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HOW NEWCOMERS ARE INVOLVED IN  
THE CULTURAL MAINSTREAM  
ASSOCIATIONS IN CATALONIA

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### ***Abstract***

This article introduces the principal findings of research on how mainstream cultural associations in Catalonia are implementing policy for the incorporation of immigrants. During the last ten years, some inclusionary programmes have been performed in this field, most of them by the *Coordinadora de Colles Castelleres de Catalunya* (Human Towers Main Board). The research herein was developed from the analysis of both actors involved in this field: mainstream cultural associations; and immigrants themselves.

This methodology allows us to study how motivations, misconceptions and prejudices play a role. Therefore, the objective of the research is to show not the quantitative results of this policy of incorporation, but the factors involved in it, and the consequences for migrant participation in the cultural associations. The initiative of associations in this field is very prominent, with a very open strategy of incorporation of the so-named “new Catalans”. But, is the result of this policy an intercultural framework? Or is it just a strategy to reinforce Catalan identity through an assimilation process?

### ***Keywords***

Associations, Human Towers, Cultural heritage, Immigration, Social Capital, Catalonia

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## **Introduction: cultural associations as a mainstream in Catalonia**

A main premise of this research is the important role of the cultural associations in the development of traditional culture in Catalonia. During the process of modernization and industrialization of Catalan society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century many groups and organizations emerged around the traditional cultural roots with a variety of expressions. According to Dolors Marín Silvestre (2005), an important part of the cultural associations has been constituted in Catalonia among the working class. They organized their leisure time through cultural and sports organizations located in the neighbourhoods of the industrial cities. While the *bourgeoisie* created their own cultural circles, like opera and halls, the working class developed a grass-roots association, providing to the people self-instructions, leisure activities, and spaces of freedom and social cooperation. This kind of social movement was known in Catalonia as ‘associationism’, as it is still called today.

From this associationism, several cultural expressions emerged: choral groups call Clavé choirs; hikers’ associations; athenaeums; amateur theatre groups, etc. As Joan Soler Amigó said (2008), these kinds of workers’ associations were strongly influenced by the French Revolution and the ideas from the Enlightenment. These headquarters were sustained only with the donations by the associated members and many of them still exist, even though they had to overcome the prohibitions of the Franco dictatorship.

As stated by Solé i Sabaté (1994), the Catalan language, Catalan cultural expressions and the associative structure of the labor movement were constantly persecuted during the Franco regime. A political system that had a totalitarian philosophy in which everything was confused with a unitary vision of Spain, and where cultural, linguistic, or national diversity were considered seditious and thus deserving of destruction. Solé i Sabaté establishes a periodization of this linguistic, cultural, and social repression by the Franco regime. The first phase of general violence (1939-1944), which aims to replace a culture based on the physical disappearance of the symbols and people who identify with the Catalanity. It is a period of great violence against any public expression of language and culture.

Any demonstration in Catalan is persecuted, prohibited, and penalized. A second phase of assimilation (up to 1947), which extends to all the Spanish cultural, political, and social expression. Finally, the emergence of a culture expressed in Spanish that seeks an audience that does not know its own language and also some public projection

of Catalan cultural world (folklore) (until 1951). From 1951, the evolution of the regime shows a greater condescension toward the Catalan cultural world. But there is a constant: all that could be mass culture was banned in Catalan. Often local authorities followed the orders of repression in an inquisitorial way. Many of these authorities had great phobia to everything listed as Catalan culture. But keep in mind that depending on the degree of collaboration, the subordination to Francoist ideology by local authorities, comprised mainly by Catalans, and the idiosyncrasies of each population, tone and persecution were different.

Another point was the local celebrations linked to the local patrons. Many cultural and traditional expressions were born as a result of these celebrations, some of them with a long tradition: giants, *grallers*, devils, *trabucaires*, human towers, *sardanes*, and other forms of cultural expression. Some of these expressions, like the *Sardana*<sup>1</sup> (a traditional Catalan dance) or the human towers became national symbols, and had established along all Catalan cities and villages, as Pere Anguera explained (2010). This kind of celebrations was permitted in a limited way by Franco's regime, considering it as simple expressions of folklore without political connections as long as they were restricted to the religious parts of the celebration. From the sixties, the dictatorship became more flexible with some of the other parts of the celebrations, permitting to people to dance again *sardanes*, for example.

