

# Citation for published version

Franco-Guillén, N. [Núria]. (2015). Which people? An exploration of the role of immigration in the secessionist process in Catalonia. In: Catalonia in Spain and Europe: Is there a way to independence, 115-128. doi: 10.5771/9783845258256-114

### Handle

http://hdl.handle.net/10609/150970

### **Document Version**

This is the Accepted Manuscript version.

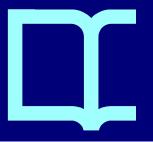
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# Which People? Exploration of the role of immigration in the secessionist process of Catalonia

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#### 1. Introduction

On January 2<sup>nd</sup> 2014, the former leader of the anti-immigrant Plataforma per Catalunya (PxC), Josep Anglada, ignited the Web after commenting on a picture of a black child wearing the Catalan secessionist flag, "Estelada". His tweet said: "We are screwed. If these are the new Catalans, I leave Catalonia. Our people first!". Within two days, the child's parents had already answered the politician and created an account in which hundreds of so-called "new Catalans" sent pictures of themselves saying "Mr. Anglada, I'm also a new Catalan; you can leave if you like," and many of them wore the secessionist flag. It was one of the first *mass* political expression with regards to the Process<sup>2</sup> by immigrants in Catalonia. We have, however, little information about how immigration relates to processes of secession, and even less when it comes to the case of Catalonia.

Catalonia, self-defined as a *terra d'acollida*<sup>3</sup>, takes for granted that it is a land where several migration waves have contributed to the construction of the country, and therefore this question is of vital importance. Theories of secession often deal with questions such as: "what sort of group is entitled to secession?", often leaving aside the individuals entitled to join the group. Even in current debates on the Process in Catalonia, some independentists have defended the idea of using the current electoral census that excludes individuals who are not Spanish nationals (E-notícies, 2014) as the basis defining the group. In other words, immigrants are somehow ignored in this process. Among all the parties' proposals for the Declaration of Sovereignty of the Catalan People approved by

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Own translation. Notice must be taken that this political party does not participate in the Process (see footnote 2) and in fact is opposed to it.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> The political situation in Catalonia has received many names. For the sake of brevity I call it "the Process" as it currently appears in the media.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Land of reception, welcome.

the Parliament in 2013, only one (the Candidatura d'Unitat Popular, CUP) took this explicitly into account, mentioning 'the People of Catalonia, regardless of their citizenship status' (Candidatura d'Unitat Popular, 2013).

One may wonder whether within the Process immigration is a relevant phenomenon to be taken seriously by political elites. This chapter tries to justify the relevance of the link between secession and immigration regarding Catalonia, and provide an overview of the main positions of the elites with regard to this issue. To do so, I first try to map out the literature that links immigration to stateless nations so as to refer to the territorial cleavage and how immigration relates to it. The case of Catalonia is then addressed, starting with a contextualisation of immigration in Catalonia. Finally, the main pro-independence stakeholders' positions and strategies related to it are examined<sup>4</sup>.

## 2. Immigration and secession

Normative theories on secession and the right of self-determination often seek to answer questions such as: under what conditions does a group have the right to secede, and, more concretely, under what conditions the group should be considered as entitled to that right? Buchanan (1997) made a distinction between Remedial Right Only Theories and Primary Right Only Theories, the latter revolving around the characteristics that the group must possess to have a primary right to secede. Thus, the question of "who is the People" is key in this field of research, just as it is in theories of nationalism that have often distinguished between civic and ethnic forms of nationalism<sup>5</sup>. This distinction has often been linked to the dichotomy liberal (plus civic) versus illiberal (plus ethnic) nationalism (Ignatieff, 1995). In this context, most stateless nations have been included in the second group, despite claims by some scholars that they are often more liberal than some Statewide nationalisms (Kymlicka, 2001; Keating & McGarry, 2001).

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> This information has been gathered through interviews with the main representatives charged with immigration issues among pro-referendum elites, including political parties and civil society, between May and July 2014.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> See Smith (1971) for a broader classification. Although broadly criticized, as Keating (1997) points out, the civic/ethnic dichotomy is the most commonly used by scholars and is based on the contraposition of subjective (willingness) versus objective (race, religion, blood or, in certain cases, language) characteristics to determine inclusion/belonging to a nation.

