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# THE POLITICISATION OF MIGRATION

*Edited by Wouter van der Brug, Gianni D'Amato, Joost Berkhout and Didier Ruedin*

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also justify their position by looking beyond the conceptions of the 'good life' as appropriate in their own community, but refer to more universal principles of justice such as equality, solidarity or fairness. A liberal position on migration could, for instance, be justified by the (universal) moral obligation to protect people, such as political asylum seekers, from unjust harm.

## 2.5 A concluding comment

The nature of this study is rather exploratory, in a descriptive as well as an explanatory sense. The next seven chapters will describe the politicisation, or lack thereof, in each of the countries covered. Each chapter will begin by providing a brief historical account of immigration in that particular country and of the main events and political debates. The chapters then provide an overview of the patterns of politicisation that are observable in the data. Subsequently, each chapter explores the plausibility of the four types of explanations outlined in the introductory chapter. Because of the limited number of data points, we have refrained from (attempting) statistical analyses to formally test the explanatory power of the different explanations. Instead, the analyses in the country chapters are largely qualitative in nature. Each country chapter concludes by evaluating the extent to which each of the explanations seems plausible. The chapters not only address which of the factors appear to have contributed to politicisation, but also attend to periods when there was *no* politicisation. The final chapter is a cross-national comparative study, which contains statistical tests of some of the relationships.

## Notes

- 1 Please refer to other codebooks and previous research for a more elaborate discussion of the composition of political claims (e.g. the appendix in Koopmans *et al.*, 2005). It cannot be stressed enough that we are heavily indebted to the previous research projects MERCI (Koopmans *et al.*, 2005; Statham and Geddes, 2006), Europub (Koopmans, 2007b; Koopmans and Statham, 2010) and Localmultidem (Cinalli and Guigni, 2007), and ongoing projects such as the Eurislam project (UNIGE, 2010).
- 2 These are: Austria – *Der Standard*, *Neue Kronen Zeitung*; Belgium – *La Dernière Heure*, *Le Soir*, *De Standaard*, *Het Laatste Nieuws* (two each from the French- and Dutch-speaking communities); Switzerland – *Blick*, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, *Le Matin*, *Le Temps* (March 1998 onwards), *Journal de Genève* (1995 to March 1998) (two each from the French- and German-speaking communities); Spain – *El País*, *La Vanguardia*; Ireland – *Irish Daily Star*, *The Irish Times*; The Netherlands – *De Telegraaf*, *De Volkskrant*; United Kingdom – *The Daily Mail*, *The Guardian*.
- 3 If all observations are in the same category of a rating scale, there would be perfect agreement or no polarisation (0). When half of the claims are in the 'strongly restrictive' category and the other half in the 'strongly open' category, there is maximum disagreement (1). A uniform distribution over all five categories yields a polarisation score of 0.5.

# 3

## THE POLITICISATION OF IMMIGRATION IN AUSTRIA<sup>1</sup>

*Sarah Meyer and Sieglinde Rosenberger*

Despite a considerable and growing share of immigrants among the population, Austrian political authorities so far refused to call Austria an immigration country. At the same time, immigration is a salient issue on the Austrian public and political agenda and plays a significant role in electoral competition. The radical-right Freedom Party (FPÖ) is one of Europe's most successful anti-immigrant parties and between 2005 and 2013 a second far-right anti-immigrant party was represented in the Austrian parliament, the BZÖ, a split-off of the FPÖ founded by former FPÖ figurehead Jörg Haider. Against this background, the immigration issue can be expected to be highly salient and one might expect the anti-immigrant parties to play a key role in politicising the issue, as a number of scholars have suggested (cf. Wodak, 2005; Bauböck and Perchinig, 2006; Krzyżanowski and Wodak, 2008, 2009). However, most scholars have focused on campaign material or parliamentary discourse as their data source, whereas claims-making in the media beyond campaign periods remains unexplored so far. In this chapter, we provide a first systematic longitudinal analysis of claims-making on immigration in Austria, considering the time frame from 1995 until 2009. We included two newspapers for our analysis, the right-wing and conservative tabloid *Kronen Zeitung* and the left-libertarian quality paper *Der Standard* (in the following: *Standard*). We find that the immigration issue is indeed relatively salient compared with the other countries studied – and particularly so in the most recent years. Different from our expectations and previous research, however, we find that the anti-immigrant, radical-right parties are not the main actors in the politicisation of immigration. Before presenting and discussing our findings in more detail, we briefly contextualise the Austrian case, providing information on trends in immigration, immigration policies, and the role of the immigration issue in party politics.



### 3.1 A brief history of immigration and immigration policies in Austria

#### *Immigration dynamics in Austria (1995–2009)*

The impact of immigration dynamics on the composition of the population in Austria becomes apparent in the growth of the number of residents with either foreign citizenship or place of birth (cf. Münz *et al.*, 2002; Fassmann and Reeger, 2008; Reeger, 2009; Peintinger, 2011). Over the last 15 years there has been a constant increase of residents with a foreign citizenship, from 6.6 per cent of the total population in 1991 to 10.4 per cent in 2009. Among the countries in the SOM study, Austria has a comparatively high share of immigrant residents in relation to their general population. Within the immigrant population former Yugoslavia and Turkey dominate as main countries of origin. These countries were primary sources of guest-worker immigration to Austria during the 1960s and early 1970s. A decrease in the number of former Yugoslavian and Turkish nationals in recent years indicates ongoing naturalisation figures, whereas the number of foreign-born residents is only slightly declining. By contrast, it is above all immigration from the EU27 (and other European Economic Area countries and Switzerland) that has gained in importance: The share of nationals from 'old' EU member states increased from 15.9 per cent in 2001 to 21.8 per cent in 2009, with Germany as a prominent sending country. Residents with citizenship from the Eastern EU countries experienced an accelerated growth after the enlargement rounds in 2004 and 2007, from 12.3 per cent in 2005 to about 15.6 per cent in 2009. Taken together, more than a third of Austria's immigrant population in 2009 can be attributed to EU internal migration. Similarly, residents originating from third countries other than Turkey and former Yugoslavia are also on the rise, amounting to about 16 per cent of the total immigrant population in 2009.

