Erschienen in: Journal of Urban Affairs. Taylor & Francis. 2023, 45(5), S. 998-1021
https://doi.org/10.1080/07352166.2021.1886855

Electoral support for the 5 Star Movement in Milan: An ecological analysis of social and spatial factors

Jonathan Pratschke [a], Tommaso Vitale [b], Niccolò Morelli [c], Bruno Cousin [b], Matteo Piolatto [d], and Matteo Del Fabbro [b]

[a]University of Naples "Federico II," Complesso Universitario di Monte Sant'Angelo; [b]Sciences Po; [c]Catholic University of the Sacred Heart; [d]University of Padova

ABSTRACT
After the 2018 general election, several scholars remarked on the failure of the 5 Star Movement (5SM) to increase its vote in Milan. While the role of demographic and socioeconomic factors has been highlighted, little attention has been devoted to spatial dynamics. The authors analyze the greater city of Milan using a new set of spatial units that capture the characteristics of the local populations which voted at specific polling stations. They regress support for the 5SM in each electoral district on a range of demographic, socioeconomic and spatial variables. The results show that more disadvantaged districts just outside the municipality have a strong propensity to support the 5SM. Many of the individuals and families living in these areas were negatively affected by economic crisis and continue to experience strain. These are not places of extreme marginality but have unsatisfied needs that are largely ignored by the traditional parties.

An exploratory ecological analysis of the 2018 general election

After the 2018 general election in Italy, many commentators suggested that the 5 Star Movement had failed to make a significant breakthrough in Milan, the economic capital of Italy, the richest metropolis in the country and one of the most dynamic and affluent in Europe. This appeared self-evident, as the party received just 18% of the vote in the city and failed to achieve the high levels of support it received in Southern Italy, where it almost doubled its support in five years to reach an impressive 47.3%. However, this was also true of the Lombardy Region and Northern Italy as a whole (23.7%).[1] To what extent does Milan actually represent an exception with respect to these broader electoral trends?

In order to answer this question, we must first clarify what we are talking about when we refer to Milan. It is well-established in urban studies that the sociological boundaries of cities do not necessarily coincide with their administrative boundaries and that analysts should seek to identify an appropriate scale when studying political and social phenomena (Le Galès & Vitale, 2013). If we define the perimeter of the greater city of Milan based on sociological criteria (this procedure will be explained later in the article), we find that support for the 5 Star Movement (5SM) was actually 23%, in line with the rest of Northern Italy. If we exclude the municipality of Milan, the percentage of people voting for the 5SM in Greater Milan was even higher (25%), illustrating the importance of geographical scale.

In order to understand the outcome of the 2018 general election in Milan, it is necessary to analyze the economic, social and demographic characteristics of different areas of the city. This can shed light on how electoral support for the 5SM was structured in social and spatial terms and enables us to evaluate the presumed exceptionalism of Milan. If we can explain the outcome of the

CONTACT Jonathan Pratschke jonathan.pratschke@unina.it Department of Economics and Statistics, University of Naples "Federico II," Complesso Universitario Di Monte Sant'Angelo, Via Cintia 21, Naples 80126, Italy.

election by referring to the local social context, we may be able to achieve a better understanding of the sociological consequences of the election results not only in Milan, but also in other areas of Northern Italy.[2]

The 5SM is often described as relying on populist rhetoric and policies and has been branded as an “eclectic” or “centrist” populist party, or even an “anti-establishment reform party” (Mosca & Tronconi, 2019). We use the concept of populism here to denote a “thin-centered ideology” characterized by anti-elitism and anti-pluralism (Mudde, 2004). Voters look to populist parties to denounce the “vested interests” of “corrupt” mainstream political parties of the Left and the Right and to represent regional, economic, social and cultural interests that have been ignored. Previous empirical research has shown that the 5SM is perceived by voters as a party that pushes for radical change, offering a space for subaltern interests within a heterogeneous political offering that is not based on a coherent project but is nevertheless effective as a channel for grievances (Biorcio & Natale, 2018).

Scholarly work on the electorate of the 5SM and on the demand for populist political representation in Europe has appealed to three contrasting explanations (Caiani & Graziano, 2019). The first of these hinges on the purported failure of mainstream political parties (following seminal work by Mény & Surel, 2002), the second focuses on the “losers of globalization” (Kriesi & Pappas, 2015) and the third links populism to the traditionalist backlash against movements espousing libertarian and cosmopolitan values (Norris & Inglehart, 2019). We adopt a different ecological approach in this paper which examines the social and spatial characteristics of different parts of the metropolitan area. Our research resonates with criticism by Lindh and McCall (2020) of literature on political behavior that overlooks contextual factors because it focuses exclusively on individual attitudes and attributes. Our approach can enrich this discussion by providing insights into the ways in which the local context can filter, reflect or amplify political, economic and cultural divisions.

Some scholars have suggested that the failure of both liberal and social democratic urban policies has encouraged populists to focus on cities (Duina & Carson, 2020). They emphasize the gulf between center and periphery, contrasting the accumulation of value in central districts and the loss of resources and capacity in other parts of the city. The relative decline in the fortunes of the periphery is seen as providing fertile ground for populist politics (Biancalana & Colloca, 2019). This approach associates places with political behavior but fails to account for differences within the categories it employs, with the result that spatial factors are generally reduced to a simple dichotomy between center and periphery.

It may be helpful to start by clarifying the relationship between populism, space and social class. This is often mentioned in studies of European metropolises, where it is suggested that specific social groups have either been forced out of central areas due to rising housing prices or have fled to the periphery in search of better services or a more attractive living environment (Hochstenbach & Musterd, 2018). However, the precise link between social groups and urban space is rarely explored empirically. This is a crucial issue, as the spatial distribution and concentration of social groups—social classes in particular—is highly relevant to their political behavior (Alex-Assensoh, 1998). If changes have occurred in the spatial distribution of the working, middle and upper classes, this could help to explain changes in electoral outcomes when studied at the local or even the municipal scale. Moreover, if the life chances and opportunities of individuals belonging to these different classes have changed, this could also shed light on political dynamics and trends. For example, some scholars suggest that support for populist politics tends to be higher in areas of economic and industrial decline, high unemployment and low educational attainments (Dijkstra, Poelman, Rodríguez-Pose et al., 2019).

We believe that the success of populist political parties in recent years may be related to both a reconfiguration in the geography of social class and changes in social and economic conditions within metropolitan areas. In Italy, these processes have led to the emergence of socially and spatially peripheral areas which are home to “disenfranchised classes.” We address these issues by assessing how spatial patterns in electoral outcomes relate to the social composition of local areas.

The concept of disenfranchisement goes beyond the class structure of local populations to explore the capacity of social actors to mobilize and to express their common needs (Thompson & Doka, 2017). It also raises the interesting question of how the emotions triggered by the loss of social rights and the experience of relative deprivation influence political attitudes and behavior. If needs and sentiments cannot be recognized collectively and expressed symbolically within the public sphere then they may manifest themselves in unpredictable ways. We use this concept to build a bridge between research that is attentive to social and spatial transformations and research that focuses primarily on the relationships involved in political representation.[3]

At the intersection between these different approaches is the question of how the different social class groups that are present in an area attempt to secure political representation and to express their needs. The resulting processes may involve readily identifiable models of local political representation over the long term, but they may also be characterized by conflicts and cleavages, disenfranchisement and disaffection. One of the secondary aims of this article is to assess whether there is any evidence that electoral support for the populist 5SM is associated with the disenfranchisement of lower-class groups in peripheral urban areas.

We use a structural approach to study the social and spatial characteristics of electoral districts in the greater city of Milan and to analyze their relationship with electoral outcomes. Opinion poll data suggest that the 5SM is particularly appreciated by young adults, blue-collar workers (and employees more generally), housewives, the unemployed and people with no more than a high school diploma (Maraffi, 2018). In other words, social class position appears to be a crucial variable in order to understand why certain groups are more likely to vote for the 5SM. This is not surprising, as variables associated with social class are often found to have high explanatory power in relation to social and political phenomena (Sakamoto & Powers, 2019).

However, a more challenging question relates to the role of space in shaping electoral outcomes. Why did the rhetoric and policies of the 5SM strike such a strong chord in specific areas of Milan? Is this purely due to their structural characteristics, or does space play a role in this process? If space matters, what can we say about the underlying mechanisms that induce specific localities to express support for the 5SM? In order to tackle this question, we use hierarchical linear regression analysis, first analyzing spatial factors on their own before combining them with demographic, social class and labor market variables to assess whether they conserve their explanatory power.

It should be noted that our conclusions are exploratory in nature and that we do not aim to draw rigid inferences. As we are working with aggregate data and studying processes that potentially operate at different levels, the results of our regression analysis require careful interpretation. We cannot directly measure all of the phenomena that we are interested in and aggregate data are more vulnerable to confounding than individual-level data (Greenland, 2001). It can be particularly challenging to distinguish between direct causal influences and spurious statistical relationships. Our aim is to develop new theoretical ideas regarding the socio-spatial origins of electoral support for the 5SM which can stimulate further empirical research.

Unsurprisingly, we find that electoral support for the 5SM is greatest in areas with larger proportions of lower-class and smaller proportions of upper-class families. Our measure of social class composition has very strong explanatory power, but as we noted above, our main aim is to shed light on the role of space and scale in relation to electoral outcomes. By studying these more neglected aspects of electoral behavior we hope to provide a more complete and convincing interpretation of contemporary political trends.

Social and spatial factors in the analysis of electoral outcomes

Since the 2000s, there has been renewed interest (particularly in the UK) in studying political behavior at the urban scale and in exploring the interaction between space and class (Johnston et al., 2005). Economic crisis, the expansion of temporary employment, the phenomenon of the "working poor" and the emergence of urban protest have promoted renewed research interest in these issues

(Featherstone & Korf, 2012), with a particular focus on peripheral estates (Bertuzzi et al., 2019) and new forms of mobilization and conflict (Bosi & Zamponi, 2015).

In the Italian context, research has focused less on urban protest and conflicts and more on the relationship between space and electoral politics (Truglia, 2007). This is partly due to a newfound willingness on the part of politicians to discuss the "problem of the urban periphery," leading to the institution of a commission of inquiry on peripheral areas, which has collated a large amount of data, and the creation of a new government funding program known as the *Bando Periferie*. This debate has raised the issue of how people vote in peripheral urban areas, invoking a dialectic between center and periphery, where the latter term is endowed with both a geographical and a social meaning, in line with earlier work in political science (Milbrath, 1965). This binary contrast remains problematic, however, and the meaning of both terms must, at the very least, be clarified.

In Italy, as elsewhere, electoral studies that incorporate a spatial dimension have concentrated mainly on participation, rather than seeking to explain support for specific parties (Bellettini et al., 2016; Truglia, 2014). For example, researchers have studied whether the ethnic composition of a district influences the propensity of its residents to vote, without including other structural variables and tending to limit themselves to the falsification of simple hypotheses (Bhatti et al., 2017).

