Article

Multilevel governance concept on migration: A qualitative meta-synthesis

Ratna Dewi Wuryandari[1,*], Teguh Kurniawan[1], Umanto[2]

[1] Public Administration, Faculty of Administrative Science, Universitas Indonesia, Jawa Barat 16424, Indonesia
[2] Business Administration, Faculty of Administrative Science, Universitas Indonesia, Jawa Barat 16424, Indonesia
* Corresponding author: Ratna Dewi Wuryandari, ratna.dewi92@ui.ac.id

Abstract: Research on migration governance at the local level in European countries often refers to the perspective of multilevel governance (MLG) by examining the roles of different levels of government, non-governmental actors, and various negotiations between actors at various scales. This study aims to synthesize qualitative evidence from primary studies to understand systematically better and explore themes that intersect with multilevel governance studies in migration. This meta-synthesis process is done by thematic synthesis following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA). The study results show that multilevel governance and migration strengthen on themes such as actors, governance, implementation, integration, and interaction. Based on the analysis of word similarity in the 500-word cloud, it was also found to be the top dominant, such as policy, local, cities, urban, governance, migration, level, integration, government, and social. The study recommends research directions for non-European countries by examining the adaptation of the MLG concept, analyzing the impact of decentralization on the effectiveness of MLG, looking at public-private sector partnerships in developing countries, as well as comparative studies between non-European countries to contribute to the theory of multilevel governance. This study implies that there still needs to be research on multilevel governance in the field of migration that specifically conducts qualitative meta-synthesis.

Keywords: multilevel governance; migration; actors; governance; implementation; integration; interaction; qualitative meta-synthesis

1. Introduction

Migration is an important issue today and has become a phenomenon affecting many countries and jurisdictions worldwide. In line with increasing globalization, it is estimated that there are currently around 281 million international migrants in the world in 2020, which is 272 million people in 2019 and equivalent to 3.6 percent of the world's population (McAuliffe and Oucho, 2024). Most international migrants come from developing countries. Almost half of all international migrants are from Asia (International Organization for Migration, 2017; Ott and Boonyarak, 2020). In 2015, 64% of all international migrants, i.e., 164 million people, were in high-income countries as migrant workers (Ott and Boonyarak, 2020). The motives for migration are diverse and come in various forms, including migration to work for a certain period or move places for the long term. International migrants comprise migrant workers, asylum seekers, and refugees. Migrant workers comprise the largest group of international migrants (Ott and Boonyarak, 2020). Economic factors are considered the most significant factors driving international migration, including poverty rates, unemployment, high wage prospects, and better job opportunities (IOM, 2017; Ott and Boonyarak, 2020).

In their article, Larrison and Raadschelders (2020) said that migration has become a significant problem for governments in many countries in the 21st century. Nevertheless, public administration studies still need to respond to migration problems. The complexity of migration policies involving multiple levels of government from the local, national, and transnational levels is directly related to public administration and policymaking, which is needed to develop more holistic policies (Larrison and Raadschelders, 2020). Public policy administration in handling migration at various levels of government is used to see and ensure the successful implementation of policies in handling migration (Larrison et al., 2019). Migrants, from the perspective of public administration, are a group of people who are related to institutions, integration, and legality and require government attention through migration management methods by stakeholders. Migration governance policies are considered a response and mechanism to regulate and facilitate these migrants (Yeo and Huang, 2020).

Over the past decade, research on local policies in migration governance has proliferated (Caponio and Borkert, 2010; Caponio, 2021, 2022). Research on migration governance at the local level in European countries often draws on a multilevel governance (MLG) perspective by examining the roles of different levels of government, non-governmental actors, and various negotiations between these actors at various scales (Caponio and Jones-Correa, 2017; Scholten, 2013; Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017). Multilevel governance has become a framework for academics in the field of public administration in migration policy (Homsy et al., 2018; Marti, 2018; Mavrot and Sager, 2016; Rodon, 2017). Over the past few years, migration specialists have appropriately adopted a multilevel governance (MLG) perspective to account for a variety of state and non-state actors at different spatial scales to shape migration policies (Bazurli and Kaufmann, 2023; Campomori and Ambrosini, 2020; Caponio and Jones-Correa, 2017). In multilevel governance (MLG), the components are integrated hierarchically and horizontally into how a policy is made and implemented (Homsy et al., 2018). The multilevel nature of Multilevel Governance (MLG) includes local government interacting with higher levels of governance (Dale et al., 2018; Li and Yi, 2014; Homsy et al., 2018). In addition to vertical interaction, Multilevel Governance emphasizes horizontal interaction between local governments and the involvement of non-state actors to enable knowledge creation and shared policies (Homsy and Warner, 2013; Homsy et al., 2018). The concept of multilevel governance consists of many actors, both government and non-government actors, who are at different levels, such as local (sub-national), national, and global (supranational). The challenge in implementing this multilevel governance is that the various levels of government must be aligned to achieve the expected collective goals (Bache and Flinders, 2004; Bersill and Bulkeley, 2006; Saito-Jensen, 2015).

This MLG is an effort to ensure that a country's national government policies can be formulated and implemented flexibly to ensure suitability for different conditions in different communities (Caponio and Jones-Correa, 2017). In this case, the MLG considers the interaction between public and nonpublic actors at two or more different levels of government (Caponio and Jones-Correa, 2017). Here, it can be interpreted that the competence of a policy must be shared by actors at various levels. Agranoff (2018) emphasizes that due to the interdependence created by globalization in

migration on the ground, local governments play a crucial role in coordinating complex relationships with other levels of government and non-governmental actors. Caponio and Jones-Correa (2018) argue that the nation-state is increasingly shifting its responsibilities (in the field of migration) 'up' towards international institutions (supra-national), 'out' towards nonpublic actors, and 'down' towards local level authorities where power/responsibility is getting greater in local level governments as governments that directly deal with the community. According to Pierre (2005), multilevel governance (MLG) goes beyond the formal institutions of local government to consider the vertical relationship between the EU, national and local institutions, as well as horizontal interactions between elected local officials, civil servants, and non-governmental actors such as municipal network managers. From policymakers at the lower levels in a multilevel hierarchy, local actors can set their agendas, identifying 'local problems' that require clear 'local' solutions' (Scholten, 2013).

This research paper aims to synthesize qualitative evidence from primary studies to understand better and explore themes that intersect with multilevel governance studies in migration. Thus, this study seeks to answer the following research questions: (a) How is the research on public administration disciplines related to multilevel governance (MLG) in migration? Moreover, (b) What themes frame the study of multilevel governance (MLG) in research in the field of migration? To answer these questions, this article provides a systematic review of research that addresses the topic of multilevel governance in the field of migration in the six years from 2018–2023. The selection of time in the last six years because the publication of research in this field has increased significantly based on the analysis of the Scopus database with the keywords multilevel governance or multilevel governance and migration. This study is expected to contribute to an empirical understanding of migration studies in the discipline of public administration on multilevel governance (MLG). Given the complexity of the implementation of migration policies and the many levels of government involved, the development of the implementation of multilevel governance (MLG) empirically can help understand the current phenomenon. Empirically, currently, there is still no research on multilevel governance in the field of migration that specifically conducts qualitative meta-synthesis.

2. Method

This study uses a meta-synthesis method in which researchers try to understand and explain the phenomenon being studied to stimulate new knowledge from previous studies (Walsh and Downe, 2005). Thematic synthesis also involves meta-synthesis (Thomas and Harden, 2008). This systematic review followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) (Moher et al., 2009). The research was analyzed using Nvivo, a widely used software to explore and organize themes that emerged from qualitative data (Welsh, 2002).

2.1. Search strategy

The electronic databases used in this study are Science Direct and Scopus, and a search was carried out in August 2024. We formulate a sensitive and comprehensive search strategy using the Sample, Phenomenon of Interest, Design, Evaluation,

Research type tool (SPIDER) (Methley et al., 2014). As stated, article searches have been carried out with publication restrictions for the last six years (2018–2023). However, no restrictions are imposed based on the article's country of origin. The inclusion criteria for articles are reviewed manually and based on Mendeley to identify eligible publication references, which are systematically reviewed.

2.2. Article selection

The author conducted an initial search to obtain relevant articles using various search terms that represented the multilevel governance and migration used in previous literature. The articles included in this meta-synthesis meet the criteria of the SPIDER tool as follows: (i) Sample is research by taking the topic of multilevel governance or multilevel governance, (ii) Phenomenon of Interest is a phenomenon in the field of migration that is highlighted from the perspective of multilevel governance. The combination of Sample and Phenomenon of Interest criteria uses the following search strategy: ("multilevel governance" OR "multilevel governance" AND "migration" OR "immigration" OR "migrant" OR "immigrant" OR "refugee" OR "asylum" OR "diaspora"). (iii) Design is research that uses qualitative methods for data collection (interviews, participant observations, secondary data, focus groups, open surveys). The combination of Sample and Design criteria uses the following search strategy: ("multilevel governance" OR "multilevel governance" AND "public document" OR "interview" OR "participant observation" OR "secondary data" OR "focus group" OR "open-ended survey"). (iv) Evaluation is often used in multilevel governance discussions, such as interactions, coordination, and relationships between actors. The combination of Sample and Evaluation criteria uses the following search strategy: ("multilevel governance" OR "multilevel governance" AND "interaction" OR "coordination" OR "actors' relation"). (v) Research type uses qualitative methods for data analysis. The combination of sample and research type criteria uses the following search strategy: ("multilevel governance" OR "multilevel governance" AND "qualitative research" OR "research qualitative" OR "qualitative studies" OR "qualitative" OR "empirical research" OR "research empirical"). (vi) research published in English articles and (vii) research published in the form of journal articles. The iterative process in selecting articles related to the scope of the review in this study is part of conducting a meta-synthesis (Walsh and Downe, 2005).

PRISMA diagrams report the study selection process (Moher et al., 2009) with the search results depicted in **Figure 1**. The search identified 731 articles. We import articles into Mendeley's software to update details and check for duplicates. The remaining 731 studies with titles and abstracts were automatically filtered using Nvivo 14 tools or manually based on inclusion criteria, auto code process, and manual coding. Based on the SPIDER tools strategy, there are 102 articles left that are included in the eligibility process. There were 7 articles excluded during the screening process, 528 articles excluded during the retrieval process, 51 articles excluded during the eligibility process and 19 articles excluded during the include process because they failed to meet the inclusion criteria. Therefore, the sample for the meta-synthesis in this review consists of 32 original articles.
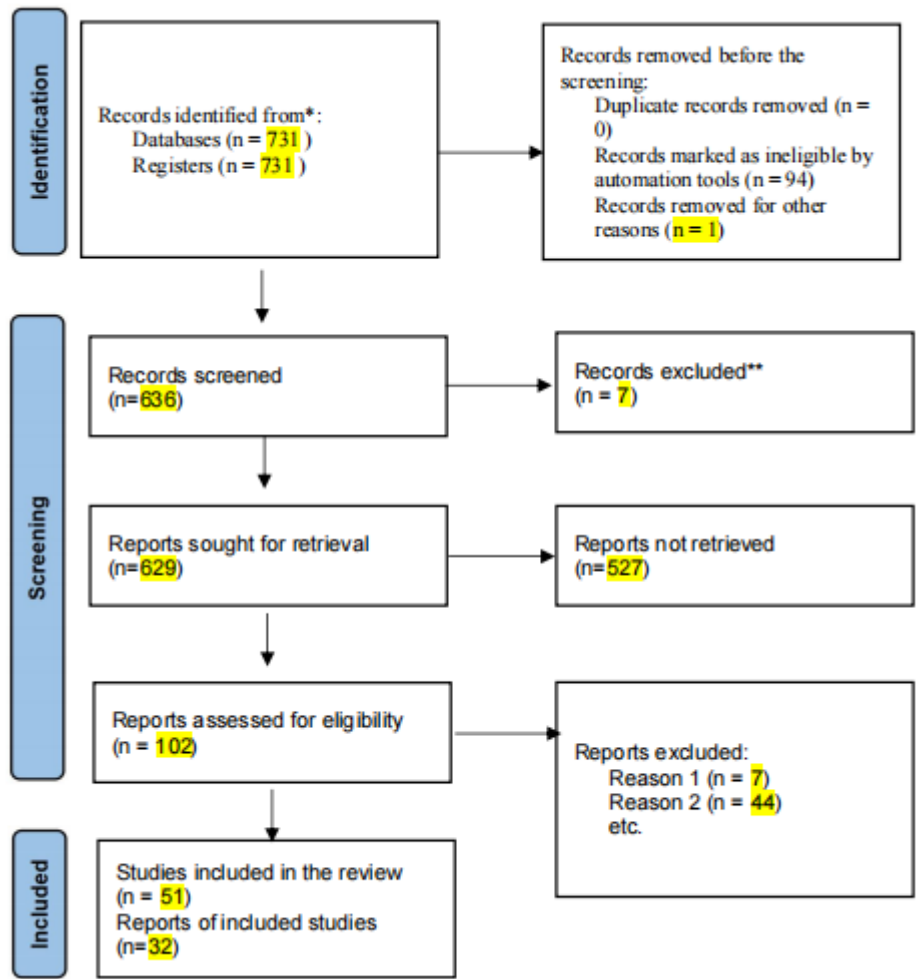
Figure 1. Diagram PRISMA.

2.3. Quality assessment

Before assessing the original 32 articles at the final inclusion, independent quality assessments were conducted by the first, second, and third authors. The explanation for potentially rejecting the article is related to the record of reasons, among others: the scope of the literature examined does not include the SPIDER search strategy, which researches within the scope of a sample article on multilevel governance (MLG) with the phenomenon of interest in the field of migration. The scope of qualitative research is also limited in terms of more detailed design (data collection through interviews, participant observations, secondary data, focus groups, and open surveys), and the results presented are analyzed qualitatively. Using PRISMA diagrams to report on the study selection process, the last number of records entered for data extraction and analysis was 32 articles.

