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Despite the crisis: The resilience of intercultural nationalism in Catalonia

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ABSTRACT

Interculturalism provides the core framework for immigration-related policies in Catalonia, while remaining deeply intertwined with Catalan nationalism. We first identify 'intercultural nationalism' as the core doctrine through which Catalan nationalist discourse has been articulated in relation to immigration. We trace interculturalism's origins to nationalism in Quebec and argue that, in Catalonia also, regional immigration policies have been constructed in opposition to those of the central state, while attempting to involve immigrants closely in subnational belonging and social cohesion. Second, we investigate whether interculturalism is durable during economic and political crises, arguing that intercultural policies did not change following the economic recession of the 2010s. This harmonises with broader interpretations that de-emphasise the role of economic factors in ethnic conflicts. In conclusion we note how the continuing resilience of interculturalism in Catalan policies on immigration contrasts sharply with the rise of xenophobia elsewhere.

INTRODUCTION

Recent debates about diversity in liberal democracies have highlighted a trend in policymakers' vocabularies – they have abandoned the formerly popular concept of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism has become a victim of a broader reconfiguration of power relations and political priorities following 9/11 and the "global war on terror" (Castles, 2011). In fact, it "has become so mired in controversy and is so maligned in public debate that its semantic capital, as it were, has been spent" (Levey, 2012: 223). Within the English-speaking world in particular it is possible to speak about a "coordinated attack on multiculturalism" (Fekete, 2011).

Recent scholarship focusing on integration discourse in sub-state nations has revealed that most stateless nationalist and regionalist parties (SNRPs) have not jumped on the anti-multiculturalism bandwagon (Barker, 2010; Hepburn, 2011; Jeram et al., 2016). SNRPs are important to the politics of multinational states since they form governments in regional parliaments and often wield influence in state-level politics (Lecours, 2012). In Catalonia, the nationalist federation *Convergència i Unió* (CiU) led the regional parliament from 1979 to 2003, returning to government in 2010.[1]

In reality, SNRPs have simultaneously pursued both multicultural policies that provide some additional form of public support for the retention of immigrant cultural identities, and practices and assimilationist policies that incorporate newcomers according to a one-sided process of

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adaptation (Barker, 2015; Hepburn, 2011; Jeram, 2014; Adam, 2013; Adam and Deschouwer, 2016). Catalonia is a case that exemplifies this complexity; the CiU has pursued a model of integration that promotes belonging to the Catalan nation among immigrants while celebrating diversity as a constituting element of the nation.

In this article we explore the sources of this measured balancing act – commonly called 'interculturalism' – contending that it has been re-appropriated by regional nationalists in novel ways which are not necessarily incompatible with multiculturalism. The appropriation of interculturalism by sub-state nationalists is not a rejection of multicultural principles, but a strategic shift in terminology in response to discursive shifts and policy reforms at the state level. Specifically, we argue that the activation of interculturalism at the sub-state level occurred in synchrony with, and in opposition to, the management of diversity by the central state. Moreover, the evocation of interculturalism in the Catalan case has been inspired by its long history in Quebec, another sub-state nation in which elites have an interest in making immigrants into allies in their struggle against the central state.

In the following sections, we direct attention to the dialectic between sub-state and state nationalism in the realm of diversity politics, which constitutes an addendum to analyses of sub-state nationalism that consider the type of nationalism – generally ethnic or civic – as the main factor explaining how sub-state movements respond to 'outsiders'. We therefore suggest that the evolution of diversity management discourse in sub-state nations draws attention to the hollowness of the distinction between multiculturalism and interculturalism as indicators of different approaches to diversity management. Finally, we explore the persistence of interculturalism in the wake of the post-2008 recession, arguing for the primacy of political, rather than economic, factors. In summary, we try to address whether interculturalism can withstand economic and political crises. This question permeates the article and relates to the primacy of political over economic factors. To answer the question, we look at the nature of interculturalism, that is, the origins, development and evolution of interculturalism in a context in which a potential conflict ('immigrants' vs. the 'host society') is transposed to a higher level (Catalonia vs. the central state). We conclude by observing the persistence of interculturalism despite the economic and political crises.

MULTICULTURALISM VERSUS INTERCULTURALISM: A FALSE DICHOTOMY?

