The limits to shaping diversity as public culture: Permanent festivities in Barcelona

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ABSTRACT

In spite of the existence of an extensive debate on cultural policies on the one hand, and on local diversity policies on the other hand, there are still few studies dealing directly with this nexus. This emerging research trend will be discussed in the context of Barcelona and through the analysis of a specific cultural policy field: the planning of permanent festivities.

After overviewing its migration history and after presenting the theoretical framework and methodology, this article frames Barcelona’s general cultural policy and intercultural policy patterns, arguing that the Catalan capital is really at a very initial stage of connecting diversity with cultural policy. After that, I will defend the argument that, in spite of recognising diversity, the analysis of Barcelona’s permanent festivities shows that there are also some limits to the development of this connection, due primarily to a lack of democratization of culture. Interviews and a discussion group confirm this empirical diagnosis. The argument I want to put forward is that this lack of participation of immigrants in cultural planning and diversity promotion is probably due to the fact that the two departments in the city represent, indeed, two approaches toward the question of how to promote the nexus between culture and diversity, and thus they are still working separately. The department of culture still has an elitist focus, centred on a culture of excellence, while the immigration department has a more social focus on cultural diversity.

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Introduction: Cultural Policies and the diversity nexus in cities: An emerging debate

“One of the defining factors that will determine, over coming years, which cities flourish and which decline will be the extent to which they allow their diversity to be their asset or their handicap. Whilst national and supra-national bodies will continue to wield an influence, it will increasingly be the choices that cities themselves make which will seal their future” (Council of Europe, 2008; 22). This statement summarises the current European view within which we will frame this article. It comes from one of the founding documents of the Intercultural Cities Network, a joint programme of the Council of Europe and the European Commission, aimed at promoting an intercultural lens for the main city policy-makers (Interculturalcities programme, 2008). Within immigration studies, cities are now recognised as active agents, drawing their own key questions and answers to challenges related to accommodating diversity (Borkert, Bosswick, Heckmann, & Lüken-Klaßen, 2007; Camponio & Borkert, 2010; Good, 2009; Lüken-Klaßen & Heckmann, 2010; Penninx, Kraal, Martiniello, & Vertovec, 2004). This article seeks to analyze a public policy that up until now has been neglected from the debate on the local management of immigration-related diversity: cultural policies.

In spite of the existence of a large debate on cultural policies on the one hand, and on local diversity policies on the other, there are still few references dealing directly with the nexus of the two (see, among others, the seminal works of Baeker, 2002; Baeker & Cardinal, 2001; Bennett, 2001; Cardinal, 1998; Ghilardi, 2001; Skot-Hansen, 2002). This emergent research trend will be discussed in the context of Barcelona and through the analysis of a specific cultural policy field: planning permanent festivities.

Barcelona is largely the result of past migrations. After overviewing its migration history and after presenting the theoretical framework and methodology, this article frames Barcelona’s general cultural policy and intercultural policy patterns, arguing that the Catalan capital is really at a very initial stage of connecting diversity with cultural policy. After that, I will defend the argument that, in spite of recognising diversity, the analysis of Barcelona’s permanent festivities shows there are also some limits to the development of this connection, due primarily to a lack of democratization of culture. Interviews and a discussion group confirm
this empirical diagnosis. The argument I want to put forward is that this lack of participation of immigrants in cultural planning and diversity promotion is probably due to the fact that the two departments in the city represent, indeed, two approaches toward promoting the nexus between culture and diversity, and thus they are still working separately. The department of culture still has an elitist focus, centred on a culture of excellence, while the immigration department has a more social focus on cultural diversity.

