Beyond immigrant ethnic politics?

Organizational innovation, collaboration and competition in the Los Angeles immigrant rights movement (1980-2015)

Gnes, D.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

The Rise and Fall of a Class-Based Immigrant Rights Movement in Los Angeles. How Did It Happen?

In 2000, a few hundred people are marching through Koreatown, an area west of downtown Los Angeles. They are holding banners in various languages and chanting slogans in English, Korean and Spanish. In the crowd there are students, local residents and seasoned activists. The Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles, the Central American Resource Center, the Instituto de Educación Popular del Sur de California, the Pilipino Workers Center have all sent some of their staff and members. The march is led by the Korean Immigrant Workers Advocates, or KIWA, as everybody knows the group, an organization founded by two Korean American activists that represents South Korean, Mexican and Central American immigrants in labor disputes with South Korean restaurant owners in Koreatown. The crowd arrives in front of the Elephant Snack, a small restaurant located on Western avenue owned by Mr. Lee, a South Korean immigrant. KIWA executive director, Roy Hong, picks up the microphone. Unless Mr. Lee agrees to pay back wages to 8 Latino workers employed at the Elephant Snack, he says in English, the people gathered there will start a community-wide boycott of the restaurant. The crowd is pleased, and they respond by chanting in Spanish: "Elefante, elefante! Obreros, adelante!" (Elephant, elephant [Snack]! Workers first!). They continue in English, in Korean and in Spanish: "Boycott Elephant Snack!"; "Ko Gee Lee, Bool Meh!" (Boycott Elephant Snack); "Que Queremos? Justicia! Cuando? Ahora!" (What do we want? Justice! When? Now!). The boycott has been launched. It would go on for a year and a half, until the restaurant owner finally caved in.[1]

In 2014, I am in downtown Los Angeles, meeting with a leading organizer from the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA). Before I start asking the actual questions I prepared for the interview, I tell her a bit about myself and my interest in studying immigrant rights groups in Los Angeles. Among other things, I tell her that I am fascinated by how groups such as IDEPSCA or CHIRLA began using popular education back in the 1980s or early 1990s. She looks at me and rolls her eyes. "Oh yeah, of course, popular education...! Back in the day that was innovative, nobody was doing that kind of stuff. But today everyone is doing popular education. And to be honest I don't think new organizations really know what they are doing with it... but it's like part of a checklist, you gotta have it in your projects, because our funders love it!" A few months later I am discussing my first findings with a researcher with extensive knowledge of the activist organizational landscape in Los Angeles. Our conversation turns to KIWA, as I begin asking about what kind of 'radical' campaigns they may be involved at this moment, after their landmark unionization campaigns in the restaurant and market sectors. "KIWA? Now?" he says, skeptically. "They're not really what they used to be ten or fifteen years ago, nowadays the organization's presence is just symbolic."

The story of the contemporary immigrant rights movement in Los Angeles is a fascinating one. As those two small excerpts show, it is also full of contradictions and turning points. The first text recalls the energy of a grassroots action organized by the Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance (KIWA) to support restaurant workers in a legal battle against their employer. Many aspects make this action special: it takes place in an area of

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[1] This excerpt was compiled on the basis of different archival sources. Those include: various authors, "Restaurant Campaign", KIWA 8th Anniversary Dinner booklet (p.17-19), May 5, 2000, box 2/folder 3, KIWA archive; various authors, "Campaign Against Elephant Snack Corner", KIWA 9th Anniversary Dinner booklet (pp. 16-19), April 27, 2001, box 2/folder 3, KIWA archive; author unknown, "Elephant Snack Chant Sheet", ca. 2000, and "Boycott Elephant Snack Corner", ca. 2000-01, box 5/6, KIWA archive. Additional context information provided by Ha (2001).

the city dominated by immigrant businesses, primarily Korean; it has been conceived by two immigrants of Korean origin against a Korean business owner; it has mobilized a constituency of immigrant workers from a variety of ethnic origins, including Korean but also (and primarily) Spanish-speaking immigrants and Mexican Americans, organized around a class identity; it has enlisted the crucial support of organizations representing Mexican and Central American as much as Filipinos and Chinese immigrants. The second text, which recalls informal conversations with two keen observers of local activist dynamics during my fieldwork in Los Angeles, points instead to more recent disenchantment with the 'movement'. While one respondent decries with a cynical undertone the professionalization of immigrant rights activism, and the organizations' structural dependence on external funders, the other rather underscores KIWA's organizational change over the year, which has greatly reduced the organization's ability to be a pivotal actor in current immigrant rights activism.

KIWA is part of a group of immigrant worker organizations established in Los Angeles between the late 1980s and the 1990s. This includes, among others, the Coalition for Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA), the Instituto de Educación Popular del Sur de California (IDEPSCA), the Pilipino Workers Center (PWC) and the Garment Worker Center (GWC). Mostly led by immigrants and by people with an immigrant background, immigrant worker organizations set to politically mobilize and advocate for the most vulnerable strata of the local immigrant population on the basis of a social and economic justice agenda. In the heyday of the LA immigrant rights movement, between the 1990s and early 2000s, immigrant worker organizations were able to bring to the fore the plight of undocumented, low-wage workers while also supporting the transformation of many of them into empowered political subjects. Through day-to-day action towards both abusive employers and unsympathetic state institutions, those organizations positively affected working conditions and more general well-being of hundreds of immigrant workers across Los Angeles. Moreover, by hiring a number of low-wage immigrant workers as staff, developing internal participatory structures and creating worker-led organizations they provided pathways of political participation for non-citizen (and often non-status) immigrants. In their narratives, immigrant worker organizations highlighted how advanced capitalism, institutional racism, gender discrimination and legal precarity were deeply intertwined and conducive to transforming particular categories of migrants into a disposable, super-exploitable proletariat. In their concrete organizational development, through activities as different as service provision, unionization, political education and legislative lobbying, they emerged as innovative hybrid organizations that filled in the socio-political vacuum left by the retreat of state institutions and the weakening of civil society, particularly labor unions. Immigrant worker organizations forged multi-ethnic coalitions and alliances that partially moved away from ethnic-based political mobilization. They imagined collective action on the basis of immigrant class solidarities and workplace-based constituencies. One of these pivotal coalitions was the Multi-Ethnic Immigrant Worker Organizing Network

(MIWON), whose organizational groundwork was laid by the above-mentioned organizations during the Elephant Snack march of 2000 recounted above.

