Codebook for the dataset 'Italian pledges'

This is the codebook for the dataset 'Italian pledges'. It includes the guidelines followed for the coding process, explains the variables included in the data-matrix and defines their categories. This document is modified and enriched as the coding process progresses by including some concrete examples to clarify the choices performed.

The steps of the coding process, determined by employing the protocol of the manifesto-testing approach, a method to analyse pledge fulfilment largely used by the Comparative Political Pledges Group and the Partipol project, are the following:

1. Identify the pledges in the electoral manifestos
2. Create a data-matrix
3. Code for each pledge several variables
4. Evaluate pledge fulfilment

Identification of the pledges in the manifestos

In this study, I analyse the electoral manifestos of the parties members of the ruling coalition. If a pre-electoral alliance presented a shared manifesto, that program is the one analysed for the entire coalition under consideration. This is the case for instance in the 1996 and 2006 elections. In both cases, the centre-left coalition discussed and agreed on policy proposals and priorities that were then included in an electoral program approved by the major parties members of the alliance. Similarly, the electoral platform for the House of Freedom coalition in 2001 was accepted by all the parties members of the centre-right coalition before the elections. In the case that the ruling coalition is supported also by smaller parties, I do not take into consideration also their manifestos, assuming that only parties that received at least one cabinet to administer and that have several parliamentary seats have a real impact on the programmatic agenda of the government in office. Finally, if a new party is formed after the elections and enters the government coalition (for instance after a cabinet reshuffle), its program is not taken into consideration. This is the case, for instance, of the Democratic Union of the Republic, a party born in 1998 that joined the governing coalition led by Massimo D'Alema.

Among six Italian general elections (from 1996 to 2013) nine electoral programs are analysed:

Olive Tree alliance (1996)

House of Freedom (2001)

The Union (2006)

People of Freedom (2008)

Northern League (2008)

Democratic Party (2013)

Civic Choice (2013)

Union of the Centre (2013)

People of Freedom (2013)

All these programs were collected from the Comparative Manifesto Project dataset (https://visuals.manifesto-project.wzb.eu/mpdb-shiny/cmp_dashboard_dataset/)

Within these documents, I identify all the sentences (or quasi-sentences) that correspond to a "pledge". The pledges are defined following Royed (1996) definition:

> «a commitment to carry out some action or produce some outcome, where an objective estimation can be made as to whether or not the action was indeed taken or the outcome produced».

Therefore, to identify a sentence as a pledge two main elements should be present. Firstly, the sentence should be a commitment; it should be about a policy or a result on the achievement of which the party engages itself. Usually, these sentences are introduced by expressions like 'we will', 'we promise', 'we have to' or even 'it is necessary to'. The second criterion is testability. Only the pledges whose fulfilment can be evaluated are analysed in this project. All the criticism of previous government's actions, all the claims on general principles, and all the promises too vague are not part of the final dataset. When in doubt, the sentence was kept in the dataset. Then, when I was in the process of checking fulfilment, it was clearer whether the pledge was actually 'objectively' testable or not.

Identifying electoral pledges was particularly easier for the Olive Tree alliance, the People of Freedom, and House of Freedom programs. In those cases, the party structured its policy preferences and promises in bullet points. Other programs (i.e. the ones published by the Democratic Party, the Civic Choice, and the Union of the Centre) are more discursive texts, where the promises are incorporated within the main text.

Examples of statements that are considered as pledges:

- √ *A gradual and progressive detaxation of Christmas bonuses* (People of Freedom-2008)
- √ *We need robust work-life reconciliation policies* (Civic Choice-2013)

Examples of statements that are not considered pledges, because the testability criterion is not met:

- × *Ensure universal access to sports activities* (House of Freedom-2001)
- × *Improve the quality of train, air and marine services to attend European standards* (Olive Tree-2006)

From the final dataset, the pledges related to European and international institutions and changes are removed. For instance, I excluded all the proposals made by the Olive Tree Alliance in 1996 to reform the United Nations. In addition to the intentions and capacities of national partisan actors, other factors play a role at the international level, whose effect is impossible to grasp in this type of analysis. Italian governments cannot be considered accountable for the realization of these promises to the same extent as for more 'national' matters.

Pledges are considered once. If the same promise is repeated multiple times in the same manifesto, it is included only once in the dataset. But, if the pledge is repeated in two different party manifestos in the same election year, both promises are retained in the final dataset.

Each row in the data-matrix (Excel file) corresponds to a single pledge.

List of variables

For each row (single pledge), several variables are coded. Each column of the data-matrix corresponds to a different variable of interest for this project.

