DIVERSITY POLICY IN THE BASQUE AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY: SUB-STATE NATIONALISM AND THE INTERCULTURAL MODEL

MSc Governance of Migration and Diversity - Public Administration

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1. INTRODUCTION

With contemporary societies facing growing diversity due to increasing international migration, an important part of the literature has been focusing on immigrant integration and governance of diversity, often putting states and state policies at the center of the analysis. While understanding governance of diversity at state level remains crucial, in the words of Zapata-Barrero (2007, p.3), "the entire current debate on immigration supposes that the receiving society and the receiving state coincide". However, this is not always the case, as can be observed in regions where sub-state nations exist and form communities with distinct identities. This analysis will be focusing on the Basque Autonomous Community, as an autonomous region within Spain where the Basque sub-state nation is represented by a nationalist government.

There is some literature analyzing the approach to diversity governance in so-called multi-national states and sub-state nations, mostly focusing on regions like Quebec, Scotland, Flanders, or Catalonia (see Barker, 2010; Sager, 2007; Adam, 2013; Loobuyck & Jacobs 2010; Conversi & Jeram, 2017; Zuber 2014; Hepburn 2011). In these places, immigrants arrive to a host society that is already diverse, and where sub-state nationalist movements have pushed for a higher level of autonomy, further developing a multi-level setting (Lecours, 2012). Among these types of regions, the BAC presents a very interesting case as its government started building an infrastructure for diversity governance well before immigration represented a significant share of its population. Through the years, the regional governance network has become stronger and more intricate and now includes a variety of entities and actors. Just like in some of the other sub-state nations (Generalitat de Catalunya, n.d.; Barker, 2010; Jeram et al., 2015), the BAC's sub-state nationalist government has adopted a pro-diversity approach, and has deemed interculturalism as the most appropriate answer to its growingly diverse context (Gobierno Vasco, 2022). Its policies have emphasized respect for cultural diversity and non-discrimination (Gobierno Vasco, 2022).

With this thesis, I aim to better understand how immigrant integration and diversity policy is formulated in the BAC. This will not only help uncover phenomena that are specific to the BAC's policy-making processes, but it might also shed some light on how diversity policy is formulated in other sub-state nations, and why interculturalism has become a popular approach in some of them. Thus, the goal of this thesis is to analyze a case that has not been widely studied in the literature (diversity policy in the BAC), while also contributing to a more accurate and comprehensive understanding of sub-state nationalism's approaches to

diversity. Moreover, the thesis will include a multi-level perspective to the analysis. By doing so, the analysis will better include the role of all the relevant actors in the policy-making process, while also raising awareness of the gap that currently exists in multi-level governance research. While the role of actors at different levels within the state is being recognized in the migration and diversity literature, it is most often focused on local actors and municipalities. However, as the analysis will show, regional actors also play a very relevant governance role, especially in regions with a strong sub-state nationalist movement. For a better understanding of diversity policy making in multinational democracies, it is crucial for studies to also consider the importance of regional actors in the multi-level structure of immigrant integration and diversity policy-making.

The analysis will be guided by the following question: *What factors explain the choice for an intercultural approach to diversity by the government of the Basque Autonomous Community (BAC)?* In order to find an answer, a qualitative content analysis will be conducted on the BAC's immigration plans, and completed with interviews with experts who participated in the policy-making process.

This thesis is structured in the following way. Chapter 2 contains the theoretical framework of the study, where the concepts that are most important to the analysis are explained in depth. Chapter 3 describes the research design of the thesis, which will provide more details about how the content analysis and interviews were conducted. Chapter 4 presents and discusses the findings obtained from the analysis, linking them to what was explained in the theoretical framework. Lastly, Chapters 5 and 6 will include the conclusions of the study and the pertinent recommendations for future policy.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter I will be discussing the different theoretical approaches that are relevant to the case of diversity governance in the BAC. In particular, the chapter will reflect on sub-state nationalism and multi-level governance (MLG), specifically in relation to the field of migration and diversity. Lastly, the intercultural model will be defined and linked to the context of regions like the BAC.

a. Approaches to migration and diversity policy in sub-state nations

The issue of immigrant integration has prompted a growing body of literature on the impacts of the arrival and settlement of immigrants to their host countries. However, only a

small segment of that literature has analyzed this phenomenon in the context of sub-state nations (Adam 2018; Zapata-Barrero, 2007).

When referring to sub-state nations, the definition chosen for this analysis will be the one created by Barker (2015): "governance units that hold at least some decision-making (and not merely administrative) power, and that claim cultural, linguistic or national distinctiveness or autonomy" (Barker, 2015, p.11). These are usually found in so-called "multination" states which have adopted a more decentralized structure to make space for the stronger regional autonomy claimed by sub-state nationalists (Kymlicka, 2011, p.282).

It has been argued that from sub-state nationalists' point of view, integrating immigrants can present additional questions. The main issue comes from the perception that immigrants usually integrate into the majority society, and that the arrival of a large number of immigrants could in theory alter the balance of the sub-state nation's relations with the central state, as its claims for more autonomy are often based on its distinctive socio-cultural character (Adam, 2013; Jeram et al., 2015; Banting and Soroka, 2012).

Because of this perceived vulnerability (Banting & Soroka, 2012; Loobuyk & Jacobs, 2010; Medda-Windischer, 2018), sub-state nationalist movements have been portrayed as exclusionary groups that uphold ethnic requirements for belonging to their political community (Jeram et al., 2015; Hobsbawm, 1990, cited in Adam, 2018). However, more recent research on the field has refuted these assumptions. Turgeon and Bilodeau (2014) mention various pieces of literature that highlight the difference among sub-state nationalist movements across regions and time. There are also other authors who have given examples of sub-state nationalist governments that opted for an open approach to diversity, like the intercultural policies of Quebec, the BAC or Catalonia, or the multicultural approach in Scotland (Jeram et al., 2015; Jeram, 2014; Hepburn, 2011; Conversi & Jeram, 2017; Barker, 2010). Because of the complexity of the issue, it is not possible to base this analysis on a simplistic generalization, and there are many different factors that can affect sub-state nations' approaches.

One of the most relevant pieces of literature in this field is Adam's article "Immigration and sub-state nations: researching the nexus" (Adam, 2018), where she identifies and systematizes the different independent variables that might affect a sub-state nation's strategy in face of growing diversity.

The first group of variables are "strategic" variables, which relate to the nation-building process in sub-state nations. It is a process closely linked to immigrant integration and diversity because it touches on issues of belonging, but also because it can

lead to diversity policies strategically aimed at distinguishing and strengthening sub-state nationalist claims vis-a-vis the central state (Adam, 2018). Some authors have mentioned that, in their nation-building efforts, sub-state nationalists might intentionally choose a diversity model different from that of the central state as a way to reinforce its own distinctiveness (Adam, 2018; Conversi & Jeram, 2017; Barker, 2010).

Other variables relevant to sub-state nations are those that concern how a national community views itself (Adam, 2018), as the elements that form this national self-understanding and identity can influence the response to growing diversity. National self-understanding refers to the combination of characteristics, ideas and/or experiences that members of a nation consider as integral parts of their national identity (Adam, 2018). Different elements of national self-understanding can impact integration and diversity policy in different ways. For instance, Jeram and Adam (2015) claim that in cases where a community's past (cultural) oppression is a significant element of national identity, policy is more protective of minorities' rights. Alternatively, De La Calle and Miley (2008) also analyze the effect of language in immigrant integration approaches, and argue that, when it is understood as a necessary element of national identity, it might result in stricter policies that require immigrants to learn that language.

Lastly, Adam (2018) mentions processes of decentralization as another relevant institutional factor that needs to be considered. Indeed, as examples such as the BAC, Catalonia, Flanders or Scotland show, regions with a sub-state nation have pushed for devolution, and have obtained more policy competences. This has resulted in policy issues being tackled by different levels of government which do not always have common goals. Thus, in order to get a better grasp of the policy-making process in these types of devolved regions, it is crucial to include a multi-level perspective to the analysis.

b. Multi-level Governance (MLG)

The concept of Multi-level Governance (MLG) has gained importance in policy and migration research over the last years, as a way to shed more light on how policies are created when different institutional levels work together (Scholten, 2018). Although the concept of MLG has often been analyzed in the context of European integration, in migration and integration research as well as in other fields, the concept is also applied to multi-level relations within the state (Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017). Thus, MLG also helps us understand how local institutions and organizations, which have obtained more power, work within a system where competences are shared between different governance levels (Schiller, 2018).

Although there is no single definition of MLG, this section will discuss the main characteristics of the phenomenon.

Caponio and Jones-Correa (2017) identify three essential features of MLG: first, the process must include a minimum contestation of "statecentred formal hierarchies of distribution of power and responsibility" (Caponio & Jones-Correa, 2017, p.1996[1]). Second, the process must involve a variety of interdependent actors from different levels of government, as well as non-public actors. Third, all the actors involved must have a minimum bargaining power in the process (Caponio & Jones-Correa, 2017).

