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*Immigrant Organizations
and the Politicization
of Cultural Diversity in the City*

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The Migration Policy Centre (MPC)

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The Migration Policy Centre at the European University Institute, Florence, conducts advanced research on global migration to serve migration governance needs at European level, from developing, implementing and monitoring migration-related policies to assessing their impact on the wider economy and society.

Rationale

Migration represents both an opportunity and a challenge. While well-managed migration may foster progress and welfare in origin- as well as destination countries, its mismanagement may put social cohesion, security and national sovereignty at risk. Sound policy-making on migration and related matters must be based on knowledge, but the construction of knowledge must in turn address policy priorities. Because migration is rapidly evolving, knowledge thereof needs to be constantly updated. Given that migration links each individual country with the rest of the world, its study requires innovative cooperation between scholars around the world.

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Abstract

The literature on the local political participation of immigrants has focused on how institutional actors shape their organization and mobilization; however, these studies have not sufficiently explored the role of specific institutional actors in opening or closing access to the political process. This is more evident when certain aspects of immigrant cultural diversity are politicized through restrictive discourses and policy actions. Based on this, I ask in the present paper: How do immigrant organizations relate to political parties during specific moments of the politicization of cultural diversity at the local level? I argue that the way both actors relate to each other under these circumstances is strongly influenced by the 'engagement strategies' used by political parties to seek support for their positions. Based on the literature related to the political participation of immigrants from a political opportunity approach, I analyze the anti-Romanian-Roma campaign in the city of Badalona and the burka ban in public buildings in the city of Lleida, both in Catalonia, Spain. Initial findings show how political parties instrumentalize immigrant organizations to either legitimize their position or to mobilize them against other political parties. They also show how local dynamics define the interaction between these actors during politicization.

Key words: politicization, cultural diversity, local level, political parties, immigrant organizations

1. Introduction

An interest in the organization and mobilization of immigrants in host societies has motivated studies on their political participation (Penninx *et al.* 2004; Caponio 2005; Giugni and Morales 2011). However, this literature has not sufficiently explored the role of specific institutional actors in opening or closing access, as an organized actor, to the policy process.

The aforementioned situation is more evident under circumstances such as the politicization of certain aspects of immigrant cultural diversity through restrictive discourses and policy actions at the local level. This level is considered the primary place where the interaction between institutional actors and immigrants is more evident in response to their claims and aspirations (Borkert and Caponio 2010: 15).

In light of this evidence, I propose an empirical question: How do immigrant organizations relate to political parties during the politicization of cultural diversity at the local level?

To answer this question I analyze two Catalan cities, which mirror the politicization of cultural diversity in a political party and in a branch of local government in 2010-2011. In the first case, I explore the anti-Romanian-Roma campaign led by People's Party (PP) in Badalona and, in the second case, the burka ban in public buildings in Lleida.

I draw on the literature on the political participation of immigrants from a political opportunity approach (Ireland 1994; Koopmans and Statham 2000; Garbaye 2005). In doing so, I argue that the way both actors relate under these circumstances is strongly shaped by the 'engagement strategies' used by political parties to seek support for their positions. These strategies are linked to the way specific issues are politicized and the position taken on them. This argument is inspired by Patrick Ireland's (1994: 10) "institutional channeling theory", where political parties are deemed as "institutional gatekeepers who control access to the avenues of political participation available to immigrants".

The paper is organized as follows: first, I introduce the analytical framework to study these two actors; second, I present the selected cases; third, I analyze them according to the analytical framework proposed and, finally, I draw some conclusions.

2. Political parties and immigrant organizations: an analytical framework

In this part, I refer to the literature on the political participation of immigrants from a political opportunity approach; after this, I justify the choice for political parties and immigrant organizations under circumstances of politicization. Finally, I propose how I intend to study these two actors.

2.1 Political participation from a political opportunity approach

The interest on how institutions affect the collective organization and mobilization of immigrants has made the political opportunity approach a tool to explore their participation in host societies (Ireland 1994; Bousetta 2000; Koopmans and Statham 2000; Garbaye 2005). The political opportunity approach mainly studies those institutional and cultural factors that explain immigrant choices and strategies in accessing political institutions. The basic tenet is to understand whether national or local characteristics shape immigrant participation and mobilization.

