Migration and Social Movements

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CHAPTER 9

MIGRATION AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

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Introduction

Migration today is a salient issue across Europe. Political and public debates often deal with the status and rights of immigrants in the so-called host societies, the regulation of inflows of economic migrants as well as asylum seekers, the supposedly negative consequences of the "Islamization" of Western society due to an increasing number of immigrants from Muslim countries, and so forth. Similarly—and perhaps as a consequence of that—public opinion is often quite skeptical about giving more space and rights to new immigrants, if not overtly opposed to it.

Such a saliency and politicization of migration issues is both a cause and a result of the mobilization of certain political forces on such issues, most notably radical right parties which have gained increasing electoral success in recent years. But other political actors have contributed to placing immigration and immigrants high on the political and public agendas: mainstream parties, but also social movements, both from the Left and from the Right. These other actors, of course, include migrants' movements themselves. However, the latter are often absent from political and public debates, and more institutional actors tend to dominate the scene, although we have many important instances of such mobilizations such as, for example, the *sans papiers* or the unrest of 2005 and 2007 in France or the mobilization in the United States of migrant background workers supporting legalization policies.

In spite of such a relevant and close link between migration issues and popular mobilizations around such issues, scholarly work has traditionally developed along two separate paths. On the one hand, research has focussed on the sociology of migration as well as on policy making on immigration and ethnic relations (Brubaker 1992; Freeman 2011; Joppke 1998). On the other hand, students of social

movements have sometimes—though not very often—examined the patterns and determinants of collective action by, on behalf, and against migrants (Ireland 1994; Koopmans et al. 2005).

In this chapter we examine the relation between migration and social movements by focussing on how the structural changes that have affected Western societies, in particular Western Europe, have led to the rise of collective mobilizations in this field (see Kastoryano and Schader 2014 for a review focussing on ethnic mobilizations). The latter take place in a space of contention in which various collective actors intervene publicly on issues pertaining to immigration and ethnic relations politics. Such interventions may take different forms, not only protest actions, but also "softer" ways of addressing migration issues, including speech acts. This is what in recent literature has been called "claims-making" (Koopmans et al. 2005; Koopmans and Statham 1999) and which is inspired by the fundamental work of McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly (1996, 2001).[1] Here we follow this broader view of contentious politics to show how certain structural changes might impact on the claims-making in the field of immigration and ethnic relations politics.

Structural Changes

It is a truism that the world has undergone a fundamental transformation in recent years. Often we refer to such a transformation as "globalization," that is, "the compression of the world and the intensification of the consciousness of the world as a whole" (Robertson 1992: 8) or the " 'lifting out' of social relations from local contexts of interaction and their restructuring across indefinite spans of time–space" (Giddens 1990: 21). This has brought about some important structural changes in contemporary societies. Three such changes, all related to the process of globalization, are of particular relevance when it comes to social movements and collective action on migration issues. Let us describe them in some detail.

The first structural change that had—and is having—important consequences for collective action in this field refers to the movements of populations from one country to the other and, more broadly, from one region of the world to the other, in particular from the less wealthy region to the richest one (Bade 2003). Western Europe has come under particularly strong pressure since the end of the Second World War. Since then immigrants moved to a number of European countries mainly for three reasons: the search for better economic conditions (the so-called "guest workers"), family reunion with other family members, and political motives by asylum-seekers and refugees. This inflow of migrants has taken place in spite of attempts by receiving countries to put up some barriers to it, also due to the inherently liberal character—both in economic and political terms—of Western countries (Hollifield 1992). At the same time, however, the so-called "fortress Europe"—that is, the double-track process of increasing control at the borders of the union and facilitating internal movements, institutionally embodied

by the creation of the Schengen space—has made access more difficult for migrants coming from extra-European countries.[2]

Yet, the most important changes in this respect lie not so much in the sheer number or share of residents of migrant origin as in the variety and diversity of this population. If, up until the 1990s, the migrant population of most immigration countries was made of a few nationalities coming from traditional emigration countries such as Italy,[3] Portugal, and Spain, or from former colonies (this applies in particular to Britain and France), in the past two or three decades this population has become more diversified. Immigration flows have started increasingly to come from extra-European countries, from Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, most notably. Perhaps most importantly in relation to recent and current political debates, is the diversity in religious terms brought about by the inflow of Muslim immigrants.[4]

These structural changes in the size and diversity of the immigrant population may have two consequences. On the one hand, they might increase the likelihood to observe the rise of migrants' mobilizations, all other things being equal. On the other hand, they might also increase the likelihood that other actors—especially anti-migrant ones—might mobilize, either verbally or physically. Social movement theory, however, has shown that at least three intervening factors need to be taken into account for explaining if and how grievances translate into actual mobilization: the degree of endogenous organization of the movement, the framing of migration issues by social and political actors, and favorable political opportunities to mount collective challenges (McAdam et al. 1996; Tarrow 2011). In other words, structural change does not translate directly in social movements around migration issues, but depends on how organized movements are, how such issues are articulated in the public domain, and how the political–institutional context offers opportunities for the movements to mobilize.