Despite these constraints, for centuries local festivals have been functioning as rituals, developing a very solid representation of hierarchies and social roles in the local field. This means that people from different statuses are involved in the local festivals throughout history. A clear example would be the celebration of Corpus Christi in Berga ("*La Patum*")<sup>2</sup>. These celebrations are, therefore, a form of regulation of social

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<sup>1</sup> The sardana is a dance typical of Catalan culture. The origin of the sardana is not clear, but it is said that this dance was already popular in the 16th century. What remains undisputed is that the sardana was a popular dance in the north of Catalonia in the middle of the 19th century. The rise of the sardana took place in the context of the new-born Catalan nationalism, and the origins of the dance were embellished to symbolize a distinct Catalan ethos, to serve Catalan nationalism. Modern choreography was established as late as the end of the 19th century and features slight differences from the original North-Catalonian. The dance started gaining wider popularity throughout Catalonia during the first half of the 20th century. For more information see: <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-23284505>.

<sup>2</sup> The **Patum of Berga** is a popular and traditional festival that is celebrated in the Catalan city of Berga during Corpus Christi. It consists of a series of "dances" by townspeople dressed as mystical and symbolical figures, and accompanied either by the rhythm of a drum, which gives the festival its name, or by band music. This "dances" are marked by their solemnity and their ample use of fire and pyrotechnics. This festival was declared a *Traditional Festival of National Interest* by the Generalitat de Catalunya in 1983, and as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO in 2005. As with other cultural expressions, Patum also innovates. An example of the mix of tradition and innovation

prestige. But they are also a gateway to participate in the public sphere for the youth, as a form of socialization of new generations in the cultural background, which sometimes follows strict rules, and at other times utilizes an informal way of participation. For example, one of the roles of “*La Patum*”, the “administrators”, can only be exercised by those who were married the same year and who live in the centre of the town.

In the late 1990s of the twentieth century and early twenty-first century, these associations had considerably increased their number of members; while at the same time there have been important changes such as the creation of federations, or their different forms of coordination. For example, the Coordinadora de Colles Castelleres (Human Towers coordinating body) gathers more than 60 colles or teams, which is ruled by a board of directors and formed by the representatives of twelve of these teams. It is elected by the assembly every three years<sup>3</sup>.

On the other hand, the Catalan society has significantly increased its population thanks to migrations. During the very first years of the XXI century, the migrant residents in Catalonia passed from 3% to 17%. At this moment, Catalan society can be described as a multicultural and superdiverse society. Thus, in few years the emergence of a new wave in the field of cultural associations has coexisted with the emergence of a new cultural reality: multiculturalism. How the cultural associations reacted to this change?

### **1. Cultural diversity and cultural identity**

In this context, the incorporation of immigrants has become a key factor for cultural associations to be more openness to the new social reality. Some associations developed strategies to involve migrant people into their activities. The conception underlying this strategy is the idea of participation as a way to integration. At the end, this integration is conceived as a way to become Catalan, that is to say, a member of the community, sharing the same national identity, without forgetting the culture of origin. We can put into question the legitimacy of this aim and the implicit conception that includes in it from the point of view of multiculturalism and the necessity of recognition of cultural diversity. But before making a critical analysis of how identities must be based in the

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is the recent use of a song ‘*If I should fall behind*’, by Bruce Springsteen, in the last celebration of ‘*La Patum*’. For more information see: <http://www.lapatum.cat/en>.

<sup>3</sup> Human Towers Coordination Body: <http://www.cccc.cat/who-we-are>.

multicultural framework, it is required to understand how language, culture and national identity shapes the idea of multicultural society in Catalonia.

From the essay of Francesc Candel in 1964 about 'The Other Catalans' (Candel, 1964), making a claim to accept a new open idea of Catalan identity based on the willing to be, more than based on a specific cultural heritage, the Catalan identity has been conceived as an elected process in the case of people born outside. Thus, from the sixties, immigration is understood as a fundamental part of Catalan identity. According to this, it is socially accepted that migrants can make their ties with the Catalan culture by engaging in the civil society in order to become a member of the community.

This seems to be a paradoxical, because it represents a mixture of cultural and civic versions of nationalism. On the one side, the identification with the cultural nationhood, its language and culture, which involve a compromise to support this language and culture despite is not the official "national". Actually, there exists a very evident competition in Catalonia between Catalan and Spanish culture on the institutional and political level, and at the same time this competition coexists with a multiple combinations of both cultures on the day to day (Saurí *et al*, 2008; Zapata, 2009; Domingo, 2014).

