

GRITIM-UPF Workshop

Immigrant policies at local level: From discourse to practice.

Monday 19 March 2012

15.00 - 18.00

The growing interest among academics, politicians and practitioners for the constitution of discourses on immigration at the local level in Catalonia has originated this workshop. The organization of the workshop is also part of the dissemination initiatives of the Spanish team of the ACCEPT PLURALISM project and has been the occasion for presenting the first results of the research on Work Package 4, about Tolerance to cultural diversity in the Spanish political life, and for opening a discussion on these results with practitioners.

The workshop has been organized at the Albert Calsamiglia Hall, Ciutadella Campus of the Universitat Pompeu Fabra and has been composed of two sessions. The first session aimed at examining the political discourses on migration in Catalonia, through the results of two projects led by members of GRITIM-UPF. The second session was conceived as a roundtable with local administration practitioners, and aimed at exploring and identifying the different challenges they are facing when implementing policies related to migration.

The workshop attracted around 30 participants, who were given the possibility to ask questions and debate in each session. All participants could also exchange during the coffee break. Half of the participants came from the academia and the other half were practitioners in local administrations and in civil society organisations and political party representatives. This represents quite well the aim of the workshop which is to create a space for dialogue between researchers and practitioners.

First session. Presentation of projects on political discourses about immigration in Catalonia.

The session has been opened by **Ricard Zapata-Barrero**. He underlined the relevance of the topic of the session at Catalan and Spanish levels and its interest as for academics as for politicians and practitioners. He also underlined, as a member of the commission advising the Catalan government on Welfare issues, the ongoing initiative on defining a code of conduct regarding the political use of migration issues. He outlined the main conclusions of the report issued by the commission and the tensions regarding its adoption by the political parties composing the Catalan parliament.

Between inclusion and exclusion. Political discourses during 2011 municipal elections in Catalonia.

Researchers: Blanca Garcès Mascareñas, Elena Sánchez Montijano and Núria Franco Guillén.

Blanca Garcès-Mascareñas (GRITIM-UPF) and **Elena Sánchez** (CIDOB and GRITIM-UPF) presented the conclusions of their research on the political discourses during 2011 municipal elections in Catalonia. It studied the discourses on migration in 16 municipalities of Catalonia under a qualitative methodology. The corpus of the research has been composed by the electoral manifestos of political parties and the main debates on immigration which appeared in the media.

Blanca Garcès and Elena Sánchez first explained the motivations of the research. Talking about immigration and political discourses leads to think almost automatically about the far right, preferably in Europe, where radical right parties have achieved electoral picks in countries like France, Austria or the Netherlands. In the contrary, the link between the discourse on immigration and "traditional" parties is far less explored. Within this analytical framework, the objective of the research has been to examine the political discourse about immigration in Catalonia to know, from the analysis in other European countries, under what conditions are developed certain political discourses. The researchers presented an analysis and a characterization of the electoral discourses on

immigration put forward by political parties present in the Catalan city councils. They then proposed a model for explaining the variability of these discourses at local level, taking into account the variations across municipalities and political parties.

The limits of political parties discourse on immigration.

Accept Pluralism. Tolerance, pluralism and social cohesion. European Commission's 7th Framework Programme. Researchers (Spanish team): Ricard Zapata-Barrero, Flora Burchianti and Juan Carlos Triviño.

Flora Burchianti (GRITIM-UPF) presented the first results of a research on intolerant political discourses on migration in Catalonia and their limits. This research is part of a wider research programme under the ACCEPT PLURALISM project which addresses the need to explore and understand tolerance in relation with ethnic, racial and religious diversity in European societies. The Spanish team has researched the limits of the discourse of political parties on immigration in Catalonia regarding the years 2010-2011 with the objective to understanding the political discourses that have emerged in local controversies about immigration issues and to determining the boundaries of these discourses. After having presented the Accept pluralism project, Flora Burchianti provided elements of context to justify the choice of the local controversies in Catalonia as cases studies. She then provided an overview of the results of the research. Firstly, she presented the repertoire of the political discourses on the controversies studied and how migration and migrants have been problematically framed by the actors in relation with identity and values, competition for welfare and security issues. Secondly, she presented how the need and possibility to limit the use of intolerance and xenophobia in the political life has been addressed very differently by politicians and stakeholders. She concluded in showing that political parties are at stake in drawing boundaries for political discourses. The specificities of the "local context", the personalisation of intolerant speeches along with the absence of institutionalised sanctions allow stretching the limits of what can be said in the political life.

After the presentations, the floor has been opened to the participants for a round of questions, notably:

- On the centrality of nationalism as a political cleavage which shapes discourses about migration in Catalonia.
- On the "civic" source of non toleration toward practices of immigrants or religious minorities.
- On the dynamics of competition between political parties and dynamics of contagion of discourses of exclusion toward migrants, from the far right to mainstream parties.

Second Session. Roundtable: Political Discourses on Immigration: How do they influence local practices?

The second session, moderated by **Juan Carlos Triviño** (GRITIM-UPF), offered the opportunity to hear about the experiences of local administration practitioners in charge of migration issues on the nexus between political discourses and policy implementation. It counted with the participation of representatives of the Catalan municipalities of L'Hospitalet de Llobregat (250.000 hab.), Terrassa (210.000 hab.) and Vic (40.000 hab.). These practitioners discussed in particular the challenges they have to face while implementing institutional discourses.

Oscar Negrodo (L'Hospitalet de Llobregat) presented general data on the city and immigrant residents. He presented also the different services aimed at immigrants and foreign residents and how these services have evolved over years, also in relation with policies and the political discourse of the city government. He presented notably the link made between security, citizenship and migration and the focus on mediation as a political-technical concept for action. He raised questions notably about representation, the role of the media and about the management of religious diversity.

Elisenda Blancafort (Vic) presented the evolution of the local services in relation with immigrant policies, highlighting the high frequency of the organizational changes and the shifts between specialization and cross-sector approaches. She followed by underlying the different sources of pressure on the implementation and the daily work of practitioners, such as political decisions at all levels, legislative changes, the media and the rules of

communication, the proactive attitude of local political leaders but also the spreading of rumors. She ended by highlighting important dimensions to bear in mind for the practitioners, such as the link between discourses and actions, the modalities of the coordination, the mainstreaming of migration, the long term perspective, the evaluation of practices and the creation of networks.

Gemma Garcia (Terrassa) presented the structure of the migrant population in the city and its relative homogeneity (40% Moroccans among the 15% immigrants). She focused her intervention on two main “slogans” which orient public action in the city: “Integration of migrants without losing cultural identities” and “Living together is everyone’s affair”. She underlined that both axes resist over time and are not affected by political changes. She highlighted the main dimensions of each of these working lines along with the challenges and obstacle that are faced through their implementation.

These interventions were followed by a round of questions and answers with the participants, notably:

- On the role of the media in the determination of policies and political discourses. Are the media the only source of pressure for the work of practitioners or are politicians also playing a role in it?
- On the connection made in at least two of the municipalities between security, citizenship and immigration. What is the view of the practitioners on that?
- On the discourse about the mainstreaming of migration issues in public administrations.
- On the coordination between municipalities.
- On the effects of the crisis on policies and actions at local level.
- On religious diversity and the respective place of Catholicism and minority religions: when will the equality between religions will be taken into account by the policies?

Two other projects of GRITIM-UPF collaborated to the workshop: the RECI - Spanish Intercultural cities network, funded by the Council of Europe and the Foundation La Caixa, and the DIVERSIDAD project “Municipalities and migration: Interculturality and Governability index”, funded by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness for the years 2012-2015.

Organizing committee:

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