Globalization has brought about a second important structural change for the claims-making on immigration and ethnic relations politics. This refers to the transformation of the structure of social and political cleavages in Europe. As Kriesi and his collaborators have argued (Kriesi et al. 2008, 2012), Europe has witnessed a transformation of the political space in recent years which has brought about a new cleavage opposing "winners" and "losers" of globalization and cutting across traditional lines of demarcation. This transformation of the cleavage structures, which has primarily affected the cultural dimension of the political space, has favored the rise and success of radical right parties in the 1990s and 2000s, which have made their opposition to immigration their main electoral selling point, but also to a transformation of the political agenda of established parties into right-wing populist parties supported by the losers of the globalization process: unskilled workers and the less well educated (Grande 2008; Oesch and Rennwald 2010). The success of these parties has been attributed to their use of a "magic formula" combining liberalism in the economic realm and authoritarianism in the cultural realm (Kitschelt 1995). The latter rests precisely on a strong anti-immigrant stance, especially when it comes to asylum-seekers and, more recently, Muslim immigrants. As a result, political debates on immigration become more polarized.

Finally, if the transformation of the political space just described is felt above all at the national level, though in most if not all European countries, a third structural change brought about by globalization—or perhaps better, characterizing globalization—and having important consequences for collective action on migration issues concerns the increasing importance of the supranational level. We refer to the process of European integration. In spite of recent and less recent instances of resistance to this process and increasing skepticism vis-à-vis the European project, the past few decades have witnessed a relative shift of power and sovereignty from the national to the supranational (European) level. In terms of social movement and collective action theory, this means that political opportunities for mobilization—including on migration issues—have emerged at the EU level (Marks and McAdam 1996). However, as some have shown (Balme and Chabanet 2008; Imig and Tarrow 2001; Rucht 2002), the structure and logic of European institutions favors interest groups as well as highly professionalized and formalized organizations rather than social movements and grass-roots associations, with little space for a Europeanization of protest, including in the field of immigration and ethnic relations (Giugni and Passy 2002).

Changing Patterns of Political Mobilization on Migration

How have these structural changes affected political mobilization in the field of immigration and ethnic relations? Two large-scale comparative studies provide empirical evidence to answer this question.[5] First and foremost, as already noted, this has led to an increasing salience of migration. The degree of intervention in the public domain, as measured by the number of claims, gives a rough indicator of salience. Although their study is more geared towards explaining differences across countries rather than changes over time, Koopmans et al. (2005) have stressed the increasing salience of migration issue in public discourse during the 1990s.

A more recent study—the Support and Opposition to Migration (SOM) project—allows us to take a closer look at the period up to the late 2000s. This study has looked, among other things at the changing patterns of claims-making in the politics of migration in Western Europe (Berkhout 2012). As we can see, in spite of day-to-day variation, there is a rising trend in terms of the number of claims since 1995 (Figure 9.1). The pattern, however, is curvilinear rather that linear: the number of claims peaked in 2004–05 and has fallen since then. Yet the level at the end of the period in 2009 remains higher than its initial level in 1995.

Migration policy has traditionally been divided into two main subfields: the regulation of immigration flows (including asylum-seekers and refugees) and the situation of resident migrants in the receiving society (in social, cultural, and political terms). These two policy fields have been captured by the distinction between immigration and

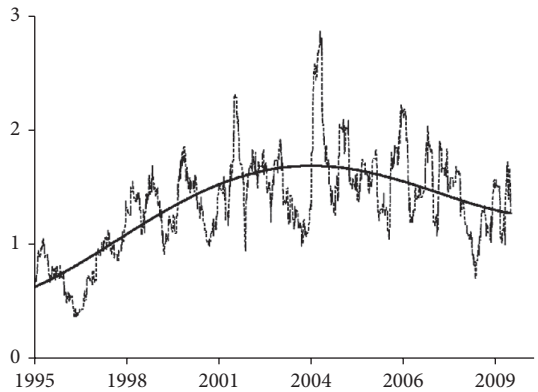

FIGURE 9.1 Salience of migration (number of claims per day and long-term trend line)