#### *Party competition dynamics and immigration policy developments*

Public opinion towards immigrants or 'foreigners' has been relatively hostile in Austria and a significant share of the population expresses support for tough immigration policies (Friesl *et al.*, 2010; Rosenberger and Seeber, 2011). This is reflected in the high support rates for the anti-immigrant FPÖ, one of the most successful radical-right parties in Europe. The salience of the immigration issue for party competition clearly contributed to the contentious restructuring of the Austrian party system starting in the mid-1980s. Until then – and despite proportional representation – Austria was a de facto two-party system, dominated by the two mainstream parties, the SPÖ (social democrats) and the ÖVP (Christian democrats). With the rise of the German-nationalist FPÖ (Freedom Party), and the establishment of the Greens in the Austrian parliament, Austria's party system developed towards moderate pluralism with four to five relevant parties (cf. Plasser *et al.*, 1995; Plasser and Ulram, 2006). Immigration issues were prominent on the agenda of the

two younger parties, the FPÖ and the Greens, these two parties being located at the ideological margins of the policy space on the right and left side, respectively (cf. Gruber, 2014). Though the FPÖ's electoral success under the leadership of Jörg Haider was not due entirely to the immigration issue, the latter has certainly played a significant role in the party's electoral mobilisation since the late 1980s. Slogans such as 'Österreich zuerst', 'Stopp der Überfremdung', and more recently 'Daham statt Islam' and 'Sozialstaat statt Zuwanderung' repeatedly caused popular outrage – but also considerable support among certain parts of the electorate (cf. Plasser and Ulram, 1991, 2000). The Green Party positioned itself as a counterpart to the anti-immigrant FPÖ. Regarding positioning on the immigration issue, Austria's two mainstream parties (SPÖ, ÖVP) were and still are located between the two poles (cf. Gruber, 2014).

The media landscape constitutes another important factor in shaping public and party controversy over the immigration issue in Austria. The media market is highly concentrated, and this applies to both the print (daily papers and magazines) and the TV market. The print sector is further characterised by a high level of 'boulevardisation', with a comparatively low coverage for quality papers. The largest tabloid – the *Kronen Zeitung* – dominates much of the market. With a constant market share between 40 and 47 per cent, it is one of the most successful papers worldwide. The influence of the *Kronen Zeitung* on both public opinion and political elites is widely acknowledged (Plasser and Lengauer, 2010). The paper has regularly run anti-foreigner campaigns by advancing fears of heightened labour supply, crime and the alleged misuse of social and welfare benefits in the context of immigration. It is known for explicitly supporting individual politicians during campaigns as well as for its generally supportive coverage for the FPÖ.

Responding to pressure for tough immigration policies coming from the increasingly successful FPÖ, the *Kronen Zeitung* and a significant part of the electorate, new immigration laws were introduced in Austria during the 1990s by several SPÖ–ÖVP coalition governments. The largely restrictive measures provoked increased public contention, with critique coming from civil society movements and the Greens, but also members of the SPÖ. Policy reforms implemented by the right-wing coalition governments of the ÖVP and FPÖ/BZÖ between 2000 and 2006 were even more restrictive. These were partially supported by the oppositional SPÖ, whereas the Greens constantly voted against the tightening of asylum and immigration laws that were adopted from the 1990s onwards (cf. König, 2013). As a result of these policy changes, Austria's immigration policies are now very restrictive, especially in the area of asylum (cf. Funk and Stern, 2010; Kraler, 2011; König, 2013). Besides asylum law, immigration policies so far have mainly focused on questions of entry, residence and access to the labour market, whereas policies on immigrant integration so far remained rare.<sup>2</sup>

Since Austria became an EU member state and part of the Schengen area in 1995, immigration policy-making has also increasingly been shaped by EU rulings. Most importantly, European integration has brought along new immigration categories and a stratification of social and political rights applying to EU-internal

immigrants on the one hand and third-country nationals (immigrants from non-EU countries) on the other. To the former, a distinctive legal framework and extensive rights apply – with effects on immigration patterns: In recent years the share of immigrants from EU-member states has increased rapidly. Furthermore, with Austria as part of the EU's Eastern border region prior to Eastern enlargement, the two enlargement rounds (2004, 2007) have been of particular relevance for Austrian migration debates and policies.

Summing up, two aspects are worth highlighting with a view to immigration policy-making. First, Austria's restrictive immigration policy regime is not just a product of the FPÖ's participation in federal government between 2000 and 2005/2006, but had already been introduced and developed further under the aegis of a series of grand coalitions between the SPÖ and the ÖVP during the 1990s. Second, EU integration has become an important initiator of immigration policies in recent years.

### 3.2 Patterns of politicisation

#### Issue-salience

How salient is the immigration issue in Austria and how has this changed over the 15 years of our study? Figure 3.1 shows that the immigration issue strongly gained in importance between 1995 and 2009. Though peaks and lows alternate, we can clearly observe a pattern towards higher numbers of claims over time: Starting from

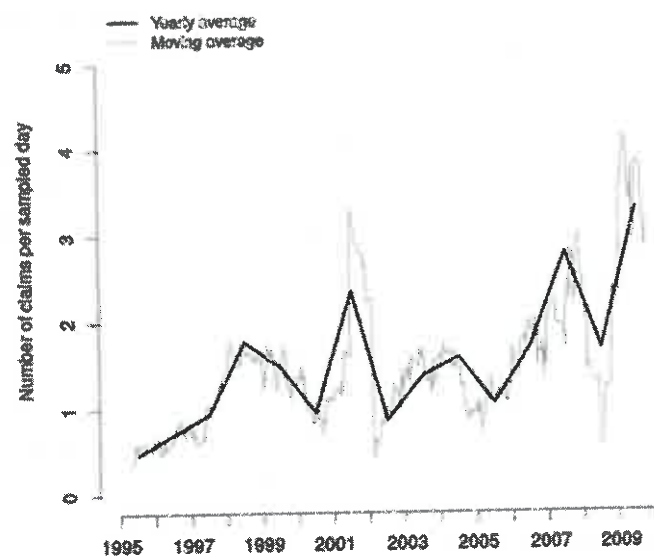


FIGURE 3.1 Salience of immigration and integration in Austria, 1995–2009.

Notes: Moving average of number of claims per 31 sampled days. N=750 randomly sampled days. Given is the average number of claims in 31 sampled days: 15 before, on the data point, and 15 after the data point.

a rather low salience level in 1995, it increases over the course of time, and particularly so in the final third of our 15-year period. In addition to this general trend, there are noticeable peaks in 2001, 2007 and 2009.

In none of these years did national elections take place, so peaks in the salience of migration are unrelated to the electoral cycle. The first notable peak in 2001 coincides with the first term of the right-wing ÖVP–FPÖ coalition government that caused an international outcry in 2000. Yet salience is particularly low in 2000 and 2002 and has only increased again remarkably since 2006, after the termination of the right-wing government's second term (2003–2006). Consequently, the presence of a radical-right party in government does not seem to directly impact on the salience of the migration issue, at least not in a consistent way. Neither do the peaks relate to changes in legislation; although legislative changes were under way in the respective years, more comprehensive and profound policy reforms undertaken in 1997, 2002 and 2005 did not evoke similar peaks.

The peaks rather seem to concur with specific events, such as the terrorist attacks of 9/11 in 2001. Similarly, in 2007 the case of Arigona Zogaj, a 15-year-old girl of Kosovar origin who resisted her and her family's deportation by going into hiding and threatening suicide, provoked high media attention and generated a public debate over the practice of deportations (cf. Gruber *et al.*, 2009). In 2009, no such sensational single case stood out, but there were some important developments with regard to the advancement of integration policies (namely the initiation of a process for the development of a national action plan for integration) and the asylum issue remained on the political and public agenda as an abiding theme.