Due to this confusing relationship between the State culture (Spanish) and the regional ("national" for most of the Catalans) culture (Catalan), it is not evident for newcomers how to be involved in Catalan culture at the first moment. Depending the neighborhood and the relationship that they established with natives, migrants could be more integrated to the Spanish or Catalan culture, using more one of both languages or combining the use of each one in different levels. This makes the process of "integration" to the so-called national culture a very complex process in which migrants are pushed to make a decision about what kind of relationship they want to have with Catalan culture. Therefore, the participation into the cultural associations represents a *calvinist* evidence of commitment to Catalan culture. In fact, some studies (Saurí *et al*, 2008) about the incorporation of Spanish and foreign immigrants to language and Catalan identity show the importance of migrant people being participated in associations (cultural, political, trade unions, neighborhood, etc.). It is in the social networks created by the cultural organizations that people clearly became Catalan speakers and acquires a national consciousness in the Catalan case. But at the same time, this participation gives to the people a very connection to the social live and provides a strong network which constitutes a fundamental way to gain social capital.

## 2. Cultural tradition and social capital

According to the Council and Voluntary Associations of the Catalan Government, Catalonia has over 15,000 active associations, 2,500 foundations and more than 600,000 volunteers in the field of cultural associationism. The amount of individuals involved in the cultural associations work as volunteers and creates a very evident source of social capital, in Bourdieu's perspective. This refers to the set of resources and powers effectively usable, distinguished primarily as *economic capital*, *cultural capital*, *symbolic capital*, and *social capital*. The volume and structure of capital owned by different individuals operate in all domains of social practice and in the course of Bourdieu's biography.

The *social capital* depends on acquaintances and friendships, according to the extent that it can lead to accessing a greater or lesser number of positions and social resources. Although these *capitals* are not an absolute value, they exist and function in relation to what Bourdieu calls *fields*. That is, the whole social microcosm built by a network of objective relations between positions of social groups and individuals. These fields are relatively autonomous and irreducible to other fields. The field can be compared to a game with rules and structures changeable and dynamic, because it is a place of power relationships between players, which imposes its particular logic to the activities carried out and to the agents who take part. In all local cultural traditions, we can find this kind of relationship between the participation in the transmission of cultural heritage and the achievement of social status. How do migrants participate in the process? Do they develop very prominent roles in the society, or just participate in a large, social network devoted to very local practices?

Considering the importance of the recent increase of migration in Catalonia, it is crucial to know how people with migrant backgrounds participate in the cultural associations. There are 17.2% foreign-born residents and 18.5% of people born in the rest of Spain (2015 census data) in Catalonia. It is estimated that three out of four Catalans have a father or grandfather born outside of Catalonia. Among the foreign-born, there are about 160 different nationalities and it is estimated that there are over 200 different languages spoken in Catalonia.



**Table 1. Birthplace of the Catalan population (2015)**

Born in Catalonia	4.857.555	64,7%
Rest of Spain	1.370.930	18,3%
Foreign country	1.279.621	17,0%
Total Population	7.508.106	100,0%

Source: *Idescat* (www.idescat.cat)

In this context, the incorporation of immigrants into the cultural associations has become a key factor as a policy of integration. For several years, various governments (Generalitat of Catalonia) have been incorporating this approach in global and local (in municipalities) hosting plans. Among the various strategic plans for integration we would like to underline two. In 2008, the *National Pact for Immigration* was signed by 68 agents—political parties, socio-economic actors, unions and civic, social and cultural associations—throughout Catalonia. This great country agreement evidenced the importance of the Catalan cultural framework as a key factor for the integration of immigrants into Catalan society. Meanwhile, Barcelona Provincial Council published a document called "Cultural policy and diversity(s)" as the result of a working group responsible for local politics (2009). The strategic importance of the role of associations in social cohesion and cultural integration of newcomers is also highlighted by the sociologist Salvador Cardús (2008).

This paper aims to show the participation in associations as a way for immigrants to join Catalan culture. On the other hand, it could be understood as a project of cultural assimilation to the Catalan heritage in order of association to maintain and enlarge it as the cultural mainstream, with the incorporation of new the population of the country. The idea of a land of immigrants reinforces the perception of this necessity of incorporation, which is not very new if we considered that in Catalonia it is assumed as a common fact to have a migrant background and to be involved in Catalan culture.