3. Result

3.1. Study trends

Figure 2 presents the volume of publications in our sample journals over the past six years. 2022 is the year with the most publications of articles related to multilevel

governance and migration. This trend may indicate increased research attention to migration associated with multilevel governance. However, the average number of publications yearly needs to be higher than other public administration topics.
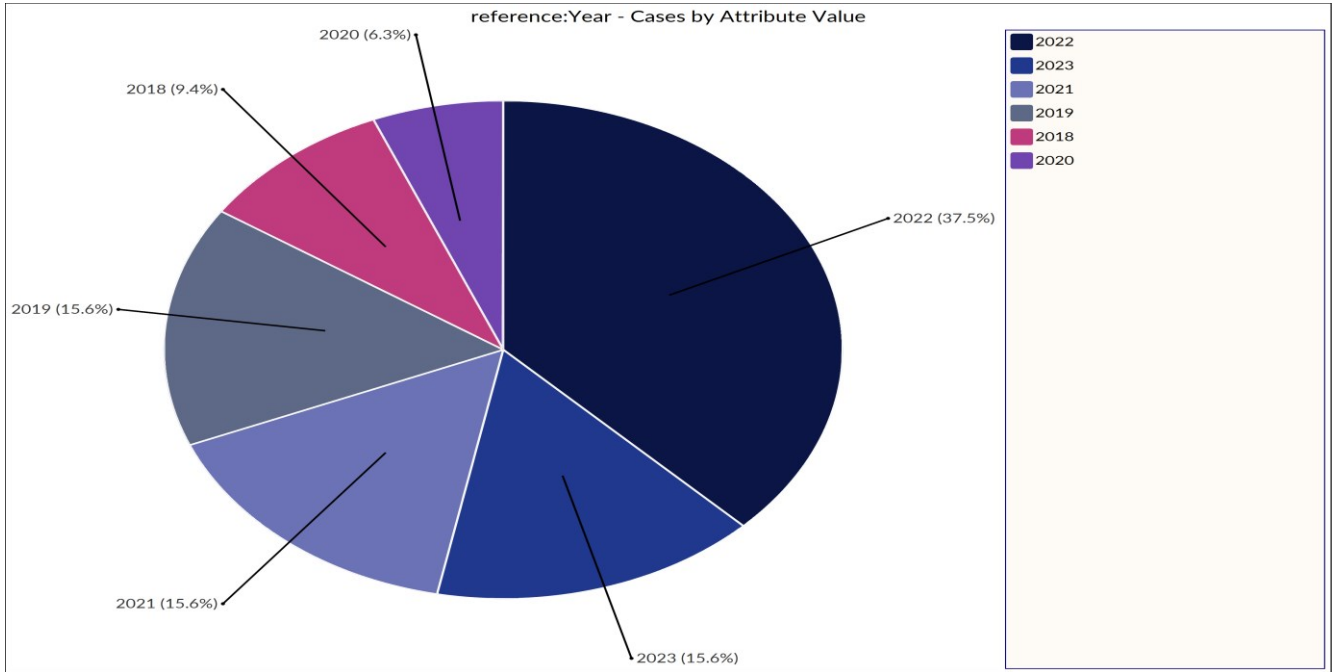

Figure 2. Research distribution by year.

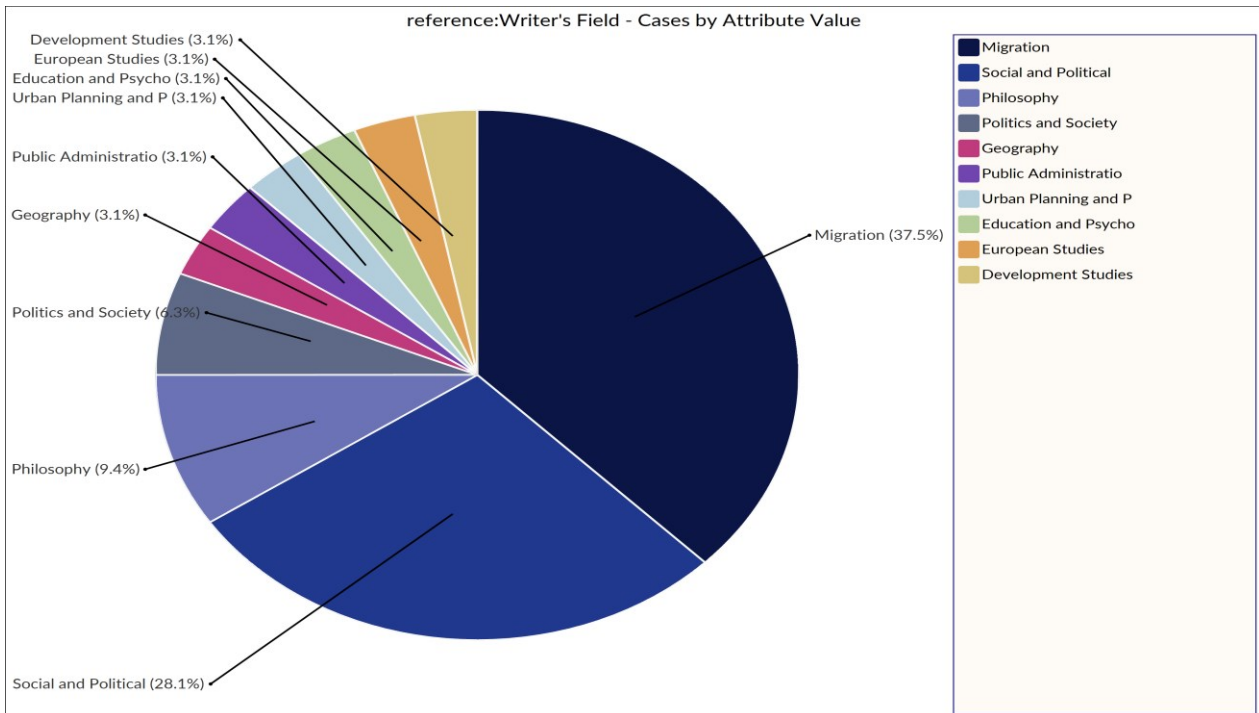Processed by Researchers using Nvivo 14.

3.2. Writer's field

Figure 3. Distribution of research based on authors.

The data was processed by researchers using Nvivo 14.

The authors of the articles that were obtained are represented by various disciplines (**Figure 3**). The top three disciplines are migration studies (37.5%) and social and political (28.1%). They were followed by philosophy (9.4%), politics and society (6.3%), geography, urban planning, European studies, development study, education and psychology, and public administration at 3.7% each. The findings show that migration studies account for the most articles compared to other disciplines and lead multilevel governance and migration research published in the sample journals. This can be ascertained because the multilevel governance research discussed is in migration. Meanwhile, in the field of administrative science, there are still very few who do research.

3.3. Geographic coverage

Figure 4 illustrate the geographical scope of this study has been limited to a few countries. In particular, this study focuses heavily on countries in the Western context, especially in European countries. About 85% of the research was conducted in European countries. Less than 15 percent of the research was conducted in countries outside Europe, such as the United Arab Emirates, West Africa, Canada, and the United States and Mexico. Two articles analyze locations that need to be more specific but still in European countries.
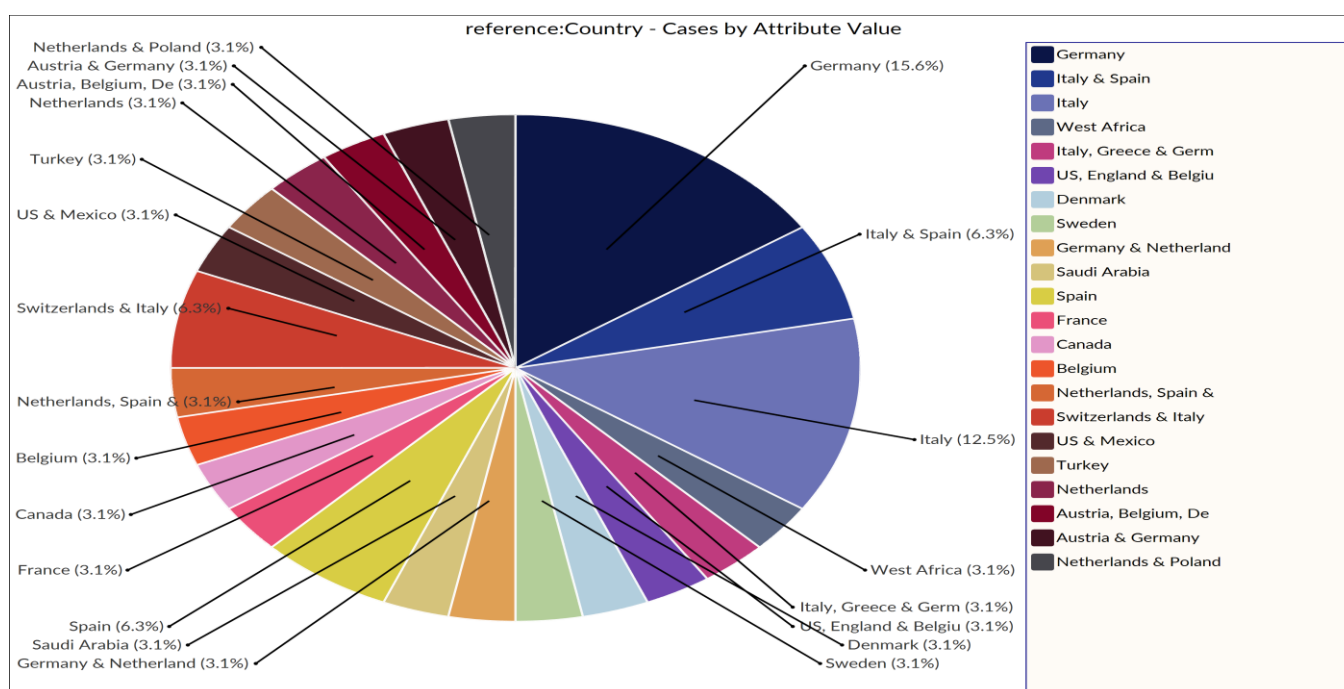

Figure 4. Distribution of research based on geographical coverage.

The data was processed by researchers using Nvivo 14.

3.4. Trends in the direction of research development

Figure 5 below is a trend in the development direction of multilevel governance research associated with migration using Nvivo 14. The figure is presented in cloud words based on 32 articles selected as a sample. The analysis of word similarity in the word cloud was calculated by generating 500 words of five characters. The top 10 dominant words are policy, local, cities, urban, governance, migration, level,

integration, government, and social. This means that multilevel governance and migration studies talk a lot about policy, focusing on the local level and discussing migration, integration, inter-city networks, governance, and the social sector. The frequency outside these words is minimal, below 0.3%, so only the top 10 words are discussed.

Figure 5. Word cloud on 27 sampled articles.

Processed by researchers using Nvivo 14.

4. Discussion

Based on the results of synthetic findings, it is known that themes strengthened from 27 research articles, including actors, governance, implementation, integration, and interaction.

4.1. Actors

Actors are the first theme that strengthens this study. Actors consist of critical actors, multilevel actors, and various actors. Multilevel actors consist of local actors and national actors. Various actors consist of governmental actors, non-governmental actors, and nonpublic actors. Local actors are still divided into city networks, local government, local-level actors, and sub-national levels. City networks are also still divided into critical city networks, migration city networks, and transnational city networks.

Key actor

Figure 6 clarify critical actors many were discussed in 2023, 2022, 2021 and 2018. There needed to be more clarity in the discussion of critical actors in 2019 and 2020. Key actors discussed a lot about the importance of interaction between actors in the covid 19 global crisis (Blauberger et al., 2023), a collaboration of government and non-government actors in asylum policy at the city level (Bazurli and Kaufmann, 2023), city networks (Caponio, 2021; Caponio and Pettrachin, 2023), the quality of

personal leadership from local officials (Hillman, 2022), the need for critical actors involved in refugee policy governance in Turkey, and the need to increase capacity by collaborating with other government actors as well as outside the government through formal and informal networks (Polat and Lowndes, 2022).
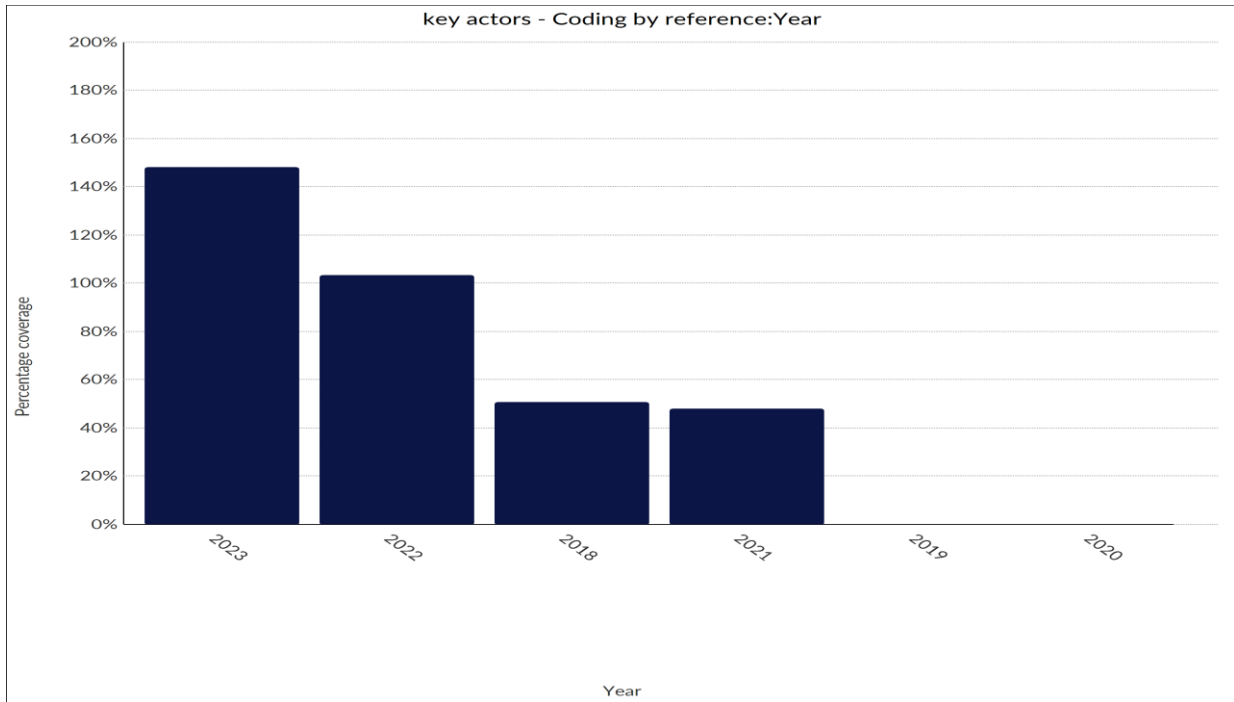
Figure 6. Key actors-coding by reference: year.
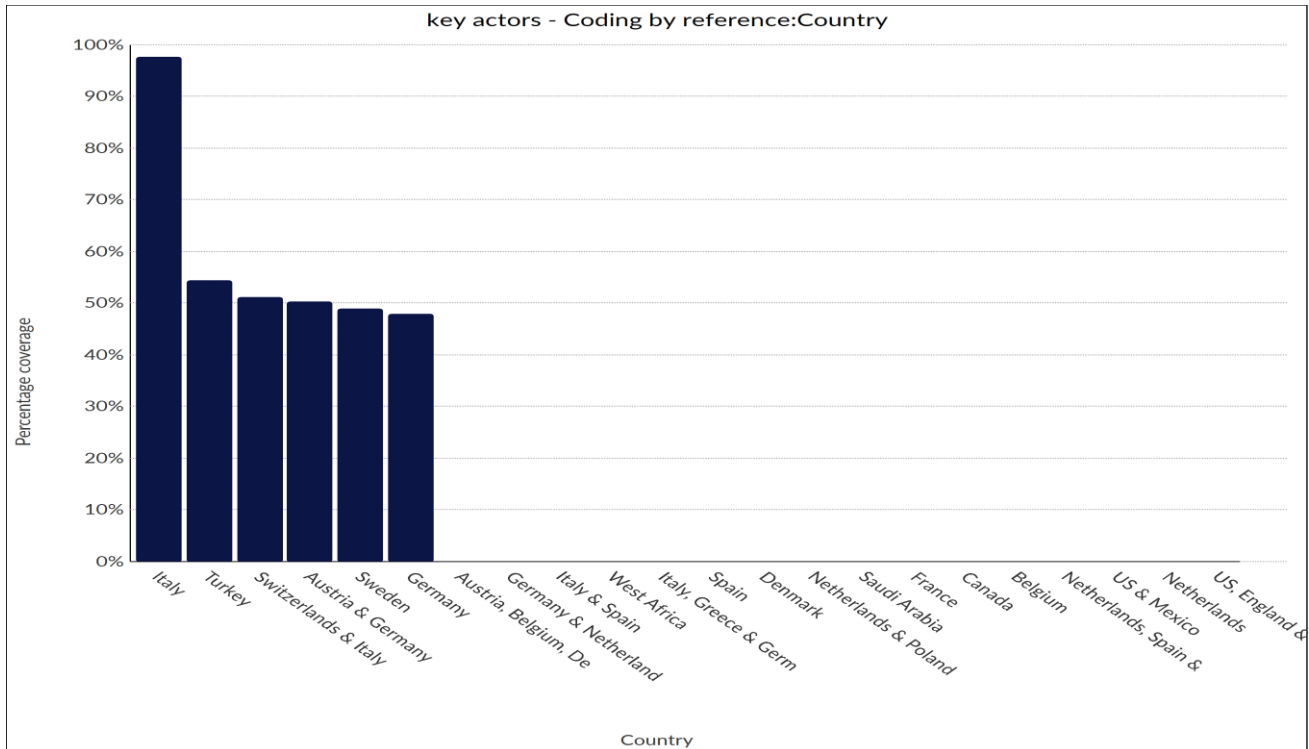
Processed by researchers using Nvivo 14.

