

ROUTLEDGE STUDIES IN EXTREMISM AND DEMOCRACY

The Politics of Migration in Italy

Perspectives on local debates and
party competition

Pietro Castelli Gattinara



The Politics of Migration in Italy

Migration represents one of the key issues in both Italian and European politics, and it has triggered EU-wide debates and negotiations, alongside alarmist and often sensationalist news reporting on the activities of government, party and social movement actors.

The Politics of Migration in Italy explores what happens when previously undiscussed issues become central to political agendas and are publicly debated in the mass media. Examining how political actors engage with the issue of migration in electoral campaigning, this book highlights how complex policy issues are addressed selectively by political entrepreneurs and how the responses of political actors are influenced by strategic incentives and ongoing events. This book studies the dynamics of the politicization of the immigration issue across three local contexts in Italy – Prato, Milan and Rome – which differ systematically with respect to crucial economic, cultural and security dimensions of immigration.

Offering an innovative exploration of party competition and migration in Italy, as well as providing the conceptual and analytical tools to understand how these dynamics play out beyond the Italian case, this book is essential reading for students, scholars and policymakers working in the areas of migration studies, agenda-setting and European politics more generally.

Pietro Castelli Gattinara holds a PhD in Political Science from the European University Institute, and is currently a postdoctoral researcher at the Centre for Social Movement Studies (COSMOS), Scuola Normale Superiore of Florence, Italy.

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The Politics of Migration in Italy

Perspectives on local debates and party
competition

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**For Giovi, because you can't read just comics forever.
And for my little Petros, though you truly do not care.
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1 Introduction

Migration has reshaped considerably European societies over the last three decades. Despite the end of the guest-workers programmes of the 1960s and 1970s, countries like Britain, France, Germany and the Netherlands have been experiencing new inflows of migrants in recent years, mainly originating from areas affected by humanitarian crises and from within Europe. Similarly, states that were traditional senders of migrants – in the southern border of the continent, Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal – progressively transformed into new destination countries. With the global refugee crisis of 2014–2015, large numbers of migrants and asylum seekers have streamed into European countries from the Middle East and Africa, making the Mediterranean the world’s most dangerous sea to cross, and transforming immigration and migrants’ integration into two of the most pressing challenges for contemporary policy-makers in Europe.

Immigration has the potential to reshape the domestic landscape of receiving countries in many ways. Yet, the extent to which it affects democratic politics depends primarily on the attitudes of native-born majorities and therefore on the way in which political actors and the mass media represent migration as a policy issue. National governments, local authorities and supranational organizations are involved in the process of politicization of migration, developing policies for migration control and for the incorporation of foreign residents. Domestic electorates express support or opposition to such policy initiatives, whilst political parties construct their own rhetoric and understanding of it, and the mass media determine the visibility of anti-immigration actors, xenophobic right-wing parties, and pro-migrant movements and organizations.

The combination of these situations has made it necessary to study the causes and consequences of the politicization of immigration at different levels of governance, and the nature of public attitudes toward migrants in European societies. When studying immigration, however, scholars of party politics and political behaviour have mainly focused on the exceptional features of the issue, whether in terms of its disruptive consequences for West European party systems, or in terms of protest, xenophobia and radicalism. The impressive scholarly and normative interest in these aspects has tended to overshadow the extent to which immigration debates, once marginal to electoral campaigning, have stabilized within party competition. The aim of this book, by contrast, is to assess the role

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played by immigration in electoral campaigning once it was normalized within party systems. This in turn implies evaluating the process by which previously non-salient issues are integrated in the public sphere, and become stable features of electoral debates and party competition.

In doing so, this book advances hypotheses important to the understanding of a real-world phenomenon of crucial significance for democracy in the EU, as demonstrated by the reactions to the ongoing refugee crisis by European leaders and political representatives. My focus is on Italy, a setting where large-scale migration has been sudden and its politicization relatively recent. In the following pages, I will provide an in-depth analysis of six electoral campaigns in three cities: Rome, Milan and Prato. At the same time, this book seeks to contribute to the literature explaining the politicization of migration. On the one hand, I shall build upon previous theories and hypotheses in order to advance our understanding of these dynamics. On the other, I shall broaden the scope of investigation of the politicization of migration to address local politics and patterns of electoral competition. The remainder of this chapter will accordingly introduce the crucial features of the scientific contribution of the present volume, discussing the main research questions and innovative aspects of the research and, subsequently, discuss the research design and methodology of the study.

