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Voice and community in the refugee crisis: A Content Analysis of news coverage in Eight European Countries

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Abstract
Drawing on a Content Analysis of 1200 news articles on the 2015 refugee 'crisis' across eight European countries, we address the question of whether and how refugees 'speak' in the news. To this end, we categorized the language of these articles in terms how they narrated the subjects, status and contexts of voice. Our analysis establishes three different linguistic practices through which the voice of refugees is managed in the news – what we call practices of 'bordering': bordering by silencing, by collectivization and by de-contextualization. In light of these findings, we reach two conclusions. First, the distribution of voice in European news follows a strict hierarchy – one that relies on specifically journalistic strategies of selection and ordering yet reflects and reproduces broader hierarchies of the European political spheres. Second, this hierarchy of voice leads to a triple misrecognition of refugees as political, social and historical actors, thereby keeping them firmly outside the remit of 'our' communities of belonging.

Introduction: Humanitarian securitization and the refugee crisis

The refugee 'crisis'[i] turned into major policy issue and news story in May 2015, following two deadly shipwrecks off the coast of Italian island Lampedusa. Faced with the arrival of a million migrants from Middle Eastern and African countries, the greatest influx since the Second World War[ii], the European Union attempted to establish a unified framework of refugee reception that would both keep the

continent safe *and* protect the lives of those who fled persecution and war to reach its shores; in its own words, the EU engaged in a "search for the balance of humanitarian needs with concerns over sovereignty"[iii] or, what critical migration and security studies refer to as, a framework of 'humanitarian securitization' (Vaughan-Williams, 2015).

Defined as a "practice of power" through which "a political community" is invited to "treat something as an existential threat" (Buzan and Wæver, 2003: 491), securitization can be seen as 'humanitarian', when, as in the case of the refugee crisis, this threat is simultaneously construed as a referent of vulnerable humanity. As a practice of power, then, humanitarian securitization operates through a contradictory discourse that is supposed to humanize and care for those it also regards as its 'others'. Physically, this contradiction was resolved in practice when, in spring 2016, several nation-states situated on the refugee route towards Central and Northern Europe closed their borders and stopped the flow – leaving approximately 57.800 people stranded in Greece. Symbolically, the contradiction was manifested as a constant struggle of shifts and turns over the narration of refugees in news journalism.

Given the relentless rate and tragic circumstances of refugees' arrival, news across Europe routinely produced stories that negotiated narratives of security (why and how 'our' borders are kept safe) with narratives of care (portraying 'their' suffering as a cause of 'our' emotion). How these stories were told and who spoke for or about the refugees was thus instrumental in highlighting the causes and circumstances of their arrival as well as the implications of their reception. These narratives are considered to be, as the European Commission itself claims (2011), a key source of knowledge through which the continent's collective perceptions of refugees emerge. The importance of news journalism on the crisis lies, therefore, not simply in its informational value but also in its political value as an instrument for the formation of European publics as moral communities (Chouliaraki, 2013). It is this political value of journalism that our focus falls upon in this essay, as we address key questions of narrative, voice and community in the news.[iv]

Relying on the discourse of humanitarian securitization, our analysis aims at establishing how European news on the crisis manages the inherent tension of this discourse between care and protection. Reflected in the linguistic ambivalence of the term 'refugee', swiftly shifting between the positions of 'victim' and 'threat', this tension raises the question of voice, that is of who has the right to narrate the crisis and from whose perspective. How were refugees narrated in the news? Who spoke about their plight and in which authority? How was their voice contextualized? And

what were the implications of these news narratives for the communities we belong to and for the ways we imagine the world beyond ourselves?

By addressing these questions, our essay aspires to shed light on the fundamental moral challenge with which the refugee crisis confronted 'us', Western communities of relative safety: our encounter with non-Western 'others' (Silverstone, 2006). Our research questions on narrative, voice and community matter then precisely because they enable us to reflect on journalism as a space where this encounter is performed linguistically before it is enacted corporeally. Rather than using a restrictive conception of the border as a territorial line of separation that regulates entry into 'our' nations, we adopt a broader conception of the border as a symbolic practice that includes and excludes; in the words of Vaughan-Williams, the border 'seeks to rhetorically identify and control the (very) mobility of certain people, services and goods that operate around its jurisdiction' (2015: 6). In its function to 'rhetorically identify and control' mobility, bordering entails the symbolic power to name and authorize who is accepted as one of 'us' or shares 'our' humanity and who does not. European journalism can, in this light, be seen as a practice of 'symbolic bordering': a linguistic practice that works in tandem with Europe's territorial borders, insofar as it regulates the symbolic construction of refugees as human beings – voicing or silencing them, humanizing or vilifying them (Chouliaraki, 2017).

In so doing, journalism-as-bordering also renegotiates the boundaries of 'our' own communities of belonging. Depending on their language choices, some stories may enable us to recognize those different from 'us' as worthy to be listened to and thus encourage 'us' to stretch the imaginary boundaries of 'our' community in order to include 'them', but other stories may block this potential. Drawing on Hannerz' definition of the cosmopolitan disposition as 'an orientation, a willingness to engage with the Other' (1999: 239), our study of press journalism in Europe aims precisely at identifying the different 'orientations to the other' that its news stories articulate. It asks whether European press stories construct 'cosmopolitan' communities that are open, hospitable and inclusive of refugees or 'communitarian' communities that are closed, phobic and introverted (for the vocabulary: Chouliaraki, 2006).

Drawing on the findings of LSE's 'Migration and the Media' research project (see Appendix), we address these questions by engaging in a content analysis of broadsheet press in eight European countries, in the peak of the crisis, June-December 2015. We begin with a theoretical overview of existing studies on refugee representations. While we draw upon this literature to contribute to our analytical vocabulary, we also expand on it by proposing a conceptual understanding of journalism as 'symbolic bordering', that is as a performative practice with ethico-

political effects of misrecognition and ex/inclusion. Within this framework, our analysis of news stories establishes three different linguistic practices of bordering across our empirical material: bordering by silencing, by collectivization and by de-contextualization. National and temporal variation in our data granted, we conclude that the humanitarian security discourse of the news has serious implications both upon refugees and upon Europe's national publics. On the one hand, news stories systematically misrecognize refugees as political, social and historical subjects; on the other, in so doing, it simultaneously calls up largely 'communitarian' publics: publics willing to consider the humanity of 'others' only in order to affirm 'our' benevolence but not in order to consider including 'them' into 'our' communities of belonging.

Literature review

We begin with a discussion of two relevant bodies of research. First, we review literature on the mediation of human mobility, which provides us with the conceptual vocabulary to analyse the dominant representational tropes of migrants and refugees in the news. Second, we introduce a theoretical understanding of journalism as performative practice that uses selective distributions of voice so as to create hierarchies of who speaks and how in the news. Combined, these two bodies of scholarship enable us to produce the framework of symbolic bordering within which to make sense of our data.

Refugees in the media

This body of research falls within a broader category of migration and media studies literature, which engages with the portrayal of refugees in the media (van Dijk, 1991; Wright, 2002; Gross et al, 2007; Triantafyllidou, 2013; and, for the recent crisis, Giannakopoulos, 2016; Musarò, 2017; Berry et al., 2015; Gillespie et al., 2016; Georgiou and Zaborowski, 2017; Chouliaraki, 2017; Chouliaraki and Stolic, 2017).[v] Despite its internal diversity, this field is defined by a strong critical perspective on the language used to represent the refugee across a range of public genres. The refugee, these studies claim, always emerges as an essentially ambiguous figure suspended between victimhood and malevolence. The refugee, in other words, is a victim of war and conflict in need of protection, yet also a threat to 'our' community of belonging (Moore et al, 2012). Caught between these fluid identities, the literature argues, such ambivalent representations ultimately never escape the orientalist presuppositions that seem to perpetuate a Western imagination of the refugee as a voiceless 'other' (Malkki, 1996). What are the arguments of this critical scholarship?