At the national level, the political opportunity approach has defended the existence of field-specific political opportunities for immigrants which are related to citizenship regimes and integration models (Koopmans and Statham 2000: 24). In this sense, these studies have found that national characteristics in the political environment shape immigrant identities and patterns of organization and participation. Empirical studies have implied doing cross-national comparisons where the political participation of immigrants is argued to occur along nationally defined lines (Ireland 1994; Koopmans and Statham 2000; Odmalm 2004).

Conversely, a large amount of research has highlighted the different ways citizenship regimes and national accommodation models are understood and implemented at the local level (Caponio 2005; Borkert and Caponio 2010; Giugni and Morales 2011). This has meant questioning the primacy of the national-level in the local institutional arrangement, which provides political opportunities for immigrant participation. Moreover, this perspective has centered on those local factors in the political environment that shape the political participation of immigrants and the policy-making of accommodation (Penninx *et al.* 2004: 8).

The study of actors and their interactions at the national and local level are a defining characteristic of this literature. However, the focus on the interactions of specific actors has not yet been pursued. This situation begs for studies that can unveil the importance of specific political actors for immigrants. As a response to this gap, I propose to focus on political parties, as an institutional actor, and immigrant organizations at the local level and during the politicization of cultural diversity. I will, now, explain the reasons that justify my choices.

2.2 Political parties, immigrant organizations and the politicization of cultural diversity

In the *institutional channeling theory*, political parties are considered an "institutional gatekeeper", which can promote or hinder immigrants from accessing immigration policy-making (Ireland 1994: 236). In this sense, they have been signaled as those responsible for politicizing immigration over the last two decades (Celis *et al*. 2011: 5). Moreover, it has been assumed, in the literature, that left-wing parties have favored liberal, multicultural or cosmopolitan policies, while right-wing parties have supported more restrictive positions (Hepburn 2009).

In this equation, immigrants are not considered mere objects of laws, policies and discourses but also agents who pursue their own interests (Bauböck 2006: 10). As agents, they organize along ethnic, cultural, religious or national lines and emerge as intermediaries between institutions and newcomers (Bengtsson 2007: 1). As rational actors, they are aware of the potential political parties have in putting forward their claims and their aspirations in the policy process (based on Rucht 2004: 208).

Immigrant organizations are considered key players in accommodation because they can be a potential partner in developing and implementing related policies (Penninx 2011: 5). Moreover, they can stand as "the expression of mobilized resources and ambitions" for their communities.

Accommodation in host societies has not been exempted from controversy. Koopmans *et al*. (2005: 3) state that "the political mobilization around issues of immigration and ethnic relations – by immigrants, against immigrants, and on behalf of immigrants – constitute since the early 1990s the most prominent and controversial field of political contention" in host societies. This situation makes of the politicization of certain aspects related to the cultural diversity of newcomers a reality (Koopmans *et al*. 2005: 205). The politicization of these aspects may mean a clash in the political sphere between institutional actors and immigrants (Zapata-Barrero 2009: 35). These aspects are mostly related to their ethnic and religious diversity or to the material redistribution of resources: e.g. a specific community perceived advantage of welfare payouts (Koopmans *et al*. 2005: 148).

In this sense, policies act as conduits that regulate and manage the politicization of cultural diversity: for example, the banning of religious symbols in public schools in France. Political parties,

because of their capacity to shape the policy agenda, and immigrant organizations, because of their capacity to mobilize claims, emerge as actors in this process and in moments of conflict.

Within this overall context, the local level is paramount, the place where institutional actors act and react to the challenge of accommodating newcomers in host societies (Borkert and Caponio 2010: 23). It is the context of proximity that generates "a renegotiated *modus vivendi* between the local power and ethnic interests" (Garbaye 2005: 286).

After locating this study within the debate mentioned above and justifying different choices related to my main question, I will now explain how I will analyze the two selected actors.