#### Positioning and polarisation

Analysing the tone and consequently polarisation in public claims-making on immigration, we have to bear in mind the differences in editorial policy and ideology between the two newspapers included in our dataset. After presenting the overall picture, we will thus also look at the two papers separately in order not to underestimate potential – and likely – differences between them in the tone of coverage.

Figure 3.2 presents the development of polarisation and tone of claims-making about migration in the time frame under study, as well as 95 per cent confidence intervals.<sup>3</sup> Polarisation varies mostly between 0.3 and 0.4, which is around the average across the seven countries included in this study. We see more pronounced tendencies towards polarisation in the years 1996 and 2004; however, these are mainly due to the particular distribution of positive and negative claims in the newspapers, and when taking account of the different sample sizes of the *Kronen Zeitung* and the *Standard* these small peaks disappear.<sup>4</sup>

Regarding the average tone, positions that tend to be somewhat more open to migrants, i.e. expressing liberal stances, seem to prevail in claims-making about migration in Austria. Correcting for the smaller sample of the *Kronen Zeitung*, positioning comes below the zero value in several years, thus shifting towards

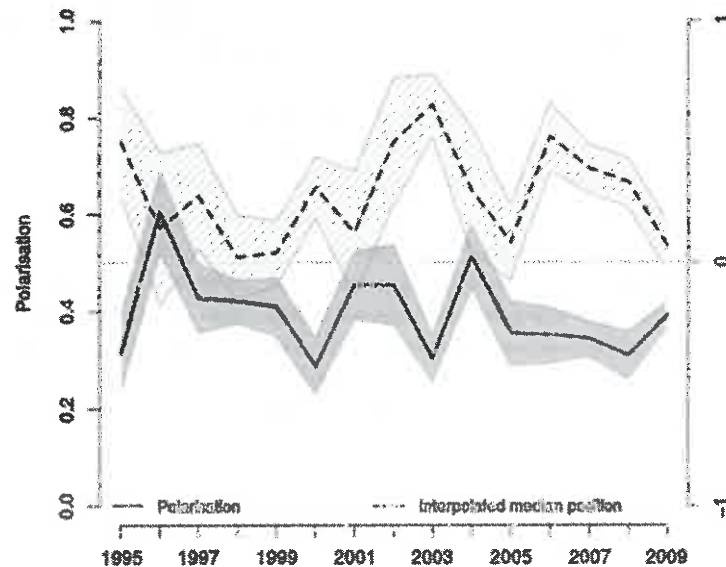


FIGURE 3.2 Developments of polarisation and tone in Austria, 1995–2009.

Notes: Polarisation (solid line, left axis) and interpolated median position (dashed line, right axis) of the debate on immigration and integration in Austria, 1995–2009. Polarisation values greater than 0.5 indicate a trend towards polarisation, values below 0.5 indicate a trend towards agreement. Positive tones indicate openness to immigrants, negative positions indicate restrictive positions. The shaded areas indicate the confidence interval  $\pm 1$  standard deviation.

slightly restrictive positions on immigration in 1996, 1998, 2004 and 2009. This is of course related to considerable differences regarding the positioning in the two newspapers. Claims reported in the *Kronen Zeitung* are overall slightly negative towards immigrants or immigration ( $-0.16$  on average), ranging between restrictive claims and claims that are to be classified as neutral, ambivalent or technocratic. Despite the overall restrictive orientation of claims represented in the *Kronen Zeitung*, we can also observe shifts towards a somewhat liberal orientation in 2000, 2003, 2005, 2006 and 2008, when average positioning changes from minus to plus, though only by a narrow margin. Contrariwise, claims expressed in the *Standard* are visibly on the pro-immigrant side ( $0.27$  on average), i.e. they range between neutral/ambivalent/technocratic positions and support for more liberal policies.

It is important to consider the large differences in the size of the readership of the two newspapers (the *Kronen Zeitung* has a distribution rate of about 40 per cent compared with the *Standard's* 4 to 5 per cent). In view of these differences, the slightly negative tone of claims on immigration represented in the more widely read *Kronen Zeitung* should not be neglected.

Having looked at salience and polarisation separately, we now turn to combining these two aspects by looking at points in time where the immigration issue was

relatively salient and rather contentious – hence politicised – in the public sphere (Figure 3.3). We find five years where we could speak of such an occasion, namely the years located in the upper right array of Figure 3.3: 2001, 2004 and 2009, and to a lesser degree in 1998 and 1999.<sup>5</sup>

Figure 3.3 also shows that the politicisation of the immigration issue displays a rather uneven development over time. In terms of the typology presented in Chapter 1 of this book, the issue can be classified as an ‘urgent problem’ in several years, when despite being salient it does not seem to be contentious. This is the case for the years located in the upper left array of Figure 3.3. The lower right area displays years when immigration was a latent issue, i.e. a polarised issue that is not salient. Being neither particularly salient nor polarised, immigration seemed to be non-politicised in Austria in 1995, 2000 and 2005 (see lower left array of Figure 3.3). As there is no obvious systematic pattern behind these incidents of politicisation in the Austrian case, we will turn to discussing the plausibility of various potentially influential factors in more detail in Section 3.3 of this chapter.

### Claims-making actors and framing

Having considered overall developments in salience and polarisation, we now take a closer look into patterns of claims-making from an actor perspective. Which actors are important as claims-makers on the immigration issue in Austria? Our findings

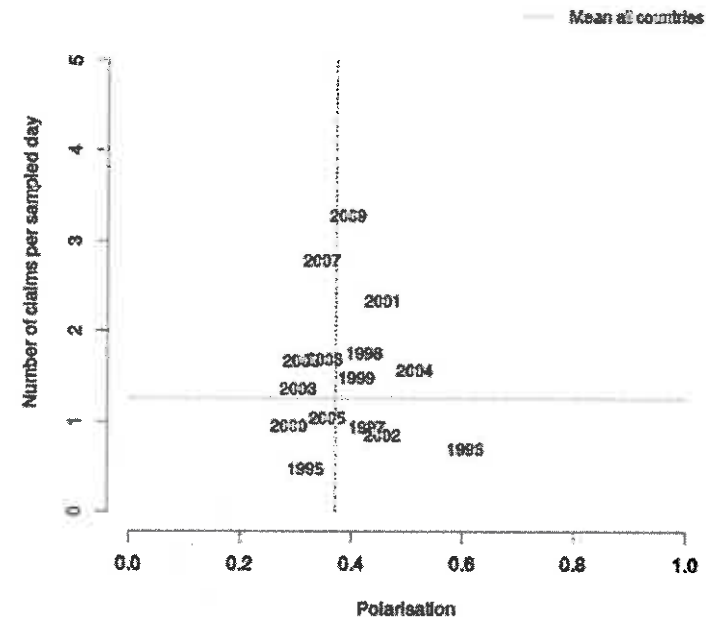


FIGURE 3.3 Salience and polarisation in Austria, 1995–2009.

