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Electoral debates on integration and immigration in Italian local elections

Milan, Prato and Rome compared

Pietro Castelli Gattinara

Thesis submitted for assessment with a view to
obtaining the degree of Doctor of Political and Social Sciences
of the European University Institute

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Abstract

This research focuses on the politicization of immigration as an issue in local electoral campaigns, comparing the cases of three Italian cities. Based on the idea that immigration must not be understood as a one-dimensional category that parties endorse or dismiss, support or oppose, I investigate its multidimensional nature, and the importance of local factors and opportunities in determining public debates. Focusing on the dimensional choices and framing strategies of competing electoral actors, I propose an account of the different constitutive dimensions of immigration debates, and suggest that parties – next to competing over different issues – also compete with one another by selectively and strategically emphasizing different aspects of the same social reality. In particular, I identify three main dimensions of the immigration issue – the socioeconomic, cultural and religious, and law and order dimension – and seven specific frames corresponding to the arguments and justifications mobilized by political actors to articulate support and opposition to immigration. The construction of public agendas in electoral campaign periods is measured through an empirical content analysis of the coverage of local elections by newspapers and of local parties' electoral manifestos across two campaigns in the cities of Milan, Rome and Prato (2004-2011).

The results show not only that debates in different local settings deal with immigration in substantively different ways, but also that actors' electoral strategies rely upon the thematic structure of the issue, exploiting immigration dimensions in order to increase the accessibility and resonance of their messages among local electorates. The results of this dissertation offer one of the first comprehensive analyses of an issue that has too often been considered "emerging" in party competition, showing that when the issue cannot be dismissed, actors compete on its constitutive dimensions by mobilizing aspects on which they enjoy a strategic advantage. These findings pave the way to connect this field of research with other promising areas within the social and political sciences, such as public opinion research and the study of mediatization and communication in party politics, providing new insights into electoral politics and campaigning.

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Acknowledgements

When I first discovered that I would move to Florence and to the EUI for my PhD, I was four and a half years younger than I am now, I was living on the other side of Europe, Alemanno was the mayor of Rome, I had more hair and cleaner lungs, I was voting the wrong party, I spoke Turkish, I thought I would have gone back to Rome, I cycled but I did not play football, I was working in a pizzeria and spending my holidays in a place called Terschelling, I could barely distinguish the Alps from the Apennines, I didn't have a gin tonic problem, I didn't know the meaning of "humongous", I thought Prezzemolo was a herb, I had never been to Calabria, I had never met a CasaPound member, I thought I would never go to the U.S., I didn't know the 'marc de champagne', I had never lived in Paris, I didn't know Carmela, Francesca, Pantaleone, Giusy and Libera, the concept of immigration had a completely different meaning for me, I considered myself a quantitative sociologist, I had a positive impression of people in Tuscany, I had round sunglasses, I had never spent Easter in Crete, I had a scooter, I wore a ring, I was thoroughly non-violent, Ballantines was not Ballantines, I didn't know the Leicestershire, I hated anarchists, none of my friends had babies, I was about to get married, I didn't understand Irish, I thought Berlusconi was the worse it could happen, I believed in miracles, I was a Euro-enthusiast, I thought Totti would retire soon, I was considerably more self-confident, I didn't know queer theory, I was considerably less cynical, I didn't know Caterina and my cat was not yet born.

In four years, with respect to some of these and many other aspects, I've changed. This thesis embodies only one dimension of this change. What is sure is that 50 months ago I knew much less than I do now, for which I should primarily thank Hanspeter Kriesi, without whom this thesis would have simply not been possible. Beyond conventional formulas, it is true that his never-ending attention to my work and progress, his availability and understanding, his experience and his criticism contributed in a fundamental way not only to the thesis, but more generally to what I've learnt as a PhD student. I also wish to thank the many other – official and unofficial – supervisors that I had over the past years: those who helped me in the initial stages of this endeavour, with whom I had to struggle and negotiate the first chaotic and wild versions of this work; those who adopted me, in many ways, within their community, for reasons that are still unclear (excluding maybe the normal motivations of 'buon vicinato'); and those others who perceived that the ways of supervision are inscrutable, supporting with their curiosity and persistence the completion of this dissertation.

The usual suspects contributed, in different ways, to my experience of thinking, developing, and writing. At various stages the support and solidarity of my grandparents, parents and brothers and sisters has helped me figure out solutions to problems that seemed insuperable but were not. As always, Di Foggia and Ruggero assisted me when I was in most need. At Pigmalione, I shared with them not only the complaints and frustration but also the amusement and challenges of the dottorando life, being well aware that a glass of Lucano is mightier than a bivariate table. My colleagues in Leicester and my friends in Paris witnessed the most critical moments of thesis revision, for which I apologize. I also wish to thank the nutrias of Arno for relentlessly triggering my imagination and the several friends that

1 Introduction

1.1   The puzzle and research questions

This study focuses on the politicization of the immigration issue in local electoral campaigns in Italy, comparing the cases of Rome, Milan and Prato. It sets out to investigate two aspects that have not received sufficient attention previous literature: 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.

When studying immigration, 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 Western European party systems, or in terms of protest, xenophobia and radicalism. The impressive scholarly and normative interest in these aspects, however, has tended to overshadow the extent to which immigration debates, once marginal to electoral campaigning, have stabilized within party competition. The aim of this research, by contrast, is to assess the role played by immigration in electoral campaigning once it has been normalized within party systems. This in turn implies evaluating the process by which previously non-salient issues become integrated into existing debates and arenas.

This study proposes an innovative approach to understanding the supply side of electoral competition, by focusing on the inherently multi-dimensional structure of complex policy issues. So far, both saliency and spatial models of electoral competition 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, thematic nature, looking at the dimensional choices and framing strategies of competing electoral actors.

The main claim is that in order to understand the dynamics of electoral campaigning, one must not look only at saliency and positional strategies regarding policy issues. Instead, one

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must also account for issue-specific constitutive dimensions, as well as actors' framing choices. 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 as more important than the others, and whether they adopt different positions depending on the aspect of immigration that is mobilized. Parties are expected to be 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 is based 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. As a result, political actors are incentivized toward representing policy problems in a partial and incomplete way, given that there are little rewards for discussing all the dimensions of policy issues. 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 are shown to be important, or alternative understandings emerge, actors with advantages in the public definition of issues may be challenged by new ones, and agendas may be reshaped.

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 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.

Immigration provides good grounds on which to test and improve theories on party competition and electoral campaigning in a multidimensional framework for at least three reasons. First, as mentioned above, the immigration issue only became salient in European political systems (and in the Italian one in particular) 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 analyse the different dimensions and framing strategies with which the various partisan choices of competition have been structured. Thirdly 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.

Having suggested that immigration could well help shed light on the dynamics of electoral competition in a multidimensional framework, the main general 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? Hence, 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 politicization strategies depend on the fact that immigration is differently embedded across local contexts? To what extent 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 look at immigration debates from three interrelated angles. First, I look at immigration debates across cities, considering whether and to what extent local factors and characteristics of electoral campaigns influence the 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 means that parties do not differ from one another in terms of *whether* they discuss the immigration issue or not, but rather *how* they discuss it, which is analysed in terms of dimensional preferences and framing. Third, I explore the role the mass media plays 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.

1.2   The case

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 filed of migrants' integration, as well as in fields that might be connected to immigration in political rhetoric. Hence, they often have strong incentives to politicize the issue of immigration in its broader sense. Exploiting the symbolic power of immigration politics, 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, local party configurations, media and focusing events are all factors that might contribute to the construction of diverging debates on immigration. Much like national institutional profiles and "immigration 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 local administrators are increasingly accorded a role in regulating specific dimensions of immigration and integration issues.

The three case studies of Prato, Milan, and Rome were selected based on a set of characteristics relating to the nature of immigrant settlement in each city and the composition of party systems. The case studies are most similar in terms of electoral system, media environment and institutional architecture, but differ substantially in terms of regional or local conditions that can facilitate the mobilization of specific sub-dimensions of the immigration issue. Hence, the cases were selected for a comparative analysis, based on two central elements. First, city settings were selected on the basis of immigration demographics, which identified Rome and Milan as the cities hosting the largest immigrant communities in Italy, and Prato as the city with the highest share of immigrant residents in the country. Second, the three exploratory case studies were identified having in mind the three constitutive dimensions of the immigration issue.

The selection was therefore based on the idea that the variation in the characteristics of the immigrant population across local settings influences the accessibility of local arenas to debates different aspects of the immigration issue. The three cases should therefore help elucidating the process of campaigning on immigration issue dimensions. By combining these records with information on electoral campaigning in Milan, Prato and Rome, I formulated the overarching expectations concerning the tone, characteristics and features of immigration debates across the different local elections in the three cities.

1.3   The structure of the thesis

The thesis is comprised of nine chapters. Chapter 2 presents the general theoretical framework of this dissertation, 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 dissertation. 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 dimension. For each

dimension, I present the framing categories that were 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 thesis concerning issue dimensions politicization and party strategies, presenting the expectations for local electoral campaigns, partisan dimensional and framing strategies, and media resonance in constructing public agendas.

The research design and methodology of the study are presented in Chapter 3, which deals with the aspects of data collection using news coverage of electoral campaigns, with respect to the advantages and disadvantages of alternative methodologies for measuring partisan campaign strategies. The coding operations are then discussed in detail for both types of sources used in the study: newspaper data and party manifestos. The choice of focusing on local electoral campaigns in Italy is further justified in Chapter 4, which presents the case studies and offers a broader contextualization of immigration and immigration politics in Italy.

The second part of this dissertation focuses on the empirical analysis of the supply side of the electoral market on immigration. Using the content analysis of newspaper media coverage in Prato, Rome and Milan, Chapter 5 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 6 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 dissertation, 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 analyse how they differ in terms of support and opposition to immigration.

Chapter 7 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 8 advances the analysis of

electoral campaigning by focusing on different channels of communication between political actors and the public. Since electoral campaigning is understood as a multistep process in which political actors first communicate with the media and then interact with voters through that media, 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 9, in conclusion, combines the conceptual contributions of this dissertation with the empirical evidence of the electoral campaigns, drawing general conclusions concerning electoral debates on immigration 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 that political entrepreneurs are confronted with once the immigration issue has been integrated in the dominant political discourse.

Part 1: Theory and methods

2
Theoretical framework

2.1   Introduction

This thesis analyses electoral campaigning on the immigration issue in six local elections in Italy. The study of electoral campaigns by political scientists has focused on two aspects: the effects on voters and the strategies of political actors. The first stream of literature focuses on campaigns as a source for information processing by the citizens, suggesting that these provide voters with necessary information for making a choice in line with their pre-existing preferences (Lazarsfeld *et al.,* 1944, Finkel, 1993; Gelman and King, 1993; Stimson, 2004; Arceneaux 2005). In this sense, communication between political actors and voters is a multi-step process, which includes the media as the main transmission belt conveying political information and frames to the public (Hänggli, 2010). The second stream of research focuses more specifically on campaigning, looking at the way in which the political actors involved in electoral competition engage in public debates involving their competitors, the media and the public (Brandenburg, 2002; Kiousis, *et al.,* 2006; Kriesi *et al.,* 2009; Matthes, 2011; Hänggli, 2012). In the course of electoral campaigns the conflict between political actors unfolds, as the actors involved form coalitions, compete and craft messages based on alternative arguments, frames and worldviews, with the goal of getting public and media attention and of mobilizing support.

I focus on the second aspect, and address the role of political actors, i.e. the actors who initiate campaign events and provide the main input into electoral debates. The key argument is that choices of politicization are driven by the attempt of political actors to control competitors and the media as to impose their preferred issues and messages in the course of the campaign. Literature in this area is well established, as previous research has underlined that thematic emphasis is fundamental to understand electoral competition and to explain electoral campaign strategies and results (Budge and Farlie, 1983; Klingemann *et al*., 1994; Green-Pedersen and Blomqvist, 2004; Petrocik *et al.,* 2003). At the core of 'saliency theory' approaches is the idea that parties do not engage in comprehensive debates addressing all

policy issues, but rather privilege only those issues that they consider favourable to their side (Budge and Farlie, 1983).

This approach has been applied predominantly to study the way in which parties introduce new issues on the agenda in order to manipulate the terms of the competition. The problem with this understanding is that we don't know much of what happens once the 'new' issues that have been introduced stabilize within party systems (van der Brug and van Spanje, 2009; Green-Pedersen, 2010; Rovny and Edwards, 2012). Moreover, by failing to differentiate between macroscopic policy themes, or bundles of issues, and their constitutive dimensions, this approach underestimates the complexity of policy issues in public debates. When complex bundles are publicly debated, instead, political actors generally focus on a limited, partial and often incomplete subset of their underlying dimensions (Baumgartner and Jones, 2002).

In line with a growing amount of literature aiming at dissecting the elements that make up complex policy issues whilst integrating the salience and positional approaches to issue competition (De Sio, 2010; De Sio and Franklin, 2012; Helbling, 2013; Rovny, 2012; Guinaudeau and Persico, 2014), in this study I suggest to look at the different dimensions of the immigration issue upon which electoral competition takes place. I suggest that practices and efforts aimed at manipulating the electoral agenda may vary depending on the features of the issue at stake, since political decisions tend to encompass a multiplicity of dimensions of choice. In this sense, political actors may strategically shift the point of reference of public debates from one aspect of a given political issue to another.

When facing complex bundles of policy issues, political actors are unlikely to consider all features as equally important. On the contrary, they are likely to emphasize the dimensions on which they expect to enjoy a strategic advantage, which leaves them to adopt different approaches to each sub-category as well (Odmalm, 2012). Similarly, De Sio (2010) hypothesizes a 'second-stage' of selective emphasis: when confronted with complex issues, parties do not only choose whether to address the issue or not, but they can also decide which aspects of a given issue they want to highlight and which others they prefer to hide.

In order to test this idea, my choice is to focus on immigration, a policy issue that has often been recognized as being complex, multidimensional or at least cutting-across traditional policy areas (i.e. Höglinger *et al*., 2012, Odmalm, 2011; Helbling *et al.,* 2010; Odmalm and

Super, 2014), yet it has predominantly been analysed as a single issue in party competition.[1] I shall compare three case studies that are associated with different underlying dimensions of the immigration issue.[2] By looking at electoral campaigns in each city setting and by comparing campaigns across contexts, my aim is to assess the constraints and opportunities that determine discursive choices of actors in electoral campaigns on immigration.

The remainder of this chapter will first outline the main argument of the dissertation, and discuss a model for the understanding of electoral campaign strategies based on multiple issue dimensions and strategic framing of policy issues. Subsequently, I introduce the choice of focusing on immigration as a prototypical example of multidimensional policy issue, and I present the rationale for the identification of its constitutive dimensions and frames. Lastly, I outline the main hypotheses and expectations concerning context conditions, campaign conditions and party conditions driving the electoral strategies of political actors with respect to the dimensions and frames of the immigration issue.

2.2   Issue dimensions, agenda-setting and framing

The core theoretical assertion of agenda-setting research is that the attention accorded to specific media objects or issues leads to increased public concern with those same issues (Kiousis and McCombs, 2004; Lopez-Escobar *et al.,* 1998). The concept of "agenda building" was introduced by Cobb and Elder (1971, p. 905), who investigated "how issues are created and why some controversies or incipient issues come to command the attention and concern of decision makers, while others fail". In line with this approach, I investigate the ability of political actors to influence attention during electoral campaigns. Yet, whereas agenda building is concerned with the issue level, I look at the different dimensions and aspects of the same issue, following the approach that communication scholars generally call second-level agenda building (Kiousis *et al*, 2006; see also Riker, 1986).

Accordingly, I use the salience of issue specific attributes and frames in the media as dependent variable and investigate the factors that influence the change in the relative salience

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[1] Cf. section 2.3.1 for a discussion of issue dimensions and frames

[2] Cf. Chapter 3 for a discussion of the case studies and case selection

of each dimension in the coverage of electoral campaigns. Lopez-Escobar et al. (1998, p.337) contended that "both the selection of *objects* for attention and the selection of *attributes* for describing these objects are powerful agenda-setting roles." In a similar fashion, I suggest that in order to understand how complex political issues are politicized in electoral campaigns, one has to look at the salience of issues and issue dimensions.

A major advantage of this approach is that it offers a framework for examining issue and dimensional salience separately. Moreover, this conceptualization allows to investigate how the shifts in dimensional attention can impact changes in the overall salience of the issue (Ghanem, 1997; Kiousis *et al*., 2006). Hooghe *et al.* (2002) have noted that certain issues (in particular EU integration) constitute a challenge for parties, as they are unable to assimilate them within either of the traditional dimensions of political conflict, namely the socio-cultural and the economic left-right dimension.

The multiple dimensions of policy issues, in fact, structure the interplay between parties, resulting in a set of ideological 'pulls' (Odmalm, 2011; 2012) on each issue dimension. More broadly, these tensions generate patterns of incentives and constraints for political actors, affecting their behaviour and competition vis-à-vis each issue aspects. Parties – therefore – are not only confronted with the question of when, why and how to emphasize the immigration issue in their election campaign, but they must engage in the much more delicate task of balancing their emphasis and positions on each issue dimension, using alternative frames and issue emphases in order to shift the focus over their key areas of strength within the immigration policy field.

My main argument in this thesis is that campaigning strategies may involve not only a struggle over what issues set the electoral and media agenda, but also how these issues are portrayed in public and electoral debates (Kiousis *et al*., 2006). Previous studies used the concept of second-level agenda-setting to describe the way in which the dimensions and frames pushed forward by political entrepreneurs are reproduced by the mass media (Huckins, 1999; McCombs and Ghanem, 2001; Kiousis *et al.,* 2006; Tan and Weaver, 2007; Wirth *et al.,* 2010). In this sense, second-level agenda-setting literature has suggested that the concept of salience can be applied either to the degree of attention that is given to certain issues rather than others, or to the importance of issue-specific attributes relative to others (McCombs, 2004; McCombs and Reynolds, 2002). Similarly, literature on framing suggested that frames are central to communication processes, as they attract attention to certain aspects of an issue

rather than others: by selectively emphasizing and evaluating certain issue features, frames provide coherence to political messages and convey an interpretation of a perceived reality (Ferree *et al.*, 2002; Gamson, 2004; Hänggli, 2010).

In line with these two streams of research, I contend that the study of electoral campaigning must focus on the way in which messages are crafted by looking simultaneously at selective emphasis on issue dimensions and framing strategies, which represent two steps within the same communication process (Riker, 1986; Odmalm, 2012). In this section, I will briefly introduce the two approaches, underlining how they differ from one another and complement each other, and discuss how they can help improving the scholarly understanding of electoral competition over multiple dimensions of policy issues.

Attribute agenda-setting or second-level agenda-setting calls attention to the special status of certain attributes of policy issues in the content of political messages. The idea is that each 'object' (McCombs 2004, p.70) in the agenda is composed of numerous attributes, or dimensions, that define the scope, properties and traits that characterize the object. If first level agenda-setting is about transmission of issue salience, the second level is the transmission of attribute salience, i.e. the selective emphasis on certain attributes of a policy issue rather than others.

In terms of issue dimensions, Baumgartner and Jones (2002) proposed that "every public policy of substance is inherently multidimensional, but official consideration (and public understanding) of the issue at any given time typically is only partial" (p. 47). Similarly, I contend that when political actors are confronted with complex issues such as immigration, they do not only choose whether to address the issue or not, but they will also try to highlight certain aspects whilst hiding others. I identify three main reasons supporting the idea that issue competition is about the selection of – and emphasis upon – particular issue attributes rather than policy themes as a whole.

The first one is related to the substantial complexity of policy problems that may have multi-faceted implications and cut across several policy sectors (*inherent complexity*). In addition, complex policy problems may be fragmented into distinct dimensions in order to facilitate information processing. Studies on framing and priming effects have demonstrated that human minds process information in a selective manner, focusing on the most relevant aspects, possibly producing partial and incomplete representations (*cognitive factors*, see: Sniderman and Theriault, 2004; Kiousis *et al.*, 2006; Zaller, 1992; Iyengar, 1991; Iyengar and

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Kinder, 1987; 2010). Generally, politicians have neither the resources nor the incentives to address political problems in all their dimensions. Rather, they will promote only the perspective on problems that they expect to favour them alone (Swanson and Mancini, 1996; Kriesi *et al.*, 2009). Struggles for attention to alternative dimensions of a general problem, hence, are essential to political competition (*strategic factors*). Similarly, we may envisage a hypothetical situation in which several parties own the same issue, all of them exerting dominance over one of its specific dimensions (Kriesi *et al.*, 2009).

Taken together, these three implications support the intuition that party competition should be studied using a multidimensional framework: strategic political actors expecting an advantage from a certain dimension of the immigration issue will selectively emphasize the issue as to shift the terms of debate from one dimension to another (Baumgartner and Jones, 2002). The implication is that identifying the circumstances that determine electoral agendas should not be done according to general issue characteristics, but rather by accounting for the specific features of issue dimensions. Each attribute of complex policy issues provides distinct opportunities which campaigners can focus electoral strategies on. Electoral agendas are thus the result of the struggle between the preferences of political entrepreneurs regarding the main conflict dimensions of policy issues.

Framing, instead, involves not only selection and salience, but also diagnosis, evaluation and prescription (Gamson, 1992): frames define problems, diagnose its causes, make moral judgments and suggest remedies in function of costs and benefits. Numerous approaches to the concept of framing exist (Entman, 1993), yet the most widely accepted definition looks at frames as messages promoting "a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described" (Entman, 1993 p. 52). Although frames can be considered as "spotlights" that drag attention to certain aspects of an issue, their main characteristic is that they provide coherence to a set of concepts and elements (Ferree *et al.,* 2002, p. 105). Hence, if attribute agenda-setting focuses on salience, looking at how certain issue dimensions are emphasized in order to fix the public's attention while obscuring alternative ones, framing implies the active effort of an actor to construct a certain meaning for a given reality or phenomenon (Entman, 1993; Hänggli and Kriesi, 2010).

In this sense, studies focusing on the outcomes of framing and agenda-setting have distinguished between the concepts of 'priming' and 'framing'. Even though my focus is on the supply side of political competition, this distinction may help elucidating the difference between issue dimensions and issue framing. Unlike studies on priming, which deal with the

outcomes of agenda-setting processes (Scheufele, 2000, p. 306), framing studies do not focus exclusively on *what* people talk or think about, but also on *how* they think and talk about political issues (Pan and Kosicki 1993, p. 70). Similarly, in their discussion on the construction of public opinion on Europe, Hooghe and Marks (2009) distinguish between strategies of political entrepreneurs oriented at priming (making a consideration salient) and framing (connecting a particular consideration to a political object).

Hence, if the dimensional approach enables to investigate the selective salience that political entrepreneurs attribute to specific issue attributes, looking at issue frames enables tackling the way in which actors understand and discuss the issue dimension that they bring to the fore. Competitive situations like election campaigns are highly suitable to be studied through the lenses of salience and framing choices, because the actors are incentivized to develop effective strategies (in terms of framing and selective emphasis) so that their messages are not cancelled by those of their competitors (Sniderman and Theriault, 2004, Nelson, 2004, Brewer and Gross, 2005, Chong and Druckman, 2007a, Jerit, 2008). Campaign strategies are therefore the result of the combination of the two elements: by emphasizing specific issue attributes and by appropriately framing an issue, political actors attempt to influence the public's interpretation of the issue, constructing "the meaning of the reality in question in a sense that supports their own point of view" (Kriesi 2010, p. 8).

In sum, in line with previous research on agenda-setting and frame building, this study uses media coverage of immigration debates as dependent variable. My analysis explores how the actors involved in the competition address the different aspects of immigration and integration debates, investigating which factors (at the context, campaign and party level) are relevant in explaining the change in positions on and attention to the immigration issue and each of its issue dimension.

2.2.1 Competition on multidimensional issues

It follows from the debate above that candidates make choices with respect to the various dimensions of an issue and then justify their positions in order to differentiate themselves from, or to challenge, their competitors. Engaging in electoral debates on immigration, in other words, can be explained in terms of framing strategies oriented to challenge the frames that are used by other actors, or to shift the attention toward other dimensions of the issue.

More specifically, dimensional salience and framing relate to two strategies that can be brought about by strategically-minded political actors seeking dominance in the electoral

agenda. The first one involves the selective emphasis of certain aspects of a political issue (salience), whereas the second one encompasses rhetorical strategies of framing. The first expects that the predispositions of individuals toward a certain aspect of a political issue are favourable to the actor, and therefore draws the public's attention towards that aspect. The second one, instead, may lead to a change in the evaluative content of individual beliefs with respect to a specific issue dimension. Hence, the first one builds upon individual predispositions whilst the second can also imply an attempt to modify the beliefs and preferences of targeted parts of the electorate.

A multidimensional approach helps clarifying these dynamics by differentiating the multiple steps in issue politicization. Figure 2.1 below depicts in graph form the strategies through which the immigration issue is politicized. As can be seen, the more the strategy of Party A resembles the one of its competitor Party B at each step of competition (issue level, dimension level and framing level), the more the two parties engage in direct confrontation. To begin with, parties must decide whether to take up an issue (in our case immigration) or discard it altogether from their electoral campaign. In line with Meguid's model (2005; 2008), mainstream parties can deliberately 'dismiss' certain issues, thereby signalling their lack of importance. This approach, however, seem to oversimplify the dilemmas that parties are faced with when they have to decide whether to address the immigration issue. The second strategy, moreover, seems to be less and less rewarding as immigration becomes incorporated into party system agendas, which makes it increasingly difficult for mainstream parties to simply 'avoid' discussing it.[3]

If parties take up the immigration issue, multidimensional competition follows three basic strategic clusters, depending on party choices with respect to issue dimensions, their choices in terms of support or opposition to immigration, and their framing choices. In the first place, parties have to decide the dimensional focus of their campaign on immigration. Odmalm (2011) suggest that parties are required to perform a delicate balancing strategy in order to avoid criticism from their competitors and adverse electoral outcomes. Emphasising the 'wrong' stream *within* the immigration issue, in other words, may detract attention from the parties' core competences and provide an advantage to their competitors.

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[3] Inevitably, the extent to which this is the case may vary across context, campaigns and settings. As shown by Morales *et al*. (2014), for example, although mainstream Spanish parties had started to incorporate the issue in their pattern of electoral competition, immigration virtually disappeared from debates in the 2011 elections, as issues related to the economic crisis absorbed all the attention. Yet, Greece offers a rather different scenario in terms of the interaction between the economic crisis and immigration debates (Tampakoglou, 2014).

In this sense, each party is confronted with the choice of taking up the same issue dimension as their competitors or rather try to shift the debate toward alternative aspects of the issue. If they mobilize alternative dimensions, their strategy is oriented at raising attention on aspects that they deem electorally rewarding, and/or diverting attention away from aspects on which their opponents are advantaged. The goal is therefore to attract swing voters whose interests and val-

Figure 2.1 *Dimensional and framing strategies of competition on the immigration issue*
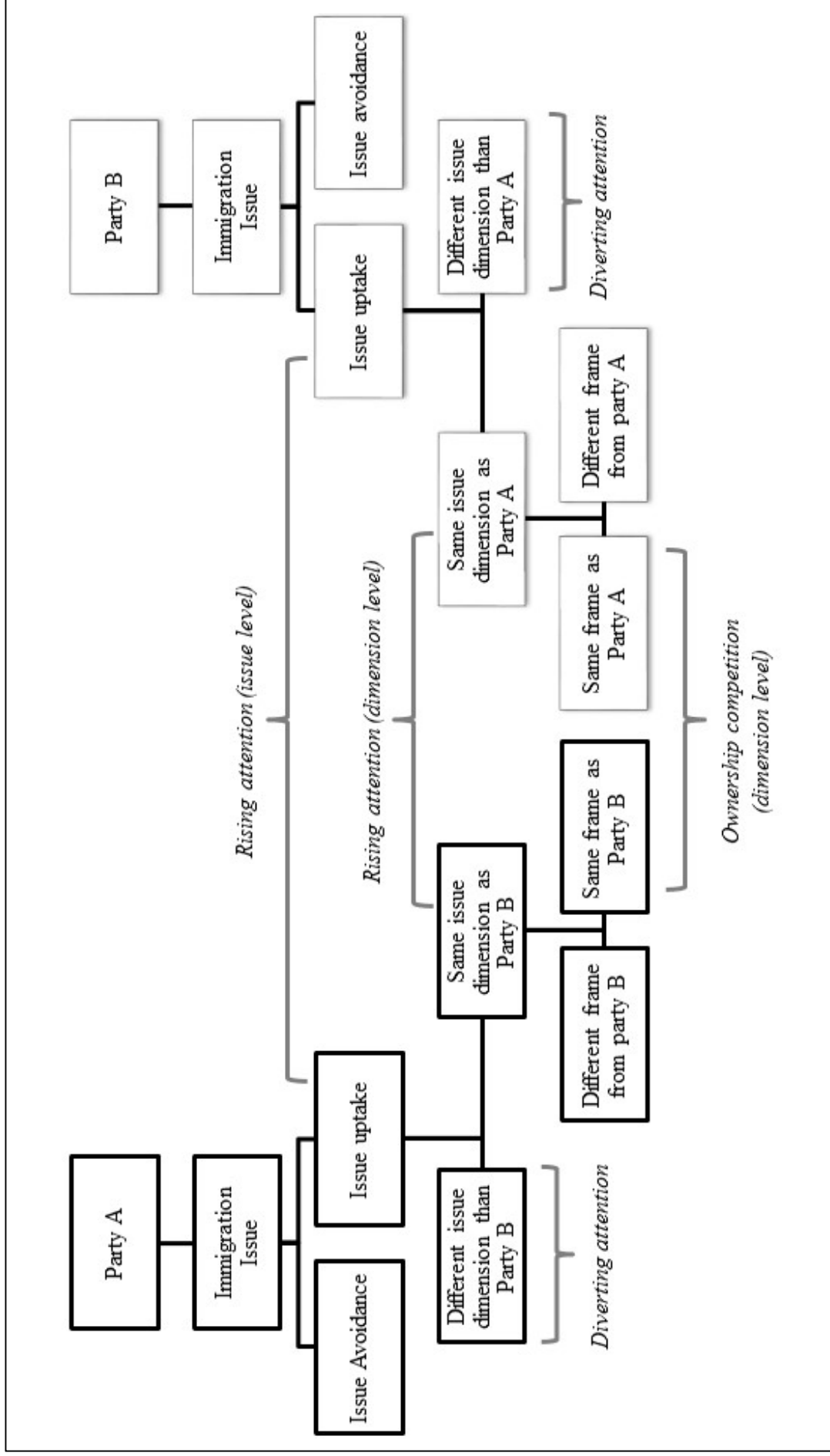
ues are not captured by the dimensional politicization of other candidates. This strategy is likely to be followed by parties belonging to different camps (pro- and anti immigration), or by parties within the same camp that prefer not to compete directly over immigration.

Alternatively, parties can focus on the same issue dimensions as their competitors, which can be done by taking up the same position or the opposite position of their counterparts. In either case, parties also have to decide on the specific arguments that they intend to mobilize in order to explain *why* a given aspect of immigration is emphasized, and *why* a certain position is taken. Similar to the previous stage, parties can mobilize a single or multiple frames, and have to decide whether to apply the same framing as their competitors or not. If they focus on different explanations, parties try to divert voters away from each other, persuading them that their own interpretation of a given aspect of immigration is preferable to that of the opponent. If they mobilize the same frames and the same dimensions as their competitors, parties directly challenge one another, offering the same interpretation of one aspect of the issue. In line with literature on valence issues (Stokes, 1963; 1992; Green, 2007) and issue ownership (Petrocik 1996; Green-Pedersen 2007), this strategy implies that parties compete primarily in terms of their competence on the immigration issue. In the present case, parties will set up their strategies based on the competence that they display on each aspect of the issue.

2.3   The case of immigration

2.3.1 *Multidimensional policy issues and immigration*

Immigration is conceived here as a prototypical example of multidimensional issues. Previous literature has illustrated that debates on this issue cut across several thematic fields, and that as a consequence the politicization of the 'immigration issue' has been subject to a conspicuous degree of variation across parties, contexts and over time (Perlmutter, 1996; Feldblum, 1999; Lahav, 2004; Lakoff and Ferguson, 2006; Messina and Lahav, 2006; Messina, 2007; Vliegenthart and Roggeband, 2007; Helbling, 2013). Based on previous research in this area, in this section I argue that the multidimensionality of the immigration issue is confirmed in three interrelated domains pertaining to the politics of immigration and integration: policy making, citizens' attitudes and public debates.

Dimensional accounts of policy issues should provide insights into the aspects and features of issues that are – or may be – relevant within specific types of debates and settings. Yet,

although multiple issue attributes and problem definitions can coexist simultaneously within public agendas (Baumgartner and Jones 2002), debates will generally not address all of the aspects, topics or dimensions that could possibly be used to define immigration. Previous research suggested that the complexity of the immigration issue and its implication in terms of migrants' integration is often drastically simplified in political narratives and policy making, as political actors have to rely on straightforward stories which can be explained in terms of cause and effect, so that debates on immigration have a structural tendency to 'short-circuit' the complexity of the issue (Boswell 2011, p.13).

Disaggregating immigration policy into distinct policy components has been an essential task for policy analysts (Lahav and Guiraudon, 2006). Baumgartner and Jones suggest that, although primarily defined by the problem of controlling borders, immigration policies have implications on a number of policy areas, so that "the immigration policy arena has several issue dimensions, making immigration more similar to heath care policy (a complex policy arena with many ramifications) than to agricultural policy (a one-dimensional arena focusing primarily on the extent of subsidies offered to producers)" (p.74). In this sense, immigration takes on distinct dimensional definitions, which the authors classify as policies on border control and for the preservation of the national identity; policies addressing immigration as a labour resource for national industries; and policies looking at immigration through humanitarianism and oriented at the protection of the politically and religiously persecuted from other countries.

Immigration policies often overlap with policies on the consequences of migration in terms of civic integration, as border security and illegal migration is often associated with internal security and crime, whereas economic policies on migration directly affect labour market regulations and welfare state policies (see: Berkhout and Sudulich, 2011). Similarly, Guiraudon (2003) argues that due to its implications for labour, economics, foreign affairs, social affairs and internal affairs, migration as a policy issue can hardly be confined to a single ministry.

Prior studies generally disaggregate the issue along two dimensions. On the one hand is the differentiation between issues pertaining to immigration and aspects concerning the integration of migrants. This is generally done in line with Tomas Hammar's (1985) distinction between immigration control policies and immigrant policy: the first refers to the framework regulating the entry and stay of foreigners, whereas the latter concerns their

integration into host societies. On the other hand, authors differentiate among the various fields that are potentially affected (Messina and Lahav, 2006; Messina, 2007). Moreover, security arguments are increasingly important in electoral debates, be that in terms of illegal entry and internal security and crime. Recent studies have also combined the two lines, assessing, for instance, whether security issues pertain to the access or the stay of migrants, and whether economic aspects have to do with labour market integration or economic migration (Berkhout and Sudulich, 2011).

For the present study, which focuses on local politics, issues of border control and immigration are generally of lesser importance.[4] My focus is therefore primarily on issues of integration of immigrants, and distinguishes between three dimensions of such issues: the *socioeconomic dimension*, the *cultural and religious dimension* and the *law and order dimension*. The first two broadly correspond to the understanding of most previous studies on the immigration issue, proposing a twofold differentiation where economic arguments are opposed to cultural and identity ones. Similarly, Kriesi *et al.* (2012) suggested that immigration and ethnic diversity have the potential of generating new political conflicts that have more to do with conceptions of national identity than they do with concerns about personal economic circumstances, labour competition and fiscal burdens (see also Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2007). Economic challenges resulting from globalization are therefore linked to increasing cultural diversity, which sets up processes of cultural competition for which ethnically different populations become symbol of potential threats to collective identity and to the standard of living of the natives (Kriesi *et al.*, 2012).

The third dimension makes reference to the securitization of public debates on immigration, and broadly refers to the conceptualization of migration as a security concern. The securitization of immigration refers to public concerns over the quality of life and physical and societal security as a result of migration processes (Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde, 1998; Weiner, 1993). More broadly, international migration can be considered as a potential source

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[4] As a matter of fact, distinguishing between immigration and immigrant politics often implies overlooking other aspects of public discourse. Previous research illustrated that this distinction is particularly difficult to "unpack" in empirical terms, since incorporation arguments are often used by governments to deter new migrant entries (Lahav and Guiraudon 2006, p. 208; Brochmann and Hammar 1999), whilst the border between international security and social fear has become increasingly thin (Buonfino 2004). In this sense, I am more interested in disentangling the various kinds of problems and opportunities that may be perceived by citizens and addressed by political actors in debating immigration affairs, than in focusing on the essential differentiation between stages of policy that is implicit in the integration/immigration distinction.

of conflicts within (but also between) states, be that because of immigrants' often imperfect economic and cultural integration, the marginalization of communities in ethnic ghettoes, or the emergence of negative sentiments or xenophobic movements and parties. In addition, after 9/11 Immigration came to be increasingly identified with invasion, terrorism, violence and physical insecurity (see: Bigo, 2002; Lahav and Courtemanche, 2011; Rudolph, 2007). Accordingly, the law and order dimension generally focuses on the explicit and implicit association of immigrants with insecurity, danger and emergency.

The three immigration dimensions provide the general framework for the classification of the arguments used by political parties to frame the immigration issue (cf. Chapter 3). This choice is the most appropriate for a study on strategic framing in electoral campaigns, although it is different from the one of comparative studies focusing simultaneously on multiple issues, or studying relatively long time periods (Helbling, 2013; Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart 2009; Roggeband and Vliegenthart, 2007). These studies generally make use of what de Vreese *et al.* (2001, pp.108-10) and de Vreese (2005) call "generic frames" (as opposed to "issue-specific" ones), which correspond to more general descriptions of a reality (or news), and are broadly applicable to a range of news topics, over time, and potentially in different cultural contexts.

As was discussed previously, my definition of framing processes involve both 'selection' and 'diagnosis': once certain issue dimensions are emphasized, framing implies the active effort to provide meaning to the aspects in question. Hence, in line with previous research in this area that finds it difficult to specify a frame as generic or general (Chong and Druckman 2007a; Druckman, 2004; Hänggli, 2010), I opt to link a frame explicitly to an issue dimension and an evaluation (see also Callaghan and Schnell 2004; Entman, 2004). Looking at substantive, issue-specific frames implies focusing on the aspect of the problem definition (in terms of Entman's frame definition), and it entails that every issue can have different issue-specific frames.

This is not to say that generic frames are unable to yield useful insights. However, they are more useful to advance theories of framing and framing effects in the field of communication than they are for a study on competition strategies in electoral campaigning. In fact, the focus on issue-specific frames is in line with the choice of most studies on strategic framing and campaigning (Matthes and Kohring, 2008; Matthes, 2009). Following this stream of research, I opted to focus on the proposition level as unit of analysis (rather than the article level as

often the case for generic frames) and to follow an inductive strategy for frame extraction (Hänggli, 2010; Matthes, 2009).[5] This strategy also enabled to diminish the risk of overlooking types of arguments that were not anticipated *a priori*.[6] Table 2.1 below summarizes the threefold categorization of the immigration issue, specifying the alternative frames that were identified within each dimension.[7]

Table 2.1 *Categorization of immigration dimensions and frames in Italy*

Dimension	Frames	Frame category	Examples
Socio-Economic	*Economic Prosperity*	Pragmatic	Economic growth/decay
			International competition
			Welfare state
	Labour and Security	Pragmatic	Unemployment rates
			Unfair competition
Cultural and religious	*Multiculturalism*	Moral-universalistic	Tolerance
			Cultural diversity
			Failure of multiculturalism
			National identity
	Nationalism	Identity-related	Loss of tradition
			Citizenship
Law and order	*Urban Issues*	Pragmatic	Suburbs issues
			Ethnic neighbourhoods
			Urban violence
			Refugee and asylum abuse
	Emergency Issues	Pragmatic	Illegal migration/amnesties
			Terrorism/civil liberties

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[5] The terms "inductive" and "deductive" are used to refer to frame extraction only and not to refer to the general epistemological orientation of the study. Inductive strategies imply that frames are generated as a result of the analysis rather than being (theoretically) derived beforehand. A deductive strategy would have implied that pre-defined frames are coded and that no new frames are generated (Matthes and Kohring, 2008).

[6] As will be discussed more extensively in Chapter 3, this implied identifying frame categories from an initial exploratory analysis of newspaper articles and subsequently coding in quantitative content analysis.

[7] For each claim, moreover, I further specify the directional nature, which allows us to account for the direction of the relationship between each dimension and frame and the immigration issue.

		EU citizenship
Roma Issues	Identity-related	Lifestyle incompatibility
		Nomadism

In line with previous research in this area, this categorization and its further sub-classification of frames takes into account the fact that parties may adopt different positions depending on the aspect of migration that is highlighted (Odmalm, 2012). I identify seven alternative frames covering the three dimensions of immigration, namely the *multiculturalism* and *nationalism* frames (cultural dimension), *economic prosperity* and *labour and security* frames (socioeconomic dimensions), and *urban issues, Roma issues* and *emergency issues* frames (security dimension). Given that issue-specific frames are justifications of actor positions, each category can be interpreted in terms of Habermas's seminal typology of arguments: "pragmatic", "identity-related" and "moral" types of argumentation in media and elite discourse (Habermas, 1993; see also: Helbling *et al*., 2010; Lerch and Schwellnus, 2006; Sjursen, 2002).[8] Accordingly, the rest of this section is devoted to presenting and discussing individually each of the three issue dimensions and frame categories.

The socioeconomic dimension

Socioeconomic aspects are often at the core of technocratic and expert debates on immigration (Citrin *et al*, 1997). This is because economic factors are behind international labour migration, and because immigration is a factor that inevitably influences the receiving country's economy. Hence, this dimension is mainly grounded in pragmatic reasoning: immigration is instrumentally connected to individual and collective interests, or to the achievement of specific outputs in terms of personal and group well-being (Helbling *et al.*, 2010). With respect to framing, immigration can be discussed in terms of market logics, structural characteristics of the economy, and by associating it with economic wealth and growth (*economic prosperity frames*). Alternatively, the logic may be that of stressing the

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[8] Pragmatic frames are present when positions are supported by arguments stressing the ability of proposals to reach a certain goal or interest. Identity frames focus on community specific features, ideas and values as justifications. Finally, moral-universal frames have to do with universal standards of justice that are supposedly shared by everyone across and beyond community-based and individual interests.

relationship (and potential trade-off) between welfare and employment opportunities of national and immigrant workforce (*labour and security frame*).

Concerning economic prosperity, this frame is primarily associated with pro-migration claims, but anti-immigration political entrepreneurs can also use it to contest the arguments of their adversaries or to deny the beneficial effects of migration. This frame connects immigration to economic performance at the collective level (national or local), which in turn results in changing living conditions for the native population as well. Quotes from the data collected might help illustrate the main message that is associated with this type of immigration frames.

> « Due to immigration, since many years Milan has become a "global city" […]. Without the support of its new citizens originating from around the world, the city would not stand economically» (*La Repubblica*, 17/04/2011)

> « According to Sandro Ciardi, the positive economic cycle is closed, and the conditions to welcome more foreigners no longer exist » (*Il Tirreno*, 10/06/2004)

In general, supporters and opponents of immigration may highlight different aspects of how the issue of immigration is related to the national or local economy. Here, the focus is on the benefits that immigration brings to a country's economic performance (also in fiscal terms) and to advantages that can arise from admitting and integrating hard-working and highly motivated economic migrants. Attention is given to the changes in the structure of the economy, which are held to make it necessary and beneficial to have a steady supply of labour to fill the gap in the sectors where native labour is increasingly scarce.[9]

In contrast, the labour and security frame is more easily mobilized to oppose immigration than to promote it, as it makes reference to work opportunities for natives and immigrants in terms of labour market and welfare resources. Compared to the prosperity frame, the focus is more directly on the consequences of immigration for the native workers.

> « In this period of economic hardship, conceding the right to participate to competitive exams to immigrants who hold a simple residence or visiting permit means taking jobs away from the Milanese people and the regular migrants who have resided here for long » (*Il Giorno*, 17/04/2011)

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[9] Some authors claim that pro-immigration utilitarian reasoning may even rely upon unequal treatment of immigrants (Bauder, 2007, p. 109), suggesting that "economic utility and humanitarian need are alternative and competing models" in the definition of the immigration discourse.

« The dialogue with the Muslim community of the Capital is also a way to acknowledge positive immigration, the one that is grounded on hard work» (*Il Messaggero*, 25/04/2008)

« Their number [foreign residents and illegal migrants] has been growing steadily over the past years, and they currently take up 30% of the economic resources available in the social services» (*Il Tirreno*, 31/05/2009)

When used to oppose immigration, this frame often conceptually associates the arrival of immigrants with decreasing opportunities for native workers, financial burdens for taxpayers, and welfare reduction (in terms of social benefits, however, immigrants can be depicted as either net-receivers of welfare or as net-contributors in the national welfare system). Similarly, this frame can be used to challenge the admission of asylum seekers and refugees, when this is justified in terms of burdens to the economy, welfare and housing. Immigrant workers are described as alien or even illegal competitors reducing the amount of resources and job opportunities available to native ones. The logic is that immigrants tend to be employed on the black market, corrupting labour relations by working at conditions unacceptable to native workers. Pro-migration political entrepreneurs generally use this frame in a reactive way, challenging the understanding that the economics of migrant and native labour are a zero-sum game. Instead, they might approach the issue of labour, welfare and migration in terms of general labour regulations, which apply to all workers and employers, irrespective of whether they are of migrant origin.

« They don't want to expel them [the immigrants]; they want to keep them here in order to put them in competition with precarious workers, in a contest between the last and the semi-last people in our society» (*Il Giorno*, 05/04/2011)

« A woman – says Cenni – wrote me that she failed to receive an apartment because there were fifty foreigners before her in the public housing list » (*Il Tirreno*, 14/05/2009)

The cultural and religious dimension

The cultural and religious dimension was built with Habermas' (1993) conceptualization of identity-related and moral-universalistic frames in mind. The main frames that thus emerged from the empirical analysis of electoral debates correspond to either arguments stressing the core values of community belonging against perceived identity threats (*nationalism*), or to moral-universal arguments calling for universal rights and peaceful coexistence of cultural and religious groups (*multiculturalism*).

Negative arguments involving the cultural and religious dimension therefore see (excessive) diversity and (uncontrolled) immigration as inherently or practically dangerous for the integrity of national culture, and for peaceful coexistence within the nation state. National and local traditions are considered endangered because of increasing concentrations of immigrants in previously ethnic homogeneous areas, and city landscapes are described as corrupted by the increased presence of migrants' places, whether shops, houses or religious buildings. Fully nationalist arguments invoke local cultural and linguistic superiority. In this sense, the national community is defined in exclusive terms with respect to cultural and political rights. These arguments always juxtapose "aliens" with "natives", claiming the necessity to prioritize the latter over the former, and tend to reject the possibility of reformulating national identity and citizenship on multi-ethnic and multi-religious grounds.

> « Carla De Albertis, a candidate for the list "La Tua Milano", aims at strengthening the sense of identity of her fellow citizens. According to her, being "Milanese" is a value that increasingly needs to be preserved, protected and enhanced. This means zero tolerance towards illegal migrants residing in the city » (*Il Giorno*, 04/04/2011)

> « Nobody likes immigrants – said Baldini – but we, the Italians, are a nation of emigrants. We must therefore offer the same hospitality that we received back then: the same rights and the same duties. We must be strict with those that do not respect our constitution, our laws but also our traditions and habits. After all, the foreigners are guests» (*Il Tirreno,* 10/06/2004)

Multiculturalist arguments, by contrast, emphasize the opportunities provided by cultural and religious diversity, as well as the inevitability of ethnic differentiation. Diversity is described as beneficial for the quality of society, and hence the suggestion is made to promote tolerance and foster policies tackling inequalities in various domains, from education to political rights and access to citizenship. The main arguments have to do with acceptance and respect for difference of culture, traditions and religion. Political entrepreneurs aiming to capitalize on pro-immigration electorates claim that equality remains at insufficient levels, and should instead be promoted both via integration-oriented policy-making and via civil participation. Assimilation policies and practices are by contrast said to lead to increased inequality, conflict and marginalization.

> « The list claims to be "secular" and "multicultural, and it promises to engage in improving the political, social and religious opportunities for the city's migrants, in the name of "hospitality, solidarity and multiculturalism" » (*La Repubblica*, 10/04/2011)

> « An effective integration policy can not be achieved by means of an absurd demand for assimilation against those that are considered different » (*Il Tirreno*, 11/06/2009)

> « If elected, he promises to extend the right to vote in local elections to immigrants, because "we need further integration in order to increase cohesion while respecting the culture of foreign peoples" » (*La Repubblica,* 15/05/2006)

In addition, the cultural and religious dimension can also be mobilized to emphasize cultural compatibility between different ethno-religious communities, and to promote intergroup tolerance and integration. This can take the form of debates over multiculturalism and cultural integration. Multiculturalist frames foster respect for cultural difference of immigrant communities and expect enhanced integration to be a result of the increasing availability of instruments and infrastructures allowing immigrants' free expression of their culture, religion and traditions.

Although in theory each frame can be easily associated with either the pro-immigration or the anti-immigration camp, contestation and trespassing are not uncommon strategies among political actors in electoral debates. Supporters of immigration try to expose the nationalist nature of opponents' arguments, while anti-immigration actors criticize the intrinsic dangers and negative outcomes of multiculturalist policies and cultural tolerance. In this case, politicians aiming to capitalize on opposition to increased immigration stress the need for immigrants to adapt to the culture and traditions of the destination country, without necessarily mobilizing nationalist rhetoric, and immigrants' predisposition to cultural assimilation is often regarded as a necessary condition for sustainable immigration policies, as well as for advancing economic and social integration in the receiving country.

> « The mayor claims that we are bound to become a multi-ethnic, multicultural and multi-religious city, but I pretend that we at least preserve our own history» (*Il Tirreno*, 09/06/2004)

> « My experience among the Chinese in Prato taught me something: it is not possible to build a multicultural society when people are unwilling to communicate with one another » (*Il Tirreno*, 11/06/2009)

> « Bringing the contest on the field of, so to speak, different "ethnicities" is always a bad sign for the quality of electoral campaigns » (*Il Tirreno*, 19/06/2009)

> « In this historical moment, voters are prone to cast an emotional vote […]. Some of the competitors are instigating citizens' distrust and ignorance towards those coming from outside » (*Il Messaggero,* 25/03/2008)

The law and order dimension

The law and order dimension links the arrival and presence of migrants to security and emergency issues like national defence, conflicts, legality, and the safety of individuals. Police action, humanitarian intervention, border control and restrictive policy-making are needed in order to preserve citizens' security. In this sense, dangers are associated with the entry or residence of immigrants, but they can also affect migrants themselves, who are in need of protection in international crisis situations, or from criminal networks. Security concerns therefore apply both to the security of borders and international migrants, and to the (in)security within the host country (Lazaridis, 2011)

As far as *urban issues* are concerned, frames connect the presence of legal and illegal immigrants to city-specific characteristics, features and events. This understanding links immigration to urban-specific factors, claiming real or perceived insecurity for local communities, as with high territorial concentrations of immigrants in city boroughs and neighbourhoods. Claims point to issues of decency and decorum in the areas of the city where migrants are settled (illegal settlements, housing and household conditions, street vending, etc.), or more explicitly connect migrant residence to violence and crime in the city. Pro-migration claims generally also recognize that areas densely populated by immigrants may be insecure or inaccessible to native citizens. Yet, supportive arguments do not address immigrants and blame them for deviance, but suggest the dismantling ethnic 'ghettoes' to improve the quality of life of the residents, and the requalification of urban peripheries to lower the risks in terms of law and order.

> « Concerning security, his message was peremptory: "we have to work on the situation in the suburbs. If we fly over Rome we would see dozens of illegal settlements, mostly inhabited by illegal migrants and squatters"» (*Il Messaggero*, 27/02/2008)

> « The growth of immigration in specific sectors of the city has contributed to the exponential expansion of serious problems, such as security. Not being properly managed, immigration is likely to blow up the equilibrium of our city» (*Il Messaggero*, 10/04/2008)

> « Concerning ghetto suburbs, the point is not how and when to use repressive instruments, but also to understand the emergence of youth problems that eventually cause these forms of violence » (*La Repubblica*, 30/04/2006)

In addition, political actors frame law and order problems related to immigration by targeting the presence of *Romani* people in the national and/or local territory. The media and political actors involved in electoral campaigning often use the category "Roma people" to refer to

numerous non-Romani groups, including stateless persons of presumably Balkan origin, as well as Romanian citizens in general (Sigona, 2008). In general, the frame is based on a mix between identity and utilitarian reasoning, as security problems are held to result from the lack of integration of these 'nomadic' people, which local residents accuse of being responsible for small crimes and thefts. Negative stances suggest the expulsion of Romani immigrants, either indiscriminately or specifically for those who are found guilty of specific crimes.

Blatanltly discriminatory claims are challenged by arguments stressing the need to integrate the Romani community, and/or by moral arguments reconnecting the current debate on Roma affairs to the historical genocide of the European Roma. Proposals of expulsion of Romani people, instead, are often countered by pragmatic argumentations underlining that the vast majority of Roma residents in Italy are either Italian or EU citizens (and therefore cannot be expelled).