At the international level, scholars have been aware for some time that the electoral behavior of the upper and middle classes can vary with the spatial context. Relatively affluent social groups appear to vote differently, for example, if they live in the suburbs rather than in more central areas (Walks, 2005). However, these kinds of reflections on the role of space have raised some difficult conceptual and theoretical issues. This is particularly evident in relation to the center/periphery dichotomy that we mentioned above. A key point is that the concept of the urban periphery, as it is used in Italian debates, excludes affluent suburban communities and refers primarily to deprived areas located outside the city center. As we will see, however, urban hinterlands have not only expanded in recent decades, they have also grown increasingly heterogeneous (Rickards et al., 2016).

Perhaps because residential dynamics and class composition have such a strong influence on electoral outcomes, there is a tendency to relegate spatial variables to the background. Although case study research can identify temporal trends, highlight internal differences and identify key themes, it can also lose sight of how places and communities are influenced by dynamics that operate at a much broader spatial scale (involving the metropolitan area as a whole, or the regional economy, for example).

We adopt a different theoretical framework in this article, which has its roots in the work of Peter Blau (Blau, 1960), and is exemplified by the work of Robert Sampson (see, for example, Sampson, 2019). At the core of this framework is the idea that social relationships, attitudes and political behavior are influenced by the social environment, which comprises both a population structure and an opportunity structure. The most relevant characteristics of metropolitan populations are not the attributes of individuals or communities, but the differences and relationships between them. Analogously, the key characteristics of the opportunity structure of a metropolis pertain to the spatial relations that exist between specific social groups, on the one hand, and opportunities for work, education, health, social participation, sport and leisure, on the other. The analysis of these spatial relations can help us to identify relatively enduring "structural effects," which are the object of this study.

Urban sociologists have insisted in recent years—quite rightly, in our opinion—on the need for researchers to abandon familiar municipal boundaries and to adopt a metropolitan scale of analysis. The metropolitan scale is increasingly important when seeking to understand political attitudes and behavior, due to the increasing social and economic interdependence and functional integration of areas linked by intense commuting flows. It is arguably now at this scale that daily practices are structured, residential choices are made and work and leisure and health/social care activities are coordinated for the entire family (Le Galès & Vitale, 2013). Importantly, individuals increasingly judge their relative condition at this scale, which means that inequalities in income, wealth and opportunities also need to be analyzed at this level. This implies that the dynamics of "metropolization" do not merely involve the geographical expansion of cities, but also changes in social practices in which connectivity, and not just contiguity, plays a key role, accompanied by qualitative, functional and morphological transformations (Cremaschi & Le Galès, 2018).

This does not mean, of course, that internal distinctions are disappearing or that the center/periphery dichotomy has no heuristic value. However, it does provide a strong rationale for adopting a metropolitan rather than a municipal scale when studying phenomena related to socioeconomic segregation in cities like Milan. Continuing to adopt a municipal focus when social and political processes have spilled over existing administrative boundaries can lead to highly misleading results. Consequently, appropriate criteria for drawing the boundary of the metropolitan area must be adopted.

The metropolitan area of Milan is polycentric but highly integrated from the point of view of the movement of workers. One of its specificities is that the local identities of urban centers remain quite strong (Tosi & Vitale, 2011) and make an important contribution to metropolitan dynamics (Andreotti & Le Galès, 2019). For this reason, it would be naïve to suggest that electoral outcomes are influenced by municipal processes alone.

Widening their gaze beyond municipal units, Fruncillo and Addeo examine the characteristics of the Italian Provinces and the metropolitan city areas recently defined by the Delrio Law (Fruncillo & Addeo, 2018). However, these administrative units—like municipalities—are not based on sociological considerations. John Agnew and his colleagues insist on a much wider perimeter when analyzing the success of the Northern League in the Milanese metropolis during the 1990s, in a precedent to the analysis presented in this paper (Agnew et al., 2002).

Methodology

Defining the greater city of Milan

There are a number of different ways of defining the perimeter of an urban area. The most straightforward is to use existing administrative units, confining attention to the central municipality (see, for example, Barbagli & Pisati, 2012) or some other metropolitan administrative area. This generally simplifies data access but frequently leads to under-bounding because urban areas have expanded rapidly over the last three decades as individuals and families have moved out of central districts and into residential areas that are further from the center. This process cannot be assimilated to the "suburbanization" strategies of affluent social groups in the U.S. and elsewhere, as those fleeing Italian cities belong primarily (but not exclusively) to disadvantaged social groups.

The main driver of this process appears to be rising house prices in the prestigious historical neighborhoods (Cousin & Préteceille, 2008), which are increasingly attractive residential locations. This process was greatly accelerated by the redevelopment of central districts as areas of entertainment, tourism and high value-added services from the mid-1990s onward, a general trend in European countries (Peck & Tickell, 2002). These developments, together with easier access to credit, have triggered a cascade of price increases whereby buyers with smaller budgets are forced to move to increasingly remote areas. One aspect of this process is that the relatively central and economical rental properties previously favored by students and young workers have been gradually displaced by redevelopment.

This leads to the conclusion that sociological investigation of urban phenomena such as electoral realignment in Italian cities should consider a perimeter defined according to sociological criteria. An effective way of doing this is provided by the EU/OECD's functional urban areas (Dijkstra, Poelman, Veneri et al., 2019; OECD, 2012). This definition treats small population centers as potentially forming part of an integrated and multipolar urban area.[4] As it is available for a large number of countries, this classification facilitates comparative research. It is updated periodically, which enables researchers to track changes, and it includes a definition of both the greater urban area and the wider commuting zone which leads to an inclusive definition of a polycentric metropolis like Milan.

We confine our attention here to the greater city of Milan as defined by the EU/OECD, excluding the outer commuter zone. This decision is motivated by the urban focus of our research, as the commuter zone often has a rural character. In the study area, 2,245,284 valid votes were cast in the 2018 general election. The most-voted parties were the 5 Star Movement (528,100 votes, 23.5%), the League (far-right, 476,080 votes, 21.2%), the Democratic Party (center-left, 464,495 votes, 20.7%) and Forza Italia (center-right, 315,561 votes, 14.1%).

Construction of spatial units

The Italian Office of National Statistics provides three sets of standardized spatial units at the sub-municipal scale for the analysis of census data in Italy. The first are the tiny census enumeration areas (*sezioni di censimento*), which can be aggregated to form either quarters (*aree subcomunali*) or census areas (*aree di censimento*), which are relatively large and heterogeneous, and poorly suited to the analysis of electoral data.

In light of these limitations, the prospect of using the existing electoral sections is attractive. In urban areas, the smallest of these units have roughly 750–1,200 registered voters, but up to 12 of these *sezioni elettorali* can be allocated to a single polling station (usually situated in a school).[5] The electoral data available from the Italian Chamber of Deputies show that the number of valid votes cast at polling stations in the greater city of Milan in 2018 ranged from just 14 to 10,401, with a mean of 3,018. There were 50 polling stations where less than 500 valid votes were cast, all of which were located in hospitals and nursing homes.[6] After excluding these special polling stations, the mean number of valid votes cast per polling station is 3,237, which is large enough to ensure stable estimates but small enough to yield relatively homogeneous areas.

There are 861 polling stations in the greater city of Milan, covering 191 municipalities. We were not able to obtain information on the precise location of 149 polling stations in 20 municipalities, so these were aggregated.[7] Figure 1 shows the geographical distribution of the polling stations for which we were able to obtain addresses, as well as the perimeter of the EU/OECD greater urban area (gray) and the boundary of the municipality of Milan with its administrative subdivisions (white).

Visual inspection of the distribution of the polling stations confirms that they are distributed quite evenly across Greater Milan, reflecting population density. This can be verified by superimposing the point data on a base layer, as shown in Figure 2 for the municipality of Opera (the polling stations are shown as dark gray circles).

In more densely-populated municipalities, such as Sesto San Giovanni, the distribution of polling stations follows the distribution of the population in a uniform way (see Figure 3), exploiting the dense spatial network of schools.

In a small number of municipalities, the polling stations are clustered closely together and it is not possible to associate them with a well-defined local population. In these cases, we aggregated the data, if necessary to the level of the municipality. In a small number of cases, different addresses were provided for the same polling station (coinciding with multiple entrances to a large school, for example). In these cases, we again merged the data to obtain a single polling station.

Unfortunately, there is no centralized source of data on the boundaries of the electoral sections, as these are defined at municipal level, often based on lists of street segments. This means that we must find an alternative way of reconstructing their boundaries. Using the data shown in Figure 1, we constructed Voronoi polygons around each polling station (Evans & Jones, 1987), based on relative distances. The boundaries of these polygons pass mid-way between adjacent polling stations, which is consistent with Italian regulations which state that residents must be assigned to vote at the polling station that is nearest to their home. Figure 4 shows the results of this operation for one municipality, Lissone, which has 6 polling stations. In this and most other municipalities, these artificially-constructed polygons represent a plausible hypothesis regarding the catchment area of each polling station.

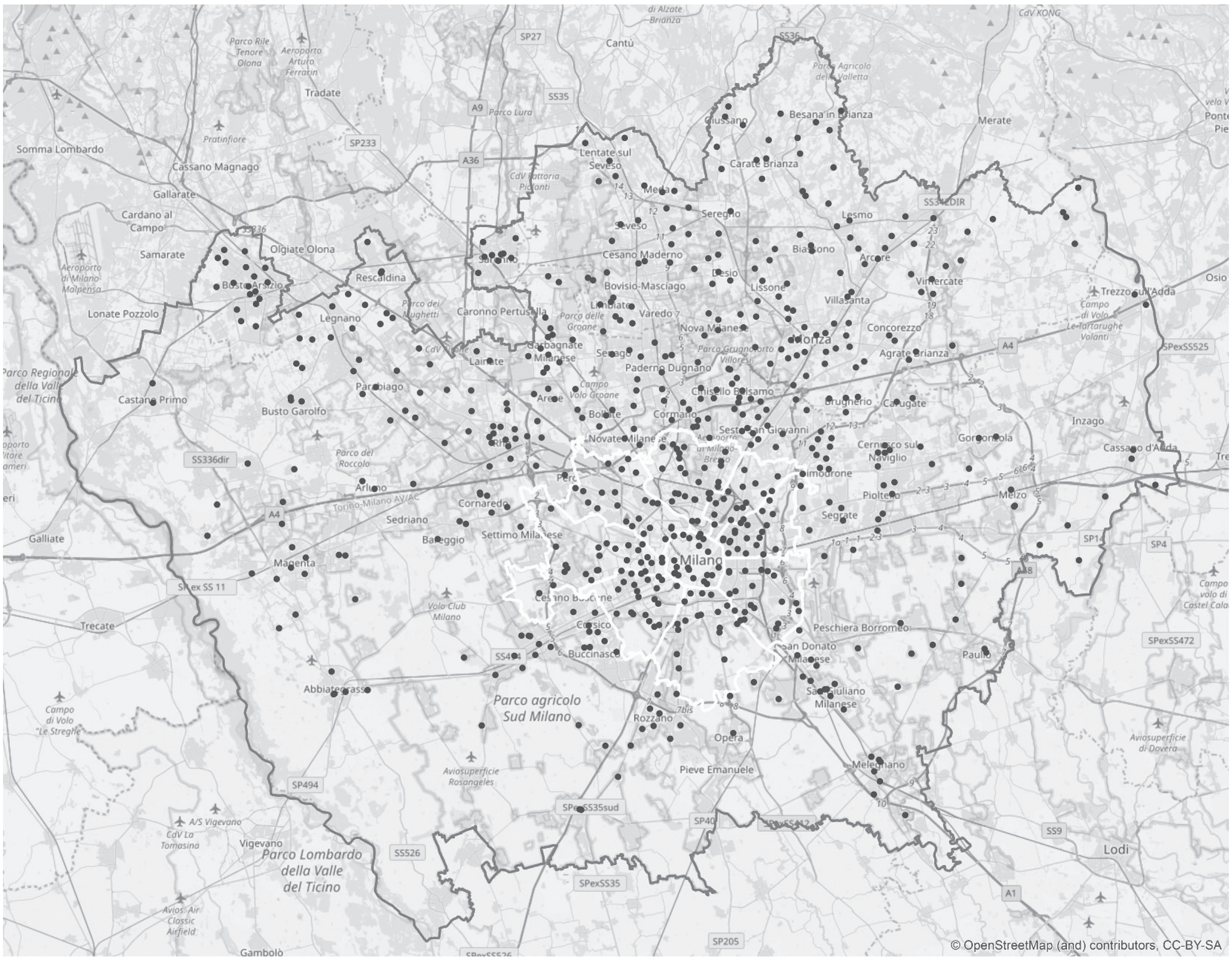

Figure 1. Distribution of polling stations in the city of Milan.