Notes: The dotted reference lines indicate the mean position across the seven countries in this volume.



show that government actors constitute the most dominant actor category (Figure 3.4). Together with executive and judicial agencies they take up about 44 per cent of all claims. The second most important actor category consists of party representatives, including members of parliament, who make 28 per cent of all claims. These two categories – i.e. government/executive agencies and judiciary plus party representatives and members of parliament – together make about 72 per cent of the total amount of claims. Claims-making is thus essentially led by established actors from within the political system. Although this holds true for both newspapers, there are significant differences between the papers regarding the presence of other actors: individual journalists and representatives of the police appear more frequently as claimants in the *Kronen Zeitung*, while the *Standard* dedicates more space to claims from civil society actors and religious organisations.

Important to highlight is the fact that minority organisations are virtually absent in public claims-making on immigration in Austria: The 11 per cent of claims in the figure by minority, pro-migrant and religious groups almost completely stems from actors representing the latter two, which are led by members of the majority society rather than members of minority or immigrant communities.

It is also striking to see that there are no claims by anti-immigration movements – i.e. racist and extreme-right non-party organisations and groups – for the whole time

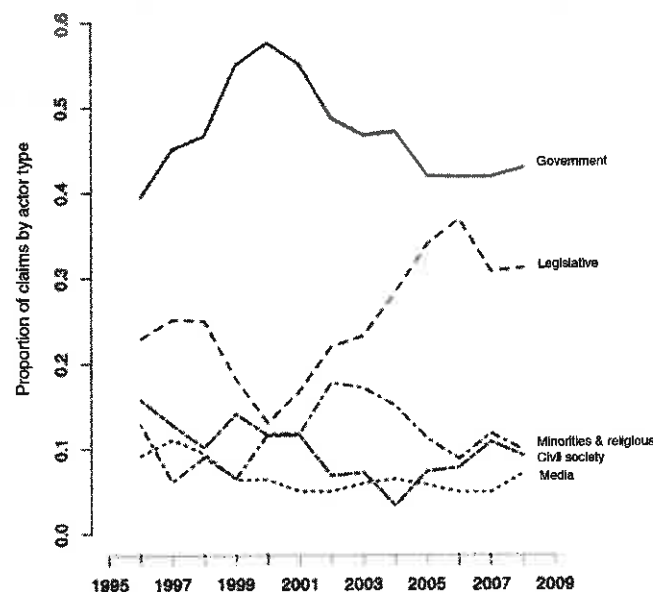


FIGURE 3.4 Proportion of claims by type of claims-maker, 1995–2009 (Austria).

Notes: Interpolated median positions for government and judiciary actors: 0.1 (N=453 claims); legislative actors and parties: 0.1 (N=284); journalists: 0.0 (N=69); minority, pro-immigrant and religious groups: 0.7 (N=118); anti-immigrant movements: NA (N=0); other civil society actors: 0.7 (N=103). Given are proportions for 3 years (moving average).

period. This is to be related to the important role that the FPÖ takes up in society and the political system: Though in terms of ideology and positioning, the FPÖ is to be considered both a radical-right and a pronounced anti-immigration party, at the same time it should definitely be considered a mainstream party in terms of its size and public and political acceptance. The policy space on the extreme right in Austria is thus occupied by a party actor firmly established in the political system, leaving little room for the emergence of other anti-immigrant or racist and right-wing extremist organisations and movements. Anti-immigrant claims are thus incorporated into the political system by the FPÖ, meaning that such claims are fully integrated within the party system and society, making anti-immigrant mobilisation outside the party system less 'necessary'. This also means that radical-right claims-making also resorts to more legitimate or moderate mobilisation strategies as opposed to political violence, which may be used more frequently by non-party actors and groups of the extreme right.

How do different actors position themselves when making claims related to immigration? In general, most of the actors predominantly make pro-immigrant claims. With a median position of 0.7, that observation is certainly very pronounced for minority, pro-migrant and religious groups, as well as various other civil society actors. Claims by journalists, government actors and legislative and party actors take a slightly more restrictive turn, while there are also many neutral claims. The picture differs when the two newspapers are considered separately. While patterns in the *Standard* resemble the overall picture, actor positions are more negative in the *Kronen Zeitung*. This is especially true for media actors, whose claims are almost entirely on the anti-immigrant side; and also claims by legislative/party actors are by a majority negative; similarly the share of restrictive claims of government actors is higher than in the *Standard*. These differences are in part a result of variation in presence of claims-making actors, as not all of them are equally represented in each newspaper, especially with a view to party affiliation that will be discussed next.

Turning to the presence of individual parties in claims-making about immigration, the ÖVP and the SPÖ are clearly ahead of the others, with approximately one-third of the total number of claims each (see Table 3.1). While the fringe parties BZÖ and LIF (the Liberals), which have only been represented in parliament for short periods, are rather irrelevant in claims-making on immigration, the FPÖ and the Green Party make an almost equal share of claims, with the FPÖ (18 per cent) slightly ahead of the Greens (16 per cent). Again there are considerable differences between the two newspapers. While the two mainstream parties (the SPÖ and the ÖVP) are equally represented in comparison of the two newspapers, striking differences appear for the FPÖ and the Greens. Whereas the FPÖ is overrepresented in the *Kronen Zeitung* compared with its presence in the *Standard* (25 per cent compared with 16 per cent), the reverse is true for the Greens, whose share of claims is twice as high in the *Standard* as in the *Kronen Zeitung* (19 per cent compared with 9 per cent).

Looking at temporal trends for individual parties, the following patterns are noticeable. While the SPÖ was most active in claims-making during the 1990s, the ÖVP takes the lead in the 2000s. As will be discussed in more detail in Section 3.3,

TABLE 3.1 Proportion of claims per political party, 1995–2009 (Austria)

Political party	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Total	N	Position
ÖVP (Österreichische Volkspartei)	13%	5%	7%	10%	67%	36%	31%	45%	44%	28%	33%	33%	37%	39%	35%	32%	185	-0.27
SPÖ (Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs)	38%	50%	57%	48%	14%	18%	19%	26%	28%	28%	28%	40%	31%	19%	25%	31%	177	0.20
FPÖ (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs)	25%	31%	25%	14%	28%	14%	33%	15%	8%	17%	12%	7%	13%	14%	21%	18%	103	-0.74
Die Grünen	38%		5%	21%	8%	5%	13%	35%	21%	11%	24%	14%	16%	28%	14%	16%	91	0.64
BZÖ (Bündnis Zukunft Österreichs)											4%	7%	2%		5%	2%	12	-0.75
N	8	16	20	28	40	21	39	26	38	36	25	43	83	36	117	576	568	

Notes: Position is interpolated median of 5-point scale ranging from -1 to 1. Parties with fewer than five claims are not presented. Government parties in bold.

this is likely to be related to office-holding of the ministry of the interior. For the Greens and the FPÖ, no clear-cut systematic pattern can be identified, as years of more active claims-making alternate with years of a lower share of immigration claims. The FPÖ, however, was most active until 2001 – despite the fact that it was a governing party between 2000 and 2005. The reverse is true for the FPÖ split-off, the BZÖ, that is represented with a higher share of claims during its government participation (2005–2006). Finally, the case of the Liberals (LIF) clearly shows that once a party loses its seats in the Austrian parliament – as was the case with the Liberals after the 1999 election – it becomes irrelevant for public claims-making, even if the party is still in existence.