Context and theoretical framework

Barcelona has a long tradition of immigrant reception over the last century. Several migratory waves have reached the capital of Catalonia since the beginning of the 20th century. After the Spanish Civil War (in the 1940s and 1950s), a great number of individuals came to Barcelona from the rest of Spain to escape unemployment. In the 1960s, Barcelona continued receiving immigrants from inside (namely, from Andalusia and Extremadura). However, the most recent migration flow of the two last decades of the previous century has been characterised by some new specificities because immigration came from outside. Now, the beginning of the 21st century is characterised by a huge increase in foreign population. In January 2001, only 4.9% (74,019) of the total population was represented by foreigners. Three years later, in 2004, they had almost tripled to 12.8% (202,489). And in 2010, immigrants living in Barcelona had increased up to 17.6% (284,832). Probably the most important feature of this last wave is the great diversity of nationalities and backgrounds (immigrants from Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru, China, Morocco, Senegal, and Pakistan among being the most numerous), and the fact that most of them are young (the average age being 33 years old in 2013, with around 22% under 24, and almost 49% between 25 and 49 years old). This change in migratory patterns, and the fact that most are today second-generation (immigrants or Spanish citizens with an immigrant background), invites the city council to consolidate the incorporation of the diversity dimension into its cultural policy agenda.

This article assumes a perspective that is the result of a key premise developed by the diversity advantage debate, coming primarily from urban and management studies (see, among others, Blommaert & Verschueren, 1998; Bloomfield & Bianchini, 2004; Festenstein, 2005; Gundara & Jacobs, 2000; Hussain, Law, & Haq, 2006; Page, 2007; Sze & Powell, 2004; Wood & Landry, 2008; Zachary, 2003; Zapata-Barrero, 2013), and is also assumed for the concept of culture that should be promoted through an intercultural strategy, a civic culture. That is, it should be assumed that diversity is itself a culture that should be promoted through an intercultural strategy, influencing knowledge construction and prejudice reduction (Zapata-Barrero, 2011b, p.8) and even serving as a tool to reduce the space of xenophobic discourses (Zapata-Barrero, 2011).

Sources, methodology and main argument

Using the available information from the current practices of Barcelona’s City Council regarding permanent festivities, the purpose of this article is to test the interpretative function of the “culture of diversity” notion for understanding the process of incorporating diversity into cultural policies in Barcelona. In this way, the article also contributes to a growing concern for the democratisation of culture in diversity settings. I will focus on the promotion and the structural and institutional preconditions for fostering a culture of diversity. To complete the task of interpretation, I will follow a multidimensional framework with three key standards, coming from the aforementioned literature:

1. Diversity recognition: used to understand the presence of diversity as a frame of reference and a driver of permanent festivities. This assumes the incorporation of different categories of diversity (culture, language, religion, etc.) in any cultural promotion.
2. Diversity participation: used to see if immigrants have the means to participate in cultural planning and in the implementation of permanent festivities.
3. Diversity management: used to analyse whether there is a structural framework in the city that mirrors the conceptual nexus between cultural policy and immigrant-related diversity policies.

Taking these three standards as drivers for the interpretation of documents and interviews, we will challenge the council’s sole concern for an elitist focus on a so-called “culture of excellence”. These three standards also follow the premise that collaboration and institutional co-operation are more appropriate ways to gain interaction and cultural exchange than dialogue.

In order to assess the culture/diversity nexus following these three standards, we have first analysed the foundational documents drafted by the Culture Institute of Barcelona (ICUB) and the immigration programmes framing the policies of the immigration department. The basic reading of these documents has been twofold: first,

