



LIVEWHAT

Living with Hard Times

How Citizens React to Economic Crises and Their Social and Political Consequences

Integrated report on collective responses to crises in the public domain

(Deliverable: 3.2)

WP3: Collective responses to crises in the public domain

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CITIZENS' RESPONSES TO THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC CRISIS IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

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Strong preference will be given to submissions demonstrating a balanced comparative treatment of policy in more than one country. Transborder, cross-national, or wider international research emphasizing a comparative study's political implications are especially welcome. Manuscripts dealing comparatively with aspects of democracy and democratization, global governance, or policies that transcend, or resist, the advent of porous borders are also actively invited, as are robust review articles on the current state of the literature.

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Introduction to the Special Issue: Citizens' Responses to the European Economic Crisis in the Public Domain

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Citizens may respond to economic crises and to policy responses to such crises in a variety of ways. This special issue focuses on collective responses as they express themselves in the public domain, in the form of social movements or other types of interventions. The special issue originates in a large-scale comparative research project funded by the European Commission and titles "Living with Hard Times: How Citizens React to Economic Crises and Their Social and Political Consequences" (LIVEWHAT). The eight articles all use a common dataset and adopt a common method, known as political claims analysis, which has proven fruitful in previous work on social movements and contentious politics, consisting in retrieving interventions in the public domain on a given issue, or range of issues, drawing from media sources, most often newspapers. The data stem from a systematic content analysis of newspapers in each of the countries under study.

Los ciudadanos responden a las crisis económicas y a las respuestas políticas a tales crisis en una variedad de formas. Este número especial se enfoca en las respuestas colectivas tal como son expresadas en el dominio público en la forma de movimientos sociales u otros tipos de intervención. El número especial tiene su origen en un proyecto de investigación comparativo de gran escala financiado por la Comisión Europea y tiene por título "Viviendo en tiempos duros: Cómo reaccionan los ciudadanos a las crisis económicas y a sus consecuencias políticas y sociales" (LIVEWHAT por sus siglas en

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inglés). Los ocho artículos usan el mismo conjunto de datos y adoptan un método común conocido como análisis de reclamos políticos que ha probado ser muy fructífero en trabajos previos sobre movimientos sociales y política contenciosa, consistiendo en búsqueda de intervenciones en el dominio público por asunto, o rango de asuntos, dependiendo de fuentes mediáticas, mas usualmente prensa. Los datos parten de un análisis de contenido sistemático de los periódicos en cada una de las naciones bajo estudio.

Keywords: Economic Crisis, Great Recession, Citizens' Responses, Public Domain, Social Movements, Contentious Politics, Protest Behavior, Political Claims Analysis, LIVEWHAT, Living with Hard Times, P&P Special Issue, Newspaper Content Analysis, Media, Political Communications, Citizenship, Participation, and Democracy.

The articles in this special issue of *Politics & Policy* originate in a large-scale comparative research project funded by the European commission under the 7th Framework Programme (grant agreement no. 613237), titled "Living with Hard Times: How Citizens React to Economic Crises and Their Social and Political Consequences" (LIVEWHAT), coordinated by one the guest editors of this special issue. This project aims to provide evidence-based knowledge about citizens' resilience in times of economic crises to inform more effective policy responses to the negative consequences of such crises. It examines in particular the ways in which European citizens have reacted to the crisis that, at different degrees of intensity in different countries, has afflicted Europe since 2008, but also how citizens deal with economic crises and their consequences more generally. More specifically, the project has three main objectives: to provide systematic evidence of the ways in which European citizens respond to economic crises and to policy responses to such crises, both individually and collectively; to advance knowledge on the connections between individual factors, contextual factors, and the ways in which European citizens respond to economic crises and to policy responses to such crises; and to suggest a number of good practices as to how to deal with economic crises, both at the social and political level, through which their negative consequences on European citizens can be avoided or limited. A more detailed description as well as various related documents and outputs are available on the project's website at <http://www.livewhat.unige.ch>

Citizens may respond to economic crises and to policy responses to such crises in a variety of ways. First, citizens may respond individually (e.g., changing attitudes and behaviors) or collectively (e.g., engaging in collective action). Second, they may respond privately (e.g., changing lifestyle) or publicly (expressing discontent in the media). Third, they may respond politically (e.g., voting for a populist party) or nonpolitically (by broadening their social ties). This special issue focuses on collective responses as they express themselves in

the public domain, in the form of social movements or other types of interventions. In addition, it focuses on a specific economic crisis, the one that started in 2008 and which has come to be known as the “Great Recession.”

In addition to—at least potentially—changing individual attitudes and behaviors, discontent arising from economic hardship may also lead to collective forms of reactions, including protest behavior. More generally, the analysis of collective responses to economic crises intersects with the study of political interventions by organized actors in the public domain. The public domain contains a large plurality of actors—including powerful policy makers and political elites as well as corporate actors, pressure groups, and civil society organizations and movements—who thus have at disposal a common arena for making public their positions, mutual conflicts, shared agreements, and so forth. While the policy domain only includes institutions and main political elites that lead processes of decision making, the public domain is opened up to different types of publics that are the object of policy making (Cinalli 2004; Bassoli and Cinalli 2016). But obviously these two domains are strongly interlinked and twined together. In particular, institutional variations are expected to affect the relationship between economic crisis, policy responses, and citizens’ resilience. On one hand, neoinstitutionalist theories have clearly shown the institutional influence on movement forms as well the historical and institutional dependence of collective forms of political engagement (Lowndes 2010). In particular, the concept of political opportunity structures has been used to explain the levels, forms, and outcomes of collective action (Kriesi 2004; Meyer 2004). On the other hand, attention can also be focused on legal systems and rules through which collective engagement become possible. One may refer to the fact that the wide-spreading meaning of “rights” in the daily life of citizens has only occurred where the same meaning was reflected in legal and institutional practices (Tarrow 1996). The legal framework has also been crucial for shaping people’s conceptions of basic principles, for example, “equality” and “personhood” (Merry 1990).

In any large polity—such as the city, a larger region, and more so the national state—it is impossible for all these actors to interact publicly and directly, together, as in a face-to-face model. Consequently, they must rely to a considerable extent on the media to access and shape the public space, so as to express their position, debate the pros and cons of different policy choices, or call upon the support of the general public. As a consequence, there are growing bodies of research that focus on the crucial relationship between different types of actors, their interventions, and the common public domain that is available through the media. Drawing upon protest event analysis in studies of contentious politics (Hutter 2014), scholars have engaged with claims making (Koopmans and Statham 1999) in a way to systematically analyze roles and positions of all actors that enter national public spheres. Other scholars have dealt with the analysis of the media so as to go deeper in the assessment of cross-actor interactions and public deliberation in the whole polity as well as in

specific policy fields (Cinalli and Giugni 2013; Cinalli and O'Flynn 2014; Dolezal, Helbling, and Hutter 2010). By acknowledging the plurality of modes of political intervention that different types of actors may use (Sanders 1997; Young 2000), a systematic analysis of the public domain has to refer to all potential forms of reactions and interventions in the public space, such as purely discursive forms (e.g., public statements, press releases, publications, and interviews), conventional forms of political action (e.g., litigation or petitioning), as well as protest forms such as demonstrations and political violence.

By tackling the distinction between institutions and public discourse, this special issue deals with the different articulations at the intersection of the policy and the public domain so as to broaden the explanatory scope of our analysis. We can thus engage with dynamics readjustments between the decisions that policy makers take on one hand, and the shape of the public domain on the other, focusing on processes of (mis)matching between the public and the policy domain. In so doing, we can also evaluate whether policy actors (in their quest for political advantages) have a discourse in the public domain that is consistent with their interventions in the policy domain. Additionally, we can evaluate which readjustments do take place across institutions and discourse.

The articles in this special issue are all based on the same dataset, generated in the LIVEWHAT project and following the method of political claims analysis (Hutter 2014; Koopmans and Statham 1999). This method, which has proven fruitful in previous work on social movements and contentious politics (Cinalli and Giugni 2013; Giugni 2010; Koopmans *et al.* 2005), consists in retrieving interventions in the public domain on a given issue or range of issues drawing from media sources, most often—as here—newspapers. The interventions are defined as “political claims,” which are instances of strategic action in the public sphere that are political in nature. They thus consist of the expression of a political position by some form of physical or verbal action that relates to collective social problems and solutions, regardless of the form this expression takes (verbal statement, violence, repression, decision, demonstration, court ruling, and so forth) and regardless of the nature of the actor (governments, social movements, nongovernmental organizations, individuals, anonymous actors, and so forth). Each intervention of any actor is characterized by a typical structure, which can be broken down into six main elements inquiring into the main attributes of a claim. We have thus identified the claimant (Who makes the claim?), the form (By which action is the claim inserted in the public sphere?), the addressee (At whom is the claim directed?), the content (What is to be undertaken?), the object (To whom is the claim directed?), and the frame (Why should this action be undertaken?).

The data stem from a systematic content analysis of newspapers in each of the countries under study. A two-step procedure has been followed to gather the relevant content-analytic data, combining the advantages of automated

search and selection of online media sources with the qualitative detail allowed by human coding. In the first step, several national newspapers have been selected (available online through sources such as Lexis-Nexis). From these newspapers a representative sample of articles has been drawn through relevant keyword searches, which was then coded in the second step. We have created a comparative dataset by random sampling about 1,000 claims per country (for a total sample of 9,033 claims) selected from five newspapers in each country and covering the period from 2005 to 2014 (in Greece and Poland the number of newspapers have been reduced owing to lower online availability). The choice of newspapers has followed from the need to ensure as much as possible a representative and unbiased sample. Therefore, we have included both quality newspapers and more tabloid-oriented newspapers. Furthermore, we have considered newspapers from different political orientations. All articles containing any of the three words “crisis,” “recession,” or “austerity” have been selected and coded, to the extent that they referred to the current economic crisis. The articles have been sampled from all newspaper sections, excluding editorials, through key words search. Table 1 lists the newspapers used as a source for the coding.

The data generated allow for both nationally based and cross-national comparative analyses. More specifically, they provide evidence to study collective responses to the crisis and the position of policy makers in the public domain, to examine the positions of collective actors with regard to the crisis, how they frame the crisis, its origins (diagnostic), and potential solutions (prognostic). Which collective actors more often address issues relating to the economic crisis? What do policy responses to such a crisis “look like” in the public domain? What issues are most often addressed? What causes are attributed to the crisis and by whom? What solutions are proposed and by whom? How do organized citizens react publicly to periods of crisis? Are protest activities related in some way to such periods?

The articles in this special issue address these, as well as related, questions. More generally, they all engage with the debates and dynamics mentioned earlier. Some of them address more general questions and adopt a broader comparative framework, while others have a more specific focus, in terms of the issues addressed, the countries covered, or both. The first two articles, in a way, both question the relevance and impact of the economic crisis on political claims making and point to the relevance of national features in this process.

Lorenzo Zamponi and Lorenzo Bosi (Which Crisis? European Crisis and National Contexts in Public Discourse) ask whether there is such a thing as “the crisis” in the European public discourse and whether this emerges as a recognizable factor. Their analysis points to a number of differences between countries that were most severely hit by the crisis on one hand and countries that were less so on the other, but also to differences within the same group of most severely hit by the crisis. Based on that, they argue in favor of a more nuanced view of the crisis to account for its political consequences. The economic crisis has an impact on public

Table 1. Newspapers Used as Source for the Coding of Claims Making

France	Germany	Greece	Italy	Poland	Spain	Sweden	Switzerland	UK
Libération	Bild	Kathimerini	La Repubblica	Dziennik	El Pais	Dagens	Neue Zürcher	Daily
Le Figaro	Süddeutsche	Rizospastis	La Stampa	Gazeta Prawna	La Vanguardia	Nyheter	Zeitung	Mail
Le Monde	Zeitung	Ta Nea	Corriere della	Gazeta	El Periodico	Svenska	Blick	Daily
Le Parisien	Frankfurter	To Vima	Sera	Wyborcza	de Catalunya	Dagbladet	Tagesanzeiger	Mirror
La Tribune	Allgemeine		Il Giornale	Rzeczpospolitain	ABC	Aftonbladet	Le Matin	The Guardian
	Zeitung		Il Sole 24		El Mundo	Gröteborgs	Le Temps	The Sun
	Welt					Posten		The
	Frankfurter					Norrbottens-		Times
	Rundschau					Kuriren		

discourse, but not a homogenous one. One needs to take into account national specific features to understand the relationship between economic crisis and political change. In this perspective, they identify four different “crises” in public discourse—the global financial crisis, the public debt and austerity crisis, the industrial productive crisis, and the political legitimacy crisis—and examine the relationship between their relative visibility and the evolution of structural factors and political change in different national contexts.

The article by Manlio Cinalli and Marco Giugni (*Collective Responses to the Economic Crisis in the Public Domain: Myth or Reality?*) questions the impact of the economic crisis in a clear-cut and provocative fashion. They challenge the common wisdom that the Great Recession has produced radical changes in terms of political behavior and more specifically in terms of a rise in protest actions. To do so, they assess the extent to which the crisis has spurred protest activities and given socioeconomic issues a higher saliency in public debates, but also the extent to which the crisis has provided a more prominent place for economic and labor actors as subject actors, as object-actors, and as addressees in claims making about the economic crisis. Their analysis shows that the crisis has not produced such radical changes in all these aspects, although it has had some impact. More broadly, the analysis unveils the normative underpinnings of the commonly held view that the economic crisis has fed a grievance-based conflict between capital and labor, which allegedly goes beyond the specific patterns and configurations of each country.

The remaining six articles all address more specific issues. The study by Marco Giugni and Maria T. Grasso (*How Civil Society Actors Responded to the Economic Crisis: The Interaction of Material Deprivation and Perceptions of Political Opportunity Structures*) focuses on the role of the civil society. They examine the relationship between material deprivation—an aspect most often stressed in works on the impact of the economic crisis—and different types of responses by civil society actors. Specifically, they look at the interaction of material deprivation and perceptions of the political environment or political opportunity structures. Their findings suggest that the effect of material deprivation on various aspects of responses to the crisis by civil society actors varies depending on the perceptions of political stability and of the effectiveness of government. This suggests that such perceptions feed into the interpretation of present conditions and act as signals leading material deprivation to become politicized as a grievance.

Maria Theiss, Anna Kurowska, and Janina Petelczyc (*Whose Rights, Which Duties? Political Claims in the Sphere of Labor Policy in the Times of Crisis: The Social Citizenship Perspective*) follow a “social citizenship perspective” and examine the discursive construction of social citizenship of labor market actors (employees, employers, and outsiders) during the crisis. Their study shows that the attribution of rights (or freedoms) to these three groups prevails and that claims supporting employees’ social rights are most often made. However, the framing of the claims varies according to the actor at

hand. In this regard, they outline three kinds of discourse about the rights and duties that actors should have with respect to the labor market: in contexts of severe crisis labor organizations and groups claim the rights of employees; in contexts of moderate crisis the state (re)calls the rights of the outsiders; and in contexts in which the crisis was present in the discourse rather than in real terms, a window of opportunity has emerged for markets and employers to claim their freedoms and rights.

The article by Sabina Monza and Eva Anduiza (*The Visibility of the EU in the National Public Spheres in Times of Crisis and Austerity*) looks at the articulation between the national and the European level in claims making during the economic crisis. To do so, they examine the visibility of the European Union (UN) in the debates that took place in the national public spheres of the nine countries included in the study. More specifically, they inquire whether the impact of the recent economic crisis and the implementation of austerity policies have advanced the presence of the EU, its member states, and European concerns in the national public spheres. Their analysis confirms previous work that has pointed to a limited presence of EU-level issues in political claims making in different fields. However, despite the very limited overall presence of the EU and European subjects in the national debates, they find meaningful cross-national differences. In particular, Germany stands out as having a leading position conveying visibility to European claims, followed by France, Greece, and Italy, whereas Poland, Spain, and Sweden display a lower visibility of the EU, and even more so Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

While the articles described so far all analyze the entire spectrum of countries included in the LIVEWHAT project—either generally or focusing on a more specific issue—the last three contributions look at specific countries. Christian Lahusen, Maria Kousis, Johannes Kiess, and Maria Paschou (*Political Claims and Discourse Formations: A Comparative Account on Germany and Greece in the Eurozone Crisis*) compare public debates on the economic crisis in two countries belonging to the Eurozone: a country that has been most severely affected by the crisis (Greece) and one that has largely been spared from it (Germany). They look at the patterns governing the discursive construction of the European financial and economic crisis in these two countries. In this regard, they suggest a number of possible scenarios: a widening of country-specific cleavages between competing discourse and policy communities; a realignment of these cleavage structures in the sense of a disruption and reorganization of existing discourse communities; and a mainstreaming or dealignment of discourse communities and a convergence of debates into a hegemonic discourse. Their analysis does not validate or refute either of such scenarios, but provides important insights concerning the patterns and implications of “crisis discourses.” First, the crisis did not erode the political cleavages and actor constellations within the domestic policy domains. Second, the crisis did not reinforce or enlarge the antagonism between contending policy communities when speaking about policy issues and ideas. More generally, while

their findings point to a number of differences between the Greek and German public debates, they also show that the dealignment of political cleavages in both countries stresses a seemingly underlying mainstreaming process that limits the diversity of crisis-related claims.

The last two articles focus on the British case. Luke Temple, Maria T. Grasso, Barbara Buraczynska, Sotirios Karampampas, and Patrick English (*Neoliberal Narrative in Times of Economic Crisis: A Political Claims Analysis of the U.K.*, Press, 2007-14) engage with the debate of the place of neoliberal thinking and policies in times of economic crisis. They show that press coverage of the financial crisis, recession, and austerity in the United Kingdom drew heavily on a neoliberal discourse. Political, market, and civil society actors discussed the impact of hard times on people using a reductionist neoliberal narrative, framing people as economic actors and consistently underplaying any social or political traits. Thus they find a strong overlap in language utilized by market actors and political actors, and by actors from the opposing two main parties, particularly from 2010 onward. While civil society actors were more likely to break away from this neoliberal mold, the stories which they told were from many reference points, with no evidence of a coherent counter-narrative. More generally, by examining communicative rather than coordinative discourse, the authors expand the focus of previous studies that have examined the embeddedness of ideology in society, and highlight potential links to studies of citizen participation and mobilization.

Finally, the article by Patrick English, Maria T. Grasso, Barbara Buraczynska, Sotirios Karampampas, and Luke Temple (*Convergence on Crisis? Comparing Labour and Conservative Party Framing of the Economic Crisis in Britain, 2008-14*) looks in further detail at the ways in which the two main British political parties framed the economic crisis. More specifically, they examine the impact of the financial crisis—seen as a “critical juncture” for British politics—on the consensus that has been forming in the United Kingdom since the 1980s regarding the ideological primacy of the market and Thatcherite politics. The authors examine whether this Downsian model of political convergence showed any change in direction between 2008 and 2014. This is of particular interest in the U.K. context since the Labour Party left office in 2010 after being in power for 13 years. Findings show that, despite the critical juncture offered by the crisis, the consensus was maintained and the Labor and the Conservatives adopted very similar framings and narratives of the economic crisis in their public discourses. The authors conclude that such narratives and frames are very much part of a continued Thatcherite, neoliberal understanding and practices in British politics. Taken together, these two articles show how the neoliberal discourse is deeply embedded in British politics and society and that, even important external “shocks” such as the financial crisis, have not overturned this state of affairs.

In conclusion, this special issue offers an articulated argument concerning the political relevance of the Great Recession, well beyond a mere economic

reading of the crisis. While the economic aspects and indicators have largely been discussed by academics and pundits, more work remains for the social sciences to dig into the varied meanings, effects, and implications of the Great Recession for European politics. This special issue sheds light on just a few, yet crucial trends for the politics of crisis. Among the main results, we find that the crisis opens up opportunities for different discourses in different countries, even when these latter are similar in the economics of crisis. Contrary to common opinion, the crisis does not translate necessarily into political action, even when focusing specifically on the reaction of civil society. We also stress the possibility to distinguish between an objective crisis on one hand and a subjective crisis on the other, both of which imply different roles for main political actors as well as variable dealignments in terms of traditional cleavages. In addition, the Great Recession can be appreciated in its quality as a strong test to evaluate the articulation between Europe and the national state, as well as the resilience of the neoliberal *entente* between left-wing and right-wing politics across the public and the policy domain.

Ultimately, this special issue analyzes what is politically at stake with the crisis. The limits of a purely economic approach may well hide different attempts to elaborate and disseminate different discourses following the different normative stand of different actors. So this special issue comes to complement a broader effort of the scholarly community that must consist in dedicating publications, conferences, and working group discussions to knowledge that gives us a better view of the multiple political crises that comes together with the Great Recession. Confused by fear-mongering and economic technicalities, it is time for Europeans to appreciate the multiple facets, in their structure and in their construction, of the Great Recession. This latter is a powerful enterprise of politics that lies entirely within the political realm.

About the Authors

Manlio Cinalli is research professor at CEVIPOF (CNRS - UMR 7048), Sciences Po Paris. He has delivered teaching and research in various leading universities and institutes across Europe and the United States, including Columbia University, the University of Oxford, the University of Geneva, and the *École Française de Rome*. Drawing upon a comparative relational approach and multimethods research, he has published widely on citizenship, exclusion, ethnic relations, and migration. He has many large grant awards in related research fields that have contributed more than £2.5M of research funding to host institutions.

Marco Giugni is professor at the Department of Political Science and International Relations and Director of the Institute of Citizenship Studies (InCite) at the University of Geneva, Switzerland. His research interests include social movements and collective action, immigration and ethnic relations, unemployment, and social exclusion.

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Which Crisis?

European Crisis and National Contexts in Public Discourse

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Is there such a thing as “the crisis” in the European public discourse? We investigate the Great Recession as it appears in the public discourse of seven European countries (Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland). We do so through a political claim analysis conducted on the most important newspapers of each country between 2005 and 2014. We show that the economic crisis, as a shared experience able to produce consequences on political processes, does matter, but not as one monolithic factor that generates homogeneous outcomes. Different countries are characterized by specific features, which need to be taken into account to understand the relationship between economic crisis and political change. We identify four different “crises” (the global financial crisis, the public debt and austerity crisis, the industrial productive crisis, and the political legitimacy crisis) and propose interpretations on the relationship between their relative visibility, structural factors, and political change.

Keywords: Economic Crisis, Political Consequences, National Contexts, Europe, Eurozone, Great Recession, Anti-Austerity Protests, Political Protests, Public Discourse, Political Claims Analysis, Austerity Policies, Political Behavior, Public Opinion, Global Financial Crisis.

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Related Articles in this Special Issue:

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¿Existe tal cosa como "la crisis" en el discurso público europeo? Investigamos la Gran Recesión tal y como aparece en el discurso público de siete países europeos (Alemania, Grecia, Italia, Polonia, España, Suecia y Suiza). Hacemos esto a través de un análisis de declaraciones políticas conducido en los periódicos más importantes de cada país entre 2005 y 2014. Se demuestra que la crisis económica, vista como una experiencia compartida que puede producir consecuencias en procesos políticos, si tiene importancia, pero no se le considera un factor monolítico generador de resultados homogéneos. Distintos países son caracterizados por propiedades específicas, que tienen que ser tomadas en cuenta para comprender la relación entre la crisis económica y el cambio político. Se identifican cuatro "crisis" diferentes (la crisis financiera global, la crisis de deuda pública y austeridad, la crisis de productividad industrial y la crisis de legitimidad política) y proponemos interpretaciones en la relación entre su visibilidad relativa, factores estructurales y el cambio político.

It is well known that the European countries were not hit by the contemporary global financial crisis all at the same time. They also have not gone through the same type of crisis, and have answered the crisis with different policy measures. Yet we know less about what the crises in each country looked like in terms of how they were socially constructed, and what their political impact has been in the institutional and protest domains. The political consequences of the current economic crisis are at the core of a widespread debate, both in academia and within the broader society. This debate is rooted in a long line of thought on the relationship between structural factors and politics: how does economic hardship influence political behaviors and processes both

in the institutional and the protest domains? From our point of view, the economic crisis cannot be considered as one monolithic factor. Instead, it needs to be analyzed in the multiple dimensions in which it has appeared in each country. In light of this, we argue that answering this question requires identifying and recognizing the publicly shared experiences of the crisis, since this has a strong effect on the social construction of the crisis itself (Coleman 2013; Kiess 2014; Thompson 2009). As Bohmann and Vobruba (1992, 145) argue, “[a]n historical situation becomes a crisis only on account of its being interpreted as a crisis by the actors in this situation. It follows that crises can only become the subject of social scientific analysis as in practice already interpreted facts” (see also Coleman 2013; Kiess 2014; Thompson 2009). We contend that investigating public discourse in the news not only allows us to identify and understand the social construction of the crisis in each country, but also the political impact of this in each country in terms of political representation and protest. Given this, making sense of the ongoing differences within Europe requires placing the crisis into context and identifying national patterns over time. The public discourse analysis offered in this study thus aims to answer two research questions: to what extent is the public discourse on the crisis differently articulated—in terms of time, issues, scope, and actors—in countries characterized by different levels of impact of the economic crisis? And to what extent is the public discourse on the crisis differently articulated—in terms of time, issues, scope, and actors—in countries characterized by a similar level of impact of the economic crisis?

Economic Crisis and Political Change in Europe

Mobilizations against austerity policies characterized in different ways and with different levels of intensity the Southern part of the Eurozone (Portugal, Spain, Italy, and Greece) in the last five years. Analyses of these countries have triggered the exploration of several research questions investigating different aspects: the radical critique of representative democracy (della Porta 2012; Flesher Fominaya 2014a), the crisis of the European governance (Kriesi *et al.* 2013), the relationship between social mobilization and political representation (della Porta 2015b; Kriesi 2015), the role of social media (Gerbaudo 2012; Juris 2012), the links with extra-European experiences such as Occupy Wall Street and the Arab Spring (della Porta and Mattoni 2014; Romanos 2015a), the forms of organization experienced in the squares (Maeckelberg 2012), and the social composition of anti-austerity protests (Peterson, Wahlstrom, and Wennerhag 2015). In particular, researchers on social movements have been investigating the role of the crisis in triggering anti-austerity protest (Giugni and Grasso 2015), claiming a comeback of materialistic issues and the analysis of structural economic factors in the field of social movement studies (della Porta 2015a; Hetland and Goodwin 2013), proposing to bring grievances back in as an explanatory factor (Portos 2014), and measuring the relationship between perceived economic loss and political attitudes in protest behavior (Bernburg 2015).

A similar effort is visible also for the place of party politics in the crisis, with a renewed interest in the dynamics of economic voting (Duch and Stevenson 2008; Lewis-Beck and Naudeau 2012). Party scholars have focused on the peculiar role of the crisis in influencing electoral behavior much more significantly than questions of economic growth (Dassonneville and Lewis-Beck 2014), on the fate of governing parties (LeDuc and Pammett 2013), on the role of European integration in shaping economic voting (Costa Lobo and Lewis-Beck 2012), and on the emergence of new challengers. Furthermore, researchers have increasingly proposed to bridge the existing divide between the literatures on social movements and on party politics, in particular with regard to the political consequences of the economic crisis (Giugni and Lorenzini 2014; Kriesi 2015; della Porta 2015b).

This manifold effort in different fields has been gradually pushing the horizon of research beyond the banal idea of a mechanical relationship between the economic crisis and political change. For example, Kriesi (2015) has proposed a theoretical framework aiming to assess the dynamics that link a crisis situation to crisis outcomes, both in electoral terms and policy terms, taking into account the degree of institutionalization of the party system and the role of the European multilevel governance structure. These political processes often tend to be conflated with the crisis itself in one unit of analysis, confusing the economic cycle with the policy responses implemented in response to it. In this vein, Bartels and Bermeo (2014, 4) showed how the most dramatic “reactions to the Great Recession were associated less with the direct economic repercussions of the crisis than with government initiatives to cope with those repercussions.” Thus, when analyzing the political outcomes of the crisis, there appears to be some need to distinguish the crisis itself and austerity policies as two different phenomena. This line of work suggests the idea that the economic crisis takes on different forms and, thus, produces different outcomes in different national contexts. This study aims to contribute to this debate, teasing out the public discourse some of the many “crises” that characterized different countries and proposing a future research agenda that takes into account the heterogeneity of the experiences of the crisis in Europe.

Central Argument

In this article we show that, at least in terms of public discourse, there is a visible difference in the experience of the crisis characterizing countries severely hit by economic hardship and in countries in which the crisis had a weaker impact. The crisis-as-economic-hardship, both in its macroeconomic structural component and in terms of austerity policies, does matter, and does identify two recognizably different fields of experience. Nevertheless, among the countries that experienced the impact of the crisis strongly, significant differences appear, signaling that national factors—both structural and political-cultural—are at work. We propose two main arguments. First, we argue for the

relevance of the economic crisis, in its structural components, in creating different fields of social experiences characterized by different political outcomes. Second, we highlight the presence of different “crises” that shape the public representation of the Great Recession in different ways. We investigate these processes by analyzing public discourse in seven European countries (Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland) based on a random sample of 1,000 claims per country. These were collected through a keyword search (based on the words “crisis,” “recession,” and “austerity”) in the digital archives of five representative newspapers per country, between 2005 and 2014. According to our analysis, the economic crisis as a structural phenomenon does matter, evidenced by the clear differences between the countries heavily affected by the crisis and those that were not severely hit. However, as the differences inside the group of countries most affected by the crisis illustrate, the social construction of the crisis takes on different forms, depending on both structural economic differences and social, political, and cultural factors at the national level. The data show that the economic crisis matters only to the extent that it interacts with country-specific factors, and that multiple “crises” emerge in different proportions in different national contexts. We identify four “crises:” the global financial crisis, the public debt and austerity crisis, the industrial productive crisis, and the political legitimacy crisis. We argue that, even if at the macro-, European-wide level a distinction between countries that were strongly hit by these crises and countries that experienced them to a lower degree holds (and probably explains, in part, the differences between Northern and Southern Europe in terms of political change), when the analysis focuses on the different forms this political change takes on in different Southern European crises, it needs to account for the different experience of the crisis every country had, even in a common framework.

We compare these two groups of countries, showing the differences in terms of public discourse related to the different impact of the crisis. We then focus on Italy, Greece, and Spain, to analyze in detail the differences between the countries that were severely hit by the economic crisis. In the concluding section we propose a categorization of different components of the economic crisis, as well as several hypotheses concerning their relationship with political change to be tested in further research.

Data and Methods

We analyze the dimensions presented above through a political claims analysis conducted in seven European countries (Italy, Greece, Spain, Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, and Poland) on a random sample of 1000 claims per country, collected through a keyword search (based on the words “crisis,” “recession,” and “austerity”) in the digital archives of five representative newspapers per country.

Political claims analysis is a methodology used to study public discourse developed in the field of contentious politics as an offspring of protest event analysis. It attempts to extend “the sample of contentious actions beyond protest event analysis by coding institutional and civil society actors, and conventional and discursive action forms, in addition to protests by movement actors” with the goal of redefining “the research object to acts of political claims making in a multi-organizational field” (Koopmans and Statham 1999, 203). Its coding unit is the political claim, defined as “a strategic intervention, either verbal or non-verbal, in the public space made by a given actor on behalf of a group or collectivity and which bears on the interests or rights of other groups or collectivities” (LIVEWHAT 2014a, 3). According to Koopmans and Statham (2010, 55), a political claim is generally based on the following structure: “an actor, the claimant, undertakes some sort of action in the public sphere to get another actor, the addressee, to do or leave something that affects the interests of a third actor, the object, and provides justification for why this should be done.”

The data collected in the context of the LIVEWHAT project includes 1,000 claims for each of the countries involved in the project (France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom), randomly sampled in all the articles containing the words “crisis,” “recession,” or “austerity” (in the national languages) published in five newspapers per country between 2005 and 2014. They were selected with the goal of building a representative sample in terms of geographical distribution, political leaning, and reporting style.

Among the nine countries involved in the LIVEWHAT project (and for which the data were available) and based on the work conducted on economic indicators of the crisis (LIVEWHAT 2014c), we chose the three countries that saw a visible economic slowdown (Greece, Italy, and Spain) and the four countries that did not have a significant economic slowdown (Germany, Poland, Sweden, and Switzerland). The two countries (France and the United Kingdom) that were placed in the middle between these two poles were omitted from this study. This choice allows us to compare two groups of countries that are sufficiently different from each other to make the comparison meaningful.

To do so, we conduct the same analysis, based on the same variables, on two levels: first, in section “North and South,” we compare two groups of countries (those characterized by a strong impact of the crisis and those characterized by a weak impact of the crisis); and second, in section “Greece, Italy, and Spain,” we compare different countries characterized by a strong impact of the crisis. In section “North and South” we show the differences in terms of public discourse related to the different impact of the crisis. The distinction between the two groups of countries, as explained earlier, is based on indicators of economic slowdown. Therefore, through the analysis of the differences in terms of public discourse between the two groups, we can assess the impact of the economic crisis on public discourse, showing how public discourse takes on

different configurations in different social and economic contexts. To be clear, at this level, when we discuss the impact of the economic crisis on public discourse, we are referring to the shared experience of economic hardship that characterizes the public discourse of different countries, without distinguishing between the different causes that may be behind that economic hardship. In particular, we do not address the distinctions between the direct effect of the economic slowdown and its indirect consequences in terms of austerity policies. This aspect, instead, is explored in the following section. In section “Greece, Italy, and Spain,” we focus in particular on these three countries to analyze the differences between the countries that were severely hit by the economic crisis. In this way, we can try to disentangle the concept of economic crisis in its effect on public discourse, identifying the different components that tend to prevail in different social and economic contexts (austerity measures, industrial crisis, political instability).

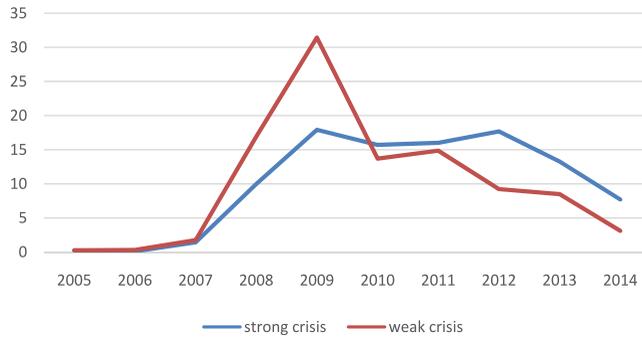
For obvious space and clarity-related constraints, our analysis of the configuration of the public discourse cannot include all the variables coded in the political claims analysis. Both sections “North and South” and “Greece, Italy, and Spain” show cross-tabulations of the distribution of claims across different dimensions. In particular, we chose to focus on four variables: the year in which the claims were made; the actors who made the claims; the issue to which the claims referred; and the scope of the issue to which the claims referred. We are interested in who made the claims, when, where, and about what. In this way, we capture the dimensions we consider most relevant to understand the configuration of the public discourse in the crisis in different contexts: the protagonists of the public debate, the issues that were publicly discussed, the geographic scope of those issues, and the diachronic evolution of the debate.

North and South

The purpose of this section is to assess the relevance of the distinction between two different groups of countries based on economic indicators, with respect to the public discourse surrounding the crisis. To what extent is the public discourse about the crisis differently articulated, in terms of time, actors, scope, and issues, in countries characterized by a strong impact of the economic crisis and in countries characterized by a weak impact of the economic crisis?

To compare the public discourse on the crisis in the two groups of countries, we chose four main dimensions: the distribution of claims across time, the issue of the claims, the scope of the issue to which the claims refer, and their actors. Figure 1 shows the distribution of claims across time (based on the words “crisis,” “recession,” and “austerity”). The difference between the two groups is visible: in the countries characterized by a weak impact of the economic crisis, there is a very visible peak in 2008 and 2009, corresponding to the global financial turmoil following the subprime crisis in the United States.

Figure 1.
Distribution of Claims across Time

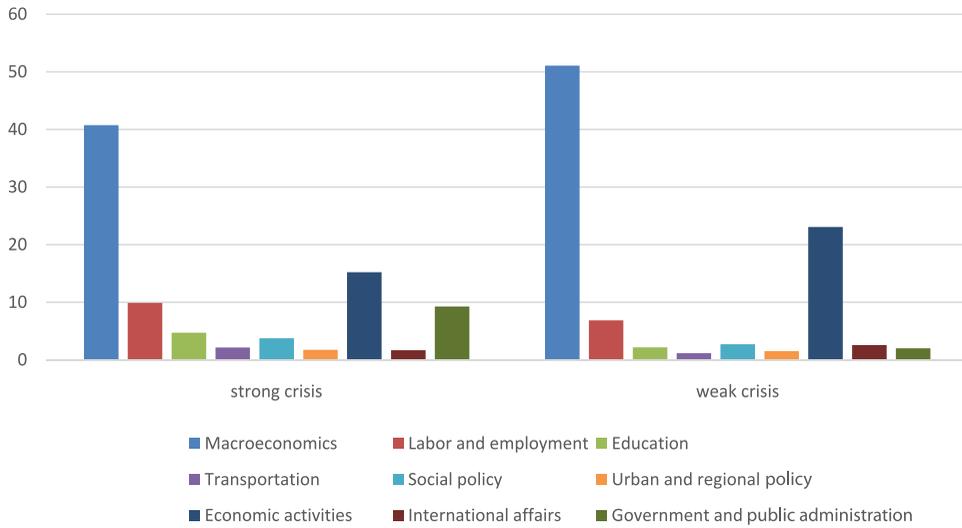


Then they tend to gradually decrease, showing that the saliency of the economic crisis for these countries is situated in a specific period of time: that of the global financial crisis. In countries characterized by a strong impact of the economic crisis, the peak of interest in this topic is consistently distributed in the years between 2009 and 2012, corresponding to the crisis of sovereign debt in Europe. The imposition of austerity measures in those countries was a direct response to this.

Figure 2 shows the distribution of claims across issues.¹ Also in this case there is a visible difference between the two groups of countries. In fact, claims about macroeconomics (including monetary policy, inflation, debt, etc.) and economic activities (including finance, banking, etc.) are the absolute majority in both groups, but their prevalence is much stronger in the countries characterized by a weak impact of the crisis, in which they cover almost three claims out of four (74.16 percent of claims). Conversely, in the countries characterized by a strong impact of the crisis, the set of issues covered by claims is much wider: macroeconomics and economic activities account for 55.98 percent of claims, while all the other issues are much more frequently covered by claims than in the former group of countries. In Greece, Italy, and Spain, the public discourse on the crisis is less dominated by the financial and budgetary aspects of the crisis (which still remain prevalent, although) than in Germany, Poland, Sweden, and Switzerland. Instead, the discourse includes frequent claims referring to labor, education, social policy, and government. Consistent with what we observed concerning the distribution of claims across time, public discourse on the economic crisis tends to coincide with financial aspects in the countries characterized by a weak impact of the crisis, while in the other group the crisis tends to cover a wider space in the

¹ Among the issues included in the LIVEWHAT codebook, here we show, for reasons of clarity, only those coded in at least 100 claims combining the two groups of countries.

Figure 2.
Distribution of Claims across Issues

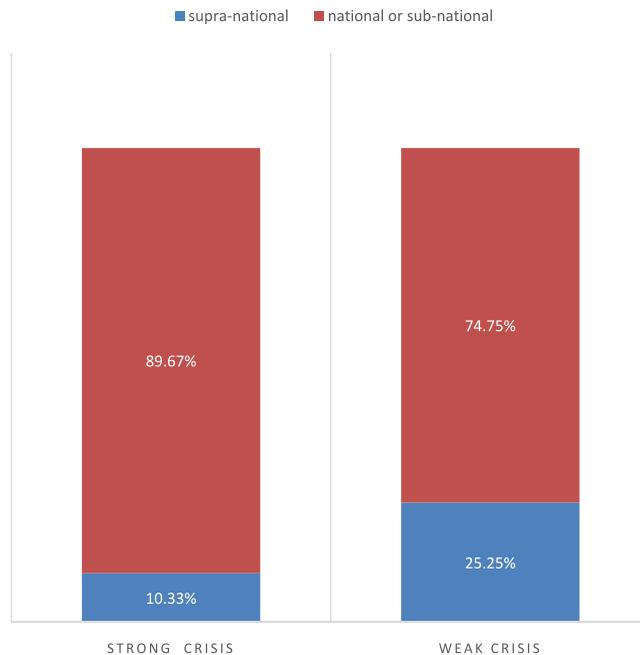


public debate, since in these countries labor and welfare were directly or indirectly hit by the economic crisis and the policy responses to it.

Figure 3 shows the scope of the issues covered by claims referring the economic crisis in the two groups of countries, aggregated in two macro-categories. The scope of the issues to which the claims referred was coded as “supra or transnational: European,” “supra or transnational: other,” “multilateral,” “national,” “regional,” or “local.” We aggregated them in two macro-categories, “supra-national” (including “supra or transnational: European,” “supra or transnational: other,” and “multilateral”) and “national or sub-national” (including “national,” “regional,” and “local”). Doing so helps us to see how large a part of the claims coded in each group of countries referred to issues taking place outside the country and how large a part of claims, instead, focused on domestic issues at the national or sub-national level. Once again, the difference is quite visible: in both groups of countries, domestic issues tend to prevail, but in the countries less severely hit by the economic crisis the weight of supra-national issues is visibly bigger. In Germany, Poland, Sweden, and Switzerland, the share of claims referring to issues situated at the European or international level amounts to 25.25 percent of the total, more than twice the figure in the other groups of countries, in which supra-national issues cover only 10.33 percent of the claims.

Figure 4 shows distribution of claims across actors (those who make the claim), aggregated in four macro-categories, which we created for clarity reasons. In “state and political actors” we included governments, parliaments,

Figure 3.
Issue Scope



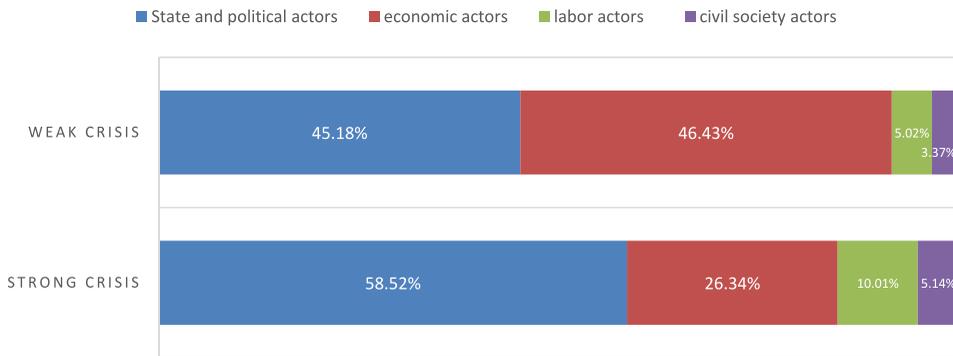
state agencies, political parties, and politicians²; in “economic actors” we included private companies, employers’ organizations, banks, and financial institutions³; in “labor actors” we included workers, employees, and trade unions⁴; in “civil society actors,” we included group-specific organizations, social movements, religious organizations, solidarity groups, and all other non-

² We included the items that the codebook classified as “state actors” (“government/executive,” “parliament/legislative,” “courts/judiciary,” “police and other security/military forces,” “state executive agencies dealing with employment issues,” “welfare/social security agencies,” “state executive agencies dealing with economic issues,” and “other state executive agencies”), and as “political parties” (“political parties” and “individual politicians”).