Human mobility in the post-war period has increased ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity in liberal democracies, which poses new challenges for states in terms of the socioeconomic and cultural integration of immigrants. Since the 1990s, group-based multiculturalism has become the dominant framework for settlement and citizenship policies in many countries including the Netherlands, Canada, Australia and Sweden (Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2010).[2]

Even though it was invoked as a catch-all solution for problems related to diversity, multiculturalism is actually quite hard to pin down; it is simultaneously used as a sociological description of an objective situation of diversity and as a kind of moral stance on the desirability of cultural diversity (Meer and Modood, 2012: 179). In practical terms, this has meant the introduction of pro-diversity measures such as public recognition for ethnic minority organizations, consideration of minority languages and cultures in education curricula, immigrant-specific social services, religious accommodation and awareness campaigns to inform the public about diversity. Multiculturalism should also be conceived as a broad political response to erstwhile forms of governance linked to a system of centralized nation-states that stressed cultural homogenization and was largely coeval with Europe's modern tragedies (Conversi, 2008; 2012; 2014).

Recently, however, multiculturalism has become a scapegoat for the perceived lack of integration of immigrants across Europe, the USA, and in the settler states of Canada and Australia – despite limited, if any, evidence that policies and practices derived from multiculturalism may have contributed to welfare dependence and segregation of immigrant communities from

mainstream society (Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2010).[3] Meer and Modood (2012) argue there is much worth retaining from multiculturalism and that its main competitor, interculturalism, is barely "an updated version" of multiculturalism. They critically evaluate four points generally made in positive evaluations of interculturalism in contrast with multiculturalism: it promotes more than co-existence, is less "essentialist", is more committed to social cohesion and is critical of illiberal practices. On all points, Meer and Modood are sanguine about the hype surrounding interculturalism, suggesting that its advocates are misinformed about the scope and meaning of multiculturalism. For example, the emphasis on communication between majority and minority cultural groups in interculturalism is contrasted with the "closed" tolerant relationship between groups in multicultural contexts. Classic expositions of multiculturalism, such as Parekh's *Rethinking Multiculturalism* (Parekh, 2000), however, are clear that the value of cultural pluralism stems from the exchanges between cultures, which result in learning and adaption by both societal majorities and minorities. In other words, there is no *ipso facto* obviation of the majority culture and emphasis on segmentation in multiculturalism; all individuals and groups participate in its synthesis and evolution.

According to Kymlicka (2012), the slow and painful death of multiculturalism has buoyed interculturalism. A staunch defender of multicultural rights within a liberal framework, Kymlicka's overture to interculturalism is strictly instrumental: he believes it is a useful rhetorical device for states seeking new ways to "sell" policies related to the accommodation of diversity to publics that now cringe at multiculturalism. In fact, Kymlicka suspects that influential international organizations, such as the Council of Europe and UNESCO, which now wholeheartedly buttress interculturalism – as a paradigm able to negate the negative consequences of both assimilationism and multiculturalism – do so because it is "politically useful to construct a new narrative ... which can better sustain support for progressive agendas and inclusive politics" (2012: 213). Even though policies labelled as multicultural, such as positive discrimination and religious exemptions, have produced positive outcomes for immigrants and host societies alike, Kymlicka laments that fighting for these policies under the heading multiculturalism "may be a political non-starter" because it has become a "poisoned" term (Kymlicka, 2012).

There is no disputing that the concept of multiculturalism has been disgraced. Before the economic crisis descended on Europe in 2008, centre-right politicians were "falling over each other to denounce multiculturalism" (Fekete, 2011).

The resonance of interculturalism among nationalist political elites in Catalonia started well before the current "crisis of multiculturalism" in Europe. Ergo, its utilization cannot be conceived solely as a rejection of multiculturalism, but has stemmed, as we shall see, from different needs.

INTERCULTURALISM IN SUB-STATE NATIONS: *FABRIQUÉ AU QUÉBEC*

Interculturalism has gained traction among parties and intellectuals representing sub-state nationalist movements, especially in its birthplace of Quebec, for a number of reasons. There is a tendency for sub-state nations to perceive that the state utilizes immigration to weaken their claims for self-determination and distinctiveness (Kymlicka, 2011). In Canada, for example, official multiculturalism was viewed in Quebec as a means to reduce the *Québécois* to "just another ethnic group" within the Canadian mosaic. Beginning in the 1980s, various policy documents coming from both the federalist Quebec Liberal Party (PLQ) and sovereignist *Parti Québécois* (PQ) governments shaped the core of Quebec's intercultural policy: "the incorporation of immigrants into the larger political community is a reciprocal endeavour – a 'moral contract' – between the host society and the particular cultural group" (Gagnon and Iacovino, 2007: 98). In other words, unlike Canadian multiculturalism, or at least unlike its popular caricature, interculturalism in Quebec stresses the primacy of the majority community.