Figure 7. Key actors-coding by reference: country.

Processed by researchers using Nvivo 14.

Meanwhile, discussions about critical actors are mainly conducted in Italy, Turkey, Switzerland, Austria, Sweden, and Germany if it is associated with the country (**Figure 7**).

Figure 8 illustrate the actors as a whole, besides discussing key actors, it also discusses multi-level actors consisting of local actors and national actors. Especially in local actors, there is a discussion about city networks, which discusses a lot about cooperation between actor networks at the city level, discussions about local government as government actors at the city level, local level actors who are actors at the local level who are involved in multilevel governance and discussions about sub-national actors who are actors at the sub-national level.

From the discussion of actors involved in multilevel governance and migration in 32 articles that were the research sample, it is known that there are various actors consisting of governmental actors who are government actors. These non-governmental actors are outside the government or NGOs and nonpublic private/private sector actors. Meanwhile, city networks are divided into discussions about the importance of essential city networks, cooperation in migration city networks, and explanation of transnational cooperation networks (transnational city networks). The result of the theme of the actors forms a group that, when depicted, looks like the image below:
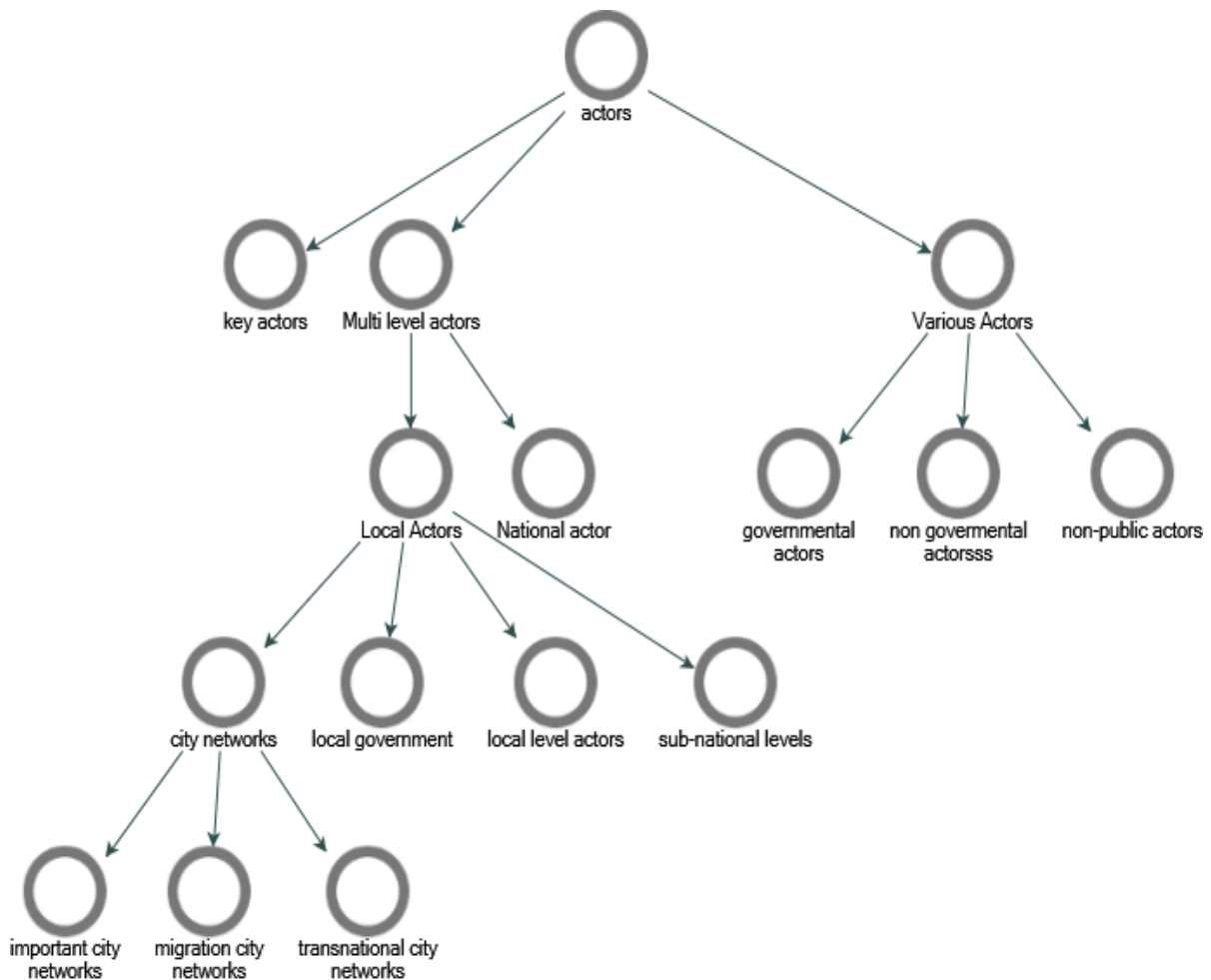

Figure 8. Actors.

Processed by researchers using Nvivo 14.

Research on actors is widely discussed by Caponio (2018); Caponio (2022); Garcés-Mascareñas and Gebhardt (2020); Auslender (2022); Bazurli (2019); Caponio et al. (2023); Blauberger et al. (2023); Meijer et al. (2023) which discusses a lot about essential city networks, migration city networks, transnational city networks, key actors, local level actors, non-governmental actors, nonpublic actors, and sub-national level. While Caponio (2021); Careja (2019); Hillmann (2021); Scholten et al. (2018); Bazurli et al. (2023) discussed a lot related to local level actors, governmental actors, local actors, sub-national actors, non-governmental actors, and key actors. Falguerra and Serra (2021); Zeyrep (2022); Bazurli and Campomori (2022); Polat and Lowndes (2022); Piccoli (2020) discuss a lot related to governmental actors, key actors, non-governmental actors, and nonpublic actors. It is described detail in **Figure 9.**
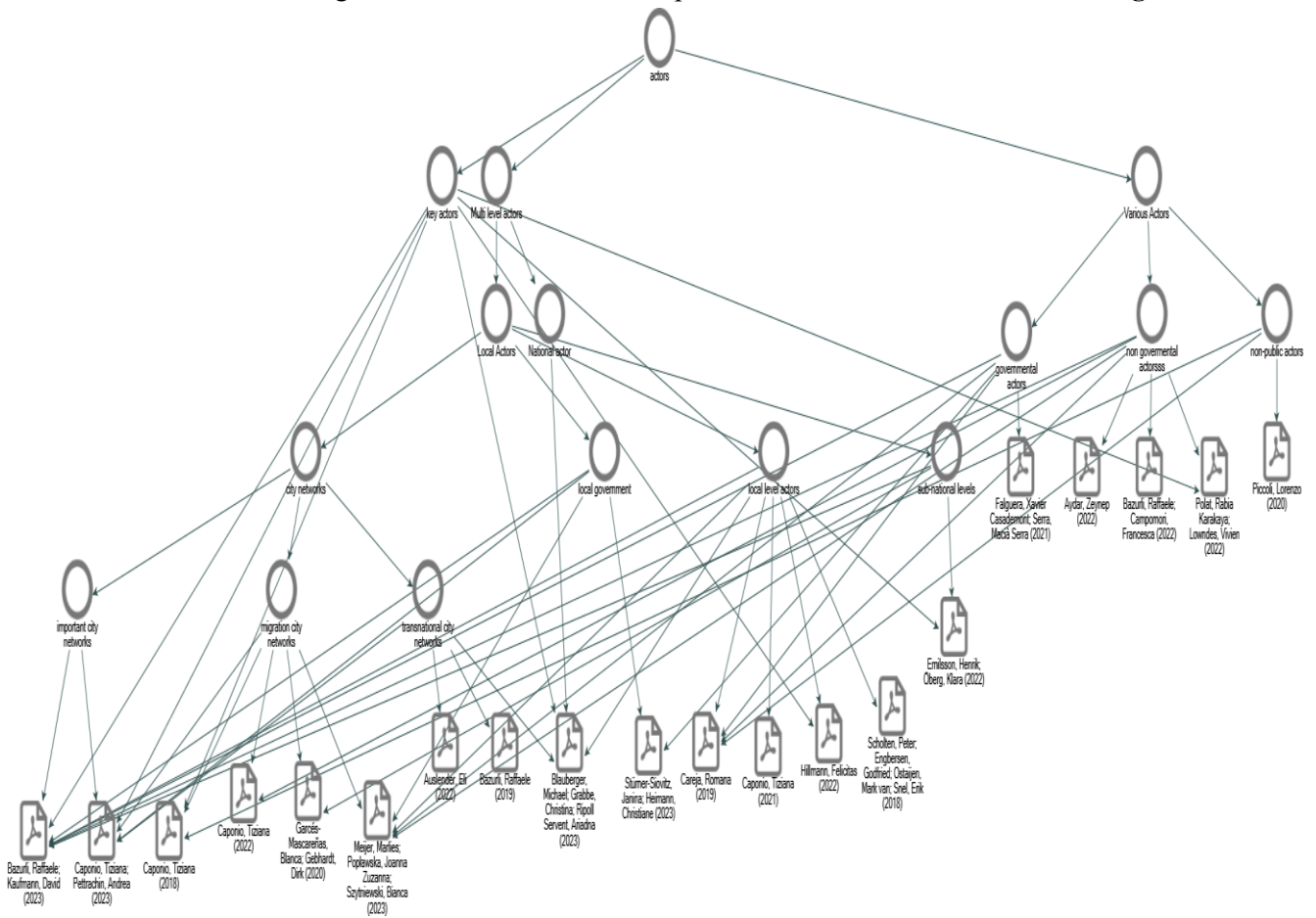

Figure 9. Actors.

Processed by researchers using Nvivo 14.

After knowing the discussion of the theme of actors in various articles that are the research samples, the next thing is to know hierarchically what is discussed the most in the article. Based on the discussion of actors in **Figure 10**, it is known that the most talked about multilevel actors are related to Local actors. Local actors are the most discussed, followed by talks about non-governmental and critical actors. Current studies on multilevel governance and migration highlight many actors at the local level, cooperation in governance with non-government actors, cooperation of actors at different levels of government, and actors who are the key to cooperation and coordination. National and nonpublic actors are also topics often discussed in
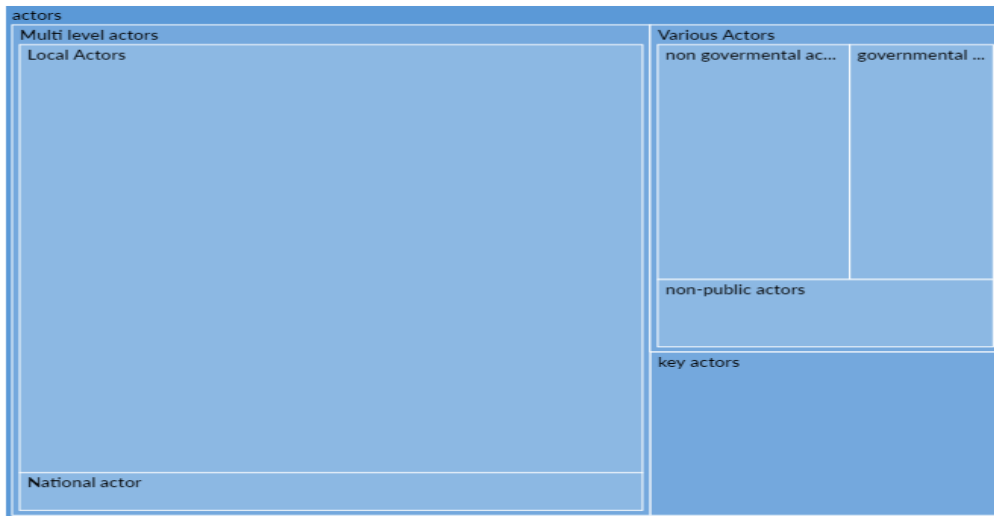
discussions about actors.

Figure 10. Compared by number coding reference.

Processed by researchers using Nvivo 14.

