti-choice group "Precious Life" writes[46]: "The purpose of this amendment is to ensure that private clinics, such as the Marie Stopes centre which opened its doors in Belfast in October 2012, cannot legally carry out abortions." After explaining the rationale behind the meeting we were about to attend, Francesca[47] laid out what I would come to realise is AfC – Derry's current perception of lobbying tactics:

> AfC Belfast's response is to write a letter when really the only response to that is 'fuck off'! Jim Wells' arguing that he doesn't want these services to be privatized when actually lots of services are being privatized, and they choose to target only this one service that just so happens to be the one about women's rights and abortion (August 19th, 2014).

Later in the fieldwork, activists also told me that they would refuse to engage in the Department of Justice's (DoJ) consultation on amending the law on abortion and yet, they had engaged in a dialogue with politicians in the past. Why, then, did Derry-based pro-choice activists refuse to engage in lobbying tactics and, in parallel, organized awareness-raising actions?

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[46] Article from a citizen go petition online, retrieved on October 8th2014.

[47]This name and all others cited in this chapter are pseudonyms attributed to interviewees. All interviews were conducted by myself during my fieldwork in Northern Ireland in 2014. See Chapter 1 for more details on methods and interviewees' socio-economic backgrounds.

In this chapter, I explore the relationship between the setting aside of lobbying tactics, the tactical innovations, and the post-conflict institutional setup of Northern Ireland. In order to fully comprehend the latter, I first discuss key events on the political scene and share Derry-based activists' view of the Northern Irish political context, in general, and in the framework of the DoJ's consultation, in particular. I show below how Hypothesis 1 — Kriesiet al.'s argument about the influence of traditional cleavages — sheds light on the absence of space for women's rights mobilization in the region. However, I argue below that we must turn to the object shift mechanism of Hypothesis 2 in order to understand the dynamics at play in the change of emphasis from state-oriented to people-oriented tactics in AfC – Derry's repertoire. I expose below how the traditional cleavage restrains activists' access to the mainstream political debate, which in turn leads to a rejection of lobbying tactics. Nevertheless, I argue that the conversation metaphor underlying in McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly's object shift mechanism better accounts for the trial-and-error process of tactical innovations by AfC – Derry from 2008 to the fall of 2014. I discuss this mechanism and its link to group identity in the final section of this chapter and conclude by outlining the specificities of this case as well as its theoretical contribution to the study of tactical and strategic changes.

2.1 Deadlock at Stormont: From Welfare Reform to the Consultation on Amending the Law on Abortion

To understand the main issues on the political scene during the fall of 2014 in Northern Ireland, we have to go back to February 2013 when the conservative government in Westminster imposed budget cuts, thus leading to the implementation of a welfare reform in the region. Following the announcement of the cuts by Westminster, Sinn Féin used its veto power, a particularity of the Northern Irish

political system, which allows any one of the two parties representing one of the two ethnonational communities to block the passing of a law in major areas such as budget allocations. This welfare reform became a salient issue since without cross-community support, Northern Ireland could not implement the cuts, thus facing major financial penalties. As the BBC reported on September 9th 2014:

> Northern Ireland faces penalties by the Treasury for not endorsing welfare reforms passed by Westminster in February 2013. (...) Mr Robinson [First Minister] said the cost of going it alone on welfare could rise to £1bn a year, or 10% of Stormont's budget. The first minister said the consequent job losses of thousands of public workers was 'not a price Northern Ireland could afford to pay to maintain devolution.'[48]

In reaction to the opposition by Sinn Féin, Prime Minister Peter Robinson of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) published a letter in the *Belfast Telegraph*, on September 9th, 2014,[49] to call for a reopening of the discussion on the functioning of the Assembly at Stormont. Indeed, he highlighted that in spite of the many successes of the coalition government since the St Andrews Agreement in 2006, the recent welfare reform has highlighted that "the present arrangements are no longer fit for purpose" and that the current system is "time-consuming and sluggish."

This type of political conundrum is common in Northern Ireland and has effects on all subsequent political decisions, from the budget and financial decisions to the nomination of the speaker of the Assembly. For instance, when naming the last speaker of the house, Sinn Féin had accepted that a DUP member be the current speaker in so far as the next one would be from Sinn Féin. However, given the opposition of Sinn Féin to the welfare reform, the DUP refused to support a Sinn Féin speaker of the house as long as the party did not approve the welfare reform.

[48] http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-29133267
[49] http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/opinion/debateni/stormonts-inadequate-setup-and-the-welfare-row-northern-irelands-first-minister-writes-exclusively-for-the-telegraph-30570776.html

Similarly, when disagreements emerged in 2013 around Northern Ireland's past and its commemoration through parading, questions about the functioning of the institutions were also brought up. Actually, talks about the future of Stormont were scheduled to begin on October 17th 2014 given that "unionist parties walked out of talks [in 2013] about contentious issues in Northern Ireland, in protest at the Parades Commission's decision." These talks, however, took on a particular importance given the issue of the welfare reform and led to questions about the desirability of keeping the current institutional set up in Northern Ireland. As Theresa Villiers, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland chairing the talks, highlighted on the Nolan Show, a popular radio show on BBC Northern Ireland:

> Stormont can carry on as it is, the trouble is its decision making is getting more and more difficult. The two big issues, the budgets on welfare cuts and flags, parading and the past are making it more and more difficult for the executives in the Assembly to operate effectively so I don't think they're on the brink of immediate collapse but I think their effectiveness is more and more held back as a result of these two blockages which we're seeing.[50]

Mike Nesbitt, leader of the Ulster Unionist Party, shared a similar point of view when commenting on the talks a few days after their beginning: "The problem, I guess, is that too many politicians [...] are obsessed with an old-fashioned, binary approach to everything we do. Politics has to be orange or green. It has to be win or lose."[51] Therefore, while the budget cuts imposed by the conservative government in London were part of nationwide austerity measures, they had a unique impact in Northern Ireland given the particular regional context. Indeed, rather than feeding a leftist opposition to welfare cuts, this welfare reform highlights the continued existence of the traditional center-periphery cleavage (see Kriesi et al. 1995) in Northern Ireland.

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[50] Online article, retrieved on June 6th, 2014 : http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b04kfn4p.

[51] Online article, retrieved on June 6th, 2014 : http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/politics/mike-nesbitt-urges-joint-stormont-talks-over-forming-of-an-opposition-30676117.html.

The political deadlock incurred because of this cleavage also affects women's issues. As Fegan and Bloomer highlight in a video on the legal framework around abortion: "You could call it a deadlock. We're used to deadlocks here, but this is a particular type of deadlock" (Bloomer and Fegan 2013a: 9:10). Indeed, they highlight that the institutional resistance to decriminalising abortion is "out of step with public opinion" since "most would be in favor of some legislative reform"[52] (Bloomer and Fegan 2013a: 6:36). In the video, Bloomer adds that "some MLAs are in favour personally, but in the Assembly their voices are dominated by an anti-abortion discourse" (Bloomer and Fegan 2013a: 9:05). Derry pro-choice activists are very well aware of this political deadlock, and not only around the issue of abortion, but more generally around the post-conflict institutional setup. Indeed, when explaining to me this gap between the population and the politicians' official discourse, Elizabeth said:

> Cause it's green and orange politics, and the big issues are marches, flags, weapons, it's dissident republicanism, it's policing things that don't affect on people, well in some communities the flags [are important], but the vast majority is an issue for a couple of days and then it's gone again, over and done with. But they dominate, so you've got poverty, protestant boys particularly they're achievement in schools are horrendous, it's at the bottom of the pile at the minute. [You've got] women's issues, feminism, all that tossed out the window. And because there is this real religious [style], it's almost cultish, you're just never going to get past that Stormont block. (October 14th, 2014)

This "Stormont block" to which Elizabeth refers is directly linked to the "green and orange politics" rooted in religious affiliation – the "almost cultish" way to approach politics – which has the effect of limiting space for any other issue in the region, including women's issues, poverty and education. This is why she adds that "there's no room for secular politics, it's all very Christian-based [...] All the political parties

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[52] The Amnesty International UK's Press Release in on October 21st, 2014 reports the results of a research poll conducted by the Millward Brown Ulster market research firm on attitudes to abortion in Northern Ireland. They conclude that "overall between 6 and 7 in 10 of the total population sample support abortion in certain circumstances" (UK, Amnesty International. 2014. "Amnesty Launches New Campaign on Abortion in Northern Ireland." in *New poll finds 7 in 10 Northern Ireland people back abortion law reform*. Northern Ireland: Amnesty International UK. p.12.

are based around religion so you can't escape it" (Elizabeth, October 14th, 2014). Elizabeth's analysis of the "Stormont block," based on the centrality of religious affiliation, is also present in the other activists' discourse, including Carole who deplores the parties' position towards Westminster in the welfare reform debate:

> ...with the welfare cuts here, this blaming Sinn Féin or them saying 'well we've done our bit we've voted against it in Westminster [...] instead of Sinn Féin and DUP really coming together and saying to Westminster 'well wait a second, this doesn't work here' and actually being an opposition and standing up and being active! (October 10th, 2014).

Similarly, another activist points to the absence of an actual opposition in the Assembly at Stormont:

> ... you know Stormont, it's like a committee: you need the backing of the other community, but there's nobody there to badger and to lobby there all the time because there's no opposition. They're all part of the same government. You don't have the Tory government, and a Labour government, or an Independent or Liberal government, you have them all on the same committee and if you have the majority on that committee, well obviously you're always gonna get your way, aren't you! (Ruth, October 22nd, 2014).

And indeed, authors observing Northern Ireland (Coulter 1999, McWilliams 1993) have highlighted the lack of any liberal democratic representation and how it makes "the task more politically difficult for the women's movement" (McWilliams 1993: 96).

This difficulty is multifaceted as it has affected the movement both *internally*, within groups and associations, and *externally*, on the political scene. Indeed, the women's movement has historically been affected by the ethnonational conflict in the region, often resulting in a limited capacity to form a united feminist front (Evason 1991, McWilliams 1995). In addition to the common internal conflicts regarding tactics and

strategies, feminist activists were divided on the national question, thus forcing them to prioritize nationalism over feminism (McWilliams 1995). According to Roulston, this distinguished the feminist movement in Norther Ireland from other places:

> Divisions among feminists over politics and ideology are a recurrent feature of all modern women's movements; in Northern Ireland, the familiar socialist/revolutionary feminist camps are fragmented even further by differences over Republicanism and the IRA campaign (Roulston 1989: 219 in Sullivan 1999: 106).

For instance, the Belfast Women's Collective themselves argued that by the mid-1970s, "this question dogged every women's group in Northern Ireland at that time and as the women's movement was becoming more cohesive and active, it became ever more difficult and more crucial to answer" (McWilliams 1995: 26). The group, like many others, ended up splitting along the lines of political ideology as well as community membership.

In terms of the presence of the women's movement on the political scene, as set out in Hypothesis 1, this two-community paradigm also affected the movement externally by limiting the space for mobilisation. Indeed, similar patterns repeated themselves throughout the second half of the 20th century where "community and single issue campaigns [including women's issues] struggled to reassert themselves in competition with the bitter political divisions in the province" (McWilliams 1995: 23). Even when divisions were pacified with the cease-fire and peace process, the cleavage remained a challenge for women's rights mobilisation. As Francesca told to me during a car ride to Belfast (August 19th, 2014): "It has happened just so often that women have been put aside for the benefit of the 'peace process' (quotation marks are hers) that it's not even a joke now." According to McWilliams, the main effect of this is the absence of a single women's coalition and the presence of "a whole range of

movements in which women had participated" (McWilliams 1995:27), something acknowledged by both theorists (McWilliams 1995) and activists: "I suppose there wasn't really, well there still really isn't a women's movement here" (Francesca, October 31st, 2014).

This does not mean however that there is no activism done by women, quite the opposite as Elizabeth highlights: "a lot of the activism is done by women. And for issues in their communities, it's often women that go to meetings and women that speak to their councillors" (Elizabeth, October 14th, 2014). But still, most of women's activism has been done through the Civil Rights Movement and single issue campaigns that often have to do with peacekeeping or community-related matters and do not mention feminism.[53] Even the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition created during the peace talks was more focused on the peace process than on women's issue. As one Derry activist explains:

> We did try to push the women's coalition to adopt a pro-choice policy, but they, well I think they were much more focused in getting the peace process rather than actually a women's process – and I know this sounds ridiculous because they were a women's coalition – but their aims in relation to the peace process was about peace building and structures rather than around women's issues. So like there is the thing in the Good Friday Agreement that says that the Assembly or executive will promote the involvement of women in public life, but of course, I would argue that if you want to promote the role of women in public life that they have to control their own bodies! They have to have control over their own bodies and they have to have childcare, and we have neither of those here (Francesca, October 31st, 2014).