The arrival of immigration to stateless nations opened a branch of research that deals with the intersection of different cultural claims. This research has often departed from the premise that immigrants tend to integrate into the State nation (Zapata-Barrero, 2009). Thus, immigration poses specific challenges for stateless nations as it strengthens a fear of internal minorization, which could contribute to their assimilation into the majority nation. This interaction raises several questions related to both political and policy responses on the one hand, and immigrant responses on the other. The possibility of a referendum in Catalonia raises important questions when it comes to immigration. Immigration policy can be seen as a tool not only for the central State, but for the Stateless Nation, who may consider immigrants as allies (Hepburn, 2014). In this sense, immigration intersects with the centre-periphery cleavage and has an influence in its three main dimensions (identity, territory and economy) with the underlying question of whether minority nationalism can incorporate newcomers to its nation-building project. In the extreme case of secession, the general question is, again, whether Stateless Nationalism can incorporate immigrants into their State-building project.

This question remains largely under-researched. However, the case of Quebec after its two referendums on sovereignty has caught the interest of researchers. In the context of the latest referendum and according to the 1993 Canadian Election Study, Anglophones (92.2%) and Allophones (94.2%) opposed sovereignty, and, as Conley (1997) argued, sovereignty cleaved Quebecers along ethno-linguistic lines. This left almost all immigrants on the "no" side. Regardless of whether immigration really was an obstacle to Quebec's independence, this experience is interesting and serves as a precedent for examining the Catalan case.

As already mentioned, immigration is clearly interlinked with the main dimensions of the centre-periphery cleavage - identity, territory (power) and economy. The existence of an identity distinct from the centre (and therefore loyalty) is a necessary condition for the emergence/maintenance of the cleavage (Rokkan & Urwin, 1983). Arguably, the stronger the loyalty to the periphery, the more likely that secessionist movements might emerge.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> See Zapata-Barrero (2007) for an overview of the main challenges.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> For an overview including several cases, see Hepburn and Zapata-Barrero (eds.) (2014).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> The central State can follow a policy of encouraging immigrants to settle in the Stateless Nation's territory with the purpose of undermining national diversity.

Conversely, high levels of loyalty to the centre should help to attenuate the rise of secessionist movements. In this context, subjective national identification (SNI) can help to predict certain voting decisions on an eventual referendum on independence. As Serrano (2013) shows, in Catalonia where dual identity is widespread, while individuals reporting an exclusive Catalan identity significantly express support for independence, the contrary does not hold, and feeling exclusively Spanish does not predict opposition to independence. The realm of identity is complex, not only in Stateless nations where important proportions of dual identity are reported, but in general in Western Democracies and more concretely in old immigration countries in which multiple identities are reported by individuals. It is, however, one of the key issues at stake when thinking about stateless nationalism, and more concretely, secessionism within these political regimes. Hence, elites may well wonder how newcomers feel about their reception societies. In the case of Quebec, Banting & Soroka (2012) showed how the existence of competing loyalties in Quebec prevent immigrants from developing a sense of belonging to either Quebec, Canada or both, as strongly as in the rest of the Canadian provinces.

The distribution of power in the management of immigration might, however, influence party positions towards immigration (Hepburn, 2009), and it has influenced the intensity of debates and the relationship with the centre. It even has a potential influence on the case for independence (Zapata-Barrero, 2012). In fact, the lack of these powers on immigration not only affects sub-state governments, but the immigrants themselves who are often obliged to follow long paths towards resident and/or work permit acquisition with the central administration, while using public services that are provided by other levels of administration. It has also been suggested that the opposition of some stateless nationalists to the central-state's policies might explain their positive stance towards immigration (Jeram, 2012). Indeed, they often propose more progressive policies (especially in realms where they have no power, such as citizenship) than the ones proposed by the central state.

In the realm of the economy, there is no doubt that the relative economic status of the different regions helps us to understand a part of the relationship between the centre and the periphery. For some, including Urwin and Rokkan, the economy only acts as a catalyst for political mobilisation, with identity and territory being the necessary conditions for the emergence of the cleavage, and therefore of relatively more important. The prominent

role of immigration for the economic growth of developed democracies is clear, and on these grounds immigration has been a source of conflict between the centre and the periphery, as in Scotland, where it has been seen as a booster for the economy (Salmond, 2003).