3 Departament de Estadística de Barcelona (2013).

we identify how the concept of diversity is incorporated and categorized into policy objectives (employing the first standard of diversity recognition); second, we identify common initiatives and institutional links between cultural policy and immigration policy, which are developed within different departments in the city council (using the third standard of diversity management). This analysis has also been the basis for the triangulation of the first findings from the three semi-structured interviews that we have carried out with top officers from each of the separate departments. The second standard (diversity participation) has also been a driver for interpreting interviews, which has been contrasted with a discussion group with five leading immigrant communities. While the selection of the top officers is obviously justified by their status and function, the selection of the immigrant communities has followed these basic criteria: (a) their proven influence on immigration policymaking and their long trajectory in Barcelona’s associative network; (b) their status as founding members of the consultative city council; (c) their ethnic representativeness and social function. For both the interviews and the discussion group we have formulated common starting questions covering two levels of evaluative analysis: descriptive (How do you evaluate the incorporation of diversity within the permanent festivities?) and prescriptive (What do you think has to be done to promote a culture of diversity in general, and within permanent festivities in particular?). From an interpretative point of view, we have identified and compared both sets of answers coming from two different profiles of policymakers, one coming from immigration policy and one coming from cultural policy. This first comparison allows us to test the third standard (diversity management), evincing that the two departments have no connection, which is also proved in their own foundational documents. These documents are without any clear reference to each other or to carrying out common projects with a distinct, common purpose of promoting a culture of diversity. The second comparison was made between the answers given by policymakers and those coming from immigrant associations in the discussion group (basically employing the second standard, diversity participation). In this case, the lack of participation or incorporation of immigrants into cultural policy design is clearly proved. The argument I will then infer, by connecting the two findings, is that however diversity is recognised (meeting the first standard), the lack of participation of immigrants in cultural planning and diversity promotion (violating the second standard) is probably due to the fact that the two departments in the city represent, indeed, two approaches toward the promotion of the nexus between culture and diversity, and thus they are still working separately (violating the third standard). There is a need, then, to connect these two foci of diversity policy – the cultural and social strands. As I will defend in my conclusion, the democratization of culture can meet precisely this need.

General city cultural and intercultural policy patterns: the initial stage

Since 1997, the city of Barcelona has been applying the first standard of diversity recognition to its basic institutional documents, and with this has been following a strategy of intercultural policy. As a result, Barcelona is now recognised as an intercultural city and is ranked sixth in the Intercultural Cities Index. This focus is entirely managed by the immigration department, separate from the ICUB, which is in charge of designing and implementing cultural policies.

The ICUB “facilitates the emergence and consolidation of numerous private initiative cultural platforms and projects throughout the city” (http://barcelonacultura.bcn.cat/en/culture-institute). Therefore, promoting the cultural and artistic creativity of those individuals as part of the Barcelonan cultural scene makes way for all types of cultural expressions, regardless of origin or cultural background. In spite of being labelled “Barcelona, metrópoli de convivència” (“Barcelona, metropolis of living together”) in the 1999 Strategic Plan for the cultural sector, it was not until 2004 that diversity was introduced as a theoretical principle framing cultural policies. Agenda 21 for Culture, approved on 8 May 2004 and endorsed by the Barcelona City Council, constitutes an important step forward in the implementation of future cultural policies regarding diversity. The democratization of culture appears to be a goal for the ICUB. In order to attain Agenda 21’s principles enshrined in the ICUB’s Strategic Plan, a long-term programme was proposed based on intercultural exchange and language-learning. The new 2006 Strategic Plan acknowledges diversity completely, both the diversity of cultural agents and the diversity of ethnic and cultural groups (see the evolution in Zapata-Barrero, 2010a; also in Mascarell, 2006, and Martí & Giner, 2008).

A key element was the establishment of 2008 as the “Year of Intercultural Dialogue” by the city council and the drafting of the “Intercultural Dialogue Programme” (2008). The Programme was launched by the ICUB with the collaboration of the Commissioner for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue (with respect to the third standard, this is the first and only joint action between the two departments.). The Year of Intercultural Dialogue had intercultural dialogue and the promotion of cultural diversity as its goals. This means that the city of Barcelona entered into a new wave of its culture of diversity, wherein the city council promotes the rights of different cultural communities to present and practise their cultures in public spaces of the city.