The actual content of Quebec's interculturalism, however, would do little to assuage the critics of multiculturalism who lament the lack of cohesion in diverse societies. Consider the official meaning of the intercultural "moral contract" in Quebec:

> A society in which French is the common public language of public life; a democratic society where participation and the contribution of everyone is expected and encouraged; and a pluralist society open to multiple contributions within the limits imposed by the respect for fundamental democratic values.
>
> (Québec, 1990: 15)

Nothing in this official statement encourages immigrants to shed any of their ancestral customs and habits; rather, it gently encourages both the majority community and recent immigrant groups to contribute to the forging of a "forum for empowerment for all citizens" – a common public culture – through communication in the French language. Learning and using French in the public sphere is perfectly compatible with the retention and transmission of other languages within the private sphere and among immigrant collectivities. Carens (1995) has astutely argued that this requirement to learn French is no stronger or assimilationist than that which most nation-states ask of their migrants, and thus criticism of Quebec's demands stems from a baseless rejection of Quebec's distinct national identity within Canada. Furthermore, specific collective identities are expected to persist alongside the common public culture defined by the French language and democratic participation. A gradual reduction in spending on ethnic associations and cultural communities in Quebec did begin in the 1990s, but the money was reoriented towards "intercultural" activities that continued to promote ethnocultural identities because the goal is not only for "Quebec to transform the identities of immigrants but its own as well" (Carens, 2000).

The development of the intercultural framework for immigrant integration in Quebec cannot be disassociated from the relational dimension of its identity as a sub-state nation. Ever since the launch of Canada's official policy of multiculturalism in 1971, Quebec's intercultural framework has been delineated in opposition to federal multiculturalism, even though the policy content of both have always been more similar than has been acknowledged: "federal multiculturalism had always been stronger in rhetoric than in budget, while support for cultural retention in Quebec existed earlier and lasted longer than political leaders suggested" (Barker, 2010: 30). The weight given to interculturalism, then, had more to do with Quebec's struggle to ensure it had its own model of diversity management rather than being subsumed within the multicultural identity pursued by the Canadian state (Bouchard, 2015). In the face of increasing diversity, sub-state nations face a paradox in that an excessive embrace of diversity may in fact undermine their justification for more sovereignty vis-à-vis the state. In Spain, regional governments ruled by strong nationalist parties have experimented with guiding visions for diversity management that borrow from the Quebec toolkit of interculturalism. As we will see, intervention in the immigration field has been as much about nation-building, legitimation and contestation with the Spanish state as an attempt to harness migration towards the ends of economic growth and development – a key reason why the economic crisis has not altered the basic discourse on immigration in Catalonia.

Yet there are obvious differences between the cases of Canada and Spain and, in turn, Quebec and Catalonia. Whereas multiculturalism has long been Canada's official policy (Kymlicka, 1998), it has never been that of Spain. Elements of an intercultural approach have dotted Spain's national integration plans since 1994, but interculturalism only became the explicit foundation of diversity governance in 2007 as part of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party's (PSOE) *Plan Estratégico de Ciudadanía e Integración* (PECI, 2007). Successive governments in Catalonia also began using interculturalism to frame their integration plans in the 1990s, and thus did not follow the lead of the central government.

IMMIGRATION AND INTERCULTURALISM IN SPAIN

Immigration is a relatively new phenomenon in Spain: the "legal" foreign-born population in Spain soared from just under 500,000 in 1995 to about 2 million by 2004, with an additional estimated 1.2 million unauthorized migrants (OECD, 2007: 6-7). Immigration was not politicized domestically in Spain until the anti-immigrant riots in *El Ejido* (Andalusia) in early 2000; events were becoming entangled with the political debate over reform to the Law on Aliens, seen as too permissive by the right-leaning Popular Party (PP). PP linked the *El Ejido* debacle to the PSOE's "excessively open border policy", and this contributed to the PP's majority win in the 2000 general election.[4] PP leader Jose María Aznar made good on his promise and introduced sweeping reforms to the Law on Aliens in late 2000, stripping undocumented immigrants of many rights and making it easy for the Spanish state to detain and deport foreigners.