Those organizations, however, have not remained the same over the years. Between the mid-2000s and the early 2010s KIWA abandoned grassroots unionization strategies in favor of affordable housing and labor law advocacy. It decided to focus its efforts on small actions for visibility purposes, while supporting large-scale institutional advocacy campaigns led by labor unions. In parallel, CHIRLA and, to an extent, PWC moved towards institutional advocacy. CHIRLA, in particular, shifted from organizing low-wage immigrant workers to organizing immigrants of Latin American origin. In so doing, it diluted the socio-economic and class aspects of its work in order to strengthen immigrant political power as an 'ethnic bloc', in line with more traditional immigrant political incorporation in local political machines. In contrast, IDEPSCA and GWC continued to focus on undocumented, low-wage immigrant workers and workplace rights, but they ended up significantly downscaling their organizational scope and abandoning most radical actions. Those concurring changes were a significant blow to a cohesive, unified movement of immigrant-led, immigrant rights organization. They marked the end of the most innovative and radical period of the contemporary immigrant rights movement.

This empirical sketch lays out the main theoretical puzzle of this research. First, theory suggests that political opportunities and resources contribute to the growth of mobilizations and cooperation between organizations. Hostile political conditions would lead us to expect low immigrant mobilization. Absence or low levels of resources, such as money or labor, would lead us to expect low organizational capacities and therefore ineffective, short-lived or absent mobilization; and vice versa. However, here we see the opposite. The rise and consolidation of the movement unfolded under adverse conditions, while the decline took place under more propitious conditions. Second, theory suggests that organizational forms, claims and identities align with existing discursive opportunities. In the United States and California, where ethnic and racial politics have historically played a key role in structuring social cleavages, and their prominence has discouraged the formation of class-based and multi-racial political coalitions, we would expect new immigrant organizations to follow such established pattern of political mobilization. Yet, we witnessed the rise of a group of immigrant organizations who adopted a leftist, Marxist-informed intersectional ideology that emphasized class solidarities across ethnic groups.

Immigrant worker organizations were founded in a rapidly changing social, economic and political context. The unprecedented growth of the non-European immigrant population was met with increasing hostility by local politicians and native population and culminated in the passing of anti-immigrant measures such as California Proposition 187 in 1994. Federal legislation such as the Immigration Relief and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986 and the welfare and immigration measures of 1996 contributed to the growth and precarization of an already burgeoning immigrant undocumented

population. Deeply entrenched institutional racism and discrimination affected not only newcomers of non-European origin but also their children, including US natives. Those factors impacted the incorporation of first and second-generation immigrants, affecting their prospects of upward social mobility as much as their ability to participate politically at all levels in Southern California. While shared discrimination provided the common ground for articulating shared grievances, it also contributed to weaken the mobilizing potential of immigrant communities by disempowering them socio-economically and politically. A class-based immigrant movement was also deemed unlikely because, between the 1980s and 1990s, Southern California was hardly a receptive context politically. This applied not only to mainstream public opinion and political institutions, but also to local civil society and immigrant communities themselves.

Paradoxically, the movement began to fragment under more positive circumstances. Political support and resources for general immigrant organizing arguably increased throughout the 2000s and the early 2010s. While migration, particularly irregular immigration, continued to remain a 'hot button issue' among politicians and public opinion alike, significant segments of the local civil society became more receptive to immigrant claims and interests. Inclusive discourses of social and economic justice gained significant traction. Labor unions, in particular, dramatically reversed their stance on undocumented migration and on immigrant organizing, and from the late 1990s began to invest significant resources in immigrant organizing and immigrant organizations. In a similar fashion, local and national foundations substantially increased their financial support to immigrant organizations. Even more strikingly, politicians and public officials of non-European immigrant background finally entered the precincts of institutional power. By 2005, Latino officials occupied both the mayoralty of Los Angeles as well as the highest post in the LA County Federation of Labor. It is therefore surprising that immigrant worker organizations abandoned their most creative, resource-intensive and innovative campaigns and coalitions at this point in time.

Explanations of Los Angeles scholars do not always mesh with the facts on the ground. For instance, Milkman and her colleagues (Milkman 2000a; Milkman 2006; Milkman, Bloom and Narro 2010; Franck and Wong 2004) stress the importance of union investments in immigrant rights activism and coalitions. They highlight the role of organized labor in developing a local pro-migrant organizational infrastructure and in channeling organizing across ethnic and racial lines. However, in the late 1980s and 1990s unions were still not very active investors in those relations. In fact, the very existence of immigrant worker organizations indicated that new immigrants faced obstacles in accessing mainstream organizations and in making use of their capacities (Fine 2006). Pastor and his colleagues (Pastor 1995; 2001b; Pastor and Prichard 2012; Regalado 1994) instead see the 1992 Civil Unrest as the spark of a veritable civil society renaissance in Los Angeles. The unrest prompted city officials, foundations and (to a lesser extent) labor unions to support the establishment of workplace-oriented, multi-ethnic and multi-racial coalitions as a way to address inner city poverty and restore social order and social

cohesion. However, as we shall see in the upcoming chapters, the consolidation of the immigrant movement, including its defining characteristics, was already underway before the unrest. In this respect, both union investment and civil society responses to the unrest accelerated what was already well underway.

In light of the puzzles outlined above, the main **research question** that guided this research is therefore the following:

> *What factors and conditions allow us to understand the rise, consolidation and ultimate fragmentation of a class-based, multi-ethnic and cross-generational immigrant rights movement in Los Angeles over the last thirty years?*

The main research question, to its turn, comprises of three more specific **sub-research questions:**

1) *What are the factors and conditions that led to the emergence of a multi-ethnic, class-based and cross-generational immigrant rights movement in a setting traditionally dominated by ethnic and racialized forms of political mobilization and collective action?*

2) *What are the factors and conditions that, in spite of low financial resources, limited institutional backing and low support from local civil society actors, allowed immigrant worker organizations to mount effective campaigns and become a visible political actor in the Los Angeles landscape?*

3) *What are the factors and conditions that, in spite of greater resource availability and more favorable political and discursive opportunities, led to the fragmentation (and eventual weakening) of the immigrant worker movement over time?*

In the remaining sections of this introduction I will begin by describing the general theoretical framework of this research more in detail. I will then proceed to linking the empirical puzzle to the relevant literature, a sketch of which has already been provided in this introductory overview. I will continue by outlining the general methodology and assumptions that guided the development of this research project. I will conclude by presenting an overview of the various chapters and their content.

Theoretical Framework of the Research Project

Immigrant Incorporation and Political Participation in Receiving Societies: The Role of Contentious Politics and Social Movements.

Over the last several decades, migration has arguably become one of the most politically salient issues within our societies (Castles and Miller 2009; Nicholls and Uitermark 2016).

In a context characterized by ever-more pervasive economic globalization and global competition, rising social and economic inequalities and a weakening of the social regulatory role of the state, migrants and their children have been increasingly perceived as a threat to the livelihood, security, and cultural identity of the communities where they settle (Castles and Miller 2009; Chebel d'Appollonia and Reich 2010; Zolberg and Woon 1999). International migrants have become a key resource to be mobilized by countries to revitalize their urban economies and boost their global competitiveness (Mayer 2007). At the same time, they have largely incorporated in new societies at the very bottom of their socio-economic structures, and there have overwhelmingly remained due to a combination of low human capital, legal precarity and ethnic and racial discrimination (Scott 2011; Sassen 2005). In light of these developments, observers have argued that the long-term incorporation[2] of migrants in receiving societies, and particularly their upward social mobility, has become more difficult (de Genova 2004; Menjivar 2006; Portes and Zhou 1993).