Indeed, the academic literature (Vandellós 1935; Candel 1964; Cabré 1999; Domingo 2014) has consolidated this idea of Catalonia as a land of immigrants and at the same portrays the Catalan culture and identity as a porous sponge that absorbs and mixes the culture of newcomers with the indigenous culture. But the last wave of immigration put on the table the questions of multiculturalism, with a net migration for

the period 2002-2009 of almost 800,000 people from around the world, who have contributed to the growth of the population of Catalonia by 83% (Domingo, Vidal Coso & Serra 2012). Meanwhile, the idea of an intercultural model ( Zapata 2014; Domingo 2014) is adopted as a strategy for integration or accommodation of immigrants from other countries, mostly based on the development of guidelines and handbooks about resources and best practices in this field, particularly in education<sup>4</sup>.

Some studies (Saurí & others 2008) about the incorporation of Spanish and foreign immigrants to language and Catalan identity show the importance of participation in associations (cultural, political, trade unions, neighbourhood, etc.). It is in the relational framework of organizations where newcomers<sup>5</sup> clearly become able to use the Catalan language and acquire a deeper understanding of Catalan culture and its society. In this context, it is interesting to observe how the associations shape the incorporation of newcomers, and the extent of which they display a sort of accommodation strategy. In this sense we can consider that cultural associations take part of a public plan in the framework of an intercultural policy, due to their connections and collaboration with public administration.

### **3. A qualitative approach**

In order to analyse the strategies of cultural associations facing immigrant participation, and immigrant pathways to their involvement into the activities, we have decided to use the same approach for both actors: the deep-interview. This approach facilitates us to understand the specific context of each actor in this field, and a more comprehensive approach to their motivations, difficulties and/or misunderstandings.

It is true that prior to going into the fieldwork, we had to search for a data reference about the number of people involved in the cultural associations. It is not easy to find a representative survey with specific questions about participation in cultural associations. Furthermore, some surveys that ask for ‘cultural & leisure’ participation offer very different results, ranging from 5% to 37%.

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<sup>4</sup> You can see some examples of handbooks and programmes of interculturality published by associations, trade unions, and municipalities: [http://www.unescocat.org/fitxer/859/guia\\_interculturalitat\\_5.pdf](http://www.unescocat.org/fitxer/859/guia_interculturalitat_5.pdf), [http://www.ugt.es/Publicaciones/fete\\_intecul\\_catal.pdf](http://www.ugt.es/Publicaciones/fete_intecul_catal.pdf), <http://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/bcnacciointercultural/ca/inici>.

<sup>5</sup> Especially in the case of adults. Children learn Catalan and Spanish at school normally, but it is true that depending of their relationships or neighborhoods they will use only Spanish in their everyday life outside of school.

- *Living Conditions Survey 2011 (Catalonia)*: 5.5%.
- *Consumption and Cultural Practices Survey 2006*: 30.7%.
- *Perception about Social Capital Survey 2009*: 30%.

Nonetheless, we can find some figures about how many cultural associations exist in Catalonia. According to a census by the Catalan Government in 2008, we can find 7,000 associations, with 28 correspondent federations (second-level associations with 50% of associations included) and 295 foundations. All of them are distributed into 14 different cultural expressions: *sarnades*, *devils*, traditional dance, crafts, theatre, *human towers*, audiovisual arts, choirs, etc.

Given the wide range of cultural organizations, we have chosen to analyse three of the most widespread, dynamic, and heterogeneous cultural expressions: *devils*, *human towers*, and *choirs*, taking into account each of its own characteristics. The *devil's dance* is a typical performance in the local festivities in Catalonia, evolved into the modern day fire runs (*correfocs*). Participation in a form of *passacaglia* (processions) and *correfocs* is an essential part of celebrations in many towns and cities for young people. The associations devoted to the *devils* usually are participated in by youth, and they have a weak level of hierarchy and organization. On the other hand, the *human tower* groups usually have a larger and more structured organization, with a 'President', a 'coach' and other different and institutionalized roles, but at the same time have a large social base with participants from all the ages and social status levels.

Finally, the choir can be very different in their own characteristics, depending on the quantity of members and the level of professionalism<sup>6</sup>. But the most important characteristic, which separates it from other groups, is that their members usually belong to the middle-class with a high level of cultural capital (professionals and official workers). Therefore, the characteristics of each cultural expression play a very important role to explain how newcomers are involved in it.

