

Cultures of protest: there is no immigrant-non- migrant divide

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As a consequence of migration flows, the Western European democracies are facing a growing number of residents who are excluded from political representation. In my MA thesis, I have investigated whether and how first- and second-generation immigrants express their political views in non-electoral arenas across 16 Western European democracies. Many immigrants have lived for years in their country of residence without having citizenship of that country. Either, they renounce on acquiring citizenship, or the naturalization regime requires a long period of residence before getting access to political rights. Several problems arise: Immigrants without citizenship are deprived of political representation, and this might have consequences for the integration process of immigrants. The political institutions of Western European democracies become less representative of the resident population, as an increasing share of those entitled to vote live abroad, and growing numbers of residents, who are affected by the policies of a country, are deprived of political rights. This can

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reduce the quality and legitimacy of a democracy.

Political participation is however neither limited to the electoral arena nor to the national level. There are further channels of participation: one might, for instance, join a political party, take part in street protests, or join consumer boycotts. Such non-electoral forms of political participation do not require citizenship, hence, they can potentially be performed by all immigrants regardless of them being citizens or not.

These reflections motivated me to write my master thesis on the non-electoral political participation of immigrants in Western Europe and to investigate how their participation is influenced by their integration, citizenship, differences between the first and second generation and their socio-economic resources. Moreover, I have analyzed the impact of the conditions of naturalization in the immigrant's country of residence on the non-electoral participation. Firstly,

the results suggest that first generation immigrants have lower participation rates, but that already the second generation immigrants catch up to the participation rate of the majority population. Also, they have shown that the higher immigrants' integration and their educational level, the higher the chance that they participate politically through non-electoral forms. How liberal a naturalization regime is, does hardly impact the political participation of immigrants. However, the political culture does have an impact, in the sense that immigrants adapt to the political culture of their country of residence. To sum up, the results indicate that immigrants in Western European democracies are influenced by similar factors in their non-electoral political participation compared with non-migrants.

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