

## 6. Solidarity contestation in the public domain during the ‘refugee crisis’

**Manlio Cinalli, Olga Eisele, Verena K. Brändle and Hans-Jörg Trenz**

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### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

Of the many crises that Europe faces today, the so-called ‘refugee crisis’ is the one that has a profound impact on the self-understanding of the European Union as a community of values based on the respect of human rights and global solidarity. Historically, Europe has for many centuries been a promoter of values that are held to be universally valid. In this tradition, the European Union (EU) has been built also on a set of fundamental values such as ‘respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights’ (Art. 2 TEU). These values are meant to unite all member states. It is the goal of the European Union to defend and promote them in both its internal and external actions. As we will argue throughout this chapter, the events that led to the so-called refugee crisis in 2015 and 2016 represent a clash of solidarities rather than a lack of solidarity within and across established member states; a clash between our moral and legal obligations towards refugees, and also a clash between nation state relationships and with regard to the moral foundations of our community of states and citizens (Krastev, 2017b).

When the number of refugees and asylum seekers from war zones in Syria increased in summer 2015, positions of EU member states with regard to the question of transnational solidarity and the degree of hospitality that should be granted to incoming refugees varied widely. Greece, together with Italy, as the first entry point to the European Union for most refugees, insisted on fair burden-sharing with the rest of Europe. After a series of dramatic events at Europe’s external borders and on the transit routes through the Balkans, Germany decided to suspend the Dublin Regulation at the end of August 2015 in order to accept asylum applications from refugees travelling from Greece. In turn, this open-door policy was heavily criticised by Denmark and Poland, but supported by France,

which was, however, less affected by the inflow of refugees. Great Britain strengthened its stance against France over the responsibility for refugees in the camps in Calais who maintained hopes of crossing the English Channel. Finally, Switzerland, as a non-EU country, but nonetheless a part of Schengen, also received increasing numbers of refugees from Syria, mainly entering through its southern borders with Italy.

In light of these differences in attitudes of hospitality and divergences in policies of control, security and solidarity, this chapter has a number of main objectives in order to engage fully with public contention about solidarity. In particular, drawing on 'claim-making' (Koopmans and Statham, 1999), we identify the extent to which acts of solidarity towards refugees were granted public awareness and what claims on behalf of or against hospitality towards refugees were made, and by whom. We also examine the discursive construction of European solidarity in terms of its positions and justifications underlying public debate, and how such differences are used in contestations between various allegiances (e.g. proponents and opponents of humanitarian transnational solidarity vs. traditional national solidarities). In addition, we look more specifically into the fault lines that opened up across Europe; in particular, we assess the extent to which national debates followed similar patterns of divisions among governments, political parties and civil society actors, for example in terms of both their positioning vis-à-vis refugees, and the way that these same actors justified (or not) solidarity with refugees.

Overall, our approach in this chapter allows for reconstructing solidarity contestation in the media. Propositions of, and opposition to different solidarity projects are taken as 'claims' that compete for salience in the public domain as represented by the media. As actors of these 'claims', claimants intervene within national public spheres; but their solidarity contestations are carried out across Europe since the decision of one country to open its borders towards refugees potentially affects all the others. What is at stake is the fact that solidarity relationships are not containable within one single country, but need to be re-negotiated between all Europeans. Accordingly, we recollect the general patterns and dynamics of 'claims' in the public sphere during the most intense crisis period between August 2015 and April 2016. By focusing on eight European countries—namely, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Italy, Poland and Switzerland—we control for relevant variations in terms of transnational solidarity with the incoming refugees. While Greece and Italy have insisted on fair burden-sharing with the other EU countries (as they are the first entry point to the European Union for most refugees) other countries such as Denmark and Poland have opposed open-door policies; France has overall supported fair redistribution, but only Germany has taken a

clear stance by suspending the Dublin Regulation so as to accept asylum applications from refugees travelling from Greece. Great Britain has contested with France the responsibility for refugees camping in Calais, while Switzerland, as a Schengen country, has also received increasing numbers of refugees. Through our quantitative analysis of 'claims', we can thus analyse the main protagonists and targets in the public domain, the main concerns expressed, the degree of trans-nationalisation (and Europeanisation) of debates, the various forms which claims took, the favourable or unfavourable positions that claimants had towards refugees, as well as the justifications given for either granting or rejecting solidarity.

## 6.2 SOLIDARITY CONTESTATION IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

Solidarity relationships in modern society are activated through a type of public communication that binds strangers together in a discourse about justice and the common good. This is the classical constellation of the public sphere as it emerged at the end of the eighteenth century. In the public sphere, the moral mechanism of commitment to the concerns of others applies to social relationships established by anonymity and distance (Habermas, 1974). Public discourse is used to communicate and exchange information about the needs of others and the moral obligations and commitments that follow from it from a perspective of social justice. This opens the possibility of communication about experiences of injustice of people who are not present, or who even live at a distance but who are nevertheless included in a discourse of moral commitment and thus recognised as carriers of rights (Brunkhorst, 2005). Such a widening of our horizon of moral commitment relies, however, on the availability of a mediating infrastructure to bring distant events to our attention and make them relevant for us. The solidarity of the public sphere relies in other words on the mass media, which are not just a neutral transmitter of information about what is happening at a distance but also a forum of critique and of normative debate about the interpretation of these events and their relevance for our moral self-understanding (Silverstone, 2006).

The public sphere of the mass media facilitates not only almost instant global dissemination, but also turns information about distant events into news that is discussed by underlying common criteria of relevance (Neidhardt, 1994). The shared world of news is in this sense also a world of shared concern and commitment. Responses to images of the pain of others and their translation in a political language of commitment follows established and institutionalised narratives that structure our

social relationships to strangers and justify our moral stance towards them (Boltanski, 1999). The 'repertoire of justifications' on which we can base our moral commitment is limited and, in itself, can only claim generalised validity through mediated discourse. Solidarity as a discourse follows narrating structures that are held valid over time and across social contexts.

Solidarity as discourse in the public sphere is further linked to particular social positions that become relevant in communication among strangers. There are, first of all, the 'discursive entrepreneurs' who call for or against solidarity, providing the basic information about distant events and the needs of people in distant places. Solidarity and anti-solidarity entrepreneurs are, however, not just those who take a verbal stance about the needs of others but also seek to promote a particular normative stance of benevolence or conflict with these others (Cinalli and Giugni, 2013, 2016a, 2016b). In our study, such discursive entrepreneurs will be approached as public claims-makers who call for or contest solidarity with refugees. In a public sphere of solidarity contestation, there are, secondly, the targets of solidarity, usually particular categories of social actors in need of assistance. The question arises whether these targets are mainly treated as objects, whose needs are defined by others and represented in public discourse or whether they appear in a more active role as subjects with the power to self-define their needs and negotiate the conditions under which they receive assistance. In our study, these targets of solidarity are broadly defined as refugees, but objects of solidarity can also shift, for instance, in the way calls for solidarity with member states (such as Greece) are raised in mastering the crisis. There are, thirdly, media organisations and mediating institutions such as journalism that facilitate flows of information, create the conditions for the selective visibility of the suffering and the needs of others and selectively amplify the calls of solidarity. In our study, we will rely on the news coverage of broadsheet newspapers (quality and tabloid newspapers) as a proxy for solidarity contestation in the national public sphere. And, finally, there are the passive audiences of those who listen to or are addressed by solidarity discourse. In our claims-making approach of solidarity contestation, we can discuss whether such audiences of solidarity discourse are primarily addressed as a national community of citizens, whether reciprocal commitments of a European solidarity community are taken into consideration or whether solidarity discourse raises global responsibilities. In Chapter 7 of this volume, we will further consider selected audience responses on social media commenting sites as contributing to the dynamics of solidarity contestation in the public sphere.