Therefore, there are several variables we can take into consideration: activities developed by the association, territorial implementation, and characteristics of members and social networks around the association. Regarding the newcomers, we must take into account the heterogeneity of cultural backgrounds, legal situations (some of the

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<sup>6</sup> In some cases, the director has a small salary paid by the members of the choir itself.

individuals interviewed have an irregular situation), age, gender, religion, career, and labour situations and relational networks.

First, we conducted exploratory interviews with experts and association leaders to set the general context of cultural associations. Second, biographical interviews have taken place with newcomers. In the case of cultural associations, the sample of interviews has been created in order to represent the three cultural expressions chosen, with a territorial distribution of the groups (districts of Barcelona, medium cities, little towns, etc). This sample has achieved the necessary diversification to have a general framework of this field in Catalonia, comprising one block of 10 representatives of federations and experts in popular culture, and a second block comprising 18 leaders of organizations.

Concerning newcomers, we have interviewed 12 members of cultural associations that are recent newcomers (1-5 years). The selection of the sample did not follow any criteria of statistical significance. This corresponds to a theoretical sampling (Olabuénaga Ruiz, 1996) to reach different sociological profiles. Following this approach, the sample has been based on theoretical significance and relevance willing to reach a saturation process of knowledge. The variables used to define the profiles were status and place of origin, with a wide variety of countries.

#### **4. Host strategies in cultural associationism**

The most prominent project linked to the incorporation of immigrants was the programme developed by the Human Towers coordinating body, named “*Tots som colla*” (“We all are a Colla<sup>7</sup>”) for the integration of newcomers. The project had the support of the ministries of Social Action (through the Secretariat for Immigration and the Ministry of Youth) and Culture and Media communication (through the Centre for the Promotion of Catalan Popular and Traditional Culture) of the Generalitat of Catalonia. Thirty castells have participated in the project since 2010. The project involves the organization of workshops geared specifically to the castles of introduction for newcomers.

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<sup>7</sup> “*Colla*” means “group of friends” and it is also the name for the human tower’s groups.

### Poster “Tots som una colla”



This represents a very proactive attitude to incorporate newcomers. The main reason, according to the discourse of the human towers associations is to give a social dimension to their cultural activity. They do that by strengthening the relationship with NGOs and immigrant associations in the local framework. Their activity is not limited to one-off projects, but their strategy of hosting is structured and longitudinal. They work in specific programs, enhancing co-operation with organizations devoted to help migrant people. They organize workshops at schools, participate in the district board of associations and, moreover, have developed some specific campaigns and agreements, apart from “*Tots som colla*”.

One of the main agreements is with the Language Learning Board (CNL) and Adult Schools. The language learning courses are complemented with cultural activities. The human towers associations offer to the students of these courses an opportunity to observe a training session. Also, the students are invited to participate and become members of the group if they want. There are many roles to develop in a group of human towers, and some of them need very little commitment. This invitation sometimes has results, but most of the time requires a more proactive strategy.

Also linked to the language courses are different agreements between the Catalan learning office and some of the choirs. But the most effective activity in this sense has been the creation of specific intercultural choirs, such as the Asian Choir or

the Akan Choir. We can see in the different strategies developed, that most enhanced and rooted to the local networks is the proposal, as it can achieve more results.

The entrance into a cultural association has positive consequences and increase of social and relational capital. The climate of friendship and trust created in the association can be a balsam for an immigrant, who is doing the best to face the difficulties of becoming a member of the society. The social network that exists thanks to the activity and the association devoted to it, can be a place to find support, help, and friendly understanding for the problems that migrant people have to solve in everyday life: work, health, housing, school for children, etc. The participation in these kinds of associations also offers an opportunity to improve language learning, because Catalan is usually the main language spoken. Often, these associations are the only place where newcomers can listen and practice Catalan as their daily interactions are in Spanish or in their own language of origin.

However, we must be aware that those positive results are very limited. Few associations develop a clear and consistent proactive strategy. We have to take into account that these associations are based on volunteering. Hence, it is difficult for them to be involved in tasks other than their own activities. In the case of human towers associations, they have a large number of members, and can appoint someone to this task. In the case of the *devil* associations, this is more difficult due to their characteristics: fewer members, more informal structure, and a mixture of children and young people. Other cases are the intercultural choir, with a specific mission to attract people from different cultural backgrounds.