In this framework, the ICUB put forward a set of measures to be incorporated in the Municipal Action Plan for 2008–2011 (PAM 2008–2011), facilitating the possibility for all citizens to practice and participate in cultural events, along with strengthening dialogue in the creation, broadcasting and exhibition of culture in Barcelona. This last phase yielded another important document from the immigration department: the Barcelona Interculturality Plan (2010). This is a specific city council plan for managing the challenges that arise from the coexistence of diversity. Its aim was to set out a road map in order to apply intercultural policies, following three basic principles: the principle of equality, the principle of recognising diversity, and the principle of positive interaction. Barcelona City Council’s concern was to turn cultural diversity into creativity, innovation, dialogue, knowledge and artistic language. Barcelona does not want simply to contemplate different cultural expressions, but rather to exploit the opportunities offered by cultural diversity. This also includes the capacity that the city has to enable immigrants who are artists to participate in the elaboration of the city’s cultural offerings. Commissioner de Torres stated in his interview that Barcelona must concentrate its efforts on giving cultural access to all its citizens and on nourishing all kinds of cultural expressions. This social focus contrasts with the elitist attitude that has always characterised the cultural policy departments.

Apart from cultural enrichment, social cohesion and a feeling of belonging are two more goals that the city of Barcelona seeks to attain through the intercultural approach. In terms of cultural policies, Barcelona is giving an added value to cultural activities that foster

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5 These were held between March and April 2011, on an average of 1.5 h each. Mr. Esteve Caramés, Advisor Head Cultural Policies of ICUB. Ms. Marta Almirall, Director of the Department of Festivities and Traditions (ICUB), and Mr. Daniel de Torres, Commissioner for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue of Barcelona’s City Council.

6 These were Moroccan, Filipino, Latin American, one immigration sector of a trade union, and one representative of an African group. The Asian and Chinese groups were invited, but they never answered our call.

7 See all the Index results at: http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/culture/cities/index/default_en.asp.

positive interaction among different communities. The Barcelona City Council is prioritizing all those projects created to establish bridges and to encourage dialogue, knowledge construction and prejudice reduction (see, for instance, the anti-rumour strategy to stop topics and to dismantle rumours about immigrants and immigration by developing intercultural activities, including social theatre, information campaigns, roundtables, the distribution of anti-rumour materials – namely, comics – and documentaries, the training of anti-rumour agents, etc., www.bcnantirumors.cat). Contact among different people is perceived as capital for community cohesion (Cantle, 2012; Zapata-Barrero, 2013).

Public space is perceived as a core element in creating cultural exchange and interaction among citizens. It is seen as an ally of interculturalism because it enables contact between different communities in a very natural way, almost incidentally. The city of Barcelona is not interested in the promotion of cultural policies that divide the public or that consider communities separately. The focus is placed mainly on promoting means of contact among different people and communities. It is at this point that we can analyse the way cultural institutions and immigrant communities interact. Interviewees shared the assertion that the degree of interaction and collaboration greatly depends on the capacity of immigrant communities to be organised in associations. The role of the associative leaders is extremely important for the creation of cultural activities with a focus on intercultural exchange. Considering the Chinese and Moroccan communities, for instance, there have been few opportunities to carry out cultural projects that stress the importance of openness towards the rest of the populace. This is why the Barcelona City Council decided only recently to participate in the celebration of Chinese New Year. The aim was to open this celebration to the rest of citizens and to establish contact with the Chinese community.

Facilitating intercultural exchange is a concern that pertains to culture but that is not accommodated by the ICUB’s objectives. To bridge the gap, a space called Espai Avinyó – Llengua i Cultura (Avinyó Area – Language and Culture) has recently been opened. This new space intends to be a new source of interculturality in Barcelona, combining diversity and culture. A programme of intercultural activities is promoted for the whole citizenship. Exhibitions are carried out with the aim of showing the culture, history and festivities of Barcelona. As the Commissioner for Immigration told us when asked about links with cultural policy managers, these activities stemmed from the necessity of including an array of artists and cultural expressions that would have not been eligible under ICUB’s high-quality standards. But this is done without ICUB’s engagement or participation. Thus, not only in programmes but also in institutional policy practices, there is evidence of a lack of connection between the department in charge of cultural policy and the one designing intercultural strategy, showing a deficit concerning by the third standard of diversity management.