Solidarity in the public sphere remains a contested notion. On the one hand, national media organisations and journalism will often give preference to a nationalist-exclusive framing of solidarity that distinguishes

between insiders and outsiders (Williams and Toula, 2017). In the case of the refugee crisis, especially, we can expect a contentious politics in defence of a nationally exclusive understanding of solidarity against European or global humanitarian commitments (della Porta, 2018). On the other hand, we can expect the media and journalism to defend an ethos of transnational and global solidarity (Brunkhorst, 2007; Calhoun, 2005). In our case, the news coverage of the 'refugee crisis' facilitated not only almost instant global dissemination, but also turned information about distant events into news that was discussed from a European and global perspective. Sharing news about the European 'refugee crisis' is in this sense also a way of sharing concern and commitment.

In tracing these contentious dynamics of solidarity discourse in news media, we build on a specific research design of claims-making that links actors' positions to public justification. Solidarity contestation in the public domain is in this sense represented by the dynamics of claims-making in the media. Media claims are partly related to strategies of agenda-setting of social actors (individuals, political representatives or institutions). As such, they relate to power positions of moral entrepreneurs, who compete for attention in the public arena (Koopmans and Statham, 2010). Media claims are, however, also given selective salience by media actors who filter and frame public discourse in a way to draw the attention of the audience. As such, media claims follow a particular media logic of publicity (Altheide, 2004; Couldry, 2012). In the following, we will account for our method of claims-making as applied to the comparative mapping of solidarity contestation in the public sphere.

### 6.3 THE METHOD OF CLAIMS-MAKING

Our claims-making approach allows for the study of interventions by organised publics in the public domain (Bassoli and Cinalli, 2016; Cinalli and Giugni, 2013, 2016a; Koopmans and Statham, 1999) providing a detailed cross-national overview of solidarity in Europe. Within the public domain, solidarity contestation was carried out by a large plurality of actors, whose claims were made selectively salient in the media: state actors and governments, political parties and powerful elites, as well as corporate actors, pressure groups, and civil society organisations and movements. These different actors competed for attention in the media as a common arena for making public their positions, mutual conflicts, shared agreements, and so forth. While previous research on solidarity in Europe has dealt with the direct interactions between state and civil society actors on the one hand, and the objects of solidarity on the other, our focus is on

mediated relationships and mediated conflicts as they develop in the public domain, including different types of 'publics' that are at the same time the subject and the object of policy-making.

In any large polity—whether consisting of a specific city, a larger region, a national state, or the whole European community—it is impossible for all actors to interact face-to-face with each other. Consequently, they must rely, to a considerable extent, on the media to access the public domain, and be able to contribute to debates by expressing their own opinions, pondering on the pros and cons of different policy choices, or calling for action. This key role of the print media as a forum for public debate and opinion formation is confirmed by the literature on comparative media systems and journalism (Hallin and Mancini, 2004; Pfetsch et al., 2008), which is why we have selected print media as our primary source of analysis. Our argument is that a comprehensive research design dealing with the public domain must allow for examination of the crucial discursive dynamics by which the plurality of claimants intersects with each other. We thus follow the example of a key body of literature that deals with the crucial relationship between different types of actors, their interventions, and the public domain that is available through the various types of media acknowledging the plurality of modes of intervention that may be used (Cinalli and O'Flynn, 2014; Sanders, 1997; Young, 2000). More specifically, we rely on the method of claims analysis so as to capture the main trends of 'claims-making' within the public domain. 'Claims-making' was born in the scholarly field of contentious politics (Koopmans and Statham, 1999), and it consists of retrieving interventions in the public domain on a given issue (or range of issues), drawing from media sources, and most often—also here—newspapers. Hence, claims-making is valuable to study the roles and positions in the public domain of all actors that formulated claims relating to the refugee crisis.

Our unit of analysis is the single claim, which is defined as an intervention, verbal or nonverbal, made in the public domain by any actor in the media (including individuals), which bears relation to the interests, needs or rights of refugees. In the quality of objects of the claims, these include refugees as individuals or as a collective group. Each claim by any actor is characterised by a typical structure, which can be broken down into a number of elements enquiring into the main characteristics of a claim. In particular, our cross-national analysis of print media here deals with six main comparative variables of all claims, including the actor (who makes the claim), the addressee (who is held responsible by the claimant), the issue (what the main concern is), the form (the action through which the claim is inserted in the public domain), the position (whether the claim is unfavourable or favourable to refugees), and the value (how claimants

justify their interventions). The analysis draws on a comparative dataset, stemming from a systematic content analysis of newspapers in each of the countries under study. A complex procedure has been followed to gather the relevant content-analytic data, combining the advantages of automated search and selection of online archives of media contents with the qualitative detail allowed by human coding as detailed below.

In the first step, a representative number of national newspapers were selected (available online through sources such as LexisNexis and Factiva). The choice of these newspapers followed from the need to ensure, as far as possible, a representative and unbiased sample. Thus, we included both quality newspapers and more tabloid-oriented newspapers, while at the same time considering newspapers from different political orientations as well as more neutral ones.<sup>1</sup> All articles containing any of the two words refugee (and its derivatives) and asylum were selected and coded, to the extent that they referred to the current 'refugee crisis'. We created a comparative dataset by coding about 700 claims per country pertaining to transnational solidarity over the 'refugee crisis' between 1 August 2015 and 30 April 2016 from a systematic random sample of articles (for a total sample of 5,948 claims). We considered all articles which reported political decisions, verbal statements, direct solidarity action or protest actions on a number of themes that refer explicitly or obviously to the 'refugee crisis'. Claims concerning the activities of actors who claimed to be victims of the 'refugee crisis' were also coded. We coded all claims taking place in one of the analysed countries, or addressing actors from these countries. Claims were also studied if they were made by or addressed to a supranational actor of which one of our countries of coding is a member (e.g. the UN, the EU, the UNHCR), under the condition that the claim was substantively relevant for any of our countries.

The definition of the claim as the unit of analysis, rather than the article or the single statement, has two implications. First, an article can report several claims. Second, a claim can be made up of several statements or actions. Statements or actions by different actors were considered to be part of a single claim if they took place at the same time (on the same day), place (in the same locality), and if the actors could be assumed to act in concert (i.e. they are considered as strategic allies); simply put, in our coding, claims have a unity of time and place. At the same time, only articles from news sections were coded, meaning that other genres, such as sport sections, editorials, or letters, were excluded. In so doing, we excluded simple attributions of attitudes or opinions to actors by the print media since our main focus, in fact, was on the claims of the actors themselves.