> « If Lega will get the position of vice-Mayor after the elections, "nomadic settlements will disappear in a few days. With our representatives in the city council, similar situations of illegality will not be tolerated any longer» (*Il Giorno*, 18/05/2006)

> « The Roma are EU citizens: security can not justify legal actions and discriminatory policies that are contrary to Community law » (*La Repubblica*, 03/05/2011)

> « It is true that the majority of Romanians are honest, but also that it is within the Roma community that we find most crimes » (*La Repubblica*, 09/04/2011)

Finally, the law and order dimension is tackled by means of the *emergency frame,* which approaches security issues through an explicitly alarmistic logic stressing the 'urgency' to take action. Political actors mobilize this frame pragmatically, to address the consequences of immigration in terms of deviance, crime, illegality and violence, or more broadly to define the whole phenomenon of immigration in Italy as a matter of emergency. These messages connect immigration to local, national and international crises leading to unforeseen outcomes and requiring emergency interventions and decision-making. The frame therefore alludes to threats of potential connections between immigration, criminality and terrorism, and emerges primarily in discourses on the entrance, stay and repatriation of illegal immigrants, including practices of expulsion for convicts and criminals, and policing regulations.

> « Alemanno accuses the "indulgency of Veltroni" to have led "Rome to chaos" » (*La Repubblica*, 26/04/2008)

« We should not alarm the citizens but finally understand who we have admitted in our home » (*Il Tirreno*, 11/05/2004)

« Fighting criminality is our top priority: the problem is not immigration but criminality and illegal immigration » (*La Repubblica*, 25/04/2008)

« Alemanno has promised more decisive policies to tackle the emergency: "clear the criminality" and zero tolerance towards illegal migrants » (*Il Messaggero*, 27/05/2006)

In general, migration is not described as a long-lasting phenomenon of Western societies, but rather as a sudden, unexpected event which needs urgent and decisive tackling. Hence, this frame also applies to issues pertaining to asylum seekers and refugees, as the security and emergency discourse can also be articulated in humanitarian terms, expressed through the concern with human rights, cooperation and humanitarian interventions (Buonfino, 2004). Political actors may define asylum seekers as inflows of desperate people in urgent and temporary need for shelter and protection, or they suggest the need to tighten contros in order to avoid bogus applications or the potential admission of criminals and terrorists. lthough arguments on the pro-migration side also make use of moral-universalistic logics, pragmatic considerations generally tend to prevail: the focus is then on pursuing national security in a way that does not jeopardize the life and basic rights of illegal immigrants, refugees or foreign residents.[10]

« Because of our geographic position, we represent the gateway to Europe. But I confirm, once again, that we do not have sufficient resources to be able to cope indefinitely with an humanitarian emergency of this magnitude » (*Il Giorno*, 19/05/2011)

« The important is not to confuse an humanitarian emergency with illegal immigration. » (*Il Messaggero*, 15/05/2006)

« The refugee issue is a matter of humanitarian emergency and as such must be considered» (*Il Giorno*, 22/05/2011)

« Rejections are "necessary though painful, as we face the arrival en masse of populations from the southern hemisphere and we have to react." » (*Il Tirreno*, 03/06/2009)

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[10] Indeed, the vast majority of arguments mobilizing egalitarian understandings of immigration were based on moral-universalistic logics and were primarily making reference to multi-culturalist aspects rather than security ones. Whenever appropriate, therefore, I categorized these frames in the cultural dimension.

2.4   Main hypotheses and expectations

As I hope to have shown, my main proposition is that speaking of immigration politics writ large provides only a superficial image of electoral campaigning on this issue. Instead, my aim is to show that there are multiple dimensions upon which political conflict over immigration unfolds. As the conditions under which different aspects emerge in electoral debates have been largely neglected in previous research (De Vreese, 2005; Hänggli, 2011), I seek to specify the factors that influence the emergence of issue attributes and frames in electoral campaigns. Hence, my general approach for conceptualizing the dynamics of electoral campaigning is that of an actor-centred political process model, in which all actors are understood as part of a contest for the control of the public agenda and the public's interpretation of specific political issues (Wolfsfeld, 1997; 2011). My argument is therefore that public understandings of the immigration issue emerging from electoral debates are not restricted to one single meaning, but change depending on the actors involved in the debate, the relationship between them, and the circumstances defining their involvement. More specifically, I look at three stages in the definition of electoral strategies on the immigration issue: the context level, the campaign level and the actor level. In this section, I discuss the main expectations of the study for each of the three levels (the full list of hypotheses is reported in table 2.2 at the end of the section).

My focus is primarily on the political actors, i.e. on the actors who engage in electoral campaign events, and who provide the key informational input into it. Campaigns, however, are embedded in specific political contexts with institutional, cultural, issue-specific and campaign-specific features, which are decisive for the choices that political actors will be making. There are two basic ways in which context conditions may affect the way in which policy issues are debated in election campaigns (Koopmans *et al.,* 2005). On the one hand, electoral debates on immigration may differ across contexts according to the opportunities and constraints in each electoral environment. As a result of the variation across contexts in the political opportunities related to each dimension of the immigration issue, the same type of strategy by political actors may have very different chances of gaining media attention and public legitimacy in election campaigns. On the other, the impact of contextual conditions may be indirect, via its effect on party predispositions, on the configuration of actors in the party system, as well as other conditions pertaining to the election in which the immigration issue is debated.

In a similar fashion, Odmalm and Bale (2014) suggest that parties' responses to the immigration issue are not only driven by exogenous – environmental and societal – conditions, but also by intra-party constraints and by the dynamics of party competition, since endogenous and intermediate factors influence the way in which political actors respond to contextual circumstances (Morales *et al.,* 2014). Parties emphasize the issues and issue-dimensions on which they expect to enjoy a strategic advantage, but campaigns may vary in terms of issue diversity (Hobolt *et al.,* 2008; Walgrave and Nuytemans, 2009), which is why dimensional priorities must be looked at in the light of the broader process of agenda-setting competition. In this sense, my model accounts for environmental conditions at the contextual level as well as for factors at the campaign level and at the party level accounting for the composition of campaign agendas, each political actor's stance on the immigration issue and its role in the election campaign (Petrocik, 1996; van der Brug, 2004; Helbling *et al.,* 2010; Statham and Trenz, 2012; Odmalm, 2012).

Concerning the first aspect, I distinguish the context conditions that pre-structure electoral campaigns, such as the institutional setting, the media system, the "discursive field" (Steinberg, 1999) or "discursive opportunity structure" (Koopmans and Statham, 1999), and the more short-term circumstances that affect choices at the electoral campaign level. Similar factors, such as the type of actors involved in a competition (Meguid, 2008), exogenous or unexpected events (Birkland, 1997), and changing public "moods" (Marcus *et al.,* 2000) might also interact with the characteristics of the issue at stake and influence actors' strategic choices. Concerning the second aspect, I look at how much leeway political actors have in attributing importance to immigration issue dimensions and in taking a position on these (Odmalm and Bale, 2014). While context conditions and campaign pressures are relevant in explaining their choices, one should also look at actors' ability to handle the multiple dimensions of the immigration issue. I therefore consider each political actor in the competition in order to assess the logics of their politicization strategies in terms of dimensional preferences and constraints.

At a first level, I argue that the three dimensions of the immigration issue that were identified in the previous section interact with local circumstances and issue specific characteristics at the context level. Secondly, I look at the electoral campaign level in order to identify the events and conditions that drive the selective emphasis and framing strategies of the competing parties. Thirdly, I consider the individual strategies and preferences of each electoral actor. Figure 2.2 below summarizes this argument.

Figure 2.2 *Theoretical framework for the analysis of electoral campaigning on immigration*
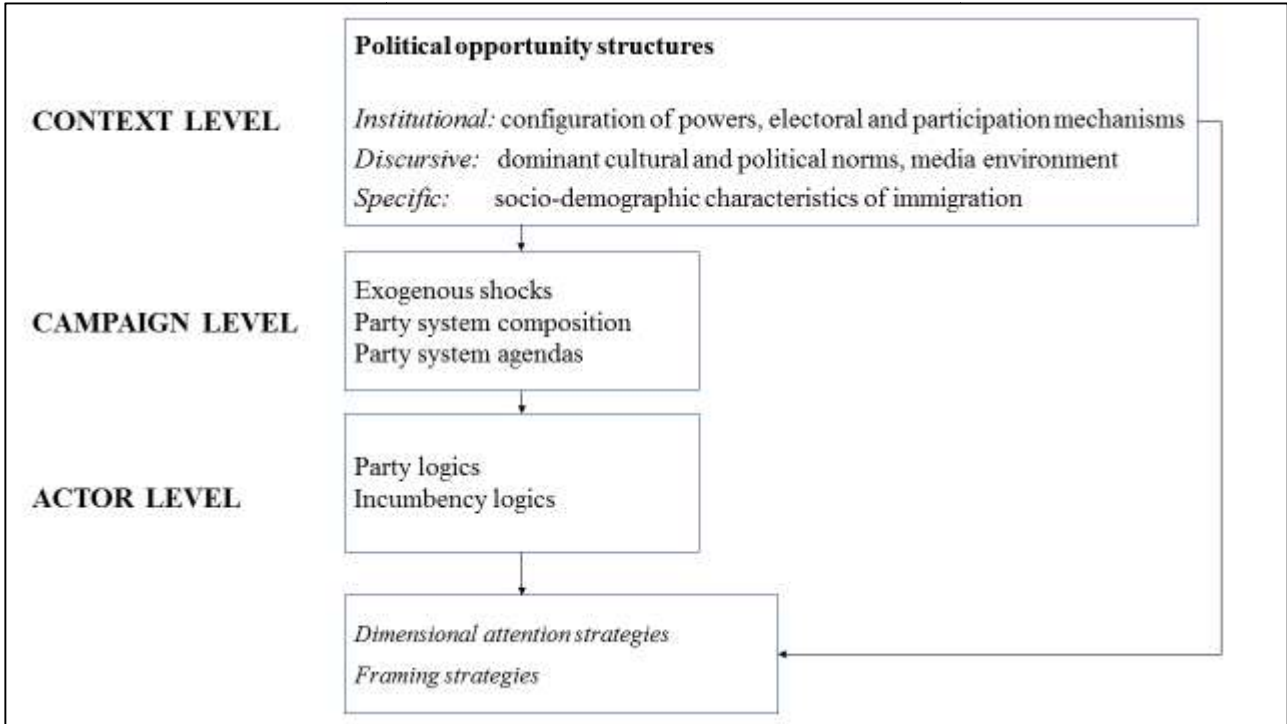
Concerning context conditions, party actions can be explained not only by the institutional framework of competition, but also by the discursive opportunities and constraints determining which type of argument is likely to gain visibility in the media and achieve legitimacy in the public discourse (Koopmans and Statham, 1999). Moreover, contexts are defined by issue-specific conditions concerning the nature and socio-demographic characteristics of immigration in each setting. Of course, none of these factors can be considered as fully independent of each other, since the way in which the characteristics of the political context are translated into patterns of opportunity for political actors is inevitably related to the nature and features of the issue at stake.

The way in which parties respond to contextual stimuli is not univocal. In order to account for temporal variation regarding issue attention and emphasis, institutional and contextual features must be integrated with factors at the electoral campaign level and with parties' electoral strategies and rationales. First of all, previous literature has underlined the relevance of immigration "shocks" at the campaign level, looking at the way in which parties respond in terms of repositioning, electoral strategies and pledges (Odmalm and Bale 2014). At the campaign level, I consider the composition of the party system as well as the composition of party system agendas. This is because in election campaign political actors are constantly engaged in debates with each other, so that the content of party-system agendas also

constrains the issue emphasis of individual parties (Hobolt *et al.*, 2008; Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2010; 2014). In terms of exogenous shocks, I will account for the possible presence of focusing events, i.e. an event "that is sudden; relatively uncommon; can be reasonably defined as harmful or revealing the possibility of potentially greater future harms; has harms that are concentrated in a particular geographical area or community of interest; and that is known to policy makers and the public simultaneously" (Birkland 1998, p.54).

Finally I account for the extent to which campaign strategies on immigration are related to the political actors themselves. In this regard, Ferree at al. (2002, p. 296) state that "the relative roles of parties and movements in taking leadership roles in framing issues in the media is an important and understudied aspect." As I will detail later on in this chapter, my focus is on the way in which mayoral coalitions and parties handle issue dimensions, considering that different types of pressures apply to the various dimensions of complex policy issues. Actors' electoral strategies are therefore likely to emerge from the tension between their positions on each issue dimensions, their 'ideological' orientation, and the degree to which they are constrained to respond to the pressures of their competitors.

<u>Context conditions</u>

Based on the assumption that the characteristics of national political landscapes affect the way the immigration issue is politicized, and that most of the policy-making on immigration concerns national parliaments and parties, previous studies have explained the variation in immigration debates and attitudes according to variation in national context (Thränhardt, 1995; Kitschelt, 1997; Ivarsflaten, 2008; Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup, 2008; Rydgren, 2008; Van der Brug and Van Spajne, 2009; Albertson and Gadarian, 2009). By selecting three case studies that are most similar in terms of electoral system, media environment and institutional architecture, but that differ substantially in terms of regional or local conditions that can facilitate the mobilization of specific sub-dimensions of the immigration issue, I seek to do the same for the politicization of immigration in local arenas (Hopkins, 2007; 2010).

To begin with, debates are likely to be shaped by the actual competences that the political actors involved in competition possess in terms of immigration affairs. As will be discussed more extensively in Chapter 4, Italian municipalities perform an important role in developing immigration and integration legislation, in particular concerning the initial welcoming and sheltering of forced migrants. In addition to this, Italian local administration have important competences in the field of crime prevention and safeguard of public safety and "urban security", with powers of injunction that apply to either extraordinary circumstances or routine regulations.[11] Given the importance of law and order among the responsibilities of local administrations, it is likely that similar aspects constitute the bulk of local debates on immigration. Hence, local debates on immigration should be generally more oriented towards security than any of the other two issue dimensions.[12]

The three exploratory case studies of this dissertation were identified having in mind the three constitutive dimensions of the immigration issue, as the variation in the characteristics of the immigrant population across local settings is likely to influence the openness and accessibility of local arenas to each dimension of the immigration issue. The selection was therefore based on the idea that the cases should help elucidate the process of campaigning on immigration

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[11] In 2010, the regional administrative tribunal of Veneto contested the constitutional legitimacy of the articles of the Italian law on local administration (D.Lgs 267/2000) granting extensive powers of mayors in terms of management of public order.

[12] In particular, previous accounts on the development of the concept of "urban security" as a distinctive policy field underline its connection to processes of urbanization and internal and external migration (Italia, 2010; Regione Piemonte, 2012; Calaresu, 2013).

issue dimensions, so that the suggested explanations provide a basis for further theory development and empirical tests. The choice of the three local settings in Italy allows for minimizing the degree of variation in terms of institutional configuration while preserving substantial differences in the specific characteristics of local immigration (cf. Chapter 3 and 4). This choice enables investigating the way in which different immigration dimensions relate to electoral campaigning in each local setting. Specific understandings of immigration are therefore likely to emerge as political actors tend to behave selectively, emphasizing particular aspects of the issue throughout their campaigns.

In particular, the characteristics of the immigrant population, and the history of migration in the three cities are likely to shape the visibility and resonance of different types of argumentations across local settings, providing the competing actors with varying sets of discursive opportunities. Upon formulating their campaign strategies on immigration, political actors take into account the type of claims, pledges and demands that are most likely to be considered reasonable, realistic and legitimate in the context and at the time in which competition takes place. As such, they will take into account the specific characteristics of migration in the context where competition takes place, therefore focusing their attention on the aspects that have most chances of achieving prominence in a given campaign. The mobilization of different dimensions of immigration can be explained by the diverging opportunities to mobilize on this issue that are available across the three settings, which differ considerably in terms of the features of the migrant population.

The socioeconomic aspects of immigration are likely to structure the debates in an industrial city like Prato, where the demand for cheap labour force has been the main drive of migration, and where the inflow and subsequent settlement of Chinese migrants is likely to represent the main subject of public concerns with respect to immigration. In Milan debates are most likely to privilege cultural and religious aspects of migration, as the Muslim population represents circa 40% of the total number of immigrant residents in the city (Bombardieri, 2011; Rebessi, 2011). Yet, for years the community was not provided with an official worship place such as the one existing in Rome and local authorities have long been debating the opportunity of building an institutional worship centre. As for the case of Rome, law and order arguments are the easiest to mobilize, as political actors can focus on the competences of city administrators in terms of urban security and public order. This is primarily because Rome hosts one of the largest community of Romani people in Italy, and that Romani migration has

been tackled by Italian policy-makers almost exclusively in terms of emergency and public security.

Campaign conditions

In addition to the contextual features in each city setting, I also account for factors at the electoral campaign level in order to explain changing issue salience and emphasis. In this respect, variation across electoral campaigns is primarily interpreted as the result of reactions to immigration 'shocks', in line with one of the main approaches in the study of immigration in party competition (see: Mudde 2004; Odmalm and Bale 2014). These shocks may be related to the composition of party systems, such as in the case of the emergence of radical right parties in a given election,[13] but also to other factors such as increasing immigration or asylum pressures, changing levels of media attention paid to the immigration issues, and unexpected events, or focusing events, forcing political actors to increase attention to the immigration issue (Walgrave and Varone, 2006; Odmalm and Bale 2014).

Campaign-level factors impact on the composition of the *party-system agenda,* which has to be distinguished from the individual strategies of political actors aiming at influencing agenda contents. In agenda-setting literature, the composition of party-system agendas is crucial for issue competition since it constrains the issue emphasis of the actors involved in the campaign (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen, 2010). Party system agendas at any given time are composed of a hierarchy of issues, to which political actors have to pay attention even as they compete on the future content of this hierarchy. This is because in election campaign political actors are constantly engaged in debates with each other, so that the content of party-system agendas also constrains the issue emphasis of individual parties (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen, 2014).

When looking at issue dimensions, immigration agendas are to be understood as the relative importance of each aspect of the issue at any given time, at the party system level. Parties must address the issue dimensions that are prominent on the agenda, while they compete to

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[13] In this study, I use the definition "radical right actors". Despite the terminological and conceptual debate is still open (Mudde, 2000; 2007; Ignazi, 1992; 2003; Kitschelt, 1995), 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, but also those opposing only specific problems within the political system. With respect to the Italian *Lega Nord* (Northern League) I follow previous prominent scholarship on this issue that has consistently excluded it from the radical right party family (Ignazi 1992; 2003; McDonnell, 2006).

influence the dimensional composition of the agenda. In terms of the relative attention that actors accord to each immigration issue dimensions, if the party system agenda logic prevails over each party's individual preferences, a party's choices should differ more between the different elections than across parties within single election campaigns (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen, 2010). If the party system agenda prevails, the dimensional choices of any party at any given point in time will be relatively more similar to the discourse of any other party in that context at that time, than to its own discourse in another context or another point in time (H1).

Moreover, specific campaign features are likely to set party responses and positions in immigration debates. I anticipate that electoral campaigns will focus on the immigration issue, and develop in a more negative direction, when electoral campaigns involve at least one radical right actor and when a focusing event lends itself to be exploited in terms of immigration. Previous research has suggested that the increased saliency of an issue pushes the position of mainstream parties in the direction of the position of the party owning the issue (Green-Pedersen *et al.*, 2013). In this sense, the more important the immigration issue writ large is, the more the other actors in the competition will adapt their positions to the ones of the party that is considered to own the immigration issue. Similarly, van Spanje (2010) suggests that parties adjust their policy positions on immigration to substantial changes in the political context in which they are operating, which implies a shift in a more right-wing, anti-immigration direction of electoral debates as a whole. I therefore anticipate that campaigns involving independent radical right challengers will be characterized by more emphasis on, and more negative tones about, immigration (H2).

In addition to this, I will test whether the same rationale also applies to competition on immigration issue dimension. In view of the considerations mentioned above, it can be expected that if parties that are fierce advocates of a specific aspect of the immigration issue have access to the electoral arena and gain public visibility, the other parties will – all other things being equal – adjust their choices of selective emphasis accordingly. In other words, if the presence of radical right actors shifts the general debate towards the position preferred by the radical right, than it is reasonable to anticipate that electoral debates might also shift towards the aspects of the immigration issue that the radical right mobilizes the most (H2a).

Moreover, the presence of immigration-related focusing event are likely to change the behaviour of political actors because they open windows of opportunity to politicize aspects of policy issues that could not – otherwise – gain public visibility, transforming low-salience

matters in concrete problems (Birkland, 2001).[14] In other words, the way in which problems are defined can transform over time, as a result of events that increase the media coverage of those issues and on specific issues connected to the focusing event's subject matter (Kingdon, 1995; Birkland, 2001). In line with Birkland's classification of focusing event types (Birkland, 1997), crime-related events generally fit in the category of "common events under uncommon circumstances", which the author differentiates from "normal events" such as natural occurrences, and "new events" that have never happened before. Hence, a crime-related focusing event increases the relative importance of law and order considerations in immigration debates (H3).

Party conditions

Concerning political actors, party strategies are investigated from the point of view of their issue and dimensional preferences and the constraints that they face when deciding whether or not to focus on specific issue aspects. Party choices are analysed in terms of salience vis-à-vis the immigration issue as a whole, dimensional emphasis, positions and framing. Electoral debates are also addressed by comparing parties' "ideal agendas" corresponding to the preferences emphasized at the beginning of the campaign within election manifestos, and "tactical agendas" emerging from media reporting of election campaigns. First, I discuss the hypotheses that have to do with party logics and ideological preferences, then the expectations on the potential constraints that parties face upon choosing their strategies of selective emphasis.

In terms of party logics, if the assumption is that the ultimate goal of any political actor is to convince the public of a specific interpretation of the social reality, it is reasonable to expect that the argumentations parties mobilize, whether pro or against immigration, must somehow resonate with the broader ideological understanding of the party doing the mobilizing (Statham and Trenz, 2012). Similar ideological commitments are generally plotted along left-right scales, in which cosmopolitan and social security aspects characterize the left while nationalism and free-market liberalism characterize the right (Helbling, 2013; Knutsen, 1995; 2006).

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[14] Cf. Chapter 5

Looking at immigration in its entirety, the main expectations therefore follow traditional comparative research on issue politicization. Right-wing parties are generally considered advantaged in immigration debates: on the one hand, radical right actors offer overtly xenophobic discourses and build their electoral appeal on unconditional opposition to immigration; on the other mainstream right-wing actors[15] exploit the nationalistic tendencies of their electorates (Bale, 2003; Ivarsflaten, 2008; Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup, 2008). Although the 'logic of defence' (Garner, 2005, p. 133) characterized the mainstream right positions on immigration long before anti-immigration parties became a force (Bale, 2008), centre-right parties often exploit the presence of radical right actors in order to address immigration in ways that traditionally were more closely associated with the extreme rather than the mainstream (Bale, 2003). This is particularly the case in those countries, like Italy, where the centre and more right-wing parties cooperate or have recently cooperated to form governments. In short, I expect the radical, but also the centre-right, to emphasize the immigration issue the most, accounting for its increased salience over time (H4).

According to this literature, the mainstream left can adopt two possible strategies in response: it can opt to ignore the issue altogether, minimizing the attention to this issue in electoral campaigning and signalling its lack of importance (a strategy which has been called 'dismissive' by Meguid, 2008), or it can decide to include the issue in its agenda. Previous studies have illustrated that the latter strategy was followed by the French left, as a result of the shift of their traditional electorate towards Le Pen in 1986 (Meguid, 2005). Moreover, it has been suggested that the adoption of the immigration issue by centre-left parties takes place when the challenge of a new issue or new actor becomes manifest, and in particular when an anti-immigration actor contributes to centre-right governments taking office (Bale *et al*.2010; see also: Van Spanje, 2010). As this has been the case in Italy over the last decades, it is reasonable to expect that the mainstream left engages in competition over immigration when the issue becomes salient in an electoral campaign (H5).

Concerning dimensional emphasis, left-wing parties are generally expected to adopt more liberal views than their right-wing counterparts and to seek to improve the social conditions of migrants as well as to extend their cultural rights (Andall, 2007a; Lahav, 2004). Bale *et al.*

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[15] Following Meguid's definition, by mainstream parties we mean the electorally dominant actors in the centre-left and in the centre-right blocs of the Left-Right political spectrum (2005: 348). Given the increasingly bipolar nature of Italian politics, especially at the local level, the empirical chapters use indifferently the terms Centre-Right (Centre-Left) and Mainstream Right (Mainstream Left).

(2010) suggest that although a 'principled' strategy would entail openly making the case for tolerance of migration and multiculturalism, the substance, form and pace of the response of left-wing parties to the rise of the issues surrounding immigration and integration has been far from uniform (Bale et al. 2010, p.423). In particular, the abandonment of progressive welfare policies by established parties of the left has led to their gradual shift towards restrictive immigration policies (Andall, 2007a; Andall 2007b; Lahav, 2004; Messina, 1990; 2002).

For the Italian case, scholars tend to agree that the mainstream left could – at least in theory – adopt open stances on cultural tolerance and the inclusion of migrants in the labour market without having to deal with strong fears of 'social dumping' among its constituencies (Massetti, 2014; Chaloff, 2005). As a result, left-wing parties are likely to address immigration primarily in terms of cultural and economic arguments (H6a). More specifically, in line with previous studies on framing choices, left wing parties are expected to frame their arguments primarily in terms of multiculturalism and labour and security frames, which correspond to their cosmopolitan and labour protectionist ideas (Helbling, 2013).

Conversely, security discourse is likely to be the primary argument in immigration debates on the right side of the political spectrum. Over the past decades, centre-right parties have often helped to prime the radical right's law and order agenda stressing the supposedly over-generous treatment of foreign immigrants (Bale, 2003), mobilizing the feelings of insecurity among their followers, and referring in particular to crime issues (Helbling, 2013; Mudde, 2007) (H6b). In the Italian context, right-wing parties often ground these arguments on emergency logics, which tend to depict immigration-related problems as unexpected and immigration in general as a temporary phenomenon (Chaloff, 2005).[16] Given that opposition to immigration is one of the primary political activities for radical right parties, previous studies have suggested that these parties mobilize on multiple aspects that could be used to oppose immigration (Mudde 2007; Helbling, 2013), from crime and security to cultural diversity and the erosion of the welfare state (H6c). In this sense, next to law and order, radical right parties mobilize nationalistic frames when debating the cultural dimension, and labour and social security ones to stress the trade-off between national and immigrant welfare and employment (De Lange, 2007).

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[16] Yet, this strategy has also been pursued by left-wing parties, see: Massetti (2014)

Party choices, however, do not depend exclusively on party ideological preferences, but also on the constraints that parties are subject to in any election campaign. In particular, I account for the competence of parties on immigration affairs and their role as incumbents or challengers in election campaigns. Concerning the first element, previous research has underlined that selective emphasis is the tool by which parties try to activate valence decision frameworks on given policy issues, i.e. the tool by which parties select aspects that connect them with good government performance (Green, 2007De Sio 2010; Budge and Fairle 1983). The degree to which they are able to divert attention to their most favourable issue attribute, however, depends on their degree of competence: issue owners are able to focus on the issue dimension on which they are considered most competent, whereas their opponents will be forced to take a position on that issue dimensions rather than divert attention to other – potentially more beneficial – aspects.

In this sense, actors enjoying a reputation in immigration debates will be more able to focus on their own issue dimensions rather than on the ones mobilized by their competitors. In general, mainstream right parties are considered to be advantaged in this type of debates, together with extreme right actors that managed to play the immigration card, while mainstream left parties are seen as the most vulnerable actors when it comes to immigration (Alonso and Claro da Fonseca, 2009; Arzheimer, 2009). This implies that right-wing parties should be more able to focus on their preferred dimensions, whilst left-wing actors will be more likely to change their distribution of attention in favour of the issue dimensions politicized by their opponents (H7).

Similarly, party reputation might explain the difference between parties' "ideal agendas" (corresponding to the preferences emphasized at the beginning of the campaign within election manifestos) and "tactical agendas" (which instead results from the interaction with the media, ongoing events and political competitors). Although ideal agendas cannot be considered fully isolated from anticipations of media reactions, it is reasonable to expect that actors enjoying a reputation on immigration affairs get easier access to the media than weaker actors. In line with this reasoning, the immigration issue should be overrepresented in the media for mainstream right and radical right parties compared to all other actors (H8).

Moreover, one should account for whether an actor runs as incumbent or challenger. This is especially so in local electoral campaigns characterized by high degrees of personalization, two main coalitions, and enhanced electoral accountability. Previous studies suggested that the immigration issue as a whole is more attractive to parties in opposition than to those in

office (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2010), because while government parties are held responsible for all policy sectors, opposition parties can focus selectively on advantageous issues, and hold incumbents accountable over immigration affairs.

More generally, research noted that incumbents' rhetoric is likely to be shaped by the opposition's agenda-setting strategies (Hobolt *et al.,* 2008). Challenger parties have incentives to introduce new elements in public debates and/or reframing existing ones, since changing the nature of the debates may jeopardize the campaign of the actors in government and enable them to win office. In order to stay in power, governing parties, in turn, are compelled to respond to the elements brought in by the opposition parties through their manipulative strategies (Riker, 1986; Klingemann *et al.,* 1994; Walgrave and Nuytemans, 2009).

As opposition actors are more able to exert an influence on the party system agenda, they will be more able than governing ones to focus on favourable issue dimensions and frames. Conversely, as government parties are more responsive to party-system agendas, they will focus relatively more on the issue dimensions of their opponents (H9). Similarly, due to the disadvantage, challenger parties may force incumbents to take up the issue and issue dimensions in the course of the election campaign. Hence, one may expect the difference between the salience of immigration in electoral manifestos and the media to be higher for incumbents than for challengers, since incumbents are more subject to campaign-specific constraints (H10).

2.5   Conclusions

This chapter presented and discussed the main theoretical traits driving my analysis of the politicization of the dimensions of the immigration issue in local electoral campaigns in Italy. As I have illustrated, researchers in this field increasingly agree on the need to open the "black box" of policy issues, dissecting and disaggregating the separate elements and aspects that make up complex political issues in order to improve the understanding of issue politicization. In this sense, rather than viewing issues and partisan strategies of mobilization as one-dimensional, I propose to take into account the complexity of political debates, analysing how the separate aspects of issues are taken up, contextualized and framed in partisan and media agendas.

In a nutshell, I have suggested that practices and efforts aimed at manipulating the electoral agenda may vary depending on the features of the issue at stake, since political decisions tend to encompass a multiplicity of dimensions of choice. This is because when parties are confronted with complex policy issues, they do not only choose whether they will address that issue in the electoral campaign or not, but they can also decide which aspects of that issue they want to highlight, and how. Beyond competition over saliency of policy issues, electoral actors interact with one another on the basis of issue dimensions, positions and interpretations. In other words, they act strategically in order to shift the focus of debates to dimensions and understandings of immigration over which they presume to be more credible than their rivals. Accordingly, I identify a number of conditions – at the context, campaign and party level – that are expected to drive the choices of politicization by competing political actors (Table 2.2).

Table 2.2 *Overview of the hypotheses*

Context level

Electoral debates are influenced by the actual competences of local administrators

Electoral debates are influenced by the characteristics of local immigration

Campaign level

The party system agenda

H1: *Dimensional choices are more similar across parties at a given time, than within parties across time*

The agenda-setting role of the radical right

H2: *Campaigns involving independent radical right actors will be characterized by more emphasis and more restrictive positions on immigration*
H2a: *Campaigns involving independent radical right actors will focus on the issues upon which the radical right mobilizes the most*

Focusing events

H3: *The salience of immigration and the relative salience of immigration dimensions are influenced by the presence of focusing events*

Party Level

Party logics

H4: *The radical right and the mainstream right emphasize the immigration issue the most*
H5: *The mainstream left engages in immigration debates when the issue is salient in the election campaign*
H6a: *Left-wing parties tend to address immigration in terms of cultural and religious aspects and economic arguments*
H6b: *Right-wing parties tend to prioritize the security over the cultural and the economic dimensions*
H6c: *Radical right parties mobilize on all three issue dimensions*

Structural disadvantage logics

H7: *Right-wing actors are more able to focus on their preferred issue dimensions; left-wing actors are more likely to change their distribution of attention.*
H8: *The immigration issue is overrepresented in the media for mainstream right and radical right parties compared to all other actors*

Incumbency disadvantage logics

H9: *Opposition parties are more able than governing parties to focus on their preferred issue dimensions and frames.*
H10: *The difference in attention profiles in electoral manifestos and the media is higher for incumbents than for challengers*

In the course of electoral campaigns the conflict between political actors unfolds, as the actors involved form coalitions, compete and craft messages based on alternative arguments, frames and worldviews, with the goal of getting public and media attention and of mobilizing support. As I will illustrate later on in this dissertation, this approach provides valuable

insights for the study of campaigning. Firstly, it suggests that the scholarly understanding of the construction of public agendas must be refined. A comprehensive account of political conflict in electoral campaigns requires analysing not only partisan strategies *across* issues, but also strategies of politicization *within* issues, i.e. the strategies that parties adopt toward issues that they cannot avoid or cannot afford to dismiss. Secondly, this framework offers an innovative interpretation of the study of electoral debates on immigration, suggesting that the type of debate varies substantially depending on the strategies of the actors involved, the characteristics of specific electoral campaigns, as well as the socio-contextual features of the setting where competition takes place. The composition, framing and tone of local electoral debates on immigration vary considerably across settings due to a combination of local conditions and opportunities and strategies of campaigning.

3
Research design and methodology

3.1   Introduction

Focusing on the supply side of electoral competition, the research design is built on the analysis of electoral campaigns. 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.

Most of the research on party competition and electoral strategies, however, has been performed at the national or cross-national level. Instead, this comparative study focuses on local municipal elections within one single national case (Italy). The reasons behind this choice have been primarily practical and methodological, but they also imply a number of theoretical considerations. Before discussing the details of the methodological strategy, the next section is devoted to introducing the choice for the research design, focusing on the comparative analysis of two election campaigns in the Italian cities of Prato, Milan and Rome.

3.2   Research design

3.2.1   *The local level and electoral campaigning on immigration*

The majority of studies on party preferences during electoral campaigns are based quantitative content analyses of party election programs (Budge, 2001). Generally, these types of data are constructed at the national level, and are based on the partisan preferences of nationwide parties. The increasing availability of similar datasets, allowing for extensive cross-country comparisons, logically resulted in a considerable surge in the number of publications within

this field of research. Yet, the degree of attention for electoral strategies at levels other than the national one has suffered from this availability of already-coded material for national parliamentary elections.

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). 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, previous studies have suggested that local level politics on immigration differs structurally from national level politics because of the different challenges that local administrators face, and the different policy competences that they have (Gilbert, 2009). This underlines the importance of 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).

Given the lack of reliable data for local immigration debates, a dataset had to be constructed *ex novo* accounting for the content of the messages sent by parties and the media in local election campaigns. This task required a focused, issue-specific overview of the actors

involved in the competition, as well as direct control over possible variation in the institutional framework of multi-level governance. Hence, I chose to focus on three cases of comparable cities within the same political system that systematically vary with respect to the dimensions of the immigration issue (Islamic migration in Milan, Roma immigrants in Rome and Chinese migrants in Prato). I opted for a "most-similar-case" research design, by selecting three case studies at the municipal level in Italy, and the two most recent local electoral campaigns within each of these cities.

3.2.2   *The design of the study*

The research design is based upon the comparative analysis of three case studies (three local settings) where I expect political parties to have relied on different dimensions and frames of the immigration issue. The comparative design enables an investigation into electoral campaigning over immigration across three different settings at two different points in time (two local election campaigns), illustrating the difference in tone, dimensional emphasis, and partisan electoral strategies.

For each election campaign, I look at the degree to which one of the three dimensions of the immigration issue (socioeconomic, cultural and religious and law and order) is central to the electoral agenda and to the campaigning activities of each actor. Hence, the bulk of the analysis is based upon the media coverage of the immigration issue during the period of the electoral campaigns. In order to disentangle the strategies that were used by electoral competitors seeking advantages from the politicization of the immigration issue, I look at the comparative differences across case studies and time, and by confronting the news media reports with the electoral material produced by the candidates, i.e. the electoral manifestos of the main actors running in the election campaigns across the three cities.

The case studies are the municipal elections in the Italian cities of Prato, Rome and Milan, over the period 2004-2011. The locations were identified based on information on the distribution of foreign residents in Italy and in each of the three cities. The selection of Rome and Milan is due to the fact that more than one third of the immigrant residents in Italy live within the borders of metropolitan areas, in particular for those 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.[17] Hence, the first driver of case selection has been the general immigration demography at the local level in Italy. By 2010, Milan and Rome, hosted the largest immigrant communities in the country, 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, after Brescia and Reggio Emilia (ISTAT, 2010).[18]

In addition, the composition of the immigrant population in the three cities resonates with my classification of issue dimensions. According to Gariglio, Pogliano and Zanini (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 considered demographic data from the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT, 2010) and previous country reports on immigration in Italy (Pogliano and Valetti, 2011), to identify whether the composition of migrant communities in Italian cities offered opportunities for dimensional politicization of immigration. 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, which correspond to the themes that have dominated crime stories and securitized immigration debates over the past decades, especially during the years of the entry of Romania in the EU (Sigona, 2011).

Muslim immigrants represents about 40% of the total number of foreign residents in the city of Milan (Bombardieri, 2011; Rebessi, 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 immigrant communities (Pogliano and Valetti, 2011). As a result, Milan was selected because the composition of its foreign population provided special opportunities to engage on cultural and religious aspects of immigration. 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 cheap labour force especially from China, and subsequently by the development of Chinese entrepreneurship.

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[17] Prato is the most sizable of the 'crown-cities' in the metropolitan area of Florence.

[18] See Chapter 4 for further details.

In other words, Prato, Milan and Rome were identified by selecting on the dependent variable, since they vary in a substantial way with respect to the three issue dimensions in my conceptualization of immigration debates. 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). Hence, the design allows both for within-case comparisons across electoral campaigns, and for between-case comparisons across local settings.[19]

In each of the case studies, the focus is on coalitions of lists supporting mayoral candidates, looking at the changing importance of different actors, issue-dimensions and events over time and across settings. This choice 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.[20] 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 more than 50% of the votes during the first round.[21]

Still, it is not always easy to get in contact with the multitude of local political organizations that take part in municipal elections: candidates often do not belong to structured organizations, they change their affiliation over time, and their electoral committees disappear after the election. This forced a limit on the number of political organizations to be considered in the study, focusing on actors that could be considered relevant in local electoral competition. Relevant organizations were identified by first distinguishing between actors and lists who reached the threshold necessary to get a seat in the city council, and those who did

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[19] Chapter 4 provides a case-by-case description of the three local settings and six electoral campaigns.

[20] More in detail, the Italian electoral system for the election of the mayors in cities with a population higher than 15,000 inhabitants is structured as follows: voters are allowed to express either a direct choice for the mayor by voting the name of one of the candidates, or an indirect choice by voting for one of the parties and lists within the candidate's coalition. After the first round, if no candidate receives at least 50% of the preferences, the top two candidates are admitted to the second round of elections, which takes place two weeks later. The election of the City Council is based on a direct choice for the candidate with a preference vote. The number of the seats for each list is determined proportionally.

[21] See Chapter 4 for the details and results of the observed local elections.

not. This threshold is very low, generally about 2% of the votes, so the actors that have been excluded based on this criterion are generally very small ones. Subsequently, this list was cross-checked with the content of media reports, so that whenever an actor was consistently mentioned in the news media, selection was reconsidered on an *ad hoc* basis.[22] Before selection, as many as 120 parties and lists grouped within 19 electoral coalitions across the 6 electoral campaigns would have been included (an average of 20 parties/lists per election).[23]

3.3   Selection of documents: news media sources and party manifestos

The measurement of public debates was based on the exploration and analysis of mass media reports of electoral campaigns. This was done specifically by way of a systematic content analysis of the news media coverage of the electoral campaigns (in local and national newspapers) over the two months preceding the 6 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).

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) within these newspapers 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 immigration. This also encompassed the selection of the same time-span across the six electoral campaigns. The third step, finally, involved the coding, in line with the design described in the following sections.

3.3.1   Selection of newspapers

For each city, I chose one local newspaper, selecting the most widely read in each location. Moreover, I also included the local section of the national newspaper *La Repubblica*, which is the largest quality newspaper per circulation in Italy (ADS, 2010). Given the size of the city of Prato, however, this type of data was not available, and local newspaper coverage had to suffice.[24] The focus on quality newspapers rather than tabloids or television programs was

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[22] The full list of all the coalitions, parties and candidates running at each of the six electoral campaigns can be found in the Table A3 in the Appendix.

[23] Note that in this list we already excluded all those candidate-mayors and coalitions that did not reach the minimum amount of electoral support of 2%.

[24] The search on the local section of the closest metropolitan area, Firenze, produced no results.

based on the awareness that these kinds of papers are the main media of political coverage. It is information papers that generally report on political debates and influence the editorial decisions of several other news outlets and organizations. With respect to local media, these are also supposed to report more often and with more precision the state of the local political debate (Table 3.1).

In Rome I chose *La Repubblica* as a national outlet, and *Il Messaggero* as a local newspaper. The latter paper is distributed all over Italy, but it was founded in Rome, it generally focuses on Rome's chronicle, and it is the most popular daily newspaper in the city (ADS, 2010). For Prato, as a local newspaper, I selected the local section of *La Nazione*, which is a Tuscany-based newspaper, and the most widely circulated newspaper in the province of Prato (ADS, 2010). For Milan, it was *La Repubblica* and *Il Giorno*, which is one of the main local newspapers in Milan. Other Milan-based newspapers were not considered even though their distribution is higher than that of *Il Giorno*, because of their strong ideological affiliation with a given party (most notably, *Il Giornale* and *Libero* are outlets belonging to Silvio Berlusconi's editorial group), and because they were more "sensationalistic" than quality broadsheets.[25]

Table 3.1 *Selected Newspapers*

	National	**Local**	**Period Covered**
Prato 2004		*La Nazione Edizione di Prato*	11 April – 11 June 2004
Prato 2009		*La Nazione Edizione di Prato*	20 April – 20 June 2009*
Rome 2006	*La Repubblica Edizione di Roma*	*Il Messaggero Edizione di Roma*	28 March – 28 May 2006
Rome 2008	*La Repubblica Edizione di Roma*	*Il Messaggero Edizione di Roma*	26 Feb – 26 April 2008*
Milan 2006	*La Repubblica Edizione di Milano*	*Il Giorno Edizione di Milano*	28 March – 28 May 2006
Milan 2011	*La Repubblica Edizione di Milano*	*Il Giorno Edizione di Milano*	28 March – 28 May 2011*

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[25] Cf. the media study of the European Election Survey: http://www.piredeu.eu.

3.3.2 Keyword search for relevant articles

The media content analysis considered all news items in the selected local newspapers and in the local section of national newspapers, focusing on articles pertaining to the electoral campaign during the two months preceding the election. The choice for this time-span is based on examples from previous literature that inform much of this section, most notably the codebook of the Media Study of the *European Election Survey* (EES) 2009 (Schuck, Xezonakis, Banducci, and de Vreese, 2010), and of Kriesi *et al.* (2008). Given that Italian law sets a minimum period of 30 days for campaigning before elections, the choice of focusing on two months of media coverage ensured a comprehensive description of candidates' activities, including coalition negotiations, and enabled accounting for possible variations in their strategies over the campaign period.

In line with the codebook of the EES, I defined the unit of coding for the selection of relevant articles as a "news story": an article within a newspaper. In other words, a news story is each individual editorial news item. There was no minimum length for an item to be considered a news story. The content analysis focused on news stories that had an explicit or implicit reference to the electoral campaign at the city level. Generally, such analyses exclude commentaries. However, these were included since articles from prominent journalists and opinion articles represent some of the main elements defining the electoral agenda.

The stories were identified by means of keyword searches in the electronic databases of the selected newspapers. Two main criteria were used to identify stories on the basis of their reference to the electoral campaign: first, stories directly covering politics at the city level, the electoral campaigns and the candidates; and second, stories covering the immigration issue in the city where the election took place, during the time of the electoral campaign, but unrelated to the electoral campaign *per se*.

The most notable keywords were the names of all the candidates and lists running for mayor in each of the electoral campaigns considered. The word search was refined with a set of keywords specifically referring to the immigration issue, which I developed inductively from the preliminary analysis of immigration-related events in the three cities: these did not yield substantial additions to the original keyword search, suggesting that in times of electoral campaigns political actors are conspicuously monopolizing immigration debates, at least at

the local level.[26] In sum, I am confident that all stories about immigration politics in Prato, Milan and Rome or about the municipal election campaign in the newspapers were taken into consideration for coding. This amounted to a total of 1,596 news stories and 21,680 core-sentences (see Section 4.4 for details on the coding procedure and unit of analysis).

3.3.3 Collection of electoral material

Concerning the analysis of parties' and candidates' framing of the immigration issue before interaction with the mass media, I relied upon the platforms produced by mayoral candidates and their lists (*Programmi del Sindaco*). According to Italian law, when a list or party decides to participate in a local election, it is requested to submit an official document to the prefecture office (*Commissione Elettorale Circondariale*) reporting the list of all the candidates for that list/party and the administrative program of the main candidate. Some lists present their own program despite being part of a coalition of parties, whereas others submit only the coalition program. In order to gather these manifestos, I contacted the archives of the municipality of the three cities under observation and made an official request to obtain the *Programmi del Sindaco* of all the organizations taking part in the campaigns. In all six campaigns, I then conducted a content analysis of the manifestos, making use of the same codebook as for media coverage.

When available, the in-depth content analysis was first performed on the sections of the electoral programs dealing with issues related to immigration and integration. The remaining textual part of the programs is instead coded in such a way as to allow one to measure the importance of the immigration issue relative to all other issues in a party's program. In total, I coded 23 coalition programmes across the 12 election campaigns, comprising a total of 3,800 core-sentences.

The choice of referring to party and coalition manifestos is often criticized in this field of research, since it is considered a conservative tool for the approximation of partisan preferences. This is because, especially in the case of coalition programmes, these may represent the outcome of long and difficult bargaining process inside the party and/or between different parties within a certain coalition. In this sense, party programs would not really represent the ideological preferences of political actors, but rather a compromise solution, reached in order to pacify struggles internal to the party or the coalition (Janda *et al.*, 1995).

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[26] The list of keywords is reported in the Appendix

Even acknowledging this limit, framing strategies are always the result of a balance of power between different factions within the same group, and my interest lies exactly with identifying the dimension (or frame) that eventually prevails. Put differently, the puzzle is the strategic choice that is made by a given actor or coalition, not the set of possible choices that could have been made, had the coalition been more homogeneous. Moreover, one additional element that is generally conceived as a "limitation" of party manifestos makes this source of data particularly appealing given this study's purposes. Scholars studying the political market of electoral programs, indeed, have often indicated that the preferences expressed in the manifestos are biased by the electoral context in which they are to be used. In this sense, certain issues may be overrepresented because they are expected to be particularly convenient in a given context at a given point in time. It is exactly this type of strategy, and this type of situation, that the present research refers to.

Hence, using this type of data was done both for theoretical and practical reasons. From a theoretical point of view, platforms are likely to provide an overview of the general positions and preferences of a political actor prior to engaging in active competition with his or her opponents, and before interacting with the mass media. In other words, this data can be considered exempt from the possible effects resulting from media logics. From a practical point of view, relying upon party programmes and manifestos allows one to cope with the difficulty of data collection, which are further exacerbated by the focus on local rather than national electoral campaigns. Even in as short s time span as the one considered here, there was a significant amount of change in terms of the party system's composition. As a result, relying on less accessible types of data (most notably press-releases from mayoral candidates), was simply impossible, since local headquarters do not always keep records or archives of their activities, whereas electoral lists often disappear as soon as the electoral campaign is over.

In sum, party programs remain one of the best available sources of data on the different political platforms that are supplied to the electorates at any given election campaign. Based on the core-sentence approach, a new dataset was built from the electoral programs of the candidates in the municipal elections in the three case studies and six election campaigns. In this way, it will be possible to identify changes across local elections within and between the different cases.

3.4   The coding procedure

The coding operations were performed on a sentence-by-sentence basis, using the "core-sentence" method of analysis introduced by Kleinnijenhuis, De Ridder, and Rietberg (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, hence allowing one to identify the relationship between political actors and political issues (in this case, sub-issues and frames as well).[27] 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).

Similar to political claims analysis (PCA), core sentence analysis (CSA) uses newspapers to generate indicators of party positions and issue salience, and its unit of analysis is elements within articles (rather than news stories). CSA is based on the notion that the content of every written document can be described as a network of relationships between objects (Helbling and Tresch, 2011). Hence, party positions are analysed from relationships between political objects within a text. Every sentence of the selected articles was reduced into a core sentence indicating the subject (actor), the object (the immigration issue and its dimensions), and the direction of the relationship between the two.[28] The number of core sentences in an article does not equal the number of grammatical sentences, as one sentence can include none, one or several core sentences.

In other words, each sentence within a news story was reduced to the basic semantic structure of the core sentence, consisting of a subject-actor (a party or politician), an object (an issue, then issue-dimension and frame), and the direction of the relationship between the subject and the object (i.e. a polarity score ranging from -1 to +1 with three intermediary positions). The direction between subject and object is always quantified using a scale ranging from -1 to +1, with three intermediary positions indicating a 'potential' or an ambiguous relation. If, for example, a politician says that in the future he might be in favour of a certain position, we

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[27] 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.

[28] Whenever applicable, we also mentioned whether the subject-object relation also included a subject-actor reference. In other words, we coded cases in which Actor X addressed Object Y by making reference to Actor Z.

coded 0.5. Ambiguous relations – no direction at all – were coded 0. Here I like to give an illustrative example of how a core sentence look like on the basis of the following sentence:

> « Storace supports special laws for fighting crime in the city, and says "no" to the study of Quran in schools».

While the subject is the same for both elements in the grammatical sentence, its object change, as the first element is connected to the issue of security (in general, unless previous sentences make clear that the reference is to immigration) whereas the second is related to the immigration issue and the cultural dimension of immigration. In the example above, the second core sentence is associated to a restrictive, negative position on the cultural dimension of immigration, and would therefore be coded as -1. Figure 3.1 below summarizes graphically the approach followed for the content analysis in order to assess actor-issue relationships and framing. Due to practical constraints, I only coded core sentences that referred to the immigration issue, whereas all other core sentences were accounted for but not coded, so that they could be used in order to measure the relative salience of the immigration issue. [29]

Figure 3.1 *The core-sentence approach and the actor-issue network of relationships*
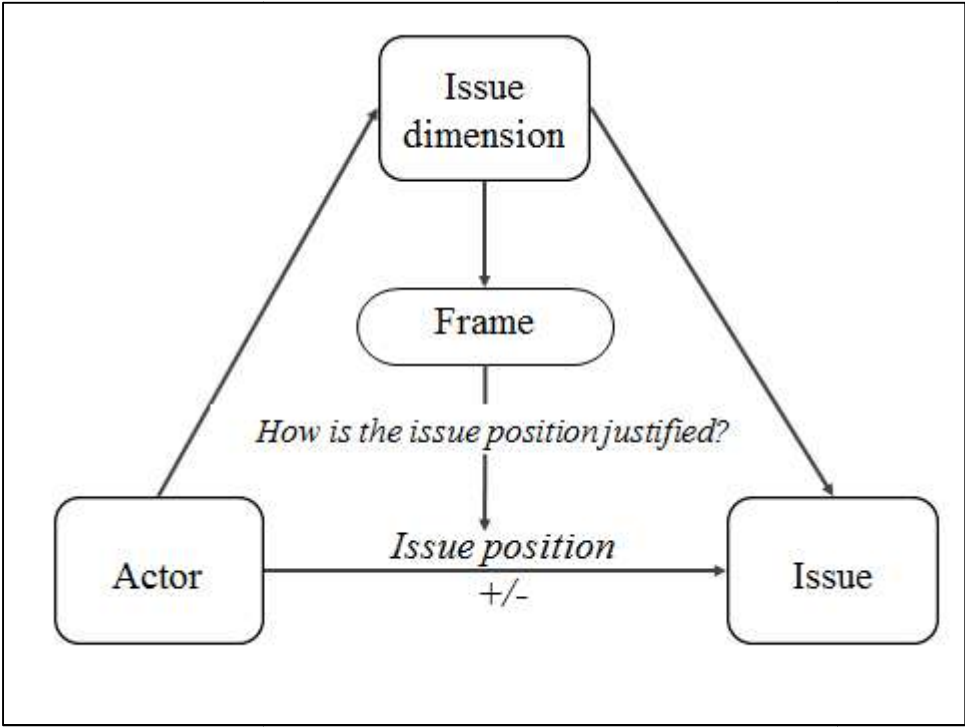
This coding strategy allows for several types of comparisons. First, it permits one to evaluate the relative importance of immigration in the electoral campaign, relative to all alternative issue debates (although this study does not differentiate among the rest of the issues). Moreover, it allows for the calculation of the relative salience (i.e. the share of sentences) 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 the mayoral candidates' 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). The next sections illustrate in detail the coding procedures of subject, objects and polarity relationships within actor-issue sentences.