The next step was to reconstruct these polygons using the census enumeration areas as building blocks, with the aim of achieving as close a fit as possible. The results of this process are shown in Figure 5, again using the example of Lissone. In a few cases, after linking polling stations in peripheral urban areas with census data, we obtained electoral districts that had very small populations. In these cases, we again merged contiguous polling stations in order to achieve a more satisfactory set of spatial units with reasonable distributions in terms of the reference population as well as the number of valid votes.

The results are highly satisfactory, each polling station being situated at the center of a clearly-defined and plausible district. The boundaries of the electoral districts can differ from the polygon boundaries, particularly in sparsely-populated municipalities at the edges of the metropolis, where the census enumeration areas tend to be larger in size and to have more irregular boundaries. In these areas, however, the boundaries of the resulting electoral districts typically cut across green areas with few or no residents, so it does not matter if they differ from the boundaries of the Voronoi polygons. In more densely-populated areas, the census enumeration areas are smaller in size and more regular in shape, leading to a better approximation.

The precise boundaries of the polling station districts are ultimately less important than their overall geometry. In fact, we do not need to recreate the exact boundaries of the electoral districts, as errors in the attribution of buildings to one district or another tend to cancel out across the metropolitan area as a whole. This is because each district is centered on a polling station, and any errors in assignment that occur along their boundaries merely feed into the residuals in the regression equation. The final set of 636 spatial units used in the statistical model is shown in Figure 6.

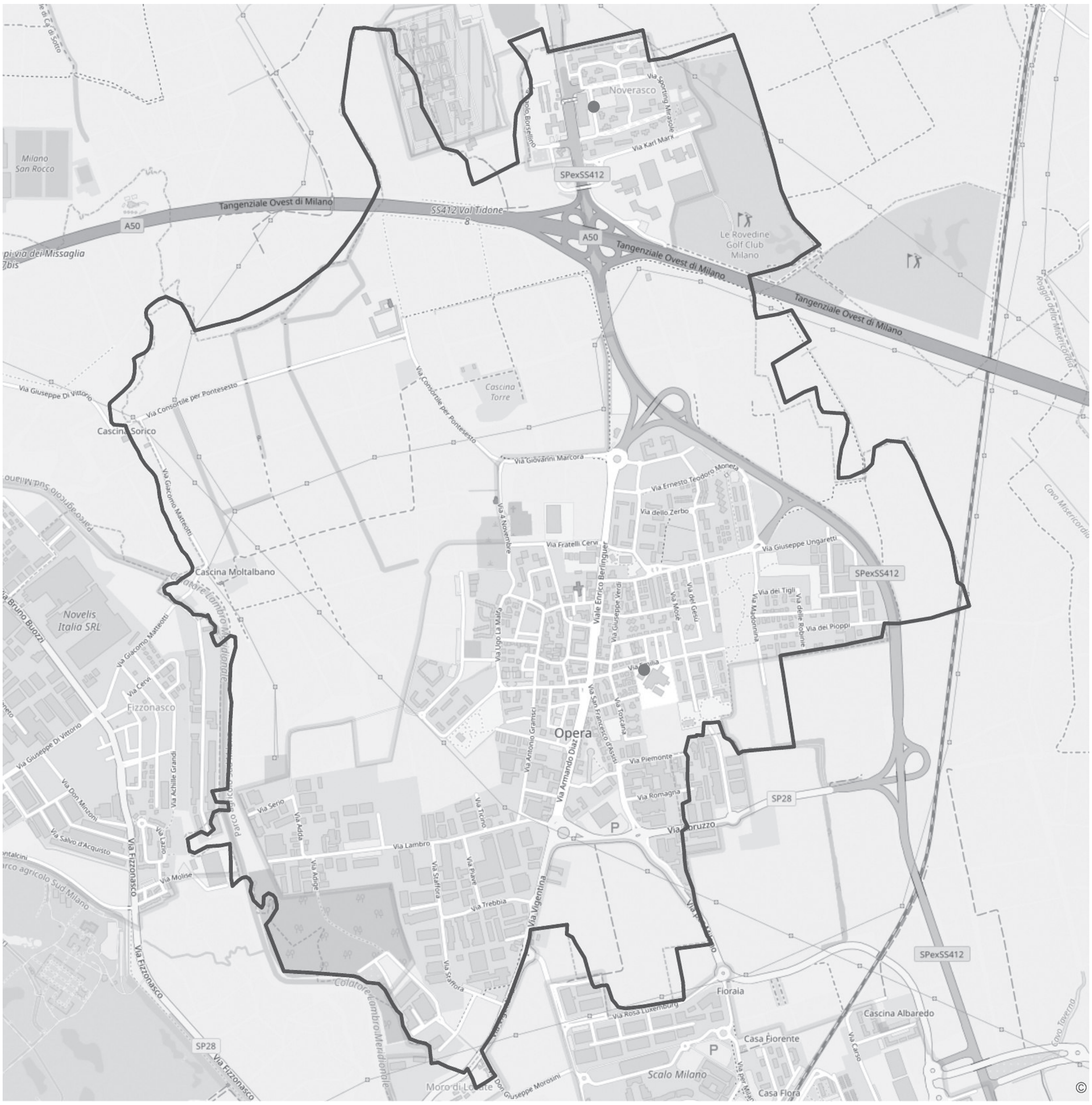

Figure 2. Distribution of polling stations in the municipality of Opera.

In the final dataset, we observe a mean of 3,530 for valid votes cast, while the resident population has a mean of 6,285.[8] The distribution of the population by electoral district is shown in the form of a histogram in Figure 7, showing that the distribution is relatively normal, with the exception of a small number of units with large populations, which we could not avoid.

Data and model specification

Table 1 provides summary data on the variables used in the statistical model and Figure 8 shows a map of the dependent variable, which is the percentage of valid votes cast in favor of the 5SM. The variables to be included in the model were chosen following assessment of a slightly larger panel of covariates, using a few different criteria. The first criterion relates to the univariate distribution of the variables themselves, as we excluded measures with highly non-normal distributions. The second relates to the correlations between indicators, as we sought to avoid including blocks of highly-correlated explanatory variables. For example, two measures of educational attainments were excluded from the model

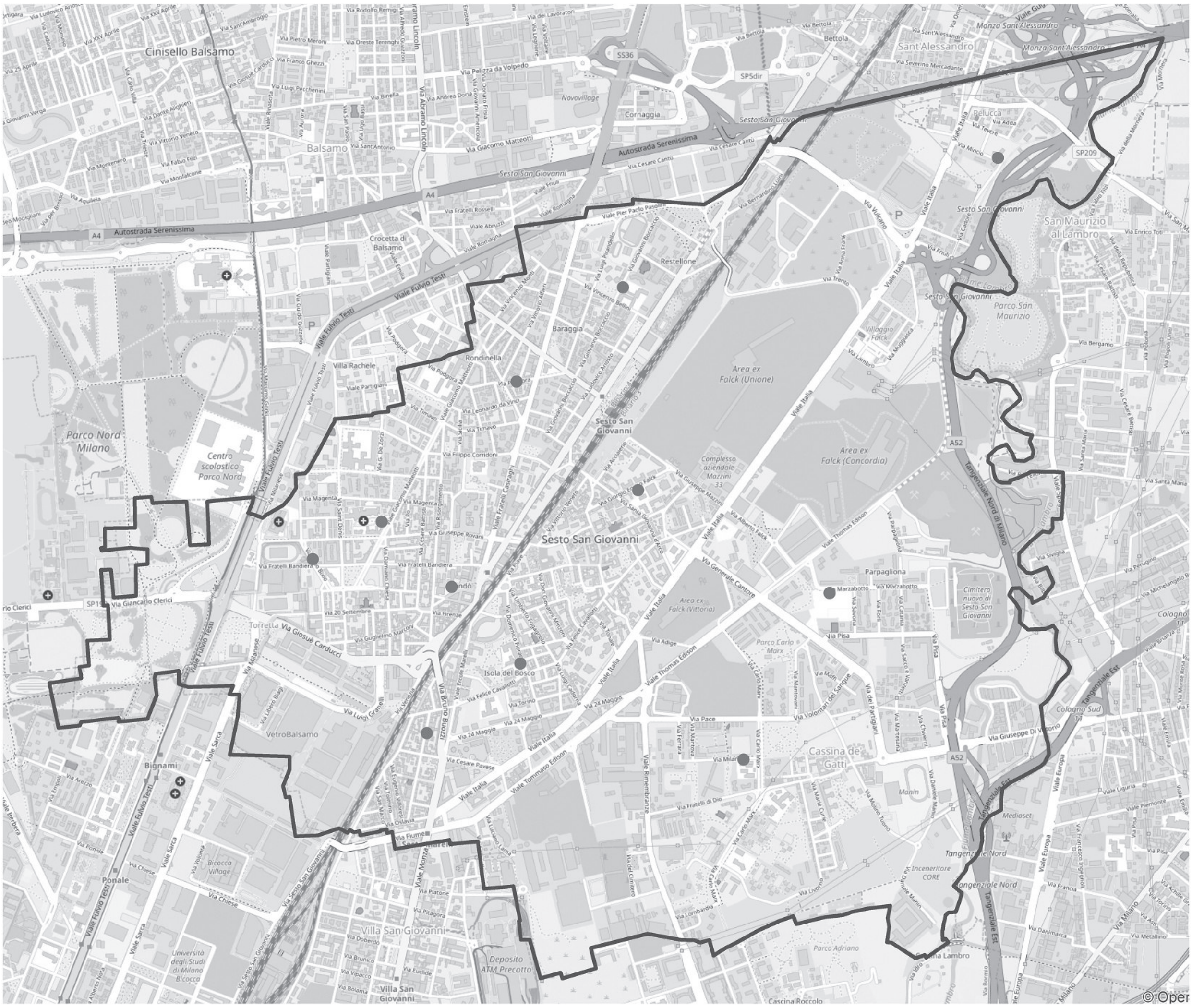

Figure 3. Distribution of polling stations in the municipality of Sesto San Giovanni.

due to the very high correlations observed with our composite measure of social class composition. Finally, we sought to achieve a relatively uniform coverage of the thematic areas identified as important by previous research: spatial factors, socioeconomic composition, labor market situation and demographic profile.