2.3 How to study the relations between the two selected actors?

I will base my analysis on the literature on political participation at the local level from a political opportunity approach and the conceptualization of the politicization of cultural diversity. In doing so I will include two main factors that I consider relevant in the framing context of this study: the politicization of specific aspects related to cultural diversity and the position assumed by the two selected actors. After this, I will propose the use of two strategies to analyze political parties in relation to immigrant organizations given these circumstances.

The first factor is related to understanding how cultural diversity is politicized at the local level. It is based on a historical institutional approach, like the one applied by Garbaye (2005) in his study of the access ethnic candidates had to local councils in France and Britain; this factor refers to the way local political elites politicize specific aspects of the diversity brought by immigrants. In this respect, it is necessary to trace back, in time, those elements which make the issue a divisive one in the discourse of local political elites.

The second factor is to understand the position assumed by political parties in the government and in opposition and in the relevant immigrant organizations on the politicized issue. Based on Koopmans *et al*. (2005: 146) on the politicization of immigration, this factor is important in understanding how an institutional actor and a non-institutional one relate to each other in terms of their similar or different positions.

The politicization of certain aspects of cultural diversity produces tensions between institutional and non-institutional actors (Koopmans *et al*. 2005: 146). When it happens institutional actors may experience the need to legitimize their position through the re-stabilization and re-routinization of the patterns of interaction with non-institutional actors (Koopmans 2004: 36). In this context, political parties, which are part of decision-making bodies, look for strategies to engage immigrant organizations when a contested aspect of cultural diversity emerges (Triviño 2013: 20).

Depending whether a political party is in government or in opposition, two possible strategies can be applied: legitimizing or mobilizing strategies.

The first one departs from the view that political elites need to establish relations with some immigrant organizations legitimizing their decisions in terms of immigration and accommodation (Toral-Martinez 2008: 7). Hence, legitimacy can be defined as the general belief that the actions of an organization or institution are desirable, suitable and appropriate within a given social system (Vermeulen 2006: 49).

Legitimizing strategies involves the search, by those political parties, which politicized cultural diversity, for support for their restrictive discourse and policy actions. In this sense, the need for legitimacy when in government can make them look at immigrant organizations as a way to show to their electorate that their discourse or that their policies enjoy wide consensus. For immigrant organizations, this can be an opportunity to get better access to the policy process, while securing recognition in a context of competition with other organizations (Triviño 2013: 15).

Legitimizing strategies can come through consultative or clientelistic mechanisms: the former are those which engage immigrant organizations through specific dialogue and consultation spaces to manage a politicized issue. The latter refer to those mechanisms which do not involve any type of consultation but rather offer material resources in exchange for support from an organization, which claims to represent immigrants.

Mobilizing strategies depart from the view that groups, social networks, crowds and social units may organize for political goal when they disagree with views proposed by the dominant political elites (Badie *et al.* 2011: 1589). This implies that some institutional and non-institutional actors may have an alternative view to the dominant one on how to manage a given politicized issue locally.

This means the search, by political parties and immigrant organizations, for alternative mechanisms to oppose to restrictive discourses and policy actions and to offer an alternative model. These strategies entail the formation of coalitions and activism platforms that offer a different view to manage the specific aspect politicized. We might be talking here of protests, popular gatherings or lawsuits.

The next part of this article will describe the background and the two cases selected. This part will be of use to then analyze these cases under the analytical framework proposed.

3. Badalona and Lleida: background and case-selection

Catalonia, a Spanish region located in the north-eastern part of the country, witnessed a rapid increase in the number of immigrants in a relatively short period of time (Garces-Mascareñas 2011: 72). While in 2000, its population was 6.2 million of which 181,000 were foreign residents (2.9%); in 2012, its population was 7.5 million of which 1,186,000 were foreign residents (15.68%) (IdesCat 2013). Considering this sharp demographic change, the accommodation of newcomers has been a major challenge (Burchianti and Zapata-Barrero 2012: 3). Further, this challenge has grown bigger in a context of economic scarcity where public institutions must accommodate not only the claims and aspirations of newcomers but also the claims of the local population.

