Chapter 3: Local politics and immigration: mobilizing immigrant associations beyond small-scale cities

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**Abstract**

Cities, towns and rural areas may respond differently to similar challenges posed by the arrival of immigrants. While New York or London are large-scale, global cities; residential cities outside of Madrid or Lisbon may be considered small-scale ones. I propose an analytical framework that problematizes the political mobilization of immigrant associations in small-scale cities through a multi-scalar lens. I illustrate the utility of this framework by studying the mobilization of immigrant associations in the 2010 local census controversy in the Catalan city of Vic, Spain. I highlight the potential that small-scale settings have for the multi-scalar mobilization of immigrant associations.

**Key words**

Immigrant associations, mobilization, multi-scalar, politicization, small-scale cities

# 3.1. Introduction

The prominence of the city as a field of interaction for immigrants, local population and institutions in host societies is a well-documented phenomenon in the literature on their political participation (Borkert and Caponio, 2010; Giugni and Morales, 2011; Scholten, 2013). However, the focus on gateway or large-scale cities has neglected the potential of small-scale cities in the mobilization of immigrants as well as their interconnectedness (Alexander, 2004; Penninx et al, 2004). It has been proven that immigration is a field that involves the interaction of actors not only in national or supranational settings, but also at the local level (Zapata-Barrero et al, 2017). The local, as an arena for the accommodation of immigrants, cannot be taken as homogenous (Campomori and Caponio, 2017). In fact, cities, towns and rural areas may respond differently to similar challenges posed by the arrival of newcomers (Giugni and Morales, 2011). Moreover, these differences make it necessary to differentiate between small and large-scale cities and the dynamics of participation that emerge in each.

I propose to study the political mobilization of immigrant associations in small-scale cities through a multi-scalar lens*.* I argue that the politicization of immigration in small-scale cities encourages immigrant associations to mobilize non-state actors (e.g. other immigrant associations, NGOs, church-based organizations, trade unions) located in settings outside of their own. By focusing on this scale, I explore the potential that apparently irrelevant settings have for the multi-scalar mobilization of immigrant associations. My argument brings the debate of small-scale cities into the literature on the political participation of immigrants at the local level. Immigration as a politicized issue on the local political agenda incites immigrants to put forward their claims through local and (even) national institutions (Koopmans and Statham, 2000).

Small-scale cities are the opposite of global cities such as New York, London, Frankfurt or Barcelona. They can be defined as those smaller or less relevant settings in terms of demographics, economic capital and access to power centres (Glick Schiller and Caglar, 2009, pp. 189-190). Like large-scale settings, small-scale cities are also subject to the forces of international migration. The definition is the result of the theory of locality proposed by Nina Glick Schiller and Ayse Caglar (2006, 2009), where they analysed the integration of migrants through the lens of city scales. The authors argue that the way immigrants integrate at the local level is linked to the “differential positioning of cities determined by the articulation of political, cultural and economic power, within regions, states and the globe” (Glick Schiller and Caglar, 2009, p. 188).

Caglar and Glick Schiller (2015) call immigration scholars to “move beyond gateway cities and also include towns and rural areas”. Multi-scalar dynamics acknowledge that “each locality is differentially positioned in relationship to multiple networks of globe-spanning power including those that link them unevenly to other localities, regions and nation-states around the world” (Glick Schiller, 2015, p. 2276). Applying this logic implies that immigrant associations in small-scale settings mobilize other organizations not geographically located in their immediate context. The multi-scalar approach places a small-scale setting in a relational space that is interconnected to other city-scales at the regional, national and international levels.

I begin with a presentation of an analytical framework that problematises small-scale cities as contexts with the capacity to mobilize immigrants in various settings. Then I demonstrate the utility of this framework by applying it to the case of the local census controversy that occurred in the city of Vic in Catalonia, Spain, from 2009 to 2010. Finally, I conclude by calling for further research on small-scale cities from a comparative, cross-city perspective.