³ We included the items that the codebook classified as “professional organizations and groups” (“economic actors/markets,” “banks and financial/investment institutions,” “credit rating agencies,” “private companies,” “employers organizations,” “media and journalists,” “research institutes and think tanks” (incl. individual experts), and “other professional organizations and groups”).

⁴ We included the items that the codebook classified as “labor organizations and groups” (“unions,” “workers and employees” (incl. unorganized groups), and “other work-related organizations”).

Figure 4.
Actors



governmental actors.⁵ The difference between the two groups of countries is once again clearly visible: the public discourse on the crisis, in Germany, Poland, Sweden, and Switzerland, is interpreted prevalently by economic actors (banks, private companies, credit rating agencies, etc.), that express 46.43 percent of the claims. The same group of actors expresses only 26.34 percent of the claims in Greece, Italy, and Spain, while all the other groups (state and political actors, labor actors, and civil society actors) are more frequently represented in the claims expressed in this group of countries than in the former. Similar to what was observed with respect to issues, the strictly economic-financial component of the crisis is much more predominant in the public discourse of the countries characterized by a weak impact of the economic crisis than it is in the other group of countries. Once again, in Greece, Italy, and Spain the public discourse on the crisis is more articulated than in Germany, Poland, Sweden, and Switzerland, including not only a wider set of (not strictly economic-financial) issues, but also of actors. State and political actors, labor actors, and civil society actors tend to have a more audible voice with respect to the economic crisis in the countries characterized by a strong impact of the crisis.

⁵ We included the items that the codebook classified as “group-specific organizations and groups” (“women’s organizations” (incl. unorganized groups), “migrants and minority organizations” (incl. unorganized groups), “unemployed organizations” (incl. unorganized groups), “disabled organizations” (incl. unorganized groups), “youth organizations” (incl. unorganized groups) and “other group-specific organizations”), “solidarity, human rights and welfare organizations” (“welfare organizations” (nonstate), “solidarity groups and networks” (incl. neighborhood assemblies), and “other solidarity, human rights and welfare organizations”) and “other civil society organizations and groups” (“extreme-right organizations and groups,” “radical left organizations and groups,” “anti-austerity and occupy movements,” “citizens’ initiatives of reclaim,” “religious-based actors,” and “other civil society organizations”).

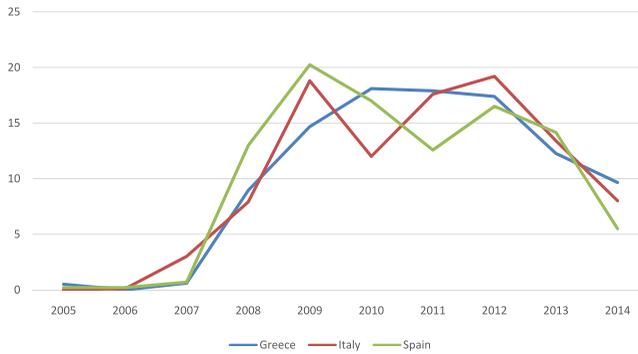
These analyses allow us to answer the question from which we started: the level of impact of the economic crisis does, indeed, matter in shaping the public discourse on the crisis in different ways. First of all, there is a quite visible difference between the two groups of countries, on all the dimensions we considered. Furthermore, this difference is coherent between the different dimensions: in fact, the public discourse on the crisis in the least severely hit countries, is more temporally concentrated in the earlier years (2008 and 2009), more frequently focusing on macroeconomic and financial issues, more often referring to supra-national issues, and more heavily interpreted by business-related actors than in the countries most significantly affected by the crisis. These differences, jointly analyzed, put together a quite clear and coherent picture. In the countries characterized by a weak impact of the crisis, the financial aspect of the crisis is largely predominant, while in the countries characterized by a strong impact of the crisis, the presence of the financial component of the economic crisis is less central and the depiction of the crisis in the media tends to be more complex, concerning different social actors and policy fields. On one hand, in Germany, Poland, Sweden, and Switzerland, the prevalent representation of the crisis is that of the financial crisis, a partially supra-national phenomenon triggered by the collapse of the mortgage market in the United States in 2007, a brief phase of turmoil in the markets the details of which are debated by bankers, entrepreneurs, and experts. On the other hand, in Greece, Italy, and Spain, the public debate on the economic crisis encompasses a longer period of time and a wider set of issues, including labor, education, and politics, it refers almost solely to national issues and is interpreted by a broader set of actors, including the state, political parties, labor, and civil society.

From this analysis we can say that the crisis matters, in dividing two recognizable fields of experience of the crisis in public discourse. Furthermore, we can identify a clear distinction between two different crises, or at least two different dimensions of the crisis. In the countries less severely hit by the crisis, the prevailing narratives concern the *global financial crisis*: a partially external, global phenomenon of market turmoil that was salient for business actors between 2008 and 2009. In the countries characterized by a strong impact of the crisis, public discourse deals with a more articulate representation of the crisis: an *internal economic crisis* that was salient for a longer period of time and, thus, involved the sovereign debt crisis, the imposition of austerity measures, and a debate on the consequences of both the “crisis” and “austerity” in different social sectors (from education to labor, to the government).

Greece, Italy, and Spain

In the previous section we identified two distinguishable public experiences of the crisis, characterizing two groups of countries that are different according to economic indicators. Different configurations of the public discourse on the crisis correspond to different levels of impact of the crisis. The level of

Figure 5.
Distribution of Claims across Time

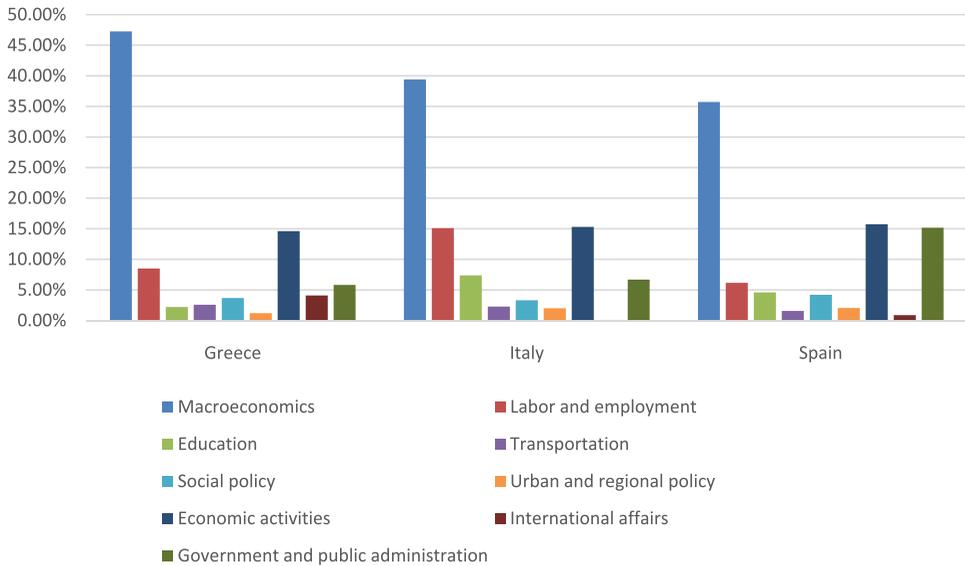


involvement of the economy of a country is a relevant factor in shaping the public discourse and in distinguishing different and recognizable fields of experience.

Nevertheless, countries that share a strong impact of the crisis according to certain economic indicators do not share exactly the same conditions. The experience of the economic crisis reflects relevant differences—both in structural economic components and in the social and cultural contexts. In this section we highlight these relevant differences as they emerge from the analysis of public discourse in Greece, Italy, and Spain. To what extent is the public discourse on the crisis differently articulated—in terms of time, issues, scope, and actors—in the different countries characterized by a strong impact of the economic crisis?

To compare the public discourse on the crisis in the three countries, we used the same dimensions to which we referred in the previous section: the distribution of claims across time, the issue of the claims, the scope of the issue to which the claims refer, and their actors. Figure 5 shows the distribution of claims across time (based on the words “crisis,” “recession,” and “austerity”). The three countries have in common the traits identified in the previous section, with the saliency of the crisis rather consistently distributed between 2009 and 2012, corresponding to the crisis of sovereign debt in Europe and the imposition of austerity. Yet inside this common framework there are clear differences. In Spain, the share of claims in 2008 and 2009 increases much more rapidly than in Italy and Greece. In the previous section we interpreted the quick increase of claims in these two years as an indicator of a strong financial component in the public discourse of the crisis, in the context of the subprime crisis, and this explanation also seems quite convincing in this case, given the dramatic mortgage crisis that characterized Spain in 2008 and 2009. The distribution of Italian claims sees two interesting aspects: on one hand, Italy is the

Figure 6.
Distribution of Claims across Issues

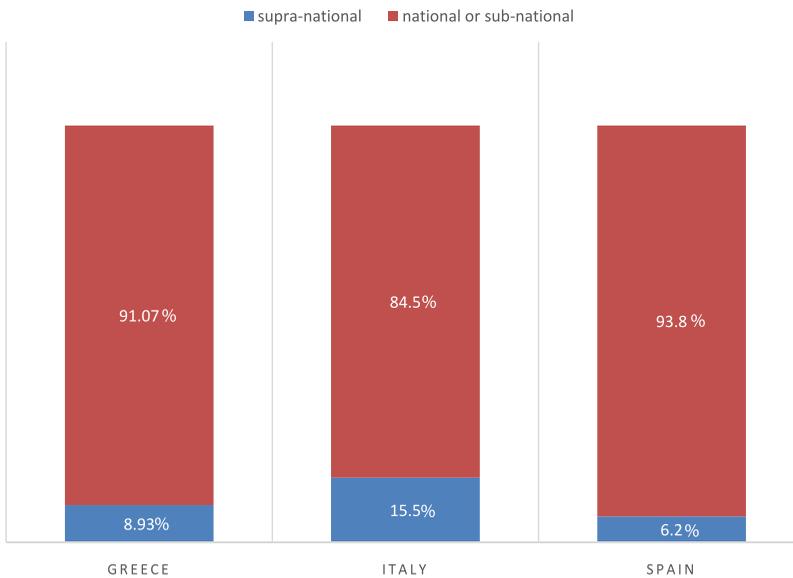


only country to already have a relevant share of crisis-related claims in 2007, before the crisis “officially” started; on the other hand, Italy has a visible peak in 2012. The early start is consistent with interpretations in the existing literature on the Italian “crisis within the crisis” (D’Ippoliti and Roncaglia 2011), with the Great Recession interacting with an already ongoing economic decline. The peak in 2012 is probably related to the so-called “spread crisis,” the Italian component of the European sovereign debt crisis. Greece, by contrast, has a quite regular and even distribution of claims without visible peaks, probably explainable through the observation that the issues related to the crisis were steadily salient in that country throughout the whole period.

Figure 6 shows the distribution of claims across issues.⁶ As we observed in the previous section, claims about macroeconomics (including monetary policy, inflation, debt, etc.) and economic activities (including finance, banking, etc.) are the absolute majority in both groups, but with a weaker prevalence in the countries characterized by a strong impact of the crisis, in which claims referring to labor, education, social policy, and government are more frequent. Comparing Greece, Italy, and Spain we can see how the frequency of claims regarding economic activities is almost perfectly constant, confirming that the financial component of the crisis is a transversal and common element of the

⁶ See footnote 2.

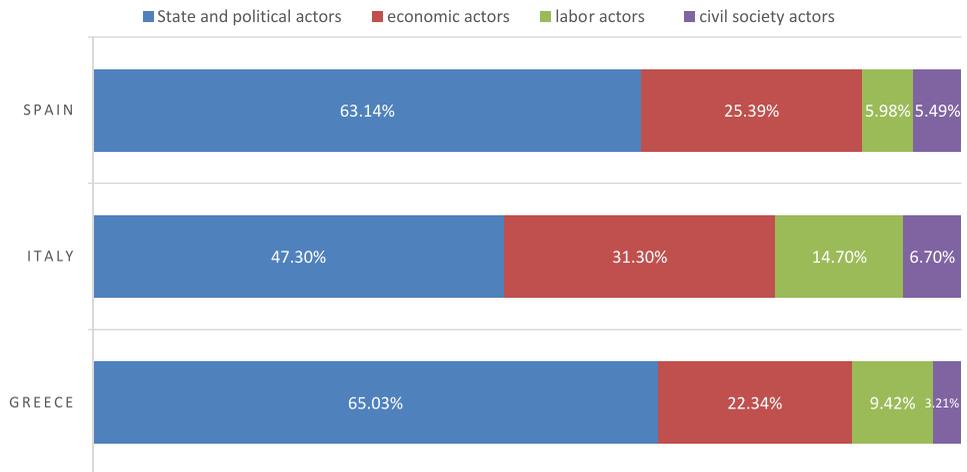
Figure 7.
Issue Scope



experience of the crisis. The number of claims on macroeconomic issues is nevertheless much higher in Greece than in Italy and Spain, probably due to the extreme economic situation of the country and to Greece's debate on the *memoranda*, the austerity packages imposed by the Troika. Italy is characterized by the relative frequency of claims regarding labor, confirming what was observed before on the "crisis within the crisis" and what we describe below with reference to the actors. The Great Recession impacted on a preexisting crisis of the Italian industrial system, and a relevant number of crisis-related claims involves factories closing due to the general context of crisis, workers being dismissed, and so on. The data on education seems fairly easily explainable, since it is the policy field that was most heavily affected by austerity cuts in Italy (LIVEWHAT 2014b). For Spain, the most striking element is the frequency of claims related to government and public administration, an issue that is almost as salient as economic activities: the public discourse on the crisis in Spain seems to be much more centered on politics and public institutions than in Greece and Italy. This is consistent with the debate on corruption, on the relationship between business and politics and of the crisis as a consequence of the lack of a "real democracy" that characterized Spain (Romanos 2015b).

Figure 7 shows the scope of the issues covered by claims referring the economic crisis in the three of countries, aggregated in the same macro-categories

Figure 8.
Actors



described in the previous section. Once again, there is a common trait identified earlier: the absolute prevalence of claims related to national or sub-national issues over those related to supra-national issues. Nevertheless, inside this common framework national differences emerge, in particular for Italy, whose share of claims related to supra-national issues is 15.5 percent, much more than in Greece (8.93 percent), and Spain (6.2 percent). In the previous section we interpreted the higher share of supra-national issues in the countries characterized by a weak impact of the crisis as a sign of the relative lack of saliency of domestic crisis-related issues: if the crisis has a weaker impact on the economy of a country, it is understandable that domestic issues are less salient and there is more space in the public discourse for claims related to supra-national aspects of the crisis. In this sense, the difference identified in Figure 7 seems coherent with a lower level of direct involvement in the crisis of Italy in respect with Greece and Spain.

Finally, Figure 8 shows the distribution of claims across actors (those who make the claim), aggregated in the four macro-categories used in the previous section: state and political actors, economic actors, labor actors, and civil society actors. As we showed in the previous section, Greece, Italy, and Spain demonstrate a stronger role of state and political actors and a weaker presence of economic actors than Germany, Poland, Sweden, and Switzerland, consistent with the differences already identified regarding the issues of the claim. But if we look at the comparison between Greece, Italy, and Spain, we see that, while Greece and Spain look very similar in terms of actors, in Italy the role of state and political actors is significantly weaker (even if still stronger than in the

countries characterized by a weak impact of the crisis). Interestingly—and differently from what happened in Germany, Poland, Sweden, and Switzerland—the relatively weak voice of state and political actors in the Italian public debate on the crisis is not compensated only by economic actors, but also and in particular by labor actors, whose participation in the debate amounts to 14.7 percent of all claims. On one hand, with the relatively weaker role of state and political actors and stronger voice of economic actors, Italy seems slightly more similar to Germany, Poland, Sweden, and Switzerland. This confirms the trend identified earlier dealing with the scope of the issues, with Italy being less directly involved by the harshest consequences of the economic crisis in terms of austerity policies than Greece or Spain. On the other hand, the stronger voice of labor actors in Italian public discourse on the crisis than in Greece or in Spain is consistent with what was already observed in terms of issues, with labor being significantly more salient in the Italian context than in the other countries characterized by a strong impact of the crisis.

From the analyses conducted in this section, an answer to our second research question emerges: even in a context characterized by a similar framework (described in the previous section), countries characterized by a similarly strong impact of the economic crisis present significant differences in the articulation of the public discourse, in terms of time, issues, scope, and actors.

The publicly shared experience of the economic crisis takes on rather different forms in each country, in many respects. Concerning time, Greece seems to have lived through a period characterized by a quite regular and steady level of saliency of the crisis as a central issue in the public debate. Conversely, the saliency of the crisis in Italy and Spain is less regular and seems to depend on peaks of attention related to country-specific contingencies, such as the mortgage crisis of 2008 and 2009 in Spain and the sovereign debt crisis of 2011 and 2012 in Italy. As far as issues are concerned, the distribution of claims in different countries seems to depend on the centrality of some policy fields in the action of both governments and social actors in the different national context. Greece was more focused on macroeconomics, Italy on recession-threatened labor and austerity-ridden education, and Spain on the role of political institutions, corruption, and the lack of a “real democracy.” The analysis of the scope of the issues shows a lower level of saliency of domestic crisis-related claims in Italy than in Greece and Spain, and the same difference appears regarding actors, with Italy showing also a stronger role of labor actors.

Putting together the pieces of this puzzle, some general traits seem rather clear. First of all, Greece and Spain are more similar to each other than to Italy regarding the aspects analyzed in this article. Italy shows elements (such as a lower share of claims regarding domestic issues, a weaker voice of state and political actors, and a stronger voice of economic actors) slightly closer to the group of countries characterized by a weak impact of the economic crisis. The interpretation of this difference should take into account the different impact the crisis had, even in a shared context of economic crisis, in Italy with respect

to Greece and Spain: different to Greece and Spain, Italy did not need a bailout program, and thus was not committed to a “memorandum of understanding.” Austerity policies were implemented, but they did not reach the extreme levels of Greece and Spain (LIVEWHAT 2014b).

Second, the Italian public discourse on the crisis seems to see a consistent centrality, in relative terms, of labor-related issues and labor-related actors. This centrality, together with the tendency to see earlier references to the crisis than in the other countries, might be interpreted through the idea of Italy as a country living through a “crisis within the crisis.” The economic literature already suggests that “the country was already facing critical developments before the 2007/2008 crisis” (D’Ippoliti and Roncaglia 2011, 189), and that the financial turmoil and the crisis of sovereign debt in the Eurozone interacted with a long-term trajectory of low growth, high unemployment, and industrial crisis.

Third, the Spanish case has the absolute peculiarity of the large number of claims (almost three times larger than in the Italian and in the Greek sample) focusing on issues related to government, politics, and public administration, suggesting a peculiar centrality of these issues in the Spanish debate about the economic crisis.

In the previous section, we analyzed the different configurations of the public discourse on the crisis in different groups of countries. This analysis identified two different crises, or at least two different dimensions of the crisis as a shared experience in public discourse: the narrative of the *global financial crisis*, prevalent in the countries characterized by a weak impact of the crisis in terms of economic hardship, and the representation of an *internal economic crisis*, prevalent in crisis-ridden countries. The analysis conducted in this section allows further refinement of these distinctions, identifying three different dimensions of *internal economic crisis*. First, the *public debt and austerity crisis* includes a set of phenomena regarding sovereign debt, bailout programs, memoranda of understanding, structural adjustment programs, and cuts to public services and institutions that are not automatically intrinsic to the financial crisis, but instead, depend on the policy responses to it. These are particularly visible in the peaks of Italian and Spanish claims in 2012, in the large number of Italian claims regarding education, in the relevant role of state and political actors in the Spanish and Greek case. Second, the *industrial productive crisis* which refers to the aspects that do not regard either the financial market or public programs, but, instead, the world of private production and industrial relations. The dynamics of this crisis interact with the global financial crisis and austerity measures but, for example, in the Italian case, may preexist them and emerge in the public debate through a large number of claims regarding labor issues and promoted by labor or economic actors. Third, the *political legitimacy crisis* which is a phenomenon consisting in the loss of credibility of public institutions in times of crisis under the pressure of different factors, such as the role of the European Union, welfare retrenchment, the revolving doors

between business and politics, and a systemic presence of corruption that may give rise to the demand of a new “real democracy,” like in the Spanish case.

One Crisis, Many Crises

In the previous sections we have identified four different “crises” in public discourse: the *global financial crisis*, the *public debt and austerity crisis*, the *industrial productive crisis*, and the *political legitimacy crisis*. They tend to interact and overlap with each other, and are probably not exhaustive of the whole set of factors the effects of which the crisis triggered in Europe. Nevertheless, they clearly emerge from our analysis of the public discourse on the crisis in seven European countries, and may be used for further research on the political consequences of the crisis, analyzing the presence of each of these dimensions and the political outcomes produced in the different national context. In this final section, we aim to begin the first steps of such an analysis, based on the existing literature on the crisis, crisis-related protest, and political outcomes in different European countries to indicate some directions for further research on this topic. We analyze the relevant differences in the public discourse on the crisis between Greece, Italy, and Spain in relationship with the economic, social and political traits that characterized the evolution of the crisis in each country.

In the Greek case, the almost completely domestic scope of the issues discussed in the claims and the relatively low share of claims in the first years of the crisis suggest a minor relevance of the *global financial crisis*, while the concentration of claims between 2010 and 2012 and the outstanding prevalence of state and political actors point toward the centrality of the *public debt and austerity crisis*. This confirms the existing literature on the Greek case. In fact, “among European countries, Greece stands out for both the severity of the impact of the adjustment measures on people’s lives and for the extent of its anti-austerity mobilizations” (Diani and Kousis 2014, 387). As it was noted, “the common frame of all the protests and activities which took place in the period under scrutiny, was the anti-austerity focus. Indeed, from the very beginning of the mobilization, the explicit goal was to block, or abolish (at a later stage) the austerity measures that were (to be) introduced” (Vogiatzoglou 2015, 20).

In the Spanish case, we see traces of the *global financial crisis*, in particular in the 2008–09 peak of claims, and this is coherent with the literature on the role of the mortgage crisis in the Spanish context (Cano Fuentes *et al.* 2013). Furthermore, similarly to what we have seen in the Greek case, the centrality of state and political actors seems an indicator of the relevance of the *public debt and austerity crisis*: both countries went through a bailout program, and both saw the implementation of austerity packages in response to an excessive sovereign debt. Nevertheless, what seems peculiar in the Spanish case is the higher saliency than in other countries of indicators related to the *political legitimacy crisis*: a relevant share of the claims related to the economic crisis focus on the

government and on public officials. The centrality of the critique toward the political system has already been identified in the literature on the Spanish 15-M movement that, since its outburst in May 2011, focused on the political nature of the economic crisis and on the critique toward an institutional system accused of facilitating corruption and impeding the emergence and development of alternatives to neoliberal policies (Adell 2013; Fishman 2012; Romanos 2015b). Scholars have pointed out the role of slogans such as “They don’t represent us” and “They call it a democracy, but it isn’t” in criticizing the democratic model established during the Transition (Romanos 2015b), which was increasingly perceived as a “low-intensity democracy” (Arribas 2015). Similar traits have been identified also in challengers approaching the sphere of political representation: the line taken by Podemos’ leader, Pablo Iglesias, in the 2014 elections of the European Parliament has been described as “populist in the purest sense of the term, and an extremely effective one it is. His campaign letter combines 15M’s ordinary citizen discourse with its anti-corruption and democratic regeneration stance” (Flesher Fominaya 2014b).

In the Italian case, the component of the *global financial crisis* might be partially visible in the high share of claims in 2008 and 2009 and in the relatively strong presence of economic actors. Yet it does not show in a particularly visible way in terms of issues. Furthermore, the weaker presence of state and political actors and the larger share of supra-national claims than in the Greek and the Spanish case suggest a connection with the fact that Italy was relatively less directly hit by the *public debt and austerity crisis*. In our sample, this might have created an overrepresentation of supra-national claims similar to what was observed in the countries characterized by a weaker impact of the economic crisis. Instead, the strong voice of labor actors and the high saliency of labor-related issues suggest a particularly relevant role of the *industrial productive crisis* in the Italian case. As already noted, these observations are coherent with the scholarship of the economic crisis in Italy, that has pointed out the relatively weak effect of the crisis on the Italian financial, banking, and private debt markets (see Ciocca 2010). Instead, the Great Recession impacted on an ongoing crisis of the “real economy,” linked to structural factors such as low productivity and insufficient investments in research and development (Lucidi and Kleinknecht 2010). As some authors have noted, “Italy had already been experiencing for several years a creeping crisis, characterized by stagnation and inflation. . . with a progressive erosion in terms of competitiveness and per capita income in comparison with the other European countries” (D’Ippoliti and Roncaglia 2011, 213). This long-term industrial crisis seems fairly visible in our data, although we do not deny that it may have been present also in other national contexts, and that its overrepresentation in the Italian case may be linked to the weaker presence of the financial and austerity-related dimensions of the crisis than in Greece and Spain. Furthermore, in terms of anti-austerity protests, Italy did not see the emergence of a united, general, and transversal anti-austerity movement similar to the Spanish 15-M or the Greek “movement

of the squares,” for reasons that have been investigated elsewhere (see Zamponi 2012). Protest event analysis did show a rather high level of austerity-related contention in Italy both in 2011 (della Porta, Mosca, and Parks 2013) and in 2012 (Mosca 2013), but it tended to emerge “in a more scattered way than in other European countries” (Mosca 2013, 268). Furthermore, both protest event analysis and protest surveys have shown a very significant role of trade unions as an actor in this “scattered protest:” among the protest events taking place in Italy in 2011, more than one-third was organized by trade unions that were “the single most active civil society actor organizing protest in the country in 2011” (della Porta, Mosca, and Parks 2012).

The hypotheses proposed in this section are based on the relationship between the existing literature on the economic crisis and political change in Greece, Italy, and Spain and our interpretation of the data produced by the political claims analysis as a set of indicators of the relative presence on different dimensions of the economic crisis in each country. These interpretations will need to be confirmed through further work on our dataset, aiming at precisely assessing to which of our four “crises” claims need to be ascribed.

Conclusions

The analysis in this article allows us to answer our research questions: to what extent is the public discourse on the crisis differently articulated—in terms of time, actors, scope, and issues—in countries characterized by a strong impact of the economic crisis and in countries characterized by a weak impact of the economic crisis? And to what extent is the public discourse on the crisis differently articulated, according to the same indicators, in the different countries characterized by a strong impact of the economic crisis?

Our data show that the crisis does matter, in producing in two groups of countries experiencing different levels of economic hardship different configurations of the public discourse related to Great Recession. In particular, countries characterized by a weak impact of the crisis tend to have a configuration of public discourse that focuses more on the financial aspects of the crisis, that treats it more like an external and supra-national phenomenon, that is more concentrated between 2008 and 2009 and that sees a more relevant role of economic and business actors. Conversely, countries characterized by a strong impact of the crisis tend to have a configuration of public discourse that focuses on a variety of issues, that treats it also as a domestic phenomenon, that is more evenly distributed between 2008 and 2012, and that sees a more relevant role of state and political actors, labor actors, and of civil society. Furthermore, countries characterized by a strong impact of the economic crisis do not share a completely homogeneous experience of economic hardship. In fact, our analysis shows significant differences between Greece, Italy, and Spain in terms of time, issues, scope, and actors, suggesting that multiple dimensions of the economic crisis are present in different shares in each national context.

Based on this analysis, we conclude that, in terms of public discourse and thus of a shared experience able to produce consequences on political processes, the economic crisis does matter, but not as one monolithic factor that generates homogeneous outcomes. Instead, multiple “crises” emerge in different proportions in different national contexts. We identified four crises: the global financial crisis, the public debt and austerity crisis, the industrial productive crisis, and the political legitimacy crisis. We proposed hypothetical interpretations on the relationship between their relative visibility in our data and the evolution of the crisis, both in terms of structural factors and political change in different countries. Further research is needed to assess precisely the different presence on these four representations in each country and the relationship between them and the processes of political change that characterize European countries in the context of the economic crisis.

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Collective Responses to the Economic Crisis in the Public Domain: Myth or Reality?

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We challenge the common wisdom that the Great Recession has produced radical changes in political behavior. Accordingly, we assess the extent to which the crisis has spurred protest activities and given socioeconomic issues a higher saliency in public debates. We also assess how far the crisis has provided a more prominent place for economic and labor actors as subject actors, a more prominent place of economic and labor actors as object actors, as well as a more prominent place of economic and labor actors as addressees in claims making on the economic crisis. Our findings show that the crisis has not produced such radical changes in all these aspects, though it had some impact. At a more general level, our analysis unveils the normative underpinnings of the commonly held view that the economic crisis has fed a grievance-based conflict between capital and labor going beyond specific patterns and configurations in each country.

Keywords: Political Behavior, Economic Crisis, Europe, Great Recession, Public Domain, Public Debates, Protests, Claims Making, Political Opportunity Structures, National Politics, Economic Organizations, Labor Organizations, Policy Domain, Normative Bias, Demystifying the Economic Crisis, Special Issue on the Economic Crisis.

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Desafiamos la concepción general que la Gran Recesión ha generado cambios radicales en la conducta política. Por lo tanto, analizamos el grado en el que la crisis ha provocado manifestaciones y dado mayor prioridad a los problemas socioeconómicos en los debates públicos. De igual manera, analizamos en qué medida la crisis económica ha dado mayor prominencia a los actores económicos y laborales como actores sujeto-objeto, así como una mayor prominencia a estos actores como recipientes de declaraciones políticas en la crisis económica. Nuestros resultados sugieren que la crisis no ha provocado cambios radicales en estos aspectos, aunque sí ha tenido un impacto. A un nivel más general, nuestro análisis revela los principios normativos de la concepción que sostiene que la crisis económica ha alimentado el conflicto entre el trabajo y el capital sin tomar en cuenta los patrones y configuración específica de cada país.

A lot has been said and written about the impact of the Great Recession on European society and politics. The most common storyline striking the attention of scholars of political behavior is that the crisis has brought about a huge rise of anti-austerity protest movements (Ancelovici, Dufour, and Nez 2016; della Porta 2014; della Porta and Mattoni 2014; Gamson and Sifry 2013; Pickerill and Krinsky 2012). In this article, we are interested in assessing the political effects of the crisis on the political mobilization of Europeans, looking more specifically at the effects on how main organized actors intervene in the public domain. Concerning the collective responses to the crisis in the public domain, according to the common storyline, one would expect some endemic spreading of contentious politics, with a steep growth of protest as opposed to other forms of intervention and a higher salience of socioeconomic issues.

This study challenges the common wisdom that the Great Recession has produced radical changes in terms of political behavior, and more specifically, in terms of a rise in protest actions. In arguing that a strong competitive bias has been placed at the core of main normative understandings of democracy, we expect that the common storyline about the dramatic impact of the economic crisis in fact overstates its real impact, at least as far as contentious dynamics are concerned. We thus unveil the normative bias that dramatizes the conflict between contrasting interests at stake during the crisis, thereby "demystifying" the idea that major changes have been produced in the ways issues are debated in the public domain, in the place of different actors, and the ways these latter intervene.

Our analysis proposes an alternative account that retrieves the importance of national politics in terms of structures, actors, and strategic interventions. Inspired by the literature on the role of national political opportunity structures for the mobilization of social movements, we examine the extent to which the Great Recession has impacted on the political claims making of collective actors in different countries. In particular, we pay special attention to economic actors (such as banks and financial/investment institutions, credit rating agencies, private companies, and employers' organizations) and labor actors (such as unions, workers and employees, and other work-related organizations). These two types of organized actors arguably have the most contrasting interests and stakes to the socioeconomic dimension of the political space, but especially so in periods characterized by economic recession and financial hardship. It is in such difficult times that policy making must be shaped in a way to counter the negative effects of the crisis. In this context of high competition among contrasting interests, economic and labor actors will likely clash with policy makers and among each other. Accordingly, we assess the extent to which the crisis has not only spurred protest activities and given socioeconomic issues a higher saliency in public debates, but also provided a more prominent place for economic and labor actors as subject actors, a more prominent place of economic and labor actors as object actors, as well as a more prominent place of economic and labor actors as addressees in claims making around issues pertaining to the economic crisis. To do so, we examine whether and how claims making over the economic crisis has changed over time, as the crisis unfolded and reached its peak, and across countries, as not all countries were equally affected by the crisis. We do so through the analysis of press coverage of political claims made by collective actors in nine European countries: France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

National Political Opportunity Structures and Claims Making over the Economic Crisis

Since 2008, the dramatic impact of the Great Recession has been discussed extensively in public and political debates. The most common storyline is that the crisis has deep—and perhaps longstanding—economic effects which can be felt at different levels beyond economics: socially first of all, through an increase of precarity in the labor market, a weakening of the position of the middle class, the strengthening of intergenerational conflict, and the loosening of social bonding in general (Fraser 2015; Stiglitz 2015); but also politically, through the increasing clash between the winners and the losers of the crisis, the emergence of new populist parties, the failure of citizenship regimes of integration and, most importantly for this article, the rise of anti-austerity protest movements (Bermeo and Bartels 2014; Giugni and Grasso 2015; Kriesi and Pappas 2015).

This article aims to assess the political effects of the Great Recession on claims making over the economic crisis and, more specifically, its effects on the role of economic and labor organizations therein. Do we observe an increase in

protests since the start of the crisis, as many scholars and pundits have argued? Are socioeconomic issues more visible owing to their centrality for economic and labor organizations? How did these actors address the crisis in the public domain? Have economic and labor actors become more central in public debates at some stage and in some countries in particular?

The fact that legal norms, institutional structures and practices, as well as discourse, vary from country to country, is a key element in our comparative approach. On one hand, our alternative account is inspired by the political process approach to social movements and, more specifically, by political opportunity theory (for reviews, see Kriesi 2004; Meyer 2004). According to this theory, the specific national configurations of political institutions and alignments go a long way in explaining the rise and decline of social movements as well as the forms they take. In other words, this approach stresses the impact of national traditions and structures. Yet it should be emphasized that we engage with political claims making more generally and not only with social movements and protest activities (Giugni 2010; Koopmans *et al.* 2005). Political opportunity theory has stressed the role of the broader institutional context for the emergence, mobilization, and outcomes of social movements. Cross-national studies have shown how the level and forms, but also the effects of movements are strongly contingent on the existence of favorable—often the term “open” is used—political opportunity structures (Kitschelt 1986; Kriesi *et al.* 1995). Furthermore, the opening up of “windows of opportunities” has been shown to be critical in explaining the ebbs and flows of protest over time (Tarrow 1989, 2011).

On the other hand, a number of scholars have introduced the idea that political opportunities also have a more informal, symbolic, and discursive side, in addition to their formal and institutional side. Works in the field of migration and ethnic relation politics, in particular, have stressed how citizenship models may affect the mobilization of migrants and more generally claims making in this field not only through their formal side, but also and perhaps above all thanks to their discursive side (Cinalli and Giugni 2011; Giugni and Passy 2004; Koopmans and Statham 1999; Koopmans *et al.* 2005). As such, they provide different degrees of visibility, resonance, and legitimacy to certain actors and issues in the public domain, which in turn opens up or closes down opportunities for mobilization by migrants.

Here, we follow up on this line of reasoning by considering how national public discourses may have their own logic that make a homogeneous impact of the economic crisis quite unlikely. In other words, in addition to the constraining and channeling role of national institutional structures, specific national “discursive structures” should also go against the expectations of the standard storyline about the impact of the economic crisis on political claims making. Hence, the study of the political, legal, and administrative contexts of opportunity structures goes side by side with the study of discursive constructions that actors contribute to shape through their interventions in the public domain. These discursive interventions play a crucial role in our research since

their analysis can also be useful to seize the broader importance of communicative tools of expressions passing through symbols, narratives, rhetoric, and so forth. Therefore, according to our account, the public domain is shaped according to specific settings in each country, and what we observe since the crisis may very much be influenced by the variation of these cross-national settings. In stronger terms, we expect that the crisis, which certainly had a number of social and political consequences such as for example the rise of populist parties or their strengthening, did not have a direct effect on the structuring of public debates, even when dealing with most conflictual interests by, and over, economic and labor organizations, respectively.

Behind our specific interest in “demystifying” the most common account of the impact of the Great Recession on political claims making lies a more general issue with which we would like to engage. We refer to a number of potential misunderstandings that are grounded on a far too competitive conception of politics. Paradoxically, this competitive conception is shared across a wide spectrum of normative accounts, linking the neoliberal perspective on one pole to the neo-Marxist perspective on the other (Engelmann 2003; Gagnier 1997; Jaret 1983; Therborn 1986; Touraine 1971). Grounded across both poles, one finds the traditional idea that conflict is an inherent characteristic of humans. Viewed from this perspective, *homo economicus* has not evolved that much from his original wolf nature, since he is still sufficiently unsophisticated to put his particular interest (whether individual or class-based) before “the force of better argument” to the advantage of all (Habermas 1984). This normative bias is based on a conflictual dogma that, in fact, prevents any view on alternative dynamics in the political domain whereby actors prefer to listen carefully and to be responsive to what other actors have to say so as to agree on decisions that may be better for all and hence produce a number of normatively desirable consequences (Delli Carpini, Lomax Cook, and Jacobs 2004; Fishkin 1995; Mendelberg 2002; Searing *et al.* 2007). An additional risk is that this conflictual dogma does not only remain just at the basis of a general notion of politics, but spills over an unlimited number of specific political fields that are only considered for their conflictual dynamics. To name just a few most recent examples: the refugee crisis has reinforced the idea that migrants’ claims are necessarily in opposition to citizens’ rights; the malfunctioning of the labor market have encouraged the cutting of workers’ rights since these latter are allegedly in conflict with the rights of the unemployed; and the defense of industrial facilities (and their employees) is resisted by those who put first the protection of the environment. This understanding of politics as a permanent conflict has spread as far as permeating the relationship between parents and their children—characterized by intergenerational scars and warfare (Binney and Estes 1988; Clark, Georgellis, and Sanfey 2001; Heckmann and Borjas 1980)—as well as the demise of welfare in the conflict between beneficiaries on one hand and decision makers on the other (Castles 2004; Esping-Andersen 1996; Hubert 2010; Kuhnle 2000).

Scholars of contentious politics have no doubt embraced such a conflictual bias of politics. Since their seminal steps (Tarrow 1989; Tilly 1978), they have chosen to focus on most conflictual moments throughout history by putting the opposition between challengers and insiders at the core of their accounts of social movements and political behavior. This focus on a challengers'/insiders' cleavage has served quite well the purpose of building up high levels of sophistication in the analysis of collective mobilization, leading to the most accomplished elaborations in the field (Kriesi *et al.* 1995; Tilly and Tarrow 2007). Yet some scholars have grown unsatisfied with this heuristic and have approached differently social movements and collective mobilizations (Cinalli 2003; Cinalli and Fuglister 2008; Diani 1992, 1995; Diani and McAdam 2003; Fillieule 2005; Hayes 2005). In line with these crucial developments, our effort to unveil the true extent of conflict around the interests of capital and labor, respectively, at the time of the Great Recession should be seen as an attempt to deal with new challenges facing contemporary examinations of contentious politics, and democracy more generally. Simply put, our analysis aims to offer a more realistic representation of diachronic and cross-national variations of political contention, as it has given substance to the greatest crisis Europe has seen since WWII. In particular, our diachronic consideration of nine European countries allows for appraising whether their large variations in institutional, policy, and discursive approaches identify some clear patterns in terms of the claims making of, and over, economic and labor organizations.

To sum up, a major added value of this study, we believe, consists in challenging common accounts of the impact of the Great Recession on public debates in Europe based on a political opportunity approach, while opening a broader reflection about the role of capital and labor in times of economic crisis. Empirically, this translates into a diachronic comparison of economic actors and labor actors in nine European countries. As representatives of capital and labor, respectively, these two types of collective actors arguably have different interests and stakes in general, but especially so in periods characterized by economic recession and financial hardship. It is in such difficult times that decision makers must adopt policies aimed at countering the negative effects of the crisis, and this is where economic and labor actors are expected to disagree. During the Great Recession, policies have been the same virtually everywhere in Europe, with strong cuts in government spending—especially in the social sector—accompanied by an increase in taxation. In short, European governments have responded to the crisis through austerity policies. Whatever the account of competitive politics being taken as a normative guide, economic and labor actors are expected to have a different stance toward such measures.

Data and Methods

The data used in this article comes from a systematic content analysis of newspapers in each of the countries under study. Following the methods of

political claims-making analysis (Koopmans and Statham 1999), which has proved fruitful in previous work on social movements and contentious politics, we have created a comparative dataset by random sampling about 1,000 claims per country (for a total sample of 9,033 claims) covering the period from 2005 to 2014. The choice of newspapers has followed from the need to insure as much as possible a representative and unbiased sample. Therefore, we have included both quality broadsheet newspapers and more tabloid-oriented newspapers. Furthermore, we have considered newspapers from different political orientations. All articles containing any of the three words “crisis,” “recession, or “austerity” have been selected and coded, to the extent that they referred to the current economic crisis. The articles have been sampled from all newspaper sections, excluding editorials, through key words search. In this article, we only use the claims that occurred between 2008 and 2014. The year 2008 can be considered as the start of the economic crisis in Europe, though the true beginning varies from one country to the other and the financial crisis took place one year earlier.

We show support to our argument in a simple way, by means of analysis in the form of cross-tabulations. We show two types of tables: by year and by country. The former is meant to address the commonly held hypothesis that the crisis matters in a number of aspects relating to public interventions about the economic crisis (if the hypothesis is true, we should observe strong variations over time in those aspects since the start of the crisis); the latter aims to show that what matters are, in fact, national traditions and political opportunity structures (if our argument is correct, we should observe strong cross-national variations that are independent from the crisis). We examine in particular five main aspects of claims: the share of protest events over all claims bearing on issues pertaining to the economic crisis; the share of socioeconomic issues, as opposed to other issues; the share of labor and economic organizations as subject actors, as opposed to other subject actors; the share of labor and economic organizations as object actors, as opposed to other actors; and the share of labor and economic organizations as addressees, as opposed to other actors. We look at all these aspects both over time and across nine countries: France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

Findings

Our analysis proceeds in two steps: in a first step, we look at changes over time in the five aspects of claims mentioned earlier; then, in a second step, we look at how these aspects vary across countries. The first step provides us with a general overview of how public debates about the crisis have unfolded during the Great Recession, whereas the second step allows us to tackle more directly the role of national contexts and traditions. For both types of analysis, we show the coefficients of association (Cramer’s V) as well as their significance level.

Table 1 shows the changes over time, from 2008 to 2014. To start with, let us look at the share of protest actions (first row), which is the most relevant aspect in a political opportunity perspective. Pundits and scholars alike have often stressed the fact that the economic crisis has spurred a wealth of protest across Europe, especially in those countries most severely affected by its negative consequences. In the social movement literature, this view is often associated with grievance-based theories of collective behavior (for a review, see Buechler 2004). Overall, however, our data suggest that this is at best only partly true. First, the overall level of protest is quite limited, never exceeding 8 percent of all claims. This rejoins Bermeo and Bartels' (2014) argument that we tend to overstate the amount of protest spurred by the crisis because certain major events, such as the large *Indignados* demonstrations in the Summer of 2011 or Occupy Wall Street in the Fall of the same year, have made the front page of the news, giving the idea of a much larger protest wave than it actually was. Thus, different types of actors have reacted to the crisis more often through other means, namely by means of verbal claims. Second, while from 2008 to 2012 the share of protest actions over all claims bearing on issues pertaining to the crisis went up, producing a sort of inverse u-shaped distribution with the subsequent decline, the increase is relatively limited. As for most of the aspects examined here, differences from one year to the other are statistically significant, but the low Cramer's V suggests a weak relationship between the share of protests and the year.