In the Spanish context, the responsibility for proposing and implementing reception and accommodation policies correspond to regional and local governments (Garcés-Mascareñas 2011: 73). This makes regional governments, but more importantly cities, important arenas for the political participation of immigrants as collective actors (e.g. organizations). In this situation, political parties in the local councils become fundamental actors in the proposition of policies for reception and accommodation. Chart 1 maps the main political parties in Catalonia.

Chart 1. Main political parties in Catalonia

Party	*Left/right cleavage*
Partido Popular (PP) (People's Party)	Centre-right
Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya (PSC) (Socialists' Party of Catalonia)	Centre-left
Convergencia i Unió (CiU) (Convergence and Union)	Centre-right federation of two parties: Democratic Convergence of Catalonia (CDC), and Democratic Union of Catalonia (UDC)
Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (ERC) (Republican Left of Catalonia)	Left
Iniciativa per Catalunya – Verds (ICV) (Initiative for Catalonia– Greens)	Left
Candidatura de Unitat Popular (CUP) (Popular Unity Candidates)	Left
Ciutadans (C's) (Citizens)	Centre-right

Source: Own elaboration

Against this background, Catalonia experienced the politicization of specific aspects related to cultural diversity preceding the May 2011 local elections. During this time mainstream political parties (namely, PP, PSC and CiU) hardened their discourse on immigration and diversity by targeting certain immigrant communities in some cities (Burchianti and Zapata-Barrero 2012: 12).

Based on this, Badalona and Lleida emerged as visible cases illustrating this situation. They became focal points to controversies related to the politicization of cultural diversity in 2010-2011.

Badalona and the anti-Roma Romanian campaign

This city (pop. 220,000/15% foreigners), located in the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona, represents the first case study. More specifically, the case study is related to the political discourse against the Romanian Roma community in the 2011 local elections. In April 2010, Xavier Garcia-Albiol, then candidate for mayor for the PP, handed out a flyer in the local market of Sant Roc neighbourhood (*La Vanguardia* 2010a). The flyer included the words "anti-social behaviour", "crime" and "insecurity" and a question: "Is your neighbourhood safe?". It depicted a picture of a balcony with a banner stating "We do not want Romanians". This situation produced widespread reactions against the PP campaign, one of the largest mainstream Spanish political parties.

Instead of changing his rhetoric, Garcia-Albiol confirmed his words and pushed a campaign with the slogan "Many think it, I say it". As the date for the elections approached, PP's discourse in Badalona got 'louder' as well as Garcia-Albiol's popularity in the polls. His claims were based on the "problematic" presence of immigrants, especially Romanian Roma in the neighbourhoods of Artigas, La Salut and Sant Roc, the three of them working-class neighbourhood on the outskirts of the city. By the time of the elections, Garcia-Albiol won and promised to keep "problematic" immigrants in check.

Lleida and the burka regulation

This city (pop. 137,387/21% foreigners) located in the west part of Catalonia, close to the Pyrenees, is the second case study. 29 June 2010, the local council approved a modification to the local law of civility where it forbade access to any public building to any person wearing burka or niqab or other accessories such as helmets or balaclavas (Diari Segre 2010). This modification, popularly known as the burka regulation, was preceded by a debate on women's rights and dignity where Lleida's socialist mayor stated in a local TV show that he would propose this measure to defend gender equality (Rios 2010).

Although the government accepted that the city had few women wearing the burka, the measure was officially justified on security grounds (Rios 2010). It raised widespread controversy not only in the city but all over Spain, since Lleida became the first Spanish city to pass this kind of regulation. Civil society organizations considered the measure an intrusion in religious affairs which provoked the stigmatization of Islam, as well as an attempt against women's right to choose.

Summary of the cases in Chart 2.

Chart 2. Summary of the cases

City	Population (2010)	% Foreigners (2010)	Most representative nationalities (2012)	Term	Ruling parties	Opposition parties
Badalona	218,886	15% (32,203)	1. Pakistan (7300) 2. Morocco (5800) 3. China (3850)	2007-2011	PSC coalition with CiU and ERC	PP, ICV
				2011-2015	PP minority gov.	CiU, PSC, ICV
Lleida	137,387	20.96% (28,798)	1. Romania (7200) 2. Morocco (5000) 3. Algeria (1500)	2007-2011	PSC majority gov.	CiU, PP, ERC, ICV
				2011-2015	PSC majority gov.	CiU, PP

Source: Own elaboration with data from IdesCat (2013)

After describing the background and case-selection, I will now discuss the empirical findings in the two selected cities.