#### 6.4 EUROPEANISATION/POLARISATION OF SOLIDARITY CONTESTATION IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

By engaging in a cross-national overview of claims in the print media, we take the 'refugee crisis' as a field of public contestation that can tell us more about where Europe stands in terms of its union and divisions. We start by considering the diachronic development of claim-making in order to assess the extent to which claims follow (or do not) a similar cross-national pattern over time. Hence, we appraise whether potential matching across countries can be related to variations of grievance-based factors such as the number of asylum applicants. In fact, given some crucial cross-national similarities in terms of asylum-seeking (Harcup and O'Neill, 2016; O'Neill and Harcup, 2009), it is unlikely to find strong cross-national variations in terms of whole volumes of claims-making. We also consider the potential impact of other domestic-based factors given that any disruption of societal routines opens up political space for many actors who are willing to redefine issues, policy reforms, and gain advantage on opponents (Boin et al., 2009: 82). In doing so, we engage with a long-standing tradition of scholarly debate that opposes grievance and opportunity theories in the field of contentious politics. If, on the one hand, we wonder whether grievance-based potential for conflict has a positive impact on claims, we are only too aware that other scholars have, contrastingly, argued that grievances do not necessarily lead to claims-making (Kriesi, 2004; Meyer, 2004). Under this viewpoint, given the nature of the 'refugee crisis' and its transnational implications, the main ambition is to enquire into the relationship between Europeanisation and re-nationalisation of solidarity contestations beyond an initial appraisal of similarities of debates across countries in terms of attention cycles.

Our engagement with Europeanisation vs. polarisation continues by appraising three main variables of claims which our codebook has scored directly in terms of their variations across the national/transnational scope, namely, the actor, the addressee, and the issue. The variable actor is especially useful for assessing the visibility of different claimants in the public domain, paying particular attention to the presence of national and supranational actors, respectively. The crucial role of the 'refugee crisis' for imposing some primary definers of debate against the others is evident when distinguishing between national and transnational actors, respectively. Obviously, the securitising and nationalisation twists suggest the likely hegemony of national actors among the primary definers in the public domain; by contrast, a more supranational view of a European people that discuss matters of common interest predicts some very high



cross-national visibility of supranational actors in the public domain. We are also interested in appraising whether political actors in particular are still maintaining their inherent news value allowing for their more extensive coverage (Koopmans and Statham, 2010; Tresch, 2009), or if the 'refugee crisis' is instead opening up more space for the intervention of other actors, such as, for example, advocacy groups challenging established policies or other potential claimants of change (Boin et al., 2009: 82). In addition, the specific salience of claims by civil society actors gives a more refined understanding of how much centrality the state is still holding in the refugee field through different types of actors.

Afterwards, the same analysis can be repeated for the variable addressee, the main actor who is held explicitly responsible for acting with regard to the claim, or at whom the claim is explicitly addressed as a call to act. In particular, the two variables, actor and addressee, can be intersected in the discussion so as to have a more detailed view of cross-national variations of the public domain between the two polar configurations of nationalisation, whereby the field is dominated by national actors addressing other national actors, and supranationalism, whereby the field is dominated by supranational actors addressing supranational addressees (Balme and Chabanet, 2008; della Porta and Caiani, 2007). In the same vein, our codebook also scores the variable 'issue' in terms of national/supranational variations: in particular, we can rely on some specific issues such as a refugee quota or border controls that would indicate the importance of European policy-making through the strengthening of a national focus on European topics (Boomgaarden et al., 2013; Brüggemann and Kleinen-von Königslöw, 2009; Kleinen-von Königslöw, 2012).

Finally, we focus on three main variables, namely form, posit and frame. The variable 'form' refers to the type of action that claimants use to enter the public domain, distinguishing between repressive measures (policing, courts' ruling, etc.), political decisions (law, governmental guideline, implementation measure, etc.), verbal statements (public speech, press conference, parliamentary intervention, etc.), protest actions (demonstration, occupation, violent action, etc.), humanitarian aid, and solidarity action (the latter as a direct act of providing help/assistance to others in need of support). In this case, it seems highly relevant to understand whether the 'refugee crisis' has transformed into a typical contentious field of European politics, or rather stands out as a more heterogeneous field where protests do not take over a larger variety of *repertoires* (Tarrow, 1994; Tilly, 1978).

The variable 'posit' is useful for checking for cross-national and longitudinal increases of favourable/unfavourable positions vis-à-vis refugees. In addition, this variable is valuable to appraise whether anti-refugee

claims-making is driven by salient divides about solidarity towards refugees, or instead whether media debates do converge on issues and positions about solidarity. In this case, we expect national debates to follow similar dividing lines to governments, political parties and civil society actors, especially when considering the favourable or unfavourable position of their claims vis-à-vis refugees. An assessment of polarising trends between favourable and unfavourable claims within the overall debate, also adds further understanding about the degree of contentiousness in the field, for example, allowing us to discuss the 'backlash thesis' and the relationship between conflict and coverage (Boin et al., 2005; Boomgaarden et al., 2013; Heath, 2010; Van der Pas and Vliegenthart, 2016). Our last variable 'value' considers how different actors justify their opposing views on questions regarding solidarity with refugees. By connecting the positionality of claimants towards refugees with their justifications, i.e. criss-crossing 'value' with 'posit', our analysis aims to understand how, and to what extent the humanitarian aspects of the 'refugee crisis' become visible. Most crucially, however, does the analysis of the variable 'value' allow for a closer look at the core idea of whether solidarity contestations may be driven by a new divide replacing traditional ideological cleavages, and that juxtaposes the so-called communitarians with cosmopolitans in unmistakable terms?

## 6.5 EUROPEANISATION AND DIACHRONIC DYNAMICS

Starting with our research question on Europeanisation, an analysis of longitudinal dynamics is crucial to evaluate whether solidarity debates are nationally confined—leading us to expect a low degree of overlap between attention cycles across countries—or whether attention cycles do peak cross-nationally at the same time. By tracing dynamics of solidarity contestation over time, we can thus detect a Europeanised public debate with similar attention cycles across countries, or alternatively, a re-nationalisation in how Europe discusses the 'refugee crisis' in each country distinctly. Figure 6.1 shows that Europe's claims-making landscape stands out for a quite regular distribution over time of the total number of articles retrieved cross-nationally. In particular, the months of September and January mark frequency peaks in covering the 'refugee crisis' across Europe, thereby matching the main calendar of important events in the field. The 'refugee crisis' was particularly salient in September 2015 given that the EU ministers voted on the EU Commission's plan to redistribute 160,000 refugees across EU member states. Salience has a second cross-national peak in the following months, December to January, though in

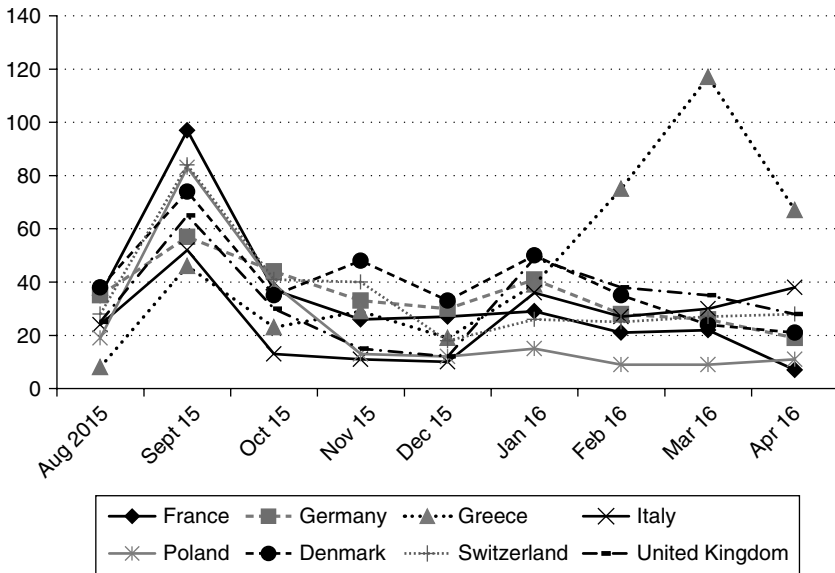


Figure 6.1 Total number of articles over sample time period

this case, salience seems to follow more specific national dynamics, for example owing to the traumatic experience of terrorism in France, or the contentious jewellery law in Denmark.