## 3. Immigration in Catalonia

As a receiver of newcomers, Catalonia presents some interesting features. In Spain in general it is a so-called "new immigration country". It started receiving immigrants from other parts of the world in the 70's when the rest of Autonomous Communities were net senders of migrants, with a flow that grew in the 80's and rapidly accelerated in the 90's (Ribas, 1997). This migratory wave is characterised by its intensity and diversity of origins. Indeed, in 2000 international migration represented 2.9% of the Catalan population, increasing to 15.6% in 2012 (Brugue & Gonzalez, 2013). Today, 17.6% of its residents were born outside Spain (INE, 2014). 980 countries are represented by groups larger than 500 residents, 50% of them coming from African and South American countries.

Despite this seemingly intense activity, Catalonia has a long experience in receiving people from beyond its border. In fact, having one of the lowest fertility rates in the world, migration has been the main pillar of the so-called Catalan System of Reproduction, which was initially based on receiving people from the rest of Spain<sup>10</sup>. Catalonia's migratory experience is in fact frequently tabled in Parliamentary debates (Franco-Guillén & Zapata-Barrero, 2014), which helps to explain why the idea put forward by the socialist, Rafael Campalans, that "anyone who lives and works in Catalonia is Catalan," has been embraced by all political forces.

We still do not know how the Process will culminate; whether a referendum or plebiscitary elections will take place, let alone who will be entitled to participate in the final decision. To date, a "participative process" has been held on the 9<sup>th</sup> November

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> To be clear, immigrants are considered here as those habitants born outside the country, regardless of their citizenship.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> See Cabré (2008) for an in-depth explanation of this System. As this demographer ironized in a reference to another Catalan demographer who predicted this process at the beginning of century, technically speaking, Catalonia ceased to be "Catalan" by 1954.

2014. <sup>11</sup> The process was open to anyone residing in Catalonia and to Catalan expatriates. The following table gives estimates of two scenarios showing the relative importance of immigrants within the Process. (1) The distribution resulting under the application of Spanish electoral rules (which would apply in case of plebiscitary elections and includes only Spanish nationals). (2) The distribution between autochthonous voters and voters born outside Spain, used for the Participative Process (residents over 16 years old).

	Autochthonous voters	Voters with immigrant background
Scenario 1	5,476,523	287,274
	94.6%	5.2%
Scenario 2	6.331.021	1,180,783
	81.1%	18.9%

[Source: Own elaboration. INE, 2014<sup>12</sup>]

We can see that the Participative Process held on the 9<sup>th</sup> November 2014 called on more than one million people born outside Spain, representing almost 19% of the "census". Besides, if plebiscitary elections were to be held, 5.4% of the census would have an immigrant background, which shows that immigrants can have an important influence on the results.

We have very little information about the voting behaviour of immigrants in Catalonia. In some cases, immigrants voting behaviour has been described as a "block vote" against the "social vote" of autochthones, as it seems there is a transition period during which all immigrants tend to vote in the same way as the majority of their community members do (Lavoie & Serré, 2002). If this was to be the case in Catalonia, the main nationalities (Morocco, Romania, Ecuador and Colombia) all voting in the same way could be crucial to the outcome.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> In September 2014, the Catalan government approved a consultation law and its subsequent decree, calling on a ballot. A few days later, the law was suspended by the Constitutional Court until its final decision over the constitutionality of the norm, thereby preventing the applicability of the decree. As a reaction, the Catalan government opted for maintaining the date and the question, but altering the procedures and the name of the event, now being a "participative process".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup>These numbers are approximate, as the National Institute of Statistics provides data by cohorts that do not coincide with voting age for scenario 2 and the electoral census does not display the place of birth, so percentages have been calculated throught the normal census in both scenarios. The results of the Participative Process also do not display information on the origins of people who participated.