The study of *victimhood* focuses on two key linguistic strategies of refugee representation: passivization and collectivization. Passivization is manifested in depictions of the refugee as a vulnerable body-in-pain, lacking basic resources for survival (such as food or shelter) – what Arendt (1998) calls 'bare life' or the naked human body that is regarded as 'life matter' rather than as a political being. Collectivization is manifested in depictions of the refugee as a statistical percentage, as part of a mass of unfortunates, where one is indistinguishable from another. Both tropes contribute to de-humanization (Malkki, 1996). First, singling out corporeal vulnerability as the refugees' defining property deprives them of the capacity to articulate personal will and rational argument, turning them into "sub-citizens" (Hyndman, 2000). Second, representing them as a number or an anonymous mass eclipses their personal histories as human beings (Nyers, 1999). Both rhetorical strategies, this literature claims, render the refugee 'voiceless' – not only unable to speak but also, because of this, placed outside reason and history and, ultimately, the order of humanity.

The critique of *evil-doing* is a component of a broader critical discourse towards the representation of refugees. This critique engages with two rhetorical properties of the refugee as a media figure: the ascription of sovereignty, which constitutes the refugee as an agentive being rather than as a submissive body, and, by extension, the ascription of maliciousness, which narrows down the refugee's agency to the capacity to harm. Despite their contrasting arguments, the literature on agency just like that of victimhood also accuses the language of journalism for de-humanizing the refugee. On the one hand, the ascription of sovereignty is misleading in that it over-emphasizes self-control when, in fact, refugees have little to decide over their lives: "there is", as Sandvik (2010: 294) puts it, "something unsettling about the manner in which individuals in arguably desperate or dangerous situations are attributed agency… as token participants performing for a global audience". On the other hand, the ascription of maliciousness turns the refugee into a dangerous stranger who threatens 'our' wellbeing; from a voiceless unfortunate they become a potential killer (Malkki, 1995). Instead of pity, this attribution of criminal intent incites fear and invites a politics of securitization: deportations or the closing of borders (Bleiker et al., 2013). Victimhood and malevolence, to sum up, contribute to an inherent instability of the refugee as a human being, for neither the sufferer nor the evil-doer ultimately partake the sphere of humanity.

Even though the literature has treated these two terms as distinct and, indeed, antithetical linguistic tropes, we argue that, in the context of contemporary

transformations in the regimes of global governance from militarized to humanitarian security (Chandler, 2012), victimhood and threat should nowadays be approached as co-existing rather than opposing categories. Our analysis will indeed treat these tropes as inherently inter-connected components of the regulative regime of the border, which alternate positions across symbolic and temporal contexts. In so doing, they change the ways refugees are portrayed in the news – though how exactly such shifts make various claims to voice and humanity remains an empirically open matter. In order to establish such shifts, however, we need to first conceptualize journalism as performative; not simply as a reporting-the-facts practice but also as a linguistic practice that constitutes the world it talks about in the course of reporting it. It is to this conceptualization of journalism that we now turn.

Journalism as performativity

Journalism is a performative practice in the sense that its news stories of suffering are not simply offering information about refugees but, actually, provide the symbolic conditions of possibility under which we are invited to imagine the predicament of these sufferers as well as think, feel and act towards them. 'Journalism', as Chouliaraki puts it, 'is about doing things with words, not simply about using words to report facts' (2013: 268). What journalism does with words is that it names refugees as particular kinds of subjects and inscribes our relationship to them in specific affective and moral registers. Rather than any concrete phrasing about refugees, it is therefore this symbolic realm, what Butler calls the 'field of the perceptible', that regulates 'whether and how we respond to the suffering of others, how we formulate moral criticisms, how we articulate political analyses' (2009: 64). Who watches and who suffers, in other words, but also how the sufferer is narrated shape how we make sense of the world beyond 'our' continent and how 'we' engage with those who come from non-Western zones of death and destitution. Our conceptualization of European news as symbolic bordering relies on this performative understanding of journalism, whereby news narratives open up diverse 'fields of the perceptible' and, in so doing, position 'us' and refugees within normative relationships of emotion and action; telling 'us' how we should feel and relate to them (Chouliaraki, 2017).

Central to this performative work of journalistic bordering is the process of recognition, by which news stories attribute agency to suffering others through, what Couldry (2010) calls 'politics of voice': who speaks, in which capacity and what context. This capacity to speak in environments that support the significance of one's story-telling, what Couldry calls 'voice as value' (2010), renders journalism

instrumental to the exercise of a politics of recognition. This is because it is the performative force of narratives that regulate how the voice of or about refugees figures in the news and how it acquires its value. The news' potential for recognition occurs, in this sense, through a symbolic process that operates at two levels. While the specific linguistic choices of the news, what we call 'voice as narrative', micro-regulate how refugees are portrayed and who speaks for them –the empirical/ /analytical dimension of voice, the implications of these choices, or 'voice as value', macro-regulate the making and re-making of ethico-political agency and community – what we may refer to as the normative dimension of voice defining who refugees are as social subjects and who is included in which community of belonging.

While the significance of voice as the 'right to speak on [one's] own issues and concerns' (Phillips, 2003: 264) has been theorized as a 'fundamental human right' that calls on global institutions, such as journalism, to include the 'voices of the voiceless' (Fraser, 2010), this right refers only to the normative dimension of 'voice as value'. We argue, however, that 'voice as narrative' is also a necessary condition of possibility for the normative vision of global justice to materialize. This is because it is through 'voice as narrative' that the value of voice is historically materialized and, consequently, its through 'voice as narrative' that we can ask the pressing empirical question of who actually speaks and who does not, in the trans-national information flows of journalism. It is precisely to this empirical analysis of the performativity of news that we now turn.

We take our point of departure in the framework of humanitarian securitization, which, by combining concerns for 'their' care with measures for 'our' protection, provides a specific 'field of the perceptible', wherein the refugee already figures as, what we earlier called, an 'unstable' signifier. Our focus falls on how European news narratives negotiate this instability between victimhood and threat; how, in so doing, they distribute voice; and which specific norms of recognition inform this distribution. We conclude by reflecting on the implications such norms have on the construction of 'us'/'them' communities in the continent.

Voice as narrative: a content analysis of European news

Our approach employs a content-analytical framework to the study of news performativity across eight European national news cultures. Our data consisted of newspapers in eight countries: five of the countries positioned across the route of the refugee journey towards Central and Northern Europe (Greece, Serbia, Hungary, Czech Republic, Germany) but we further included three other major countries, which were themselves some of the preferred destinations (France, UK and Ireland).

This empirical choice of countries enabled us to compare local, regional and continental trends and uncover a broad and varied range of narratives surrounding the crisis. Our sample included two key broadsheet papers per country, each representing the left/right political spectrum. We focused on three crucial moments of the crisis, each of which played a catalytic role in shifting public debate – though not always in also influencing policy-making in EU[vi]. Each moment further delineated a distinct phase in the narration of the refugee news, what Georgiou and Zaborowski refer to, respectively, as 'careful tolerance', 'ecstatic humanitarianism' and 'securitisation' (2017). For each of these moments, we sampled twenty refugee-related articles per newspaper, which resulted in a 1200-article data bank overall (see Appendix for details).

While national, political and temporal variations are taken into account, a detailed discussion of differences remains outside the remit of our study. Our focus is instead on establishing shared patterns across data. Given our interest in journalism as a performative practice of bordering, let us reiterate that our analytical categories seek to classify how, in the framework of humanitarian securitization, news stories tactically use voice to provisionally settle the unstable signifiers of victimhood and threat in specific news narratives, and how, in so doing, they make different claims to the humanity of refugees. Our analysis of 'voice as narrative' focuses, therefore, on the *subjects of voice* (absence or presence of refugee voice); the *status of voice* (how refugees are named and characterized as) and the *context of voice* (the justifications and consequences through which we are to understand the predicament of refugees). Depending on linguistic choice, as we shall see, each of these categories plays out a different politics of 'voice as value', that is each identifies a different strategy of humanization in the news and, in so doing, conjures up particular relationships of recognition and hence of inclusion and exclusion between 'us' and 'them'. We examine each linguistic category in the sections on 'subjects', 'status' and 'contexts' of voice, before we conclude this study with reflections on the imaginations of community these categories invite us to attach ourselves to, in the section 'voice as value'.