State decentralization following the transition was primarily a response to sub-state nationalist movements in the Basque Country and Catalonia (Conversi, 2000). Many policy areas relevant to immigrant integration, such as education, housing, social services and language, are, at least partially, shared between the central state and Spain's seventeen ACs (Autonomous Communities). In the Basque Country and Catalonia, immigrant integration intersects with matters of national identity because most newcomers are likely to adopt the majority Castilian Spanish language and culture which may compromise the goals of sub-state nationalism in the long run (Jeram, 2014; Jeram et al., 2016).

A Spanish model of integration first materialized as part of the country's naturalization policy. The first notable state response to diversity in Spain took place in 1990, when applicants for citizenship were required to prove a sufficient degree of integration into Spanish society. Without more specific criteria, state authorities have had much leeway in interpreting whether an immigrant has indeed "integrated" into Spanish society. They have upheld that immigrants should master the Castilian Spanish language and shed cultural differences that prevent integration into the democratic values of Spain. The *modus operandi* of case-by-case decision-making was complemented by an instruction that formalized the interview process in which a representative of the Civil Registry would determine whether an immigrant was indeed in compliance with the integration requirement. The same instruction also states that integration is a proxy for "the adaptation to the culture and way of life of Spanish people" (Carrera, 2009: 265).

Spanish ambivalence towards developing a model of integration was very evident during the tenure of the PP government from 1996–2004. The government orchestrated the GRECO Plan 2001–2004 (*Programa Global de Regulación y Coordinación de la Extranjería e Inmigración*, Global Programme of Regulation and Coordination of Foreigners and Immigration) with a key objective of ensuring that immigrants, especially non-European arrivals, "adapt and integrate into the receiving society" (GRECO, 2000). GRECO aligned with the PP's overall aim to fashion "good immigrants": workers with precise skills required by the Spanish economy and close in culture to Spaniards. A reasonable interpretation of GRECO alongside the party's reforms to the Law on Aliens is that the PP government cultivated the notion that immigrants from certain non-European cultures would not integrate easily into Spanish society. There was no explicit recognition by the PP of Spain as a diverse or pluralistic country.

The PSOE Government that came to power in 2004 made immigration reform part of its core agenda. In addition, a central aspect of its programme was the development of a structured immigrant integration policy with the aim of acknowledging that Spain was indeed a "country of immigration". The *Plan Estratégico de Ciudadanía e Integración* (PECI, Strategic Plan of Citizenship and Integration) designated interculturalism as the style of cultural integration to be adopted in order to achieve a more cohesive Spanish society. Accordingly, interculturalism is designated as one of the main principles that orients the PECI: "interculturalism is the mechanism according to

which persons of different origins and cultures can interact with esteem and in full respect of diversity" (Gobierno de España, 2007: 30).

For our purposes here, two things should be noted about the PECI. First, even though it respects the division of powers between the state and ACs, it explicitly ignores Spain's multinational character; no consideration is afforded to the possibility that ACs with distinctive national identities may need added competencies to manage linguistic integration. Second, the explicit reference to interculturalism as the guiding philosophy for cultural integration at the state level came after the government in Catalonia adopted it in their inaugural guiding frameworks for diversity management in 1993 (Zapata-Barrero, 2007). In this way, the Catalan administration forged its own path, at least at the level of discourse, while immigration-related debates at state level were void of references to the intersection between multinationalism and immigrant-generated diversity.

Although the control of international borders and immigration flows remains nearly universally a nation-state competency, we need to consider policies at the level of the AC, where sub-state nationalists attempt to create an autonomous local policy in opposition to the central state: Catalonia's interest in immigrant integration has been driven, at least in part, by concerns related to identity and language. Proactive integration frameworks aimed at settlement contrasted with the PP's emphasis on immigration as a security issue. In short, interculturalism became a means of promoting Catalan distinctiveness as well as concurrently dealing with a possible challenge to linguistic normalization posed by immigrants, especially Spanish-speaking Latin Americans.

IMMIGRATION AND INTERCULTURALISM IN CATALONIA

In the early 1990s, immigrants began arriving in Catalonia from North Africa, Asia and Latin America. When neither the media nor the public elsewhere in Spain paid much attention to immigration, Catalan academics and politicians started to debate how this new immigration wave would affect Catalan society and identity. All parties in the *Generalitat* petitioned the executive for a plan to manage the social integration of immigrants (Ferrero-Turrión and Pinyol-Jiménez, 2009: 347). The proposal was controversial and did not touch upon policies that were the responsibility of the central state such as entry or naturalization. The resultant Interdepartmental Plan on Immigration 1993–2000 was the first of its kind in Spain. It specified integration without assimilation as a goal over a decade before the Spanish state explicitly did the same with the PECI.