4. Findings

This part is organized according to the analytical framework presented above. Two techniques were used to gather information: desk-research and semi-structured interviews. For the first technique, I used Catalan newspapers related to the cases and the two main actors. For the second technique, I did 25 interviews with 4 councilmen, 3 Roma organizations and 2 pro-Roma NGOs in Badalona and 4 councilmen, 1 party's local president, 5 Maghrebian organizations, 5 pro-immigrant NGOs and 1 local officer in Lleida.

4.1 The process of politicization

Badalona

The politicization of the Romanian Roma community in Badalona was underpinned by a socio-demographic and political process.

The first process was informed by the arrival of newcomers in large numbers in the last decade. From less than 2% of foreign residents in 2000 the city had 15% foreign residents by 2012 (IdesCat 2013). Immigrants coming from all over the world settled down in low-income neighbourhoods located on the outskirts of the city, namely: Artigas, La Salut, Llefia and Sant Roc. Around 2008 these neighbourhoods started receiving Romanian Roma who moved into apartment blocks located in areas that were home to local Roma, Pakistani and Moroccan residents.

This situation produced clashes between local residents, immigrants and Romanian Roma over alleged non-civic behaviour in public spaces (García 2010). It also resulted in concerns from the local Roma who felt that Romanian Roma members were 'invading' a territory that had been 'conquered' by them several decades ago.

"*There is a moment when the Romanian Roma started assuming certain social roles that the local Roma used to have, like street vending, scrap metal dealers and all that*" (pro-Roma NGO representative, interview, 6 May 2013).

The second process is derived from PP's role in politicizing immigration in the 2007 electoral campaign. During this campaign, Xavier Garcia-Albiol, then candidate for mayor, focused on the conflictive presence associated with foreign residents in Badalona. He released a video-documentary called '7 minutes' where laymen complained about the presence of immigrants in the city by linking it to incivility and crime.

In 2010, PP tried a similar electoral strategy to the one they had used in 2007; however, this time they picked a specific community: the Romanian Roma. Garcia-Albiol's discourse claimed that their presence led to all the evils associated with immigrants in Badalona. The overarching argument during PP's campaign was to defend the city against the threat posed by "uncivilized foreign residents" particularly from the "global south". Referring to this Garcia-Albiol stated in a newspaper:

"*Here integration policies do not work, but strong police and judicial measures. Lock them up or send them back to their countries*" (Rosa 2010).

Lleida

The politicization of the religious diversity through the burka regulation in the city of Lleida was underpinned by the relations local institutional actors had with local Muslim communities. During the last decade the local management of Islam proved to be a controversial matter for local political elites, led by the PSC, and Muslim communities.

When referring to the burka regulation, this restrictive policy cannot be considered an isolated situation based on women's rights or the need to protect the city against terrorism. First it is necessary to refer to the relations the local government had with certain sectors of the Maghrebian Muslim community since the early 1990s when immigrants from Maghreb region and Sub-Saharan Africa arrived.

In Lleida, the Muslim community can be divided into two main communities and several smaller ones. Of the two main communities, the first is led by Imam Morro Jaiteh and is more "open and liberal"; and, the second, is a more "close and conservative" community led by Imam Abdelwahab Houzi. Imam Houzi's community became prominent in the last decade because of Houzi's attempts to build a new mosque (City of Lleida's officer, interview, 5 May 2013). As time passed, the planning and building of Houzi's mosque encountered opposition from the local population due to the location and Houzi's more fundamentalist view on Islam. After many controversies, the local government stopped the project and looked for other Maghrebian Muslim communities to work with. In the meantime, Houzi's community grew larger, while the perception among the local population that the Socialist government was being too soft with his demands and views also grew.

These situations along with the need to show to the socialist electorate that PSC had a specific plan in the management of Islam became determinants to pass the burka regulation. This measure was interpreted as a symbolic step to show acceptable religious practices in the city.