4.2. Governance

The next theme that strengthens this study is governance. **Figure 11** illustrate during the last six years, from 2018–2023, discussions about governance were discussed in 2023, then 2022, 2019, 2021, and 2018. There was a vacuum in the discussion of the topic in 2020.
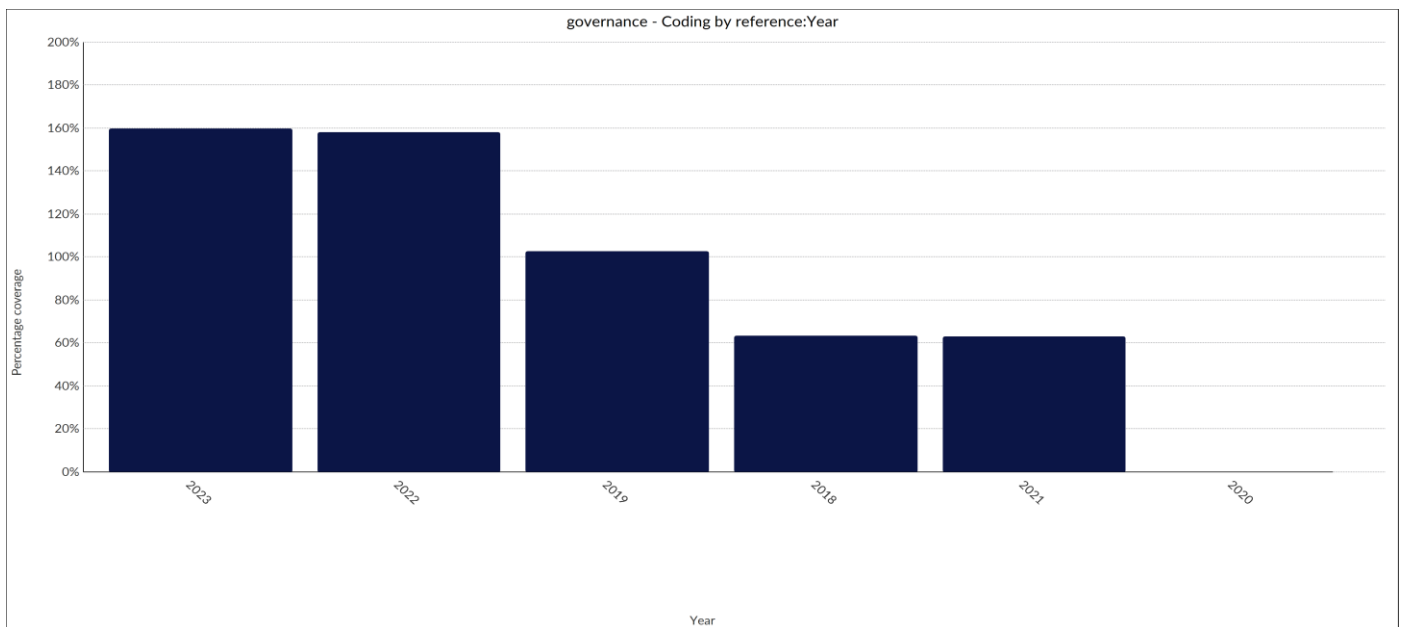

Figure 11. Governance coding by reference: year.

The data was processed by researchers using Nvivo 14.

Figure 12 clarify of the countries that researched governance, it is known that Italy and Germany conducted the most research on governance, followed by countries such as West Africa, the Netherlands, Poland, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey.
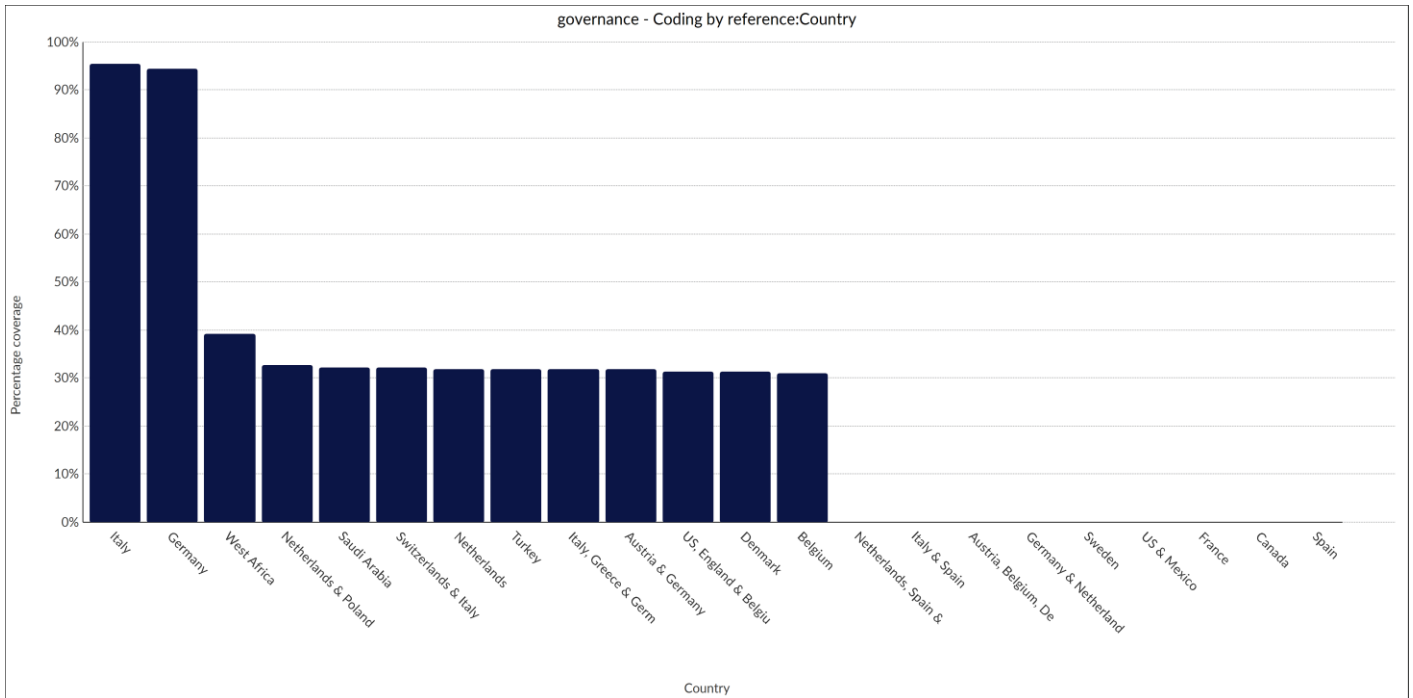
Figure 12. Governance coding by reference: country.

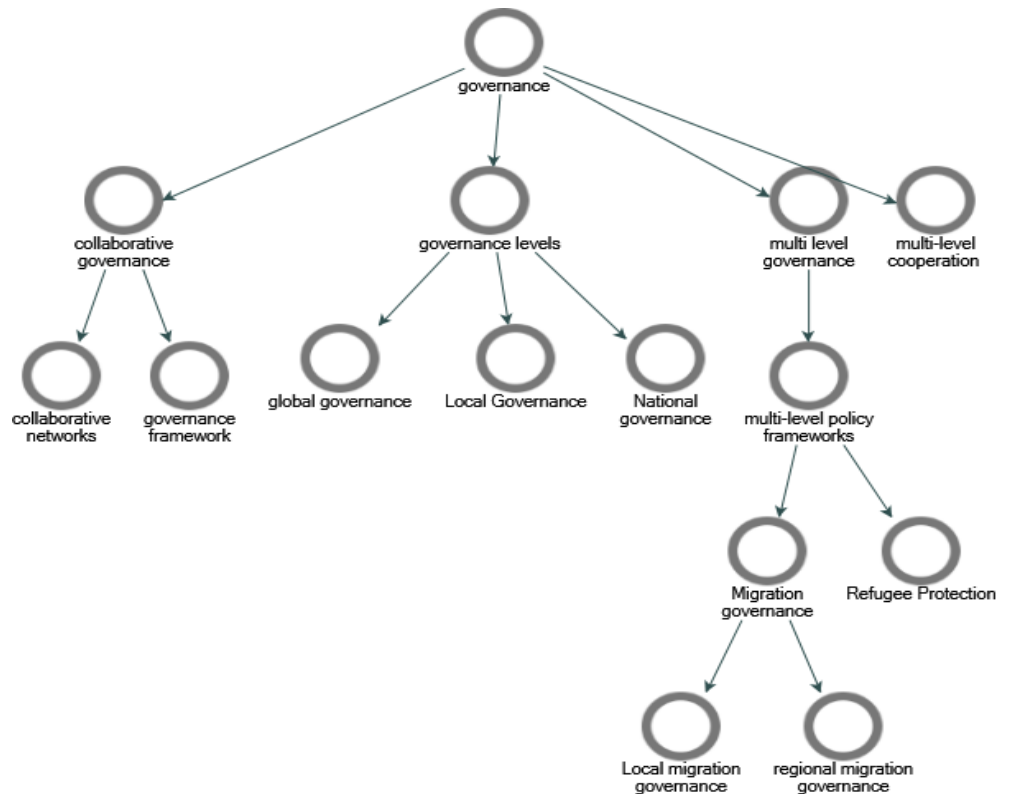The data was processed by researchers using Nvivo 14.

Figure 13. Governance.

The data was processed by researchers using Nvivo 14.

Discussion on governance, discussing a lot about the application and adaptation of multilevel governance theory, especially in migration and refugees (Auslender, 2022; Bisong, 2018; Meijer et al., 2023; Stürner-Siovitz and Heimann, 2023) and in dealing with crises (Blauberger et al., 2023), the role of local governments as ideas

and implementers of policies at the local level (Aydar, 2022; Bazurli and Campomori, 2022; Bazurli and Kaufmann, 2023; Polat and Lowndes, 2022) and the role of city networks in multilevel governance (Caponio, 2018, 2021; Careja, 2019; Caponio and Pettrachin, 2023). The grouping of governance in this study can be seen in **Figure 13** as follows:

Auslender (2022); Polat and Lowndes (2022) discussed research related to collaborative networks. Meanwhile, governance frameworks are discussed by Scholten et al. (2018); Auslender (2022); Bisong (2018). Discussion on global governance is discussed by Bisong (2019). Meanwhile, local governance is widely discussed in Polat and Lowndes (2022); Zeynep (2022); Mescoli (2021); Barzurli and Campomori (2022). The discussion of national governance is widely discussed by Careja (2019); Bazurli and Kaufmann (2023); Stürner-Siovitz and Heimann (2023). Research related to local migration governance is widely discussed in Bazurli and Campomori (2022); Caponio (2018); Caponio (2022); Bazurli and Kaufmann (2023); Caponio and Pettrachin (2023); Meijer et al. (2023). Meanwhile, related to multilevel cooperation was widely discussed by Caponio (2018); Caponio (2021); Bisong (2018); Bazurli and Kaufmann (2023); Caponio and Pettrachin (2023); Meijer et al. (2023) and Blauberger et al. (2023). Research related to refugee protection was conducted by Bazurli and Campomori (2022) and Fakhoury (2019). In the discussion of research related to governance, the most discussed thing is multilevel governance in its application in various cases and the role of local governance at the regional level which is illustrated in **Figure 14.**
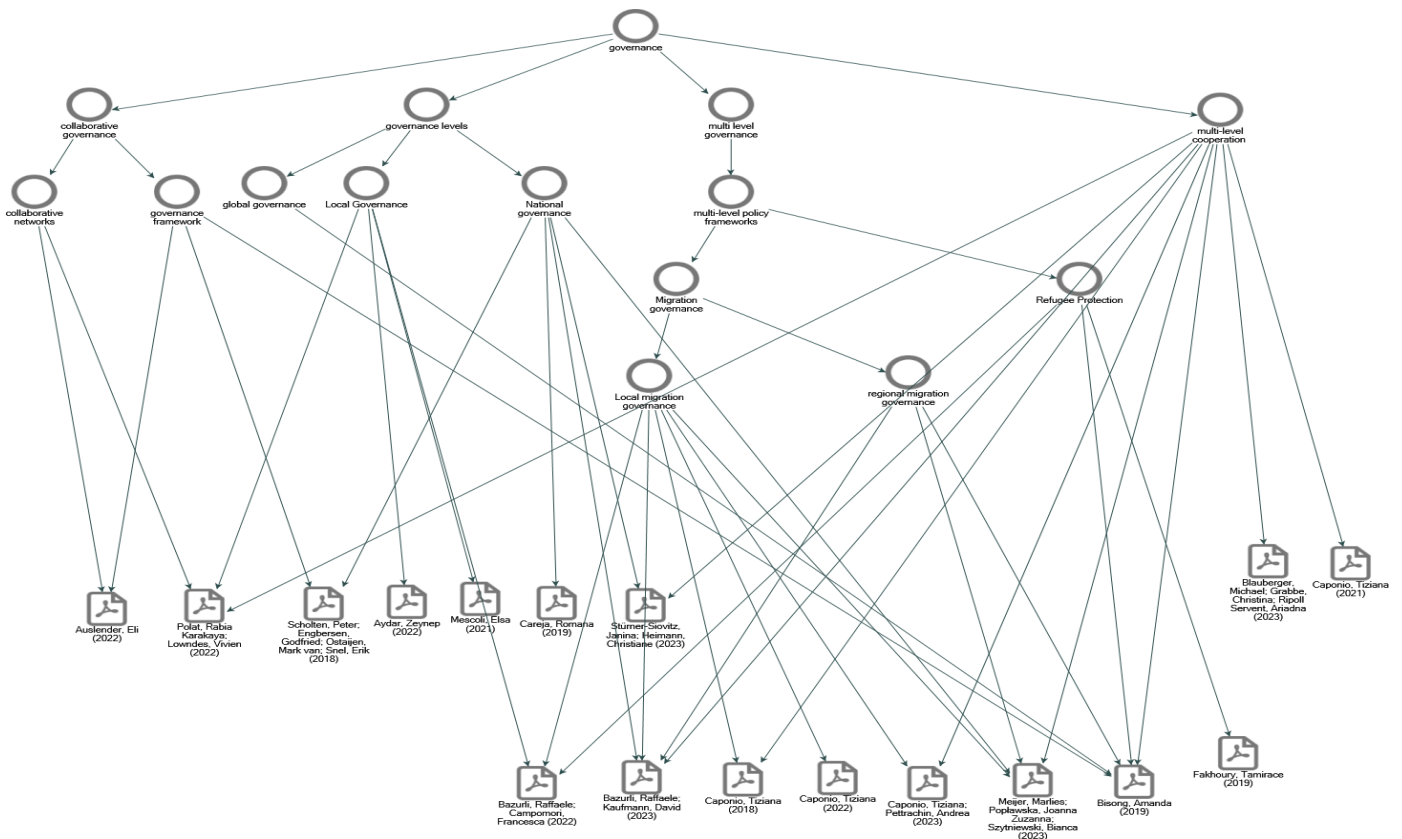

Figure 14. Governance.