The only indication as to how immigrants might vote that exists in Catalonia is the wave of consultations that were organised by civil society associations in over 500 municipalities between 2009 and 2011. Despite not having the global disaggregated results, the results for the city of Barcelona (consultation celebrated in 2011) show overall a low interest in this issue:

Table 2. Participation in Barcelona's Consultation

	Total votes	Immigrant votes	Immigrants over 16	Population over 16
Totals	257,645	10,247	246,066	1,070,317
% of population				
Over 16	24.1%	1.0%	23.0%	

Source: Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE, 2013) and Barcelona Decideix webpage: http://www.barcelonadecideix.cat/noticia/4221/vots-per-districtes

Table 2 shows that in the city of Barcelona, 23% of the population eligible to participate had an immigrant background. However, only 4.16% of immigrants entitled to vote did so. This low turnout might be explained by three factors: first, by a lack of knowledge or interest within immigrant communities; second, because those referendums had no legal basis at all and were semi-spontaneous activities; and third, because immigrants were very reluctant to show the required identity documents to vote, even more so when the electoral board had to register them<sup>14</sup>. Some of these aspects have or could change in the near future and therefore would change immigrants' decisions on participating.

Unlike the rest, the ICPS Opinion Survey (2012) includes people born outside Spain. The following table shows which people would vote "if a referendum on independence was held tomorrow", but bear in mind that this sample only comprises 234 individuals of this kind.

Table 3. Positions on an eventual referendum.

Immigrants	Autochthones	Totals
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<sup>13</sup> As for the Participative Process of the 9<sup>th</sup> November, residents over 16 years, regardless of their citizenship, were entitled to vote.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> These were the main arguments observed during the referendum campaign in an immigrant neighborhood in Mataró, were the author carried out participant observation.

Yes	73	485	558
	13.1%	86.9%	100 %
	31.2%	50.2%	46.5%
No	71	274	345
	20.6%	79.4%	100%
	30.3%	28.4%	28.8%
Abstention	70	126	196
	35.7%	64.3%	100%
	29.9%	13.0%	16.3%
Blank vote	3	17	20
	15.0%	85.0%	100.0%
	1.3%	1.8%	1.7%
Don't know	16	58	74
	21.6%	78.4%	100%
	6.8%	6.0%	6.2%
No Answer	1	6	7
	14.3%	85.7%	100%
	0.4%	0.6%	0.6%
Totals	234	966	1200
	19.5%	80.5%	100%

Source: Institut de Ciències Polítiques i Socials (ICPS) Sondeig d'opinió Catalunya, 2012.

While a majority of autochthones (50.2%) would vote yes, in the case of people born abroad there is no clear winning option, and immigrants are split between voting yes, no or abstaining.

## 4. Stateless Nationalist elites and Immigration

This section maps the positions of the main actors' on immigration, which are briefly described and are based on previous analysis of the author (Franco-Guillén & Zapata-Barrero, 2014); strategic actions, if any, are also explained.

Political parties<sup>15</sup>.

Convergència i Unió (CiU): CiU is a centre-right coalition of two parties, currently ruling the Catalan government (Generalitat): the centrist Convergència Democràtica de

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Interviews with responsible on immigration of the main parties were held, with the exception of the Candidatura d'Unitat Popular (CUP), which, due to its specific organization, has no responsible as such.

Catalunya (CDC) and the Christian democrats Unió Democràtica per Catalunya. Overall, CiU has expressed positive stances towards immigration at the Autonomous Community level, especially in their electoral manifestos. This positive stance can be identified in discourses highlighting positive or neutral aspects about immigration. This has been accompanied by a (re)description of the Catalan nation into overall civic terms, which is suited to the integration of immigrants into the minority nation. At the local level, however, the attitude of CiU is quite volatile, ranging from a very positive stance in the case of the Barcelona branch to a more negative one in the case of Vic and other important Catalan municipalities, such as Reus or Mataró (Garcés Mascareñas, Franco-Guillén, & Sanchez-Montijano, 2011). Strategically, the CDC has created the Fundació Nous Catalans that acts as a mobiliser for immigrants and as a think tank for the party. This foundation, as its president, Angel Colom (interview, May 2014), acknowledges, invests most of its time today disseminating information about independence among immigrants and immigrant associations. As its president explained, the Foundation has developed a briefing on the benefits of independence, which is translated and adapted to several minority languages and dialects. A series of conferences on independence for immigrant groups across the territory are also being programmed.

Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (ERC): Since transition to democracy, this left wing party has traditionally been smaller than CiU in electoral terms, but managed to substantially increase its success in the last elections in 2012, after which it supported CiU's minority government. ERC's discourse on immigration is clearly positive and mainly based on the principle of equal opportunities. The party's positions are the same both at the local, autonomous and central levels of government. Despite its current success, ERC has a smaller structure and less resources, which means it is unable to invest in immigrant mobilization. As a former regional minister of welfare commented, the party struggles to recruit new members, especially women, and cannot afford to create specific campaigns or structures (Interview, April 2012). Therefore, there is no institution like the Nous Catalans. According to its representative (Oriol Amorós, interview May 2014), ERC also holds an inclusive vision of citizenship that does not look at origins. In this sense, a specific strategy aiming at immigration is hardly predictable.