These last two characteristics go hand in hand with the concept of *governance*, which has also become a crucial tool to understanding the growing interdependence between state and non-state actors addressing complex social matters (Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017). Schiller (2018) explains that governance is a phenomenon involving "autonomous but interdependent actors" from different areas of the public and private, government and non-governmental sectors. The emphasis here is on the presence of non-government actors in multi-level policy processes because without them, we would just be looking at inter-institutional relations across government levels. The author claims that for governance to exist, there must be a relationship of "cooperation and coproduction" among all actors, where "both the views of state and nonstate actors inform the policymaking process" (Schiller, 2018, p.208).

On a similar note, Scholten (2018) explains that a variety of governance relations can emerge in multi-level settings, but not all of them can be identified as MLG. The author analyzed the multi-level policy relations in the field of migrant integration, and distinguished between four governance types in multi-level contexts: centralist, multi-level (MLG), localist and disjointed governance (Scholten, 2018, p.158-159). In MLG, substantial relations and interactions between the different levels must exist (Scholten, 2018, p.158). Put simply, it is not enough that a government and non-government actors work in a multi-level scenario. If the multi-level relations only reflect top-down hierarchy, bottom-up localist perspectives, or a complete separation of local and national levels, it is not possible to talk about true MLG (Scholten, 2018).

In relation to the migration and diversity field, MLG introduces new perspectives that can be useful to this analysis. Because in multi-level systems local and regional institutions have gained competences, and the central state is no longer able to tackle policy issues on its own, it is reasonable to expect that national models of diversity governance

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[1] The document of this article indicates that it is page 2, but page 1996 is where it is found in the journal where the article is published.

cannot be seen as the single approach applied in the totality of a state. National models are not all-encompassing, and nowadays coexist with other approaches that appear from the bottom-up in multi-level settings (Borkert & Caponio, 2010). Simultaneously, sub-state nationalism often strengthens the authority of the regional level of governance by pushing to obtain more competences over different policy areas. This allows regional institutions to address issues in a way that is different from the central state. Indeed, sub-state nationalist governments in Spain have long promoted the idea that regional institutions are entitled to tackle issues in their own way (Romero González, 2008), and migration and diversity are no exception. Within an MLG system with sub-state nationalist regional institutions, it would be reasonable to expect that the state's and the region's approach to diversity might not always coincide.

c. Interculturalism

As different frames for diversity governance have shown their weaknesses and have been heavily criticized, there is a new approach that has gained popularity: interculturalism (Huddleston & Scholten, 2022). In the last years, several European institutions have created initiatives with interculturalism at their core, for example, "Intercultural cities" programme launched by the Council of Europe among others (Council of Europe, n.d.; Zapata-Barrero, 2016, p.164).

When it comes to approaches to diversity governance, Zapata-Barrero (2017) claims in his work that we are living in a post-multicultural era. However, there is still an ongoing debate about the differences between multiculturalism and interculturalism, with authors like Modood (2018) arguing that they are really the same thing. The aim of this section is not to dive into that discussion, but it is important to consider that interculturalism does indeed borrow the foundation of multiculturalism by proposing a model for "integration without assimilation" (Levrau & Loobuyck, 2018, p.8). Departing from this pro-diversity perspective, and influenced by Cantle's work (Cantle, 2001 cited in Levrau & Loobuyck, 2018), interculturalism puts more emphasis on promoting social cohesion and interaction across communities. This is based on the idea that interpersonal contact helps fight negative stereotypes about the "other", and can "generate mutual understanding" (Levrau & Loobuyck, 2018, 9).

Zapata-Barrero and Mansouri (2021) made a "multi-scale" analysis of the intercultural approach, and they explain that interculturalism was initially seen as a tool for solving international conflicts and facilitating dialogue between states thanks to its main core:

the "relational feature" that promotes cross-cultural exchange (Zapata-Barrero & Mansouri, 2021, p.777). When this same relational feature is applied to the individual or community level, it is a helpful principle for guiding positive personal interactions in diverse societies. In particular, this approach of promoting personal interactions is very well suited for the local level of diversity governance, as it requires a certain degree of proximity with citizens (Zapata-Barrero & Mansouri, 2021; Zapata-Barrero, 2017). As a result, interculturalism has become a very popular approach for the local governance of integration and diversity. Considering that local institutions and organizations are currently obtaining more bargaining power in multi-level systems, this might be contributing to the popularization of the intercultural approach, also at levels higher than the local.

Lastly, for understanding why this model might be perceived as a beneficial approach in sub-state nations, we can turn to Bouchard's article titled "What is interculturalism?" (Bouchard, 2011). The author addresses the case of Quebec and proposes interculturalism as the approach that can balance the interests of immigrant minorities as well as the region's francophone community's legitimacy and core values by applying the principle of pluralism (Bouchard, 2011). According to him, the appropriate application of pluralism would not fail to recognize that the francophone community is also a minority that needs protection (Levrau & Loobuyck, 2018). This understanding of pluralism is very interesting for those regions where the interests of all minorities must be taken into account and balanced correctly.

Lastly, in sub-state nations the aforementioned relational feature could serve not only to manage relations between immigrant minorities and the majority in the host society, but also to establish contact between immigrant and national minorities (Zapata-Barrero, 2016; Gimenez, 1997). This possibility that interculturalism offers of accommodating the interests of both national and immigrant minorities, while also being a tool to promote interactions between them is an important idea to consider for the remainder of this study.

d. Analyzing the connection

This theoretical framework includes the different theories and angles that are related to the topic of this thesis. The following paragraphs will briefly touch on the connection between all these ideas, and how they are relevant to answering my question about the BAC's intercultural approach to diversity governance under its sub-state nationalist government.

On the one hand, regarding MLG, the multi-level system established in Spain and in the BAC opens up the space for local levels of governance to have more power and more of a say around diversity policy. At the same time, sub-state nationalist movements have pushed

for their regional institutions to govern with more autonomy, which has led to them having the power and initiative to take the state's place in multi-level relations for certain policy areas. Thus, instead of local-state relations, governance can sometimes take place between the local and the regional levels.

On the other hand, as the intercultural model has been especially popular at the local level, it is possible that local actors have found in regional institutions the answer to their claims in favor of interculturalism: these regional institutions are not hesitant to make policy in their own way, and at the same time, local actors present an approach that can accommodate sub-state nationalist interests. Indeed, following Bouchard's explanation, interculturalism can provide an answer for the concerns that immigration and diversity could pose to sub-state nationalists, by applying a model where both national and immigrant minorities can express their identity. Ultimately, one of the main principles of interculturalism, which is that of plurality and the right to maintain a community's own culture and traditions can be applied to national and immigrant minorities, immigrants and nationals, while its relational feature can promote positive interactions between them.

RESEARCH DESIGN

a. Case selection

The Basque Autonomous Community is a region within Spain that bears significant political representation of the Basque sub-state nation, as the mainstream basque nationalist political party (PNV) has governed the region almost uninterruptedly. Being an autonomous community, it does not have competence over immigration per se, and thus, it cannot decide who gets in as that is the state's duty. However, it does have the competence to decide on other aspects, such as integration and diversity policies. Starting in 2001, the Basque government has created "Immigration Plans" every four years, the current one being the VI Plan, in place from 2022 to 2025. While the previous plans already included some ideas that were in line with an intercultural approach, the latest one has confirmed this direction as it explicitly mentioned interculturalism as the perspective chosen by the Basque government (Gobierno Vasco, 2022). The case of the BAC is also interesting for the field of MLG, as its institutions are part of a broader and very intricate multi-level context, where European, national, provincial and local government and non-government actors coexist and can work together on tackling complex issues.

As it has been explained in the theoretical framework, there is no uniform approach that sub-state nationalists opt for to tackle the issue of immigrant integration and growing diversity, and their choices are based on a variety of different factors. Analyzing the Basque approach to immigrant integration and diversity could provide us with interesting insight not only on factors specific to the region, but also on general dilemmas that policymakers face when governing immigrant integration in contexts with different interests and vulnerabilities at stake.

b. Choice of methods and sampling

The research question for this analysis is the following: *What factors explain the choice for an intercultural approach to diversity by the government of the Basque Autonomous Community (BAC)?*

For a more specific guidance of the analysis, the main question is then divided into the following subquestions:

SQ1: What was the policy-making process for the BAC's intercultural policies?

SQ2: What factors favored the adoption of an intercultural approach by the BAC's government?

As a first step, a review of the relevant literature on the topics of sub-state nationalism, diversity, multi-level governance and interculturalism was conducted in order to identify and define the factors that have been found to influence sub-state nationalist governments' approach. Once these were summarized in the theoretical framework, they were translated into codes that would later be applied to the content analysis.

