

**THE COMPLEX PLASTICITY  
OF MEDIATION**

**INTERCULTURAL MEDIATORS IN CATALONIA**

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## ABSTRACT

Intercultural mediation programs have been recently developed in Catalonia, mostly by local governments, in order to deal with growing non-EU immigration flows. Intercultural mediators, working mostly on the relationship between African immigrants and public local welfare services, accomplish a very wide variety of tasks. The current paper, on the basis of ethnographic fieldwork, examines the profile and roles of this emerging profession, concentrating on the activity of mediators in managing intercultural conflict and brokering between cultures. It analyzes whether these mediators act as third party neutrals bridging cross-cultural negotiations and achieving intercultural dialogue, or as tools in the hands of public welfare professionals who aim to attain the normalization and integration of immigrants through informal processes and it assesses the extent to which the work of intercultural mediators in Catalonia can be viewed as mediation and as intercultural. The paper attempts to provide a rich description of the current landscape, which suggests various possible interpretations, in order to contribute to the ongoing process of definition of intercultural mediation in Catalonia and thus to a better understanding of cross-cultural mediation in general.

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