The salience of the traditional cleavage thus narrows the space for mobilisation because it filters the type of issues that can be brought forth by women.

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[53] As was mentioned in the introduction, since politics in the region is understood as having to do with the national conflict, Sales explains that the feminist slogan "the personal is political" is not common in Northern Ireland since "women's issues are often described as not 'political'" (Sales 1997: 169-70).

The center-periphery cleavage also limits the identities that can be deployed in public, which has represented a challenge for AfC's mobilisation. As Carole explained:

> … a lot of people have no experience on anything that is not structured in the green-orange divide and are very confused by things outside of it, like 'what do you mean there is something else?' (laughs). There is an alternative to 'politics' that does not exist because it always comes back to 'ok but which side are you on?' (Carole, October 10th, 2014).

Similarly, Meaghan told me how "people just think you're one thing or the other, you're just Unionist or Republican, and that's fucking lame. And it's just too male as well, all the things to do with IRA or UVF, it's all male. There were women in [these groups] you know, but it's still this masculine exercise and idea of the soldier" (Meaghan, October 20th, 2014).

Meaghan's condemnation of the masculine character of this political divide represents well the activists' feminist lens in their analysis of the context. Indeed, they not only critique the traditional cleavage but also point to the sexist dimensions of this divided context:

> there's (…) this control over women and straightforward views about women and if you look at the women that are in politics, there are not many (…) And you have all these traditional roles of women and where they should be and that type of thing. (Elizabeth, October 14th, 2014)

And with regards to the consultation launched by the DoJ, she adds:

> … again it's this whole notion of 'what are we going to allow them to do' – it's being debated at the minute – it's the 21st century! It's unreal! It [a discussion about the consultation] was on the Steven Nolan Show the other night and there were four men and one woman at the table talking about what they were going to "*allow*" (emphasis hers) women to do. I couldn't believe it! (Elizabeth, October 14th, 2014)

While all activists held a similar discourse about the sexism and conservativism of Northern Ireland, few linked it to patriarchy *per se*, except for Sophie:

> … and there's this other thing you know, do they really want women to be self-sufficient with their bodies? The women have always been, especially in a conservative place like here, they have relied on women, not as commodities, but on the domination of women to suit a certain economic model or privileges within the men in society. So giving women control over their bodies is threatening their own position. So it's not just a moral stance, it's the patriarchal system (September 10th, 2014).

This is where, in spite of all that divides the parties representing the two communities, activists confirm how parties come together around their anti-abortion stance: "this is one thing that they agree on. There's an all-party group made up of 11 men called the pro-life group" (Elizabeth, October 14th, 2014). As one activist explained to me about Stormont "… you've got right wing Catholics and these fundamental Protestants and they just don't know how much they have in common. They just don't!" (Ruth, October 22nd, 2014). And finally, Carole said that "regarding choice, they're on the same page. It's pretty much the only thing they are on the same page about." This, however, seems to affect positively their motivation for action as Elizabeth said: "It gives you something to focus on as well, cause you're not one-sided, you're sort of attacking them all really, saying 'you're being anti-women'" (October 14th, 2014).

Activists' view of the three elements discussed above (i.e. the institutional set-up, the space for women's mobilisation and the control over women's bodies) cannot be divorced from their opinion regarding the DoJ's consultation. The reasons for which they disagree with the consultation have to do first with the narrow scope of the initiative. Indeed, they see it as limited and argue that any resulting law amendment would be very hard to legislate for. As Elizabeth explains: "I think most people

would say yes in the case of fatal foetal abnormalities, and in the case of rape, but what they don't think about is, how do you legislate for that? How do you tell a woman you don't believe she's been raped if there's no criminal conviction?" (Elizabeth, October 14th, 2014). Secondly, some activists suspected the consultation to be a political maneuver in order to be able to put the issue of abortion under the carpet for another decade: "See, my fear about that is once they deal with the difficult cases [referring to the FFA], it'll be difficult to do anything about it really" (Francesca, October 31st, 2014). Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, underlying in activists' interpretation of the consultation is a distrust of government and political institutions.

Activists were thus quite pessimistic about any possibility of extending the 1967 Abortion Act, whether through the consultation or any other lobbying actions: "I can't see it happening" as Ruth told me. This is true for both regional and national assemblies as highlighted by one activist: "There is a grey zone. It's clear that Stormont had the power to do so [extend the act in 2008], but Westminster had the responsibility" (Francesca, October 31st, 2014). Similarly, Sophie explained that:

> you can lobby, but it's banging your head against the wall all the time. 'Cause politically, the legislation is not going to change. Even though there are pro-choice individuals within the party, the leadership of all parties will not advance abortion right for women at all. The fact that they are discussing and debating it now is because some women have shared their own experience – that's why there has been a bit of a debate. (September 10th, 2014)

Activists' refusal to engage in the DoJ's consultation thus indicates that the government, both at Stormont and Westminster, is no longer perceived as a locus of change. This sheds light on facilitation mechanisms such as the DoJ's consultation. Indeed, as mentioned in Chapter 1, this type of consultation usually lowers the costs of action and thus tends to increase the level of mobilization (Kriesi et al. 1995: 28).

However, the anchorage of the two-community paradigm within post-conflict institutions restrains the actual possibility of change through such mechanism. Therefore, whether it is for the DoJ's consultation or for past opportunities to lobby the government, pro-choice activists in Derry have faced difficulties in bringing their claims into the political arena, thus supporting Hypothesis 1 (see H1 in Chapter 1).

What the evidence presented above also suggests is that activists are very well aware of the absence of a strong women's movement and of the problems of the post-conflict institutional arrangements. They also see the challenges these elements represent for their current mobilisation. Given their two awareness-raising actions they have organised in the fall of 2014, this rejection of lobbying tactics is not synonymous with demobilisation, but rather with the development of alternative tactics. Let us now take a closer look at AfC – Derry's strategic choices, not only their rejection of lobbying tactics but also their tactical innovations.

2.2 The Object Shift Mechanism: From State-Oriented to People-Oriented Actions

Between 2009 and 2014, Derry pro-choice activists innovated in a number of ways, seizing a variety of opportunities for mobilisation. Their actions were diverse, ranging from support to women, to popular education and a public statement on turning themselves to the police. When asked about the rationale behind their recent actions, Francesca expressed that "It's ok to be shouting at people when there's something going on like in the South [Ms X], but you can't do that year in year out, month after month" (October 31st, 2014). If they are not "shouting," as Francesca says, then what is it that AfC – Derry activists have been doing? The information about their actions

below shows how the group's mobilisation effort in 2008 was their last lobbying action which prefigured the orientation AfC was about to take.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, when a debate on human fertilisation and embryology was be held in Westminster in 2008, including an amendment regarding the extension of the 1967 Act to Northern Ireland, Derry activists seized the opportunity to highlight the demand for abortion in the region, with one Member of Parliament in their sights:

> the action with all the masks, the '40 women a week', that was in 2008 and we decided we would have 40 women wearing masks getting together in as many towns as possible across the North to make the point of the 40 women a week who are leaving to England [to get an abortion]. We got Derry, Belfast and Lisburn, which was really important because of the MP who's head of the all-party pro-life group. (Francesca, October 31st, 2014)

However, as pointed out in Chapter 1, this action was in vain. As one activist puts it: "we always had bits and pieces in Derry, a few times a year. I suppose that what happened in 2008 enraged everybody…" (Francesca, October 31st, 2014). Actions in years to come borrowed from the symbolism of the 2008 action, but had different targets which included only rarely elected officials. In the next three sub-sections, I describe Derry activists' people-oriented tactics, their new way to frame their claims as well as their new approach to pro-choice mobilization. This descriptive passage will highlight the trial-and-error process at play as well as the key elements in the relationship between strategy and identity. While the latter was not set out in my initial hypotheses, it nevertheless emerged out of the data and provides an interesting bridge to tactical reproduction, the topic of the third chapter. But for now, let us take a closer look at AfC – Derry's tactical innovations.

Innovation and Creativity: Alliance for Choice – Derry' People-oriented Tactics

The first people-oriented action developed by AfC – Derry was the wash line, developed in 2010. The objective was to share information and facts to counter the myths around abortion for an awareness raising action. The tactic was also used in 2013 to show their discontent regarding a DUP member of parliament's stance on abortion:

> Like last year, we put up big panties outside a DUP office, Paul Girvan (DUP MLA), [...] so we went and hang up big knickers outside and one of the youngest member came along asking 'oh what are youse doing?' [naïve voice]. He must have been about 25, and he's very religious and didn't know where to look and all of a sudden he was confronted by me and Sophie going 'Here's a leaflet and these are the issues' and he was shaking trying to get the key in the door of the office (laughs) (Elizabeth, October 14th, 2014).

Another action, characterised as somewhat shocking by activists themselves, was the creation of a mural of Sheela Na Gig for the International Women's Rights Day in 2011. As one activist explains: "It's an old Irish fertility figure – a huge vagina basically! Which is very in your face! So sometimes you have to drag people with you and say let's do a little bit more, we can be a little bit more adventurous" (Carole, October 10th, 2014).

Not all of their innovations had the desired effect however, as exemplified by the silhouettes tactic. Indeed, in 2011 activists elaborated an action using silhouettes of women to highlight the wide array of considerations women have to face when thinking about abortion:

> We had silhouettes of women with a wee back story on it, one was a student from India, a 46-year-old mom struggling financially, a victim of rape and

> others, there were six or seven I think, just a silhouette, a story and then *What would you do*? [written at the end]. Just setting out all the concepts finance, emotions, medical reasons like heart weakness, to get people to question themselves [...] Many people though we were anti-choice 'cause we were asking people to question themselves but a lot of people would stick with their principles. (Elizabeth, October 14th, 2014)

As Elizabeth explained, the action did not reach people the way they intended to, but activists kept the underlying idea of the stories for the shoes tactic which was elaborated for the city of culture in 2013. The idea of using shoes came from an action previously organised by another group for the Bloody Sunday commemoration where there were "shoes in the streets leading up to the wall from the Bogside, and some had put different color shoes the whole way" (Carole, October 10th, 2014). In line with the silhouettes' tactic, the variety of shoes and stories by AfC serves to highlight the women's multiple reasons for deciding to terminate their pregnancies. While the rationale is well thought out, the process reported by activists nevertheless suggests some level of improvisation and uncertainty:

> ...when they [the others in the group] were talking about it [the shoes tactic], I didn't have a clue of what they were talking about, and I went 'sounds great', but thinking ' I haven't got a clue of what you guys are talking about! (laughs), but they were just brilliant! (Francesca, October 31st, 2014)

The stories they used for the shoes came from either their own stories or from the women they knew or helped throughout the years. Indeed, for some of AfC – Derry activsits, their pro-choice activism started before the existence of the group. For instance, Ruth explains how for her, it started over thirty years ago, when a friend of hers got pregnant:

> My activism there [i.e. on this issue] has been going on quite some time. It happened, it started even before Alliance for Choice ever existed. A friend of mine was pregnant, what you would refer to now as a crisis pregnancy and at that time [...] we didn't know what to do, where to go for help.(October 22nd, 2014)

Ruth recalls asking a women she trusted how a person would go about if she wanted an abortion:

> And I remember, from the family planning or one of these organisations, she got us an address in Portstewart. The woman who was there she organised the whole thing. After that, the girl had to go to London and at that time I had a friend who lived in London who was able to help out on the other side. (October 22nd, 2014)

Francesca explains how this service to women was the objective of AfC's ancestor, the Women's Rights to Choose group, and how this service to women actually never stopped:

> Well it's actually very interesting because the very first meeting that we had, in 1996, we decided: Women's Right to Choose group is no more, we're going to call ourselves Alliance for Choice and we're gonna stop collecting money for women. But, during the very first meeting, a woman who was 23 week-and-a-half pregnant, living in a hostel with two year-old twins – living in a hostel because she had fled an abuse relationship – arrived at our meeting to ask if we could possibly help her. [...] We had to say no, it was absolutely awful, and I'm telling you that because we never really stopped collecting money and never really stopped doing that service for women.(October 31st, 2014)

Therefore, the "people-oriented" nature of AfC's action was always present through the individual support they offered women. However, this service is more present since 2009 first because of the availability of the abortion pill through the internet with women on web. Secondly, according to Fiona Bloomer who studied the abortion rights movement in Northern Ireland, the 2008 deals between Gordon Brown at Westminster and the DUP at Stormont reported earlier in this chapter led activists to focus on short term actions such as access to abortion rather than lobbying[54]. Indeed, according to her the events of 2008 highlighted how nothing would go through this "Stormont Block" and led activists towards a popular education approach.

