



Redefining Nations. Nationhood and Immigration in Italy and Spain.

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Abstract

In the early 1990s, Italy and Spain, traditional labor exporters, started to acknowledge their new position as ‘immigration countries’. This dissertation examines how both states have coped with the consequences of this rapid and unexpected shift. Combining discourse and policy analysis, we look mainly at political elites’ (parties and their members) discourses and practices, during the first decade of the immigration turn (from early 1990s until the early 2000s). The literature has often treated Italy and Spain as examples of the same ‘Mediterranean’ group, also usually assuming that they have followed a very similar route towards immigrants’ criminalization and a populist mobilization of the immigration theme. Adopting an innovative analytical perspective, this thesis arrives at an original understanding of both immigrants’ representation and immigration politics in Italy and Spain. The predominant categories mobilized by Spanish and Italian political elites in the construction of the immigration ‘problem’, as well as the strategies used to seize the (political) opportunities offered by the immigration theme are more diverse than they seem. While in Italy a ‘grammar’ of insecurity has been reiterated and institutionalized by nearly all political groups throughout the 1990s, in Spain, parties have mostly treated immigration as a matter (problem) of social integration, politicizing (‘criminalizing’) the issue quite late in the decade. This dissertation concludes moreover that the rising influx of immigrants during the 1990s has triggered a revival of particular ways of framing the Italian and Spanish ‘nations’ and nationhood, which have strongly marked political actors’ approach to immigrants and immigration politics. In this way, while in Italy the post-Fascist idea of a bounded Italianità, grounded on family ties and blood connections, have underlie immigration policy-making; the post-Franquist conception of a ‘new’, open and plural Spain has overruled in Spain. We show how these different national ‘mythologies’ were instrumental for legitimating quite similar (restrictive) policies.



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Bio

Any Freitas holds a BA in Law (UERJ, BR) and a MA in International Relations (IRI/PUC, BR) during which she specialized in International Human Rights Law and Human Rights Protection, with a particular focus on Latin America.

She was a 'visiting researcher' at the Instituto Juan March (Madrid, ES) and the Centre March Bloch (Berlin, DE), and worked as a researcher at the Germe-Metice of the Université Libre de Bruxelles (Brussels, BE).

Any's main fields of interest are immigration, citizenship and ethnicity, integration and anti-discrimination policies and politics. More recently, Any has also become involved in different projects involving ICT applied to multilingualism and translation, as well as ICT and migration, social inclusion and the promotion of diversity.