Others have argued that it is not so much the extent of the crisis and the grievances it produced that has led to mass protest, but rather the austerity measures implemented in most European countries (Bermeo and Bartels 2014). This seems a more plausible view as the highest share of protests occurred in 2011 and 2012, which is when austerity policies were fully implemented throughout the whole of Europe. Again, however, the evidence suggests that such an impact is at best moderate.

Moving to the content of claims (second row), we can see that, overall, more than half of all claims deal with socioeconomic issues. In other words, during the crisis, and especially so at its peak in 2011, attention was directed to issues pertaining to macroeconomics, labor and employment, social policy, and economic activities and domestic commerce. Of these, the lion's share is taken by macroeconomic issues (about half of all claims). While we cannot see the thematic focus of claims before the crisis as well as beyond the general reference to it, we observe a relative stability during the period under study, that is, during the crisis itself. Yet, just as for protest actions, we also observe a slight increase from 2008 to 2011, followed by an equally slight decline afterward. Again, the findings data are far from being conclusive in one direction or the other.

The next six analyses all deal with the two more specific actors we would like to zoom in on: economic and labor organizations, respectively. The first two analyses consider them as subject actors, that is, as makers of claims (third

Table 1. Changes over Time in Various Aspects of Claims (2008-14)

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Chi ² Cramer's V p-value
Share of protest actions	3.12 (1,155)	5.26 (1,957)	4.80 (1,187)	6.00 (1,234)	7.71 (1,063)	4.10 (854)	4.52 (487)	28.5531 0.0600 0.000
Share of socioeconomic issues	58.16 (1,219)	60.22 (2,074)	61.19 (1,260)	66.31 (1,309)	61.36 (1,131)	62.18 (928)	61.06 (511)	20.1119 0.0488 0.003
Share of economic organizations as subject actors	34.84 (1,260)	28.86 (2,152)	25.54 (1,308)	25.35 (1,353)	23.43 (1,161)	24.60 (947)	19.35 (522)	72.2441 0.0911 0.000
Share of labor organizations as subject actors	6.19 (1,260)	8.64 (2,152)	9.17 (1,308)	7.10 (1,353)	8.01 (1,161)	7.39 (947)	7.66 (522)	11.2490 0.0360 0.081
Share of economic organizations as object actors	45.56 (1,260)	34.90 (2,152)	32.95 (1,308)	30.82 (1,353)	30.92 (1,161)	29.36 (947)	29.12 (522)	101.9803 0.1082 0.000
Share of labor organizations as object actors	10.71 (1,260)	15.61 (2,152)	12.77 (1,308)	11.09 (1,353)	12.58 (1,161)	11.30 (947)	11.49 (522)	26.5851 0.0553 0.000
Share of economic organizations as addressees	10.16 (1,260)	12.45 (2,152)	10.24 (1,308)	9.16 (1,353)	9.39 (1,161)	8.34 (947)	8.05 (522)	20.6263 0.0487 0.002
Share of labor organizations as addressees	1.67 (1,260)	2.65 (2,152)	3.36 (1,308)	1.77 (1,353)	2.33 (1,161)	2.75 (947)	1.72 (522)	12.4892 0.0379 0.052

Note: Number of cases for calculation of percentages in parentheses.

and fourth rows). As we said earlier, one may expect these two actors to have played an increasingly important role in public debates during the economic crisis as they are most directly concerned by it, though for different reasons. Concerning the former, our data show exactly the opposite: a steady decline over time in the share of economic organizations as subject actors. Their overall presence is high (about 27 percent of all claims), but it is much higher in 2008 than in 2014. Thus this type of actor becomes less rather than more visible during the crisis. As for labor actors, we observe a rather stable distribution over time. They become a little more present in 2009 and 2010, but then their presence goes down again. Moreover, their role in claims making is much less prominent than that of economic actors.¹

These patterns are quite similar to those observed when we look at economic and labor organizations as object actors (fifth and sixth rows), that is, when they are the actors “at stake” in claims making rather than the active protagonists of claims. Here too, economic actors are much more prominent than labor actors (34 percent and 13 percent of all claims, respectively). Most importantly, the share of economic organizations as object actors displays a steady decline from 2008 to 2014, with a particularly pronounced fall in 2009, when the crisis was starting to make their negative effects visible to everybody. Also, similarly to what we observed for subject actors, the share of labor organizations as object actors is quite stable over time. Perhaps the only single exception is an important increase in 2009, suggesting that, precisely when the crisis started to become visible to all, labor actors were often mentioned as objects of claims.

Finally, we can also look at economic and labor organizations as addressees (seventh and eighth rows), that is, when standing out in their quality of actors to whom a claim is explicitly addressed, and more broadly speaking, the actors whom the claim makers refer to. Once again, overall economic actors are more often mentioned as addressees than labor actors, though both at a much lower level than when they are mentioned as subject actors or as object actors.² The diachronic trend for both actors is also in line with previous observations (even if less pronounced), that is, a declining trend for economic organizations and a relatively stable trend for labor organizations.

Table 2 shifts the analysis to cross-national comparisons and shows, for all the same aspects, whether and to what extent the claims vary across countries.

¹ If we look at protest actions only, however, labor actors are more present (38 percent and 10 percent of all claims, respectively) owing to the mobilization role played by unions and the labor movement more generally.

² The lower share of claims that have the two types of actors as addressees, as compared to the distributions concerning subject actors and object actors, can also be explained by the fact that subjects and objects are always coded (while the addressees are not). In other words, all claims must by definition have a subject actor and an object actor, but they do not necessarily have an addressee (e.g., in occasion of many claims not asking someone to act in any way).

Table 2. Cross-National Variations in Various Aspects of Claims (2008-14)

	FR	GE	GR	IT	PL	ES	SE	CH	UK	Chi ² Cramer's V p-value
Share of protest actions	11.56 (813)	4.66 (772)	6.74 (920)	10.93 (851)	3.05 (950)	4.97 (865)	0.71 (983)	2.39 (879)	2.66 (939)	205.8510 0.1607 0.000
Share of socioeconomic issues	76.99 (778)	56.33 (948)	58.84 (962)	57.93 (946)	65.34 (978)	47.30 (943)	70.35 (968)	50.41 (968)	72.38 (974)	314.9799 0.1929 0.000
Share of economic organizations as subject actors	18.77 (863)	18.64 (971)	12.03 (989)	24.77 (969)	37.78 (990)	12.86 (1011)	51.42 (984)	35.45 (976)	30.15 (985)	678.7300 0.2787 0.000
Share of labor organizations as subject actors	13.56 (863)	4.12 (971)	9.50 (989)	14.55 (969)	5.15 (990)	6.03 (1101)	5.18 (984)	5.53 (976)	7.82 (985)	152.9219 0.1323 0.000
Share of economic organizations as object actors	26.65 (863)	40.78 (971)	24.47 (989)	44.07 (969)	32.22 (990)	10.48 (1101)	47.26 (984)	35.35 (976)	44.77 (985)	503.7610 0.2401 0.000
Share of labor organizations as object actors	14.14 (863)	8.14 (971)	20.32 (989)	21.36 (969)	13.03 (990)	6.73 (1101)	10.57 (984)	15.98 (976)	3.96 (985)	252.2039 0.1699 0.000
Share of economic organizations as addressees	7.88 (863)	16.89 (971)	8.49 (989)	14.55 (969)	17.07 (990)	5.54 (1101)	4.98 (984)	10.55 (976)	5.38 (985)	205.9286 0.1535 0.000
Share of labor organizations as addressees	4.29 (863)	1.85 (971)	5.76 (989)	4.02 (969)	2.22 (990)	1.58 (1101)	0.71 (984)	0.41 (976)	0.81 (985)	116.0550 0.1152 0.000

Note: Number of cases for calculation of percentages in parentheses.

Let us start once again with the form of claims and more specifically on the share of protest actions as compared to all other forms (first row). Cross-national variations are striking, as witnessed by the relatively high Cramer's V. The share of protests ranges from 11 percent in Italy and 12 percent in France to as low as less than 1 percent in Sweden. These differences might suggest that this has something to do with the severity of the economic crisis as the former countries were deeply affected while the latter was only marginally or not at all so. Yet, if we look at the distributions in other countries, we see that Greece, the most deeply affected country by the economic crisis, displays a lower share of protests than both France and Italy. Spain has also a much lower share of protest actions compared to France, notwithstanding the fact that France buffered the negative effects of the crisis to a greater extent.³

At first glance, what seems to be at work here is that countries with a traditional structure of political opportunities favoring mass protest, such as France, show a higher share of protests than countries that have a structure of political opportunities unfavorable to mass protest, such as Switzerland. That is, political opportunities seem to play a stronger role than the impact of the severity of either the economic crisis or the austerity measures implemented by governments to deal with it. More plausibly, however, an interaction among the two factors is probably at work here: the crisis, along with austerity measures as a response to it, spur protests especially in countries that have a structure of political opportunities favoring a strong protest.

A similar remark applies to the share of claims dealing with socioeconomic issues (second row). As we have already seen, these types of issues are quite prominent in public debates during the period under study. Yet they are more so in some countries than in others. For example, they take the lion's share in Great Britain, France, and Sweden, while they are much less visible especially in Spain and Switzerland. Each country has its own—nationally based—public debates and is characterized by a specific public sphere. It is not our goal here to explain or even describe in detail these national specificities. What matters for the purpose of this article is that we observe strong and significant variations across countries, suggesting that national characteristics are a crucial factor for the structuring of public debates dealing with the economic crisis.

Similar and sometimes even stronger variations can be observed when we look at economic and labor organizations as subject actors (third and fourth

³ Based on common knowledge of the situation of our nine countries as well as on contextual data collected in the LIVEWHAT project (most notably, on indicators of economic recession), we can consider Greece, Italy, and Spain as belonging to the countries that have suffered by a deep economic crisis; Germany, Poland, Sweden, and Switzerland as belonging to the countries that have not; and France and Great Britain as belonging to the countries standing somewhere in between. This is admittedly a bit of a rough way to classify our countries, but it will give some hints as to whether the severity of the crisis has an impact on the ways in which organized actors intervene in the public domain and, therefore, on the structuring of the discursive field around the issue of the economic crisis.

rows), as object actors (fifth and sixth rows), and as addressees (seventh and eighth rows). Again without going into the details, we observe strong cross-national variations, as attested by the relatively high Cramer's V. In this regard, the share of economic organizations both as subject actors and as object actors display the strongest coefficients of all eight aspects that we are considering here, hence the deepest differences across countries.

Most importantly, once again, these cross-national variations do not seem to be linked to the impact of the crisis as they often crisscross the distinction between countries deeply affected by the crisis and countries that have been less so. For example, economic organizations as subject actors are most present in Sweden and least present in Greece and Spain, but at the same time they are relatively prominent in Italy; the share of labor organizations as subject actors is similarly low in Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland, while it is much higher in France and Italy; economic organizations as object actors are often mentioned in Germany, Great Britain, Italy, and Sweden, while they are much less often so in Spain; the share of labor organizations as object actors is relatively high and very similar in Greece and Italy, while it is much lower in Germany, Spain, and especially Great Britain; economic organizations as addressees are quite present in Germany, Italy and Poland, less in the other countries; finally, labor organizations as addressees have some place in France, Greece, and Italy, less in the other countries.

To stress our point further: these differences might have something to do with the crisis (we cannot exclude this with the present analysis), but they seem more plausibly linked to specific nationally based structures of political and discursive opportunities, besides other potential factors, such as the types of industrial relations, policy networks, national traditions of mobilization and protest policing, and so forth. In fact, each aspect considered depends on a configuration of different factors at the national level. Besides the fact that variations across countries in the eight aspects of claims examined crosscut the distinction between countries deeply affected by the crisis and countries less deeply affected, a further indication that national structures weigh to a greater extent than the progression of the crisis is given by the coefficients of association (Cramer's V) between the eight aspects and the year (Table 1), on one hand, and those between the same eight aspects and the countries, on the other. The latter are systematically higher than the former.

The main lesson to be drawn from this simple analysis is twofold. On one hand, contrary to common knowledge, during the Great Recession protests have not increased dramatically, nor have socioeconomic issues increased in public debates. Similarly, there has been no relevant growth in the role of economic and labor organizations, neither as makers of claims nor as objects or addressees. The role of economic actors, in fact, has rather become less prominent. On the other hand, we observe strong cross-national variations in the forms, issues, and actors (focusing specifically on economic and labor actors) of claims. Furthermore, such variations are not necessarily related to the extent

or severity of the economic crisis, nor to the extent or severity of austerity measures. Rather, structures of political and discursive opportunities, together with other potential national-based factors specific to each country, are likely to account for much of the variation that exists in the forms, issues, and actors of claims pertaining to the economic crisis. Just as governmental responses to the economic crisis reflect the interests and power of domestic actors as well as external constraints and the nature of the economic problems at hand (Pontusson and Raess 2012), responses by collective actors are also deeply embedded in preexisting national structures and traditions.

Conclusion

In this article, we have challenged a commonly held view about the impact of the Great Recession on public debates and collective mobilizations in Europe. According to this view, the extent and severity of the economic crisis has produced major changes in the ways issues are debated in the public domain, in the place of different actors, especially economic and labor actors, and the ways they intervene. Drawing on an original dataset made of a random sample of political claims in nine European democracies, we have proposed an alternative account inspired by the political process approach to social movements and more specifically by political opportunity theory.

Overall, our research has identified three major objectives—empirical, theoretical, and normative—that are linked to three deficits in the current discussions around the Great Recession. First, we developed a context-sensitive analysis of the impact of the economic crisis on public debates about the crisis in terms of protest actions, socioeconomic issues, and with a particular focus on the role of economic and labor organizations. These two actors have traditionally been identified by previous research as those conflicting actors that are most likely clashing with each other owing to their affiliation to capital and labor, respectively. Second, we stressed the role of national political opportunity structures to explain why we observe more important variations across countries than over time. According to our argument, the public domain is structured according to the specific national settings of institutions, policies, and discourse, and what we observe since the crisis is very much influenced by these national settings much more than is influenced by changing grievances (and consequent policy changes) over time. The opposition between changing grievances on one hand and national contexts on the other is studied through a research design that tests the relevance of the former by looking at time differences, and the latter by looking at cross-country differences. Finally, and more broadly, we have unveiled the normative underpinnings of the commonly held view that the economic crisis has fed a grievance-based conflict between capital and labor, beyond specific patterns and configurations at the national level. Our analysis of the impact that the Great Recession has taken is thus valuable to assess the extent to which the traditional interest-based model of

contentious politics can still convey an effective portrait of the mobilization of economic and labor organizations. This traditional model of contentious politics fits the usual approach to politics as a zero-sum game to be fought across various cleavages dividing governors and the governed, the included and the excluded, challengers and outsiders, and—in this study—economic and labor organizations.

Far from offering a definitive answer, our findings have provided support for an alternative account along our three main objectives. Therefore, our analysis has “demystified” the common storyline about the impact of the crisis on political claims making. Empirically, we have found that protest against the crisis and austerity policies are not as widespread as the most updated accounts sometimes suggest (Ancelovici, Dufour, and Nez 2016), that socioeconomic issues have not become more salient in public debates during the crisis, that stronger variations emerge cross-nationally, and that the role of economic and labor organizations is far from being more central or more mutually conflictual because of the crisis.

Most crucially, and beyond the empirical analysis of the impact of the economic crisis on public debates, we have opened space for a stronger scholarly engagement with current evidences suggesting that traditional interest politics and the challengers’/insiders’ dynamics at the core of standard conceptualizations of contentious politics may no longer have the lion’s share for explaining developments in terms of political behavior across many fields of politics. We need to work at alternative models of contentious politics that may be based on alternative accounts of political behavior, for example, when actors aim to produce a better collective view to the advantage of all. These new conceptualizations of noncontentious or less-than-contentious politics are also valuable to put emphasis on current processes of re-composition and articulation of contrasting positions across different political fields. Neo-Marxist and neoliberal accounts of democracy, albeit moved by opposite desires and advocating different predictions, have constructed well-established narratives of politics as the main tool by which actors compete and conflict with each other in the name of their particular advantage. Yet this dramatization of ubiquitous conflict may be overstated. And even at the time of the Great Recession, the “reason of all” may offer an alternative basis for political behavior than acting “in my own name.” The Great Recession, far from being the last frontline of contentious politics, may be remembered in the future as an epochal moment marking the passage to an alternative model of contentious politics.

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How Civil Society Actors Responded to the Economic Crisis: The Interaction of Material Deprivation and Perceptions of Political Opportunity Structures

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We examine the relationship between material deprivation and different types of responses to economic crises by civil society actors. We are interested in understanding whether material deprivation has an effect on civil society reactions to the crisis and whether political opportunity factors contribute to this relationship. In particular, we wish to ascertain if the effect of material deprivation is moderated by perceptions of political stability, on one hand, and of the effectiveness of government, on the other. Our results show that the effect of material deprivation on various aspects of responses to the crisis varies depending on the perceptions of the political environment. This suggests that perceptions of political stability and government effectiveness feed into the interpretation of present conditions. Therefore, perceptions of political stability and government effectiveness act as signals leading material deprivation to become politicized as a grievance.

Keywords: Economic Crisis, Europe, Eurozone, Great Recession, Civil Society Actors, Material Deprivation, Political Stability, Government

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Effectiveness, Political Opportunity Structures, Political Claims Making, Public Opinion, Political Participation, Public Perception, Social Movements, Protest Behavior, Resource Mobilization Theory.

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Analizamos la relación entre la privación material y diferentes tipos de reacción a una crisis por parte de diferentes actores de la sociedad civil. Nuestro interés es entender si la privación material tiene un efecto en la reacción a una crisis por parte de la sociedad civil y también si el factor de oportunidades políticas contribuye a esta relación. Específicamente, buscamos establecer si el efecto de la privación material es moderado por percepciones de estabilidad política, y de igual manera, determinar el efecto de la efectividad de un gobierno. Nuestros resultados muestran que el efecto de la privación material en distintos aspectos de la reacción de la sociedad civil varía en función a la percepción de la eficacia de un gobierno. Esto sugiere que las percepciones de estabilidad política y la efectividad de un gobierno son tomadas en cuenta para interpretar las condiciones actuales. Por lo tanto, las percepciones de estabilidad política y eficacia de gobierno actúan como señales que conducen a la politización de la privación material como una injusticia.

This article examines the ways in which civil society actors responded to the economic crisis that started in 2008. We are particularly interested in ascertaining if and to what extent aggregate levels of material deprivation produced by the crisis may or may not lead civil society actors to react publicly and to do so in certain specific ways, targeting specific actors, and focusing on specific issues. Theoretically, we engage in the long-standing debate in the social movement literature about the role of grievances for social movements and protest behavior. Has the economic crisis brought grievances back into social movement theory? More generally, are grievances more important than both resource mobilization theory and political opportunity theory have assumed? To answer these questions, we examine the impact of a number of measures of economic crisis, austerity policies, and hardship on the responses by civil society actors.

Most importantly, we would like to link back the debate about the role of grievances to a discussion of the relationship between grievances and

perceptions of political opportunity structures. The latter form part of a long-standing tradition in social movement research (for reviews, see Kriesi 2004; Meyer 2004). Political opportunity theorists argue that protest behavior is channeled in important ways by the political-institutional context. In this vein, not only the “objective” aspects of such a context are important—which has formed the bulk of works in this research tradition—but also how people perceive them. In this perspective, it is not so much the level of relative or absolute deprivation that matters, but it depends on the extent to which such a deprivation—and the grievances associated with it—are considered as politically relevant. In other words, we assume that “objective” conditions must be framed by people to lead to protest or other ways to respond to the economic crisis, and the perception of the political environment is crucial in this respect. More specifically, we argue that material deprivation interacts with the perception of the “openness” or “closedness” of the political environment to lead people to organize and respond publicly to the economic crisis. To this end, we examine the extent to which the perceptions of the stability of the political system or the perceptions of the effectiveness of the government play a role in this context. These types of assessments can be thought of as two sides of citizens’ understanding of the political opportunity structure for developing their responses to the economic crisis and, more generally, their activism in the public domain. While political stability may be considered as an input measure of the perception of political opportunity structures, government effectiveness can be seen as an output measure of perceived opportunities.

Empirically, the analysis is based on a random sample of political claims in nine countries (Britain, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom) covering seven years (2008–14). These countries have been affected differently by the economic crisis and differ also with regard to the political responses in terms of austerity policies implemented by the respective governments. Political claims include both verbal statements and protest actions. This allows us to measure how civil society actors have responded to the economic crisis and the related austerity policies as well as how such responses vary both across countries and over time. In addition, we use a number of aggregate-level indicators allowing us to measure the extent of the crisis as well as variations in the policy responses to the crisis. These indicators will then be related to the protest and claims data to examine if and how the level of material deprivation interacts with the perceptions of the stability of the political system as well as that of the effectiveness of the government (at the aggregate level) to explain four aspects of the response of civil society actors to the crisis: their relative presence, the form of their intervention, the target of their intervention, and the thematic focus of their intervention.

The remainder of the article proceeds as follows. First, we discuss previous research and theory motivating the study. Next, we discuss the data and

methods applied in the present article. We then present and discuss results. Finally, we conclude by discussing their implications for future research.

Popular Reactions to the Economic Crisis: The Social Movement Perspective

After eight years of economic crisis in Europe—often characterized as the Great Recession—the literature on its effects has become abundant. Scholars in sociology, political science, and economics, as well as from other disciplines, have written extensively on the impact of the crisis on a variety of aspects such as policy making, individual attitudes and well-being, family patterns, political responses, and many others. In this article, we focus on one such aspect, namely how citizens² have responded to the economic crisis in the public domain. This translates into an analysis of the collective responses of organized citizens through political claims making.

As citizens struggle to cope with the effects of the crisis, attention has been drawn to the potential social and political effects of the recession. One type of possible negative effect of economic hardship is the decline of political participation and civic engagement. If citizens need to struggle with working overtime to keep a job, searching for a new job, or more generally dealing with the array of difficulties thrown up by economic hardship, they will have less time and resources to engage in political action. Perhaps more importantly, losing a job (or, for young people, not being able to find one) means the loss or absence of social networks and personal contacts which facilitate the spread of information and solidarity and motivate people to engage in collective, political action.

However, while the experience of economic difficulty can certainly be understood to drain resources from political participation, it may also be considered that tough economic conditions generate grievances which people may seek to redress through political participation, and, in particular, protest. Economic crisis may provide the political space and motivations for the mobilization of those seeking to criticize what are perceived to be unjust patterns of wealth distribution in advanced capitalist democracies and to draw attention to the fact that not all sections of society bear the costs of economic crisis evenly. For example, the rhetoric of the Occupy movement set the greedy, corrupt financial sector's 1 percent, against the 99 percent of hard-working, law-abiding citizens.

Research has shown that the economic downturn affected citizens' support for government intervention (Malhotra and Margalit 2010; Margalit 2013; Popp and Rudolph 2011) and fueled political protests and social movements (Bennett 2012; Skocpol and Williamson 2013). Particularly in those countries worst hit, large protests took place as governments were blamed for the negative economic context (Giugni and Grasso 2015; Grasso and Giugni 2013, forthcoming). Political science literature shows how voters use their judgment about circumstances around them to hold politicians accountable (Fiorina 1981) as well as showing that citizens use a wide array of institutional and non-institutional modes of engagement (Barnes and Kaase 1979). However, with

rare exceptions (Levin, Sinclair, and Alvarez 2015), research has tended to focus on understanding the causes for voter turnout, ignoring other political activities such as claims in the public domain. Moreover, most studies of participation tend to focus on sociological explanations of participation (Brady, Verba, and Scholzman, 1995; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980), disregarding the effects of economic perceptions, blame attribution, and policy-related approval. It is particularly during periods of economic challenges that macro-economic conditions might fail to meet expectations resulting in feelings of deprivation and dissatisfaction leading individuals to claims making in the public domain (Thomassen 1989).

Providing opposing expectations to the mobilization hypothesis, the withdrawal hypothesis suggests that personal economic worries block participation since individuals are deprived of resources needed for participation, instead focusing on more pressing material issues (Brody and Sniderman 1977; Rosenstone 1982). Others argue that personal economic worries should not impact on participation as individuals tend to deal with these issues on their own (Lane 1959; Rosenstone 1982).

Evidence on these accounts is varied. Not all studies have found effects of negative macro-economic conditions on mobilization (Brody and Sniderman 1977; Rosenstone 1982). Moreover, the intensity and direction of the effect of economic adversity on political participation would seem to depend on economic context, for example, of an election (Southwell 1988), and whether social welfare exists to alleviate the worse effects of negative economic conditions (Radcliff 1992). Given that research to date has not provided firm answers on all these questions, it appears important to examine the effect of material deprivation and government evaluations on diverse types of political claims making in the current economic crisis.

The social movement literature has long discussed whether deprivation leads to an increase or a decrease in protest participation. Popular in the 1970s, following Durkheim's classic thinking, strain and breakdown theories saw social movements (along with riots, panics, crowds, and so forth) as one subtype of collective behavior resulting from weakened or absent social controls (Buechler 2004). For example, Blumer (1951) understood collective behavior as spontaneous group activity that emerged out of social unrest, or breakdown. Another variant in this tradition was the relative deprivation theory (Davies 1962; Geschwender 1968; Gurr 1970). Here, the strain is understood at the social-psychological individual, not the societal, level, and pertains to comparisons either with some external reference group or oneself against past and future selves (Buechler 2004).

Smelser (1962) linked strain and breakdown into a structural-functionalist macro theory of collective behavior (ranging from panics, crazes, fads, riots, and revolutionary movements) by suggesting that it emerges out of structural conduciveness, structural strain, generalized beliefs, precipitating factors, mobilization of action, and the breakdown of social control. Kornhauser's (1959) mass society theory emphasized concerns over anomie and egoism present in Durkheim's classic work suggesting that due to the breakdown of mid-

level groups and social anchors, individuals would gravitate to collective behavior as one of the only few available sources of social belonging in modernity.

While some elements of strain and breakdown theories persisted in the works of Goldstone (1986, 1991a, 1991b), Piven and Cloward (1977), Snow and others (1998), and Useem (1980), by and large, this type of explanation was called into question by a large number of scholars as it did not provide useful tools to explain and make sense of the new social movements emerging since the 1960s. Tilly, Tilly, and Tilly (1975) emphasized group solidarity as the key factor explaining collective action and also political violence as an extension of such tactics under specific political circumstances. Resource mobilization theory emphasized the rationality of social movements as political challenges following the patterns of more institutional types of action (McCarthy and Zald 1973, 1977; Oberschall 1973; Tilly 1978).

Perhaps it could be contended that some elements of strain and breakdown theories survived in the ways in which we view social movements now. The concept of opportunity in Tilly's (1978) mobilization model of collective action—defined as the increased vulnerability of other groups and governments to the actions of a challenger pursuing their interests—could be seen to link to strain and breakdown as facilitating conditions (Buechler 2004). McAdam's (1982) political process model recognizes opportunity structures as central for understanding the emergence of social movements. Kriesi and others (1995) showed how diverse political opportunity structures operate in this context.

Nonetheless, long gone are the days when social movements were understood as deviant behavior resulting from psychological strain and social breakdown. Current literature overwhelmingly sees movements and protest as “normalized” (Van Aelst and Walgrave 2001) and part of the standard repertoire of action available to democratic publics. More recent literature on unconventional political participation generally points to contemporary protesters as very similar to the general population but younger and more highly educated individuals (Grasso 2013; Norris, Walgrave, and Van Aelst 2005; Schussman and Soule 2005). In particular, younger people and students are understood to be more “biographically available” (McAdam 1986). Moreover, relative to older cohorts the generations coming of age since the 1960s and 1970s are understood to be the most active in protest activism and movement politics (Grasso 2014).

Therefore, while classic theories of deprivation as spurs for protest action, focusing on grievances and relative deprivation as the origins for political protest, have been increasingly dismissed, the current crisis context motivates our study to examine whether grievances matter for protest. Today, more support exists for mobilization models, which emphasize the importance of resources, political opportunities, the construction of political problems, and ideological identification for the development of political solidarity and the organizational structures necessary for political action and mobilization. The main ideas behind this shift in focus are that, while groups may be relatively deprived, they

first need to realize, or perceive this, and also see themselves as able to mobilize and effect political change, generally through membership of a political group. In the absence of the construction of grievances and relative deprivation as social or political problems to be redressed through political action—and without the organizational structures, resources, and political opportunities necessary to mobilize and effect political change—the experience of economic hardship or other forms of disadvantage on their own are unlikely to lead to political participation. According to this line of argument, the experience of economic recession and, specifically, the costs and pressures experienced by individuals suffering economic hardship, are more likely to push them to exit political engagement, rather than mobilize them to political action.

In line with this, the postmaterialism thesis (Inglehart 1977, 1990) suggests that the experience of relative economic security during the early years of socialization leads to the development of values which emphasize post-material, liberal values over materialist ones and which in turn spur people to antistate “elite-challenging” political action such as demonstrating, joining boycotts, signing petitions, and participation in new social movements. According to this theory, it is the opposite of the experience of economic hardship—material security—which leads to political participation and to the formation of those types of values emphasizing self-expression and universal moral causes which are seen to be conducive to protest participation.

However, as the emergence of the Occupy and similar movements would support, it could also be suggested that the experience of hard times could lead individuals to focus attention on economic inequalities and the human costs these exert on fellow citizens and, therefore, lead individuals to develop values which are more supportive of egalitarian redistributive policies and welfare support measures. In other words, the experience of economic crisis may lead to the formation of values which spur individuals to political action by constructing hardship and relative deprivation as the result of political arrangements which can be altered through political intervention. Tough economic times may also provide the basis for political solidarity and identification with political groups, leading people to mobilization and political action. It, therefore, remains a puzzle as to whether the experience of economic crisis should be seen to depress or foster political action in the form of protest. While in one reading, the experience of economic hardship might lead individuals to “exit” political engagement, on an alternative reading it might spur individuals to “voice” grievances and, therefore, engage in political action to attempt to address these problems through political change.

In this article, we draw from the literature on social movements and protest behavior discussed above. In particular, as we have seen, grievance theory predicts that people engage in protest activities and, more generally, become more “contentious” when they are discontent, frustrated, or aggrieved. This contrasts with resource mobilization and political opportunity theories that stress, instead, resources (broadly defined) and political openings (understood in

different ways). Here, we start from grievance theory and the idea that the economic crisis has produced varying levels of material deprivation in European countries, but we contend that such a deprivation impacts on the “contentiousness” of the organized civil society to the extent that people perceive that the political-institutional environment is conducive. Drawing on political opportunity theory and, more specifically, on the idea that opportunities must be “framed” and perceived to have an impact on social movements (Gamson and Meyer 1996), we examine the extent to which material deprivation interacts with the ways people view their political environment, specifically in terms of the perception of political stability or in terms of the perception of the effectiveness of the government. While the former aspects may be seen as referring to the “input” side of political opportunity structures, the latter relates to their “output” side (Kitschelt 1986). We argue that grievances stemming from exposure to the economic crisis have not so much an unconditional effect on the responses of civil society actors in the public domain, but material deprivation interacts with perceptions of the political environment to influence the responses by civil society actors in the public domain.

We look at the impact of material deprivation and, above all, of the interaction between material deprivation and these two measures of perceptions of political opportunity structures on four aspects of the responses by civil society actors to the economic crisis: their presence in claims making (as opposed to the presence of other actors), their use of protest action (as opposed to other forms of intervention), their addressing of claims to state actors (as opposed to targeting other actors), and their focusing on socioeconomic issues (as opposed to other issues). Broadly speaking, we consider these four aspects as measures of the contentiousness which might be produced by the grievances relating to the economic crisis. Indeed, from the perspective of grievance theory, one would expect the economic crisis to lead to an activation of civil society, especially, but not exclusively, in the form of protest actions, targeting state actors, and focusing on socioeconomic issues.

Data and Methods

The data used in this study stems from a systematic content analysis of newspapers in each of the countries under study. Following the methods of political claims analysis (Koopmans and Statham 1999), which has proved fruitful in previous work on social movements and contentious politics, we have created a comparative dataset consisting of about 1,000 claims in each country (for a total sample of 9,033 claims) covering the period from 2005 to 2014. The claims were generated by random-sampling newspaper articles based on a list of relevant keywords. All articles containing any of the three words “crisis,” “recession,” or “austerity” have been selected and coded, to the extent that they referred to the current economic crisis. For this article, state and party actors are excluded from all the analyses to focus on civil society actors, except

when we analyze the relative weight of the latter as compared to other actors (namely, state and party actors and economic actors). Furthermore, we focus on the 2008-14 period, that is, the period starting from the very beginning of the economic crisis.

Given the hierarchical structure of the data, we use multilevel random-intercept logistic regression models in our analyses. The models are structured according to a variable combining countries and years. As we have nine countries and seven years, our models are built on 63 level 2 observations (or groups), each representing a given year in a given country. However, some of the analyses are conducted on 61 or 62 level 2 units as there are no observations on some of the dependent variables within one or two groups. The level 1 observations are represented by the claims. The models only include predictors measured at level 2.

We examine the effect of level 2 predictors as well as the interaction between level 2 predictors, notably, material deprivation on one hand, and perceived political stability and perceived government effectiveness on the other, on four measures of citizens' responses in the public domain (all dummy variables): a first one concerns the form of intervention by civil society actors (protest = 1, other form = 0); a second one deals with the target or addressee of claims by civil society actors (state addressees = 1, other addressees = 0); a third one looks at the content or issue of claims by civil society actors (socioeconomic issues = 1, other issues = 0); and finally a more general one refers to the actors making the claims (civil society actors = 1, other actors = 0).

We include in the models a number of level 2 predictors measured on a yearly basis for each country. The most important ones refer to material deprivation on one hand, and on perceived political stability and perceived government effectiveness on the other. These are the aspects that are at the core of our analysis. The indicator of *material deprivation* is an aggregate measure coming from Eurostat (2016) and refers to the material deprivation rate, economic strain, and durables dimension based on four items or more. In our data, it varies between .7 and 21.5. *Government effectiveness* is an index created by the World Bank (Global Economy 2014a) and ranging from -2.5 to +2.5. It captures perceptions of the quality of public services, the quality of the civil service and the degree of its independence from political pressures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government's commitment to such policies. In our data, it varies between .29 and 2.13. However, as this variable is strongly correlated with the measure of material deprivation, we recoded it into a dummy where the values below or equal to the median (1.45) take the code 0 and all the values above the median take the code 1. *Political stability* is an index created by the World Bank (Global Economy 2014b) and ranging from -2.5 to +2.5. It measures perceptions of the likelihood that the government will be destabilized or overthrown by unconstitutional or violent means, including politically motivated violence and terrorism. The index is an average of several other indexes from the Economist

Intelligence Unit, the World Economic Forum, and the Political Risk Services, among others. Again, we recoded this variable into a dummy where the values below or equal to the median (.53) take the code 0 and all the values above the median take the code 1.

In addition to these three key variables, we include in our models five further predictors. The first two refer to the state of the economy and can be considered as measures of the economic crisis: the *quarterly Gross Domestic Product (GDP)* expressed as percentage change from the previous period (OECD Data 2015) and the *yearly unemployment rate*, expressed as percentage of the labor force being unemployed (OECD Data 2014c). The next two variables are meant to capture the extent and severity of austerity policies: *yearly social spending* (public), expressed as percentage of the GDP (OECD Data 2014a), and *yearly tax wedge*, expressed as percentage of labor cost (OECD Data 2014b). These two variables reflect the definition of austerity policies as reducing government spending and increasing taxation. Finally, we also include a measure of the *institutional context*, namely the Gallagher index of disproportionality (Gandrud 2015), which is an indicator of the openness or closedness of the political system for challengers.

All these variables vary both across countries and over time. For all the measures, we took the average referring to each year in each country and created the respective variable. Estimates were applied in some cases to filling missing data. The Appendix shows the descriptive statistics for all the variables in the analyses.

Findings

Our analysis is based on multilevel random-intercept logistic regression models predicting each of the four aspects we focus upon: the fact that the claim is a protest action (as opposed to other forms), the fact that the claim addresses state actors (as opposed to other actors), the fact that the claim focuses on socioeconomic issues (as opposed to other issues), and the fact that the claimant is a civil society actor (as opposed to other actors, namely state and party actors and economic actors). For each aspect, we run three separate models: one with only the main effects, then one in which we add an interaction term between material deprivation and the perception of political stability, and finally one in which we add an interaction term between material deprivation and the perception of effectiveness of the government. Before presenting the findings, let us keep in mind that we are dealing with material deprivation at the aggregate level, and the same remark applies to all the predictors included in the models.

Table 1 shows the three models relating to protest actions (as opposed to other forms of claims). Here, we observe a lower number of statistically significant effects. Material deprivation has a direct effect on protest supporting the findings of a few previous studies (Bernburg 2015; Klandermans, van der Toorn,

and van Stekelenburg 2008; Rüdig and Karyotis 2014). In addition, we observe a positive effect of social spending (reflecting the one we saw earlier) and a negative one of the disproportionality index (confirming the political opportunity argument that more proportional electoral systems lead to more protest).

To visualize the interaction effects for all four dependent variables, we calculated the predictive margins based on the models with interactions, then plotted them so as to show graphically how the two variables pertaining to perceived political opportunity structures (political stability and government effectiveness) moderate the relationship between material deprivation and the dependent variable at hand. The effect of material deprivation on the dependent variable at given values is shown for the two values of the moderating variables (0, meaning “closed” opportunities and 1, meaning “open” opportunities), holding all other variables at their means.

Concerning the interaction terms, in this case they are both statistically significant and positive. The plots show that at higher levels of material deprivation, the slope for high government stability is steeper than for low government stability. What this means substantively is that at high levels of material deprivation low government effectiveness seems to be less important as the effect of material deprivation on protest is greater where political effectiveness is understood to be high. Conversely, at low levels of material deprivation, the effect is greater for low government effectiveness. The same is true with opportunity structures understood through the lens of government stability. Thus, when it comes to explaining protest behavior, the perception of political opportunities moderates the relationship between material deprivation and protest, supporting our general hypothesis. This can clearly be seen in Figure 1, which plots the interaction effects of material deprivation with perceived political stability and perceived government effectiveness on protest.

Table 2 examines the impact on claims addressing state actors (as opposed to other actors). In this case, no effect of material deprivation can be observed. Thus, in this case the hypothesis that the grievances produced by the economic crisis lead civil society actors to increasingly address their claims to the state is not confirmed. Among the main effects, only two are significant (at the 10 percent level): unemployment and social spending (but the latter with a negative sign this time).

Most importantly for our present purpose, we observe a significant effect of the interaction term combining material deprivation and the government effectiveness index. Thus, the perception that the government is effective seems to moderate the relationship between material deprivation and the fact that civil society actors target state actors rather than other addressees. In other words, it is only among those who perceive government as highly effective that material deprivation has an effect. The plot of the predictive margins, which can be seen in Figure 2, shows very well the importance of the interaction in this case. What this means in substantive terms is that at higher levels of material deprivation there is a steeper effect of perceiving government as highly effective.

Table 1. Multilevel Random-Intercept Logistic Regression for Protest versus Other Claims (Log-Odds)

	Main Effects Only	Interaction Effect (Political Stability)	Interaction Effect (Government Effectiveness)
<i>Fixed effects</i>			
Material deprivation	.14*** (.04)	.12*** (.04)	.13*** (.04)
GDP	-.00 (.04)	-.02 (.04)	-.01 (.04)
Unemployment	-.03 (.02)	-.03 (.02)	-.04* (.02)
Social spending	.21** (.10)	.29*** (.10)	.31*** (.11)
Tax wedge	-.04 (.04)	-.07 (.04)	-.10** (.05)
Disproportionality	-.08*** (.03)	-.10*** (.03)	-.10*** (.03)
Political stability index	-.40 (.29)	-1.17** (.45)	-.37 (.28)
Government effectiveness index	.06 (.27)	.17 (.27)	-.88* (.50)
Deprivation * Stability		.10** (.05)	
Deprivation * Effectiveness			.15** (.07)
Constant	-5.06*** (1.17)	-5.60*** (1.20)	-5.03*** (1.15)
<i>Random effects</i>			
Sigma u	.37 (.15)	.34 (.15)	.33 (.16)
Rho	.04 (.03)	.03 (.03)	.03 (.03)
Log likelihood	-503.585	-501.325	-501.018
Observations	1,016	1,016	1,016
Number of groups	62	62	62

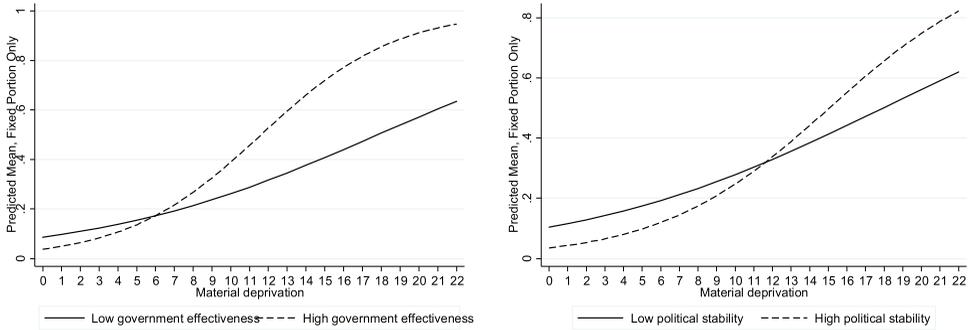
Notes: Standard errors in parentheses.

***p < .01; **p < .05; *p < .1.

Finally, Table 3 looks at the last indicator of contentiousness that we are interested in: namely, the focus on socioeconomic issues (as opposed to any other issue). Recent work has sought to “bring capitalism back in” to social movement studies (della Porta 2015). We expect material deprivation brought about by the economic crisis to be associated with a more frequent focus on this kind of claim, for obvious reasons. Consistently with the previous analysis, we also observe, in the first model, a negative effect of unemployment, a positive effect of increasing social spending, and a negative effect of increasing taxation.

Figure 1.
Plot of Interaction Effects of Material Deprivation with Perceived Political Stability and Perceived Government Effectiveness on Protest

Notes: Adjusted predicted means based on logistic regression with interactions shown in Table 2. Other variables are set at their means.



Concerning the interaction terms, they are both statistically significant, suggesting that there is a moderating effect of both the perception of political stability and of the effectiveness of the government. Once again, this provides evidence supporting our main argument about the interplay of material deprivation and the way in which people view their political-institutional environment, both in input (political stability) and output (government effectiveness) terms. This is best seen in Figure 3, which shows the plots of the predicted margins for this aspect. Again, different levels of perceived government effectiveness lead to very different predictions concerning the impact of material deprivation, although in a different pattern than with the previous dependent variable. However, here high average levels of perceived government effectiveness are characterized by a negative effect of material deprivation, while low levels lead to a positive effect. Different slopes can also be clearly seen when we look at the moderating effect of political stability index, but in this case the slope of the lines indicate a positive effect in both situations.