Greece is the only national case that departs from this ubiquitous trend, given that the increase of claims in January continues in the following months by contrast with the decreasing trend in all other countries, reaching a peak in March which is unparalleled throughout the whole period and across all countries. In fact, the first three months of 2016 were extremely important in Greece because there was a series of events, political decisions and debates which strengthened the 'refugee crisis' in the public discourse much more than in any other country. Briefly, these took the form of debates about the expulsion of Greece from the Schengen area, the closure of the Balkan route between Greece and Austria, and especially the EU–Turkey agreement on curbing large numbers of refugees arriving in Europe. Once again then, this finding underlines the potential re-appropriation of the transnational 'refugee crisis' that each national state performed from the end of autumn 2015 onwards, in a way to fit the domestic dynamics of its own national politics. Simply put, our main argument is that the two peaks of September 2015 and January 2016 are profoundly different: the 'refugee crisis' had a common supranational momentum in September 2015, which was lost in the re-nationalisation of the public domain in the

following months, thereby triggering national claims-making on follow-up events or political decisions by national governments.

The frequency distribution of the sampled claims in Figure 6.2 confirms the existence of the supranational momentum of September 2015. With a peak in September 2015, European claims-making decreased in the following months, but then increased again in a new (minor) peak at the beginning of 2016. Once again, we find that, in contrast with trends in other countries, claims in Greece continue to increase throughout the first trimester of 2016, reaching the highest peak only in March (though this peak in terms of claims-making is lower than the peak for articles in Figure 6.1).

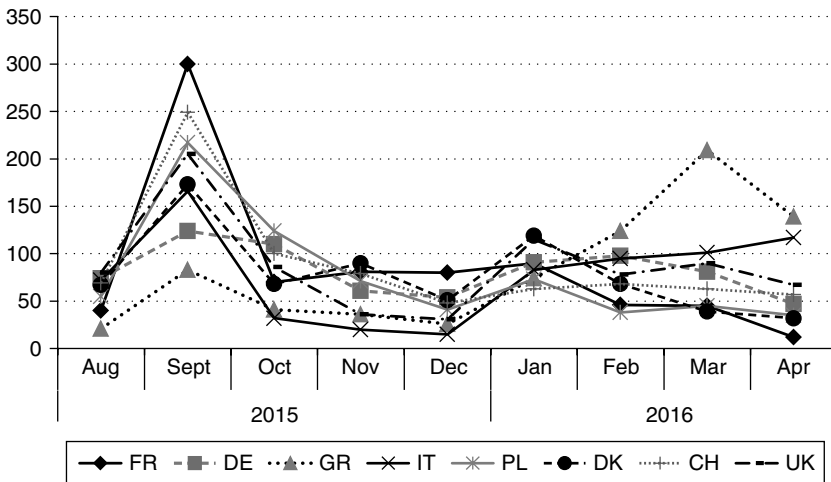
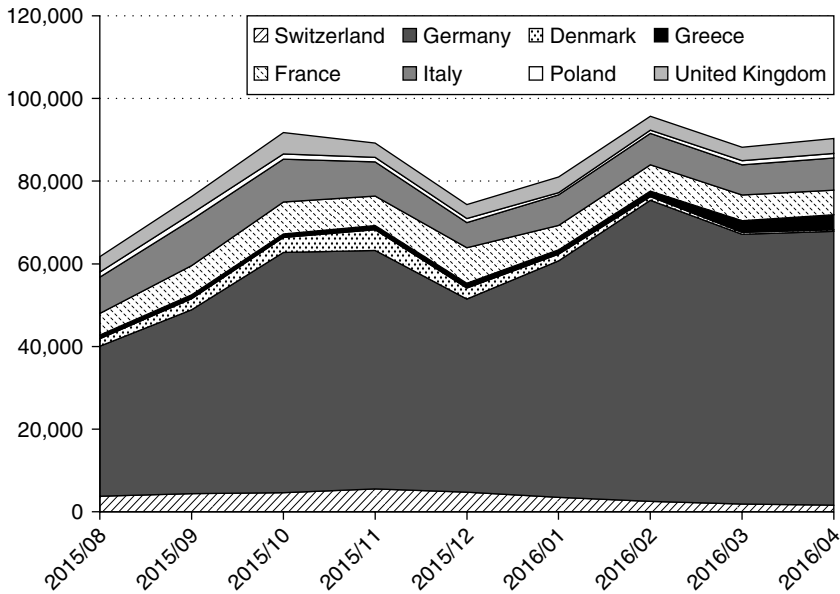


Figure 6.2 Total number of claims over sample time period

As stated previously, a crucial analysis consists of matching this consistent diachronic trend across both articles and claims with the variation of a main grievance-based factor, such as the number of asylum applicants. This is based on the assumption that higher numbers of asylum applicants also imply their higher visibility; thus, the higher numbers of asylum seekers stand for stronger feelings over refugees, thereby potentially leading to more claims and media coverage in general. By contrast, lower numbers of asylum seekers are expected to translate into low levels of claims and media coverage in general. Figure 6.3 shows numbers of first-time asylum applicants. It confirms the existence of very similar patterns of asylum-seeking across the eight countries, which in turn fits the expectation that a similar diachronic pattern should be found across them in terms of both articles and claims. Yet, while we have already noticed the existence of a



*Figure 6.3* Number of first-time asylum applicants during the 'refugee crisis'

similar diachronic pattern in terms of articles and claims, this hardly follows the same chronology of asylum requests in Figure 6.3. In particular, we can detect two peaks, but these peaks have a more gentle slope than in Figures 6.1 and 6.2, following, rather than anticipating, the two peaks that were found in the analysis of the public domain. In other words, discursive dynamics in the public sphere follow their own logics, having to do more with the strategic posture and claim-making capacity of actors in the field rather than objective grievances.

## 6.6 PRIMARY DEFINERS, TARGETS AND CONCERN OF CLAIMS

A detailed enquiry into Europeanisation can be expanded by the analysis of claims-makers as the primary definers of the 'refugee crisis' in the public domain. Accordingly, Table 6.1 shows the cross-national distribution of claims when looking at the main claimants, answering the simple question "Who makes the claim?". Findings are provided so as to distinguish the main actors of decision-making, such as the state and political parties, civil society groups and organisations of different kinds,<sup>2</sup> individual citizens,

Table 6.1 *Actors of claims by country (percentages)*

	State actors and political parties	Civil society groups/ collectives	Individual citizens/ activists	Supranational actors	Unknown	Total (absolute numbers)
FR	64	23.2	6.4	6.4	0	100 (764)
DE	63.5	15.8	13.5	7.2	0	100 (740)
GR	63.1	20.6	5.6	10.5	0.2	100 (753)
IT	64.5	21.4	6	8	0.1	100 (701)
PL	58.8	26.9	7.9	6	0.4	100 (699)
DK	57.7	22.9	9.8	9.6	0	100 (707)
CH	62.7	20.4	5.4	10.8	0.7	100 (796)
UK	62.3	20.9	5.1	11.7	0	100 (788)
Total	62.1	21.5	7.4	8.8	0.2	100.0 (5948)

and lastly, supranational actors in their role as major stakeholders in the public debate over the 'refugee crisis'.