## **5. The incorporation of migrants into the cultural associations**

As a result of the interviews to a sample of individuals, we can find different profiles of approaching the Catalan cultural mainstream. First, we can define a profile of individuals characterized by a strong identification with Catalan culture. Also very engaged are members of a cultural organization. In this group, we can find two different trajectories. One includes individuals from Europe and Latin America, with a high level of education, liberal professionals, or even students who participate most of all in choirs. A second group of individuals is formed by migrants from Africa with low levels of formal education and bad positions in the labour market. Some of them are or had been irregular migrants, with the family in the country of origin. We can find among them a very proactive attitude toward the host society, with a will to enhance

their links with individuals and organizations of local networks. Then, they are very engaged in political, social, cultural and neighbourhood movements.

This proactive attitude is a key factor that facilitates the encounter with the cultural associations involved in the social life of their city. Another key factor is the language learning courses, which make it possible to enter in a net of activities promoted to improve this learning process. In the interviews, this profile of members with a recent migrant background, points out that speaking Catalan is a way to take part in the community, and also a way to be recognized as being part of it as well. Then, the Catalan language becomes a strong value, a form of social capital. Speaking Catalan is a symbol of belonging to the Catalan national community. In all cases analysed, the reasons for learning Catalan—both instrumentally and expressively—and contact (through friends, co-workers, adult schools, associations, etc.) with the '*world of the Catalans*' are crucial for entry to cultural associations. The *social and symbolic capitals* as a result of this contact have been fundamental in this association approaching. This national belonging to Catalan identity does not entail denying their culture of origin. It is not understood as an assimilation process to the host culture, but a dual process of identification and maintenance of the own culture.

There is also an instrumental motivation for the participation in cultural associations. It guarantees contact with Catalan speakers, for example, and consequently helps in the process of language learning. Furthermore, the placement of the associations in areas with a high density of Catalan speakers facilitates the incorporation into Catalan language. The high level of associative activity in this placement is also a key factor to explain how migrants become members of the associations, taking into account the strong network they create and their high level of presence in public life. In this sense, the NGO devotes itself to welcoming and integrating immigration, which has a key role in creating a path to be in contact with members of the host society. Therefore, being a member of cultural associations has its benefits: social inclusion; mutual aid; social capital increase; Catalan learning, etc.

On the other side, for other migrants, to participate in the traditional culture is understood as a way to spend leisure time, like a hobby. To be with other people, or even to be in contact with local members, is the most relevant motivation for these individuals, in order to take part in the host society. Some newcomers participate in a very sporadic way in the cultural events or performances, as an activity during their leisure time.

Regarding how individuals enter into the associations, it is interesting to note that it is very straightforward, due to the openness of the organizations itself. That is, there are three main pathways used by the members of this profile: the personal initiative in conjunction with the relational capital; positive disposition towards the cultural activity itself; or the coincidence with a performance on the street. Despite this casual approach, we discover three important effects due to the associative practice: the strengthening of *social capital* and growing commitment to the organization and the cultural expression. At the same time, the discovery of this new cultural model allows them to get into Catalan culture as a discovery. Although they consider themselves as 'foreigners' or 'foreign students', they are aware of the special significance that confers to them the taking part of a Catalan cultural association.

## **6. But, what about the cultural diversity?**

Is this participation of migrants into the Catalan culture opening the possibility for a new framework of intercultural production? Taking into account the results of the research explained, it is clear that the mainstream cultural associations conceive the incorporation of immigrants as a way to *be involved* in the Catalan culture. This is not understood as a pure process of assimilation, because the members of this association have a positive discourse about the original cultures of immigrants.

In fact, some of the traditional celebrations are introducing elements from other cultures, in a process of mixed renovation and modernization of cultural expressions from traditional basis. For example, the local celebrations incorporate the “batucada”, a substyle of samba played with a percussive style. Besides this, an example of modernisation is the recent use of a song ‘If I should fall behind’, thanks to the authorization of Bruce Springsteen, in the last celebration of ‘La Patum’.

But a true process of mixing with cultural diversity is performed mainly in the specific celebrations of other cultures. For example, the celebration of the Chinese New Year in Barcelona<sup>8</sup>. Since 2010, a great parade goes around in the streets of the city with the participation of Catalan (Human Towers, groups of batucada, giants, devils, etc.) and Chinese organisations (dancers, lions, dragons, masks, and other elements of Chinese folklore). Ending with music and dance performances, the Chinese New Year is organized by Barcelona City Council, Casa Asia and the Foundation Institute

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<sup>8</sup> Chinese New Year programme: <https://www.casaasia.eu/actividad/detalle/214966-any-nou-xines-a-barcelona?>.