# 3.2. Towards an analytical framework

The shift towards a more city-centred focus started at the end of the 1990s, when the agency of immigrants at the local level became a matter of interest for scholars focusing on their political participation (Ireland, 1994; Fennema and Tillie, 1999). Studying the political engagement of newcomers in cities contributed to understanding the choices they made to access local institutions (Bousetta, 2000; Koopmans and Statham, 2000; Alexander, 2004; Koopmans et al., 2005). The literature on the political participation in the city has been roughly divided into two approaches: one that deems the city as embedded in a hierarchical relation where immigrants mobilize according to national models of accommodation (Koopmans and Statham, 2000; Jones-Correa, 2005; Alba and Foner, 2015) and a localist approach that deems the city the context that influences the dynamics of mobilization the most (Garbaye, 2005; Però, 2005; Ramakrishnan and Bloemraad, 2008; Giugni and Morales, 2011; Zapata-Barrero, 2015; De Graauw and Vermeulen, 2016). It is precisely the national-localist dichotomy that I seek to problematize through the lens of multi-scalar analysis in small-scale cities.

The study of the city as a field for the mobilization of immigrants has two important criticisms. The methodological nationalism, especially in the national approach, tends to underestimate the role of local political and cultural features in shaping immigrant mobilization (Giugni and Morales, 2011: 4; Triviño-Salazar, 2017). Second, in the national and localist approaches, researchers empirically situate most of their studies in large metropolitan areas or those that have some relevance in geographical and administrative terms (see for more extensive critiques Glick Schiller and Caglar, 2009; Caglar and Glick Schiller, 2015). It is somehow assumed that large cities will contain more diversity than smaller or less relevant settings. The apparent focus on sizable urban spaces in terms of ethnicities and demography is derived from the methodological understanding that more internal variation implies richer data (Glick Schiller and Caglar, 2009, p. 183).

I take small-scale cities as my primary unit of analysis. I consider small-scale cities as settings with as much potential to mobilize immigrants as large-scale ones. From here I explore the different dynamics of mobilization that emerge in connection with and within this setting. The multi-scalar approach places a small-scale setting in a broader space of mobilization that is connected with non-state actors in other small and large-scale cities on the regional, national and international levels. Using a multi-scalar lens focuses on a relational approach through which “the political borders of states do not delimit the work of the social” (Glick Schiller, 2015. p. 2). Based on the literature on city scales and the political participation of immigrants, I propose three dimensions to study the political mobilization of immigrant associations in small-scale cities through a multi-scalar lens, identifying: (1) the small-scale city; (2) the event that triggers the mobilization of immigrants in small-scale settings; and (3) the multi-scalar mobilization of immigrant associations in small-scale cities.

Bonizzoni and Marzorati (2015, p. 12) identify small-scale cities (1) as those that share the characteristics of what they call “micropolitan gateway” cities. They are characterized by having a relatively small population and economy and a more limited access to power resources as compared to other cities in their surrounding area (e.g. regions and provinces). In spite of their scale, these cities are poles of attraction for international migrants and their families to settle in. For example, the small-scale cities of El Prat de Llobregat in the Barcelona Metropolitan Area and the city of Desio near Milan have received immigrants from all over the world during the last two decades. Neither city has large populations compared to their large-scale neighbors and they have small economies. However, in both, their city governments put proactive and reactive policies that acknowledged (or not) the presence of newcomers on the political agenda (Zapata-Barrero, 2011; Bonizzoni and Marzoratti, 2015).

As in any other receiving society, the politicization of immigration in small-scale cities has produced welcoming or hostile environments for them. However, the context-specific political features of small-scale settings may favor different organizational and mobilization patterns among immigrants seeking institutional recognition (Bonizzoni and Marzoratti, 2015, p. 2). These features are linked to the formal and informal ties developed by local state and non-state actors, the configuration of political power and, more importantly, the proximity that small-scale dimensions offers for social and political relationships (based on Cappiali, 2016; Triviño-Salazar, 2017).

Talking about mobilization implies identifying the events that trigger (2) an environment for cooperation or confrontation with institutions in small-scale cities (Ambrosini, 2012; Cappiali, 2017). Triggers are events that spark immigrants to mobilize as a collective actor (Ruedin and Meyer, 2014, p. 2). The concept draws on the work of political scientists interested in the processes behind the politicization of issues (Berkhout and van de Brug, 2013; van der Brug et al, 2015). Practical examples of triggers can be the approval of local policies of exclusion (Ambrosini, 2012) such as the ban on opening prayer halls aimed at Muslim residents, security measures to dissuade people from gathering in public spaces in areas with a high immigrant presence (e.g. removing benches, deploying police), policing based on ethnic profiling or a burqa ban in public spaces. They can also involve acts of violence between the local and immigrant population, such as the clashes in El Ejido, Spain, in 2000 or more recently in the city of Salt, in Catalonia in 2010.