This research departs from the assumption that participation and incorporation within the political system[3] are key processes through which immigrants can redress their structural subaltern incorporation within host societies (Bloemraad and Vermeulen 2014; Briggs 2013). This is most effective when immigrants, both at the local and the national level, are able to challenge the distribution of resources and positions of authority that underpin societal power arrangements (Dancygier 2010; Gerstle and Mollenkopf 2001; Beetham 2013). Scholars have often focused on how immigrants enter the 'the precincts of powers' (Mollenkopf 2014), for instance by building an organizational infrastructure that translates into ethnic voting blocks and clientelistic relations with political party machineries (Dancygier 2010; Vermeulen, Michon, and Tillie 2014). Historically, however, the incorporation of migrants and their children within the formal political system has been rather slow (Bloemraad and Vermeulen 2014). On the one hand, because even when migrants attain a certain degree of social and economic rights in a given country, for example when they are granted a long-term resident permit, they are still denied political rights (including the right to vote and to stand for political office) unless they undergo naturalization (Bauböck et al. 2006; Castles and Davidson 2000). On the other, because even naturalized immigrants or second-generation migrant citizens are often excluded due to more subtle barriers of institutional racism and discrimination (Vermeulen,

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[2] The concepts of migrant incorporation, as well as integration and assimilation have a long and complicated history in the social sciences, and in migration studies more specifically. The concepts of integration and assimilation have been often criticized for their excessive normativity, and for implying that only immigrants need adapt to the economic, cultural, social and political structures of the receiving society. In this research, I use the less-loaded term of incorporation, and broadly define it as the process through which migrants, in the process of settlement, interact with the host society (Garces-Mascareñas and Penninx 2016: 12, 19). However, in more normative terms, the outcome of this process on the migrants' side may comprise of varying benchmarks, such as securing access to the labor market on equal footing, learning about and interacting with host-society institutions, expressing and gaining recognition for valued cultural and social practices, and so on (Garces-Mascareñas and Penninx 2016).

[3] For reviews of the literature on political incorporation and participation in the United States and Europe, please see Bloemraad and Vermeulen 2014; Gerstle and Mollenkopf 2001; Martiniello 2006; Bauböck et al. 2006).

Michon and Tillie 2014; Bloemraad and Vermeulen 2014; Portes and Zhou 1993). That said, it is undocumented or non-status migrants who face the greatest hurdles to formal political participation, as they are excluded from the polity both formally and substantially (de Genova 2004; Menjívar 2006; Park 2013; Benhabib 2004).

For these reasons, migrants' grievances and claims have often found expression through contentious politics[4] outside institutional channels (Nicholls 2013a; Voss and Bloemraad 2011; Milkman, Bloom and Narro 2010; Adler, Tapia, and Turner 2014; Barron et al. 2011; Però and Solomos 2010). In certain cases, immigrant organizations have coalesced around more or less cohesive *social movements*, that is "collective challenges, based on common purposes and social solidarities, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents and authorities" (Tarrow 2011: 8). They have engaged in acts of claim-making through sustained campaigning, and participated in public performances such as rallies, pickets, demonstrations, marches and advocacy activities (Tilly and Tarrow 2015: 11; see also McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2004).

State authorities are generally the primary target of political claims by immigrants and on immigration-related matters (Koopmans and Statham 2003). Through migration policies, citizenship policy and integration policy,[5] nation states have traditionally used their sovereign power to dramatically affect the extent and quality of social, economic, cultural and political opportunities afforded to non-nationals within the boundaries of their territory (Castles and Davidson 2000; Bauböck et al. 2006; Benhabib 2004; Menjívar 2006; Dancygier 2010). However, local institutional and private actors, particularly in large cities, have also become the target of immigrant political activism. On the one hand, in the United States, such development has been influenced by the gradual devolution of particular competences over immigrant integration policy to states (as opposed to federal authorities) as well as to municipalities (Varsanyi 2008; Romero 2008; de Graauw 2008; 2016). On the other hand, this shift also reflects the more general consideration that cities, due to the state's inability (or unwillingness) to protect the collective interest of its citizens and residents vis -à-vis the pressure of transnational corporations, are today the geographical and symbolic space where the effects of neoliberal global capitalism and market penetration are mostly felt (Voss and Williams 2012). As a result, particular grievances and claims – which are not necessarily unique to immigrants, such as enforcement of labor rights, access to emergency healthcare, obtaining a driver's license, or gaining approval for building a new mosque – may be best accommodated by local public or private actors (Nicholls and Vermeulen 2012; Varsanyi 2008).

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[4] I here draw on Tarrow's and Tilly's notion of contentious politics as a process involving "interactions in which actors make claims bearing on other actors' interests, leading to coordinated efforts on behalf of shared interests or programs, [and] in which governments are involved as targets, initiators of claims, or third parties" (Tilly and Tarrow 2015: 7).

[5] If migration policy is mainly concerned with regulating entry and conditions of stay of foreigners, and citizenship policy with regulating access to nationality and political rights, integration policies are concerned with a wide range of aspects relating to immigrants' stay in the host country, including their access to social and economic provisions for non-citizens.

Thus, unsurprisingly, grassroots social movements have increasingly targeted not only national institutions, but also local institutions as well as private corporations, firms and agencies (Voss and Williams 2012; Nicholls and Vermeulen 2012). The immigrant worker organizations analyzed in the following chapters, in this respect, are key examples of this multi-level targeting. This is not to say, of course, that central states cease to be important targets of political action for immigrants. Rather, as shown by Nicholls and his colleagues (Nicholls 2008; Nicholls and Vermeulen 2012; Nicholls, Uitermark and van Haperen 2016), that immigrant (and other types of) mobilizations have become increasingly multi-scalar and multi-sited, and now routinely include even the virtual space of social media. As such, localized struggles, such as a dispute over access to housing or the construction of a mosque, may become "proxy battles for [the securing of] broader rights in the national society" (Nicholls and Vermeulen 2012: 79) by paving the ground for the establishment of larger movements confronting national governments.

Exploring immigrant political participation and engagement through contentious politics and social movements is important for a number of reasons. Practically, political incorporation of migrants is of course neither a necessary not a sufficient condition to ensure the improvement of immigrants' material conditions in the receiving society. However, I argue that greater political inclusion is likely to provide the potential means and instruments by which immigrants can approach and influence issues from the perspective of their own communities. Theoretically, by focusing on the political activity of individuals who are partly or fully excluded by the polity, we can shed a light on the opportunities and constraints faced by some of the most vulnerable members of society to gain recognition and equality in a particular context (Nyers 2010; Benhabib 2004). Within a democratic, pluralist society, to investigate the organizing processes which allow or hamper underprivileged groups to not only voice their concerns, but also to leverage actual power, has therefore intrinsic value with a view to promoting a more just and equal democratic society, based on the recognition of people's common humanity (Jenkins 2002; Louie 2001; Nyers 2010). Moreover, by highlighting political practices that involve non-citizens or second-class citizens, and that extend outside of the perimeter of formal political participation, we can also interrogate the very boundaries of our political communities and complicate the meaning of contemporary notions of citizenship –e.g. formal, substantial, or enacted (Isin and Nielsen 2008; Benhabib 2004; Varsanyi 2005; 2006; McNevin 2013).