In order to answer the two sub-questions, I combined two complementary methods: qualitative content analysis and semi-structured interviews. In regards to the first method, I analyzed the content of policy documents produced by the Basque government, and of debates and speeches that took place both in the Basque government and the Basque parliament. Additionally, I conducted four semi-structured interviews with policymakers and experts to go more in depth in the process behind the choice for interculturalism, to obtain information that might not be evident from the policy documents alone, and to interpret the results of the content analysis more accurately (Qu & Dumay, 2011; Seidman, 2006; Babbie, 2016; Dexter, 2006).

The sampling of policy documents for the content analysis was not randomized. The most relevant policy documents were selected to reflect the reasons behind the Basque government's approach in the most comprehensive way possible. The main documents that I studied were the III, V, and VI Immigration Plans (Gobierno Vasco, 2011; Gobierno Vasco, 2018; Gobierno Vasco, 2022), which constitute the core of the BAC's diversity policy. In addition, references to migration and diversity in other related documents were also taken into consideration, albeit not explicitly mentioned in the analysis. More specifically, these included the I and II Immigration Plans (Gobierno Vasco, 2003; Gobierno Vasco, 2007), the "Plan Udaberri 2024" for living together, human rights and diversity (Gobierno Vasco, 2021), The II Plan of Assistance to Immigrant Pupils (Gobierno Vasco, 2016), and the Basque Social Pact for Immigration (Gobierno Vasco, 2022b). In order to obtain relevant data from these documents a directed content analysis was conducted (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). As mentioned, a few codes were defined beforehand based on the theoretical framework of the paper. These were then identified in the documents through Atlas.ti 23, while simultaneously, new codes were created whenever relevant concepts and ideas came up during the analysis.

In addition, I interviewed policymakers that have been involved in the elaboration of integration and diversity policies, as well as experts in the field. In particular, I interviewed two experts who were in charge of writing part of the V and VI Plans, a member of Ikuspegi-Basque Observatory of Diversity, and an immigration technician who has worked on intercultural initiatives at the local level in the cities of Getxo and Bilbao.

Interviewee number	Role	Code
1	Policymaker (participated in the elaboration of Plans)	i1
2	Policymaker (participated in the elaboration of Plans)	i2
3	Member of Ikuspegi	i3
4	Immigration technician	i4

Finally, it is also important to mention the main limitations that come with this methodology. The first one comes from the single-case selection, as it provides an in-depth analysis of the case, but will not necessarily be generalizable to other contexts. Furthermore, we find the same limitation with the use of semi-structured interviews, as they only involve a

limited number of interviewees who participated in a specific policy making process of the BAC (Queirós, Faria & Almeida, 2017). Although the interviews provided great insight on the topic, the information given by four interviewees cannot be comprehensive enough on its own, as relying just on the statements of a limited number of policymakers could lead to biased conclusions. For this reason, the interviews were just used as a tool to complement and expand on the main data obtained from the document analysis.

c. Operationalization

As explained in previous sections, sub-state nationalism and multi-level governance are key phenomena for understanding the BAC's choice for an intercultural model of diversity governance. Whereas these concepts have been described more extensively in the theoretical framework of this thesis, this section seeks to operationalize those concepts and to translate them into observable features that guide the analysis. The following operationalization table includes four main concepts: *nation-building process* and *national self understanding* (linked to sub-state nationalism), *multi-level governance*, and *choice for interculturalism*. During the analysis, I assessed whether and to what extent the first three were influential in the policy-making process of the BAC's integration and diversity plans. Although many different perspectives were included in the previous explanations of these ideas, this operationalization is based on the following authors: Adam's (2018) independent variables guide the analysis of the nation-building process and national self-understanding factors, and Schiller (2018) and Scholten's (2018) types of governance are followed for assessing the role that multi-level governance relations have played in the case. The last concept, choice for interculturalism, follows Zapata-Barrero and Mansouri's (2021) and Levrau and Loobuyck's (2018) ideas about interculturalism, and is used to identify policies that apply the model's main principles of respect for diversity and positive interaction.

Concept	Definition	Codes (indicators)		Operational definition	Method
Nation-building process	Process of "boundary drawing and the promulgation of an identity group as the legitimate owners of a territory" (Eley and Suny, 1996, cited in Adam, 2018, p. 267).	- Distinctiveness from central state		Government chooses an approach different from that of the central state with the aim of distinguishing itself from it.	Interviews + document analysis
		-Immigrants as active part of nation-building		Government sees immigrants possible supporters of the nation-building process.	
National self-understanding	The combination of characteristics, ideas and/or experiences that members of a nation consider as integral parts of their national identity (Adam, 2018).	-Past experiences of oppression		Policies that do not respect minorities' rights are rejected based on a feeling of empathy because of past experiences of oppression (Adam, 2018).	Interviews + document analysis
		-Language		Knowing the language of the sub-state nation is either seen as a prerequisite for belonging or is just being promoted (Adam, 2018; de la Calle & Miley, 2008).	
		-Diversity as inherent to Basque society		(Cultural) diversity existed in the BAC before the increase of international immigration.	
MLG	A phenomenon where different levels of government and non-government actors are involved in a policy-making process, which are	Governance relations with non-government actors (Schiller, 2018)	-Imposition of policies (Schiller, 2018)	State-actors impose the policy to non-state actors. The latter have no room to influence the policy-making process. (Schiller, 2018).	Interviews + document analysis
			-Coordination and	Low degree of intensity in state and non-state actors' relations. There is no top-down	

	interdependent and have a minimum bargaining power (Caponio & Jones-Correa, 2017).		consultation(Schiller, 2018)	hierarchy, and non-state actors are consulted (Schiller, 2018).
			-Cooptation of non-state actors(Schiller, 2018)	Intense relations between state and non-state actors, and strong hierarchy. State actors coopt the rest (Schiller, 2018).
			-Cooperation and co-production of policies (Schiller, 2018)	Intense relations between state and non-state actors, and policy-making process is horizontal, no hierarchical relations (Schiller, 2018).
		Relations between levels of governance (Scholten, 2018)	-Centralist governance (Scholten, 2018, p.158)	National government formulates policy, and local governments are mainly concerned with implementation (Scholten, 2018).
			-Multi-level governance (Scholten, 2018, p.158)	"Coordinated interaction between various government levels" (Scholten, 2018, p.158).
			-Localist governance (Scholten, 2018, p.159)	Bottom-up, policy is formulated at the local level (Scholten, 2018).
			-Disjointed governance	Policies at different levels are contradictory, due to lack of interaction between levels of

			(Scholten, 2018, p.159)	government (Scholten, 2018).	
		-Policy authority and devolution (Adam, 2018)		Which level of government has the power to act upon a policy issue. In devolved states, the regional level gains more competences (Adam, 2018).	
Choice for interculturalism	A choice for interculturalism has been made when diversity policies are based on intercultural principles. Especial attention is given here to relational feature, as it is the most distinctive attribute of the model (Levrau & Loobuyck, 2018).	-Respect for diversity		"the diversity of people's different backgrounds and circumstances are appreciated and positively valued" in the policies (Levrau & Loobuyck, 2018, p.9).	Interviews + document analysis
		-Positive interaction/relational feature (Zapata-Barrero & Mansouri, 2021; Zapata-Barrero, 2017)		Policies promote positive personal interactions across cultural communities (Zapata-Barrero & Mansouri, 2021; Zapata-Barrero, 2017).	

d. Expectations

The aim of this study is not necessarily to confirm specific hypotheses related to my research questions, but to learn what lays behind the choice for an intercultural approach to immigrant diversity and integration by the government of the BAC. Through the case study, I seek to form a comprehensive overview of the factors that might motivate sub-state nationalist governments to tackle the matter of immigrant diversity from a certain perspective, while gaining in-depth understanding on the specific process that led to the creation of intercultural approaches in the BAC.

Nevertheless, the review of the relevant literature as well as an initial overview of the sampled documents makes it possible to draw some expectations for the analysis. Each one of the expectations responds to one of the sub-questions proposed at the beginning of this section.

SQ1: What was the policy-making process for the BAC's intercultural policies?

E1: It was a process influenced by an MLG system that allowed for local actors to advance an intercultural approach to diversity governance, and for the BAC institutions to be able to include that in their own regional policies.

SQ2: What factors favored the adoption of an intercultural approach by the BAC's government?

E2: The factors related to the national-self understanding led the BAC's sub-state nationalist government to reject an assimilationist approach, and favor a pro-diversity model like interculturalism. Besides, interculturalism's principle of pluralism and its relational feature are especially fit for the diverse context of the BAC and its minorities.

e. Ethical considerations

Before starting the analysis, it is necessary to be aware of the ethical requirements that a study like this one must comply with. One of the main ethical issues that arises in social research usually concerns the principle of objectivity. There is a discussion on whether or not social researchers can have a neutral or value-free approach to their research, but not being aware of one's own biases can negatively impact the quality of a study (Babbie, 2016). In order to avoid that, it is necessary to, first, gain awareness of our biases, and second, to be open and transparent about how our own perceptions can influence the observations that we make in our analysis. Because I myself identify as a Basque citizen and

have lived in the BAC for most of my life, I have my own beliefs regarding the political, cultural, and social context of the region. These beliefs might lead me to present pro-diversity initiatives and measures that raise awareness about Basque culture and language with a more positive light than other researchers with a different experience would. Although I have been aware of this throughout the whole process, and I have made sure to remain as objective as possible, it is necessary for anyone that reads this thesis to take into consideration how these biases might unconsciously impact my findings.