4.2 Position on the politicization

Badalona

The position of political parties and immigrant organizations assumed in this particular controversy was quite homogeneous. The only exception was PP, the one which politicized the issue. PP justified their position because of the perception of a threat against the local population's social well-being and values. In this respect, this party made ethnic focus a security and social concern.

The other political parties in the local council (PSC, CiU, ICV and ERC) positioned themselves against this discourse. PSC, which was leading the ruling coalition when PP's discourse emerged, considered that this party "polluted the whole city" (PSC councilman, interview, 15 April 2013). For

the other parties, the opposition to PP's discourse was based on the commitment that they should have in promoting social cohesion (CiU councilman, interview, 10 April 2013).

Moreover, ICV, which became one of the most outspoken critics of PP's campaign, considered this situation pure demagogy, an electoral strategy and nothing more. Although ICV recognized that some issues related to the Romanian Roma community were real; they were linked to more general problems like access to education and the need to improve the conditions of marginalized groups.

"*So you have a demagogue like this who only says: no worries, I will fix this in no time, I will sort them out and it will be over*" (ICV councilman, interview, 21 March 2013).

As for Roma organizations, representatives of local Roma organizations in Sant Roc neighborhood fought the PP's discourse. They justified this position on the fact that this discourse labeled this community as conflictive, a stereotype that they claimed they had fought against for decades. Also because they felt they were representing the interests of Spanish Roma, Romanian Roma and all the Roma communities as a single people (Representative of Roma organization, interview, 4 May 2013).

Although local Roma organizations in Badalona positioned themselves against this discourse, Roma patriarchs, who were considered the authority within this community, ended up supporting PP's discourse and position. This situation granted votes to the PP in the local elections in 2011.

Interestingly enough, there was one small Roma organization which publicly supported Garcia-Albiol's discourse against the Romanian Roma. This organization based their public support on the perception that their presence threatened the image of the local Roma who lived in Sant Roc. In a statement released by them, they justified their position:

"*We feel represented by the facts presented by Xavi Garcia-Albiol, president of Badalona's People's Party, regarding the problems of co-existence that are happening*" (*La Vanguardia* 2010b).

Lleida

The burka regulation was voted though in June 2010 by the PSC, as the proponent, PP and CiU. Conversely, ERC abstained while ICV voted against.

When representatives from the three political parties, which supported the burka regulation, were interviewed, their arguments showed a strong perception of threat against the local system of values. For them it was good western values vs. bad non-western values. These arguments became evident through interviews with a PSC councilwoman responsible for immigrant affairs and a PP councilwoman who supported the regulation:

"*If you present a proposal in a city where everyday there are more veils, everyday you see more people with burka and the people* [local population] *are not responding well to these inputs that come from the Muslim community... something has to be done*" (PSC councilwoman, interview, 6 June 2013).

"*...when you externalize this religious freedom, you cannot go against these values... So this is something good for the city of Lleida... here there are some rules and some values*" (PP councilwoman, interview, 5 June 2013).

In the case of ERC, they abstained from voting. For them, the justification not to vote was based on the need to study, in depth, this issue and all its implications (ERC former councilwoman, interview, 5 June 2013). ICV voted against the regulation. Although they disagreed with the burka, they believed in another approach to the issue based on education and dialogue (ICV local president, interview, 3 June 2013).

For Maghrebian organizations which were visible in the media during the controversy, two things became evident: there was not a homogenous position on the issue and their justification denoted closeness to those defended by certain political parties, in this case PSC.

The first situation was linked to the perception that the burka regulation was based on the use of Islam by PSC, CiU and PP for electoral ends (Representative Maghrebian Muslim organization, interview, 4 June 2013). This was also connected to the concern the PSC had at being identified as being too soft towards Muslim immigrants who followed Imam Houzi.

"*They only looked after their partisan interests… from that moment (the burka debate), it came out the problem with the salafists that brought the mosque issue* [Imam Houzi's community]. *I mean… if you wear beard and a tunic….they hate us...*" (Representative Maghrebian socio-cultural organization, interview, 3 June 2013).

In the second situation some organizations saw those conservative sectors as a threat to the local system of values. They tended to justify the local government and the political parties' position on the burka regulation.