The cross-national comparison of figures (see Table 6.1) shows that state actors and political parties had the lion's share in all countries, with very little variation existing between countries with the highest (Italy) and the lowest (Denmark) percentages, respectively. The low cross-national variation is confirmed when dealing with civil society groups. With the exception of Germany, which stands out for a very low score of 15.8%, all other percentages varied between 20.4% for Switzerland and 26.9% for Poland. This relatively high salience of civil society further shows that the domestic debate was not state- and government-driven, but that many other groups, such as trade unions, advocacy groups and human rights organisations took part in the debate. Some larger cross-national variations can be noticed when dealing with individual citizens and activists since we can detect at least two poles of lower (Great Britain, Switzerland and Greece) and higher presence (Germany), respectively. However, most crucially for our argument, cross-national variation is evident when focusing on supranational actors. In this case, percentages doubled when moving from the lowest presence of supranational actors in Poland (6%) to the highest presence of supranational actors in Great Britain (almost 12%).

In spite of a dominance by state actors as main protagonists in the field, overall results seem to suggest that there is a wide distribution of voices across different categories of actors (even though voices are distributed unequally over different actor categories), which shows that refugee solidarity debate was quite plural and with no ultimate monopoly of single actors. Even if visibility of political parties varied across countries, the

share of state actors and parties was similar across countries. The same can be said about civil society in general, that is to say, regardless of specific distinctions made within this category. The proportions between state actors and parties on the one hand, and civil society on the other, are also useful when focusing on national specificities; thus, the true force behind the more generous stand that Germany took vis-à-vis the other European countries seems to originate particularly in the direct relationship between policy actors and individual citizens, with only a minor role left for client politics (Freeman, 1995, 1998). However, overall comparative findings are sufficient to indicate that supranationalism followed a different trend across countries, which is consistent with the idea that the European momentum of the first peak in Figures 6.1 and 6.2 was lost in the following months, while the second peak in the same figures may be due to the process of re-nationalisation of narratives within the public domain of various countries.

Moving on to the analysis of the addressee, Table 6.2 shows the cross-national distribution of claims when answering the question “Who is held responsible with regard to the claim?”. Once again, findings are provided so as to distinguish the main actors/decision-makers, such as parties and the state, civil society groups and organisations of different kinds, individual citizens, and, lastly, supranational actors in their role as major stakeholders, hence a very likely target to be addressed by other actors.

The first overall finding is that only a minor percentage of claimants explicitly addressed another actor when intervening in the public domain. However, when focusing on the analysis of valid cases (almost a quarter of

*Table 6.2 Addressees of claims about the refugee crisis by country (percentages)*

	State and political party	Civil society groups/collectives	Individual citizens/activists	Supranational actors (EU and UN)	No actor or unknown	Total (absolute numbers)
FR	9.3	1.8	1.2	3.7	84.0	100.0 (764)
DE	9.2	0.9	0.7	1.9	87.3	100.0 (740)
GR	19.1	10.4	2.0	6.1	62.4	100.0 (753)
IT	12.7	5.8	1.9	3.9	75.7	100.0 (701)
PL	20.2	5.2	4.6	2.3	67.8	100.0 (699)
DK	15.7	2.7	1.1	4.4	76.1	100.0 (707)
CH	17.5	1.1	3.5	4.3	73.6	100.0 (796)
UK	14.8	1.8	0.8	3.2	79.4	100.0 (788)
Total	14.8	3.7	2.0	3.7	75.9	100.0 (5948)

the whole sample) we find that state actors and political parties are, once again, dominant across all countries. In this case, some higher variation distinguished countries with the lowest addressing of state and parties on the one hand (France and Germany), and countries with the most extensive addressing of state and parties on the other (Poland and Greece). In addition, this difference between the two poles of the most- and the least-addressed, respectively, is somewhat confirmed when dealing with civil society groups, for example considering that they are scarcely addressed in Germany, but extensively addressed in Greece.

Most crucially for our argument, cross-national variation is once again evident when focusing on supranational actors. In this case, percentages more than tripled when moving from the lowest presence of supranational actors as an addressee in Germany (under 2%) to the highest presence of supranational actors in Greece (over 6%), while scoring differently in each other country along the continuum between one pole and the other. Emphasis should be put on the fact that countries which played a minor role in the 'refugee crisis' were not necessarily indifferent to discussing and detecting responsibilities at the supranational level, while countries with a major role were not necessarily interested in detecting responsibilities at the supranational level (cf. the low percentage of Germany when compared to France, controlling for a similar number of valid cases). So overall, the data fit the idea that national specificities may have prevailed in the long run, having lost the driving potential of the supranational momentum of September 2015.

With regard to the analysis of the issue, Table 6.3 shows the cross-national distribution of claims when answering the question "What is the

*Table 6.3 Issues of claims about the 'refugee crisis' by country (percentages)*

	Migration management	Integration	Background of refugees	Consequences of refugee crisis	Public/civic initiatives	Total (absolute numbers)
FR	64.9	5.2	10.9	11.9	7.1	100.0 (764)
DE	49.9	8	12.3	16.2	13.6	100.0 (740)
GR	66.1	2.9	11.6	11	8.4	100.0 (753)
IT	65.5	2.6	15.4	7.1	9.4	100.0 (701)
PL	62.4	4	10.6	9.9	13.1	100.0 (699)
DK	66.5	8.9	7.6	7.8	9.2	100.0 (707)
CH	66.1	4.2	8.4	6	15.3	100.0 (796)
UK	68.1	3.2	15.9	8.6	4.2	100.0 (788)
Grand Total	63.7	4.9	11.6	9.8	10	100.0 (5948)



main concern about?"'. Findings are provided to help distinguish among a number of major issues that were in the public domain cross-nationally, namely, migration management, integration, the background of refugees, consequences of the 'refugee crisis', and public/civic initiatives. Overall, data show that the debate in Europe about the 'refugee crisis' focused in particular on migration management. This is consistent with both a national and overall supranational fit, given the ubiquitous contestation over borders in almost all countries, as well as for the direct engagement of the EU in the formulation of the refugee quota scheme. Yet, national specificities are once again present when focusing on other dominant issues after migration management. The concern about integration was especially prevalent in Denmark; the concern about the background of refugees was especially prevalent in Great Britain; the concern about the consequences of the 'refugee crisis' was especially prevalent in Germany; the concern about public/civic initiatives was especially prevalent in Switzerland. Simply put, overall findings once again fit the idea of a specific re-appropriation of the refugee crisis in each country, in spite of a strong overall supranational framework.