Competing on migration at the local level

This book focuses on the dynamics of electoral competition on the immigration issue in local electoral campaigns. Immigration provides good grounds on which to test and improve theories on party competition and electoral campaigning for at least three reasons. First, as mentioned above, the immigration issue only became salient in European political systems relatively recently. Rather than as a single issue, however, my claim is that immigration has penetrated electoral debates as a bundle of multiple aspects and issues conditionally and strategically framed by the actors involved in competition. In addition, its relative novelty seems to have paved the way to a variety of party politicization strategies, ranging from attempts to exclude it from public agendas to direct efforts to challenge the radical parties that contributed to its emergence. This offers a crucial opportunity to analyze the different dimensions and framing strategies structuring party competition. Third and most importantly, the immigration issue has been described in previous literature as cross-cutting the traditional divide between economic and cultural issues, since it simultaneously contains economic, cultural and identity features. As a prototypical example of a multidimensional issue, immigration provides a good opportunity to observe the mechanisms of electoral campaigning across different dimensions and frames.

Based on these considerations, I set out to investigate two aspects that have not received sufficient attention in previous literature on this subject: the multidimensional nature of policy issues in electoral campaigning and the importance of local factors in determining electoral debates on immigration. By investigating these two aspects jointly, and by empirically assessing the campaigning strategies

of political actors at the local level, I suggest an understanding of electoral competition based on the breakdown of policy problems along constitutive issue dimensions. To this goal, I develop an innovative approach to understanding the supply side of electoral competition, by focusing on the inherently multidimensional structure of complex policy issues. So far, both saliency and spatial models have tended to focus on one-dimensional policy issues, which parties can either endorse or reject as a whole. This research, contrarily, emphasizes their multidimensional and thematic nature, and looks at the role played by issue dimensions in the politicization strategies and framing choices of competing electoral actors.

In this respect, my main claim in this book is that saliency and positional strategies of issue competition are not sufficient to account for the dynamics of electoral campaigning on contentious policy issues. Instead, one must also account for framing strategies and issue-specific constitutive dimensions. Once the immigration issue is salient at the party-system level in fact, electoral actors lose their capacity to dismiss the issue altogether, and have to set up their electoral campaigns on the basis of alternative interpretations of the same issue. Rather than competing over different issues, they compete over directing attention to and away from different aspects of the same social reality.

On this basis, I shall look at whether political actors in election campaigns consider certain dimensions of the immigration issue more important than others, and whether they adopt different positions depending on the aspect of immigration. Parties are selective with respect to the dimensions of immigration they choose to highlight, emphasizing the aspects on which they have a strategic advantage whilst trying to conceal others. In order to disentangle the process of agenda setting competition in electoral campaigns on immigration, this study offers a close examination of political parties' priorities and approaches with respect to the sub-categories of complex policy issues.

The concept of dimensionality builds on the idea that complex political issues involve a large amount of dimensions of choice that could matter to citizens while making up their minds. Yet people generally process information in a selective manner and therefore take in consideration only some of these many dimensions. Since there are little rewards for discussing all the dimensions of a policy issue, political actors have additional incentives to represent policy problems in a partial and incomplete way. Recognizing the thematic nature of policy issues enables understanding which aspects are important in setting up public agendas in electoral times. When new dimensions of the issue become important, or when alternative understandings emerge, agendas may be reshaped, since emerging actors may challenge the ones that enjoyed an advantage in the public definition of an issue at a previous point in time.

This is why the study of electoral campaigning must focus on the way in which messages are crafted. In line with previous literature, I define a 'frame' as a central organizing idea that attracts attention to certain aspects of an issue, while directing it away from others (Gamson, 2004). Given that frames promote 'a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described' (Entman, 1993, p. 52), framing strategies

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refer to the active effort of an actor to construct a certain meaning for a given reality or phenomenon (Entman, 1993; Hänggli and Kriesi, 2010). This is done by emphasizing certain aspects on which to fix the public's attention while obscuring alternative ones.

