

Special Issue Proposal on “The Politicisation of Local Migration Policymaking”

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Deadline to submit an abstract for the SI proposal: September 30th 2024
(please send your abstract to andrea.pettrachin@unito.it, tiziana.caponio@unito.it and Ilke.Adam@vub.be)

*The editors plan to send the SI proposal to political science journals in late 2024/early 2025 (suggestions of potential journals from prospective authors are very welcome). Submission of the final articles is foreseen in Autumn 2025 (with room for adjustments depending on authors' availability). Authors are invited to also prepare an abstract for a panel proposal to be submitted for the next IMISCOE Annual Conference 2025. The internal deadline for contributions to both the SI and the panel proposal is: **September 13th 2024**.*

The politicization of migration – i.e., the expansion of ‘the scope of conflict’ on migration within a political system (Grande et al., 2019) – has been extensively analysed in Europe, before and after the recent 2015 ‘refugee crisis’. Scholars have identified different dimensions of the politicisation process – raising salience of the migration issue, polarisation of views and expansion of the actors involved in migration-related debates (see Grande et al., 2019; Hutter and Kriesi 2022) – and compared levels of politicisation in different political systems, mostly analysing the number and type of immigration-related claims made by party actors. Several studies focused on the **drivers** of politicisation processes, including the role of key actors, especially radical right and centre-right political parties, and structural or contextual drivers, such as migration patterns, public attitudes to immigration and issue entrepreneurship of right-wing parties (Bale 2008; Meyer & Rosenberger, 2015; Van der Brug et al., 2015; Hobolt & de Vries, 2015). Some scholars have looked at the effects of the politicisation of migration on policies (e.g. Abou-Chadi & Helbling 2018; Temizisler 2021; see also Hadj-Abdou et al. 2021) and on migrants and minorities (Simonsen 2016a; 2016b; Adam and Torrekens 2016).

Most of this scholarship focuses on the national level. A limited number of scholarly works has started to explore the drivers and effects of the politicisation of migration at the subnational level. The few existing contributions seem to focus primarily on the regional level, often on ‘minority nations’ (Hepburn 2014, Zapata-Barrero 2009; Pettrachin 2022; see also Adam and Hepburn 2018). These scholarly works have argued that opportunities and constraints for the politicisation of migration at the subnational level partially differ from those in play at the national level. Hepburn (2014) identifies among the relevant drivers the following ones: socio-economic factors such as high migration flows and high unemployment rates; high issue salience; political factors such as proportional or mixed-member electoral systems, high political variation and the presence of electorally successful anti-immigration parties; extensive competences over immigration policies by regional governments; focusing events and media.

The local level has instead been largely neglected so far in research on the politicisation of migration. For many years local migration policy scholars have argued that local governments dealing with migration tend to adopt pragmatic approaches in responding to migration-related challenges regardless of political and strategic factors (Haselbacher & Segarra, 2022; Hillmann, 2022; Lidén &

Nyhlén, 2015). More recently, however, local migration policies have been highly salient, and scholars have identified a growing importance of party politics and (antimigrant) radical right parties (RRPs) for local migration policymaking (Castelli Gattinara, 2016; Pettrachin & Paxton 2022). Somehow pointing to an increased politicisation of local migration policymaking, Campomori and Ambrosini (2020) recently described local asylum policymaking as a ‘battleground’ characterised by the prominence of conflictual relations between local actors, particularly on issues related to asylum seekers’ reception (Campomori & Ambrosini, 2020).

This Special Issue aims to contribute to these debates, providing the first (to the best of our knowledge) comprehensive examination of the drivers and effects of the politicisation of migration – and specifically of migration policymaking – at the local level.

We are interested in contributions that cover the following questions (this is a non-exclusive list):

- What are the (structural, institutional or actor-related) drivers of the politicisation of migration at the local level? Are they different from national-level drivers?
- What are the effects of processes of politicisation of migration at the local level and/or of local migration policymaking specifically?
- How do different types of local actors contribute to politicise local migration policymaking?
- (How) does the political affiliation of local executive influence local migration policymaking or key features of local policy networks, including relations between governmental and nongovernmental actors?
- (How) does the presence of radical right parties at the local level influence local migration policymaking or key features of local policy networks, including relations between governmental and nongovernmental actors?
- How do local executives controlled by radical right parties deal with migration, at the discourse and policy level?
- Which specific migration-related issues are particularly salient or polarised at the local level?

We are particularly interested in contributions that adopt comparative approaches to explore differences in the drivers and effects of the politicisation of local migration policymaking, e.g., across different policy subfields (e.g. asylum-seekers’ reception vs inclusion/integration) and/or across different localities (e.g., comparing cities and small localities, or comparing localities across different countries/regions) and/or across different time periods and/or ‘migration crises’.