3.4.1   Coding of the subjects

The subjects of core sentences were coded on the basis of their party, list and coalition affiliation, differentiating between candidates running as independents, challengers or incumbents. Given that coalitions are crucial in local electoral campaigns in Italy, lists and candidates were grouped within separate categories: *radical left, centre-left, centre, centre-right* and *radical right.* Non-partisan actors belonging to public interest groups, or individuals and experts that are not members of any given party or coalition, were coded in the independent category *public interest groups.* Finally, all minor lists and candidates that did not reach the threshold of 2% but received considerable attention in the media were aggregated, independently of their ideological orientation, in the category *Minor Lists.*[30]

This choice was most appropriate since, despite the high fragmentation of the Italian political system, municipal elections in the observed period are characterized by the convergence of most parties in two main coalitions (cf. Ch.4). The names and composition of local electoral lists are extremely volatile, but the main coalitions characterizing the 2004-2011 period can be identified as the groups of parties and lists clustering around the centre-right (*Alleanza Nazionale* and *Forza Italia,* subsequently *Il Popolo della Libertà*), and the centre-left (*Democratici di Sinistra* and *La Margherita,* subsequently *Partito Democratico*). Although in

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[30] Despite its scarce relevance in terms of partisan competition this category provides substantial information in terms of salience and characteristics of debates at the party system level.

most occasions these coalitions involved political organizations at the extremes of the ideological spectrum (the radical right-wing *La Destra* and/or *Fiamma Tricolore*, and the euro-communist *Rifondazione Comunista*), and electoral lists affiliated to centrist parties at the national level (the the *Unione di Centro - UDC*), independent candidates are not uncommon, as the electoral system allows for negotiations and endorsements after the first round of elections.[31]

Based on the above considerations, the empirical analysis distinguishes the following types of actors across local settings for comparative purposes: in addition to the mainstream centre-left and centre-right coalitions that run in all six election campaigns, at the extreme of the political spectrum I make reference to unaffiliated radical left [32] and radical right lists and organizations, when these run campaigns independently from the centre-left and centre-right (as is the case in Prato and Rome). The same applies for the various centrist actors that do not affiliate with mainstream coalitions (in Prato and Rome). Finally, all non-partisan actors intervening in public debates and representing societal or economic interests are considered, ranging from trade unions, business organizations, and institutional, religious and public figures such as journalists and experts.

3.4.2   *Coding of the objects and frames*

Objects within written documents (news stories and electoral manifestos) were selected based on whether the documents were implicitly or explicitly related to the electoral campaign or the issue of immigration (including asylum seekers and illegal migration) and integration (including ethnic and religious minorities and minority policies).

The objects and arguments proposed by each actor were coded in terms of the dimensions and frames of the immigration issue that were introduced in the previous chapter. Each coded core-sentence included the dimension of immigration that the actor referred to, and the

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[31] As will be discussed in the empirical chapters, the composition of electoral coalitions at the local level often (yet not always) reflects national-level strategies. This is particularly the case in Rome of Milan, which represent the most prominent administrative elections in Italy, and often assume importance and resonance at the national level.

[32] Radical left parties are actors accepting democracy, although they combine this with (often vaguely defined) 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 tradtion of dialogue with mainstream left and centre-left coalitions (Albertazzi, McDonnell and Newell, 2011).

specific frame that was used in order to push forward a certain argument: labour and security as opposed to economic prosperity (Socio-Economic Dimension); Nationalism, as opposed to Multiculturalism (Cultural and Religious Dimension); and Roma Issues, Urban Issues and Emergency Issues (Law and Order Dimension). Concerning frames, however, several core-sentences made reference to more than one type of argumentation. For this reason, I added an additional category reporting, when applicable, the second frame characterizing a given core-sentence.[33]

In order to quantitatively account for the double frames, the data was reshaped in the long format, adjusting the unit of analysis (core-sentences) to the number of immigration frames. This reshaping of the dataset into the long format greatly increased the number of observations. In terms of the media material, the amount of immigration-related sentences increased to match the sum of the first and second frames included in the original dataset (2,408+524= 2,932). Given the increase in observations, the dataset in the long format could not be used for the measurement of the (relative) salience of issue-dimensions in the general electoral debate. Instead it was utilized to look at the relative importance of each frame within the share of the debate dedicated to a given issue dimension.

3.4.3   *Coding the relationship between subject and object*

As was illustrated earlier, the theoretical assumption of core-sentence approaches is that every text is composed of a network of relationships between subjects and objects. The unit of analysis is therefore sentences reduced to their basic structure, expressed in terms of a relationship between a political actor and an object/issue. Each object refers to an attribute of the immigration issue, which is then characterized by the actor in terms of the various frames comprised in the socioeconomic, cultural-religious and law and order dimensions. In other words, each actor is connected (positively or negatively) to each one of the three dimensions of the immigration issue, and the argument that is provided is then coded in line with the framing typology.

With respect to each of the dimensions of immigration, political actors were given a score ranging from -1 to +1, with three intermediate positions indicating a potential (+0,5 and -0,5)

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[33] For the media material, on 2,408 immigration-related core sentences, 524 employed two frames and were given a value corresponding to the second frame's category. This choice also reduced considerably the amount of core-sentences that were not pertinent to any frame category (residual category).

and a neutral position (0). In this way, the data resulting from the content analysis offers detailed information on the positions of all candidates and parties with respect to each of the dimensions of the immigration issue, measured on a continuum ranging from full opposition to immigration (in any dimension) to full support for immigration (again in any dimension), and differentiating between mild support, mild opposition and neutrality.

In this way, the main characteristics defining each observation included in the dataset (next to contextual codes such as "date", "article id", "title" etc.) are: the specification of a subject (type of actor, coalition, incumbent/challenger); the specification of the object (immigration-related sentence, non-immigration sentence); the specification of the dimension and frame within the immigration category (the 3 dimensions and 7 frame categories); and the direction of the relationship between the subject and the object (from -1 to +1).

4

The context: local politics and immigration in Italy

4.1   Introduction

This chapter contextualizes the case studies by describing and analysing the origin, nature and development of immigration in Italy in general and in Milan, Prato and Rome in particular. In addition, it provides an overview of the way the immigration issue has been debated and regulated in the national arena alongside a discussion of how local governments and administrations are *de facto* involved in immigration policy-making. The chapter is structured as follows: section 4.2 provides an overview of the main historical and demographic developments of immigration to Italy; section 4.3 introduces the legal framework regulating immigration in Italy, differentiating between national competences and local prerogatives and activities; section 4.4 sketches a panorama of immigration and integration in the three cities; finally, section 4.5 introduces the main political actors engaged in local politics across the three municipalities, and discusses coalition formation and electoral results in the six election campaigns considered in this study.

4.2   Immigration in Italy: an overview

4.2.1   *From a mass-emigration to a stable immigration country*

Research on the politics of immigration in Europe has overwhelmingly devoted itself to traditional immigration destinations like Germany, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and France, to which there has been mass immigration since the 1950s and early 1960s. Far less attention has focused on other countries, especially in southern Europe, which have also been influenced by mass migration, but have only more recently become host societies.

Colombo and Sciortino report that immigration to Italy is commonly described as a "new" phenomenon (2004, p. 49). The novelty refers not only to the beginning of the influx, generally held to coincide with the oil crisis of the early 1970s (when Italy's balance of migration became positive), but also to the difference between *old* and *new* types of immigration. Previously, Italy was a prominent example of classical migration flows: first,

massive emigration took place in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, mainly towards the Americas, followed by a smaller but still significant wave in the aftermath of World War II, when hundreds of thousands of Italians moved to the industrialized countries of Northern Europe as labour migrants.

Since then the in- and outflow of migration in Italy has changed, transforming from a net emigration country and traditional supplier of labour to Northern Europe into a net immigration destination. The shift has been attributed to push factors in the sending countries, such as conflicts and poverty (Macioti and Pugliese, 1991), as well as the development of restrictions on immigration in the older immigration destinations, which had the unintended effect of transforming Southern European countries into "second best" choices for international migrants (Pugliese, 2002).

In addition, Italian immigration was "unplanned": it resulted more from the transnational economic forces and the choices of neighbouring countries than from an actual willingness of Italian governments to attract migrants. Because of this immigration to Italy is hardly comparable to the strategic, state-led recruitment of foreign labour in Northern Europe. Other authors have contested the "second-best destination" hypothesis (Colombo and Sciortino 2004; Massey 2002), underlying the specificities of the Italian economic "miracle" (*miracolo economico)* of the 1950s and 1960s. According to this interpretation, immigration to Italy was a response to a growing demand for labour in some specific sectors and areas of production, including informal ones,[34] due to the period of relative economic growth which transformed Italy's developing economy into an attractive labour market for foreign workers.

In the 1980s the increased inflow of immigrants became more consistent and steady, and began receiving greater media and public attention (Macioti and Pugliese 1991; Bonifazi 1998; Sciortino and Colombo, 2004). In line with most other Western European countries, however, it is only in the 1990s that Italy started experiencing the steady arrival of labour migrants and refugees from countries outside of Europe and, after 1990, from Central and Eastern Europe. Since then, the situation has radically changed, and during the 2003-2010 period the total number of foreign residents in Italy has almost tripled, from 1.5 to 4.2 million persons (ISTAT, 2010). Their share of total population is currently above 7% which is still

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[34] Italy's economic growth, in fact, was not achieved by means of mass production in large industries, but on the basis of small and medium sized businesses located mainly in the North-East of the country. This model allowed successful performances without fully discarding two important pillars of the country's traditional system of production: the informal economy, and the underground labour market.

below the level of traditional destination countries in Europe, such as the U.K., France or the Netherlands (11%), but also Germany (12%), Sweden (14%) and Austria (15%), and Southern European countries such as Spain (14%).[35]

Figure 4.1 below displays the evolution of regular migration to Italy between 1985 and 2010, showing that the total inflow of migrants coming from outside EU-15 has grown progressively over the last two decades, with major peaks in 2002-2003 and 2008 due to government-led regularization campaigns. The 1990s and 2000s also witnessed the stabilization of foreigners within the country. During these years the amount of foreign-born (outside EU-15) legal residents more than doubled, increasing from less than half a million to more than one million (Figure 4.2). If in 1991 the ratio of foreign residents over the total Italian population was only 0.6%, already in 2001 it had increased four times (2.3%), and in 2011 it reached 7.2%. On January 1, 2013 Italy counted about 4.4 million foreign-born residents. The number and the share of immigrants are still on the rise (334.000more than in 2012, with a growth of +8.2%).

Figure 4.1 *Total inflow of foreign population in Italy 1985-2010 (in thousands of people)*
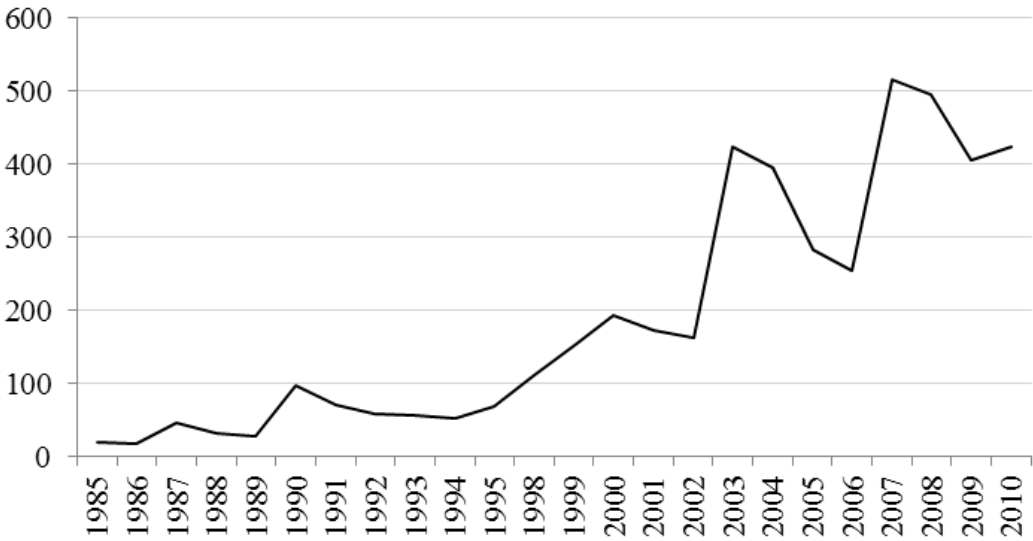
Source: OECD Stats 2010, available at www.stats.oecd.org

All these figures, however, only refer to foreigners residing in Italy under a legal status. Although estimations on the magnitude and features of irregular immigration are by definition quite difficult to come by, the *Fondazione Inisziative e Studi Sulla Multietnicità* (ISMU)

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[35] Cf. Eurostat (2010). Available at: http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu [29 May 2014].

provides since 2005 an annual survey on illegal migration to Italy. According to these estimates, the total foreign population by 2010 was above 5,000,000, whereas the threshold of 4 million foreigners in Italy was exceeded as early as in 2007. The number of irregular immigrants residing in the country is assumed to fluctuate between 541,000 in 2005 to 651,000 in 2008, with Eastern Europe as the principal area of origin (ISMU, 2009; 2010).

Figure 4.2 *Total numbers of foreign-born residents (1981-2009, in thousands of people)*
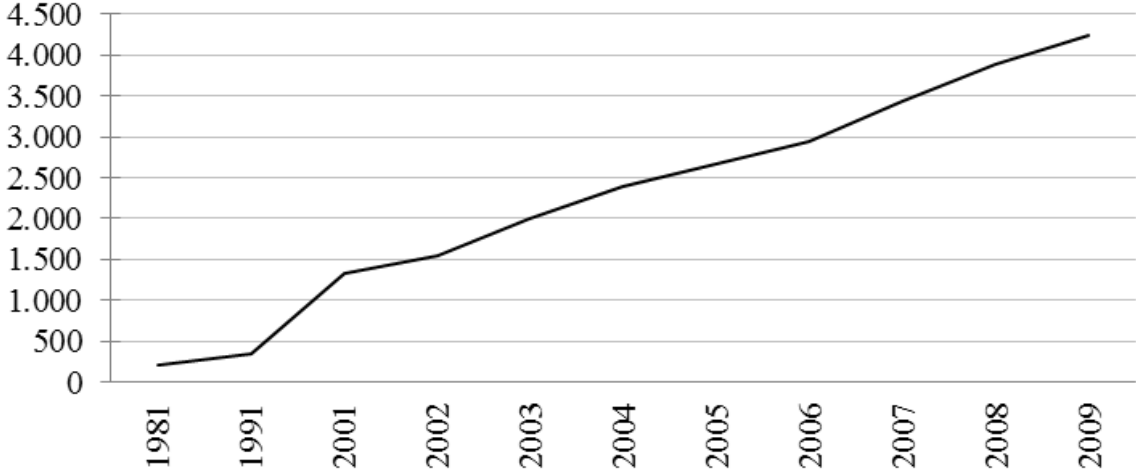
Source: Istat; available at www.dati.istat.it

4.2.2 Mapping foreigners' settlement in Italy: geographic distribution

Italy's development into an immigration country encompasses more than the quantitative dimension of immigration. Over the past decades, the Italian immigrant community has seen qualitative changes as well, most notably in terms of the main countries of origin and the type of migration. A distinctive characteristic of the Italian immigration experience has to do with the considerable socio-cultural and economic regional differences in the country. In this sense, regional economies and labour market structures explain varying patterns of migrant labour recruitment – and the settlement of migrants across the country (Bonifazi *et al.,* 2009).

Figure 4.3 shows the distribution of immigrant residents across Italian municipalities, as a percentage of the total population in 2013. The figure illustrates the unequal distribution of immigrants across the country, as well as the varying proportions they make up of the total population at the municipal level. This is the result of the progressive movement of migrants towards the north of the country, a process mainly driven by the search for stable and better-paid employment (King and Andall, 1999). In other words, in Italy pull factors vary geographically.

Figure 4.3 *Share of immigrant residents in Italian municipalities*
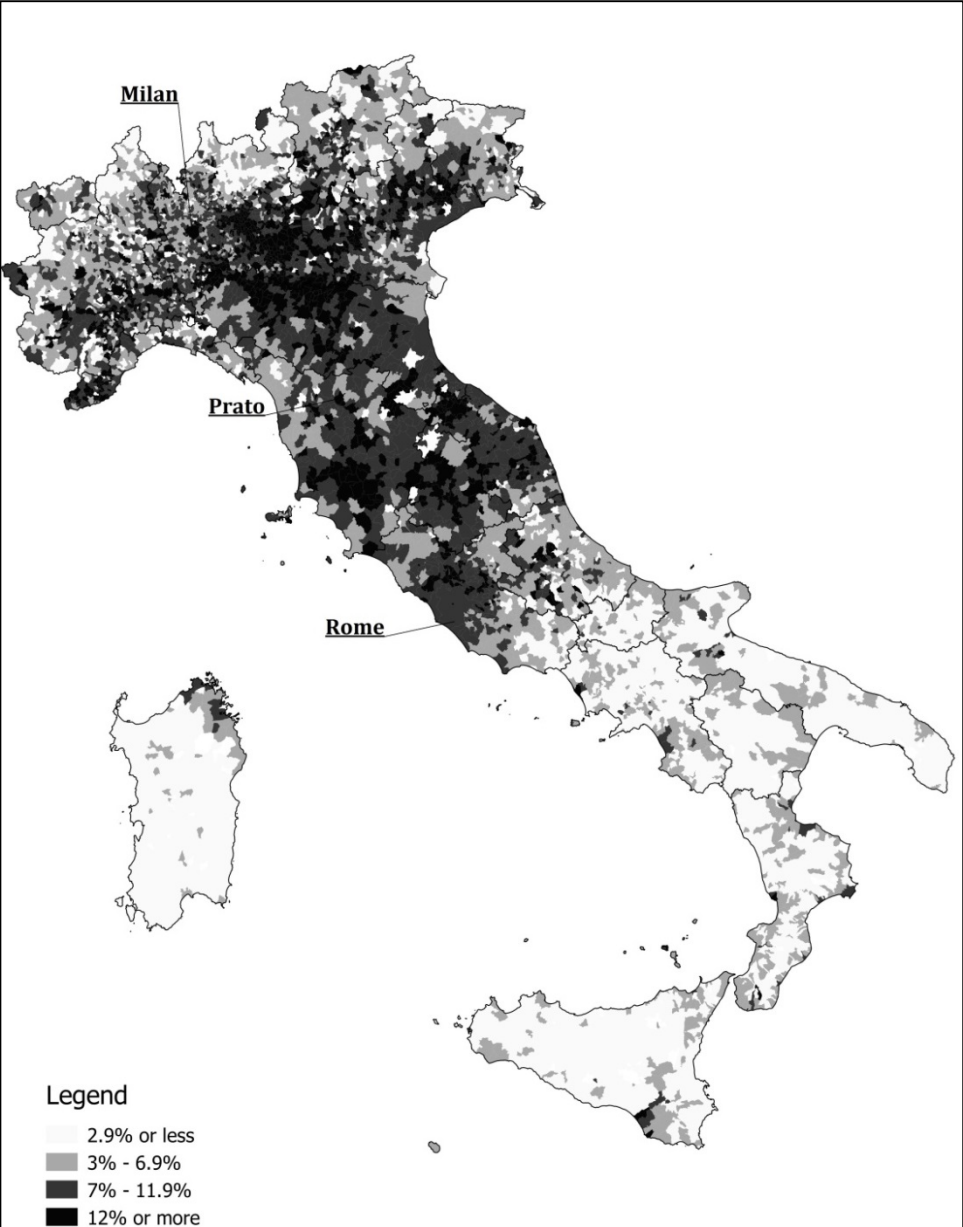
Source: Istat (2010)

Immigration in Italy is not only related to the agriculture and the other traditional sectors attracting foreign labour (domestic work and low-skilled services), but has a significant industrial component as well: according to official data, more than 40% of the legal immigrant residents are employed in the industrial sector (including construction). In this sense, immigration in Italy is not just a metropolitan phenomenon, but is also widespread in local economies in the industrial districts in the centre and north of Italy.

Central and Northern Italy offer employment in the industrial sector, whereas immigrant labour in the South is mainly concentrated in domestic and agricultural work. As a result, if at

the national level immigrants represent 7.4% of the total Italian population, the highest proportions are found in the regions of the Northeast (10.1%) and Northwest (9.7%). Central regions have somewhat lower proportions (Lazio, Umbria, Toscana, Marche: 9.1%), while the South and the islands have substantially lower proportions of immigrants (3%). The regions hosting the largest numbers of immigrant residents are Emilia Romagna (11.3% of the total population), Umbria (11%), Lombardy (10.7%), and Veneto (10.2%).

Large urban areas are the most attractive to immigrants, with the two main cities of the country, Rome and Milan, absorbing more than one third of the total immigrant population. As pointed out by Bonifazi *et al.* (2009, p.44), however, "immigrants no longer find work in large industrial estates in the suburbs but look for work in the service sector. They have the skills to carry out financial activities and advanced services, and still supply the labour force for unskilled jobs, often involving a high degree of insecurity, needed even in the central sectors of the economy." Medium-sized cities are therefore becoming more and more attractive for immigrant settlement.

Data from 1993 show an absolute predominance of large urban areas in terms of foreign residents, with particularly high concentrations in Rome and Milan. Already in the year 2000 however, immigrant settlement had reached medium-sized towns such as Prato, Vicenza or Reggio Emilia. Recent statistics from 2007 show medium-sized cities (Prato, Brescia) overtaking the large urban areas of Milan, Rome and Turin in terms of immigrant concentration. By today, about 35.8% of foreign residents live in provincial capitals (*Capoluogo di Provincia*), in particular in the centre of Italy (43.9%).

In northern cities like Piacenza, Brescia, Mantova and Modena immigrants represent 12-13% of the total population, whereas in Parma, Milan and Verona they are 11%. In the centre, Prato's immigrant population makes up 14.7% of the total, whereas the values for Firenze, Perugia and Macerata are somewhat lower (11%). In the south, the concentration is generally lower: 7% in L'Aquila and Teramo. If on average, immigrant residents in provincial capitals account for 7.4% of the total population, in the largest municipalities of the country this value reaches an average of 10%.[36]

In sum, there seem to be three territorial patterns of migrant settlement (Ambrosini, 2013). The first is that of the industrial cities of the centre-north, where male migrants find jobs as

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[36] Rome, Torino, Milan, Verona, Venetia, Genoa, Bologna, Firenze, Roma, Napoli, Bari, Palermo, Catania

factory workers within SMEs or in services related to industrial production whereas female migrants find jobs in the domestic or care sectors; the second model is that of large metropolises, led by Rome and Milan, where immigrants' work is more varied but generally ranges from the construction sector to restaurants, cleaning services and transportation; the third model is the temporary employment model of southern regions, which reproduces the 1980's model of initial "gateway" employment for new migrants: the jobs it provides are mostly temporary and irregular, many workers do not have a regular status and are employed in the harvesting of Mediterranean agricultural products.

4.2.3 *The composition of Immigrant communities in Italy*

The regionally-differentiated set of pull factors identified in the previous section played a key role in determining the ethnic composition of Italy's immigrant population. Already in the 1970s, different communities of foreigners had settled in different areas of the country: "Yugoslavs in the North, Tunisians in western Sicily, Ethiopians and Somalis in Rome and Filipino and Cape Verdean domestic servants recruited to work in wealthy households in the big cities. There were also high-status immigrants from North America and Europe who were involved mainly in business, or who were retired. By the 1980s these communities had been joined by many others and Italy's new status as a country of fairly massive immigration had been confirmed" (King and Andall, 1999, 137).

Detailed information on the composition of the Italian immigrant population is shown in Figure 4.4 below. If the largest communities of legal migrants during the 1980s were the French and the North Americans (data not in table: 10.9% and 8.8%, respectively), and the total number of foreign residents was about 200,000, in the 1990s the largest resident immigrant group had become the Moroccans (40,000, 11.2% of the foreign-born population), and the total amount of foreigners had doubled. In the early 2000s, the total number of foreign residents increased even further (from 350,000 to more than one million), mainly due to the inflow of Moroccans and Albanians, respectively accounting for 13% of the total foreign population. From the mid-2000s, moreover, Italy experienced a remarkable inflow of Romanian citizens: by January 1, 2013, foreign residents in Italy numbered slightly below 4.5 million, one fourth of which were Romanian.

Residents of Romanian origin numbered only a few thousand in the early 1990s,[37] but increased considerably to 50,000 by the end of the decade. The state-sponsored regularization campaign of 2002 documented the presence of 240,000 Romanian temporary residents. The unofficial inflow of Romanian workers benefited from the country's negotiations with the EU: starting from January 2002 Romanian citizens became able to enter the Schengen Area without need of a visa for a three-month stay; following entry into the EU in 2007, Romanian residents in Italy have increased by about 100,000 per year.

Figure 4.4 *Nationality of foreign-born residents (1981-2009, in thousands of people)*
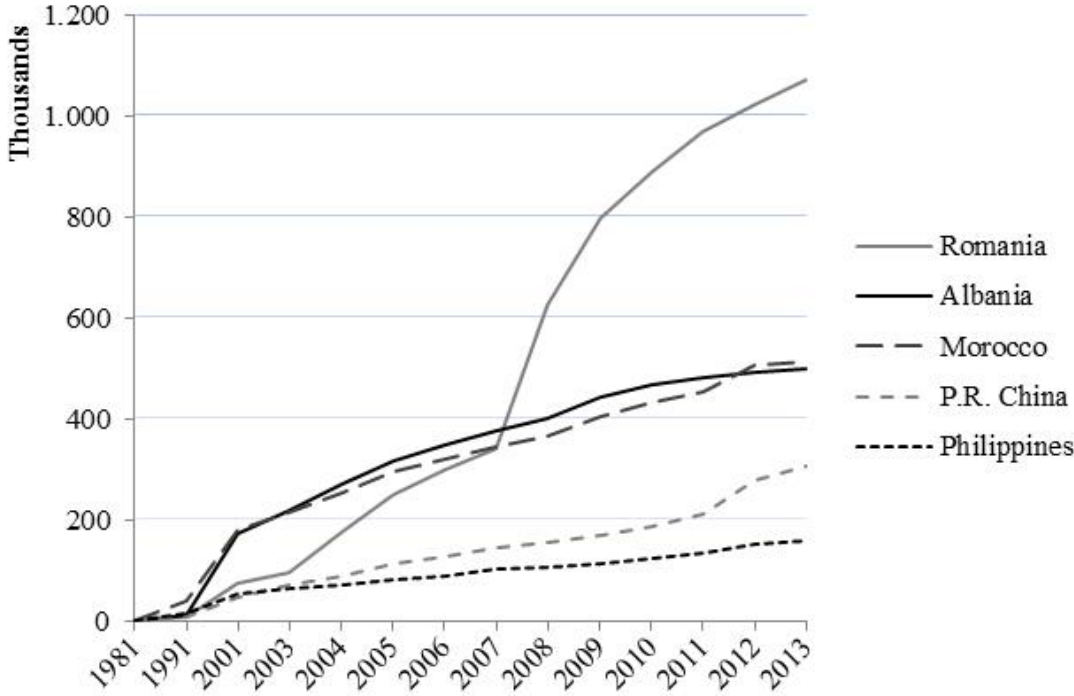
Source: Istat[38]

Previous studies have underlined labour opportunities as the main pull factor explaining the mass migration from Romania in the decade from 1999 to 2009 – often referred to as *Fenomenul către UE* (Mara, 2012). In the first years of visa liberalization however, mobility was mainly driven by labour *supply*, rather than demand in the later stages (due to changing market needs in Italy) next to the transnational networks of Romanian migration and family reasons that had emerged (Mara, 2012). The highest concentration of Romanian residents is in

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[37] 8,000 in 1990, according to Istat data

[38] Main groups of foreign-born residents, not born in EU-15, EFTA-countries, Andorra, San Marino, Monaco, North America, Australia, or New Zealand.

the regions of Lazio (36.2%) and Piedmont (34.4%). In Rome alone, there are more than 154,000 Romanian residents; 95,000 reside in Turin and 39,000 in Milan.[39]

The inflow of Romanian immigrants in Italy has been accompanied by growing concerns from politicians and the media, which have often referred to EU enlargement as the source of an alarming "tidal wave" of Romanian (and Bulgarian) migrants (Sigona, 2011). Attention has above all focused on possible inflows of Romanian Roma immigrants: despite the majority of *Romani* settlements in Italy date back more than fifty years, in fact, the arrival of Romani war refugees and economic migrants from the successor republics of former Yugoslavia and more recently from Romania has changed the balance between Italian and foreign Roma (Sigona and Trehan, 2010).

Even if the amount of Romani migrants has increased after the accession of Romania to the EU, the overall population in Italy is considerably small, numbering 140,000–160,000 people (Clough Marinaro, 2010). The largest community is settled in Rome, with estimates ranging between 7,200 and 15,000. The hysterical tone of media reports resulted in collapsing several different groups into one single category. Although the Romanian Roma are commonly referred derogatorily as *zingari* and *nomadi,* which correspond to the English "gypsies", these terms are used interchangeably as synonyms for Roma, and serve as shortcuts for all groups and subgroups of 'nomadic' peoples resident in Italy. Moreover, the terms 'Roma' and 'nomads' are incorrectly yet commonly used to define, and express negative attitudes towards, the Romanian (and to a lesser extent Bulgarian) immigrant population more broadly (Sigona, 2008).

As a result of a number of criminal events involving Romanian Roma immigrants between 2007 and 2008 (highly emphasized in the mass media, see: Sigona, 2008), the government issued an emergency law facilitating the removal and expulsion of EU citizens from Italy in case of a threat to public and national security. The proclamation of a "gypsy emergency" resulted in waves of evictions measures: in the Municipality of Rome alone, local authorities evicted more than six thousand people from illegal camps in less than one year (Clough Marinaro and Daniele, 2011). Security and repression, articulated in terms of "zero tolerance" towards illegality, rapidly became the main frame through which politicians and media commentators referred to the *problema nomadi.* The Berlusconi government, elected in 2008,

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[39] Despite the relatively recent migration, Romanian naturalization is also on the rise, (in 2011 is the third largest community for naturalization rates, following Albanians and Moroccans).

undertook numerous policy initiatives, among which there was a decree appointing special commissioners in charge of implementing all necessary measures to deal with "the state of emergency in relation to the settlements of nomad communities in Campania, Lombardy and Lazio" (Sigona, 2008). These measures – subsequently extended to Piedmont and Veneto – included the monitoring of the camps where nomadic peoples lived and the identification of all their residents, including minors and families.

The second largest group of foreign residents in Italy originates from Morocco. At least in the early stages, Moroccan immigration had to do with increasingly restrictive immigration policies in France and northern Europe. Workers of Moroccan origin were generally reaching Italy with touristic visas, and then settled illegally in the industrial areas of Northern Italy. As a result, the government introduced processes of collective regularization of foreign workers,[40] by which Moroccan immigrants could legalize their status. In turn, these regularization campaigns led to a further increase in the size of Italy's Moroccan community in the late 1990s. Ever since, the number of Moroccan residents in Italy has grown steadily over time, with an increase of 100 thousand people every four years: 93,000 in 1996; 195,000 in 2000; and about 300,000 in 2005. According to the National Institute of Statistics (Istat), by 2013 there were over half a million Moroccan residents in Italy, especially in the North of the country (71%).

Albanian immigration in Italy is closely linked with Albania's transition to democracy in the 1990s. The first arrivals of Albanian refugees in the late 1990s (generally in small groups, and on small boats or rafts) were followed by the decision of the Italian government to offer political asylum to the hundreds of Albanians who found refuge in the Italian embassy in Tirana. This triggered the first wave of mass migration, with about 25,000 Albanians reaching Southern Italy between March and August 1991. These events created channels of illegal immigration that would lead thousands of Albanian citizens to Italy in the years to come. The second wave of migration followed the Albanian economic crisis of 1997, when more than 9,000 people reached Italy in less than two months, mainly by means of self-made rafts or via smugglers.

The third wave of migration followed the descent of Kosovo into war, following which thousands of Albanian Kosovars left the country over a few months in 1999. The following

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[40] 22,000 in 1986; 51,000 in 1990 and 34,000 between 1995 and 1996

years, by contrast, were characterized by a regular inflow of workers and family members of residents. From 1991 to 2001, the number of Albanians residing in Italy grew from 10,000 to more than 170,000, and the increase continued in the following years, reaching 460,000 in 2009. By 2013, the Albanians in Italy are 497,000, 60% of which are resident in the North, 27% in the centre, and 13% in the South and the islands.

The fourth largest foreign community in Italy is the Chinese. Pretty much like the rest of Western Europe, Chinese immigration to Italy can be traced back to the early years of the twentieth century, but it has significantly increased in terms of numbers and ratio only in the last twenty-five years. Figure 4.5 below shows the territorial distribution of Chinese residents across Italian provinces.

Figure 4.5 *Distribution of Chinese residents across Italian Provinces*
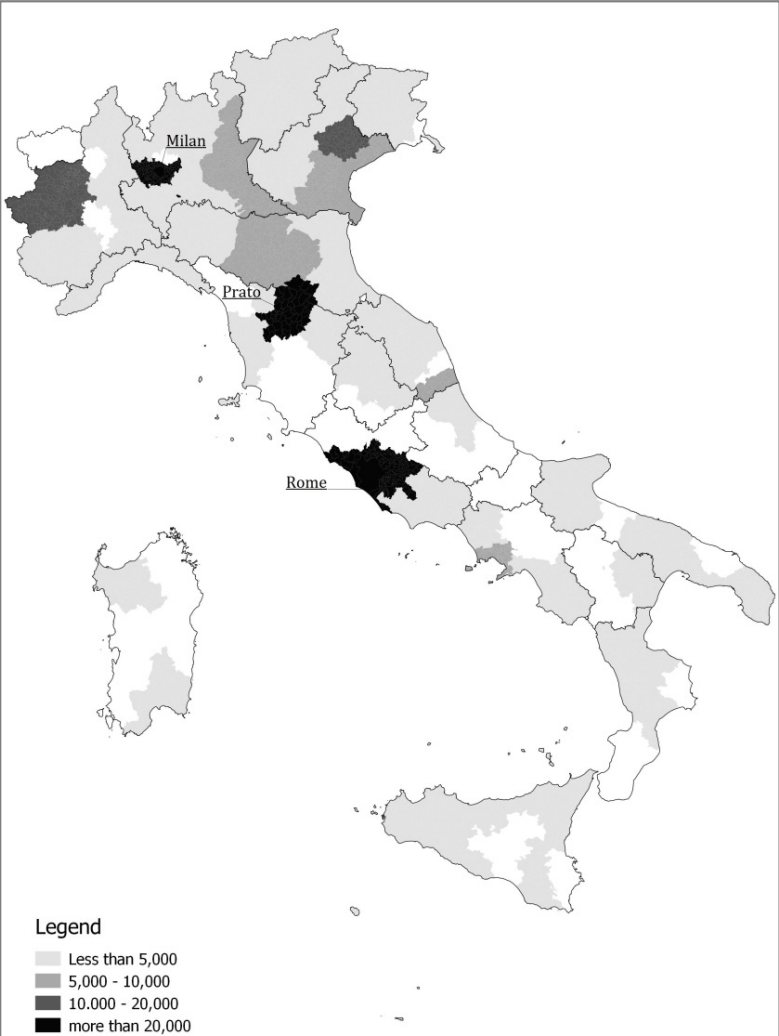
Source: Istat (2010)

The first waves of this Chinese migration to Italy took place in the early 1980s. Migrants were initially attracted by job opportunities in the Italian textile and leather industries, where the

first Chinese migrants had already been employed in the interwar years. In a relatively short time, however, chain-migrants developed self-entrepreneurial activities in the gastronomic and trade sectors, as well as in ethnic services. These were mainly oriented at importing "Made in China" commodities and at providing ethnic-specific services: groceries, hairdressers, video stores, call centres, translation services (Ceccagno, 2004).

As shown in Figure 4.5, the largest communities reside in the large metropolitan areas of Rome and Milan, and in the so-called "Chinese Industrial Triangle" of the Tuscan cities of Florence, Prato and Empoli (Caritas, 2006). Overall, one third of Chinese in Italy live in central Italy, in particular in Tuscany (21%), especially in Prato (9.5%). The size of the Chinese community in Italy has been growing steadily over the past years, and the number of Chinese residents has doubled throughout the last decade. In addition, illegal migration and residence is reported to be rather common among Chinese migrants. This is confirmed by the results of the regularization campaign of 2002, which confirmed the presence of more than 35,000 Chinese illegally residing in Italy.

The Filipinos – which represent the fifth largest group of foreign residents in Italy – were one of the first groups to arrive in Italy, already in the late 1970s. Filipino migration has generally been composed by temporary workers, although there are a significant number of permanent residents, reunited families and second generation citizens. The Filipino community is mainly concentrated in the metropolitan areas of Northern and Central Italy, whereas the largest community (about one third of the total Filipino population) resides in Milan. According to the *Economic Resource Centre for Overseas Filipinos*, approximately 80% to 90% of the Filipinos are employed as either domestic workers or caregivers (ERCOF-IOM, 2010).

4.3   A brief history of immigration in Milan, Prato and Rome

This section discusses the context in which local politics takes place. For each city, it will describe how and why the immigration issue has entered the public agenda of local political entrepreneurs, focusing on migratory patterns and discussing the implications of local immigration in terms of cultural and economic integration, territorial development, security and welfare. As will become apparent, Rome, Milan, and Prato are characterized by very different immigration profiles, and also by substantially different models of integration within the local territory, which offered distinct opportunities for the politicization of immigration. Where Milan is a perfect example of a "global" city, Rome is characterized by many job

opportunities in the tertiary sector, whereas Prato has developed over the years as one of Italy's major industrial districts.

4.3.1 Milan and immigration

As reported by Foot (1999), immigration to Milan can be divided into two main streams, the first one involving Italians in the 1950s and 1960s, and the second one involving mainly non-Italians from the 1980s onwards. In the late 1970s and early 1980s the city started experiencing immigration, especially political dissidents from Latin America and Africa, international students, and housemaid workers from Ethiopia, Eritrea and the Philippines. In addition to that, the city hosted a number of Chinese enterprises and a relatively sizable Chinese community.

Throughout the 1980s, Milan also saw a rapid growth in the number of Egyptian and Eritrean residents. Egyptian workers reached the city to find employment in the steelworks and subsequently developed autonomous ethnic entrepreneurship activities. Eritreans meanwhile found employment in domestic services in Milan. Until the late 1980s, however, immigrant communities in Milan remained "invisible". This was because the municipal administration did not actively engage in immigrant-specific projects of integration and accommodation, and also because most of the new residents (Italians and migrants alike) were forced to seek housing in the suburbs and in the newly urbanized "belt" of towns surrounding Milan.

A larger inflow of foreign workers took place in the early 1990s as a consequence of the first regularization policies, when numerous North African workers reached Milan after leaving the informal sector in the Southern regions. The years that followed were characterized by an increased diversification not only of immigrants' countries of origin,[41] but also of gender, with an increase in female immigration especially from Central and South American countries. For the new immigrants, housing remained the most important problem: the municipality did not plan to build new houses for, or to assign available ones to, the growing non-Italian population of Milan. With time, and especially through the assistance of religious and civil society organizations, most immigrants managed to obtain access to the rented housing market in the city hinterland.[42]

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[41] With the progressive increase in importance of Eastern European countries and the Balkans.

[42] As a result, most immigrant workers had to travel daily as commuters to reach their work place.

Presently Milan hosts one of the largest immigrant communities in Italy, with about 240,000 foreign-born residents in a total population of 1.35 millions (17.6%). This is the result of the different waves of foreign immigration that have characterized the city over the last decades: Chinese migrants that have long worked in Lombardy's textile industry; political migrants and refugees from Latin America and the Balkans; North African workers attracted by opportunity in heavy industry; and Filipino workers employed in the poorly-qualified tertiary and domestic sector. The different waves of immigration have affected the city's ethnic composition. In this respect, Table 4.1 below shows foreign residents' principal nationalities in Milan in 2012, compared to previous population measurements in the 1980s and 1990s.

Table 4.1 *Nationality of main groups of foreign residents in the city of Milan 1989-2012*

Country of origin	2011	%	2005	%	2000	%	1995	%	1989	%
Philippines	37.002	15,6%	26.645	16,4%	18.685	15,9%	6.505	10,1%	1.551	4,4%
Egypt	31.999	13,5%	20.992	12,9%	13.309	11,3%	7.473	11,6%	3.829	10,8%
P.R. China	20.852	8,8%	13.110	8,0%	8.675	7,4%	3.576	5,6%	1.595	4,5%
Peru	19.655	8,3%	13.784	8,5%	7.965	6,8%	1.357	2,1%	176	0,5%
Sri Lanka	14.512	6,1%	9.872	6,1%	6.118	5,2%	2.362	3,7%	455	1,3%
Ecuador	14.232	6,0%	12.356	7,6%	2.006	1,7%	149	0,2%	34	0,1%
Rmania	12.701	5,4%	5.536	3,4%	1.752	1,5%	541	0,8%	193	0,5%
Morocco	8.071	3,4%	6.067	3,7%	5.849	5,0%	3.294	5,1%	556	1,6%
Ukraine	6.913	2,9%	2.995	1,8%	132	0,1%	2	0,0%	-	-
Bangladesh	4.738	2,0%	2.268	1,4%	1.120	1,0%	337	0,5%	18	0,1%
Albania	5.441	2,3%	4.273	2,6%	2.205	1,9%	438	0,7%	19	0,1%
El Salvador	3.720	1,6%	2.497	1,5%	1.751	1,5%	1.127	1,8%	507	1,4%
Brazil	3.498	1,5%	2.580	1,6%	1.864	1,6%	1.173	1,8%	471	1,3%
Moldova	2.971	1,3%	1.151	0,7%	41	0,0%	- -		-	-
Ethiopia / Eritrea	498	0,2%	2.603	1,6%	2.678	2,3%	2.351	3,7%	1.926	5,4%
Senegal	2.124	0,9%	1.791	1,1%	2.002	1,7%	684	1,1%	94	0,3%
Other origin	47.928	20,2%	34.359	21,1%	76.152	64,6%	31.369	48,7%	11.424	32,2%
Tot.	236.855	100,0%	162.879	100,0%	117.816	100,0%	64.372	100,0%	35.495	100,0%
Tot. Pop. (%)	1.341.830	(17.6%)	1.307.545	(12.4%)	1.303.279	(9.0%)	1.305.364	(4.9%)	1.432.184	(2.3%)

[a] Data reported for the main nationalities of origin. Other origin also refers to citizens of EU-15 and EFTA-, Andorra, San Marino, Monaco, North America, Australia, and New Zealand. [b] Cumulative data for Ethiopia and Eritrea since Eritrea obtained independence only in 1993. *Source*: Comune di Milano, Settore Servizi Statistici.

As can be noticed, the largest immigrant community are the Filipinos, one of the main groups reaching Italy since the beginning of the 1990s, mainly to work in the domestic services sector. Peruvian and Ecuadorian settlement in Milan followed a similar path, as female migrants employed in domestic care (in the late 1990s) were progressively joined by their

families (throughout the 2000s). At the national level, more than 60% of Peruvian and Ecuadorian women residing in Italy work in the family services (Caritas, 2009).

The settlement of Chinese migrants in Milan has already been discussed in the previous sections. The Sri Lankan community, instead, is specific to Milan, as it is the largest such community in Italy (one fifth of the 80,000 Sri Lankan residents in the country). If in the 1990s Milan represented a temporary destination for Sri Lankan migrants seeking to settle in other Western countries, by today the city represents a first rather than a second choice, as is shown by the growing rates of family reunification and of the inscription of Sri Lankan minors in Milan's schools (Ministero del Lavoro, 2012). Similarly, their traditional short-term employment in cleaning and surveillance companies has been more recently joined by more long-term activities in food and ethnic services (Ministero del Lavoro, 2012).

Egyptians, Moroccans and other groups of North African origin are also central to Milan's immigrant panorama. More broadly, the city hosts one of the largest Muslim communities in Italy. This partly explains the choice to politicize the immigration issue in the 2011 municipal elections, when the electoral campaign involved an open conflict over Muslim residents. In particular, the debate was triggered by the proposal by the centre-left candidate to construct an Islamic religious centre for the large Muslim population of Milan, before developing into a debate over diversity and cultural and religious identity.

Over the previous years, many Islamic communities in Milan have voiced their discontent with the lack of official Islamic worship places within the city. Since the only official Milanese mosque is located in Segrate, on the city's outskirts, the Muslim community spontaneously gathered in unofficial places such as abandoned buildings and big tents. Until the election campaign of 2011 however, the centre-right administration of the city had been strongly opposing the construction of a mosque, based on the supposed "Christian roots" of Italian culture, and on the potential dangers (mainly related to terrorism) associated with the recognition of Muslim communities by municipal authorities.

Other various controversies have dogged the Islamic community of Milan. The most (in)famous is the Abu Omar case in 2003, concerning the disappearance of the Imam of Milan, Hassan Mustafa Osama Nasr.[43] National and international media reported this as one of the better-documented cases of extraordinary rendition. After being transferred to Egypt for

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[43] *Il Corriere della Sera,* 25/06/2005

interrogation, Hassan Nasr was released by an Egyptian court in 2007, which ruled that his detention was "unfounded." The subsequent court case raised many controversies in Italy and about the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), before resulting in a ruling of the Court of Appeals of Milan (2013) sentencing the former and deputy directors of Italy's military intelligence agency, and the CIA station chief in Italy, to up to 10 years of jail.[44]

The dangers of political Islam and terrorism have characterized the Milanese Muslim community for a long time. Already in 1998, Milanese prosecutors claimed that Milan was the hub of a European terrorist network involving groups in France, Belgium and Switzerland.[45] In 2007 another Milanese Imam and 10 affiliates were arrested for criminal activities linked to terrorism and for attempting to recruit suicide bombers among illegal migrants in the city.[46] In the same year, a home-made bomb exploded in front of the religious centre of Via Quaranta, in Milan, producing no victims.[47] In 2008, the Ministry of Internal Affairs reported that one of the largest Muslim groups in the city (Via Quaranta) is marked by "confirmed ideological intransigence".[48]

4.3.2 The Chinese immigration in Prato

The city of Prato is the prototypical medium-sized Italian municipality, the second most populous city in Tuscany, and the third in Central Italy. Since 2001, the city has been recognized as being part of the vast metropolitan area (almost 5,000 km^2) encompassing the territorial areas of Florence, Prato and Pistoia. Similar to other Tuscan cities, Prato's economy has long been dominated by the textile industry, and today represents one of the main industrial centres in the textile and clothing sectors in Europe, employing more than 35,000 workers (Confindustria Prato, 2013). Prato's history of immigration is strongly related to the settlement of Chinese migrants and their entrepreneurship in Italy.[49]

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[44] "Italy convicts Air Force O-6 in CIA kidnap case", *Military Times*, 4/11/2009.

[45] *La Repubblica,* 10/06/1998

[46] *La Repubblica*, 20/12/2007

[47] *La Stampa*, 02/02/2007

[48] *La Repubblica*, 08/03/2008

[49] Without entering into a discussion that would be too extensive for this section, it is important to underline that – at the national level – Moroccan enterprises are the most widespread in Italy among immigrant-owned economic activities (16.9% of the total amount of immigrant enterprises), followed by Romanian (14.3%) and Chinese ones (13.6%). In particular, Tuscany and the Prato area represent one the most privileged locations for Chinese and immigrant entrepreneurship in Italy.

Despite having been first established in medieval times, Prato's textile sector developed rapidly in the nineteenth century, when Prato was popularly known as "the Manchester of Tuscany." This reached its peak in the years of Italy's industrial boom, when the inflow of workers from southern Italy doubled the city's resident population. Since about two decades, moreover, Prato and its industrial district have been attracting migrants from outside of Italy. While in 1991 immigrant residents in Prato numbered under 1,500 (about 0.8% of the residents in the municipal territory), their number increased almost tenfold during the 1990s, so that in 2001 foreign residents made up 5% of Prato's population, slightly above national figures. In the following decade, however, the number of immigrant residents in Prato continued its rocket growth, reaching above 30,000 by 2013 out of Prato's total population of about 180,000 (17%).

Starting in the early 1990s, Chinese migrants have revitalized Prato's fashion industry, first by increasing the competitiveness of Italian companies through Chinese imports, then by taking over Italian companies and substituting them with Chinese-owned ones. By now, it is common to find former Italian entrepreneurs being employed as sales managers in Chinese enterprises. Chinese immigrants seem to have found the economic network necessary for the construction of small-scale enterprises and individual ventures: Chinese businesses currently make up 97% of the foreign-owned enterprises in the city. Between 1997 and 2010, Chinese businesses in Prato hugely increased in number (from 479 to almost 5,000, Barbu *et al.,* 2013) and area of entrepreneurship, including restoration, housing, and services (Campomori, 2008, Marsden, 2002).

In the early 1990s more than 50% of the foreign immigrants residing in Prato were Chinese. Today this ratio is lower, yet the city still hosts the second largest Chinese community in Italy with almost 12,000 residents. According to recent estimations, however, if one considers undocumented Chinese residents, the number could reach 25,000 (Barbu *et al.,* 2013). Table 4.2 below illustrates the main nationalities of foreign immigrants to Prato during recent decades.

Table 4.2 *Nationality of main groups of foreign residents in the city of Prato 1988-2011*

Country of origin	2011	%	2005	%	2001	%	1996	%	1991	%	1988	%
P.R. China	11.882	38,0%	8.636	43,6%	4.806	45,7%	1.761	46,7%	1.008	51,7%	39	5,2%
Albania	4.642	14,8%	3.560	18,0%	1.766	16,8%	332	8,8%	400	20,5%	-	-
Romania	2.806	9,0%	869	4,4%	172	1,6%	29	0,8%	21	1,1%	2	0,3%
Pakistan	1.957	6,3%	1.533	7,7%	622	5,9%	61	1,6%	3	0,2%	2	0,3%
Morocco	1.540	4,9%	1.177	5,9%	709	6,7%	265	7,0%	102	5,2%	34	4,5%
Other origin	8.450	27,0%	4.013	20,3%	2.452	23,3%	1.319	35,0%	415	21,3%	677	89,8%
Tot.	31.277	100,0%	19.788	100,0%	10.527	100,0%	3.767	100,0%	1.949	100,0%	754	100,0%
Tot. Pop. (%)	188.579	(16.6%)	183.823	(10.8%)	176.023	(6.0%)	168.892	(2.2%)	166.688	(1.2%)	163.287	(0.4%)

[a] Data reported for the main nationalities of origin. Other origin also refers to citizens of EU-15 and EFTA-, Andorra, San Marino, Monaco, North America, Australia, and New Zealand. *Source*: Istat & Ufficio Statistiche Comune di Prato

In line with general immigration trends in Italy, Chinese migrants entered as unregistered migrants from China or other European countries, and subsequently profited from the fairly regular amnesties extended by the Italian government (Ceccagno, 2007). Starting from the late 1990s, the increasing demand for foreign manpower by local industries led to the inflow of Albanian and Moroccan, and subsequently Romanian and Pakistani workers, which over time have come to constitute sizeable communities through family reunification processes.

The rapid growth in numbers and in economic power by the Chinese community in Prato (by 119% since 2004) has been accompanied by numerous controversies and tensions with the local population. Previous research has identified three main reasons behind growing negative attitudes towards Chinese residents: the perception that migrants are unregistered or illegal, and therefore work outside any national regulations and administrative control; the perception that the community is closed and homogeneous, and that Chinese in general lack interest in interacting with the Italian community; and the perception that China represents a threat to the Italian industry, and in particular to the textile and fashion sectors of the "Made in Italy" (Johanson *et al.*, 2009).

In addition to that, Prato has its own Chinatown. Despite being located centrally, the Chinatown of Via Pistoiese is generally regarded as peripheral due to low-quality infrastructure and urban degradation, lack of public spaces and insufficient public services. Because it encompasses the main industrial estates of Prato, the Chinatown area forms a *de facto* factory-city, and is separated from the rest of the city not only by architectural barriers, but also because of 'white flight' from the area among Italian natives (Barbu *et al.,* 2013). Overall, there are signs of increasing xenophobia on the side of the Italian community. Johanson *et al.* (2009) have reported growing concerns over the social costs that the city has

paid over the last years, transforming its industrial status from capital-intensive to labour-intensive and from high-quality to low-quality production systems.

Similar sentiments have been echoed and fuelled by prominent local politicians and the media, which consider the Chinese community too rapidly expanding. In 2006, the last centre-left mayor of Prato, Marco Romagnoli, called Chinese immigration to Prato an "economic blessing", yet at the same time "a catastrophe for the community" (Johanson *et al.*, 2007). Similarly, the president of Prato's Chamber of Commerce said about Chinese entrepreneurs: "We underestimated them. What they're doing here is called unfair competition. We need a battalion, an operation like the one in Iraq, to keep them under control" (in Di Castro and Vicziany, 2009, p. 14).

Before the electoral campaign of 2009, presented in the next chapters, tensions arose in 2007, when the planned Chinese New Year parade was banned by the municipal authorities, officially with the goal of persuading the Chinese community to collaborate with the Italian one and respect local regulations (Di Castro and Vicziany, 2009). Two years later, the centre-right coalition won the municipal elections for the first time in the city's history, which had long been a stronghold of the Italian Communist Party, and had always been administered by left-wing coalitions (Poli, 2009a; 2009b).

4.3.3 *Immigration and security in Rome*

Although the main magnets for foreign immigration to Italy have traditionally been the cities of northern Italy, today Rome hosts the largest immigrant community in the country, numbering more than 300,000 in a total population of 2.6 million (approximately 11%). Modern migration to Rome broadly follows the same pattern as Italy as a whole, and only in the last three decades have overseas labour migrants become a significant social presence.