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[54] Fiona Bloomer is a Lecturer in Social Policy at the University of Ulster, campus Jordanstown, in Belfast, Northern Ireland. Ms Bloomer was interviewed by the author on September 23rd 2014.

An instance of this approach is one of the several innovations of AfC during the City of Culture event. In addition to the shoes tactic for the Lumière event[55], activists organised workshops opened to the general public in a local theatre: "[A few activists] were trying to teach us, people like me, to be more creative and to use these things for activism. So we did things like cut out butterflies and putting pro-choice messages on them" (Francesca, October 31st, 2014). Activists also modified the Free Derry Wall, a well-known nationalist mural in an Irish-Catholic bastion of Derry.[56] The objective was to "continue our awareness raising campaigning at home while standing in solidarity with all women worldwide who suffer the same institutional and political repression and social stigma" (Sophie, February 2014). [57] The modification was simple, and yet efficient, since in replacing the 'Now' to 'Not' (See ANNEX A), activists were able to "emphasise that a society can't be free if women aren't free to decide upon their own bodies and lives" (Sophie, February 2014). The use of the mural was also decided upon for visibility purposes as "it has a huge footfall and traffic passage" (Sara, February 2014[58]). It is also a recognizable location of Derry and thus integrates the activists' action in a global movement for greater reproductive justice.

One action that stands out within this myriad of innovations is the open letter written in 2012 in reaction to some MLAs' effort to close the Marie Stoppes clinic in Belfast – a Planned Parenthood clinic which provides abortions. The idea of the letter was to state that they would turn themselves in to the police either for taking or helping

[55] In chapter 3, I develop on the elaboration of this tactic and its key role in the development of AfC's people-oriented strategy.
[56] This mural has been modified several times and for a variety of causes by activists in Derry. As Sophie explains: "this mural has been a symbol of people's resistance throughout many years of occupation and people still use it today to highlight many and varied justice campaigns of today's society." For more information about the histories and multiple faces of the Free Derry Wall, see Collins, Jim and Adrian Kerr. 2009. *Free Derry Wall.* Derry: Guildhall Press.
[57] Source: written questionnaire sent to activists in preparation for fieldwork in February 2014.
[58] Source: written questionnaire sent to activists in preparation for fieldwork in February 2014.

share the abortion pill. This would have, according to activists, compelled the authorities to go forward and apply the legislation, thus creating a debate around its multiple deficiencies. The letter gathered 100 signatures, but activists never actually went to the police. The idea of doing it resurfaced in 2014 when Marie Stoppes was once again threatened with closure by the Health Minister at the time, Jim Wells.

In contrast with the initial actions of AfC - Derry described in Chapter 1, actions presented above put forward a variety of targets, tactics, and strategies. They also highlight a certain creativeness on the part of activists in their efforts to find alternative tactics as a way to go around the obstacle of the traditional cleavage. Activists' interpretation of these actions cited below in turn hints to a changing relationship with both the nature of their claim as well as the way to put it forth.

Changing Claims? Between Extending the Act and the Decriminalisation of Abortion

In activists' account, the rejection of lobbying tactics presented in the first section is closely linked to the new approach to their claim, as expressed by Sophie:

> It's a dynamic [at Stormont] of 'you vote for me I vote for you,' so it ain't gonna happen. There have been cases here you know nobody has died, but there have been cases and women going on the radio and still it hasn't changed anything. What we might do [...] we are going to be campaigning for the decriminalisation of abortion, 'cause that makes more sense and it's a new approach to people: why should women be criminalized for a medical intervention. (September 10th, 2014)

Similarly, Sophie highlights again the uselessness of lobbying politicians: "Our web page says AfC is demanding the extension of the act - that's limiting. Because you

know there is no political willingness: it ain't going to happen" (September 10th, 2014). She goes on to say how this new way of presenting their pro-choice claims is better:

> And I think it'll be good to bring that discussion [about the decriminalisation] 'cause it's [extending the 1967 Act] very local. I know it affects each country in different ways, but you can't ignore that this affects women everywhere, it's a broader issue. So it's limiting to talk about the 1967 Act, it's very provincial, it's very local and limiting. This place is part of this number of thousands of women who die worldwide you know (September 10th, 2014).

This new way to envision their pro-choice claims is paralleled by a new approach to mobilisation as presented below.

From Shouting to Discussing: Derry's People-Oriented Approach to Pro-Choice Mobilisation

This description by Elizabeth of AfC – Derry's recent actions provides a good idea of how activists generally described their approach:

> It's artistic and getting people to think about the issue rather than just you know agree with me or else… it's actually Ruth's son who said that to me: 'you can stand at the top of the hill as much as you want but there'll be nobody listening to you.' So it's trying to convince people through stories which is the best way to deal with things (October 14th, 2014).

This metaphor of 'standing on the top of the hill and shouting' resurfaced often in interviews with activists when explaining their tactics. Elizabeth explains clearly how this "shouting" comes into stark contrast with what they do now: "And that's the road AfC is taking which is trying to get people to think about the different circumstances of why a woman would find herself in that position" (October 14th, 2014). The wash line and shoes are good examples of this different approach: "it's taking the personal

and taking it in the public sphere. And it is education as well because we have the info with stats and scenarios" (Carole, October 10th, 2014).

In both the content and form of their mobilisation reported above, there is a shift in how activists perceive the pro-choice cause and, it follows, to whom their claims are addressed as well as how they are made. While politicians are less present as the target, legislative change is not completely absent from AfC – Derry's strategy. Legislative change remains their ultimate goal, but it is not expressed through the extension of the 1967 act. Rather, legislative change is indirectly aimed for through the possibility of a referendum, where the general public acts as a proxy target. This was expressed by Sophie when discussing what drives them to mobilise: "We go out and do it for the sake of doing it. We don't necessarily think it's gonna be a tool for change, it's mostly a tool for creating a debate, to lead to a referendum. And if that were to happen we would get a surprise then" (Sophie, September 10th, 2014). Just as is evoked in this statement, Sophie articulated well how their relationship to their claim is intrinsically linked with how they see their role in society and themselves as a pro-choice group:

> You know AfC won't change things. AfC is just a consciousness-raising group, it's a vehicle to counteract the government policies and the lice from pro-life groups. It has to exist, but it won't be AfC or any other political party for that matter that will bring about the change. It'll have to be the people (September 10th, 2014).

The redefinition of the relationship between AfC - Derry, the claimants, and their pro-choice claims confirms the presence of an object shift mechanism as defined by McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2001: 144). The object shift's relationship to identity and repertoire has been highlighted by the activists quoted above and refers to Crowley's interpretation of McAdam et al.'s mechanism. Indeed, he argues that:

> ... object shift is important for two reasons. First it can activate new allies or opponents in contentious struggles, such as when national politicians are drawn

> into local policy debates. Second, object shift affects the 'repertoires of contention' available to challengers (Crowley 2005: 27).

In our case, AfC's new tactics did not activate new allies, but it set out new opponents and, more importantly new targets. It is also clear that object shift affected the repertoire available to the group. Indeed, the evidence shown above suggests that a certain type of action is increasingly predominant within AfC's repertoire, that is actions that: (a) focus on education rather than lobbying, or 'shouting on top of the hill' as activists have characterised it; (b) aim at bringing up a debate amongst the people as a proxy target rather than targeting politicians; and (c) center on the idea of decriminalising abortion rather than extending the 1967 Abortion Act.

Going back to Francesca's statement reported at the beginning of this chapter, we can better understand why she believes that 'fuck off' is the appropriate response to Jim Well's reform to the Criminal Justice bill. Indeed, writing a letter to politicians does not seem like an appropriate response for Derry activists as it resembles in form and content the type of tactics from which they have moved away. As a way to maintain their pro-choice activism, activists have developed a series of small-scale innovations adopting several tactics based on popular education which has changed their approach to mobilisation, thus highlighting the object shift mechanism. Francesca's statement also made a reference at the difference between the Belfast and Derry groups' response, hinting at the identity component of this mechanism which I explore below.

2.3 On the Relationship between Tactics and Identity

According to activists, the difference between the Belfast and the Derry groups go back to the very beginning of Alliance for Choice. The idea behind this project was to unite pro-choice organisations in the midst of a government change in 1996 (see Chapter 1). In that effort, pro-choice activists in Derry got in touch with several organisations that were part of England's "Voice for Choice," a network of pro-choice organisations in the UK including BPIS, Abortion Rights, Brooked Centers, Marie Stopes and Doctors for Choice. However, as Francesca highlights, in Northern Ireland: "we didn't manage to get the organisation beyond Derry at that stage". When asked why that is, she identifies logistical reasons and disagreements regarding tactics:

> First, because there was already an abortion law reform association in Belfast, but for some reason they had kind of given up on this at that time [...] and it was around that time that the abortion ship first came to Dublin and we thought it was a great idea but for some reason people in Belfast were against it. And so I think we got off with a bad start, so it was actually not until 2008 that AfC was settled in Belfast. Before that, there was the FPA and the Brooke Center in Belfast, but no campaigning. [...] It's surprising and disappointing that there was nothing from the capital! (Francesca, October 31st, 2014)

The differentiation between both groups, however, goes beyond tactics as activists report different ways to think about their pro-choice claims. As Sophie explains, who they are as activists influences the lenses through which they analyse the situation, and subsequently their targets and strategies:

> ... if you are in an office, writing articles, which is ok, but you don't reach to anybody and your responses are always targeted at the government. And they do produce good reading material, but it's about reforming something which in my opinion shouldn't exist. (...) Maybe the difference is that we are all political activists here [in Derry]. And it makes a difference because you see the importance of highlighting all the time that abortion is a class issue, that poor

> women have babies and rich women have abortions, 'cause they don't have the money to do that. And this is trying to find different situations that other women can relate to. So that makes a difference I would say (September 10th, 2014).

Sophie's vision of the Belfast activists as working in their offices "writing articles" comes in stark contrast with them who, in Derry, are political activists as Sophie said, or alternatively "a bunch of less respectable women" as Francesca explained during a group meeting (August 25th, 2014).

Derry activists' self-definition thus implied a differentiation from the Belfast group, which in turn affected other key elements in mobilisation as suggested by McAdam et al's object shift mechanism. First, the differentiation often resurfaced when activists explained how they approach their pro-choice claims, asking for choice unapologetically as Elizabeth said:

> Some of the younger ones in Belfast would be on the same page as we are. I think it has to do with the older ones in Derry. In AfC here they are very, you know… well, there are no apologies. This is a women's issue, it's choice without apologies and they stand by that altogether and because they do that you kind of have the confidence to say 'well you know what that is the issues and I'm going to be forthright in saying it.' 'Cause you got [three long-time activists] who have been campaigning for a long time, and they don't make any apologies for saying it and it sort of gives you the confidence to just say it. (October 14th, 2014)

Similarly, the types of opportunities seized for actions were geographically differentiated, as shown above with the lobbying tactics before 2008 as well as for the City of Culture event: "You know just last year we made a lot of things during the city of culture, but Belfast did nothing" (Francesca, October 31st, 2014).

While this division limits the capacity to create an actual 'alliance for choice', it does not appear to be all negative. In fact, Francesca insinuates that this soft competition feeds action: "I think there is this synergy, for all that there are differences between

Belfast and Derry, there is a synergy and when there's something organised in one place, it encourages people in the other place, and vice versa" (October 31st, 2014). It even seems to strengthen cohesion in the Derry group as it glosses over any internal divisions there might be within them:

> I think the big dividing issue would be between Derry and Belfast, and between the kind of 'respectable' [women], I call them 'femocrats' with that notion of playing the game. But luckily in Derry we don't have anyone like that, but I think [generally] Derry's a bit like that, it's more radical. So if anyone did think that, they'd probably keep quiet (laughs). But that's unfair to the people of Belfast because many are quite radical (Francesca, October 31st, 2014).

Therefore, while some activists in Belfast – the younger ones as Elizabeth pointed out earlier – would share a similar stance, differences between the groups remained. The explanation of such differences often served as an opportunity for Derry activists to reaffirm their common identity and principles, whether outspokenly like Francesca above or more subtly like Elizabeth: "We've tried to tie with Belfast as well but they don't seem to be as much… I don't know [hesitation] they're a bit softer on the issue, whereas we're kind of asking for choice with no apology" (October 14th, 2014).

In this differentiation between the two AfC groups, activists express the important connection between identity and repertoire as well as McAdam et al.'s relational focus in the object shift mechanism. Indeed, the series of innovations they have elaborated between 2009 and 2014, often by adopting popular education tactics from other activist groups, given their exclusion from conventional political channels have not only led them to change the way they put forth their claims, but also the way they identify as pro-choice activists.