- ***Pledge***: the original text of the promise
- ***Election***: year of the election
- ***Eco_crisis***: dummy variable, elections took place before 2008 (0) or during/after 2008 (1). The year 2008 is chosen as the year of reference for the onset of the Great Recession in Italy.
- ***Debt_crisis***: dummy variable; elections took place before 2011 (0) or during/after 2011 (1). The year 2011 is chosen as the year of reference for the onset of the sovereign debt crisis in Italy.
- ***Party_it***: the original name of the party/pre-electoral coalition that presented the manifesto during the electoral campaign
- ***Party_en***: name of the party/pre-electoral coalition in English

- ***Partyfamily***: three broad categories are created to group the party and/or the coalition with respect to their ideological family:

  (0) left and centre-left parties (Democratic Party, the Union, and Olive Tree alliances);

  (1) centre parties (Civic Choice and Union of the Centre);

  (2) right and centre-right parties (including Northern League party, the House of Freedom, and the People of Freedom coalitions)

- ***Coalition***: size of the governing coalition; number of parties members of the parliamentary majority and the cabinet

- ***Duration***: duration of the parliamentary term (number of days)

- ***Governments***: number of governments that have taken place within the same parliamentary term

- ***Npledges***: total number of pledges contained in the electoral manifestos per year

- ***Npledgesparty***: total number of pledges contained in the each electoral manifesto

- ***GDP_change***: difference between the GDP growth in the year of election and the average growth in the following years. A negative value corresponds to a deterioration in economic conditions whereas a positive value to an improvement.

- ***Unempl_change***: difference between the unemployment rate in the year of election and the average rate in the following year. A negative value corresponds to a decrease in the unemployment rate during the governing years whereas a positive value to an increase in the unemployment rate.

- ***Policyissue***: issue related to the content of the pledge promised. The categories are defined following the Comparative Agenda Project codebook specific to Italy. The categories are:

  (1) Domestic Macroeconomic Issues

  (2) Civil Rights, Minority Issues, and Civil Liberties

  (3) Health

  (4) Agriculture

  (5) Labour and Employment

(6) Education

(7) Environment

(8) Energy

(9) Immigration and Refugee Issues

(10) Transportation

(12) Law, Crime, and Family Issues

(13) Social Welfare

(14) Community Development and Housing Issues

(15) Banking, Finance, and Domestic Commerce

(16) Defense

(17) Space, Science, Technology, and Communications

(18) Foreign Trade

(19) International Affairs and Foreign Aid

(20) Government Operations

(21) Public Lands, Water Management, and Territorial Issues

(23) Cultural Policy Issues

· ***Issue***: issue related to the content of the pledge promised. The categories of the variable 'Policyissue' are grouped into seven major categories:

(1) Economy [combining the previous categories 1+5+15+18]

(2) Social Issue [3+13+14]

(3) Government [20]

(4) Education [6]

(5) Transportation [10]

(6) Law and Order [12]

(7) Other Issues [2+4+7+8+9+16+17+21+23]

- ***OutputOutcome***: output policies refer to an action or a specific measure that the party pledges to carry out (1). They include promises stating the adoption of specific measures, legislation, introduction of laws, increase/decrease of spending, and adoption of taxes. On the contrary, outcome policies are the electoral promises on a goal and a particular objective (0). If some pledges include the two aspects, so present a goal and also the resources, the means, to achieve it, they have to be separated into two different "pledges" in my data-matrix.

- ***Tax_cut***: dummy variable; pledge that requires explicitly a tax cut (1) or not (0). In this case, as for the next variables, I decided to consider each variable separately, since there may be some policies that do not provide a tax cut or a tax raise.

- ***Tax_raise***: dummy variable; pledge that requires explicitly a tax raise (1) or not (0).

- ***Incr_spending***: dummy variable; pledge that requires explicitly an increase of expenditure (1) or nor (0).

- ***Red_spending***: dummy variable; pledge that requires explicitly a reduction of expenditure (1) or nor (0).

- ***Expansionary***: this category is created to identify if a promise explicitly refers to an increase in public expenditure, the creation of new public agencies or jobs, the promotion of public investments or projects. In other words, this category includes all the policies that require, in one way or another, an allocation of public resources to be implemented. Promises such as 'Reintroduction of baby bonus' (People of Freedom, 2008) or 'Program of investments on human capital' (Civic Choice, 2013) are both classified as expansionary pledges, whilst claims like 'Reduction of the number of senators to 150' (The Union, 2006) or 'Regulation of lobby activities' (Civic Choice, 2013) are not.

Evaluation of pledge fulfilment

To evaluate pledge fulfilment, I compared the substance of the policy proposal with the legislation, the laws and the decree-laws approved during the legislature under consideration.