Lastly, and specifically linked to the interview method chosen for this study, it is crucial to maintain the necessary confidentiality for the identity of the interviewees. Besides, it is also important to make sure that they have given their informed consent, both at the beginning and at the end of the interviewing process, so that they have full understanding of what the research project implies (Babbie, 2016). To ensure this, verbal consent was obtained from each interviewee before starting the interviews, and later on, they signed a written consent form where more detailed information about the process and about confidentiality was presented.

4. ANALYSIS

This chapter is divided into three sections, each one of them concerning a different aspect of the analysis. The first section describes the evolution of the BAC's approach to diversity from the I to the VI Plans, and what kind of measures each one of them included. The second section explains how intercultural policies were included into the plans, and the role that MLG had in that process (SQ1). Lastly, the third subsection argues why the BAC's government embraced interculturalism in the last two plans, and how this was aligned with its sub-state nationalist interests (SQ2).

a. **The BAC's approach to diversity throughout the plans**

Well before immigration was a prominent issue in the Basque Country, at the beginning of the 2000s, a basic network was established in the BAC for receiving and assisting immigrants who settled in the region, initially promoted by the Ezker Batua leftist party under a nationalist coalition government (Biltzen, n.d.; El País, 2004; Galarraga Gortázar, 2001). The network comprised different entities which were aimed at protecting immigrants' rights, facilitating their access to public services and creating the necessary

infrastructure for meeting their needs. Also at this time, Ikuspegi, the Basque Observatory of Immigration was created, linked to the University of the Basque Country (Ikuspegi, n.d.). Although it is in this moment, around 2002, when the pillars of the Basque Immigration Plans were created (i4), due to the low number of immigrants that arrived at the BAC, and the incipient nature of the network, the focus was still on improving the reception of these new citizens, and not so much on governing the growing diversity in the region (Gobierno Vasco, 2018).

As a response to this new context of growing international immigration, the Basque parliament urged the Basque government to elaborate an immigration plan in order to govern immigration and diversity in the BAC. The result was the I Plan implemented between 2003 and 2005, which acknowledged international immigration as a structural part of the modern Basque society, and organized government response in line with the principles of equality, public responsibility and social participation (Gobierno Vasco, 2003, p.67). From that moment until today, five different immigration plans have been created, and although all of them have mentioned interculturalism in one way or another, it is the last two immigration plans (V and VI) that have explicitly applied an intercultural approach (Gobierno Vasco, 2022).

Although all the plans have advocated for maintaining a coherent response to growing immigration throughout the last two decades, there are some clear differences between the five plans that help us trace the trajectory of the Basque Government's response to this phenomenon.

Basque Immigration Plans I and II constitute the initial response of Basque institutions to the growing immigration flows to the BAC. Indeed, growing immigration coincided during those years with great economic growth and a need for more workers. It is in this context that the I and II Plans began the trajectory of governance of immigration in the Basque region, mainly focusing on a joint strategy to host these newcomers. The Plans mentioned interculturalism as a possible guide for managing integration in the BAC, but because international immigration to the region was still in its early moments, governing cultural diversity was not at the forefront of this new strategy, the plans were more focused on giving an adequate response to the material needs of immigrants (Gobierno Vasco, 2003; Gobierno Vasco, 2007; Gobierno Vasco, 2018).

The III Plan was elaborated during the only time in the BAC's history where the mainstream nationalist party, PNV, was not in government. It was created under the government of one of the main Spanish political parties: PSOE. Regarding the context, the

plan mentioned that the government needed to start managing diversity because the share of the immigrant population had grown significantly, but after the economic crisis, it was expected to remain stable. As for the approach, the main focus was on achieving equality between immigrants and the autochthonous population through work and education, as a means to ensure integration and social cohesion. One of the main goals was to ensure access to decent jobs for immigrants that arrived to the BAC, and for their children to access the necessary education in order to promote social mobility (Gobierno Vasco, 2011). This is showcased in the section where the plan's approach is explained, as it states that:

> *"In conclusion, and alongside a reasonable management of diversity, emphasis must be placed on the real and material integration of the collective, and for this, we believe that there are and will be two key and fundamental elements: employment and education. In other words, the first-generation immigrant must have a job, and their son or daughter should be able to attain a better job through the social elevator of education. This premise has worked in recent times with internal immigration, and it is essential that it also works at the present moment for foreign immigration.[2]"* (Gobierno Vasco, 2011, p.39).[3]

Even though interculturalism was mentioned in the title of the plan, the government mostly focused on the equality and non-discrimination aspect of this model, while few measures were taken to promote other aspects like positive interaction. Indeed, many of the proposed measures were more in line with a mainstreaming approach, as the plan expressed a will to include the perspective of immigration and diversity as part of all other policy areas (housing, healthcare, etc.). This can be observed in the operating principles of the plan, which include:

> 1. *"Normalization and Universalization*
>
> *The needs of immigrant individuals are common needs and, therefore, should be addressed with general services aimed at the entire citizenry. Normalization means that the entire population is included in the existing social services and resources under the same conditions and through the same procedures. Thus, integration actions are directed at the entire population, not just immigrants. In this way, the diversity of Basque society is managed from a*

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[2] "En definitiva, y junto a una gestión razonable de la diversidad, se tiene que hacer hincapié en la integración real y material del colectivo y para ello creemos que hay y va a haber dos elementos clave y fundamentales: el empleo y la educación. O dicho de otra manera, que el inmigrante de primera generación tenga un empleo y que el hijo o hija de éste pueda obtener un empleo mejor a través del ascensor social de la educación. En épocas recientes y con la inmigración interior esta premisa ha funcionado y resulta imprescindible que también funcione en el momento actual para la inmigración extranjera." (Gobierno Vasco, 2011, p.39).
[3] Exact quotes extracted from the analyzed policy documents were translated from Spanish to English with the help of AI, and then checked for accuracy before introducing them in this chapter.

standpoint of normality, without the need for specific services. However, at certain
points during the integration process, strictly specific needs may be addressed by
temporary specific services, always in an exceptional and subsidiary manner.

   2. Transversality

   Integration, citizenship, and intercultural coexistence policies must be
integrated in a cross-cutting manner into all public policies aimed at the citizenry.
The integration policy must be embodied in all vertical public policies (education,
employment, housing, culture, health, social services, etc.). Therefore, all
government departments are called upon to reflect together and adopt a series of
measures, adjusting them to a context of diversity.[4]" (Gobierno Vasco, 2011, p.14).

  It is also worth mentioning that in 2013, the Forum for social integration and participation of immigrant citizens in the Basque Country was established. Its main goal was to promote an intercultural approach to immigration and diversity through inter-institutional collaboration. Besides organizing the different institutions' tasks around a range of issues from access to healthcare and education, to the fight against racism and xenophobia, it also mentions two organizations that were in charge of promoting and revitalizing this approach: Ikuspegi and Biltzen. The first is the already mentioned Basque Observatory of Immigration (Ikuspegi), in charge of researching all things related to migration and diversity in the BAC, and the second is the Basque Service of Intercultural Coexistence (Biltzen), in charge of technical assistance and the creation of new programs (Biltzen, n.d.).

  In 2014 there was an attempt to formulate the IV Plan, but the effort failed and the document was never published as a government-wide plan. Thus, after the III Plan, we must take a look at Plans V and VI, which cover the period of 2018-2020 and 2022-2025 respectively. These plans can be studied together as the VI Plan is just a continuation of the V

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[4] 1. "Normalización y universalización   Las necesidades de las personas inmigrantes son necesidades comunes, por consiguiente deben   atenderse con los servicios generales dirigidos al conjunto de la ciudadanía. La normalización supone que   el conjunto de la población se incorpora a los servicios y recursos sociales existentes en las mimas condiciones y mediante los mismos procedimientos. Por tanto, las actuaciones en materia de integración van dirigidas al conjunto de la población, no únicamente a las personas inmigrantes. De ese modo, se   gestiona la diversidad de la sociedad vasca desde un planteamiento de normalidad, sin necesidad de existencia de servicios específicos. No obstante, en algunos momentos de los procesos de integración,   las necesidades estrictamente específicas podrán ser atendidas por servicios específicos de carácter   transitorio, siempre de manera excepcional y subsidiaria.
2. Transversalidad   Las políticas de integración, ciudadanía y convivencia intercultural deben incorporarse de modo   transversal a todas las políticas públicas orientadas a la ciudadanía. La política de integración ha de sustanciarse en todas las políticas públicas de carácter vertical (educación, empleo, vivienda, cultura,   sanidad, servicios sociales, etc.). Por lo tanto, todos los departamentos de Gobierno están llamados a reflexionar conjuntamente y a adoptar una serie de medidas ajustando éstas a un contexto de diversidad.
La transversalidad implica que la unidad directiva encargada de la política de integración (en este caso la Dirección de Inmigración y Gestión de la Diversidad) no es una unidad llamada a ser gestora de servicios propios, sino a contar con los instrumentos y mecanismos para poder fortalecer, apoyar, informar e influir sobre las políticas verticales." (Gobierno Vasco, 2011, p.14).