Conclusion

The data presented in the first section of this chapter showed that Kriesi et al. (1995) provide great insight into the persistent salience of the two-community paradigm in Northern Ireland. As explained in Chapter 1 and confirmed by the activists quoted above, the ethnonational conflict as well as its pacification process has led to a restricted space for mobilisation around women's issues in the region. This context echoes what Taylor argues about contexts in which groups are likely to enter in an abeyance process[59] (1989). She describes abeyance as "a holding process by which movements sustain themselves in non-receptive political environments and provide continuity from one stage of mobilization to another" (Taylor 1989: 761). The evidence presented above thus demonstrated how the imprint of the traditional cleavage upon the current context limited the space for AfC – Derry's mobilisation. It also showed that the cleavage's effect is less static then Kriesi et al. suggest given the continued presence of AfC through this abeyance process. Indeed, I have shown that, much like McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly argue, Derry activists engage in a conversation which leads to "constant improvisation" during contention. Therefore, just like in other cases these authors identified, "[o]bject shift had political actors alternating their claim making among international actors, national authorities, and local targets, with corresponding shifts among repertoires, rhetorics, and categories" (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001: 155). Therefore, rather than a complete rejection of lobbying tactics, we see a shift of emphasis in AfC – Derry's tactics. After 2008, activists henceforth aimed at creating a discussion amongst the public as an intermediate goal for the decriminalization of abortion, a legislative change which goes beyond the extension of the 1967 Abortion Act.

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[59]In her 1989 article, Taylor challenges and extends Mizruchi' (1983) concept of abeyance central to his theory of social control by hypothesizing that "social movement abeyance organizations, by providing a measure of continuity for challenging groups, also contribute to social change" (Taylor 1989: 762).

Cases discussed by McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly regarding the object shift mechanism show that claim-making can scale-up, such as in instances of parliamentarizations discussed in Chapter 1, where actions increase in scale, consequently altering the actors and targets involved (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001: 144). However, the authors also mention that object shift "sometimes works laterally or downward" such as in the case at hand which presents a scaling down of tactics, alliances and targets. Therefore, while McAdam et al.'s conversation metaphor does better account for the process of tactical innovation going on in AfC – Derry's repertoire, Kriesi et al. shed light on this de-scaling object shift at play. Indeed, activists' awareness of the restricted space for mobilisation due to the persistent salience of the traditional cleavage helps us understand why they no longer perceive the government as a locus of change and, in turn, engage in a process of trial-and-error through which their repertoire is redrawn to include new tactics, but also new ways to approach their claims, and a new identity to embrace.

As a whole, these elements provide evidence to support that the object shift mechanism explains the setting aside of lobbying tactics and the adoption of new tactics which constitute their new people-oriented strategy, perceived as more effective by activists. Indeed, as the authors state, object shift alters the "collective claim making that are available, appropriate and likely to be effective" (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001: 144). It follows that the object shift hypothesis does not only explain tactical innovation but also sheds light on strategy. Indeed, if we go back to the definitions laid out in Chapter 1, strategy is "the overall movement plan, framework, or theoretical approach" of a movement or a group and the tactics are the means through which the strategy is operationalised (Turner and Killian 1972 in Taylor 1998: 675 footnote 1). As presented above, rather than being state-oriented, innovations in AfC – Derry's repertoire were associated with a new way to put forth their claim: activists were not "shouting at the top of the hill" as they caricatured, but

rather were discussing with people about abortion and other related issues. This was accompanied by a strong group identity differentiated from the Belfast activists. Innovations, such as the silhouettes, the wash line, the workshops, the murals, and the shoes, all fit into the new people-oriented strategy. Therefore, the object shift mechanism's intrinsic connection with identity and strategy also leads the way to an explanation of tactical reproduction: if AfC – Derry's tactics are so strongly attached to their analysis of the context and to who they are as activists, then it can be expected to see more of this type of tactics developed by the group. What is surprising, however, is that we do not see during the fall of 2014 any other tactical innovations for this strategy. Rather, it seems that certain tactics, namely the wash line and the shoes, 'stick' and were repeated more often than the others.

McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly's partial response to this is that some tactics bring rewards the ways other do not, but evidence presented so far shows how people-oriented tactics as a whole provided more rewards than lobbying tactics. Therefore, the question remains: how can we distinguish, within a global strategy, which tactic is most likely to be reproduced? I explore this question in Chapter 3 by building on both the literature on path dependence and Polletta (2006) and Meyer's (2006) work on stories in social movement studies.

CHAPTER III
FROM INNOVATION TO REPRODUCTION: THE PATH TOWARDS SUCCESSFUL TACTICS

On September 20th, 2014, activists met to discuss their action for the International Day for the Decriminalization of Abortion:

> Anna: For our action, we still got the shoes…
>
> Elizabeth: Yeah. And the wash line.
>
> Anna: It might not be a bad idea actually…
>
> Sophie: Yeah, to use the same thing.
>
> Anna: Plus the wash line's good, 'cause people actually stop and read.
>
> Meaghan: … and the stories are good and touching.

And just like that, in a few seconds only, without further deliberation or voting, their action was decided.

In this chapter, I show how path dependency allows us to understand this seemingly hasty tactical choice. In doing so, I aim at explaining the reproduction of two specific tactics within AfC's popular education repertoire. As was shown in Chapter 2, AfC – Derry's changing relationship with their pro-choice claims, targets and general approach to mobilisation explains the development of several tactical innovations that fit within a people-oriented strategy. Amongst these tactics, the wash line and the shoes have been used for several actions over time, to the point of becoming the obvious choice for activists. Using the concept of increasing returns as put forth by Pierson (2000), I explore the anchoring of these two tactics within the group's

repertoire. As Hypothesis 3 states, between Sewell's vague "history matters" perspective and Mahoney strict historical sequences with deterministic properties, I adopt Pierson's middle-ground definition of path dependency as an increasing returns process.

I explore in section one the first two features of increasing returns, namely set up costs and the learning effect, since the coordination effects does not apply to this case. Indeed, Arthur's definition of the coordination effect suggests that "the benefits of our individual activities or those of an organization are often enhanced if they are coordinated or 'fit' with the activities of other actors or organizations" (Pierson 2000: 254). However, I have shown in Chapter 2 how a coordinated tactic between both AfC groups was not possible given their different approaches to pro-choice activism. Hence, it appears that coordination effects in contentious collective action are linked to alliances which in turn are strongly influenced by ideology and identity, probably more so than in cases of technological change studied by Arthur (1994 in Pierson 2000).

The second part of this chapter deals with the fourth feature: actors' adaptive expectations. The latter, as suggested in Hypothesis 4, will be explored through an analysis of AfC –Derry's internal narratives. Based and Polletta and Meyer's contribution about the study of stories in social movements, I suggest that the AfC's group culture has a constraining effect on their action repertoire. Furthermore, as we have seen in Chapter 2, the group evolves in a context which constrains their access to the mainstream political debate, or as Taylor would put it, a context where "insufficient opportunities exist to channel their commitment into routine statuses" (Taylor 1989: 762). According to Taylor, this leads to certain group characteristics and affects tactical choice. Indeed, groups in abeyance are characterised by five

features: (i) temporality which facilities the survival of the group since "(c)onstant numbers – even if small – are better for morale than steady turnover" (Taylor 1989: 766); (ii) purposive commitment from the members – "the willingness of people to do what must be done, regardless of personal rewards and sacrifices" (Taylor 1989: 766); (iii) exclusiveness of membership; (iv) centralisation of leadership;[60] and (v) and a strong group culture (Taylor 1989: 766-9). Taylor developed this concept to explain social movement continuity, highlighting how a group's structure and characteristics may transform to allow for its survival and continued challenge. In Taylor's case, abeyance structures emerged after a wave of mass mobilization as well as important gains by the national women's movement. While neither of these elements are present in AfC's case, they nevertheless went from a period of opening of opportunities (during the peace process), to a "non-receptive context" (Taylor 1989: 761), as shown with the traditional cleavage in the previous chapter. It is important to explore the group's structure since they influence tactics: "[t]hese structures both restrain [the activists] from potentially more disruptive activities and channel them into certain forms of activism" (Taylor 1989: 762). Section two of this chapter will also show how the homogeneity of the group – given the exclusiveness and the centralisation characteristics – allows for the institutionalisation of the blame and success narratives which emerge from critical events in AfC – Derry's trajectory.

By testing the validity of these two hypotheses, I not only aim to explain the reproduction of two specific tactics of AfC – Derry's people-oriented strategy, but also to explore a path dependent argument for the reproduction of contentious tactics.

[60]Taylor explains how in her case study, "the centralization of leadership, like exclusiveness, had the potential to provoke conflict among members. But it also had advantages in a non-receptive political environment" (Taylor 1989: 769).

I also argue that this perspective adds to Staggenborg's concept of critical events (1993), a key element in path-dependent processes.

3.1 Doing and Learning: The Increasing Returns Process of Tactical Reproduction

a) Large Set-Up Costs

Whether we are talking about technologies or contentious tactics, innovations involve costs and investments, either of money, time or effort. As Pierson argues, "many types of collective action involve high start-up costs, which reflects the fact that considerable resources (material or cultural) need to be expended on organizing before the group becomes self-financing" (Pierson 2000: 258). For the activists of AfC – Derry, the costs to innovate are acutely felt. When asked about the elaboration of previously used tactics, many of them discussed their limited financial resources as a group: "We don't have resources, but we did get money from the Edge Fund to look at the legal side, but that's it" (Elizabeth, October 14th, 2014). While this lack of funding is clearly a limitation for their actions, it is not necessarily seen as a problem for the Derry-based activists. As Sophie explains:

> We get our resources from fundraising nights and get people together with donations – it's built up by the people rather than being conditioned funding. And that would be a common political position, even though we come from different backgrounds. We have seen a lot of, and especially the women's movement has stopped existing as an activist force because of the funding. (September 10th, 2014)

To palliate for the lack of public funding, activists build on their skills and access to community organisations' resources: "... you see [these two activists] are both very

creative and arty. And then we all have access to different community organisations, which means that we are able to get resources" (Elizabeth, October 14th, 2014). And indeed, thanks to their key positions in different organisations and offices, activists are able to access state resources they can use for their own cause:

> Well again [the big cones] it's Derry City Council and the reason we have access to it is because of Keira, and I'm sure they would have a heart attack [if they knew], because obviously, it's Sinn Féin, and the DUP, and SDLP [the same parties than at the regional level] that are all the councillors and they don't know that we just used all their equipment for our own agenda (laughs) (Elizabeth, October 14th, 2014).

Therefore, not only were activists able to lower the set-up costs of the shoes tactic innovation for the City of Culture event by recycling Derry City material, but they were also able to increase the return on their investments by re-using the same tactic. Using the same tactic multiple times thus brings a higher return on the resources and time invested by activists (Arthur 1994: 112 in Pierson 2000: 254).

The limited material resources are paired with limited human resources, as pointed out by Elizabeth: "There's probably more pro-choice people in Derry, [...] but generally at meetings it's the same ten" (October 14th, 2014). Also, the activists all mentioned how each of them are quite busy either with other activist involvements, with their personal life, or both: "... everyone's got families and jobs and all" (Elizabeth, October 14th, 2014). Therefore, the activists usually meet when something big happens, or when someone has an idea for an action "because people have work, have children and are involved in other activities" (Carole, October 10th, 2014). Therefore, for them, the costs to innovate is felt in monetary terms, but also in time and labour given the small number of activists.

The absence of funding, the low levels of mobilisation and the limited time each activist has to give highlight the salience of the costs of innovation for pro-choice activists in Derry which leads to tactical innovation. Indeed, as Carole responded to my question about why they reused the shoes for both their actions in the fall of 2014: "Well once you have the shoes, you might as well be using them, you know. And we don't have that much, well any financial support, and not that much resources so if we have something, we'll use it" (October 10th, 2014). This echoes Arthur's comment on set-up costs: "when set-up or fixed costs are high, individuals and organizations have a strong incentive to identify and stick with a single option" (Arthur 1994: 112 in Pierson 2000: 254). In sum, the low levels of financial and human resources as exposed above show how set-up costs are key in understanding tactical reproduction. Sophie's explanation of the utility of the shoes and the wash line below connects well the large set-up costs and the limited human capital with the reproduction of certain tactics:

> "It's finding ways to be present in the street without having a big group of people. You know, 'cause whenever you have to protest, if you come in the middle of the square which is quite big and you are only five, with five or six placards, then you are relying on a big group of people to come out in the streets. Whereas for actions like this one [the wash line], you can be two or three, enough to put the things up and you have your leaflets ready. You're still doing a protest, you're still putting your point across and you don't need the crowd. And that's what I would emphasize as well - 'cause people work, people are busy and you still have to take the time to do activism (September 10th, 2014).