Table 4 shows the results for the presence of civil society actors. The model with main effects shows several statistically significant effects. We discover that the level of material deprivation has a significant effect on the presence of civil society actors: the higher the level of material deprivation in society, the more likely that claims are made by civil society actors (rather than by other actors). We also observe a significant effect of unemployment. The latter, however, reduces rather than spurs the intervention of civil society actors, which goes against the overly simplistic argument that “objective” grievances have a stimulating effect on popular contention. The two indicators of austerity policies also display a significant effect. Both the level of social spending (as a percentage of the GDP) and the level of taxation (tax wedge) significantly affect the propensity

Table 2. Multilevel Random-Intercept Logistic Regression for State Addressees versus Other Addressees (Log-Odds)

	Main Effects Only	Interaction Effect (Political Stability)	Interaction Effect (Government Effectiveness)
<i>Fixed effects</i>			
Material deprivation	-.04 (.04)	-.05 (.05)	-.05 (.04)
GDP	.02 (.04)	.01 (.04)	.01 (.04)
Unemployment	.05* (.03)	.06* (.03)	.05 (.03)
Social spending	-.20* (.11)	-.16 (.12)	-.10 (.12)
Tax wedge	.07 (.05)	.05 (.05)	.01 (.05)
Disproportionality	.01 (.03)	.00 (.03)	-.01 (.03)
Political stability index	-.43 (.33)	-.83 (.53)	-.39 (.32)
Government effectiveness index	.24 (.31)	.30 (.32)	-.78 (.59)
Deprivation * Stability		.05 (.06)	
Deprivation * Effectiveness			.16** (.08)
Constant	2.70** (1.30)	2.52* (1.32)	2.92** (1.29)
<i>Random effects</i>			
Sigma u	.56 (.13)	.57 (.12)	.54 (.12)
Rho	.09 (.04)	.09 (.04)	.08 (.03)
Log likelihood	-507.911	-507.433	-505.814
Observations	801	801	801
Number of groups	61	61	61

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses.

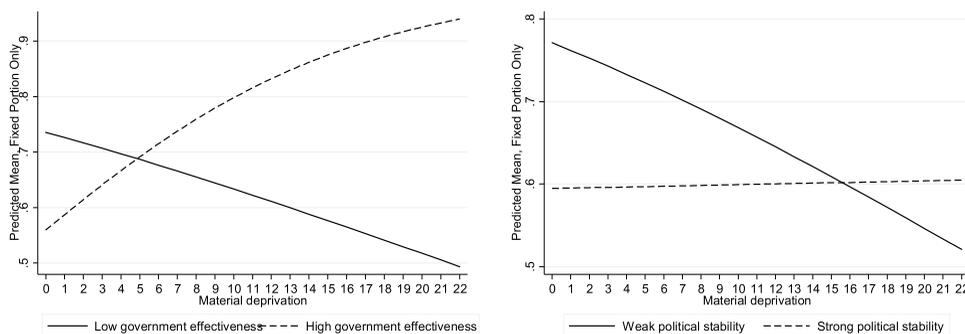
***p < .01; **p < .05; *p < .1.

of civil society actors to intervene publicly on issues pertaining to the economic crisis. However, such an intervention becomes more likely with increasing (rather than decreasing) levels of social spending and is also more likely when taxation diminishes (rather than rises). In both cases, austerity policies (i.e., decreasing levels of social spending and increasing taxation) seem to deter rather than spur popular contention in this regard.

Most importantly, our two measures of aggregate-level perceptions of political opportunity structures (the political stability index and the

Figure 2.
Plot of Interaction Effects of Material Deprivation with Perceived Political Stability
and Perceived Government Effectiveness on State Addressees

Notes: Adjusted predicted means based on logistic regression with interactions shown in Table 3. Other variables are set at their means.



government effectiveness index) are also statistically significant. Both lead to a greater likelihood of civil society actors being the protagonists of claims making (as opposed to other actors). More precisely, where and when people tend to think of the political system as being stable and deterring violence or the government to be effective, civil society actors are less likely to become engaged in claims making on issues pertaining to the economic crisis. This finding is in line with the idea put forth by proponents of the political opportunity approach that stable political alignments and conditions as well as closed political opportunity structures (in terms of seeing the government as being highly effective) are not conducive to political contention (Tarrow 1989).

What about the main focus of our analysis, that is, the interaction terms? As we can see in the other two models, neither the interaction between material deprivation and perceived political stability, nor the one between material deprivation and perceived government effectiveness, are statistically significant. Thus, in contrast to the other three dependent measures of citizen responses to the crisis studied in this article, when it comes to explaining the presence of civil society actors in claims making, there does not seem to be a moderating effect of these perceptions of political opportunities on the relationship between material deprivation and claims making.

Figure 4 shows the plots for the presence of civil society actors. Both interactions were not significant in the regression model. We observe that the two lines for the government effectiveness index have a different slope. If the interaction had been significant, this would have meant that if people view the government as highly effective, the impact of material deprivation on the likelihood that a claim is made by civil society actors is greater than when people have a poor evaluation of the performance of the government. In other

Table 3. Multilevel Random-Intercept Logistic Regression for Socioeconomic Issues versus Other Issues (Log-Odds)

	Main Effects Only	Interaction Effect (Political Stability)	Interaction Effect (Government Effectiveness)
<i>Fixed effects</i>			
Material deprivation	.08** (.03)	.09*** (.03)	.09*** (.03)
GDP	.02 (.03)	.04 (.03)	.04 (.03)
Unemployment	-.05** (.02)	-.05** (.02)	-.04** (.02)
Social spending	.25*** (.08)	.18** (.08)	.17** (.08)
Tax wedge	-.09*** (.03)	-.06* (.03)	-.04 (.03)
Disproportionality	.01 (.02)	.02 (.02)	.02 (.02)
Political stability index	.29 (.23)	.95*** (.36)	.20 (.21)
Government effectiveness index	.10 (.23)	.01 (.22)	1.09*** (.40)
Deprivation * Stability		-.09** (.04)	
Deprivation * Effectiveness			-.15*** (.05)
Constant	-2.47*** (.91)	-2.15** (.88)	-2.73*** (.86)
<i>Random effects</i>			
Sigma u	.27 (.12)	.19 (.14)	.17 (.15)
Rho	.02 (.02)	.01 (.02)	.01 (.02)
Log likelihood	-621.083	-618.541	-617.134
Observations	1,002	1,002	1,002
Number of groups	62	62	62

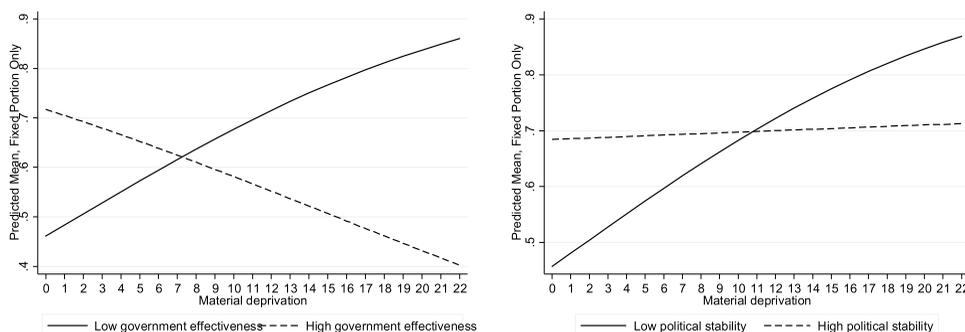
Notes: Standard errors in parentheses.
 ***p < .01; **p < .05; *p < .1.

words, at low levels of material deprivation there is a fairly large difference in the prediction of the likelihood of the presence of civil society actors in claims making across low and high perceptions of government effectiveness, while such a difference diminishes and eventually becomes null at high levels of material deprivation. In contrast, for the political stability index the two lines are close to being parallel.

In sum, our evidence supports our argument about the moderating effect of perceptions of both input and output aspects of the political opportunity

Figure 3.
Plot of Interaction Effects of Material Deprivation with Perceived Political Stability
and Perceived Government Effectiveness on Socioeconomic Issues

Notes: Adjusted predicted means based on logistic regression with interactions shown in Table 4. Other variables are set at their means.



structure on the relationship between material deprivation and four measures of contentiousness relating to the economic crisis. Specifically, we found perceived political stability and government effectiveness to interact with material deprivation in most cases. To be sure, in some cases material deprivation also has a direct effect. However, the key insight here is that, more often than not, it interacts with perceptions of the political environment to lead to higher or lower levels of involvement of civil society actors, of protest, of state actors being targeted, and of socioeconomic issues being the focus of claims making.

Conclusion

In this article, we have investigated the relationship between material deprivation and different types of responses to crises by civil society actors. In particular, we wished to ascertain if these effects are moderated by perceptions of political stability, on one hand, and of the effectiveness of government, on the other. We started from grievance theory, a strand of scholarship on social movements that predicts that people engage in protest activities when they are discontent, frustrated, and aggrieved. However, we argued that grievances stemming from exposure to the economic crisis—as captured through an aggregate-level measure of material deprivation—do not so much have an unconditional effect on the responses of civil society actors in the public domain, but material deprivation interacts with perceptions of the political environment to influence the responses by civil society actors in the public domain, in terms of their presence, the use of protest actions, the targeting state actors, and the focus on socioeconomic issues.

Table 4. Multilevel Random-Intercept Logistic Regression for Civil Society Actors versus Other Actors (Log-Odds)

	Main Effects Only	Interaction Effect (Political Stability)	Interaction Effect (Government Effectiveness)
<i>Fixed effects</i>			
Material deprivation	.03** (.01)	.03* (.02)	.03* (.01)
GDP	-.01 (.01)	-.01 (.01)	-.01 (.01)
Unemployment	-.06*** (.01)	-.06*** (.01)	-.06*** (.01)
Social spending	.17*** (.04)	.18*** (.04)	.18*** (.04)
Tax wedge	-.05*** (.02)	-.05*** (.02)	-.06*** (.02)
Disproportionality	.00 (.01)	-.00 (.01)	-.00 (.01)
Political stability index	-.53*** (.11)	-.60*** (.18)	-.52*** (.11)
Government effectiveness index	-.39*** (.11)	-.38*** (.11)	-.55*** (.19)
Deprivation * Stability		.01 (.02)	
Deprivation * Effectiveness			.03 (.03)
Constant	-3.55*** (.43)	-3.59*** (.44)	-3.53*** (.43)
<i>Random effects</i>			
Sigma u	.13 (.05)	.13 (.85)	.12 (.06)
Rho	.01 (.00)	.01 (.00)	.00 (.00)
Log likelihood	-3,088.869	-3,088.747	-3,088.355
Observations	8,658	8,658	8,658
Number of groups	63	63	63

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses.

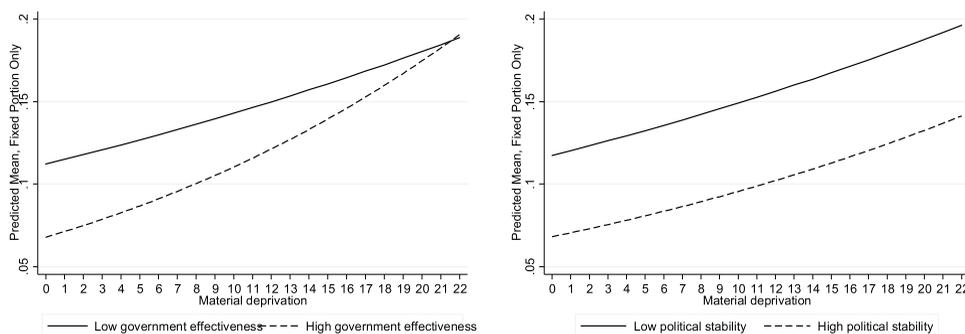
***p < .01; **p < .05; *p < .1.

Our findings provide evidence in favor of the expectation that material deprivation interacts in important ways with both input and output measures of perceptions of political opportunity structures, which we have operationalized through an indicator of perceived political stability and with an indicator of perceived government effectiveness. This supports arguments about the social construction of grievances and the way they are framed in public discourse.

In spite of the insights it provides, our analysis has a number of limitations that should be considered when interpreting our findings. Specifically, the way

Figure 4.
Plot of Interaction Effects of Material Deprivation with Perceived Political Stability
and Perceived Government Effectiveness on Civil Society Actors

Notes: Adjusted predicted means based on logistic regressions with interactions shown in Table 1. Other variables are set at their means.



we built the analysis, through multilevel models clustering the data by country and by year, has the advantage of taking into account both time invariant and time-varying contextual predictors. However, the data are limited in this respect due to the low number of cases on some of our dependent variables. This applies above all to the analysis of protest actions, as the overall level of protest is quite low, and especially so in certain countries. In addition, the nature of our contextual predictors calls for a cautious interpretation of the results. Yet analyses conducted on models clustered by country (instead of country and year) yield largely consistent results, hence offering a good robustness check. Another important caveat regards the level of analysis. The variables included in the regression models are all contextual factors characterizing a given country in a given year. This is the grouping variable in the multilevel models. Therefore, our findings should be interpreted in the light of this specific design. When, for example, we say that material deprivation interacts with the perception of political stability or that of the effectiveness of the government, this refers to the aggregate level and can by no means be inferred to the individual level. To test the same hypotheses at the individual level, we would need survey data.

Future research should develop more detailed analyses in particular through a comparative design allowing us to detect and study cross-national variations in the ways the explanatory factors we have examined play out. Future research should also analyze the mechanisms connecting economic crises and collective responses to them. Finally, we should examine potential interaction effects between measures of the severity of the crisis, of austerity policies, and of self-perception of the effects of the crisis on one's own life to see whether we observe mediating and moderating effects.

Appendix: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Protest	7,972	.051	.221	0	1
Civil society actors	8,693	.120	.325	0	1
State addressees	5,585	.692	.462	0	1
Socioeconomic issues	8,465	.615	.487	0	1
Material deprivation	8,703	7.643	5.243	.7	21.5
GDP	8,703	-.498	3.280	-9.13	5.99
Unemployment	8,703	10.278	5.941	4.04	27.47
Social spending	8,703	25.115	3.715	17.93	31.95
Tax wedge	8,703	39.951	8.641	21.86	51.34
Disproportionality	8,703	7.321	5.006	1.25	17.66
Political stability index	8,703	.491	.500	0	1
Government effectiveness index	8,703	.494	.500	0	1

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Whose Rights, Which Duties? Political Claims in the Sphere of Labor Policy in the Times of Crisis: The Social Citizenship Perspective

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The goal of this article is to explore the discursive construction of social citizenship of various labor market actors during crisis. Using the newspaper data from nine countries we conduct a quantitative and qualitative study of the rights and duties attributed to employees, employers, and outsiders in the labor market. We find that the attribution of rights to all groups prevails and the most frequent are the claims supporting employees' rights. In a context of crisis severity, we find three distinct groups of discourse on rights and duties in the labor market sphere. A severe crisis created conditions for labor organizations to claim the rights of employees. A moderate crisis created the ground for the state to (re)call the rights of the outsiders. In countries in which crisis was present in the discourse, rather than in real terms, a window of opportunity emerged for markets and employers to claim their freedoms and rights.

Keywords: Rights and Duties, Political Claims, Labor Policy, Europe, Eurozone, Public Debates, Political Behavior, Political Opinion, Social

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Citizenship, Industrial Relations, Labor Market, Labor Law, Rights and Duties Attribution, Economic Crisis.

Related Articles

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Youtube. 2016. "Centre for Inclusion and Citizenship ~ Rights Based Social Policy." <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCfgMuy2zkhXLDTUAgmZTK2Q/videos?flow=grid&view=0&sort=p>

El objetivo de este estudio es explorar la construcción discursiva de la ciudadanía social de distintos actores del mercado laboral durante la crisis. Usando datos de periódicos de nueve países realizamos un estudio cuantitativo y cualitativo de los derechos y obligaciones atribuidos a empleados, empleadores y ajenos al mercado laboral. Encontramos que prevalece la atribución de derechos a todos los grupos y las más frecuentes son las declaraciones de apoyo a los derechos laborales. En el contexto de la severidad de la crisis, encontramos tres distintos grupos de discurso sobre los derechos y obligaciones en la esfera del mercado laboral. Una crisis severa crea condiciones para que los sindicatos laborales demanden derechos para los empleados. Una crisis moderada sienta las bases para que el estado pueda modificar los derechos de actores ajenos al mercado laboral. En los países en los que la crisis estuvo presente en el discurso y no en términos reales, surgió una oportunidad para que los mercados y empleadores reclamen sus derechos y libertades

Since the outburst of the economic crisis in 2008, the policy domain of labor and employment has been a sphere of vivid social and political tensions in most of the European countries. A reorganization of interests and powers in this field has been taking place. Social problems, such as massive unemployment, in particular among the youth, precarious employment, or in-work poverty, have resulted in political mobilization among the disadvantaged groups (Chabanet and Royall 2014; della Porta and Mattoni 2014; Giugni and Grasso 2015). Simultaneously, a "deconstruction" of labor law under the guise of the economic crisis has been taking place, leading, with varying degrees in different countries, to the greater flexibilization of, and reduction of, labor law

provisions, as well as to the depletion of minimum labor protection standards (Clauwaert and Schomann 2012).

These tensions and attempts to implement austerity measures in labor policy as well as collective actions against them may be interpreted as a “battle” over the (re)design of the rights and duties of employers and the labor force (citizens in a broader sense), that is, (re)defining the content of social citizenship. Pressures on social citizenship—both at the discursive and institutional levels occurring in times of economic crisis—are not a novelty. After the post-war *treientes glorieuses*, the European 1980s crisis reformulated the claims for a “balance” between social rights and various duties needed to be regained. Contemporarily, they are often articulated as claims for a flexible, active, and precautionary worker (ETUI 2015; Lister 2013; Sotripoulos and Bourikos 2014; Soysal 2012). Thus an important aspect of the crisis-led tension is to be seen in public discourse—political claims for certain rights and duties of employees, which are part of the politics in austere times.

The goal of this article is to explore the political claims that are related to economic crisis from the perspective of social citizenship. We limit the scope of our analysis to the salient sphere of labor issues, investigating the manner in which rights and duties of the labor force (employees and the unemployed) as well as duties of the employers are claimed by various actors. Specifically, we seek to identify whose rights (e.g., employers or employees) gain more attention in the European countries, bearing in mind that this is probably related to the frequency of different actors making strategic interventions in the public discourse.

In our study, we acknowledge the fact that the severity of the economic crisis, in real terms, has been very different in European countries, ranging from insignificant levels (e.g., in Poland) to a very severe deterioration of economic conditions (e.g., in Greece). However, several studies show (Della Sala 2012; Hay 2013; McCann 2013) that even in the countries that have been marginally affected by the crisis, the crisis-related narrative has been present in the public discourse. In this article we examine how the level of crisis severity in real terms relates to the studied claims. Since our study has explorative character, we try to find models linking the claimant to the narrative of employers’/labor force’s rights and duties and the severity of the crisis. As we refer to the concept of “active citizenship,” we will particularly explore whether the severity level of the crisis matters for employees’ duties and employers’ various freedoms gaining salience in the researched field of political claims.

The article is structured as follows. The literature review shows different constructions of social citizenship in the context of labor market and crisis “rights and duties” analysis. The following part includes sampling and operationalization of rights and duties attribution. In the methods section, the authors present the study’s use of the unique dataset prepared for this special issue. The subsequent findings section is divided into three parts. The first reveals the content of the claims for each group of the objects. The second presents the position and

combinations of different groups in the claims analysis, and the third shows the model resulted from multiple correspondence analysis (MCA).

Theoretical Background

Labor market problems and labor policies are one of the most salient spheres of political claims making in the current times of crisis. Apart from approaches investigating the labor mobilization mechanisms, protest events, or solidarity networks, an insight into discursive constructions of the rights and duties of various actors in the labor market may help to deepen our understanding of the change of the status of employees, employers, and outsiders in the labor market. The goal of this article (to provide insight into political claims on the rights and duties of various groups in the labor market) is inspired by the scholarship on social citizenship. A bulk of literature on this topic suggests that not only the formal rights, but also the *substantive social citizenship*—that is, various social practices, including informal and discursive ones—is an important aspect shaping the status of individuals (Lister 2005; Nakano-Glenn 2011; Turner 2009). Thus the attributions of one's rights or duties present in the public discourse are regarded as a context and a source of the formal position of a citizen.

Two contradictory stances which are present in the literature on social citizenship fuel our exploration of rights and duties attributed to workers, employers, and outsiders in the labor market. Irrespective of the model of citizenship advocated by the authors (either liberal or communitarian-republican) and the specific changes of the given social policy discussed (either developing or curbing rights of certain social groups), in the first standpoint the position of *rights* in the *discursive* construction of contemporary social citizenship is highlighted, whereas in the second the (growing) relevance of *duties* is emphasized. According to the first stance, “rights talk” prevails in the public discourse and the construction of social citizenship is—to some authors, by definition—based on certain social rights (see e.g., Brysk 2013; Heywood 2009; Powell 2008). The position of rights is also emphasized in the stream of social citizenship literature where the emergence of cosmopolitan norms and universal human rights is seen as a part of social citizenship reconfiguration (see e.g., Benhabib 2007; Sassen 2003).

The latter perspective suggests that not only rights but also certain duties constitute an immanent part of citizenship status, including social citizenship (Janoski 1998; Johansson and Hvinden 2013). Thus some scholars, such as Turner (2001, 2009), highlight the relationship between rights and duties, suggesting that certain duties (like work, military service, childbearing, and childrearing) are necessary “routes to entitlement” when social privileges are taken into account (Turner 2001). Such an approach assumes that there is fundamental conditionality in social citizenship status that either should be highlighted or regained—as in the well-known phrase: “no rights without duties” (Havemann 2001; Lister 2003). Other scholars seem to take a more moderate stance, assuming that rights should not be conditioned but balanced with certain duties (Johansson and Hvinden 2013).

The economic crisis that began in 2008 adds a new context to the discussion on citizenship rights and duties. On one hand, the articulation of workers' and, more generally, citizens' rights may be stronger due to workers' and unemployed mobilization processes. In particular, youth protests against austerity measures may contribute to the pronouncement of work-related rights. On the other hand, declining unionization levels, as well as austerity measures and neoliberal reforms, may serve as mechanisms working in the opposite direction. In particular, the activation and active policy emphasizing the duty of work, education, or job searches are interpreted by some citizenship scholars as a means to change the balance between rights and duties. Critics talking of the "responsibilization" of the citizen (Jenson 2009), the "virtualization" of citizenship (Schinkel 2010), and the growth of "obligations of individuality" (Soysal 2012) focus on "duty and responsibility" in the changes of British social citizenship (Dwyer 2000) as contemporary changes in the content of social citizenship. It may be concluded from this bulk of literature, which assumes *social citizenship is being dismantled*, that economic crisis fuels the emphasis on workers' and citizens' duties; in particular those related to economic activity (working, learning, job searching) and flexibility. However, little is known about the relations between the severity of the crisis and the narrative on rights and duties. Our study aims to shed light on this issue.

The general *rights articulation* and *duties articulation* hypotheses in times of crisis may be refined by placing them in the context of industrial relations. The scholarship on labor relations suggests that the positions of various actors in the labor market should not be regarded in terms of separate or even opposing stances and interests, but as a set of interlinked relations (Ackers 2002). Thus the set of rights and duties of an employer or an employee in the labor market should not be regarded as an isolated bundle of rights and duties, but as a context shaping the position of other actors present in the field. On one hand, this means that political claims for more duties of an employee (e.g., to be flexible) may simultaneously constitute means to plead for a stronger position of an employer. On the other hand, claims by the employers for more rights of the employees (e.g., to support disabled employees) may be regarded as beneficial for the employers. Therefore, we may expect to witness claims articulated by employers in favor of employees. Such a relational interpretation opens a new perspective to analyze claims made by employers and employees regarding each other's rights and duties in times of crisis, the position of third parties (the state and the nongovernmental organizations [NGOs]) in this area, and their propensity to claim for the rights of labor market outsiders. This article aims to contribute to this perspective by analyzing both types of relations between claims articulated by different groups in the labor market.

Analytical Approach

In our analysis, we use a database elaborated in the FP 7 research project LIVEWHAT. In line with the procedure of recoding of the open categories in claims analysis described by Koopmans and Statham (1999), we have selected

and recoded the claims where the attribution of formal or moral rights or duties of employees, employers, and the outsiders in the labor market has taken place. Thus our unit of analysis is a claim containing the following elements: actor, object (restricted to the objects related to the labor market), attribution (limited to the claims in which right—in a broad sense—duty, or freedom of the object was claimed), and position (e.g., right of the object being supported or denied). Our approach of zooming in on the claims containing rights/duties attribution is analogous to the methodological procedures of research on responsibility attribution in claims-making analysis (Roose, Kousis, and Sommer 2014). However, we shift the attention from investigating “who makes whom publicly responsible for what” to the issue of “who publicly defines citizens’ right (to receive support or to act) or duty?” Our understanding of right, derived from critical literature on social citizenship, is broad; it covers any precise normative attribution of what individual or collective group of citizens “should be doing or receiving.” This covers formal rights (including labor and human rights ideas) but also a discourse on deservingness or individuals’ responsabilization.

It is noteworthy that the presence of rights in the public discourse is already well researched in the social movement literature using framing analysis (see e.g., Benford and Snow 2000; Elveland 2015; Williams 2004). The significance of rights recognized in this approach led to their status of master frames and various specific frames defined as workers’ rights, civil rights, human rights, and law violation (Bloemraad, Voss, and Silva 2014; Haunss 2007). Nevertheless, our study goes beyond frames analysis. Given the broadly discussed arguments on the shortcoming of the political discourse or frame analysis compared to the political claims approach, we employ the latter perspective. This choice has been supported by our inductive coding of the claims in the field of labor, collected within the LIVEWHAT project. It revealed that many claims—such as those on the social support a young unemployed person should receive—were framed in the narrative of economic growth, but not social rights. Thus we assumed claims on implicit rights (what one should be entitled to) and on the duties of various actors are a matter of strategic intervention of an actor, creating a position of the object of the claim, but not necessarily a matter of developing rights’ narratives in public discourse.

Our exploratory analysis follows four major research questions:

1. What kind of rights and duties are attributed to the employers, employees, and outsiders in the labor market in the times of crisis?
2. Are rights or duties more frequently attributed to all three groups of actors? Whose rights receive most attention in the times of crisis?
3. To what extent are the claims for object’s rights formulated by object’s political representations and to what extent are other claimants advocating for object’s rights?
4. Can we identify visibly distinct types of rights’ attributions in the field of the labor market with reference to the severity of the economic crisis?

Table 1. Number of Claims Related to Labor Market Issues by Country

Country	Number of Claims	As a Percentage of Total Number of Claims
France	185	18.84
Germany	90	8.96
Greece	130	13.00
Italy	168	16.80
Poland	146	14.56
Spain	81	7.93
Sweden	113	11.24
Switzerland	97	9.70
United Kingdom	47	4.63
Total	1,057	11.70

Sampling and Operationalization of Rights and Duties Attribution

As noted above, for the sake of our analysis we used a database elaborated in the FP 7 research project LIVEWHAT. We employed a two-step sampling procedure. First, with the use of the “first important issue of the claim” and “second important issue of the claim” variables, we have selected claims related to the field of labor policy and employment. It is worth noting that the share of labor policy-related claims was very uneven among the researched countries, ranging from 4.6 percent of the claims in the case of the United Kingdom, up to almost 19 percent in the case of France. Table 1 shows labor- and employment-related claims as a ratio in total claims coded for each country.

Second, we further narrowed our claims sample to claims meeting two specific criteria: an object being an employee, employer, or an unemployed person (or their collective representations), and the rights or duties attributed to the object of the claim. This means we disregarded the claims that spoke of some rights in general, and where policies or instruments were described or suggested but with no specific attachment to the object.¹ As we focus on the rights of the groups of citizens operating in the labor market, we also disregarded claims where the objects were: the government, various governmental units or agencies, the economy, the public sector, the private sector, or the “whole country.”

Coding of the claims containing rights and duties attribution was conducted inductively with the use of descriptive variables: claim description, descriptive, and prescriptive frames. Thorough coding enabled us to exclude the claims in which

¹ An example of such a claim is: “J. Kaczynski, president of the party Law and Justice told, on election convention, that government is fighting against trade unions which are standing up for workers’ rights during crisis. Poland needs social dialog of equal partners.”

Table 2. Number of Claims under Study by Country

Country	Number of Claims	As a Percentage of Total Number of Claims
France	85	9.48
Germany	30	3.08
Greece	84	9.17
Italy	62	6.61
Poland	99	10.95
Spain	1	0.1
Sweden	2	0.2
Switzerland	20	2.04
United Kingdom	13	1.3
Total	396	4.58

no right/duty attribution was made and to classify the relevant claims into attributions of: *explicit rights*, *implicit social rights*, *freedoms to act*, and *duties/obligations*.² This procedure has led us to the selection of 396 claims for our study (Table 2).

Other Variables Operationalization and Methods Applied

We identified several precise groups of citizens in the labor market whose rights or duties were claimed. These included: workers in certain branches of the economy, young and elderly workers, the unemployed, employees, and so forth. We have grouped them into three categories: employers (including individual employers and their collective political representations), employees (including individuals, groups, and labor unions), and outsiders (including the unemployed, graduates looking for work, and vulnerable groups, such as youth, if their difficult situation in the labor market was highlighted in the claim). We also diagnosed and classified the position of the claim toward an object, distinguishing the claims in which the claimant was *supporting* the right/freedom/duty of the object from the claims in which a claimant was *opposing* the right/freedom/duty of the object.

Following the insight from industrial relations into the analysis of the rights and duties, we assume that the claims pleading the rights of the employees belong, in terms of the position of the workers, to the same category as the claims opposing the rights or freedoms of an employer (e.g., opposing the facilitation of an employee's dismissal). Taking into account the position of the object, we have finally recoded claims from our sample into the trivalent broad

² An example of a claim that was not retrieved for the analysis: "more flexible policies at the labour market should be introduced."

variable describing whose rights are directly and indirectly supported (hereafter, “recoded attribution”). Its values are labeled as “pro employers,” “pro employees,” and “pro outsiders.”³

To investigate the relation between the rights, freedoms, and duties attributed to the object and the actors (claimants), we have included a recoded variable of the claimant. We categorized claimants into four groups: state; market actors and employers; labor organizations; and NGOs and others.

Finally, as we acknowledge the fact that the severity of the crisis has been different in European countries (e.g., insignificant in Poland and high in Greece), we grouped the countries from which the claims came from into three categories according to the severity of the crisis. For the classification criteria of countries into three levels of severity of economic crisis we followed the approach adopted in Giugni (2016).

Methods

To carry out our exploratory analysis we use a triangulation of research methods. To address the first three questions, we use qualitative content analysis and the descriptive statistics. Here, we analyze the claims divided according to the intermediate variables: the recoded attribution, the object, and the actor. To answer the final research question, we apply an MCA (Bourdieu and Saint-Martin 1979) based on three active variables—the recoded attribution, the actor, and severity of the economic crisis—carried out on 395 claims.⁴

³ Coding details: The variable ATTRIBUTION could take following values:
0 = not relevant.

1 = explicit right, “1” was coded when it was explicitly spoken of object’s right being acknowledged, supported, claimed, abolished, dismantled, and so forth. Example: *The Panhellenic union of workers and employees in the private sector is inviting through the media workers and employees to protest against austerity measures which violate employees’ rights.*

2 = implicit social right, “2” was coded when it was claimed that an object can/must/has to/should/wants: obtain, receive, get, be helped, assisted, and so forth. Example: *S. Szwed, deputy calls on government to increase amount of subsidies for employers during crisis.*

3 = freedom to act (unite, choose, pursue own goals). “3” was coded when it was claimed that the object can/must/has to/should/wants to: take an action, unite, be allowed to act for own goals. Example: *University students distribute flyers titled “We won’t pay their crisis” in front of the FIAT factory in Turin, proposing to workers to cooperate in fighting austerity.*

4 = duty/obligation, “4” was coded when it was claimed that an object must/has to/should be showing (more): adjustment, flexibility, resignation, lowering the demands, sacrifice, and so forth. Example: *Andreas Kempf, spokesman of Robert Bosch GmbH, explains that Bosch will use several saving measures. The employees have to use their overtime, there will be closure days and the Christmas break could be extended to save costs for storage areas.*

⁴ One of the claims records from the original database did not include the information on the actor and could not be taken into consideration in the MCA.

Results

We present our results in three sections. The first reveals the essence of the claims for each group of the objects. The second reveals the position of each group in the claims making and interrelations between these positions. Finally, the third subsection provides the results of MCA, which we apply to search for models of attribution claims with relation to severity of the crisis.

Kinds of Rights and Type of Objects

The analysis of the claims containing the explicit right frames reveals that, in the case of employees, the narrative of their rights being threatened prevails (see Table 3). The attribution of rights usually signifies the need to mobilize against workers' rights cessation. Beyond a general defense of labor law, the workers' right most often invoked is that concerning their salaries—an explicit right of an employee turns out to be, primarily, the right to a decent wage. As presented in Table 3 (code M), only the employees' explicit rights are questioned by other actors; one can find postulates to restrict collective labor legislation and to limit the workers' right to strike.

When it comes to employers' rights, it turns out that the most salient right of the employer in times of crisis is the one to dismiss easily, as stated in the following case: *“Government passes new legislation that gives to businesses the right to dismiss anyone with less than two years' service without fear of being taken to a tribunal from employees claiming wrongful dismissal”* (United Kingdom), or a right to use a flexible labor law *“during the economic crisis entrepreneurs have right to hire people not only on long-term contracts but also on the elastic ones - they have to be flexible. If not, their companies won't survive the crisis”* (Poland).

The claims on implicit rights of the employees refer, as in the case of explicit right frames, primarily to higher wages (Germany), introducing a minimum salary (Greece), or higher wages based on collective agreements (Italy). The second biggest group of postulates concerns the protection of existing jobs, as in the Polish example: *“Representative of All-Poland Alliance of Trade Unions (OPZZ) tells that in Polish anti-crisis legislation there is only flexibility without security, therefore he proposes more protection of jobs.”* It is worth noting that authors of the claims often consider crisis as a time to introduce reforms in favor of employees (France).

Claims concerning support for implicit employers' rights refer mostly to financial backing. Its three forms are particularly visible: the claims by the employers concerning receipt of governmental subsidies (Poland), claims for a tax relief obtained by the investors (Germany), and the suggestions that the government should provide high quality training for the workers for the benefit of the employers (Spain).

Among claims supporting implicit labor rights, there is a strong voice in favor of outsiders (see Table 3, code F) and people in unfavorable positions in

Table 3. Content of the Rights, Freedoms, and Duties Attributions

	Employers	Object Employees	Outsiders
Claims supporting (rights, duties, freedoms)			
Explicit rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to introduce flexible working hours adapted to the needs of employers to dismiss employees more easily without fear of being taken to a tribunal from employees claiming wrongful dismissal (code A) (N = 2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to negotiate about (resist on, protest against) threatened workers' rights to protest against austerity measures which violate employees' rights to protect existing workplaces not to be dismissed easily to protect social security rights to protect collective labor rights to get higher salaries (code B) (N = 34) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to protect rights of people unemployed due to crisis (code C) (N = 2)
Implicit rights to receive support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to receive state subsidies for employers that suffer from economic downturn to get tax relief for companies (to set stimuli for investments) to introduce high quality training by state to ensure employers have well-qualified workers (code D) (N = 11) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to receive a subsidy for one's (young person) workplace to facilitate youth to enter to the labor market to help graduates find a job to ensure support for people who lost their job due to crisis to combat youth unemployment to obtain training 	

Continued.

Table 3. Continued

	Employers	Object Employees	Outsiders
Freedom to act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to bypass the collective agreement regulations • to introduce flexible working hours adapted to the needs of the company and benefit from the possibility of not to pay in time of demurrage • to regulate employment issues by themselves (avoid protectionism) • to fire an employee during crisis with more ease (easier dismissals) <p>(code G) (N = 29)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to protect workers against redundancies • to strike against anti-labor measures, changes in dismissal legislation and privatization <p>(code E) (N = 140)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to increase unemployment allowances • to provide insurance to the unemployed • to introduce programs that would involve less qualified persons into the job market • to introduce a universal basic income <p>(code F) (N = 56)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to facilitate young people to launch own business <p>(code I) (N = 2)</p>

Continued.

Table 3. Continued

	Employers	Object Employees	Outsiders
Implicit rights to receive support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> not to introduce state's subsidies for employers in times of crisis (code N) (N = 5) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to lower wages in times of crisis to facilitate dismissal of employees to introduce more flexible working time (that has a negative impact on employees) (code O) (N = 13) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> not to extend redundancy period of persons that lost jobs due to crisis to decrease salaries of young workers (code P) (N = 5)
Freedom to act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to forbid forcing employees to work overtime on Sundays to forbid employers from disabling their workers to join the trade unions (code Q) (N = 3) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to limit the freedom to strike in hard times (code R) (N = 8) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> against filling the employees' working places with trainees (code S) (N = 1)
Duty/obligation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> against obligation of paying high labor costs (paying contribution) against protective dismissal legislation (code T) (N = 8) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> against employees paying the cost of the crisis (code U) (N = 4) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> against the victims of the crisis paying the costs of the crisis (e.g., unemployed) (code V) (N = 1)

Note: Bolded are the numbers of the claims belonging to each category.

the labor market (e.g., young employees and the unemployed). In particular, the needs of youth are being pronounced, as in the German example: “*The Minister of Labor and Social Affairs says that young people out of the job market must be supported,*” or the Swedish one: “*Gabriel Wikström wants a better school system, more vocational training and improved unemployment insurance for young people.*” Claims coded as a freedom to act encompass mostly, in the case of employees, the postulates of workers or unions engaging in protest or collective negotiations. However, it needs to be stressed there is also a group of claims (code R in the Table 3) strongly opposing the freedom to strike, by calling it “irresponsible” in times of crisis. This is present in a German example: “*Dieter Hundt, president of the Confederation of German Employers’ Associations, calls strikes in times of economic crisis irresponsible and demands a waiver of strikes. Anton Börner supports him and says that strikes should be rethought.*”

The list of implicit freedoms to act of employers is longer. It is most often claimed that they should have the right to regulate working issues on their own: “*Troika send a letter to the ministers of finance and labor with which it recommends to eliminate ‘protectionism’ in the labor market and to give enterprises more freedom to regulate themselves employment issues*” (Greece). The freedom attributed to the employers consists, in particular, of a claimed autonomy to introduce flexible working hours (Poland), to dismiss employees more easily (Poland), or even not paying in time of demurrage (Poland). Opposition against employers’ implicit freedom to act is weaker (code Q in Table 3). There are postulates against forcing employees to work overtime on Sundays and against preventing the workers from joining trade unions.

In groups of claims where employees are the objects of the claim and are seen unfavorably by the actor, discontinuation of the protection against dismissal and wage reductions are once again the *leitmotifs*. Work flexibility appears to be the leading concern, along with lowering wages (code O in the Table 3). It is worth noting that similar arguments, often with a greater discursive power, are addressed to the group of outsiders and the vulnerable groups. This is present in the Swedish example: “*Minister of finance wants lower wages for young workers to tackle youth unemployment.*” Or in the Italian one: “*Forza Italia states that labor market flexibility is crucial to face the crisis. For this reason, it is important to facilitate dismissals for those workers who have been working for less than three years.*” There are a lower number of demands to decrease implicit employers’ rights (code N in Table 3). They mostly concern cuts of state-funded aid for entrepreneurs.

As far as employees’ duties and obligations are concerned, it is claimed above all that the employees have to “adjust” in times of crisis, as in the Polish claim: “*Polish journalist claims that during the time of crisis the employees have to accept worse job conditions.*” This necessity means, in particular, accepting salary cuts (Poland), working longer hours for the same salary (Switzerland), and being even more adaptable to the requirements of the employer, as claimed in Germany: “*Andreas Kempf, spokesman of Robert Bosch GmbH, explains*

that... employees have to use their overtime, there will be closure days and the Christmas break could be extended to save costs for storage areas.” Moreover, the employees should “invest in themselves” (Poland), or simply “lower their demands” (Sweden). Outsiders’ duties are concentrated on active job searching.

In turn, employers are called to propose more stable work conditions and, above all, to pay salaries in general, to pay them regularly (Poland), and to keep their promises to the employees (Italy).

The qualitative analysis of the content of the claims shows that the attributions of rights, freedoms, and responsibilities of employers and employees revolve around the issues of dismissals and wages. There is a clear tension in the researched claims; for example, between employers’ freedom to dismiss and the employers’ right to be protected against dismissal. In a similar vein, receiving a regular salary is, on one hand, attributed as an employee’s right, whereas paying less or infrequently is being claimed as an employers’ autonomy in times of crisis. It needs to be stressed that both arguments are being put forward and amplified in relation to the crisis. This means that the economic crisis serves as an argument both for stronger labor protection, and for greater employer autonomy. Thus it seems that, at least in public discourse, the economic crisis leads to the polarization of demands of rights and duties. However, we have found that rights are being attributed to both the employers and the employees, something which is clearly beneficial for both groups in the labor market. This refers in particular to the state subsidy for more working places, training, or job searches. Interestingly, actors often explicitly justified these claims through the presence of an economic crisis.

The attributions to the group of outsiders in the labor market seem somewhat ambiguous. On one hand, the claims attributing social rights to this group generally construct it as vulnerable and “obviously deserving.” Also, the attributions of rights to this group are often very broad and general, verging on mouthing platitudes. On the other hand, the examples of a far-reaching neoliberal discourse also applied to this group, containing postulates to pay less and dismiss more easily—surprising in times of massive precarity.

Finally, though the mentioned “mirrored attributions” of rights to, for instance, dismiss/not to be dismissed, our analysis reveals that the crucial obligations of employees and employers in times of crisis vary in terms of their “heaviness.” Whereas the employees’ duties in times of crisis generally mean the need to be flexible—in terms of accepting new working hours, reduced salary, and so forth—the employers’ broadly pronounced obligation is to pay for work.

Whose Rights Are Most Salient? Who Attributes Rights to Whom?

Within the entire sample of the claims analyzed (N = 396), the claims on the employees’ attributions prevail (240 out of the total; see Table 4), and the overwhelming majority of them are favorable to employees (192 out of 240).

Table 4. Number of Researched Types of Attributions

Types of Attributions	Type of the Object		
	Employers	Employees	Outsiders
Favoring the object:			
PRO explicit rights	2	34	2
PRO implicit social rights	11	140	56
PRO freedom	29	14	2
AGT duty	8	4	1
Subtotal	50	192	61
Opposing the object:			
AGT explicit rights	0	7	0
AGT implicit social rights	5	13	5
AGT freedom	3	8	1
PRO duty	24	20	7
Subtotal	32	48	43
Total	82	240	74

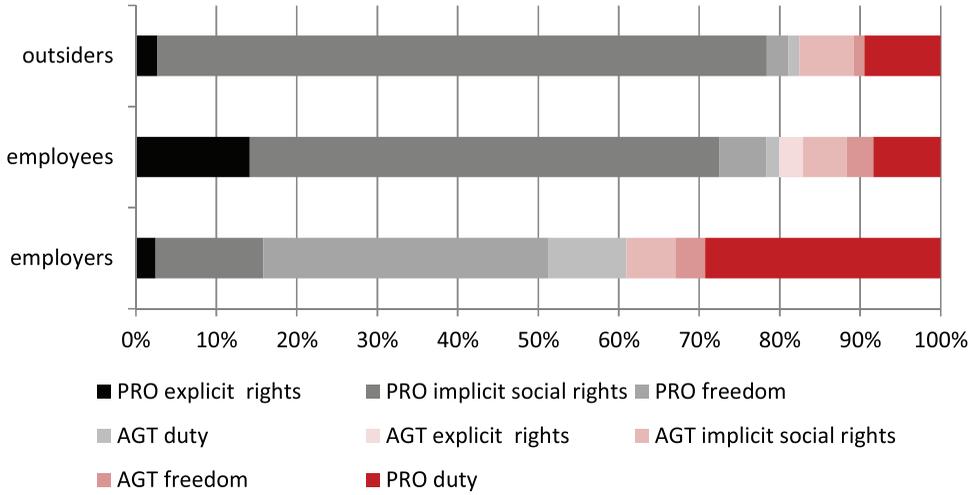
Note: PRO, supporting or raising the issue of; AGT, against/opposing.