Permanent festivities and diversity: connecting people from diverse backgrounds

In this section, in order to assess how Barcelona is incorporating diversity, we reflect on a relevant policy area: the celebration of permanent yearly festivities. We are interested in how Barcelona focuses in general on permanent festivities and at what moment, as well as how this policy field incorporates recognition of diversity (standard 1), whether immigrants participate (standard 2), and at what policy level (planning or implementation).

We will conclude that, in spite of a great effort to connect cultural policies to the diverse immigrant reality of the city of Barcelona, there are certain limits, which are due to the difficulty the ICUB has in moving from an elitist to a democratised approach toward culture.

Barcelona has always had multiple festivities embedded in its traditions, both with religious and cultural backgrounds. Public spaces are the areas where they take place. There is a vast literature showing how public spaces are places where people form new or deep relationships with people from other cultures, and that most of the time they are interclass and intergenerational. Permanent festivities are probably the most prominent cultural policy encouraging the devotion of public space to the promotion of sociability, cohesion, co-operation, and a sense of community (Bagwell, Evans, Witting, & Worpole, 2012; Carr, Francis, Rivlin, & Stone, 1993; Dines, Cattell, Gesler, & Curtis, 2006; Francis, Corti, Wood, & Knuiman, 2012).

Through interviews and discussion groups I have identified the five best practices shared by all.

The Three Kings Cavalcade is a festivity held the evening of 5 January, celebrating the arrival of the Three Wise Men from the East. It is a festivity that thrives on Barcelona’s diversity, and it has evolved into a festivity that promotes diversity. Since 2005 the Cavalcade has renewed both its contents and participants and has actively applied the practical principle of diversity by reflecting the legend of the Three Kings with a modern view that integrates immigrant collectives into this celebration. The Cavalcade has been conceived since 2005 around a discourse that links the Three Kings’ geographical origin with each of the civilisations that supposedly constituted the Ancient World: the White King (Median, Arab cultures), the Blond King (Assam, Asian cultures) and the Black King (Nubia, black African cultures). The traditional Cavalcade has introduced an innovative element to this practice. This new diversity approach of the Cavalcade has given not only a more diverse image of this traditional festivity, but it has also incorporated some immigrants groups into the organisation of the Cavalcade.

Ramadan Nights was an initiative carried out in 2008, under the International Year of Intercultural Exchange, and became part of Mercè’s activities programme. The coincidence of the city’s traditional festivity with this important moment in the calendar of Muslims produced the interaction of different cultural and social agents. This inclusion sought to portray Muslim culture and to present it to the rest of the citizenship through music, workshops, food and reflections.

Carnival constitutes one of the occasions where different communities mingle. The Festivities and Traditions Department calls for citizens to join the parade and to dress up and participate in the awards that the department gives with the aim of promoting artistic creation and civic participation. Some specific communities – namely, Latin Americans – engage in this celebration. In fact, their participation represents around 40% of the total. Latin American communities are feeding the Carnival’s parade, and the context in which it occurs allows for cultural interaction.

The Grec Festival is a renowned festival in Europe that has taken place since 1976. It serves two purposes: on the one hand, to show local productions and creations by Catalan artists, and on the other, to attract contemporary foreign art. An interesting characteristic of this festival is that since 2009, Barcelona’s Grec Festival has been collaborating with festivals from other Mediterranean cities like Istanbul. These cities are under the Kadmos network, which has the aim of organising joint projects to produce shows, to promote artists, to exchange professional experiences and to share so-

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10 The Grec Festival of Barcelona is the city’s main annual celebration, with theatre, dance, music, circus and other stage arts. This festival has become the most outstanding summer cultural attraction in Barcelona, as well as a key reference on the European festival calendar, http://grec.bcn.cat/en [18 November 2013].
cial reflections that are common to the Mediterranean region.