Understanding the story behind an event that becomes a trigger is necessary to frame the context in which the mobilization of immigrant associations occurs. Triggering events may take place in large or small-scale settings, but their implications in smaller cities may deeply affect the relationships between state and non-state actors and residents in general due to city dimensions and social proximity.

It can be assumed that triggering events which mobilize immigrant associations in small-scale cities can garner the support of non-state actors beyond this setting (e.g. other cities at the regional, national or international levels). When the ties between immigrant associations and these non-state actors provoke joint mobilizations then we are referring to processes of multi-scalar mobilization (3).

Building on the work by Glick Shiller (2015) and Caglar and Glick Schiller (2016), multi-scalar mobilization can be defined as the process that links immigrant associations with non-state actors in settings beyond where the mobilization starts. Linking a small-scale city to multi-scalar mobilization provides immigrants with a space to voice their claims and seek support and legitimacy from non-state actors located in different settings. The mechanisms of mobilization may come in the form of state (e.g. forums of debate and consultation, commissions, class action suits) and non-state avenues (e.g., ad-hoc networks, protest movements). As an example, in the city of Brescia, Italy, the protest movement started by a group of irregular migrants to push for a more expedited resident regularization process evolved to a national movement joined and supported by non-state actors across the country (Cappiali, 2016). It is precisely the capacity to mobilize actors across scales what defines the multi-scalar potential of the mobilization.

# 3.3. Applying the framework to the case of the local census ordinance in Vic

Vic, a small-scale city an hour from Barcelona city, became the protagonist of one of the most important controversies in immigration policy-making in Spain in January 2010. On 27 December 2009, Vic became the first city to pass an ordinance forbidding undocumented immigrants from participating in the local census. The mayor at the time, Josep Vila d’Abadal, also announced that the city would inform the national police of any irregular migrants in their local census. In Spain, local residents must sign up with the local census (*padrón*) to have access to public services (i.e. education, health, subsidies, public housing) (Garcés-Mascareñas, 2011). Mid-January, the State Attorney, after a request for legal advice from the city of Vic, recommended not applying the ordinance. The local government accepted and withdrew the restrictive requirements. However, Convergence and Union (CiU), the centre-right political party governing Vic, raised a question before the European Commission on the local ordinance in April 2010. The Commission suggested that member states should give their residents a legal status or remove them from their territory (El Mundo*,* 2010). This move was interpreted as an endorsement of the local government’s action because CiU claimed that if Spain was unable to regularize the situation of these individuals then Vic was allowed not to register them.

The local government claimed that cities with limited resources had to fill the vacuum left by the national government in controlling the arrival of irregular migrants . Vic’s claim came as a direct challenge to the distribution of competences that national and sub-national authorities had in the accommodation of immigrants. While the national level had specific attributions on the legal status of immigrants, organizing migration flows or granting certain political rights, the sub-national level had powers related to social and economic rights and the promotion of certain political ones, such as the creation of immigrant associations (Miret, 2009, p. 51).

On a methodological note, the empirical part of the study relies on a qualitative multi-method research which includes desk research on newspaper articles on the controversy and official documents and 13 semi-structured interviews carried out between March and May, 2013 with councilmen in the local government (3), the opposition (3), immigrant associations’ representatives (5) and pro-immigrant NGOs’ representatives (2). The time period covered was from December 2009, when the controversy started, to June 2010, just after the largest public demonstration of civil society groups in the city to reject xenophobic policies occurred. Next, I apply the three dimensions of the framework described above to identify the main elements that made a small-scale city like Vic the setting for the mobilization of immigrant associations through a multi-scalar lens.

## Identifying the small-scale city

Vic meets all the requirements to be considered a small-scale setting for the accommodation of immigrants. It is located in the interior of the Barcelona province, 70 km northwest of the city of Barcelona, the capital of Catalonia. Although the city is quite wealthy by Catalan standards, it has a relatively small economy in absolute terms. In 2012, the GDP was €1.4 billion (in comparison to Barcelona’s which was €72 billion) and the GDP per capita was €35,000, which is far higher than the Catalan one of €27,000 and the Spanish one of €22,562 (IdesCat, 2016). The city’s economic structure is dependant on Barcelona and is based on the agro-industrial sector, mainly cattle and swine, and the service industry, based on hospitality and its own local public university.