On the basis of these premises, the main question motivating the research proposed here can be spelled out: how do political actors politicize an issue like immigration, which used to be 'novel' but is by now established in electoral campaign dynamics, which is cross-cutting and multidimensional in nature, and which is differently embedded in local contexts? I investigate immigration in order to explore the nature of campaigning on complex policy issues and the framing choices that accompany party strategies, with the goal of improving traditional spatial and saliency understandings of electoral competition. In so doing, I aim at explaining the set of constraints and opportunities that determine the discursive choices of strategic actors in electoral campaigning. What is the role played by the different attributes of the immigration issue in electoral competition? Which dimensions of immigration emerge in local electoral debates? What is the role of local factors, and to what extent do politicization strategies depend on the fact that immigration is differently embedded across local contexts? To what extent do parties compete using these alternative issue dimensions and frames? Does uncertainty in actors' strategies of politicization persist?

In order to answer these questions and to assess the dimensionality of electoral competition, I address immigration debates from three interrelated angles. First, I look at immigration debates across three Italian cities, considering whether and to what extent local factors and characteristics of electoral campaigns influence framing and dimensional choices in politicizing immigration. Second, I investigate whether political actors develop strategies of competition based on issue dimensions rather than on the immigration issue as a whole. This implies that parties do not differ from one another in terms of *whether* they discuss the immigration issue or not, but rather on *how* they discuss it. Third, I explore the role the mass media play as a transmission belt in the construction of electoral agendas, assessing the news value of the multiple aspects of the immigration issue and comparing the way in which political actors deal with them across different channels of communication.

Research design and methodology

My study is a comparative investigation of the politicization of the issue of migration across six electoral campaigns in three Italian cities: Milan, Rome and Prato. In recent years, scholars have increasingly recognized the importance of immigration in local political contexts. Although most of the actual policy competence on immigration affairs lies with national institutions, in fact, local political actors have important competences in the field of migrants' integration, as well as in other fields connected to migration in political rhetoric. Hence, they often have strong incentives to politicize this issue in its broader sense. By exploiting the symbolic power of immigration politics, in fact, local politicians debate issues

in areas well beyond their concrete administrative competences. Moreover, the dynamics of interethnic competition and threat often depend on patterns of concentration across local territories, on problems of cohabitation at the urban level, and on the distribution of locally-based resources and locally-managed welfare assets.

Local conditions, party configurations, media and focusing events are all factors that might contribute to the construction of diverging debates on immigration. Much as national institutional profiles and ‘citizenship regimes’ have traditionally been considered fundamental to explaining different policy-making activities and debates at the international level, I suggest that local factors and opportunities substantially shape the politicization of migration affairs in local debates. In this sense, the dynamics of politicization of the immigration issue at the local level can differ significantly not only from those at the national level, but can also vary substantially between local settings. On the one hand, this is because immigration provides opportunities to political entrepreneurs at all levels of public administration; on the other, because of the crucial role that local actors play in regulating specific dimensions of immigration and integration issues.

The decision to investigate local electoral campaigns in Italy also had to do with the main focus of this study, which looks at competitive strategies *within* multidimensional issues, rather than competition strategies *over* issues. Understanding how parties frame a certain issue and its constitutive dimensions requires an in-depth investigation of the discourse that parties produce, and a detailed analysis of how these frames and dimensions manage (or fail) to manipulate the electoral agenda in the news media. A similar endeavour is often hard to perform when the unit of analysis is national electoral campaigns, because party strategies may vary across settings and contexts, and the news agenda is often heterogeneous due to the marketing strategies of different outlets in different areas of the country. By focusing on the national level, in other words, there would have been the risk of summarizing strategies by averaging out local differences in dimensional choices.