As observed by Lucciarini (2010, p. 64) Rome is peculiar in the settlement and integration of its immigrants because of the fact that they have been poorly employed in the industrial sectors (unlike in northern Italy), while being remarkably active in the service sector and in entrepreneurial activities. As opposed to other cities in Italy, however, Rome in the late 1960s and early 1970s underwent a first inflow of female migrants from Cape Verde, Eritrea, Somalia and the Philippines, settling in the city and working in the domestic services sector. In addition to that, with the exception of a few – and relatively small – established communities of Filipinos and Egyptians, the 1970s were characterized by a rather limited inflow of migrants, most of whom only stayed for short periods.

Similarly, the acquisition of legal status via regularizations and amnesties was generally followed by displacement to other cities in Italy. In line with the dynamics at the national level, the mid-1980s mark a steep increase and differentiation of Rome's immigration patterns, with the first arrivals of Northern and Central Africans, as well as Southeast Asians. Different from previous arrivals, these migrants were generally males reaching Italy from other European countries, and the main pull factor were employment opportunities in food services and small craft businesses. By the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, these communities were joined by a conspicuous inflow of immigrants from Eastern Europe, first mainly Polish, and subsequently also Romanian, Ukrainian, Moldavian and Russian. Male migrants from Eastern Europe were employed in the construction industry and in the low-qualified manual sector, whereas female migrants – which often reached Italy without a work permit – found jobs in the domestic sector.

In the early 1990s, moreover, these groups of residents were joined by the Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities, which were particularly active in food services and set up numerous small businesses in the city centre. Another later wave came with refugees, in particular from Turkey, Iraq, and Sub-Saharan Africa. In the early 2000s, the main countries of origin in Rome were Morocco, Albania, Romania and Philippines, although the number of Chinese residents was also significant.

Over the last decade, the number of foreign residents in the capital has more than doubled, from 169,000 in 2001 to 352,000 in January 2012, an increase of 108%. Although the number of foreign residents in Rome has grown steadily over the years – remaining above the national average – significant numbers of migrants have also left the city in order to settle in the belt of Rome or in smaller cities in the region. Unlike the vast majority of European capitals, however, the immigrant population in Rome is highly diversified, due to the weak relationships between Italy and its former colonies. As a result, the urban panorama is characterized by a strong variety of ethnic and migrant groups, with only few concentrations in specific areas of Rome and rare ethnic neighbourhoods.

Today, the largest immigrant community by far is the Romanian one (cf. Table 4.3 below), which accounts alone for one third of the foreign residents in the city (approximately 90,000 people), followed by the Filipinos with 35,000 residents and the Bangladeshis and Polish with approximately 15,000. Romanian immigration to Rome has been the engine of the broader process of Romanian settlement in Italy. In fact, although Romanian migrants are spread all over the country, the Lazio region hosts the largest community, and in Rome in particular

they have overtaken communities that have been established there for longer periods. The building industry of the city has benefited significantly from the availability of Romanian labour, and so did the capital's social services thanks to the involvement of Romanian immigrants in domestic services and care work in Italian families.

The presence of Romanian migrants has been fundamental – although often undervalued – for the economic and social growth of the capital in the last two decades (Sigona, 2008). Even if often employed irregularly, immigrants have played a relevant social role in Rome's contemporary history, and significantly increased the wealth of the city. Despite this, the presence and use of public spaces by the Romanians and the Roma has often been targeted by political propaganda, and their settling in the city is often perceived as a threat to local communities. Sigona (2008) underlines the out-of-proportion attention provided by the press to fatalities involving immigrant workers and residents and to criminal events involving migrants. If the first are generally overlooked, the latter are systematically used in order to generate public debates, indignation, and calls for repressive interventions by local authorities.

Table 4.3 *Nationality of main groups of foreign residents in the city of Rome (2001-2012)*

Country of origin	2012	%	2005	%	2001	%
Romania	89.636	25,4%	23.148	16,0%	9.080	9,2%
Philippines	36.150	10,3%	15.897	11,0%	13.105	13,3%
Bangladesh	19.025	5,4%	5.542	3,8%	3.124	3,2%
Poland	15.148	4,3%	7.611	5,2%	5.587	5,7%
P.R. China	13.742	3,9%	4.642	3,2%	2.903	2,9%
Perù	13.370	3,8%	6.503	4,5%	4.920	5,0%
Ukraine	11.782	3,3%	3.894	2,7%	-	-
Ecuador	9.844	2,8%	4.529	3,1%	-	-
Egypt	8.318	2,4%	4.240	2,9%	3.198	3,2%
Moldova	8.110	2,3%	2.384	1,6%	-	-
India	7.860	2,2%	2.945	2,0%	2.213	2,2%
Sri Lanka	7.466	2,1%	2.908	2,0%	2.296	2,3%
Albania	7.421	2,1%	3.504	2,4%	2.183	2,2%
Ex-Jugoslavia	6.651	1,9%	4.611	3,2%	2.334	2,4%
Other origin	97.741	27,7%	52.646	36,3%	47.484	48,2%
Tot.	352.264	100,0%	145.004	100,0%	98.427	100,0%
Tot. Pop. (%)	2.638.842	(13.3%)	2.547.677	(5.7%)	2.545.860	(3.9%)

[a] Data reported for the main nationalities of origin. Other origin also refers to citizens of EU-15 and EFTA-, Andorra, San Marino, Monaco, North America, Australia, and New Zealand. *Source*: Istat, Ufficio Statistiche Comune di Roma

Above all, it is the presence of Roma people that stirs up the hottest debates on urban security. Estimates indicate circa 15,000-18,000 Romani living in Rome, most of whom are illegal, and approximately half of whom are assumed to be originally from Romania. Although the most significant inflow of Romanian Roma started after 2001, many Roma had reached the capital already in the 1980s and 1990s from Eastern Europe and the Balkans. Although the accession of Romania to the EU was of much higher impact on Romanian immigration to Italy than on its Roma counterpart (Sigona, 2008), the public's perception has not been the same and many news agencies and politicians raised concerns about a possible "invasion" by Roma people in the years following Romania's entrance. As previously mentioned, moreover, many Italians (including local politicians) do not differentiate between Romanians and Roma.

In sum, both public opinion and local politicians have generally confused the increasing number of Romanian residents in the city with that of Roma, framing both issues as an emergency. The local administration of Rome has reacted to the appearance of unauthorized settlements with the strategy of forced evictions, with few – if any – efforts to build up dialogue with Roma communities. As mentioned before, in 2007 the national government issued an emergency decree facilitating the removal of EU citizens from the Italian territory based on threats to public security. This decision was echoed by the statement of the then-mayor of Rome Walter Veltroni: "Before Romania entered the EU, Rome was the safest capital in the world. We need to repatriate people again; otherwise cities like Rome, Milan and Turin can't cope with the situation."[50]

As the next chapters will show, the widespread alarm and the frequent anti-immigration statements from leading political figures has had a strong impact on the April 2008 municipal elections that followed the Roma 'emergency'. The political campaign saw unprecedented emphasis on security issues, both from the media and from political actors, with episodes of open speculation on crime stories. This created an unprecedented anti-immigrant, and particularly anti-Romanian and anti-Roma, environment (Milella, 2008; Vitale, 2008).

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[50] *La Repubblica* 01/11/2007, in Sigona, 2008

4.4 Italian immigration law and policies

4.4.1 The national context

It was only in the 1980s that immigration emerged as a relevant policy issue and entered the Italian public debate. In its early stages, the debate was characterized by a high degree of consensus among political actors, most of whom saw immigration mainly from the point of view of labour relations. Accordingly, the discussion dwelled almost exclusively on labour control and regulations, and on the need to protect workers from unfair competition. The core of the debate dealt with the protection of the rights of immigrants, based on Christian ethics or international workers' solidarity. On this basis, the Italian government approved the first law on immigration in 1986, providing a first definition of the system of controls and employment of foreign workers to Italy. The law introduced the concept of family unification and provided measures to regularize the migrants already resident in the Italian territory.

The consensus surrounding the 1986 law, however, could be sustained only as long as the issue was kept away from public and media attention (Statham, 1998). Already by the early 1990s, in fact, the consensus was challenged by small government coalition parties (*Partito Repubblicano Italiano*) and opposition parties from the radical right (*Movimento Sociale Italiano*), challenging the "right to immigrate" (Magnani, 2012) and promoting a renovated form of nationalism (Ignazi, 1992, 2002). Mainstream parties started focusing on problems of social inclusion and on the need for measures enabling immigration control and expulsions. Both aspects were subsequently included in the new immigration law, which also regularized more than 300,000 illegal residents.

The late 1990s marked a change in Italy's immigration policy, with the passing of the so-called *Turco-Napolitano* law by the newly elected centre-left coalition government, which aimed at challenging opposition parties on illegal immigration. The Italian centre-right, in fact, had been asking for tougher controls on migration, and demanded the criminalization of illegal entry.[51] The new law introduced a quota system for employment-related immigration and new measures concerning expulsion, including detention centres for undocumented migrants.[52]

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[51] According to which all undocumented migrants would have to be arrested and forcibly expelled.

[52] The centres were officially intended for the identification of irregular migrants, establishing that all irregular migrants (hence including all migrants that have eluded immigration controls, as well as asylum seekers with pending applications and legal migrants who did not obtain or renew a residence permit,) can be detained at

When the right-wing coalition of Silvio Berlusconi entered office in 2001, the law and order discourse on immigration had already become predominant. As reported by Magnani (2012), the new government aimed to regulate immigration on the basis of "quality", defined in terms of immigrants' professional qualifications, knowledge of Italian culture and threat to the security of the Italian society. Concerning the opposition, parties were fragmented, with the centre-left advocating a quantitative limitation of legal flows, and the radical left challenging the practice of expulsions by the Italian state. The polarization first increased the salience of immigration in the electoral programmes of both coalitions, before resulting in the development of a set of restrictive measures by the new government: the *Bossi-Fini* law.

The new law's restrictions primarily concerned admission quotas and family reunification, next to a system of internal control, linking the right and duration of residence to the availability of a labour contract. This way the loss of job implied that a legal working immigrant would become illegal and thus eligible for forced repatriation. The law considerably broadened the area of irregularity for which expulsion applied. Finally, the law contributed to the symbolic criminalization of migrants, by broadening the practice of fingerprinting and by extending the scope of externalized policies of control.

The crime of illegal immigration and residence, however, was not introduced until the third Berlusconi government, within the so called Security Act, approved in 2009 as a result of the growing debate over security in Italy. The law also tripled the amount of time illegal immigrants could be detained. The measure criminalizing illegal immigration faced profound criticism. Some of its aspects were subsequently struck down by the Italian Constitutional Court, most notably the measure declaring the clandestine condition of immigrants an aggravating factor in the punishment of other offenses.

It may be obvious from this that the period covered in this study corresponds to the peak of a *crescendo* of immigration policies in Italy, both in terms of the breadth of areas covered by legislation and in terms of the selectivity of admission criteria. Where the 1980s and early 1990s Italy were characterized by a high tolerance toward illegal residents (which resulted in mass-regularisation campaigns and openness towards intercultural dialogue), the decades since have been characterized by increasingly tight controls and the securitization of immigration.

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specified facilities for a period "strictly limited to the time necessary to determine the identity and qualification for remaining in Italy, and for determining whether or not they should be deported."

This means that migration policy has been increasingly oriented on selectivity, discriminating between high-skilled workers and low-skilled professionals, to be employed in separate sectors of the labour market. Furthermore, the system of integration has concentrated exclusively on employment, which facilitates the sudden transformation of legal residents into illegal, unemployed aliens. As a result, immigrants' access to social rights and citizenship is subject to extreme uncertainty, making their actual status not too different from that of *guest workers* in post-war Europe (Caponio and Graziano, 2011). Similarly, this fluctuating character of their status has fostered criminalisation campaigns against illegal residents, leading to a progressive reframing of the immigration debate in security-related terms.

4.4.2   *The role of local governments in the migration policy system*

The purpose of this section is to investigate the degree to which immigration policies in Italy have seen the involvement of local authorities. Although previous literature has recognized that local authorities have substantial powers in domains pertaining to migrants', comparative studies in this area have suffered of the large international differences in the institutional structure of local administrations (Caponio and Borkert, 2010; Alexander, 2003; 2004; Lapeyrronie, 1992 Mahnig, 2004; Penninx *et al.*, 2004; Rogers *et al.*, 2001). There is not only large variation across European countries in immigration and integration policies, but these countries also vary in the form of their regional and federal administrations. Despite this a number of authors have dealt with the issue of immigration policy making at the local level in Italy (Caponio, 2006; Fasano and Zucchini, 2001; Campomori, 2005 Crosta, Mariotto and Tosi, 2000; Cinalli *et al.*, 2009; Zincone and Caponio, 2004).

This is mainly because, in Italy, cities have represented a fundamental catalyst for immigration flows, as they provide job opportunities in the tertiary sector in large urban areas, and in the small and medium-sized enterprises of industrial areas and in their hinterlands. While large cities such as Rome, Turin and Milan have traditionally represented the main destination for immigrant labour in Italy, small-scale industry outside metropolitan areas has attracted large numbers of immigrant workers since the late 1980s, when the regularization campaigns permitted illegal migrants employed in the agricultural sector in the south to seek new and legal job opportunities in the centre and north of the country. The territorial distribution of immigrants is therefore differentiated between settlement within the metropolitan areas of regional capitals – which offer job opportunities in the domestic sector

and in the low-qualified tertiary sector – and settlement in smaller cities characterized by small and medium industrial districts.

For this reason, Italian local governments have over the years become fundamental actors not only in the implementation of national policies, but also in designing and developing new ones (Zincone and Caponio, 2006). Previous studies have suggested that in order to understand city-level provisions with respect to immigration, one should look at the joint efforts at three levels of local governance: cities, provinces and regions (Caponio, 2006). Municipal administrations, in fact, coordinate the main aspects of multi-annual programmes with regional authorities, but preserve a certain degree of autonomy in managing and providing immigration-specific services.

Like in the rest of Europe, the first Italian legislation on immigration was framed almost exclusively in terms of "national interests", within a strongly centralized framework of policy-making and implementation. Since the early 1990s however, national regulations have increasingly drawn in local authorities, identifying a number of domains and areas in which local administration could operate autonomously or in cooperation with national ones. Local government activity, however, has been mostly concerned with the organization and provision of services for immigrant residents and communities, rather than with the multi-level management of immigration flows, or with the managing integration into local labour markets.

In this sense, local authorities are responsible for the welcoming, hosting and accommodation of immigrants upon their arrival and subsequent stay, although they officially have no voice in the development of specific plans and on the arrangement of funding. In addition, municipal governments are expected to take care of many aspects concerning the socio-cultural integration of immigrants, their social and medical assistance, and issues such as housing, education in the Italian language, and vocational training.

How actively municipalities can pursue the integration of immigrant residents in the territory therefore largely depends upon the resources made available to them for welfare and social policies by the regional governments, and upon the choices regional and provincial authorities in charge of developing the territorial plans make as part of multi-level coordination. Through the so-called "System of protection of asylum seekers, refugees and foreigners holding humanitarian permits," the national government delegates the management of the most critical social problems related to immigrants, alongside urgent humanitarian matters, to its urban

counterparts. As such municipalities are expected to develop and manage projects dealing with issues ranging from trafficking in women to taking in unaccompanied minors and refugees. They are also expected to monitor the presence of refugees and asylum seekers in their territory.

When it comes to immigration policies, local governments (both municipal and regional) are consulted by the national government to help define the three-year programmatic plans of immigration control, and the same occurs with the concrete definition of the yearly quotas regulating the inflow of foreign workers. In coordination with the national government, regions can also promote projects responding to the specific needs of local labour markets, and interact with sending countries in order to develop professional training programmes.

In addition to this, the local administrations in Italy enjoy substantial leeway in the fields of crime prevention and "urban security". These competences have often been applied to address immigration-related affairs,[53] as the debate on delegating powers of injunction to Italian mayors started, among other things, as a result of the interethnic conflicts and violence that characterized a number of northern cities in the early 1990s (Regione Piemonte, 2012). The process of delegation of security competences to local administrations accelerated from 2006 onward, irrespective of the alternation in government between centre-left and centre-right cabinets. Although city administrations act as 'agents of the national governments, they have been appointed extensive injunction powers for the normative regulation of urban security ("*competenze in materia di sicurezza urbana*"), applying to both ordinary and extraordinary circumstances. It is in this framework that city administrations developed a set of "Security agreements"[54] with the ministry of internal affairs, consisting of working plans for the allocation of financial and human resources, as well as specific actions oriented at "tackling, for instance, Roma issues or counterfeiting crimes, as well as the exploitation of prostitution and illegal commercial activities" (Servizio Studi del Senato, 2010).

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[53] Legge 125/2008 "Conversione in legge, con modificazioni, del decreto-legge 23 maggio 2008, n. 92, recante misure urgenti in materia di sicurezza pubblica" (artt. 1,5,9), d.lgs 159/2008 ""Modifiche ed integrazioni al decreto legislativo 28 gennaio 2008, n. 25, recante attuazione della direttiva 2005/85/CE relativa alle norme minime per le procedure applicate negli Stati membri ai fini del riconoscimento e della revoca dello status di rifugiato", d.lgs. 160/2008 ""Modifiche ed integrazioni al decreto legislativo 8 gennaio 2007, n. 5, recante attuazione della direttiva 2003/86/CE relativa al diritto di ricongiungimento familiare", legge 186/2008, legge 102/2009, legge 94/2009 (art.1) "Disposizioni in materia di sicurezza pubblica".

[54] *Patto per Milano Sicura* (18 May 2007); *Patto per Roma Sicura* (18 May 2007; 29 July 2010; 21 December 2011); *Patto per Prato Sicura* (31 July 2007 and 26 January 2010);

In sum, Italian municipalities indisputably perform a fundamental role in the development and management of immigration and integration legislation, in particular with respect to involuntary migration. In addition, they carry out key functions in educational, socio-cultural and welfare policies oriented at legal immigrant residents. Finally, municipalities can also contribute to the development and promotion of immigration plans that take the needs of local labour markets and the social integration of migrants into account. This is mainly a result of the high degree of territorial differentiation in Italy, in terms of cultural identity, socioeconomic development, welfare arrangements and performance of local administrations (Caponio, 2010). At the same time, one must not underestimate that when the comprehensive national legislation on immigration has been approved, local and regional policies were in some cases already in place.

Municipal administrations' freedom of manoeuvre, however, is largely dependent on the context. The vast majority of immigration regulations that municipalities are responsible for in fact pertain to the sector of regional social governance, meaning that municipal governments are not fully autonomous from a financial point of view, and can pursue their policy preferences only within the budgetary boundaries set up at the regional level. This notwithstanding, city-level authorities are responsible of policy-making on all three dimensions of the immigration issue that were discussed in the previous chapter: more or less autonomously, they operate on emergencies related to involuntary migration, on the distribution of welfare resources and management of labour issues, and on the socio-cultural integration of different communities.

4.5   The Italian municipal elections 2004-2011: an overview of the actors and results

In this section, I shall introduce the parties and coalitions which took part in the six electoral campaigns under consideration in this study,[55] and provide a succinct overview of the main candidates and campaigns for each city. For the 2006 elections in Rome, the two coalitions reproduced the sets of coalitions which supported Romano Prodi and Silvio Berlusconi in the general elections of the same year. The incumbent mayor of the city Walter Veltroni (*L'Ulivo*) ran for a second mandate supported by a wide coalition of lists, ranging from radical left actors (*Rifondazione Comunista*) to centrist and moderate ones (*Moderati*), in line with the

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[55] A full list of parties, coalitions and results can be found in the appendix.

coalition agreement that was formed at the national level. The main opposition party, the *Casa della Libertà* of Silvio Berlusconi*,* opted for Gianni Alemanno, prominent member of *Alleanza Nazionale* (the party that emerged from the neo-fascist *Movimento Sociale Italiano*) and Minister for Agriculture in the second Berlusconi cabinet. The candidature of Alemanno rapidly gathered the support of most parties and lists within the centre (*Unione di Centro, Nuovo* PSI) and right-wing area in the city (*Azione Sociale Mussolini*). As predicted by a majority of pollsters, Veltroni obtained an easy victory in the first electoral round.

Two years after, however, municipal elections were held again in Rome (13-14 April 2008), as the outgoing Mayor of Rome Veltroni (by then secretary of the Italian *Partito Democratico*) resigned in order to run as candidate in the general elections. The centre-left candidate was Francesco Rutelli (again supported by a wide coalition ranging from the left-wing *Sinistra Arcobalena* to the moderate centrists of *Lista Moderati per Roma*), who was already mayor of Rome from 1993 to 2001. Gianni Alemanno was again the candidate of *PDL* and a centre-right coalition encompassing radical right (*Popolo della Vita*) as well as centrist lists (*Alleanza per il Sud*). Yet, Alemanno was unable to secure an alliance with the newly-born radical right cartel of *La Destra-Fiamma Tricolore,* who presented Francesco Storace as their independent candidate. Similarly, the centrists who did not join the *Popolo delle Libertà* presented their autonomous candidate, which ran independent from the mainstream right coalition. Although the polling were in favour of Rutelli, Alemanno eventually won after the second-round of consultations, taking advantage (among other things) of a number of crime stories that discredited the outgoing city administration, and benefiting of the support enjoyed by the neo-elected centre-right government of Silvio Berlusconi.

The 2006 elections in Milan coincided with the end of the second mandate of the mayor Gabriele Albertini, supported at first by *Forza Italia* and subsequently by *Casa delle Libertà*. As the Italian law does not allow more than two consecutive mandates, the mainstream right coalition (involving multiple centre-right lists, as well as *Lega Nord,* the radical right of *Azione Sociale* and *Fiamma Tricolore*, and moderates from *UDC* and *Nuovo PSI*), appointed Letizia Moratti, at the time Minister for School and University in the incumbent Berlusconi government. The mainstream left coalition was approximately the same as for the 2006 elections in Rome, and largely reproduced party agreements reached at the national level between the centre-left, the Greens, the radical left (*Rifondazione* and *Comunisti Italiani*), and multiple centrist actors (*UDEUR,* IDV). The coalition chose former city prefect Bruno

Ferrante after a primary election. Some other candidates also considered the candidacy, but were eventually integrated within the two main coalitions. Although the race was close, the centre-right candidate Moratti ultimately succeeded in keeping the centre-right in office in Milan, without the need of a second round of elections.

At the end of her mandate in 2008, Letizia Moratti was confirmed as the mayor candidate of the centre-right for the May 2011 elections, supported by *Lega Nord,* the radical right of *La Destra*, and a number of lists belonging to centrist parties at the national level (*Nuovo PSI, Alleanza di Centro, Popolari*). Yet, the main centrist party presented an independent candidate (Manfredi Palmeri), in line with the political strategy of autonomy undertaken by the *Unione di Centro* at the national level. Concerning the challenger coalition, the primary elections of the centre-left led by the *Partito Democratico* in November 2010 were won by Giuliano Pisapia. His candidacy was supported by the left-wing of the area (*Rifondazione Comunista* and *SEL*). Since Milan was considered a stronghold of conservative vote, many observers described the election in Milan as a poll of the popularity of the national cabinet of Silvio Berlusconi. This contributed to attract the attention of national media and national political figures to this election. Although at the beginning of the campaign incumbent mayor Letizia Moratti was thought to be largely advantaged, the centre-left coalition enjoyed a number of successes across local elections in Italy in 2011, and Pisapia ultimately defeated his competitor in the second round of elections in Milan (29-30 May 2011).

Prato used to represent a stronghold of the Italian Communist Party and – subsequently – of the centre-left. The procedure to appoint the 2004 mayoral candidate for the left was not smooth, with several important figures of the party proposing themselves and being supported by the different 'wings' of the centre-left party *Democratici di Sinistra* (DS) in Prato. Ultimately, the leadership in Florence appointed an outsider: Marco Romagnoli, an important figure at the regional level (yet loosely linked to politics at the city-level), who secured a coalition with both moderate (*Margherita, UDEUR*) and radical leftist actors (*Comunisti Italiani*). Yet, the choice of the candidate also resulted in a fraction with the left-wing of the city administration, which decided to support the candidate of the radical left Mauro Vannoni (*Rifondazione Comunista*). Similarly, the centre-right was also unable to reach a shared decision: the appointment of Filippo Bernocchi (a member of *Alleanza Nazionale* considered closer to the most right-wing area of the *Casa delle Libertà*) led to a split with the centrist fraction of Massimo Taiti (*Nuovo PSI*, who ran as an independent) but not with the other centrists of *UDC*. Eventually, despite several observers expected the left to be sanctioned

electorally, the vote saw the success of the mainstream left already in the first round; the centre-right coalition and the radical left instead, did not meet the expectations in terms of electoral scores and actually retrenched compared to the 1999 consultations.

In October 2008, since Romagnoli announced that he would not run for the Prato elections 2009, the party appointed as candidate Massimo Carlesi – by then member of the city council for *Partito Democratico*. The coalition supporting Carlesi this time involved a vast list of centrist (*Partito Liberale, IDV, Repubblicani*) and left-wing actors (*SEL, Comunisti Italiani*), so that there were no sizable independent lists and candidates to his left. By contrast, the centre-right appointed Roberto Cenni: a local entrepreneur that was presented as independent from local politics, but that was actively supported by PDL and by Silvio Berlusconi, who came in person to Prato during the campaign. Cenni's coalition involved a wide set of lists and parties of the centre (*UDC*) and right-wing (*La Desrta, Lega Nord*), as well as civic lists of consumers and young entrepreneurs. The main trait of the campaign of the centre-right was the challenge to the centre-left establishment that had administered the city of Prato for the previous 60 years. In this respect, the centre-right rhetoric could take advantage of a small anti-immigration list, led by a former member of the centre-left administration (Aldo Milone) and supported by the groups of the local radical right (*Prato Libera e Sicura*). Although the list's electoral appeal was minimal (about 3% in the first round) the alliance with the mainstream right in the second round of elections was decisive, as Roberto Cenni was elected mayor with a 50.88% majority, and a surplus of only 1,500 votes over Carlesi.

As could be noticed in the previous outline, in line with the increasingly bipolar tendencies of the Italian party system (cf. Chiaramonte, 2007; Cotta and Verzichelli, 2008; Fabbrini, 2009), and due to the specific electoral law for municipal elections outlined in the previous chapter, each city presents two main candidates representing the centre-left and centre-right coalitions. The overall picture, however, is far less straightforward than this. The composition of the two coalitions varied over time and across cases, as a consequence of the extreme volatility of the Italian party system in general, and of local electoral lists in particular. What is more, the number of independents running outside the mainstream coalitions varied across cases and over time, as a consequence of both partisan negotiations and local political dynamics (see: Pasquino, 2001; Baldini, 2002).

A radical left list of considerable size (*Rifondazione Comunista*) ran independently from the centre-left on only one occasion (in Prato in 2004) whereas in all other cases radical left parties ran in support of the mainstream left coalition.[56] These generally comprise a combination of post-communist, social-democratic, liberal-democratic and Catholic traditions – often the case in recent Italian political history (see: Newell and Bull, 1997; Cotta and Verzichelli, 2007). Prato in 2004 also saw the presence of the *Nuovo PSI* ("New Italian Socialist Party"), which is a centrist party that has been progressively integrated into the new party of the centre-right camp, *Popolo della Libertà* (PDL). The main Italian centrist party (*Unione di Centro* - UDC) runs in coalition with the centre-right parties in some occasions but not in others, mainly because of a combination of national politics and local dynamics (see: McDonnell, 2013). After bitter internal conflicts, in fact, the UDC decided to run on its own in the national elections of 2008, which made local alliances with the PDL unsuitable. Again, however, the elections of 2009 in Prato present an exception to this trend.

On the right side of the political spectrum, local elections reproduce the longstanding national alliance between the mainstream right parties and the regionalist populist party, the *Lega Nord* (see: McDonnell, 2013). Being a regionalist party, however, the Lega Nord is not present in Rome, whereas it appears in the 2009 elections in Prato in coalition with the centre-right.[57] In addition, radical right parties participated in virtually all the elections considered, but only in two cases did they gain a substantial amount of voters. The 2008 elections in Rome provide another example of a national-local political intersection. The newly formed party *La Destra* was born out of a conflict over the birth of the PDL, and represented a new radical right actor which built an electoral alliance with a traditional party of that area: *Fiamma Tricolore*. Prato's radical right, by contrast, is a small municipal list, created as a single-issue movement (pro-security and against Chinese residents) for the occasion of the 2009 elections.

Table 4.4 below reports electoral results for the six electoral campaigns in the three municipal settings, specifying the type of coalition in each local setting. Bold characters indicate the coalitions, candidates and votes obtained by the elected mayors. As can be seen, in the second election in each city no candidate reached the required 50% quota, so that there was the need

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[56] The full list of the parties/lists belonging to each of the main coalitions in the six municipal elections can be found in the appendix.

[57] This is the result of the strategy of "expansion" to the south of the party

for the second-round voting (*ballottaggio*) in order to elect one of the two top candidates. Moreover, each city experienced an alternation in power between the mainstream left and right coalition over the period considered: Milan shifted from a centre-right administration to a centre-left one in the elections of 2011, whereas both Rome and Prato followed the opposite trend in 2008 and 2009.

Table 4.4 *Candidates and electoral results (Milan, Prato, Rome: 2004-2011)*

			Round	
Cirty / Year	Coalition	Candidate	1st %	2nd %
Milan 2006	**Centre-Right**	**Letizia Moratti**	**54.3**	
	Centre-Left	Bruno Ferrante	44.6	
Milan 2011	**Centre-Left**	**Giuliano Pisapia**	47.3	**55.1**
	Centre-Right	Letizia Moratti	43.3	44.9
	Centre	Manfredi Palmeri	4.6	-
	Mov. 5 Stelle	Mattia Calise	3.4	-
Prato 2004	**Centre-Left**	**Marco Romagnoli**	**53.2**	
	Centre-Right	Filippo Bernocchi	32.8	
	Radical Left	Maurizio Vannoni	8.1	
	Centre	Massimo Taiti	3.1	
Prato 2009	**Centre-Right**	**Roberto Cenni**	45.9	**50.9**
	Centre-Left	Massimo Carlesi	48.1	49.1
	Radical Right	Aldo Milone	2.7	-
Rome 2006	**Centre-Left**	**Walter Veltroni**	**61.4**	
	Centre-Right	Gianni Alemanno	37.0	
Rome 2008	**Centre-Right**	**Gianni Alemanno**	39.6	**53.7**
	Centre-Left	Francesco Rutelli	47.9	46.3
	Radical-Right	Francesco Storace	3.4	-
	Centre	Luciano Ciocchetti	3.3	-

Source: Italian Ministry of Internal Affairs (www.interno.gov.it)

4.6   Conclusions

During the 1980s and 1990s, Italy changed from a traditional country of emigration to an immigration destination. Although this coincided with a broader process of change in the patterns of migration at the European level, the Italian case stands out as the new flows of immigration were not accompanied by adequate regulatory legislation. This is one of the main causes for why a considerable share of the immigrants that reached the country during this period had to do so via irregular channels.

Parallel to these developments, a hardening public opinion and media coverage of immigration gradually transformed the original tolerance towards involuntary migrants into a growing impatience with – and later open opposition to – "illegal", "clandestine", or "undocumented" migrants. By the early 2000s, foreign residents had already become more than one and a half million, but the political debate had undergone a parallel growth in hostility, paying little attention – if any – to the economic role, integration and contribution of foreign workers and families already settled in the country.

This transition has been followed by more than two decades during which immigration flows changed and adapted to the legislation that was progressively introduced. By today, residents of immigrant origins and second generations represent a significant share of the Italian population, despite levels remaining generally lower than the rest of Western Europe and the Mediterranean. In addition, mainly due to Italy's brief colonial history, the composition of the immigrant population has long been fragmented, with no ethnic community clearly predominant in numbers at least until the recent mass migration from Romania.

At the same time, the density of migrants is geographically skewed, with high concentrations of immigrants in the centre and North of the country (in line with average European levels) and comparatively few foreign residents in the South and in the islands. Cities – especially large and middle-sized ones – constitute the most attractive destinations for immigrant workers and families. Yet, as illustrated, different cities showcase substantially distinct immigration profiles, in terms of ethnic composition and also social and labour market integration.

Milan, Rome and Prato stand out for their peculiar immigration history and characteristics: on the one hand, their immigration numbers are well above the national averages; on the other, the features of their migrant communities are quite distinct from one another, highlighting different aspects of the broader phenomenon of immigration to Italy. This invites an investigation into whether the distinctiveness of their immigration profiles, the characteristics of the local markets, and the opportunities for politicizing migration explain the dynamics of local immigration debates. This is the main objective of the next chapter.

Part 2: Empirical analyses

5 The immigration debate: salience, framing and positions

5.1   Introduction

This study claims that looking at the salience of immigration as a whole provides only a very superficial image of electoral campaigning. Instead, it seeks to show that there are multiple ways in which political entrepreneurs can approach complex issues, and that these multiple choices account for the variation in debates across local settings. To this end, this chapter looks at the way in which immigration was mobilized in the six electoral campaigns under study, investigating the immigration issue's salience as a whole, the relative importance of its constitutive dimensions across city contexts, and the degree to which each dimension is used in order to express support or opposition to immigration. In doing so, it provides a first overview of the nature and characteristics of the immigration debate in Italian local elections.

As I illustrated in the previous chapter, the development of political conflict over immigration in Italy was influenced by the considerable differences in terms of the timing and geographic distribution of immigration *within* Italy. This chapter follows on this by analysing whether these contextual differences can account for the way in which the immigration issue is politicized at the local level. Based on the assumption that the characteristics of national political landscapes affect the way the immigration issue is politicized, and that most of the policy-making on immigration concerns national parliaments and parties, previous studies have explained the variation in immigration debates and attitudes according to variation in national context (Thränhardt, 1995; Kitschelt and McGann, 1997; Ivarsflaten, 2008; Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup, 2008; Rydgren, 2008; Van der Brug and Van Spajne, 2009). This chapter seeks to do the same for the politicization of immigration in local arenas.

The logics explaining variation in local debates may be derived from cross-national models prevalent in immigration studies: local politicians and actors discuss immigration primarily in reference to the actual competences they possess in handling immigration and integration

affairs (Freeman, 1995; Bommes and Thranhardt, 2010). Although the distinction between the symbolic and the actual responsibilities of local authorities in the enforcement of law and order is often blurred (Vitale, 2012; Biorcio and Vitale, 2011), local administrations have gained in the past years extended competences in 'urban security' affairs, which have been used to reframe immigration in terms of law and order. Local governments frequently use emergency mayoral orders (*ordinanze sindacali d'urgenza*), to deny to 'nomads' the right to mobility and parking, allegedly for reasons of public health and safety, and have developed in the mid 2000s specific plans to tackle the "Roma emergency" (Sigona, 2011).

According to Vitale (2012), the majoritarian, highly personalized logics of local politics in Italy led to a further emphasis on the symbolic role of local authorities as agents of law and order, especially the mayors. In this sense, the Security pacts that local administrations agreed with regional and national authorities throughout the last decade marked a turning point in redefining the governance of security in Italian municipalities in terms of immigration. In Rome, the agreement of 2007 mentioned the need for multilevel coordination to strengthen the activities of identification and expulsion of illegal foreigners and communitarian citizens who commit crimes or represent a danger for the city. Even more explicitly, the Security pact of Milan (2007) reports that the city "suffers from the presence of numerous illegal extra-communitarian citizens and nomads, who have settled permanently in its territory making use of abusive structures and abandoned buildings". Finally, the security pacts in Prato for 2008 were "made necessary since the city of Prato is one of the Italian territories with the higher ratio of foreign citizens over Italian residents, and is characterized by the high concentration of companies operated by extra-communitarians, especially Chinese".

In sum, given the importance of law and order among the actual responsibilities and the symbolic competences of local administrations, it is likely that similar aspects constitute the bulk of local debates on immigration in mayoral electoral campaigns. Hence, local debates on immigration should be generally more oriented towards security than any of the other two issue dimension, as immigration and integration are primarily discussed in terms of public order, emergency and security.

In addition, previous studies have underlined that the dynamics of interethnic competition and threat have to do with a mix of national and local factors, as contextual effects are not always as ubiquitous as they were once thought to be (Hopkins, 2007). Substantial resources and welfare-related assets are now directly managed by local administrations, which are in charge of distributing them among local constituencies, including immigrants. Local politicians must

therefore develop political discourses to justify their choices and challenge their opponents' proposals. If institutional factors at the national level may explain differences in policy-making and discourse, the same is likely for the politicization of immigration in local electoral competitions, on the basis of local-level opportunity structures (Koopmans and Statham, 1999).

Hence, as was suggested with this study's case selection and in the theory section, local conditions and characteristics should influence substantially immigration debates at the city level, so that different local settings are characterized by specific immigration profiles. In order to account for this, the various constitutive aspects of immigration and the way in which these may interact with local characteristics, events and actors need to be disentangled. Each city setting is therefore likely to be associated with a specific dimension of the immigration issue, as the composition of the immigrant population in the three cities resonates with my classification of issue dimensions. More specifically, Milan was selected because the composition of its foreign population could give leverage to engage on cultural and religious aspects of immigration; campaigns in Prato are likely to discuss immigration primarily in terms of the economic dimension due to the weight of the Chinese economy in the territory; and Rome – hosting the largest Romanian and Roma community in Italy – provides fertile grounds for securitized immigration debates.

Finally, concerning the difference across election campaigns, the theoretical chapter introduced the hypothesis of an effect of focusing events on the dimensional politicization of immigration. As outlined earlier, the growing alarm over the risks of a 'tidal wave' of migrants from Romania and Bulgaria in Italy grew exponentially in the period of the 2007 EU enlargement. Old and deeply-rooted prejudices and wide-spread *antiziganism* contributed to stirring a debate on an alleged 'invasion by Romanian Roma (Sigona, 2008; 2011. See also: ERRC, 2000; Sigona and Monasta, 2006; Sigona, 2006). The climax was reached in November 2007, few months before the mayoral elections in Rome, when an Italian woman was murdered by a Romanian Romani immigrant in a peripheral neighbourhood in the capitol city. The national government responded to the incident by issuing, as a matter of 'necessity and urgency', an 'emergency law' (n. 181/2007) facilitating the removal of EU citizens from Italy in case of threat to public security. By officially recognizing the existence of a security emergency, these events are likely to have provided further incentives to politicize immigration in terms of law and order for the 2008 electoral campaign in Rome.

This chapter shall therefore look at electoral debates on immigration across the three cities and six election campaigns. More in detail, I firstly look at the salience of the issue as a whole, measuring the fluctuation in the importance that is attributed to immigration over time and across cities. Second comes an analysis of the relative importance of each of the three constitutive dimensions of immigration and the differences across cities and electoral campaigns. Finally, I investigate the articulation of support and opposition to immigration in the three cities. By looking at the interrelations between the salience and the tone of immigration's political dimensions, a pattern of preferences between supporters and opponents of immigration in terms of issue dimensionality becomes apparent. I find that, although both sides of the debate make reference to law and order arguments, with symmetrical strategies between opponents and supporters of immigration, the way in which dimensions are mobilized changes considerably across city contexts. The final part of the chapter therefore discusses the general implications of the empirical evidence for this study's framework, paving the way for the investigation of the electoral strategies of local political actors in immigration debates.

5.2   The salience of the immigration issue in Italian local elections

To begin with, I shall look at the relative share of attention devoted to immigration compared to all other issues debated in each city and electoral campaign. The total amount of core sentences coded in the national and local newspapers was 21,680, among which 2,408 sentences made reference to the immigration issue. Accordingly, the average salience of immigration across the whole period and the three city contexts was 11%. The rest of the attention was dedicated to a number of different local issues which are not relevant to the present study and which were not taken into consideration because of resource constraints and time limits (cf. Chapter 3).

Assessing the relevance of a political issue only based on its own share of attention (rather than looking at the distribution of attention across all the issues of an electoral campaign) is always a risky endeavour, as the best understanding of the importance of any issue is provided by complete figures. To cope with this limitation, I compare this assessment to benchmarks from previous studies based on similar data and designs. In this perspective, the importance given by the Italian media to the immigration issue in local campaigns is somewhat higher, yet generally comparable to the one reported in previous studies.

With respect to other European countries (namely Austria, the UK, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Switzerland), Kriesi *et al.* (2012) show that the immigration issue gained importance over time: its salience was very limited in the 1970s (1.6%), but it has increased greatly over the following decades, and in particular in the 1990s (7.4%) and the 2000s (8%). Similarly, Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart (2009), indicate that when immigration-related news accounts for more than 10% of the media attention, the issue can be considered salient. For the Italian case, previous research underlined that the 2006 elections marked a turning point in the politicization of immigration, which never received as much attention in national election campaigns during the previous decades (Urso and Carammia, 2014). Although recent analysis of Italian TV and newspapers over a random week in 2008 (Morcellini *et al.* 2009), shows a salience of the immigration issue of only 5% at the national level, a previous study on immigration claims making in Milan over six months in 2006 shows quantitatively comparable results to the ones I retrieved for the two months preceding municipal elections (Cinalli *et al.*, 2009).

Concerning the period observed, hence, I can conclude that the immigration issue is not only salient, but also somewhat more salient than is normally the case at the national level in Italy. Nonetheless the data suggest that this is not systematically the case. Table 5.1 reports the salience of immigration by electoral years in each of the municipal case studies under observation. The overall attention to the immigration issue increased between the first and the second electoral campaign in each city, both in absolute and in relative terms. The largest increases take place in Rome (+8.8% between 2006 and 2008) and Milan (+7.6%). In Prato the increase is relatively more limited (+5.8), but this case shows the highest salience for immigration both in the first and second electoral campaigns.

Table 5.1 *Overall Salience of immigration across city and electoral years (%)*

	Milan		Prato		Rome	
	2006	*2011*	*2004*	*2009*	*2006*	*2008*
%	5.5	13.1	11.1	16.9	3.7	12.5
N	120	827	239	452	116	654
Tot N	2,159	6,288	2,149	2,681	3,149	5,247

Note: Share of core-sentences dedicated to the immigration issue in newspapers

5.3 The dimensionality of immigration

This section investigates the relative weight of each dimension of the immigration issue in the electoral campaigns in Prato, Milan and Rome. Let's recall that the three cities have been selected having in mind the three constitutive dimensions of the immigration issue, as my expectation was that the characteristics of the immigrant population across local settings would influence the openness and accessibility of local arenas to different aspects of immigration. Table 5.2 below reports the distribution of attention across the three dimensions of immigration in each of the three cities during the two electoral campaigns. As the table shows, there are considerable differences in the relative salience of each aspect of immigration.

Nonetheless the results are not fully in line with the overarching expectation that there will be clear-cut dimensional profiles in each of the three cities. Although there are local characteristics in the debates of each city, this seems to only apply to the share of attention that is not already dedicated to security matters. As envisaged, in fact, it appears that the law and order dimension dominates the debate on immigration in all three city contexts. Law and order arguments are often at the core of symbolic immigration politics, but local administrators also share a number of responsibilities with national governments and law enforcement agencies on matters of security. Hence, concrete and symbolic security aspects are frequently mobilized in election campaigns, as the law and order dimension represents an aspect of immigration on which candidates are expected to intervene if they are elected.

Table 5.2 *The three dimensions of the immigration debate (%)*[58]

	Milan		Prato		Rome		Total	
	2006	*2011*	*2004*	*2009*	*2006*	*2008*	*time1*	*time2*
Socioeconomic Dimension	14.5	10.0	26.6	32.8	10.1	5.8	17.0	16.3
Cultural and Religious Dimension	39.7	31.7	32.4	24.5	14.2	11.8	28.8	22.6
Law and Order Dimension	45.8	58.3	50.0	42.7	75.7	82.4	57.2	61.1
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	131	999	320	543	148	791	599	2,333

Note: Share of core-sentences dedicated to the immigration issue in newspapers

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[58] In order to further investigate dimensional variation by city, we performed Chi-Square tests of goodness of fit on the values reported in the above table. The results of the tests indicate that the dimensional issue attention across cities are statistically different at both time 1: X^2 *(4, N = 599) = 52.1, p < .01* (Cramér's V= .23); and time 2: X^2 *(4, N = 2,333) = 364.5, p < .01* (Cramér's V= .31).

This being said, the three cities also provide quite distinctive attention profiles in terms of immigration debates. The law and order dimension is fully hegemonic in Rome, where cultural and socioeconomic aspects receive only marginal levels of attention. Moreover, as immigration grew in importance in 2008, so did the relative attention dedicated to security aspects, as more than 70% of attention to the immigration issue concentrated on this dimension in 2006 and more than 80% in 2008. Although this provides initial evidence on the specific role of the focusing event in this city context, the data show that security issues ranked high in the immigration agenda also prior to the event.

Differently the socioeconomic dimension receives substantial attention only in Prato, where it gathers about a third of the overall attention to immigration in 2009. Even if thus not fully predominant (law and order considerations are relatively more important here as well), this dimension is clearly overrepresented in Prato when compared to Rome or Milan (where it is systematically ranked third). In this sense, Prato stands out as an exceptional case not only compared to the other two cities under study, but also vis-à-vis national figures showing that socioeconomic aspects are progressively losing importance to cultural and security ones in immigration debates (Buonfino, 2004).

The debate on immigration in Milan did not fully follow the hypothesized pattern, since the issue was tackled mainly in terms of law and order arguments, and increasingly so over time. Still, the cultural and religious dimension receives a substantial share of attention, generally higher than in Rome and in Prato. Moreover, given the increasing importance of immigration as a whole in the electoral campaign of 2011, the salience of the cultural dimension grew over time in absolute terms. Where in 2006 this dimension accounted for 2.3% of the overall electoral debate, in 2011 cultural aspects 'weighed' twice as much, accounting for 4.7% of the overall attention in the campaign.

To conclude, this section provided initial evidence on the main features of local electoral campaigns and the immigration issue in Italy. As expected, local debates are strongly suffused with law and order arguments. Security stands out as the main aspect through which to debate immigration, not only because it responds to the need for local governments to confront public opinion on personal safety, but also because it concerns aspects of municipal government which local administrations actually have the institutional power to affect. What is more, the analysis suggests that the way in which immigration is debated varies substantially across city settings. Although the city profiles are not as clear-cut as hypothesized, there is substantial empirical evidence suggesting that local characteristics

matter in setting up immigration debates. Starting from a multidimensional understanding of policy issues, it seems more appropriate to speak of 'immigration debates,' as the constitutive dimensions of immigration are mobilized differently depending on contextual opportunities and dynamics of electoral campaigning.

5.4   Opposition and support to immigration

This section analyses the patterns of opposition and support to immigration during local electoral campaigns in Italy. As illustrated in the theory section, the choice of the evaluative component that is associated with each issue dimension depends on the social, cultural and ideological resources available to the actors involved in the debate (Williams, 2004). Moreover, given the difference in immigration debates across cities, it is likely that also the tone in which issue dimensions are debated varies. By looking at whether and to what extent each immigration claim is used to oppose or to support immigration by a given actor, I account for the general tone of the immigration debate across cities and electoral campaigns, and the degree to which each dimension of the immigration debate is mobilized to support or oppose immigration. Based on these aggregate figures, it then becomes possible to investigate the extent to which electoral campaigns differ from one another in how pro-immigration and anti-immigration discourses are articulated.

Previous research suggests that high issue salience is accompanied by predominantly anti-immigration discourses (Green-Pedersen *et al.,* 2013), generally because of the weight of actors exploiting the 'symbolic' politics of immigration (Faist, 1994; Thränhardt, 1995), or more broadly because of the influence of negative public opinion on immigration on campaigning strategies (Hopkins, 2010; Alonso and Claro da Fonseca, 2009). Our analysis of media coverage of electoral campaigns can not disentangle whether increased issue conflict leads to increased attention or whether, *vice versa,* increased media attention polarizes issue positions. Yet, I look at the two processes simultaneously, since increased salience is likely to lead to a polarization of positions and polarization is likely to further increase media attention.

Figure 5.1 below reports the degree of opposition to and support for immigration in the three cities at each point in time, plotted along the anti-immigration pro-immigration continuum. As can be observed, five out of the six election campaigns moderately lean towards the anti-immigration end of the continuum, and so does the average position across the six campaigns (-0.4). The sharpest anti-immigration tone is found in the 2008 election in Rome (-0.7),

followed by Prato in 2004 and Rome in 2006 (-0.5). The only marginally positive score emerged from the 2006 elections in Milan (+0.1), whereas the position of the 2009 immigration debate in Prato is only somewhat negative (-0.1).

With respect to the change over time, the average positions across the three cities indicate that the balance between support and opposition to immigration did not change: the aggregate values of the two election campaigns are both negative and identical (-0.4). Yet, the change in support and opposition to immigration across election campaigns is not homogeneous for the three cities. In Milan, the debate was characterized by a sharp turn from being basically 'neutral' in 2006, when the issue was not very salient (+0.1), to being markedly opposed to it as the importance of the issue grew in the 2011 electoral campaign (-0.4). The debate in Rome was dominated by anti-immigration arguments already when the issue received scarce attention (in 2006: -0.4), and thus predominance expanded in 2008 (-0.7). Prato, instead, followed the opposite pattern, as the tone of the debate was markedly negative on immigration in 2004 (-0.5) and it became substantially more positive as salience increased in 2009 (-0.1).

Figure 5.1 *Average position towards immigration in Milan, Prato and Rome (t1 and t2)*
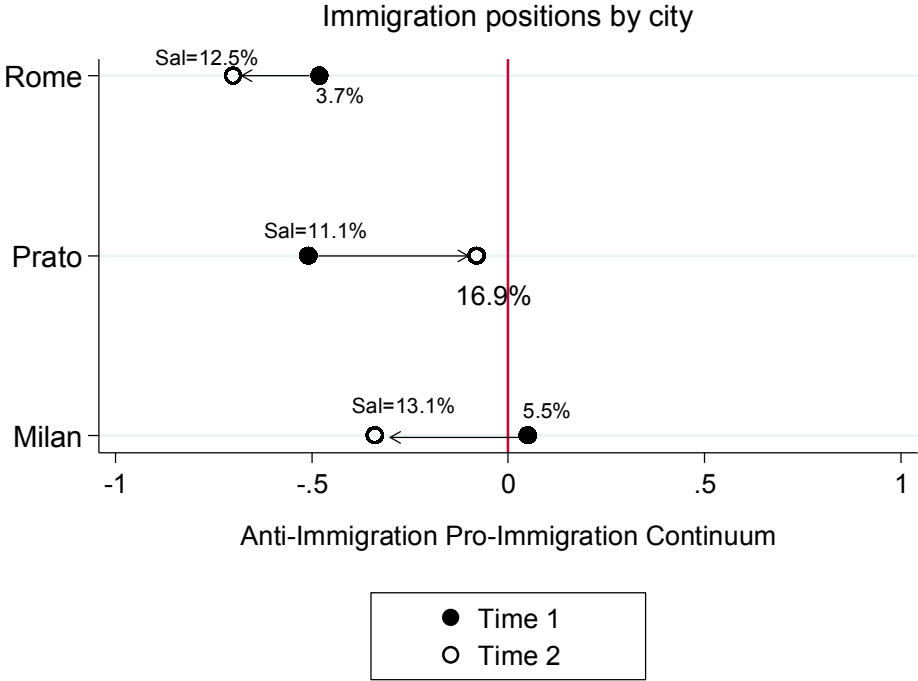
Having reviewed the general tone of immigration debates, my analysis turns now to the evaluative content of the three constitutive dimensions. While some aspects of the

immigration issue can be mobilized by either sides of the debate, in fact, others have a more clear-cut evaluative component, making them therefore less readily bipartisan. Although Chapter 7 offers a full discussion on the framing choices of parties engaged in electoral campaigning, I shall now focus on city differences, looking at whether the articulation of support and opposition to immigration in terms of issue dimensions differs across the three cities. Table 5.3 below shows the composition of the competing discourses on immigration in terms of issue dimensions. Vertically, the table shows the dimensional composition of the pro and anti-immigration camps, whereas horizontally it shows the weight of pro and anti-immigration arguments within debates on each of the three immigration dimensions.

Table 5.3 *Issue dimensions and competing discourses on immigration (%)*[59]

Issue dimensions	Anti-immigration field	Pro-immigration field	Tot. %
Socioeconomic	14.2	20.9	-
N	234	144	378
% of dimension	61.9%	38.1%	100%
Cultural and religious	17.7	49.0	-
N	292	337	629
% of dimension	46.4%	53.6%	100%
Law and order	68.1	30.1	-
N	1,120	207	1,327
% of dimension	84.4%	15.6%	100%
Tot	100%	100%	-
N	1,646	688	2,334

Note: Share of core-sentences dedicated to the immigration issue in newspapers

At the most general level, the table confirms the previous findings that arguments in opposition to immigration largely outweigh supportive ones, and that the law and order dimension is the most recurring aspect of immigration that is debated in local electoral campaigns. Yet, two additional elements emerge from the analysis of the composition of the competing camps on immigration. On the one hand, the attention profile of the pro-immigration camp is more equally distributed (despite a tendency towards the cultural and religious dimension) than is the anti-immigration camp (which instead is skewed in favour of

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[59] The Chi-Square tests indicate that the association between dimensional preferences and the pro-immigration and anti-immigration camp is statistically significant: X^2 *(2, N = 2,334) = 312.2, p < .01* (Cramér's V= .37).

law and order arguments). On the other hand, the composition of dimensional debates show that negative arguments outweigh pro-immigration ones for both the socioeconomic dimension and, even more so, the law and order one, yet pro-immigration ones are somewhat more prominent when immigration debates focus on cultural and religious aspects.