The subjects of voice

The question of who speaks in the European press takes a straightforward response: it is politicians, not refugees. In our 1200-article data bank quotes from migrants or refugees were present in only 16.6% of the sample, as compared to 66% of politician quotes (national or EU). Differences in newspaper format and article length granted, this trend was consistent across all countries of our sample: refugee voices were a

minority voice compared to politicians (Fig. 1). There was significant difference between right- and left-wing press, with the percentage of refugee quotes being higher in the latter (20.4%) rather than the former (14.1%); and there was also a difference between Western and Eastern European press, where the former (39.2%) had a considerably higher percentage of national politician quotes than the latter (27.2%). While such variations illustrate key differences in conceptions of democracy and civic participation across the political spectrum and the historical trajectories of the continent, our focus here falls rather on the persistent gap between 'our' and 'their' voice, across these divisions.

(Figure 1 about here)

The temporal perspective complicates without drastically modifying this gap. Following Alan Kurdi's tragic death, in September 2015, there was a 4% increase in refugee quotes throughout the 'humanitarian' phase of reporting: from 17% to 21%. This was accompanied by a concomitant shift in the emotional trajectory of the news, where 'solidarity' rose in the 'humanitarian' moment from 12.5% earlier to 14.7% and 'understanding' from 7.5% to 10% (Fig. 2). Still, however, politicians continued to be by far the most vocal presence in the news: 41% of articles had quotes from national politicians, 34% from politicians coming from other nations and 30% from EU officials. Following the Paris attacks, in November 2015, we witness a sharp drop of 9% in refugee quotes, which fell to 12%. This suggests that, in the 'securitization' moment, we have a nearly total silencing of the refugee, who had, by now, shifted position from victim to terrorist (Fig. 1). This muting was, predictably perhaps, also accompanied by a sharp increase in negative emotion: 'frustration/concern for possible security risks' rose from 10.7% to 18%, 'fear' rose from 4% to 10% and 'solidarity' percentages halved from 14.7% to 7.7% (Fig. 2).

(Figure 2 about here)

Even though such shifts illustrate the symbolic instability of the signifier refugee, they also illustrate the permanent chasm between Europe's elite voices and refugees. For, independently of whether the latter are victims or assumed perpetrators, they remain consistently marginalized or almost fully silenced in European news. As victims, refugees are humanitarian subjects defined, as we saw, exclusively by their human needs (Malkki, 1996) whereas as a threat, they are enemies of national sovereignty and hence as undeserving of voice (Chouliaraki,

2006). Either way, the omission of their voice from news stories throughout the peak of the crisis shows refugees to be endowed with an ambivalent humanity as both vulnerable and lethal. This is what Malkki calls a 'mere, bare, naked, or minimal humanity', which traps refugees firmly within the framework of humanitarian security and misrecognizes their status as political and historical actors (1996: 390). Whether victims or terrorists, refugees are never human.

Beyond this consistent rupture between 'us' and 'them', however, there is a further division within 'us'. For national civil societies across Europe had a rather low audibility in the news, too (Fig. 1): volunteers and activists were quoted in 7.9% and 6.7% of articles respectively, whereas NGOs in 13.3%. Ordinary citizens were similarly only sporadically quoted: 5.9% of all articles included the voice of national citizens, 5.3% the citizens of other European nations and 1.1% the voice of minority group citizens. And yet, despite this marginalization of civic voice, news stories did make frequent appeals to 'ordinary people' and 'their emotions' – with 'frustration' and 'uncertainty' being the highest scoring ones across the 'tolerant' and 'securitization' moments of the crisis: 'frustration' at 18% and 'uncertainty' at 12.6% on average, with the exception of the 'humanitarian' moment, when both emotions scored lower (Fig. 2). This marginalization of citizen voice, then, did not only minimize the potential of popular deliberation within the spaces of journalistic publicity. It also allowed the authoritative voices of politicians (in their direct quotes) and journalists (in their general references to public affect) to dominate the argumentative and emotional spaces within which 'we' were to make sense of the crisis.

Through the double silencing of refugees and citizens, the European news did not only misrecognize 'them'. It also misrecognized 'us' as political subjects with a right to voice and with a plurality of views that would have, at least partly, challenged the status-quo – for instance, by allowing NGOs and civil society voices to speak the cause of refugees. As a consequence, the views of the political establishment assumed a naturalness that, in most, though by no means all, cases rendered the refugee crisis a matter economic calculation and technocratic management, marginalizing the experiences, emotions and testimonies not only of refugees themselves but also of those of 'us' who might have been able to communicate their plight – but see Georgiou and Zaborowski (2017) for key differences in selected countries.

The subjects of voice, to conclude, were regulated through the news' strategies of *silencing,* which marginalized voices of refugees as well as those of European citizens and privileged instead the voices of politicians. While there was

fluctuation in the degrees of silencing refugees, with certain moments granting more voice than others, ultimately, the systematic silencing created a hierarchy of voice that produced effects of misrecognition. This hierarchy prioritized the voices of the political establishment and, thus, largely legitimized affective claims to frustration and uncertainty, while devaluing alternative narratives of solidarity by or for refugees.

This hierarchy of voice misrecognized refugees as political actors in that it narrated them primarily as abject bodies unable to participate in public discourse with their own stories, explanations and emotions. If people assume a political status, as Arendt puts it, when they appear in public 'in the unique shape of the body and the sound of the voice' (1958: 179), then those who remain voiceless are by definition exiled from the political sphere. As a consequence of this effacement of refugees from journalistic publicity, the news tended to call up a 'communitarian' community of strictly national publics that could not challenge the limits of humanitarian security nor acknowledge refugees as right-bearing actors with a complex story to tell.

The status of voice

If the subjects of voice refer to the presence or absence of those who speak, status refers to the authority attributed to those who speak. Who are the refugees? And what is it that they bring to 'our' societies? Even though crisis journalism was intense, there was little attention to these questions. Refugees were predominantly described as groups in terms of their category membership: predominantly nationality (62% of all articles) and less so gender (24%) and age (27%). More personalized specifications, such as names and professions had the lowest frequency with 16% and 7% respectively (Fig. 3).

(Figure 3 about here)

This general tendency to 'collectivization' remained relatively constant throughout the three moments of our study, from the early 'careful tolerance' through to 'ecstatic humanitarianism' and the 'securitization' ones. In the latter, for instance, speculation that one of the Paris killers had entered Europe through the Greek passage in summer 2015, grouped all refugees in the category of the terrorist, suppressing the option of more diverse and personalizing narratives – for instance, though family- or profession-related information (though this was the case with

locally born terrorists). There was, however, a slight increase in the inclusion of specificities during the 'humanitarian' peak: 25.5% of articles included names of the refugees and 32% included their age. This shift towards personalization, however, correlated with the timing of Alan Kurdi death and it is possible that it did not reflect a generalized trend for *all* refugee descriptions but was linked to repeated descriptions of this particular victim and his family, as their names recurrently appeared in an abundance of stories. This hypothesis is further supported by the lack of correlation between the increase in name/age references and references in profession – the latter remained unchanged across all three moments of the study, at 7.7%, 7% and 6.5% respectively.