By the early 2000s, Catalan parties with nationalist leanings were calling for a more concerted effort to tailor integration policies that would mesh with the goal of maintaining a distinctive Catalan society. It was a tense period because of the PP reform of the Law on Aliens in 2000 and a number of isolated incidents of xenophobic violence.

The second Interdepartmental Plan (2001–2004) highlighted the identity-related concerns of Catalan policymakers in two ways. First, the experience of intrastate migration in the 1950s and 1960s was set forth as a model for the current phase of foreign immigration because of the success Catalonia had had in integrating Castilian Spaniards into a shared Catalan public culture (Conversi, 2000). The Plan alludes to Catalonia's integrative experience during the previous centuries:

> Catalonia is the result of a permanent integration process of people who came from other places. Now and then, our country has hosted different people, as we have a long integrative tradition. [Catalonia] has been an open country from the Middle Ages to the XVII century and the XX century, Catalonia has had the same response to the migratory movements: an approach for integration and coexistence
>
> (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2001: 9).

Second, the Plan further recognized that the *Generalitat* is a political actor with responsibility to protect the Catalan cultural heritage. Taken together, these two points contribute to a 'Catalan way of integration', which aspires to avoid top-down assimilation. While the Catalan Plan bears some hallmarks of the French assimilationist model, it sharply differs from it by endorsing the active recognition of diversity as a means of bringing about social equality (Ferrero-Turrion and Pinyol-Jiménez 2009: 351). Ergo, no conflict is perceived between retaining the immigrants' home culture and 'feeling Catalan'. The most central concern for the CiU with respect to immigration has remained language, long established as the main pivot of Catalonia's national identity (Conversi, 2000).

"Non-Catalan-speaking pupils" became a primary target of the Service of Catalan Instruction, an institution developed by CiU's cultural wing in the 1980s and 1990s (Arrighi de Casanova, 2012). The CiU-led Government pioneered a programme for the "linguistic incorporation" of immigrant students consisting of extra Catalan classes to prepare students for entry into the regular school system. The use of Catalan among adult-age immigrants was also a concern of the CiU during its tenure in government. CiU's 'CAT' campaign in 2003 accentuated the Catalan language's role in public life; the CiU requested that participating institutions and businesses only speak in Catalan to patrons regardless of their competency level or cultural background. CiU leader Jordi Pujol responded to claims of racism by retorting that the party's aim is to "treat people humanely . . . but the key for Catalonia is successful integration" (Adler, 2003).

According to some authors, the concepts of interculturalism and integration obfuscate an enduring ethnic nationalism at the popular level; for example, some Catalans used to distinguish '*xarnegos'* (offspring of a mixed marriage between a Catalan and an immigrant) and '*catalans, de la ceba'* (born in Catalonia of *pure* Catalan ancestry) (Barrera González, 1985: 157; Miley, 2013: 10; Guia, 2014: 113). CiU has utilized the immigration issue to affirm that the Catalan nation is linguistic and territorial rather than ethnic, a strategy that has also been in place in Quebec for many decades. Although both nationalisms are contested by segments that prefer an ethnic boundary (Edwards, 2004), the commitment to interculturalism by dominant elites has proved to be a useful tool for the consolidation of nationalism as a mainstream ideology in Catalonia and in Quebec.[5]

The post-2003 phase of the immigration debate took place with a non-CiU Catalan government; a tripartite coalition of left-leaning parties took control of the executive and presidency. The coalition broadened the meaning of Catalonia's distinctiveness beyond language. The new immigration framework title, 'Citizenship and Immigration Plan 2005–2008' (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2005), was indicative of the reorientation of the framework by the tripartite government to recognize that immigration is not only an administrative issue but also a political and social one. Following on from this was the creation of the concept of inclusive citizenship, dependent only on permanent settlement in Catalonia and decoupled from formal Spanish citizenship. Inclusive citizenship is defined as "pluralist and civic" and "accommodationist", while Catalan authorities are charged with an active role in "managing areas of contact between new immigrants and local residents" (Ferrero-Turrion and Pinyol-Jiménez 2009: 353). In other words, the goal is to create space for interaction between different cultures, that is, the Catalan and 'others', rather than privilege the dominant one.