Plan, and a big part of the content is the same (Gobierno Vasco, 2022). These plans were elaborated under the PNV's nationalist government. In them, the importance of the principles of equality and discrimination is just as prevalent as in the III Plan, and work and education are still seen as the main contributors to immigrants' integration into Basque society. However, they also add two new elements that are quite relevant for this analysis. First, it includes the principle of living together as one of the main axes of the Basque model of diversity governance (Gobierno Vasco, 2022; Gobierno Vasco, 2018). With that, the plans have significantly more references to the principles of interaction and social cohesion, as well as including new measures which promote the creation of spaces where personal interaction between people from different communities can take place. According to the V Plan, from the evaluation of the previous plans the following idea stood out:

> *"[...] it is important to develop a plan as a working tool that is truly operational, an efficient and effective instrument in designing the overall intervention strategy of the Family Policy and Diversity Directorate, and in the development and implementation of specific and unique strategies that enhance interpersonal relationships among culturally diverse individuals, enable the integration of all groups of people, promote an inclusive perspective of an increasingly diverse society, and improve coexistence in our towns and neighborhoods."* (Gobierno Vasco, 2018, p.9).

The principle of living together in this case is thus linked to the principle of interaction or the relational feature that makes interculturalism distinctive.

The second element is the establishment of Basque language as a transversal principle for the whole plan. It is not only reflected in the measures that make the learning of the language more accessible to immigrants, but also in the idea that an effort should be made to create a connection between Basque language and culture and the respect for diversity in the BAC (Gobierno Vasco 2022; Gobierno Vasco 2018). This might show the intercultural model's ability to accommodate both immigrant and national minorities within the same frame, a point that will be further developed in the next section.

To summarize, the I and II Plans, although already started mentioning interculturalism, were still centered around receiving increasing waves of international migration. Governance of diversity only became relevant years later, and although the III Plan already mentioned the model as a guide for managing the growing diversity in the BAC, it did not include many clearly intercultural policies. It is possible to say that interculturalism,

with all its foundational elements, was truly adopted as the BAC's model and applied to its diversity policies in the V and VI Plans.

b. **MLG: Introducing interculturalism into the BAC's policy**

Although the concept of interculturalism was already present in the I, II and III Plans, these did not really include many intercultural policies. As I explained in the previous section, the concept was used more as a general idea, in a symbolic way. However, according to i2, initiatives promoting equality and positive interaction (foundational elements of an intercultural model) were already taking place at the municipal level (e.g., Vitoria-Gasteiz, 2010; Donostia Entremundos, 2010; El Correo, 2009). This initiative shown by local actors at the time matches with the idea proposed by Zapata-Barrero and Mansouri (2021) on the multi-scale perspective of interculturalism, where he argues that the relational feature of this model is considered to be well suited for the *local* governance of diversity (Zapata-Barrero & Mansouri, 2021, p.787).

During the following years, however, interculturalism was still not fully adopted as the model to guide the BAC's diversity policy. According to i4, the true shift took place in 2018, with the creation of the V Plan, in part thanks to three Basque cities joining the "Intercultural Cities" programme organized by the Council of Europe. The cities of Donostia, Bilbao, and Getxo joined the programme in 2011, and carried out intercultural initiatives of their own since then. Having Basque municipalities be part of that international network, and the fact that international organizations started backing interculturalism (Zapata-Barrero & Mansouri, 2021), gave the model the relevance and legitimacy that it needed to truly become part of regional policy in the BAC (i4).

In a similar vein, another reason why this approach, initially implemented at the local level, became a crucial part of the BAC's policy might be the increasing participation of local actors in the policy-making process of the plans. In fact, for the III Plan only one meeting was held with municipal technical staff, and no feedback was given by local entities and organizations later on in the process (Gobierno Vasco, 2011, p.6). The V and VI Plans, however, are simultaneously the policy documents that include the most intercultural practices, and the ones that have had the most participatory procedures in their creation by including local actors in different phases of the process. Indeed, the creation of the V Plan involved:

> "*-40 in-depth personal interviews with individuals from different institutions, organizations, and entities working in the fields of citizenship, diversity, and immigration.*
>
> *-12 meetings (focus groups) with the six commissions of the Forum for Integration and Social Participation of immigrant citizens in the Basque Country, involving experts from academic and private sectors, third-sector entities, municipal technical staff, Biltzen staff, and Ikuspegi staff.[5]*" (Gobierno Vasco, 2018, p.35).

These meetings took place in both the first and second phases of the process, and involved feedback from the association of Basque municipalities (Eudel) as well as other entities (Gobierno Vasco, 2018, p.36). An almost identical process was conducted for the VI Plan (see Gobierno Vasco, 2022, p.33).

Moreover, the V and VI Plans also put more emphasis on measures to improve local entities' ability to contribute to diversity governance and to ensure learning from past experiences of these entities. For example, the following measures were included:

> "*Development of a catalog of best practices, including those related to the connection between Basque and linguistic diversity, at the municipal level, highlighting positive experiences at the neighborhood level and their impact on improving intercultural coexistence in towns and cities.[6]*" (Gobierno Vasco, 2018, p.118).
>
> "*Financial support to Basque Municipalities in the development of activities related to the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and the social inclusion of foreign immigrant individuals.[7]*" (Gobierno Vasco, 2018, p.109).
>
> "*Creation of three intervention and support teams for municipal action in the Basque Autonomous Community (BAC) in the areas of citizenship, intercultural coexistence, and immigration, one for each historical territory, where municipal technical staff (specifically trained in interculturality or general social action) from local governments (municipalities or consortiums) can collaborate to ensure that*

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[5] "-40 entrevistas personales en profundidad a personas de distintas instituciones, organizaciones y entidades que trabajan en el ámbito de la ciudadanía, de la diversidad y de la inmigración.
-12 reuniones (focus group) con las seis comisiones del Foro para la Integración y Participación Social de las ciudadanas y ciudadanos inmigrantes del País Vasco, con personas expertas del ámbito académico y de la empresa privada, con entidades del tercer sector, con el personal técnico que trabaja en el ámbito municipal, con el personal de Biltzen y con el personal de Ikuspegi." (Gobierno Vasco, 2018, p.35).

[6] "Elaboración de un catálogo de buenas prácticas, incluyendo las referidas a las que vinculan el euskera y la diversidad lingüística, en el ámbito municipal con experiencias positivas a nivel de barrio y con incidencia en la mejora de convivencia intercultural de los pueblos y ciudades." (Gobierno Vasco, 2018, p.118).

[7] "Apoyo económico a los Ayuntamientos vascos en el desarrollo de actividades en el ámbito de los derechos y deberes de ciudadanía y a la inclusión social de las personas inmigrantes extranjeras." (Gobierno Vasco, 2018, p.109)

the strategy of the Directorate reaches the entire Basque territory.[8]" (Gobierno Vasco, 2018, p.111).

"Comparative analysis of various integrated municipal management models. Description: In the local context, there are several examples of how to integrate a series of interrelated and synergistic services within the same physical space in different municipalities.[9]" (Gobierno Vasco, 2022, p.152).

It is also worth noting that plans V and VI put a special emphasis on strengthening the Basque government's relations with the municipal level not just during the making of the policy, but also for the implementation phase:

"Municipal technical staff: We are talking about the municipal technical staff working in the field of interculturality, coexistence, and immigration. We believe that establishing coordination links can lead to the improvement of both parties' actions, respecting the competencies of each and their independent work. This plan includes actions aimed at enhancing communication and coordination of the joint efforts of the Department and the Municipalities.[10]" (Gobierno Vasco, 2018, p.25; see also p.10, 23, 39, and Gobierno Vasco, 2022, p.25, 29, 63, 81, 89).

Put shortly, interculturalism became a relevant approach for the BAC's diversity policy thanks to the inclusion of local actors in its creation and implementation. It was, to an extent, a bottom-up process where. As local actors were already implementing intercultural initiatives, and the intercultural model started gaining legitimacy thanks to also being endorsed by international organizations, it started to be included in regional policies. From the document analysis it became visible that the plans that had the highest number of measures based on interculturalism were also the ones that made more space for local actors both in the policy-making process and in the implementation.

c. **Interculturalism and sub-state nationalism in the BAC**

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[8] "Creación de tres equipos de intervención y apoyo a la acción municipal de los ayuntamientos de la CAPV en el ámbito de la ciudadanía, convivencia intercultural e inmigración, uno por cada territorio histórico, en los que podrá colaborar personal técnico (específico en interculturalidad o inespecífico en acción social) municipal (ayuntamientos o mancomunidades) para que la estrategia de la Dirección llegue a todo el territorio vasco." (Gobierno Vasco, 2022, p.111).