Understanding Immigrant Organizations and their Organizing Process. A Relational Perspective.

Organizations are key units of our social life. Generally speaking, they are mid-level institutions, linking more primary attachments and social spheres such as family and kinship to higher-level institutions such as the state or the market (Moya 2005; McQuarrie and Marwell 2009). They are the main vehicle through which people engage in collective action, and through which individuals can engage in activities and pursue goals that

would otherwise be too broad or complex (Aldrich and Ruef 2006; Scott 2003). In this sense, organizations are instrumental. However, organizations are also collective actors endowed with particular rights, powers and identities (Scott 2003; Melucci 1995; see also chapter 4 of this dissertation). In a broad sense, regardless of their specific activities, organizations are always, to an extent, *political*. They routinely engage in the task of defining who they are, what they stand for and who they speak on behalf of (Whittier 2009; Melucci 1995; Taylor and Whittier 1995; Scott 2014). Moreover, depending on their capacities and influence, they may be able to enhance or restrict access to various resources and benefits to members and non-members alike, and to contribute to shaping the political and material interests of the constituency on whose behalf they purport to operate (Scott 2003; Beetham 2013; Stokke and Selboe 2009).

Organizations formed by or catering to immigrants have long been the subject of scholarly attention. They are important because they mediate the relation between immigrant groups and the context of settlement, they are collective entities that can deeply affect immigrants' social, economic, cultural and political incorporation in a particular locality (Moya 2005; Schrover and Vermeulen 2005). Immigrant organizations naturally engage in all domains of social life. Social scientists have described how organizations help immigrants navigate the host society and its institutions (Portes, Escobar and Arana 2008; de Graauw 2016; Ramakrishnan and Bloemraad 2008a), maintain and foster social and cultural ties with the country of origin (Levitt 2001; Østergaard-Nielsen 2003a; Chaudhary and Guarnizo 2016), or smoothen their inclusion through various forms of social, economic and political support (Fine 2006; Milkman 2000a; Milkman, Bloom and Narro 2010; Gleeson 2009). As Moya (2005) has shown, immigrant organizations have historically taken a myriad of forms, from secret societies to rotating credit associations, from mutual aid societies to religious or hometown associations, including more explicit political organizations across the whole ideological spectrum. Immigrant organizations are often hybrid and include a combination of service provision (for example legal or service), community-building activities and political undertakings (Fine 2006; Ramakrishnan and Bloemraad 2008b; de Graauw 2016).

Like any other organization, immigrant political organizations face the challenges of survival and attaining success (Gamson 1975; Pfeffer and Salancik 1978). In a contentious setting, those dimensions are generally linked to two different aspects: political backing and external resource support. Political opportunity structure theories link movement emergence and success to the degree of support or hostility provided by political elites, such as government, or other powerful elites (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996; McAdam 1982). Hostile elite attitude to immigrants' claims is therefore likely to negatively affect the outcome of immigrant mobilizations, particularly when closed political opportunities translate in pessimistic and quiescent attitudes on the side of potential challengers (McAdam 1982). Resource mobilization theories instead underscore the importance of organizational strength and various types of resources – namely money and labor – in creating the material conditions for effective mobilization on the ground

(McCarthy and Zald 1977; Jenkins 1983). Immigrant communities are generally regarded as unlikely to mobilize politically because of a varying combination of general disempowerment, limited technical resources, cultural and political apathy or lack of context-specific capabilities (Ramakrishan and Bloemraad 2008b; Chung, Bloemraad and Tejada-Peña 2013; Martiniello 2006; Milkman 2006). In both situations, securing government backing is a great source of dilemma for all social movements. Too much dependence on government support and recognition may result in co-optation and pacification of the movement (Piven and Cloward 1977; Nicholls and Uitermark 2016), while too little may end up in dramatically reducing access and chances of success (Tarrow 2011). In a similar fashion, too much resource dependence on powerful actors such as government, business elites or large philanthropies may lead organizations to align their structures, goals and claims with external interests and preferences (Pfeffer and Salancik 1978; McQuarrie 2013; Uitermark, Rossi and van Houtum 2005).

Prior to engaging in action, immigrant organizations also face the question of defining who they are, what their interests are and who they speak on behalf of; that is, of defining their *collective identity, organizational goals, and form* (Whittier 2009; Melucci 1995; Taylor and Whittier 1995). Collective identities and concrete organizational forms are, to a large extent, the product of conscious ideological work on the part of political activists (Wilson 1973; Simons and Ingram 1997; see chapter 3 and 6). *Ideology* affects how individuals and organizations understand social reality and guides their action (Wilson 1973). Moreover, in a social world characterized by the availability of a plurality of identities – from class to gender, from ethnicity and 'race' to sexual orientation, from religion to age, and so forth – ideological constructs help determine the saliency of particular social cleavages[6] for the political project at hand (Calhoun 1997; Brubaker and Cooper 2004; Brubaker 2004). While possibly a goal in itself (Bernstein 2009: 267), organizational forms and identities are also critically important in securing political backing and external support. The latter do not take place in a cultural vacuum, rather in the context of existing normative expectations of individual and collective agents (Suchman 1995; Powell and DiMaggio 1991; see also chapter 4). Theories of 'discursive opportunities' show that established discourses on the nature of social reality, national identity or politics all contribute to define the perimeters of *what claims* and *identities*

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[6] If ideologies are seldom entirely detached from the material conditions of people who embrace them, this relation remains ambiguous at best. Social scientists have long debated the question of what conditions shape the basis of collective action and have wondered the extent to which collective identities are a reflection of people's material conditions, such as their positioning within relations of production or their embeddedness in socially and culturally bounded residential communities (Katznelson 1981; 1994; Calhoun 1982; Buechler 2000). Those conditions, while they may well be a pre-requisite, they are often not a sufficient condition to trigger collective action along specific cleavages and identities (Buechler 2000). In his historical analysis of nationalism, Calhoun (1997) has shown how working classes in various European countries have often mobilized politically along lines other than class, for example by embracing nationalist political projects or by identifying as members of particular crafts. Similarly, other scholars have noted that what appear to be ethnic-driven social processes are often founded on different types of identities and social relations, such as family ties or geographical proximity (Wimmer 2008; Smith 2006). Scholars in the social constructionist tradition have long recognized that we carry multiple social identities, and all of them may be potentially used as the basis for collective action (Buechler 2000; Calhoun 1997; Jenkins 2008).

migrants can legitimately put forward in the public sphere of a given context (Koopmans and Statham 1999; Koopmans et al. 2005). Organizations challenging established discourses or established ways of 'doing things' therefore risk rapid disbandment or, at best, irrelevance.