Regarding the positioning in claims-making for individual parties, the FPÖ and the Greens constitute the two poles between which the whole spectrum of positions in immigration debates unfold – the FPÖ on the anti-immigrant side of that spectrum, asking first and foremost for restrictions on immigration and for immigrant residents, the Greens on the pro-immigrant side, claiming for liberal positions towards immigration and immigrant rights. The BZÖ is close to the FPÖ in its positioning towards immigration, whereas the Liberals are close to the Greens. Austria's traditional mainstream left and right parties are located between these poles, as they make use of both liberal *and* restrictive claims – the SPÖ is on average closer to the former, as about 60 per cent of their claims are oriented towards liberal (including slightly liberal) positions, whereas a relative majority (44 per cent) of all ÖVP claims are to be categorised as restrictive (including slightly restrictive).

Looking at the distribution of frames (Figure 3.5), we can observe a similar pattern as in other countries: Most claims are framed in an instrumental way, i.e. using utilitarian or pragmatic arguments. Also a relevant share of claims is framed using universal moral principles and rights, whereas arguments related to collective identity only rarely appear. Despite the outlier in 2003, when we can observe an increase in reference towards universal principles at the cost of an instrumental framing, it is striking that there is not much variation over time in the use of different frames. This is the case despite the fact that the immigration issue has become more salient over time and despite a 6-year period of a right-wing government including the FPÖ, respectively BZÖ, between 2000 and 2006.

### 3.3 Explanations

In this section we will discuss the trends in political claims-making on immigration in Austria according to the analytical framework developed in Chapter 1 of this volume. In line with this, we will hence consider four types of factors that might determine patterns in the politicisation of the immigration issue: societal developments, actions of specific groups, the relevance of the immigration policies, and the political opportunity structure. We will discuss the plausibility of each of these explanatory strands in accounting for patterns in the politicisation of the immigration issue in the Austrian case.

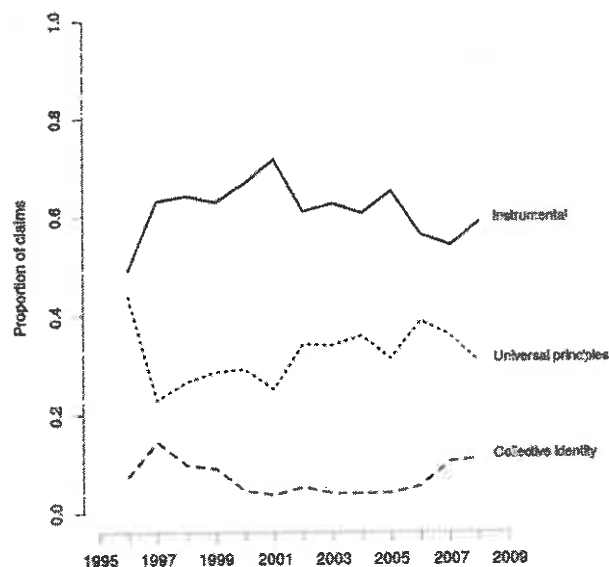


FIGURE 3.5 Frames used in claims on immigration and integration in Austria, 1995–2009.

Notes: Distribution of the proportion of claims using a particular frame (justification) over time. Given are instrumental frames (solid line), collective identity (dashed line), and universal principles (dotted line) for periods of 3 years each (moving average).

### Societal developments

It seems plausible that any kind of issue will be more likely to become politicised – i.e. salient and polarised – when the issue has a strong impact on society and people's ordinary lives. A larger share of immigrants could well lead to higher levels of issue-salience and polarisation in public claims-making. However, this link is far from being conclusive, which is evident when looking at the contradictory findings of various empirical studies examining potential connections between real-world developments and the salience of issues.<sup>6</sup>

How do the findings for politicisation presented in Figure 3.3 correspond to trends in the number of immigrants residing in Austria? As discussed in Section 3.1, Austria witnessed a steady increase of immigrants between the early 1990s and 2009. A similar trend is noticeable in the salience of the issue (Figure 3.1). However, the peaks in the politicisation of immigration, i.e. years with comparatively high levels of salience and polarisation, cannot be explained by trends in the numbers of immigrants. Whereas the numbers of foreign nationals and foreign-born residents report a steady increase between 1995 and 2009, peaks in politicisation do not follow a linear pattern: Politicisation is highest in 2009, 2004 and 2001, followed by the years 1998 and 1999.

Immigration numbers and issue-politicisation might show stronger correspondence once we consider the composition of the immigrant population. Not

all immigrants are equally distinguishable from the majority population and thus more likely to be considered as outsiders or foreigners among the receiving society, which might lead to their stronger politicisation compared with other immigrant groups. Following this argument, we would assume EU-internal immigration to be perceived as less challenging for the receiving society, given the existing cultural and historical ties and the deepening of European integration that has taken place throughout the last decades. Immigration from outside the EU would, on the other hand, be more controversial, especially if third-country nationals appear further apart from the indigenous population in terms of culture, religion or ethnicity. Within the EU territory this is commonly noted to be the case in particular with residents from predominantly Muslim countries. In Austria, immigrants from predominantly Muslim countries first and foremost emigrated from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Turkey, both constituting primary sources of guest-worker immigration to Austria during the 1960s and early 1970s. During the last decade, the share of Muslim immigrants has remained fairly stable, however, so that this cannot account for the increased salience. A more significant increase in the share of Muslim immigrants among the immigrant population in Austria appears if second generations, i.e. children with Muslim migration background born in Austria and with Austrian citizenship, are taken into account (Österreichischer Integrationsfonds, 2010). Among the total immigrant population, however, it is above all EU-internal immigration (plus EEA and Switzerland) that has gained in importance: The share of nationals from 'old' EU member states increased from 15.9 per cent in 2001 to 21.8 per cent in 2009, with Germany as the prominent sending country. Residents with a citizenship from the Eastern EU countries experienced an accelerated growth after the enlargement rounds of 2004 and 2007, from 12.3 per cent in 2005 to about 15.6 per cent in 2009. Taken together, more than a third of Austria's immigrant population in 2009 could be attributed to EU-internal migration. Similarly, nationals originating from non-EU countries other than Turkey and former Yugoslavia are also on the rise, amounting to about 16 per cent of the total immigrant population in 2009. While these patterns cannot explain temporal trends in the salience and polarisation of the immigration issue, where we find much more fluctuation, it is evident that the immigration issue has become more salient within the last decade despite the large share of EU-internal immigration that we hypothesised would not to trigger issue-politicisation.