The first step consists of identifying the law that could have turned the pledge into practice. For the more recent governments, an important source of information is the Italian Chamber of Deputies website. On this page, the main legislation approved during the legislature is grouped by policy issue. Comments and descriptions of parliamentary activity make it easier to identify the right law. Reports published by the Parliamentary committees and the Senate were also useful. Other

important sources were the documents published by the party/coalition at the end of their mandate. In these documents, usually published on the party/coalition website, parties discuss their main achievements in the different policy sectors (i.e. 'Il governo Berlusconi: le principali realizzazioni'; 'Il Governo Prodi: rapporto conclusivo sull'attuazione del programma di Governo'.). In its website 'perl'ulivo.it', for instance, the main promises ('the 88 thesis') included in the electoral manifestos are restated and, for each 'thesis', there is a list of the actions taken to fulfil the promise. If I could not find any information in these documents, I performed a keyword search into the archives of important national newspapers (i.e. LaRepubblica and Corriere della Sera). I also used the Google platform in order to look for specialized journals or web pages that could have discussed newly adopted laws in a particular sector (to cite an example, *eduscuola.it* was helpful for school reforms). Sites like *handylex.org* were particularly useful for a general overview of the new laws, their abrogation, etc. If no action could be found, the promise was considered broken.

The second step was to actually read the content of the laws/decree-laws under scrutiny to evaluate if the pledge is actually realised, merely partially realised, or broken. This step was particularly relevant for verifying the accuracy of the information contained in the 'partisan' sources.

Pledges on goals (i.e. 'we will reduce public spending', People of Freedom, 2008) were evaluated by looking into national and international statistics and indicators of the government performance.

I use five categories to evaluate pledge fulfilment (***Fulfilment_5***). In this way, all the different levels of fulfilment are accounted for, and thus a more detailed analysis can be performed.

(-1). *Policy adopted is the opposite* of what the party promised in its manifesto. The pledge to lower the limits of cash payments (Civic Choice-2013) falls into this category because the limit was raised. Only other two promises are contained in this category.

(0). *Broken pledge*. The party has not carried out the action expected from the electoral promise. The pledge to reduce the tax burden up to 33% of GDP (House of Freedom-2001) is considered not kept because the percentage of the tax burden actually reduced to 40.3% of GDP but it grew up again at the end of the mandate (42%). The exact percentage promise (33% of GDP) was never reached and overall the pressure cannot be considered reduced.

(1). *Policy included in the agenda*, but not fulfilled. For instance, if a pledge is proposed and discussed by the government but the policy proposal has not received the needed parliament support to be adopted. In this case, the ruling party has done all it can to carry out its programmatic agenda, so this has to be accounted for in the data. This is for instance the case of the promises to reform the RAI and to control the advertising for television stations

(The Union-2006). A draft law was approved by the government in that sense ('ddl Gentiloni') but it was never voted by the Parliament.

(2). *Pledge partially fulfilled*: some policies in the direction of the electoral promise are adopted, but the pledge cannot be considered as completely realized. The promise to drastically reduce the lawmaking in Parliament (House of Freedom-2001) was evaluated as partially fulfilled because the number of laws approved is reduced from the previous parliamentary term but it is not considered a 'drastic' reduction. If a promise with a specific timeframe (ex. Reform of the electoral law as the first act of the new Parliament; Civic Choice-2013) was realized but outside the timeframe, the pledge is considered only partially fulfilled.

(3). *Pledge fully fulfilled*: the exact content of the promise is achieved and/or the policy promised is actually carried out by the ruling party/coalition.

I have also created a variable (***Fulfilment_2***) where pledge fulfilment is divided only into two categories, to simplify statistical analysis:

(0) *Broken pledges*: this category includes also the cases when the party adopted a policy that is the opposite of what they promised in the electoral campaign and when the parties only included the policy in the agenda. In all these cases, the pledge cannot be considered kept.

(1) *At least partially fulfilled pledges*: this category includes both partially fulfilled and fully fulfilled promises.

Data were collected by the author. As it can be easily guessed by the explanation above, this methodology is particularly time-consuming. The data collection process lasted a total of five months. To guarantee the reliability of the coding process and the data, three important precautions were adopted. Firstly, as previously discussed, I diversified as much as possible the sources used to determine whether the pledges are effectively realised or not. Secondly, every decision on pledge fulfilment was explicitly indicated in the final dataset. There the author specifies the laws and, in some cases, explains the choice made (see the variable ***Comment***). This guarantees the transparency of the data collection as well. Thirdly, a reliability test was conducted. The evaluation of the pledge fulfilment for the People of Freedom manifestos of 2008 was compared with the data collected with the same methodology for the same platform by Catherine Moury (Data collected for the comparative pledge project presented in Thomson et al. (2017). Among the 107 pledges compared, 73,8 percent of agreement was found. While a systematic pattern cannot be identified, disagreement

can be partially explained by the different interpretations of the actual meaning of some pledges. For instance, the promise to re-introduce a baby bonus was evaluated as fulfilled by Moury since the government funded a ‘New Born Credit Fund’ while I considered that only with the introduction of birth grants this pledge could be really realized.