The data was processed by researchers using Nvivo 14.

Based on discussion of governance in **Figure 15**, in terms of existing research the most talked about multilevel governance, especially related to multilevel policy frameworks, and the governance level related to local governance. Discussions related to collaborative governance also discussed governance frameworks and multilevel cooperation. This means that the current research discusses multilevel governance, the role of local governance in multilevel governance, and governance frameworks related to collaborative governance and multilevel cooperation.
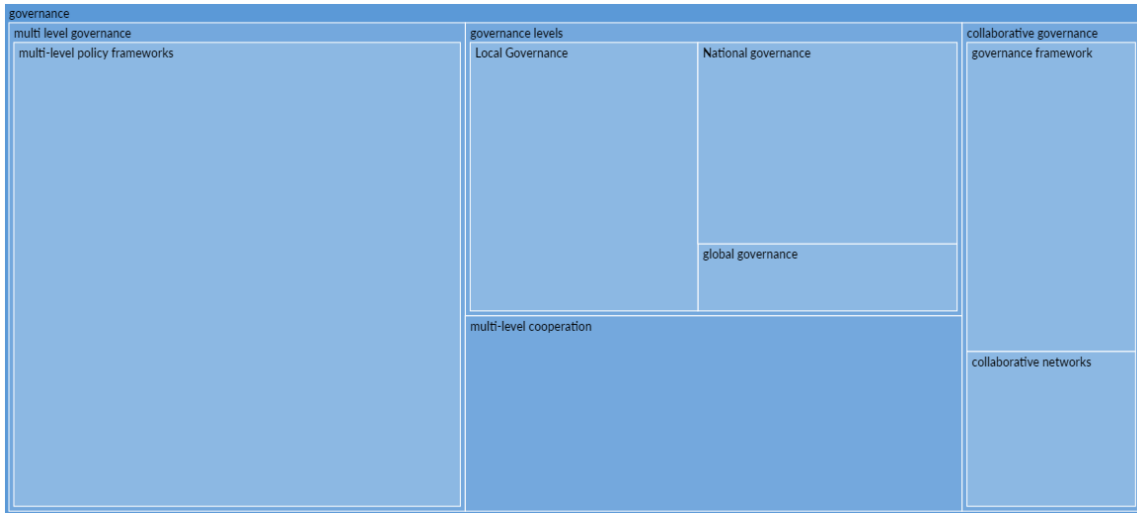

Figure 15. Compared by number coding reference.

Processed by researchers using Nvivo 14.

4.3. Implementation

The next theme that strengthens research related to multilevel governance and migration is implementation. The implementation theme in the research for the last six years between 2018–2023 was carried out most in 2023 and 2022, then 2019, 2018, and 2021. There is a gap that no research was conducted in 2020. It can be seen in **Figure 16** as follows.
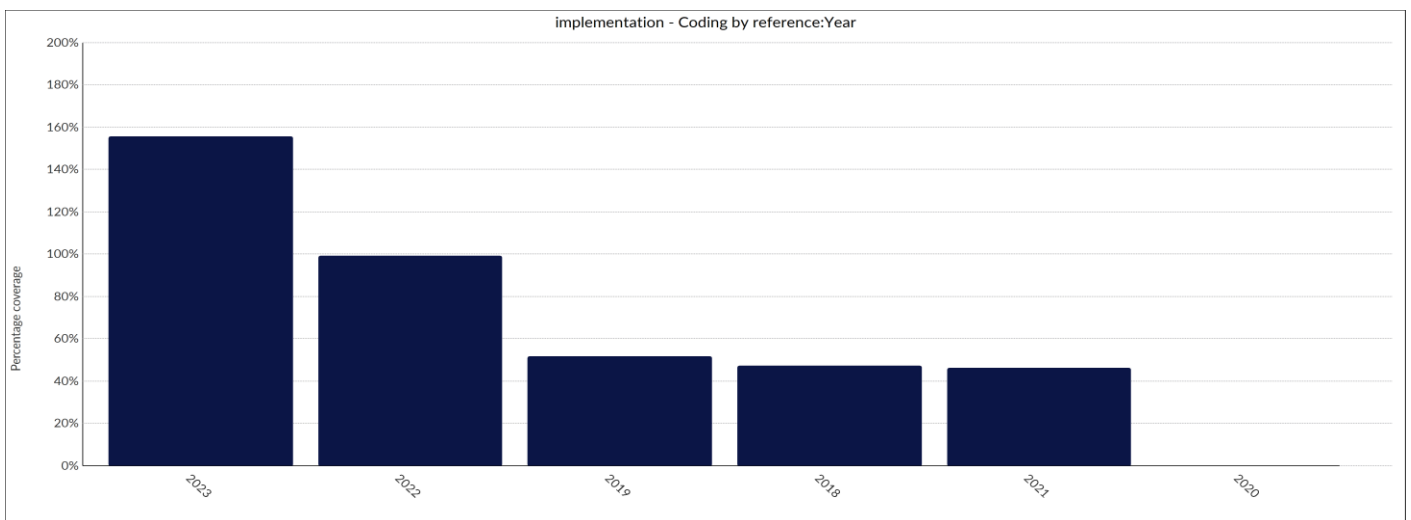

Figure 16. Implementation coding by reference: year.

The data was processed by researchers using Nvivo 14.

By country as seen in **Figure 17**, research related to implementation was carried out in Italy, the Netherlands and Poland, Austria and Germany, Denmark, the US and Mexico, and Greece. Research related to the implementation theme was primarily conducted in European countries and a little in America between 2018–2023. There are still many research opportunities to highlight the implementation of multilevel governance and migration research in other countries.
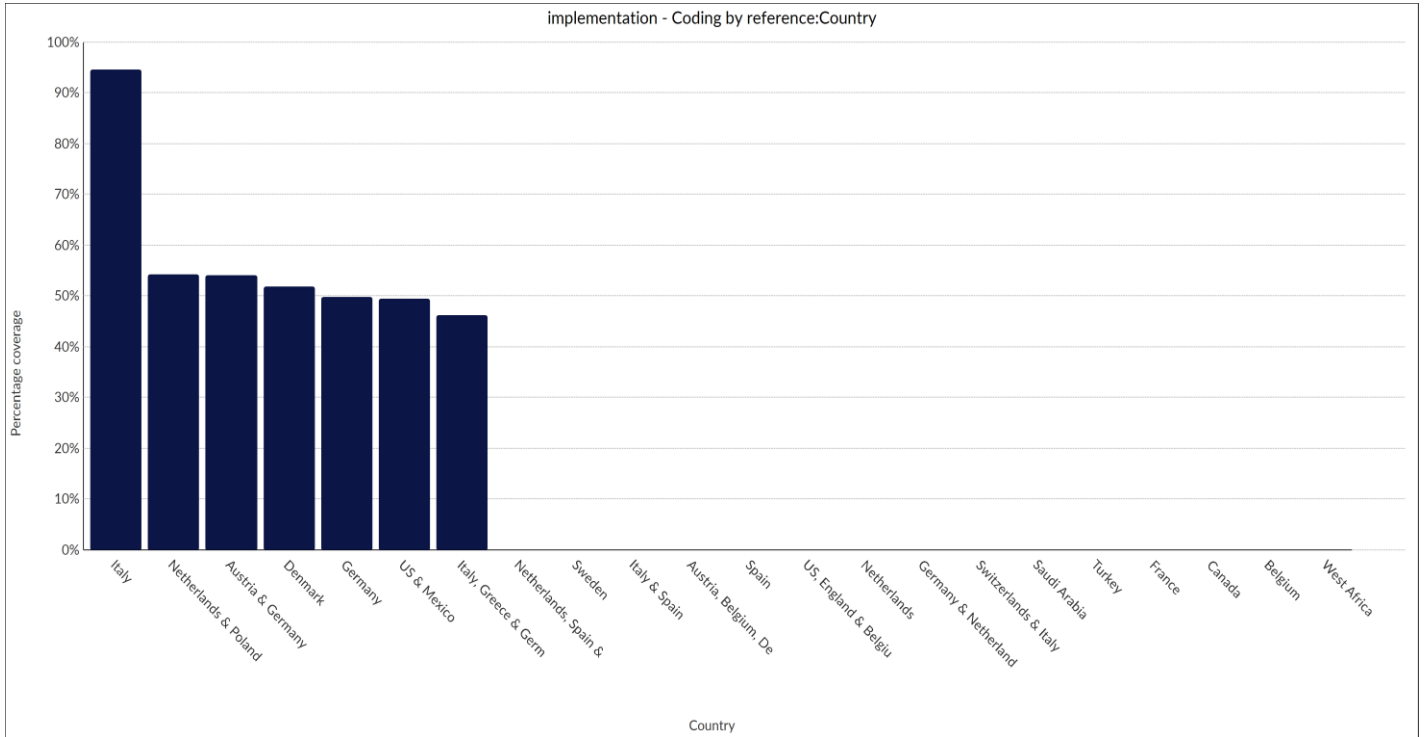

Figure 17. Implementation—coding by reference: country.
The data was processed by researchers using Nvivo 14.

In the 32 selected sample articles, the research that discusses implementation is divided into 2, namely implementation power and policy implementation. Research on this implementation discusses the implementation of multilevel governance in uncovering interactions at various levels of government and governance partnerships in formulating and implementing policies (Auslender, 2022; Caponio, 2018). According to Caponio (2018); Caponio and Pettrachin (2023) requires establishing closer collaborative relationships between city governments, local associations, and civil society responsible for policy implementation. According to Caponio (2021), it is increasingly essential for local governments to ensure effective implementation through MLG policy arrangements. Blauberger et al. (2023) see the implementation of solid and coordinated transgovernmental networks as crucial in responding to crises effectively. According to Meijer et al. (2023), the need to build a theoretical framework for MLG to understand the differences in implementing national and local migration policies. According to Careja (2019), there is a need to focus on the governance underlying the implementation of integration policies that include vertical (cross-level and national-local) and horizontal (cross-actor, state-non-state) dimensions, as well as how local authorities in developed countries influence the implementation of migration policies, which increasingly shows that there is an

increase in variety and complexity discussed by Pipkin (2022).

Figure 18 below is an overview of the implementation, which in this study is divided into 2, namely implementation power and policy implementation.
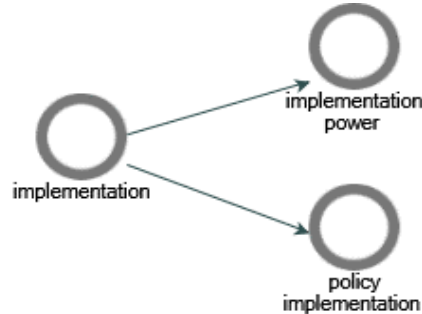

Figure 18. Implementation.

The data was processed by researchers using Nvivo 14.

Research related to implementation in this theme is divided into 2, where the implementation power discusses by Pipkin (2022); Blauberger et al. (2023) and Meijer et al. (2023). Furthermore, policy implementation was widely discussed by Pipkin (2022); Auslender (2022); Caponio (2018); Caponio (2021); Caponio and Pettrachin (2023) and Careja (2019). In detail, it is described in **Figure 19** as follows:
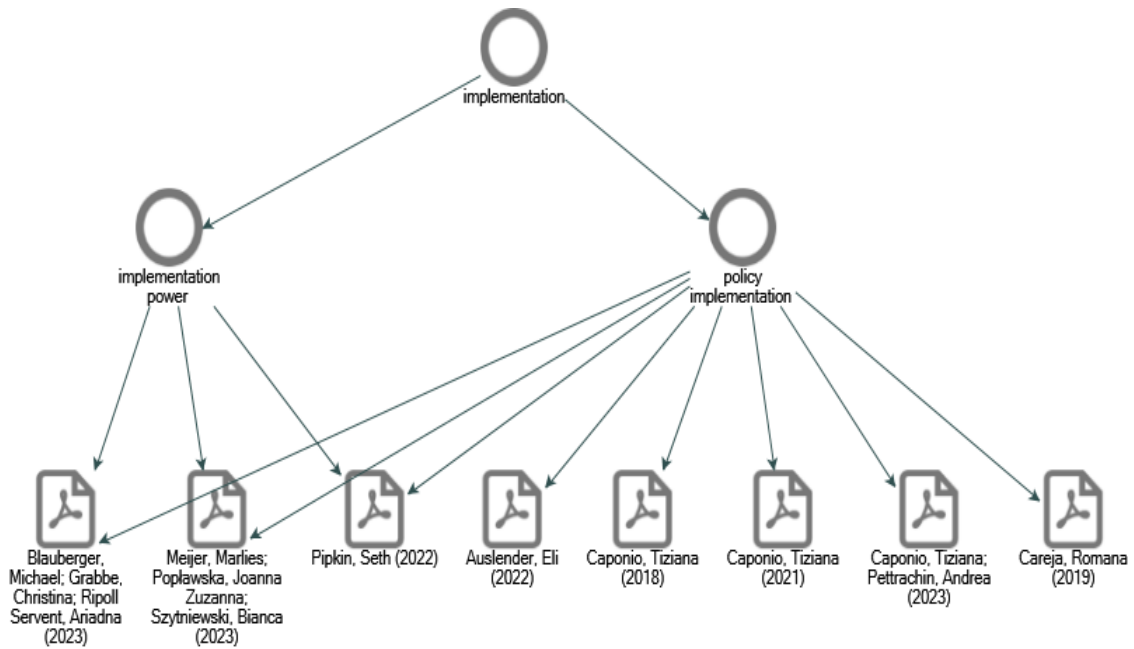

Figure 19. Implementation.

The data was processed by researchers using Nvivo 14.

Based on **Figure 20** regarding the hierarchy of all the research conducted, this research discusses policy implementation and implementation power. In the six years between 2018–2023, there has been much research on the theme of policy implementation and implementation power in multilevel governance and migration research. However, there are still opportunities to highlight this topic from various perspectives.

Figure 20. Compared by number coding reference.

Processed by researchers using Nvivo 14.