## 6.7 SOLIDARITY DIVIDES ACROSS COUNTRIES: FORM, POSITIONALITY AND JUSTIFICATION OF CLAIMS

A key aspect to consider when focusing on solidarity contestations in the public domain refers to the analysis of forms of political intervention, in line with seminal literature debate over repertoires within the scholarship field of contentious politics (Tilly, 1978). Accordingly, Table 6.4 provides data on forms of mobilisation by answering the question "By which action is the claim inserted in the public domain?". In this case, our systematic analysis refers to all potential forms of action over the 'refugee crisis', such as purely verbal statements (including public statements, press releases, publications, and interviews), protest actions (including forms such as demonstrations and political violence), humanitarian aid (including solidarity mobilisations), direct solidarity (including the provision of help and assistance to others in need of support) as well as other forms of intervention that were the prerogative of state and policy actors such as political decisions and repression. The hegemony of verbal statements is just one expected finding given the intense debate over the 'refugee crisis' spreading throughout Europe. Yet, beyond this homogeneous result, we find once again some crucial evidence for emphasising national specificities.

In particular, an elites-based and state-centric approach in France, Denmark and Switzerland translated into an extensive presence of political

*Table 6.4 Forms of claims about the refugee crisis by country in percentages*

	Political decisions	Direct solidarity	Humanitarian aid	Protest actions	Repressive actions	Verbal statements	Unknown	Total (abs. numbers)
FR	20.5	7.5	2.0	8.9	0.9	59.9	0.3	100.0 (764)
DE	10.7	9.2	1.8	10.4	0.5	67.4	0.0	100.0 (740)
GR	12.7	6.2	2.9	13.9	2.3	61.9	0.0	100.0 (753)
IT	15.3	3.7	1.9	12.7	5.0	61.5	0.0	100.0 (701)
PL	11.2	3.7	2.4	9.8	0.6	72.2	0.0	100.0 (699)
DK	18.0	3.8	3.3	8.1	2.3	64.6	0.0	100.0 (707)
CH	21.6	6.3	2.0	9.7	2.8	57.7	0.0	100.0 (796)
UK	15.5	1.8	1.6	9.4	1.3	70.4	0.0	100.0 (788)
Grand Total	15.8	5.3	2.2	10.4	1.9	64.4	0.0	100.0 (5948)

decisions. Political decisions were less extensive in more crisis-laden countries such as Germany, Greece and Italy; these latter countries, by contrast, stood out as the ones with the highest percentages of protest action. While we find no relevant cross-national differences in terms of humanitarian aid, we do find some substantial variation across countries when dealing with the delivery of direct solidarity; in particular, countries covered variable positions across the two poles of high solidarity in Germany on the one hand, and low solidarity in Great Britain on the other. Overall then, findings suggest that the 'refugee crisis' did not become a typical contentious field of European politics, or rather, only a few countries have witnessed this. By contrast, we observe a more heterogeneous field cross-nationally, where protest did not dominate over a larger variety of national-specific repertoires.

Another key aspect to consider when focusing on solidarity contestations in the public domain is the question "How do different actors position themselves towards the question of refugee solidarity?". With regard to the overall position towards refugees as our object of solidarity, findings in Table 6.5 suggest that all countries were strongly divided about the question of refugee solidarity. Public claims-makers were generally disposed to granting solidarity to refugees with a slight majority of positive (39.7%) over negative voices (35.7%) (see Table 6.7). 24.6% of the claims were neutral or ambivalent. This somewhat even distribution between pro- and anti-solidarity claims in the media indicates a rather balanced coverage of different political opinions in all countries, but also underlines the lack of agreement among claimants regarding the question of how Europe should treat its refugees. In this case, data do suggest a relatively high degree of contestation given that positive and negative claims were more dominant, i.e. opinionated claims made up 75.4% of the claims (as opposed to 24.6% of neutral or ambivalent claims).

*Table 6.5 Positions across countries in percentages*

	Negative	Neutral/ambivalent	Positive	Total (Abs. Numbers)
FR	31.8	29.6	38.6	100.0 (764)
DE	29.6	31.8	38.6	100.0 (740)
GR	42.1	14.9	43.0	100.0 (753)
IT	30.2	29.4	40.4	100.0 (701)
PL	34.3	30.2	35.5	100.0 (699)
DK	40.0	19.9	40.0	100.0 (707)
CH	33.2	19.3	47.5	100.0 (796)
UK	43.7	22.8	33.5	100.0 (788)
Total	35.7	24.6	39.7	100.0 (5948)

Table 6.6 Positionality across claimant types

Positionality	Percentages	Absolute Numbers
Negative	35.7	2122
State and political party actors	26.2	1560
Civil society groups/collectives	4.6	276
Individual citizens/activists	2.9	173
Supranational actors	1.8	107
No actor or unknown	0.1	6
Neutral/ambivalent	24.6	1465
State and political party actors	16.9	1007
Civil society groups/collectives	3.6	215
Individual citizens/activists	0.6	35
Supranational actors	3.5	206
No actor or unknown	0.0	2
Positive	39.7	2361
State and political party actors	19.0	1128
Civil society groups/collectives	13.2	785
Individual citizens/activists	3.9	232
Supranational actors	3.6	212
No actor or unknown	0.1	4
Grand Total	100.0	5948

When zooming in more closely to observe the different countries of Table 6.6, we find the lowest level of neutral claims, and thus the highest level of solidarity contestation, in Greece, arguably the one country in the sample which was affected the most by huge numbers of refugees landing on its coasts. With less than 20% of neutral claims, Denmark and Switzerland also show a high degree of contestation, most likely as a result of polarised politics among decision-makers (cf. the high percentage of political decisions in Table 6.4). Positions seem rather evenly distributed in Polish, French, German and Italian claims, but more positive overall for the latter three mentioned, while Great Britain stands out for being the only case where negative claims outweigh the positive ones. Overall, then, positions seem to be covered rather evenly in the media, often (slightly) more positive, with the exception of Great Britain, where claims in the three largest newspapers were more often anti-solidarity claims. Nevertheless, findings in Figure 6.4 suggest that differences were not that big: average positionality ranges were between *c.* 0.15 and -0.10. The use of a very small interval scale in Figure 6.4, however, allows for capturing cross-national differences, no matter how small they are.