Source: Berkhout, Joost (2012). *Changing Claims and Changing Frames in the Politics of Migration in Western Europe, 1995–2009*. SOM Working Papers. Paper Number 2012-09.

immigrant policy (Hammar 1985). Political mobilization over migration accordingly addresses these two main issue fields. Koopmans et al. (2005) show that the thematic focus of claims varies very much across country as a result of different institutional and discursive opportunity structures. In some countries, such as Germany and Switzerland but to some extent also France, claims on immigration, asylum, and aliens politics largely surpass claims on minority integration politics, while in others, like Netherlands and Great Britain, it is the other way around. If, however, one includes in immigrant policy also claims pertaining to anti-racism, xenophobia, and inter-ethnic conflicts, then in all five countries but Switzerland the former represent the core of political debates and collective action in this field. So, in spite of a substantial share of claims being focussed on the regulation of immigration flows and in spite of the question of refugees taking central stage—in addition to being a real problem—in specific periods and in some contexts, most notably in the wake of the dramatic events occurred in the Middle East and Northern Africa after the Libyan and Syrian crises, in most countries the real stuff of political mobilization in this field seems to have to do with minority integration politics.

Again, the SOM project provides us with longitudinal data in order to see whether and how the thematic focus of claims has changed over time (Berkhout et al. 2013). The distinction between immigration and civic integration issues roughly reflects that between immigration and immigrant policy. The trends over time unveil something a cross-sectional analysis cannot show, namely that priorities have changed considerably. Once again, important annual variations can be observed, but the linear trend lines are quite explicit (Figure 9.2). Clearly, political mobilization in this field has shifted from a focus on immigration in the mid-1990s to a focus on civic integration in the late 2000s. The issue of accommodation of Islam in Europe is certainly not alien to this major shift (van Parys et al. 2013). In fact, if one looks at claims-making on Muslims only—hence excluding other types of migrants—minority integration politics became

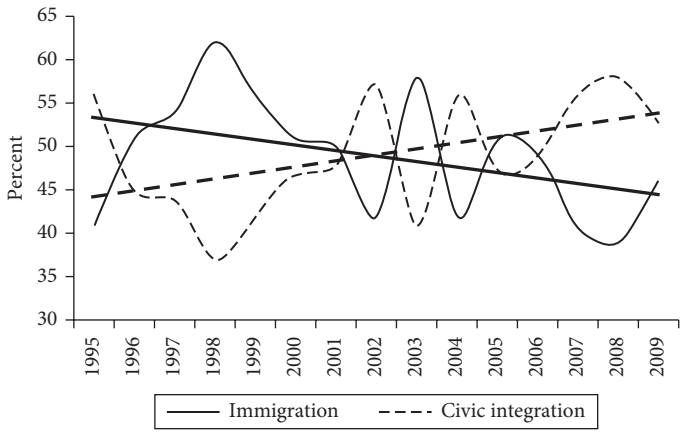

FIGURE 9.2 Thematic focus of claims-making on migration (proportion of claims per year and linear trend lines)

Source: Berkhout, Joost (2012). *Changing Claims and Changing Frames in the Politics of Migration in Western Europe, 1995–2009*. SOM Working Papers. Paper Number 2012-09.

overwhelmingly the most important priority in all countries, with only a small share of claims dealing with immigration, asylum, and aliens politics when it comes to this population.

Obviously, claims are made by actors. So, who lies behind interventions in claims-making? Has the relative weight of certain actors changed over time? We can get an idea of this by looking again at the SOM data (Figure 9.3). These show the distribution of claims on migration issues across types of actors. Perhaps the most immediately visible aspect is that both state and non-state actors have increased their interventions in the public domain on issues pertaining to immigration and ethnic relations politics during the period under scrutiny.[6] This applies in particular to governments as well as parliaments and political parties, on the one hand, and other civil society actors, on the other.[7] In contrast, the contribution of three key actors in this field seems to be more limited. These are extreme right (anti-immigrant) actors, anti-racist and pro-migrant actors, and of course migrants themselves.