4.4. Integration

The next theme that strengthens multilevel governance and migration research is integration. Based on **Figure 21**, research on integration was carried out in 2019, then reappeared in 2021, 2022 and 2023. There was a research gap in 2018 and 2020.
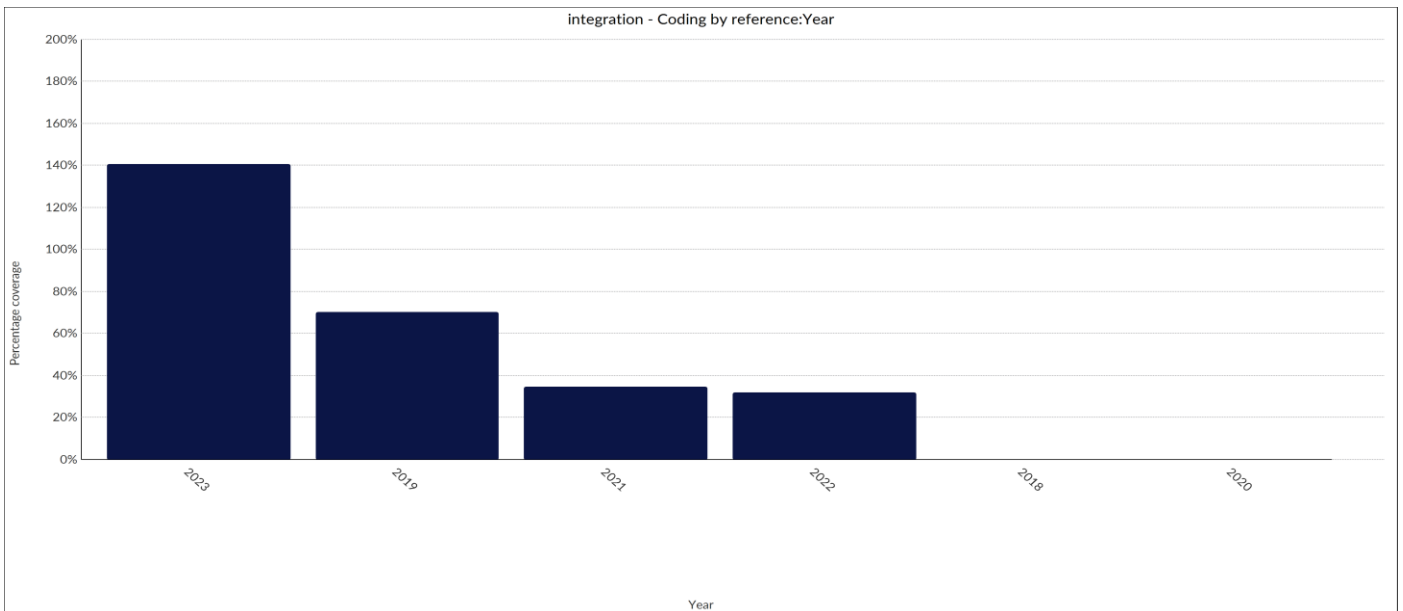

Figure 21. Integration coding by reference: year.

The data was processed by researchers using Nvivo 14.

Based on countries, research on the theme of integration was carried out in Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Denmark, Spain, Italy, and Austria as illustrated in **Figure 22**. Research on the theme of integration is mainly carried out in European Union countries because integration occurs in European Union countries. This

integration research discusses a lot of multilevel research and practical implications regarding the refugee reception process related to the role of local populations, the role of local stakeholders, and the role of national policies and approaches to migration, integration, and refugee acceptance (Glorius et al, 2019).
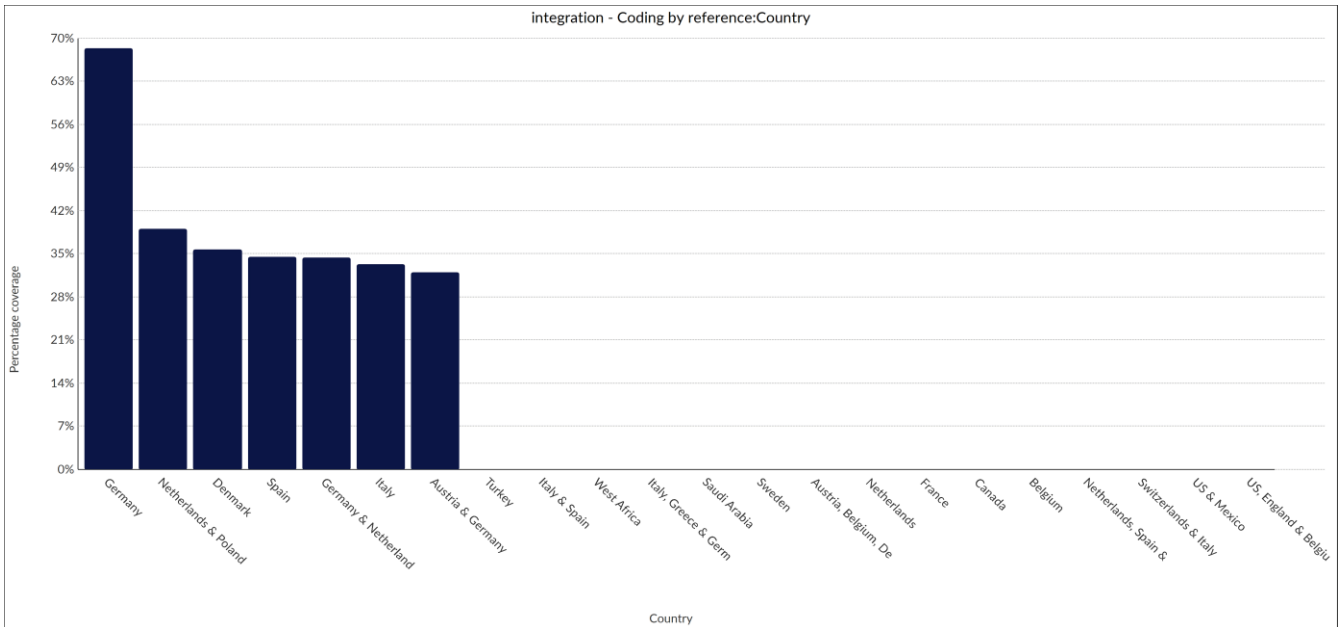

Figure 22. Integration—Coding by reference: country.
The data was processed by researchers using Nvivo 14.

This study's theme of integration that strengthens is divided into two groups: integration management and integration policies. Integration management is divided into integration outcomes. Meanwhile, integration policies are divided into local and national-level integration policies. **Figure 23** below is a grouping based on this study:

Figure 23. Integration.
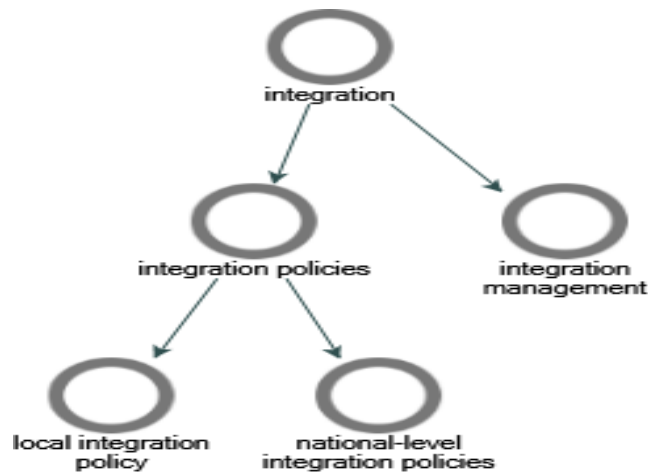The data was processed by researchers using Nvivo 14.

Based on data processing using Nvivo 14 on 32 articles sampled, local integration policy was discussed by Careja (2019); Glorius et al. (2019); Stürner-Siovitz and Heimann (2023); and Meijer et al. (2023). Meanwhile, national-level integration policies were discussed by Careja (2019); Glorius et al. (2019); Meijer et al. (2023)

and Caponio and Pettrachin (2023). Theme of integration management discussed by Meijer et al. (2023); Stürner-Siovitz and Heimann (2023); Blauberger et al. (2023); Falguerra and Serra (2021); Heimann and Schammann (2022). In detail, it can be described in **Figure 24** as follows:
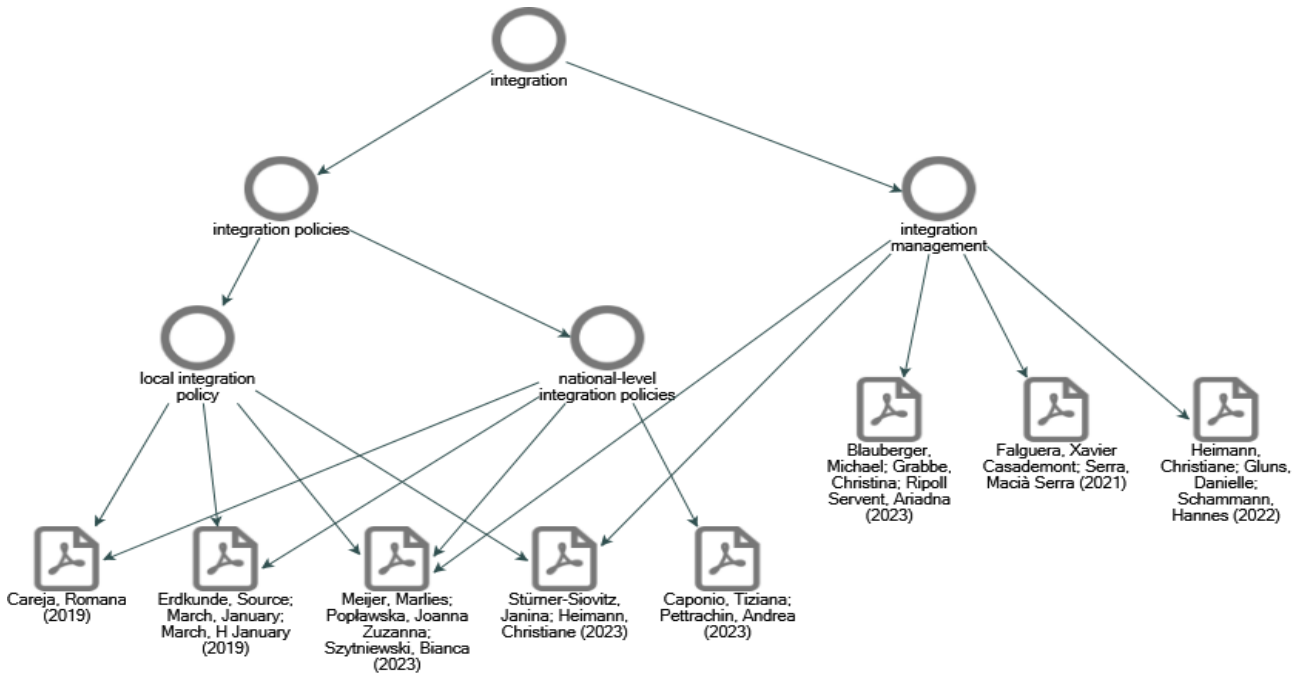
Figure 24. Integration.

The data was processed by researchers using Nvivo 14.

Figure 25. Compared by number coding reference.

Processed by researchers using Nvivo 14.

Based on the research hierarchy which is illustrated in **Figure 25**, currently the existing research discusses the most integration policies based on local integration policies. In addition, research related to integration is also quite widely discussed, especially related to national-level integration policies. The research discussed is

related to the definition of integration, minority states, and their political frameworks (Falguerra and Serra, 2021), highlighting the symbol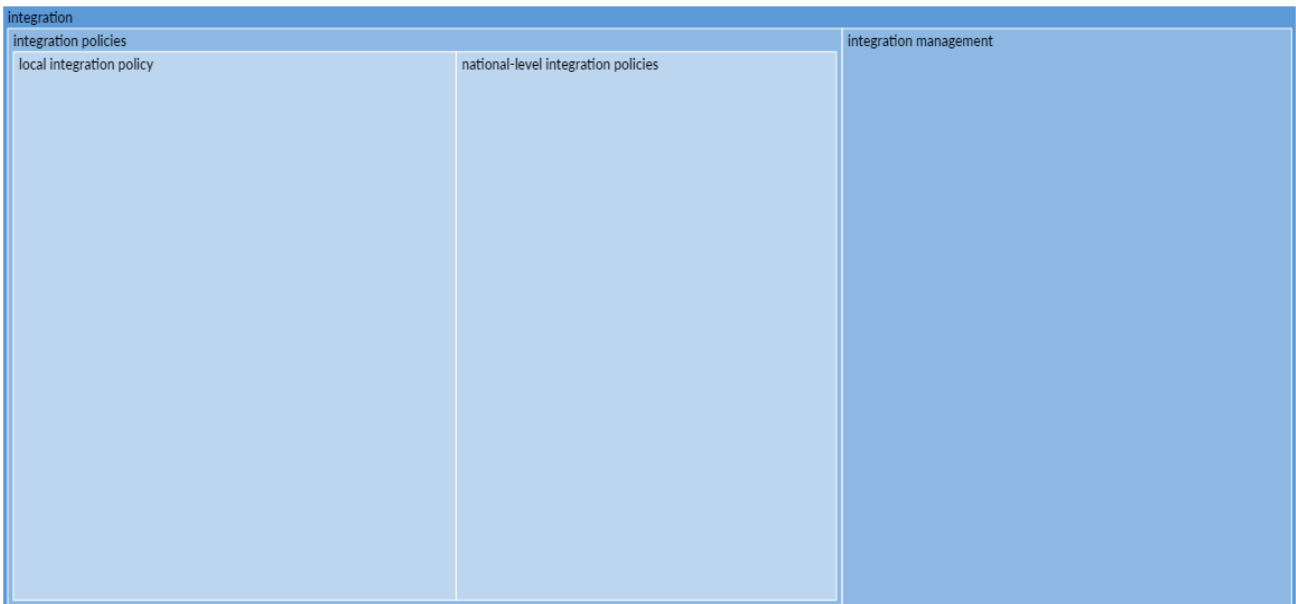ic value of urban networks in migration and integration (Heimann et al., 2022), designing and implementing integration measures carried out by local governments in mitigating the demands of integration policies at the national level and local realities (Careja, 2019), the obligation of municipalities to provide essential services to migrants by national policies on integration (Caponio and Pettrachin, 2023) as well as multilevel research related to migration and refugee reception (Glorius et al., 2019; Stürner-Siovitz and Heimann, 2023).