Based on this aggregate figures, I now look at which dimensions account for the change over time in the tone of the debates in the three cities. Figure 5.2 below reports the average positions on the anti-immigration pro-immigration continuum, in each city in each year, for the three dimensions of the immigration issue. In order to track changes over time in the tone of the debates and in the attention provided to the different aspects of immigration, the figure for each average position also specifies the absolute salience of the issue dimension during the electoral campaign.

Figure 5.2 *Average position of immigration dimensions by city and electoral year*
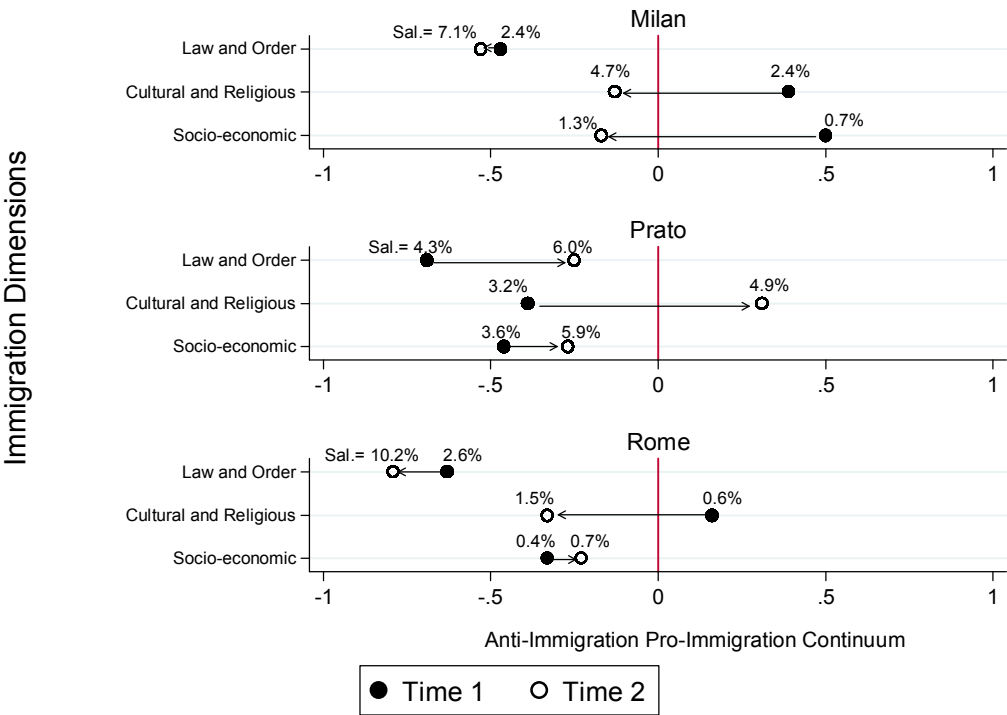
The figure shows that the tone by which the three issue dimensions are debated in the three cities changes substantially over time. In particular, there is a high degree of conflict over cultural and religious aspects: arguments from this dimension were used to articulate support for immigration in three electoral campaigns (Milan and Rome in 2006 and Prato in 2009), while they were used to express opposition in the remaining campaigns (Milan in 2011, Rome in 2008 and Prato in 2004). Socioeconomic aspects are less subject to change in Prato and

Rome than in Milan, whereas law and order values are negative in all cities and at all time points, meaning that this dimension is used mainly to express opposition to immigration. A separate look at the three cities is useful to provide additional insights on the dynamics behind over time changes illustrated above. To this goal, I shall also present, in Table 5.4a 5.4b and 5.4c, the dimensional composition of the opposing camps for the two election campaigns in each city.

Table 5.4a *Competing discourses on immigration in Milan (2006-2011)*

Issue dimension	*2006*			*2011*		
Immigration field	*Anti-*	*Pro-*	*Tot.*	*Anti-*	*Pro-*	*Tot.*
Socioeconomic	2.3	23.7	-	10.6	8.9	-
% of dimension	6.7%	93.3%	100%	72.1%	27.8%	100%
Cultural and religious	18.2	62.7	-	27.4	56.3	-
% of dimension	17.8%	82.2%	100%	51.4%	48.6%	100%
Law and order	79.5	13.6	-	61.9	34.8	-
% of dimension	81.4%	18.6%	100%	79.4%	20.6%	100%
Tot	*100%*	*100%*	*-*	*100%*	*100%*	*-*
N	*44*	*59*	*103*	*536*	*247*	*783*

Note: Share of core-sentences dedicated to the immigration issue in newspapers

In Milan, the cultural and religious and the socioeconomic dimensions were mainly used to support immigration in 2006 but became slightly anti-immigration in 2011, as their absolute salience increased. Indeed, Table 5.4a shows that the relative weight of these two dimensions within the anti-immigration camp increased in 2011.[60] Concerning cultural aspects, as we shall see later in the next chapter, this was due to the politicization of the Mosque issue by both anti- and pro-immigration actors in the 2011 campaign. Concerning socioeconomic ones, results should be discussed with caution given the overall low salience of this dimension: in 2006, these aspects were mobilized almost exclusively by the pro-immigration camp, namely through the proposal of increased popular housing for immigrant residents in Milan. On the contrary, in 2011 the anti-immigration camp focused on the trade-off between immigrant and native opportunities, most notably in terms of access to popular housing and open competitive

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[60] The differences in the total values (when compared to previous tables and figures) are due to the fact that neutral scores (=0) are not reported in either the Anti- or Pro- immigration camp.

exams. Finally, the direction of law and order arguments, remained stable and negative across the two elections, although attention to these aspects increased conspicuously. These aspects were frequently mobilized in terms of opposition to *Romani* settlements, and the 2011 campaign was characterized by claims that the city would soon become a *Zingaropoli*, literally a "gipsy-polis".

Concerning Prato, the results show a general shift towards support to immigration across issue dimensions. Most notably, there is evidence of a shift in the discursive priorities of the pro-immigration camp, counterbalancing the ones of the anti-immigration camp. If in 2004 anti-immigration claims are almost four times more frequent than pro-immigration ones, the two camps become approximately equal by 2009. Although arguments drawn from the socioeconomic dimension of immigration were used to oppose immigration both in 2004 and 2009, the average position of socioeconomic arguments became less negative in the second election (from -0.5 to -0.3). As shown in Table 5.4b, the predominance of anti-immigration arguments also decreases in terms of salience. Similarly, pro-immigration claims increased their relative weight within the cultural and religious and the law and order dimension. The cultural dimension shows the most radical change, as the tone by which these aspects were debated turned positive in 2009, and the pro-immigration camp became predominant.

Table 5.4b *Competing discourses on immigration in Prato (2004-2009)*

Issue dimension	2004			2009		
Immigration field	**Anti-**	**Pro-**	*Tot.*	**Anti-**	**Pro-**	*Tot.*
Socioeconomic	30.6	40.3	-	39.8	29.1	-
% of dimension	70.5%	29.5%	100%	61.0%	38.9%	100%
Cultural and religious	23.9	43.9	-	17.4	43.7	-
% of dimension	63.2%	36.8%	100%	31.3%	68.7%	100%
Law and order	45.5	15.8	-	42.8	27.2	-
% of dimension	90.1%	9.9%	100%	64.3%	35.7%	100%
Tot	*100%*	*100%*	-	*100%*	*100%*	-
N	*180*	*57*	*237*	*236*	*206*	*442*

Note: Share of core-sentences dedicated to the immigration issue in newspapers

Concerning the case of Rome, finally, Figure 5.2 shows that not only the absolute salience of law and order increased conspicuously from 2006 to 2008, but also the tone by which this dimension was used changed, becoming even more negative to immigration in 2008 (-0.8), hence confirming that mediatized crime stories related to the focusing event might have offered an opportunity to further mobilize on security. What is more, the case of Rome shows

that in 2008 the pro-immigration camp virtually disappeared from the debate, as supportive arguments account for only 13% of the immigration debate (whereas in 2006 they accounted for almost one third of the debate). As a result, anti-immigration arguments dominate debates across all three issue dimensions, including the cultural and religious one which used to be marginally supportive of immigration in 2006.

The comparison of data from 2006 and 2008, moreover, suggests that the focusing event that occurred in Rome few weeks before the beginning of the election campaign might have impacted on campaigning in three ways. First, the event seems to have contributed to increasing the overall salience of immigration, which became an important issue only in 2008. Yet, this is found to be in line with the two other settings. Second, it seems to have contributed to boosting the importance of law and order considerations. Although this is certainly the case, data from 2006 shows the relevance of this dimension already before the event took place. This might indicate that not all "unexpected events" are "focusing events", as only those which resonate with already-established discursive patterns in a given setting are actually able to attract media and political attention. Third, the event certainly contributed to changing the tone of the immigration debates, which turned more negative not only – as expectable – in terms of law and order arguments, but also for the dimensions that were previously used to support immigration, such as the cultural one. As a result, the campaign of 2008 shows the marginalization of the pro-immigration camp, as the anti-immigration camp controlled the law and order dimension, and this dimension *de facto* monopolized the immigration debate.

Table 5.4c *Competing discourses on immigration in Rome (2006-2008)*

Issue dimension	2006			2008		
Immigration field	Anti-	Pro-	Tot.	Anti-	Pro-	Tot.
Socioeconomic	4.8	27.3	-	4.1	18.6	-
% of dimension	30.8%	69.2%	100%	58.9%	41.0%	100%
Cultural and religious	10.8	36.4	-	7.8	39.5	-
% of dimension	42.9%	57.1%	100%	56.4%	43.6%	100%
Law and order	84.4	36.3	-	88.2	41.9	-
% of dimension	85.4%	14.6%	100%	93.3%	6.7%	100%
Tot	*100%*	*100%*	*-*	*100%*	*100%*	*-*
N	*83*	*33*	*116*	*567*	*86*	*653*

Note: Share of core-sentences dedicated to the immigration issue in newspapers

5.5   Conclusion

Looking at immigration debates in Italian local electoral campaigns, I suggested that the dynamics of mobilization on this issue should be regarded in more detail than previous research has done. The analyses demonstrated that the immigration issue (though the argument applies to many if not all multidimensional policy issues) should not be conceived of as homogeneous, but as a multi-faceted bundle of different aspects that are mobilized independently from one another. For local Italian elections, my analysis shows the overwhelming predominance of security aspects in immigration politics, although there is variation in dimensional attention and tones of debates across local contexts and over time. In this sense, this chapter also suggested that local factors can lead to substantial differences in the way in which the immigration issue is politicized across electoral campaigns.

Next to asking the question "does immigration matter?" in a given electoral campaign, therefore, this chapter has revealed the need to ask another question: "what aspects of immigration make it matter?" Though not providing a systematic answer for all the factors contributing to this, the results indicate that one should look at the specific issue dimensions that are responsible for the salience of policy issues and the tone by which these are debated in electoral campaigns.

In the six campaigns, electoral debates on immigration were dominated by law and order arguments, not only because it is used symbolically to respond to public concerns on issues if personal safety, but also because local administrations actually have substantial institutional competences on matters of law and order, and often use these to address immigration politics. Overall, local debates are more oriented towards security than any of the other two issue dimensions, and immigration and integration are primarily discussed in terms of public order, emergency and security.

By confirming one of the overarching expectations of this dissertation, I therefore also suggest that the broader process of securitization of immigration politics is permeating to the local level as well. Here, debates are composed of a mix between symbolic politics and actual competences of local administrators, so that local stories and crime events can boost the salience of the security arguments that politicians and local actors are already highly inclined to mobilize. Hence, especially when unexpected events are highly mediatized, a law and order, highly restrictive approach to immigration and integration affairs monopolizes local electoral debates.

At the same time, there is considerable variation in the way in which the issue is debated across local settings. Although the high focus on security issues makes city profiles less clear-cut than originally hypothesized, there is substantial empirical evidence suggesting that local characteristics matter in setting up immigration debates. In other words, it appears that the characteristics of the context in which electoral competition takes place, that is of the interaction between native and immigrant populations, explains – at least to a certain extent – the variation in local immigration debates. The constitutive dimensions of immigration are mobilized differently depending on contextual opportunities: while security arguments are particularly predominant in Rome, socioeconomic ones have more resonance in Prato, and cultural and religious arguments are more important in Milan than in the other two cities.

Beyond dimensional issue salience, the analyses suggest that the evaluative content of the different dimensions is of major importance in structuring public debates. The general tone of the immigration debate changed greatly across cases, showing that increasing attention is not necessarily associated with increasing opposition to immigration. This suggests that the way in which debates unfold also depends on the strategic choices of the actors involved, as will be discussed in the next chapters. At the same time, the results illustrated that the effects of focusing events had major impacts on the way in which immigration debates unfolded in Rome, possibly impacting on the salience of the issue as a whole, on the patterns of dimensional attention and, in particular, on the tone by which the issue is debated and on the relative strength of pro- and anti-immigration arguments.

In conclusion, the results of this chapter suggest that immigration debates are not only fragmented, but also strongly related to the characteristics of local settings, local events, and local competition. Although I find that local immigration debates are, in general, highly securitized, their nature, composition and tone of appears to be also related to the way in which the issue interacts with local characteristics, the responsibilities and competences of local political actors, and the occurrence of focusing events. A thematic understanding of policy issues therefore yields promising insights for the study of the politicization of immigration, as it helps accounting for the multiple aspects of complex policy issues and for the factors that contribute to shaping electoral debates.

6

Electoral actors and conflict over immigration in a multidimensional framework

6.1   Introduction

Studies on the formation and development of cleavages have repeatedly pointed to the interrelations between the left-right divide and the emerging socio-cultural dimension of party competition and behaviour (Inglehart, 1977; 2008; Ignazi, 1992; Kriesi *et al.*, 2008; 2012). Moreover, research on party and electoral agendas has investigated the consequences of the appearance of new actors within Western European party systems, focusing on the structural effects of emerging issues and on the reaction of mainstream parties to new challenges (Meguid 2008; Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup, 2008; Bale 2003). Based on the results of Chapter 5 on local variation in immigration debates, the present chapter shall test the theoretical model of multidimensional issue competition by addressing the role of local electoral actors and coalitions.

Previous studies have tended to classify the growing salience of the immigration issue in national arenas as part of the broader process that led to the emergence of a new, socio-cultural dimension of party competition at the expense of topics from the traditional left-right spectrum. Following the work of Kriesi *et al.* (2004; 2008; 2012), many have argued that party competition is structured along both the socio-cultural and the left-right dimension, whereas others (most notably, Van der Brug and Van Spanje 2009), have suggested that competition mainly takes place within the latter, claiming that cultural issues like immigration have not yet managed to cut across the traditional left-right divide.

As was argued in the previous chapter, however, research in this area has mainly focused on national arenas, looking at electoral issues as single, homogeneous, topics. Most studies

assume that immigration can either have an impact on the socio-cultural dimension or on the left-right dimension of party competition.[61] As a result, mainstream centre-right parties are considered to be the "issue owners" of immigration, together with extreme right actors that managed to "play the immigration card" (Arzheimer, 2009; Golder, 2003). On the left wing of the immigration debate, meanwhile, small post-communist and green parties have often benefited from their openly favourable positions on this issue, while mainstream centre-left parties are generally seen as the most vulnerable actors when it comes to immigration, as they tend to be challenged by both the mainstream right and the radical right (Bale *et al.,* 2010; Alonso and Claro da Fonseca, 2009).

By contrast I suggest that political actors seeking to gain electoral support strategically mobilize separate aspects of the immigration issue, rather than opting for either fully endorsing or disregarding the issue. This model enables me to overcome the overly simplified picture of parties as either "pro" or "anti" immigration. I submit that much depends on the dimensions of the issue that are mobilized. Once immigration has become a stable object of electoral competition, in fact, electoral actors will not be able to simply neglect the issue, and will be forced to shift the focus of the debates to dimensions and understandings of the immigration issue in which they presume they are more credible than their rivals. Moreover, the results provided in the previous chapter showed that the way in which the immigration issue is debated at the local level varies substantially depending on a locality's characteristics. That is, local conditions shape the way in which the immigration issue is represented and perceived, and thus the way in which electoral actors decide to tackle it. In terms of issue salience, one must look at which actors play the immigration card the most, and whether the pattern is the same across local settings.

In sum, this chapter builds upon the previous one by investigating when and whether actors are associated with certain dimensions of, and positions on, immigration. The focus is on actors' electoral strategies, which are interpreted in terms of the preferences of the coalitions running for office, contextual circumstances and party system configuration.[62] The analysis focuses firstly on the salience of the immigration issue for each electoral actor across the three case studies and over time. This aggregated analysis paves the way for the investigation of the

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[61] A notable exception to this is the study by Höglinger *et al.* (2012) focusing on the framing of globalization debates, and assessing empirically the circumstances that make the cultural logic or the economic logic prevail.

[62] The detailed description of the candidates, lists, coalitions and their electoral results is reported in Chapter 5.

attention given by each type of actor to the different dimensions of the issue, over time and across the three electoral contexts. This is further elaborated by means of an in-depth examination of partisan issue positions over immigration dimensions. The chapter closes by discussing the broader implications for the study of electoral campaigning and immigration politics.

6.2   Electoral actors at the local level and the mobilization of immigration

The first step is to look at the way in which the immigration issue is mobilized as a whole. Based on the data shown in the previous chapter, in fact, it is already apparent that the overall importance of immigration has grown over time, and that the level of attention differs significantly across the electoral campaigns in Milan, Prato and Rome. Now I shall look at which actors and coalitions contributed to the importance (and increase in importance) of immigration in the different electoral campaigns.

Looking at immigration in its entirety, the main expectations follow traditional comparative research on issue politicization. Right-wing parties are generally considered to be advantaged in immigration in electoral competition: radical right parties build ownership through overtly xenophobic discourses, whereas mainstream right-wing actors exploit the nationalistic tendencies of their electorates (Bale, 2003; Ivarsflaten, 2008; Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup, 2008). In short, the radical, but also the centre-right, should emphasize the immigration issue the most, accounting for most of its increased salience over time.

According to this literature, the mainstream left can adopt different strategies in response: it can opt to ignore the issue altogether, minimizing the attention to this issue in electoral campaigning and signalling its lack of importance (a strategy which has been called 'dismissive' by Meguid, 2008). Alternatively, it can decide to take up the issue in its electoral campaign. As I shall show later in this chapter, this may entail either holding their traditional pro-immigration positions, or adopt the more negative positions of its competitors. In either case, however, this means recognizing the importance of the immigration issue, which therefore increases its relative salience in the mainstream left's electoral offer.

In general, centre-left actors tend to take up the issue when anti-immigration actors participate in electoral campaigns, and particularly so when they are crucial for the formation of right-wing governments (Bale *et al*. 2010). In similar cases, in fact, the right-wing actors may use their reputation on immigration affairs to discredit centre-left competitors, questioning their

credibility on immigration politics and reliability in handling sensitive policy issues, capitalizing on the difficulty of the left in discussing immigration successfully.

Moreover, in line with the framework outlined in chapter 2, actors are more likely to take up the immigration issue when they are in office. Government parties are in fact held responsible for all policy sectors, whereas opposition parties can focus selectively on advantageous issues, and hold incumbents accountable over immigration affairs. Hence, governing parties on the left may be pressed to address the issue even when they would prefer to dismiss it, once this has gained attention in the party system agenda. In such cases, incumbent actors might be seen as responsible for the handling of immigration, so that they have to take up the issue to defend themselves (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen, 2010).

Based on this framework, the remainder of this section shall first describe the salience of immigration debates in Milan, then Prato and finally Rome, with the goal of identifying ideal-typical strategies vis-à-vis the politicization of the immigration issue by different types of political actors, and focusing on why and when they choose to pursue the strategies they do. Accordingly, Table 6.1a describes the electoral campaigns in Milan, reporting the share of attention dedicated by the competing actors to the immigration issue (vertically) and the relative weight of each actor's discourse in immigration-specific debates (horizontally).

Table 6.1a *Overall salience of the immigration issue by party in Milan 2006-2011*

	Centre-Right *(Incumbent)*	Centre-Left *(Challenger)*	Centre	Minor Lists	Public Interest Groups	Total
2006	6.1	3.3	-	0.0	9.6	5.5
N	49	31		0	40	120
%	41	26		0	33	100%
2011	15.0	9.9	2.7	17.8	20.9	13.1
N	531	163	11	13	108	826
%	64.3	19.7	1.3	1.5	13.1	100%

Note: Share of core sentences dedicated to immigration in newspaper articles

In the absence of radical right competitors, the centre-right coalition mobilized the immigration issue the most, playing the role of the issue's credible owner (about half of the immigration debate is driven by the centre-right, both in 2006 and in 2011). This comes as no surprise, given that in the region of Milan the mainstream right coalition is composed – and has been for more than 20 years – of an alliance between moderate right parties (the PDL and

the Christian Democrats) and the populist anti-immigrants of the Lega Nord (McDonnell, 2006; Albertazzi, McDonnell and Newell, 2011). In Milan therefore, the centre-right coalition can capitalize on the immigration issue without being challenged by any relevant right-wing competitor. Moreover, both electoral campaigns are characterized by the active involvement of non-partisan actors (public interest groups). These types of actors appear to have been strongly involved in the debate, especially when the topic is highly salient.

Yet, as long as the overall salience of the issue in the electoral agenda was low, the centre-left did not choose to fully engage in the debate. As can be seen, the centre-right coalition mobilized the issue already in 2006, when the overall salience of immigration was very low at the party system level, whereas the centre-left opted for a dismissive strategy, addressing the immigration issue only marginally. In 2011, instead, both coalitions engaged in campaigning on the immigration issue. Importantly, although the centre-left tripled the attention it gave to immigration, the centre-right further consolidated its ownership over the issue, monopolizing about two thirds of the immigration debate.

Although the composition of the two coalitions did not vary substantially, the change in the centre-left's strategy seems to have been induced by the behaviour of the centre-right, whose campaign strategy was directly oriented at challenging the reputation of their adversaries. This is confirmed by the in-depth analysis of the campaign claims, which show that the right opted to 'trespass' over a specific policy proposal formulated by the left-wing candidate: the mosque issue. By addressing this issue, the centre-right picked up a distinctive element of the left's immigration discourse in order to discredit and neutralize it, highlighting the tension between the moderate and more left-wing components of the challenger coalition. In this sense, the analysis of the debate shows that the incumbent centre-right coalition accused the centre-left of endorsing a soft-touch approach to immigration, one which would leave Milan in the hands of the "gypsies" (see: Gabardi, 2012). The strategy was that of exposing the contradictions of the left coalition, and was successful insofar as the centre-left was forced to respond, as it is shown by the increased importance attributed to immigration affairs.

Similarly, the visual campaign by centre-right was very energetic, with posters on walls in the city explicitly intended to cue voters by referring to the potential security problems which could arise if the left won the elections. Counterattacks and rebuttals are a common practice in electoral campaigns, and the centre-right in Milan clearly opted for a "trespassing" strategy (Sides, 2006) anticipating that their opponents may be disadvantaged in immigration debates. Rather than voluntarily deciding to take up the issue, hence, the centre-left was forced into a

defensive strategy, having to deny the accusation of being prospectively unable to handle the immigration issue.

Table 6.1b reports data on immigration salience by party for the electoral campaigns in Prato. This case shows a high level of issue salience for immigration already in 2004 (11.1%), and a further increase in the subsequent elections (16.9%). As in Milan, the role of public interest groups in debating immigration was significant in Prato. This mostly had to do with the role employers' federations and business owner associations played alongside the major trade unions, which actively participated in the debate and commented on the state of the affairs with respect to immigration and the economic crisis of the textile industry in Prato.

Table 6.1b *Overall salience of the immigration issue by party in Prato 2004-2009*

	Centre-Left (Incumbent)	Centre-Right (Challenger)	Rad. Left	Rad. Right	Socialists	Minor Lists	Public Interest Groups	Total
Prato								
2004	7.5	14.5	4.6	-	15.9	20.3	7.1	11.1
N	54	81	14		57	28	5	239
%	22.6	33.9	5.8		23.8	11.7	2.1	100%
2009	17.5	12.4	-	30.4	-	9.9	32.3	16.9
N	183	101		72		42	55	453
%	40.4	22.3		15.9		9.3	12.1	100%

Note: Share of core sentences dedicated to immigration in newspaper articles

In 2004, all challengers mobilized on the immigration issue, profiting from being in opposition to cue the debate on issues in which they were advantaged. As a result, the centre-left could not follow a fully dismissive strategy. Instead, the incumbents provided some attention to immigration, mainly in a reactive way and illustrating the achievements of the administration in terms of economic integration of migrants. In other words, the centre-left had to pick up the issue in response to the solicitations of its competitors, and did so trying to build upon the reputation it believed it acquired whilst in office.

By 2009, the picture had changed substantially. To begin with, a radical right actor entered the competition on the basis of an electoral platform sharply opposed to immigration (one third of its attention was devoted to immigration). The list *Prato Libera e Sicura* is the product of a small city-level association campaigning for increased market liberalization and relentlessly opposed to irregular migration. The municipal list stressed problems of security in Prato, opposed the settlement of Chinese migrants, and questioned the legality of the local Chinese economy. This represented an innovation for the traditionally leftist area of Prato,

where the radical right had never participated in elections with its own lists, although there had been candidates of this persuasion within moderate centre-right coalitions.

Faced with a new challenger, the centre left's strategy changed substantially, as the incumbents fully engaged in competition with the radical right, dedicating to the immigration issue more than 17% of the overall attention. The centre-right, instead, did not change considerably the attention provided to the issue. The increased importance the centre-left gave to the issue is likely to be related to its position as an incumbent, which forces actors to take into account issues that are salient in the party system agenda. Unlike the previous electoral campaign, however, the left provides considerably more attention to the issue, as they faced the challenge of a radical right actor.

Since the beginning of the electoral campaign, the incumbent coalition feared that the radical right could – at least potentially – contribute to the centre-right success by subscribing an electoral alliance during the second round of elections. This was frequently claimed by local politicians and members of the centre-left coalitions, who accused their competitors of promoting an excessively restrictive immigration agenda, and calling for the vote of moderate electorates. In this way, the left tried to antagonize the centre-right and radical right actors on immigration matters: by recognizing the importance of immigration, it hoped to increase the competition between the two right-wing competitors over similar electorates. The fact that the centre-right and the radical right allied for the second turn of the local elections further confirms this impression.

The case of Rome is presented in Table 6.1c. If in 2006 only public interest groups accorded considerable attention to immigration, in 2008 the issue became highly salient, most notably in the discourse of the centre-right (17.2%) and radical right (13.8%), but also in that of the centre (9.9%). Although right-wing actors almost completely monopolized the issue, the shift in attention to immigration affairs by the incumbent centre-left actor is also remarkable (from 2.6% to 8.7%). Public interest groups were overrepresented in the immigration debate in comparison to partisan actors, pretty much as in Milan and Prato. In particular, in 2008 there seems to have been a relation between public attention to this issue and the focusing events: the national visibility of the electoral campaign attracted numerous journalists, opinion-makers and no-profit organizations.

The events occurring during the 2008 electoral campaign are crucial, since the already existing law and order rhetoric of right-wing parties intersected with a series of crime stories

involving immigrants, one of which took place in the midst of the electoral campaign. This provided right-wing parties with new impetus in politicizing immigration affairs, while at the same time forcing the incumbent to change the distribution of its issue attention. Indeed, the analysis of the attention dedicated to immigration in the last two weeks of the electoral campaign (i.e. the second round) shows an increase for both the centre-right (21.6%) and the centre-left (9.7%).

Table 6.1c *Overall salience of the immigration issue by party in Rome 2006-2008*

	Centre-Left (Incumbent)	Centre-Right (Challenger)	Centre	Rad. Right	Minor Lists	Public Interest Groups	Total
Rome							
2006	2.6	3.8	-	-	3.3	13.3	3.7
N	43	49			1	29	122
%	35.2	40.2			0.8	23.8	100%
2008	8.7	17.2	9.9	13.8	2.4	23.14	12.5
N	179	320	45	51	3	53	651
%	27.5	49.2	6.9	7.8	0.4	8.1	100%

Note: Share of core sentences dedicated to immigration in newspaper articles

Similar to the case of Prato, as long as the issue was not salient in the party system agenda, the incumbent centre-left coalition opted for a defusing strategy. Being aware that right-wing actors might be advantaged in immigration debates, and that the generally negative public opinion on immigration would not be beneficial for the incumbent administration in electoral terms, the left preferred to focus the attention on issues on which it could demonstrate competence and trustworthiness.

Yet, as the issue gained attention in the systemic agenda due to focusing events and to their exploitation by radical right and centre-right actors, the centre-left could not pursue that strategy anymore and was forced to address the immigration issue. Being in government, it was impossible for the left to simply disregard the issue, as the debate on immigration took primarily the form of issue blaming by challenger actors, mainly in terms of urban safety and individual security. In this sense, the left had to respond in order to avoid responsibility over the handling of immigration affairs.

Given that challengers could not demonstrate to voters their record in managing this policy area, they invested all of their efforts into discrediting the performance of their competitors. In contrast to Prato, therefore, more than a strategy aimed at highlighting the contradiction

within the right-wing camp, the picture for Rome hints more directly at the disadvantage that incumbent actors face in dealing with issues that address their bad performance in office. As a matter of fact, in a desperate attempt to acquire credibility on immigration affairs, the outgoing administration implemented a number of security measures in the months prior to the elections, targeting especially Roma settlements. In other words, the centre-left administration was well aware that – due to the 'mood' created by the crime stories – law and order arguments would have monopolize the upcoming electoral campaign, and tried to develop a last-minute credibility on an issue that was, until then, largely disregarded.

Overall, the analysis of the mobilization of the immigration issue in local campaigns confirms the findings of previous studies on electoral strategies, showing that the centre-right and radical right parties tend to capitalize more on immigration matters, especially but not exclusively when they run as challengers. Our cases show that centre-left actors tend to focus on immigration affairs generally less than right-wing ones, and suggest that the centre-left response to the presence of radical right actors and of the issues surrounding immigration and integration is far from uniform.

In the cases under study, the centre-left actors display different strategies of uptake of the immigration issue. Above all, they campaign on the immigration issue because of incumbency constraints, i.e. because they are held accountable by their competitors for their decisions on immigration-related affairs while in office. Under these circumstances, left-wing actors tend to take advantage of the results obtained while in office, since outgoing administration can 'demonstrate' their policy competence. Yet, if the public opinion on immigration is particularly negative, such as in the weeks following the focusing events in Rome, incumbents are not only forced to take up the issue, but in so doing they end up further legitimising the credibility of their opponents.

Moreover, there is evidence that their choices are not only influenced by the presence of the radical right itself, but also by the behaviour of the mainstream right. Even when they run as challengers, in fact, centre-left actors may take up the issue when their opponents preventively challenge their ability to handle immigration affairs. Incumbency constraints are most evident in Rome, where the left was forced by its right-wing competitors to take up the issue defensively. Similar circumstances apply to Prato, although in this case the left also tried to mobilize the issue offensively, by antagonizing the two right-wing opponents. Instead, in Milan the left seem to suffer from a broader disadvantage, which has not to do with their

actual performance in government, but to their scarce reputation on immigration affairs in general.

Hence, these first results suggest that there are different circumstances and rationales explaining when and why left-wing parties opt to campaign on immigration. This provides additional leverage to the main goal of this study, focusing on the substance of immigration debates. In this sense, the next sections shall further clarify these dynamics by analysing the thematic nature of this complex policy issue from the point of view of issue dimensions and positions, investigating the role of incumbency constraints, the location of parties on the left-right scale, and local issue characteristics.

6.3   Attention and the dimensionality of immigration

By looking at the three dimensions of the issue, it is now possible to open the 'black box' of the debates (Höglinger *et al.*, 2012), and illustrate and discuss the dynamics of competition over immigration in electoral campaigning. The question this section aims to answer is which dynamics of issue mobilization by left- and right-wing, and by incumbent and challenger actors, account for the constitutive dimensions of the immigration issue?

At the most general level, my interest lies with establishing whether there is a relation between the types of actors involved in electoral competition, and their dimensional choices of issue mobilization. As discussed earlier (cf. Chapter 2), the three dimensions of immigration should be mobilized differentially by parties depending on where they are located in the ideological spectrum. The law and order dimension is generally associated with the values of right-wing and anti-immigration parties, who draw arguments from it to demand tougher immigration controls and integration regulations. Previous studies suggested that centre-right parties often contribute to priming the radical right's security agenda by focusing on perceived insecurity and crime (Helbling, 2013; Mudde, 2007). Given their relentless opposition to immigration, I have suggested that radical right parties, next to law and order arguments, politicize also the cultural dimension in nationalistic terms, and socioeconomic affairs in terms of labour security (De Lange, 2007). Differently, left-wing parties adopt more liberal views, seeking to improve the social conditions of migrants as well as to extend their cultural rights (Andall, 2007a; Lahav, 2004), and therefore prefer to address immigration primarily in terms of cultural and economic arguments.

Table 6.2 shows the attention given to the three dimensions of the immigration issue across the three cities and two electoral campaigns.[63] Vertically, the table shows the preferences of parties regarding the three dimensions, whereas horizontally it shows the weight of the discourse of the various parties within each dimensional debate on immigration. The dimensional preferences of the centre-left and centre-right are very similar, with a slight preference for socioeconomic and cultural and religious arguments on the left, in contrast to higher attention for law and order on the political right. Importantly, at the aggregate level a very similar pattern also emerges for public interest groups.

Table 6.2 *Overall Distribution of attention by dimension and party*

Dimension	Centre-Left	Centre-Right	Radical Left	Radical Right	Interest Groups	Total
Socio-economic	15.9	12.3	7.1	40.7	18.3	
N	104	139	1	50	52	346
%	30.0	40.2	0.3	14.5	15.0	100%
Cultural-Religious	27.6	23.8	78.6	13.0	29.6	
N	180	269	11	16	84	560
%	32.1	48.0	1.9	2.8	15.0	100%
Law and Order	56.5	63.9	14.3	46.3	52.1	
N	369	722	2	57	148	1298
%	28.4	55.6	0.1	4.4	11.4	100%
Tot	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	
N	653	1130	14	123	284	2204

Note: Share of core sentences dedicated to immigration in newspaper articles

At the edges of the political spectrum, the results for the radical left show a clear preference for cultural arguments, although the number of observations is rather limited. The radical right mobilizes mainly the law and order dimension, yet it provides substantial attention to the socioeconomic one as well. Cultural aspects however play only a marginal role on the radical right in these three Italian cities, unlike what previous studies found (Kriesi *et al.*, 2012).[64] By looking at Table 6.2 horizontally, however, we can also see that the centre-right dominates debates across all three issue dimensions. Its advantage over the mainstream left, as expected,

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[63] The results of the Chi-Square tests for the above table indicate that the dimensional issue attention is statistically different between parties: X^2 *(12, N = 2204) = 143.2, p < .01* (Cramér's V= .18).

[64] Next to the local level factors that were discussed in the previous seciton, this can be partly explained by the post-fascist tradition of the Italian radical right, especially in Rome. Similar groups have a tendency to emphasize corporatist and social justice arguments in their political campaigning (Caldiron, 2009).

is most evident in terms of law and order aspects, but it is also considerable within the cultural and socioeconomic dimensions. Overall, the centre-left appears unable to get a hold over any of the three dimensions of the immigration issue.

I now turn to the analysis of the choices of mainstream parties when they are in office compared to when they are challengers. The main idea here is that challenger parties are freer to focus on advantageous issue dimensions. Hence, the centre-right – which derives the strongest advantage from mobilizing security issues – should focus more on this dimension when it is in opposition than when it is in office. Conversely, also the centre-left should focus more on relatively advantageous dimensions, e.g. cultural and religious affairs, when it is in opposition than when it is in office. The difference between the two actors is a result of the overall credibility that the centre-right and centre-left enjoy in immigration debates, so that the left should suffer the costs of being in office more than the right.

As can be noticed in Table 6.3 this appears to be the case. When waging a challenger's campaign, the centre-right focuses mostly on law and order and only marginally on socioeconomic and cultural aspects. When it is in office, however, the amount of attention provided to law and order shrinks, whereas the one provided to the cultural and religious dimension increases substantially. The opposite takes place on the centre-left: in opposition, it focuses mainly on cultural aspects and less so on law and order; yet, when in office, the left is forced to concentrate its policy attention mainly on law and order issues.[65]

The magnitude of the difference between being incumbent or a challenger is more pronounced for the left than for the right, suggesting that the immigration issue as a whole is more unfavourable to the centre-left, which is forced to change its distribution of attention more dramatically. Put differently, left-wing coalitions seem to suffer relatively more disadvantages from incumbency than right-wing ones, which makes them less able to defend their performance while in government. The centre-right, instead, can provide a more stable and coherent discourse on immigration, taking advantage of their reputation on security issues both when in office and when in opposition.

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[65] In order to provide an exhaustive account of the differences reported in Table 6.3, we performed Chi-Square tests of goodness of fit. The results of the tests indicate that dimensional issue attention is not equally distributed across challenger and incumbent actors: X^2 *(6, N = 1783) = 104.9, p < .01* (Cramér's V=.17). Moreover, the results also confirm that the attention profile of the centre-right running as incumbent is not equal to its attention profile as a challenger: X^2 *(2, N = 1,130) = 28.0, p < .01* (Cramér's V=.16). Similarly, the attention profile of the centre-left as an incumbent and as a challenger is not equal: X^2 *(2, N = 653) = 63.8, p < .01* (Cramér's V=.31).

Table 6.3 *Distribution of attention by incumbent and challenger parties.*

	Centre-Right		Centre-Left	
	Incumbent	Challenger	Incumbent	Challenger
Socioeconomic Dimension	10.2	14.5	18.5	9.8
Cultural & Religious Dimension	30.2	17.1	18.5	49.0
Law & Order Dimension	59.6	68.4	62.9	41.2
Tot	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	580	550	459	194

Note: Share of core sentences dedicated to immigration in newspaper articles

Given the reciprocal nature of partisan strategies, especially when the focus is limited to mainstream coalitions, caution is in order when presenting these results. Moreover, the limited amount of cases upon which this study is based calls for additional attention, as the difference between incumbent and challenger actors might not be exclusively related to incumbency constraints but also to events and characteristics at the context and campaign level. Provisionally, however, Table 6.3 suggests that parties tend to focus more on the dimensions that they perceive as advantageous when they are challengers than when they are in office. This also means that governing parties are less able to avoid dimensions unfavourable to them in the immigration debate, since they are forced to respond to the issues their competitors bring into the agenda.

These results, however, cannot be interpreted without taking into account that city-level factors certainly explain at least part of the dimensional preferences by mainstream parties, as I will show in the next chapter. Nonetheless, the evidence reported here is generally supportive of the idea that incumbency is constraining for political actors, as illustrated by the fact that both the centre-left and the centre-right, when incumbent, are forced to focus on disadvantageous dimensions more often. Moreover, the results further explain the structural disadvantage of left-wing parties in immigration debates, as the variation in the distributions of attention for the centre-left as an incumbent and as a challenger is higher than for the centre-right, indicating that the left suffers relatively more from being incumbent than the right. That is to say, when incumbent the left has to discuss law and order affairs more than right-wing incumbents are forced to focus on cultural and religious ones.

6.3.1   Overlap and continuity in the dimensional politicization of immigration

So far, this study has shown that local contexts matter in structuring immigration debates, and that the dynamics of election campaigns drive parties to engage in debates about specific dimensions of immigration. Two mechanisms are at stake when actors set up their dimensional strategies of mobilization of the immigration issue across different local elections. On the one hand, as was suggested in the theoretical chapter, parties follow what Helbling (2013) calls an "actor-driven logic". Accordingly, they are not fully free to select the way in which they politicize immigration, as they are influenced among other things by their own understanding of the social reality, as well as by their previous commitments. If this is the case, it is fair to expect that the dimensional choices with respect to the immigration issue of party *x* across contexts *a, b* and *c,* and over time *t1* and *t2* will be relatively steady, because they must reflect previous engagements and ideological profiles. Conversely, if an agenda-driven logic prevails (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen, 2010), parties should focus on dimensions of immigration that resonate with the context in which the campaign takes place. This means that their choices should differ more *between* the different elections than *within* single election campaigns. Hence, the discourse of party *x* in context *a* at time *t2* will be relatively more similar (in terms of dimensions of immigration) to the discourse of party *y* in context *a* at time *t2,* than to its own discourse in another context.

Table 6.4 describes the profiles in dimensional attention to immigration according to party and electoral campaign. These results cover the two mainstream coalitions and the radical right,[66] showing a noticeable degree of variation across both electoral contexts and different party families. The most straightforward case is that of the radical right: in Prato it devoted two thirds of its attention to socioeconomic issues, in Rome it did so for security ones. In neither of the cases, moreover, did the cultural dimension seem to have played a significant role.

With respect to mainstream parties, the results show a general tendency of according increased importance over time to the law and order dimension, across the three local settings and with only the centre-left of Prato as an exception. Prato also stands out for the degree of attention devoted to the socioeconomic dimension, which was almost absent from the debates

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[66] Due to inconsistent coalition choices across cases, political actors outside of the mainstream-left and right coalitions participate quite irregularly to the electoral campaigns under study, and were therefore excluded from this section of the study.

of the two other settings. Similarly, law and order completely dominated the debates in Rome, at both points in time and for both mainstream parties. Dimensional profiles are less clear in Milan, where the increased importance of the law and order dimension was also accompanied by a remarkable degree of attention to cultural and religious aspects.

Table 6.4 *Dimensional attention by party and context*

		Milan		**Prato**		**Rome**	
		2006	2011	2004	2009	2006	2008
Centre-Left	Socio-economic	16.1	8.6	35.2	32.8	2.3	2.8
	Cultural-Religious	58.1	47.2	14.8	26.2	23.3	10.6
	Law and Order	25.8	44.2	50.0	40.96	74.4	86.6
	Tot.	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Centre-Right	Socio-economic	8.2	10.4	35.8	28.0	8.2	5.9
	Cultural-Religious	38.8	29.4	24.7	31.0	16.3	10.9
	Law and Order	53.0	60.2	39.5	41.0	75.5	83.2
	Tot.	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Radical Right	Socio-economic	-	-	-	61.1	-	11.8
	Cultural-Religious	-	-	-	6.9	-	21.6
	Law and Order	-	-	-	31.9	-	66.6
	Tot.	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Note: Share of core sentences dedicated to immigration in newspaper articles

In general, however, the results do not fully support the actor-driven logic. The increasing salience of the immigration issue (as seen in the previous chapter) is not associated with a clear pattern of dimensional attention profiles. Instead, though the right shows a general preference for law and order arguments while the left does the same for cultural aspects, mainstream and radical parties show a substantial level of variation in the way they approach the immigration issue. Despite the centre-right's overwhelming attention to law and order issues, in fact, its dimensional choices in Prato are considerably different from those in Rome and Milan. Similarly, also the mainstream left does not follow coherent strategies across different settings.

The dimensional profile of the radical right is considerably different in the two electoral campaigns, and the difference is associated with the prevailing issue dimension in the election campaign. In other words, although this type of analysis can say little about causal mechanisms, it certainly show that radical right actors mobilize the issue dimensions that eventually come to dominate electoral campaigns.

Meanwhile, the table shows that the mainstream coalitions choose their respective strategies more consistently within city settings, suggesting that strategies may target those dimensions of the immigration issue that resonate the best in the context in which campaigns take place. In order to further elaborate on this, I constructed an index of dimensional consistency, measuring the degree to which one mainstream actor's dimensional choices overlap with the choices of the other. This measure of *interparty overlap* is then compared to one of *intraparty similarity* across subsequent election campaigns (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen, 2010). These measures enable one to see whether discourses on immigration are more similar across actors (which would underline the importance of the agenda logic) than they are to an actor's own discourse from previous elections (which would instead support the idea that the partisan component drives competition on immigration).[67]

As shown in Table 6.5, the results illustrate that both logics explain partisan competition. The issue overlap score is found to be above 80 on the 0-100 scale at time 1 (first election campaign in each (city), and above 90 at time 2 (second election campaign in each city). This suggests that the attention profiles of the competing actors grow increasingly similar as the overall salience of the immigration issue grows, confirming the appropriateness of the agenda logic interpretation for explaining dimensional preferences in local immigration debates.[68]

Table 6.5 *Interparty overlap and intraparty similarity across local election campaigns*

%	Interparty Overlap	Intraparty Similarity	
		Centre Left	*Centre Right*
Time 1	85.0		
Time 2	91.3	85.8	91.7

Note: degree of dimensional similarty across parties and elections

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[67] Both measures are developed from Sigelman and Buell's (2004) measure of issue convergence among parties, which – in a two-party system – is calculated as follows: $100 - \sum_{i=1}^{n} |P_A - P_B|)/2$. The logic of the *interparty overlap* is to average the absolute differences between issue (dimensional) emphases of parties (results are then standardized in order to range between 0 and a 100 and subtract from 100 in order to measure similarity rather than dissimilarity). From the example of Green-Pedersen and Mortensen (2010), moreover, the *intraparty similarity* index applies the same logic to consecutive campaigns: instead of averaging differences across parties' attention profiles, this measure does so between a party's attention profile and its own profile at the previous time point (measuring the average summed distances between a party's campaign and that party's campaign at the previous election): $100 - \sum_{i=1}^{n} |P_{t-1} - P_t|)/2$.

[68] The high values of overlap are explained by the low number of categories upon which the measurement of overlap is made. See: Sigelman and Buell (2004)

There is also evidence supporting the logic of intraparty similarity across consecutive election campaigns, which is reported in the second and third column of the table for the mainstream left and right parties. The scores indicate that the centre-right keeps to its previous dimensional profile rather consistently, obtaining a score of 91.7 out of 100. The score of the centre-left is somewhat lower than for the right, yet it should be acknowledged that a continuity score of about 85% still means a considerable amount of continuity across elections.

Overall, the above analysis suggests that both party and agenda logics drive choices in the dimensional politicization of the immigration issue. My results suggest that the centre-right is more capable of providing a consistent discourse on immigration than the centre-left, but that the degree of overlap between actor profiles is generally high, indicating that similar dimensions tend to prevail in both actors' discourses. Moreover, this similarity grows with increasing levels of salience for the immigration issue. Together, these findings suggest that (across local elections and beyond the contextual specifics of campaigning) higher salience for the immigration issue increases the degree to which right and left discourses are similar, yet it does so because the centre-left is forced towards the dimensional attention profile of the centre-right, rather than the other way around.

6.3.2 *Determining the level of attention to immigration*

In order to provide a more exhaustive explanation of what determines the salience of the immigration issue and its dimensions, I ran OLS (ordinary least squares) regression analyses, using as dependent variable the share of attention (in percentage) given to each dimension of the immigration issue by each actor in a given election campaign. [69] Starting from the attention provided by one actor to all issues debated in the election campaign, I looked at the absolute salience of each issue dimension within that campaign. Table 6.6 below reports the regression results.

The number of observations (93) refers to the salience given by each actor participating in the six electoral campaigns under study to each of the three dimensions of the immigration

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[69] For this reason, the standard errors allow for intragroup correlation, relaxing the usual requirement that the observations be independent. That is to say, the observations are independent across groups (clusters) but not necessarily within groups.

issue.[70] The salience provided to immigration issue dimensions is regressed across four subsequent models accounting for (1) the status of incumbent or challenger of the various actors involved, (2) the time of the election campaign, (3) the local setting of the election, and (4) the three issue-dimension dummies.

Model A investigates the level of attention given by centre-right, centre-left and radical right actors, controlling for the role of mainstream parties as incumbents or main challengers. The model confirms that immigration dimensions are most salient for radical right parties, confirming the argument that they are the real owners of the issue. Although not statistically significant, the values of the coefficients suggest that the average attention provided by the centre-left to the three immigration issue-dimensions is lower than that among the rest of the parties. Conversely, the centre-right slightly exceeds the mean. As opposed to what was previously observed, there is no statistically significant association between salience and whether either mainstream party participated in the elections as challenger or incumbent.

Table 6.6 *Regression results for the salience of the immigration issue dimensions*

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[70] These correspond to the mainstream coalitions and the lists that ran with independent candidates in the six election campaigns, as well as the minor list and the public interest groups' categories, in line with the criteria outlined in chapter 3.

Salience of immigration	Coef.			
	A	B	C	D
Intercept	4.33	3.55	4.50	3.48
	(0.917)	(0.728)	(0.695)	(0.797)
Centre-Left	-0.56	-0.42	-0.94	-0.94
	(1.000)	(1.008)	(1.003)	(1.015)
Centre-Right	0.49	0.64	0.83	0.83
	(1.107)	(1.065)	(1.186)	(1.200)
CL Challenger	-1.56	-1.61	0.30	0.30
	(0.456)	(0.424)	(0.975)	(0.988)
CR Challenger	-1.47	-1.57	-1.78	-1.78
	(0.911)	(0.848)	(0.899)	(0.836)
Radical Right	3.77**	3.21**	2.46*	2.46
	(1.012)	(1.463)	(1.035)	(0.988)
Time (ref. T1)		1.38*	1.86**	1.85**
		(0.795)	(0.846)	(0.856)
Rome (ref. Prato)			-1.12***	-1.12***
			(0.484)	(0.489)
Milan (ref. Prato)			-2.58**	-2.58**
			(1.123)	(1.013)
Cult. & Relig. Dimension				0.32
				(0.653)
Law & Order Dimension				2.74***
				(0.741)
R-squared	0.09	0.11	0.16	0.24
No. Observations	93	93	93	93

Standard errors are reported in parentheses.

*, **, *** indicate significance at the 90%, 95%, and 99% level

Model B adds the effect of time, checking for the difference between the first and second election campaigns. The results indicate a positive and significant effect of time, confirming the time trend of increasing importance of immigration in election debates in the three cities. The subsequent model accounts for the differences between local settings in terms of the salience of issue dimensions. Model C shows that the immigration issue is significantly less salient in Rome and Milan than in Prato.

Finally, Model D accounts for the separate effects of the three dimensions.[71] The results indicate that the average attention provided to the law and order dimension is higher than that provided to the reference category (which is the socioeconomic dimension). In this model, moreover, the direct effect of the radical right on salience turns out to be non-significant, suggesting that the effect of the radical right on the immigration debate mainly lies in the attention it gives to the law and order dimension.[72]

To conclude, the results of the regression analyses explain about one fourth of the variance in the salience of the immigration issue's dimensions. Although a large share of the variance remains unexplained, the results indicate that at least 23% of the salience given to immigration by parties across electoral campaigns has to do with the presence of radical right parties in the competition, and with the mobilization of security arguments. In line with the analysis here and in the previous chapter, moreover, salience also seems to be differentially associated with the three local contexts, and with the timing of the election campaigns, confirming the relevance of a party-system agenda interpretation of the dynamics of local electoral competition in Italy.

6.4 Opposition and support for immigration in a multidimensional perspective

As illustrated in the previous chapter, the choice to mobilize a specific dimension of the immigration issue often has to do with the predominance of a given tone within the debate, and thus with the evaluative intentions of the actors involved in a campaign. In this section I account for the actual positions of electoral actors, in order to see to what extent their discourse opposes or supports immigration in general and in terms of each issue-dimension in particular. In so doing, and building on the findings of the previous sections, the point is to investigate what factors and political actors account for the varying tone in which the immigration issue is dealt with across the different settings and electoral campaigns.

The first point of analysis is the overall positioning of electoral actors along the pro to anti-immigration continuum. The general positions *vis-à-vis* the immigration issue are reported in

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[71] For illustrative purposes, Table A4 in the appendix reports Model D separately for each dimension of the immigration issue.

[72] In order to test for possible interaction effects, we ran additional models including interaction terms between specific actors and issue dimensions. Given that no result reached statistical significance, the models were excluded from the analysis.

Figure 6.1 below, which shows a clear left-right pattern: the most anti-immigrant party is the radical right closely followed by the centre-right, whereas the most pro-immigrant is the radical left, followed by the centre-left. Minor lists and interest groups are generally neutral to immigration, as the diffuse composition of these categories is likely to contain both tendencies.

Figure 6.1 *Actor positions on the immigration issue (overall)*
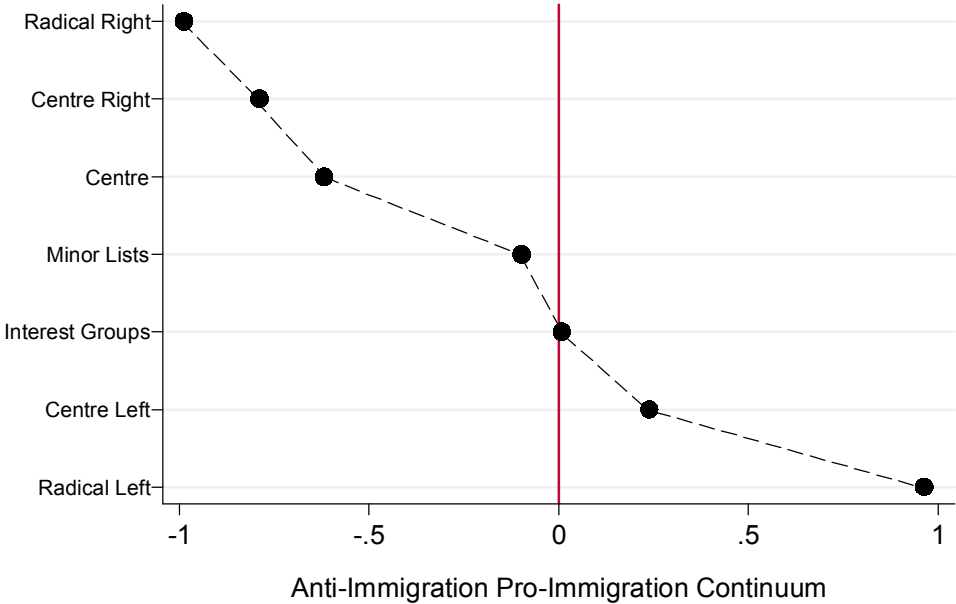
Although the figure is largely in line with previous studies on left-right preferences for immigration, the graph also provides two additional pieces of information: first, the centrist actors are not located in the centre of the axis, but are clearly positioned within the anti-immigration camp (with a score of -0.67); second, the positional distance between the radical right (-0.98) and the centre-right (-0.79) is remarkably smaller than the one between the radical left (0.96) and the centre-left (0.24).