In a small number of cases, where it was not possible to adjudicate between two or more indicators, alternative model specifications were tested in order to identify the variable with the greatest explanatory power. For example, we assessed population density and linear distance from the center of Milan as well as the three spatial indicators actually included in the final set of models. Population density and linear distance were found to be less powerful predictors and were consequently excluded from the model. We also assessed some measures relating to the quality of the residential housing stock and found them to have low explanatory power.

Most of the data come from the 2011 Census of Population, which means that there is a gap of seven years between the collection of data on the characteristics of districts and the 2018 election. We therefore assume that the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of local populations have remained relatively stable over this period of time, which is not unreasonable given that the relativities between residential areas in socioeconomic and demographic terms tend to remain relatively stable (Pratschke & Haase, 2014).

Figure 8 shows that the outcome variable has a strong spatial pattern. The percentage of people voting for the 5SM is relatively low in central districts but increases as we move away from the

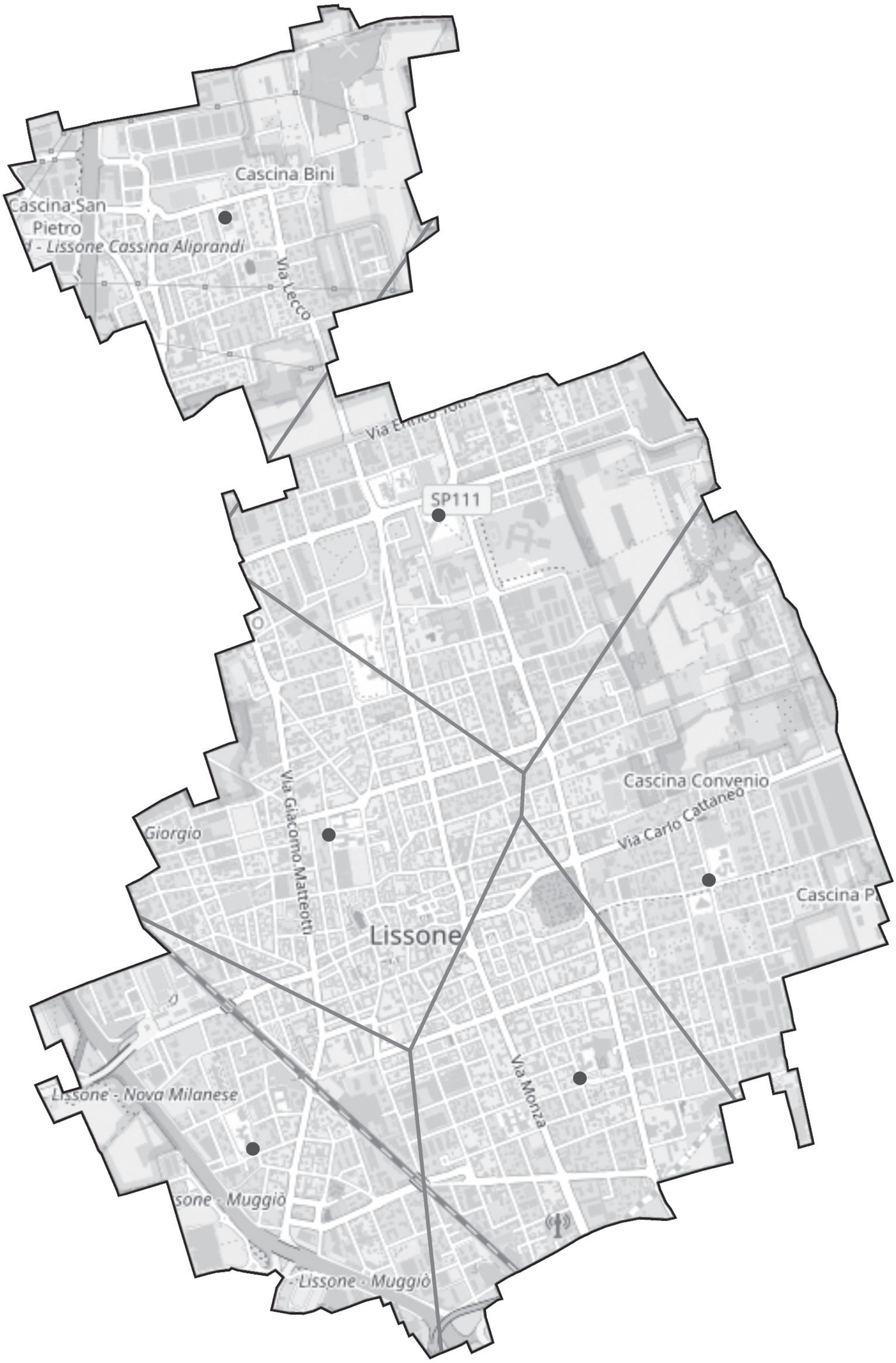

Figure 4. Division of the municipality of Lissone in Voronoi polygons.

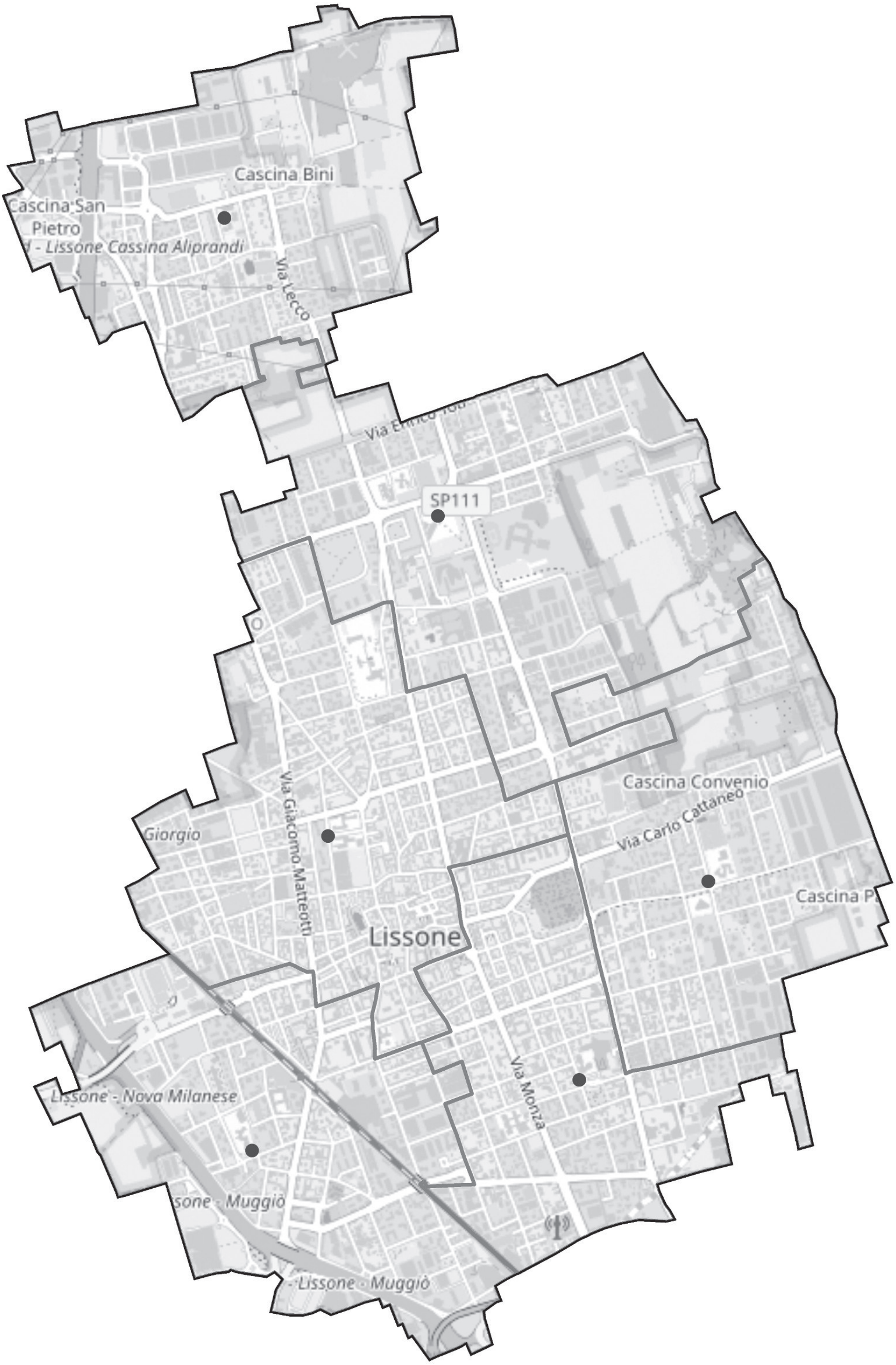

Figure 5. Division of the municipality of Lissone in polling station districts.

Figure 6. Division of the Milan urban area into polling districts.

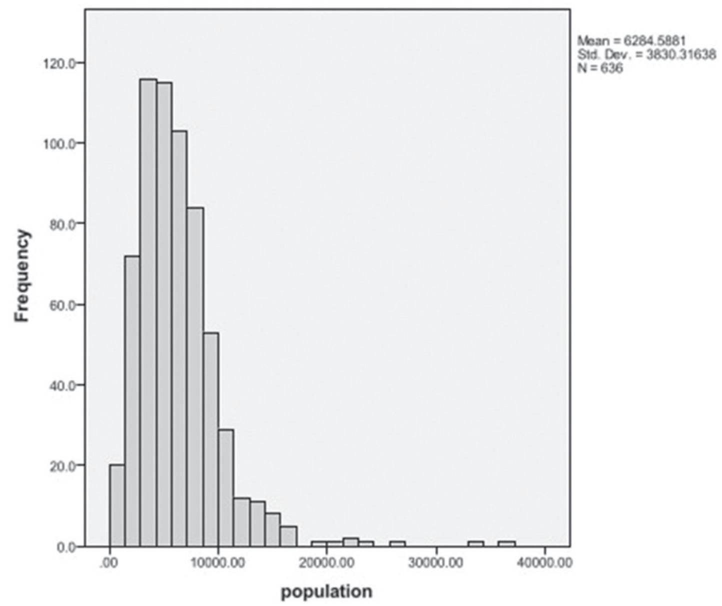

Figure 7. Histogram of population distribution of electoral districts.

municipality of Milan before declining again as we move toward more distant localities. We use the statistical techniques presented below to assess whether this pattern of concentric rings is due to the distribution of different social groups across the metropolis or whether it can be attributed to spatial