The tripartite government reasserted the commitment of the previous administration to identify Catalan as the *lingua franca* in a plural society. This can overcome "the risk of acculturation to the state language [Castilian] and identity by immigrants", and elevate Catalan to the status of the vehicular language of society (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2010: 65). After 2003, under the tripartite government, the justification for the adoption of Catalan amongst immigrants in the public sphere emphasized more socioeconomic integration and mobility (Arrighi de Casanova, 2012). Responsibility for language policy was passed from the Department of Culture to the Department of the President as a "direct response to what the [Catalan Socialists and its governing partners] saw as an unhealthy link between language and culture that had been institutionalized" by the CiU (Crameri, 2008: 74). This, however, certainly did not mean that the tripartite government backed away from the commitments made previously to expand the use of Catalan among immigrants.

The tripartite government was also at the helm when the *Generalitat* approved the Reception Bill (*Llei d'acollida*) in June 2009 (Parlament de Catalunya, 2010). According to Zapata-Barrero (2012: 231), it is a "text without precedent" in Spain that pinpoints Catalan linguistic ability and a basic knowledge of the government, history, politics, economy and culture of Catalonia, including its diversity, as requirements of citizenship. The Spanish Ombudsman successfully challenged it in 2010 on the grounds that the Bill offended the principle of bilingualism stipulated by the Spanish Constitution and Catalan autonomy statute (Zapata-Barrero, 2012: 230) – it considered unconstitutional the use of Catalan as the official language of reception in Catalonia, in opposition to the Law of Reception and Immigration. The term interculturalism has explicitly appeared in governmental documents only sporadically in Catalonia, but the concerted effort to delicately balance the issues of unity and diversity resemble the Quebec model of interculturalism.

Despite these setbacks, intercultural practices and discourses have been maintained. In contrast with several other countries where xenophobia has erupted, interculturalism does not seem to have suffered from the distressing effects of the economic recession – which began in 2008 in the USA, but fully manifested itself in Spain during the 2010s. The next section explores its resilience in spite of the crisis.

NEOLIBERAL RECESSION AND THE RESILIENCE OF INTERCULTURALISM

In Barcelona, as in other European cities, thousands of small shops and micro-businesses have been forced to close down, file bankruptcy or face eviction due to high rents and the lack of tax exemptions; in their place, big brands have moved in (Burgen, 2014). This trend emerged before the recession began in earnest in 2008, but has continued at a more rapid pace ever since (Aroca and Angulo, 2015; 2014). In Catalonia, the economic crisis has heightened social tensions, impelling huge numbers to direct their political sympathies and preferences towards the pro-independence movement (Huszka, 2014). In late 2012, the Catalan government announced the most severe budget cuts in its history.

It is worth remembering that economic factors have traditionally been considered among the key variables in explaining both ethnic conflict and prejudice.[6] However, in political science, the broader relationship between economic factors and ethnic conflict has long been questioned (Connor, 1984) or reframed as a minor partner under the broader roof of "grievance" (Gurr, 1993). As for immigrant policies in general, one cannot assume that an economic crisis will automatically lead to an anti-immigrant backlash or, even, less support for diversity.

While we cannot analyse in detail the impact of the post-2008 economic crisis on integration discourses, it is worth mentioning the existence of a still embryonic literature addressing this causal link (Bello, 2016). In the case of Belgium, recent research shows that electoral competition between, and within, the Walloon and Flemish party systems remains the main driver of integration policy reform, while the adoption of pro-restriction policies has been unaffected (Gsir et al., 2016). Although economic reasons can be deliberately used to endorse immigration policy reform, the causal link between the two is anything but obvious and the factors leading to the spread of prejudice are more complex than econocentric theories would like us to suppose (Stone and Rizova, 2014).

As for the Catalan case, many scholars do not agree that the economic crisis has been the main catalyst for the strong separatist push which surfaced in the 2010s, arguing that relative prosperity – rather than economic decline, poverty or unemployment – plays a decisive role in the capacity and power of nationalist movements to mobilize their supporters. For instance, Sorens (2004: 747) argues that relative regional economic growth promotes secession, while an analysis of survey data conducted in Catalonia during the post-2008 recession identifies the desire to control taxation as a major motivating factor for separatists (Boylan, 2015). Another study confirms that the appeal of

identity politics "is in large part primed by the popular perception of how secure sub-state national identity is against the 'official' state narrative" (Olivieri, 2015: 1610). Even electoral behaviour cannot easily be ascribed to economics alone, as a complex interplay of political, administrative and cultural forces also come into play (Léon and Orriols, 2016).

