Acknowledgments

Many people have contributed to bringing this dissertation into being and several of them have also made the preceding research process a very enjoyable one. I would like to take the opportunity to thank a number of them.

First of all, I would like to thank Wouter van der Brug and Sarah de Lange for their excellent supervision. It was a privilege to work with both of you. Wouter, your theoretical, methodological and stylistic guidance was indispensable. You taught me that one of the main challenges for (social) scientists is to identify the right puzzles. I hope that in the future we will find (and solve) more puzzles together. Sarah, it was great working with you. Your sharp but always constructive comments protected me from drowning in a pool of slippery concepts and sloppy argumentation. You made me a more precise thinker and, thereby, a much better academic. Wouter and Sarah, I am also very thankful for your enduring commitment. Even my occasional Sunday-morning e-mails received an immediate response...

Two other people were very important in the early phase of this project as well. Jos de Beus, you encouraged me to pursue my academic interests when I worked for you as a student-assistant, and helped me with my research proposal. I enjoyed our collaboration during the first few months of this research project very much. Catherine de Vries, you gave me a lot of helpful advice during the initial phase of this project on diverse topics such as methodology, teaching and mortgages.

Getting along with one’s officemates is a prerequisite for a conducive working environment and I have been exceptionally lucky in this respect. Thank you very much Jasper Blom, Lutz Hofer, Madeleine Moret, Benno Netelenbos, Marii Paskov and Mihai Varga for your company, the discussions, and, of course, the full house drinks, the office songs, and the occasional German metal. Other AISSR colleagues whom I would like to thank for making the journey fun are Paul van Hooft, Elise van der Laan, Yulia Poskakukhina, Valentina di Stasio and Marloes van Westrienen.

This PhD trajectory would not have been nearly as enjoyable without the colleagues and friends with whom I have travelled to conferences and/or
summer schools abroad. Thank you Johannes von Engelhardt, Emma Folmer, Marijn van Kligeren, Daphne van der Pas, Annemarie Walter and Marc van de Wardt. I especially want to thank Elmar Jansen with whom I had the honor to share the presidency of the AISSR ‘relaxation’ (read: drinks) committee. I am glad that despite the brain damage that this must have caused, I have been able to finish this dissertation. And last, but not least, thank you Gijs Schumacher. We became friends during our first year as sociology students. Now, twelve years later, we are still friends and academic companions. I hope that this will form a good basis for the production of an unprecedented number of political science articles with titles reminiscent of old Rolling Stones songs.

I would also like to thank those scholars who have helped me to improve this dissertation with their critical questions and useful comments during (Comparative Politics PhD Club) meetings at the Department of Political Science. Thank you Tjitske Akkerman, Bouchra Arbaoui, Joost Berkhout, Armen Hakhverdian, Eelco Harteveld, Sjoerdje van Heerden, Ruud Koopmans, Tom van der Meer, Philip van Praag, Eefje Steenvoorden and Agnieszka Walczak. Kirk Hawkins and Teun Pauwels, I am very grateful for our collaboration. Teun, the third chapter of this dissertation could not have been written without your input; I look forward to joint projects in the future.

A special thanks goes to my fifteen great and reliable coders. Thank you Ina Allenhöfer, Renée Dubbeldeman, David Harding, Vanessa Jorissen, Suzy Kennedy, Giovanni Macca, Olivier Marcombes, Kitty van Muiswinkel, Lucas Neher, Ioana Pal, Camilla Pesce, Marie Pigniol, Stefanie Schellwies, Annefleur Stickel and Alexandra Vasileva. Thank you Nicolò Conti and Luca Verzichelli of the University of Siena for sharing with me your collection of Italian election manifestos.

Bram and Lutz, I am very glad to have you as my ‘paranimfen’ and friends. Bram, we became friends in high school. Later we also became roommates, colleagues and neighbors. I very much enjoyed our theatre performances, Biology classes, trips to Fanghetto, your exquisite meals, and our many, many alcohol-enriched evenings together. Sambuca-Lutz (the name says it all), we have enjoyed many such evenings as well. During the last four
years we succeeded admirably in combining the necessary stuff with some fun. I very much liked our ‘fieldwork’ trips to Collindale, Düsseldorf, Wupertal and The Hague (although I hate old newspapers ever since).

Of course, the support of family and friends outside the ivory tower of academia has been indispensable, as well. Thanks go to my family and friends, especially Bart, Bram, Diederik, Gijs, Kim, Laura, Marco, Mariëlle, Rémy, Theo, Ties, Tom, Wilma en Wouter. Most of all, I would like to thank Bianca for her unconditional support. Bianca, you are the love of my life and my best friend. Without you I would not be the cheerful man I am today.

I dedicate this dissertation to Jeroen, who is responsible for endowing me with the genes of a political sociologist – an essential to the entire endeavor.

Amsterdam, January 2013