The Ciutat Convidada (Invited City) is an initiative promoted under the festivity of La Mercè. This practice brings foreign artists from one country to the festivity. These artists are part of the contemporary artistic offering of the festivity’s programme, together with the rest of the artists. The invited artists represent contemporary culture from their country. The Festivities and Traditions Department chooses the Invited City based on two criteria. The first is to take into account the large immigration communities living in Barcelona (for example, in 2008 the invited city was Quito). The second is to foster cultural exchange with another city (the 2012 invited city was Montréal). A special feature of this practice is that invited artists are integrated with local artists. These artists are not placed on one special stage for the Invited City, but are rather placed within each cultural section (e.g., circus, dance). In fact, invited artists and local artists share the shows so that they can interact and establish professional relationships. This is important, since this type of practice fosters interaction between artists of two or more nationalities and yields future collaborations among them, beyond the festivity of La Mercè.

What has also characterised Barcelona in recent years is its ability to draw artists from all over the world to the city. This advantageous feature, along with the late arrival of immigrants, has encouraged the ICUB to take up a strategic policy that benefits from all the diverse expressions encountered in the city. The reviewed Strategic Plan (i.e., New Accents 2006) already reflects the city’s adherence to Agenda 21 for Culture and its principles. This is key, since Agenda 21 for Culture acknowledges the participation of people with cultures from immigration. Another main point of departure towards a culture of diversity is the 2008 International Year of Intercultural Exchange. This event was the framework within which conceptual and programmatic bases of intercultural exchange were laid down (New Accents 2006). As Zapata-Barrero (2010b, p. 9) states, “in view of the new diversity forms according to origin, religion, language and different cultural practices, ICUB wants to manage and incorporate all these culturally different perspectives and practices within its strategic policy.”

First steps...first assessments

ICUB’s focus is the inclusion in their programme of the best artistic and cultural expressions. In its search for excellence, culturally diverse expressions are sought too, but without taking the opportunity to democratise culture. This is something the Advisor on Cultural Policies of the ICUB made very clear in his interview. He stated that Barcelona has socially and culturally changed in the last years. Therefore, cultural policies inevitably had to change. Thus, there is awareness that the new social and cultural dynamics due to immigration have an impact on both the demand on cultural programmes and on the raw material that cultural institutions have available to shape this cultural demand. In words of Mr. Caramés: “With the incorporation of this diversity, the city’s cultural DNA has changed and we have to work with this new DNA.” However, he affirmed that Barcelona’s cultural policies have a general scope. Activities and cultural programmes are not specifically addressed to one single community, but to the whole citizenship. The ICUB does not believe they have to organise specific activities for some groups, and they work autonomously within the city council, without any connection with the department managing immigration.

This calls our attention to an important element related to the timeframe of intercultural policies. The incorporation of diversity in the activities programmed under “Festivities and Traditions” has no expiration date. The ICUB believes that their response towards diversity cannot be constructed as a response to immigrating, which might vanish or disappear within some years. Interviews with the two top cultural policy officers confirm diversity recognition and even go a step forward in assuming that diversity dynamics will make up Barcelona’s heritage in the future. Thus, the ICUB has a long-term perspective when they recognise diversity in the design of cultural policies. This is partly one of the internal reasons why it refuses to propose specific activities addressed to immigrants. The Advisor on Cultural Policies wants to emphasise the fact that ICUB does not need a specific department in charge of interculturality, either, to create concrete links with the immigration department.