What, however, if one breaks these results down according to the three municipal contexts? Chapter 5 showed that the tone of the debates on immigration varies substantially across contexts. Figure 6.2 below disaggregates the data of Figure 6.1, underlining city-specific differences in the way in which local electoral actors deal with the immigration issue. Overall, the figure shows that the positions of right wing actors are much more stable across cities than the ones of the centre-left, centre, Minor Lists and Interest Groups.

Figure 6.2 *Partisan positions on the immigration issue by city*
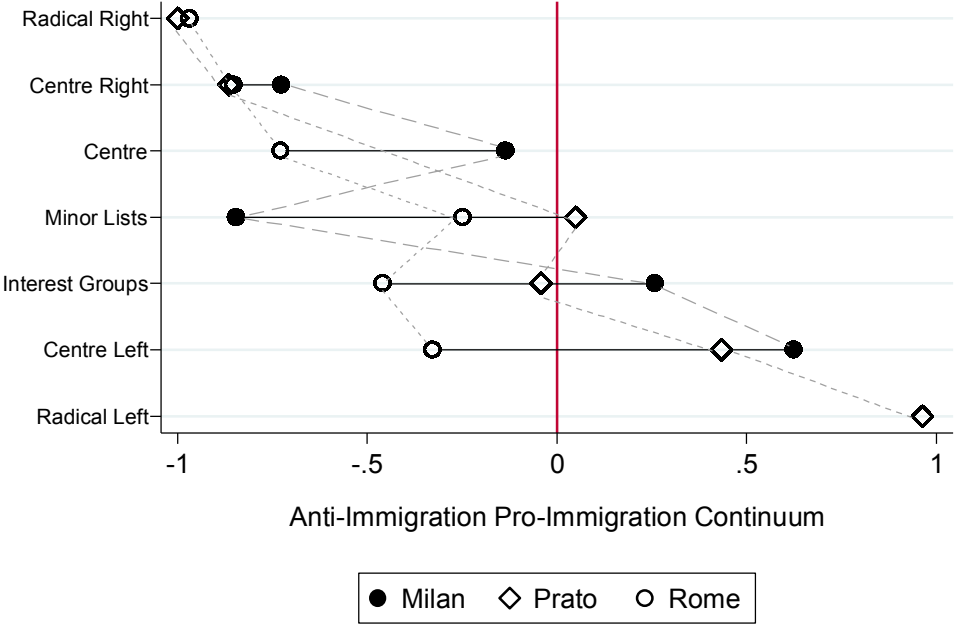
Right-wing actors tend to have a very negative position towards immigration regardless of the context. Still, the position of the centre-right in Milan – the only context where there is no independent radical right candidate involved in electoral competition – is slightly less opposed to immigration than in Prato or Rome, which may indicate that the presence of radical right competitors pulls the mainstream right towards sharper opposition to immigration. Conversely, the position of the centre-left is most supportive of immigration in Milan and in Prato (although less so than in Milan), while in Rome it is in fact part of the anti-immigration camp. The discourse of the centrist party and that of the Interest Groups is much more opposed to immigration in Rome than in the other cities.

These results highlight the relevance of studying the local level of immigration debates. Doing so revealed that the positional distance between mainstream and radical right actors is much lower than the distance between the mainstream left coalition and radical left parties. In addition, actors on the right of the political spectrum tend to be more consistently opposed to immigration than parties on the left, whose positions instead change more substantially depending on the local context. Moreover, I find evidence that opposition to immigration for most actors is highest in Rome and lowest in Milan. The next section shall further develop this point by looking at the relationship between actor positions and the three dimensions of the immigration issue.

6.4.1   Actor positions and the dimensionality of immigration

Based on the framework of this dissertation, there are three basic ways in which immigration dimensions and actors' positions may interact. Firstly, candidates may decide to set up their electoral discourses around full-fledged opposition to, or support for, immigration. If this is the case, all three dimensions will be used in favour of a single position towards immigration, as actors will use them interchangeably. In other words, they will use either the socioeconomic, cultural, or law and order dimensions to express wholesale support or opposition to immigration.

Alternatively, local actors may set up their strategies around issue-aspects, using certain dimensions to support immigration and others to oppose it. Such strategies may be oriented at electorates holding mixed preferences vis-à-vis the immigration issue, such as citizens who evaluate the economic consequences of immigration positively according to, say, national productivity and development, yet fear illegal immigration; or individuals who do not discriminate against immigrants on cultural grounds, yet fear the economic competition of foreign-born labour.

Third, actors may take different positions on the three immigration dimensions across local campaigns. If this is the case, electoral strategies are likely to be strongly affected by local factors, since they would be based upon expectations of local electorates' preferences at a given point in time and in a given context. The problem with this strategy is that the reputation of political actors is generally produced by the 'history' of their approach towards a problem; hence, variation in their positions vis-à-vis a certain issue dimension across local context may not be beneficial in electoral terms, as it risks loosening the connection between the actor and the handling of the policy problem.

Figure 6.3 has a first cut at these dynamics by showing the positions of various electoral actors on immigration according to issue dimension. On the law and order dimension, most parties are more inclined to oppose rather than support immigration. This is particularly the case for right-wing actors, yet it is also true for centrist ones, minor lists and interest groups. Most importantly, the centre-left is also negative on immigration when dealing with security and law and order aspects. In the socioeconomic dimension, instead, the immigration debate is more polarized: the location of these aspects on the anti-immigration pro-immigration scale parallels the left-right scale, with actors of the extreme and centre-right opposing immigration on socioeconomic grounds and parties on the left supporting it based on the same dimension. Likewise, in the cultural and religious dimension electoral actors either fully support

immigration (the left and public interest groups), or are quite critical of it (the centre, centre-right and radical right).

Figure 6.3 *Actor positions on the immigration issue by dimension*
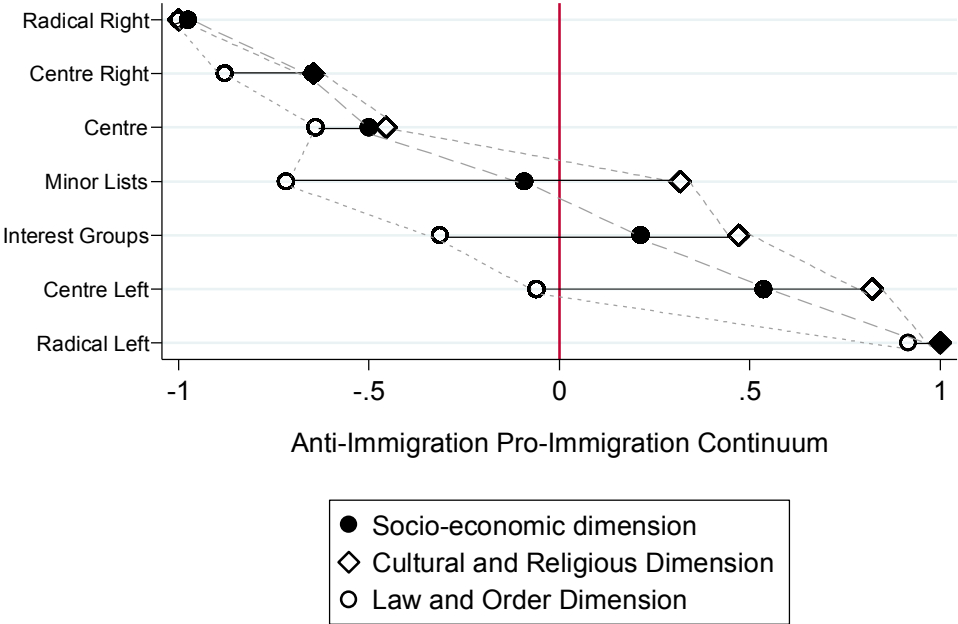
In addition to this, Figure 6.3 provides information on the type of discourse that each actor mobilizes. On the right of the political spectrum, actors tend to provide rather homogeneous discourses, as their positions across the three dimensions are coherently opposed to immigration. This is particularly the case for the radical right, for which the dimensional differentiation is almost non-existent, and somewhat less for the centre-right which privileges law and order over the other two dimensions when expressing strong opposition to immigration. Dimensional differentiation is most evident for the centre-left meanwhile, as well as for public interest groups and minor lists. The discourse of the centre-left is highly differentiated between law and order arguments (with a slight tendency to oppose immigration: -0.13), cultural and religious arguments (overwhelmingly used to express support. 0.82), and socioeconomic ones (in the midway, although leaning towards support: 0.52).

In sum, the results outlined so far support only in part the expectation that parties use certain dimensions to oppose and others to support immigration. More precisely, the aggregate data shows that right-wing actors tend not to differentiate their positions across the three issue dimensions, whereas the centre-left and non-party actors involved in electoral competition do. In order to further investigate this, it is worth looking at partisan dimensional positions in

each individual city. As shown in Chapter 5, in fact, city contexts are characterized by substantially different immigration debates, whereas we already know that actor positions vis-à-vis the immigration issue as a whole change across local settings.

Figure 6.4 below reports the dimensional party positions in each of the three cities under consideration. The figure confirms that the immigration discourse of radical right actors is consistently anti-immigration, irrespective of either the issue dimension under debate or of the city context. Similarly, the centre-right's campaigning on immigration is generally more consistent than the centre-left's. The distance between the issue positions on socioeconomic, cultural and law and order dimensions for the centre-left is in fact higher than for the right.

The highest variation is found in Rome: both the centre-right and the centre-left differentiate their positions across the three issue dimensions, and take polarized anti-immigration positions on the law and order dimension. For the centre-right dimensionality is lowest in Prato, where the three issue dimensions are discussed in anti-immigration tones; for the centre-left dimensionality is lowest in Milan, where the three issue dimensions are discussed in generally pro-immigration tones. More broadly, immigration discourses in Milan show the lowest variation also for non-party actors, such as interest groups and minor lists.

What if one differentiates dimensional discourses according to city rather than party? Concerning the socioeconomic dimension, the discourse of right-wing actors is more negative in Prato than in any other setting. In particular, the score of Prato's centre-right (-0.86) is significantly higher than in Milan (-0.57) or Rome (-0.34). Moreover, even public interest groups and minor lists adopt a generally anti-immigration tone toward these aspects in Prato, though the centre-left's tone is more or less in line with that of its counterparts in Rome and Milan. With only Rome as an exception (where the centre-left adopts an anti-immigration discourse that outdoes the centre-right's), party positions on socioeconomic aspects again see the anti-immigration pro-immigration continuum parallel those on the left-right scale.

In all three case studies, virtually all actors involved adopt their most anti-immigration (or least pro-immigration) tone when the law and order dimension is concerned. Centre-right and radical right-wing actors mobilize this dimension in a similar way across the case studies, with marginal variations. The centre-left meanwhile mobilizes law and order to moderately support immigration in Milan (0.38) and Prato (0.21), while adopting a fully anti-immigration discourse in Rome (-0.54). Other actors, such as centrist parties and minor lists, but also

interest groups, tend to adopt anti-immigration tones upon discussing law and order affairs in all cases.

Figure 6.4 *Dimensional party positions on the immigration issue by city context*
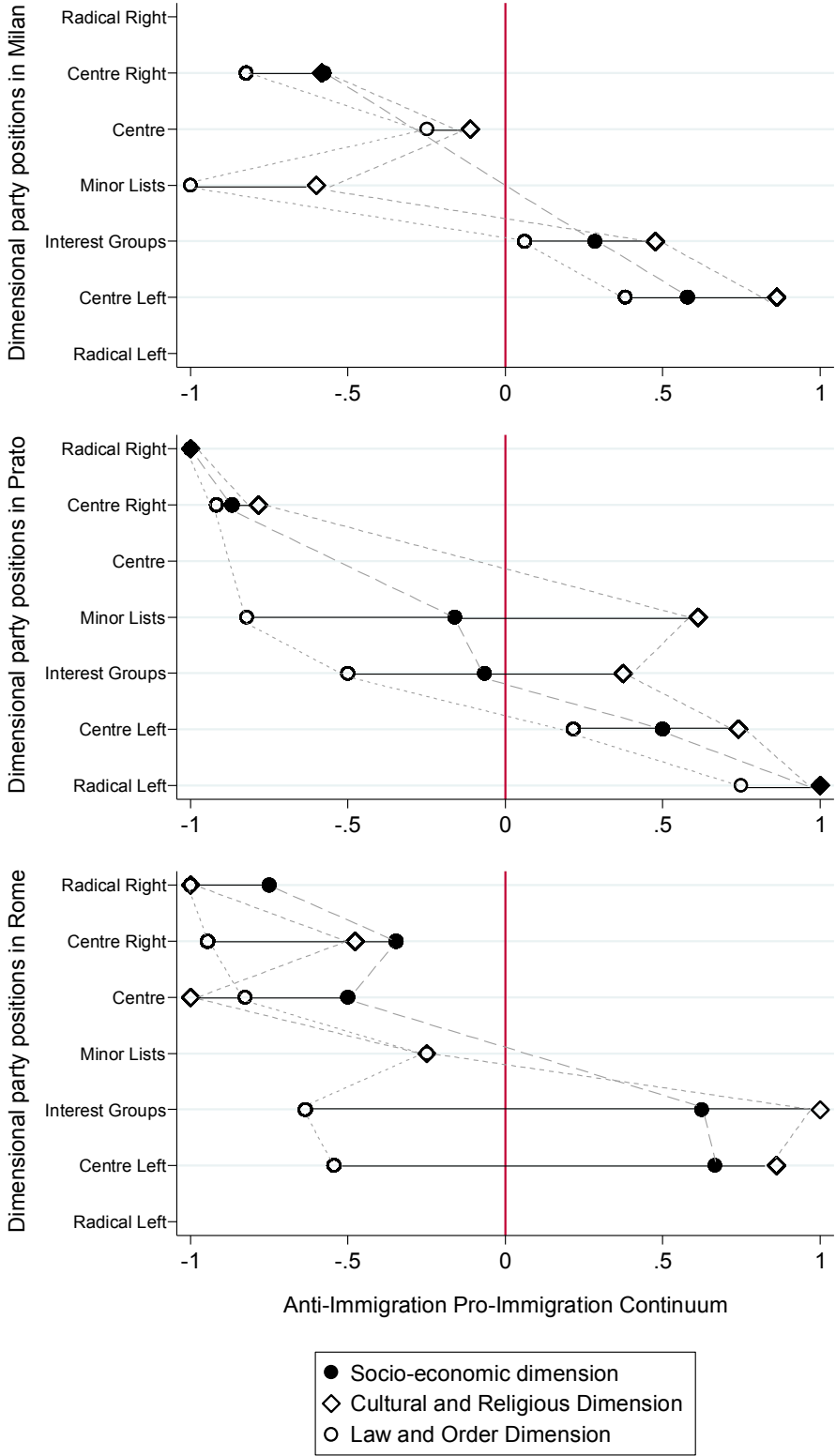
Finally, the cultural and religious dimension is marked by a considerable degree of polarization: right-wing actors mobilize it in negative terms consistently across the three cities (especially in Prato), whereas the left and interest groups do so in pro-immigration terms in all three cities. Hence, actors seem to follow a clear-cut differentiation along the left-right divide with respect to this issue dimension. The other actors seem to follow city-based strategies, as the positions of minor lists and centrist parties on this issue dimension vary from largely pro-immigration to fully anti-immigration depending on the context of the competition.

The results of this section provide evidence for a dimensional approach to partisan strategies of electoral competition on immigration. Upon selecting their respective strategies, in fact, parties clearly take into account the multidimensional nature of the issue, and strategically take position based on the characteristics of the issue dimensions and city contexts. A left-right pattern in immigration debates seems to prevail, yet this is structured not only along the anti-immigration pro-immigration continuum, but also in terms of issue-dimensional differentiation. Right-wing actors tend to be more consistently anti-immigration, using different aspects interchangeably to oppose immigration. Although they differentiate across issue dimensions considerably less than left-wing actors, the degree to which each dimension is used to oppose immigration varies across city contexts. By contrast, left-wing actors use certain dimensions (mainly the cultural one) to support immigration and others to oppose it (the law and order dimensions). Moreover, even if dimensional differentiation is noticeable in all three cities, showing a certain degree of change in politicization strategies across different local elections, the position of the centre-left on the law and order dimension in Rome stands out as remarkably more restrictive than any other observation.

Hence, these results suggest that local political actors are driven by different logics. First of all, centre-right actors are more consistent, as they change less their anti-immigration positions across all issue dimensions and cities than do the centre-left actors. Second, centre-right and centre-left actors adopt steady positions vis-à-vis the cultural and religious dimension, which is politicized restrictively by the right and in a pro-immigration direction by the left. In other words, the position of the centre-left on the cultural dimension, is less subject to change across city settings than their positions on other issue dimensions (although the centre-right, but not the centre-left, is also stable on law and order). Third, city-level characteristics play a role in structuring partisan positions on different issue dimensions, as is shown in the changing tone of socioeconomic affairs in Prato for the centre-right and, even more so, in that of the law and order dimension in Rome for the centre-left.

6.4.2 Determining the tone of partisan discourse on immigration

Table 6.7 reports the regression results for the mean partisan position on immigration dimensions, using as dependent variable the position of each party on each dimension of the immigration issue in the two election campaigns in the three cities.[73] Partisan positions are again based on a scale ranging from -1 (full opposition) to +1 (full support). As a result, the number of observations (79) refers to the position of each actor (31 actors) with respect to the three dimensions of the immigration issue, in the six electoral campaigns under study.[74] All non-dummy variables were standardized to facilitate the interpretation of results. Mean positions were regressed across four models accounting for (1) the main electoral actors and their role as incumbents or challengers, (2) the time of the election campaign and the salience of the immigration issue (standardized), (3) local settings and (4) immigration dimensions.

Model A investigates the positions of centre-right, centre-left and radical right actors, controlling for incumbents and challengers. In line with the previous discussion, the left is found to have a significantly more positive position on the three immigration dimensions than do the other actors on average. Conversely the centre-right and – even more so – the radical right are significantly more anti-immigration than any other actor. Moreover, controlling for incumbency effects, I find that when the centre-right runs as challenger, its positions on the three issue dimensions are significantly more anti-immigration than when it runs as an incumbent, whereas the same is not confirmed statistically for the centre-left.

Model B adds the effects of time and salience of issue dimensions. Although time per se does not seem to influence the tone in which the three aspects of the immigration issue are debated, the salience attributed to each of them is negatively associated with mean positions. This confirms the link between attention to specific issue dimensions and anti-immigration positions, indicating that increasing salience is associated with debates more hostile to immigration. The dummy specifications accounting for the differences between local settings (model C) only show a small positive coefficient for Rome, suggesting that, having accounted for all other effects, there is a marginally statistically significant difference in the tones in which the three issue dimensions are debated in Rome and Prato.

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[73] The standard errors allow for intragroup correlation, relaxing the usual requirement that the observations be independent. The observations are independent across groups (clusters) but not necessarily within groups.

[74] The difference with respect to the analysis presented in section 6.3.2 is due to the missing values associated with no salience (salience=0).

Table 6.7 *Regression results for the mean position on the immigration issue dimensions*

Position on immigration	Coef.			
	A	**B**	**C**	**D**
Intercept	0.01	0.27	0.22	0.27
	(1.887)	(0.248)	(0.263)	(0.262)
Centre-Left	0.51**	0.43**	0.45**	0.48**
	(0.180)	(0.218)	(0.209)	(0.194)
Centre-Right	-0.53***	-0.58***	-0.56***	-0.56***
	(0.182)	(0.227)	(0.236)	(0.211)
CL Challenger	0.06	0.01	0.06	-0.07
	(0.067)	(0.064)	(0.117)	(0.133)
CR Challenger	-0.23*	-0.26*	-0.32	-0.28
	(0.135)	(0.123)	(0.197)	(0.193)
Radical Right	-0.86***	-0.74***	-0.73***	-0.76***
	(0.180)	(0.196)	(0.179)	(0.155)
Time (ref. T1)		-0.05	-0.06	-0.09
		(0.170)	(0.173)	(0.178)
Salience		-0.04***	-0.04***	-0.02
		(0.014)	(0.016)	(0.018)
Rome (ref. Prato)			0.12*	0.14*
			(0.059)	(0.061)
Milan (ref. Prato)			0.10	0.16
			(0.195)	(0.221)
Cult. & Relig. Dimension				-0.02
				(0.051)
Law & Order Dimension				-0.51***
				(0.127)
R-squared	0.44	0.50	0.50	0.61
No. Observations	79	79	79	79

Standard errors are reported in parentheses.

*, **, *** indicate significance at the 90%, 95%, and 99% level

Finally, Model D describes the separate effects of the three constitutive dimensions of the immigration issue.[75] The results indicate that the positions on the law and order dimension are significantly more anti-immigration than those on the cultural and religious or socioeconomic dimensions (which are not statistically different from one another). Compared to debates over

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[75] For illustrative purposes, Table A4 in the appendix reports Model D separately for each dimension of the immigration issue.

the other two dimensions, in fact, debates on law and order are characterized by a significantly higher tendency to oppose immigration. Even more importantly, once this specification is introduced, the coefficient of the salience of immigration dimensions turns non-significant, indicating that the effect of salience is mainly explained by the law and order dimension.[76]

In sum, the results of the regression analyses explain about two thirds of the variance in the positions on immigration. Centre-left parties tend to be less opposed to immigration than the rest of the actors, whereas radical right and centre-right are significantly more so, particularly when running as challengers. As previous results likewise demonstrated, the tone by which immigration dimensions are debated across electoral campaigns has to do with the salience of issue dimensions and the mobilization of security arguments. Nevertheless, when controlling for the attention and positions of mainstream and radical right actors, one cannot confirm that city contexts differ in terms of mean positions on the three immigration dimensions.

6.5   Conclusions

Analysing campaigning across local elections, Chapter 5 showed that the issue-dimensions of immigration are crucial to understanding immigration debates. Chapter 6 built upon this idea in order to assess the degree to which local contexts shape partisan strategies for the politicization of the immigration issue and its constitutive dimensions. In line with previous research suggesting that parties of the radical right, and to a lesser extent the mainstream right, play the card of tough immigration regulations while left-wing parties occupy more moderate positions (Kitschelt, 1995; Golder, 2003; Ellinas, 2007; Arzheimer, 2009; Ivarsflaten, 2008), the chapter's results generally confirm that competition on immigration is structured along the left-right axis. However the threefold typology of immigration dimensions allowed for a more detailed investigation of the dynamics of the politicization of immigration across local contexts in Italy.

The analyses confirmed the idea that political debates on immigration are better understood on the basis of multiple issue dimensions, since it is these that parties strategically mobilize in order to gain an advantage over (or reduce a disadvantage towards) their competitors. In line

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[76] In order to test for possible interaction effects, we ran additional models including interaction terms between specific actors and issue dimensions. Given that no result reached statistical significance, the models were excluded from the analysis.

with the findings reported in Chapter 5, this chapter showed that not all three dimensions are equally important in determining local competitors' electoral strategies. Although actors display specific preferences with respect to the dimensions of immigration, their strategies are often based on the mobilization of dimensions with particular resonance in given local contexts. My results suggest that the centre-right is generally better at providing a consistent discourse on immigration, but that the degree of overlap between actor profiles is generally high, indicating that similar dimensions tend to prevail within election campaigns. In this respect, my findings illustrated not only that the increasing salience of immigration reduces the differentiation between the discourse of right- and left-wing actors, but also that this is mainly because the centre-left is forced towards focusing on the issue dimensions mobilized by the right.

By looking at the salience of immigration dimensions, I've also seen that challenger parties tend to focus on dimensions that they perceive as advantageous more than incumbents: the centre-right tends to focus more on law and order, and the centre-left more on cultural aspects, when they run as challengers. This relationship, however, could not be fully disentangled from the effect of the context, due to the limited case studies on which this research is based, and my regression analysis showed that the differences are not confirmed at the level of statistical significance. Hence, the findings on the disadvantage of being in office and on the fact that the centre-right suffers fewer costs of incumbency, enable me to draw only provisional conclusions to be developed and further assessed in future research.

The second part of the analysis, dealing with partisan positions, confirmed that issue positions on immigration do not vary only across parties on the left-right scale, but also within the same party families in different localities. These results illustrate the relation between parties' politicization strategies, political contexts at the local level, and the thematic structure of complex policy issues. A left-right pattern in immigration debates in fact does exist, yet this is structured not only along the anti-immigration pro-immigration continuum, but also in terms of issue-dimensional differentiation. Right-wing actors tend to be more consistently anti-immigration, using different aspects interchangeably to oppose immigration, whereas left-wing actors use certain dimensions (mainly the cultural one) to support immigration and others to oppose it (the law and order dimensions).

By showing that parties align with – and diverge from – one another based on issue dimensions, my results buttress the argument that the study of debates on immigration should be refined. This is first because the immigration issue has been largely subsumed by the left-

right division, in particular when it comes to the cultural and religious dimension; and second because it has underlined that focusing events and the characteristics of local contexts can make specific issue dimensions cut across traditional party lines.

In sum, the results further corroborate the findings of the previous chapter, suggesting that local campaigns are often associated with specific understandings of the immigration issue. By manipulating the importance of issue dimensions and the way in which these are debated, political actors shape the immigration debate differently across different campaigns and settings. Moreover, since increased salience enhances the similarity in mainstream actors' immigration discourse, an agenda logic seems to drive choices of politicization. The left in particular is often forced to bend the knee to right-wing strategies towards dimensional issue salience and positions, in particular when right-wing parties mobilize the law and order dimension. Hence, not only do this chapter's analyses relate to the study of issue politicization (cf. Green-Pedersen, 2010), they also pave the way toward connecting with public opinion research, in particular that focusing on how elites' framing affects citizens' preferences and opinions (cf. Chong and Druckmann, 2007a; 2007b). Similar to this stream of research, the present analysis suggests that parties may "structure" public opinion by offering different sets of choices to different publics (Sniderman and Theriault, 2004). The results of this chapter may therefore contribute to joint research on party politics with the study of mediatisation and communication, which is the endeavour undertaken in the next chapters.

7 The framing of electoral debates on immigration

7.1 Introduction

This chapter moves one step further in the analysis of electoral campaigns, investigating how political actors frame immigration across different local settings and election campaigns. Indeed, even if the dimensional analysis developed in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 allowed for a closer look at the thematic structure of electoral debates from the point of view of city settings and party competition, it is still not apparent what the real arguments are that different local politicians mobilize in order to debate immigration. Previous chapters helped unpack the immigration issue to expose its intrinsically multidimensional nature, yet could not assess how particular problems are defined, nor the justifications used to support the contrasting positions. Put differently, what are the concrete argumentations that local political entrepreneurs use when competing over the immigration issue? What are the actual motivations behind supportive and restrictive stances towards immigration? Do political actors follow the same framing strategies under different campaign circumstances?

Developing the basic argument underlying this study, this chapter claims that the immigration issue may take multiple *meanings*. These alternative understandings change and develop as a result of variations in the type of actor involved in the debates, as well as the circumstances of local debates. Contextual constraints related to the social and political environment in which competition takes place, as well as ideological and practical ones related to partisan differences, have an impact on the choice of particular frames to debate immigration affairs in local electoral campaigns.

The present chapter builds on the previous one by deepening the scope of the analysis, and looks at the specific frames that municipal candidates mobilize to deal with and to express support for or against the immigration issue. Therefore, keeping the focus on electoral coalitions and municipal candidates, this chapter departs from partisan dimensional attention profiles to investigate the framing of each issue dimension in public discourse. Likewise it

will further investigate the motivations that lead political parties to support or to oppose immigration, or – more accurately – the motivations that electoral actors advance in public, across the three cases.

Previous literature has looked extensively at how immigration is framed in general, while giving little attention by comparison to the way in which different actors make use of alternative frames in order to build their electoral discourses (Helbling, 2013). As was discussed in Chapter 2, framing involves not only selection and salience, but also the definition of problems, the diagnosis of its causes, and the evaluation and prescription of possible remedies (Gamson, 1992). In this sense, if the previous chapter looked at how certain issue dimensions are emphasized in order to fix the public's attention while obscuring alternative ones, the present one provides an investigation into the framing choices of electoral actors within each specific aspect of the issue. In so doing I offer an in depth analysis of the active efforts of political actors to construct immigration discourse, looking at how alternative frames are used, and positions on immigration are taken and justified.

I will examine the extent to which left-wing coalitions differentiate their discourse from the political right, based on the evidence on the preferences of the different actors that was obtained in the previous sections of this dissertation and on the empirical data on electoral campaigning in Italian local elections. Subsequently, I look at each of the six electoral campaigns under study, in order to check for variation in actors' framing choices due to the different circumstances in Milan, Prato and Rome. A final section looks at the evaluative judgement that actors put forth, in order to elucidate whether opposition and support to immigration are framed differently by different actors and in different contexts.

7.2   Immigration frames and the logics of electoral competition

7.2.1   Actor logics

The choice of focusing on issue-specific frames rather than on general frame categories reflects a more general understanding of the relationship between political actors and the issue they mobilize. As was discussed in Chapter 2, in this dissertation I chose to look at substantive, issue-specific frames, linking them explicitly to an issue dimension and an evaluation (see: Entman, 2004). In terms of competition strategies in electoral campaigning,

this implies understanding actors' strategies in terms of differentiation in problem definition between one actors' framing choices and those of their most direct competitors.

At a first level, however, parties' framing choices will be inevitably influenced by their more general understanding of social reality. As pointed out among others by Helbling (2013) and Sniderman and Theriault (2004), political actors are not completely free to develop framing strategies, but are constrained by their previous choices and by their broader ideological commitments. The choice of particular frames to describe a given social reality is thus likely to derive from a combination of tactical and ideological considerations, including sets of ideas, values and world-views that are (at least presumably) shared within a party or coalition. Hence, concerning the immigration issue, and assuming that the ultimate goal of any political actor is to convince the public of her interpretation of the social reality, framing choices must resonate with the broader ideological understanding of the actor doing the mobilizing (Statham and Trenz, 2012).

Such ideological commitments are generally plotted along left-right scales, in which cosmopolitan and social security aspects characterize the left while nationalism and free-market liberalism characterize the right (Helbling, 2013; Knutsen, 1995). In terms of the cultural and religious dimension, therefore, previous studies suggest that the political left is more inclined to mobilize multicultural arguments (favouring cultural openness, living together among different groups and religions, and universal human rights), whereas the political right prefers nationalistic ones (stressing the importance of national identity and assimilation).

The socioeconomic dimension meanwhile is divisible into two frames, referring on the one hand to labour and social security (including unemployment and salary problems, reduction of welfare assets and social security), and on the other to economic prosperity (interpreting immigration in terms of economic benefits, growth and improved societal wellbeing). Supporters of economic liberalization on the left and on the right could use economic prosperity arguments based on the need for a cheap labour force in order to improve the country's productivity, interpreting the advantages and disadvantages of immigration in terms of economic growth. By contrast, labour and social security frames are generally used to stress the trade-off between national and immigrant welfare and employment, especially by labour protectionist actors. For the Italian case, however, previous researchers suggest that

mainstream left actors faced little concerns of 'social dumping' among their constituencies, at least when compared to other European countries (Massetti, 2014; Chaloff, 2005).

Finally, with previous chapters in mind, it is reasonable to assume that law and order arguments are more appealing to right-wing actors, since radical right and populist parties in particular mobilize feelings of insecurity by linking immigration to crime and violence (Mudde, 2007). Yet, in some cases, left-wing actors are also susceptible to using similar frames. As was discussed in Chapter 4, similar arguments are not necessarily related to security problems at the urban level, but have often been grounded in more broad emergency logics, which tend to depict immigration-related problems as unexpected and immigration in general as a temporary phenomenon. At the local level, this has also involved the targeting of specific communities, in particular the Roma, which are held responsible for problems of security, receiving the etiquette of "Gypsy problem" (Sigona, 2005).

Table 7.1 below reports the share of attention given to each of the seven frame categories by the main actors in local electoral campaigns, as well as the relative importance of each actor in the debates by frame category. Data are reported for the mainstream left, the mainstream right and the radical right, alongside interest groups and a category encompassing the remaining parties in the elections under study.[77]

Table 7.1 *Immigration frames by actor (overall)*

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[77] The Chi-Square indicates that framing choices are statistically different across parties: X^2 *(24, N =2653) = 234.4, p < .01* (Cramér's V=.15).

Frame	Centre-Left	Centre-Right	Radical Right	Interest Groups	Others	Total
Socioeconomic dimension						
Labour and Security	8.2	7.1	24.1	7.6	10.4	-
% of frame	24.7%	39.2%	14.9%	9.8	11.4%	100%
Economic Prosperity	7.5	4.4	13.9	8.8	6.4	-
% of frame	30.3%	33.0%	11.7%	15.4%	9.6%	100%
Cultural and Religious dimension						
Nationalism	3.9	10.1	10.1	5.1	15.8	-
% of frame	12.1%	56.8%	6.4%	6.8%	17.7%	100%
Multiculturalism	20.0	11.6	1.3	20.9	20.1	-
% of frame	34.5%	36.8%	0.5%	15.6%	12.6%	100%
Law and Order dimension						
Roma Issues	19.5	17.3	15.2	14.5	5.4	-
% of frame	31.2%	50.6%	5.0%	10.0%	3.1%	100%
Urban Issues	19.1	19.5	17.1	27.3	19.3	-
% of frame	24.7%	46.3%	4.6%	15.2%	9.1%	100%
Emergency Issues	21.7	30.0	18.5	20.6	22.6	-
% of frame	22.7%	57.5%	4.0%	8.6%	7.1%	100%
Tot.	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	-
N	764	1401	158	330	279	2653

Note: Share of core sentences dedicated to immigration in newspaper articles

As can be noticed, the centre-left mobilizes multiculturalist frames (20%) more often than the mainstream right (11.5%) and radical right (1.3%), which instead are much more prone to use nationalist arguments (10%) than the left (4%). In contrast, there are no clear-cut differences in the use of economic frames between mainstream parties, although the centre-left uses economic prosperity arguments somewhat more often than the centre-right (7.5% and 4.4%, respectively). Similar to previous findings, moreover, the radical right consistently mobilizes both the labour and security frame (24%) and the prosperity one (14%). In terms of security, finally, centre-right parties are more inclined to mobilize what we have called the 'emergency logic' than the centre-left (30% and 21.7%, respectively).

In line with the discussion in the previous chapters, looking at the table horizontally it also appears that the mainstream right is key in mobilizing all types of discourses on immigration, irrespective of the frame category. This is most evident for emergency frames, where the centre-right is responsible of more than 60% of the claims using this type of argumentation, and least so for economic prosperity and multiculturalist frames. Yet, the results illustrate that the centre-right is almost as important as the centre-left in terms of multiculturalist frames.

These results suggest that partisan ideological differences explain only part of the framing strategies in local electoral competition. A more accurate interpretation must also account for

whether these frames are used to support or to oppose immigration, as it is likely the case for multiculturalist frames. Before moving to the analysis of frames' evaluative content, however, we shall look at whether framing strategies are associated to the context in which competition takes place, investigating whether cross-context differences outweigh partisan ones.

7.2.2   City context logics

Next to previous commitments and partisan ideologies, framing strategies by political actors are likely to be influenced by the characteristics of the context in which competition takes place. As observed in Chapter 6, in fact, the social and political environment of local campaigns is of utmost importance in setting up actors' campaigning strategies, since local characteristics and features can increase the legitimacy of certain arguments, or enhance the relative attractiveness of a specific understanding of immigration affairs (Hopkins 2007; Hopkins *et al.*, 2014). Based on these considerations, this section will describe in detail the framing of immigration debates in Milan, Prato and Rome. Table 7.2 displays the framing strategies of centre-left, centre-right and radical right actors in each of the three cities, during each of the six election campaigns. Overall, the results show that the framing choices of the three actors vary considerably across city settings, especially for the centre-left and the radical right.[78]

Table 7.2 *Immigration frames by city and election campaign*

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[78] The Chi-Square indicates that framing choices are statistically different across the election campaigns for the centre right: X^2 *(30, N =1401) = 427.6, p < .01* (Cramér's V=.25); centre-left: X^2 *(30, N =764)= 363.4, p < .01* (Cramér's V=.31); and radical right: X^2 *(6, N =158) = 72.1, p < .01* (Cramér's V=.67).

Party	Election campaign	Milan		Prato		Rome	
	Issue Frame	2006	2011	2004	2009	2006	2008
Centre-Left	*Labour and security*	9.4	11.7	9.1	13.9	1.9	0.0
	Economic prosperity	6.2	0.5	22.7	15.3	0.0	3.0
	Nationalism	6.3	4.1	4.5	7.0	0.0	1.0
	Multiculturalism	50.0	35.5	7.6	15.4	19.6	9.4
	Roma issues	0.0	26.4	0.0	0.9	58.8	32.1
	Urban issues	21.9	7.1	24.3	13.5	11.8	35.4
	Emergency issues	6.2	14.7	31.8	33.9	7.8	18.2
	Tot.	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Centre-Right	*Labour and security*	11.1	8.0	8.5	12.8	8.2	2.8
	Economic prosperity	1.8	1.2	19.5	12.8	1.6	3.3
	Nationalism	20.4	8.3	19.5	17.6	11.5	6.1
	Multiculturalism	14.8	18.5	1.7	8.8	1.6	5.3
	Roma issues	16.7	19.8	0.0	1.6	45.9	18.8
	Urban issues	20.4	7.7	13.6	34.4	19.7	35.9
	Emergency issues	14.8	36.5	37.3	12.0	11.5	27.7
	Tot.	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Radical Right	*Labour and security*	-	-	-	35.6	-	8.8
	Economic prosperity	-	-	-	23.3	-	1.5
	Nationalism	-	-	-	5.6	-	16.2
	Multiculturalism	-	-	-	0.0	-	2.9
	Roma issues	-	-	-	0.0	-	35.3
	Urban issues	-	-	-	11.1	-	36.4
	Emergency issues	-	-	-	24.4	-	18.2
	Tot.	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Note: Share of core sentences dedicated to immigration in newspaper articles

Concerning the framing of the socioeconomic dimension, the three cities showcase different framing strategies by political actors. In Milan both mainstream coalitions tend to focus on labour and security aspects, whereas little – if any – attention is given to economic prosperity aspects. The same holds for the centre-left in Rome in 2006 and for the radical right in 2008. By contrast, in Prato all actors shifted attention from prosperity frames in 2004 to labour and security ones in 2009. The in-depth analysis of the data collected might help illustrate the main messages in each election campaign.

Immigration was framed in labour and security terms in Milan and, to a certain extent, in Rome since the mainstream right and left developed symmetrical, yet opposite, discourses: the centre-right questioned the access of foreign residents to social benefits, housing and open competitive exams for jobs within local institutions and offices; whereas the left focused on

immigrants' rights as workers, accusing the government of putting "immigrants in competition with precarious workers". In Prato, instead, the framing of the socioeconomic dimension changed as the radical right entered the competition. In 2004, immigration was primarily connected to economic prosperity, by referring to immigrant entrepreneurship either as "a fundamental resource for Prato", or as "the origin of the crisis in our textile industry". Yet in 2009 the radical right enters the competition focusing primarily on labour and social security and on the problems of sustainability of the local welfare system. The centre-right candidate picked up on this with claims that the wealth the Chinese and that of Prato's citizens are mutually exclusive, and the left-wing one accepted that, due to the increasing numbers of foreign residents, the municipal administration "will not be able to guarantee resources to everybody".

Concerning the framing of the cultural and religious dimension, the results are influenced by the fact that this issue is generally more salient in Milan than in Rome or Prato. The results show that: first, although the centre-left uses the multicultural frame much more frequently than the nationalist one in all three cities, there is variation across electoral campaigns, since this frame is used 50% of the time in Milan in 2006, compared to only 7.6% in Prato in 2004; second, the radical right used nationalist frames almost exclusively, but the overall importance of this frame is not as pronounced as one could assume; third, the mainstream right's profile in framing the cultural dimension is ambiguous, showing a preference for nationalist frames at earlier elections and for multiculturalist ones in the most recent campaigns.

More in detail, if left-wing multiculturalist frames were generally informed of cultural liberalism – "it is our intention to build a centre for the Chinese culture" (Milan, 2006); "our goal is to have a green, multi-ethnic municipality" (Prato, 2009) – the nationalist frames of the radical right have to do with loss of identity for the city and on the need to restore its traditional values, for instance through proposals to show the crucifix in public buildings and opposing the introduction of Quran readings in public schools – "we needed Chinese labour force, but we do not want to rebuild China in Prato" (Prato, 2009). The shift towards multiculturalist frames by the mainstream right may be related to the unsuccessful strategy to radicalize the issue of diversity *vis-à-vis* Italian culture and tradition (Caponio, 2013), which have generally not been backed by Catholic and moderate public opinion in Italy (Bordignon, 2008). Nationalist frames include slogans such as "Milanese people come first" (Milan, 2006), but also by calls to defend the traditional identity and 'Christianity' of cities "from the

excessive presence of alien immigrants" (Rome, 2006). Multiculturalist ones, instead, included specific ad hoc proposals, such as the construction of a "Department of Identity and Citizenship to promote civil coexistence between natives and immigrants", but most frequently took the form of reactive counter-framing, especially for the mosque issue in Milan.

Law and order frames were widely used in all the campaigns. Yet, the way in which this dimension is framed varied considerably across city contexts, especially in terms of Roma issues. This frame is completely absent in the debate in Prato, for both its campaigns,[79] whereas it is widely mobilized in Rome in 2006 (but lost importance in the subsequent campaign) and in the second election campaign in Milan. Both the right and the left tend to associate the presence of Romani people with threats to individual and collective security. In Rome the right-wing candidate Alemanno proposed to "erase immigrant illegality: nomad camps and abusive settlements should be displaced away from urban areas", whereas in Milan the Lega Nord proposed to "reset all regular and irregular Roma camps". The radical right claimed with irony that the "best mayor in Europe is the one of Bucharest, as he sent all of the Roma people here" (Rome, 2008).

Yet, contrary to what could be expected it is the centre-left that uses the frame most often. It is actually the centre-left takes the lead in promoting the Roma issue frame in immigration discourse. In Rome, this was done especially by accusing the national government of being responsible for the regularization of thousands of Romanian Roma, which were targeted as one of the main sources of insecurity in the city. In Milan, instead, the Roma were targeted only in the 2011 election by the centre-left, and often in a reactive way since the challenger coalition was accused of being excessively permissive with respect to Romani settlements and squats.

The Urban issue frame category is widely used in Prato, and it is mobilized the most by all parties in Rome in 2008, due to the previously mentioned crime-related event, which the candidates framed in terms of urban problems such as the decay of the city's outskirts, the incapability of the city to integrate immigrant residents, and the lack of security in specific areas of the city. The tight wing candidate depicted the city as "out of control" due to the

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[79] Indeed Prato, being a small industrial city, has not experienced a conspicuous settlement of Roma people like Milan and Rome (cf. Chapter 4).

inefficacy of its security policies. The radical right described the city as insecure because "in the end of the day it is always immigrants who steal our bread and rob our houses"; the centre-right made extensive use of the crime stories in the media to support its campaign against the incumbents: "the murder confirms what we have been denouncing: the escalation in immigrant criminality is shaking the everyday life of Rome". This, in turn, forced the left to react with promises of tightening the controls in dangerous districts, and by mobilizing counter frames such as "the propaganda of our opponents does not help to fight crime" (Rome 2008).

Finally, emergency issues were mobilized in all three cities. They were mainly used to discuss refugee and immigrant related emergencies in which local administrations were expected to intervene. This frame characterized arguments about the management of humanitarian crises, especially in Milan. Although issues related to terrorist threats and amnesty proposals received only marginal attention, radical and centre right actors also asked for special powers or special interventions. In particular, the radical right claimed that "the army is essential in Prato as a deterrent of violence" and called for a "sheriff" rather than a mayor to restore the rule of law. The centre-left also mobilized emergency frames, mainly in a reactive way to defend the regional law on immigration and accusing the national government of indifference towards the "emergency that Prato and Tuscany are facing with respect to the governance of legal and illegal immigration" (Prato 2009).

In sum, the findings support the general idea that framing choices vary across campaigns, as actors tend to use somewhat different frames in the three cities. First, candidates seem to take into account the specific necessities, conditions and priorities that characterize local economies and organize their framing of the socioeconomic dimension accordingly, so that debates on the presence and labour market integration of immigrants take quite different meanings in Prato when compared to Rome and Milan (Campomori and Caponio, 2013). Second, although the left-right differentiation is more noticeable for the framing of the cultural dimension, the propensity of radical right and mainstream right parties to use nationalist frames is lower than one could expect, as they increasingly prefer to use multicultural ones in a reactive way. Third, the relative importance of the law and order frames also changes across electoral campaigns, although I find that left-wing parties stand out in framing immigration in terms of Roma issues, and centre-right ones in terms of emergency and urban issues.

In order to further elaborate on these findings, this chapter follows the same approach as the one for the analysis of issue dimensions. I constructed two indexes for the consistency of the frames applied by the mainstream coalitions: the first measures the degree to which an actor's framing choices overlap with the other actor's choices in an election campaign (*interparty overlap*); the second measures the consistency of mainstream parties' framing choices across subsequent election campaigns (*intraparty similarity*).[80] The two indexes reveal whether partisan strategies of framing immigration are more similar to one another in any given election campaign (which would support the idea that party system agendas influence individual actors' choices) than to a party's own discourse at previous elections (which would support, instead, a actor-driven logic). Table 7.3 displays the results for the two indexes.

Table 7.3 *Interparty overlap and intraparty similarity in framing strategies*

%	Interparty Overlap	Intraparty Similarity	
		Centre Left	*Centre Right*
Time 1	69.1		
Time 2	74.3	68.7	66.5

Note: degree of dimensional similarty across parties and elections

The interparty overlap score indicates that, on average, the framing strategies of the competing parties at time 2 coincided three-quarters of the time, whereas at time 1 their convergence was lower. Similar to the results of Chapter 6, this confirms the agenda interpretation of the dynamics of electoral debates, since the choices of mainstream parties become increasingly similar when the salience of immigration increases. This implies that the more important is immigration in electoral debates, the more actors will be forced to 'respond' to one another, not only in terms of the attention that they attribute to specific issue features, but also in terms of the argumentations and justifications that they mobilize.

Moreover, the intraparty similarity score indicates that the centre-left behaves somewhat more consistently than the centre-right in terms of issue framing, although the difference is very marginal. Combined to the findings of chapter 6, this implies that the right is advantaged in

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[80] Both measures are developed from the measure of issue convergence that was presented in Chapter 7 (Sigelman and Buell, 2004).

terms of driving the attention to the issue dimensions on which it is advantaged, and it is more flexible in the type of justifications it uses to discuss its dimensional positions. As I have shown previously for the case of the multiculturalism frame in Milan, this is mainly the result of 'trespassing' strategies by which the centre-right takes up the frames mobilized by the centre-left and uses them to discredit the proposed justification.

Overall, the table indicates that the scores for interparty overlap are higher than those of intraparty similarity at both time points, for the centre-left and for the centre-right. This suggests the prevalence of the agenda-logic over the partisan one in driving framing choices with respect to the immigration issue. This is further confirmed by the fact that the gap between the two indexes increases as the level of attention to immigration grows.

In conclusions, these findings suggest that when the immigration issue as a whole increases in salience, the degree of similarity between the frames applied by the mainstream right and left does too. This is likely because actors are increasingly forced to respond to one another once the issue has come to the core of election debates, as illustrated by the reactive use of multiculturalist frames by the mainstream right in Milan. As I have illustrated, the framing of the centre-left is somewhat more consistent than the one of the centre-right, which is at odds with the findings of Chapter 6 where the analysis showed that the dimensional attention profile of the right was more consistent than the one of the left. Together, these results indicate that whilst the left is more ready to change its immigration discourse across issue dimensions, the right is more inclined to differentiate its framing choices within single dimensions. In other words, the centre-left is more prone to change its dimensional profile across electoral campaigns, whereas the right is more likely than the centre-left to put forth alternative interpretations of the same immigration dimension.

7.3   Framing opposition and support to immigration

So far the analysis has looked at the degree of importance of alternative frames within electoral competitors' discourse, following the assumption that frame categories can be considered neutral from an evaluative point of view. As shown, agenda logics tend to prevail, since in interactive environments like election campaigns candidates are pressured to respond to one another, especially when engaged by the media. In these cases, looking at the salience of frames may not suffice to distinguish an actor's profile from its opponent's. In other words,

when candidate *a* deals with issue *x* using frame *i,* candidate *b* may find himself obliged to respond to the frame used by *a* about issue *x*. In such cases, the only element enabling the differentiation between the competing actors would be their evaluative judgement about the political issue under debate.

This section looks therefore at the composition of the alternative partisan discourses, analysing the choice of frames to express evaluative judgements on immigration. As frames are justification of actors' positions on a given dimension, they are inevitably related with either pro- or anti-immigration positions. In this sense, nationalist and labour and security frames are generally mobilized by to oppose immigration, whereas multiculturalist and economic prosperity ones characterize pro-immigration stances. Finally, as the law and order dimension is less prone to be mobilized to support migration, the corresponding frames also primarily express negative interpretations of immigration. Yet, emergency arguments can also play a different role, as it allows moderate parties to mobilized security aspects in a less negative way, by referring to forced migration and asylum issues. Table 7.4 below displays the extent to which each category is used in support of or opposition to immigration by the main political actors.

Table 7.4 *Opposition and support frames of immigration by actors*

Parties	Centre-Left		Centre-right		Radical right
Issue frames	*Anti-*	*Pro-*	*Anti-*	*Pro-*	*Anti-*
Labour and Security	3.4	11.5	7.1	6.3	23.6
Economic Prosperity	5.0	8.8	3.3	15.9	14.0
Nationalism	1.3	5.8	10.5	6.3	10.2
Multiculturalism	2.0	32.4	9.3	32.5	1.3
Roma Issues	32.7	10.8	18.4	6.3	15.3
Urban Issues	36.0	7.9	21.2	4.8	17.2
Emergency Issues	19.1	22.9	30.2	27.8	18.5
Tot	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*
N	*303*	*445*	*1262*	*126*	*157*

The table provides two main insights: on the one hand, it shows that mainstream actors choose substantively different frames depending on whether they express support for or

opposition to immigration;[81] on the other, it indicates that the framing choices to express opposition to immigration change depending on the actor doing the mobilizing,[82] whereas the justification for supportive arguments on immigration is rather similar among mainstream left and right actors.[83] To support immigration, both the mainstream right and mainstream left use primarily the multiculturalism and the emergency frame. In contrast, opposition is articulated primarily in terms of urban and Roma issues by the centre-left, and in terms of emergency issues by the centre-right. Unexpectedly, the centre-left stands out as the main actor targeting the Roma community in terms of immigration problems, conspicuously more than its right-wing competitors. The radical right meanwhile mobilizes in particular labour issues to oppose immigration.

If we look separately at the framing of each issue dimensions, the table shows that the mainstream right prefers labour and security frames to oppose immigration and economic prosperity ones to support it, the left uses both frames mainly to support it and the radical right mobilizes both frames negatively. In terms of cultural framing, the radical right actors use exclusively nationalist frames to oppose immigration, whereas the centre-right makes also use of multiculturalism. However, this frame is also used when the centre-right engaged in pro-immigration discourse. Reciprocally, the centre-left uses nationalistic frames more in the pro- category than in the anti- one, suggesting that actors are highly responsive to one another when it comes to framing this dimension. In terms of security, the corresponding frames were used primarily to express negative interpretations. Yet, the emergency frame also allows to emphasize the "temporary" and "unexpected" actions and to justify shelter policies for refugees and asylum seekers in case of international emergencies. In a pro-immigration fashion, this frame enables to put aside political differences in favour of either a pragmatic, problem-solving approach, or a more universalistic understanding of international solidarity.

In order to further investigate this, the chapter now turns to framing strategies in each of the contexts under investigation. Figure 7.1 below displays actors' positions on each immigration

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[81]   The Chi-Square test shows framing choices in support and opposition to immigration are statistically different for the centre-left: X^2 (6, N = 748) = 226.9, p < .01 (Cramér's V=0.55); and for the centre-right: X^2 (6, N=1388) = 122.4, p < .01 (Cramér's V=0.30).

[82] The Chi-Square test shows that framing opposition to immigration is statistically different between actors: X^2 (12, N = 1722) = 207.5, p < .01 (Cramér's V=0.25). The results are stable also when I excluded the radical right and run the Chi-Square for the two mainstream parties only. Statistical significance is instead not confirmed for framing support to immigration: X^2 (6, N=571) = 11.6, p < .1 (Cramér's V=0.14).