First of all, Sophie highlights how their action palliates for the low number of core activists. They have learned that the wash line and shoes allow them to "be in the streets" but does not sink too much of their resources into putting it together. Second, she hints at how activists have learned their roles: two or three activists are enough to "put the things up" and share the leaflets. This is in line with Taylor's argument about group's abeyance structures in non-responsive contexts: "For a movement to survive periods of relative hiatus, it must develop a battery of specialized tactics that can be carried out by an activist cadre without the support of a mass base" (Taylor 1989: 771). The specialisation of certain tactics comes with their repetition as activists learn

how to implement them efficiently. I next discuss how this relates to the second feature identified by Pierson: the learning effect.

b) Learning effect

The learning process associated with every new tactic also contributes to reproduction: given their limited resources, in terms of money and time, activists might not be able to learn how to use yet another tactic. To fully comprehend how the effect of this "learning by doing" process, I describe the preparatory meetings and the actions I have attended and highlight their most striking feature: an efficient deployment of tactics along with the absence of almost any logistical planning.

Discussions and laughter were the key elements of the first meeting I attended in Derry on August 20th, at a local café along with eight pro-choice activists. After first having already ridden to Belfast for the meeting with the other AfC group the week before (see Chapter 2), I was invited to join activists for their preparation of the solidarity vigil to be held the following day. I was however surprised to see how the action *per se*, while being the impetus for getting the group together, took up very little of the time during the meeting, resurfacing in the discussion after half an hour of conversations and information sharing.

The main topic discussed was the Ms. Y case[61] for which the vigil was organised – one of the several others held all around Ireland and the UK. The explanation of the

[61] The Ms Y case came out in the media on August 18th and many pro-choice activists, in both the North and South of Ireland, reacted by organising solidarity vigils for Ms Y. For more information on the Ms Y case, see footnote 6 in the introduction of this thesis.

case by one of the well-informed activist was punctuated by the disapprobatory comments of the others regarding the decision-makers, such as "What the hell is wrong with you people!", and compassionate exclamations for Ms. Y "How awful!", "A terrible story, really!". Activists also highlighted the confusion around the case, given that not all facts could be made public. Carole added how some extreme anti-choice activists also disagreed with the procedure, as a caesarian section is often seen as a termination of a "natural" pregnancy, which was accentuated by a recurring reaction of Francesca: "Their arguments are just nonsense!" This was supported by Elizabeth's comment about the irony of the "pro-life" stance given the baby's actual poor chances at life. The discussion then shifted as one of the activists' young baby woke up. One of them leaned towards him to gently pick him up and said in baby talk: "Now come see the baby murderers." The mother of the child added: "I actually said to him when leaving home 'Now we'll go and see the baby killers'!". This was followed by a unified laughter.

After this motherly interlude, already half an hour had gone by. Francesca seized this transitory moment to show posters she had brought from activists in the South. They rapidly decided that she would print additional ones and would have them ready for the action. The date was common amongst all locations, and activists swiftly decided on the time and place: it would be in the Guildhall Square, where most of Derry activists' actions are held, at 6:00 pm and they would meet half an hour before for the set-up. With a similar pace, activists agreed on using the shoes and the wash line, with a few new signs and slogans to denounce the Ms. Y case. The remaining of the meeting – more or less fifteen minutes – was dedicated to writing these new mini-posters to hang on the wash line on the day of the vigil. Throughout the meeting, the atmosphere remained light, pleasant and, as always, punctuated with laughter. On the following day, I met activists at 5:30 pm as I thought they could use an extra pair of

hands. It turned out I was quite useless as everyone knew their role and all the material was rapidly put up.

The second meeting I attended on August 25th had a very similar unfolding. This time, it was held at a local pub and six people were present. The first topic of the conversation was the upcoming March for Choice in Dublin:

> Sophie: … so there's the March in Dublin coming up – do we go?
>
> Francesca: I would go, especially with all that's happened in the South.
>
> Sophie: We could do an action here next week and invite people to take the bus to go.
>
> Francesca: Do we want a bus? It's really expensive and last time, it really wasn't a success for the protest in support to Gaza [oranized by a different group but with many of the same activists]. We should get a couple of cars instead.

This time again, the awareness of the few number of people involved along with their limited financial resources had a role to play in the way they participated to the march. The next topic of the meeting was the International Day for the Decriminalization of Abortion, which led to the conversation cited at the beginning of this chapter. This conversation shows how the decision was not only made rapidly but also that it was supported by a certain narrative praising the shoes and wash line tactics. It should be mentioned, however, that after their decision, there were two suggestions for a new tactic, the first one brought forward by Meaghan, a young women who recently joined the group:

> Meaghan: There was actually another idea I wanted to share. A few of my friends and I were chatting the other night and wanted to send blood-stained sanitary towels… using ketchup of course! (laughs)

Francesca: Well, might as well be the dirty women they think we are! (laughs).

The discussion then took a completely different turn and led to the topic of MLAs in trying to decide to whom they should send the sanitary towels. The pro-life group was mentioned and discussed, followed by a critique of the media in the region. This lasted for over 30 minutes during which topics such as anti-choice MLAs, the media, other pro-choice initiatives in the UK, such as the twitter campaign #myuterus, were discussed. When her idea of the blood-stained towels re-emerged, Meaghan suggested that they hang them on the wash line for the International Day for the Decriminalization of Abortion action. This was immediately opposed by two long-time AfC - Derry activists:

Francesca: Not sure it's a good idea for the general public.

Anna: The politicians yes, but we don't want to turn people away.

As this idea was subtly dismissed, Sophie came up with the idea of having monthly meetings and a stall to increase the group's visibility. In the same vein, they discussed the Facebook page, which they had initially hoped would be in common with Belfast, and the creation of a website. These ideas were accompanied by the search for a new place to meet and to get new people on board. Therefore, during this second meeting, while they decided to use the same actions, activists nevertheless discussed alternative ideas of tactics, both for the upcoming action and for increased visibility over the long run.

Finally, as the meeting was coming to an end, activists hastily decided to meet again a week before the action, which was to be held on September 26th at the square between the two shopping centers for increased visibility, to confirm a few details for the action. That third meeting, however, turned out to be very short. Lasting around

thirty minutes, only three of the eight activists were present. The few logistics details were quickly settled as Sophie said she would bring the shoes and call Keira – another activist who she thought still had the cones – to confirm that she would come and pick them up before the action. In spite of the low turnout, on the day of the action, the seven people present took care of setting up the cones, the shoes and were ready to hand out leaflets to the passers-by. In brief, everyone knew what they had to do even if nothing was clearly stated during either preparatory meetings.

The most striking element of these meetings is not so much the wide array of topics discussed during meetings, the length of these discussions or the humour and light tone, but rather the rapid pace with which both actions were planned. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that for all three meetings, no deliberation nor formal voting procedures were held, no precise tasks were distributed and no logistics were discussed other than the time and place of the actions. And yet, the set-up for both actions was executed smoothly thanks to an unspoken distribution of tasks. This confirms what Pierson argues about the learning effect:

> Knowledge gained in the operation of complex systems also leads to higher returns from the continuing use. With repetition, individuals learn how to use products more effectively, and their experiences are likely to spur further innovations in the product or in related activities (Arthur 1994: 112 in Pierson 2000: 254).

And indeed, in both cases, tactics were repeated but slight adaptations were made allowing for higher returns over the use of these two specific tactics within AfC Derry's people-oriented strategy.

In sum, the evidence presented above partly supports Hypothesis 3 which suggested that the three first features of increasing returns – large set-up costs, learning and coordination effects – were present and help explain AfC's reproduction of the shoes and wash line tactics. While there was no evidence to support the influence of the coordination effect on tactical reproduction, both large set-up costs and the learning effect are key in understanding AfC's decision to use previously used tactics for their two actions. First, the low level of resources made any innovation by the group a costly endeavour, both in terms of material and human resources. Also, based on the data from my participation to the meetings and actions, it was clear that the use of both the shoes and the wash line tactics were well-oiled processes, ideal for activists with little time and money but with a desire to "be in the streets".

As for the fourth feature of Arthur's increasing returns process (1994 in Pierson 2000), the discussion on how the stories are "good and touching" and how "people actually stop and read" hints at the expectations of activists regarding their tactics. The question to be explored is thus: how do they perceive the effectiveness of these two specific tactics and how does this help explain their reproduction? In the next section, I draw on contributions from Polletta and Meyer to explain how the internal narrative of the group provides a good way to understand activists' adaptive expectations.

3.2 Changing Narratives, Changing Expectations: The Analysis of Alliance for Choice – Derry's Interpretation of Blame and Success

As was shown in Chapter 2, the activists' awareness of the political context contributed to their rejection of lobbying tactics and their people-oriented

innovations. Presumably then, activists had certain expectations about what had to be done, in turn influencing their tactical choices. Just as Pierson suggests, "When picking the wrong horse may have very high costs, actors must constantly adjust their behavior in the light of how they expect others to act" (Pierson 2000: 258). I explore below how the group's internal narratives allow us to grasp activists expectations and argue that the interpretations of politicians' blame and certain actions' success create a constraining effect along with the set-up costs and learning effects explored above, thus explaining the reproduction of the shoes and the wash line tactics. The idea behind this fourth hypothesis is that internal narratives, which include stories, reputations or common understandings, "can be remarkably resilient and long-lived, and can constrain as well as enable collective action" (Meyer 2006: 286). In both the blame and success "stories," I discuss the role of critical events and their relationship with the internal narrative of the group.

a) From Political Institutions to Politicians: AfC – Derry's Blame Narrative

Debra Javeline (2003a) looked at the effect of blame on protest behaviour using surveys done during the 1998 Russian wage arrears crisis. She argues for the importance of blame in explaining people's motivation to protest and suggests that the greater the specificity of blame, the greater the probability of protest. While my interest here is tactical innovation, it is nevertheless interesting to consider her argument regarding the attribution of blame: "The specific attribution of treatment responsibility facilitates collective action to the extent that protest is instrumental – that is, an efficient means to achieve a public good or eliminate a public bad by convincing a particular actor to redress a grievance" (Javeline 2003a: 108). Therefore, "[t]he task of simplifying a problem and identifying a culprit and/or problem-solver is part of the task of collective action" (Javeline 2003a: 108).

Javeline's blame attribution is akin to Benford and Snow's framing (2000), where frames "refer to the cognitive lenses and sets of categories" (Ancelovici 2013: 354) that simplify our social world. However, the blame narrative here is understood more largely, as incompassing several frames as well as key settings and main characters (Stone 1997 in Meyer 2006: 206). As Meyer suggests, frames and stories alike are "rhetorical tools that organizers use to mobilize, channel, and legitimate collective action", but unlike frames "narratives emphasize sequence in order to make causal claims and inspire action" (Meyer 2006: 206). AfC activists achieve this task of blame attribution through their interpretation of Northern Irish political institutions and past actions. Indeed, there is a strong blame narrative underlying in activists analysis of their political context presented in Chapter 2 as, for instance, all of them identified the political institutions as the biggest obstacle standing in the way of the decriminalization of abortion. As Francesca explains:

> Because the way in which the whole executive and all these institutions were set up by the GFA, it's all about orange vs green, and it's all about institutionalizing that. And because that is so institutionalised, each side has a veto which means that actually no one can do anything without the possibility of being vetoed (October 31st, 2014).

This echoes one of the three ways, according to Polletta (2006), in which stories influence social movements as presented in Chapter 1. While some stories maintain the status quo, others make sense of unintelligible events or challenge inequalities. With regards to the latter, it can be that practices that were settled become contested because an institution loses its credibility either due to (i) a gap between stories and practice which becomes grounds for mobilization or (ii) external developments that heighten the tension between two competing stories (Polletta 2006: 17). In our case, the gap between the official narrative of the peace process and practice is the source for the blame narrative. In criticising the post-conflict institutional set-up – the "green-and-orange" politics and the "Stormont Block" as discussed in Chapter 2 –

activists highlight the inefficacy of Stormont and the inaction of Westminster, thus blaming the politicians sitting in these assemblies for failed past attempts at extending the 1967 Abortion Act.

Along with the institutional set-up, the attribution of blame applies to the government and politicians for not recognising the demand for abortion, thus putting women's lives at risk:

> Yeah women's lives are at risk, and it [extending the Act] still didn't happen. And the government's argument is that there is no demand and that women don't require these services, but obviously that is not the case (Sophie, September 10th, 2014).