Politicisation might also be more likely to occur not only with regard to cultural or religious 'otherness' of different immigrant groups, but also with regard to the perception of a potential burden associated with particular immigration categories. Some groups of immigrants are likely to be more easily welcomed because their stay is perceived to be of mutual advantage, for example in terms of their possible contribution to the domestic economy, as is the case with highly skilled labour migrants. Others might be perceived first and foremost as a burden to society, inasmuch as they are likely to depend on social benefits and may not be able (or allowed) to provide for their means of subsistence themselves. This will



most likely apply to asylum seekers, making immigration dynamics in the context of asylum particularly interesting. We can therefore expect the immigration issue to be more politicised the higher the number of asylum seekers or the higher their share among all immigrants. Within the last two decades Austria experienced a rather uneven development regarding new asylum applications per year. During the 1990s the number of actual asylum applications was comparatively low; yet the number of so-called quota refugees that have been collectively granted asylum – as was the case with Bosnian and Kosovar war refugees – are usually omitted in national asylum statistics. From 1998 onwards regular applications increased, reaching a peak in 2002, thereafter decreasing sharply once more until 2007, when they eventually rose again, though only slightly. These peaks and lows do not correspond with patterns in the politicisation of immigration, which reached its peaks in 2009, 2004 and 2001.

Summing up, patterns in the politicisation of immigration in Austria cannot be explained by developments in immigration numbers or the composition of the immigrant population. The plausibility of the immigration patterns hypothesis is further weakened by the fact that issue-salience increased in recent years despite a growing share of EU-internal immigration – which we hypothesised as being no particular driver of politicisation – among all immigrants.

Apart from immigration patterns, other 'real-world' developments, including specific events, may help explaining the peaks and lows in the salience of the immigration issue. The increase in 2001 for instance might be related to the 9/11 terror attacks that are often considered as triggering more intense public debate on immigration, immigrant integration, and Muslim immigrants in particular. Another plausible explanation would be election years, as parties might increase their mobilisation efforts on the issue of immigration during campaign periods. Looking at years during which general elections took place (1995, 1999, 2002, 2006, and 2008), however, we cannot find a systematic pattern for Austria in this respect.

### **Actions of specific groups**

Politicisation could also be the result of active claims-making by specific actors or groups who have an interest in increasing the salience of the immigration issue on the public agenda. Two types of actors can be expected to be particularly relevant in this respect: (1) organised immigrant groups representing immigrant interests by actively raising claims for immigrants' social and political rights; (2) anti-immigrant movements mobilising for the opposite, i.e. restrictions in the granting of rights to immigrants, as well as resistance to further immigration.

As described above, immigrant or minority organisations are almost absent as claimants in the Austrian public sphere. Immigrant actors are completely missing among claimants in the *Kronen Zeitung* and appear only very marginally in the *Standard*. Rather, it is pro-immigrant solidarity groups as well as religious organisations that actively mobilise for immigrants' demands and interests, meaning that the self-representation of

the immigrant population in the politicisation of immigration is rather weak. Turning the focus from collective immigrant actors to individual immigrants acting as speakers of non-immigrant organisations, such claims make for less than 5 per cent of the total number of claims, which is quite low compared with the size of the immigrant population living in Austria. These claimants are first and foremost members of the Green Party or representatives of religious organisations, in particular the Islamic Faith Community in Austria (IGGiÖ). This also gives an indication of the most successful path for the inclusion of individual immigrants into the political system and public sphere, which seems to go via institutionalised channels such as parties and religious organisations rather than self-organised immigrant groups or other civil society organisations (cf. Meyer and Peintinger, 2013).

As shown in Figure 3.4 of this chapter, in Austria the share of claims raised by anti-immigrant movements from outside the party system is zero for the whole period of investigation. Of course this does not mean that restrictive or anti-immigrant claims were not represented – quite the contrary. It is instead related to the strength and positioning of the FPÖ: The FPÖ's mainstream character in terms of size and establishment in the political system together with its extreme nature when it comes to positioning – and particularly so on the immigration issue – does not leave much space for other extreme-right or anti-immigrant groups or movements in Austrian politics. Consequently, anti-immigrant claims do not come 'from below' but are advocated by a political actor widely established in the political and party system (see below).

To sum up, claims-making on the immigration issue in Austria does not seem to be driven by either immigrant actors or non-party anti-immigrant groups or movements, suggesting that other factors must be more important in explaining patterns of issue-salience and issue-polarisation.

### **Immigration policies**

Austria is characterised by a rather restrictive immigration policy regime, and policy reform is often used to adopt further restrictions.<sup>7</sup> There is much policy activity in the field of immigration, with regular amendments, one following the other. This applies in particular to the field of asylum policy, where legal changes have been undertaken almost on a yearly basis, namely in 1997, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2007, 2008 and 2009. Apart from asylum, several other comprehensive laws were passed between 1995 and 2009 as part of so-called alien legislation packages. The most important include the 1997 Integration Package, the 2002 amendment of the Aliens Act, the 2005 Alien Legislation Package and the 2009 Alien Legislation Amending Law (cf. Çınar *et al.*, 1995; Çınar, 1996; Davy and Çınar, 2001; König and Stadler, 2003; Schumacher, 2008; Krzyżanowski and Wodak, 2009; Kraler, 2011; Peintinger, 2012).

Given the high policy activity indicated by the various legislative amendments and the adoption of new laws in the field of immigration and asylum, it is difficult to trace back patterns in the politicisation of the immigration issue to policy reform,



as the latter virtually occurred on a yearly base. However, some of the reform packages were indeed heavily disputed both in parliament and civil society, and partly accompanied by demonstrations and protest activities in the public sphere (Gruber *et al.*, 2009; Gruber, 2010; König, 2013; Rosenberger and Winkler, 2013).

To figure out whether policies do matter in the politicisation of immigration, we first focus on the role of the main policy-makers in the field – i.e. the ministry of the interior – and then compare the topical components present in issue-politicisation with the main realm of policy packages, distinguishing between the fields of asylum, immigration (apart from asylum) and immigrant integration. Of all claims, 16 per cent come from representatives of the ministry of the interior, including the minister him- or herself. Among the claims raised by governmental actors, the share is 41 per cent, with the lowest share in 2007 (10 per cent) and the highest in 1997 (77 per cent). Though the number of observations is too low to apply statistical methods to assessing the relationship between policy-making and patterns of politicisation, we do see that those mainly in charge of immigration policies indeed play a non-negligible role in the politicisation of the issue.

Turning to topics of claims vis-à-vis the substance of policies, however, the link between issue-politicisation and policy-making has to be put into perspective. Comparing the salience of the three main immigration topics – namely, asylum, immigration (apart from asylum), and integration – we can conclude that the politicisation of the immigration issue on these dimensions does not correspond to their importance in terms of adopted policies.<sup>8</sup> Whereas integration policies have only rarely been adopted in Austria, integration is the most salient among these three topical dimensions. The opposite is true for asylum, which scores lowest in public claims-making despite the fact that the majority of legislative acts deal with the regulation of asylum; however, it could well be that policies on asylum also evoke claims about civic integration. This shows that potential links between claims-making and policies are difficult to identify from our data.