In general, as we shall see, the economic downturn has not visibly affected immigration policies in Catalonia. Thus, recession has not manifestly influenced public policies and stances, although it has affected the way regional parties have selected their "main issues for debate, and the ways in which these are managed" (Franco-Guillén, 2016).[7]

One of the main grievances expressed in Catalonia is that the region only receives 14 per cent of the Spanish state's regional funding whilst contributing 20 per cent of its tax revenue (Boylan, 2015). To the external observer, this meagre discrepancy may appear to be an insufficient basis for nationalist mobilization; decentralized states routinely practice revenue redistribution to smooth out imbalances that could threaten social and policy cohesion. The caustic nature of the political conflict between Catalonia and Spain concerning revenue imbalances only becomes comprehensible when connected to coincident political developments: for Catalan nationalists, the state has attempted to use the economic crisis to reassert centralized political authority while carrying out its neoliberal agenda. In response to perceptions of political rigidity, financial pressures and the threat of re-centralization, Catalan nationalist elites have capitalized on previously latent pro-independence sentiments, mobilizing them into one of the most powerful secessionist movements in contemporary Europe.

However, while in power, both official nationalisms in Madrid and Barcelona have championed neoliberal globalization: the governments of Mariano Rajoy in Madrid and Artur Mas in Barcelona – the latter from a wealthy industrialist family – have concurrently fomented privatization and approved austerity policies. Indeed, under Artur Mas' leadership (2010–present), privatization of the economy was in full swing before the recession reached its peak. Catalan conservatives usually retort that they embraced austerity because of financial strangulation by Madrid. Thus, responsibility for austerity, budget cuts and neoliberal policies is often shifted onto Madrid, while, as in Quebec, opposition to the central state also involves an ideological dimension of solidarity against neoliberal principles (Gagnon and Lachapelle, 1996).

What are the implications of this for the management of diversity in Catalonia? Although immigration rates grew rapidly in the 2000s, the rise in anti-immigrant sentiment has been muted in political and popular discourse. At the official level, intercultural dialogue and multicultural policies remain entrenched in the discourses of the main nationalist parties – even though a marginal anti-immigrant populist party, *Plataforma Per Catalunya* (PxC), has gained a foothold in some municipalities (Jeram, 2014). The impact of the economic crisis on political support for diversity has not been as strong as it has elsewhere in Europe. Certainly, cutbacks have affected programmes aimed at diversity promotion and the economic empowerment of immigrants, but Catalan nationalists are not systematically leveraging anti-immigrant sentiment to achieve independence.

Just as the economic crisis was beginning to manifest itself, the Government of Catalonia, the main political parties, local government organizations and civil society representatives signed the National Agreement on Immigration (PNI) in 2008 following extensive public consultation. Noted opposition to the agreement came from the two parties vehemently opposed to Catalan nationalism – PP and *Ciutadans* (Citizens). Recently, *Ciutadans* gained attention for its proposals to ban the burqa and strip healthcare rights from immigrants in Catalonia (Baird, 2015). Discussion groups in the lead up to the PNI were focussed on "shared public culture" and "adapting public services to the new demographics", fomenting the understanding of Catalonia as an intercultural society. The PNI set aside €3.88 billion in new spending across the main policy areas, one-third of which is directed to foster integration into a shared public culture based on the principles of two-way acculturation between the host society and immigrants and a differentiated, diverse society. The budgetary allocation for interculturalism in the PNI supplemented the funds earmarked by the

Citizenship and Immigration Plan 2009–2012 for "integration into a shared public culture". Some programmes which fit comfortably under the label "multicultural"– such as increasing the visibility of "new Catalans" in the media and promoting languages from immigrants' home countries – have been allotted extensive budgets (see Generalitat de Catalunya, 2010).

Despite the recession, Catalonia's interculturalism has proved to be a resilient policy platform. The crisis has, however, been, broader than the economic one and has involved mounting tensions with the central government, reflected in a declining legitimacy of the Spanish state in Catalonia since the early 2000s. In short, we suggest that the policy of Catalan interculturalism has proved to be resilient in spite of a double-edged economic and political crisis.

One may question whether the promotion of interculturalism reflects a genuine, widespread sentiment, or is rather an instrumental attempt to draft in immigrants to vote "yes" in a potential referendum on Catalan independence. The lead-up to the public consultation on independence in November 2014 did not heavily feature immigration issues. The clash with Madrid over the legality of the referendum captured the attention of Catalan political elites, but "civil society", under the umbrella of the Catalan National Association (ANC), expressed support for an inclusive nation in an independent Catalan state. Various immigrant associations have lent support to the ANC during a number of impressive mobilizations for self-determination in recent years.