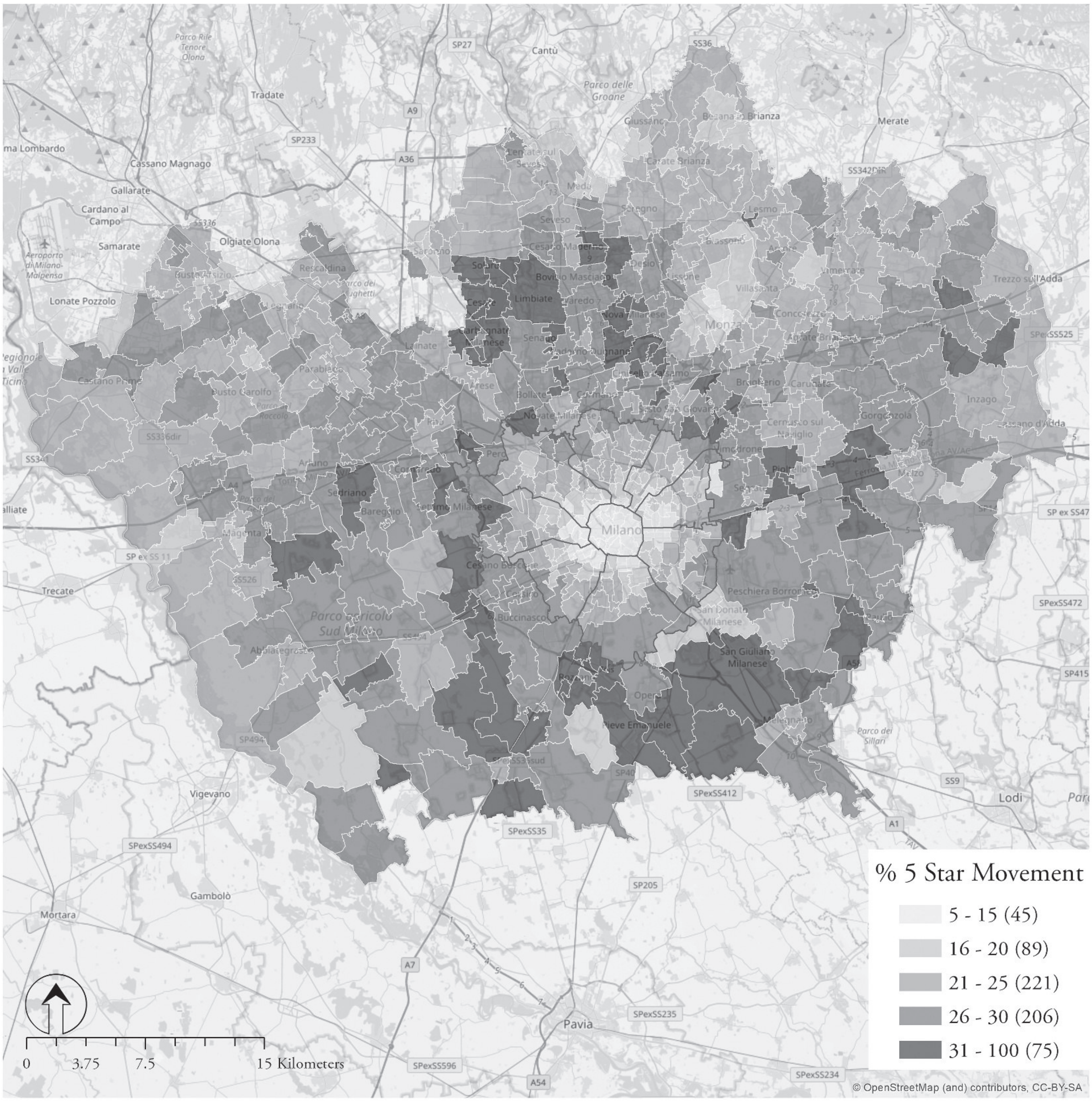

Figure 8. Percentage of valid votes for the 5 Star Movement, March 4, 2018 general election, Milan functional urban area.

factors. The spatial distribution of each of the variables in Table 1 is shown in map form in Figure 9, to assist with the interpretation of the results.

Before presenting the results of our statistical analysis, it is important to be aware of the limitations posed by the use of aggregate data. These limitations have been discussed by social scientists for decades and are associated with debates about the "ecological fallacy," "aggregation bias" and the "modifiable areal unit problem." The "ecological fallacy" refers to attempts to draw inferences relating to individuals from data that relate to geographical areas. "Aggregation bias" is what leads to the ecological fallacy and implies that, after aggregating individual-level data to form higher-level units, the results of statistical analyses may vary. The "modifiable areal unit problem" further warns that different boundaries can yield different estimates.

These statistical problems have deterred many researchers from even analyzing aggregate data due to the fear that their results may be written off as a statistical artifact rather than reflecting meaningful relationships or patterns. Our position is rather more optimistic, and is based on three considerations. Firstly, we do not seek to make inferences about individuals, but limit ourselves to discussing the

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for measures used in statistical model ($N = 636$).

Description	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.
% 25–44 year-olds	20.20	40.94	28.19	3.31
% single-person households	18.60	55.12	32.35	8.48
% ever-married adults who are separated or divorced	4.64	17.70	8.76	2.05
% foreign citizens from developing countries[a]	1.13	37.46	8.75	5.59
% 25+ year-olds with third-level qualification	4.66	57.43	17.08	10.58
Female labor force participation rate	32.38	65.60	48.35	4.51
Male unemployment rate (excluding new labor market entrants)	1.30	11.53	4.70	1.41
Index of social class composition[b]	−1.94	3.06	0.00	0.98
% households who are owner-occupiers	21.25	90.32	74.91	10.29
Mean surface area (m^2) in occupied dwellings per person[c]	26.67	87.31	40.73	5.98
Estimated travel time (minutes) to Central Station, public transport[d]	1	150	65.87	45.01
District belongs to the municipality of Milan	0	1	0.27 [e]	0.44

[a]Defined as citizens of countries in Africa, Central and South America, Central, Eastern and South Asia or Central and Eastern Europe.
[b]This is calculated as the regression factor score from an exploratory Maximum Likelihood factor analysis of the following indicators (standardized factor loadings in brackets): percentage unclassified (−0.55); percentage of unskilled workers (−0.49); percentage of skilled workers (−0.81); percentage of sales workers (−0.62); log of the percentage of self-employed workers/artisans (−0.65); percentage of employed professionals (0.93); log of the percentage of self-employed professionals (0.94); log of the percentage of employers/managers (0.79). These variables were provided by the Italian Office of National Statistics and are based on the classification of occupational descriptions collected via the 2011 Census of Population. The KMO statistic was highly satisfactory at 0.82, and the dimension extracted explained 59.7% of the variance of the indicators. The index score reflects the social class composition of the districts, with higher values indicating greater affluence. The natural logarithm is used to normalize indicators with strongly skewed distributions due to the concentration of large numbers of people belonging to specific categories in a small number of areas.
[c]We used the total surface area of occupied dwellings and the total number of residents for each census enumeration area; the final indicator is the weighted mean of the ratio of these two values after aggregating.
[d]Defined as the amount of time required to travel from the centroid of the electoral district to Milan's central station, using the fastest form of public transport available just after 10am on Monday morning. Estimates were obtained using Google Maps.
[e]This implies that 27% of districts are in the municipality of Milan.

characteristics of local populations. If we find, for example, that more people vote for the 5 Star Movement in areas with higher unemployment rates, this is not taken as implying that the unemployed are more likely to vote for this party. We can nevertheless draw careful conclusions about the aggregate electoral behavior of people in areas with this characteristic.

Secondly, we define our spatial units in such a way that they have a robust sociological meaning rather than relying on arbitrary administrative boundaries. This overcomes the modifiable areal unit problem, as our units capture the characteristics of the local populations which actually went to vote at specific polling stations and are not arbitrarily defined. Thirdly, we minimize the impact of aggregation bias by using a well-specified model that covers the key factors that researchers have identified in previous theoretical and empirical investigations. One of the reasons why individual-level estimates often differ so dramatically from aggregate-level estimates is due to the greater scope for confounding that exists in the latter case. By including a wide range of explanatory variables (while avoiding multicollinearity) we reduce the risk of confounding.

As mentioned earlier, there is still a risk of confounding when analyzing aggregate data, and this should be borne in mind when interpreting the results. For example, a specific variable may have a relatively large coefficient due to the fact that its spatial distribution matches that of the outcome variable, even if there is no underlying causal effect.

Results and discussion

Linear regression models were specified using SPSS version 23. Two variables were transformed by taking the natural logarithm in order to reduce the impact of outliers (these relate to foreign citizens and square meters per person in occupied dwellings). Second-order (squared) terms were introduced on theoretical grounds for the social class index score and travel time, to allow for possible non-linearity.

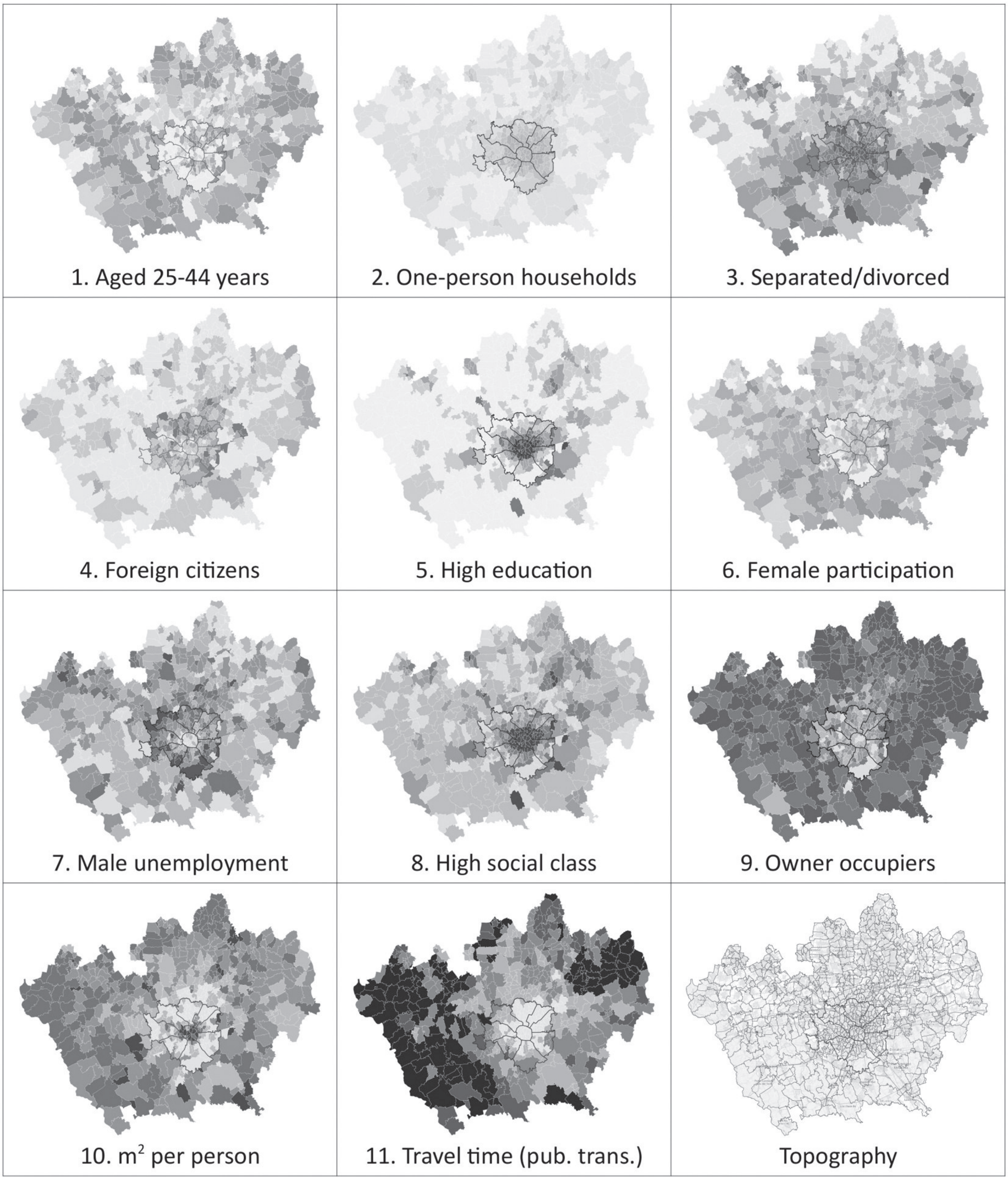

Figure 9. Maps of explanatory variables, Milan functional urban area.