These women whose lives are at risk include two highly mediatised cases including Sevita, a young Irish girl of Indian origin who died in 2012. As Carole said: "Going out in public took a new thing when Sevita died in the South. Some things were happening before that also, [but] the Sevita case gave all that a 'second souffle'. And ever since that we've been much more often in the streets" (October 10th, 2014). In their reaction to the Ms Y case, which happened in August 2014, activists' blaming of politicians was more forceful. In the car ride in direction to an Alliance for Choice meeting in Belfast (August 19th, 2014), after one of the activists had given additional details about the Ms Y case explaining how the young woman had been denied an abortion in spite of her suicidal thoughts, had been force fed after her hunger strike, and then forced to give birth by caesarian section, activists engaged in a discussion where they shared their consternation about every aspect of this case, from the traumatising past of this woman to politicians and health-practitioners' decision. By the end of the conversation, Anna said:

> Her human rights were just repeatedly violated; first the force feeding, then the giving birth. The state is basically saying you're body belongs to us. (...) But I wonder if the hunger strike will resonate with Republicans at home.[62]

To which Sophie responded, in a pessimistic tone: "Well you know, in the end, they're all right-wing bastards" (August 19th, 2014), a statement welcomed by a consensual nod amongst those present.

This instance of a group conversation along with the blame narrative highlights the homogeneity within the group. Indeed, the group's stable membership over the years, labelled by Taylor as "exclusiveness" (Taylor 1989: 766), allows for a shared understanding of the post-conflict institutional set-up as well as the causes of Ms. Y's sufferings. The cases of Sevita, Ms. Y and the others, less widely reported in the media, represent, in Staggenborg's typology, accidents which have crystallized the blame narrative in this exclusive group. As she argues, the difference between an accident and other types of events lie in the identification of blame: "In contrast to large-scale events like depressions and wars, however, accidents have more limited and specific causes; in contrast to natural disasters and diseases, the causes of accidents are human and technological" (Staggenborg 1993: 326). The activists interpretation of these accidents (i.e. the blame narrative) is thus a way through which is expressed the strong culture which characterises groups in abeyance processes. Indeed, much like in the case under study here, Taylor found that NWP's group culture was not expressed through a "well-articulated ideological and theoretical position. Rather, feminism was defined principally through a culture that promoted a feminist worldview" (Taylor 1989: 769). Here, the underlying blame narrative of

[62] During the height of the Northern Irish conflict in the late 1970s - early 1980s, many Republicans were imprisoned without trial. As a way to protest, many prisoners first refused to wear prisoner uniforms, leading to what is called "the Blanket Strike", and eventually refused to eat. Following this hunger strike, several prisoners died, including Bobby Sands, now a mythical figure in the Irish Catholic/Republican community.

their conversations, particularly the ones about past actions and the "accidents" happening to women, serve to reinforce the group's ideological and tactical orientation. Indeed, as Polletta argues: "Each time such stories are told, one might argue, their normative message is reinforced" (Polletta 2006: 14).

Beyond highlighting the group's exclusiveness and strong implicit feminist culture, this case shows that the effect of blame is not as straightforward as Javeline argues. When the government was perceived by activists as "the culprit" *as well as* "the problem-solver," it was the target of AfC's actions. However, the quotes above as well as the analysis done in Chapter 2 show that while the government, either at Westminster or Stormont, remains the malefactor in the story, it is no longer perceived as a locus of change by activists. The question hence becomes who is the problem-solver for AfC. Or put differently, what do they expect to be an avenue for success? Sophie, during a discussion on the demand for abortion in Northern Ireland hinted at this by talking about their role:

> And if you look at the figures of the thousands of women that have had abortions in England – that's demand. And we were trying then to highlight the hypocrisy of the government that don't want to face the demand, don't want to face that society is changing. And they keep sending the problem to England, and we as activists need to change that mindset and say it's ok to come out and say you're pro-choice. It's not pro-abortion really, it's pro-choice. [...] it's not being pro- any medical procedure, it's just demanding the right to have it for those who need it (September 10th, 2014).

So "we," as pro-choice activists, need to target individuals and tackle the taboo around abortion. This role activists impinge upon themselves is directly connected to what they see as a successful action, an element I explore below.

b) The Reproduction of Familiar Tactics: A Synonym for Success

Alongside blame, we find in AfC – Derry's discourse as a group three elements that are woven together into a narrative of success: (i) the artistic character of tactics which, according to activists, goes hand in hand with (ii) the focus on people as a target, and finally (iii) the activists' surprise of the people's openness to discuss abortion rights.

AfC's people-oriented strategy is expressed through tactics with an artistic character. As Elizabeth says: "I like the whole artistic nature of what AfC does. It has drawn attention, especially that light thing. And you can see people questioning" (Elizabeth, October 14th, 2014). As for the wash line, during its elaboration, activists were looking for ways to make it eye-catching so that it would attract people. As Elizabeth explained: "we bought size twenty pants in Primark or somewhere. And it works! 'Cause you get guys and people coming and reading them so it is eye-catching." (October 14th, 2014). With a similar pride, Carole recalls the first time they used the shoes tactic at the City of Culture's Lumière event, explaining how they reused the material resources from Derry City's Carnival and the people's interest:

> … [it] was during the Lumière thing for the City of Culture. And there was these cones left over from the Carnival and what we had done was only to get new sleeves and we had three cones. And for the Lumière there were different installations and we just sneaked in and people thought we were just part of it. So we had the shoes and the wee stories attached to them and people just walked around like an exhibition and were wondering and discussing! And barely anyone figured out we weren't part of the official program (laughs). (October 10th, 2014)

Discussing the reaction to the shoes tactic at the Lumière event action during the City of Culture, Francesca brings a more nuanced view of the actual possibility to have an opened discussion with everyone, but nevertheless remains positive in her account:

> [The response was] very mixed, well as the town is. We didn't really have any aggressive response. People don't really know what it is at first and so they might be curious, come and then realised what it's about and then shove it back in your hands. Or they go "that's a great idea" and then you start a discussion. But nobody was screaming 'Murderers' so that's a start! (laughs) (October 31st, 2014)

Francesca's joke about people screaming "murderers' speaks to the activists expectations regarding their actions. Indeed, much to their surprise, people's response was rather positive when coming across the different people-oriented tactics. We can indeed see how the narrative of success is accompanied by an element of surprise in activists' accounts, particularly when it comes to the City of Culture event: "Yes [it worked really well], people genuinely thought we were part of the official thing. People kept saying 'oh but you're not on the map!' (laughs)" (Francesca, October 31st, 2014).

A similar effect of surprise can be found regarding the temporary re-appropriation of the Free Derry Wall[63] during the City of Culture:

> Well actually it was quite interesting because I expected that they'd scream blue murder,[64] but it went really, really well and there wasn't blue murder. We thought it'd stay up overnight, we were taking photographs of it because we didn't expect it to be still the next day. And it not only was up the next day, but stayed up for a full week. [...] we took it down, [but] it wasn't taken down or anything, which is fairly amazing (Francesca, October 31st, 2014).

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[63] See Chapter 2, particularly the section on the Object Shift mechanism, for information more about this action.

[64] Definition according to the Merriam Webster Online: *British informal* To scream, yell, or complain in a very loud or angry way <*His political opponents screamed blue murder when he was appointed to office.*>

The surprise expressed by activists' shows that while it was a decision on their part to use the City of Culture event as an opportunity for mobilisation, its impact exceeded their expectations. As was exposed in Chapter 2, by 2013, activists had put aside their lobbying tactics and as was exposed above, the exclusiveness and centralisation of the group reinforced the blame narrative making politicians an undesirable target for their actions. The City of Culture was thus the opportunity for activists to elaborate small-scale innovations.[65] Through this trial-and-error process, a new road was chosen by AfC, thus highlighting how the City of Culture represents a turning point in the developmentof their contentious repertoire. This echoes Mahoney's concept of critical juncture:

> Critical junctures are characterised by the adoption of an institutional arrangement from among two or more alternatives. These junctures are "critical" because once a particular option is selected it becomes progressively more difficult to return to the initial point when multiple alternatives were still available (Mahoney 2000: 513).

However, as mentioned in Hypothesis 4, Staggenborg (1993) argues that it is insufficient to merely categorise an event as "critical." Indeed, she states that it is necessary to specify the type of event and its effect on the opportunities, tactics, and resources. In the case at hand, the City of Culture event is best defined, based on Staggenborg's typology, as a strategic initiative. These are events that aim to advance a movement's goals and that include "actions undertaken by supporters or opponents who are not connected to formal organisations as well as programs designed and implemented by movement or countermovement organizations" (Staggenborg 1993: 337). In her case study (i.e. pro-choice movement in the US), Staggenborg shows how the "strategic initiative from the countermovement provided a target and tactical opportunities for pro-choice groups which helped to reinvolve local activists in the movement" (Staggenborg 1993: 337). Similarly, for AfC – Derry, City of Culture

[65] See Chapter 2, particularly the section on the Object Shift mechanism, for more details on these innovations.

provided an opportunity to experiment with a more artistic approach as well as a new target: "AfC Derry has always been more arty in its actions, even before the City of Culture, but the City of Culture gave us an opportunity to kind of focus on some events like the Lumière thing" (Francesca, October 31st, 2014). Since then, activists have said that "whatever we do now, it's focused for people to learn and question" (Sophie, September 10th, 2014). And similarly, Francesca told me during the action on September 26th that the shoes and wash line are "good because at least we get to talk to people".

In both Mahoney and Staggenborg's argument about critical events, the contingent character is key since, for Mahoney, "selection processes during a critical juncture period are marked by contingence" (Mahoney 2000: 513). Similarly, Staggenborg's argument suggests that a critical event is not necessarily planned or strategized in advance. Therefore, it is not so much the event *per se* that matters, but how it's used and interpreted afterward by activists. In the case at hand, the informal nature of AfC's structure, characterised by exclusiveness and centralisation, was well suited to respond to this cultural initiative funded by the UK government. Indeed, Staggenborg argues that "an informal organizational structure may be an advantage in responding to opportunities for mobilization presented by strategic initiatives" (Staggenborg 1993: 339). Also, it occurred at a time where, as shown in Chapter 2, AfC had started trying out different tactics and targets, slowly letting go of state-oriented actions and experimenting with people-oriented tactics. The direct access to the general public through this significant event in Derry was interpreted as a success, thus making the people-oriented strategy synonymous with the wash line and shoes tactics.

This is what Polletta calls a metonymic association.[66] Metonymy is a common figure of speech in which one word or image is invoked for another, for example speaking of the Crown to refer to the King. As Polletta argues, metonymies may supply causal threads, they may be positive or negative and can change over time "but once established they have staying power, since to question them is to question the basic idiom of the group" (Polletta 2006: 80). Two metonymies are at work in the analysis presented above since, on the one hand, politicians and governments become synonymous with the malefactors in the interpretations of failed pas actions and accidents experienced by women, and, on the other hand, people-oriented tactics become the only way to go about for a "successful" tactic. We saw the influence of these two metonymies when two long-time activists excluded the blood-stained towels idea brought by Meaghan. Indeed, the idea did not match the "basic idiom of the group" – a language in which success can only be achieved by popular education. This also highlights that "[i]t therefore takes work to preserve any stability of meaning" (Polletta 2006: 15).

Going back to the activists' discussion on September 20th presented at the beginning of this chapter which featured their decisions to use the wash line and the shoes again, we can better understand the content of that conversation. Highlighting that the stories are "good and touching" was not simply a vague consideration of whether or not to use the wash line and the shoes, but rather a reiteration of the metonymic

[66] Polletta, in her analysis of participatory democracy in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in the Civil Rights Movement (SNCC), calls this a metonymic association. In her case study of the SNCC, Polletta argues that: "Participatory democracy was abandoned when it came to be metonymically associated with the dominance of whites in the organization" (Polletta 2006: 58). She uses the literary concept of metonymy because it remains unclear to what extent participatory democracy was the core problem of the organisation, or that changing the decision-making process would truly solve the group's problem. Rather the answer lies in the internal story of the group: "in SNCC workers' collective narrative of the problems they were facing in the fall and winter of 1964, participatory democracy stood in for organizational dilemmas that were difficult to confront, let alone solve" (Polletta 2006: 58).

association between these people-oriented tactics and a successful action. This echoes Mahoney's argument about increasing returns processes which are marked by a positive feedback cycle "in which an initial precedent about what is appropriate forms a basis for making future decisions about what is appropriate" (Mahoney 2000: 523). I have shown how this initial precedent is a critical event, a strategic initiative as suggested by Staggenborg, which crystallizes the success narrative of the people-oriented strategy and associates it with two specific tactics. "As a result," Mahoney argues, "a familiar cycle of self-reinforcement occurs: the institution that is initially favored sets a standard for legitimacy; this institution is reproduced because it is seen as legitimate; and the reproduction of the institution reinforces its legitimacy" (Mahoney 2000: 523-4). Even if our interest here is not institutional reproduction, by looking at the internal narrative of success, we can appreciate how the critical event played a crucial role in setting this narrative and contributed to the reproduction of the cycle of self-reinforcement. It is not surprising then, that activists chose to use a tactic that they expected to be successful – they were, as Pierson puts it, "picking the right horse."