The personalization of the toddler's tragic death was further combined with an increase of emotions of solidarity (from 17.5% to 25.2%) and empathy (from 17.7% to 22%) for refugees between July and September (Fig. 4). While this emotional peak contributed to endowing Alan with iconic status as a universal symbol of the suffering of the innocent and perhaps a sign of 'our' own failure to care (Ibrahim and Howarth, 2016), it paradoxically did so at the expense of misrecognizing him. On the one hand, Alan's death as an icon of victimhood came at the cost of muteness – the absolute silence of the dead; moreover, when his father sought to narrate the family's tragic fate, his voice was quickly undermined as inauthentic in news debates that framed his as a 'human smuggler'[vii]. On the other hand, the potential of Alan's loss to become itself a 'voice' of martyrdom, denouncing the 'let die' governance at work in Europe's sea borders (Basaran, 2014), was subordinated to dominant interpretations voiced by elite actors, national politicians – their voices, at the 'humanitarian' moment, held indeed the highest audibility at 40.5%. Instead thus of turning the iconic event of Alan's death into an occasion for, what Christensen and Jansson (2015) call, 'cosmopolitan reflexivity' over 'our' border politics, the coupling of personalization and emotionalization, displaced critique onto sentimentalism. It thus turned the event into a case of 'sublimation' (Gay, 1992): the diffusion of the moral and legal scandal involved in the boy's death through a plethora of emotional calls for solidarity. What was lost in the process was the confrontation with key failures of 'our' security priorities, which, in Basaran's words, 'dilutes the legal duty to rescue' and classifies people in terms of 'worthy lives that fall within the duty to rescue and charitable lives becoming a question of benevolence.' (2015: 1).

(Figure 4 about here)

The status of voice in European news narratives was thus largely regulated through the news' strategies of *collectivization*, whereby groups remained unknowable and nameless whereas individuals were named but dead. Misrecognition in the status of voice, then, both sustained the news hierarchy established through the subjects of voice, and further effaced refugees by grouping them into general categories or by dispersing the unspeakable tragedy of 'their' death onto 'our' voices and emotions. If then, in the subjects of voice, silencing resulted in the misrecognition of refugees as political subjects deprived of the right to speak as equals in public, in the status of voice, misrecognition referred to refugees as *social* subjects. Not only were they being spoken about rather than spoken to or with, refugees also became faceless and characterless figures without capacities, experiences, relationships or emotions; without 'personhood' - the symbolic marker of humanity as singular and autonomous social agency (Rose 1998:2).

Unable to invite 'us' to understand and feel for 'their' everyday lives as part of an ordinary lifeworld, now shuttered but once similar (even if not same) to our own, the status of voice in European news failed to produce, what Arendt refers to as, the conditions of 'imaginative mobility': '*the capacity to represent the perspective of others'* in ways that thematize simple commonalities in our separate lives (Villa, 1999: 96). Rather than enabling a 'cosmopolitan reflexivity' around the fragility of everyday life as part of our shared vulnerability as humans (Butler, 2009), European news narratives reproduced instead narratives of radical difference, thereby consolidating the 'communitarian' ethos of 'our' ways of life.

The contexts of voice

The contexts of voice refer to the historical, socio-economic or geo-political narratives within which the news situated the crisis and invited 'us' to make sense of it. Context, in the crisis news, is thus about *explanation* of the reasons why refugees had arrived and about *conversation* on the consequences of their arrival, positive as well as negative. Across our data, there was remarkably little by way of explanation as to what led refugees to abandon home and travel to Europe: 49.4% of all articles mentioned either none or only unclear underlying reasons behind the refugee inflow. Consequently, the news attitude towards developing a rational 'understanding' the

predicament of refugees, as opposed to expressing 'solidarity' or cultivating 'uncertainty', remained consistently low throughout the three moments of reporting, at 11.5%, 13.7% and 6.5%, respectively. While geopolitical reasons for migration were mentioned (for instance, 'fleeing war') in 43.9% of the articles, a more explicit and systematic connection between crisis reporting and war reporting, normally kept as separate news sections, would have foregrounded the urgent links between, for instance, chemical gas attacks in Syria and Syrian families' desire to flee the death zone. This lack of explanatory context lies perhaps behind the modest and largely unchanging percentages of empathy - feeling for the pain of others as-if we could be in their place (Boltanski, 1999), which, regarding the refugees and the future remain stable at around 10% throughout the crisis, with no peak in the 'humanitarian' moment and plummeting to 4.75% in November 2015.

At the same time, the conversation around consequences was overwhelmingly biased towards negative impact, privileging the harmful aspects of hosting refugees: 58% of all stories employed one of four arguments against refugees: geopolitical (fear of terrorism), economic (fear of economic crisis), cultural (fear or antipathy of Islam) or moral (fear of deceit) (Fig. 5). While the most frequent were geopolitical consequences (28.5% in total), with the sharpest peak occurring after the Paris terrorist attacks (49%), economic consequences (25% in total) were highest in the first stage of the event, July (31%). These results were framed not so much by 'fear', which only reached a peak of 10% in the 'security' moment, but mostly by low-intensity negative emotions, such as 'frustration', stable at 18% with a predictable fall to 10.7% in the 'humanitarian' bracket, and 'uncertainty', fluctuating between 13.5 and 11.7% - and again slightly dropping to 9.7%, after Alan's death. This focus on negative consequences and emotions could be seen as practices of symbolic bordering par excellence, in that they reproduced a logic of military deterrence onto the language choices of the news. The refugee remains here a constantly negative figure: from an economic burden he turns into to a terrorist threat and from a 'fake' victim to a dangerous perpetrator.

(Figure 5 about here)

Positive consequences, geopolitical, economic or cultural, were rarely mentioned: 7.6% in total. In the context of an already information-poor narrative on refugee status, on their existing competences and literacies, this proliferation of uncertainty-driven, negative arguments came to consolidate a thoroughly dehumanizing image: refugees bring nothing useful, only problems.

In the absence of utilitarian narratives that could have shown how refugees might contribute to 'our' societies, the only argument in support of 'our' hospitality was the appeal to the European ethos of solidarity – a deontological discourse of 'moral obligation' that placed the imperative to act on vulnerable others without asking back at the heart of civilized Europe (Chouliaraki, 2013): 28% of articles included such a moral claim, with the percentage shooting up to 38.5% in the 'humanitarian' moment (Fig. 6). This upward trend further correlated with the news' discussions on *measures* of reception, that is specifications of the forms of action most conducive to hosting 'them', where 'our' duty to save 'their' lives was found in as much as a 71.7% of all September articles compared to 55.4% in July (Fig. 7). While, in this Euro-centric discourse of benevolence, the news inscribed refugees into narratives of victimhood, where they figured as passive sufferers to be rescued, the 'security' moment of November 2015 co-opted and subordinated the ethics of rescue to a militarized narrative where refugees turned into malevolent actors. Positive moral narratives now dropped from 38.5% to 24.5% (Fig. 6) and the surge of self-protective rather than life-saving measures soared: 60.7% in November as opposed to 47.2% in September (Fig. 7).

(Figures 6 and 7 about here)

In a pattern complementary, albeit distinct, to the subjects and status of voice, the context of voice illustrates yet another new linguistic trope of symbolic bordering. Together with silencing and collectivization, at work here were strategies of *decontextualisation* that consistently severed the plight of refugees from its historical circumstances and impoverished public conversation on the implications of their arrival. Refugees were hardly represented as civilians fleeing from death zones in the conflicts in Syria, Afghanistan or Iraq, while the consequences of 'their' arrival in Europe were almost exclusively discussed in negative terms. Lacking a narrative of the causes or benefits from 'our' co-existence with 'them', the news further marginalized emotions of understanding or empathy towards refugees, drawing solely on a moral rhetoric of solidarity in order to forge a positive connection between 'us' and 'them' – a deontological framework that proved unstable and short-lived in the face of events.

If silencing and collectivization managed to misrecognize refugees as political and social subjects, decontextualization led to the misrecognition of refugees as *historical* subjects. This is because, not only were refugees deprived of their personhood, as unique individuals with their own live stories, but they were also

stripped of the historical trajectories that conditioned their fate as stateless fugitives of their own homelands. Instead, they appeared out of nowhere as 'ghostly figures' who brought no good, only trouble. If, as Arendt puts it, the 'pre-political … condition of history' is the fact that 'every individual life … can eventually be told as a story with beginning and end' (1958: 184-85), then allowing refugees to articulate themselves within a coherent temporality ('with a beginning and end') is crucial to endowing them with historicity, with their own specific pasts and aspirations for the future – rather than locking them into the abject present of statelessness and dispossession. Their misrecognition was thus no longer due to their muting or irrelevance to 'our' communities, but to their a-historical existence, as beings coming from nowhere and bringing nothing.