The variables were then grouped into four blocks covering the following attributes: (1) spatial variables, (2) social class profile, (3) labor market situation and (4) demographic characteristics. We estimated these blocks hierarchically, starting with the spatial variables (see Table 2 for standardized coefficients and Table 3 for unstandardized coefficients and standard errors).

All three variables in the first block have statistically significant effects ($p < .000$), the coefficients are moderately large and the model explains 30% of the variance of the outcome variable. In districts outside the municipality of Milan, the percentage of people voting for the 5SM is, on average, 4.35 points higher, controlling for distance from the center. Travel time by public transport to the central

Table 2. Results of linear regression (N = 636; standardized coefficients).

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Travel time (centered)	0.35***	−0.16**	−0.10*	−0.16**
Travel time (squared)	−0.29***	0.03	−0.01	0.06
Municipality of Milan	−0.34***	−0.09*	−0.14***	−0.10**
Social class (centered)		−0.66***	−0.55***	−0.55***
Social class (squared)		−0.05	−0.09**	−0.12***
Owner occupiers		0.18***	0.12***	0.14***
Square meters per person (log)		−0.14***	−0.13***	−0.15***
% foreign citizens (log)			−0.06*	−0.02
Female labor force partic. rate			0.29***	0.32***
Male unemployment rate			0.19***	0.16***
Population 25–44 years				−0.10*
% one-person households				−0.22***
% Separated/divorced				0.18***
R^2	0.30	0.68	0.75	0.77

Model 1: spatial variables; Model 2: including socioeconomic variables; Model 3: including labor market variables; Model 4: including demographic variables.
* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

Table 3. Results of linear regression (N = 636; unstandardized coefficients with standard errors in brackets).

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Constant	26.36	38.00	19.70	24.68
	(0.29)	(4.88)	(4.82)	(4.85)
Travel time (centered)	0.044	−0.019	−0.013	−0.020
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Travel time (squared)	−0.0007	0.00007	−0.00003	0.00014
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Municipality of Milan	−4.35	−1.10	−1.74	−1.30
	(0.62)	(0.48)	(0.43)	(0.47)
Social class (centered)		−3.80	−3.18	−3.17
		(0.22)	(0.21)	(0.25)
Social class (squared)		−0.19	−0.34	−0.45
		(0.12)	(0.11)	(0.11)
Owner occupiers		0.10	0.06	0.08
		(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Square meters per person (log)		−5.71	−5.59	−6.20
		(1.23)	(1.11)	(1.08)
% foreign citizens (log)			−0.00	0.00
			(0.00)	(0.00)
Female labor force participation rate			0.37	0.39
			(0.03)	(0.05)
Male unemployment rate			0.76	0.66
			(0.11)	(0.11)
Population 25–44 years				−0.16
				(0.07)
% one-person households				−0.15
				(0.04)
% Separated/divorced				0.49
				(0.11)

Model 1: spatial variables; Model 2: including socioeconomic variables; Model 3: including labor market variables; Model 4: including demographic variables.

station has a non-linear effect (with a standardized main effect of 0.35 and a coefficient for the squared term of −0.29). This effect is discussed in greater detail below.

After introducing social class variables, the second model explains a much higher percentage (68.3%) of the variance and the coefficients for the spatial variables change significantly, suggesting that they coincide with differences in social composition. After controlling for the labor market variables in the third model, we find that social class has a non-linear effect on the percentage of people voting for the 5SM. In areas with a larger share of deprived social groups, the percentage voting for the 5SM is higher than would be predicted by a linear specification. The coefficients for the socioeconomic variables decline only slightly compared to the previous model, suggesting that the labor market and social class dimensions are distinct; this model explains 75.2% of the variance.

In areas with a higher percentage of foreign citizens, a slightly smaller share of people vote for the 5SM. Once we control for the age profile and other demographic characteristics of local areas in the fourth model, the share of immigrants no longer influences the percentage of people voting for the 5SM. The non-linear effect of social class grows slightly stronger but the coefficients for the other variables in the model do not change greatly. This suggests that the demographic profile of local areas also represents a distinct dimension; this model explains 77.1% of the variance.[9]

The coefficients for the spatial variables change by a small amount after introducing the labor market and demographic variables, reducing the effect associated with higher travel times to the center. In the municipality of Milan, the vote for the 5SM is, on average, 1.3 percentage points lower than in other parts of the city (in the first model this effect was much larger, at −4.35). These results show that spatial factors remain relevant even after controlling for a considerable number of other variables, although the size of the effect is greatly reduced. The effect of distance from the center can be summarized by plotting its effect on electoral outcomes using the unstandardized coefficients from the four different models (Figure 10).

Figure 10 shows that in the first model (which only includes spatial factors), support for the 5SM increases with travel time from the center of Milan, reaching its maximum at about 30 minutes, dropping below 0 once travel time goes above about 70 minutes. In the final model, however, this curve has almost disappeared, and the effect is generally negative (−0.77 percentage points at 80 minutes). In other words, in Model 1 the percentage of people voting for the 5SM increases with distance from the center before subsequently declining. In Model 4, after controlling for other factors, the shape of the curve changes considerably and the effect of this factor is much smaller.

Our composite measure of occupational social class has a large coefficient and is accompanied by a non-linear effect which implies that particularly disadvantaged areas tended to manifest a higher vote for the 5SM than a simple linear effect would imply. There is also a smaller but important effect associated with male unemployment, which works in the same direction, increasing the vote for the 5SM in disadvantaged areas.

As we have seen, the presence of immigrants is not a statistically significant explanatory variable in the final model, but demographic factors appear to be relatively important. The larger the share of young adults (aged 25–44 years) living in an area and the more one-person families, the lower is the vote for the 5SM, and a higher vote is observed in areas with higher rates of separation/divorce. The

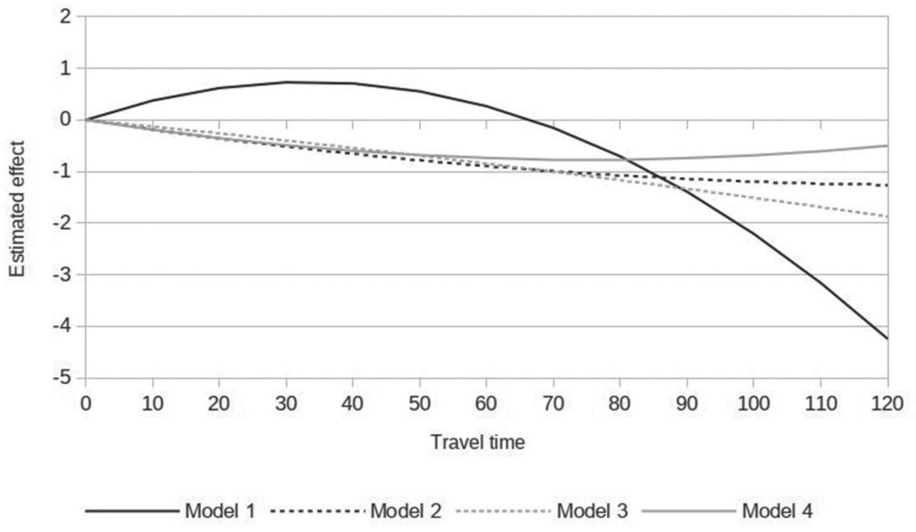

Figure 10. Line graph showing the effect of travel time on vote for the 5 Star Movement.

latter variable has quite a high standardized coefficient (0.18) which requires explanation. In a separate model (not reported here), we found no significant association with the presence of young children.

The most plausible explanation for this pattern of coefficients is that these demographic variables are influenced by social and spatial factors. Younger adults tend to live in more central areas, while more remote areas have larger percentages of older people and people living alone. As electoral support for the 5SM was highest in the areas in between (i.e. situated between the municipality of Milan and the edges of the greater city of Milan as defined by the OECD/EU), demographic variables have considerable predictive power. These should be interpreted with care, however, at least until we identify further evidence regarding mechanisms linking demography with electoral outcomes.

As we have seen, all of these characteristics have distinct geographical distributions, with male unemployment being higher in the public housing estates located on the outskirts of the central municipality and in the more distant areas to the North-West, as well as affecting a number of other peripheral areas. Female labor force participation rates are higher at the very center of the city and outside the municipality itself (particularly to the South), while rates of separation/divorce are higher, in general, in districts situated to the South of the greater city of Milan. Areas with more overcrowding tend to have higher percentages of people voting for the 5 Star Movement, and this variable also has a distinctive spatial distribution, with lower overcrowding in the affluent city center, higher overcrowding in the surrounding areas and lower overcrowding in more distant parts of the urban hinterland.

People living outside the municipality of Milan, but not too far from its boundaries, are particularly attracted to the 5 Star Movement, and this pattern can only be explained by reference to a combination of spatial and social factors. Many of the areas in question face the effects of temporary contracts and unemployment, as well as the challenge of reconciling home and work responsibilities in a situation where both partners are committed to paid employment and where incomes are quite low.

One possible explanation is that the dual-earner, low-income families living in these areas are at particular risk of social strain due to the ways in which their constrained residential choices interact with their resources, attributes and lifestyles. Family support networks are likely to be less effective in these neighborhoods due to geographical dislocation, as these areas have seen a substantial inflow of new residents in recent decades. Access to affordable childcare may be a problem (Da Roit et al., 2019), just as the absence of effective income support measures increases their vulnerability to the vagaries of the labor market.

The need to make a lengthy commute and the relative weakness of the local network of services and cultural/recreational activities are also likely to have an impact on their lives. This phenomenon appears to derive from the way in which rising house prices have compelled less-affluent couples to move outside the city and beyond its postwar inner periphery, taking up residence in an outer periphery which has a much weaker transport, social and economic infrastructure and which offers few of the advantages traditionally associated with a "suburban" lifestyle (Colleoni, 2013). These outer urban areas provide less wealthy families who work in Milan with the opportunity to own their own home, after cascading price increases have reduced their prospects of purchasing an apartment nearer the city center.