My attention is not on the traditional question concerning the degree to which parties manipulate the salience of the immigration issue in the news media, which could be addressed by looking at national parties, news media, and electoral campaigns. Contrarily, this study’s interest lies with investigating how the dynamics of agenda definition at the local level influence the way in which problems are framed and publicly discussed (Caponio and Borkert, 2010; Morales and Giugni, 2011; van der Brug *et al.*, 2015). Approaches based on national models of immigrant incorporation have often neglected the complexity of immigrant policies and debates, which are frequently shaped by regional dynamics and local factors (Caponio, 2006; Jesuit and Mahler, 2004). On the one hand, this is due to the spontaneous and unplanned nature of migration flows and immigrant settlement in countries like Italy. On the other, local-level politics on immigration differ structurally from national-level politics because of the different challenges that local administrators face, and the different policy competences that they have (Gilbert, 2009; Hepburn and Zapata-Barrero, 2014). This underlines the importance of

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looking at local dynamics in immigration politics, as these may provide additional information on the rationales of immigration conflicts (Alexander, 2004; Penninx *et al.*, 2004).

Focusing on the supply side of electoral competition, moreover, the research design of this book is built on the analysis of electoral campaigns rather than party behaviour in between elections. This is because it is during these times that the game played by parties and electoral actors becomes most evident and explicit, exposing the influence that they exert on, and receive from, the political, social and media environment in which their competition takes place. A research design measuring party strategies of agenda construction during electoral campaigns must account for the socioeconomic, cultural and institutional characteristics of the place where competition takes place, the set of policies and arguments that political parties develop for a given electoral campaign, and the resonance of these propositions within the campaign period. For each election campaign, therefore, I looked at the degree to which one of the migration dimensions is central in the campaign and media agenda, and I uncover the campaigning activities of all involved political actors. As will be discussed later, the bulk of the analysis is based upon the media coverage of the immigration issue during the period of the electoral campaigns. Yet, in order to disentangle the strategies of the various actors involved in agenda setting, I not only look at differences across settings and time, but also differentiate news media reports from the electoral material, pledges and manifestos of the main actors running in the election campaigns.

To address these, I selected the three case studies of Prato, Milan and Rome based on a set of characteristics relating to the nature of immigrant settlement in each city, and studied the two most recent local electoral campaigns within each of these settings. In each setting, I considered the latest municipal electoral campaign at the time of the data collection, namely the elections 2008 in Rome, those of 2009 in Prato and those of 2011 in Milan. In order to have sufficient grounds for comparison, moreover, I also account for the three municipal elections that preceded the selected ones (Prato, 2004; Milan, 2006; Rome, 2006). In this way, the design allows both for within-case comparisons across electoral campaigns, and for between-case comparisons across local settings.¹

I focus on three comparable cities within the same political system in order to keep constant the institutional framework of multi-level governance, investigating the systematic variation in specific characteristics of migration politics (Islamic migration in Milan, Roma immigrants in Rome and Chinese migrants in Prato). The case studies are most similar in terms of electoral system, media environment and institutional architecture, but differ with respect to the dimension of immigration that is crucial in electoral campaigns. This builds on the idea that local conditions can facilitate the mobilization of specific issue sub-dimensions, so that the variation in the characteristics of the migrant population across local settings influences the accessibility of local arenas to different types of debates on migration. The three cases should therefore help elucidating the process of campaigning on immigration issue dimensions.

The locations were identified carefully based on information on the distribution of foreign residents in Italy and in each of the three cities, and the corresponding problems and debates related to immigration at the city level. By 2010, Milan and Rome hosted the largest immigrant communities in the country,² whilst Prato, where the size of the immigrant community is considerably smaller, is one of the *chef-lieu* cities with the highest share of immigrant residents over the total population (ISTAT, 2010).³ In addition, I considered the immigration debates that could be triggered given the composition of the immigrant population in the three cities. According to Gariglio *et al.* (2010), the main feature of public debates on immigration in Italy has been the tendency to build stereotypes and isolate ‘groups of immigrants’. Hence, I anticipated that the composition of migrant communities offered opportunities for dimensional politicization of immigration, and considered cities where ethnic concentration might result in different issue dimensions dominating electoral debates.