The category “pro implicit social rights” is the most numerous among the attributions of employees and outsiders, whereas in the case of employees the “pro freedom” category dominates. Generally, in the case of all three groups, the favorable stances prevail. However, the position of employees and outsiders seems to be much stronger than the position of the employers. Not only are the favorable attributions of employers less frequent than the favorable attributions of employees or outsiders (see Table 4), but the percentage of unfavorable attributions among all attributions in the case of employers is also much bigger than in the case of employees and outsiders (see Figure 1). Therefore we may conclude that, in the normative attributions of rights and duties in the public discourse, it is the “rights talk” rather than the neoliberal discourse that prevails. If the attributions are the only factor taken into account, the orientation most widespread among claimants is that which is “social” (the claimants plead for social rights rather than for the neoliberalism).

However, if we look at the positions of all the three groups taken into consideration from the perspective of relational interpretation of “bundle of rights and duties” (i.e., the existence of political claims for more duties of an employee: e.g., to be flexible), this may be a means to plead for a stronger position of an employer and vice versa, the relative position of employers versus employees and outsiders gains importance (see Figure 2). A significant share of the claims supporting the position of the employer tried to “sneak in” by the attributions of workers’ duties. In Figure 2, we can see that the employees’ duties are relatively more frequently mentioned compared to the employers’ duties, and this significantly strengthens the relative position of the employers.

Finally, it is important to take into account the link between the claimant (actor) and the attribution. Specifically, the question is whether the actors in

Figure 1.
Share of the Researched Types of Attributions to Employers, Employees, and Outsiders



the labor market are only claiming their own rights (or more generally supporting their own position) or if they are considering other actors as well. Controlling for the actor is also important because the dominance of the workers' rights in our sample could be a result of many labor claims formulated by labor unions which dominated the discourse.

Figure 2.
The Number of Attributions Supporting and Weakening the Position of the Object

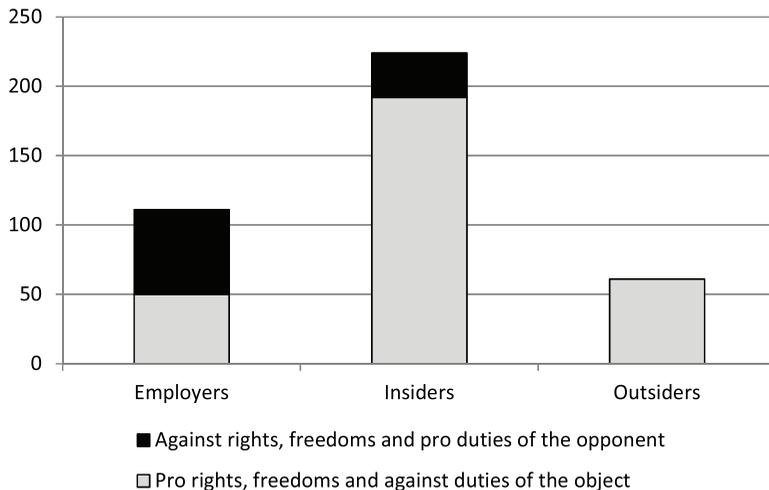


Table 5. Who Claims Whose Rights

			The Position of the Claim			Total
			PRO Employees	PRO Outsiders	PRO Employers	
Three Groups of Countries According to Severity of the Crisis						
High	The group of actors	State	23%	77%	40%	54
		Market & employers	3%	0%	30%	12
		Labor organizations and groups	62%	14%	23%	77
		NGO & others	12%	9%	7%	17
	Subtotal		100%	100%	100%	160
			108	22	30	
Moderate	The group of actors	State	17%	40%	18%	19
		Market & employers	25%	15%	18%	18
		Labor organizations and groups	33%	10%	35%	24
		NGO & others	23%	35%	29%	23
	Subtotal		100%	100%	100%	85
			48	20	17	
Low	The group of actors	State	13%	58%	6%	24
		Market & employers	26%	11%	72%	66
		Labor organizations and groups	41%	11%	3%	32
		NGO & others	19%	21%	19%	29
	Subtotal		100%	100%	100%	151
			68	19	64	
Total			224	61	111	396

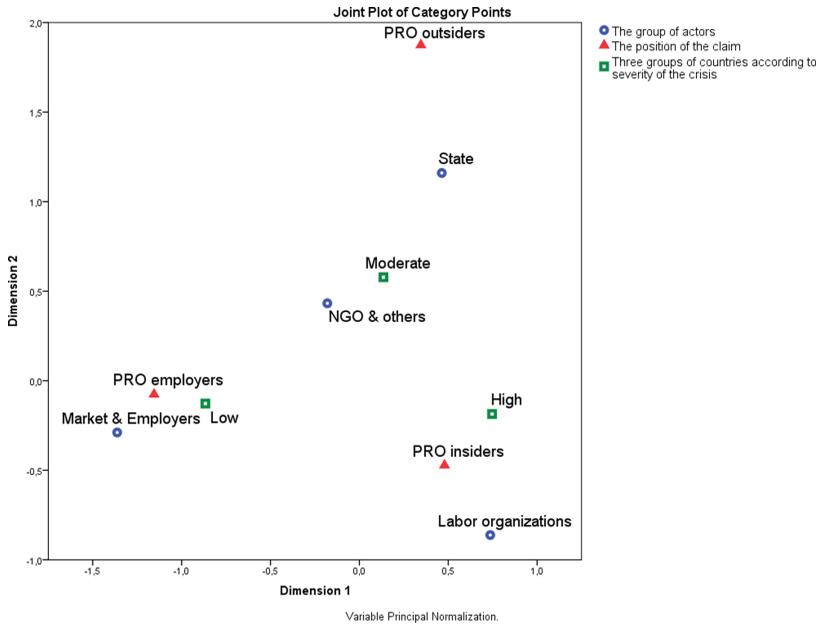
Notes: In each group of countries according to the severity of the crisis, there is significant, although weak, stochastic association between the group of actors and the position of the claims. For high crisis countries Cramer's $V = .29$, $p < .001$; for moderate crisis countries Cramer's $V = .11$, $p < .01$, and for low crisis Cramer's $V = .22$, $p < .001$.

As Table 5 shows, indeed, the highest share of the claims supporting the position of the employees is formulated by the labor unions, regardless of severity of the crisis. In case of employers, when crisis is low, it is almost only employers and markets' representatives who claim their rights. However, when crisis becomes more visible, not only these but also other actors, that is, the state and employees' representations make an important share of employers' advocates. It is also worth to notice that there is a significant number of claims, in which employers advocate the rights of the employees and outsiders. Nevertheless, this share becomes insignificant when the severity of crisis is high.

Types of Attributions of Rights and Duties and Their Architects in Times of Crisis

The MCA allows us to answer the last of our four research questions: whether we can identify visibly distinct attributions of rights and duties within

Figure 3.
The Graphical Presentation of the Results of MCA: Joint Plot of Category Points



the population of claims related to the sphere of the labor market in the context of divergent severity level of economic crisis in Europe.

The obtained joint plot of category points for a two-dimensional solution in MCA provides an easy way to interpret the portrait of attribution constructs and their architects within the sample of studied claims (see Figure 3). The first dimension on the plot grasps the division between the two sides in the labor market: the supply side (on the left) and the demand side (on the right). The second dimension distinguishes the two major spheres in the modern welfare mix: the state (top) and the market (bottom). In the space defined by these two dimensions, three types of attributions of rights and duties and their architects emerge. First, in the context of a severe economic crisis the labor organizations and groups visibly claim in favor of the insiders, that is, employees. Second, the opposite context of a marginal factual crisis created a “window of opportunity” for employers to claim their freedoms and rights. Third, the context of a moderate crisis created the ground for the state to (re)call the rights of the outsiders.

This finding sheds light on the divergent role of the “real” and narrative context of the economic crisis in the “battle” over the (re)design of the rights and duties of the employers and the labor force (citizens in a broader sense): that is, (re)defining the essence of social citizenship. As our analysis has an explorative character, further research is needed to deepen our understanding of the identified relationships here.

Conclusions

Contrary to the hypothesis of social citizenship dismantling and social policy focus on activation, we have found that, for all three researched categories of objects—employees, employers, and outsiders—the attribution of rights (or freedoms) prevails. It is rather claimed that these groups of actors should be entitled to “being able to do something” or “receive something,” than that they (should) have certain economic or moral duties.

Furthermore, we have found that, among all of the studied claims in the labor market sphere, those supporting (rising the issue of) employees’ social rights constituted the overwhelming majority. Therefore we may conclude that the position of employees in public discourse on rights and duties in times of crisis was much stronger than the position of the employers. However, if the position of each party (group of actors) is more broadly operationalized as a bundle of rights and duties in relational terms (i.e., duties of employers are interpreted as strengthening the position of the employees and vice versa), then the relative position of employees weakens, though remains dominant.

The content of the duties of all three groups in the labor market varies. In particular, our analysis reveals that the major attributed duty of an employer is the one to pay regularly, whereas for the employee it is to be flexible, including longer working hours, accepting a lower salary, and so forth. Thus the employer’s obligation is rather to obey the *status quo* of his responsibilities, whereas the employee’s is about the need to adjust to the crisis.

In context of crisis severity, we have found three distinct groups of discourse on the rights and duties of the actors in the labor market sphere. The context of a severe crisis created conditions for labor organizations and groups to claim the rights of employees. The context of a moderate crisis created the ground for the state to (re)call the rights of the outsiders. On the contrary, in countries in which crisis was present in the discourse rather than in real terms, a window of opportunity emerged for markets and employers to claim their freedoms and rights. It also created conditions for polarization of the employers and employees, as the low level of factual crisis promoted the self-concentration of the markets and employers (actors) on their own rights and freedoms.

In a broader sense, we can interpret our findings as the emergence of two general models of citizenship claiming in the labor market sphere in times of crisis: first, the “social citizenship model,” which emerges in countries where the crisis was perceptible, and second, the “nonsocial citizenship model,” which emerges in countries with a meager level of economic crisis. In the latter, crisis-related discourse constituted favorable conditions for markets and employers to regain the balance between employers and employees. However, the focus was mainly on employers’ rights and freedoms rather than employees’ duties.

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The Visibility of the EU in the National Public Spheres in Times of Crisis and Austerity

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We examine the visibility of the European Union (EU) in the national public spheres of nine European countries during the period 2008-14, inquiring whether the impact of the recent economic crisis and the austerity policies have advanced the presence of the EU, its member states, and European concerns, or not. Using political claims analysis, we map the visibility of collective actors in the main national newspapers of France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. Despite the overall limited presence of the EU and European subjects, we find meaningful differences among countries. First, Germany's leading position conveying visibility to European claims, followed by Greece, Italy, and France. In contrast, negligible levels of visibility of the EU in the United Kingdom and Switzerland along with general low levels in the remaining selected countries, even in those most severely hit by the recent economic crisis and under EU surveillance.

Keywords: European Union, Visibility, Public Sphere, Economic Crisis, Great Recession, Austerity Policies, Regional Integration, Political Claims Analysis, Eurozone, Regionalization, Europeanization, National Debates, Media, Comparative International Politics, Multilevel Transnational Communications.

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En este estudio analizamos la prominencia de la Unión Europea en la esfera pública nacional de nueve países europeos durante el periodo 2008-14, para determinar si el impacto de la reciente crisis económica y las políticas de austeridad han servido para aumentar la presencia de la UE, sus estados miembros, y las preocupaciones europeas, o no. Usando un análisis de discurso político, se mapea la visibilidad de actores colectivos en los principales diarios de Francia, Alemania, Grecia, Italia, Polonia, España, Suecia, Suiza y el Reino Unido. A pesar de la limitada presencia de la UE y temas europeos, encontramos diferencias significativas entre los países. Primero, la posición de liderazgo de Alemania que otorga visibilidad a los temas europeos, seguida de Grecia, Italia y Francia. En contraste, se observaron bajos niveles de visibilidad de la UE en el Reino Unido y Suiza, así como niveles generalmente bajos en el resto de los países seleccionados, incluso si éstos se encuentran bajo escrutinio de la UE y fueron severamente afectados por la reciente crisis económica.

The magnitude and depth of the recent economic crisis jeopardized the European integration project while revealing considerable differences across European countries. Some states in Southern Europe suffered the social consequences of the economic collapse heavily, which is tangible in acute debt crises, critical unemployment rates, and ongoing austerity policies that altered every social sphere, from education to health, welfare, pensions, labor, taxation, and housing. Other European states, by contrast, experienced moderate or even minor public policy retrenchments. In any case, the economic and debt crises highlighted the interdependence of the European national economies, underlying conflicts between debtors and creditors' interests, and the risk of "contagion" among the weaker economies. The European Union (EU)

undertook new political roles defining and supervising the implementation of national policies to access EU/International Monetary Fund (IMF) credit, and even decided new institutional governances under the Troika's surveillance (see Hellwig 2011; Pisani-Ferry, Sapir, and Wolff 2013; Roth, Jonung, and Nowak-Lehmann 2011). Given the acute impact of the crisis in Europe, and regardless of whether the EU is positively or negatively assessed, we would expect that these exceptionally critical circumstances have altered the limited visibility of the EU in national public spheres, usually dominated by national actors and national concerns.

The public sphere is an arena for political contention. Within a long period of "constraining dissensus" in European mass public opinion, when citizens no longer accept without questioning the European integration process as in the early years of "permissive consensus" (see Eichenberg and Dalton 2007; Hooghe and Marks 2009; Lindberg and Scheingold 1970), at a time when, in addition, the economic crisis has accentuated the contrast between different national and regional contexts, it seems relevant to examine and compare the presence of the EU in diverse national public spheres. This is particularly so since the way citizens perceive the EU might affect the legitimization of its institutions, its policies, and the ongoing process of European integration itself. In light of this, this article inquires whether the EU and European subjects gained visibility in national debates as a function of the intensity of the economic crisis or the consequent implementation of austerity policies at the national level under imposition and surveillance of the EU itself. We explore the multilevel communicative links within the EU, as well as the European and national actors of EU member states. In doing so, we measure the spread of European issues in a set of noticeably different European countries—where we expect to find contrasting differences on account of the variety of socioeconomic contexts. The nature of the available data does not permit us to differentiate between the crisis and austerity policies. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to assume that the EU was more visible in those Eurozone countries most affected by the austerity policies dictated by the EU itself; these countries were, in consequence, bound to the EU's monetary restrictions and the regulations of the European Central Bank. Bearing this in mind, the present study maps the variations over time (2008-14) and offers a cross-national comparison regarding the presence of the EU and European issues vis-à-vis their national counterparts in a sample of selected European countries: France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

We have chosen to apply a claims-making methodology based on Koopmans and Statham's (1999) systematic approach to the Europeanization of the national public spheres, using the LIVEWHAT project's dataset of 8,703 claims that refer to the crisis, recession, and austerity, published in the five major newspapers of each country under study. Our work follows a series of analyses that have addressed similar questions with a similar methodology (see e.g., Cinalli and Giugni 2013; Europub.com project 2001–2004; Koopmans and Statham 2002; Koopmans and Erbe 2003; Pfetsch 2004, 2007; Statham 2007;

Vetters, Jentges, and Trenz 2006). However, unlike most of these studies, the contribution we hope to make here lies in the wide-ranging comparisons we cover. We examine a broad comparative European sample that reflects the crisis, recession, and austerity in every policy domain and in all sections of the selected national newspapers. This approach allows for a more comprehensive view of the magnitude of the European claims published in the national public spheres that is not restricted to a theoretical selection of specific policies under the EU's domain (where we would certainly expect to find increasing European presence), contrasted with a selective approach to other strictly national policy domains (where we would expect to find a prominence of national claims). We propose a less constrained examination of the national debates in an exceptionally critical period. Our aim is to capture the significance of European claims that appeal to the crisis, the recession, and the austerity in their real contexts. As far as we know, no other study poses the question of European visibility in the national public spheres in such a comparative European perspective, addressing general topics across an ample selection of cases during the recent economic crisis.

The article is structured as follows. First, we outline a theoretical framework based on the literature on Europeanization of the public sphere. Second, we introduce the methodology and data. Third, we present the results of the claims analysis. Finally, we present the conclusions of this analysis and propose areas for further research.

Europeanization of the Public Sphere

The EU's multilevel political structure holds an increasing supranational level of political decision making and a prevailing national level of public opinion formation and deliberation. National states still remain the key controllers of citizenship and the providers of collective identities, where decisions are made over a range of policies that affect everyday life. National public spheres are persistently dominant, bound to national cultures, while transnational communicative flows continue to be related to specific interests or groups. In such a context, the development of a European public sphere is usually regarded as a precondition for, or at least carries an underlying assumption that it would strongly contribute to, the legitimization of the EU and its policies, bridging the gap between the EU and its citizens (de Vreese 2012; Eriksen 2005; Koopmans and Erbe 2003; Koopmans and Statham 2002; Schlesinger 2007; Trenz 2008b). In this regard, the national media link the communicative flows between different geopolitical levels, relating the EU to the public while allowing European actors to provide expert knowledge and inside information that is crucial for citizens' opinion formation in subjects that are usually far away and difficult to assess (Hobolt and Tilley 2014; Vetters, Jentges, and Trenz 2006). In addition, gaining visibility in the media may arouse resonance in the reactions of other political actors, legitimating the initial discourses (de Vreese 2012; Koopmans, 2004, 2007; Loveless and Rohrschneider 2011;

Vetters, Jentges, and Trenz 2006). Our aim is to ascertain whether the visibility of the EU and European issues varied in the national debates over time and across countries during the recent economic crisis. Although this study is framed within the theories of Europeanization of the public sphere, we are neither strictly discussing Europeanization and its explanatory factors—which we recognize as a broader and complex subject that is already discussed amply in the relevant literature (see e.g., Featherstone and Radaelli 2003; Graziano and Vink 2007; Green Cowles, Caporasso, and Risse 2001; Olsen 2002)—nor the role of the mass media in determining the national public spheres. Rather, we address the visibility of European actors and subjects as a partial approach related to the Europeanization of the national public spheres in times of crisis and austerity.

The notion of public sphere is thoroughly discussed in the literature. In general terms, “it is most commonly referred to as a space or arena for (broad, public) deliberation, discussion, and engagement in societal issues” (de Vreese 2012, 5). The public sphere is a medium for political justification and for mobilizing political support, “the place where civil society is linked to the power structure of the state” (Eriksen 2005, 342). For our analysis, we conceptualize the public sphere as “an open field of communicative exchange. . . made up of communication flows and discourses which allow for the diffusion of intersubjective meaning and understanding” (Trenz 2008a, 2). We recognize that the European public sphere is “fragmented, differentiated, and in flux” which acknowledges its dynamic character within the processes of deterritorialization and dissociation that characterize contemporary multicultural societies (Eriksen 2005; Schlesinger 2007; Trenz 2008a).

The concept of a utopian European public sphere, defined as a singular supranational space that echoes the national public sphere, is nowadays rejected in the literature under the evidence of a missing common European identity, the lack of significant purely European media, and communication difficulties, namely language differences (see de Vreese 2012; Trenz 2008b; cf. Esmark 2007). More recent literature favors a realistic approach that regards the Europeanization of national public spheres as a continuous process of advancing European interests and concerns into the national domain (de Vreese 2012; Koopmans and Erbe 2003; Statham 2007). Hence the emergence or development of a European public sphere may not necessarily follow similar patterns as those performed by national public spheres. If we expect the consolidation of powerful European media that specifically cover European news, both occupying to a great extent the national public sphere in each EU member state, we might, as well, never detect other ways of Europeanization of the national public spheres that are currently taking place in the mass media—that is, the indirect effects of Europeanization.

To the extent that it emerges at all, a European public sphere will build itself, and be built, through the interactions of collective actors who politically engage over European issues, both between and within

different levels of politics... [S]uch actions are mediated through the mass media and rendered visible to citizens in the public domain. (Statham 2007, 85)

This perspective considers public discourse as another medium for social conflict and symbolic struggles (Koopmans and Statham 1999). New strategic repositioning occurs in the national domain due to the progressive denationalization and regional integration. As a new challenge, the EU provides new opportunities for new structural alignments and new strategic alliances. Domestic and European interests that converge and compete in the national domain are likewise evident in the public sphere. There is an expectation of high correspondence between discursive and policy-making powers that may be traced in examining the debates being published in the national media (della Porta and Tarrow 2005; Koopmans 2007; Koopmans and Erbe 2003; Statham 2007).

However, we also need to consider foreseeable limitations regarding a broad visibility of the EU in the nationally bounded public spheres. The distinctive multilevel feature of the EU polity is not reflected in the nationally centered debates presented by the media in the European countries. The national media are already heavily concerned with national issues discussed by national actors and directed to national targets, severely limiting the possibilities of directly advancing a European presence in the debates of the national public spheres. National actors dispute national interests, whereas Europe represents just another realm of contention. The alignment of national political actors targeting European addressees, and debating European issues, depends on whether the issues being discussed affect their own interests. Those actors that are weaker might target the EU in search of political opportunities that they may then use at home to put pressure on their own national governments (Koopmans 2007; della Porta 2003; della Porta and Tarrow 2005; Trenz 2008b; Vetter, Jentges, and Trenz 2006). Although studies on social movements have already noticed that the EU is not a direct target for protesters, we presume that due to the exceptionality of the period we study political contention must have been intensified in the scarcity of economic resources and the execution of extraordinary public policies, enhancing the visibility of the EU and European debates in the national public spheres.

To examine the discursive flows that take place in the national media of a multilevel political structure as the EU, we adapt a conceptual model of claims-making inter-sphere communications that represents the possible ways of Europeanization of the national public sphere (Koopmans and Erbe 2003; Pfetsch 2004, 2007; Statham 2007; Statham and Gray 2005; Vetter, Jentges, and Trenz 2006), distinguishing four basic communicative flows:

- Vertical communications (multilevel: links EU to/from national levels)
- Horizontal communications (transnational: links national to other national levels)

- Supranational communications (at the EU level)
- National communications (within own country)

Although multilevel relations may also take place among other supranational organizations, we circumscribe the conceptual model to the EU, which is our subject of examination. First, vertical communications refer to the communicative flow between actors from two different political levels, national and supranational, either top-down (from the supranational EU level to the national level) or bottom-up (from the national level to the supranational EU level). They are open communications because they transcend the national boundaries of the nationally confined public sphere, conveying visibility either to EU supranational actors/addressees, or to European issues. Second, horizontal communications define the discursive flow between variables from the same political level but beyond the national boundaries; they take place when a national actor addresses her counterpart from another EU or European country, or vice versa. These are also open relations that transcend the national limits and allow European visibility. Third, national communications denote the communicative flow between variables within the same country. A purely national debate involves a national actor discussing a national issue with a national addressee, all from the same country. In this case, there is no visibility of Europe: the relation is closed, circumscribed to the limits of the national public sphere in all its facets. However, when two national actors from the same country discuss a European issue, Europe becomes visible in the debate, despite the closeness of the relation that still occurs within the nation. In contrast, supranational communications define the flow of debates at the EU level. In our sample there are no purely supranational communications—that is, two EU actor/addressees that discuss an EU topic in an EU media—as all these debates were published by the national media in national public spheres, making them visible to the national publics. We therefore consider these supranational debates as open debates that confer visibility to the EU. Table 1 summarizes the different types of communicative flows that can be identified considering the characteristics of the issues, actors, and addressees involved in each claim.

From previous research we expect most claims making to take place at the nationally bounded level. Different types of communicative flows may involve different types or degrees of visibility of the European actors and subjects with different implications, but the crucial question remains to what extent they are visible at all.

Methodology and Data

The goal of our study is to comparatively assess the degree of visibility of the EU and of European subjects in the debates that took place in the national public spheres of a set of selected countries throughout the recent economic

Table 1. Levels of Communicative Linkages in Claims Making with Examples of the Spanish Public Sphere

Issues	Actors	Addressees		
		EU Supranational Addressee	EU-State/Euro-pean Addressee	National Domestic Addressee
European	EU supranational actor	Supranational communication. <i>e.g., The Commissioner for Economic Affairs demands a change in the formula of bailouts in which the Eurogroup is involved and proposes that in the future the Communitarian institutions assume the main role.</i>	Vertical communication. <i>e.g., The European Commission extends state aid to European companies in financial difficulty to avoid bankruptcy.</i>	Vertical communication. <i>e.g., The European Central Bank and the European Commission agree to pay the first 30,000 million for the European bailout and call on the Spanish government to meet its commitment to reduce the deficit accordingly.</i>
	EU-state/Euro-pean actor	Vertical communication. <i>e.g., Angela Merkel says to the EU that those who speak now of euro-bans have not understood this crisis, and adds that her goal is fiscal integration.</i>	Horizontal communication. <i>e.g., Sarkozy and Merkel agree that Germany accepts the voluntary participation of the private sector in the Greek bailout, and ask for Greek support. The objective is to underpin the euro.</i>	Horizontal communication. <i>e.g., The Greek prime minister demands support to the Spanish president for negotiating policies to enhance employment in the Eurozone, particularly in the most affected countries.</i>
	National domestic actor	Vertical communication. <i>e.g., The Spanish finance minister says the current situation is unsustainable and that to avoid the final collapse the European Central Bank should buy debt of the most affected countries.</i>	Horizontal communication. <i>e.g., Elena Salgado calls on the governments of France and Germany to accelerate the process of European economic governance to anticipate economic imbalances.</i>	National domestic communication with an issue of European scope. <i>e.g., The economist Xavier Sala warns Spanish Vice-President Pedro Solbes that the European Central Bank should purchase debt to avoid Eurozone countries' bankruptcy.</i>
Not European	EU supranational actor	Supranational communication.	Vertical communication.	Vertical communication.

Continued.

Table 1. Continued

Issues	Actors	Addressees		
		EU Supranational Addressee	EU-State/Euro-pean Addressee	National Domestic Addressee
		<i>e.g., The Green Members of the European Parliament remind that the EU should not lag behind its commitments toward a global agreement on climate change due to the economic crisis.</i>	<i>e.g., The European institutions ask the Portuguese government to stimulate the economy and employment in the country.</i>	<i>e.g., The EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion admits to Rajoy that Spain has gone through very difficult times and that Spain is working in jobs recovery.</i>
	EU-state/Euro-pean actor	Vertical communication. <i>e.g., A European nongovernmental organization confederation calls on the EU to still champion global poverty in times of crisis as it remains the world's biggest problem.</i>	Horizontal communication. <i>e.g., European intellectuals and academics jointly launch a manifesto targeting European governments to intensify their efforts in combating international fiscal paradises as a means for tackling the causes of the world economic crisis.</i>	Horizontal communication. <i>e.g., Angela Merkel supports Rajoy rejecting a Catalan unilateral declaration of independence.</i>
	National domestic actor	Vertical communication. <i>e.g., Zapatero declared to Brussels that the Spanish economy has entered a "period of stagnation" with "very serious difficulties to grow" and situated the exit of the crisis as his government's top priority.</i>	Horizontal communication. <i>e.g., The Spanish health minister explains to a Swiss medical association the government's plans to privatize basic services at the Spanish national hospitals.</i>	National domestic communication. No European visibility. <i>e.g., Fernández Díaz claims that the municipal government is not doing anything for those who suffer the crisis.</i>

Sources: Adapted from Koopmans and Erbe (2003) and Statham and Gray (2005).

crisis. Our examination traces all the references to Europe and the EU in a representative sample of claims related to the crisis, recession, and austerity in every policy field, as they were published in the different European national media between the years 2008 and 2014. We consider that “claims-making acts which link different levels of politics are important carriers of Europeanization processes in national public spheres” (Statham 2007, 101).

Our examination of the European communicative flows is based on political claims-making analysis (Koopmans and Statham 1999), a methodology that uncovers the relationships among all forms of national, supranational, and transnational discourses that are presented by the mainstream national media: namely, in printed newspapers. Claims are direct verbal or nonverbal statements, not journalistic interpretations of those statements; they are published as they are, without intermediaries. Claims analysis is interested in what has been effectively published by the media, as a relative measure of the political discursive opportunities and cleavages already present in society. Therefore, the problem of media bias that usually arises when analyzing public discourses becomes a possibility for understanding powerful cleavages that exist in society itself (Cinalli and Giugni 2013; Koopmans and Statham 1999; Statham and Koopmans 2009). In our study, these are the direct debates that shaped an important part of the European national public spheres during the recent economic crisis. As such, they conveyed visibility to subjects and actors that sustained political information and meanings with which the European citizens could construct their own opinions regarding the EU as the events developed.

Our units of analysis are political claims. A political claim is a strategic intervention, either verbal or nonverbal, in the public space made by a given actor on behalf of a group or collectivity and which bears on the interests or rights of other groups or collectivities (see LIVEWHAT 2014, 3).

To be included, a claim should be made in one of our countries of coding. Claims are also included if they are made by or addressed at a supranational actor of which the country of coding is a member (e.g., the UN, the EU, the IMF), on the condition that the claim is substantively relevant for the country of coding (e.g., a decision by ECB is included if affecting one’s own member state).

Political claims on a number of themes (unemployment, recession, exclusion, welfare reforms, economic stability, budget balance, spread, and so forth) that referred explicitly to the crisis were tracked in selected newspapers of each country.

The sample we use contains 8,703 claims and covers the period 2008-14.¹ Claims were coded by random sampling of 1,000 articles from five newspapers in each country, selected to increase the representativeness of the sample:

¹ The LIVEWHAT dataset covers the period 2005-14. We discarded the data previous to 2008 due to the scarcity of claims related to the crisis, austerity, or recession.

France (*Le Figaro, La Tribune, Le Monde, Le Parisien, Libération*), Germany (*Bild, Die Welt, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Frankfurter Rundschau, Süddeutsche Zeitung*), Greece (*Eleytherotypia, Kathimerini, Rizospastis, Ta Nea, To Vima*), Italy (*Corriere della Sera, La Stampa, Repubblica, Secolo XIX, Sole 24 Ore*), Poland (*Dziennik Gazeta Prawna, Super Express, Gazeta Polska Codziennie, Gazeta Wyborcza, Rzeczpospolita*), Spain (*ABC, El País, El Periódico de Catalunya, La Vanguardia, El Mundo*), Sweden (*Aftonbladet, Dagen Nyheter, Göterborgs Posten, Norbottens Kuriren, Svenska Dagbladet*), Switzerland (*Blick, Le Matin, Le Temps, Neue Zürcher Zeitung, Tages Anzeiger*), and the United Kingdom (*Daily Mail, Daily Mirror, The Guardian, The Sun, The Times*). All articles from all newspaper sections, excluding the editorials, containing any of the three words “crisis,” or “recession,” or “austerity” were selected through key words search and retrieved. Unfortunately, with the available data it is impossible to disentangle “crisis” from “recession,” or “austerity.” We therefore explore the three concepts altogether, extensively referencing a particularly critical period for the EU and the individual European countries.

For each claim we identify the actors (those who declare the claims), the addressees (to whom these claims are directed), and the issues involved (topics of discussion between actors and addressees).² The original LIVEWHAT dataset distinguishes seven scopes for actors, addressees, and issues: “supra- or transnational: European,” “supra- or transnational: other,” “multilateral,” “national,” “regional,” “local,” and “unknown/unclassifiable.” These scopes have been recoded according to the objectives of our study. The scopes we use for actors and addressees are five: “EU,” “EU-state,” “European,” “national,” and “other.” The “EU” scope refers strictly and explicitly to the EU, its institutions, officials, policies, and citizens; it measures either supranational or vertical communications. Similarly, the “EU-state” scope explicitly mentions another EU country, its citizens, government, officers, institutions, and policies; it measures horizontal communications within the political limits of the EU member states. “European” scope refers to the geographical limits of Europe and measures the most broad, inclusive concept of Europe; it also embraces ambiguous and general notions of Europe (e.g., the European citizens, the European banks, the European economies, and so forth) as well as all kinds of actors with no restriction regarding their institutional status (e.g., European organizations in any subject, European individuals, and so forth). The “national” scope covers national, regional, and local actors and addressees. Finally, “other” includes international and supranational actors and addressees beyond the EU or Europe (e.g., United Nations, the World Bank, the United States), and unspecified scopes. Many claims have no direct target,

² Because of the small frequencies of second actors and issues in the original LIVEWHAT dataset, we only examine first actors and first issues in our study.

hence we find a high amount of unspecified addressees particularly in Sweden, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, France, and Spain. In our search for European claims we are not interested in further detailing this scope.

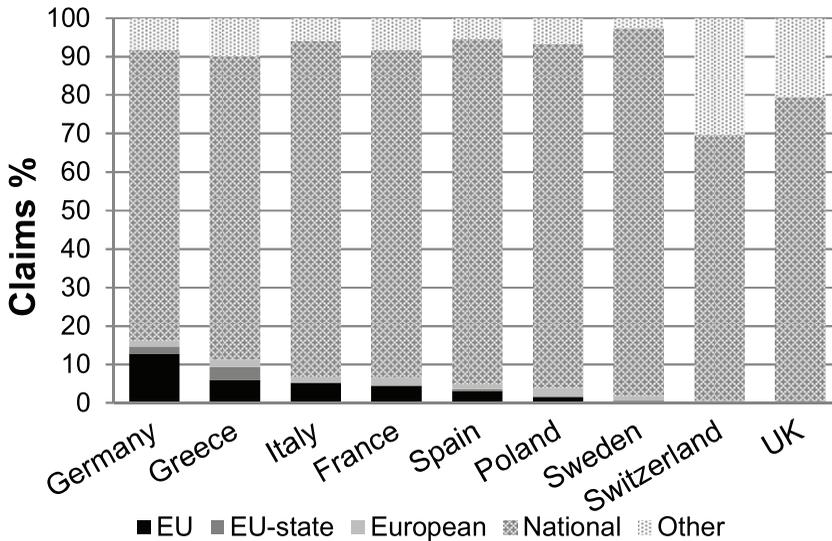
The scopes of the issues were coded in the original LIVEWHAT dataset in seven categories as well, according to the reach of the topic and considering at which level the issue had been raised; that is, dependent upon whether the issue was discussed from a European perspective (“European” scope) or from the exclusive perspective of the national state (“national” scope in the original LIVEWHAT dataset). For example, a Spanish claim that reports that “Brussels approves a proposal that gives more power to the national Central banks to restrict the activity of large banks in cases of solvency deficiencies” is coded as having a European scope. In contrast, a Spanish claim that states that “in a meeting with experts and the government, the Bank of Spain insists on the need to increase labor flexibility and warns that the strong wage increases will hurt the Spanish competitiveness” is coded as bearing a “national” scope. Similarly, global, regional, and local subjects are not European issues: for example, “the Valencian government asks the central government to borrow and incur deficits to maintain the investment needed to stimulate the economy,” and “the National Council of Fiscal and Financial Policy agreed that the Autonomous Communities may incur in deficit during the next triennium.” For our purposes, we recoded the issues as having either a “European” or “not European” scope (1-0 dummy variable).

With the information provided for actors, addressees, and issues we are able to construct our dependent variable following the conceptual scheme outlined in the previous section. A dummy variable identifies whether there is European visibility in each claim (1), or not (0). Value 1 indicates that the claim contains at least one EU, EU-state, or European actor, addressee, or European issue. In contrast, claims on non-European issues produced by national or “other” actors targeting national or “other” addressees are considered as “not European” and coded 0. Due to the scarce amount of European claims in the sample, for the purpose of this study we discarded any further differentiation in degrees or types of European visibility.

In sum, whenever a claim is being made by, or targeted to, an EU, EU-state, or European actor/addressee, or whenever the issue debated holds a European scope, we consider it conveys visibility to Europe, the EU, its institutions, its member states, or its policies in the national public sphere. Although we do not assess levels of Europeanization of the national public spheres—being aware of the multiple indirect forms it may develop—we do inscribe this evidence of European visibility as a clear indicator of the presence of the EU and Europe in the debates of these national public spheres. Despite the lowering bias that our conservative approach might confer to the real presence of the EU and Europe in the national public spheres, our data reflects undeniable values in different European countries over time.

The crisis impacted upon the European countries at different degrees. Our nine countries conform three basic groups: strongly affected by the economic

Figure 1.
Scope of Actors in Each Country 2008-14 (N = 8,703)



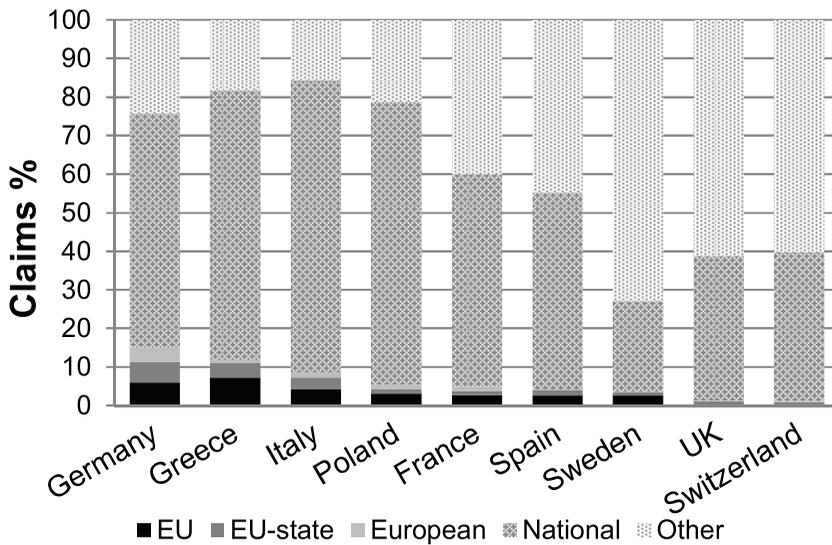
and debt crises (Greece, Italy, and Spain), intermediately affected (France and the United Kingdom), and with weak or lateral effects (Germany, Poland, Sweden, and Switzerland).³ Our cases represent a comprehensive set of European countries that reaches beyond the “usual suspects” or specific groups of comparative European studies. We include EU and non-EU member states; creditors and debtors; the Economic and Monetary Union, opt out, and noneuro countries; pro-EU and Eurosceptics; founder members and countries from subsequent accession waves; and Western and Eastern Europeans.

Results

We aim to examine comparatively the visibility of the EU and EU-state actors, addressees, and issues through a detailed observation of the communicative flows between the different geopolitical levels across the nine selected countries. We also analyze other European actors and addressees considering whether they relate to their EU or EU-state counterparts, in the first instance, or to national and other actors and addressees. In any case, we should always keep in mind that our analysis reveals the presence of the EU’s and European communications in these national public spheres only when referring to the crisis, recession or austerity during 2008-14.

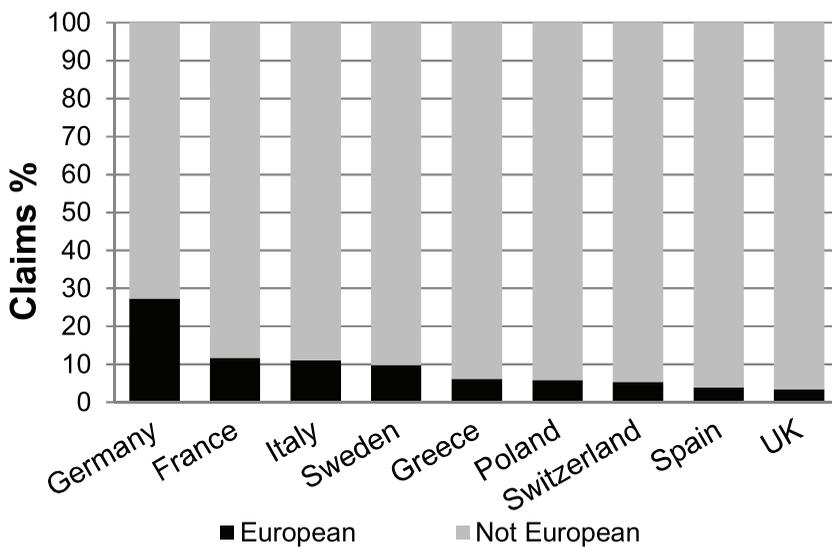
³ For more details on this classification, see the contextual data collected in the workpackage 1 of the LIVEWHAT (2013-present) project.

Figure 2.
Scope of Addressees in Each Country 2008-14 (N = 8,703)



First of all, we present the distribution of the 8,703 claims, contrasting the scopes of actors (Figure 1), addressees (Figure 2), and issues (Figure 3) across the nine selected countries during the whole period. As can be observed in

Figure 3.
Scope of Issues in Each Country 2008-14 (N = 8,703)



Figures 1–3 it is clear that the national protagonists and their national concerns⁴ dominate the discursive activity in every country, far ahead from any EU/EU-state/European scope. National actors conform 83 percent of the sample (ranging from Swiss 69 percent to Swedish 95 percent) while all the European actors' scopes register a meager 4 percent (from the UK's and Swiss 1 percent to German 16 percent). Similarly, although we should always remember the high percentages of undefined targets, national addressees constitute 54 percent of the sample (ranging from Swedish 23 percent to Italian 75 percent) against 6 percent of all European scopes (again spanning from the UK's and Swiss 1 percent to German 15 percent). Last, non-European issues represent 91 percent of the sample (from German 73 percent to the UK's 97 percent) while European issues account for the remaining 9 percent (from the UK's 3 percent to German 27 percent). In sum, European scopes altogether are most visible in Germany followed by Greece (11 percent actors, 12 percent addressees, 6 percent issues), Italy (7 percent actors, 9 percent addressees, 11 percent issues) and France (7 percent actors, 5 percent addressees, 12 percent issues), and least visible in the United Kingdom (1 percent actors and addressees, 3 percent issues) and Switzerland (1 percent actors and addressees, 5 percent issues). Although EU/EU-state/European actors and addressees are also negligible in Sweden, 10 percent of Swedish issues have a European scope, only short after Italy and more prominent than in Greece and Poland (6 percent each), Switzerland (5 percent), or Spain (4 percent). In detail, the EU is always more visible than the EU-state or other European scopes. EU actors represent 13 percent of German actors, 6 percent of Greeks, 5 percent of Italians, 4 percent of French, and 3 percent of Spanish, being insignificant elsewhere. EU addressees, however, are only relatively more prominent than EU-state addressees (3 percent against 2 percent of the sample) but, once again, addressees should be carefully read, even more when showing such low frequencies. In any case, the countries in our sample present claims with very low degrees of European visibility, despite the clear European scope that the recent crisis had. We expected more visibility of the various European scopes in the countries most affected by the crisis and austerity, particularly in Spain and Italy, but also in Greece.

In Table 2, we examine the interrelations between different geopolitical levels that shape vertical and horizontal communicative links, considering whether the topics being discussed are European or not. Switzerland and the United Kingdom show a similar pattern of high concentration of national/other claims making debating non-European issues—which again demonstrates their low levels of European visibility. Sweden follows presenting low amounts of EU/EU-state activity—national actors, if any, are the ones who

⁴ In the original LIVEWHAT dataset “national” issues represent 73 percent and “other supra- or transnational” issues 8 percent of all claims—the latter being most prominent in Switzerland (25 percent) and Sweden (12 percent). Both categories are included in our “non-European” scope of issues.