[9] "Análisis comparativo de diversos modelos de gestión municipal integrados. Descripción En el ámbito local existen varios ejemplos de varios municipios de cómo integrar en un mismo espacio físico una serie de servicios interrelacionados y con sinergias específicas." (VI Plan, p.152).

[10] "Técnicos/as municipales: hablamos del personal técnico municipal que trabaja en el ámbito de la interculturalidad, la convivencia y la inmigración. Creemos que se pueden establecer vínculos de coordinación que redunden en la mejora de las actuaciones de ambos, respetando las competencias de cada uno de ellos y su trabajo independiente. Este plan contempla acciones encaminadas a mejorar la comunicación y coordinación de los empeños y esfuerzos comunes de la Dirección y de los Ayuntamientos." (V Plan, p.25)

In this section, I will be analyzing the intercultural model established in the V and VI Plans, and in what ways it is in line with the sub-state nationalist government's discourse. Before continuing, however, it is very important to note that the plans were not formulated unilaterally by nationalist government actors. As it has been explained, the policy-making process was a participatory one that included the contributions of different entities and organizations (e.g., Begirune Foundation, Médicos del Mundo, CEAR, etc.) (Bilbao.eus, 2023; Gobierno Vasco, 2022; Gobierno Vasco, 2018), and many of them have no nationalist concerns. Therefore, while the V and VI Plans can give us signs of why interculturalism and sub-state nationalism might fit together, the policies are not mere reflections of Basque nationalist ideas.

But before diving into why interculturalism specifically was considered the best model for diversity policy in the BAC, it is necessary to start with a more general question: why did the BAC government opt for a pro-diversity approach in the first place? Interculturalism is one among a few other models that have a positive perspective of diversity at the base, advocating for the right to be different and a strong emphasis in non-discrimination (Zapata-Barrero, 2017). As mentioned at the beginning of this thesis, other sub-state nations have also opted for pro-diversity approaches when facing growing immigration. The first part of this section will be dedicated to analyzing why this has also been the case in the BAC.

In the theoretical framework I introduced the concept of "national self-understanding", which is composed of those values and features that are understood to be at the core of a nation's identity. While an endless variety of elements can be part of each nation's self-understanding or identity, there are three specific ones that are specially interesting for the BAC's case. The first one that was mentioned in the literature is the memory of past oppression of a cultural community. Some authors argued that sub-state nations, because they have often seen their culture and identity oppressed in the past, tend to oppose assimilationist discourses that could be perceived to limit a minority's right to express their distinct identity (Adam, 2018; Jeram & Adam, 2015). This exact idea was not really confirmed by my analysis of the documents and interviews. However, there was a past experience that was often mentioned as part of the Basque nation's identity by the BAC's government: the Basque Country as a country of emigration, as its citizens escaped poverty and oppression. The BAC's president mentioned this when introducing the BAC's immigration policy at the European Conference on immigration and asylum policy:

"[...] we remember that we have been an emigrant people for centuries, experiencing the difficulties of integration in new countries. In many of our families, we have had close knowledge of the challenges faced during the integration experience. It is important to bear this in mind as we now find ourselves receiving migrants who are simply seeking a better future. Let us remember: "we were welcomed, and so we must welcome." (Urkullu, president of the BAC, in Irekia, 2022).[11]

Through this quote, the president of the BAC expresses a feeling of empathy towards immigrants, who are going through a difficult process of integration just like Basque people did in the past. Elaborating policy that undermines immigrants rights upon arrival to the BAC or limits their possibility to integrate through harsh requirements would be contrary to this discourse based on empathy and understanding.

Second, there is the issue of language as part of a nation's identity. Because Basque is a minority language, protecting and promoting it is among the BAC's government's goals. As a result, one might expect for this to be reflected in the plans through assimilationist measures that require all immigrants learn the language in order to become part of the Basque society. However, there are no examples of this in the plans nor in the discourse of the Basque government. When asking about it in the interviews, a few very relevant points came up: first, the BAC is composed by different contexts in regards to the use of Basque and Spanish, where the former has more presence in the province of Gipuzkoa as well as in rural areas, but the later is more commonly used in urban areas. Taking into account that most immigrants in the BAC live in urban areas (Ikuspegi, 2022b; Ikuspegi, 2021; Ikuspegi, 2020; Ikuspegi, 2019), just requiring that they learn to speak Basque might not match the reality that they encounter in their host cities (i1, i2, i4). Second, there is an issue, also tackled in the II Plan de atención al alumnado inmigrante, where students who did not arrive at an early age to the BAC usually find it difficult to progress in the Basque school system when most of their classes are in Basque (i3, i4). According to i4, the goal should not be to make them learn Basque as fast as possible over other subjects in school, as it can delay their other learning goals. Institutions should thus focus on their overall success in school, and in providing the necessary tools to learn Basque once they are prepared to use them. "Learning Basque should be a positive tool for integration, not a setback for success in school" (i4). Lastly, and

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[11] "[...] recordamos que somos un pueblo emigrante desde hace siglos y conocemos las dificultades de integración en los nuevos países. En muchas de nuestras familias hemos tenido conocimiento cercano de las dificultades vividas en la experiencia de integración. Es importante tenerlo presente cuando hoy nos toca recibir a personas migrantes que sólo buscan un futuro mejor. Recordemos: fuimos y somos acogidos. Debemos acoger." (Irekia, 2022) *transcription of a recorded speech.

referring to the aim of protecting the Basque language and avoiding its further minoritization, on the one hand, there is no generalized concern about immigration affecting the use of Basque, and on the other hand, that the "problem" of the language is not immigration but the lack of use by its speakers (Ikuspegi, 2022c; i1, i2, i3, i4). As a result of all these points, assimilationist policies were considered for the area of language when drafting the V and VI Plans.

Lastly, the plans often mentioned the idea of the Basque Country being a diverse region even before international migration began to rise. Diversity, more specifically cultural and linguistic diversity, is acknowledged as an inherent element of Basque society. This idea is something that I have not found in the literature, yet it was very present in the plans, as well as in the debates and speeches in Basque institutions. The Basque society is presented as a culturally diverse one where people with different views, identities and languages live together and share the same space, so immigration only exacerbates this pre-existing characteristic:

"Foreign immigration has accentuated a characteristic that the Basque society already had: its diversity. [12]" (Gobierno Vasco, 2022, p.5)

"[...] starting from the basis of the diversity that has characterized the Basque Country throughout its history, expressed and materialized in a broad cultural and political pluralism, in a linguistic duality, and in a variety of mentalities and social behavior, this V Action Plan in the field of Citizenship, Interculturality, and Immigration 2018-2020 proposes to build a privileged, respectful, and inclusive space where its specific signs of identity and culture can find their place.[13]" (Gobierno Vasco, 2018, p.10)

Seeing that diversity is put forward as an inherent element of the BAC, it would be incoherent for Basque institutions to then promote policies that would not respect that same principle for those immigrants that settle in the region.

Once having understood why this pro-diversity element fits with the values and ideas that are part of the Basque society's identity, as presented by the BAC's institutions, we now must focus on why interculturalism specifically, among all the models that have a positive perspective on diversity, has been chosen to be the BAC's approach.

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[12] "La inmigración extranjera ha acentuado un rasgo que ya tenía la sociedad vasca: su diversidad." (Gobierno Vasco, 2022, 5)

[13] "[...] partiendo de la base de la diversidad que ha caracterizado al País Vasco a lo largo de su historia, que se expresa y concreta un amplio pluralismo cultural y político, en un dualismo lingüístico y en una variedad de mentalidades y hábitos de comportamiento social, este V Plan de actuación en el ámbito de la Ciudadanía, Interculturalidad e Inmigración 2018-2020 propone construir un espacio privilegiado, respetuoso e inclusivo donde tengan cabida sus señas de identidad y cultura específicas." (Gobierno Vasco, 2018, 10)

First, I would like to contest a hypothesis found in some of the literature regarding sub-state nations and diversity governance. Some authors claimed that sub-state nations tend to choose a specific model of diversity governance that is different from that of the central state, as an intentional move to express its distinctiveness (Adam, 2018; Conversi & Jeram, 2017; Barker, 2010). As nothing was found in the document analysis to support this idea in the case of the BAC, a question was dedicated to it during the interviews. All four interviewees denied that this was a relevant factor influencing the BAC's choice for interculturalism. Indeed, they argued that there is no specific model of diversity governance in Spain as a whole. As i3 put it, the reason for the BAC to opt for an intercultural model and to not follow Spain's totally laissez-faire strategy was simply *"because managing diversity correctly is very beneficial to society*[14]*"* (i3). Thus, the choice for interculturalism was not a strategic decision taken by the BAC to deliberately distinguish itself from the Spanish state.