The low presence (read: political mobilization) of the radical right may seem odd. It can however be explained in two ways. First, public attention has often been captured by some *éclatant* events, such as xenophobic violent attacks to centers of asylum-seekers—especially in Germany—in the 1990s or certain speeches by extreme right party leaders. This might convey the image of a very active radical right, while a more systematic view tells us that it is less so (see Caiani et al. 2012 for a recent comparative analysis of the mobilization of the extreme right).[8] Secondly, unlike leftist positions in favor of immigrants, the radical right most often takes the form of parties and uses the electoral channels rather than of social movements (Hutter and Kriesi 2013; Kriesi 1999). Protests on immigration only represent a small share of all protest events (Kriesi et al. 2012). In addition, it remains largely in the hand of

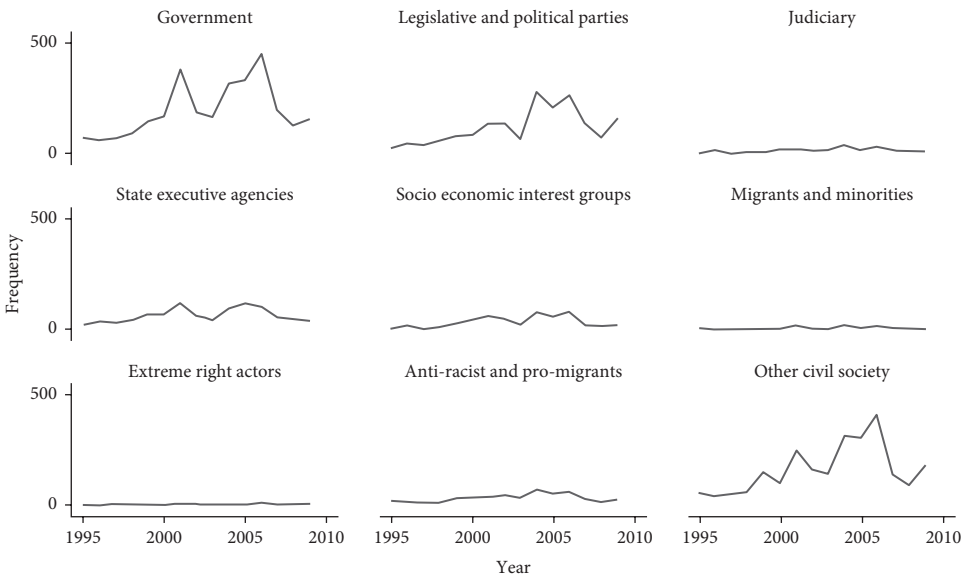

FIGURE 9.3 Distribution of claims over time by type of actors (number of claims)

Source: SOM project.

left-wing pro-migrant groups than of anti-migrants actors. The latter tend to prefer using the institutional venues, most notably interventions in the electoral arena. We should therefore not be too surprised to observe a low presence of radical rights actors in political claims-making on migration issues, a presence which has moreover remained quite stable over time. In addition Koopmans (1996) has shown that there is an inverse relationship between the electoral strength of the radical right and the level of extra-parliamentary mobilization by extreme right actors: the stronger the former, the weaker the latter and vice versa.

If mobilization by "anti-immigrant" actors is less important than one might expect, that of their counterpart is not much higher. As we can see, claims by anti-racist and pro-migrant actors are also at a relatively low level. In contrast to the radical right, however, they have increased their presence during the peak of mobilization in the field, around 2004–05. Yet, research on anti-racist and pro-migrant movements is extremely limited. Apart from certain works on the *sans papiers* in France (Siméant 1998) and in the French-speaking literature more generally (Passy 1998), little has been done so far on this front (Koopmans 2001; Statham 2001).

In our earlier discussion of the structural changes, we referred to globalization as a major transformation which has had—and is still having—important consequences for migration. To what extent does it influence collective action and social movements on immigration and ethnic relations politics? During the 1990s, a number of important works argued that, under the thrust of globalization, the locus of conflicts around migration issues has shifted from the national to the supranational arena and that the national level has become much less important in recent decades (Jacobson 1996; Soysal 1994).