This account supports the two components of Hypothesis 4. First, the activists' expectations about what is a successful tactic worked hand in hand with the other increasing returns features in creating a constraining effect on the group's repertoire. Second, Polletta and Meyer's contributions about narrative analysis are indeed a relevant entry point into activists "adaptive expectations" since stories "make explicit the cultural schema that underpins institutional practices" (Polletta 2006: 13). While I did not focus on institutions, arguably this applies to the group under study since, as Polletta explains stories allow us to live in the 'subjective mode,' that is, seeing how things should be and the consequences if they are not (Polletta 2006: 13). The data presented in the second section also adds on Hypothesis 4 by shedding light on the

influence of events on group culture and the importance of sequence in path-dependent processes, two elements I discuss in the conclusion below.

Conclusion

For each of their action during the fall of 2014, AfC – Derry activists were compelled to choose the vehicle through which they would put forth their pro-choice claims. Intervening in this decision are, as the first section of this chapter has shown, the costs of innovation and the learning effect. Indeed, AfC's low level of both human and material resources make them less willing to invest in new tactics. Also, the ease with which they were able to use these tactics provided them with further incentives to continue to use the shoes and the wash line, particularly given each activists' limited time involvement. While these material concerns play a key role in explaining tactical reproduction, the fourth feature identified by Arthur (i.e. adaptive expectations in Pierson 2000) and further developed above, points towards the constraining effect of culture.

The analysis of activists' interpretation and informal conversations allowed us to identify the blame and success narratives, which in turn revealed key information about the group's objectives and tactics since, as Meyer argues, "stories identify the factors relevant to an issue, defines which policy areas are amenable to human intervention, which claims and claimants are worthy, and which actors are politically significant" (Meyer 2006: 286). Past actions aiming at extending the 1967 Act as well as the two accidents (i.e. the cases of Sevita and Ms. Y) have influenced the identification of the culprit and the attribution of blame by AfC, a crucial task for

mobilisation according to Javeline. The attribution of success also proved to be central in activists' continued motivation to "be in the streets." There also, a particular event, namely the City of Culture, has played a key role in crystallizing the expected result of two specific people-oriented tactics. The data presented above suggests a certain sequence in the internal narrative, that is, the necessity of the attribution of blame in order for the success interpretation to emerge. While the data does not allow us to identify precisely the timing of the emergence of the blame narrative nor the success narrative, it nevertheless suggests that without such a strong blame towards institutions and politicians, the success of the people-oriented tactics at the City of Culture event would not have been so momentous for the group. And once particular targets were put aside and two-specific tactics were associated with success, then the exclusiveness and centralisation of the group, characteristics of abeyance processes, worked at reasserting these metonymical associations at the heart of the group's idiom. While biographical and ideological differences existed within the group, the non-responsive context in which activists were active politically made compliance to this common idiom particularly important for the survival of the group. This peculiar contexts thus underlines the constraining effect of narratives on repertoires since, as Polletta argues, "some strategies, tactics, organizational forms, and deliberative styles may be appealing mainly on account of the social groups or conditions with which they are symbolically associated" (Polletta 2006: 80).

However, unlike in Polletta's case study, the analysis above points to the associated effect of cultural and material factors. Indeed, as shown above, activists themselves were very clear about how the reproduction of the shoes and the wash line was a way to palliate for their dire lack of resources. For instance, the idea of a monthly stall for the group in the town center never materialised since, while it matched the people-oriented strategy, it necessitated too much time and resources. In contrast, the blood-stained towel to be added to the wash line probably would not have been too

demanding, at least not more so than the other posters created for the Ms. Y case, but it was nevertheless rapidly dismissed during the meeting as it diverged from the narrative of success. The resulting outcome was the reproduction of two tactics which, on the one hand, did not require additional money or time investment and, on the other, were expected to be successful. This confirms Pierson's argument about the applicability of increasing returns process in social sciences, which in turn explains the tactical reproduction in the case at hand: "That collective action processes in politics are very often subject to increasing returns explains why social scientists are often struck by the considerable stability of patterns of political mobilization over time" (Pierson 2000: 258). Therefore, by bringing together cultural and path dependent perspectives, this analysis shed light on both tactical reproduction in the case of AfC – Derry and more generally on the constraining effect of repertoires.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have explored processes of tactical innovation and reproduction through the case study of Derry's pro-choice group, Alliance for Choice. When in Derry during the fall of 2014, I was struck by AfC's refusal to engage in the Department of Justice's consultation on amending the law on abortion. Through interviews and participant observation, I found there was limited space for them to mobilise for abortion rights given the two-community paradigm dominating political debates. Along with failed efforts at lobbying and key events on the political scene, this led them to experiment several new tactics having less and less to do with their initial approach to mobilisation – lobbying for the extension of the 1967 Abortion Act – and more to do with popular education. By October 2014, AfC's collective narrative of the solution to the non-responsive, green-and-orange, political institutions they were facing was to have the general population as their main target with the wash line and shoes as tools to reach them. This led to the reproduction of these two tactics for both their actions in the fall of 2014, namely the vigil of solidarity for the Ms. Y case and for the International Day for the Decriminalisation of Abortion.

Northern Ireland has served here as a case study for questions of change and continuity in the actions of social movements, but the analysis presented above also sheds light on some pitfalls of the peace process. In what follows, I go over the four hypotheses of this research and connect the key findings with wider sociological debates, first with regards to the relationship between structure and agency and then to the study of culture. I conclude by discussing the key contributions of this research

for the study of social movements and Northern Ireland, and then point to the limits of this project and suggestions for future research.

Dynamics of Tactical Innovation and Reproduction: Hypotheses and Key Results

a) Tactical Innovation

Hypotheses 1 and 2 drew upon structuralist contributions in the study of social movements to respond to the question: why do AfC activists reject lobbying tactics and elaborate new people-oriented tactics? Hypothesis 1 suggested that the rejection of lobbying tactics was induced by a process of exclusion of pro-choice activists from the main political debate given the predominance of the Green-and-Orange divide, the center-periphery cleavage in Kriesi et al.'s terms (1995). This confirmed how the "configuration of political cleavages in a country constitutes a key element of political opportunities"[67] (Kriesi 2009: 26).

The validation of Hypothesis 2, however, showed that activists responded to this macro-structural constraint by innovating and developing new tactics. Through these innovations, activists targeted different audiences, articulated new ways to put forth their claims and developed a new sense of identity. These three elements were highlighted by object shift, a meso-level identity-related mechanism conceptualized by McAdam et al. (2001) to highlight the relationship between a group's identity and repertoire. Beyond tactical innovation, the analysis in Chapter 2 also shed light on the

[67]Translated from French: "la configuration des clivages politiques dans un pays constitue un élément clé des opportunités politiques".

concept of strategy and its relationship to identity. Indeed, it showed how the new people-oriented strategy was closely connected to activists' own definition of what it means to be a pro-choice activist in Derry.

In sum, Chapter 2 has shown both how structure constrains individuals' actions and, as Fine puts it, how "individuals respond to structure" (Fine 1992: 101). In doing so, the case at hand speaks to the agency-structure debate. Through the focus on change and innovation, I have explored both the constraint and negotiation elements discussed by Fine, with constraint conceived as the gap between realistic and imaginable actions and negotiation as the "slop" in systems allowing individuals to alter their context (Fine 1992: 94). The conversation metaphor (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001) underlying throughout the chapter shows how instead of performing strict scripts imposed upon them by the macro-structural context, activists engaged in a constant, but bounded, improvisation, thus re-evaluating over time their answers to questions such as "what is going on, what should I be doing, what is this thing *here*?" (Fine 1992: 102). These questions highlight actors' capacity to negotiate, but within given constraints as they are "embedded, contingent questions" (Fine 1992: 102). While I have explained how tactical change took place within AfC – Derry's repertoire through small-scale innovations, I also aimed at understanding how reproduction was negotiated by activists in Chapter 3, an element I turn to next.

b) Tactical Reproduction

The third chapter of this thesis explored path dependency as a way to explain tactical reproduction. Given the extensiveness of the debate on definitions of path dependency, a limited number of authors were discussed to finally adopt Pierson's

definition of path dependency as a process of increasing returns. While Hypothesis 3 was concerned with the three first features of increasing returns, namely set-up costs, the learning effect, and the coordination effect, the fourth hypothesis focused on the adaptive expectations component. The latter, arguably the most abstruse of the four features, was further explored in final hypothesis. Indeed, I suggested that the analysis of the group's narratives was a good entry point in order to account for the actors' expectations towards their actions.

The analysis has revealed that while the coordination effect did not apply to this case due to different approaches to mobilisation by the Belfast and Derry groups, the set-up costs and the learning effect were key in understanding tactical reproduction by AfC – Derry. Due to the activists' limited time and resources, the high costs associated to a tactical innovation were acutely felt. The sunk costs of the development of the wash line and shoes as well as the ease with which they were henceforth able to use these tactics, made it increasingly interesting for activists to reproduce these pre-existing tactics.

Furthermore, Chapter 3 highlighted the usefulness of bridging material concerns and cultural ones in one common explanation of tactical reproduction. Along with the set-up costs and learning, the actors' attribution of blame towards politicians and success towards people-oriented tactics constrained action. Two highly mediatised accidents and failed past attempts at extending the 1967 Abortion Act were the basis of activists' identification of the culprit, while the direct access to the general public during the City of Culture event made people-oriented actions an avenue for success. The data presented in Chapter 3 showed how this limited the range of actions they did, with for instance the exclusion of the blood-stained towel addition to the wash line. Indeed, the interpretation of success rendered two-specific tactics within the

people-oriented strategy the "go-to" tactics for AfC's actions. The identification of the group's abeyance structure played a key role in our understanding of the effect of these narratives on AfC's repertoire. Staggenborg argues, the actor's interpretations *as well as* their group structures intervene between macro-structural conditions and contentious outcomes (Staggenborg 1993: 340). We have seen how exclusiveness and centralisation contributed to maintain the blame and success narratives. Indeed, the small number of core activists created a close-knit group with a strong group culture where decisions, in spite of a horizontal-like mode of organisation, were made in a centralised way by a two or three long-time activists. This abeyance structure led to the institutionalisation of stories and interpretations, thus creating a strong group culture. Therefore, through the narrative analysis done in Chapter 3, we have seen how actors' adaptive expectations were grasped through the group's stories, which in turn, are dependent upon critical events as well as group structures.

The way I have approached increasing returns' fourth feature (i.e adaptive expectations) echoes Swidler's understanding of culture as a 'toolkit' – a box of "symbols, stories, rituals, and world-views" (Swidler 1986: 273) which allows actors to build strategies of action to attain several life goals. As Swidler argues, this has allowed me to take into account culture's "causal significance, not in defining ends of action, but in providing cultural components that are used to construct strategies of action" (Swidler 1986: 273). And indeed, the blame and success narratives do not act alone in explaining tactical reproduction. Nevertheless, it was shown in Chapter 3 how they have made some tactics seem inappropriate and others well-suited. In recognising activists work at maintaining these stories and interpretations, Chapter 3, similarly to Chapter 2, has shown the relational dynamic involved in actions, both *inside* and *outside* social movements, highlighting how "(p)eople do not build lines from scratch, choosing actions one at a time as efficient means to given ends. Instead they construct chains of action beginning with a least some pre-fabricated links"

(Swidler 1986: 277). And indeed, as Meyer argues, in explaining the constraining effect of narratives, the objective was not to suggest that the construction of social movement stories "goes on in a vacuum" (Meyer 2006: 287), but rather to acknowledge that through these stories we can access the interaction between the structural constraints that impinge upon activists and the tools at their disposal to respond to them.