Vic is a relatively small city population-wise by Catalan standards. It has 42,500 residents and ranks 28 in the 50 largest cities in Catalonia (IdesCat, 2016). During the arrival of hundreds of thousands of immigrants to Spain in 2000-2008, Vic mainly attracted low-skilled workers from the Maghreb region, Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America. They tended to work in the agro-industrial and service industries mentioned above. At less than 2% of the foreign population at the end of the 1990s, the city by 2016 had more than 9,000 foreign-born residents (or 23%) (EU and non-EU) mainly from Morocco, China, Nigeria, Poland, Senegal and Ecuador (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas, 2017). Most of the newcomers moved to neighborhoods in the southern part of the city, and most specifically, to El Remei. This is a working-class neighborhood where Spanish immigrants coming from other parts of the country settled in the 1960s.

Politically speaking, Vic may be considered a conservative city with strong ties to landed elites and merchants (Simó, 2011). The city has been governed by the center-right Catalan party, Convergence and Union (CiU), since the first democratic elections after the Franco regime in 1979. From 2007 to 2011, covering the period when this controversy occurred, the city was governed by a coalition government led by CiU with the Socialist Party of Catalonia (PSC) and the Republican Catalan Left (ERC). The controversial extreme right party, Platform for Catalonia (PxC), and the left wing Initiative-Greens (ICV) and Popular Unity Candidates (CUP) were in the opposition. In the 2011-2015 term, the city was once again governed by a coalition government led by CiU with ERC. PSC, PxC, CUP, ICV and the centre-right Catalan Solidarity (SI) were in the opposition.

Vic offers a decidedly open institutional environment for immigrant policy-making. In the last two decades, it has introduced several reception and integration policies to guide how immigrants are accomodated (Triviño-Salazar, 2016). As an example, the city’s educational model has been praised for desegregating public schools by evenly mixing immigrant children with local students and by paying special attention to newcomer students (Simó, 2011, p. 147). Another example is the inclusion of immigrant leaders in non-binding consultative bodies in local policy-making. In these bodies, government representatives, immigrant leaders and civil society actors discuss issues affecting immigrants or other policy areas of interest for immigrants. Immigrant leaders participate in the local immigration and housing commissions, both under the Council of Vic, and in the co-existence and security commission (City of Vic, 2017).

In spite of its size, Vic has actively encouraged the creation and presence of civil society actors involved in the reception and accommodation of immigrants. The city webpage vicentitats.cat offers a directory of all the civil society organizations (including immigrant associations) registered in the city. The existence of pro-immigrant Catholic organizations (e.g. Casal Claret and Caritas), NGOs for the socioeconomic integration of youth (e.g. Espai Tapis), the municipal reception network (Xarxa d’Acollida Municipal) formed by NGOs and immigrant associations and the local chapters of immigrant organizations sponsored by the major Catalan trade unions are all noticable. In Vic, there are more than 20 sociocultural associations formed by immigrants according to the city sponsored webpage vicentitats.org. Although most of Vic’s immigrant associations are built along national or regional lines, there are some that are not connected to particular ethnic or national groups. An important reference for these organizations is the Immigrant Association Steering Committee *(****Coordinadora d’Associacions d’Immigrants)*,**which is made up of 12 well-known associations to encourage networking and pool resources. The presence of a civil society as strong as the one described above gave the feeling of a well articulated and efficient environment for the accommodation of immigrants (Representative immigrant association, interview, 9 May 2013), a feeling dispelled by the local census controversy.

## Identifying the trigger

The local census controversy made it evident that the city’s political environment was becoming contaminated by hostile attitudes from some local officials and politicians. A triggering event, such as the politicization of the local census, changed the perception of the city as welcoming to immigrants. Moreover, it put a small-scale setting on the national map due to the noise generated by this specific measure. To understand how the city got to that place, we should mention three different prior triggers.

First, the presence of the extreme right wing party PxC since 2003 changed what had seemed to be an unpolarized and relatively conflict-free setting for immigration policy-making (Triviño-Salazar, 2016, p. 31). This party, as a political entrepreneur, cashed in on the discontent from certain sectors of Vic’s society generated by the arrival of immigrants in recent years. Their presence in the political scenario and their increasing popularity in the polls made the different governing coalitions look weak at managing immigration. The apparent problems of co-existence in the buildings of El Remei neighborhood and the use of public space created low-intensity tensions that were well exploited by this party (Veus Diverses representative, interview, 9 May 2013).