"*You see a burka if you are not bothering anyone; however, if you are you must adapt to the rules of that country…. I always say, the burka is an adoption from Afghanistan, it has nothing to do with religion...*" (President Maghrebian socio-cultural organization, interview, 5 June 2013).

An interesting point on Maghrebian associations is that basically all of them were male-dominated (Maghrebian socio-cultural association, interview, 4 June 2013). In spite of the 'feminist' angle of the official discourse, it was not possible to detect the political involvement of female leaders from the Maghreb region in the controversy.

4.3 Engagement Strategies

Badalona

When the PP became the ruling political party in May 2011, they started implementing several securitizing actions in line with their electoral discourse. Some of these actions were the creation of a new police station in Camarón de la Isla Square, which is located in Artigas neighborhood (home to a large Pakistani, Moroccan and Roma residents). There was also the removal of water springs and benches from a square where "uncivil residents" allegedly spent the day and the 'cleaning' of the local census of those residents without proper documentation.

When it comes to Roma organizations, PP used a *legitimizing strategy* during the campaign and in its first year in government.

During the campaign, they approached local Roma patriarchs who were influential in the Roma community in exchange of access to the local government if they won. These leaders legitimized PP's discourse during the electoral campaign by using clientelistic mechanisms within their own community. By winning support from the local Roma community PP promised to expel Romanian Roma from their neighborhoods.

"*They told patriarchs:* [with us] *everything is going to be better because the only ones who should be here are the 'payos'* [White people in colloquial language] *and you*" (Representatives from Roma organizations, interview, 4 May 2013).

When in government, PP's securitizing approach, with an eye on the Romanian Roma community, was legitimized through the funding of several Roma organizations. Moreover, these clientelistic mechanisms led to the creation of new Roma organizations during the first year of Garcia-Albiol's government. These organizations were linked to the Roma leaders who had established relations with this party during the electoral campaign.

"They represent nobody, because they don't have members. Look at the level of manipulation and they say it is representative of the Roma community" (Roma Organizations' platform, interviews, 22 April 2013).

The whole situation showed how they used a legitimizing strategy based on *clientelistic mechanisms* with the local Roma community.

Another party which had a role when PP politicized the Roma issue was the opposition party, the ICV. In this process they employed a *mobilizing strategy* to engage certain local Roma organizations. As explained by its councilman, this situation was born from the need to offer alternatives to the PP discourse against this community (ICV councilman, interview, 21 March 2013). By joining forces against this discourse, ICV and five Roma organizations created a platform where they denounced Garcia-Albiol's discourse and looked for answers to the daily problems within the community. This platform is called "*Som Badalona*" ("We are Badalona").

It was not possible to detect any engagement strategy between the other three parties (PSC, CiU and ERC) and Roma organizations. As explained by the councilman from PSC and CiU, the fact that they were no longer in power made them neglect their relations with Roma organizations.

Lleida

In Lleida, it was possible to identify the PSC deploying engagement strategies with Maghrebian organizations, CiU with its own immigrant organization and ICV's unsuccessful attempt to deploy their own strategy in the context of the burka regulation.

The PSC employed a *legitimizing strategy* during the approval of the burka regulation and its aftermath. This strategy was based on contacting those organizations representing residents from Morocco and the Maghreb region. These organizations, which were already close to the local section of the PSC, were informed about the decision to pass this regulation and the justification for its approval. Through the interview with the socialist councilwoman responsible for Lleida's immigration affairs, it was possible to establish this strategy through the use of *consultative mechanisms*.

"I spoke, before speaking as a local government official, with people from the political party about this issue, people who come from other countries and belong to these communities and organizations. The truth is that everyone perfectly agreed on this. Some of them even told me: it was about time. Imagine that…" (PSC councilwoman, interview, 6 June 2013).

This situation implied the support from part of the Maghrebian community which was affected by the alleged stigmatization of Islam. For this party, it was necessary to demonstrate that Maghrebian Muslims supported their position; this at the end would legitimize their actions before the electorate. In this sense, a representative from a Maghrebian organization, which supported PSC, confirmed the relations that they and other organizations had with this party on the burka regulation.