[83] No Pro-Immigration category is reported for the radical right, as I could retrieve only 1 observation for this category, namely pertaining to the labour and security frame.

frame in Milan's two election campaigns. As can be noticed, the pattern is approximately the same: in both elections, the centre-right framed immigration positively only in terms of the frame it mobilized the least, namely economic prosperity (used in only 2% of the cases), whereas the centre-left mobilized negatively only through urban issues frames, which are instead used quite frequently, especially in 2006. The average position on multiculturalism by the left and the right remained basically unchanged and highly polarized over time, while the frame gained in importance.

Concerning the left, in the 2011 elections the emergency frame was used in a somewhat more anti-immigration fashion, whereas the actor also engaged in competition over Roma issues (which were neglected in 2006). In particular, the left denounced the inefficacy of the centre-right's policies of "zero-tolerance" for the Roma camps, claiming that dismantling their settlement could only "displace" the problem, rather than solving it. This was a clear attempt at delegitimizing the local government over the outcomes of its policies. The mainstream right responded to its opponents by framing security problems in terms of emergency. It placed the emphasis on the security threats emerging from a supposed "Islamic invasion" that Milan would face in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, and defended the conduct of the municipal government by arguing that immigrant criminality was due to the extraordinary inflow of clandestine migrants (Milan, 2006).

Figure 7.1 *Framing of support and opposition to immigration in Milan by actor (2006-2011)*
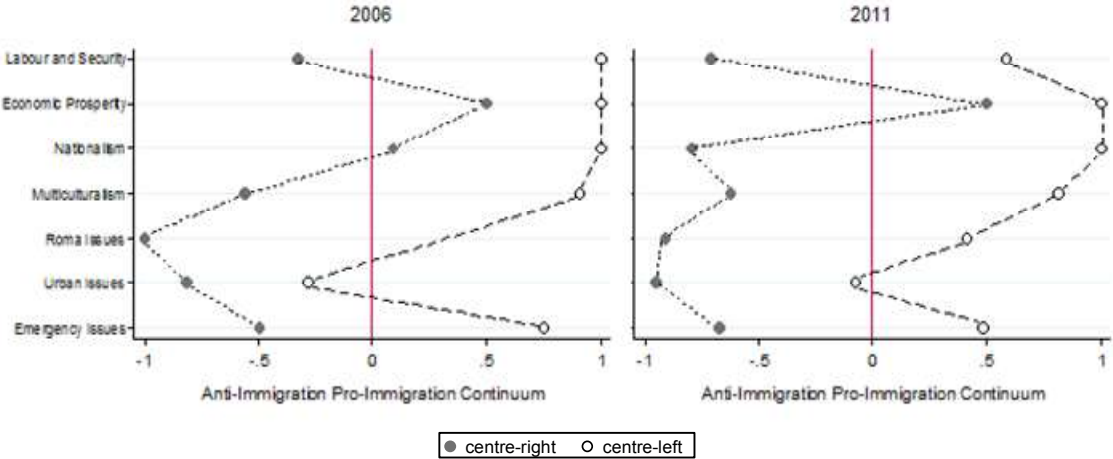
Figure 7.2 reports pro and contra framing of immigration in Prato. First of all, the two election campaigns differ due to the presence of a radical right party in 2009, which only mobilized fully anti-immigration arguments. Both mainstream actors decisively changed the way they used the different frames between the two election campaigns. In particular, the

centre-right remained opposed to immigration across all issue-frames excluding multiculturalism, on which it nuanced considerably its position (and increased attention). Since this happens in combination with the appearance of a radical right competitor, it seems safe to conclude that this strategy aimed at attracting moderate voters.

Figure 7.2 *Framing of support and opposition to immigration in Prato by actor (2004-2009)*
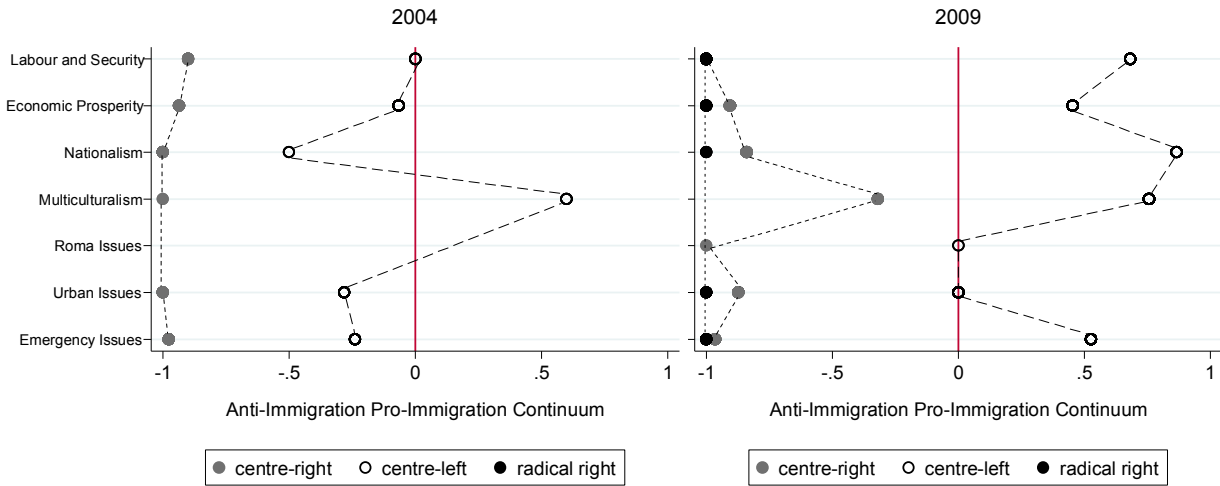
By contrast, the centre-left changed its use of virtually all issue frames, most of which were used in a considerably more pro-immigration fashion in 2009 than in 2004: this applies to the two socioeconomic frames and for the nationalist and emergency frames. The left in fact framed security problems mainly by reference to clandestine immigration and regulations of the inflow of immigrants, challenging the proposal of the radical right to expel illegal residents from the city. This strategy seems oriented at differentiating its profile from that of the right-wing competitors, in the attempt to put pressure on the mainstream right which had to decide whether to compete with the left for moderate voters or with the radical right for less moderate ones.

Figure 7.3 displays the data for the case of Rome. As can be noticed, both time points demonstrate a skewed distribution of positions, as both centre-left and centre-right articulated opposition to immigration mainly through law and order frames. The radical right, participating in the 2008 campaign, offered a consistently anti-immigration discourse across all seven frames. Similar to Prato, this seems to have forced the centre-right to nuance positions justified by multiculturalism and economic prosperity (these frames are also used more frequently in 2008, though marginally), whilst the three law and order frames were consistently used to oppose immigrants. This pattern is most likely attributable to the centre-

right's need to avoid alienating electorates with mixed preferences, i.e. voters who approved immigration in terms of cultural and economic enrichment, yet were afraid of its consequences in terms security.

Figure 7.3 *Framing of support and opposition to immigration in Rome by actor (2006-2008)*
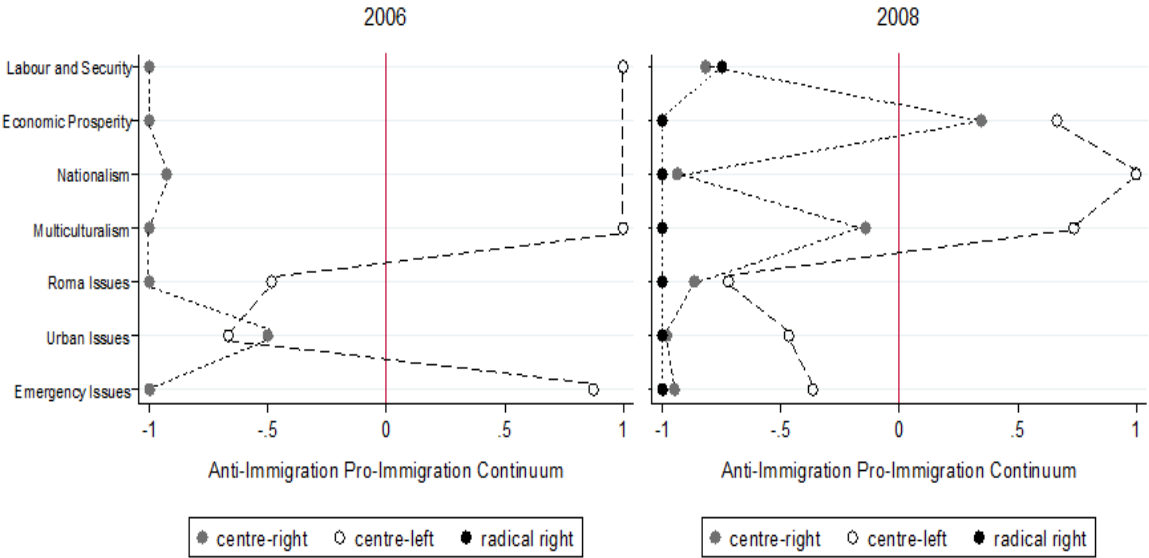
In contrast, the centre-left strategy remained largely unchanged in terms of cultural framing of immigration, and with respect to the targeting of Roma people in highly restrictive terms (both in 2006 and in 2008. Instead, the incumbent actors' dimensional choices changed substantially in the use of emergency ones. Being pressed by the centre-right and radical right on security affairs as a consequence of the crime-related focusing event, the centre-left preferred to frame immigration concerns as emergencies in order to avoid being held responsible as the party in office. The centre-left used the emergency frame in order to address the news stories about crime as 'unexpected events', which needed firm handling (hence the increasingly anti-immigration tone) yet for which the incumbent administration was not responsible.

In sum, the results outlined in this section show that mainstream actors choose substantively different frames depending on whether they express support for or opposition to immigration, whereas the radical right mobilizes the most consistently anti-immigration discourse across the various elections. Supportive arguments mobilize above all multiculturalist frames, although tactical considerations often induce left actors to frame immigration in terms of emergencies. Similarly, the results show that the left uses Roma frames restrictively much

more frequently than the centre-right, targeting a specific community rather than migrants as a whole when immigration focuses on security matters.

7.4   Conclusion

The previous chapters analysed the multiple dimensions that comprise parties' understanding of, and public discourse on, immigration. Recognizing the relevance of studying electoral competition within inherently multidimensional models, however, triggered a number of additional questions: what arguments do actors set out in order to defend their positions on immigration? What frames do they use under different circumstances? To answer these questions, the analysis not only looked into how issues are framed, but also into who was responsible for the frames, i.e. the choices of the various electoral candidates and coalitions. Not only the context of issue framing was therefore investigated, but also partisanship and other forms of constraints on discursive choices by strategic actors. In sum, by showing the justifications and the underlining interpretations of actors' claims and positions on immigration, this chapter sought to contribute to a better understanding of immigration politics in electoral campaigning.

In line with the broader theoretical framework of this dissertation, the chapter's empirical analysis shows that the way in which the immigration issue is debated can take various meanings and forms, depending on the type of actor participating in the campaign, the characteristics and contextual circumstances of the city in which the campaign takes place, and whether a certain frame is deployed seeking to support or oppose immigration. Even if there is considerable variation in framing strategies across actors and contexts, I find additional evidence that increasing salience of immigration as a whole reduces the leeway of political actors, which are constrained to focus on a more limited set of aspects and justification types.

The results show that framing strategies at the aggregate level are influenced only marginally by the ideologies of the political actors involved in the construction of public discourse, as no major differentiation could be identified among the mainstream left and right. Yet, framing strategies follow an actor-driven logic in two, interrelated, aspects: the left is substantially more prone to support immigration than the right, and it tends to prefer multiculturalist frames over nationalist ones, unlike its right-wing competitors. In this sense, a clearer left-right pattern emerged in terms of cultural and religious aspects, which was confirmed across the

different election campaigns and despite the specificities of the cities. As it was showed, moreover, it was precisely by changing its position on the multicultural frame that the centre-right tried to differentiate its discourse from that of the radical right, when necessary.

In contrast to the idea that issue-position justifications resonate with previous commitments by the actors, our analysis shows that tactical considerations play a crucial role in setting up partisan framing strategies at the local level. Tactical considerations and the disadvantage of the left on security debates explain the generally negative tone and the attention provided to Roma issues by this actor; similarly, the pro-immigration framing of the law and order dimension is frequently based on emergency arguments, since these enable developing a pragmatic discourse without being necessarily forced to either turn to alternative interpretations, or switch to anti-immigration tones. The finding that increasing salience of immigration leads to increasing similarity in the framing choices of mainstream left and right parties suggests that, when the issue is at the core of electoral debates, parties are increasingly forced to respond to one another. Moreover, the presence of the radical right in the campaigns was found to impact on framing choices by, and the positions of, the centre-right and centre-left coalitions.

Beyond the specific findings of this chapter, this analysis provides additional insights for the study of the politics of immigration and the changing nature of electoral competition. To begin with, they tend to corroborate the idea of an increasing "securitization" of immigration debates across Europe, illustrating that this takes place not only at the national level, but also in local elections (Buonfino, 2004). Beyond emergency logics, community-based and context-specific security frames stand out as fundamental elements shaping immigration debates in local campaigns in Italy. In particular, the centre-left framing of the law and order dimension shows that the left is still unable to construct a pragmatic discourse on immigration autonomously. Its framing strategy relies heavily on responses to the arguments of its opponents, and on the targeting of specific communities as the main responsible of immigration-related problems and conflicts.

Secondly, these results provide further information on the dynamics by which issues that were previously outside the core of contentious politics are integrated into political campaigning agendas.[84] Actors do not simply aim at ideological consistency when faced with immigration

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[84] Cf. the concept of "issue bundling": De Vries, Hakhverdian and Lancee (2011).

as a campaign issue, but also consider contextual circumstances and tactical opportunities, and are constrained by the behaviour of their competitors as well as by unexpected events. At least at the local level, in fact, only cultural frames are somewhat consistently articulated in line with the coalitions' 'ideologies'. In the other dimensions comprising the issue, by contrast, framing strategies appear to be set up based on different types of considerations. This makes it fundamental to account for other types of factors that may change the relationship between the different actors and the immigration issue during the actual campaign, especially the nature of the mediatized system of political communication, and the difference between actors' pledges in the electoral platforms and the coverage these by the media (Esser and Matthes, 2013). Whether or not these elements are able to further explain immigration debates across local election campaigns in Italy is the subject of the next chapter.

8

Controlling the campaign agenda: actors and the mass media in local debates

8.1   Introduction

So far, this study has looked at the way in which debates on immigration were reported in the news, analysing electoral campaigning on the basis of actors' positions emerging from media reports. Hence, the analysis focused on the electoral agenda only once it had already become public. In this chapter, I look more in detail at the way in which the agenda is constructed, by evaluating the attention given to the immigration issue dimensions by political actors in their electoral manifestos and in their public statements during electoral campaigns. Policy platforms are the most formalized way in which electoral actors communicate their positions about policy issues, yet they might or might not be fully consistent with the actual campaign messages of mayoral candidates. Manifestos provide complementary information on parties' relationship with the immigration issue, generally reproducing the main views of party elites. Hence, the advantage of using party manifestos is that the positions expressed in there can be considered as unmediated by media attention (at least to a certain extent, since parties might also anticipate media reactions). In contrast, party positions in the media are filtered by media agendas and newsworthiness considerations (Koopmans *et al.*, 2005).

Hence, this chapter compares two different stages of electoral agenda building: the one of political actors' promises and pledges prior to the campaign, and the one of the actual electoral rhetoric as reported in national and local newspapers. In line with previous contributions from the field of political communication (Wolfsfeld, 1997; Hänggli and Kriesi, 2010), campaigning is thus conceived as a multistage process in which political actors first communicate with the media and then – through the media – interact with voters. In other words, this chapter investigates the variation in the way in which political actors deal with the various dimensions of the immigration issue in their electoral manifestos and in their public statements during the electoral campaign.

Similar to the previous chapters, I do not focus on *what* issues manage to enter the agenda and set public priorities, but on *how* they are discussed in electoral actors' manifestos and media agendas. In line with research on second-level agenda-setting (Huckins, 1999; McCombs and Shaw, 1993; McCombs and Ghanem, 2001; Kiousis *et al.*, 2006; Tan and Weaver, 2007; Wirth *et al.*, 2010), the idea is that actors not only try to influence the attention given to particular issues in the composing of the news agenda, but are also interested in manipulating the way in which those are discussed in the media, as there are certain issues in certain periods and contexts that simply cannot be excluded from agendas, irrespective of partisan efforts and preferences (Walgrave *et al.,* 2006). In such cases, actors do not compete over which issues are worth being discussed during the campaign, but rather on how their constitutive dimensions must be publicly understood.

By looking at actors preferences for salience, dimensions and positions as reported in in electoral platforms and in the news media, the remainder of this chapter focuses on the degree to which the original preferences in electoral manifestos correspond to the contents of electoral debates on the news media. The construction of electoral agendas is explored from the point of view of immigration as a single issue, for each of its constitutive dimensions and for the positions that political actors take with respect to each of them. Based on the evidence on electoral competition in the three city contexts developed in the previous chapters, and considering the interplay between actor strategies and media preferences, this chapter discusses patterns of variation in the way in which actors deal with immigration politics in their ideal agendas compared to the rhetoric of their public statements to the media during the campaigns.

8.2   Ideal and tactical agendas in electoral campaigning

As illustrated in Chapter 3 this study makes use of content analytical data from electoral manifestos in order to compare actors' preferences in terms of electoral promises to those emerging from the news media coverage of their electoral rhetoric. Hence, similar to the technique employed in studies on party pledges and on programme-to-policy linkages (Mansergh and Thompson, 2007), I identify the proposed electoral agendas according to the policy positions and preferences the actors outline in their electoral platforms. Electoral manifestos are issued at the very beginning of the official campaign, and are therefore severely limited when the aim is to analyse the dynamic relationship between parties and the

media in the course of election campaigns (Walgrave *et al.*, 2006; Hänggli, 2010). A similar analysis would have required data enabling to capture the dynamic interaction between political actors and the media, such as press releases and other types of communication produced and divulged on a daily basis (Brandeburg, 2002), which was not available at the local level in Italy for the observed period.

Consistent with previous literature, therefore, I use electoral manifestos as benchmarks for the understanding of partisan preferences and promises (Budge and Fairle, 1983; Budge, 2001; Helbling and Tresch, 2010; Morales *et al.,* 2014). Previous studies have underlined that different channels of campaign communication are associated with different sets of issue preferences, since actors adjust their issue focus to the logics of communication and newsworthiness, and to their respective strategies of competition (Elmelund-Præstekær, 2011). Norris *et al.* (1999) distinguish between two types of partisan electoral agendas, identifying an "ideal agenda" corresponding to the preferences emphasized at the beginning of the campaign within election manifestos, and a "tactical agenda" which instead results from the continuing modification of the ideal one through the interaction with the media, ongoing events and political competitors.

In sum, the idea is that parties' policy preferences and promises may vary depending on the channel of communication and on the phase of the election campaign (Elmelund-Præstekær, 2011). Given that electoral manifestos are generally negotiated *within* parties and coalitions rather than *between* them and the outside world, they offer a valuable measurement of partisan position before they engage in active competition and develop strategies to interact with the media. In other words, party manifestos offer a reliable measure of actors' initial, or "ideal", sets of preferences. Although the news media generally reproduces quite accurately the positions that actors take in their manifestos (Helbling and Tresch, 2010), this is not likely to be confirmed for issue salience, since active campaigning means focusing selectively on specific topics. This aspect is of particular importance when studying the multiple dimensions of policy issues. By analysing the gap between the attention provided to specific elements or "sub-issues" in party manifestos and in the media, hence, I shall provide additional information on the nature of electoral campaigning.

There are three main processes that may explain the difference between actors' discourses on immigration in their original manifestos and in media reports. The first argument concerns the influence that the media exerts on politics, based on media outlets' own preferences and on the fact that parties need the media in order to gain visibility and, eventually, support

(Altheide and Snow 1979; Mazzoleni and Schulz, 1999; Kepplinger, 2002; Mazzoleni *et al.*, 2003; Walgrave and van Aelts, 2006). The second argument deals with actors' strategies of competition, and investigates the extent and nature of the adjustments of party strategies over the course of the election campaigns (Soroka, 2002; Walgrave, *et al.*2008; Green-Pedersen and Stubager, 2010; Van der Pas, 2014). Finally, the third argument is that both media and partisan strategies are subject to the influence of exogenous events and context-specific characteristics that may change the rules of the game and, as such, the strategic choices of the actors and the way these are reported in the news (Birkland, 1997). Since the design of this study does not enable to systematically assess the explanatory power of each of the three interpretations, I shall use them as my main reference points within an exploratory analysis of the association between ideal and tactical agendas in immigration debates.

In particular, my attention is devoted to understanding the extent to which actors' strategies and characteristics can explain the difference between the issues that are emphasized in their manifestos and those they discuss during the campaign. Campaign strategies may be fundamental for the reproduction of specific understandings of a given issue. As previous chapters demonstrated, in fact, the competition between electoral candidates for the control of the news agenda does not only involve a struggle over the attention to alternative political issues, but also a struggle between different aspects of the same issue, as over the meaning of issues. In other words, actors may support and promote specific understandings of issues in the media when the definition of the problem and the suggested solutions suits their policy programme (Van der Pas, 2014).

As discussed in Chapter 2, hence, the reputation of an actor in dealing with a specific issue or issue dimension may provide advantages in terms of setting the media agenda. Based on the findings of the previous sections, therefore, it is likely that the immigration issue is overrepresented in the media for mainstream right and radical right actors, since they enjoy easier access to the media when debates focus on this issue. Similarly, although ideal agendas cannot be considered fully isolated from anticipations of media reactions, I have illustrated that incumbent parties are more subject to campaign-specific constraints, since the actors in opposition are advantaged in setting the party system agenda. Hence, during the campaign challenger parties can force incumbents to take up issues or (issue-dimensions) that they had deliberately avoided in their 'ideal' agendas and, more broadly, it is likely that the difference between the dimensional attention profiles in the manifestos and in the electoral rhetoric will be higher for incumbent actors than for challengers.

In addition, the difference attributed to each immigration issue dimension in party manifestos and in electoral rhetoric should be explored from the point of view of the different 'publics' that the two types of agendas address. It is known from previous studies that the media is not equally attentive to all types of issues, and generally prioritizes issues that appeal the broad public (Hallin and Mancini 2004; Swanson and Mancini, 1996). In terms of dimensional attention in media coverage, therefore, one should also consider the newsworthiness of the various aspects of the immigration issue (Altheide and Snow, 1979; Mazzoleni *et al.*, 2003; Hallin and Mancini 2004).[85] In his categorization of policy issues, Soroka (2002) distinguishes between *obtrusive, sensational* and *government issues* on the basis of two main characteristics that influence agenda-setting: a) the degree of direct experience that citizens have with a given issue, or aspect of an issue; and b) the dramatic and/or emotive nature of its content, which determines the extent to which an issue can be considered newsworthy.

Sensational issues clearly correspond to the law and order dimension, since despite their concreteness they have "little observable impact on the vast majority of individuals" (Soroka, 2002, pp.20-21). In addition, this aspect of immigration is also the one most likely to be characterized by dramatic, emotional and intense tones. As a result, one may consider the law and order dimension as the most newsworthy aspect of immigration debates. The socioeconomic dimension meanwhile corresponds to Soroka's obtrusive issues, since people have high levels of everyday, direct experience with it. This makes media attention less necessary for citizens to evaluate the (negative and positive) socioeconomic implications of immigration.[86] Nonetheless political entrepreneurs have to account for this dimension in order to increase their appeal to voters, to defend their policy choices while in office and/or to propose alternative ones. Finally, the cultural and religious dimension does not fit neatly into Soroka's issue-attributes. Cultural aspects are generally unobtrusive[87] yet they may take concrete forms, since identity issues can easily take dramatic and sensationalistic tones. If this

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[85] With the concept of 'media logics' the literature on political communication generally refers to the set of imperatives driving the production of news, ranging from professional to commercial ones (see: Altheide and Snow, 1979; Soroka, 2002; Mazzoleni *et al.*, 2003; Hallin and Mancini, 2004; Walgrave *et al.,* 2008; Green-Pedersen and Stubager, 2010).

[86] Unless – obviously – external events or macro-level circumstances change the intrinsic value of debating these issues, such as in case of low economic performances, high unemployment rates or general economic crises.

[87] Even in the case of the Islamic centre in Milan, citizens had to rely on the media and political entrepreneurs to learn about it, as otherwise only the inhabitants of one neighbourhood of the city would have had "direct" experience with it.

is the case, then cultural aspects gain concreteness and newsworthiness, and the media are likely to further amplify their visibility.

8.3 Similarity and difference between manifestos and campaign rhetoric

As a first step, this section shall look at the news coverage of immigration across all election campaigns, in order to see whether and to what extent it reflects partisan issue-preferences in electoral manifestos. Overall, the degree to which immigration was salient in party manifestoes and in electoral rhetoric in the media was approximately the same: 10.4% in party manifestos across cities and election campaigns, and 11% in the news media. In contrast, positions were considerably more pro-immigration in electoral manifestos (with a mean slightly superior to 0.1) than in media reports (-0.4). National and local news outlets diverged marginally in terms of level of attention provided to the issue (9.5% of national media attention; 12.3% in local coverage), but not in terms of the average tone of the debate (-0.3 and -0.4, respectively).

Beyond aggregate data, a closer look at salience and positions is necessary, since preferences expressed in electoral manifestos cannot be analysed and understood without taking into consideration differences between political actors. To this end, Table 8.1 below reports the salience of the immigration issue as expressed in coalition manifestos, compared to the news coverage of their election campaigns, differentiating between aggregate news coverage and national and local media outlets. The results indicate that there is a certain degree of difference in the salience of immigration across different communication channels. As shown in columns A and B, for the centre-left, and to a lesser extent the radical right, the immigration issue receive roughly the same importance in the manifesto and in the news media. By contrast, the visibility of the immigration issue in news coverage of the centre-right is twice as high as in the actor's electoral manifestos. A lower degree of attention for immigration affairs instead characterizes the news coverage of the radical left.

Moving the focus to column C and D, moreover, the table shows that the access to the news media is not equal for all actors involved in electoral campaigns: smaller actors seem to be disadvantaged in reaching national channels of communication, at least compared to local media (column D). In particular the radical right discourse on immigration is largely downsized in national news (only 5% of the relative attention), compared to the attention in the election manifestos (25%), and in local outlets (24.6%). The results thus show that

mainstream actors, especially the centre-right, are advantaged in terms of access national news coverage. In line with previous research (Hänggli, 2010; 2012), this suggests that the media can influence public debates by following the campaign of one candidate (generally the most powerful organizations and the most relevant parties) more closely than the one of its competitors, (Brants and Van Praag, 2006; Hänggli, 2010; Hopmann *et al.* 2012).

Table 8.1 *Salience of Immigration in party platforms and news media*

		Salience of Immigration			
		A	B	C	D
Party		*Electoral Manifesto*	*(aggregate) News Media*	*National News Media*	*Local News Media*
Centre-Right	%	6.4	12.8	11.9	13.5
	N	128	1131	482	649
Centre-Left	%	8.2	8.1	6.9	10.2
	N	278	653	264	389
Radical Left	%	8.2	4.6	-	4.6
	N	76	14	-	14
Radical Right	%	26.3	20.3	5.3	24.6
	N	62	123	8	115
Total	%	*10.4*	*11.0*	*9.5*	*12.3*
	N	*570*	*1977*	*760*	*1217*

Note: Share of core sentences dedicated to immigration in newspaper articles and party manifestos

Moreover, the results show that the discourse on immigration of the mainstream right is largely overrepresented in the media compared to the party manifesto, since in the news (local and national) immigration receives two times the attention that it receives in electoral manifestos. In contrast, the media gives roughly as much attention to the centre-left's discourse as the coalition does in its own party platform. Concerning the radical right, although its discourse is not overrepresented, it is fairly well represented at least in local news coverage, where it receives substantial attention.

In other words, it appears that centre-right actors engage in immigration politics much more in terms of electoral rhetoric than in their party manifestos, whereas other actors have more 'balanced' profiles. In terms of strategies, this may be due to the advantage of centre-right actors in immigration debates. Compared to party platforms, which are a low-key form of communication with the electorate, public statements to the media allow political actors to

further concentrate their attention on advantageous issues. From the point of view of the media, instead, centre-right statements on immigration may be more newsworthy and appealing than the ones of other actors, be that because of the focus of the statements or because of the consideration of the agents, which would also explain the importance attributed to the radical right in local media.

The two explanations are not contradictory and may have a mutually reinforcing effect, since radical and centre-right actors may be incentivised in further stressing their 'advantageous' issues during the electoral campaigns, being confident that the media would be responsive and grant them access to the media agenda. In this sense, the reputation of a given actor on a specific issue may be the result of the actor's own communication as well as of the link that the mass media create between the actor and the issue in the coverage of everyday affairs (Walgrave and De Swert, 2007).

In order to further investigate this, it is useful to look at the relationship between the positions expressed by actors in their manifestos and the ones emerging from the news media coverage of election campaigns. Figure 8.1 shows that the increased visibility that the immigration issue receives in media coverage does not necessarily imply a change of tone. Although positions in the media (considering both local and national outlets) tend to be consistently less supportive of immigration than in partisan programmatic documents (with the exclusion of the radical left), the figure shows that the positions expressed by right-wing actors are quite similarly anti-immigration across channels of communication, whereas those of the centre left are much less pro-immigration in the media than in the electoral manifestos.

As it turns out, the centre-left approaches the immigration issue with quite different tones in its electoral programmes and in public statements to the media, whereas the gap is less wide for the actors in the anti-immigration side of the spectrum and, to a certain extent, the radical left. The centre-left may have preferred to tone down its pro-immigration stances during the campaign for electoral reasons, especially since it faced strong anti-immigration rhetoric from its radical right, centre-right and centrist competitors. For the same reason, the radical left opted to move to the pro-immigration end of the continuum in order to further differentiate its immigration positions from that of the mainstream left.

Although exploratory, the analysis outlined so far underlines that the relationship between tactical and ideal agendas is not homogeneous for all actors, due to media preferences and the reputation of actors on immigration affairs. In a similar fashion, the difference between the

preferences expressed in the manifestos and those emerging from actors' public statements might have to do with the leeway that actors have *vis-à-vis* the party system agenda. More specifically, although party manifestos often incorporate anticipations of media reactions and campaign dynamics, challengers can force incumbents to take up issues that they had deliberately avoided in their 'ideal' agendas.

Figure 8.1 *Actor positions on immigration in manifesto and media agendas*
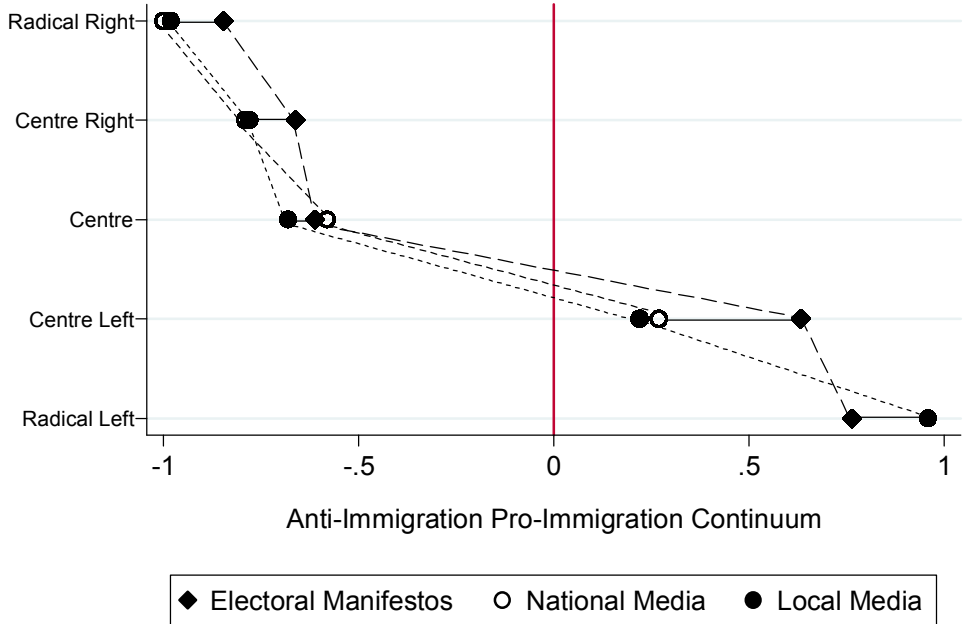
To explore this, Table 8.2 below reports the degree of attention dedicated to the immigration issue in the different channels of communication by incumbent and challenger actors. The degree of attention to the issue is lower in incumbents' party manifestos than in those of challengers, for both centre-left and centre-right actors. This likely has to do with the fact that parties in office prefer to dismiss highly contested issues in their electoral platforms. Since immigration is mainly discussed in negative terms, candidates that have to defend the incumbent coalition's handling of immigration and integration affairs generally prefer to avoid the issue altogether. In other words, incumbents prefer dismissal rather than having to choose between two disadvantageous discursive strategies: on the one hand, popular arguments criticizing the conduct of the outgoing administration; and on the other, unpopular arguments that promote its conduct.

As it turns out, prior to interacting with the media and directly confronting their opponents, incumbent actors tend to make fewer policy promises on immigration than challengers.[88] Both right and left-wing incumbents provide considerably more attention to the immigration issue in the media than in their election manifesto, whereas the gap is smaller (for the centre-right) or even the inverted (for the centre-left) when they run as challengers. The results also show that the gap is somewhat more pronounced in local outlets than in national ones (columns C and D).

Table 8.2 *Immigration attention in incumbent/challenger manifestos and in the media*

Role	Party		A *Electoral Manifesto*	B *(aggregate) News Media*	C *National News Media*	D *Local News Media*
			Salience of Immigration			
Incumbent	Centre-Right	%	3.5	13.3	11.8	16.4
		N	34	580	337	243
	Centre-Left	%	5.6	8.4	6.2	9.7
		N	114	459	143	338
Challenger	Centre-Right	%	9.0	12.2	14.4	12.2
		N	94	551	145	406
	Centre-Left	%	12.0	7.5	7.7	7.1
		N	164	194	121	51

Note: Share of core sentences dedicated to immigration in newspaper articles and party manifestos
City contexts: Prato (2004, 2009); Milan (2006, 2011); Rome (2006, 2008).

Additional evidence on the different treatment of immigration affairs across the two agendas can be found by looking at issue-positions. Figure 8.2 below illustrates the centre-left and centre-right positions on the anti-immigration pro-immigration continuum, differentiating between incumbent and challengers and between electoral manifestos and local and national media outlets. The figure shows that the positions of actors vary substantially depending on their role in the election campaign.

Both the centre-left and centre-right are subject to the same incumbency mechanism, as the position they take on immigration varies across agendas when they are incumbents, whereas it remains the same when they run as challengers. When in office, both the right-wing and left-

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[88] The difference in attention between manifestos and public statements for incumbents and challengers is also statistically significant: X^2 (3, N = 2190) = 266.0, p < .01 (Cramér's V=0.33).

wing actors change their positions to adopt stronger anti-immigration tones once they interact with the media. This suggests that the disadvantage of being incumbents forces actors to change their strategic choices during the election campaign. The left does so by taking up positions that are more similar to the ones of their opponents (moving towards the anti-immigration end of the spectrum), following what Meguid has called an "accommodative strategy" (2005). The right by contrast opts for an "adversarial strategy", meaning that it moves away from the position proposed by the main challenger.

By looking at party manifestos only, moreover, the figure shows that both actors adopt more moderate positions when they are in office than when they run as challengers. This suggests that incumbents initially try to tune down their arguments in order to defend the policies and decisions that they have taken while in office. In contrast the positions of challengers tend to be polarized (the centre-right towards the anti-immigration end, and the centre-left towards the pro-immigration end) and consistent across the different agendas.[89]

Figure 8.2 *Incumbents' and challengers' positions in manifestos and media agendas*
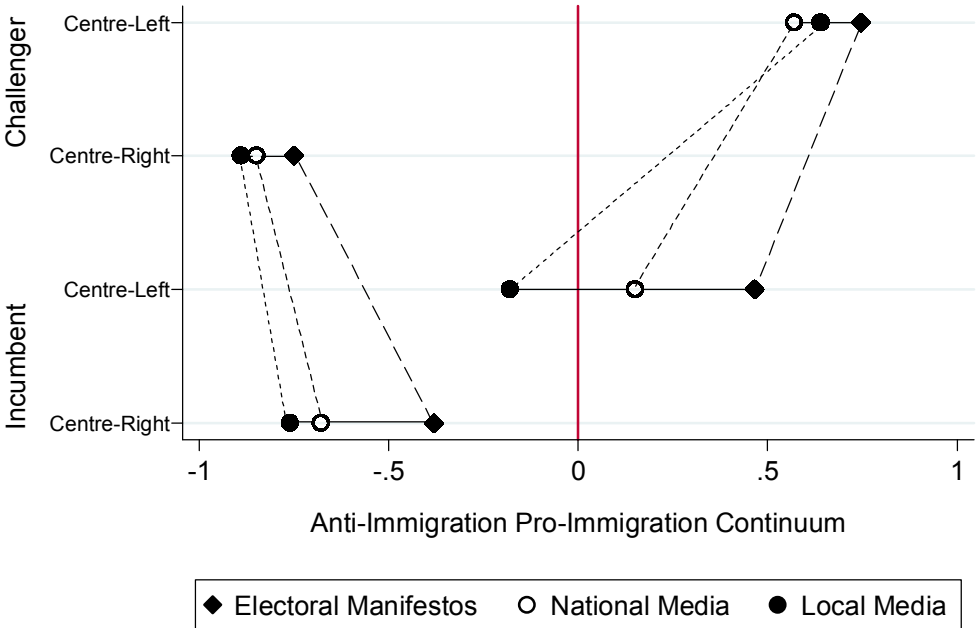
Overall, these results tend to support the incumbency dynamics outlined in previous chapters, since the gap between the positions on immigration in electoral manifestos and in the news

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[89] In terms of different media outlets, results show only minimal differences, with the notable exception of centre-left incumbent actors, since their positions are significantly more anti-immigration in national outlets than in local ones.

media is larger for incumbent than for challenger actors. Actors in opposition are more consistent in their strategies, whereas incumbents are more moderate in the manifestos and then change their position once the actual competition has started. The left follows an accommodative strategy, moving towards its opponent; the right, instead, follows an adversarial one aiming at increasing inter-party distance and distinguishability. In either case, the campaigning of incumbent actors on immigration turns more negative once we account for media agendas. Although the limited amount of observations and the specificity of certain local contexts do not allow to draw systematic conclusions on the effects of incumbency, my exploratory analysis shows that consideration of newsworthiness and media preferences contribute to explaining these differences, since incumbent actors are forced by challengers to focus on issues that they would otherwise avoid. In order to further explore this process, the next section looks at partisan and media agenda in a dimensional perspective.

8.4 Electoral manifestos and public rhetoric in a dimensional perspective

The analysis now turns to the relationship between ideal and tactical agendas from the point of view of issue dimensions. As previously argued, I suggested that immigration attributes differ in terms of newsworthiness. Table 8.3 below shows data on attention to the three constitutive dimensions of the immigration issue in electoral manifestos and in the public statements during election campaigns. The results are discussed first at the aggregated level and then in relation to each city.

To begin with, the table shows that the law and order dimension is considerably more important in the news media than in actors' electoral platforms, which supports the idea that these arguments are particularly appealing for the news media due to their dramatic and sensational characteristics.[90] Although the pattern is relatively stable across the three case studies, the results are not homogeneous across actors and cities. The centre-right in Prato does not follow this pattern, whereas in Milan it does so only marginally, given that security arguments receive substantial attention already in party manifestos. Rome shows the widest gap between attention in the media and in manifestos, suggesting that the focusing event provided the law and order dimension with additional news value.

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[90] The results of the tests indicate that the attention to the law and order dimension is statistically different in the news media and in party manifestos: X^2 *(3, N =1566) = 46.1, p < .01* (Cramér's V= .17).

Conversely, it turns out that the socioeconomic dimension is generally more salient in the actor's programmatic promises than in their public statements in the media, which confirms the 'obtrusive' nature of this issue dimension.[91] While in Rome and Milan the socioeconomic dimension is systematically more salient in manifestos than in media coverage, however, in Prato the opposite relation holds. Lastly, the attention to the cultural dimension varies between the two types of agendas, but do not show a clear pattern across parties and cities.[92]

Table 8.3 *Dimensional salience of immigration in platforms and media, by city (2004-2011)*

Dimension	Centre-Right Manifesto	Centre-Right Media	Centre-Left Manifesto	Centre-Left Media	Radical Left Manifesto	Radical Left Media	Radical Right Media	Radical Right Media
Salience of immigration dimensions								
Aggregate								
Socioeconomic	20.7	11.5	26.8	15.7	56.6	5.6	36.5	38.0
Cultural and Religious	19.5	21.7	48.1	23.9	26.4	61.1	23.1	11.4
Law and Order	59.8	66.7	25.1	60.3	17.0	33.3	40.4	50.6
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	*87*	*1401*	*183*	*764*	*53*	*18*	*52*	*158*
Milan								
Socioeconomic	23.8	9.5	29.1	12.7	-	-	-	-
Cultural and Religious	14.3	27.4	40.9	41.9	-	-	-	-
Law and Order	62.9	63.1	30.0	45.4	-	-	-	-
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	-	-	-	-
N	*21*	*704*	*110*	*229*	-	-	-	-
Prato								
Socioeconomic	15.1	26.7	22.4	29.9	59.6	5.6	40.0	58.9
Cultural and Religious	18.4	23.9	60.3	19.9	21.3	61.1	20.0	5.6
Law and Order	66.5	49.2	17.2	50.1	19.1	33.3	40.0	35.5
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	*33*	*243*	*58*	*281*	*47*	*18*	*20*	*90*
Rome								
Socioeconomic	24.3	6.6	26.7	2.7	-	-	34.4	10.3
Cultural and Religious	24.1	11.7	53.3	12.2	-	-	25.0	19.1
Law and Order	51.5	81.7	20.0	85.1	-	-	40.6	70.6
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	-	-	100%	100%
N	*33*	*454*	*15*	*254*	-	-	*32*	*68*

Note: Share of core sentences dedicated to immigration in newspaper articles and party manifestos

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[91] X^2 *(3, N =450) = 48.3, p < .01 (Cramér's V= .33).*
[92] X^2 *(3, N =757) = 57.6, p < .01 (Cramér's V= .27).*

Nonetheless, the limited amount of observations on manifesto attention at the local level calls for particular caution in drawing general conclusions on the differential news value of the three issue dimensions. At the least these results provide informative insight into how the strategies of electoral candidates change across the two agendas. By looking at each party separately, Table 8.3 confirms the findings of previous chapters, in that the attention profile of the right-wing parties is much more homogeneous between the manifestos and the media coverage than that of left-wing ones.[93] The centre-left, in particular, tackles immigration in its manifesto in a very different way from the way it does in its public statements. In the party platform, it dedicates almost 50% of the attention to cultural and religious arguments, which are generally the ones to which the core of the centre-left constituency is more sensitive. In the media agenda, instead, these were largely supplanted by security arguments which the left considered to be appealing for a broader public. The dynamics of the debate and the interaction with the media seem to define the increasing importance that the centre-left attributes to immigration's law and order dimension, in particular in Rome.

Given this, it shall be instructive to look at the positions that actors take on the three immigration dimensions in their public statements and election manifestos (Figure 8.3). As noted earlier in Figure 8.1, party positions in the media are generally less supportive of immigration than manifestos. To begin with, both media and manifesto data show that the positions of the radical right are the most coherent across the three dimensions in the two agendas. Conversely, the positions of the centre-left are the least so, and the centre-right is located somewhere in the middle.

More generally, centre-left actors turn out to follow a considerably different pattern than their right-wing counterparts. Right-wing political actors, which tend to be markedly opposed to immigration, display generally 'coherent' immigration positions, and this is even more so in the media. In other words, right-wing positions in public statements are more negative to immigration position and more similar across issue-dimensions than they are in party manifestos. The opposite takes place for the centre-left: its dimensional positions are not only the least coherent across the two agendas, but they are also more diffusely distributed in the

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[93] In line with the measures of consistency outlined earlier (Sigelman and Buell, 2004) I calculated an index of similarity by averaging the absolute differences between issue (dimensional) emphases. Results are then standardized in order to range between 0 and a 100 and subtracted from 100 in order to measure similarity rather than dissimilarity. The results confirm that consistency across agendas is highest for right-wing parties (79% and 75% for centre-right and radical right parties) and considerably lower for centre-left (59%) and radical left parties (46%).

media than in the election manifesto. This points at a general contradiction in the way in which the centre-left organizes its campaigning on immigration, as it send considerably different messages depending on the channel of communication.

This is mainly due to the law and order dimension. In fact, while most parties' positions on this dimension do not vary substantially across the two channels of communication, the centre-left shows a substantial shift (about 0.2 units) from pro-immigration to anti-immigration in law and order affairs. Conversely the positions of the mainstream right and of the centrist party remain basically unchanged on law and order, whereas the radical right's shifts even more towards the anti-immigration end of the continuum according to media coverage. The opposite relation characterizes the radical left: it shows a more pro-immigration discourse on law and order in the media than in the manifesto, showing high levels of support for immigration in both cases.

Figure 8.3 *Dimensional issue positions by actor and channel of communication*
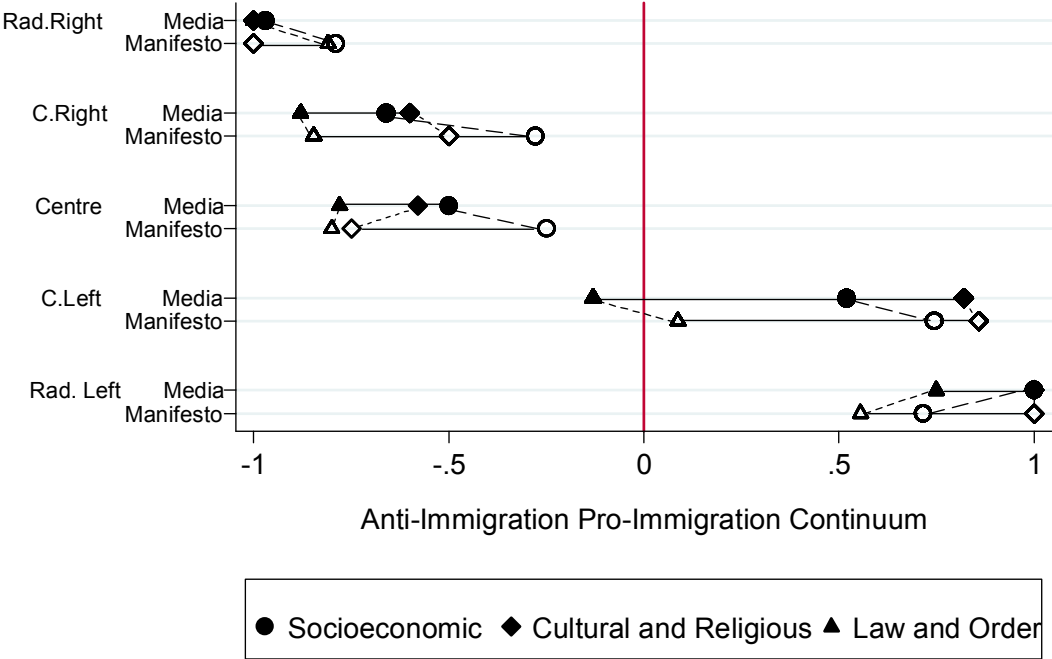
In addition, the results indicate that the socioeconomic dimension takes very different meanings when dealt with in party manifestos compared to the media. With the exception of the radical left, all parties adopt significantly more anti-immigration positions on socioeconomic aspects in the news media than in their electoral platforms. The analysis of dimensional positions by city showed that this result is not only due to party positions across media and manifesto in Prato, where the socioeconomic dimension is most salient. Rather, the

socioeconomic dimension is one aspect of immigration on which actors are very incoherent between media and electoral platforms, in terms of salience and positions.

Overall, the analysis of dimensional positions on immigration corroborates previous results pointing to a substantial difference in the way in which actors deal with the immigration issue and its constitutive dimensions at different stages of electoral campaigning. The change in the degree of attention provided to the three dimensions of the immigration issue, and the change in the positions by which political actors discuss these turn out to further increase the advantage of anti-immigration actors in election campaigns, since the centre-left sets out considerably different campaigning messages depending on whether it addresses its own constituency in the party manifesto, or the public in general through the mass media. Although this study does not focus on the outcomes of campaign strategies, this differentiation hints at a general contradiction in the relationship with the immigration issue, so that each of the two strategies risks to neutralize the other.

The results provided here cannot fully disentangle the respective role of political actors and the media in this process, since changing tones and issue emphases may be the result of anticipation strategies by political actors, media biases or other forms of interaction between competitors and the media environment. Yet, I have provided exploratory evidence suggesting that, given the attractiveness of sensationalistic news stories in the media, actors that invest in the law and order dimension in their electoral platform have an advantage in accessing news media channels, whereas centre-left parties in particular have to substantially change the tone and the emphases they set up in their "ideal" agenda.

8.5   Conclusions

This chapter set out to investigate competition on the immigration issue from the point of view of the different agendas that comprise electoral campaigning. By looking at the way in which parties refer to the immigration issue in their "ideal" agendas and in the news media, it has sought to reveal the difference between how political actors "would" discuss immigration before engaging in competition, and how they actually do in electoral campaigns. As was discussed, processes of agenda building are best assessed by means of data allowing to tackle in a direct way the struggle among campaigners over the control of the news agenda, whereas the comparison between party manifestos and media reporting does not allow to fully disentangle the respective roles of actors' and media preferences in this process. In contrast, I

explored the different way in which immigration is dealt with when actors' positions are not mediated by the media attention, and when, instead, they are filtered by media agendas and newsworthiness considerations. In this sense, although the analyses performed here are mainly exploratory in nature, they point to the continued need to examine the relationship between policy promises and actual electoral rhetoric on the different dimensions of the immigration issue.

In this sense, building upon the multidimensional model proposed in this study, this chapter suggested that the different forms of political communication that characterize electoral campaigning (from the formalized positions expressing the range of views prevalent within party elites, to actors' views emerging from media reporting of campaign activities) interact with the constitutive dimensions of immigration. In other words, the reciprocal efforts of political actors and the media to manipulate the electoral agenda, and their respective issue preferences influence the relative importance of the various dimensions of policy issues, so that not only immigration as a whole, but also each of its constitutive aspects receive quite different levels of attention, and are discussed in different ways, in the two channels of communication.

To this end, the chapter investigated the variation in attention to, and issue positions on, the three dimensions of the immigration issue across six local electoral campaigns in Italy, looking at news coverage of the immigration issue in relation to the preceding issue preferences by political actors in their election manifestos. The empirical analysis showed that right-wing, anti-immigration parties enjoy a particular advantage in the news media coverage of immigration debates, as the visibility of their public statements on this issue is considerably higher than the attention they devote to it in their programmatic policy documents. Moreover, it turns out that their manifesto positions are faithfully reproduced in the media, i.e. there is no change in issue positions across the two channels of communication. In contrast, centre-left actors have to significantly tune down their positions once they engage in active campaigning.

From the point of view of actors' strategies, it appears that unlike ideal agendas and electoral platforms, public statements to the media allow political actors to further concentrate their attention on advantageous issues, triggering further issue-prioritization. From the point of view of the media, instead, it seems that centre-right statements on immigration have a higher 'news value' than the ones of other actors, because of their focus on appealing issue dimensions and because of the reputation of the actor making the claim. In this sense, actors enjoying a 'reputation' in immigration debates seem to have additional incentives to

campaign on this issue, since they can count on resonance (in terms of issue-salience) and accuracy (in terms of issue positions) in media reports. Conversely, disadvantaged actors suffer a double disadvantage: not only do they have a difficult time getting visibility in immigration debates, but if they do manage to obtain attention, it generally involves changing their original issue-positions.

At the same time, the media do not prioritize all aspects of the immigration issue indifferently, but rather give attention to the ones that bear a particular news value. Hence, the overrepresentation of some party preferences has to do with those parties' capacity to focus on aspects that are highly newsworthy. The results indicate that certain issue attributes tend to be systematically more attractive for the news media (i.e. sensational issues and especially the law and order dimension) than other, more obtrusive issue dimension. In line with the general design of this study, the results also underline that the newsworthiness of the constitutive dimensions of immigration is not permanent, but varies depending on local characteristics and focusing events.

Also in this case, however, I have suggested that media biases and actors' strategies must not be necessarily understood as alternative mechanisms. Rather, they refer to two complementary processes, as strategies are often set up on the basis of previous knowledge of media preferences. As a result, the communication efforts by each actor are filtered by the mass media, who create links between certain actors and issues in their coverage of election campaigns. Hence, the press seems to respond predominantly to the most credible actors in immigration and integration affairs, for two main reasons. First, because of the *content* of the news: commercial reasons make the media prefer sensational news stories, often related to law and order and to opposition to immigration; and second, because of *clarity* of the news: the issue-owner right-wing parties offer a coherent anti-immigration discourse, opposing it on all three of its constitutive dimensions, which makes it easily translatable into news stories. By contrast, the centre-left differentiates positions across the issue-dimensions, which makes its discourse less readily transferable into the mass media language and logics.