Accordingly, Rome hosts the largest Romanian community in Italy, next to a number of illegal and nomadic camps mainly inhabited by Travellers of *Romani* and *Sinti* origin. These are the themes that have dominated crime stories and securitized immigration debates over the past decades in Italy and beyond (Legros and Vitale, 2011), and especially at the time of Romania’s access to the EU (Bonetti *et al.*, 2011; Sigona, 2011). Muslim immigrants represents about 40% of the total number of foreign residents in the city of Milan (Bombardieri, 2011; Rebesi, 2011), and the presence of Muslims in the streets during the Friday prayer has been one of the main sources of conflict between neighbourhood organizations and migrant communities in Europe (Göle, 2013; Cousin and Vitale, 2012; Pogliano and Valetti, 2011). Finally, Prato offered a straightforward case where to test the nature of debates on socioeconomic aspects of immigration, due to its industrial economy and to the history of migration to the city, which was mainly driven by demand for a cheap labour force especially from China, and subsequently by the development of Chinese entrepreneurship.

Within each city setting, the comparative design focuses on coalitions of lists supporting mayoral candidates, looking at the changing importance of different actors, issue dimensions and events over time and across contexts. This choice to focus on coalitions is most appropriate given the electoral system in local Italian municipalities: a majoritarian system where voters express a preference vote for the mayor or his list/party; if no candidate receives at least 50% of the votes, the top two candidates are admitted to a second round after two weeks.⁴ Concerning the local campaigns observed, three of the six elections considered (Rome, 2008, Prato, 2009 and Milan, 2011) required a second round of elections because none of the candidates managed to obtain an absolute majority at the first round.

Previous studies that tried to explain variation in the politicization of migration have primarily focused on specific party types, focusing on niche or populist radical right parties that mobilized around migration (Meguid, 2008). On the contrary, the empirical analysis of the present book distinguishes six main types of local political actors: mainstream left and right actors, radical left and right actors,

centrist actors and interest groups. This choice was preferred to other possible categorizations because it allowed accounting for left–right differentiation in the politicization of migration, whilst simultaneously coming to terms with previous literature investigating the weakening of traditional cleavages in Western societies (Kriesi *et al.*, 2008). As argued by Peter Mair (2008, 2009), in fact, the main divergence between parties in contemporary democracies is between mainstream parties who are accustomed to being in office, and fringe or peripheral parties at either end of the left–right spectrum that have no government experience.⁵

Accordingly, I first differentiate between the mainstream left (centre-left) and mainstream right (centre-right) coalitions that run in all six election campaigns, which alternate in power and tend to address a broad set of issues in their electoral programmes. These correspond to the general cleavage between left- and right-wing politics existing at the national level, reproduced in scale in local arenas. In addition to these, I focus on those parties that are generally considered radical rather than mainstream, since the extent to which immigration plays a role in electoral campaigns is often strongly related to their strategies of competition.⁶ At the extreme of the political spectrum, therefore, I make reference to unaffiliated radical left⁷ and radical right lists and organizations,⁸ when these run campaigns independently from the centre-left and centre-right. The same applies for the various centrist actors that do not affiliate with mainstream coalitions.⁹ Finally, I also consider all those non-partisan actors intervening in public debates and representing societal or economic interests, ranging from trade unions, business organizations and institutional, religious and public figures such as journalists and experts.

The measurement of public debates was then based on the exploration and analysis of mass media reports and political advertisements and manifestos produced by the actors involved in the campaigns. This was done specifically by way of a systematic content analysis of electoral manifestos and news media coverage of the electoral campaigns (in local and national newspapers) over the two months preceding the six electoral events. I opted for the content analysis of newspapers rather than television, because the printed press is generally considered to report more extensively on political issues (Druckman and Parkin, 2005).

As illustrated in detail in Appendix 1, this strategy was composed of a number of successive steps: first, I selected the relevant newspapers to describe the local debates within electoral campaigns. Subsequently, I identified all newspaper articles (news stories) that referred to the electoral campaigns, to the politics at the municipal level in Prato, Milan and Rome (overall media coverage), or more specifically to migration. This also included the selection of the same time span across the six electoral campaigns. The third step, finally, involved the actual coding of the material, on a sentence-by-sentence basis, using the *core-sentence* method of analysis introduced by Kleinnijenhuis *et al.* (1997), and further developed by Kriesi *et al.* (2008). Given its focus on relational data, the main idea behind this approach is that the content of texts can be synthesized as a network of objects, allowing one to identify the relationship between political actors and political issues (in this case, sub-issues and frames as well).¹⁰ Previous studies have confirmed that this approach and type of data is most

appropriate for the analysis of how parties compete with one another (Helbling and Tresch, 2011).