Confucius of Barcelona together with the Chinese community in Barcelona, and counts on the institutional support of Generalitat de Catalunya and the Consulate of the People's Republic of China in Barcelona. So, it is therefore a product of the collaboration of public institutions and associations.

Another example of mixed traditions is the Carnival Parade in Barcelona, which has become a place for the participation of different cultures, most of all with the participation of the groups from Latin America. This has produced conflict, due to the important presence of those groups and the transformation of the Carnival style they produce, thanks to their ostensibly colourful nature. In the same city of Barcelona, the Raval annual festival<sup>9</sup> represents a mix of cultures, with the young Philippine's festival, concerts featuring oriental music and dance and, throughout the annual festival, a haima installed in the middle of a square representing Amazigh and Moroccan cultures.

During the research we also found some other forms of mutual collaboration between associations. For example, some associations lend their buildings to the associations of immigrants who are recently established in the city or neighbourhood to develop their activities. On the other hand, the immigrants' associations can provide activities into the old buildings of the ancient cultural associations. This could be a possible way for future intercultural associations to share resources.

At this moment, the most similar thing to a intercultural association has been found during the research among the intercultural choir, with the two best examples: Asian Choir, promoted by Casa Asia<sup>10</sup> with the support of the Department of Immigration and Interculturality of the Barcelona City Council. The group is formed with around 60 young people from 23 different nationalities (60% of them are Asian). The other example is the Akan Choir, based in the Akan association, which is devoted to helping immigrants with their difficulties. It was created in 2003 in Salt, a city with 45% of people born abroad, mostly from Africa. Both cases are examples of mixed culture, which perform music from different traditions and creates a new way to reshape the cultural diversity.

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<sup>9</sup> Raval Festival programme: <http://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/bnacciointercultural/en/noticia/tradition-and-multiculturalism-at-the-raval-annual-festival>.

<sup>10</sup> Asian Choir: <https://www.casaasia.eu/actividad/detalle/208229-concierto-de-la-barcelona-coral-asia?>

## 7. Conclusion

The research about the strategies of mainstream cultural associations in Catalonia shows the limitation of some of the practices that have developed. Indeed, the mere incorporation of migrant people into the associations provides a form of *social capital*, in terms of the Bourdieu perspective: a network of relations, acquaintances, and connections into the local framework. They also provide a way to become ‘part of the group of Catalans’, as explained by some of the people interviewed. This is an important way to become part of the society, as an actor, participating as a volunteer in the mainstream cultural associations.

The strategies of migrants’ incorporation are moreover a way to ‘integrate’ people from different cultural backgrounds. Sometimes this incorporation could suppose a change of the tradition, in a context of openness to innovation. But usually the newcomers do not have the position and the security that permit them to propose any kind of innovation or cultural mixture.

On the other hand, we have seen some good practices of intercultural activities coming from associations that develop special strategies specifically for that purpose, like the Asian Choir and Akan. Beyond these, the collaboration between cultural associations and the local administration is one of the best ways to develop intercultural strategies to create new public (official) celebrations, such as the Chinese New Year or Raval Festival, with the participation of different cultural traditions.

To enhance this intercultural process in all cultural expressions, it must be clear the commitment of associations as mentors of intercultural projects. Potentially, the free collaboration between cultural associations could be a very powerful way to develop strategies to share different cultural expressions. At this moment, we can see in Catalonia a growth of little cultural associations from the migrants. It would be interesting to analyse if they incorporate people with other cultural backgrounds into those associations of African, Latin American or Asian cultures.

However, what makes more interesting the situation of cultural mainstream in Catalonia is this process of permanent contact between Catalan folklore and newcomers. At this moment, we can see a very strong development of the associations devoted to cultural tradition, at the same time that the society is transformed through the presence of other cultural traditions. We could imagine a multicultural society, where every migrant community will be maintaining its own cultural references (necessarily changed by the process of relocation) in a context of superdiversity and postmodern way of live.

But, the interesting point, and the challenge for Catalan society, is the encounter and the intercultural proposals that are appearing onto the scene. In this sense, the efforts done from the Catalan mainstream culture must be appreciated, because they could be in the future the seed for an opening process to a more comprehensive intercultural model.

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