The literature presented above provides us with an entry point into the puzzles presented at the beginning of this introduction. First, if LA immigrant organizations received limited institutional and civil society support in their early phases, both in terms of political openings and resource provision, how can we explain their ability to mount successful campaigns in spite of those limitations? Second, how can we explain the emergence of organizations that, at least in part, challenged institutionalized forms of collective identity, organizing and political action? Third, why have immigrant worker organizations changed over time and has the movement fragmented right when institutional backing and civil society support increased?

I thus suggest that we can best answer those questions by adopting a broader relational lens on those processes. This perspective alerts us to the fact that organizations depend for their survival and success on a wide range of social actors, including (but not limited to) government institutions, private actors, and other organizations, and that this dependence affects internal organizational dimensions such as identity- and goal-definition, claim-making and structures (Hannan and Freeman 1989; Powell and DiMaggio 1991; Pfeffer and Salancik 1978; Diani and McAdam 2003; McCarthy and Zald 1977). Those insights allow us to understand organizational development not only in relation to the state, but also as a reflection of organizational relations with other audiences and organizations within a given context. As a matter of fact, scholars of social networks have argued that through the analysis of inter-personal and inter-organizational relations we can better comprehend key social dynamics such as *innovation* (McAdam and Ruth 1993), *collaboration*, *competition* and *conflict* (Hannan and Freeman 1989; Vermeulen 2006; Diani and McAdam 2003). As we will see in the following chapters, those dynamics are critical for at least two reasons: first, because organizational innovation and inter-organizational collaboration, by supplying both ideological and practical alternatives and material resources, may allow challenging movements to offset the obstacles presented by hostile political and discursive opportunities; second, because inter-organizational competition and conflict may instead hamper movement success and lead to its fragmentation. To better understand the LA case, it thus becomes important to identify factors and conditions that, at varying stages of the immigrant rights movement, spurred organizational innovation and inter-organizational cooperation or conflict.

Urban sociologists have noted that large cities, characterized by high social differentiation and diversity, are particularly conducive to those processes (Sennett 2002; Nicholls 2008). Unlike smaller context, metropoles are more likely to contain dense and diverse organizational environments that can provide different forms of critical support and specialized resources to aggrieved (yet under-resourced) immigrants, including highly technical and logistical expertise (Nicholls and Vermeulen 2012; Nicholls 2003).

Similarly, migration scholars have argued that patterns of ethnic community formation in large cities, especially when buttressed by dynamics of residential concentration, can facilitate collective action and the pooling of resources on the basis of pre-existing networks of trust and solidarity (Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993; Portes and Zhou 1993; Fennema and Tillie 1999; Tillie 2004). Those 'community resources' can become particularly important in context of 'micro-mobilization' (McAdam 1988), when activists operate at a relative informal level and cannot count on high level of financial and technical resources. Such resources can also lead to more complex and articulate ethnic political infrastructures that boost political participation and/or political influence of immigrant communities in particular contexts (Vermeulen, Michon and Tillie 2014; Tillie 2004).

In the following chapters I will therefore focus on the factors and conditions that fostered those processes of organizational innovation and inter-organizational collaboration and/or conflict. In chapter three, I suggest that we can explain the ideological diffusion and innovation that characterized immigrant worker organizations during the 1980s and 1990s by analyzing the local and transnational connections that underpinned this process. In chapter four (together with my co-author) and chapter five I suggest the usefulness of the concept of *organizational legitimacy* to better understand organizational dynamics. Organizational access to resources is shaped by the normative expectations of the different audiences involved in this process, even within the same context. We can therefore show why and how organizations embedded in similar geographical and socio-cultural contexts can nevertheless end up developing different organizational structures and identities. Finally, in chapter six, together with my co-authors I develop a theoretical model that incorporates insight from ecological organizational theory, resource mobilization theory and theories of collective action to comprehensively understand organizational trajectories over time as well as *dynamics of collaboration and competition*.

Research Methodology

The empirical chapters that comprise this dissertation are all part of the same research project investigating the immigrant worker rights movement in Los Angeles. They also broadly share the same qualitative research methodology. However, the reader should keep in mind that all the chapters have been conceived independently as stand-alone articles. This means that, while they all share the same broad theoretical concerns and research questions presented in this introduction, they also approach them from somehow different theoretical angles and sub-questions. Moreover, each chapter uses its own research methodology and data sources, which do not always overlap with each other. In this section, in order to avoid unnecessary repetitions, I will therefore only focus on a few methodological aspects that are not covered in subsequent chapters, and that inform the overall research project. Those include: the general perspective on social

reality that informs this research; the justification for selecting a case study approach and Los Angeles as single case study; a brief description of the data sources; a set of considerations evaluating my own positionality in the field and on gaining access to the field; a note on terminology.

Perspective on Social Reality

The collection of articles in this research project all share the same ontological perspective on social reality, which can be summarized as 'pragmatic realism', or *post-positivism* (Miles, Huberman and Saldaña 2014; Scott 2014). In adopting such view, I do not reject the claim that social phenomena are socially and historically constructed, moreover filtered by the interpretation of research participants and researchers alike (Berger and Luckmann 1967). However, I also argue that, beyond the extreme complexity and messiness of social life, as well as its mediation by systems of meaning, it is still possible to try and identify certain patters and regularities that characterize social interaction (Scott 2014). While I reject the post-modernist claim that reality exists uniquely as a product of the mind, I also contend that its analytical interpretation by the researcher does not parallel the universal *truth* claimed by pure positivist scholars (Scott 2014; Miles, Huberman and Saldaña 2014). Following Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2014: 7), I argue that, while affirming the "existence and importance of the subjective, the phenomenological, and the meaning making..., [the] goal is to register and transcend those processes by making assertions and building theories to account for a real world that is both bound and perceptually laden."

Research Method and Case Selection

In this research project, I decided to employ a qualitative case study research strategy. Following Snow and Trom (2002: 150), I define case study research as "a research strategy that seeks to generate richly detailed, thick, and holistic elaborations and understandings of instances or variants of bounded social phenomena through the triangulation of multiple methods that include but are not limited to qualitative procedures." The reason for choosing such approach was three-fold. First, I found it most suitable in guiding the early stages of my research, as it allowed me to start engaging with a relatively bounded social phenomenon – the immigrant rights movement in Los Angeles – while not immediately demanding the formulation of detailed research questions, sets of hypotheses and data sources (Snow and Tron 2002). Second, once the research questions were specified, I continued to find the approach sensitive to explore historical processual dynamics as well as meanings and motivations of the social actors involved in them. Case study research lends itself well to historical research as well as to the use of a wide range of qualitative data sources (Snow and Trom 2002; Clemens and Hughes 2002; Blee and Taylor 2002). Third, pragmatic considerations of limited time and capabilities persuaded

me that I could most effectively answer my research questions by focusing on an in-depth, single case study rather than on comparing two different ones.