This coding strategy allows for several types of comparisons, highlighting three different dimensions of politicization and competition over the migration issue. First, it permits one to evaluate the relative importance of immigration in the electoral campaign, relative to all alternative issue debates. Moreover, it allows for the calculation of the relative salience of a certain dimension in the total amount of immigration-related news stories. That is, it allows one to identify different types of debates across local electoral campaigns, and different types of discourse among competing coalitions. Similarly, it permits one to evaluate the degree to which each frame and argumentation is utilized within a debate on immigration. Finally, it enables one to investigate which frames and dimensions are mobilized to support, and which ones to oppose, immigration (again across cases and mayoral candidates).¹¹

The structure of the book

The book is comprised of eight chapters. Chapter 2 presents the general theoretical framework of the study, a salience model of political competition integrated in order to account for spatial positioning with respect to issue dimensions and frames. Starting from previous research dealing with party and issue competition, electoral campaigning and immigration politics, I justify and contextualize the main conceptual contributions of this study. I then move to the discussion of multidimensional issues on the basis of their inherent characteristics, cognitive factors on the demand side, and strategic preferences on the supply side of electoral competition. Immigration is introduced as a prototypical example of a complex political issue, comprised of three alternative dimensions that cut across policy sectors: the socioeconomic, cultural and religious, and law and order dimensions. For each dimension, I present the framing categories identified empirically, and discuss their relevance in explaining electoral debates and understandings of immigration in local Italian elections. Finally, the chapter introduces the main argument of the book concerning party strategies and the politicization of issue dimensions, presenting the expectations for local electoral campaigns, partisan dimensional and framing strategies, and media resonance in constructing public agendas. Chapter 3 then introduces the case studies and offers a broader contextualization of migration in Italy, referring to existing literature on the local dimension of migration politics and to studies on other Western and Southern European contexts.

The second part of this book presents the empirical analysis of the supply side of the electoral competition on migration. Using the content analysis of newspaper media coverage in Prato, Rome and Milan, Chapter 4 compares electoral debates across six local campaigns. The analyses of the salience of the immigration issue across time and settings reveal the importance of context and dimensionality in determining variation in electoral debates. Chapter 5 builds on this to investigate debates from the point of view of the actors that engage in electoral campaigning. It focuses on whether specific political actors are associated with particular frames

and dimensions which could explain the varying salience of the issue across local elections. In line with the main arguments of this book, I show that dimensional strategies vary depending on the salience of immigration, and on the composition of the party system. In particular I underline the role played by political actors in setting up dimensional strategies of competition, and analyze how they differ in terms of support and opposition to immigration. Chapter 6 deals with the question of how political actors frame immigration in electoral debates, and why they propose certain argumentations rather than others to articulate support or opposition to migration. The comparative design indicates that framing strategies depend not only on the position of actors on the left–right scale and the importance attributed to the issue, but also on the circumstances in which electoral competition takes place. Having assessed the dimensionality of the public electoral agenda, Chapter 7 advances the analysis of electoral campaigning by focusing on different channels of communication between political actors and the public. This chapter compares actors' pledges in their electoral platforms with the newspaper coverage of the campaigns, and differentiates political actors based on their left–right alignment, their role in election campaigns and their position towards immigration.

Chapter 8, in conclusion, combines the conceptual contributions of this volume with the empirical evidence of the electoral campaigns, drawing general conclusions concerning electoral debates on migration and integration at the local level. The final remarks synthesize the main findings of this research and their implications for the study of electoral competition and campaigning activities in political science, discussing the strategic options available to Italian and European political entrepreneurs once the immigration issue is integrated in the dominant political discourse.