This "social periphery" has needs which are different, in many respects, from those of more traditional working-class communities (the inner periphery). Although both types of areas have predominantly working-class populations, those in the outer periphery are more heterogeneous and have weaker links to job opportunities, commercial services and public welfare. Their residents are younger and have suffered more than other social groups as a result of austerity, economic crisis and the decline of well-paid, permanent jobs. Their well-being is based upon a delicate balance between employment and care responsibilities due to the need for two incomes and as a result of lengthy commuting times, poor public services and weak support networks. Community-based organizations in these territories are less active, not very inclusive and not very effective at representing residents' interests, by contrast with the more central upper-middle class districts of Milan.

As these observations suggest, it is not possible to neatly separate social and spatial factors. In our final model, the spatial variables have a relatively small influence on electoral results at local level, but this does not imply that space is unimportant. On the contrary, we believe that social and spatial factors are increasingly intertwined as a result of the mechanisms described above, making them difficult to separate empirically.

Crucially, these populations in the outer urban periphery are relatively invisible to policy makers and spread across a very large and heterogeneous area of urban sprawl, rather than being concentrated into uniform and densely-inhabited neighborhoods. They are dissatisfied and feel that their social status is deteriorating; they have seen the supply of collective goods and services shrink; they have not found civic associations or interest groups that express their needs and anger. In this sense, we may speak of disenfranchisement, to underline the articulation between objective conditions and emotions.

In other localities—be they affluent neighborhoods in the center of Milan or more distant areas which are less dependent on commuting—local populations appear to be both more satisfied and more integrated into existing forms of political representation. These two dimensions are likely to be related because identification with or satisfaction with a political party or leader which is dominant at local level is likely to reduce feelings of disenfranchisement. Our results are in alignment with the thesis that an unequal distribution and declining supply of collective goods and services play a fundamental role in forming the expectations and shaping the electoral behavior of citizens (Chaskin & Greenberg, 2013; Le Galès & Pierson, 2019).

The groups in question may have been more willing to support the 5 Star Movement than people living in other parts of Greater Milan because this political party in some way spoke to their needs and expressed their disaffection with the status quo. The 5 Star Movement's promises to introduce universal income support measures and to improve local services are likely to have been an important part of this picture. Another element may have been its ability to tap into the anger and dissatisfaction of social groups which have been "left behind," not only in terms of welfare and access to collective goods, but also in terms of voice and political representation.

These are territories where voters express a relatively high level of political discontent and are attracted by the promise of a far-reaching restructuring of the entire political system and administrative apparatus. This hypothesis accords a key role to emotions, as it suggests that emotionally-charged political discourse may provide a way of mobilizing the electoral support of disenfranchised groups. It also implies that disenfranchisement leads local populations to respond differently to political rhetoric, generating tensions and opportunities to which the political parties respond in specific ways. For this reason, it is necessary to analyze electoral support for each party, as this can involve distinct mechanisms.

Conclusions

In this paper we applied an innovative methodology for analyzing voting behavior in Italy, focusing on support for the 5 Star Movement in the 2018 general election. This methodology has at its core the definition of polling districts using the geographical coordinates of polling stations, covering the entire area of the greater city of Milan. This procedure ensures that a polling station is situated at the center of each spatial unit, which means that there is a good fit between the electoral data and the census data. Although this fit is not perfect—and cannot be, due to the contrasting principles that underlie the construction of these two sets of units—it ensures that each polling station is associated with the characteristics of the surrounding population, relying on the plausible assumption that individuals are assigned to the polling station which is nearest to them. This allows us to delimit polling districts that are significant for their inhabitants in terms of propinquity (physical proximity among voters) and spatial composition (the presence of welfare services and collective goods), considering also the physical barriers that result in a segmentation of space (Small & Adler, 2019).

We show that several aggregate variables contribute to explaining the unprecedented number of votes received by the 5SM; together these variables account for four-fifths of the variance of the outcome variable. Firstly, and most importantly, socioeconomic indicators have great explanatory power, and the presence of workers and the absence of upper-middle class families are associated with higher levels of support for the 5 Star Movement. Both labor market (unemployment, participation rates) and demographic factors (rates of separation/divorce and age structure) influence electoral support for this party. Finally, spatial indicators contribute to the overall explanation. There is a negative effect for districts situated in the central municipality and a non-linear effect associated with distance from the center.

Because many variables are found to have statistically significant effects, some with large coefficients, and because their spatial distributions vary considerably, the overall picture is complex. In general terms, support for the 5SM at the 2018 general election involved cleavages that are drawn along social class, generational and spatial lines. Where these cleavages coincide, we can identify communities with large numbers of dual-earner, low-income families facing considerable social strain. Many of these areas were negatively affected by the economic crisis that began in 2008, and are likely to experience difficulties due to lengthy working hours, precarious contracts, commuting times, substantial family responsibilities, weak local support networks, weak public welfare services and a reduced ability to access private services.

A key conceptual difficulty we encounter when attempting to situate these areas along the center-periphery axis is that they cannot be defined in either geographical or social terms alone. Instead, their characteristics derive from the way in which these different dimensions combine and interact. In geographical terms, they do not belong to the center, or even to the central municipality, nor are they clustered in the semi-autonomous centers situated around the edges of the functional urban area. Their key attribute is that they are tied to the center by the demand for work and the supply of health, welfare and leisure services. They are peripheral to the center in the sense of living as far away from central districts as is feasible, while remaining within commuting distance.

Although they do not form an identifiable community or a visible social group, the greater propensity of these populations to vote for the 5SM suggests that the radical, populist rhetoric of this political formation strikes a chord. It is difficult to determine to what extent this is due to unmet social needs and to what extent it is due to feelings of political and cultural marginalization, as these different elements appear to be intertwined. This means that as well as being spatially excluded from the most affluent parts of the city and relegated to areas which are relatively deprived in social composition, they may also be described as disenfranchised.

This outcome is a consequence of the historical evolution of the parties which dominated Italian politics in the latter part of the 20th century, their failure to mitigate the impacts of economic crisis and restructuring and the inability of the State to effectively reduce the segregating effects of rising house prices in a growing urban area. In this scenario, the 5SM was able to intercept grievances related to the economic and political crisis of representation. Voters of the 5SM see the *Partito Democratico* (PD) which rules the city of Milan and the right-wing coalition which rules the Lombardy Region as distant mainstream parties, deaf to the voices of disenfranchised families in the metropolitan area. They do not distrust politics as a whole, but are critical of the ruling parties.

It seems plausible to suggest that these populations experienced severe difficulties following the 2008 economic crisis, with consequences for their political behavior. However, there are several alternative hypotheses that must be tested, as it is also possible that economic crisis altered the spatial distribution of poor families or had a disproportionate impact on younger couples, for example. As social class divisions help to explain why many disaffected residents in Milan's social periphery voted for the 5SM, it will be interesting to assess at the next elections how the policies promoted by this party—which has been part of the national government since 2018—are evaluated by different segments of the population. A key issue is whether the 5SM can provide stable political representation that gives a voice to disenfranchised social peripheries or whether electoral outcomes in Milan and other Italian cities will continue to be influenced in unpredictable ways by the pressures and contradictions described in this article.

Notes

1. In the North of Italy, electoral support for the 5SM did not increase significantly between 2013 and 2018, remaining stable in the North-West and falling slightly in the North-East (−1.1%).
2. It would be necessary to carry out a comparative analysis in order to fully evaluate the claim that Milan represents an "exception." Our aim is to build on the case study presented in this paper in the future in order to address this issue.
3. In this respect, we follow Pizzorno (1993) in treating political "demand" as being constituted in relation and in reaction to the structure and quality of the "supply" of political representation offered by the parties present in a given area.
4. A functional urban area comprises one or more high-density urban centers and a series of less densely populated commuting zones. Two urban centers are considered to be integrated—and thus part of the same polycentric metropolitan area—if more than 15% of the resident population of one of them commutes to work in the other.
5. Article 38, DPR no. 223 of March 20, 1967; Law no. 449 of December 27, 1997.
6. Most are identified in the dataset as "Hospitals or nursing homes with at least 200 beds," while others are identifiable from their names or addresses. Under Italian law, special polling stations must be set up in hospitals with 200 beds or more. As these voters do not actually reside in the area where the hospital is located, it does not make sense to include them in the analysis.
7. We sent an e-mail to all municipalities within the perimeter of our study area which had not provided this information directly to the central government (this is not mandatory). In this way, we were able to obtain an acceptable number of addresses. Although we were forced to aggregate the electoral data to municipal level in certain cases, this procedure is acceptable and did not generate units with disproportionately large populations.
8. The population ranged from 614 to 35,971, without imposing any age restrictions. The latter figure refers to San Giuliano Milanese, a municipality for which we did not have the polling station addresses at the time of writing. There were five other municipalities with more than 20,000 residents which we were forced to treat as aggregates: Seregno, Peschiera Borromeo, Cesano Boscone, Buccinasco and Limbiate.
9. This is highly satisfactory, but it should be noted that the values obtained for R^2 tend to be higher when analyzing aggregate data than when analyzing individual-level data.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank Carlo Barone, Caterina Froio and Marco Oberti for their comments on a previous version of this paper, together with anonymous referees and editors of the *Journal of Urban Affairs*. Financial support was provided by the Centre for European Studies and Comparative Politics (CEE) at Sciences Po, which enabled us to carry out the empirical research on which this study is based.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

About the authors

Jonathan Pratschke is Associate Professor at the Department of Economics and Statistics, University of Naples "Federico II," where he lectures in the field of Economic Sociology. His research interests are centered on the social and spatial articulation of inequalities in education, the labor market, health and well-being. He has published on these themes in international journals, including *Ageing and Society* ("Direct and Indirect Influences of Socio-Economic Position on the Wellbeing of Older Adults: A Structural Equation Model Using Data from the First Wave of the Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing"), *Environment and Planning B* ("A Longitudinal Study of Area-level Deprivation in Ireland, 1991-2011") and *Urban Studies* ("Social polarisation, the labour market and economic restructuring in Europe: An urban perspective"). He has participated in national and international research projects and networks, as well as carried out commissioned research for European bodies and national agencies in Ireland, the UK and Italy.

Tommaso Vitale is Associate Professor of Sociology at Sciences Po (Paris, France) where he is the scientific director of the MA program on "Governing the Large Metropolis" (Urban School). He is an affiliate of the Centre for European Studies and Comparative Politics (CEE) and of the "Cities are Back in Town" research program. His current research topics relate to tensions between endogenous and exogenous mechanisms of urban change as well as structural contexts of opportunities. He has published books and articles on conflicts and urban change, spatial segregation, local welfare planning, civic participation at neighborhood and metropolitan levels, and the governance of industrial restructuring.

He is co-editor of the peer-review journal *Partecipazione e Conflitto—The Open Journal of Sociopolitical Studies*. He has been visiting researcher at the Vincent and Elinor Ostrom Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis (Bloomington, Indiana University).

Niccolò Morelli is Post-Doc Researcher in Sociology at Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Milan, where he is part of the *Osservatorio Giovani Sud*, a research lab on the Southern youth condition. He is also Adjunct Professor of General Sociology at Padua University. His main research interests are on forms of conviviality in urban contexts, generational inequalities and metropolitan urban studies. He has recently published an interview in the Open Access Journal *Sociologica* (2020) with Robert J. Sampson on the main challenges for urban sociologists.