One of the actual reasons why interculturalism was chosen in the BAC, as mentioned by i3, is the fact that we are currently in a post-multicultural era, where the intercultural model is now the most popular model in diversity policy after seeing the pitfalls of multiculturalism (i3). Nonetheless, I would go further and argue that the model is especially appropriate for the BAC and other sub-state nations because of its distinctive element, the relational feature. This feature allows for national minorities and immigrant minorities to be considered and accommodated in one same diversity model, instead of seeing them as two entities that exist separately and with opposing interests. Interculturalism in this case makes the space for institutions to promote interaction between minorities, in order to find connections that can benefit them.

The connecting element that the BAC's plans focus on for this relational feature is linguistic diversity, as it is a point in which national and immigrant minorities' interests can coincide. Among the main goals of the V and VI Plans is to raise awareness about linguistic diversity and non-discrimination across the BAC (Gobierno Vasco, 2022, p.30; Gobierno Vasco, 2018, p.30). This obviously tackles the needs of immigrants and their rights to maintain their cultural and linguistic heritage, but it also allows the BAC's government to include measures that promote the learning and use of the Basque language within the same policies, because defending linguistic diversity also implies promoting minority languages (El País, 2015; Gobierno Vasco, 2015; Gobierno Vasco, 2011).

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[14] "porque gestionar bien la diversidad es muy beneficioso para la sociedad." (i3).

But the plans go further as they also mention Basque language as a "constituent element of interculturalism" in the BAC (Gobierno Vasco, 2022, p.113; Gobierno Vasco, 2018, p.112), and many of the specific measures related to the relational feature and living together are meant to promote interaction between immigrant and minorities' cultures. This becomes very clear as the measures related to this principle of interaction include the:

"Detection, enumeration, and promotion of proactive actions that, at the municipal or neighborhood level, promote the interaction of different collectives that make up these areas and create shared spaces, including all actions that bring Basque language closer to the foreign ancestry population and promote social gatherings around linguistic diversity and coexistence.

[...]

An intensive search will also be conducted to investigate the cooperative and collaborative relationships between the sectors of "euskalgintza[15]" and linguistic diversity that have strengthened mutual recognition between Basque speakers and collectives of different origins, cultures, and languages, promoting gatherings around linguistic diversity and coexistence." (Gobierno Vasco, 2018, p.121)

This particular understanding of the relational feature is what makes interculturalism especially attractive for sub-state nationalist governments when creating diversity policy, because it allows for national minorities to also be included in the picture, and to protect elements like linguistic diversity which can favor both national and immigrant minorities' interests simultaneously and within one same policy. That is why interculturalism could be the answer for sub-state nationalists in other regions as well, because it makes it possible to find specific elements that represent a common ground between national and immigrant minorities, and through the relational feature, that element can be strengthened by promoting positive interaction among all minorities.

To summarize, the principles promoted by the BAC's sub-state nationalist government, which are based on an understanding of the Basque society as a diverse and welcoming one, eased the adoption of pro-diversity policies that had long been promoted by other actors that worked in the field of migration and diversity. While interculturalism in particular, as a pro-diversity model, was introduced thanks to the initiative of local actors, it is also a model that fits the interest of the national minority which the sub-state nationalist government defends. It is a model that creates a space for both national and immigrant minorities to be taken into account in a broader diversity framework, and allows for the

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[15] Euskalgintza refers the movement in that promotes the knowledge and use of the Basque language.

connecting elements between those groups to be strengthened. This is what made the intercultural model especially appropriate for governing the ever-growing diversity in sub-state nations like the BAC.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The aim of this thesis was to understand what brought the Basque government to adopt interculturalism as the model to guide the BAC's diversity policy. By doing so, I sought not only to have an in-depth analysis of an understudied case like the BAC, but also to fill a gap in the research. Indeed, there has been a "local turn" in migration and diversity studies in recent years (Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017), but most of the literature focuses on the local perspective of migration and diversity governance. Comparatively, little has been said about how sub-state nations, or in general regional actors within states, respond to this new and complex reality in their territories (Adam, 2018). The topic for this thesis was brought about by the fact that there are various sub-state nations which have opted for an intercultural approach to diversity governance in their regions, including the BAC. Through this analysis I wanted to understand what are the specific features of a sub-state nation that might favor the adoption of this particular model. For this reason, and focusing on the BAC's case, the analysis tries to answer the following question: *What factors explain the choice for an intercultural approach to diversity by the government of the Basque Autonomous Community (BAC)?*. This main research question was then divided into two more specific sub-questions: *SQ1: What was the policy-making process for the BAC's intercultural policies?* and *SQ2: What factors favored the adoption of an intercultural approach by the BAC's government?*.

The first sub-question was answered through the second section of the analysis, where the policy-making process and the role of MLG were explained. Thanks to the document analysis and the interviewees' knowledge of said process, it became clear that the adoption of interculturalism as the model to guide the BAC's diversity policy was gradual. Although interculturalism was mentioned from the very beginning of this journey, the first three plans did not include a significant amount of measures based on intercultural policies, and only presented the model in a symbolic and rather superficial way. At the local level, however, some initiatives promoting positive interaction were already taking place at the time, and their intercultural approach gained even more support when three Basque cities joined the "Intercultural Cities" program of the CoE. Coincidentally, interculturalism as an approach to diversity governance was adopted seriously in the BAC's policy at the same time as local

actors gained a more significant role in the policy-making process, that is, with the V and VI Plans. It is possible to conclude that the introduction of interculturalism in the plans was a bottom-up evolution encouraged by the participation of local actors in the policy-making process and by the recognition of the successful intercultural initiatives that had been taking place at the local level.

By analyzing the policy-making process we can understand *how* interculturalism arrived at the BAC's diversity policy, but we still need to answer the second subquestion and understand *why* it was deemed as the most appropriate model for the Basque context. On the one hand, the adoption of a pro-diversity model like interculturalism was in line with the discourse that the sub-state nationalist government had around the BAC: the region is portrayed as welcoming of immigrants and diversity, partly because of its past of emigration, partly because of the Basque society's inherent diversity even before growing international immigration. Besides, on the one aspect where the sub-state nationalist government could have chosen to push more assimilationist measures, in regards to the protection of Basque language, no need was seen to oblige immigrants to learn the language as a requirement for becoming part of the BAC. Therefore, opting for a pro-diversity approach and rejecting assimilationism was in line with the government's understanding of the BAC, its identity and its reality.

Moreover, the very feature that distinguishes interculturalism from other pro-diversity approaches, the relational feature that promotes positive interaction among different cultural communities, might be the characteristic that makes this model popular among sub-state nations. It allows their governments to find an element that is common to both the national and immigrant minorities, and by basing positive interaction policies around that element, they have the opportunity to strengthen both groups and protect their interests at the same time and within one same diversity framework. In the case of the BAC, that element is linguistic diversity. Linguistic diversity has been defended in the Basque region by those who want to protect the Basque language, because protecting linguistic diversity necessarily implies protecting minority languages (El País, 2015; Gobierno Vasco, 2015; Gobierno Vasco, 2011). At the same time, it is also an element that is positive for many immigrants who want to preserve their linguistic heritage when arriving at the BAC and building a new life there.

The application that the BAC has effectuated of interculturalism, by identifying the aspect that can help connect national and immigrant minorities through a common ground, is a response to a concern often found in the literature, that the national minorities would see

immigrant minorities as a threat to their claims (Medda-Windischer, 2018; Turgeon & Bilodeau, 2014). With this intercultural approach it has been possible to find the link that can help connect these groups and avoid conflicts that could arise from their seemingly opposing interests.

As mentioned at the beginning of this thesis, the analysis presents some limitations that must be taken into account. On the one hand, it is a single case study, which means that the findings might offer some hints about why the intercultural model has been chosen in similar contexts, but eventually they are only showing the reality of the BAC. If we want to understand how diversity governance has been approached in other sub-state nations, more research would be needed to analyze similar cases. On the other hand, the analysis for this thesis was based on the theory around diversity governance and interculturalism in sub-state nations, as well as on policy documents and the policy-making process. This means that little has been said about the actual implementation of the analyzed policies, and whether or not they have been successful at creating the desired connection among national and immigrant minorities that policymakers sought. Ultimately, models of diversity governance might seem promising in theory, but their correct application to a specific context is a complex process, and the success of these types of policies is subject to a variety of factors, many of which are beyond institutional control. Further research should be conducted in this field so as to understand how these types of policies are implemented in regions like the BAC, and to see if the models that fit perfectly in theory actually work when faced with reality.

6. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Throughout this thesis project I have had the opportunity to take an in-depth look at the policy-making process and at the policies behind the BAC's diversity governance. It has allowed me to see the very positive aspects that have been promoted by the BAC's institutions (a participatory process, a transversal approach that includes all government departments, an inclusive approach that tries to include immigrants within Basque citizenship, etc.). However, there are some areas that could be improved, so for future policy-making in the BAC's diversity governance field, I would like to present the following recommendations:

1. Transparency of the policy-making process: the VI Plan, which is currently in its implementation phase, has a section in which the methodology for its elaboration is explained. However, it does not say which specific organizations were involved in the policy-making process and to what degree. In order to better assess how open and

participatory the process really was, it would be interesting to see which actors took part in which phase, and how their claims were reflected in the plan.