On the other hand, Catalan politics has not been devoid of xenophobic discourse during the recession. The anti-immigrant PxC made significant gains in local, regional and national elections after 2010 (Burchianti and Zapata-Barrero, 2014: 402). Some studies also indicate that Catalans are no more open to religious pluralism than other Spaniards and consistent popular opposition to mosque building has revealed a less benign set of attitudes towards religious diversity (Guia, 2014).

We should recall here what was previously said about immigration as a tool of 'competitive nation-building' and political legitimacy. The primacy of politics indicates the reason why the economic crisis has not, for the most part, had a clear and uniform effect on the way immigration is conceived and managed in Catalonia.

How intercultural nationalism would fare in an independent Catalonia is unclear. According to Serrano, although Catalans of immigrant origin are far less likely to support independence, the gap between ethnic Catalans and immigrants is narrowing (Serrano, 2013). In the short term, political elites with an interest in sovereignty cannot afford to alienate potential nationalists.

CONCLUSION

This article has advanced two interrelated claims. First, we argue that the specific intercultural brand developed by Catalan nationalist parties and institutions has achieved relative success in integrating immigrants. We thus identify this trend by using the term "intercultural nationalism" to encompass the relationship between Catalan immigration policies and nationalism. Second, we show how intercultural nationalism has remained unaffected by economic recession, lingering on as the central discourse of Catalan immigration policies. We thereby connect with the core arguments of other articles in this special issue which, in different ways and from various perspectives, analyse the relationship between immigration policies and economic recession. We do not simply provide an overview of developments in Catalan interculturalism, but go further, setting these against the litmus test of the economic crisis. That is, the main goal has been to demonstrate that intercultural nationalism has remained a constant political practice in Catalan institutions' and parties' relationship with non-Spanish immigrants since it manifested itself in response to the first wave of intercontinental migration.

In Catalonia, the economic recession that began in 2008 has not prompted anti-immigrant populism among mainstream nationalist parties while Catalonia's model of intercultural nationalism

has endured. Instead, frustration with the status quo has been channelled towards the conflict between Catalonia and Madrid. The reasons why the Catalan government has pursued integrative policies and attitudes in the face of the crisis have been identified throughout this article as a mixture of oppositional politics to central government policies and a persistent belief in the integrative capacity of Catalan society. As this is not per se a strictly comparative article, the contrast between Barcelona's and Madrid's immigration policies is taken into account, but cannot be systematically developed.

Like other articles in this special issue, we have also questioned whether the economic crisis has somehow affected not just popular attitudes but Catalan public policies in relation to immigrant-generated diversity. We have highlighted oppositional politics and competitive nation-building as key factors: Catalonia's intercultural nationalism has been sustained instrumentally to oppose the PP and Spanish nationalism. The similarity here is with Quebec's interculturalism as clearly developed in opposition to federal multiculturalism. The Spanish conservative media has launched periodic attacks on Catalan nationalists, accusing them of xenophobia. However, Catalan nationalist parties and organizations, well aware of the importance of co-opting immigrants to their side, have used opportunities provided by the autonomy statute to opt for distinctive integration policies based on the model of interculturalism borrowed from Quebec. Nevertheless, one should be cautious about the possibility that, if the dialectic relationship between Spain and Catalonia were to be broken through secession, the successor Catalan state may reconsider the relationship between majority and minority cultures as has occurred in other historical instances of secession.[8]

NOTES

1. On 18 June 2015, the two component parties of the federation announced they had split over irreconcilable differences regarding the Catalan independence process.
2. It is worth remembering that the defence of multiculturalism often remained at a symbolic level, rather than being translated into specific policies with budgetary considerations (Bloemraad, 2006: 233–252).
3. For an opposite interpretation and counterpoint to this claim, see Koopmans, 2016.
4. For instance, see Calavita (2005); Kunz (2003): 58–83.
5. Immigrants to Catalonia, most notably the writer and journalist Francesc Candel (1925–2007), have stressed the virtues of this language-focussed civic nationalism.
6. As with the Self-Interest Model and the Theory of the Perceived Group Threat, both described in this special issue (Bello, 2016).
7. Another study investigating the effects of the economic environment on attitudes towards out-groups found mixed results (Rodon and Franco-Guillén, 2014).
8. One of the most notorious being the creation of the 'erased' category in post-independence Slovenia (Mandelc and Ucakar, 2011; Blitz, 2014: ch. 8).

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