4.5. Interaction

The last theme that strengthens multilevel governance and migration research is interaction. **Figure 26** explains the interaction theme was most discussed in 2022, 2023, 2021, 2019, 2020 and 2018. Almost every year in the last six years, there have been interaction-related discussions. This theme always appears yearly because interaction is the most frequently discussed topic in multilevel governance and migration research.
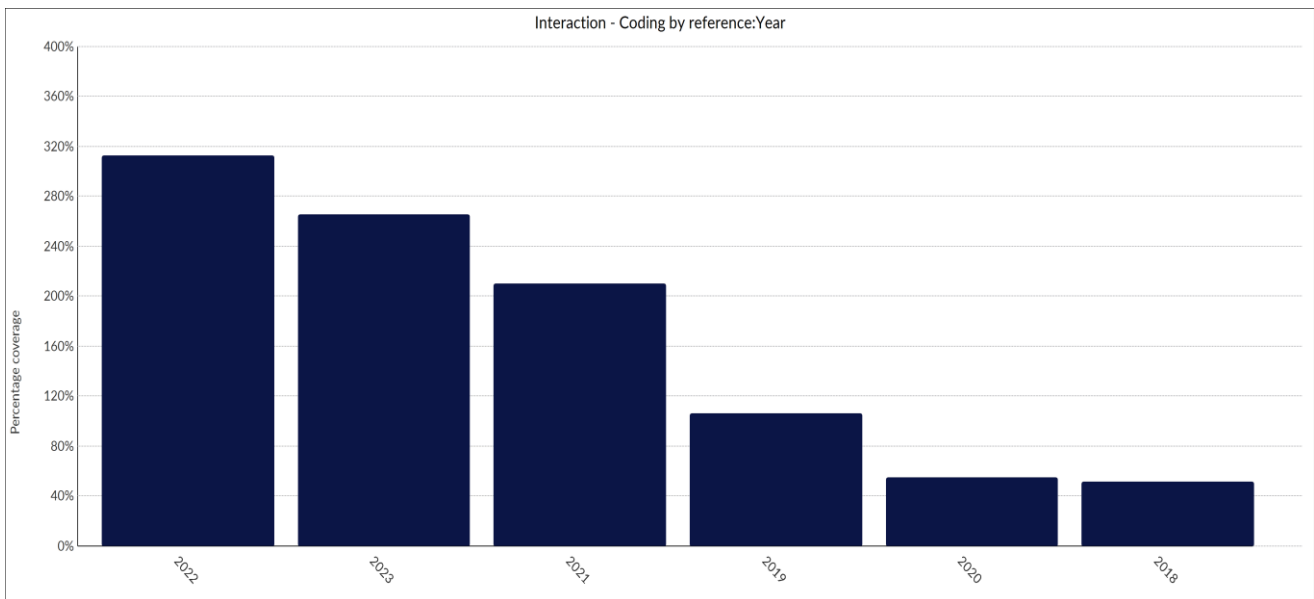

Figure 26. Interaction-coding by reference: year.
The data was processed by researchers using Nvivo 14.

While related to countries, research on interaction has been carried out in several countries such as Italy, Germany, Spain, Austria, West Africa, Canada, Switzerland, Belgium, the Netherlands, France, America, the United Kingdom, Greece, and Saudi Arabia as seen in **Figure 27**.
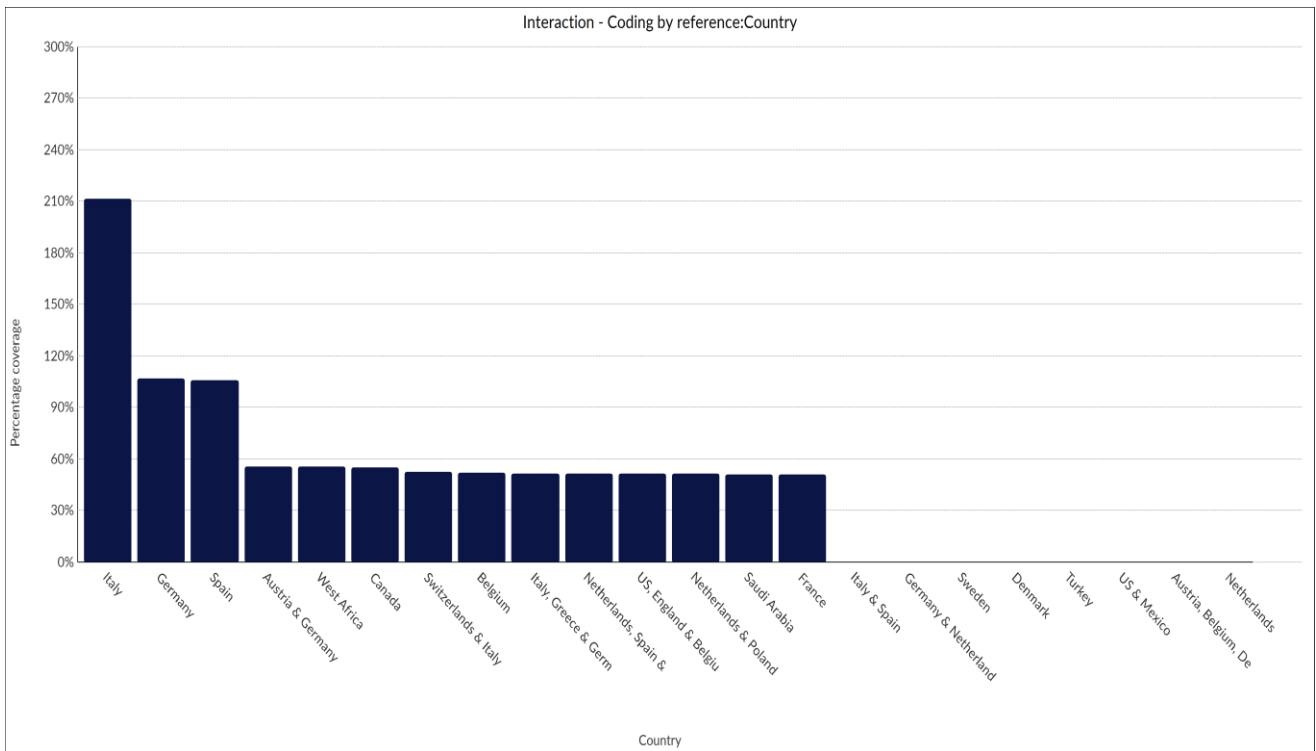
Figure 27. Interaction—coding by reference: country.

The data was processed by researchers using Nvivo 14.

Based on **Figure 28** below, the interaction themes in this study consist of Compliance, Innovation, and Interplay. Meanwhile, compliance consists of cooperation and conflict. Research with the theme of interaction discusses multilevel governance as a framework to describe and reveal how interactions at various levels of government and governance partnerships formulate and implement policies (Auslender, 2022; Blauberger et al., 2023; Bazurli and Campomori, 2022; Bisong, 2018; Caponio, 2021; Garcés-Mascareñas and Gebhardt, 2020; Gunn, 2019; Kuschminder, 2021; Mescoli, 2021; Meijer et al., 2023; Özdemir, 2022; Stürner-Siovitz and Heimann, 2023). Meanwhile, according to Caponio (2018); Caponio and Pettrachin (2023); Stürner-Siovitz and Heimann (2023); city networks can potentially be innovative places for policymaking that go beyond hierarchical relationships while connecting with other cities in migration policy and institutional cooperation.
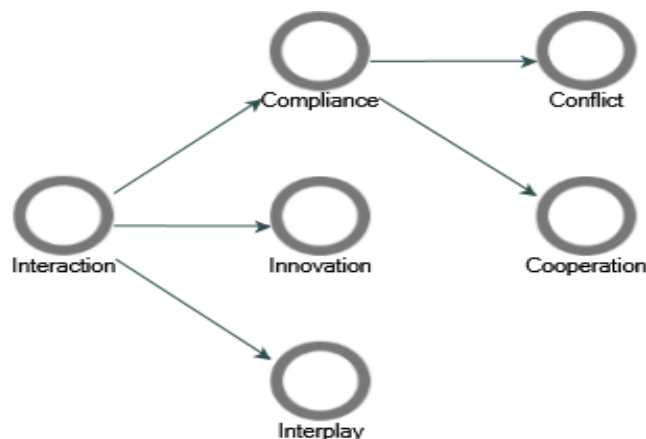

Figure 28. Interaction.

The data was processed by researchers using Nvivo 14.

Research addressing conflict was discussed by Falguerra and Serra (2021); and Garcés-Mascareñas and Gebhardt (2020). Meanwhile, research that discusses cooperation was discussed by Auslender (2022); Bazurli and Campomori (2022); Bisong (2018); Caponio (2021); Meijer et al. (2023); Stürner-Siovitz and Heimann (2023); Bazurli and Kaufmann (2023); Caponio and Pettrachin (2023); Stürner-Siovitz and Heimann (2023); Gunn (2019). Researched innovation conduct by Caponio (2018); Caponio (2022); Mescoli (2021) and Özdemir (2022). Related to the interplay discussed by Auslender (2022); Bisong (2018); Fakhoury (2019); Fourot et al. (2022); Blauberger et al. (2023) and Kuschminder (2021). Based on this study, it is described in **Figure 29** as follows:

Figure 29. Bagan interaction.
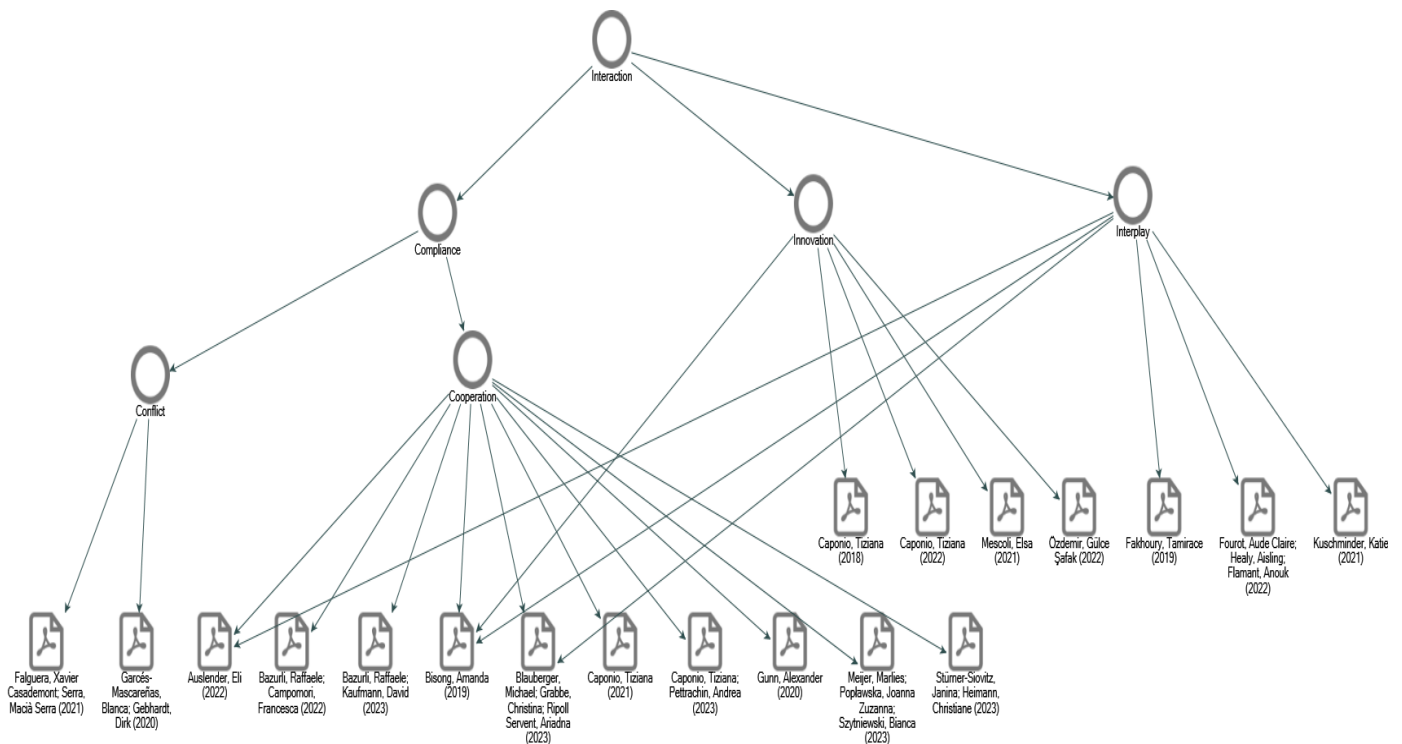
The data was processed by researchers using Nvivo 14.

Based on the research hierarchy, research on interaction currently discusses compliance with the main discussion on cooperation and interplay. Innovation and conflict are also often discussed in research that raises the theme of interaction in multilevel governance and migration research. In detail, it can be seen in **Figure 30** below.
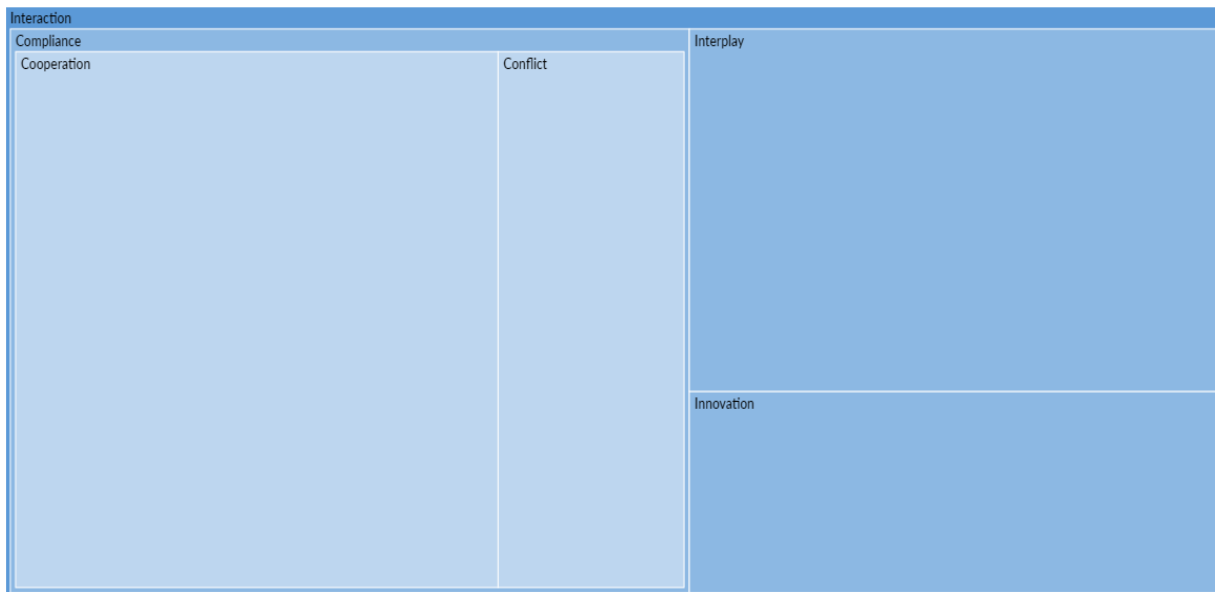
Figure 30. Compared by number coding reference.

Processed by researchers using Nvivo 14.