Second, the 2008 economic crisis, swelling unemployment and the intensification of PxC’s discourses were seen as causes behind the coalition government’s decision to pass an ordinance with a more symbolic than real effect. After giving the impression of an open and welcoming institutional setting, the coalition shifted their approach to a more restrictive one based on the securitization of immigration. The ordinance’s approval in a context of economic crisis aimed to show the electorate that the governing political parties were managing the presence of immigrants. However, the role played by opposition political parties (ICV and CUP), local immigrant associations, the Catholic organization*,* Caritas, the organization, SOS Racisme, and the most important trade unions in Catalonia were essential in raising awareness among the public about the issue (Caritas representative, interview, 16 May 2013).

Third, the involvement of political actors at other levels magnified the controversy. It is precisely through opposition to the ordinance that the media became an important actor in broadcasting the issue to regional and national levels. In fact, thanks to the salience of the issue in the media, the discussion of the local census took centerstage in the debate within CiU and ERC at the Catalan level. CiU was divided: one part of the party supported the mayor while another considered the measure unnecessary. ERC disagreed with the decision taken by their local counterparts, however, they expressed the need to have a serious debate on the issue at the Catalan level. For the PSC, the situation was more complex since they were in governments in Vic, Catalonia and Spain. The Spanish PM, José Luis Rodriguez-Zapatero, opposed the measure and asked Vic’s Socialist councilmen not to support the ordinance (La Vanguardia, 15 January, 2010)). The People’s Party (PP), the other major national Spanish party, requested a change in the 2009 Foreigners Law (FL) to make it more restrictive and more clear in terms of the competences that Spanish cities had in immigration management (El País, 18 January 2010). Vic brought to the surface similar situations that were happening in other small-scale Spanish cities where street-level bureaucrats were deciding the requirements to register a resident in the local census (Domingo and Sabater, 2012, p. 53).

## The processes of multi-scalar mobilization

The opposition of immigrant associations along with NGOs and community leaders to the ordinance in Vic and the salience of the issue provoked their mobilization in the city and in other parts of Catalonia and Spain. The multi-scalar mobilization of immigrant associations in Vic followed three different processes that occurred from the moment the ordinance was approved. All three reinforced the regional and national character of the mobilization that started in the city of Vic.

The fact that the local census ordinance affected irregular migrants helped to unite the positions of the different associations representing immigrant interests. The legal status of individuals was a cross-sectional issue for immigrant associations, national or ethnic origin notwithstanding. The immigrant leaders representing different interests in Vic felt threatened by this change in the local legislation. The ordinance epitomized the pressure exerted by the xenophobic and racist discourse that had penetrated local politics in previous years. The most visible immigrant associations in the city decided to act together in their opposition to the local government’s action. As some interviewees pointed out, the Steering Committee had an emergency meeting right after the ordinance was approved. The meeting sought to design different strategies to oppose, on the one hand, the local census ordinance and, on the other, the endorsement of extreme-right political actors by the local government (Colombian Association of Vic, interview, 16 May 2013).

The formal strategy was to meet the local authorities and express their discontent with this approach to newcomers. Part of this strategy was also meeting different political leaders in the opposition to garner sympathy and support for their strategy. The local government invited immigrant leaders to discuss the issue. The government also committed itself to creating an immigration commission to advise the city on related issues. While the commission was being implemented, some of the immigrant leaders from the Steering Committee contacted local political leaders and organizations that agreed with their cause. More informally, Veus Diverses, an immigrant association in the city known for their more contestatory positions with local government policies and a member of the Steering Committee, opted to pursue street-level actions against local political actors with the support of left wing actors such as the CUP party. These actions included directly asking political leaders to publicly condemn the presence of PxC and distributing flyers attacking well-know extreme right leaders in the city, among others (Unity Against Fascism responsible, interview, 30 May 2013).