As discussed already, state and political actors were the most dominant

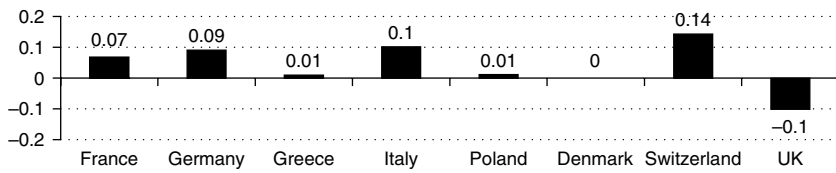


Figure 6.4 Average positionality towards refugees per country

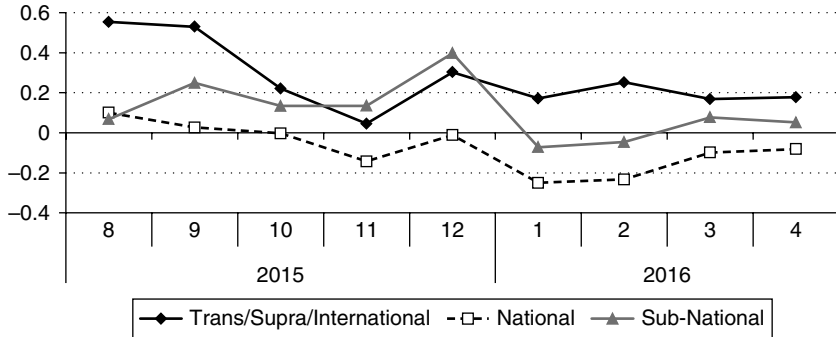


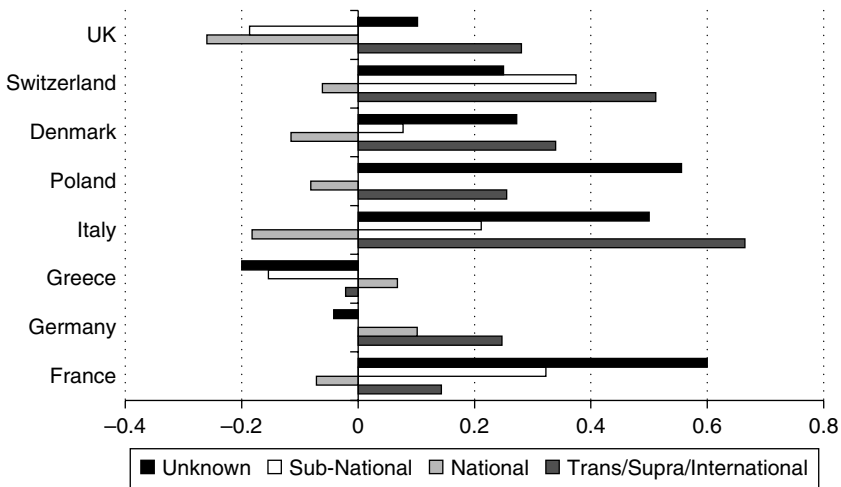
Figure 6.5 Average position of actors by scope across all countries over time

claimants. This is, in itself, not a surprising finding since political actors tend to be the most dominant in the public space in general (e.g. Tresch, 2009). However, when dealing with positionality, findings in Table 6.6 show that state and political actors were particularly visible with negative claims where 26.2% of the negative stances towards refugees were expressed by them—as opposed to 4.6% by civil society groups and collective actors. State and political actors also led the field in positive (19%) and neutral claims (16.9%), yet, negative claims were more prominent. Overall, our claims analysis neatly pictures the political contestation over how to treat refugees—not only between political actors and the more positive claimants from civil society, but also among the different categories of state and political party actors.

In terms of the Europeanisation of solidarity contestation during the refugee crisis, one way to understand it is to look at the positionality of actors with different scope. Here, when pooled across countries, Figure 6.5 shows quite clearly that actors were on average the most negative when they had a national scope, whereas claimants with a scope beyond or below the national context were substantially more positive throughout the whole time. This seems to match the specific divisive nature of electoral

politics at the national level, which has in fact led to the further rising of the extreme right in many European countries. By contrast, sub-national and EU politics follow quite different dynamics, as they are often inspired by the common search for bipartisan solutions to concrete issues (the subnational level) or by the formation of consensus among different national perspectives. More broadly, as stated, this trend mirrors the division between national governments looking for electoral support on the one hand, and the EU on the other: the EU actors, favouring a European solution based on universal human rights, found themselves in opposition to national governments refusing to comply with EU resettlement schemes. However, the average positionality of claims seems to follow similar trends across different scopes. This suggests that events like the Paris attacks in November 2015 and the sexual assaults in Cologne over New Year in 2016 influenced the discourse about solidarity with refugees towards the negative (though the trend is less pronounced for transnational actors).

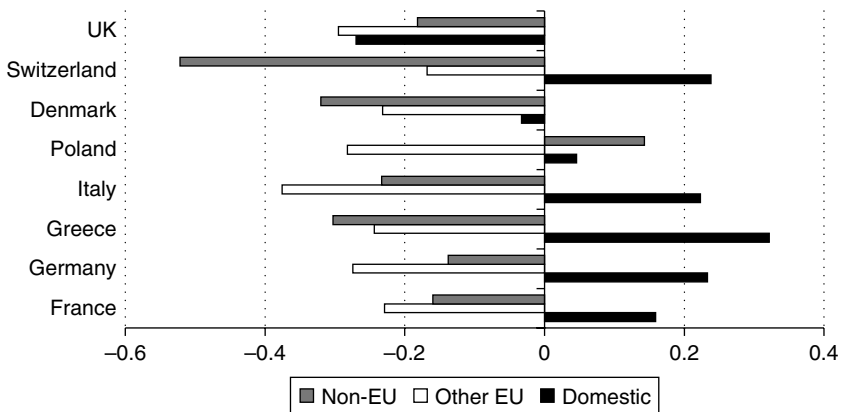
Looking into the average positionality of actors of different scopes by country reveals some remarkable differences. Figure 6.6 shows that Germany and Greece, for example, are the two countries in the sample where actors of national scope had, on average, made more positive claims about refugees, whereas in all other countries, national scope equalled negative tonality. Germany stands out for the closest gap in positionality between the domestic and the European level, not surprisingly so given its leadership in Europe and the relatively scarce role that the supranational cleavage plays in its electoral politics. A close gap can also be observed in Greece, yet this



*Figure 6.6 Average positionality of claimants by country/scope*

latter stands out in particular when looking into the positionality of actors with a larger than national scope. Greece is the country in the sample with the most negative claims put forward by trans-, supra- or international actors, possibly owing to their usual way of portraying European actors for their problem-bringing, rather than problem-solving, capacity since the beginning of the debt crisis in 2008. Overall, solidarity claims in Greece seem to follow an opposite dynamic in terms of positionality and scope when compared to most of the other countries in our sample. As regards these latter, we have already referred to the divisive nature of their national politics, with the instrumental position that the extreme right takes against EU institutions for maximising electoral results.

The overwhelming majority of claims were made by actors with a national scope. However, this does not shed light on potential divisions between different nationalities. Zooming in on the national category of actor scopes, again, reveals interesting differences between countries. First of all, nationalities could not be identified for the main claimant in around 15% of cases. Going back to the example of Greece, Figure 6.7 shows that Greek actors were responsible for the overall positive positionality of claims, while actors with other nationalities were negative on average. The same was true for all countries except Great Britain and Denmark, where all types of national-scope claimants were negative on average. Claimants with a national scope and nationalities from other European countries made more negative claims in all countries. Regarding non-EU nationalities, Poland was the only country in which such actors seem to have made more positive claims.



*Figure 6.7 Average positionality of claimants with national scope by nationality*

Table 6.7 Percentages of justifications (n=5948) in all claims by position and claimant

	Interest-based	Rights-based	Identity-based	No justification	Grand Total
<i>Political actors</i>					
Negative	13.8	1.7	1.8	10.8	28.0
Neutral/ambivalent	9.4	1.4	0.7	9.0	20.4
Positive	6.4	6.0	1.0	9.1	22.5
<i>Civil society actors</i>					
Negative	2.2	0.4	1.5	3.4	7.5
Neutral/ambivalent	1.3	0.3	0.3	2.4	4.2
Positive	2.0	6.8	1.2	7.1	17.1
<i>Unknown/unspecified</i>					
Negative	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1
Neutral/ambivalent	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Positive	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1
Grand Total	34.9	16.7	6.5	41.9	100.0

Moving on to consider the justification of claims, we should emphasise that the debate over the 'refugee crisis' was mainly about values and the morally defensible limits of humanitarian assistance (Bauböck, 2018: 141). With regard to our analysis here, the question then is whether and how claimants justified their respective stances on the question of solidarity with refugees. A first finding in Table 6.7 is that the largest volume of claims (41.9%) were not provided with a justification. This share is followed by 34.9% of claims that were justified by using an interest-based value<sup>3</sup> to give more rational or pragmatic reasons. A rights-based value<sup>4</sup> was used in 16.7% of cases whereas an identity-based<sup>5</sup> value was the least employed in justifying positive, neutral/ambivalent or negative positions. When focusing on specific actors, one finds that the interest-based justification seems to be reserved for political actors and their negative positions, rather than the other claimant groups who are, as already stated, more positive overall and use rights-based arguments to justify their opinions.