AfC – Derry and the Sociology of Social Movements: Key Contributions of this Research

A common thread between these two chapters is the salience of interpretations, stories and common understandings both in mediating the agency-structure relationship and in telling us about actors' expectations. These interpretations are deeply rooted in practice since I have shown that activists' understandings of "past situations, and (their) symbolisation of them, constitute the context within which (they) strive to make sense of (their) present activities – in which we can recognize constraint and attempt to negotiate" (Fine 1992: 102). Therefore, in this thesis, the concept of culture was approached using a meso-level point of view, looking at the "everyday life" of pro-choice activism in Derry and how it affected tactical choice. The ethnographic approach was an appropriate way to do so since, as Polletta argues, ethnographers have observed everyday conversation in a myriad of contexts to highlight the norms and understandings that underpin mundane actions (Polletta 2006: 13).

The object shift and increasing returns mechanisms also proved to be good tools to answer questions of tactical innovation and reproduction brought forth by the

research puzzle. In the case of the first mechanism, the analysis provides an instance of a scaling-down object shift (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001) within the study of social movements. As for increasing returns, the argument of path dependency has rarely been used in the social movement literature. Therefore, this exploration of Arthur's four features of increasing returns is an attempt to suggest the usefulness of path dependent processes in the analysis of action repertoires. As was stated in Chapter 1, these mechanisms constitute the generalizable elements of this research. As McAdam et al. argue, mechanisms "recur in a wide variety of settings" not exactly with the same effects every time, but nevertheless operating in a similar fashion across a number of social settings (2001: 159).

Along with these two mechanisms, this research project's contributions lies in its concern for the role of the general public in contentious politics approach (Kriesi 2009) as well as in the light it sheds on the concept of action repertoires. First, the analysis contributes to the contentious politics approach by taking into account the public as a target of social movements. As Kriesi (2009) argues, Tilly's understanding of the polity does not take into account the general public in his insiders vs outsiders approach to social movement campains. Kriesi further argues that: "the public is absolutely essential for a social movement, since it is through the public that it exercises influence on its target, that is, on the 'insiders' in the political process model'" (2009: 30).[68] Therefore, in supporting Kriesi's tipartite model rather than Tilly's bipolar conception of the polity (Kriesi 2009: 30), this research recognises that the political system might become a less central target of social movements than suggested in the political process approach (Kriesi 2009: 33).

[68] Translated form French : "Le public est absolument essentiel pour le mouvement social, car c'est à travers le public qu'il cherche à exercer de l'influence sur le destinataire, c'est-à-dire sur les insiders dans le modèle du système politique de Tilly".

The analysis of AfC – Derry's contentious actions also contributed to the understanding of repertoire in the study of contentious politics. As Polletta has highlighted, "(w)hile Tilly and other scholars have sought to explain broad transformations in repertoires over the course of whole centuries, they have not accounted for how particular strategies, tactics, or claims come to be part of an established repertoire" (Polletta 2006: 55). Focusing on meso-level processes allowed to explain precisely how lobbying tactics have, firstly, been excluded from AfC - Derry's repertoire, and then how two specific people-oriented tactics have become part of the "established repertoire" of the group. In doing so, I highlighted the importance of the group's response to the macro-level constraints, the close link between strategy and identity, and the salience of both material and cultural components in social movement's tactical choices.

Finally, with regards to the case per say, while it was not an explicit objective of this research project, I hope that the analysis has demonstrated the relevance of studying women's issues and feminist groups in post-conflict societies. I find that this thesis sheds light on enduring grey areas in both political decisions and the literature on Northern Ireland. As Coulter highlights, "(a)n adequate depiction of the nature of contemporary Northern Irish society demands, therefore, an understanding of the complex ways in which experience, practice and belief are *gendered* within the particular context of the province" (Coulter 1999:101).

Limits and Suggestions for Future Research

The present thesis covers several key concepts in both the sociology of social movements and the study of Northern Ireland. However, in discussing such a wide

variety of themes, the analysis lacks at times the necessary depth for a comprehensive account of these concepts. For instance, with greater time and means, a comparative analysis between Derry and Belfast could shed light on the differentiated response to a common political context, thus enriching the argument about the role of group culture in mediating structure and agency. With regards to the path dependency argument, while its application is original in the field of social movements, important improvements could be made by adopting a stricter historical sociology approach. Further application of this concept should include greater discussion on the methods with which it is usually analysed, for instance process tracing (Collier 2011). As for the study of culture in social movements, further analysis should be done on the interaction between meaning and practice, perhaps using the concept of "culture in interaction" developed by Eliasoph and Lictherman (2003). This could allow to see how the use of "tools" (i.e. tactics) is linked to a group's collective representations since, as they argue, the "fundamental task for sociological studies of culture [...] is to conceptualize how people use collective repertoires to make meaning together in everyday life" (Eliasoph and Lichterman 2003: 736).

As for the Northern Irish case, while this study draws the portrait of a challenging context for mobilisation on women's issues and highlights the necessity to look beyond the two-community paradigm when studying Northern Ireland, it does not provide any concrete suggestions. Therefore, similarly to what Deiana (2013) has done with her own study of grass-roots feminist organisations in Belfast, I invite students of Northern Ireland to delve into feminist initiatives since:

> (e)ven though located outside the realm of institutionalised politics and the community sector, these feminist interventions encapsulate the potential to have an impact on the broader cultural and social context that shapes ideas and practices of citizenship, and to alter perceptions about feminism, gender equality and women's rights in Northern Ireland (Deiana 2013: 408).

In line with Deiana's argument, I posit that studying a pro-choice group's contentious actions is telling not only in terms of women's mobilisation in Northern Ireland, but also for a comprehensive understanding of the pitfalls of the post-conflict peace process in the region. As Sophie told me while discussing poverty in Derry: "if we want peace rather than just 'not war' [in Northern Ireland], then we must address poverty and women's rights" (September 16th, 2014). This echoes Sales argument, articulated almost twenty years ago, about the importance of fighting both wars: "The struggle for women's rights cannot, however, be divorced from the struggle against the undemocratic structures of Northern Ireland" (Sales 1997: 9).

And indeed, at the time of writing, a young woman was given a suspended sentence for having had a self-induced abortion. Reported in an article in *The Guardian*: "Her barrister told Belfast crown court on Monday that if his client had lived anywhere else in the UK, she would 'not have found herself before the courts'".[69] In reaction to this, activists in Derry organised an action. They stood between the two shopping malls, the same location than for the 2014 Day for the Decriminalisation of abortion, with a banner on which we could read: "Don't criminalise women." Four women stood in front of the banner wearing a white one-piece and a cross made in red tape over their mouth (see ANNEX A, picture 3). It thus has to be recognised that activists' mistrust of the actual possibility for change through the political institutions and the DoJ's consultation 2014 was well-founded. Arguably this condemnation shows a continuity in both the attribution of blame by activists, perhaps even its consolidation, as well as the decriminalisation discourse and the people-oriented approach to their pro-choice mobilisation.

[69]Online article, retrieved on June 16th, 2016 : http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/apr/04/northern-irish-woman-suspended-sentence-self-induced-abortion.

ANNEX A
Pictures of Tactics by Alliance for Choice

Picture 1:

Picture of the wash line tactic used by Alliance-For Choice – Derry during the vigil of solidarity on August Picture taken by myself, during the Vigil of solidarity on August 21st, 2014. Picture taken by myself.

Picture 2:

Picture of the shoes tactic used by Alliance for Choice – Derry for their action for the International Day for the decriminalisaiton of Abortion. The picture can be found on AfC – Derry's facebook page, online: https://www.facebook.com/Alliance-for-Choice-Derry-671209726322824/photos_stream (Retrieved April 26th, 2016.)

Picture 3:

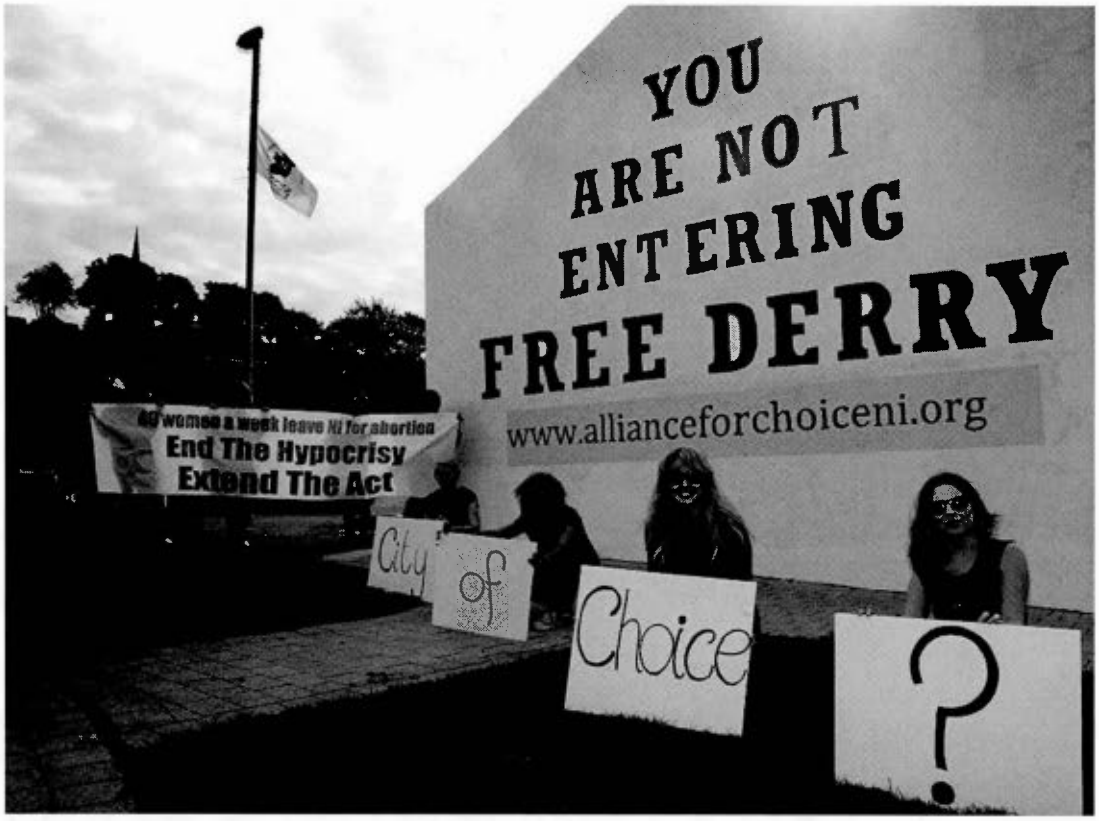
This picture was taken by AfC – Derry during their action on April 9th, 2016 in solidarity to the woman charged for having taken the abortion pill. The picture can be found on Alliance for Choice – Derry's facebook page, online:

https://www.facebook.com/Alliance-for-Choice-Derry-671209726322824/?fref=ts, (Retrieved on April 26th, 2016)

Picture 4:

Picture of the modification of the Free Derry Wall by AfC – Derry activists during the City of Culture event in 2013. The picture can be found online:

http://www.broadsheet.ie/tag/free-derry-corner/ (Retrieved June 16th, 2016).



ANNEX B

Interview Guide for Semi-Structured Interviews

About Alliance for Choice

How long have you been participating in Alliance for Choice (AfC)?

What led you to get involved in AfC?

Was it your first pro-choice activism experience?

How does AfC work? (What would a usual meeting be like? How do you take decisions as a group? How often do you usually meet?)

Can you tell me about actions you have organised in the past?

How do you usually organise actions/events?

What is the composition of the group (political allegiances, sex, age, ethnicity, etc.)? (homogenous or heterogenous?) (Is this a strenght or a challenge?)

Alliance for Choice and other groups

Does AfC collaborate with other groups in Northern Ireland for actions or events? Why so?

Does AfC collaborate with pro-choice groups in the south? Why so and how so? E.g. the recent vigil = example of collaboration?

About the vigil of solidarity for Ms Y

Does Afc often organize solidarity vigils?

I noticed that this case was discussed a lot during meetings, do you often discuss cases?

Used the shoes and wash line:

- How did you come up with that idea?
- Is this action something you have already used in the past?
- Is this action something you have seen other groups use before?

- Does this action resemble other actions you have organised in the past with Alliance for Choice? How so?
  (if yes) -Was it important for you that the action resembled other actions of AfC?

About the action for the International Day for the Decriminalisation of Abortion

Used the shoes and wash line:

- Same thing: Was it important for you that the action resembled other actions of AfC?
- Different location: why?

How do these two tactics (shoes and washline) fair in relation to other tactics used in the past?

About pro-choice activism

What would you say is the biggest challenge for you as a pro-choice activist? Why so?

Would you say these challenges are specific to Derry? Why so?

Would you say other social issues or other groups face similar challenges/obstacles? Why so?

- How does that impact the way you choose actions to undertake?

What would you say is the main thing holding in the way of legalization of abortion in Northern Ireland?

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