By this token, the lack of historicity in the news blocked 'our' potential to reflexively contemplate 'their' fates as part of a shared chain of events where the West articulates its own responsibility for, at least part of, 'their' suffering. Instead, 'our' news narratives locked refugees into the linguistic pattern of malevolence and victimhood, where, either as abject lives-to-be-rescued or evil-doers-to-be-excluded, they mobilized nothing but 'our' own communitarian reflexes of closure and introspection.

Voice as value: concluding reflections

Voice is, we have argued, instrumental in endowing the refugee with personhood and historicity – and hence with the potential for recognition. Who speaks and in which capacity, or 'voice as narrative', defines whether and how their words will be listened to in public as the words of an equal, or 'voice as value'. This understanding of voice complements traditional views of talk as a semantic event, concerned with the content of words, by foregrounding the very 'act of speaking' as a political event in its own right: 'in acting and speaking,' as Arendt put it, 'men (*sic*) show who they are, reveal actively their unique personal identities and thus make their appearance in the human world' (1958: 179). It is in this Arendtian sense, that 'voice as value' becomes a performative act that constitutes the speaker as a human being – as a social and historical actor belonging to a political community.

Our content analysis started from an understanding of journalism as a key site for this performativity of voice. It sought to establish how the language of European news tactically distributes 'voice as narrative' and how, in the process, it endows the refugee with 'recognizability' (Butler 2009) – how it mobilises 'voice as value'. The aim of this analysis has been to explore the ways by which, in articulating voice, journalism shapes not only the refugee as 'recognizable' but also

the communities of European nations as communities of exclusion or openness; as communitarian or cosmopolitan.

Our assumption has been that, in the context of humanitarian securitization, Europe's dominant discourse of border reception, the news' distributions of voice might reflect, reproduce or challenge, the linguistic tension inherent in the refugee as both victim and threat; thereby also rendering journalism itself a security practice of symbolic bordering. To this end, we mapped out the language of 1200 news articles on the crisis in terms of how they narrated the subjects, status and contexts of voice: who speaks, on which capacity and in which context.

Our analysis, which concentrated on similarities rather than differences across our data, yielded two simple but perennial insights into the question of voice. First, the distribution of voice in European news follows a *strict hierarchy* – one that relies on specifically journalistic *strategies of bordering* yet reflects and reproduces broader hierarchies of the European political spheres. Second, this hierarchy of voice leads to a *triple misrecognition of refugees* as political, social and historical actors, thereby keeping them firmly outside the remit of 'our' communities of belonging. Let us reflect on each of these implications in turn.

i) The hierarchy of voices

The first significant, albeit perhaps predictable, insight of our analysis is the dominance of politician voices at the expense of those of citizens and refugees. National politicians, followed by EU and foreign ones, are the most audible voice in refugee news across Europe. While this supports Lawrence's claim that 'in institutionally driven news, political institutions set the agendas of news organizations' (2000: 9), it also simultaneously points to the moral function of authoritative quoting in the news, namely to introduce a sense of control and normality in the midst of crisis (Pickering 2001). The cost of this normalizing operation of the news, however, is the restriction of the 'field of the perceptible' that journalistic stories open up for us.

On the one hand, the marginalization of citizen voice points to long-established deficiencies in the structure of broadsheet news, which, as Ross puts it, 'privileges elite and other (white) male voices' that, in turn, 'appear to exert a greater influence and conformity over who `counts' as an authoritative voice' (2007: abstract). The marginalization of refugee voice, on the other, reflects a similar narrative structure of exclusion, which works by ignoring the stories of those it does not already regard as part of 'us' while, in doing so, it reconstitutes and re-legitimizes their exclusion.

This double exclusion of non-elite voices from the news granted, refugees nonetheless differ radically from citizens in that the latter are a foundational component of the West's liberal democratic polities while the former remain alien to these polities – they are the West's 'other'. The distinction is succinctly captured by Arendt's critique of human rights as the rights of citizens only, so that, for those who turn stateless, as she puts it, 'the abstract nakedness of being nothing but human was their greatest danger' (1976: 300). At the heart of this de-humanized humanity of the stateless, she continues, lies precisely this structural failure to be seen and heard in public as actors with a voice. It is, we claim, because of their failure to represent the refugees' voice 'in public' and so to establish potentially humanizing, even if fleeting, encounters between 'them' and 'us' that European news journalism operates as a site of symbolic bordering.

The second major insight of our analysis then is the identification of three linguistic strategies through which symbolic bordering takes place. Associated with the three properties of voice, its subjects, status and contexts, these strategies are: silencing, or the omission of voice altogether; collectivization, or the incorporation of refugees into collective referents, such as nationality, in ways that eliminate their status as unique individuals; and decontextualization, or the severing of individual lives from the historical conditions within which their requests to be hosted derive their legitimacy and justification. If, as Cavarero (2000) suggests, the fundamental question of recognition is 'who are you?', then, the response of 'our' media is 'nobodies': mute groups of abject sufferers devoid of personhood or history. What are the implications of this deprivation of 'recognizability' both for refugees and for us as news communities of reception?

ii) *The triple misrecognition of refugees*
Whereas these three strategies of symbolic bordering delimit the 'field of the perceptible' within which the refugees might claim recognizability, it is the specific dynamics of linguistic naming that these strategies allow, which ultimately shape the forms of misrecognition in the news. Revolving around the vocabulary of humanitarian securitization, our final question then is how the linguistic dynamics of victimhood/threat participates in the various forms of refugee misrecognition that we identified across our data. *Pace* relevant literature, which, let us recall, presents this vocabulary as responsible for leading to an inevitable 'muteness' of refugees, showing them as always silent in the media, our own analysis started from the inherent instability of the refugee as victim or threat in order to unpack and complexify muteness as a problem of voice. Voice as value, we have shown, is the consequence of intersecting practices of power that regulate the performativity of the

news, or voice as narrative, across Europe. We conclude, therefore, by reflecting on this complexity.

First, our analysis of 'voice as narrative' in terms of three dimensions of speaking-in-public, subjects (who speaks), status (in which authority) and context (in which circumstances), shows that, rather than straightforward muting, misrecognition is linked to the selection and ordering of voice in individual news stories. Following Euro-centric, nationalist principles of significance and priority, such journalistic practices established a 'universal' hierarchy of voices, where 'our' political elites monopolized the explanations and emotions around the crisis over both citizens and refugees themselves.

Second, our identification of silencing, collectivization and decontextualization as the specific performative strategies of selection and ordering, used in news stories across European nations, should be seen as an analytical contribution to understanding journalism as symbolic bordering. It is, as we saw, either by way of subordination to elite voices (subjects of voice), denial of their individuality (status) or emptying out their temporal continuity (context) that news narratives deny refugees the capacity to speak in supportive environments that listen to and value their claims. By being deprived of this capacity (their 'voice as value'), refugees are also further denied the capacity to be seen and validated as political actors (they do not speak in public), as social actors (they are not seen as having 'our' familiar webs of social relationships) or as historical actors (they are cut off coherent life narratives with a beginning and an end).

This critical account of European news granted, however, we would like to now end on a positive note. This is because our conceptualization of journalism as performative does not only enable us to identify its negative effects of symbolic bordering. By the same token, it also enables us to imagine alternatives. If, indeed, 'journalism is about doing things with words', as we mentioned earlier, then undoing the words we currently use with a view to creating more open and inclusive symbolic spaces should also be possible. To this end, we conclude with two suggestions.

On the one hand, we need to begin crafting 'crisis' news stories with more range and complexity; one that may generate a real debate about what is positively good and not simply what might be risky. For this to happen, 'voice as narrative' needs to change: the range of speakers, emotions, justifications and consequences around human mobility should also become more detailed. On the other hand, and related, we need to portray refugees themselves as political, social and historical actors, entitled to speak about their reasons for leaving and their aspirations –

whether we accept these or not is precisely the matter of debate we are not currently having.