### **Political opportunity structure (POS)**

Opportunities or constraints for politicising the immigration issue could also be dependent on structural factors like institutional characteristics, political culture or party politics dynamics. The political opportunity structure helps to explain patterns in issue-politicisation first and foremost from a cross-country comparative perspective. Among the seven countries included in the SOM study, Austria is among those where the issue of immigration is rather politicised. In particular, the issue appears to be relatively salient, even if this is not always accompanied by strong polarisation. We argue that the comparatively high issue-salience can be explained by the specific political opportunity structure in Austria that not only facilitated the strengthening of a radical-right party but, as a consequence, the politicisation of the immigration issue.

Different from other countries, where radical-right, anti-immigrant parties appeared as new political entrepreneurs, the Austrian radical right has been firmly established in the party system since the foundation of the Second Republic in 1945.

The FPÖ is rooted in the third 'Lager' representing the German-nationalists as part of the national cleavage. In the mid-1980s, however, the FPÖ repositioned itself towards right-wing populism and strongly relied on the mobilisation of anti-immigrant sentiments in its electoral campaigning – a strategy soon crowned with success: The FPÖ constantly increased its vote share, reaching a peak in the 1999 general election, when it gained 27 per cent of the vote share and for the first time became the second strongest party behind the social democrats (SPÖ). The party's success then culminated in the building of a coalition government with the ÖVP, Austria's established centre-right party. In terms of policy influence, however, the FPÖ was already successful when in opposition during the 1990s. Continuously pressurised by the FPÖ, the governing SPÖ and ÖVP implemented a number of immigration reforms that included FPÖ policy demands (cf. Peintinger, 2012). Looking at the time frame between 1995 and 2009, the FPÖ thus has to be considered an established party and even a mainstream party in the Austrian party system in terms of its size and blackmailing power.

The success of the FPÖ, however, is not only related to the immigration issue but to characteristic features that the Austrian party system has passed through since the rebuilding of the Second Republic (cf. Pelinka and Rosenberger, 2007). The strengths of neo-corporatism together with prevalent clientilism forced by and benefiting Austria's two biggest and governing parties – the SPÖ and ÖVP – to some extent paved the way for the success of another political entrepreneur: The FPÖ could challenge the established parties by portraying itself credibly as a political underdog fighting for ordinary Joe against the governing elites and their collusion to the only end of maintaining power (cf. Müller *et al.*, 1999).

Still, anti-immigrant mobilisation certainly played a vital role in the FPÖ's success story. The immigration issue appeared to be particularly suitable for introducing political conflict and open competition in a political system characterised by a strong consensus culture and collusion between the two biggest parties, which both culminated in, and resulted from, the vital importance of the Austrian social partnership. Conflict about immigration also contributed to the rebuilding of a collective Austrian identity beyond the idea of belonging to a German culture or nation.<sup>9</sup>

Hence the specific configuration of the Austrian political and party system together with its well-established consensus culture makes for a political opportunity structure not only favouring the strengthening of the radical-right FPÖ, but in particular the politicisation of immigration. Comparing the levels of issue-salience across countries, this expectation is supported by our empirical findings – even if not as distinct as one might expect.

However, despite these facilitating opportunities and the fact that the FPÖ is well-known for its anti-immigrant positioning and mobilisation during election campaigns, the FPÖ was not the main driver in the politicisation of immigration according to our data. Rather, the mainstream governing parties (the SPÖ and ÖVP) strongly emphasised the issue. While governing actors are amongst the main claimants in all seven countries of our study, they are so in particular in the case of

Austria. How can we explain their dominance in the politicisation of immigration, as well as the surprisingly low issue-salience for the FPÖ compared with the SPÖ and ÖVP, respectively?

Starting with the second part of the puzzle, it is important to highlight that the FPÖ was already quite active in its anti-immigrant mobilisation before the period of analysis covered in our study. It was in 1992/1993, for instance, that the FPÖ launched its popular initiative 'Austria first', which among other things called for a general freeze on immigration and the immediate expulsion of foreign criminals. The initiative provoked widespread popular outrage among civil society organisations and led to the most successful Austrian-wide demonstration of the Second Republic with more than 300,000 protesters.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, we would expect for the FPÖ to show higher shares of issue-salience, taking into account the period before 1995; the lower numbers that we do find are due to the fact that the FPÖ was later attributed issue-ownership on immigration topics even without permanently raising claims in the public sphere.

But why are governing actors that dominant in claims-making on immigration in Austria despite the fact that we find no direct link between policies and issue-politicisation? Important to note, it is mainly the governing SPÖ and ÖVP who politicise the issue, whereas the FPÖ did not increase its issue-salience during its government participation between 2000 and 2005. Two potential explanations should be mentioned here. First, high issue-salience is related to the distribution of competences in government coalitions. As shown in the temporal trends, the party with the highest share of claims is always the party holding responsibility for the ministry of the interior: Until 2000 this was the SPÖ, and from then onwards the ÖVP. Hence the politicisation of immigration is to a large extent driven by state authorities and party representatives in charge of policy-making in the respective policy field.

A second explanation is related to Austrian mainstream parties' strategy in response to the electoral success of the FPÖ (and later also BZÖ). Different from other countries confronted with radical-right challengers, Austrian political elites did not respond by a consequent strategy of combating the FPÖ (cf. Art, 2007), but tried to tame it, cooperated actively with it or legitimised its policy demands by including them in legislative reforms, as was the case with the immigration issue. Part of this strategy was also to actively emphasise the immigration issue, which explains the high issue-salience found in our data for the (most of the time governing) SPÖ and ÖVP.

Even if the FPÖ is not dominant in the politicisation of immigration in Austria according to our data, we have argued in this section that the comparatively high issue-salience at the country level and the dominance of the left and right mainstream parties in claims-making on immigration is to be viewed in connection with the presence and strength of the radical right in the party system rendering specific opportunities for the politicisation of immigration more generally. The FPÖ's quite extreme positioning was continuously rewarded by a steadily growing constituency from the late 1980s, which put the two mainstream parties under severe pressure to respond. They did so by introducing new immigration laws and by tightening these in subsequent years. Furthermore, putting more emphasis on

immigration during election campaigns (cf. Gruber, 2014) and, as shown by our data, in public claims-making was likewise part of their strategy to respond to the radical right's success.

Temporal patterns within a single country are more difficult to explain by reference to the political opportunity structure. Still, we would argue that the increase in the salience of the immigration issue in Austria since 2006 is related to the strengthening of the right-wing block in the party system. Even though the FPÖ had to face tremendous losses in the first election after its governing participation (minus 17 points in the 2002 general election) and suffered from the party-split in 2005 (when the BZÖ was founded by former FPÖ figurehead Jörg Haider), the radical right became even stronger than before. Until the elections in 2013, the radical right was represented by two parties in parliament whose vote share added up to 28 per cent – more than the FPÖ received in its historical victory in 1999. Though the BZÖ was founded explicitly for the purpose of staying in government and proceeding with government policy, the party's policy programme hardly differed from the FPÖ's, in particular with regard to the issues of immigration and European integration (cf. Luther, 2006). The emergence of the BZÖ then also led to competition on the immigration issue within the radical-right camp, which further boosted the overall importance of the issue in the public sphere. This argument is supported by our data, which show that since 2006 all parties increased their issue-salience in claims-making on immigration.