Understanding diversity is the reason why permanent festivities like the Grec Festival or La Mercè include in their programmes contemporary foreign art. We have briefly introduced the essence of the Grec Festival and the new diversity perspective included by the Mercè Festival with the practice of the Invited City. In fact, the Invited City represents the only occasion where a specific culture is sought out with the idea of intercultural exchange. The purpose of searching for the most contemporary cultural expressions of other countries offers an opportunity to elucidate out-dated myths about foreign cultures. The rationale behind such a practice is that prejudice reduction is a necessary step towards the knowledge construction of a culture of diversity. However, diversity creates room for all kinds of cultural expressions, from the traditional to the most modern. An example of this was that very old, traditional dances from Turkey did not have space in the organisation of Mercè’s programme due to the fact that the ICUB is searching for contemporary art. This is why, when Barcelona invited Dakar in 2010 or Istanbul in 2009 as the Mercè’s Invited City, Senegalese or Turkish artists represented nothing but contemporary Senegalese or Turkish art. Thus, ICUB is certainly enriching their programmes with cultural diversity, and the Invited City is an excellent example, but this is done without any participation from the immigration department or the immigrant communities living in Barcelona (thus failing to meet Standards 2 and 3). The focus continues to rely on an elitist understanding of the industry of culture.

Ms. Almirall, in charge of the Festivities and Traditions Department, is very positive about the interactions that the Invited City yields among the visiting and local artists. This focus is evident when she claims that this practice has produced co-productions between Catalan groups and foreign groups, as well as establishing a professional relationship between the ICUB and these foreign artists that is maintained over the years, thus meeting diversity participation (Standard 2).

In spite of the fact that the ICUB does not target any specific immigrant group, it does have contact with some immigrant community representatives, but these are institutional representatives, rather than those of the social immigrant community. The Asian House, which does not only represent Chinese people, is a formal institution with whom the ICUB interacts to co-promote the Asian Festival. The Ramadan Nights, which in 2008 were incorporated into the programme of the Mercè Festival, were supposed to be an excellent opportunity to address the Muslim community of Barcelona, as well. This diversity practice was the product of the co-occurrence of the celebration of the Mercè Festival and the Ramadan month for Muslims on the calendar. The ICUB took the advantage of such a coincidence to create common public spaces in the Mercè’s context, but this initiative could only be carried out that year. After that, this cultural event ceased to be managed by ICUB, but is managed separately by the immigration department, showing again there is a lack of exchange or joint action (standard 3).

An important element for ICUB is that diversity in the city gives an excellent opportunity for cultural officers to innovate and revitalize cultural programmes. However, immigrant artists encounter difficulties in reaching the Festivities and Traditions Department,
even though this department opens its doors to anyone with an interesting artistic proposal. In fact, this is a criticism that appeared in the discussion group when immigrant associations stated that the Invited City programme did not sufficiently count on foreign artists already living in Barcelona. Associations regard their role in the celebration of permanent festivities as being a mere instrument, helpful in broadcasting ICUB activities among immigrants, but not really relevant in shaping cultural policy. Immigrant associations do not perceive themselves as being part of the cultural machinery because occasional collaborations do not result in regular professional relationships. Furthermore, as far as diversity is concerned, these associations see their communities as being represented peripherally in festivities like the Three Kings Cavalcade. Arguments such as the search for exoticism were described to exemplify the way they perceived Barcelona to be incorporating diversity into its permanent festivities.