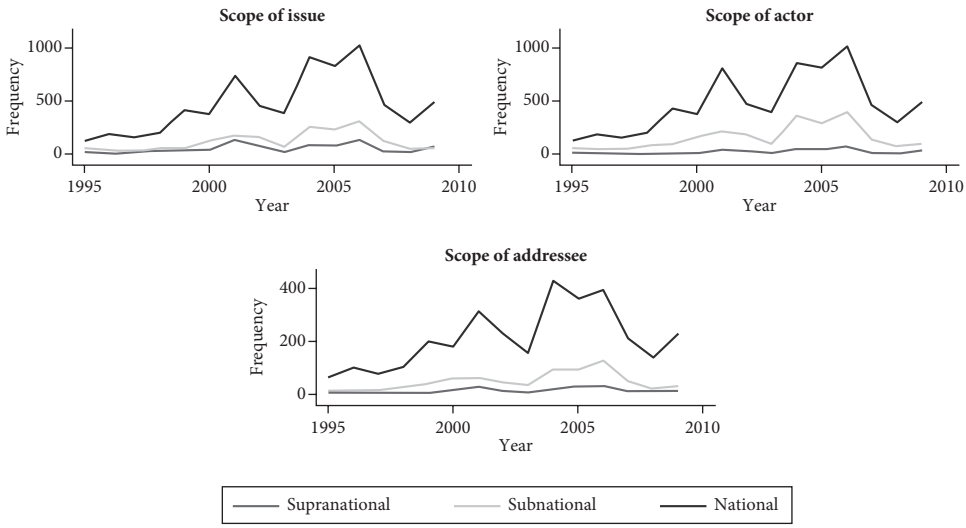

FIGURE 9.4 Distribution of claims over time by scope (number of claims)

Source: SOM project.

Koopmans et al. (2005), among others (Joppke 1999) have challenged this view, showing evidence that this is not the case and that the core of political debates and mobilizations has remained well anchored in the national level. The data from the SOM project lead to a similar conclusion. We can see the extent to which claims-making in this field went "beyond borders"—or perhaps has localized—by looking at the scope of claims-making (Figure 9.4). Regardless of whether we consider the scope of the issue, actor, or addressees—three indicators of the "supranationalization" of claims-making—the share of national-based claims remains overwhelmingly larger than that of both supranational and sub-national ones. In addition, while all levels have contributed to the rise in the first half of the 2000s, national claims take the lion's share in it.

Migrants' Movements

In our earlier discussion on claims-making by specific actors, migrants and minorities were deliberately not included, as their political mobilization is discussed in more detail here. The increasing salience of migration as an issue in the public domain and in contentious politics goes along with an increasing organization of migrants as collective political actors. Long considered as politically quiescent, in particular in European scholarship on contentious politics in the field of immigration, recent works show that migrants are politically active (Jacobs and Tillie 2004; Morales and Giugni 2011; Ramakrishnan and Bloemraad 2008). As can be seen in the data shown in Figure 9.3, migrants form only a small share of actors mobilizing on issues related to immigration and ethnic relations

politics. In addition, migrant organizations use protest very sparingly (Eggert and Pilati 2014). However, they are increasingly organizing themselves, both nationally and supranationally, advancing claims on issues as diverse as the extension of their rights, the recognition of their cultural particularities, and the conditions of entry and stay in the receiving countries (Soysal 1997). In some countries, the presence of migrants in claims-making is actually quite large and can constitute as much as one fifth of all claims, as for example in Britain in the 1990s (Koopmans et al. 2005).

The structural changes discussed earlier have not only affected the patterns of claims-making and political mobilization on issues pertaining to immigration and ethnic relations, but also the ways in which scholars have addressed these issues. In Western Europe and most notably in long-standing immigration countries such as Britain, France, and Germany, research has long focussed on immigrant groups coming from Southern Europe in order to work or—especially in the case of Britain and France—on people from former colonies such as India, Pakistan, or the Maghreb region. In the last few years, however, the focus of scholars has shifted towards an analysis of new immigrant groups, including from Sub-Saharan Africa and, more recently, Muslims migrants have taken center stage.

Various approaches have accounted for the mobilization of migrants and their collective action. Reflecting the ways in which immigration has been dealt with more generally, in the 1970s and 1980s the study of collective action of migrants was dominated by the debate opposing class-based and ethnic-based approaches (Castles and Kosack 1974; Miles and Phizaclea 1977; Miller 1982; Rex 1991). In the 1990s and 2000s, however, there has been a paradigmatic shift towards theories stressing the role of resources and opportunities for the political mobilization of migrants (Ireland 1994; Koopmans and Statham 2000; Koopmans et al. 2005; Okamoto 2003; Soysal 1994, 1997; Steil and Vasi 2014). This theoretical turn has come in part under the lead of students of social movements who became interested in collective action in the field of immigration and ethnic relations politics. Studies undertaken in this theoretical tradition were able to show how collective action by migrants follow logics similar to any other social movement as well as its wide cross-national variation as a result of different sets of institutional and discursive opportunities. Thus, recent studies show that the use of protest activities by migrant organizations varies across countries: in countries where migrants have limited rights, migrants and their organizations tend to rely on native associations and actors to advance their claims (Eggert and Pilati 2014; Pilati 2012).