2. Including immigrant voices in the process: because no specific immigrant organization was mentioned as part of the process, we cannot know to what degree immigrant communities' claims were taken into account. For future plans, it is important to make it a priority to ensure immigrants have a minimum degree of involvement in the elaboration of the plans. If there are no immigrant organizations able to do this (participate in meetings, give feedback, etc.), at least there should be an effort to consult immigrant communities even if they are not organized into a group (through surveys or individual interviews, for example). Also, and more linked to the actual content of the plans, if the respect for diversity is to be taken seriously as a basic principle for the BAC's policies, some kind of measure should be implemented to promote more immigrant representation in the BAC's institutions.

3. Bringing intercultural initiatives to the regional level: as explained previously, the aspect of interculturalism that distinguishes it from other models, and makes it an attractive choice for the BAC, is the relational feature translated into policies that encourage positive interaction. The VI Plan includes a variety of measures in this vein, but all of them are to be carried out at the municipal level. Although it is logical as positive interaction is easier to promote at the governance level closest to citizens, if interculturalism is to be the chosen model at the BAC, I believe more regional intercultural initiatives should be proposed.

To sum up, for future diversity policy, the BAC institutions and the actors participating in its elaboration should focus on making the process as transparent as possible, so that it is clear which organizations have contributed and how. At the same time, a priority should be to include immigrants or immigrant organizations into the process, to make sure that their voices are heard and that the plans do not include any measures that could be harmful to them. Lastly, for interculturalism to truly become the model of the BAC, more regional initiatives should be promoted with positive interaction at their base.

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Información y formulario de consentimiento

Información

Introducción

La entrevista en la que participa forma parte de mi investigación para el trabajo de fin de máster en "Gobernanza de la Migración y la Diversidad" para la universidad Erasmus de Rotterdam. El trabajo se centra en la adopción de políticas interculturales en la Comunidad Autónoma del País Vasco.

Si tuvieran alguna pregunta adicional acerca de este trabajo, puede contactar con Elena Etxepare Buissan a través de:

- Email: elenaetxepare@gmail.com
- Teléfono: (+34) 653626900

Recolección de datos

La investigación para este trabajo de fin de máster se realiza a través de dos métodos complementarios: análisis cualitativo de políticas públicas y entrevistas semi-estructuradas. Las entrevistas se basan en tres preguntas abiertas sobre conceptos que requieren una mayor clarificación una vez realizado el análisis de las políticas públicas. Las respuestas se transcriben simultáneamente durante la entrevista. Las preguntas no hacen referencia a información personal sobre el/la participante.

Posibles inconvenientes y riesgos

No existen riesgos físicos, legales o económicos asociados a su participación en este estudio. No es obligatorio responder a todas las preguntas. Su participación es voluntaria y puede renunciar en cualquier momento.

Reembolso

La participación en la entrevista no conlleva reembolso.

Confidencialidad y protección de datos

Los datos recopilados se utilizarán para un análisis agregado y no se incluirá información confidencial o datos personales en los resultados de la investigación. Los datos se almacenan en un lugar seguro y se conservarán durante 10 años.

Compartir datos

Los datos se compartirán con el profesor P. Scholten (supervisor) con el propósito de investigar y redactar el trabajo de fin de máster, obligatoria para completar mis estudios en la Escuela de Ciencias Sociales y del Comportamiento de la Universidad Erasmus de Rotterdam.

Participación voluntaria y derechos individuales

Su participación es voluntaria y puede renunciar en cualquier momento. Tiene derecho a solicitar más información sobre la recopilación y análisis de datos, o a retirar el consentimiento y solicitar la eliminación de los datos antes de que se anonimice el conjunto de datos o se envíe el manuscrito para su publicación. Puede ejercer sus derechos contactando a Elena Etxepare Buissan.

Si tiene alguna queja con respecto al procesamiento de datos personales en esta investigación, por

favor contacte a Elena Etxepare Buissan.

Formulario de consentimiento *TFM: Políticas interculturales en la CAPV*

Al firmar este formulario de consentimiento, confirmo que:

- Se me ha informado sobre el propósito de la investigación, la recopilación y almacenamiento de datos, según se explica en la hoja de información;
- He leído la hoja de información, o se me ha leído;
- He tenido la oportunidad de hacer preguntas sobre el estudio, y las preguntas han sido respondidas adecuadamente;
- Acepto voluntariamente participar en esta investigación;
- Entiendo que la información será tratada de forma confidencial;
- Entiendo que puedo dejar de participar en cualquier momento o negarme a responder cualquier pregunta sin consecuencias;
- Entiendo que puedo retirar mi consentimiento antes de que se presente el conjunto de datos para su aprobación.

Adicionalmente, doy permiso para:

	Sí	No
Doy permiso para que se utilicen las respuestas de la entrevista (de forma anónima).		
Doy permiso para que se utilicen citas exactas de la entrevista (de forma anónima).		

Nombre de la/del participante: _____

Fecha: _____

Firma: _____

_____

9. APPENDIX II: INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM (IN ENGLISH)

Information and Consent Form

Information

Introduction

The interview you are participating in is part of my research for my master's thesis in "Governance of Migration and Diversity" at Erasmus University Rotterdam. The study focuses on the adoption of intercultural policies in the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country. If you have any additional questions about this study, you can contact Elena Etxepare Buissan at:

- Email: elenaetxepare@gmail.com
- Phone: (+34) 653626900

Data Collection

The research for this master's thesis is conducted through two complementary methods: qualitative analysis of public policies and semi-structured interviews. The interviews are based on three open-ended questions about concepts that require further clarification after analyzing the public policies. The responses will be transcribed simultaneously during the interview. The questions do not refer to any personal information about the participant.

Potential Inconveniences and Risks

There are no physical, legal, or economic risks associated with your participation in this study. It is not mandatory to answer all questions. Your participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time.

Reimbursement

Participation in the interview does not involve reimbursement.

Confidentiality and Data Protection

The collected data will be used for aggregated analysis, and no confidential or personal data will be included in the research findings. The data will be stored securely and will be retained for 10 years.
Data Sharing The data will be shared with Professor P. Scholten (supervisor) for the purpose of investigating and writing the master's thesis, which is mandatory for completing my studies at the Erasmus University Rotterdam School of Social and Behavioral Sciences.

Voluntary Participation and Individual Rights

Your participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time. You have the right to request more information about data collection and analysis, or to withdraw your consent and request the deletion of data before the dataset is anonymized or the manuscript is submitted for publication. You can exercise your rights by contacting Elena Etxepare Buissan.

If you have any complaints regarding the processing of personal data in this research, please contact Elena Etxepare Buissan.

Consent Form for Master's Thesis: *Intercultural Policies in the CAPV*

Upon signing of this consent form, I confirm that:

- I've been informed about the purpose of the research, data collection and storage as explained in the information sheet;
- I've read the information sheet, or it has been read to me;
- I've had an opportunity to ask questions about the study; the questions have been answered sufficiently;
- I voluntarily agree to participate in this research;
- I understand that the information will be treated confidentially;
- I understand that I can stop participation any time or refuse to answer any questions without any consequences;
- I understand that I can withdraw my consent before the dataset is submitted for approval

Additionally, I give permission to:

	Yes	No
I give permission to use the information from my interview (anonymously).		
I give permission to use quotes from my interview (anonymously).		

Name of the Research Participant: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

_____

10. APPENDIX III: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The semi-structured interviews began with a brief introduction of the topic of my thesis and the issues that we would touch upon with the questions. Then, I explained how the data from the interviews would be used (storage, anonymity, use of quotes, etc.) and obtained verbal consent. Once the necessary explanations were offered and doubts were resolved, I conducted the interview based on the following questions:

1. In general, compared to other approaches to diversity governance, such as multiculturalism or assimilation, what are the advantages that interculturalism offers in the BAC?

2. In the BAC, there has been an explicit choice in favor of an intercultural approach. In your opinion, what are the main factors that have influenced that choice? Is one of them the fact that the BAC already had its own cultural and linguistic diversity? If so, to what degree was this important? I would also appreciate it if you could touch upon the fact that some actors push for assimilationist policies in the area of language, and if this has ever been considered when elaborating the BAC's policies.

3. In the last two plans there are several references to immigration as an asset to the BAC, and to interculturalism as a way to "create a new and diverse Basque society". One of the core ideas of the plans is also to establish a connection between this new diversity and Basque language and culture, whereas there are no similar mentions of Spain and Spanish culture. Besides, there are no mentions of collaboration with Spanish institutions at any point of the policy-making process. Does this reflect a desire by the BAC's institutions to create a policy approach that is explicitly different from that of Spain?