Table 2. Inter-Sphere Communications in Claims Making. Scopes of Actors, Addressees, and Issues by Country, 2008-14

Actor	European Issue → Addressees					No European Issue					Total %	N
	EU- EU State	European	National	Other		EU- EU State	European	National	Other			
FRANCE (N=858)												
EU	3	8	5	27	19	8	0	3	16	11	100	37
EU-state	–	33	–	67	0	–	–	–	–	–	100	3
European	12	6	–	12	41	–	–	–	–	29	100	17
National	1	1	–	3	2	1	–	–	56	36	100	729
Other	1	–	–	4	6	–	–	–	26	63	100	72
GERMANY (N=971)												
EU	11	10	15	12	21	1	2	2	24	2	100	124
EU-state	5	–	16	11	37	11	–	4	5	11	100	19
European	21	–	7	–	21	7	14	–	21	7	100	14
National	3	3	1	10	3	1	1	1	59	19	100	734
Other	4	8	–	3	5	3	3	–	39	38	100	80
GREECE (N=984)												
EU	7	3	–	8	4	7	3	2	58	8	100	59
EU-state	–	3	–	–	–	13	6	–	69	9	100	32
European	4	10	–	4	–	10	10	–	38	24	100	21
National	1	1	–	2	1	5	2	1	71	16	100	774
Other	1	3	–	1	1	6	5	–	53	30	100	98
ITALY (N=969)												
EU	2	16	12	16	19	2	–	–	29	4	100	51
EU-state	50	–	–	–	50	–	–	–	–	–	100	2
European	50	8	18	–	–	–	8	–	8	8	100	12
National	3	1	–	2	–	1	–	–	79	14	100	847
Other	7	12	2	2	5	–	–	–	44	28	100	57
POLAND (N=985)												
EU	14	7	–	–	22	7	–	–	43	1	100	14
EU-state	60	20	–	–	–	–	20	–	–	–	100	5
European	20	5	10	–	15	5	5	–	20	20	100	20
National	2	–	–	1	–	–	–	1	77	19	100	879
Other	5	5	3	–	–	3	1	–	49	34	100	67
SPAIN (N=1,007)												
EU	6	3	3	6	16	3	3	–	54	6	100	32
EU-state	20	–	–	–	20	–	–	–	20	40	100	5
European	8	8	–	–	8	–	–	–	23	53	100	13
National	1	1	–	–	–	1	–	–	52	45	100	902
Other	5	2	–	–	2	–	–	–	36	55	100	55
SWEDEN (N=984)												
EU	33	–	–	–	67	–	–	–	–	–	100	6
EU-state	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
European	8	–	–	8	15	–	–	–	31	38	100	13
National	2	–	–	1	5	–	–	–	23	69	100	939
Other	4	11	4	–	15	–	–	–	4	62	100	26

Continued.

Table 2. Continued

Actor	European Issue					No European Issue					Total	
	EU- EU State	European	National	Other	EU- EU State	European	National	Other	%	N		
SWITZERLAND (N=972)												
EU	-	-	50	-	-	-	50	-	100	2		
EU-state	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		
European	-	25	-	25	-	-	-	50	100	4		
National	-	-	1	2	-	-	46	51	100	671		
Other	1	-	1	8	-	1	18	70	100	295		
UK (N=973)												
EU	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		
EU-state	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	100	100	1		
European	-	-	-	-	-	-	50	50	100	4		
National	-	1	1	2	-	1	39	56	100	769		
Other	-	-	1	4	1	-	24	69	100	199		
										N =8,703		

Notes: Figures in percentages. In italics: no European visibility.

discuss European issues. As for the rest of countries, claims display mostly national-to-national closed communications that neither confer direct visibility to the EU nor to European subjects. As expected, we confirm the prominent national character of the national public spheres. Even so, as we are particularly interested in inspecting the EU’s claims-making communicative flows, we leave aside the United Kingdom, Switzerland, and Sweden to concentrate in the EU and EU-state actors. We aim at tracing to whom they relate at other political levels, and in particular whether the national actors address them as well. As already mentioned, EU actors are much more visible than EU-state actors. In the first place, EU actors target national addressees on non-European issues (Greece 58 percent, France 56 percent, Spain 54 percent, Poland 43 percent, Italy 29 percent, and Germany 24 percent); second, they direct claims on European issues at other addressees (Germany 21 percent, Poland 22 percent, Italy and France 19 percent, Spain 16 percent). There is no other clear pattern for EU or EU-state actors targeting specific addressees across countries besides the fact that they never address themselves in the first place, therefore generating open multilevel political communications. On the other side, national actors hardly address EU or EU-state addressees, and barely discuss European issues (only 6 percent of their claims)—except for Germany where they represent the highest share of national actors claims making on European subjects (20 percent), perceptibly ahead from all the rest (second highest—Sweden 8 percent; and lowest—Spain 2 percent). Nevertheless, as national actors are so overwhelming in the sample, they are the ones that

Table 3. Share of European Visibility in the Debates in Each National Public Sphere, 2008-14

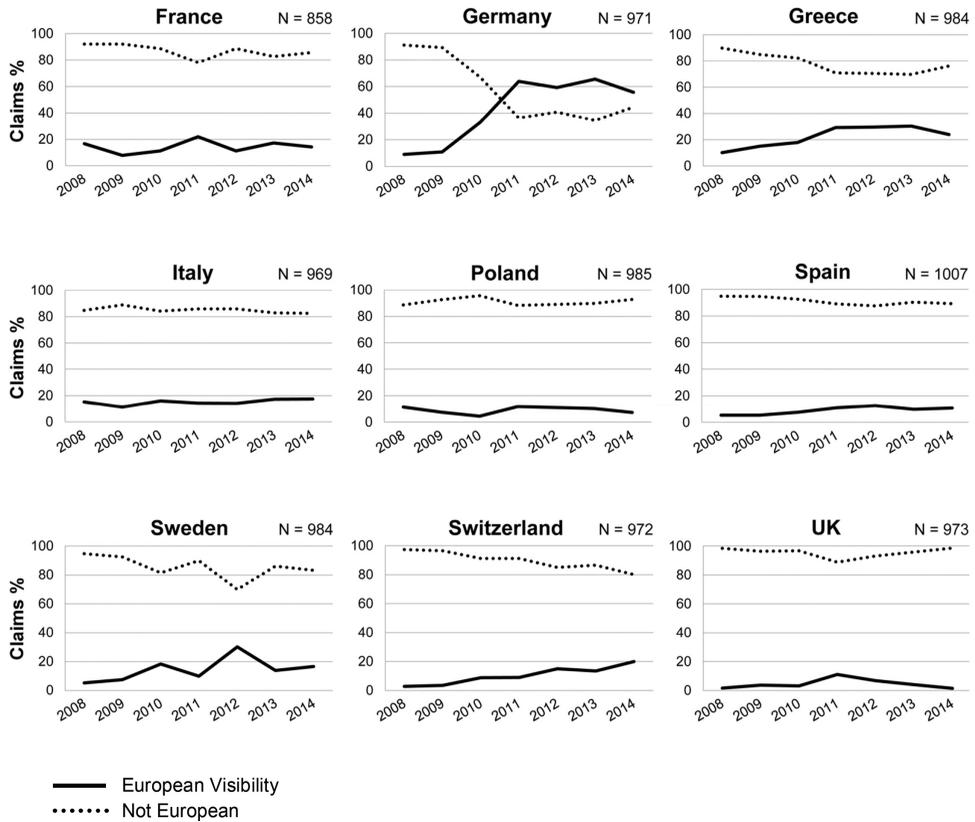
Country	Germany	Greece	Italy	France	Sweden	Spain	Poland	Switzerland	UK	All Countries
European visibility %	35	23	15	14	11	9	9	7	5	14
Percentage of total claims per country										N = 8,703

convey most visibility to the European issues (59 percent against the EU's 16 percent of the sample).

These inter-sphere communications define the degree of visibility of the EU and European concerns in the debates of the different national public spheres captured by our dummy variable. Altogether, claims that convey European visibility represent 14 percent of the sample against the remaining 86 percent of non-European claims. We present the share of claims with a European scope in each country in Table 3. Once again, we need to be careful when assessing this information as our dummy variable does not define levels or differentiate hierarchies of European visibility—that is, we treat actors, and issues as equivalent carriers of a European scope, and we do not consider how many of these variables are present in a single claim. We deal with very scarce amounts of claims that bear EU and European scopes, hence we privilege contrasting European to non-European claims, giving a single value (0/1) to each claim in the sample. This simple opposition allows for an overview of the presence of European references in the debates in each country during these years. Germany (35 percent of its claims) in the first place, then Greece (23 percent), and to a lesser extent Italy (15 percent) and France (14 percent) lead the European communicative flows. There is also evidence that corroborates the lowest visibility of the EU and Europe in the United Kingdom (5 percent). Moreover, any European scope of the debates in the United Kingdom or Switzerland depended on national and other actors discussing European issues—and in fact it is still extremely low. Similarly, Swedish national actors targeting EU addressees with European issues advanced European visibility to a higher degree than the more numerous Spanish or Polish EU, EU-state, and European actors in their respective public spheres.

A complementary time series 2008-14 presents these levels of visibility of the EU and Europe across countries (Figure 4). The differentiated pattern of German debates stands out: European claims steeply ascended between 2008 (9 percent) and 2013 (66 percent), surpassing non-European claims and remaining stable at high levels from that year onward. Greek (10 percent in 2008 up to 30 percent in 2013) and Swiss (3 percent in 2008 up to 20 percent in 2014) European claims show steadily ascending trends. However, these figures alone do not account for the fundamental differences between both countries

Figure 4.
European Visibility in the Debates of the National Public Spheres by Country, 2008-14



in the degree of European visibility—which we discussed in Table 2. Our time series also shows peaks of European claims in Sweden in 2012 (30 percent) and to a lesser extent in France (22 percent) and the United Kingdom in 2011 (11 percent). For the rest, Italy, Poland, and Spain present no significant variations in the low trends of European visibility. Altogether, European visibility is somehow higher in the Italian debates (fluctuating between its lowest 11 percent in 2009 and its highest 18 percent in 2014) than in Polish (lowest 5 percent in 2010 and highest 12 percent in 2011), or Spanish (lowest 5 percent in 2008 and 2009, and highest 13 percent in 2012) debates.

Conclusions

In spite of the strong European character of both the recent economic and debt crises, and the austerity policies implemented at the national level under

the EU's surveillance during the period 2008-14, these nine countries present very low levels of European visibility in the debates of the national public spheres. Overall, the results confirm the uncontested primacy of national communicative flows in every country, leaving limited visibility for the EU's or European protagonists and subjects. The overwhelming presence of national actors, national addressees, and national issues conform closed, self-centered communicative debates that seldom transcend geographical boundaries or political levels. Hence, at first sight, it seems that the recent crisis has had no significant effect advancing the presence of the EU and European issues in the debates of the national public spheres, although a note of caution is required considering the very low frequencies of European claims.

Once this indisputable evidence is acknowledged, a closer examination reveals interesting differences among the countries in our sample. First, considering the disparity across countries regarding the intensity of the economic crisis and the severity of the austerity policies subsequently implemented, the data contradicts our expectations. We presumed that the most affected Eurozone countries—Greece, Italy, and Spain—would present the highest levels of European visibility in the debates; accordingly, we envisaged moderate European presence in intermediately affected countries as France and the United Kingdom, and the lowest European visibility in those countries with weaker, lateral crisis effects—Germany, Poland, Sweden, and Switzerland. However, our examination reveals that Germany clearly stands out from the rest displaying the most visible European debates in the sample, while Greece presents second highest. Next, Italy, France, and Sweden occupy middle-low ranges, completed in descending order by Poland and Spain, Switzerland, and, finally, the United Kingdom.

Second, weighing the scope of the actors that initiate the debates, we found no, or negligible, amounts of the EU's and European actors, addressees, and issues in the United Kingdom, Switzerland, and Sweden. In these countries, EU and European concerns are being carried by national and other trans- or supranational actors debating European subjects. In contrast, although Spain and Poland do show visible EU and European actors, addressees, and issues, due to their small numbers, these represent lower levels than those of Sweden. In the end, the weight of national actors (and other actors, particularly in the case of Switzerland) is always much more prominent in every country. And this finally defines the degree of visibility of the EU and Europe in the debates in the national public spheres—that is, although the prominence of national actors prevents the direct visibility of the EU, its institutions, and member states, and of any European actor, they still bring forward European concerns. Notwithstanding this, however, national actors perform remarkably reduced communicative exchanges with either EU or European addressees.

Third, the EU and EU-state actors are most visible in Germany, Greece, Italy, France, and Spain, in that order. They direct their claims to national

addressees on non-European issues in the first place, in every country of our sample except in France, where they also target national actors first but on European subjects. Considering EU and EU-state actors when targeting all types of addressees, their visibility is higher when debating non-European issues in Greece and Spain—while in Germany, Italy, and France they first debate European issues. National actors respond accordingly.

Fourth, when tracing the presence of the EU, EU members, and European actors/addressees, and European issues from 2008 to 2014, Germany again shows a completely different pattern from the rest: from 2011 it presents more European than non-European claims. Every country begins an ascending trend in 2009, except Poland and the United Kingdom—where changes happen in 2010. In any case, the increasing amount of European claims is impressive in Germany, remarkable in Greece, quite noticeable in France, almost imperceptible in Italy and Poland, and very subtle in Spain. It presents high peaks in Sweden in 2010 and mainly in 2012, and in France and the United Kingdom in 2011, and rises in Switzerland up to 2014. We thus not only found scarce vertical linkages between the supranational and national spheres but even more reduced horizontal communications among different EU countries, and no similarity in the patterns of European visibility in the most affected Eurozone countries (i.e., Greece, Italy, and Spain). In every country the EU becomes a topic for national politics and contestation in the national arena.

Some of these results appear to be quite reasonable and may find explanations if interpreted from other perspectives: for example, the low presence of the EU and Europe in the United Kingdom in terms of Euroscepticism or that of Switzerland due to its broader global financial interdependence. Others, however, still remain rather puzzling: for instance, Spain and Italy displaying lower degrees of European presence than Sweden during 2008-14. In any case, the visibility of the EU and European actors, addressees, and concerns in the debates of the national public spheres does not seem to be *directly* related to the severity of the economic crisis nor to the harshness of public policy retrenchment in the different European countries. Particularly, we presume that the higher levels of Germany might well be linked to the country's leading role in the EU during the recent economic crisis, to its position as creditor in the debt crisis, and to the "internal use" that German national actors have made of the country's leading EU status. In this respect, we might inquire whether the moderate levels of European visibility in France reflect its difficulties in co-leading the European project during these years. Furthermore, the higher degree of European visibility presented by Germany and Greece might well respond to their prominent contending debates concerning austerity policies and how to deal with the crisis. Unfortunately, as it is not possible to separate crisis, austerity, and recession in the data, we do not advance explanatory factors that, in any case, exceed the reach of this article. These might well become the subject of further research that should also examine in detail the composition of national

actors and of all issues being discussed, comparatively analyzing the cleavages present in each society. Moreover, regional/local and other trans- or supranational actors could also be assessed in detail, the former particularly in Italy and Spain, and the latter in Switzerland and Sweden. In addition, contrasting aggregated data from different sources may depict the economic context across the time series 2008-14, and even the inclusion of some critical political events in each country might also help to contextualize and understand the particular peaks and overall low results of European visibility that we present.

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Political Claims and Discourse Formations: A Comparative Account on Germany and Greece in the Eurozone Crisis

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The economic crisis following the financial meltdown in 2007 had disparate impacts for citizens of the southern and northern Eurozone member states. In this study, we analyze public debates in Germany and Greece, two countries that have attracted global attention during the crisis, through a political claims analysis based on newspaper articles published between 2005 and 2014. The article makes use of multiple correspondence analysis to detect the patterns governing the discursive construction of the European financial and economic crisis. Our findings corroborate the expected differences between the Greek and German debates in regard to core issues and assessments. However, the de-alignment of political cleavages in both countries is notable and stresses seemingly an underlying mainstreaming process that limits the diversity of crisis-related claims.

Keywords: Claims-Making Analysis, Europe, Economic Crisis, Great Recession, Discourse Communities, Discourse Analysis, Crisis

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Interpretation, National Debates, Germany, Greece, Troika, Eurozone, European Union, Memoranda of Understanding, Political Cleavages, Public Opinion, Political Behavior, International Comparative Policy, Austerity Policies, European Integration.

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La crisis económica que siguió a la crisis financiera de 2007 ha tenido consecuencias dispares para los ciudadanos de los estados miembros al norte y sur de la Eurozona. En este artículo analizamos los debates públicos en Alemania y Grecia, dos países que han atraído atención durante la crisis, a través de un análisis de declaraciones políticas basado en artículos de periódicos publicados entre 2005 y 2014. Este estudio hace uso de un análisis de correspondencia para detectar los patrones que rigen la construcción del discurso sobre la crisis financiera y económica en Europa. Nuestros resultados confirman las diferencias esperadas entre los debates alemanes y griegos en cuanto a los temas centrales y su evaluación. Sin embargo, la disparidad en la división política en ambos países es notable y destaca un proceso subyacente general que limita la diversidad de las declaraciones relacionadas a la crisis.

Since the financial and economic crisis, and consecutively the Eurozone crisis, public debates in European member states have become significantly more contested and the European integration process was further politicized (e.g., Statham and Trenz 2015). Thus European integration resulted eventually in politicization, once again showing that transformation processes usually come with new cleavages and produce winners and losers (Azmanova 2011; Hutter 2014; Kriesi *et al.* 2006, 2008; Lahusen 2013). Yet, more specifically, this time the economic, political, and social consequences of the crisis were dramatic: for Germany we observed a short-lasting but heavy shock in 2009 when the economy shrank by an (since World War II) unprecedented 5 percent. In Greece, the conditions were less dramatic in the first crisis phase (2007-09), but since 2010 worsened into the biggest recession a country ever went through in peace times. Memoranda of Understanding (MoU), austerity, and structural adjustment measures imposed on the Greek government by its international lenders

or the Troika—European Commission (EC), European Central Bank (ECB), and International Monetary Fund—have placed a heavy toll on Greece and its people. Even though the country lost a fifth of its gross domestic product (GDP) since 2009, during the period 2010-12 the state implemented a fiscal constriction of 20 percent of GDP (about €50bn), committed to measures cumulatively totaling €65bn by 2015, and decreased its budget deficit by a notable 9 percent (Monastiriotis 2013). Austerity measures resulted in severe recession, including rapid deterioration of job security and labor rights, impoverishment of the middle classes, increasing migration of younger, highly educated people (“brain drain”), rapid rise in homelessness and suicide rates, and deterioration of public health and its infrastructure (Markantonatou 2013, 16-7; Monastiriotis 2013). Unemployment rates more than tripled from 7.8 in 2008 to 26.5 in 2014 (Eurostat 2014). More than one-fourth of the total (229,000) of small and medium enterprises shut down by 2015, leading to the loss of 700,000 jobs (Athanasίου 2015). Severe material deprivation doubled from 11.2 in 2008 to over 20 in 2013 (Eurostat 2016). The impact on the political system has also been overwhelming, as seen in the unprecedented dismissal of more than 50 members of parliament by their parties for not abiding to the party pro-austerity and pro-MoU position from 2010 to 2012 alone (Kousis and Kanellopoulos 2014). Contention arose sharply in the streets and squares as well (Diani and Kousis 2014). According to police records, more than 35,000 protests occurred in the country between 2010 and 2015.¹ Additionally, on the European level, the crisis has led to countless summits and debates on the future of the European Union (EU).

It is in this light that this article aims at investigating the national debates in Greece and in Germany with a discourse-analytic framework of reference. Considering the fast recovery in Germany and the severe and sustained crisis in Greece, it is obvious that this study deals with very different cases. This selection is justified when the aim is not only to paint a picture of possible differences that corroborate previous expectations, but when the focus is also on identifying potential similarities that might require new explanations. In our case, the research aim is to understand the discursive construction of “crisis” in the public sphere. According to scholarly writing, discourses collectively construct narratives on the meaning and significance of the crisis, its causes and potential solutions (Kiess 2015; Thompson 2009; Wodak and Angouri 2014, 418). They evolve through political claims made by various actors within the public sphere, and by the specific interests, policy ideas, and values they propagate (Münnich 2011). For this reason, it is very plausible to expect differences between the two countries. Indeed, research showed that the crisis is more controversially debated in a country hit stronger by the Great Recession. It produces a larger number of responsibility attributions and a higher

¹ Data courtesy by the Ministry of Citizen Protection (police headquarters), February 2016.

share of causal attributions (Roose and Kousis 2016) as well as large-protest-event claims related to accountability, democracy, economy, labor, and social rights as well as sovereignty (Diani and Kousis 2014; Kousis 2015). Moreover, “higher levels of legitimation pressure translate into higher levels of public sphere activity and therefore partially confirm that legitimation pressure leads to a greater relevance of positive self-presentation in the public sphere” (Sommer *et al.* 2014). Overall, these observations tend to foresee differences. In this sense, we can formulate a number of research questions to be validated in this article. Are public debates highly contentious and controversial in times of crisis, and should we expect that this holds true in particular for Greece, when compared to Germany? And assuming that this observation is correct: Are public debates in times of crisis affected by intense political cleavages (e.g., between left and right, between capital and labor), and/or by a marked diversity of (minoritarian) groups and (contentious) claims that shatter established policy coalitions?

At second glance, however, we need to enlarge the list of research questions, because we could expect similarities between the two countries as well. Are discourses about the crisis (cf., Schmidt 2011; see also Blyth 2002) dominated by a specific constellation of actors and specific narrative that leaves little room for contentions and alternatives? Are public debates exposed to a process of de-alignment or realignment in terms of political cleavages and discourse communities? Do these debates exhibit similar agendas in terms of issues, ideas, and values?

Our results promise to deliver important insights, because public debates in times of crisis help to increase our knowledge about the structures and dynamics patterning mass-mediated discourses. In particular, it is to be expected that discursive constellations unveiled by our analysis in regard to narratives and actors will remain important points of reference for the public handling of the crisis and the policy options that stakeholders might take into consideration in the future (Bohmann and Vobruba 1992; Hay 1996).

The Public Construction of Understandings and Assessments of the Crisis

In this article, we regard crisis as an interpreted fact, that is, we are looking at a certain period of economic or political struggle (only) insofar as actors speak about it (cf., Bohmann and Vobruba 1992). This is not to say that people’s hardships in Greece or the slump of German GDP in 2009 were not “real,” even though GDP is a highly abstract figure. However, “to say that a situation is real is not the same as saying that its reality is self-evident. The ways in which a situation is named, described, explained and historically positioned both shape its context and determine the plausibility of one contextual account over another” (Coleman 2013, 330). Public discourses “construct” public understandings and assessments of the crisis as “collective ventures.”

Moreover, to speak of a crisis is creating a societal decision situation, or, in Hay's (2002) words, a "moment of decisive intervention:" defining a specific situation as a crisis implies that a solution is needed to prevent the situation from escalating. Hence the public talk about a crisis is highly influential for further developments. It paves the way to discursive opportunities (Koopmans and Olzak 2004; Snow 2008) for political actors and, at least informally (see Cinalli and Giugni 2013) influences the choice of policy measures. Depending how the crisis is perceived and narrated in the public discourse it can even modify the societal cleavage structure or establish new cleavages (Rokkan 1975), as it has in the recent globalization period (Hutter 2014). "Moments of crisis open up struggles for hegemony between competing strategies" (Fairclough 2005, 55; cf., Jessop 2002). Consequently, changes in public discourses indicate and, although not solely, lead to social change (Fairclough 1993; Fairclough, Cortesse, and Ardizzone 2007).

The construction of the "European crisis" is thus to be considered as a collective venture. Actors are not relevant as isolated entities, but as part of larger formations (e.g., coalitions, networks, communities) within the public and policy domain (Klüver 2013; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993). Scholarly writing has introduced the concept of discourse communities to stress this point. They are defined as "socio-rhetorical networks that form in order to work towards sets of common goals" (Swales 1990, 9). They are constituted by a set of actors who share certain interests and ideas of how to pursue them (Kousis *et al.* 2015; Norton 2014). This shared world-views might even entail "canonical knowledge" that "regulates the world-views of group members, how they interpret experience" (Bizzell 1992, 222; cf., Swales 1990, 29). Consequently, members of discursive communities produce and reproduce shared understandings and assessments of the crisis while reading situations.

In this theoretical perspective, we can define public discourses as an assemblage of publicly stated claims addressed by various actors and discourse communities. In particular, public discourses are in most cases conflictual deliberations involving different and/or competing discourse communities. In fact, "discourse operates within conventions defined by communities, be they academic disciplines or social groups. Discourse is a means of maintaining and extending the group's knowledge and of initiating new members into the group, and that discourse is epistemic or constitutive of the group's knowledge" (Herzberg 1986, 1). Hence we can assume that policy communities strive to influence public debates to shape the public understanding of the crisis. Ultimately, public debates are a vehicle for the reproduction of power, possibly of discursive hegemony (Fairclough, Cortesse, and Ardizzone 2007, 12). At the same time, public debates are heavily patterned by existing power structures, both within the policy domain and public sphere (Schattschneider 1960). For instance, it is known that state actors constitute the majority among all actors in public debates on the recent crisis, both in Greece and Germany (Roose and Kousis 2016).

The literature points at huge imbalances in public access “apparently resulting from differential command of money and other resources” that “seem to violate norms of equal access, representativeness, balance, and diversity in the marketplace of ideas” (Danielian and Page 1994; Tresch and Fischer 2015).

The analysis of Greek and German public debates provides illuminating input to this theoretical argument. The Great Recession has been an imperative topic of public debates and has impacted on the policy priorities and orientations of their participants. However, it is not clear whether this has altered the structures of the national policy domains with their competing topics, goals, and orientations. In this sense, we can paint three different scenarios. First, we assume that both countries are still marked by those political cleavages that tend to structure politics in most advanced democracies: the one between conservative and leftist political allegiances, between market liberalism and Keynesianism, and between employers and labor organizations. These cleavages have been corroborated recurrently by previous research (e.g., Lahusen and Baumgarten 2010; Sonnett 2010; Zschache 2016), because competing discourse communities tend to keep distant within the public sphere, when promoting their policy agendas. In this sense, we should expect that public debates about the crisis and its antidotes should be patterned by these cleavages even in a much more pronounced way than during “normal times.” In fact, the economic and fiscal crisis might push contending policy coalitions and discourse communities to struggle much more forcefully for their goals to capitalize on the critical momentum generated by the crisis in regard to problem-solving policies.

This expectation is very plausible. However, cursory observations suggest that two other scenarios are very probable as well. Second, there might be a mainstreaming or streamlining impact on public debates that entail a de-alignment of traditional political cleavages. This scenario can be exemplified by the dictum of Margaret Thatcher that “there is no alternative” (TINA) to Thatcherism. In Germany, this doctrine was promoted by German governments also in reaction to the Great Recession and the proposed austerity measures, notably through both parties forming Angela Merkel’s cabinet (i.e., the Christian and Social Democrats). In Greece, the TINA scenario (Gerodimos and Karyotis 2015) was also promoted as “memorandum or default” (Lyrantzis 2011) by the two major parties which ruled Greece since the mid-1970s—Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) and New Democracy. But also a second cleavage seems to be attenuated, because German social partners have worked closely together since the beginning of the crisis, in what has been described as “crisis corporatism” (Lehndorff 2011; Urban 2012; see also Herzog-Stein, Horn, and Stein 2013).

Third, public debates in times of crisis might lead to a realignment of policy communities. In Greece, for instance, debates tend to cluster around the pro- and antimemorandum camps—which also gave rise to new parties, both

on the left and the right. This said, however, fluid and shifting alliances and positions have also been taking place, as reflected vividly by each consecutive government who usually had opposing views on the Troika bailout austerity policies before winning the election. An even starker example is that of the June 2015 referendum where the Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA) government was against the new agreements with the Troika, but did sign them afterward and is now implementing them.

These scenarios allow us to specify three research assumptions. First, we assume that the Great Recession provided a stimulus or critical juncture (Schmidt 2010) for established discourse communities to promote their interests, ideas, and policy solutions. Consequently, we expect to find competing discursive communities and advocacy coalitions (e.g., conservatives, liberals, and employers on one side, social-democrats, far left parties, and unions on the other) with clearly separated policy agendas in both countries. Second, we assume that the crisis does not only embroil the usual stakeholders, but mobilizes also further contending political groups and parties. It should also increase dissent within the political elites, and thus boost discursive opportunities within the public sphere for minority groups and claims (Koopmans and Olzak 2004). This should increase the diversity of visible actors (in particular among the marginalized ones), it should disrupt existing discourse communities and realign potential cleavage structures. Additionally, we should find public debates marked by considerable differences between the two countries. Third, we assume that core policy communities might be successful in influencing and/or monopolizing public debates, and thus shaping the public understanding of the crisis. Considering the established power structures discussed before, we expect to observe a de-alignment of political cleavages within public discourses. In this case, we should be able to spot a hegemonic discourse that leaves little room for alternatives.

Data and Methods

This study uses a dataset collected within the EU-funded project, following the research design of a claims-making analysis (Koopmans and Statham 1999). All relevant information on sampling, the dataset and the methodological approach are presented in the introduction to this special issue. For this article, we used claims publicized by five German newspapers (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, *Die Welt*, *Bild*), and four Greek print media: three pro-EU *Kathimerini*, *Ta Nea*, and *To Vima*, and the anti-EU *Rizospastis*, the Greek Communist newspaper); the fifth newspaper, *Eleftherotipia*, was not selected due to its bankruptcy and closure in December 2011. A total of 1,193 claims were extracted in the German case and 1,097 in Greece.

From this dataset, we use three variables for our analyses, namely actor, issue, and value. The actor variable indicates the protagonist of the claim

and was used to identify the discourse constellations in regard to actors, discourse communities or coalitions. Two further variables were used to identify the semantic structure of the discourses. On one hand, we used the “issue” variable, because this item retrieved the main topic of the claim made. Our dataset identifies 233 different issues, which we recoded into 20 main issue areas. On the other hand, we included the “value” variable in our analyses (28 original categories recoded into 17 main values), because this variable was used to identify the guiding normative value or idea to which the claims made reference. On this basis, we are able to spot the normative, ideational, or ideological orientation of the claim, and thus the ideational proximity between various actors. Overall, issues and values allow us to identify policy communities on a semantic level.

Our analyses will be based on two instruments. On one side, we will conduct descriptive analysis of our claims-making data in order to describe the main patterns of public debates in Greece and Germany. On this basis, we will be able to detect initial differences and similarities. On the other side, we will present findings of a multiple correspondence analysis (MCA). This statistical method has been used successfully in discourse analysis to detect underlying structures and patterns (e.g., Lahusen and Baumgarten 2010; Sonnett 2010; Zschache 2016). Very often it is also used to analyze discourse communities. In fact, the primary aim of MCA is to reduce the complexity of a dataset to a number of dimensions that estimate the position of the variables and cases, according to their mutual interrelations and associations. In our case, it allows to conceive public debates as a discursive space into which public claims are placed according to their distance or proximity to other claims, when considering actors, issues, and values.

Findings: Political Claims about the Crisis in Greece and Germany

The analysis that follows depicts the high significance of the Eurozone crisis (an aftermath of the global financial crisis) on the public debates of the two countries.² Fifteen percent of the claims in Germany (188) and one-tenth of the claims in Greece (106) were made before 2009. The larger portion of the pre-Eurozone crisis claims in Germany (147 of the 188 in 2008) are related to the first impact of the global economic crisis on the German economy. Since then, debates intensified markedly.

Our descriptive analyses unveil a number of interesting observations. Concerning actors, we see in Table 1 that state actors dominate public debates about the crisis in both countries, with more than 50% of all claims.

² The following analyses were preceded by separate calculations—that is, segregated MCAs for different time periods per country—which did not unveil significant changes over time. Therefore, there was no need to show the diachronic evolution of the debates.

Table 1. Actors per Country (No. of Cases and %)

Germany	No.	%	Greece	No.	%
Government party actors					
Gov_noparty	166	13.9	Gov_noparty	217	19.7
Gov_CDU	133	11.1	Gov_ND	5	0.5
Gov_CSU	25	2.1	Gov_PASOK	26	2.4
Gov_FDP	22	1.8	Gov_DIMAR	6	0.5
Gov_SPD	32	2.7		7	0.6
Legislative party actors					
Leg_noparty	23	1.9	Leg_noparty	16	1.4
Leg_CDU	50	4.2	Leg_ND	35	3.2
Leg_CSU	16	1.3	Leg_PASOK	47	4.3
Leg_FDP	30	2.5	Leg_DIMAR	9	0.8
Leg_green	23	1.9	Leg_SYRIZA	64	5.8
Leg_SPD	61	5.1	Leg_KKE	52	4.7
Leg_Linke	14	1.2			
State actors					
Courts	13	1.1	Courts	5	0.5
State economic agencies (e.g., Bundesbank)	120	10.1	State economic agencies (e.g., national bank)	67	6.1
Other state agencies	18	1.5	State executive agencies	39	3.5
			Other state agencies	11	1.0
Economic actors					
Market and financial actors	113	9.5	Market and financial actors	79	7.2
Companies	47	3.9	Companies	26	2.4
Employer organizations	60	5.0	Employer organizations	33	3.0
Civil society & labor					
Research institutes	65	5.4	Research institutes	43	3.9
Other professional organizations	32	2.7	Other professional organizations	71	6.4
Labor organizations	54	4.5	Labor organizations	112	10.1
Citizens groups	45	3.8	Citizens groups	31	2.8
Elites	14	1.2	Elites	8	0.7
Other (excluded from MCA)	17	1.4	Other (excluded from MCA)	95	8.6
Total	1,193	100	Total	1,104	100

Governments are more important in Germany, while political parties are more present in Greece. Economic actors have a larger share in Germany, while unions are more prominent in Greece. Given the orientation of most of the selected newspapers, the range of political parties is rather limited, and citizens groups and protests are almost absent from our dataset.

Concerning issues, we see from Table 2 that macroeconomic issues prevail in both countries, with claims addressing economic activities and domestic commerce to follow. In Germany, the debate tends to center more strongly on financial matters (e.g., the monetary policies, industrial policy, banking

Table 2. Issues per Country (No. of Claims and %)

	Germany		Greece	
	No.	%	No.	%
Macroeconomic policy fields				
Inflation, prices, and interest rates	12	1.0	22	2.0
Monetary policy, national bank/ECB	157	13.3	23	2.1
Budget and debt	139	11.8	197	18.0
Taxation, tax policy, and tax reform	70	5.9	64	5.8
Industrial policy	73	6.2	7	0.6
Other macroeconomics issues	71	6.0	139	12.7
Economic policy fields				
Banking system	108	9.1	53	4.8
Financial markets, credits, insurances	108	9.1	47	4.3
Corporate management, small business	22	1.9	22	2.0
Other economic activities, domestic commerce	82	6.9	46	4.2
Social policy & labor market				
Labor and employment	62	5.2	99	9.0
Unemployment rate	20	1.7	14	1.3
Wages	41	3.5	34	3.1
Social policy	23	2.0	44	4.0
Administration & governance				
International affairs	61	5.2	44	4.0
Government and public administration	29	2.5	60	5.5
Other policy fields				
Education, culture, and sports	17	1.4	24	2.2
Transportation	16	1.4	27	2.5
Law and order	13	1.1	6	0.5
Other fields (excluded from MCA)	57	4.8	125	11.4
Total	1,181	100	1,097	100

systems, and financial markets, but also state budget), while in Greece the problem of the state budget and debt, labor and unemployment, and issues pertaining to government, public administration, and social policy are more prominent.

Both countries diverge considerably when looking at the guiding values addressed by public claims (see Table 3). This variable looks at the “collective good” that actors defend and/or promote in their public intervention, and shows therefore which “value” a society at large, and politically responsible actors in particular have to safeguard in times of crisis according to the debates. In the German press, the most frequently cherished values are security and stability, the smooth functioning of markets, competitiveness and merit, fairness and ethics, as well as professionalism. In the Greek press, economic prosperity is by large stressed most, followed by fairness and ethics, as well as security and stability, professionalism, social justice, and accountability. Hence we see that public debates in Germany are focused much more strictly to an economic agenda that tries to defend market imperatives (stability and security, smooth functioning of markets), with a particular impetus on the need to

Table 3. Values per Country (No. of Cases and %)

	Germany		Greece	
	No.	%	No.	%
Humanitarian and philanthropic				
Solidarity and altruism	20	1.7	57	5.2
Truthfulness, honesty, and sincerity	35	2.9	15	1.4
Trust	55	4.6	15	1.4
Rights-based ethics				
Civil rights, political equality	6	0.5	24	2.2
Human rights	0	0.0	20	1.8
Fairness, ethics	108	9.1	119	10.8
Social justice	22	1.8	77	7.0
Empowerment and participation				
Mutual understanding	15	1.3	25	2.3
The good of democracy itself	8	0.7	10	0.9
Diversity and sustainability				
Toleration	1	0.1	13	1.2
Economic virtues				
Economic prosperity	76	6.4	226	20.6
Professionalism	82	6.9	82	7.5
Accountability	36	3.0	81	7.4
Smooth functioning of markets	124	10.4	74	6.7
Competitiveness and merit	123	10.3	61	5.6
Community and order				
Security and stability	139	11.7	86	7.8
Social cohesion	2	0.2	13	1.2
Other values (excluded from MCA)	338	28.4	99	9.0
Total	1,181	100	1,097	100

increase competitiveness and merit while combating the crisis. In Greece, the alleviation of crisis-related harms is much more prominent (economic prosperity and social justice), but also the management of the crisis seems to be an important focus (professionalism and accountability).

These descriptive findings provide already important evidence for our research aims. On one hand, we see that the discourse arena is limited to the usual stakeholders, with a strong emphasis on state actors. The discursive opportunities do not seem to be very open during times of crisis, particularly for citizens groups. On the other hand, national debates tend to put different emphases: in comparative terms, we see that Germany stresses more often economic issues and virtues (e.g., the smooth functioning of markets, competitiveness, and merit), while social justice, economic prosperity, and civil and human rights are more prominent in Greece. This certainly reflects the draconian measures of the Greek government affecting the national economy and most, if not all, policy sectors. It might also be due to the stronger presence of leftist political parties and labor unions in the Greek dataset, thus indicating that public debates might be patterned by discursive communities differently.

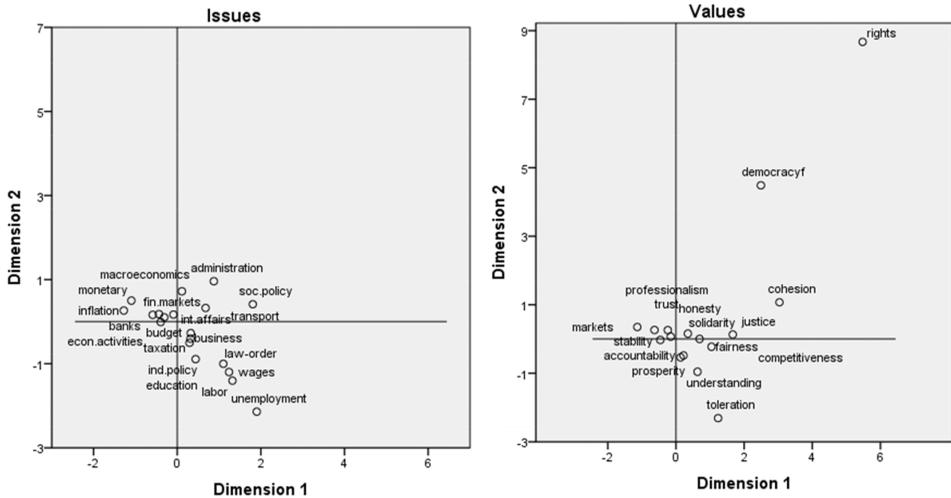
A MCA will help to better understand the inherent structure of national debates about the crisis, because it is geared to identify the main dimensions along which public claims making is structured. We ran MCA for each country separately, because we assumed that public debates will be patterned differently in Greece and Germany. Accordingly, we expect that the relations of proximity and distance between issues, values, and actors will be different in the two countries, and thus also the dimensions or patterns structuring the discourse at large. For both countries, we conducted MCA with a principal component analysis that was directed at optimizing the distances between variables, because we wish to determine the position of the various claims (issues, values, actors) in the discursive space. The MCA calculated for both countries is based on a two-dimensional model; a third dimension did not generate intelligible solutions and did not increase the variance explained by the overall model. The calculations unveil interesting similarities and differences.

The first finding that strikes our attention is the similarity in the dimensions along which MCA places the claims within the discursive space in both countries. In Germany and Greece, the model with two dimensions explains a considerable degree of the variance, and it is notable that both dimensions have a similar contribution: in Germany, the first dimension explains 66.9 percent of the variance, the second one 64 percent; in Greece, the explained variance is 71 percent and 60.7 percent, respectively. Moreover, the dimensions organize the categorical variables in a similar way. On the vertical dimension, the debates are divided into claims that address either legal/political elements (on the top) or economic aspects of the crisis (on the lower end); on the horizontal dimension, the discourse structures along the division between financial aspects (the left side) and labor-related ones (the right side). Figure 1 exhibits this semantic structure by visualizing the centroid positions of the various issues and values addressed in the public claims for both countries. Later on, we will see that these different debates tend to be propagated by different actors.

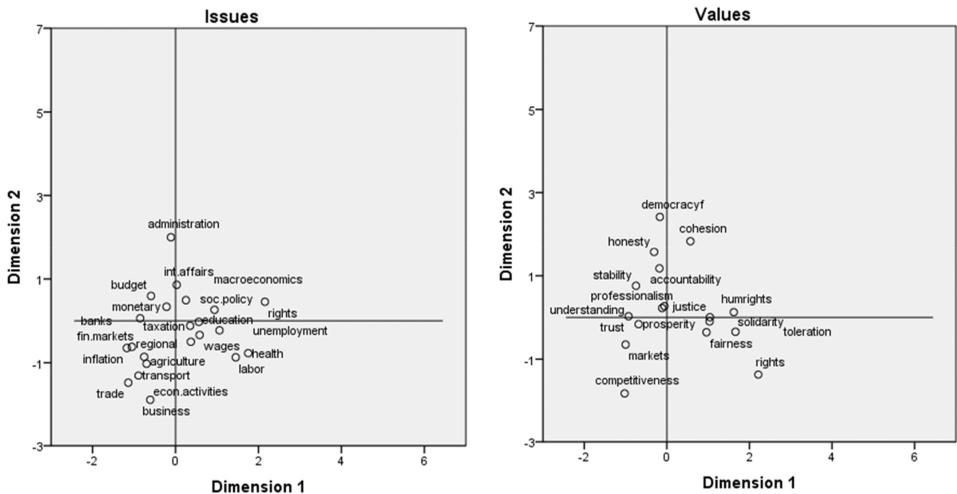
MCA constructs a discursive space that is structured, in broader terms, into four semantic “quadrants:” claims positioned in the top left address the institutional and political architecture of markets (e.g., monetary policies, budgets) and related economic virtues (e.g., professionalism and trust); in the bottom left the focus is on market-internal dynamics (e.g., trade and inflation); on the top right side the topics focus on the institutional and political architecture of labor markets (e.g., civil rights and social policies); and in the bottom right quadrant claims address labor market-internal issues (e.g., wages and unemployment), and work-related values (e.g., fairness and toleration). Even though a number of individual issues and values are placed in different quadrants for Germany and Greece (e.g., competitiveness, business, inflation), it is remarkable that the overall semantic structure of the discourse is very similar between the two countries.