An important part of the city’s popular parties would be those that belong to the cultures of foreign communities. This is the case for the Independence Day celebrations of South American groups, for religious celebrations like the month of Ramadan for Muslims and for Chinese New Year. All these celebrations are not part of the Barcelona permanent festivities calendar. In fact, the Festivities and Traditions Department does not include the commemoration of these special dates. In the interview held with the Commissioner for Immigration, he stated that some celebrations like the parties for the Independence Day of a country fell under the responsibilities of the Institutional Relations of Barcelona City Council. From the city council’s perspective, it is of paramount importance to support these festivities institutionally and to provide some logistics. For this reason, the Commissioner believes that all communities should understand that the city council approves all types of celebrations. In this sense, it is interesting to reproduce what Fati ma Ahmed, representing the Ibn Batuta Association (dedicated to promoting Moroccan culture and to aiding the integration of Moroccans in Barcelona) stated about the celebration of certain religious festivities. Ms. Ahmed believed that some of these immigrants’ parties should be attended by the city council in order to explain to the rest of the citizenship the background of certain religious celebrations that have a strong cultural component. She offered as an example of this reflection the celebration of a traditional Shia-Muslim festivity in which men flagellate themselves. Ms. Ahmed believes it is the city council’s duty to help to illuminate to the rest of the citizenship some extreme practices that might garner rejection against the community practising it. As far as foreign traditional festivities are concerned, the representation of one of the most relevant immigrant associations was not satisfied with the city council’s approach.

Concluding remarks: further steps towards a culture of diversity in Barcelona

Following the three key standards of the interpretative framework, the premise is that diversity is already a policy practice that defines Barcelona’s public culture (meeting standard 1: diversity recognition). However, the challenge that remains – regarding how to create institutional bridges between the social and elitist focuses of culture – is perhaps the most important question in this stage of the diversity process in Barcelona. The analysis of permanent festivities has offered an appropriate arena for examining how the connection between cultural policy and diversity is being made in Barcelona. However, as was shown through a reading of standard 3 (diversity management), these two policies are managed by two separate departments, thus suggesting that this connection has some shortcomings in practice. This is basically due to a lack of a democratisation of culture in Barcelona. One of the basic conclusions that can be derived from this analysis is that there is no strategic collaboration between immigrant communities and cultural institutions (standard 2: diversity participation), as was recognised by all the interviewees and as was shown through the analysis of best practices and through a comparison to policy programmes. The role of immigrants living in Barcelona in the implementation of cultural policy is important to take into account, since they represent an aggregate of individuals from different countries that are the bearers of cultural diversity. These immigrant communities can certainly orient cultural policies to accommodate diversity and to shape some of the programmes that Barcelona is already carrying out in the cultural field. At this point, it also becomes apparent that the main concerns of Barcelona’s government and immigrants alike (particularly the more recent ones) centre around the more social aspects of integration, particularly in the realms of education, employment, health and housing; therefore, the management of diversity is likely to be led by a department with a social policy focus. Nonetheless, we should stress the fact that the idea of a culture of diversity is not merely a tool that is feasible after achieving a degree of social integration in the abovementioned realms, but is moreover an important aspect of the development of community cohesion. In practice, political rights, in the sense of immigrants having the power to vote, may be the force that tends to drive change in the realm of cultural provision, putting equality and diversity at the centre of policy-making, service delivery and employment practices. However, it is the role of power as culturally and symbolically created – and constantly re-legitimised through the interplay of agency and structure – that may become increasingly relevant in diverse settings such as Barcelona. Although in one sense, understanding cultural provision for new immigrants through the lens of social class may seem a retrograde move, it seems clear that the elitist focus of Barcelona’s City Council would require such a perspective. However, since class is dynamic and circulates through symbolic and cultural forms as much as through economic inequalities, this social class dimension becomes an explanatory factor for understanding the tension found in the nexus between culture and diversity, as the Barcelona case study on permanent festivities has shown.

A cultural policy that defines diversity as a collective good must guarantee that all citizens will have access to diverse cultural expressions. One of the criticisms that immigrant communities make regarding the Barcelona City Council and its cultural institutions is that they are being used as a tool. They understand that the role cultural institutions play is based on the necessity of gaining support and credibility from the immigrant population, as well as using their organisations to broadcast the city council’s activities that promote diversity. If we furthermore admitted immigrants to be bearers of culture, we might find a new source of inspiration that would trigger the reinvention of Catalan culture. This may be the driving force that a culture of diversity needs to clarify through further research.

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