According to both party representatives, in the event of a referendum or consultation, anyone residing in Catalonia for at least two years and is older than 16 should be entitled to vote. In the hypothetical case of the creation of a Catalan State, both representatives

defended the approval of a "Juridical continuity law" in which all rights and status possessed under the Spanish Regime would remain in place until the approval of a Catalan Constitution. On this last issue, CiU considers that the status of foreigners should be decided in the constituent discussions, while ERC defends that anyone residing in Catalonia (for two years) at the time of independence should be considered part of the "Founding People," thus having equal rights to Catalan Citizenship.

Iniciativa per Catalunya-Verds (ICV): This eco-socialist party has not adopted an official position on independence, and members have different individual positions ranging from federalism to independence. The party clearly defends the right to decide and the celebration of a consultation on sovereignty. In a vein similar to ERC, the party takes a positive stance towards immigration, and considers citizenship in an inclusive way. According to its representative, newcomers should have the right to participate in the consultation and be considered Catalan citizens in case of independence (Gabriela Poblet, interview May 2014). In this context, the party organized a debate with immigrants' representatives to get an overview of the main challenges that should be taken into account in the Process, and in the hypothetical scenarios after the consultation.

# Civil Society<sup>16</sup>

Assemblea Nacional Catalana (ANC): The ANC is the main civic organization that is today driving the Process towards the use of the right to decide and independence. It was the main organizer of the main civil society's actions, as in the massive demonstration on the 11<sup>th</sup> September (Catalonia's national day), 2012, the human chain that went from the French Pyrenees to the Valencian community (the so-called Via Catalana) on the 11<sup>th</sup> September 2013, and the demonstration in 2014 that took the shape of a V, with over one million people occupying two main streets in Barcelona. The assembly is organized into territorial sub-units and sectorial assemblies. The Immigrants' Sectorial assembly of the ANC was created by Diego Arcos (Argentinian House of Barcelona, interview May 2014) and other prominent individuals of the immigrant associative world in Catalonia. Despite the interviewee's acknowledging that the sectorial has few members, during its years of existence it has organized several activities throughout the country with the purpose of

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Notice must be taken of the existence of Súmate, an organization created by Spanish-speaking independentists. However, this entity does not target immigrants.

inviting newcomers to participate in the process of creating a new State. The main objective is to raise awareness that all individuals who reside in Catalonia are part of its People, and therefore should be entitled not only to participate, but to vote in an eventual referendum.

#### Government

Generalitat de Catalunya: The Catalan government has not taken an official stance in favour of independence, despite the governing party being so. However, it received a clear mandate from the Catalan Parliament to hold a consultation on independence. The executive has a Directorate General for Immigration within the Social Welfare and Family Department. Its Citizenship and Migration Plan (Horizon 2016) contains five axes/cross-sectional areas of action, the last one being called "national transition". This section sets the objective of informing newcomers of and raising their awareness to the "process of national transition" that the country is undergoing with the objective of fostering their engagement in it. The Plan, however, does not include more concrete actions or proposals, and no budget is provided for it. On this issue, the Directorate General is awaiting clearer formulations of the "Process" in order to design a concrete strategy, and the budget is to be taken from different departments as immigration is a cross-sectional issue (General Director of Immigration, interview July 2014).

#### 5. Conclusions

This paper has explored the relationship between immigration and independence. Primary and secondary sources of information have been analyzed, including data from interviews and the exploitation of quantitative data available.

Whether immigration can be an asset for independence is a question that depends on how the Process will materialize, and whether and how immigrants will be included and involved. The more inclusive the consultation is, the higher the influence immigrants may have on the final result. The position of the pro-consultation elites is that immigration is to be taken into account in the process and immigrants should be invited to participate. The general view is inclusive, rather than exclusive, and each actor, as far as respective circumstances allow, tries to include immigrants into the Process. Awareness about the lack of information about immigrants' opinion on politics in Catalonia also needs to be raised.

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