5. Conclusion

This meta-synthesis brings together multilevel governance and migration research from various perspectives. The review results show that multilevel governance and migration strengthen on themes such as actors, governance, implementation, integration, and interaction. This result is consistent when compared with word similarity analysis in a 500-word word cloud consisting of five characters by producing the ten most dominant words such as policy, local, cities, urban, governance, migration, level, integration, government, and social. This condition shows that multilevel governance and migration research discusses policy, focusing on the local level, related to migration, integration, inter-city networks, governance, government, and social fields. This is similar to the themes that were strengthened in this study. The theme of actors strengthens the role of actors at the local level, followed by the theme of governance regarding multilevel governance and the role of local governments at the local level in multilevel governance. Meanwhile, the most robust implementation theme talks about policy implementation, which aligns with the implementation of migration and refugee policies. Furthermore, the most potent integration theme talks about integration policies, which discusses local integration policies a lot, and the interaction theme, which discusses cooperation, with discussions about cooperation between actors at different levels in multilevel governance.

Multilevel governance exists as a theoretical approach in these 32 articles because handling migrants requires coordination and cooperation between various levels of government (Blauberger et al., 2023; Falguerra and Serra, 2021; Mescoli, 2021; Pipkin, 2022; Stürner-Siovitz and Heimann, 2023; Scholten et al., 2018;), the involvement of various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) actors and civil society actors with state institutions in managing migration issues (Falguerra and Serra, 2021; Hillmann, 2021; Meijer et al., 2023; Mescoli, 2021; Özdemir, 2022; Pipkin, 2022; Polat and Lowndes, 2022), local influence in policy implementation (Aydar, 2022; Bazurli and Campomori, 2022; Emilsson and Öberg, 2022; Özdemir,

2022; Pipkin, 2022; Polat and Lowndes, 2022; Piccoli, 2020;) as well as interaction and coordination between levels of government and horizontal interaction and coordination (Auslender, 2022; Careja, 2019; Emilsson and Öberg, 2022; Fourot et al., 2022; Fakhoury, 2019; Glorius et al., 2019; Gunn, 2019; Hillmann, 2021; Kuschminder, 2021; Scholten et al., 2018; Spencer, 2018). In addition, the multilevel governance approach can also overcome the divergence between national policies and local practices (Aydar, 2022) and the importance of trans and regional institutional cooperation in the network (Bisong, 2018). Multilevel governance broadens understanding of how policies are implemented at different levels and highlights the importance of local actors in addressing migration and integration challenges (Careja, 2019; Fourot et al., 2022; Glorius et al., 2019; Gunn, 2019; Heimann et al., 2022; Kuschminder, 2021; Piccoli, 2020). Multilevel governance also plays a vital role in shaping political inclusion and public policy (Piccoli, 2022). Multilevel governance allows space for policy negotiation, adaptation, and innovation at different levels of government, facilitates the efforts of cities to advocate for and implement a more inclusive approach, and allows for multi-actor involvement in migration and integration governance (Bazurli and Kaufmann, 2023; Caponio, 2018, 2021, 2022; Caponio and Pettrachin, 2023; Garcés-Mascareñas and Gebhardt, 2020).

Further primary research is needed on multilevel governance and migration because this field still needs to be researched, especially if we look at the research on multilevel governance and migration that is still widely carried out in European countries. Research is still scarce in countries outside Europe, especially in Asia.

This meta-synthesis does not show that the strengthening research themes are a reference for the themes researched today. However, further research needs to be carried out by focusing on other countries with different characteristics and regions so that other themes can be found. This study offers insights into the concept of multilevel governance for migration governance in non-European countries, especially developing countries, through more effective inter-level coordination with the establishment of joint committees or special task forces for migration, the importance of involving various stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations, migrant communities, and the private sector in the policymaking and policy implementation process, the use of technology and information systems to collect, analyze data and facilitate coordination, as well as increase the capacity of human resources at every level of government. In addition, it is also necessary to increase government supervision and evaluation in each migration process and policy flexibility by understanding the uniqueness of each region. This study recommends future research directions to examine the adaptation of the concept of multilevel governance in political, social, and cultural contexts in non-European countries that have different characteristics from European countries, analyze the impact of decentralization on the effectiveness of multilevel governance in non-European countries, how public-private sector partnerships in non-European countries, especially developing countries, as well as comparative studies between non-European countries to identify best practices in multilevel governance in the field of migration and contribute to multilevel governance theory.

Author contributions: Conceptualization, RDW, TK and U; methodology, RDW,

TK and U; software, RDW; validation, RDW, TK and U; formal analysis, RDW, TK and U; investigation, RDW, TK and U; resources, RDW; data curation, RDW; writing—original draft preparation, RDW; writing—review and editing, RDW, TK and U; visualization, RDW; supervision, TK and U; project administration, RDW; funding acquisition, RDW. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Conflict of interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

Agranoff, R. (2018). Local governments in multilevel governance: The administrative dimension. Lexington Books. and governance policies in the United States. World Affairs Journal, 2019. https://doi.org/10.1177/0043820019864103

Auslender, E. (2022). Multi-level Governance in Refugee Housing and Integration Policy: a Model of Best Practice in Leverkusen. Journal of International Migration and Integration, 23(3), 949–970. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-021-00876-4

Aydar, Z. (2022). The Life Opportunities of Young Refugees: Understanding the Role, Function and Perceptions of Local Stakeholders. Social Sciences, 11(11), 527. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci11110527

Bazurli, R. (2019). Local Governments and Social Movements in the 'Refugee Crisis': Milan and Barcelona as 'Cities of Welcome.' South European Society and Politics, 24(3), 343–370. https://doi.org/10.1080/13608746.2019.1637598

Bazurli, R., & Campomori, F. (2022). Further to the bottom of the hierarchy: the stratification of forced migrants' welfare rights amid the COVID-19 pandemic in Italy. Citizenship Studies, 26(8), 1091–1116. https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2022.2131073

Bazurli, R., & Kaufmann, D. (2023). Insurgent Asylum Policies in European Cities: A Multi-Level Governance Perspective. Urban Affairs Review, 59(4), 1129–1159. https://doi.org/10.1177/10780874221091594

Bisong, A. (2018). Trans-regional institutional cooperation as multilevel governance: ECOWAS migration policy and the EU. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 45(8), 1294–1309. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183x.2018.1441607

Blauberger, M., Grabbe, C., & Ripoll Servent, A. (2023). EU free movement of people: fully recovered or suffering from long COVID? Journal of European Public Policy, 30(4), 696–720. https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2022.2140818

Caponio, T. (2018). Immigrant integration beyond national policies? Italian cities' participation in European city networks. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 44(12), 2053–2069. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183x.2017.1341711

Caponio, T. (2021). Governing Migration through Multi-Level Governance? City Networks in Europe and the United States*. JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies, 59(6), 1590–1606. https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.13214

Caponio, T. (2022). Scaling migration network governance? City networks and civil society in multilevel policymaking dynamics. Global Networks, 22(3), 397–412. https://doi.org/10.1111/glob.12365

Caponio, T., & Jones-Correa, M. (2017). Theorising migration policy in multilevel states: the multilevel governance perspective. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 44(12), 1995–2010. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183x.2017.1341705

Caponio, T., & Pettrachin, A. (2023). Modes of Migration City Network Mobilization in the EU and US Multilevel Institutional Systems: The Neglected Role of Politics. International Migration Review, 57(4), 1374–1401. https://doi.org/10.1177/01979183221149921

Emilsson, H., & Öberg, K. (2022). Housing for Refugees in Sweden: Top-Down Governance and its Local Reactions. Journal of International Migration and Integration, 23(2), 613–631. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-021-00864-8

Fakhoury, T. (2019). Multi-level governance and migration politics in the Arab world: the case of Syria's displacement. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 45(8), 1310–1326. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183x.2018.1441609

Falguera, X. C., & Serra, M. (2021). Immigrant Integration Policies in Catalonia (1993-2017): Political Frames. Migraciones, 52, 221–247. https://doi.org/10.14422/mig.i52.y2021.008

Fourot, A. C., Healy, A., & Flamant, A. (2022). French participation in transnational migration networks: understanding city (dis)involvement and "passivism." Local Government Studies, 48(6), 1152–1174. https://doi.org/10.1080/03003930.2020.1857246

Garcés-Mascareñas, B., & Gebhardt, D. (2020). Barcelona: municipalist policy entrepreneurship in a centralist refugee reception system. Comparative Migration Studies, 8(1). https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-020-0173-z

Glorius, B., Oesch, L., Nienaber, B., & Doomernik, J. (2019). Refugee Reception Within a Common European Asylum System. Erdkunde. pp. 19–30.

Gunn, A. (2019). Immigration and Integration Policy and the Complexity of Multi-level Governance: A Case Study of British Columbia. Journal of Borderlands Studies, 35(4), 603–618. https://doi.org/10.1080/08865655.2019.1619472

Heimann, C., Gluns, D., & Schammann, H. (2022). Characterising two German city networks: the interplay of internal structure, issue orientation and outreach strategies. Local Government Studies, 48(6), 1091–1112. https://doi.org/10.1080/03003930.2021.1964476

Hillmann, F. (2021). Becoming glocal bureaucrats: mayors, institutions and civil society in smaller cities in Brandenburg during the 'migration crisis', 2015–17. Territory, Politics, Governance, 10(3), 327–345. https://doi.org/10.1080/21622671.2021.1936147

Homsy, G. C., Liu, Z., & Warner, M. E. (2018). Multilevel Governance: Framing the Integration of Top-Down and Bottom-Up Policymaking. International Journal of Public Administration, 42(7), 572–582. https://doi.org/10.1080/01900692.2018.1491597

Hooghe, L., & Marks, G. (2001). Multilevel governance and European integration. Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield.

International Organization for Migration. (2017). The International Migration Report 2017 (Highlights). Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division.

Kuschminder, K. (2021). The Multi-level Governance of Asylum in Italy: Understanding Eritreans' Secondary Movements in Search of Relocation within Italy. Journal of Refugee Studies, 34(1), 285–304. https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fey074

Larrison, J., & Raadschelders, J. C. N. (2020). Understanding Migration: The Case for Public Administration. International Journal of Public Administration, 43(1), 37–48. https://doi.org/10.1080/01900692.2019.1620772

Larrison, J., Raadschelders, J. C. N., & Thapar, A. V. (2019). Refugee migration as wicked problem: Controlling, palliative

Li, H., & Yi, H. (2014). Multilevel governance and deployment of solar PV panels in U.S. cities. Energy Policy, 69, 19–27. doi:10.1016/j.enpol.2014.03.006

McAuliffe, M. and Oucho, L.A. (eds.), 2024. World Migration Report 2024. International Organization for Migration (IOM), Geneva.

Meijer, M., Popławska, J. Z., & Szytniewski, B. (2023). Spaces of Decoupling in the Netherlands and Poland: Emerging Local Governance Networks for Hosting Non-EU Migrants in Peripheral and Shrinking Areas. Journal of International Migration and Integration, 24(S5), 839–862. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-023-01057-1

Mescoli, E. (2021). Multi-Level Governance and Sanctuary Cities: The Case of Liège (Belgium) and Undocumented Migrants. Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies, 19(3), 287–300. https://doi.org/10.1080/15562948.2021.1924413

Methley, A. M., Campbell, S., Chew-Graham, C., et al. (2014). PICO, PICOS and SPIDER: a comparison study of specificity and sensitivity in three search tools for qualitative systematic reviews. BMC Health Services Research, 14(1), 579. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-014-0579-0

Moher, D., Liberati, A., Tetzlaff, J., & Altman, D. G. (2009). Preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses: The PRISMA statement. PLoS Medicine, 6(7), e1000097

Ott, J. S., & Boonyarak, P. (2020). Introduction to the Special Issue International Migration Policies, Practices, and Challenges Facing Governments. International Journal of Public Administration, 43(2), 95–101. https://doi.org/10.1080/01900692.2019.1672188

Özdemir, G. Ş. (2022). Urban solidarity typology: A comparison of European cities since the crisis of refuge in 2015. Cities, 130, 103976. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2022.103976

Panizzon, M., & van Riemsdijk, M. (2019). Introduction to Special issue: 'migration governance in an era of large movements: a multi-level approach.' Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 45(8), 1225–1241. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183x.2018.1441600

Perna, R. (2018). Migrant Health Policies. Actors and Levels in a Multi-Level Perspective. International Migration, 56(5), 11–25. https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12426

Piccoli, L. (2020). Traditions of regional citizenship: Explaining subnational variation of the right to healthcare for undocumented immigrants. Regional Studies, 54(11), 1498–1507. https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2019.1693530

Piccoli, L. (2022). Multilevel strategies of political inclusion: The contestation of voting rights for foreign residents by regional assemblies in Europe. Regional and Federal Studies, 32(3), 331–352. https://doi.org/10.1080/13597566.2021.1921742

Pipkin, S. (2022). Redirecting Leviathan: discovering local room to manoeuvre in US-Mexico border policy. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 48(9), 2268–2284. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183x.2019.1616540

Polat, R. K., & Lowndes, V. (2022). How Does Multi-Level Governance Create Capacity to Address Refugee Needs, and with What Limitations? An Analysis of Municipal Responses to Syrian Refugees in Istanbul. Journal of Refugee Studies, 35(1), 51–73. https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/feab101

Scholten, P. W. A. (2013). Agenda dynamics and the multi-level governance of intractable policy controversies: the case of migrant integration policies in the Netherlands. Policy Sciences, 46(3), 217–236. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11077-012-9170-x

Scholten, P., Engbersen, G., Ostaijen, M. van, & Snel, E. (2018). Multilevel governance from below: how Dutch cities respond to intra-EU mobility. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 44(12), 2011–2033. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183x.2017.1341707

Shivakoti, R., Howlett, M., Fernandez, V., et al. (2019). Governing international regime complexes through multi-level governance mechanisms: lessons from water, forestry and migration policy. International Journal of Water Resources Development, 37(4), 658–675. https://doi.org/10.1080/07900627.2019.1662379

Spencer, S. (2018). Multi-level governance of an intractable policy problem: migrants with irregular status in Europe. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 44(12), 2034–2052. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183x.2017.1341708

Stürner-Siovitz, J., & Heimann, C. (2023). The EU Urban Partnership on Inclusion: Institutionalizing Local–Supranational Integration Governance. International Migration Review, 57(4), 1362–1373. https://doi.org/10.1177/01979183221102419

Thomas, J., & Harden, A. (2008). Methods for the thematic synthesis of qualitative research in systematic reviews. BMC Medical Research Methodology, 8(1), 45. https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2288-8-45

Thouez, C. (2018). Strengthening migration governance: the UN as 'wingman.' Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 45(8), 1242–1257. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183x.2018.1441604

Walsh, D., & Downe, S. (2005). Meta-synthesis method for qualitative research: A literature review. Journal of Advanced Nursing, 50(2), 204–211. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.2005.03380.x

Yeo, J., & Huang, X. (2019). Migration in Public Administration Research: A Systematic Review and Future Directions. International Journal of Public Administration, 43(2), 176–187. https://doi.org/10.1080/01900692.2019.1672731