The decision to focus on a single case was taken when it became clear that the Los Angeles immigrant rights movement was no ordinary case. As I have argued above, and as I dwell more in detail in chapter 2, the unlikely emergence of this particular movement in the socio-historical context of 1980s-1990s Los Angeles singled out the phenomena as a 'critical' case defying conventional explanations (Snow and Trom 2002; Flyvbjerg 2006). The local immigrant rights movement was therefore selected as an 'unusual', stand-alone case study to explore alternative explanations for such developments. At the same time, while the movement itself was my case broader study, it did not prevent me from analyzing its constituent parts in separate, and sometimes comparative, sub-case studies.

Being primarily concerned with issues of organizational emergence and change among leftist immigrant organizations, I selected a group of organizations that fulfilled four requirements: a leftist ideology committed to pro-migrant social change, workplace organizing and multi-ethnic activism, at least during the early years of organizational operations; a relatively long operational continuity, spanning at least 15 years; a majority of staff, volunteers, members and constituents comprising of first- and second-generation immigrants; a significant impact on the local political landscape, testified by pre-existing academic literature and further corroborated through informal conversations with local activists and key informants; the availability of sufficiently rich historical records, such as organizational archives and other forms of documentation. Based on those criteria, I selected the following organizations: the Korean Immigrant Workers Advocates (KIWA), the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA), the Pilipino Workers Center (PWC), the Instituto de Educación Popular del Sur de California (IDEPSCA) and the Garment Worker Center (GWC). The Korean Resource Center (KRC), an organization which can arguably be inscribed into a more liberal and integrationist political tradition, was moreover included in the group for comparative purposes (see chapter 5).

To be clear, such a selection limits the scope of my argument to a very specific group of organizations engaged in immigrant political activism in Los Angeles. My analysis did not include, for example, the vast array of more socially conservative groups, as well as organizations that engage in liberal politics or support more traditional forms of ethnic politics. The following research does not intend, therefore, to provide an exhaustive account of the immigrant political organizational landscape in Los Angeles, and not even to account for the richness and heterogeneity of its progressive immigrant rights movements (see chapter 6 for further comments). Instead, it aims to provide the reader with a 'strategic window' to observe inter-organizational relations in a more fine-grained and detailed manner than can be achieved in large-scale, quantitative studies. Moreover, it also provides the reader with a comparison that is also *historical* in nature, since it compares the organizational trajectories of the different groups analyzed over

time. Those two aspects, I believe, constitute the most interesting methodological contributions of this research to the literature.

Data Sources, Analysis and Limitations

All chapters analyze, from a qualitative standpoint, the historical interactions occurring among immigrant worker organizations as well as between those organizations and other social actors. In each chapter, I drew on a slightly different combination of data sources. Overall, I relied on a triangulation of four types of sources: 1) archive material from the aforementioned organizations; 2) qualitative interviews from key informants; 3) IRS 990 US Federal Tax Return Forms (1990s-2013); 4) existing case study literature. The first two constituted the main data sources of the following empirical chapters.

The bulk of the archive material consisted of grant applications, correspondence, and other documents that the examined organizations supplied to a local philanthropy, the Liberty Hill Foundation, when applying for founding (1990s-2014). In addition to those documents, I was also able to access the internal organizational archives of KIWA (1993-2006), which included additional material such as minutes of meetings, correspondence, strategy and position papers and other documentation for internal purposes, as well as various material (reports, newsletters, fliers, etc.) produced by other organizations and collected by KIWA staff.[7] All those archives, with the exception of the latest Liberty Hill grant files (2006-2014), which are still hosted by the foundation, are freely available at the Southern California Library in LA (see appendix A for more detailed information). During my visits to the Liberty Hill Foundation and the SoCal Library I was able to create digital copies of the above-mentioned documents, which are all in my possession. I catalogued the scanned documents, whenever the information was available, by year,[8] by type (flier, grant application, newsletter, finance statement, minutes, etc.) and by box and folder numbers.[9] Between 2014 and 2016 I also conducted 30 formal interviews with 28 key informants, all of whom were current or former staff of the organizations in our study, or had an intimate knowledge of organizational dynamics through personal involvement (see appendix B for a list of formal interviews with informants). Interviews centered on individuals' biographies, organizational work, and perceptions of organizational missions, activities, and objectives. While some were interviewed to specifically talk about their lives as political activists, others were interviewed to gain a deeper understanding of

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[7] Since one of KIWA staff was tasked with coordinating the Multiethnic Immigrant Worker Organizing Network (MIWON), KIWA archives include a substantial section on the internal development of the coalition, which is treated quite in detail in chapter 6.

[8] It is important to note that this chronological division only refers to how the material was organized by the Liberty Hill in specific yearly folders (possibly depending on what kind of material each immigrant organization decided to include to support each application, or what material Liberty Hill was able to gather independently). This does not mean that all included material was dated within the specific folder time framework, nor that it necessarily made reference to that period either.

[9] Box and folder number are given in the case of the archives hosted by the Southern California Library, but not in the case of more recent data acquired directly at the Liberty Hill Foundation (2006-2014).

internal movement and organizational dynamics (Blee and Taylor 2002). Interviewees were largely drawn from the (more or less professionalized) class of organizational leaders and staff and, except in a handful of cases, did not extend to the membership (see paragraph below). I also collected IRS 990 forms for each organization analyzed, which specified its annual finances and main funding sources (see appendix A for further information). Moreover, given the availability of such material, I drew on previous case studies for additional insights into the internal workings of some of the organizations.

I considered organizations as the primary unit of analysis, but I attempted to relate the varying organizational trajectories to the influence of both the individual and the inter-organizational dimensions. The organizational dimension largely focused on its most formal layer – the leadership, the staff, and in certain cases the membership leadership – rather than on its membership and broader constituency. In each chapter, I described the specific data used, the process of analysis as well as the limitations of each research methodology. As I acknowledge further in the various chapters, the use of those data sources held a number of limitations.[10] Archive material, largely produced by immigrant organizations themselves and often designed for specific external purposes – such as funding applications – demanded careful contextualization, particularly when used to assess the state of relations with other organizational actors or organizational performance. Moreover, using archive sources to assess organizational qualities inevitably carries the bias of seeing the collective largely through the eyes of organizational leadership or specific internal factions (Clemens and Hughes 2002). Finally, there were some language limitations that I could not overcome. While I was able to process archive material in English and Spanish, my lack of Korean and Tagalog language skills prevented me from making full use of those archives.[11] If interviews posed no significant language limitations,[12] they posed other challenges. as interviewees were often asked to recall events far in the past, dating back as early as the early 1990s (if not 1980s). This inevitably increased the risk of faulty recollections, or of retrospectively superimposing new meanings, motivations and rationales for actions on earlier events (Blee and Taylor 2002; Weiss 1994).