Figure 1.
Issues and Values

Germany

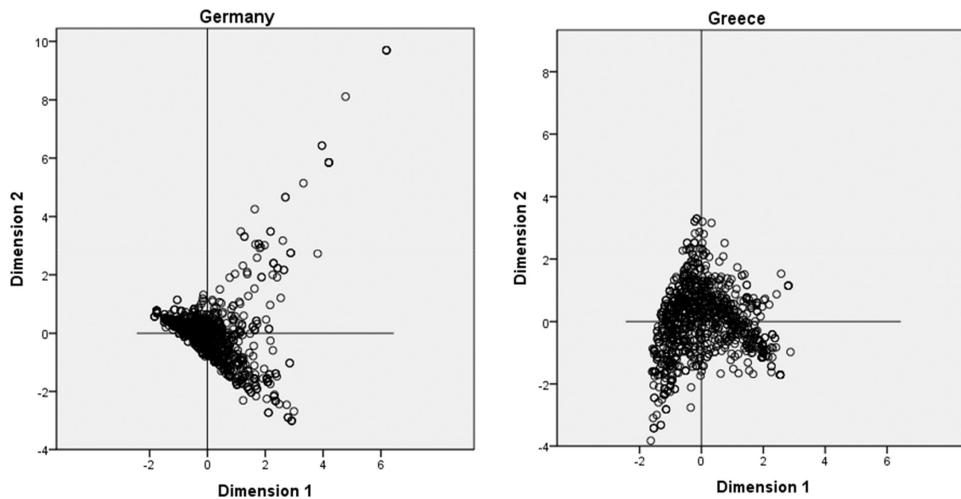


Greece



Differences are linked to two aspects. On one hand, the extreme position of two political values (“civil rights and liberties” and “the good of democracy”) is very notable in the German case. These claims clearly dissociate semantically from the dominant discourse that clusters the various issues and values to a rather dense “cloud.” In Greece, issues and values are more evenly distributed. This points already to a very specific discursive contraposition in the German case. On the other hand, German and Greek discourses differ in the semantic

Figure 2.
Distribution of Claims



accent they put on the common contrapositions. In Germany, labor-related claims in the bottom right quadrant are pivotal, with issues such as “unemployment,” “social policy,” “labor issues,” “wages,” and social values such as “toleration” and “understanding.” They are not only at a maximum distance from financial matters on the top left side (e.g., “inflation” and “monetary policies,” the “smooth functioning of markets,” “trust,” and “stability”), but also most distant from political and institutional matters in the top right quadrant (“government and public administration” and “macroeconomic issues,” “civil rights,” “social cohesion,” “the good of democracy,” and “social justice”). In Greece, labor-related debates in the bottom right (“labor” and “unemployment”) address also “health issues.” Moreover, the position of various issues in the bottom left quadrant (e.g., “trade,” “transport,” “agriculture”) shows that debates are not only concerned about the institutional architecture of markets, but also about the internal structure and dynamism of the Greek economy. Finally, the Greek debates discuss political and institutional matters in a different way. Claims about the political and institutional architecture of markets and labor embrace more clearly than in German debates “the good of democracy,” “social cohesion,” “honesty,” and “accountability.”

The semantic structure of these debates needs to be contextualized with reference to “numbers,” because we have seen in Tables 2 and 3 that German debates tend to privilege economic issues and values, while the Greek discourse addresses more often crisis-related harms and remedial measures. MCA allows us to dig deeper into this observation by exhibiting the distribution of claims within the discursive space. Figure 2 gives an insight into this aspect for both countries. On one hand, it is remarkable that the discourses tend to be highly

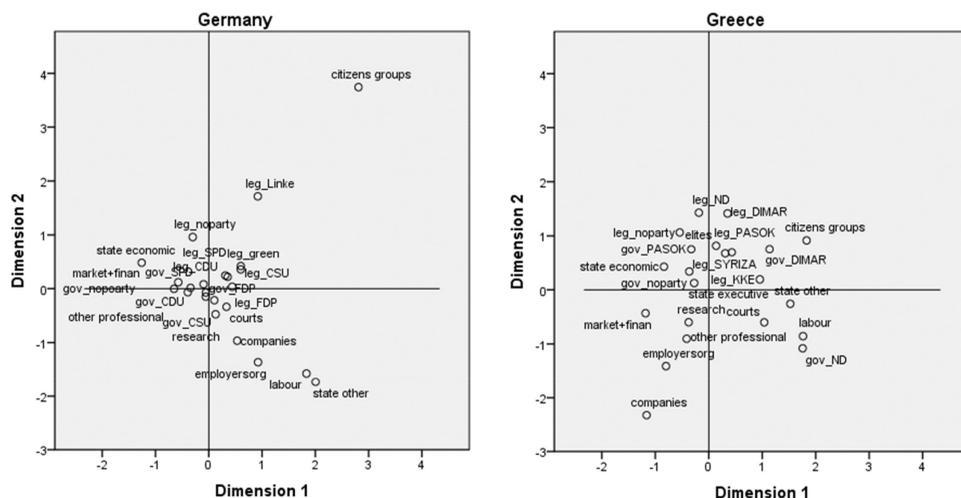
integrated. On the other hand, we see considerable differences between the two countries in the patterns of integration and dispersion. In Germany, the distances between the points are low, and the concentration of claims intense, particularly at the center position of both axes. The debates addressing the institutional architecture of markets (top left) and labor-related issues (bottom right) are close by, even though the cloud tends to thin out while extending into the latter quadrant. The disaggregation of the discourse is much more pronounced when moving from the economic to the political corner point of the debate, where debates center on the political system, democracy, and civil rights. The more we move to this end, the less we find public claims confronting the majoritarian discourse, and the bigger the distances between the claims.

In Greece, the dispersion is less pronounced, and claims tend to group around the central position, even though in a less dense manner. Hence there is a less marked distinction between majoritarian and minoritarian discourses. At the same time, the triangular shape of the discursive “cloud” shows that Greek claims stress more clearly the distances between three more outspoken debates. First, we have a number of claims within the left bottom quadrant that conduct a more opinionated debate about economic issues (i.e., business, trade, and competitiveness). Second, public claims tend to set themselves off in the bottom right quadrant, by addressing social problems (labor, unemployment, health) and values (toleration, civil rights, and solidarity). And third, debates emphasize clearly political and institutional concerns (government and public administration, international affairs, democracy, cohesion, honesty, and accountability).

A final piece needs to be added to this picture: namely the actors involved in claims making. Figure 3 shows that the discourses are clearly patterned by the types of organizations involved. However, in this respect the picture visibly diverges from what we would have assumed. In general terms, we would have expected to find the standard cleavage structure between political orientations and advocacy coalitions: conservatives, liberals, and economic actors on the one side, and social democrats, leftist parties, and labor organizations on the other side. In both countries, the cleavages are different, even though to a varying degree.

In Germany, the discourse seems to be patterned less by ideological cleavages than by actor types and political functions. The first dimension, namely the one contraposing economic and political claims, mirrors a cleavage between a highly formalized and institutionalized policy domain, consisting of the executive, interest groups, and think tanks, and the sphere of critical citizens, particularly leftist elites and anti-austerity oriented protest groups. This dimension is mediated by political parties, be they members of parliament, individual politicians, or representatives of the political parties. Apart from the “Linke,” which is closest to the leftist groups and anti-austerity activists, the discourse of these parties is less political in terms of rights, liberties, and democracy, but closer to political virtues such as “truthfulness,” “honesty,” and “sincerity.”

Figure 3.
Actors



Clearly, public debates are dominated by an economic orthodoxy, which is evident in the strong concentration of public claims around a policy domain that includes state institutions, interest groups, and think tanks. The only differentiation within this prevailing policy domain is the one between state executive actors in the upper left quadrant (governments, state agencies dealing with economic issues), which center on monetary and financial issues, and the interest groups of labor and capital in the bottom right quadrant, which deal with labor market- and work-related issues. This pattern is very surprising, as it gives an interesting twist to German neo-corporatism. In public debates about the crisis, labor-related issues are dealt with by employers and unions as part of “social partnership” and “crisis corporatism” (Urban 2012), while economic and financial policies are being discussed by the state executive, parties in government, and state agencies. The one-sidedness of this political mandate is quite striking: the German administration (and within it, a closed circle; see Hegelich 2010) centers on financial and monetary issues, and it is unconditionally devoted to further the smooth functioning of the markets.

In the Greek case, the agency within public debates about the crisis exhibits interesting similarities and dissimilarities. Compared to the German case, in Greece there are more ideological cleavages. Market-related organizations (companies, employers, research institutions, market, and finance actors) are clearly specialized on the market-related debate about the crisis (bottom left quadrant), while labor organizations devote themselves to the work-related debates (bottom right side), with the assistance of courts and, even by right wing (New Democracy) led administrations possibly influenced by voters’

demands. The debates about the institutional and political architecture of (financial and labor) markets dissociate more strongly between state economic agencies, center governments (PASOK), government and parliamentary actors without party affiliation, the right wing New Democracy on the side of market-driven debates, and citizens groups, leftist parties, and governments (Democratic Left [DIMAR], SYRIZA, Communist Party of Greece (KKE)) on the labor-driven side of the debates. The discourse of these parties is clearly more political compared to the German one, in terms of rights, liberties, and democracy, similarly close to political virtues such as “truthfulness, honesty, and sincerity,” but also centered on accountability, justice, and human rights values.

In contrast to the German case, in Greece citizens’ groups are closer to the core debate and are, therefore, less marginalized. The proximity to various political parties is remarkable. More interestingly, the Greek debates seem to be dividing along a diagonal line that runs from top left to bottom right: political parties are located almost exclusively in the bottom right quadrant, while executive and market actors are addressing more clearly economic and financial issues. Political actors, among them political parties and party-led governments, speak out mostly related to economic and social policies, but they also make claims relating to citizens’ rights, education, and health. This is a new turn to the Greek “state- or disjoint-corporatism” (Aranitou 2012; Lavdas 2005; Zambarloukos 1993), with labor attempting to be independent from the state, while at the same time governmental actors also voicing labor-related claims. Compared to the German case, there is a more balanced spread of public claims, with Greek Coalition Governments (DIMAR, New Democracy, PASOK) not only concentrating on economic and financial issues but also addressing political and social policy ones.

Discussion

Our analyses allow making a number of observations that were in part expected, but in part also surprising. On one side, we detected a number of differences between Greek and German debates that conformed to our expectations. While in Germany public claims were more concerned about monetary issues and economic stability, the emphasis of Greek claims was more often on crisis-related harms and remedial actions. German debates centered more clearly on the institutional and political architecture of markets, while the Greek discourses were more concerned about market-internal issues and problems. And while German debates were concerned more often about competitiveness, the smooth functioning of markets and security and stability, the Greek discourse emphasized more often prosperity, accountability, solidarity, and social justice. These differences will probably be a reflection of the economic and financial crisis, because the Great Recession affected Greece in a much more fundamental way and endangered the domestic economy, labor

market, and welfare state in a more sustained manner than in Germany. In Germany, debates were limited to a discussion about the necessary political and institutional measures to preserve economic stability and competitiveness (cf., Herzog-Stein, Horn, and Stein 2013). Following our assumption, however, the crisis has no direct effects on public discourses. These effects are mediated by policy actors and discourse communities, which promote specific readings, interpretations, and conclusions. In this regard, our data suggests that the differences can be explained by agency. On one side, we have seen that Greek debates are more strongly imprinted by unions and political parties (especially when in view of the frequent elections of this period), which raised their voice more often and thus promoted their agenda more effectively—as seen in the two older, pro-European and centrist major parties, those of the anti-austerity forces on the left, as well as the xenophobic anti-bailout forces on the right (Teperoglou and Tsatsanis 2014). In Germany, it is to be noted that labor-related debates are also strongly shaped by the employers' organizations, and thus tightly linked to an economic agenda. On the other hand, political and ideological cleavages are more present in the Greek debates, when looking at the contraposition of capital and labor, and the divisions between political actors from the right and left. This has implications on public discourses, because these actors promote either a market- or a labor-driven policy agenda. In Germany, these cleavages are supplanted by a “functional” division of labor between social partners addressing labor-related issues and values, and state actors concerned about (financial) markets and related economic virtues.

On the other side, our findings unveil a number of noticeable similarities. In both countries, debates do not only focus on market-internal issues and concerns, but also stress the political and institutional implications of the crisis (“public administration,” “accountability,” “the good of democracy itself,” “civil rights,” “cohesion”). According to these claims, the crisis is more than an economic disturbance requiring field-specific answers. However, these voices are secondary, because national discourses are dominated by an economic and fiscal agenda that marginalizes social issues and political problems. At the same time, state and market actors are prevalent, when compared to civil society organizations and nonorganized citizens. This finding speaks against the assumption of a realignment of political cleavages proposed in our theoretical discussion. The crisis could have politicized and split political elites, it could have mobilized contending groups and claims, and it could have disrupted established discourse communities. Even though the Greek data gives some instances for this trend (e.g., reflected in the position of left or right-wing parties linked to the Coalition Governments from 2011 to 2014), the overall picture of our findings does not corroborate this scenario.

A second set of remarkable similarities resides in the fact that public discourses about the crisis do not disaggregate into disjointed and separate discourse communities. In other analyses of public discourses, MCA has tended to detect separate groups of actors within the discursive space, and these

discourse alliances have no overlaps or associations with regard to their claims (Lahusen and Baumgarten 2010; Sonnett 2010; Zschache 2016). In our case, the analysis has shown that debates about the crisis are marked by a rather pronounced proximity of the various actors and the underlying discourse communities. Consequently, our data seems to support the assumption of a marked de-alignment of public discourses in times of crisis. In Greece, traditional policy communities or advocacy coalitions tend to overlap (e.g., four Coalition Governments), because they address similar issues and values with firm concerns over the economic aspects of the crisis. We see such overlaps particularly when looking at the remarkable proximity between the parliamentary representatives from PASOK, SYRIZA, and KKE. In Germany, the antagonism of discourse communities with their ideological cleavages disappears completely, which is in line with the idea of “crisis corporatism” (Lehndorff 2011; Urban 2012); it is supplanted by a functional division of discursive labor between debates centered on economic governance and a social dialogue. German policy actors do not give up their programmatic preferences, as evidenced by the importance this social dialogue confers to “competitiveness” as a value to be preserved when dealing about labor markets. But it is remarkable that companies and employers join into a debate that puts labor and labor-related policy priorities and virtues at center stage, following an “all-in-one-boat” logic of crisis behavior (Vobruba 1983).

This similarity is remarkable, and requires some explanations, even if they need to be provisional. We propose two readings. On one side, we argue that ideological cleavages do not simply disappear in times of crisis, but are rather attenuated, or tempered within the public domain. Our data suggest that right-wing governments and parties as well as economic actors see the need to address the social implications of the crisis and develop a more “social” agenda (with issues such as unemployment, poverty, solidarity), while leftist groups and unions are forced to address economic issues and market-driven values, because the “economy” is at stake and unavoidably on the agenda. On the other side, we might consider that the public de-alignment of political cleavages is also a reaction to the common European discourse arena. In fact, national debates about the crisis are interrelated, given the fact that German and Greek claims make reference to events and decisions in other countries and at the level of the EU institutions. The similarities could thus be a reflection of inter-related and/or joint agendas and discourses.

Conclusions

Public debates are an important object of analysis when dealing with the economic and financial crisis affecting the EU, especially the Eurozone, since 2008. This crisis has brought considerable hardships and turbulences, but it is agreed in scholarly writing that crises provide also critical junctures or windows of opportunities for the reform or redefinition of public policies (e.g.,

Bermeo and Pontusson 2012; Schmidt 2010). In this regard, it is crucial to understand how a given crisis is addressed and processed within public debates (Coleman 2013; Kiess 2015; Schmidt 2011). Claims made by the various policy actors—such as public administrations, political parties, interest groups, or think tanks—have an influence on the way the crisis, its causes and problem-solving measures, are defined, negotiated, and selected (Fairclough, Cortesse, and Ardizzone 2007).

Our own analysis made use of a dataset of public claims extracted from a sample of German and Greek newspaper articles for the years between 2005 and 2014. It allowed us to deal with public debates about the economic and financial crisis in these two countries; we note nevertheless that the majority of our selected newspapers have a pro-government and pro-Eurozone orientation and, therefore, tend to report on mainstream claims. The analysis of these very dissimilar cases allowed us to unveil differences and similarities that required theoretical interpretation and explanation. In particular, we were interested in showing whether and how public debates are imprinted by the crisis and the pressures it exhibits on the domestic policy domains. According to theoretical considerations, we proposed various scenarios: a widening of country-specific cleavages between competing discourse and policy communities; a realignment of these cleavage structures in the sense of a disruption and reorganization of existing discourse communities; and a mainstreaming or de-alignment of discourse communities and a convergence of debates into a hegemonic discourse.

Our findings do not paint a monochrome picture, and they do not allow refuting fully one scenario while validating another one. However, they provide important indications about the patterns and implications of “crisis discourses.” In the first instance, the crisis did not erode the political cleavages and actor constellations within the domestic policy domains. Greek debates about the crisis still mirror the ideological divisions between left and right political parties, employers, and unions. German debates still reflect the prominent role of the social partners in dealing jointly with labor market issues. Hence our findings do not disprove the reproduction of country-specific cleavage structures, even though it discourages the assumed realignment of policy coalitions or communities. Discourses are dominated also in times of crisis by key policy actors (the state executive, political parties in parliament, employers and unions), and they marginalize civil society organizations and citizens’ groups. Hence the crisis is not at all a window of opportunity that expands the range of groups and claims and disrupts established discourse communities.

Additionally, our data shows that the crisis does not reinforce or enlarge the antagonism of contending policy communities, when speaking about policy issues and ideas. On the contrary, our findings tend to unveil a mainstreaming process that narrows down the range of issues and ideas being discussed, and moves actors and discourse communities closer to each other, even to the extent of provoking overlaps, and a merging discourse domain. While this scenario is far from being imperative, it does leave its prints on the Greek and

German debates. Following Fairclough, Cortesse, and Ardizzone (2007), this would be a sign of increasingly hegemonic structures.

An explanation of this streamlining process would require more analysis. Our findings provide at least some clues for a plausible explanation. On the one hand, we argue that the crisis seems to force competing discourse communities to temper their agendas, either by addressing more proactively social concerns and antidotes (e.g., among right-wing parties and employers) or by engaging more strongly in market-driven debates (e.g., unions, leftist parties). On the other hand, we assume that this finding is also a reflection of joint developments within the EU. The Great Recession has called the Greek and German governments into action, because each one had to find solutions to the economic downturn, the budgetary and fiscal turmoil, and the increase in unemployment rates. However, very soon the recession was defined as a common European crisis that called for joint efforts and policies. The reform of the European Stability Pact with its new instruments (e.g., the European Financial Stability Facility, and the European Stability Mechanism) is to be seen as an attempt to discursively define and master the economic crisis. In this regard, an economic orthodoxy has been propagated by EU institutions and core member states, among them in particular Germany, which puts an emphasis on market integration, competitiveness, and austerity. This orthodoxy has limited the discursive space by privileging specific issues and ideas, and by discouraging others. The fact that German debates are more narrowly patterned along this orthodoxy, thus marginalizing a discursive minority, and the fact that Greek debates exhibit a broader range of claims, might just be a reflection of this European discourse arrangement. In this sense, we suggest that the European-wide debates might have had a significant impact on both countries by mainstreaming public debates, attenuating political cleavages, and limiting the political pluralism of policy issues and ideas.

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in Germany and Greece (2009-13) funded by Greek and German Ministries. See <http://www.ggcrisi.info/>

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Neoliberal Narrative in Times of Economic Crisis: A Political Claims Analysis of the U.K. Press, 2007-14

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Using political claims analysis on 1,000 articles from five national newspapers (Daily Mail, The Sun, The Times, The Guardian, and Daily Mirror), this article demonstrates that press coverage of the financial crisis, recession, and austerity in the United Kingdom between 2007-14 drew heavily on a neoliberal discourse. Political, market, and civil society actors discussed the impact of hard times on people using a reductionist neoliberal narrative, framing people as “economic actors” and consistently underplaying any social or political traits. By examining communicative, rather than coordinative, discourse this research expands the focus of previous studies which have examined the embeddedness of ideology in society, and highlights potential links to studies of citizen participation and mobilization.

Keywords: Political Claims Analysis, Financial Crisis, Neo-Liberalism, Newspaper Coverage, Media, Hard Times, Neoliberal Narrative, Communicative Discourse, Great Britain, U.K., United Kingdom, Press Coverage, U.K. Press, Recession, Austerity Policies, Ideology and Society, Citizen Participation, Mobilization, Great Recession, Economic Crisis, Economic Actors.

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- LSE British Politics and Policy Blog. 2016. "Words Matter: Deconstructing 'Welfare Dependency' in the UK – Paul Michael Garrett." <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/%EF%BB%BFwords-matter-deconstructing-welfare-dependency-in-the-uk/>

Usando un análisis de discurso político sobre 1,000 artículos de cinco periódicos nacionales (Daily Mail, The Sun, The Times, The Guardian, y Daily Mirror), este artículo demuestra que la cobertura de la prensa sobre la crisis financiera, recesión y medidas de austeridad en el Reino Unido entre 2007-2014 se basan significativamente en un discurso neoliberal. Actores políticos, del mercado y la sociedad civil, han discutido el impacto de tiempos difíciles en la población general usando una narrativa neoliberal reduccionista, concibiendo a las personas como "actores económicos" y subestimando de manera consistente cualquier característica social o política. Al examinar el discurso comunicativo, en lugar de coordinativo, este estudio expande el enfoque de literatura previa que ha analizado los fundamentos ideológicos en la sociedad, y destaca relaciones potenciales con estudios sobre participación y movilización ciudadana.

By analyzing media coverage of the hard economic times affecting the United Kingdom from 2007-14, this article examines how neoliberal ideology is embedded in the way we make sense of crisis. This time frame covers the financial crisis, recession, and the subsequent introduction of austerity measures. Throughout this time quotations in the press principally utilized a neoliberal discourse, presenting these events as happening not to "people" but to "economic actors" who were understood primarily in relation to markets.

This article demonstrates that this neoliberal outlook permeated the discussion and presentation of economic crisis in the U.K. media, and can be attributed to actors across the political, economic, and civil society spheres. As human beings are not understood in terms of their human qualities as

“people” but rather solely in relation to their role in the market—whether as consumers or producers—this discourse, we argue, dehumanized the crisis and constructed it as an external problem that could not be solved politically. Individuals were portrayed as economic agents of the market, stripped of any political or social traits. This diminished any relatable human element from the narrative, leaving the discussion dry and technical, and narrowing any suggested solutions to the crisis to the field of macroeconomics.

This analysis extends the focus of previous studies that have tended to concentrate on the discourse used between policy elites (Cahill 2011, 486). Here, we examine the discourse used between policy elites and the public. This moves the analysis beyond a narrow focus on elite speeches and policy documentation, to the more resonant day-to-day narratives built up by the media.

In 2010 and 2011, Mervyn King, then-Governor of the Bank of England, made very similar comments to the Trade Union Congress and the Treasury Select Committee asking, in essence, why Brits were not angrier given the dire and worsening economic situation? (see Ellis 2010; The Sun 2011). Here we argue that part of the answer lies in the neoliberal narrative widespread in society and reflected in media coverage. If economic crisis is reified as a problem outside of human control—almost as a natural disaster—and human beings the victims of this calamity as dehumanized consumers, it is harder for us to relate to abstracted problems, and therefore for emotions such as anger to emerge through solidarity and compassion.

Therefore, this discursive dominance of neoliberalism is important for at least two reasons. First, it is so prevailing that it arguably skews the “information environment” (Jerit, Barabas, and Bolsen 2006) available to citizens and crowds out alternative narratives and understandings of the events that have impacted upon the United Kingdom in recent times. Second, this environment limits the emotional and empathetic resonance of news coverage during this time. Brown (2015, 208) calls these ideas of solidarity and empathy the “register of democracy,” and argues that when this is lost and crowded out by market values, as we suggest in this analysis, what disappears is the “capacity to limit, this platform of critique, and this source of radical democratic inspiration and aspiration.”

The present study analyzes data from a random sample of 1,000 political claims reported across five U.K. newspapers from the start of 2007 through to September 2014. The articles were a random sample from a mix of broadsheets and tabloids: *Daily Mail* ($n = 202$), *The Sun* ($n = 203$), *The Times* ($n = 201$), *The Guardian* ($n = 202$), and *Daily Mirror* ($n = 204$).

The article is structured as follows. The literature review discusses the theory behind the building and transmitting of discourse in the media by political actors before outlining what the literature has defined as the tenets of neoliberal ideology. The following methods and data section outlines our use of political claims analysis and introduces the unique dataset utilized by this study, and the coding of a neoliberal claim. The following results and findings section is then split into two. The initial part maps out the claims landscape between 2007 and 2014 and examines the actors and issues being reported. The

second part then focuses specifically on claims concerning “people,” noting how a neoliberal framing dominated such news coverage. We conclude with a discussion of the wider implications of the results of our study.

Ideology and Discourse in the Media

In his analysis on the embeddedness of neoliberal ideology, Cahill (2011, 486) argues that neoliberalism has become the “dominant framework through which social and economic policies are made across the capitalist world.” In the United Kingdom, the pervasive effects of the ideology have been identified in many policy developments, including labor market management (Whitworth and Carter 2014), social security provision (Kiess *et al.* 2015), and health (Ferlie, Mcgovern, and FitzGerald 2012). Indeed, an important feature of the world postfinancial crisis has been the resilience, and indeed resurgence, of the neoliberal paradigm (Cahill 2011; Cerny 2014; Mirowski 2013; Peck, Theodore, and Brenner 2009).

There are numerous ways in which these neoliberal developments are theorized to have come about, including regulatory experimentation, inter-jurisdictional policy transfer, and the formation of transnational rule-regimes (Brenner, Peck, and Theodore 2010a). Such ideas focus in particular on developments in political economy, and are less likely to examine just how it might be that neoliberal paradigms become embedded in wider society. Cahill (2011, 486-7) makes strides to address this issue by suggesting that neoliberalism has become normalized and embedded societally in (at least) three ways: *through institutions*, *through class relations*, and *discursively*. The first point is that, contrary to many interpretations, neoliberalism does not circumnavigate the state but instead operates *through* it, particularly in terms of economic regulation. The second point is that the transformation of class occurs through the boosting of the power of capital, to the detriment of labor and the working class. However it is the third point, the discursive mechanism, which we wish to focus upon in this article.

Cahill (2011, 486) argues that, discursively, neoliberalism is the “political common sense” among elite policy makers, and so, to varying degrees, there has been “ideological and policy convergence around a neoliberal core among both conservative and social democratic parties.” This is an uneven process, and so there are differences in strategy and elements of discourse between the types of party; however, there is ultimately a shared frame of reference.

In general, this suggestion from Cahill (2011) has a focus on “coordinative discourse,” that is, the narrative utilized *among* elite policy actors. In this research we expand this idea to look at “communicative discourse”; that is, the narrative between political actors and the *public* (see Schmidt 2008). Such a focus is key to understanding in more detail the societal embeddedness of neoliberalism.

When it comes to this communication between political elite and the public, the crucial conduit for information is provided by the mass media. For the

majority of citizens, the mass media are the main source of information regarding what is going on in the wider world. Studies on the effect of the mass media have demonstrated its ability to inform and influence the attitudes of citizens regarding, for instance, their opinions toward politicians (Bartels 1993; Dalton, Beck, and Huckfeldt 1998; Stevens and Karp 2012) or attitudes toward immigrants (Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart 2009). Indeed, when it comes to immigration, the media has been shown to have an effect above and beyond real-world developments, for instance by boosting the visibility of minority groups, leading to much higher estimates of rates of immigration compared to reality (Sides and Citrin 2007; van Klingeren *et al.* 2015).

Furthermore, Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart (2009, 518) point out the general importance of the *information environment*, which suggests that people can be affected by the news through interpersonal communication without necessarily being directly exposed to it. Citizens do not need to directly read or watch the news to be influenced by it. We should therefore take seriously messages from political actors as reported in the media. As Moss and O'Loughlin (2008, 709) note:

Political representatives frequently engage in practices of representing issues or problems requiring collective action; of representing 'the public' and other identity groups; and indeed of representing the political system within which they work.

These claims in the media thus tell us an important story, a particular representation of what is going on. It is these claims that form the unit of analysis in our study. Of further importance when examining the communicative discourse of mass media, is that those actors making claims to be read by the public are not always "political representatives" in the narrow understanding of the term, that is, Members of Parliament. For instance, the Governor of the Bank of England made frequent claims in the media concerning these issues; these claims played a part in building up a narrative of the unfolding events. The same can be said for Trade Union leaders, bosses of financial institutions, directors of charities, and so on. In this context, to only examine claims made by politicians overlooks a large swathe of the narrative that was presented to the British public.

Accordingly, these claims are not presented in isolation, but can be understood as the building blocks of a much larger discourse. And as van Dijk (1995, 2006) argues, discourse plays a prominent role in the way that ideological propositions are acquired, confirmed, changed, and perpetuated. The media then can easily be understood to play an important role in informing people when it comes to their ideology. It can then be seen as a valid area to examine for developing our understanding of the embeddedness of neoliberal ideals across society more widely.

Furthermore, "ideologies, just like other social representations, may have a standard schematic organization, consisting of a limited number of fixed

categories” (van Dijk 1995, 139). These schemas need not necessarily be detailed or complex systems. Indeed, regardless of whether the schema itself is complex, in terms of the level of detail provided by everyday newspaper articles, any ideology is unlikely to be presented in any great detail. Instead, actors can be expected to draw on an existing framework of often highly simplified “tropes” to make their claims.

An example of this can be seen in the U.K. media’s popularization of the moniker “Red Ed” for the previous Labour Party leader Ed Miliband from 2010 onward. In this one phrase the papers were trying to encapsulate Ed Miliband’s supposed desire for interventionist and redistributive policies (particularly in the housing and energy markets), a reference to the “red scare” during the time of the Soviet Union, as well as serving as a reminder that his late father was a Marxist scholar (Gaber 2014).

Taken together, the ideas in the previous discussion demonstrate that we can examine the U.K. media for signs of a neoliberal discourse, to assess whether there is evidence of societal embeddedness of a neoliberal ideology as detailed in Cahill (2011). Before we undertake this analysis, we first need to outline an expectation of what a neoliberal framing of events would look like.

Tenets of Neoliberal Discourse

Neoliberalism has been termed a *rascal* concept: “promiscuously pervasive, yet inconsistently defined, empirically imprecise and frequently contested” (Brenner, Peck, and Theodore 2010b, 182). Peck, Theodore, and Brenner (2009, 96-7) briefly outline the history of neoliberalism: as a term distinct from classic liberalism it can be traced back to the 1920s; as a guiding ideology to implementing government policy it gained traction in the 1970s; in public discourse it had a boost during Reagan and Thatcher’s time in office but properly took off after 2000; and, in academic discourse “explicit deployment of neoliberalism is a strikingly recent phenomenon.”

Accordingly, while neoliberalism is not a monolithic, singular idea, it is an Anglo-American-centric ideology and regardless of what particular flavor of neoliberalism might be up for discussion, there is arguably a common principle that can be identified across them: “the superiority of individualized, market-based competition over other modes of organization” (Mudge 2008, 706).

In a similar manner, Schram and others (2010, 742) suggest that “neoliberal ideology emphasizes the constructive and intentional application of market principles to diverse social relations that extend beyond economic markets.” This leads to a shift away from the notion of democratic citizens toward one of market actors who occupy “individualistic market roles of consumer, worker, and paying customer,” a space which is “synonymous with ‘taxpayers’ who have a contractual right to expect efficient and effective institutional actions that produce a good return on their investment” (742).

Wendy Brown (2006, 694) argues that “neoliberalism casts the political and social spheres both as appropriately dominated by market concerns and as themselves organized by market rationality,” meaning that the state must “promulgate a political culture that figures citizens exhaustively as rational economic actors in every sphere of life.” Elsewhere, Brown (2015, 35) sees neoliberalism as eroding democratic principles, in particular when the principles of political life are transformed into an “economic idiom.” When it comes to the power of narrative, Brown (2015, 208) makes a strong point about the importance of language:

The point is simply that as long as it operated in a different lexical and semiotic register from capital, liberal democratic principles and expectations could be mobilized to limit capitalist productions of value and market distributions; they could be a platform for critiques of those values and distributions, and they could gestate more radical democratic aspirations. When this other register is lost, when market values become the only values, when liberal democracy is fully transformed into market democracy, what disappears is this capacity to limit, this platform of critique, and this source of radical democratic inspiration and aspiration.

What a neoliberal narrative does, then, is cast people predominantly as *agents of the market*, with a focus on their productivity in the economy, stripping away their social or political needs (unless these needs can be reconceptualized to align with the economy). The following section discusses how this research examines this narrative in the U.K. media using political claims analysis on 1,000 articles across five national newspapers.

Data and Methods

In this study political claims analysis is used to outline the extent to which the information environment is informed by a neoliberal narrative. Political claims analysis integrates the quantitative rigor of *protest event analysis* with the constructivist framing perspective of *political discourse analysis* (see Koopmans and Statham 1999). It draws from sociolinguistics to examine elements of political actors’ speech and statements, including but not limited to their setting, access to the platform from where they are speaking, communicative acts and their social meanings, and the “microsemantics” of what is said (see van Dijk 1993). The analysis looks not only at the statements made, but also the substantive impact they might have “in the real world,” making it a method particularly well-suited to examining claims in the media (see for instance Giugni and Passy 2004; Giugni *et al.* 2005; Koopmans 2004; Lodge and Wegrich 2011).

An important precursor to this study is by Lodge and Wegrich (2011), who carried out political claims analysis of U.K., U.S., and German financial

newspapers, focusing on financial regulation. They demonstrate that the period from 2006 to 2011 was dominated by a “hierarchical” frame of reference which drew on ideas of promoting stronger regulations as a response to crisis. However, this dominating frame decreases in popularity toward the end of 2011. In the United Kingdom, specifically, they argue that regulation did not form part of the 2010 general election campaign, and priorities shifted to the overall state of public finances, the future of public services, and social and labor policies (Lodge and Wegrich 2011). Straight after the election, the second-most utilized frame of reference was that of “individualism,” which draws on discourse such as “regulation is bad for investment/recovery,” “markets are superior to rules,” and “consumer protection is bad” (Lodge and Wegrich 2011, 728). In their short research symposium, the authors do not draw out the implications of this finding. However, it is arguable that this pattern is very much expected with the formation in May 2010 of a governing coalition between the right-wing Conservative Party and Liberal Democratic party taking over from the ousted (traditionally center-left) Labour Party. Indeed, this hints at policy development drawing heavily on neoliberal discourse.

In our analysis, the data come from a systematic content analysis of newspapers in the U.K. press between 2007 and 2014. Both quality newspapers and more tabloid-oriented newspapers are included, chosen to represent the political spectrum of reporting in the United Kingdom: *Daily Mail*, *The Sun*, *The Times*, *The Guardian*, and *Daily Mirror*. While it is well-known that print media is in decline in the United Kingdom, it remains an important transmitter of political claims. Taking the last month of study, September 2014, the five newspapers had a combined daily circulation of 5.2 million copies (Guardian Media 2014). These articles are in the most part also replicated online. As they are behind an internet paywall, figures are not available for *The Sun* and *The Times*, but in August 2014 the remaining three papers had over 19 million unique daily browsers between them (driven in a large part by the popularity of the *MailOnline*). Taking the idea of an “information environment” we can argue that newspapers form an important source of political information in the United Kingdom, and an important place to examine for evidence of the discursive embeddedness of neoliberalism.

Articles containing any of the three words “crisis,” “recession,” or “austerity” (in reference to the current economic crisis) were searched for and then randomly selected and analyzed until 200 claims were coded from each newspaper. Editorials and opinion pieces were excluded, and therefore the focus is purposely restricted to the narrative presented in the news itself.

After initially mapping out the media claims landscape, a second round of coding was undertaken on all the claims which had “people” (broadly defined) as the object of the claim, to examine if the claim utilized a neoliberal framing. This might include “families,” “the public,” “workers,” and “Brits,” but would not include companies, sectors of the economy, banks, or political parties, for instance (the reason for this is discussed in further detail later).

To identify a neoliberal claim we draw on the literature review to argue that to be considered part of this discourse the claim must principally or explicitly refer to the object (in this case, “people”) in terms of its value to the economy or market. This casts the people under discussion firmly as economic actors, rather than as social or political actors, and forms the basis of the “standard schematic organization” that neoliberal claims will utilize. If that is the case, the claim is coded as 1, if otherwise, it is coded as 0.

A couple of examples here demonstrate the coding process in more detail. A political claim which was coded as neoliberal in nature (1) is provided in this extract from an article (Chapman 2014) which discussed the impact of the crisis and recession on middle class families:

Emran Mian, director of the Social Market Foundation, said: ‘Families in the middle have adapted to evade the squeeze. The super-consumers among them have beaten the market, managing their costs so that they rise by less than inflation.’

Here, it is clear that what matters are the individual choices and responsibility (made by “super-consumers”) regarding financial and economic decisions. The suggestion is that for a middle-class family to fall foul of economic hardship, is to not be acting correctly—the market can be “beaten.”

In comparison, an example of a nonneoliberal (0) political claim comes from an article (Butler, Taylor, and Ball 2013), which discussed the impact of multiple welfare cuts caused by austerity policies:

Claudia Wood, deputy director of Demos, said households hit by multiple welfare cuts were more likely to get into debt, become reliant on charities for crisis help and face social isolation and mental illness.

Here, the claim provides a far more rounded picture on the multiple possible outcomes of being affected by hard economic times, which draws on related social and health issues, rather than primarily focusing on just economic ones.

Findings

Table 1 outlines which actors were most commonly reported as making claims about the financial crisis, austerity, or recession. The government of the day accounted for 16.4 percent of claims in the sample, making them the most commonly cited actor, followed closely by politicians and political parties (15.2 percent). Taken together, the four political actors—the two mentioned, plus Parliament and state agencies—accounted for 43 percent of claims. The next largest group of actors consists of market-based actors such as banks and financial institutions (9.9 percent), private companies (12.9 percent), and professional organizations (10.1 percent), and they account for a third of claims in

Table 1. Claims in the U.K. Media 2007-14, by Actor (%)

Actor Making Claim	% of Total Claims
Government	16.4
Parliament	2.0
Politicians and political parties	15.2
State agencies	8.9
Banks and financial institutions	9.9
Private companies	12.9
Professional organizations	10.1
Unions	7.8
Civil society groups	4.7
Think-tanks	8.4
Other	3.7
Total number of claims	989

total. Finally, civil society actors account for the remaining quarter of claims overall. In this group, think-tanks lead the way (8.4 percent), closely followed by unions (7.8 percent). Third-sector civil society groups such as charities, voluntary support networks, and housing associations account for only 4.7 percent of all claims.

These results demonstrate a clear hierarchy in terms of media coverage, with political actors leading the way, market actors following, and then civil society actors lagging behind. In particular, these civil society actors have quite limited coverage, considering the scale of the crisis and subsequent impact of austerity measures across society.

Much of the following discussion draws on these three broad groupings of actors—political, market, and civil society—categories used in varying configurations across other studies using political claims analysis (Hutter 2014; Koopmans and Pfetsch 2006) as well as network governance (Klijn and Skelcher 2007, 587). Next, the results from the political establishment are examined in more depth. The claims break down in an expected pattern when it comes to political parties: 43 percent came from the Labour Party, 42 percent from the Conservative Party, and 12 percent from the Liberal Democrats (at the time the third-largest party, and part of the governing coalition from 2010). This leaves only 3 percent of claims from all other parties. This may initially seem inaccurate considering the increasing media coverage of smaller parties over this period, in particular the U.K. Independence Party (UKIP) and the Scottish National Party (SNP). However, the UKIP narrative is one focused very specifically on immigration and the EU and for the SNP has arguably attracted much less attention from major newspapers. They gained much more exposure in the run up to the Scottish independence referendum in September 2014 and the May 2015 general election, both events falling outside of the dates covered by this analysis.

Figure 1.
Political Party Claims by Incumbent Government N = 332

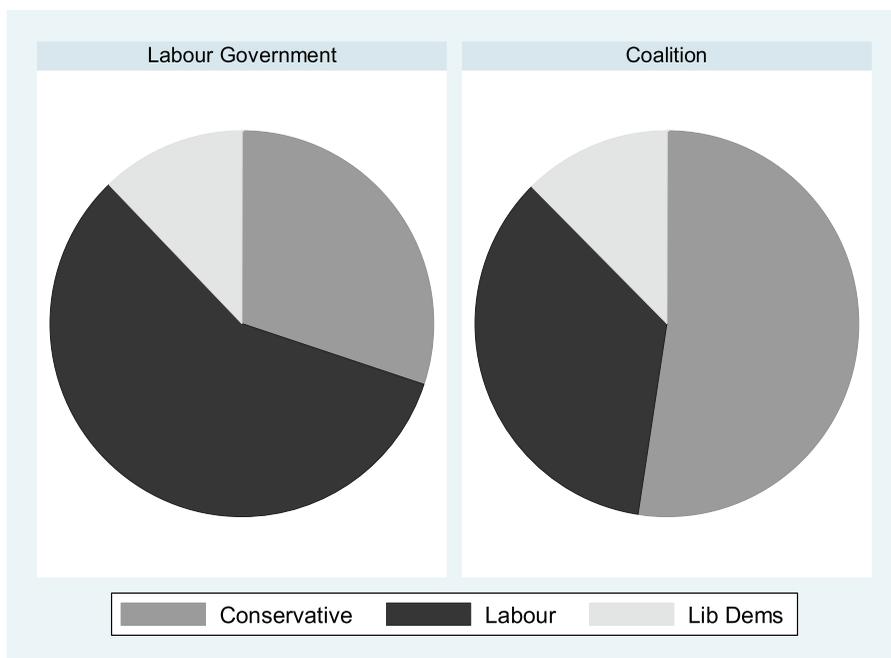


Figure 1 shows claims made by political parties during the Labour Government and the Coalition Government.

There is a clear shift in focus determined by which party is in government. Actors from the Labour Party accounted for 58 percent of claims by political actors during their time in government, dropping to 35 percent in opposition. For the Conservative Party, the pattern is reversed but of roughly the same magnitude: 31 percent of claims were accounted to them during opposition, compared to 52 percent in government. Interestingly, the Liberal Democratic percentage did not change when they became a minority party in the coalition. This suggests they were either doing quite well originally in getting their views reported while in opposition, or they did badly while in government. Either way, it suggests a problem for the party during their time in power.

Widening the focus from only the political establishment, we can examine what topics political, market and civil society actors were discussing, with the results presented in Table 2.