Immigrant leaders, NGOs and activists in Vic contributed to mobilizing non-state actors with a regional and national presence. As the politicization of this particular issue reached other administrative levels, immigrant leaders from Vic sought solidarity and support for their cause from organizations outside of Vic. The fear that the Spanish government might change the Foreigners Law or grant cities the right to decide whether or not to register immigrants spurred the support and mobilization of different groups throughout the country (Ellakuría, 2010)*.* Several umbrella organizations such as the Gallegan Forum on Immigration, the Federation of Latin American Associations (FEDELATINA) and other organizations with presence all over Spain supported the position of immigrant associations in Vic. SOS Racisme*,* a Catalan pro-immigrant organizationwith strong ties to immigrant associations in Vic, played its part by getting activating other organizations at the regional and national levels involved (Caritas representative, interview, 16 May 2013). This situation highlighted how connected the apparently small immigrant organizations in small-scale cities were with larger ones that could exert pressure on decision-makers at different levels of government.

At the individual level,Veus Diverses focused its efforts on establishing relations with multiple actors at different levels. During and after the politicization of the local census controversy, this association worked with SOS Racisme (Veus Diverses representative, interview, 9 May 2013). Together and with the collaboration of immigrant and local leaders, they established a parallel forum in addition to the Steering Committee that mobilized anti-fascist activists. Some of them who were part of the UK umbrella organization Unite against Fascismhelped create a local chapter in Vic to counter the spread of xenophobic discourses and actionsin November 2010 (local Unite against Fascism representative, interview, 30 May 2013).

A third and final process was the emergence of polarized views on the strategies to use to oppose the local government months after the local census ordinance. While the Steering Committee discussed the issue with the local government and was invited to the newly created immigration commission of the City of Vic, some of their associations followed non-state channels by organizing large demonstrations in the city along with other Catalan human rights organizations and trade unions (CUP councilman, interview, 16 May 2013). A major demonstration on May 29, 2010 had the support of SOS Racisme. They, along with human rights activists, organized transportation from Barcelona to Vic for those who wanted to participate. Left wing Catalan parties such as CUP and ICV openly supported the demonstration in Vic (ICV councilman, interview, 9 May 2013). With the exception of Veus Diverses*,* most of the associations from the Steering Committee did not participate in this demonstration. Instead, other lesser known associations in the city participated. Associations from the Steering Committee not participating in this protest felt that less confrontational actions such as participation in institutional forums, participation in city activities and education were more effective.

# 3.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I aimed to problematize small-scale settings as contexts for the multi-scalar mobilization of immigrant associations. Although it is difficult to generalize or advance a deep reflection based on one case, the theoretical effort to put together an analytical framework applicable to the local census controversy in Vic leaves some important observations that may inspire further research.

Unlike more traditional studies of the political participation of immigrants at the local level, this study problematized the city by indicating the difference between large and small-scale cities in immigrant mobilizations. This is a novel approach that makes of scales differentiated spaces of mobilization with various levels of interconnectedness. Leadership in a small-scale setting such as Vic was central to the multi-scalar mobilization of actors. This case shows that the immigrant associations and their leadership at the local level do not act separate from other levels. In fact, their mobilization can assume bottom-up dynamics activating contacts and attracting potential allies or supporters to their cause.

Immigrants as a collective actor in a small-scale city such as Vic demonstrated their capacity to assume mobilization strategies according to their immediate (and not so immediate) setting. Interestingly enough, these strategies were generated by triggering events produced by the context itself. The strategies were diverse and they responded to the profile of the association behind them (more contestatory with local institutions as in the case of Veus Diverses or more mainstream like some associations on the Steering Committee). Accordingly, immigrants assumed mobilizing strategies that connected with different actors in other settings (e.g. the involvement of the Catalonia-wide SOS Racisme in opposition to the ordinance). Immigrant associations, as a collective actor, have agency and this agency can assume different forms that respond to the political opportunities in the host society. The political opportunities in a small-scale setting such as Vic are part of a broader relational space circumscribed by the multi-scalar mobilization of immigrant associations.

Although this study is a very modest contribution to introduce small-scale cities into the literature on the political participation of immigrants, further research could lead to theoretical models that problematize scales as spaces of differentiated mobilization. This study also opens up the scope for comparative studies of small-scale cities as contexts that mobilize immigrants through organizations, social movements and individual activism. Small-scale settings have a great potential to demonstrate that the local configuration of power, the incorporation channels the local government offers immigrants and the incorporation strategies they develop may create mobilization dynamics beyond a limited geographical space. In the end, mobilization in these settings denotes recognition of the immigrants’ presence by local residents and state and non-state actors.

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