"When you have a big problem (like this one), you need to look for people, political parties which can help you; allies so you can be reinforced and impose what you want…" (President of Moroccan socio-cultural organization, interview, 5 June 2013).

CiU used a *legitimizing strategy* of their position through their relations with the organization "*Nous Catalans*" ("New Catalans"). This organization, with a presence all over Catalonia and without a particular geographical focus, was created by CiU members. In Lleida, Nous Catalans' members of Moroccan origin lent support to CiU's position on the burka regulation (President Maghrebian socio-cultural organization, interview, 3 June 2013).

On the other hand, ICV made attempts to establish a relation with those Maghrebian associations, which were closer to their views, so they could make a common front against the regulation (ICV local

president, interview, 3 June 2013). However, organizations close to them did not support their engagement strategy on this matter.

It was not possible to identify any strategy from the other two parties (PP and ERC). They spoke with different organizations during the approval of the burka regulation; however, they did not develop any relation with them.

On the other hand, there were some Maghrebian organizations that unsuccessfully approached local political parties. They alleged that these parties did not want to deal with them because of their activism (in the case of one association) in other controversial issues and because of their perceived religious radicalism (in the case of another association).

"*It is fear, fear because we do not want to receive a red card* [making an analogy from soccer] *and get ourselves expelled from the game…*" (President of Maghrebian socio-cultural organization, interview, 3 June 2013).

The two cases herein discussed shows different patterns in the politicization of cultural diversity and different protagonists in these processes. In spite of this, it is possible to identify how specific issues related to newcomers have a strong polarizing effect at the local level. Moreover, both cases confirm how based on this power two actors such as political parties and immigrant organization emerge as defining ones in this context. Next, I would like to conclude by making some general observations drawn from the cases of Badalona and Lleida.

5. Conclusion

Throughout this paper I have been able to show that restrictive discourses and policy actions employed in a context of electoral competition by ruling and opposition political parties shape the relations between these actors and immigrant organizations. However, the ways these relations are shaped are strongly related by who politicized what and which community this politicization affects.

Under the aforementioned circumstances, I have defended how relevant the engagement strategies employed by political parties are in the way they relate to immigrant organizations. Moreover, the studied cases show that these strategies are not related to, for example, the ideological cleavage a political party has, but to their position of power in the local context.

In this sense, some immigrant organizations relate to these actors based on their interest in the material benefits derived from their access to the policy process, while some others relate to them based on the common views they have on broader issues related to immigration. For the latter, this position might put these organizations further away from the power spheres. That is why smaller parties in the opposition emerge to mobilize their views *vis-à-vis* those political elites, which politicized cultural diversity from a restrictive approach.

All this makes me conclude that immigrant organizations at the local level and under specific circumstances of politicization assume an accommodating character. This accommodating character makes them legitimize those political parties that can offer more power resources as in the cases of PP in Badalona or the PSC in Lleida. Also this character can make them mobilize along with other political parties against those political parties with which they disagree, as in the case of ICV and the platform of Roma associations in Badalona.

For political parties the importance of legitimizing their discourses and actions through immigrant organizations or by mobilizing them is derived, in certain cases, from their need to address parts of their electorate. For the PP, in the case of Badalona, they needed this legitimization to address certain part of the local Roma voters, while for PSC, in Lleida, they needed it in order to appeal to the socialist electorate concerned with the effects of such measure on religious diversity.

Also, it is interesting to observe that, in this context, certain political parties and immigrant organizations chose not to get involved in engagement strategies. This might be due to a cost-benefit analysis where their involvement in certain issues could harm their potential before their constituents (in the case of political parties) or their communities (in the case of immigrant organizations).

In the cases studied here, it is possible to confirm how the "institutional channeling theory" developed by Ireland (1994) applies to political parties at the local level. Accordingly, they act as "institutional gatekeepers" helping or harming the interests of immigrant communities represented through their organizations. In this sense political parties act as either enablers or pacifiers of these claims through the strategies they apply in certain moments of politicization. This at the end has consequences on the potential that immigrant organizations have in becoming partners in the accommodation of newcomers in host societies.

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