Notes

- 1 See Chapter 3 for a case-by-case description of the three local settings, an overview of the migration patterns to Italy and Italian cities, and a discussion of the six electoral campaigns observed.
- 2 More than one-third of the immigrant residents in Italy live within the borders of metropolitan areas, in particular cities with a long history of international migration (Genoa, Rome, Turin and Milan; see: Testa, 2013). In addition, immigrant residents are concentrated in the so-called 'crown cities' of metropolitan areas of Central and Northern Italy (Venice, Florence, Bologna; see: Testa, 2013), where small and medium-sized cities tend to have high shares of foreign residents.
- 3 Further details and a discussion of the role of small and medium-sized municipalities for migrants' integration in Italy can be found in Chapter 3.
- 4 The electoral law in Italian municipalities is discussed in depth in Appendix 2. The results of the six elections under study are also available in the appendices.
- 5 Although the notion of mainstream parties is often used in opposition to that of niche parties (Meguid, 2008), the literature in this area is increasingly open to use the term in line with the choice of this volume (see: Kriesi *et al.*, 2008; Odsmalm and Bale, 2014). Niche parties, moreover, usually are defined as parties that emphasize issues that existing mainstream parties ignore (Meguid, 2008), which is in contradiction with the main focus this book, as I address party behaviour at times in which neglected issues can no longer be ignored.

- 6 For these and other parties addressed in the book, I avoided using populism as a defining category, and I addressed it solely as a specific style characterizing defined traits of the electoral campaigning of an individual actor, in a specific point in time. From a conceptual perspective, in fact, I am generally more oriented towards viewing populism as a type of social and political mobilization, related to a specific way of understanding political action and discourse, rather than as a particular ideological content that enables categorizing actors as either populist or non-populist (Laclau, 2005; Taguieff, 2002; Tarchi, 2004). From a methodological perspective, moreover, adding populism to the theoretical model would imply measuring it as a dimension of discourse. Yet, my focus is on strategic framing as a second-level agenda setting process (cf. Chapter 2), and therefore addresses substantive and issue-specific framing rather than generic frames (Matthes, 2009).
- 7 Radical left parties are actors accepting democracy, although they combine this with aspirations towards direct democracy and/or local participatory democracy, including incorporating the rights of the excluded and marginalized (for example, the unemployed and migrant workers) in the political system. Their anti-capitalism no longer involves a planned economy but opposition to neo-liberal globalized capitalism. Extreme left parties, in contrast, have far greater hostility to liberal democracy. In Italy, radical left parties have been represented by *Rifondazione Comunista*, *Sinistra Ecologia e Libertà* and *Comunisti Italiani*, which have a tradition of dialogue with mainstream left and centre-left coalitions (Albertazzi *et al.*, 2011).
- 8 In this study, I use the definition ‘radical right actors’. Despite the terminological and conceptual debate that is still open (Ignazi, 1992, 2003; Kitschelt, 1995; Mudde, 2000, 2007), previous literature has found no less than twenty-six different ways to identify this party family (Minkenberg, 2007). Generally, the groups pertaining to the ‘radical right’ or ‘extreme right’ are associated with values such as nationalism and exclusivism, xenophobia, welfare chauvinism, revisionism and conservatism. Although the two terms are often used interchangeably, the difference between extremism and radicalism is associated to the (degree of) hostility to the constitution and established order of political societies. By focusing on radicalism, I address not only the parties and movements of the neo-fascist scene in Italy (Albanese *et al.*, 2015; Castelli *et al.*, 2014; Castelli Gattinara *et al.*, 2013), but also those opposing only specific problems within the political system. With respect to the Italian Lega Nord (Northern League), I follow previous scholarship on this issue that has consistently excluded it from the radical right party family (Ignazi, 1992, 2003; McDonnell, 2006).
- 9 As well as the *Movimento 5 Stelle*, whose members reject identification with either of the two ends of the traditional left–right paradigm. This party, however, participated in local elections only sporadically in the years 2004–2011, and it emerged as a relevant political actor only in the years following the period observed here.
- 10 Accordingly, the number of core sentences in an article does not correspond to the number of grammatical sentences, since a core sentence may include one or more than one grammatical sentence, but it can also include none.
- 11 A detailed illustration of the coding procedures of subject, objects and relationships within actor-issue sentences can be found in Appendix 1 of this book.

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