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[10] As it will become clear in the empirical chapters, organizational membership was a relatively large and also constantly changing group of individuals in comparison with the organizational staff. In practical terms, the volatility of the membership made it difficult to locate and interview members, particularly those who had left the organization. From an organizational point of view, with few exceptions, members generally played a small role in shaping the organizational vision or practices. This does not mean that the membership dimension was not significant – on the contrary, the ability to verify whether the ideology and vision of immigrant worker organizations was broadly embraced by their main constituents would have significantly strengthened the arguments presented in this dissertation – but rather that researching it presented extensive methodological challenges. That said, certain organizational documents (particularly in the case of KIWA) such as minutes of meetings sometimes presented the view of the membership.

[11] Those limitations were more evident for Korean in the case of KIWA than for Tagalog in the case of PWC, as the overwhelming majority of PWC material was in English. In the case of KIWA, a sizable share of the material (though inferior to the share in English) was in Korean during the very first years of organizational activity. This share very fast decreased over the years though.

[12] Interviews were all conducted in English, with two exceptions (one in Spanish and one in Korean). Interviewees, for the most part, were all perfectly confident in conducting a conversation in American English. While I conducted one interview in Spanish, I conducted another one in English/Korean with the help of another respondent who translated questions and responses for me.

Nevertheless, I believe I was able to counter some of these shortcomings through constant triangulation of sources. For example, access to both the internal archives of KIWA and the Liberty Hill archives containing KIWA's grant applications allowed me to assess the discrepancies and differences between the two levels. In a number of cases, the Liberty Hill foundations also conducted its own evaluations of the different organizations prior to granting funding, providing the external observer with a more nuanced and 'technocratic', if more distant, assessment of the goals, activities and internal workings of these groups. In other cases, organizational archives of different organizations recounting the same events provided complementary and sometimes contradictory takes on similar events. When not referring to information such as dates or names but to more substantial interpretative content, such information was considered as reflective of different sensitivities among organizational members and staff. Moreover, inasmuch as archive information was triangulated with information contained in previous case studies, it was also used to inform interviews with respondents. Conversely, interviewees provided crucial insights to better contextualize and situate organizational documents.

Researcher's Positionality, Access to the Field and Ethnical Issues.

The topic and questions of this study raise important ethical questions and issues. What are the implications of researching political movements, particularly those led by some of the most vulnerable segments of society? How do we, as researchers, situate themselves in the research field, and how do we negotiate our (often privileged) position vis-à-vis our research participants? How does our position affect our theoretical and empirical concerns, the way we gather and process information in the field, and the way our respondents see us? Obviously, these are all questions that have been long debated in the social sciences, and do not have easy answers. However, they remain today more important than ever.

Unlike other researchers that have chronicled immigrant activism from an insider position, I approached the movement as a sympathetic outsider. My sympathy for the work of immigrant organizations, as well as for their broader struggle to gain social, political and economic inclusion stems from my own background as son of a foreign-born mother, as well as from my volunteer and work in non-profit organizations. In particular, my experiences in Syria, Jordan and the Maghreb opened my eyes to the complex dynamics that fuel migration, but also to the basic unfairness that characterizes the contemporary apparatuses of migration control. Those experiences also made me aware of the various layers of privilege I myself held within this system, as a white, heterosexual man of middle-class, European background with a dual citizenship. Even though I believe they did not impede my capacity for critical analysis, those various factors clearly influenced my research positionality and impacted the way I was perceived by research respondents. In more general terms, I approached my research from a normative standpoint that sees immigrant incorporation on equal footing as natives as desirable,

since it recognizes the unfairness of particular sets of structural inequalities that affect migrants and their children in the pursuit of social, economic, cultural and political opportunities. Moreover, I similarly see the political struggle of migrants as valuable and worthy of support as an ally.

As an outsider to the context of Los Angeles, gaining access to archive information and respondents was not a straightforward process. Initial attempts to formally contact respondents on my own as PhD student from the University of Amsterdam fell on deaf ears, so I had to rely on external help. As a testimony to the rich web of interconnections between academia and political activism in Southern California, my access was greatly facilitated by a number of local researchers (including one of my dissertation supervisors). An Amsterdam-based labor organizer, formerly based in Los Angeles, was key in connecting me to key informants and respondents. While my access to the archival information was basically unrestricted since the beginning, the development of a friendly relation of trust with archival managers both at the Liberty Hill Foundation and at the Southern California Library ensured that I was able to make better use of the material overall. Liberty Hill personnel also facilitated connections with respondents who had initially declined to be interviewed.

Finally, to study a political movement largely composed of people in socially vulnerable positions raises the issue of their potential harm by research (Weiss 1994). This is all the more relevant in the case of respondents in precarious legal position, whose identification for research purposes may expose them to the action of immigration or other law-enforcement authorities. In this research, I exclusively interviewed respondents who were either long-term legal residents or US citizens, who therefore risked no legal consequences. As a research that is mainly concerned with social relations and inter-connections, I named my respondents in a number of occasions whenever that was indispensable for structuring the narrative. I believe this decision does not place them in a situation of danger nor breaks our interview agreements. My respondents are well known figures in the local activist context, and sometimes beyond, and they are part of very small organizations. A great deal of information, including biographical one, is already available in a number of previous case study literature dealing with those organizations, as well as online in newspaper articles and other material. Their own digital footprint is quite extensive, as they have often authored different kinds of political material themselves, so connecting the dots is therefore a relatively simple and straightforward operation.

Notes on Dissertation Terminology

In this section I would like to specify the usage of several terms throughout the chapters. When referring to *ethnicity*, I define it in Weberian terms as the "subjectively felt sense of belonging based on the belief in shared culture and common ancestry" (Wimmer 2008: 973). I view '*race*' a sub-type of ethnicity, inasmuch as phenotypical characteristics are used

to define and indicate group membership (Wimmer 2008: 973-74). In a similar fashion, I conceptualize *ethnic/racial politics* as the processes through which supposed ethnic and racial similarities are given significance and mobilized by various actors for political purposes, including creating collective identities, encouraging recruitment, or establishing a basis for a collective claim (Buechler 2000; Calhoun 1997; Brubaker 2004; Wimmer 2008). When referring to *class,* I refer to a mechanism of social differentiation based on "the production and distribution of material resources as mediated by labor and capital markets and state intervention" (Buechler 2000: 107). Along the same line, I see *class politics* as the process through which class identity and consciousness becomes the primary basis for political action, typically among working class people (Buechler 2000; Katznelson 1994; Calhoun 1997).