Bruno Cousin is Assistant Professor of Sociology at Sciences Po, where he is an affiliate of the Centre for European Studies and Comparative Politics (CEE) and of the "Cities are Back in Town" research programme. He is mainly interested in inequalities, class relations, residential segregation, social capital and forms of sociability, and modes of elite legitimization. He has recently coauthored *Ce que les riches pensent des pauvres* (Seuil, 2017) and coedited *Euro-Caribbean Societies in the 21st Century* (Routledge, 2018), *D'une ville à l'autre* (La Découverte, 2019), *La morale des sociologues* (PUF, 2020), "Elites, Economy and Society" (special issue of the *Socio-Economic Review*, 2018) and "Au service des riches" (special issue of *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, 2019).

Matteo Piolatto is a Research Fellow at the University of Padova, where he works on the ARQUS project aimed at comparative research assessment in Europe. His current research interests include the connection between several dimensions of social support and cognitive decline in older adults in Italy, the study of inequalities of educational opportunities, with a specific focus on dynamics in lower secondary schools in Italy, as well as the relationship between the distribution of opportunities in the urban space and school segregation.

Matteo Del Fabbro has a PhD in Urban Studies and is an associate researcher at the Centre for European Studies and Comparative Politics (CEE), Sciences Po, Paris. His scientific work on metropolitan governance, territorial disparities and local policies has been published in international journals such as *Territory, Politics, Governance* and *Area*. He currently works in Milan, Italy as a research consultant.

ORCID

Jonathan Pratschke http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3864-3514
Tommaso Vitale http://orcid.org/0000-0003-0901-5754
Niccolò Morelli http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8916-8640
Bruno Cousin http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1992-4604
Matteo Piolatto http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0645-0614
Matteo Del Fabbro http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1634-9392

References

Agnew, J., Shin, M., & Bettoni, G. (2002). City versus metropolis: The Northern League in the Milan metropolitan area. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, *26*(2), 266–283. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.00379

Alex-Assensoh, Y. M. (1998). *Neighborhoods, family, and political behavior in urban America*. Routledge.

Andreotti, A., & Le Galès, P. (2019). Introduzione. Governare Milano nel nuovo millennio [Introduction. Govern Milan in the new millennium]. In A. Andreotti (Ed.), *Governare Milano nel nuovo millennio* [Govern Milan in the new millennium] (pp. 7–41). Il Mulino.

Barbagli, M., & Pisati, M. (2012). *Dentro e fuori le mura: Città e gruppi sociali dal 1400 a oggi*. [Inside and outside the walls: Cities and social groups from 1400 to today] Il Mulino.

Bellettini, G., Berti Ceroni, C., & Monfardini, C. (2016). Neighborhood heterogeneity and electoral turnout. *Electoral Studies*, *42*, 146–156. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2016.02.013

Bertuzzi, N., Caciagli, C., & Caruso, L. (Eds.). (2019). *Popolo chi? Classi popolari, periferie e politica in Italia* [People who? Popular classes, suburbs and politics in Italy]. Ediesse.

Bhatti, Y., Danckert, B., & Hansen, K. (2017). The context of voting: Does neighborhood ethnic diversity affect turnout? *Social Forces*, *95*(3), 1127–1154. https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/sow093

Biancalana, C., & Colloca, P. (2019). The dynamics of the electoral geography of the Five Star Movement: The role of territorial area and municipality size. *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, *24*(5), 716–735. https://doi.org/10.1080/1354571X.2019.1681704

Biorcio, R., & Natale, P. (2018). *Il Movimento 5 stelle: Dalla protesta al governo* [The 5 Star Movement: From the protest to the government]. Mimesis.

Blau, P. M. (1960). Structural effects. *American Sociological Review*, *25*(2), 178–193. https://doi.org/10.2307/2092624

Bosi, L., & Zamponi, L. (2015). Direct social actions and economic crises: The relationship between forms of action and socio-economic context in Italy. *Partecipazione e Conflitto*, *8*(2), 367–391. https://doi.org/10.1285/i20356609v8i2p367

Caiani, M., & Graziano, P. (2019). Understanding populism in times of crises. *West European Politics*, *42*(6), 1141–1158. https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2019.1598062

Chaskin, R. J., & Greenberg, D. M. (2013). Between public and private action: Neighborhood organizations and local governance. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, *44*(2), 248–267. https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764013510407

Colleoni, M. (2013). Mobility, accessibility and social equity: A comparative and interdisciplinary empirical study in the metropolitan areas of Milan, Bologna and Turin. In D. Henckel, S. Thomaier, B. Könecke, R. Zedda, & S. Stabilini (Eds.), *Space–time design of the public city* (pp. 137–156). Springer.

Cousin, B., & Préteceille, E. (2008). La division sociale de l'espace milanais: Comparaison avec le cas parisien [The social division of the Milanese space: Comparison with the Parisian case]. *Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome – Italie et Méditerranée*, *120*(1), 315–333. https://doi.org/10.3406/mefr.2008.10521

Cremaschi, M., & Le Galès, P. (2018). Tra tipi e forme: Perché la sociologia urbana deve lavorare sulle dinamiche [Between types and forms: Why urban sociology must work on dynamics]. *Rassegna Italiana di Sociologia*, *64*(4), 761–788. https://doi.org/10.1423/92203

Da Roit, B., Sabatinelli, S., & Arlotti, M. (2019). Explaining subnational variations in early childhood education and care. A fuzzy-set analysis of the Italian case. *Social Policy & Administration*, *53*(7), 1136–1156. https://doi.org/10.1111/spol.12489

Dijkstra, L., Poelman, H., & Rodríguez-Pose, A. (2019). The geography of EU discontent. *Regional Studies*, *54*(6), 737–753. https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2019.1654603

Dijkstra, L., Poelman, H., & Veneri, P. (2019). The EU-OECD definition of a functional urban area. *OECD Regional Development Working Papers* 2019/11.

Duina, F., & Carson, D. (2020). Not so right after all? Making sense of the progressive rhetoric of Europe's far-right parties. *International Sociology*, *35*(1), 3–21. https://doi.org/10.1177/0268580919881862

Evans, D. G., & Jones, S. M. (1987). Detecting voronoi (area-of-influence) polygons. *Mathematical Geology*, *19*(6), 523–537. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00896918

Featherstone, D., & Korf, B. (2012). Introduction: Space, contestation and the political. *Geoforum*, *43*(4), 663–668. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2012.03.018

Fruncillo, D., & Addeo, F. (2018). *Le elezioni del 2018. Partiti, candidati, regole e risultati* [The 2018 elections. Parties, candidates, rules and results]. Società Italiana di Studi Elettorali.

Greenland, S. (2001). Ecologic versus individual-level sources of bias in ecologic estimates of contextual health effects. *International Journal of Epidemiology*, *30*(6), 1343–1350. https://doi.org/10.1093/ije/30.6.1343

Hochstenbach, C., & Musterd, S. (2018). Gentrification and the suburbanization of poverty: Changing urban geographies through boom and bust periods. *Urban Geography*, *39*(1), 26–53. https://doi.org/10.1080/02723638.2016.1276718

Johnston, R. J., Propper, C., Burgess, S., Sarker, R., Bolster, A., & Jones, K. (2005). Spatial scale and the neighbourhood effect: Multinomial models of voting at two recent British general elections. *British Journal of Political Science*, *35*(3), 487–514. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123405000268

Kriesi, H., & Pappas, T. S. (2015). *European populism in the shadow of the Great Recession*. ECPR Press.

Le Galès, P., & Pierson, P. (2019). "Superstar cities" & the generation of durable inequality. *Daedalus*, *148*(3), 46–72. https://doi.org/10.1162/daed_a_01750

Le Galès, P., & Vitale, T. (2013). *Governing the large metropolis. A research agenda*, Working papers of Cities are Back in Town Program, 2013-8. Sciences Po.

Lindh, A., & McCall, L. (2020). Class position and political opinion in rich democracies. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *46*(1), 419–441. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-121919-054609

Maraffi, M. (2018). The social stratification of the 2018 vote in Italy: Between continuity and change. *Contemporary Italian Politics*, *10*(3), 267–278. https://doi.org/10.1080/23248823.2018.1531932

Mény, Y., & Surel, Y. (2002). *Democracies and the populist challenges*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Milbrath, L. (1965). *Political participation: How and why do people get involved in politics?* Rand McNally & Company.

Mosca, L., & Tronconi, F. (2019). Beyond left and right: The eclectic populism of the Five Star Movement. *West European Politics*, *42*(6), 1258–1283. https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2019.1596691

Mudde, C. (2004). The populist zeitgeist. *Government and Opposition*, *39*(4), 541–563. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2004.00135.x

Norris, P., & Inglehart, R. (2019). *Cultural backlash: Trump, Brexit, and authoritarian populism*. Cambridge University Press.

OECD. (2012) . *Redefining "urban": A new way to measure metropolitan areas.*

Peck, J., & Tickell, A. (2002). Neoliberalizing space. *Antipode*, *34*(3), 380–404. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8330.00247

Pizzorno, A. (1993). *Le radici della politica assoluta e altri saggi* [The roots of absolute politics and other essays]. Feltrinelli.

Pratschke, J., & Haase, T. (2014). A longitudinal study of area-level deprivation in Ireland, 1991-2011. *Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design*, *42*(3), 384–398. https://doi.org/10.1068/b130043p

Rickards, L., Gleeson, B., Boyle, M., & O'Callaghan, C. (2016). Urban studies after the age of the city. *Urban Studies*, *53*(8), 1523–1541. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098016640640

Sakamoto, A., & Powers, D. A. (2019). The demography of social stratification. In D. L. Poston Jr. (Ed.), *Handbook of population* (pp. 457–480). Springer.

Sampson, R. J. (2019). Neighbourhood effects and beyond: Explaining the paradoxes of inequality in the changing American metropolis. *Urban Studies*, *56*(1), 3–32. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098018795363

Small, M. L., & Adler, L. (2019). The role of space in the formation of social ties. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *45*(1), 111–132. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-073018-022707

Thompson, N., & Doka, K. J. (2017). Disenfranchised grief. In N. Thompson & G. R. Cox (Eds.), *Handbook of the sociology of death, grief, and bereavement* (pp. 177–190). Routledge.

Tosi, S., & Vitale, T. (2011). *Piccolo Nord: Scelte pubbliche e interessi privati nell'Alto Milanese* [Small North: Public choices and private interests in the Upper Milanese area]. Bruno Mondadori.

Truglia, F. G. (2007). La configurazione spaziale del consenso elettorale nel Comune di Roma [The spatial configuration of the electoral consensus in the Municipality of Rome]. *Sociologia e ricerca sociale*, *27*(81), 190–198. https://doi.org/10.1400/76758

Truglia, F. G. (2014). L'Italia incantata. Geo-statistica della diffusione dell'astensionismo, elezioni politiche 2008 e 2013 [Enchanted Italy. Geo-statistics of the prevalence of abstention, political elections 2008 and 2013]. *Sociologia e ricerca sociale*, *101*(101), 61–90. https://doi.org/10.3280/SR2013-101003

Walks, R. A. (2005). City-suburban electoral polarization in Great Britain, 1950-2001. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, *30*(4), 500–517. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-5661.2005.00185.x