**Research territory definition**

A few sentences laying out the broadest possible context for the work

The global number of international migrants has grown significantly, from 75 million in 1965 to around 272 million in 2019 (World Migration Report, 2020). Europe has emerged as one of the primary global destinations (Haas et al., 2019). Economic inequality, demographic pressures, and environmental crises are just some of the drivers of migration (Richmond, 2002). In Europe, opinions about immigration are heterogeneous. In Western Europe, short-term increases in immigration can lead to more negative attitudes, particularly when immigrants are from non-EU countries. However, regions with a higher share of foreign-born populations tend to be less anti-immigrant (Dražanová & Gonnot, 2023). Differences between countries often reflect economic conditions, for example the severity of a current recession (Hatton, 2016). Polarization refers to the divergence of opinions or attitudes within a society, often leading to the formation of distinct and opposing groups (Williams, 2018). In the context of immigration, polarization can manifest as stark differences or subtle distinctions in attitudes towards migrants, ranging from acceptance and support to scepticism and opposition.

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One aspect of polarization is issue alignment. Issue alignment refers to the process by which people's attitudes, beliefs, or preferences on one set of issues become correlated or aligned with their attitudes on other issues, often due to shared ideological, partisan, or social factors. This concept is commonly studied in political science, sociology, and psychology to understand how individuals or groups develop cohesive worldviews or political identities. Issue alignment is associated with increased negative political affect, particularly towards out-groups. This alignment of issue attitudes can exacerbate political hostility, as individuals perceive others with differing issue alignments as more ideologically distant (Bougher, 2017). Investigating issue alignment regarding immigration opinions in Europe is an important topic because it sheds light on how attitudes toward immigration are connected to broader political, social, and cultural dynamics, with significant implications for understanding public opinion, policy-making, and social cohesion.

**Niche establishment within research territory**

A concrete and narrow open problem within the research territory

Pointing out a gap in the knowledge of some topic

Noting an apparent contradiction in the literature or a published claim that is vulnerable to new data

Identifying rival theoretical models that can be distinguished by new data

Suggesting an entirely novel way of thinking about a research area

clearly and specifically state the central research question

**Niche occupation**

how we occupied the niche we just identified

outline the approach

Observations and / or executed theory

General form of the data (what quantities and how we measured them)

How analyses of the data can can answer the central research question

Maybe end the introduction with a short summary of our main results and conclusion (even if they are already stated in the abstract)