'We' become who we are, Cavarero reminds us, through 'our' encounter with 'others' (2000). Our identity depends on how we respond to the existential question that this encounter poses to us: 'who are you?' As our analysis has shown, confronted with 'them', European news responded to this question by abruptly shifting from pitying the victims to denouncing the terrorists. Even though, as we mentioned, the question of 'who we are' has since been politically settled in the closing of European borders, rendering Europe a resolutely 'communitarian public', *narratively*, the question remains, in principle, open. If we wish to imagine Europe as a more inclusive and open community, as a 'cosmopolitan' public, our journalism should also move beyond sentimental pity or angry exclusion towards a new appreciation of voice as a key site of recognition for the persecuted and the vulnerable.

Figures
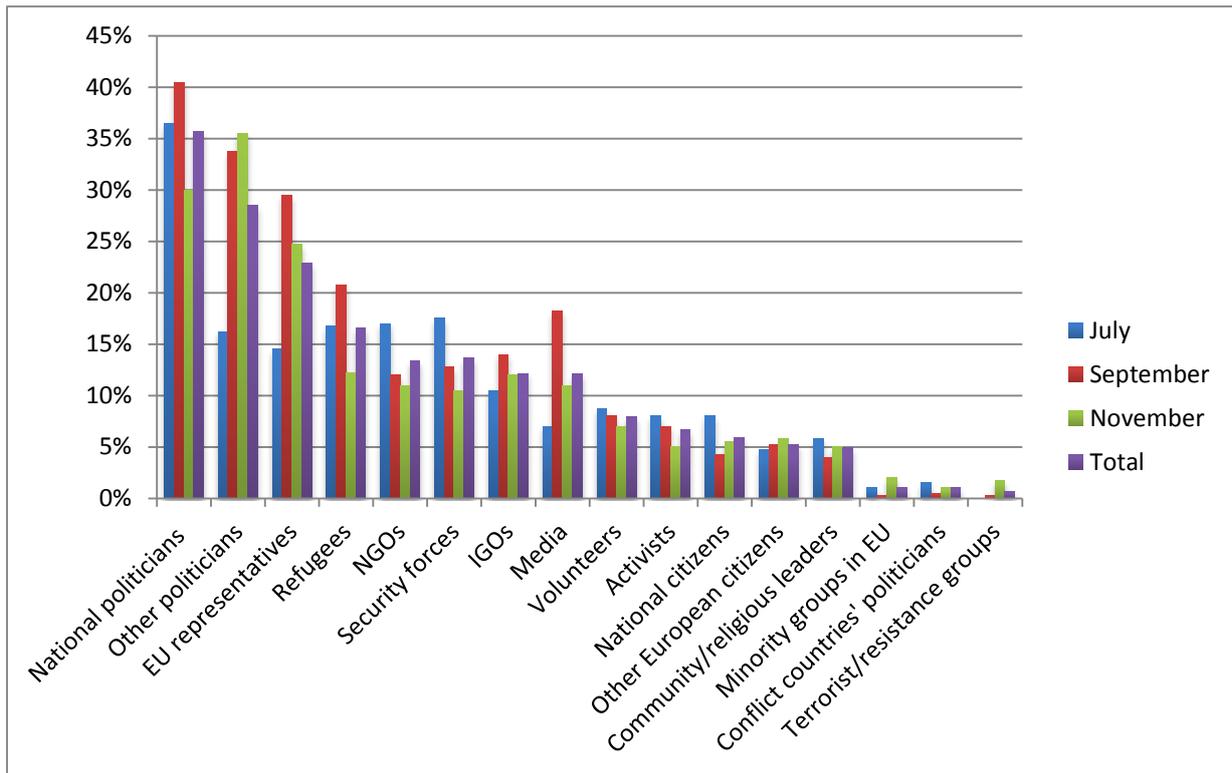
Figure 1. Actors quoted in articles, by period.
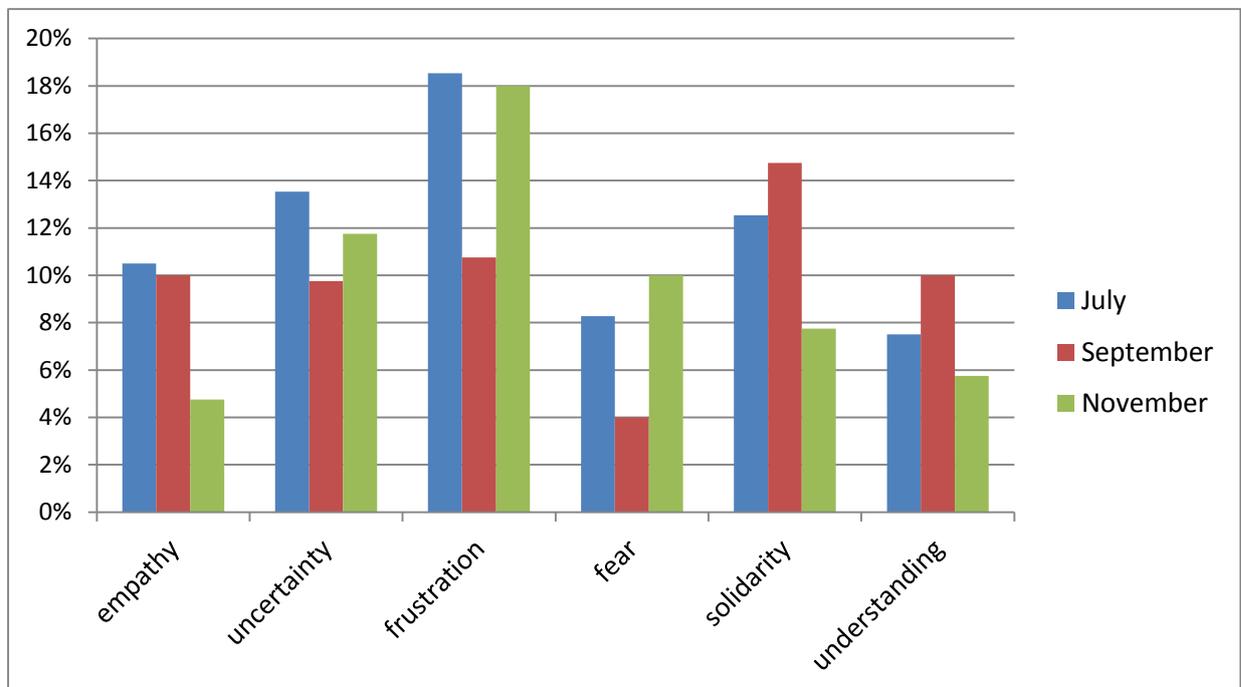
Figure 2. Most frequent emotions attributed to citizens concerning the refugees and the future, by period.
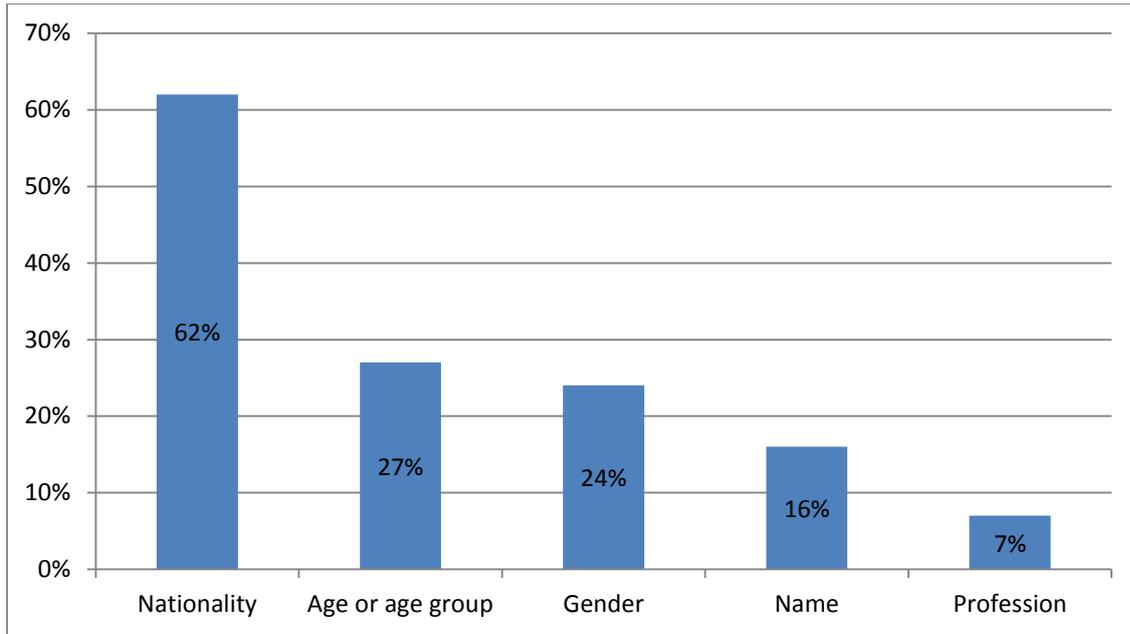
Figure 3. Refugee characteristics in the press.
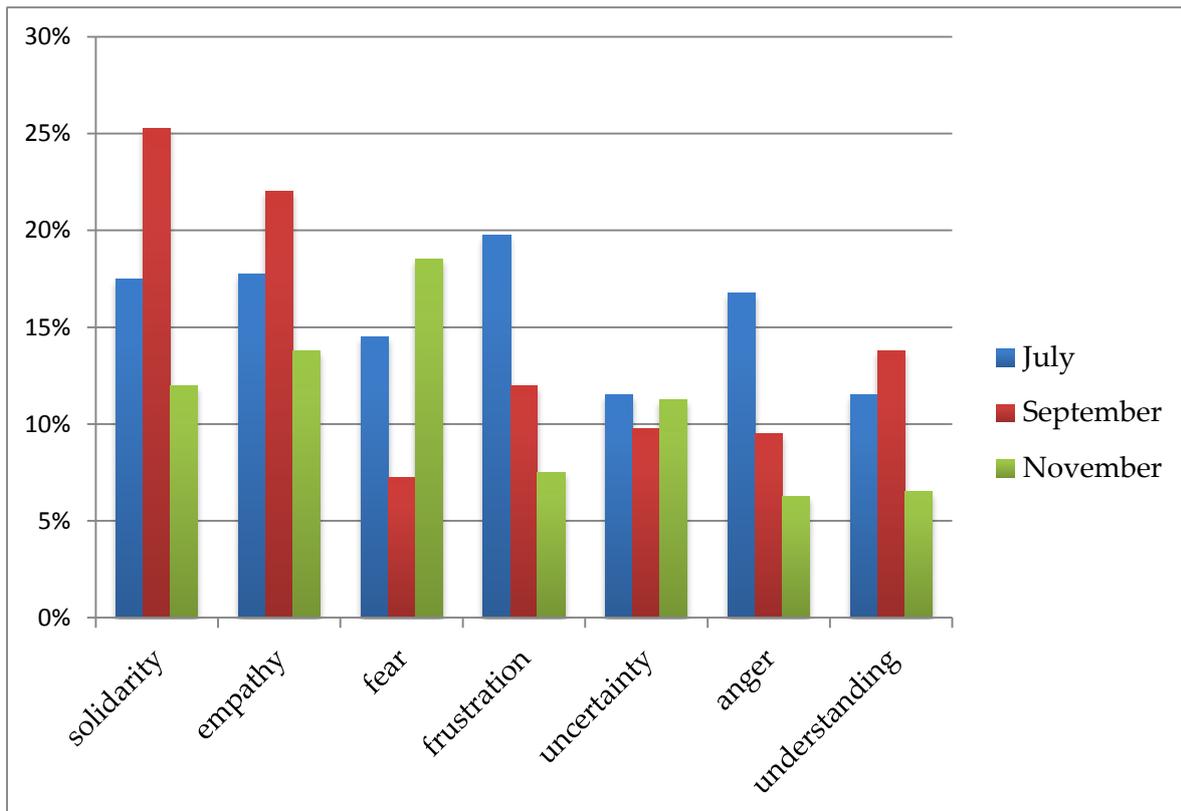
Figure 4. Most frequent emotions attributed to the citizens concerning the refugees' arrival and the current situation, by period.
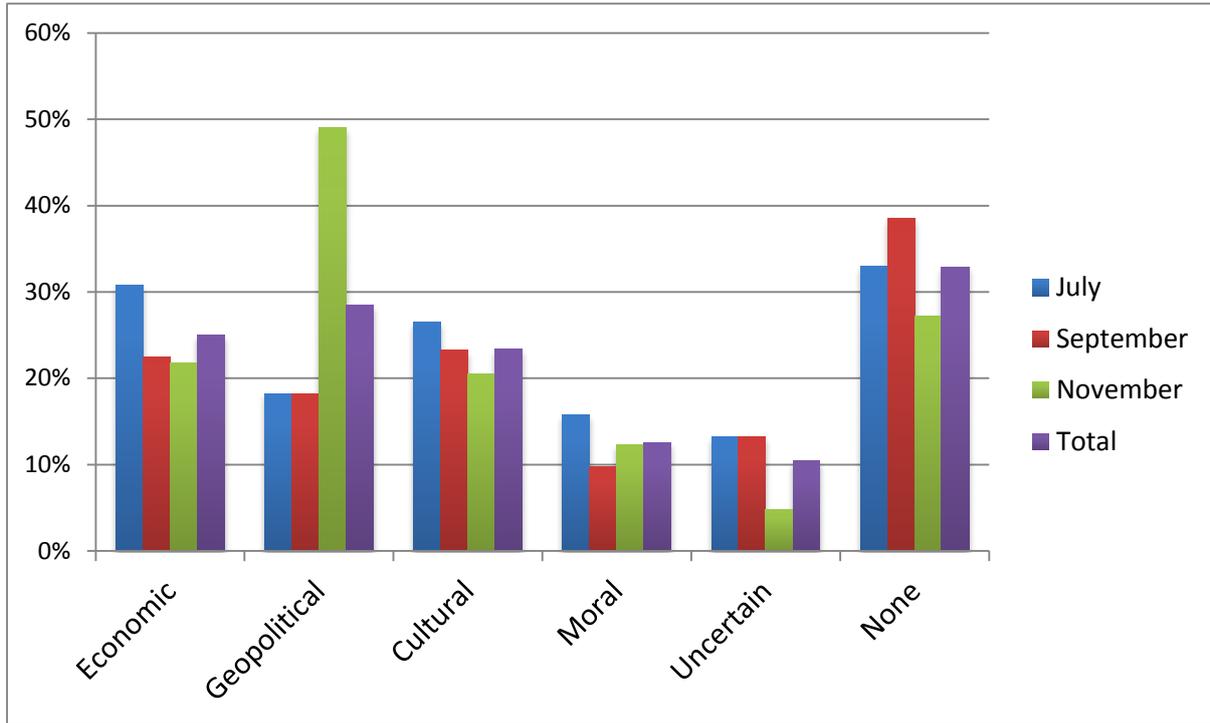
**Figure 5. Mentions of negative consequences of refugee arrivals, by type and period.**
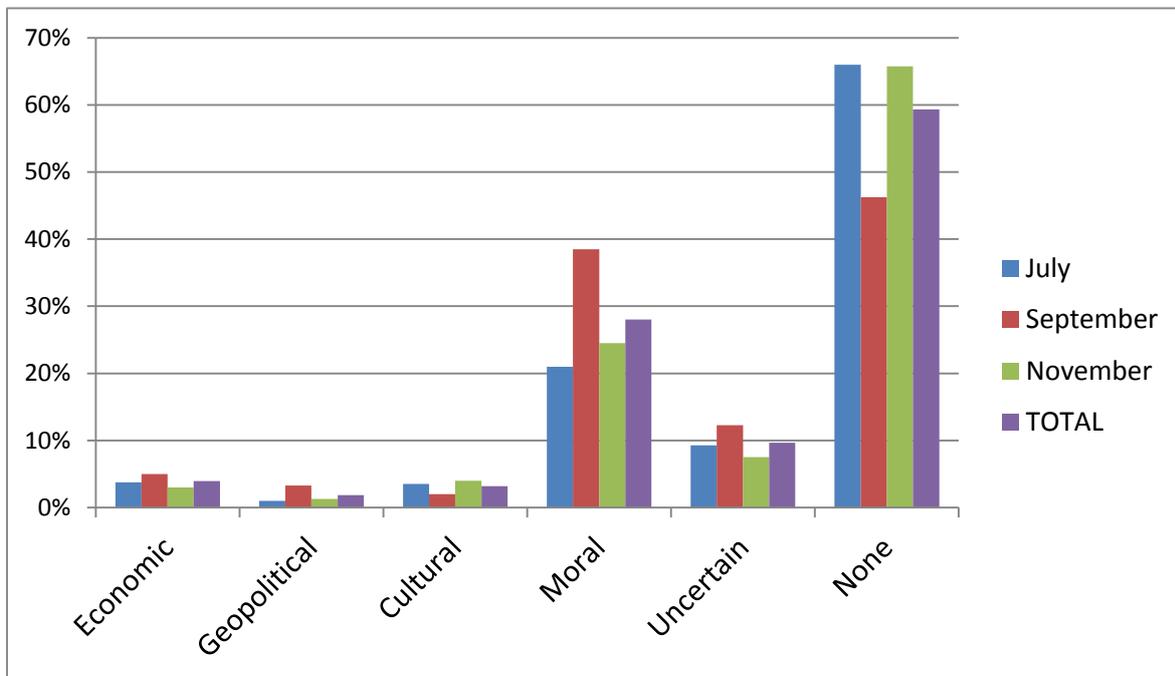
**Figure 6. Mentions of positive consequences of refugee arrivals, by type and period.**
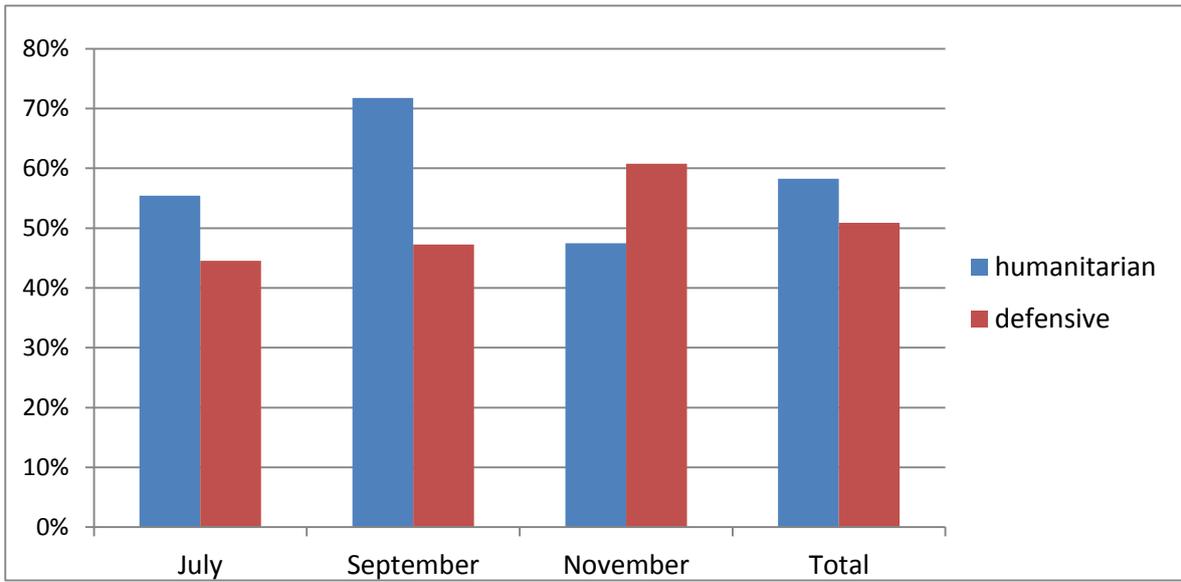
Figure 7. Humanitarian versus defensive actions mentioned or declared, by period.