### 3.4 Conclusion

Between 1995 and 2009 issues related to immigration, migrant integration and asylum are characterised by a considerable increase in salience in Austria, in particular during the last four years of this period. No similar pattern, however, can be found regarding the polarisation of immigration, which is generally rather low, mostly indicating agreement or an equal distribution of different positions rather than a polarisation of opinions. Still, compared with the other countries presented in this book, both salience and polarisation reach considerable highs at several points in time. With reference to the typology presented in Figure 1.1 of this volume, the issue of immigration can thus be characterised as an 'urgent problem' or a 'politicised issue' during most of the 15-year period under study.

Looking at claims-making actors, we find similar patterns as in other countries: Governing and party actors are the most important claimants, together making up more than 65 per cent of all claims. Interestingly, we find that anti-immigration parties are not the drivers in the politicisation of immigration. Though the FPÖ expresses the clearest anti-immigrant stance in their positioning, it is much less present as a claims-making actor compared with Austria's two traditional mainstream parties, the SPÖ and the ÖVP. This is not least related to the distribution of competences in government coalitions: The party holding responsibility for the ministry of the interior is consistently also the party with the highest share of claims (i.e. the SPÖ until 2000 and from then onwards the ÖVP). Hence politicisation of immigration in Austria is clearly a top-down phenomenon driven by governing authorities



and established parties. Restrictive claims as well come from established political actors, first and foremost governing actors and representatives from the three largest parties (the SPÖ, the ÖVP and the FPÖ), whereas pro-immigrant claims are spread among more actors, with the Greens and civil society actors playing an important role. Not surprisingly, we also find considerable differences in the tone of the debate between the two newspapers. Whereas more restrictive claims appear in the coverage of the right-wing tabloid *Kronen Zeitung*, the left-wing quality paper *Standard* reveals a higher share of liberal pro-immigrant claims.

Seeking to explain patterns in the politicisation of immigration in Austria, we discussed four potential explanations: (1) societal developments, (2) actions of specific groups, (3) immigration policies, and (4) the political opportunity structure. Regarding trends in immigration we found that despite a correspondence with issue-salience in terms of a general increase over time, peaks and lows in the salience and polarisation of the immigration issue cannot be explained by similar patterns in immigration to Austria. The plausibility of the immigration patterns hypothesis is further weakened by the fact that issue-salience increased in recent years despite a growing share of EU-internal immigration – which we hypothesised as being no particular driver of politicisation – among all immigrants.

No support at all can be found for the assumption that the politicisation of immigration is driven by migrant and/or anti-immigrant actors, both having a specific interest in emphasising the issue by publicly raising claims. Migrant or minority organisations are virtually absent from public claims-making on immigration in Austria and anti-immigrant actors – in Austria represented by political parties (the FPÖ and BZÖ) – are much less active in claims-making compared with other actors, in particular their mainstream competitors.

Whether the adaptation of controversial policies impedes on issue-salience is difficult to assess given the high policy activity in Austria, where controversial policy amendments or reform packages took place each year. Still, we found that the salience of different immigration dimensions or topics – immigration, asylum and integration – do not correspond to the importance of these dimensions in terms of policy adoption. Questions of integration are overrepresented in claims-making, whereas asylum claims are underrepresented compared with legislative activity on the other two.

While the political opportunity structure can hardly account for temporal variation on a yearly base, we still argue that general trends, like the increase in issue-salience in the final third of our 15-year period of analysis, are to be viewed in connection with the strengthening of the radical right in the Austrian party system observable at about the same time. Since 2005 two far-right, anti-immigration parties have been represented in the party system (the FPÖ and BZÖ). Consequently, party competition over immigration further increased: Since 2006 all relevant parties have increased their issue-salience in claims-making on immigration.

The relatively high issue-salience of immigration in Austria from a cross-country comparative focus is related to favourable conditions for radical-right mobilisation more generally. The radical-right FPÖ has been firmly established in the Austrian party system since 1949 and – despite its radical positioning on immigration – is

to be considered a mainstream party in terms of its size and blackmailing power. In contrast to other countries, Austrian political elites did not respond to radical-right pressure by a consequent strategy of exclusion. Contrariwise, the SPÖ–ÖVP grand coalition governments that had been in power from the early 1980s until 2000 legitimised the FPÖ's policy demands by adopting restrictive policies on immigration and, ultimately, providing them access to government (as did the ÖVP in 2000 and 2002). Hence, though the radical right is not the driver in politicising immigration in Austria, its presence and strength together with its mainstream competitors' response facilitate party competition over, and issue-politicisation of, immigration in the Austrian case.

## Notes

- 1 We would like to thank Teresa Peintinger for her contribution to earlier drafts of this chapter.
- 2 With the introduction of a State Secretariat for Integration in 2011 – a long-term demand of humanitarian civil society organisations and experts – immigrant integration, however, has recently become subject to actual policy-making in Austria.
- 3 These confidence intervals were estimated by means of 1,000 bootstrap samples. The other graphs do not contain confidence intervals because they would become too unclear.
- 4 Claims on migration in Austria are unequally distributed among the two newspapers selected, leading to different sample sizes for the two: 75 per cent of all claims come from the quality paper *Standard*, while only a quarter originates from the *Kronen Zeitung*. However, apart from a few exceptions, weighing our results accordingly does not lead to any substantive changes in the findings. In order to avoid methodological inconsistencies and to keep comparability with the findings from other chapters in this volume, we therefore refrain from using the weighted numbers in the figures and tables presented in this chapter. Instead we will explicitly point to deviations compared to weighted results if applicable – as is the case for the polarisation scores for 1996 and 2004.
- 5 These are the years where both salience and polarisation values are above the average values computed using the data from all seven countries included in our project and this edited volume; the upper right array in Figure 3.3 thus displays years of politicisation.
- 6 For a summary see Gruber (2014).
- 7 This is not to say that there has been no liberalisation at all. Still, the larger reform packages often introduced further restrictions to immigrants and, in particular, asylum seekers (cf. Peintinger, 2012).
- 8 We singled out all asylum-related claims from the immigration category, which is also why immigration is then less salient compared to questions of immigrant integration.
- 9 The same holds true for the process of European integration, which allowed Austrian radical-right entrepreneurs to evoke concerns about losing the only recently developed Austrian national identity by creating us–them conflicts that were utilised likewise in anti-immigrant mobilisation.
- 10 The initiative was also one of the main reasons for the foundation of the Liberal party in 1993, a split-off of the FPÖ founded by former members of the liberal wing in the FPÖ.