In conclusion, this chapter has suggested that there are three main processes explaining the difference in the way political actors deal with the immigration issue in their manifestos and in their public statements to the media: the influence that the media exert on politics with its own set of preferences and priorities; the reciprocal strategies of competition of political actors, including the adjustment of these based on anticipation of media reactions; and the effects of exogenous events and context-specific factors that may change the rules of the

game and the news 'value' of different items in a communication process. My exploratory analyses suggest that neither party strategies nor media preferences *per se* can fully explain the unfolding of public debates in any electoral campaigns. Rather, I have proposed that the construction of campaign agendas depends on the strategies of politicization of the actors involved in competition, which are formulated on the basis of, and shaped by, the preferences of media actors *vis-à-vis* the immigration issue and its attributes, which in their turn vary depending on local factors and focusing events. Yet, the limitations in the available data point at the need of further research on these mechanisms.

Part 3: Conclusion

9 Conclusions

When immigration becomes a stable part of electoral agendas, all the actors involved in campaigning are forced to choose how to address the issue in public debates. Often dismissive strategies are not convenient, and parties that would otherwise prefer to stay out of these debates are nonetheless forced to develop their own positions. By dissecting the immigration issue in a number of different issue-dimensions, and by analysing processes of issue-framing in electoral campaigning and agenda building, this study has tried to find answers to questions about the supply side of issue competition in local electoral campaigns. In so doing, it has asked how actors holding different predispositions with respect to immigration compete with one another, why they compete the way they do, and what explains varying strategies and preferences across different electoral contexts.

My main argument has been that, instead of emphasizing or de-emphasizing the issue as a whole, actors' campaigning entails strategic framing and selective emphasis of issue dimensions, which allow them to develop distinctive profiles and engage in public debates on aspects of the immigration issue that are relatively favourable to them. In order to assess the dimensionality of campaigning on immigration, I have analysed immigration debates from several interrelated angles, looking at the weight of different issue dimensions across local contexts; investigating how actors tackle these depending on available opportunities and constraints and by means of strategic framing; and assessing the varying news value of the multiple aspects of the immigration issue.

Following the assumption that the politics of campaigning are a fundamental aspect in the functioning of contemporary democracies at different levels in the decision-making process, the thesis analysed the way in which the immigration issue is framed and electoral agendas on immigration are built in six local campaigns across three cities in Italy. The focus on electoral periods follows the idea that campaign decisions are "too important for political scientists to ignore" (Rohrschneider, 2002 p. 308), and combines the study of partisan strategic attention to policy issues with the investigation of dimensional issue politicization and framing

decisions. These analyses unpacked the process by which political actors, relying on the media to convey frames to the public, define political problems and compete with one another over the meaning of public issues. Electoral campaigning not only involves a struggle over the attention to alternative political issues, but also encompasses a struggle between different definitions so that candidates compete over alternative ways of understanding social reality and public problems.

The main argument put forward is therefore that the immigration issue must not be understood as a homogeneous category that parties endorse or dismiss, support or oppose. By illustrating firstly that debates in different local settings deal with immigration in substantively different ways, and secondly that parties' electoral strategies rely upon the thematic structure of the issue, exploiting immigration dimensions in order to increase the appeal of their messages, this argument finds support in the empirical evidence.

This is this dissertation's most general conclusion. It has sought to offer one of the first comprehensive analyses of an issue that has too often been considered "new", that has been generally approached as a single category, and that therefore has been predominantly analysed through a fixed framework of competition between 'established' and 'emergent' actors. Rather, this thesis suggests that immigration may be less exceptional than often implied, and may resemble any other political issue in electoral campaigning. Other issues like the environment, EU integration or civil rights, which also first appeared as part of the politicization strategies of parties wishing to increase the salience of then largely neglected issues in electoral and public debates, may have followed a similar trajectory.

This process of "issue bundling" refers to the sets of mechanisms by which a previously non-salient political issue becomes more and more integrated into the dominant political discourse (De Vries, Hakhverdian and Lancee, 2011). So far, this process has been mainly interpreted as integration of issues within the left-right dimension: when public events and the strategies of parties succeed in politicizing a new controversy and in establishing it within the public agenda, parties are generally expected to opt for the safest strategy and to ensure ideological consistency by integrating the new issue into their already established profile.

In this dissertation, however, the claim was empirically tested that the path towards normality, and the reshaping of the competitive dynamics of party systems by new issues implies more than just their incorporation into mainstream left-right competition. Inevitably, it also involves the development of a set of sub-categories and dimensions characterizing the

framing of the issue in public debates. On this basis, the dissertation's findings clarify the dynamics of local election campaigning, focusing on the types of actors involved and their politicization strategies, on their role within the campaigns, and on the interaction between them and the media environment.

By looking not only at the dimensionality of the political space, but also at the dimensionality of policy issues, the findings of this study point to a first conclusion about the mechanisms of issue politicization in immigration politics. The incorporation of new policy issues into the dominant political debate, in fact, besides integration into the left-right dimension, also means disintegration into a number of alternative dimensions, aspects, and frames. It is with these, as we show, that electoral actors set up their strategies of competition, since parties do not simply aim at ideological consistency but also consider contextual and tactical opportunities available across election campaigns.

Beyond competition over saliency of policy issues, electoral actors interact with one another on the basis of issue dimensions, positions and interpretations. Strategic campaigning is aimed at shifting the focus of debates to alternative dimensions and understandings of the immigration issue, manipulating the content of electoral agendas in order to gain a relative advantage over ones' adversaries. My study suggest that context, campaign and party level conditions jointly drive the choices of politicization by competing political actors, but that their strategies of politicization on the immigration issue are far from uniform, whether we consider the substance of the debates, its tone or its scope.

Depending on local circumstances and structures of opportunity, the competing actors take up sections and aspects of policy issues, while neglecting others. Next to framing the immigration issue on the basis of consistency with their ideological profiles, they also carry out cost-benefit calculations based on their role in the election campaign and on the resonance of alternative interpretations with common understandings of immigration. By recognizing this, the findings pave the way toward connecting this field of research with other promising areas within the social and political sciences, such as electoral and public opinion research and the study of mediatisation and communication, hopefully opening new avenues for the understanding of contemporary party politics.

9.1 The multiple dimensions of policy issues

In line with a growing amount of research, this work has suggested that political issues may encompass multiple policy dimensions (Höglinger *et al.*, 2012, Helbling *et al.*, 2010, Baumgartner *et al.*, 2008, De Vries and Hobolt, 2012), and that immigration represents a prototypical example of a multidimensional political issue. As a result, it suggested that any understanding of the strategies used by political actors to politicize immigration must include an account of its multiple issue dimensions, and the variety of framing strategies that could be used to address each. This is because, although every public policy of substance is inherently multidimensional, its public understanding at any given time is only partial (Baumgartner and Jones, 2002).

The dissertation advanced three interrelated reasons behind the multidimensionality of electoral issues and their selective politicization in party competition: *inherent complexity*, referring to the substantial complexity of policy problems and the multiple implications they have that cut across policy areas; *cognitive factors*, explaining that the fragmentation of issues into distinct dimensions facilitates their processing and understanding for the public; and *strategic factors,* since political entrepreneurs have neither the resources, nor the incentives, to address all aspects of policy issues simultaneously. Political actors would rather strategically mobilize certain aspects rather than others in order to promote specific understandings and perspectives on policy problems, based on expectations that doing so will lead to increased electoral returns.

Chapter 2 thus put forth a model of party competition based on a categorization of immigration into three issue dimensions, and empirically accounted for each dimension by further differentiating seven alternative frames used in newspapers' coverage of electoral debates on immigration. This approach implies that each separate attribute of immigration provides distinct opportunities to campaigners, so that electoral agendas are the results of their struggle over conflict dimensions within policy issues. Once issues are established in electoral agendas, alternative frames serve political actors in attempting to drive attention away from aspects that they perceive as disadvantageous towards advantageous ones.

In this sense, this dissertation has presented, discussed and empirically tested hypotheses concerning the politicization of immigration, proposing to take into account the complexity of political debates and analysing how the separate aspects of issues are taken up, contextualized and framed in partisan and media agendas. I have demonstrated that strategies oriented at

manipulating electoral agendas vary depending on the interaction between context, campaign and party level factors, and the features of the issue at stake. Political decisions tend to encompass a multiplicity of dimensions of choice, so that political actors do not only choose whether they will address one issue in the electoral campaign or not, but they can also decide which aspects of that issue they want to highlight, and how.

This study has therefore primarily focused on the empirical analysis of the strategic framework of issue multidimensionality, investigating the choices of political actors confronting complex policy issues. In so doing, I have illustrated the varying approaches that local political actors have followed to politicize immigration depending on strategic opportunities and constraints that interacted with the distinctive dimensions of the issue. By focusing on the supply side of competition, however, a main limitation of my approach is that it could not account for cognitive factors in the context of multidimensional issue competition. In this sense, my results provide initial evidence that could be developed in future research assessing dynamically how attitudes towards immigration can generate different electoral effects, conditional on the specific dimension of the issue that is mobilized as well as on its predominant framing, and how – in turn – political actors respond to changing public perceptions of immigration.

9.2 The local dimension of immigration debates

The question of whether parties compete using multiple dimensions of the immigration issue could not be answered in the abstract, but had to be studied in a given context. Accordingly, I have proposed to study the dimensionality of immigration in a very specific context, namely Italian local electoral campaigns. The decision to investigate local electoral campaigns in Italy matched the focus of this study on competitive strategies "within" multidimensional issues, which requires the in-depth investigation of the construction of immigration discourse by the competing actors. The three city contexts that I have selected represent three ideal-typical situations in terms of available opportunities to mobilize on the immigration issue, corresponding with the constitutive dimensions of the immigration issue. As a matter of fact, the three settings differ systematically with respect to the features of the migrant population, allowing me to study the implications of some key situational conditions influencing electoral campaigning.

Inevitably, the disadvantage of a natural-setting design implies that the observed campaigns and actors differ in many respects, which makes comparing them more complex. In this sense, the timing, composition of the party systems, and the coalitions opposing each other in Rome, Milan and Prato vary considerably. Additionally, a disadvantage of this design is that I have focused on a set of specific local electoral campaigns in Italy, so that my results are heavily tainted by the context of the Italian political and communication system. I acknowledge, of course, that the Italian context might have influenced my results in many ways, and that this study should be replicated in other local context in order to be better able to assess the generalizability and external validity of my findings. Most notably, the volatility of the Italian party system and the specificity of Berlusconi's populist political style, but also the lack of a significant immigrant vote and the particular competences of the municipal governments in Italy are all issues can have influenced the specific campaign strategies observed in the cases under study.

Yet, although the results of social science research in natural settings are always context-bound, they may still point beyond the specificities and idiosyncrasies of a given context, if they succeed in characterizing it in analytical terms, and recognize how this conditions the results. In this sense, although the specific circumstances of local immigration politics in Italy might explain the stronger presence of one dimension over another in the case under study, the logics of competition unfolded throughout the study apply beyond this specific context. I shall therefore in this conclusive chapter attempt to indicate how my results do not only speak of campaigning in three Italian cities, but say something more general on immigration politics at the local level and on electoral campaign strategies over multidimensional policy issues.

This study has tried to fill a gap between the widespread awareness that the immigration issue has contributed to reshaping the structure of party systems, and the predominant focus on national electoral campaigns and debates. The comparative analysis of three city contexts in Italy showed that any understanding of the supply side of electoral competition over immigration cannot avoid accounting for local dynamics, as local factors can be responsible for substantial differences in how the immigration issue is politicized. To explain this, however, the analysis showed the necessity of accounting for the complex nature of policy issues, which are made of a thematic network of alternative aspects and dimensions that can be mobilized independent from one another.

The varying levels of attention for the immigration issue are associated with the relative emphasis that is put on each of its constitutive dimensions across different local debates and

election campaigns. Hence, the results suggest that studies on the composition of electoral agendas should focus not only on the traditional questions about the when and whether of attention to immigration, but also on the more detailed investigation of those aspects that determine the salience of different issue dimensions in electoral debates, since these lead to the overall importance that is attributed to the issue.

Electoral debates on immigration in Italy are overwhelmingly dominated by security arguments, which – as I have shown – is primarily likely to the special responsibilities of Italian local administrators in the enforcement of law and order. Yet, the predominance of law and order is not stable across cases and over time, showing that the actual competences of administrators cannot explain the full complexity of local debates on immigration. As a matter of fact, my analysis identified substantial differences in the way in which the issue is framed across local settings.

Local contexts and structures of opportunity influence the composition of immigration debates in a substantial way, as the nature of debates depends on the way in which events and controversies interact with local characteristics, the actual competences of administrators and the type of actors involved in debating immigration. The comprehensive analysis of immigration debates presented in Chapter 5, and the following frame analyses of Chapter 7, confirm not only the appropriateness of studying politicization dynamics at the local level, but also the need to account for the various aspects and frames of policy issues that can be simultaneously mobilized.

Such findings point to a first set of conclusions about the comparative study of immigration politics, beyond the specificities of the local electoral campaigns under investigation and the high degree of territorial, cultural and socioeconomic differentiation in Italy. To begin with, the thematic understanding of policy issues that I suggested enables accounting for the concrete aspects of the immigration issue that make it matter in contentious politics, improving the understanding of its politicization and how political debates unfold.

In addition, this implies that approaches based on political institutional dimensions at the national level risk overlooking the multifaceted development of immigration debates, which often are structured according to the characteristics of local settings. Although this study did not analyse debates on different levels of governance, and therefore cannot draw conclusions in this sense, future research might look into whether, and to what extent, national politicization dynamics influence local discursive opportunities, and *vice versa*.

Yet, it is incontrovertible that the broader process of securitization of immigration politics is increasingly permeating to the local level as well. Local debates on immigration, often as a consequence of local events and sensationalistic stories, are overwhelmingly dominated by a mix between symbolic security politics and actual competences of local administrators. Especially when unexpected events are highly mediatized, all actors at the local level endorse a law and order, highly restrictive approach to immigration affairs, so that insecurity is primarily framed in terms of the presence of ethnic minorities, in particular Roma communities, on the local territory.

9.3 Campaigning strategies, issue emphasis and framing of immigration

The empirical analyses presented in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 tackled the strategies of politicization of the immigration issue put forth by the actors in electoral campaigning in the three cities. In so doing, they provided and empirically tested a framework for the analysis of party strategies in electoral campaigns. This framework is based on the threefold assumption that the public learns about candidates and votes mainly in the course of election campaigns, that political actors rely on the media to reach citizens and to win the support of electorates, and that political actors' strategic choices are not fully free. I suggested that in the course of electoral campaigns the conflict between political actors unfolds, as the actors involved form coalitions, compete and craft messages based on alternative arguments, frames and worldviews, with the goal of getting public and media attention and of mobilizing support. This is why a comprehensive account of political conflict in electoral campaigns requires analysing not only partisan strategies across issues, but also strategies of politicization within issues, i.e. the strategies that parties adopt toward issues that they cannot avoid or cannot afford to dismiss.

I have offered an innovative interpretation of the study of electoral debates on immigration, demonstrating that the type of debate varies substantially depending on the strategies of the actors involved, the characteristics of specific electoral campaigns, as well as the socio-contextual features of local settings. By conceptually dividing policy choices into distinctive dimensions and frames, my model of electoral campaigning conceived partisan strategies as successive steps in the process of competition with other parties in the system, accounting for

the constraints posed by the features of the issue under debate and the opportunities of the context where competition takes place.

Actors must first decide whether to take up the immigration issue or discard it altogether from their electoral campaign. If they engage in immigration affairs, multidimensional competition follows three basic strategic clusters, depending on whether parties are interested in capitalizing on support or opposition to immigration. First, they have to decide whether to take up the same issue dimension as their competitors or rather shift the debate to alternative aspects. By mobilizing alternative dimensions they try to raise attention for aspects that they deem electorally rewarding, while avoiding direct competition with their opponents. When instead focusing on the same issue dimensions as their competitors parties have to decide whether to take up the same frames as the opponents or to mobilize alternative ones. Mobilizing alternative frames means an attempt to persuade voters of an alternative interpretation of a given aspect of immigration, whereas providing the same frame as their competitors entails a direct competition with them.

My analyses have shown the importance of party system agendas and campaign-level factors in explaining local debates on immigration. Dimensional profiles and issue positions do not vary only across parties on the left-right scale, but especially between local settings within the same coalitions. Mainstream parties' accommodative and adversarial strategies depend on the dimensions of the immigration issue that are being debated and on the presence and electoral strength of radical right competitors in the campaign. Moreover, I have illustrated that strategic responses and campaigning choices are also driven by the behaviour of mainstream opponents vis-à-vis specific issue dimensions. Hence, immigration debates do not appear to be only actor-driven but also agenda-driven, since strategies are generally more coherent over time across actors within city settings than the other way around, across cities within the same coalitions.

Despite a general preference for law and order arguments among the right and for cultural aspects among the left, mainstream and radical parties show substantial variation in the way they tackle the immigration issue. When it comes to immigration, therefore, actors seem to be ready to mixing their strategies with those of the opponents, whilst matching them with respect to other issue aspects. They try to stay competitive by tackling primarily the issue

dimensions that do not contradict their values, and hoping not to have to surrender too much of their credibility when disadvantageous aspects gain visibility in public debates. Although "proprietal" issues may be increasingly exceptional due to the tendency of parties' to dedicate attention to the same policy problems (Guinaudeau and Persico, 2014), patterns of issue advantage and disadvantage emerge in the framework of their multiple dimensions and aspects.

Framing, in this sense, represents a crucial instrument to manipulate the public understanding of policy issues especially – yet not exclusively – when actors are forced to take a stance on disadvantageous issues. By involving both selection and diagnosis, evaluative framing enables to define issue dimensions and to provide them with specific meaning. Chapter 7, looking at substantive, issue-specific frames, shifted the focus of the analysis on the aspect of the problem definition by strategic political actors. The empirical analyses presented therein showed that framing strategies are only marginally influenced by the ideological profiles of parties, and much more by tactical considerations, and by the degree to which election debates are consensual, conflictual or blurred. As a matter of fact, the public discourse of the mainstream left and right, whether in support of or in opposition to immigration, was found to be remarkably similar, with little substantive evidence that parties framed immigration in line with their ideological commitments.

Against this background, the dissertation illustrates that the centre-right is better able to provide a consistent discourse on immigration than the centre-left. The increasing salience of the immigration issue enhances the dimensional similarity between the discourses of mainstream parties while simultaneously increasing the anti-immigration tone of the debate. This is because the centre-left emulates the dimensional attention profile of the centre-right, by taking up law and order aspects and negative tones. The analysis of dimensional choices shows that left-wing parties – and most notably the mainstream left – are unable to construct their own discourse on migration, and have to rely conspicuously on responses to the opponents' arguments. Our results confirm thus that the political right enjoys ownership and that the 'structural' disadvantage of left-wing actors in immigration debates is persistent and formidable, relegating them to the role of followers.

9.4 Advantaged and disadvantaged actors and the immigration issue

Based on a twofold differentiation of the actors involved in electoral competition, I looked at patterns of advantage and disadvantage on immigration debates starting from, on the one hand, parties' position along the left-right scale, and, on the other, the role they play in the election campaign, that is, as incumbents or challengers. The concept of party system agendas was used in order to argue that government parties tend to be more constrained than opposition ones in selecting their preferred strategies in electoral campaigns, since they have to respond in all policy sectors and policy dimensions for which their opponents can hold them accountable, and have to defend their credibility with respect to the handling of immigration affairs while in office.

Although the limited amount of cases upon which this study is based enabled me to draw only preliminary conclusions to be tested in future research, the analysis of local electoral campaigns confirmed that incumbent actors tend to be generally disadvantaged and more hesitant when dealing with immigration debates. This implies that parties tend to focus more on the dimensions that they perceive as advantageous when they are challengers than when they are in office, whilst governing actors are less able to avoid dimensions unfavourable to them in the immigration debate, since they are forced to respond to the issues their competitors bring into the agenda. The disadvantage of being incumbents, in other words, explained why parties in office are often forced to take up dimensions of the immigration issue in which their competitors enjoy an advantage.

Opposition parties have strong incentives to introduce new alternatives in order to win office, whereas governing actors, in turn, are compelled to respond to them in order to stay in power. 'Herestetic' devices, in other words, are used by challengers in order to divide the majority with a new alternative, or to reframe existing problems in order to win a majority of votes (Riker, 1986; Klingemann *et al*. 1994). This is in line with previous research suggesting that government rhetoric is not only shaped by public preferences, but also by the oppositions' agenda-setting (Hobolt *et al.,* 2008; Walgrave and Nuytemans, 2009)

The electoral campaigns of incumbent actors (irrespective of their left-right ideological profile) tend to discuss immigration most vigorously by means of issue dimensions and frames that enable them to defend their decisions against challengers' disruptive campaigning. Incumbents try to construct a pragmatic discourse of solidarity that conveniently minimizes government responsibility for policy failure, using emergency logics that insulate incumbent

actors from being punished by voters. Conversely, challenger political actors enjoy an increased leeway in attributing importance to immigration issue dimensions and in taking a position on these. Hence, my analysis suggest that future research shall further look into this process, investigating whether other cases confirm the finding that challengers are freer in their choices when they set up the immigration agenda.

Based on my empirical data, moreover, I have tentatively suggested that although parties in opposition tend to focus more on convenient dimensions than incumbent ones, right-wing actors benefit more from being in opposition than left-wing ones. To put it differently, the advantage of being a challenger is more evident for right-wing parties than for left-wing ones, and the left appears to be more ready to change its dimensional profile than the right when incumbent. In this sense, I have further confirmed the general disadvantage of the left in immigration debates. Most notably, the investigation of the overlap between the dimensional and framing choices of mainstream parties has illustrated that leftist parties' disadvantage has been aggravated by securitization.

Looked at from that angle, the findings of my study corroborate the conclusions of previous research on party competition suggesting that the Downsian 'if you can't beat them join them' is not the only strategy that disadvantaged parties may follow (Bale *et al.*, 2010). On the contrary, more differentiated agenda-setting strategies are at stake, since parties do not consider all issue dimensions as equally important, and emphasize dimensions on which they have a strategic advantage depending on the opportunities available at the campaign level and the strategies adopted by their mainstream opponents.

In this context, the left was first forced to take up the issue as a whole, before then turning out to be unable to participate to increasingly restrictive debates on the basis of the issue dimensions on which it enjoyed relative credibility. The left's inability to keep the focus on advantageous aspects, such as social and economic arguments and universal values, explains why its attention profile is subject to higher variation than its competitors'. As the analysis of the election manifestos has shown, moreover, this lack of consistency is also associated to the different audiences that actors address via different channels of communication.

What is sure, is that coherence matters in terms of agenda friction because it is generally rewarded by the media, explaining how difficult it is for issues and issue dimensions to emerge and disappear on the public agenda (Jones and Baumgartner, 2005). As I have illustrated in chapter 8 by comparing the different way in which immigration is dealt with

when actors' positions are not mediated by the media attention, and when, instead, they are filtered by media agendas and newsworthiness considerations, the media tends to prioritize simplified and consistent messages.

I have shown that established features of party competition at the national level are reproduced in local arenas, and that local political debates in the media tend to give priority to securitized and simplistic messages on immigration, which are more attractive for mediatized audiences than in pledges in party manifestos. More broadly, the multiple dimensions of immigration are differently reproduced conditional on the type of political communication in electoral campaigning. In this sense, the reciprocal efforts of political actors and the media to manipulate the electoral agenda, and their respective issue preferences influence the relative importance of the various dimensions of policy issues. Not only immigration as a whole, but also each of its constitutive aspects receive quite different levels of attention, and are discussed in different ways, in the two channels of communication.

This is particularly the case for the centre-left, whose approach to immigration affairs is considerably different depending on whether the left is stating its preferences in a programmatic way or, instead, it has to interact with the mass media to reach citizens. Conversely, my analysis showed that right-wing, anti-immigration parties enjoy a particular advantage in the news media coverage of immigration debates, especially in terms of visibility, but also with respect to the consistency of their positions across different channels of communication. In terms of actors' strategies, this means that interaction with the media allows advantaged parties to further concentrate their attention on advantageous issues, triggering additional issue-prioritization. From the point of view of the media, instead, it seems that centre-right statements on immigration have a higher 'news value' than the ones of other actors, because of their focus on appealing issue dimensions and because of the reputation of the actor making the claim.

9.5   Immigration, left and right strategies

The results outlined so far beg the question whether parties on the pro-immigration side of political competition, the mainstream left in particular, can ever find a way out of their disadvantage. By only looking at the supply side of competition, my empirical results do not tell much about how successful the different strategies are. As suggested in previous studies,

in fact, there are multiple patterns of strategic adjustment to new political conflict and challenges, so that political scientists should beware of 'winning formulas' as explanations of, or prescription for, party behaviour in the long run.

Nevertheless, the analysis of the dimensionality of immigration clearly suggests that agendas are mainly shaped by actors who are capable of formulating coherent discourses on issue dimensions, or at least ones that are familiar to, and resonant with the values of specific constituencies of national or local electorates. The disadvantage of the pro-immigration camp also has to do with the inconsistency of its campaign rhetoric over time and across contexts. Although the press seems to respond predominantly to sensational news stories and to the stimuli of issue-owners, rhetorical clarity also plays a pivotal role. In this sense, at least in the Italian case, the mainstream left and right seem to have taken very different directions indeed.

The Italian right has responded to the dilemma between economic liberalization and social and cultural nationalism decisively, fully opposing integration and the opening up of borders when it comes to immigration affairs. Even more importantly, it has successfully understood and interpreted media logics and language, offering a coherent anti-immigration discourse in which the perceived threat posed by immigration to the national identity is primarily framed in security terms. Its discourse has been readily translatable into news stories, gaining further currency with its constituents and beyond. Next to resonating with its voters, this choice has enabled the right to frame immigration in light of common arguments, making it familiar and accessible to mediatized audiences, giving it an advantage in electoral struggles.

The main problem with this strategy is one of accountability: if security issues and threats arise when the political right is in government, it may be held accountable over precisely that aspect of immigration it prioritized during the electoral campaign.[94] This, however, would require that independent and threatening radical right actors challenge the mainstream right on its own territory, something that has been very uncommon in the Italian political landscape of the recent years. One could even raise the question whether this strategy could inadvertently contribute to the emergence of a competitive anti-immigration actor on the extreme right of the political spectrum, especially today that the far-reaching alliances in the right-wing field

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[94] As was shown in the recent elections in Prato in 2014, where the right-wing administration was punished – among other things – for its inability to convey the immigration policies that were promised in the 2009 electoral campaign.

seem to have come to an end. Alternatively, it should be the left and the centre-left to point at the failures of the right in terms of immigration and security.

As a matter of fact, pro-immigration actors and the centre-left in particular generally opt for a strategy of differentiation. Their positions are spread across issue dimensions: tolerance and openness in the cultural dimension are generally accompanied by neutral positions on socioeconomic integration and support for tough immigration policies in terms of law ad order, in particular concerning Roma affairs. Moreover, left-wing parties often reconsider their policy preferences from one electoral campaign to the other and across different local contexts. This indicates, first, that the increasing importance of the issue in political conflict opens up substantial room for strategic manoeuvres by the left; on the other hand, however, this may be interpreted as the image of a weak and procrastinating left, unable or unwilling to fully engage in immigration politics, and undecided in terms of the values it wants to represent in public debates.

The Italian centre-left has mainly followed the dynamics of party system and media agendas, without being able to take the lead and to shape issue debates and policy-making in its most favourite direction. The volatility in terms of dimensional selection and issue positions, and across channels of communication indicates that the left is quite uncertain on *how* to address the immigration issue and on the type of electorate (or public) that it should be addressing. This points to how the immigration issue and its dimensions are likely to undergo a continuous number of re-framings by the centre-left, because its electoral strategies are highly shaped by the prevailing definitions of the issue among right-wing competitors.

The centre-left seems to have been subject to partial contagion from the right in migration-related issues, preserving its tolerant stances on cultural aspects, yet endorsing repressive policies in security matters. In other words, the left has tried to straddle both camps: it raised attention for its own issue-dimensions whilst simultaneously acknowledging the importance of those discussed by its opponent. In order to come to terms with electorates with mixed preferences (such as working-class authoritarians), the centre-left has taken up its opponents' law and order discourse by emphasizing emergency logics in its rhetoric even further. This seem to have been a self-defeating strategy, as it contributed to validating right-wing narratives, reproduced the idea of immigration as exceptional and temporary, and de-legitimized the left's own efforts to politicize immigration in terms of long-term socioeconomic and cultural benefits.

As a result, the mainstream left in Italy now finds itself in a political *cul-de-sac.* To come out of it, the results of this study suggest it should approach immigration affairs as a function of its multiple dimensions. The growing salience of the agenda of order and anxiety has shifted public priorities, overtaking the economic and social agendas; the left must decide whether it wants to build a new profile in terms of security, or instead whether it prefers to restore the centrality of its traditional worldview. This requires coming to terms with the cleavage over the value of security in immigration affairs, which should not be understood as a cleavage between the left and the right, but within the left itself (Sniderman *et al.,* 2000).

If the left really aimed at capitalizing on the security threats associated with immigration and crime, then the most appropriate strategy would be to drop the discussion of economic and cultural benefits of immigration from the agenda: their politicization, combined with substantial attention on security aspects, in fact seems detrimental, as security concerns benefit from higher media coverage and therefore tend to be prioritized by voters. This choice, however, would mean engaging in direct confrontation with the anti-immigration camp, by giving up a theoretically advantageous position in managing social and economic integration in favour of a platform that is, at least in terms of dimensional attention, the same as the political right. Hence, one could question whether this would be electorally rewarding, given that the issue would be overwhelmingly framed in terms of values of order and authority, which generally advantage the political right. As the case of Rome has shown, when this is the case it is increasingly difficult for the centre-left to preserve its pro-immigrant positions within a security frame.

Alternatively, the left may realize – as this study implicitly suggests – that "becoming more right-wing on cultural issues" (Van der Brug and Van Spanje, 2009) does not necessarily yield electoral gains. Adapting their policy positions to what electorates think, or what the left thinks they think, may prove beneficial only in the short term. Over the long run, instead, this strategy has only contributed to further strengthening the advantage of the political right, by bringing to the fore values of authority, order and discipline, to which the left is vulnerable. Given that equality may be considered the criterion that ultimately distinguishes the left from the right (Bobbio, 1996), left-wing parties might be better off cultivating egalitarian constituencies, by focusing on long-term socioeconomic and cultural benefits of immigration rather than on short-term security threats.

This could be done by integrating the debate on immigration into the left's already existing (at least in theory) political profile, stressing issues related to the unequal distribution of

economic opportunities, access to education and housing, as well as labour, civil, and political rights. This would generate ideological consistency, channelled through egalitarianism, and would engage the left in a more comprehensive struggle with the right over the understanding of immigration in Italy. Conversely, the Italian left seems to be increasingly dragged into the securitization discourse as soon as the immigration issue gains visibility in media agendas. In so doing, it fails to highlight favourable dimensions, it fails to address the contradictions of its adversaries and it actually contributes to reinforcing the image of a 'tough' centre-right in immigration politics.

As a matter of fact, the Italian left has opted to withdraw from the socioeconomic dimension when dealing with immigration despite the absence, thus far, of major public tensions on these aspects. In other words, the actual circumstances would appear to create favourable opportunities, as suggested by previous accounts underlining that job competition between natives and immigrants is minimal, and that immigration has had a generally positive impact on the national welfare system and average wages (Calavita, 2004; Massetti, 2014). This is not to say that a similar strategy would not face short-term drawbacks. Yet, the left could achieve resonance with voters through the recognition of the familiar value of equality, rather than exclusively via the disadvantageous channel of mediatized logics, sensationalism and threat.

In sum, focusing on issue dimensions on which it enjoys at least a theoretical advantage and articulating a clear-cut immigration profile of its own, may be the only way for the mainstream left to gain a place in the sun in immigration debates. If this has not been the case so far is primarily due to the ability of the anti-immigration field to conceal the socioeconomic aspects from the debate. By choosing to follow the right and focus on public anxieties and security concerns, however, the left has also contributed to further consolidate its adversary's credibility in dealing with immigration.

9.6   Future research directions

This study has revealed that neither party strategy nor media preferences *per se* can fully explain how public debates will unfold in electoral campaigns. Rather, it shows that the construction of campaign agendas in terms of issue-dimensions depends on multiple factors, ranging from the politicization strategies of the actors involved in competition, through the

issue-specific preferences of media actors and socio-contextual factors, to focusing events and opportunities affecting the environment of electoral competition. The aim of this study has been to produce an empirical comparison of three local settings, linking partisan strategic options with contextual circumstances. It has sought to introduce a thematic conceptualization of the way in which the immigration issue is debated in Italy. It is up to the reader to assess the extent to which the evidence provided is convincing, and to judge whether the study has been successful in meeting its goals.

I pointed at a new dynamic that party competition may follow when policy issues become established in electoral agendas, suggesting that actors involved in campaigning are forced to choose how to address the issue in public debates in terms of issue dimensions. However, my analysis also gives rise to additional questions that need to be addressed in future studies. These questions concern the degree to which this trend can be generalized beyond the case of immigration, in order to assess whether this issue maintains a certain degree of exceptionality in party competition. Moreover, since my results show that political actors are selective with respect to the aspects of migration they choose to highlight, a cross-national comparative design could assess the strategic advantage and spatial location of actors depending on the type and nature of migration across countries.

The analysis of the media coverage of electoral campaigns reveals much about the strategies of politicization of the immigration issue, and likewise about the nature of the relationship between parties and the media system. However, it certainly does not provide an entire picture of the dynamics of electoral campaigning. To provide a more exhaustive assessment of partisan framing strategies and interaction with the news media environment, it would be necessary to combine these findings with research based on data on how political actors acquire media attention. The most common way parties produce events that the media find attractive are press conferences and press releases, but also demonstrations and other explicitly staged events. Because of this, this study has avoided drawing general conclusions on the reciprocal influences between parties and the media, which could be only assessed on the basis of indicators that more directly tackle the struggle among campaigners over the control of the news agenda (and in particular over the framing of political issues in the media).

Future research could apply the theoretical framework that was developed in this study to models based on more complete figures on issue attention, to begin with by accounting for other issues susceptible to a process of issue bundling similar to the one described here for

immigration. Indeed, one limitation of this study that is important to acknowledge is that assessing the relevance of a political issue based solely on its own salience is never preferable to looking at the distribution of attention across all issues discussed in a campaign. The coexistence of distinct dimensions within single policy issues, as well as the conditional relationship between issue dimensions and actors' electoral strategies might in fact be considered a peculiarity of immigration. Yet, the multiple analytical steps and the conceptual framework developed in this study have connected the immigration issue's specificity with the general processes of electoral campaigning. The changing importance of issue-dimensions across local contexts in Italy, the tendency of immigration to polarize debates, and the specific patterns of issue-ownership that it generates, helped illustrate the dynamics of the incorporation and subsequent normalization of new policy issues in political competition, through mechanisms of dimensionality and framing.

More generally, I hope that my typology of immigration issue dimensions will open the way for new developments in the study of issue competition, with a better integration of salience and positions, along with a dynamic perspective. In this sense, another potentially important direction for future research may be to use the multidimensional model proposed here to uncover more general dynamics of politicization and framing. In order to provide a more systematic analysis of the incorporation of the immigration issue into electoral campaigning, future studies might look beyond the local politics of immigration, accounting for longer time frames and tackling not only cross-national convergence and divergence but also multi-level interactions between actors in local, national and supranational arenas. Moreover, electoral campaigns only focus on a particular segment of political conflict, whereas a broader scope may be necessary in order to better capture actor's position and competition on immigration.

My analysis has also provided additional insights for the study of the politics of immigration and the changing nature of electoral competition, corroborating the idea of an increasing securitization of immigration debates across Europe, and illustrating that this takes place not only at the national level, but also in local elections. Inevitably, as I discussed, this is also the result of the larger context of the Italian media and political system, which means that future cross-national research on campaign strategies at the local level could further look at questions that could not be addressed by the design of this study. This would enable to see whether party systems characterized by different levels of fragmentation and volatility result in alternative strategic choices by political actors mobilizing immigration issue dimensions, and whether contexts in which municipal governments have less competences in matters of

internal security than in the Italian case are characterized by different patterns of campaigning and dimensional preferences.

These are just some of the obviously important aspects that can help the understanding of electoral campaigning, which could not be addressed in this research. Nonetheless, this study has provided a first comprehensive analysis that combines parties' strategic advantages and issue multidimensionality, investigating from an innovative standpoint the reasons why 'the immigration issue' has been difficult to assimilate within existing conflict dimensions, and addressing the need for a systematic, comparative analysis of how parties handle and engage with policy 'issues' and their constitutive dimensions in public debates.

Appendix

Table A1 *Codebook*

Level	Variable label (short)	Variable label (long)	Comments	Values
Sentence	obs	Number of observation	Unique identifier of each core sentence	
Election	city	City	City in which the election campaign was coded	Milan Rome Prato
Election	year	Year	Year of the election campaign	2004
				2006 2008 2009 2011
Election	election	Electoral campaign	Identifier for each city and year of the election campaign coded.	
Election	ballottaggio	Ballottaggio	Identifier for second-round of electoral campaigns	
Sentence	sen_type	Core sentence type	Type of core sentence.	actor-actor actor-issue actor-actor-issue
Sentence	proposal	Policy proposal	Identifier for claims proposing actual policy or policy changes	
Article	source_type	Type of data source (local newspaper articles, national newspaper article, party manifestos)	Identifier for articles and manifestos. National newspapers were coded for all election except for the ones in Prato.	National newspaper Local newspaper Party manifesto
Article	source_name	Name of data source	Name of news outlet used (La Repubblica, Il Messaggero etc.).	

Article	title	title of article	The first two words of the title of the article	
Article	date	date of newspaper article	Date of publication	
Article	page	page of publication	Page of publication (when available for newspapers; for PARTY MANIFESTOS = ranking)	
Article	type	type of article	It indicates whether it is a commentary, an interview or a reportage article	
Article	length	length of article	It indicates the length of the article in n° of words	
Article	comments		Any additional comment on article	
Article	art_ID	Article identification number	Unique identifier among the articles published on the same day of publication in the same news outlet.	
Sentence	text	Grammatical sentence	When available, text of the grammatical sentence that was reduced to core-sentence (for recoding and correction)	
Sentence	subject	subject actor as coded	Mainly names of organizations (parties, interest groups).	
Sentence	subjectname	second level subject actor	When available, names of persons if mentioned in the document/article	
Sentence	party	Party family of subject actor	If applicable, party family of the subject actor (e.g., social democrats, right wing populists).	
Sentence	coalition	Coalition of subject actor	If applicable, the coalition to which subject actor belongs	
Sentence	incumbent	Incumbent or challenger	Whether subject actor is within incumbent or challenger coalition groups at local level	
Sentence	subj_direction	Relationship for actor-actor sentences	Direction of the relationship between subject and object	(-1, -0.5, 0, 0.5, 1)
Sentence	object	object actor as coded	Mainly names of organizations (parties, interest groups).	

Sentence	objectname	second level object actor	When available, names of persons if mentioned in the document/article	
Sentence	partyobj	Party family of object actor	If applicable, party family of the object actor	
Sentence	coalitionobj	Coalition of object actor	If applicable, the coalition to which object actor belongs	
Sentence	incumbentobj	Incumbent or challenger	Whether object actor is within incumbent or challenger coalition groups at local level	
sentence	issue	issue of reference of the core sentence	Coded for immigration sentences.	
Sentence	dimension	Dimension of immigration	Dimensional issue categories	Dimensional issue categories
Sentence	direction	Relationship as coded	Direction of the relationship between subject and issue	(-1, -0.5, 0, 0.5, 1)
Frame	frame1	first level Frame of the immigration issue	Frame issue categories	
Frame	frame2	second level Frame of the immigration issue	when available, additional Frame issue categories	Frame issue categories
Frame	frame3	third level Frame of the immigration issue	when available, additional Frame issue categories	Frame issue categories

List of keywords	"immigra*" "migrant*", "stranier*", "extracomunitar*" "clandestin*", "vu compr*" "ambulant*" "Islam" "Musulman*" "Imam" "Moschea", "minaret*", "Jihad", "burqa", "maghrebin*" "magrebin*", "African*" "Albanes*" "Rumen*" "Romen*" "Rom" (excluded) "etnia+Rom" "zingar*" "nomad*", "cines*" "fabbrica-dormitor*", "capannon*""Joan Rus" "La Storta","Via Padova" "via Quaranta" "Macrolotto" "via Pistoiese" "Reggiani" "Piazza Vittorio" "Tor di Quinto" "sicurezza" "decoro" "camp*+abusiv*" "Neamtu", "Mailat", "tendopoli" "accampament*" "baracc*" "Lampedusa" "CIE" "CPT" "basist*" "scafist*", "rifugiat*" "barcon*" "Ponte Galeria" "ondata" "asilo" "richiedent*" "Bossi-Fini" "Turco-Napolitano" "Decreto flussi" "sanatori*",*", "soggiorno", "visto", "cittadinanza", "nazionalità" "Razzis*" "discrimina*", "multicultur*", "assimila*" "integraz, "xenofob*"

Table A2 *Codebook of dimensions and frames for content analysis*

Dimension	Frame	Pro-immigration arguments	Anti-immigration arguments
Socioeconomic	Economic Prosperity	Economic growth Immigrants necessary in specific sectors of labor market	Economic decay Illegal economic activities
	Labour and Security	Immigrants as taxpayers and welfare contributors	Immigrants as welfare receivers tradeoff employment with immigrants Black market and unfair labour competition
Cultural and religious	Multiculturalism	multiculturalism religious equality political rights	Failure of multiculturalism incompatibility of religions and cultures Political rights for italian diaspora rather than immigrants
	Nationalism	Nationalism (-) evolution of national identity citizenship (+)	Protection of national identity comunitarismo differenzialista citizenship (-)
Law and order	Roma Issues	Citizenship and EU frame	security frame
	Urban Issues	Banlieues and urban degradation (+)	Banlieues and urban degradation (-) Urban violence
	Emergency Issues	Refugee and shelter Amnesty and regularization	Illegal entry and residence terrorism and islam

Table A3 *Candidates, lists and electoral results*

Municipal Elections in Rome 2006

	Candidate	Party Lists	Vote %	Coalition Programme	Tot %
Mainstream Left Coalition	**Walter Veltroni**	L'Ulivo*	33.8%	"Walter Veltroni, Il sindaco di tutti"	**61.4%**
		Civica Veltroni*	6.2%		
		Rifondazione Comunista*	5.4%		
		Verdi*	4.8%		
		Moderati*	4.4%		
		Di Pietro – Italia dei Valori*	2.3%		
		La Rosa nel Pugno*	2.0%		
		Comunisti Italiani*	1.5%		
		Roma Arcobaleno	0.6%		
		Lista Consumatori	0.2%		
		Consumatori Uniti	0.1%		
		Socialdemocrazia	0.1%		
Mainstream Right Coalition	**Giovanni Alemanno**	Alleanza Nazionale*	19.4%	"In nome del Popolo Romano"	**37%**
		Forza Italia*	10.2%		
		Unione Di Centro*	4.3%		
		Amore per Roma	0.8%		
		Az. Sociale Mussolini	0.6%		
		Dem.Cr. per Autonomie	0.6%		
		Nuovo PSI	0.4%		
		Forza Roma	0.3%		
		Partito Rep. Italiano	0.2%		
		Avanti Lazio	0.1%		
		Mida	0.1%		
		Pensione case lavoro	0.1%		
		Nuova Generazione	0.1%		
		Partito Real Democratico	0.1%		
Other	All other candidates below 1%				

Source: Italian Ministry of Internal Affairs – Electoral Archive http://elezionistorico.interno.it
* Indicates whether parties obtained seats in the city council

Municipal Elections in Rome 2008

	Candidate	Party Lists	Vote %	Coalition Programme	Tot %	2nd Round
Mainstream Right Coalition	**Giovanni Alemanno**	Popolo delle Libertà*	36.6%	"Roma Cambia"	**40.7%**	**53.7%**
		Lista Civica Sindaco Alemmanno*	1.22%			
		Lista Civica il Popolo della Vita	0.7%			
		Movimento per le Autonomie, Allenza per il Sud	0.6%			
		Lista Civica la Voce dei Consumatori	0.3%			
		Partito Repubblicano Italiano	0.2%			
Mainstream Left Coalition	**Francesco Rutelli**	Partito Democratico*	34.0%	"La Nostra Idea di Roma"	**45.8%**	**46.3%**
		Sinistra Arcobaleno*	4.5%			
		Di Pietro – IDV*	3.3%			
		Lista Civica per Rutelli*	2.7%			
		Lista Civica under 30	0.8%			
		Lista Bonino-Radicali	0.7%			
		Moderati per Roma	0.5%			
		Unione Democratica per i Consumatori	0.2%			
Other	**Francesco Storace**	La Destra Fiamma Tricolore*	3.8%	Programma La Destra	**3.8%**	
Other	**Luciano Ciocchetti**	Unione di Centro*	3.3%	Programma UDC	**3.3%**	
Other	All other candidates below 3%					

Source: Italian Ministry of Internal Affairs – Electoral Archive http://elezionistorico.interno.it
* Indicates whether parties obtained seats in the city council

Municipal Elections in Milan 2006

	Candidate	Party Lists	Vote %	Coalition Programme	Tot %
Mainstream Right Coalition	**Letizia Moratti**	Forza Italia*	32.2%	Programma Coalizione	**54.3%**
		Alleanza Nazionale*	8.5%		
		Lista Moratti*	5.1%		
		Lega Nord*	3.7%		
		UDC*	2.4%		
		Pensioni e Lavoro	0.6%		
		DC per autonomie	0.4%		
		Azione Sociale – Muss.	0.4%		
		Fiamma Tricolore	0.3%		
		Giovani per Milano	0.2%		
		Nuovo PSI	0.1%		
		Pensionati Invalidi	0.1%		
		SOS Italia	0.1%		
Mainstream Left Coalition	**Bruno Ferrante**	L'Ulivo*	22.0%	"Un'altra Milano comincia da qui"	**44.6%**
		Lista Ferrante*	7.5%		
		Rifondazione Comunista*	4.2%		
		Federazione Verdi*	3.4%		
		Uniti con Dario Fo*	2.1%		
		Comunisti Italiani	1.5%		
		Di Pietro – IDV	1.5%		
		La Rosa nel Pugno	1.4%		
		Partito Pensionati	0.6%		
		UDEUR Popolari	0.3%		
		Lista Consumatori	0.1%		
Other	All other candidates below 1%				

Source: Italian Ministry of Internal Affairs – Electoral Archive http://elezionistorico.interno.it
* Indicates whether parties obtained seats in the city council

Municipal Elections in Milan 2011

	Candidate	Party Lists	Vote %	Coalition Programme	Tot %	2nd Round
Mainstream Left Coalition	**Giuliano Pisapia**	Partito Democratico*	28.6%	"PROGRAMMA DEL CANDIDATO SINDACO GIULIANO PISAPIA e delle liste che lo sostengono"	**47.3%**	**55.1%**
		Sinistra Ecologia Libertà*	4.7%			
		Milano Civica per Pisapia*	3.9%			
		Rifondazione Comunista - Comunisti Italiani*	3.1%			
		Di Pietro – IDV*	2.5%			
		Lista Pannella – Bonino*	1.7%			
		Verdi Ecologisti	1.4%			
		Milly Moratti per Pisapia	1.3%			
Mainstream Right Coalition	**Letizia Moratti**	Il Popolo della Libertà*	28.7%	"Per una Milano sempre più bella da vivere"	**43.3%**	**44.9%**
		Lega Nord*	9.6%			
		Milano al Centro*	2.4%			
		Io amo Milano Io amo l'Italia	0.5%			
		Progetto Milano Migliore	0.5%			
		Pensioni e Lavoro	0.3%			
		La Destra	0.3%			
		Unione Italiana	0.3%			
		Giovani per l'EXPO	0.2%			
		Nuovo PSI	0.2%			
		Popolari Italia Domani	0.1%			
		Alleanza Di Centro	0.1%			
Other	**Manfredi Palmeri**	Nuovo Polo per Milano*	2.7%	"La Primavera di Milano Palmeri sindaco"	**5.5%**	
		Unione di Centro	1.9%			
Other	**Mattia Calise**	Movimento 5 Stelle*	3.4%	"Programma per la nostra città"	**3.4%**	
Other	All other candidates below 1%					

Source: Italian Ministry of Internal Affairs – Electoral Archive http://elezionistorico.interno.it
* Indicates whether parties obtained seats in the city council

Municipal Elections in Prato 2004

	Candidate	Party Lists	Vote %	Coalition Programme	Tot %
Mainstream Left Coalition	**Marco Romagnoli**	Democratici di Sinistra*	35.2%	"Per una Prato da Primato"	**53.5%**
		La Margherita*	9.6%		
		Lista Di Pietro*	2.8%		
		Comunisti Italiani*	2.2%		
		Federazione Verdi*	2.0%		
		SDI	1.2%		
		Alleanza Pop. - UDEUR	0.3%		
Mainstream Right Coalition	**Filippo Bernocchi**	Forza Italia*	16.7%	"Un futuro per Prato, un cambiamento per tutti"	**33.0%**
		Alleanza Nazionale*	12.7%		
		UDC	2.5%		
		Insieme per Prato	0.86%		
Other	**Mauro Vannoni**	Rifondazione Comunista*	6.3%	Programma Coalizione	**8.1%**
		Sinistra per Prato	1.8%		
Other	**Massimo Taiti**	Nuovo Partito Socialista Italiano*	3.0%	Programma Nuovo PSI	**3.1%**
Other	All other candidates below 1.5%				

Source: Italian Ministry of Internal Affairs – Electoral Archive http://elezionistorico.interno.it
* Indicates whether parties obtained seats in the city council

Municipal Elections in Prato 2009

	Candidate	Party Lists	Vote %	Coalition Programme	Tot %	2nd Round
Mainstream Right Coalition	**Roberto Cenni**	Il Popolo della Libertà*	32.5%	"Il PDL Cambia l'Italia: anche a Prato dalle parole ai fatti"	**47.4%**	**50.9%**
		Lega Nord*	5.1%			
		Unione di Centro*	3.2%			
		La Destra	1.1%			
		Giovani Pratesi	0.9%			
		Prato Civica	0.8%			
		Taiti per Prato	0.5%			
		Socialisti Riformisti	0.4%			
Mainstream Left Coalition	**Massimo Silvano Carlesi**	Partito Democratico*	39.9%	Programma Coalizione	**48.1%**	**49.1%**
		Di Pietro – IDV*	4.3%			
		Sinistra e Libertà	2.5%			
		Comunisti Italiani	1.2%			
		Partito Liberale Europeo	0.1%			
		Repubblicani Europei	0.1%			
Other	**Aldo Milone**	Prato Libera e Sicura*	2.7%	Programma Prato Libera e Sicura	**2.7%**	*Supports Cenni*
Other	All other candidates below 1%					

Source: Italian Ministry of Internal Affairs – Electoral Archive http://elezionistorico.interno.it
* Indicates whether parties obtained seats in the city council

Table A4 *Regression results for Model D - salience and position on the immigration issue (by dimension)*

Salience of immigration

	Socioec	Cult	L&O
Intercept	6.22	4.15	3.14
	(1.938)	(0.680)	(0.945)
Centre-Left	-1.22	-1.47**	-0.14
	(1.147)	(0.418)	(2.327)
Centre-Right	0.21	-0.45	2.73
	(0.954)	(0.828)	(2.660)
CL Challenger	1.101	0.80	-0.99
	(0.668)	(1.073)	(2.327)
CR Challenger	-2.21	-0.81	-2.32
	(1.587)	(0.982)	(2.031)
Radical Right	6.58***	-1.56**	2.38
	(1.053)	(0.730)	(3.016)
Time (ref. T1)	0.21	1.65	3.69**
	(1.059)	(1.050)	(1.566)
Rome (ref. Prato)	-3.66***	-2.57**	2.87**
	(0.34)	(0.591)	(1.45)
Milan (ref. Prato)	-5.51***	-1.01	-1.24
	(1.424)	(1.213)	(2.38)
R-squared	0.61	0.37	0.23
No. Observations	31	31	31

Standard errors are reported in parentheses.
*, **, *** indicate significance at the 90%, 95%, and 99% level

Position on immigration

	Coef.		
	Socioec	Cult	L&O
Intercept	0.48	0.35	-0.31
	(0.350)	(0.385)	(0.389)
Centre-Left	0.62***	0.54	0.21
	(0.194)	(0.304)	(0.227)
Centre-Right	-0.68***	-0.64	-0.38
	(0.143)	(0.356)	(0.233)
CL Challenger	-0.43**	0.03	0.23
	(0.140)	(0.282)	(0.216)
CR Challenger	-0.32*	-0.42	-0.15
	(0.171)	(0.356)	(0.339)
Radical Right	-0.86*	-1.192***	-0.49**
	(0.260)	(0.359)	(0.204)
Time (ref. T1)	-0.36*	-0.09	0.03
	(0.189)	(0.396)	(0.211)
Salience	-0.04	-0.04	-0.18
	(0.037)	(0.070)	(0.016)
Rome (ref. Prato)	0.16	0.12	0.02
	(0.193)	(0.173)	(0.138)
Milan (ref. Prato)	0.25	0.05	0.46
	(0.252)	(0.396)	(0.353)
R-squared	0.78	0.54	0.46
No. Observations	24	28	27

Standard errors are reported in parentheses.
*, **, *** indicate significance at the 90%, 95%, and 99% level

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