When I use the term *immigrant*, I primarily refer to a foreign-born citizen who has reached another country for the purpose of permanent (or at least long-term) settlement. Moreover, somehow controversially, I apply the term immigrant to US-born citizens of immigrant descent. This decision reflects the general academic consensus on the fact that, for various reasons (explored in chapter 2), *second-generation immigrants* still face significant structural barriers in accessing the same social, economic, political and cultural opportunities afforded to full-fledged natives. In further defining immigrant communities, I followed the conventional terminology adopted by US ethnic and migration scholars (for examples, see Waldinger and Bozorgmehr 1996a; Ngai 2014; Muñoz 2007; Chavez 2002). Such tradition recognizes that, because of the persistent salience of those identities for immigrants and their children, as well as of the way in which US institutions have historically articulated them, the use of ethno-racial categories to define groups and communities remains inescapable. This does not mean, however, to automatically equate the existence of a category with the existence of a group characterized by bounded identity, tight networks and solidarity (Jenkins 2008; Wimmer 2009), but rather to recognize that those labels carry everyday significance in the context of Southern California.

That said, I defined Mexican, Central American, Korean and Filipino Immigrants as those immigrants who were born outside of the United States. Conversely, with the terms Mexican American, Central American, Korean American or Filipino American I designated US-born second generations. Terms such as ethnic Mexican were used to refer to a community of people including both Mexican-born immigrants and Mexican Americans. The category of *Latino* was employed to denote first- and second-generation immigrants of Mexican and Central American origin and/or descent. In a similar fashion, the *Asian* category was used to refer to first- and second-generation immigrants with ties to a number of Asian countries (including the Philippines, South Korea, India, Thailand, and so forth).

Outline of the dissertation

I ordered the chapters in the following manner: chapter 1 is the present introduction; chapter 2 provides a general introduction to the socio-economic and political context of Los Angeles; chapter 3 focuses on the emergence of the immigrant worker organizations examined in this research; chapter 4 introduces the concept of legitimacy, and outlines its usefulness for the study of immigrant organizations; chapter 5 focuses on a comparative empirical study of two immigrant organizations; chapter 6 analyzes the rise and fall of the multi-ethnic, class-based collaboration among various immigrant worker organizations; chapter 7 provides an overview of the general research findings and concludes this dissertation.

In chapter 2, entitled "The Research Puzzle in Context: Theorizing Los Angeles as a Critical Case", I place the relevance of my case study and research questions in the context of the socio-economic and political history of Los Angeles. The chapter describes the peculiar pattern of urban growth, political nativism and economic development that characterized Los Angeles for most of its existence, and it highlights how those dynamics contributed to trapping non-European immigrants within the lowest rungs of the labor market and prevented them from exerting significant political influence. The chapter also explores immigrants' involvement in institutional and contentious politics, underscoring the importance of ethnic and racial politics. It further places such involvement in a context of widespread hostility and lack of support from other civil society actors. Finally, the chapter reframes the empirical puzzle presented in this introduction in light of the dynamics presented above.

In Chapter 3, entitled "Immigration, Ideology and the 'Third World': Organizational Innovation in the Early Days of the LA Immigrant Rights Movement," I explore mechanisms of organizational innovation through a migration-centered analysis of the founders of key immigrant rights organizations in Los Angeles. While migration researchers have convincingly argued that practices, values and ideological orientations of migrant political organizations are influenced by the latter's relation with both the place of origin of its members, they have paid less attention to how migrants themselves may be able to reshape existing practices of organizing in a particular context, creating new organizational forms and practices that allow for alternative ways of political engagement. In this chapter I set out to show how migrant activists drew on their earlier militant experiences, cultural sensitivities and transnational connections to develop new hybrid organizational forms that converged towards a common ideological platform. By combining autochthonous US approaches, such as community unionism and community-based organizing, with alternative experiences including Third-World Marxism and Popular Education, migrant activists of different generations (and different socialization degrees within the US context) contributed to the creation of an organizational model which rejected both ethnic-based organizing and traditional unionism to the advantage of class-based, intersectional and multi-ethnic solidarities.

In Chapter 4, entitled "Legitimacy as the Basis for Organizational Development", I discuss the concept of organizational legitimacy in the context of organizational

emergence and survival. Legitimacy and legitimation processes are crucial dimensions to understand the relation between voluntary organizations, including immigrant organizations, and the environment in which they operate. Broadly defined as the process through which an organizational entity justifies its right to exist and its actions within a particular societal power arrangement, legitimation can help us understand how organizations establish themselves, strengthen their position and survive over long periods of time in spite of very limited material resources of their own. Moreover, it can help us examine how resource dependence affects the relations between an organization and other relevant social actors, from members and constituents to organizational allies, funders or state institutions. While the concept is not extensively used in all three remaining chapters, it provides an important anchor to understand the mechanisms at work in chapters 5 and 6, namely the ability to access resources and the constraints exerted over organizations by environment constraints.

In chapter 5, entitled "Organizational Legitimacy beyond Ethnicity? Shifting Organizational Logics in the Struggle for Immigrant Rights in Los Angeles", I look at how ideological orientations interplay with support networks to drive organizations toward alternative legitimating strategies in local urban politics. Building on a neo-institutional theory of legitimacy, I examine the diverging legitimating strategies employed by two long-standing immigrant organizations based in Los Angeles (LA): the Korean Resource Center (KRC) and the Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance (KIWA). Through grant applications, organizational archival data and qualitative interviews, I show how KRC and KIWA, two groups embedded in the same sociopolitical context, have built unique yet equally successful legitimating accounts by adopting different organizational logics, one broadly based on ethnicity and one on class and multi-ethnicity. I suggest that KIWA and KRC's ideological differences, and their reliance on a different core of supporters – ethnic-oriented for KRC, labor-oriented for KIWA – drove the organizations towards distinct, yet partially overlapping subfields. By discursively mobilizing those connections, and by actively shaping the surrounding organizational environment, both KRC and KIWA were able to incorporate in the broader non-profit advocacy sector in LA.

In chapter 6, entitled "Beyond the Los Angeles Model? Understanding the Evolution of Immigrant Worker Organizations through a Hybrid Resource-Based Model," I provide a tentative explanation for the emergence, consolidation, and fragmentation of the Los Angeles immigrant workers rights movement over the last three decades. While traditional accounts highlight labor unions and private foundations as supporters of immigrant workers' organizations and multi-ethnic collaboration, the role of such institutions fails to account for the rise and fall of a key coalition, the Multi-Ethnic Immigrant Worker Organizing Network (MIWON). Inspired by ecological theory and Olson's collective action theory, I contend that organizational collaboration is shaped by 1) forces that spur competition between organizations, 2) complementarity and alignment of organizational goals, and 3) ideologically grounded moral incentives that sustain collective action. With qualitative data from in-depth interviews and organizational and

public archives, I elaborate how these three dimensions' changing configuration underpins shifting rationales for organizational collaboration within a group of ideologically similar organizations.

In Chapter 7, the conclusive chapter, I summarize the findings and main arguments of the previous chapters, discuss research implications and limitations, and offer a few overarching concluding remarks.