In sum, research on migrants' movements is still relatively limited. This is not because of a lack of "raw material," as different types of migrants do mobilize in spite of the fact that they are often to be found at the margins of society. Students of social movements have traditionally tended to focus on a limited number of "important" movements, such as peace and environmental movements in Europe or the civil rights movement in the United States. This has adversely affected not only the study of migrants' movements, but also of that of mobilizations against (i.e., radical rights movements) or on behalf (i.e., pro-migrant movements) of such movements. In addition, this relative shortage of studies on migrants' movements is to some extent hidden by the fact that there is a

growing and quite important literature on the political participation of immigrants at the individual level (see Morales an Giugni 2011 for a recent study). While these works often look at different forms of participation or at participation in general, they provide important insights into the conditions and mechanisms of engagement in protest activities.

Conclusion

Migration and social movements have seldom been associated in the social science literature. Scholarly work has either looked at migration mainly in terms of policies or in its sociological dimension, leaving little room for discussion of collective action by, for, or against migrants. When scholars have addressed political mobilization on migration issues, they have mostly focussed on party politics, mainly in order to explain the rise and electoral breakthrough of radical right parties. And in the rare instances in which they have looked at social movements in this field, they have predominantly focussed on migrants as objects rather than protagonists of political mobilization.

Yet, the field is not completely empty. Scholarly interest in the topic has increased in recent years, partly as a consequence of certain structural changes that have had important consequences for collective action in this field, such as the increasing size and diversity of the immigrant population in Western Europe. As a result, migration has become a more salient issue, both in political debates and among scholars.

Research has been characterized by two major shifts in recent years. First, class and ethnicity theories, which dominated the field in the 1970s and 1980s, have been increasingly challenged by new approaches stressing the role of resources and opportunities. This is because students of social movements have become interested in the political mobilizing of migrants as well as more generally on immigration and ethnic relations politics. The resulting cross-fertilization between the field of migration studies and that of social movement studies cannot but be beneficial to both.

Secondly, in addition to this theoretical shift, scholars have shifted their attention away from traditional immigrant groups to other migrant populations, most notably Muslims. In addition, partly as a result of the structural changes described earlier, research has paid increasing attention to mobilizations occurring at the global and not only national or local levels.

While the gap between the research on migration and research on social movements, at least in part, has started to be closed, much more work is required in order to better understand under which conditions social movements by, for, and against migrants mobilize and through which processes and mechanisms. Work on migrants' movements is particularly necessary, as this represents one of the main blind spots in the extant literature. In addition, research on the consequences of social movements in the field of immigration has been lagging behind and therefore scholars should pay much more attention to this aspect in the future.

Notes

1. In this context, an instance of claims-making can be defined as any act involving "demands, criticisms, or proposals related to the regulation or evaluation of immigration, minority integration, or xenophobia" (Koopmans and Statham 1999: 207).
2. This does not apply, or only to a limited extent, to countries such as Switzerland that have made specific bilateral agreements with the European Union.
3. Britain is perhaps an exception, given the more varied migrant population coming from Commonwealth countries.
4. Of course, countries with former colonies in Muslim societies, like Britain and France, had already a large share of residents originating from those societies.
5. These are the MERCI (Mobilization on Ethnic Relations, Citizenship, and Immigration) project (covering France, Germany, Great Britain, Netherlands, and Switzerland) and the SOM (Support and Opposition to Migration) project (covering Austria, Belgium, Britain, Ireland, Netherlands, Spain, and Switzerland).
6. Since these data (and those presented by Koopmans et al. 2005) come from a content analysis of media sources, here we refer to the presence of actors in the public domain in this field. However, this is the most relevant aspect when it comes to examining patterns of political mobilization, both across countries and over time. The same applies to the other data presented in this chapter.
7. Other civil society actors include religious organizations, media and journalists, academics and experts, charity and social organizations.
8. It is important to note that we are speaking here of claims by radical rights actors, not xenophobic or racist claims made by other actors, such as mainstream parties for example. If we include the latter, obviously we find a much higher number of extreme right claims (Koopmans et al. 2005).

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