Zooming in more closely on the different countries, Figure 6.8 shows that rights-based values are almost ubiquitous when claiming solidarity with refugees. Findings also show that the opposite is true for interest- and identity-based justifications, although the tendency towards the negative is not as spelled out. In Switzerland, Denmark and France, identity is, on average, more related to positive stances, which in turn seems to suggest a more inclusive approach to solidarity in these countries, whereas claims in



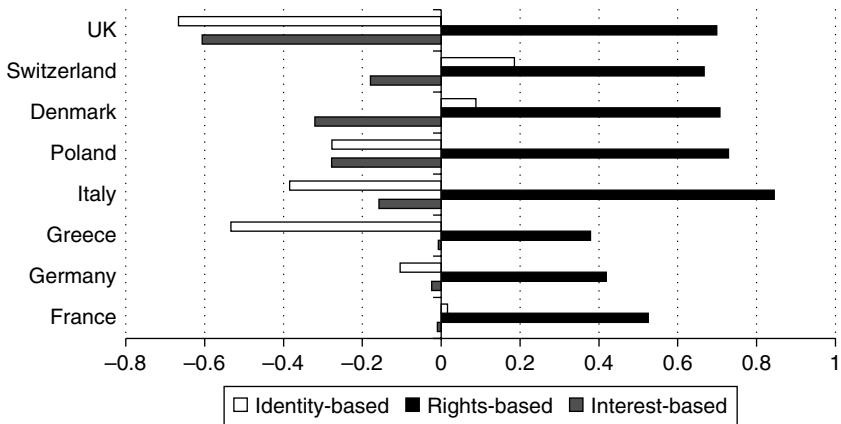


Figure 6.8 *Frames and average positions in claims by country*

Great Britain and Greece more often conveyed a perception of an exclusive national identity in opposition to the identity of refugees. Interest-based positions were almost balanced in Greece, Germany and France.

## 6.8 CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, we have shown that public debate and contestation over the 'refugee crisis' emerged as a dynamic process. This dynamic process started with a genuine European momentum, but then transformed quickly through the re-appropriation of the 'refugee crisis' by national actors, who were mainly driven by concerns and positions of national politics. We have demonstrated that solidarity contestation depends upon particular moments, and certainly a moment for European solidarity was triggered by the dramatic events that unfolded throughout the summer of 2015. Yet supranationalism declined over time, leaving the space for national specificities to re-emerge and re-nationalisation to take place over the following months. At the same time, our findings have suggested that the 'refugee crisis' has not yet at least become a typically contentious field of European politics; in fact, we have observed the presence of heterogeneous forms of action in the public domain, whereby protest does not dominate the larger variety of national-specific repertoires.

Looking into the average positionality of actors, we have shown that the public domain is not a main arena that can be held solely responsible for promoting anti-solidarity and anti-refugee attitudes, justifications and positions. The overall position of claims was often favourable, rather than

unfavourable, vis-à-vis refugees, while some strong emphasis was regularly put on humanitarian issues and not just on security concerns. In addition, civil society was particularly active, and most often with a positive position. In particular, we found only some limited cross-national differences when looking at average positionality. By contrast, variation is stronger when looking at intra-national differences between actors: state and political actors stand out for their stronger involvement in negative claims whereas civil society groups and collective actors engage more extensively in pro-refugee claims.

Claimants with a trans-, inter-, or supranational scope were overwhelmingly positive regarding solidarity with refugees (in contrast to national scope claimants), thereby widening the potential gap between the more cosmopolitan standing of the EU, on the one hand, against the national revival across member states, on the other. Furthermore, we have identified some relevant patterns in terms of values which claimants appeal to when justifying their claims. In particular, rights-based values are often used when claiming solidarity with refugees, while the opposite is true for interest- and identity-based justifications. This finding corroborates the opposition between supranationalism and re-nationalisation processes: thus, national governments often refused to comply with EU resettlement schemes in order to defend their interests and identities, at the same time as EU actors favoured a solution based on universal human rights.

Ultimately, our findings have shown that there was a potential to mobilise solidarity beyond the borders of the national public domain, but this was especially linked to the European momentum of September 2015, after which solidarity simultaneously declined and re-nationalised. European integration has always been advanced as an expansive solidarity project, for example, the EU as a humanitarian power, free flows of labour, capital and people, or the propagation of inclusive notions of citizenship or of a European social model (Trenz, 2016). Yet European solidarity, instead of being perceived as expansive, can also turn into a more exclusive and protective project. In this new constellation, European cooperation would be limited to coordination of the fight against irregular immigration and of external border controls with the objective to protect national welfare regimes.

This might suggest a new dynamics of transnational solidarity contestations that would be driven by a new ideational divide that replaces traditional ideological cleavages and that juxtaposes so-called communitarians with cosmopolitans (Kriesi et al., 2012; Zürn and de Wilde, 2016). By looking at media contestation over the refugee crisis, this chapter has uncovered the ambivalence of European solidarity between the needs to provide humanitarian assistance and the protection of national welfare

and democracy. While one may disagree with the idea that the 'refugee crisis' was Europe's September 11 (Krastev, 2017a), it is nonetheless clear that the 'refugee crisis' has not only been about refugees, but has also been, and still is, about Europe itself.

## NOTES

- 1 In particular, *Le Monde*, *Le Figaro*, and *Le Parisien* were selected for France; *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, and *Bild* were selected for Germany; *Proto Thema*, *Ta Nea*, and *Kathimerini* were selected for Greece; *La Repubblica*, *Corriere della Sera*, and *Liberio* were selected for Italy; *Gazeta Wyborcza*, *Rzeczpospolita*, and *Fakt* were selected for Poland; *Politiken*, *Jyllandsposten*, and *BT* were selected for Denmark; *The Guardian*, *The Telegraph*, and *The Express* were selected for Great Britain; lastly, due to its regional specificities, the Swiss case relied on the examination of five newspapers (*Le Matin*, *Le Temps*, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, *Tages Anzeiger*, *La Regione Ticino*), two of which are written in German, two in French, and one in Italian.
- 2 Under this category we have included a wide range of civil society actors, including welfare movements, charity networks, cooperatives, human rights organisations, citizens' initiatives, and different types of advocacy and policy-oriented groups.
- 3 Including different items such as political calculations, economic calculations, efficiency/functionality, rule of law and security (cf. Cinalli and Trenz, 2016).
- 4 Including different items such as human rights, equality and non-discrimination, moral responsibility/philanthropy, democracy, restriction of rights-based on criteria of fairness or deservingness (cf. Cinalli and Trenz, 2016).
- 5 Including different items such as nationality, religion, race, traditions, gender, ethnicity, territory (cf. Cinalli and Trenz, 2016).

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