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APPENDIX ON METHODOLOGY

The newspapers analysed are: Pravo, Lidove Noviny (Czech Republic); Le Monde, Le Figaro (France); Süddeutsche Zeitung, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (Germany); EFSYN, Kathimerini (Greece); Magyar Nemzet, Népszabadság (Hungary); Irish Independent, The Irish Times (Ireland); Vecernje Novosti, Blic (Serbia); The Guardian, The Times, The Independent, The Daily Telegraph (UK).

The three moments observed in the study were: i) Hungary' refusal to admit refugees, erecting a physical barrier along its borders with Serbia (July 13th, 2015); ii) the drowning of toddler Alan Kurdi in the Mediterranean (September 3rd, 2015); and iii) the terror attacks in Paris (November 13th, 2015). Methodologically, we observed each key moment in the press across ten working days following the event. The two largest stories concerning refugees and migrants to Europe in each of the ten daily editions were systematically sampled. The remaining gaps in sampling were systematically filled by stories from different days in the period and, where necessary, we expanded the period of study to up to two weeks outside of the period (for as long as relevant articles were available for the constitution of the sample). While many of the articles were accompanied by images, for consistency across the sample and due to a focus on textual narratives, these were not part of the content analysis at this stage of the research.

The articles were coded and then analysed using quantitative content analysis, driven by our conceptual framework. In a pilot study, the reliability was assessed through intercoder reliability test conducted by two independent researchers. The codebook was subsequently revised and items which did not meet reliability criteria were removed from the study. The revised codebook was then used to code the 1200 articles on the sample.

[i] Migration 'crisis' is placed in quotation marks once here to indicate our critical stance towards Eurocentric uses of the term, which have framed the one million arrivals in Europe in 2015 as the continent's main cause for concern and policy-making. While the term is extensively used in academic discourse and public debate, it ignores three important things: i) the systemic causes that led to the increase in arrivals in Europe – the ongoing conflicts of Central Asia and the Middle East as well as conflict and poverty in East Africa and elsewhere; ii) the overstretched hosting capacity of countries such as Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey, which are already hosting approximately 5 million refugees. (https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/02/syrias-refugee-crisis-in-numbers/); iii) it misleadingly assumes that refugee arrivals started and stopped in 2015, while the flow, albeit in lower numbers, has been and still is continuous and equally lethal as it was during in May-December 2015.

[ii] For background, see http://www.inss.org.il/uploadImages/systemFiles/adkan17_4ENG_7_Berti.pdf

[iii] Report of the European Council on Foreign Relations (22/12/2015): http://www.ecfr.eu (accessed, January 26th 2016)

[iv] Specifically, in the study we focus on the broadsheet press as a crucial resource of information for both European audiences and policymakers. While we acknowledge the role of social media in covering the 'crisis' and sharing information (also among refugees), the role of mainstream media was especially significant – firstly, because of the scale and pace of the developments in 2015, and secondly, because of very limited knowledge the European public had about the refugees and causes of migration (Chouliaraki, Georgiou and Zaborowski, 2017).

[v] It is worth mentioning that even literature discussing the current 'crisis' does so with different geographical foci and different methodological tools. The research on media and refugees remains thus internally diverse, as the *media* in question may include, for instance, publicity stories published by Italian Navy on their website (Musaro), UK press (Ibrahim and Howarth) and European press articles (Berry et al); refugee selfies (Chouliaraki) or refugee's mobile media and social networks (Gillespie et al).

[vi] While the two Lampedusa shipwrecks and the drowning of Alan Kurdi had an immediate but transitory impact on news reporting and public debate on the crisis, the Paris terrorist attacks had a lasting impact. Following a period of intense deliberation among European nation-states, the attacks led to the EU's decision to close national borders in March 2016, blocking 58,000 of them in Greece.

[vii] For instance: Daily Mail (14.09.2015): (http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3233802/Second-passenger-claims-Aylan-Kurdi-s-father-driving-boat-son-died-working-people-smugglers.html and Newsweek (02/12/2016): http://www.newsweek.com/alan-kurdi-father-suspects-tried-turkey-smuggling-425744