By far the most popular issue concerned macroeconomics, such as deficit reduction, interest rate cuts, inflation, or taxation. These topics covered 65.5 percent of all issues raised. The second most popular issue concerned the banking and financial systems. Together, topics within these two issue groups made up 82 percent of what actors were discussing. The strongest difference between

Table 2. Issue Topic by Actor Type (%)

	Political	Market	Civil Society	Overall
Macroeconomics	69.1	65.0	59.2	65.5
Banking/finance	15.2	21.5	9.7	16.2
Employment	2.1	2.2	6.8	3.2
Government	1.9	—	2.4	1.4
Educational	—	.6	1.9	.6
Other	11.7	10.7	19.9	13.1
Total number of claims	420	326	206	952

actor types can be found with the civil society actors, who were generally more likely to emphasize employment and other subjects, and less likely to focus on macroeconomics and banking.

In one sense, of course, this is not a surprising result as the events under discussion were caused by a credit crunch. However, during the following recession and austerity drive it is surprising just how absent social policy issues were in relation to this topic; issues of health, particularly mental health, community cohesion, social well-being, and the like do not feature much at all in the coverage.

After the macroeconomic categories, the frequency of issue coverage falls away considerably. In the United Kingdom, large-scale unemployment was warned about, but did not materialize at the levels expected, and it was not until later in the cycle that zero-hour contracts made it onto the agenda. Considering the crisis stemmed from a subprime mortgage market, there appears to be a gap here in the narrative when it comes to housing issues.

The “other” category is a very mixed one containing lots of different topics that receive only scant mention in regard to the financial crisis, recession, and austerity. For instance, as an issue, racial discrimination only comes up twice (0.21 percent of claims), as does protecting animal and plant life, renewable energy, or financing the health service. Some topics with slightly more prevalence included gender and sexual discrimination and riots and crime, but these still accounted for less than 1 percent each.

Finally for this section, Table 3 presents a breakdown of the objects of the political claim; this is the group affected by whatever it is the actor is discussing in relation to the hard times in the United Kingdom.

The main object of the claims was “economic markets.” This may seem to overlap with companies or organizations, but in fact it generally did not. The habit of actors was to talk very broadly about “the economy”—or discuss certain sectors within it, such as construction, retail, or finance—as being an “object” that would be affected by changes in circumstances. Such an approach effectively depopulates these “places” of their human components and presents them as something “out there” that is stalling, struggling, growing, or recovering.

It is for this reason that only claims which specifically have “people” as the object—often families, but sometimes individuals or specific groups or simply

Table 3. Object of Claim (%)

Object of Claim	% of Total Claims
Political players	9.6
State agencies	2.1
Banks and financial institutions	9.5
Private companies	4.6
Professional organizations	3.4
Unions	.5
Civil society groups	.5
“People”	29.1
Economic markets	38.7
Other	2.0
Total number of claims	952

the general population—were coded for signs of neoliberal discourse. This was done to obtain a better sense of how the information environment presented the impact of hard times on the U.K. public themselves in the claims most relatable to them. Indeed, it is clear that even though the dominant issues are macroeconomic, the reporting still relates to people 29 percent of the time. The following section focuses on this subset of claims in particular.

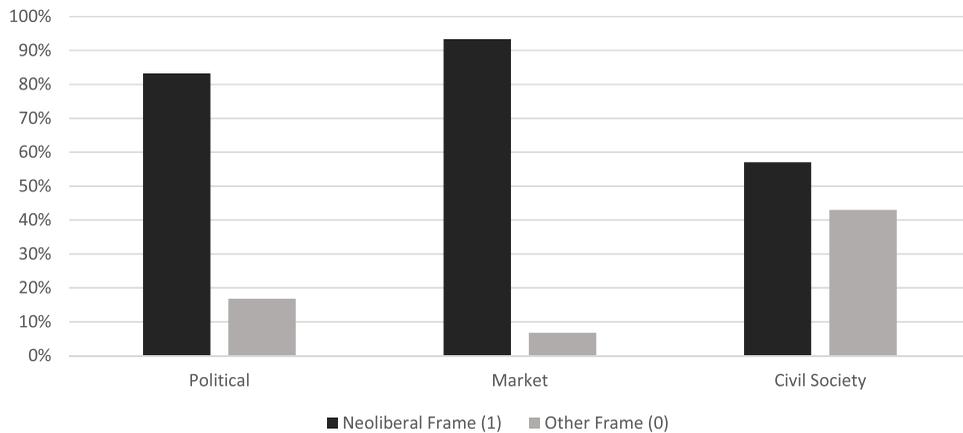
The Neoliberal Narrative

The sample contained 276 claims which identified “people” as the primary object being discussed in relation to the financial crisis, recession, and austerity. When these claims are coded for the use of neoliberal discourse, a clear pattern emerges: 78 percent of claims utilized the neoliberal narrative in some way. Figure 2 shows the percentages by type of actor.

It is clear that, in comparison to civil society actors, political and market actors are considerably more likely to utilize neoliberal framing in their political claims.¹ Indeed, these actors use such a narrative between 80 percent and 90 percent of the time. Civil society actors are using such a framing around 57 percent of the time. While this is a large difference, it still shows that a majority of the time when civil society actors are making political claims in the media, they are still using the same ideological reference points as the political and market actors, in these political claims. More specifically, the point being made by the actor describes people primarily in terms of their economic value, such as their spending power, unemployment, earnings, debt, or productivity.

¹ Results from a simple logistic regression model demonstrate that the odds of a civil society actor using neoliberal framing are significantly lower compared to a political actor (odds ratio [OR] = .3, $p < .001$) and considerably higher for a market actor, again compared to a political actor (OR = 2.8, $p = .039$).

Figure 2.
Neoliberal Claims by Actor



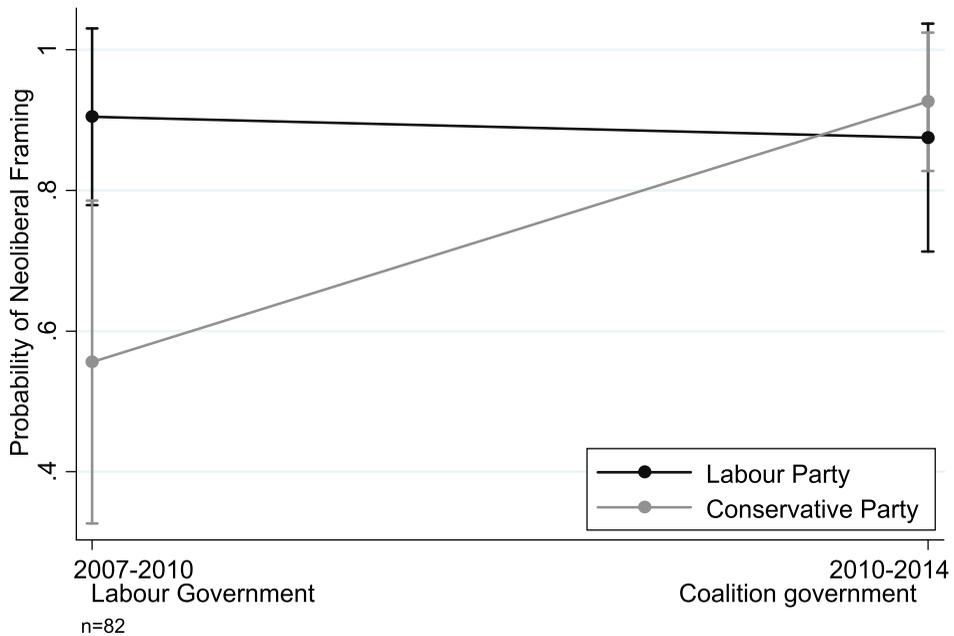
That the impact of these kinds of issues may have social or political effects such as stress, family breakdown, corrosion of well-being, disenfranchisement, disengagement, apathy (or indeed heightened political mobilization), is hinted at only occasionally, or sometimes appears to be assumed, but it is very rarely mentioned explicitly. Such impacts are not the core concern most of the time.

We can examine in more detail how the framing of neoliberal events played out across claims from the major political parties. It is challenging to disentangle the impact of the election result from the changing patterns of narrative regarding the impact of crisis and even more so the governance of the recession and introduction of austerity measures. Accordingly, this analysis uses the natural split provided in the data in the May 2010 general election, producing two time periods; one under a Labour Government, the other under the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition. Due to small numbers of Liberal Democrat claims, we focus here only on the two largest parties. Even when focusing on the larger parties, it is still important to consider this is a small sample and the results are predominantly illustrative. However, the results are intuitive.

Figure 3 graphs the predictive probabilities of framing a political claim in a neoliberal way, using results from a simple logistic regression model with the two parties as independent variables, interacted with the two time periods (Labour Government and Coalition Government). Full model specification and results are available in the Appendix (see Table A1).

The results show a clear shift in claim framing by the Conservative Party. Between 2007 and 2010, while in opposition, less than six out of ten claims were neoliberal. During their time in power, in the coalition between 2010 and 2014, this increased considerably to nine out of ten claims. The model results show that, when talking about people and hard times, the Conservative Party in power were significantly more likely to draw on a neoliberal discourse

Figure 3.
Probability of Neoliberal Framing by Political Party



compared to when they were in opposition (OR = 26.7, $p < .05$). It is arguable that while in opposition the party drew strategically on more emotive language (such as Cameron’s “Broken Britain” and then his “Big Society”) as a way of heightening their criticism of government. However, this changed when they were in power; once in office and pursuing their austerity agenda, the language utilized became almost constantly neoliberal and market-orientated in nature.

In terms of strategies of political rhetoric, we might expect this shift to occur in reverse for the Labour Party over this time period as they went from being in government (up until 2010) to being in opposition. However, the data show this was not the case. Instead, from 2010 onward the Labour Party was just as likely to utilize a neoliberal narrative in their political claims making as were the Conservative Party (OR = .47, $p = .540$).² This description of events fits critiques from some commentators that—despite having a leader nicknamed “Red Ed”—the Labour Party was unable to project an alternative message in opposition and found itself tagged as “Tory-Lite” (Corbett 2015). This finding is in line with research showing that New Labour effectively embraced the neoliberal paradigm and was even more successful than Thatcher in establishing its principles in British society (Grasso *et al.* forthcoming).

² This OR is calculated from the same model as run in Table A1, but with the reference categories switched for comparison.

Figure 4.
Probability of Neoliberal Framing by Actor Type

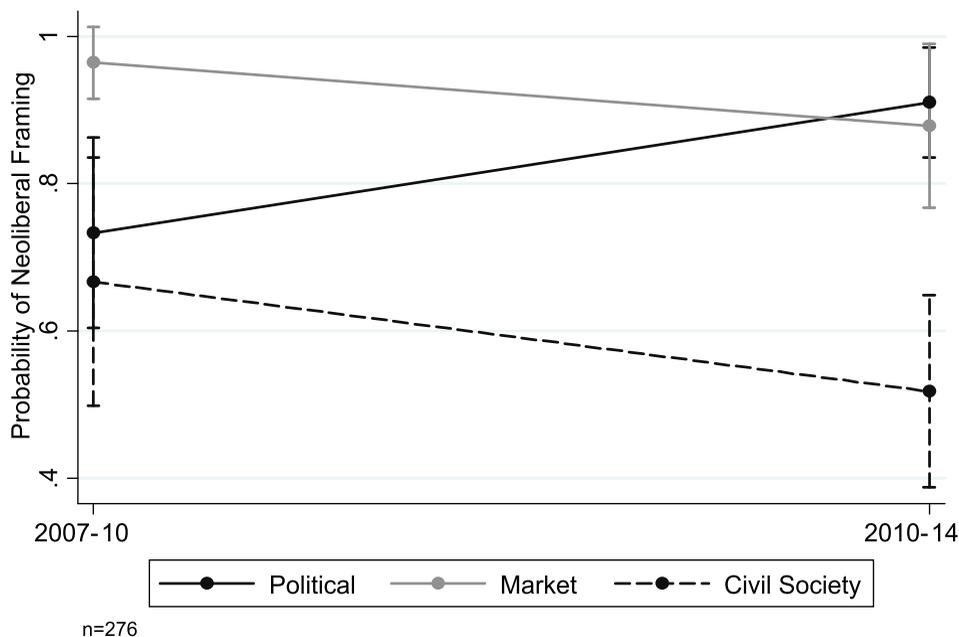


Figure 4 combines all the claims from political actors and examines their predictive probabilities alongside the market actors and the civil society actors, again employing a simple logistic regression using the actor type as an independent variable, interacted with the two time periods (full results are in the Appendix, see Table A2). Again, we should be cautious about the small sample, however, the pattern is once more intuitive.

The results show how during Labour's term in office, when the financial crisis first broke and was followed by the recession, market actors were significantly more likely to frame the impact these events would have on people in a market-focused way, with almost every claim in the media using such framing. This is not an unexpected result. At this time political actors and civil society actors were less likely to use such a framing (around 70 percent of the time), but as likely as each other to use it. During the Coalition Government however, the picture shifts. Political actors increased their usage of such claims (OR = 3.7, $p < .05$), however, civil society diverged, with much lower odds in comparison (OR = 0.4, $p < .05$).

The implications of this finding are important. During the coalition and the implementation of austerity measures, if a claim was made in the press discussing the impact such difficult times were having on people in the United

Kingdom, these results suggest that, if it was taken out of context, it could be difficult to determine if it came from an economist in an auditing company or from a politician. This result suggests that both actor types have the same likelihood of using a market-based, reductionist language to refer to people, presenting them in the first instance as economic units, who need to be spending more, consuming more, who need better access to credit, or who need to be employed (or work harder and more productively if they are). Not only did market actors and political actors have the same likelihood of using such framing, but they also used it the vast majority of the time.

Finally, of those claims made by political or market actors which utilized a neoliberal framing, none were being used to criticize a neoliberal approach in any way. Interestingly, out of the entire sample (not just those claims focusing on “people”), only one article reported a claim by an actor specifically using the term “neoliberalism” and this *was* to provide a direct critique; the term was used by a Trade Union leader during the Labour Party conference in October 2012, as reported on by *The Guardian* (Mulholland 2012). Indeed, the Trade Union leader used the term to critique the governing coalition, but *also* the previous New Labour Government.

In other words, direct use of the term “neoliberalism” is not at all a frequent part of political parlance when it comes to the U.K. information environment; however, media reports are dominated by issue framing that is neoliberal in nature.³ This is an important finding of our study showing the normalization and embeddedness of neoliberalism.

Conclusions

The analysis presented in this article mapped out the political claims landscape in the United Kingdom from 2007-14, showing that the neoliberal concerns of macroeconomic and financial issues were the main topics of discussion by a considerable margin and that the prominent actors discussing these issues were political and market actors. Civil society actors struggled to be heard in the debate, and social policy issues barely featured. Yet more than one in four claims had as their object not neoliberal actors in the sense of policy makers, banks, or companies, but instead were discussing the broader object of “people” in some way.

In these discussions of people, neoliberal ideals dominated, and provided the main “go-to” framework to present and discuss the impact of hard times. Any detailed human cost of the crisis and subsequent austerity was given little room in the news coverage. When the discussion was focused on people, it

³ Analysts at the Sheffield Political Economy Research Institute noted this absence in their social media coverage of the 2015 general election. As part of a list of eight election “unmentionables” a tweet listed neoliberalism at seven) noting that: “Some broadcasters are sick of hearing about it. Odd, because they never mention the word.”

remained framed by macroeconomic and neoliberal parlance, giving rise to a dehumanizing narrative that reduced the human story to its economic constituents, at the expense of any social or political traits.

Accordingly, our results show a strong overlap in language utilized by market actors and political actors, and by actors from the opposing two main parties, particularly from 2010 onward [see also English *et al.* (2016) in this special issue]. In comparison, civil society actors were more likely to break away from this neoliberal mould, but accordingly the stories they told were from many reference points, and there was no evidence of a coherent counter-narrative.

The results presented in our analysis have contributed to the literature on the discursive embeddedness of ideology in society, as outlined by Cahill (2011). Importantly, we have the narrative beyond a narrow focus on coordinative discourse to include communicative discourse. We move forward this literature by demonstrating that political claims analysis of media coverage, as conducted in this study, provides a fruitful area to for further research. By examining not just coordinative discourse between elite level policy makers and “in grey” policy documentation, and focusing on the communicative discourse between political actors and the public, we have provided a detailed quantitative analysis of the narratives that build up, and in this case dominate, the primary information environment available to citizens.

This article has mapped out and outlined the extent of this discourse, and its change in usage by different actors over time. Further research should examine the suggestion made here, regarding the prevalence of this neoliberal narrative discourse and the lack in the expression of values regarding empathy, collaboration, and understanding. This is what Wendy Brown (2006) calls the loss of a “democratic register,” which, she theorizes undermines collective action. This theory is convincing, but to test it, this article opens the door to ways in which the narratives available to citizens can be studied, and rigorously empirically assessed for establishing their impact on political behavior.

In doing so, we have tried to sketch a more convincing answer to the Governor of the Bank of England’s question about the lack of citizens’ anger over the years in which the United Kingdom has been under economic pressure and hardship. Since media coverage has been shown to skew people’s perceptions on levels of immigration and to influence their vote, then perhaps it would not be too surprising if an information environment dominated by a dehumanizing neoliberal discourse also affected how citizens view one another, as well as the available opportunities for social and political change. After all, the belief in the absence of political alternatives would lead citizens to shy away from an angry response to the current crisis. If citizens do not blame the government or other actors for the crisis, but rather see it as a normal part of life in neoliberal societies, then anger would make little sense.

Appendix

Table A1. Logit Regression Results Political Parties and Neoliberal Framing

	OR	p
Political Party * Government in Power (<i>ref: Conservative Party * Labour in Power</i>)		
Conservative#1	26.67	.009
Labour#0	8.67	.014
Labour#1	12.78	.008
N	82	
Pseudo-R ²	.14	

Note: #0 refers to the time period of Labour in power (2007-10) and #1 refers to the Coalition period in power (2010-14).

Table A2. Logit Regression Results Political, Economic, and Civil Society Actors Neoliberal Framing

	OR	p
Actor Type * Government in Power (<i>ref: Political Actor * Labour in Power</i>)		
Political#1	3.71	.023
Market#0	9.81	.004
Market#1	2.64	.124
Civil Society#0	.73	.535
Civil Society#1	.39	.029
N	276	
Pseudo-R ²	.16	

Note: #0 refers to the time period of Labour in power (2007-10) and #1 refers to the Coalition period in power (2010-14).

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Convergence on Crisis? Comparing Labour and Conservative Party Framing of the Economic Crisis in Britain, 2008-14

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Since the 1980s, Britain's two largest political parties have been converging ever closer on the political spectrum, in line with a Downsian model of two party majoritarian systems. While both Labour and the Conservatives have been moving toward consensus, we investigate the extent to which the recent financial crisis, understood as a critical juncture, interrupted this movement. Using a "fuzzy set" ideal type analysis with claims-making data, we assess whether or not we can detect any signs of this consensus breaking down as a result of the crisis and the events which followed. Our results show that despite this most critical event, consensus was maintained as we found both parties adopting very similar framing and narrating strategies on the economic crisis in their public discourse. The study concludes that the shared discursive framing and narrating between both parties on the crisis demonstrates a continued Thatcherite, neoliberal consensus in British politics.

Keywords: Great Britain, United Kingdom, Labour Party, Conservative Party, Convergence, New Labour, Party Politics, Economic Crisis, Great

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Recession, Fuzzy Set Analysis, Ideal Type Analysis, Political Change, Neoliberalism, Neo-Liberalism, Comparative Political Analysis, Framing.

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Desde la década de 1980, los dos partidos políticos más grandes de Gran Bretaña se han concentrado cada vez más en el espectro político, esto de acuerdo al modelo Downsiano de un sistema con dos partidos mayoritarios. Mientras el partido Laborista y Conservador se han dirigido hacia un consenso, investigamos a qué grado la crisis financiera, entendida como un cambio estructural, ha afectado este movimiento de convergencia. Usando un análisis de "conjunto difuso" ideal con información de discursos, analizamos si es posible o no detectar signos del colapso de esta convergencia como resultado de la crisis y los eventos que siguieron. Nuestros resultados muestran que, a pesar de este evento crítico el consenso se mantuvo ya que ambos partidos adoptaron estrategias de narrativa similares sobre la crisis económica en su discurso público. Este estudio concluye que el discurso y narrativa sobre la crisis que comparten ambos partidos demuestra una continuación de la ideología neoliberal de Thatcher en la política británica.

In recent decades, the range of ideological positions adopted by political parties has been slowly but consistently narrowing down (Crouch 1997; Dalton and Wattenberg 2002; Mudge 2008) in what has been articulated as a global "downgrading of party competition" (Hay 2007, 56). In British politics, the two dominant political parties, Labour and the Conservatives, have been converging on a consensus of ideology and policy outcomes since the 1980s and *particularly* so on economic issues (Bara 2006; Bara and Budge 2001; Green

and Hobolt 2008; Heath, Jowell, and Curtice 2001). These two British political powerhouses have been drifting toward “neoliberal normalization” where neoliberalism as an ideology has moved from being a normative proposition to becoming institutionalized and normalized within mainstream political discourse and policy (Cerny 2008; Grasso *et al.* forthcoming; Hay 2004; Swarts 2013). Bara and Budge (2001) have noted the particular strength of this convergence on economic issues. Heffernan (2000), among others, also finds the Labour Party steadily converging with their Conservative counterpart on Thatcherite, or neoliberal, policy ground. Put simply, it is well established that since the early 1990s the Labour Party has been moving steadily and consistently right-ward toward a more neoliberal economic ideology. This process is understood to have emerged from Margaret Thatcher’s Conservative governments and the process of neoliberal normalization in the United Kingdom. The Conservative Party has, on this front, remained largely static, with little movement from this neoliberal, Thatcherite position across the years (Bara 2006).

This movement toward convergence and consensus between the two largest political parties in a two-party system is very much in line with predictions made by Downs (1957). Downs argued that in two-party, majoritarian systems electoral strategy dictates that both parties will seek to occupy policy and ideological positions closest to that of the “median voter” to maximize their appeal to the electorate and thus their chances of winning elections. In other words, finding and converging on the “median” position of the electorate is a key part of any party’s success in a two-party state (Bara and Budge 2001; Green 2007). Thus, according to the Downsian model, policy convergence is a natural consequence of a two-party democracy.

Critics of the Downsian convergence hypothesis, however, argue that it rests upon numerous and necessarily static assumptions concerning the nature of the political and electoral contexts in which parties are operating that, in some realities, rarely coexist and in others are very much in flux (see e.g., Grofman 2004). They argue further that rather than follow the Downsian model, many elections are subject to ever-changing electoral conditions and electoral strategies employed by political parties (Adams, Merrill, and Grofman 2005; Besley and Preston 2007; Grofman 2004). It is argued by such scholars that in fact the model is “turned on its head” by alterations in electoral contexts and strategies from election to election (Grofman 2004), producing outcomes where divergence is instead the norm resulting in “spaced out politics” (Adams, Merrill, and Grofman 2005). Despite these challenges, extant evidence shows that the Downsian model holds in the context of British politics. Indeed, Besley and Preston (2007), themselves critics, write that it “holds quite broadly.”

While ideological and policy convergence produces political consensus characterized by periods of stability and consistency in political discourse and policy outcomes, these can be subject to sudden changes. Exogenous “critical events” can, and often do, serve as “shocks” to established norms or trends (Meyer and Staggenborg 1996; Staggenborg 1993). This idea of a sudden, crucial movement

delivered upon the direction or motion of political change or development of an actor, capable of loosening structural influences around them, is defined in the historical institutionalist literature as a “critical juncture” (see Capoccia and Kelemen 2007; Soifer 2012). Critical junctures threaten stability and can “establish certain directions of change and foreclose others in a way that shapes politics for years to come” (Collier and Collier 2002, 27). Economic crises such as the “Great Recession,” the worst global economic downturn since the Great Depression of the 1930s, exemplify precisely this kind of exogenous event which could lead to a critical juncture in party political discourse and eventual policy outcomes, capable of altering electoral contexts and thus the tactics parties might apply to them. An exogenous shock such as a financial crisis could mean that the normally stable British political system could come more closely to reflect the types of scenarios that Besley and Preston (2007), Grofman (2004), and other fellow Downsian critics argue would destabilize the Downsian model, making divergence instead of convergence a more likely outcome. As the crisis can clearly be seen as a critical event for the British political system, so it serves as a critical juncture for its actors—in other words, the political parties.

As such, this article investigates to what extent the financial crisis destabilized, if at all, the observed equilibrium of consensus in British mainstream party politics. To this end, this research makes use of political discourse analysis in the form of a media claims analysis of the Labour and Conservative parties over their respective terms in government during the economic crisis. This allows us to empirically establish whether the crisis stimulated the Labour Party to diverge away from the Conservatives, or whether the two dominant parties of British politics continued to converge on their framing of economic issues and maintained a political consensus. The central question of this research is thus: did the exogenous shock of the financial crisis lead the Labour Party to diverge from the center-right, neoliberal British political consensus?

Previous Research

The aim of our research is to investigate the extent to which the consensus in mainstream British party politics was challenged during and after the economic crisis. In the study of British politics, “consensus” is understood as relating to a perceived overlap between the economic, foreign and social policies of both Labour and Conservative governments (Seldon 1994). The idea of a consensus politics operating between the two major British political parties is far from new; the post-war consensus emerging since 1945 was widely documented (see e.g., Kavanagh and Morris 1989; Marquand 1988; Rose 1984). Nor is it unexpected: policy convergence, as a feature of two-party democratic systems such as that in the United Kingdom, was, as noted, the mainstay of Downs’ (1957) spatial model. The key argument here was that in a two-party system, rationally acting political parties would drift toward the “center ground,” away from polarization on the left-right political spectrum, to maximize their appeal

(and thus votes). Scholars of British politics have long argued that this has been the case in the United Kingdom, with the literature on New Labour's shift to the "center ground" generally understood in this light (Evans and Norris 1999).

This Downsian approach to two-party competition, however, is not without its critics. Authors such as Adams, Merrill, and Grofman (2005), Besley and Preston (2007), and Grofman (2004) highlight in particular the long and necessary list of conditions and assumptions upon which the convergence hypothesis rests. Grofman (2004, 26) outlines them in a 15-point list which presents a static and stable view of elections and electoral contexts wherein voters hold clear policy preferences and pick parties which clearly align with those preferences. In turn, parties should be consistently able to detect and maneuver toward these preferences from election to election, with little concern for (or perhaps interference from) factors outside of the immediate electoral arena.

Nonetheless, British politics since the Second World War has generally reflected the empirical expectations of the Downsian model rather well since it witnessed two major eras of consensus between its two dominant political parties: the "post-war" Keynesian political consensus, and then a "neoliberal" consensus swept in by the Conservative government of 1979-82 led by Margaret Thatcher (Heffernan 2000; Kavanagh and Morris 1989; Matthews and Minford 1987; Peck and Tickell 2002). This second consensus saw the rise and eventual dominance of neoliberalism as a political ideology in the 1980s, which heralded a "neo-liberal age" (Mudge 2008, 703) where free markets are elevated and celebrated as the central component for individual and collective prosperity and freedom (Campbell and Pedersen 2001; Fourcade and Heely 2007). This neoliberal hegemony is understood to have a global reach: as well as coming to dominate the domestic politics of developed countries, it was exported to developing countries during a period known as the "Washington Consensus" (see Gore 2000; Williamson 1993, 2009). The impact of this global new consensus upon domestic party politics was profound, and indeed Mudge (2008, 704) stated that across the Western world, "specialists in comparative politics cite the decline of partisan identities within the electorates" and "the rise of professional political parties that do not adhere to 'old' ideological divides." Further, "[b]y the 1990s, some understood neoliberalism's widespread manifestations as "proof" of its ontological unassailability" (704).

Successive Thatcher governments sought to continue the pursuit of neoliberal ideology and policy outcomes for a time spanning over a decade in what became known as Thatcher's "neoliberal project," typified by a "dramatic" change in the view of the state and state intervention/ownership in the economy and a shift toward focusing on private markets as the source of economic growth and prosperity (Green 1989; Heffernan 2000; Peck and Tickell 2002, 2007). The project was so successful that both the Labour and Conservative parties are now in a consensus defined by Thatcher's project. Bara and Budge (2001, 602) found that there had been a "convergence" between the two parties

on a “Thatcherite” stance on the economy and on a general set of social policy outcomes tending toward “social conservatism” for the 2001 election. In subsequent work, Bara (2006) found little evidence of any fluctuation in this convergent movement in the 2005 election manifestos. A few years later, Green and Hobolt (2008, 464) find further evidence of a convergence between the two major parties toward a “median” consensus. A notable number of other scholars studying the legacy of Thatcher and her neoliberal project have come to similar conclusions, arguing that the following Conservative and Labour governments acted as a “continuation” of Thatcher’s project (Grasso *et al.* forthcoming; Heffernan 2000). So while a consensus was certainly reached, it was very much brought about by a dramatic shifting of Labour Party policy and ideology from their traditional Keynesian base toward that of their Conservative, now indisputably neoliberal, counterparts. Scholars of British politics have understood this convergence on ideology and policy between the major political parties in British politics to now have reached such a stage where ideological differences are no longer the general source of party competition. For example, Green (2007, 630) claims that the largest British parties compete primarily no longer on ideology or left-right positioning, but on “competency,” or “valence” (see also Clarke *et al.* 2004; Green and Hobolt 2008; Whitely *et al.* 2013). The modern British voter, it is claimed, primarily votes for the party whom they evaluate as the most competent and convincing, particularly in terms of the economy, as opposed to ideological grounds of left or right.

While consensus, of one form or another, may have been the buzzword of British politics for much of its history since WWII, any form of consensus is always threatened by “critical events,” or “shocks,” which throughout history have repeatedly produced significant alterations in the direction of politics and political discourse (Hogan 2006; also see Cortell and Peterson 1999; Haggard 1988). Since 2008, no one has evaluated the extent to which the British political consensus has been maintained. This is of particular note because since this last major study of the convergence between the two main parties, the world economy succumbed to a large-scale financial crisis which came to be known as the “great recession” (Bell and Blanchflower 2011, 245; Jenkins *et al.* 2012, 2). The effects of economic crises are wide ranging, creating shocks and challenges across all political, social, and economic boundaries: affecting financial systems and theory (Kirman 2010), political participation (Bosco and Verney 2012; Decker *et al.* 2013), and migration patterns (Becker *et al.* 2005) to name but a few. More broadly, scholars have argued that critical events like large scale economic shocks can alter the direction of travel of entire political regimes and administrations (Gasiorowski 1995; Marangos 2002; Przeworski and Limongi Neto 1997; Przeworski *et al.* 1997). Most relevant perhaps to this study is the finding of previous analysis of an economic crisis providing stern challenges to party-political consensus in Latin America by Roett (1993).

When an event or any other sudden pressure on a given system produces an instance where norms and conventions are very quickly challenged with

alternative choices and consequences open up, it is referred to in historical institutionalist literature as a “critical juncture” (Capocchia and Kelemen 2007; Soifer 2012). The concept of critical junctures is beginning to be applied across a range of studies. Generally, they are understood as serving an opportunity for actors involved in any given system that the juncture affects to make significant changes in their (or indeed the entire system’s) direction of travel; Capocchia and Kelemen (2007, 343) write that when faced with a critical juncture “the range of plausible choices open to powerful political actors expands substantially,” and that the “consequences of their decisions... are potentially much more momentous.” In this way, the financial crisis could be seen as potentially destabilizing and leading to greater divergence between parties.

The opening of such opportunities would seem to create the kind of conditions which Grofman (2004) and other critics of the Downsian model of party competition argue “turn the model on its head.” A critical juncture such as an economic crisis constitutes the kind of shock to a political equilibrium which would significantly alter preferences among parties and voters (Lewis-Beck and Nadeau 2012), thus undermining consensus over a “median position.” This blurring of the connection between the behavior of voters and the reciprocal behavior of political parties challenges the assumptions underpinning Downsian predictions of convergence (Adams, Merrill, and Grofman 2005; Grofman 2004). Seeing as critical junctures both present the opportunity for new directions *and* for potentially high rewards for embarking on them (Capocchia and Kelemen 2007), policy divergence can become an attractive electoral strategy, especially when we consider the growing anti-austerity, antineoliberal discourses postcrisis (Della Porta and Mattoni 2014; Fominaya and Cox 2013; Thompson 2013).

As Britain’s traditional “left wing,” working-class party (Hibbs 1977, 1475; see also Thorpe 2008) we expect the Labour Party, not the Conservatives, to be the most likely to be spurred to divergence from the neoliberal consensus in the aftermath of the crisis. We expect this for two reasons, one historical and one logical. Previously the party was in favor of traditional socialist positions such as a strong and large welfare state and sizeable state intervention into the national economy (Thorpe 2008). Second, the Labour Party shifted previously right-ward to produce the current consensus in a Thatcherite direction (Green and Hobolt 2008; Heffernan 2000). As such, we might expect them to move left-ward again to challenge the current set-up. We argue that it is unlikely that the Conservatives could challenge the consensus by moving further right since this would go against their modernization tendency which paid high dividends in terms of making them electable.

Thus, if we understand the recent economic crisis as a momentous event producing a critical juncture, then as an event impacting on the British political system we expect it to both severely challenge the established norms operating within British politics, and to open up new opportunities and choices for its principal actors. We anticipate that both parties would significantly shift their

respective discursive framing and positioning between their periods in and out of government. This is mostly due to the particular opportunity structure that being in opposition presents any political party, namely that they can afford to be more radical and outspoken in their discourse and policy statements, without the “shackles” of government (see Sitter 2001). Based on these considerations, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 1: That the Labour Party will show a significant and consistent divergence from the Conservative framing and narrating of the economic crisis, and

Hypothesis 2: That this divergence would be most apparent in the years of government opposition.

Data and Methods

This research makes use of media claims analysis as its means of investigation. By studying the media interventions of the main British political parties, we investigate whether or not both parties used similar political framing concerning the crisis, and to what extent they shared ideas in their claims making concerning the crisis. Using discourse analysis to investigate claims making by actors is now a key approach across social research (McCright and Dunlap 2000, 502), and in the discipline of political science, assessing the political discourse of political actors is to assess a key part of their political action (Van Dijk 1997, 20). Koopmans and Statham (2010, 2) argue that assessing the extent to which political actors use or challenge established norms by the way they frame key issues, a “political discourse analysis” provides a unique insight into actors’ motives and intentions. Analyzing claims making by (representatives of) political parties in the media is also argued to provide a crucial analysis of their ideological and policy positions on given issues, and their intended or favored outcomes to events or discussions (see e.g., Bhatia 2006; Fairclough 2001; Van Dijk 1995).

This research embarked on a political discourse analysis by analyzing media claims made in mainstream newspapers as its source of discursive material. Newspaper claims are a particularly appropriate source of information for a political discourse analysis, as in the words of Koopmans and Statham (1999, 203): “[n]ews reporting assigns meaning to issues by providing a continuous record of public events and visibility to the claims of the actors.” In other words, media claims analysis can be employed to provide a continuous roll of data on the positions of political actors on given issues and serves as a good indicator of any actor’s position and strength on an issue at any given time. Thus we argue that an analysis of newspaper claims made by the two main British political parties constitutes an apt measure of the discursive positions

of both political parties while in and out of government during the economic crisis and subsequent recession.

To place the political discourse analysis in context, our research makes descriptive use of a Downsian style spatial analysis of discourse in the same ilk as that applied by Bara and Budge (2001). The research follows Downs' (1957) party competition argument that political parties compete for political "space" among ideological lines, attempting to sense public preference on policy issues and react accordingly (see Jennings 2009, 850-1). The term "space" is analogous with a general idea of policy positions on issues. So if one party is said to be occupying a particular "space," this means it is understood to have taken up a general set of policies and discourses which would typify that particular "space." For example, it is often argued that the Conservative Party for a long while owned and occupied the "restrictive" immigration policy space in U.K. politics (Koopmans and Statham 1999; Koopmans *et al.* 2005), meaning that they regularly adopted restrictive immigration policies and discourses (in other words, talking "tough" on immigration), to appeal to voters looking for restrictive policies on immigration and to squeeze out their party rivals from occupying the same positions. In terms of this research, for the Labour and Conservative parties to be occupying the same "space" in terms of their media discourses on the economic crisis, it would mean using the same or similar discourses concerning the crisis and concerning growth and austerity which followed in the media. If the two parties were using the same space in such a manner, indicating that they were suggesting the same or similar diagnostic causes and prognostic policy solutions (including whom should benefit from prognostic solutions as well as what type of solutions should be offered), it would indicate that the crisis had failed to break down the consensus, and that the Labour Party had not shifted away from their Conservative counterparts.

The data used to test the hypotheses is a unique dataset of 1,000 media claims made concerning the economic crisis by a variety of actors in the United Kingdom from five preselected newspapers from 2008 to 2014. This data was collected as part of the LIVEWHAT research project's investigation into the response of citizens and civil society to economic "hard times" resulting from the 2008 stock market crash. This original data collection utilized a random-stratified sample, with the individual newspapers acting as strata. Each stratum contained a minimum of 200 claims. The newspapers represented in the data collection were preselected to represent the left-right and tabloid/broadsheet balances of national newspaper circulation in the United Kingdom.

Since the overall economic situation of the country altered significantly between the later years of both governments, with the economy largely returning to growth health by 2014 (World Bank 2014), it is therefore important that we split these two periods. Thus, whenever Labour Party discourse is analyzed during its years in opposition, it is being compared directly with Conservative

years in opposition.¹ Given that in years of opposition we expect the “shackles” to be removed and for parties to be allowed to become more radical in their policy making, we believe that this presented the Labour Party with greater opportunity to diverge from their Conservative counterparts. As noted in our hypotheses, we expect them to diverge more during their years in opposition.

For this research, the time period from which claims were analyzed was narrowed down to 2008-14. This period was selected to capture the political discourse surrounding both the immediate economic crisis (2008-10) and the economic stagnation and austerity periods which followed (2010-14) the “hard times,” but also to eliminate the precrisis period (pre-2008). Moving forward, we again narrowed this dataset to include claims made only by the Labour and Conservative parties. Claims were then divided by Labour and Conservative-led government years (January 1, 2008–May 5, 2010 and May 6, 2010–December 31, 2014, respectively). In total, 111 claims were coded during the Labour government years included in the sample frame, and 164 over the course of the following Conservative-led government.² By party, this amounted to 135 claims from the Conservative Party, with 135 individual claims by the Labour Party.

Claims were coded following a strict set of criteria by five U.K.-based coders after completing training on the codebook and testing for standardization.³ Each claim made by an actor concerning the crisis within each article was single coded into a unique unit of observation. A range of variables were collected concerning the claims.⁴ For our purposes, the most important of these were: the “diagnostic” and “prognostic” frames used by the actor (in our case: the political parties), to whom the actor attributes “blame” for whatever the crisis-related claim concerns, the “object” of the claim ~~who’s~~ interests were being affected or would be affected either by the claim or what the claim was proposing should happen or had happened, and the “value” to which the claim attributed its interest or cause (e.g., “fairness” or “economic prosperity”).

¹ Although we include both periods we focus on analyzing the comparison between each party’s framing during years of government. We retain most of our focus on the governmental record of both parties, as this is consistent with previous work on the extension of Thatcher’s neoliberal project into following governments of both the Conservative and Labour parties. Indeed, almost all of the literature claiming that the Labour Party has adopted and continued Thatcher’s discourses and policies almost exclusively does so in terms of the “New Labour” governments of 1997-2010 (Bara and Budge 2001; Fairclough 2001; Heath, Jowell, and Curtice 2001; Heffernan 2000).

² Although this constitutes enough claims to investigate over aggregated periods, it is not enough for a full temporal analysis of the claims (year by year). This would average just a handful of claims per year. Thus we aggregate each year into periods of Labour and Conservative government to test the hypotheses.

³ See Cinalli and Giugni (2016), in this special issue.

⁴ A full list of the information collected from each claim can be found in Cinalli and Giugni (2016) in this special issue.

Table 1. Variable Types and Lists

Variable Type	Variables
Discursive field variables	Diagnostic frame, prognostic frame, blame, object, value.
Actor variables	Labour Party, Conservative Party
Period variables	Labour Government (Jan 2008-May 2010), Conservative Government years (May 2010-Dec 2014)

Table 1 shows the type and list of variables used in our analysis. Each of these individual pieces of information form subfields of the overall discourse framing used by the parties over the study period. The “diagnostic” and “blame” framing gives us information concerning whom the parties were holding responsible for the crisis, and the nature of the origins of the crisis. Equally, the “prognostic” framing variable can tell us what the party was offering in terms of solutions to the crisis and the hard times which followed, while the “object” and “value” frames can tell us much concerning whom the parties were arguing the crisis was impacting and for what reasons action should be taken to support them. As an example of how claims might translate into such coding, in one article an actor might assert that the crisis was caused by economic actors such as financial markets or banks (this would be the diagnostic frame), and perhaps blame the banks themselves for behaving recklessly (blame frame), and offer the solution that banks should be heavily taxed to raise funds (prognostic frame) to assist the beleaguered ordinary citizens struggling to make ends meet (object frame) in the interests of fairness (value frame). Alternatively, a second actor’s claim may insist that the crisis was caused by a failure of government policy (diagnostic), blame the previous administration for not doing enough to protect the national economy against crises events (blame), and suggest that the solution to the crisis was to get money moving in the economy again by cutting taxes and charges for beleaguered businesses (prognostic) who were suffering and struggling to turn a profit (object), so that markets can return to full health (value). With such valuable qualitative information coded into the dataset, each discursive subfield acted as a unit of measurement from which we were able to assess the similarities between the two party’s discourses on the economic crisis.⁵ This plethora of coded information provided us with a large amount of data to investigate claims making by the Labour and Conservative parties over the six-year period under study.

A “fuzzy set” ideal type analysis was the approach selected by this research to investigate the closeness of fit of Labour Party discourse surrounding the

⁵ A full explanation of the coding scheme and the rules applied to sampling and case selection can be found in the introduction to this special issue (Cinalli and Giugni 2016).

crisis to their Conservative counterparts. Testing for divergence using qualitative data of this kind is not often done, and so there is little previous methodology to go by. However, a key contribution to qualitative data research was made by Uta Gerhardt in 1994, who laid out the case and groundwork for the use of “ideal type” analysis of qualitative data in contemporary methodology (Gerhardt 1994, 78-80). The process is very much grounded in the research of sociologist Max Weber, who argued that practical realities may be judged by hypothetical standards using ideal type analysis and stated that the ideal type in any given hypothetical is a case “unaffected by errors” (Weber 1978, 9).

Essentially, an “ideal type” analysis considers the “ideal picture” of whatever it is we are looking to test and then assesses to what extent following cases or observations align with or tend toward that ideal picture. Such analysis is mostly used in the study of sociology (see Ciccica and Verloo 2012; Forsberg 2011). In each case, the ideal type method can be used to assess to what extent a particular case tends toward another along predefined characteristics/criterion, with the other assumed to be the ideal case of those given characteristics/criterion.

The process and its place in qualitative research is perhaps best articulated by Kvist (2007) who states that ideal type analyses allow us a precise operationalisation of theoretical concepts, allowing for a true connection between data and theory. Kvist’s own research seeks to establish to what extent various Western-European welfare regimes fall into “ideal type” categories of various hypothetical regimes, including “old social democratic,” “new social democratic,” “new conservative,” and many others (Kvist 2007, 481). Each welfare regime over time formed a unit of measurement, and was qualitatively constructed and judged against by Kvist himself. Kvist employs a “fuzzy type” analysis instead of a binary “in/out” measure of a case’s fit into the ideal type, which allows him to create a scale of degrees of “in/out” within the two limits of 0 (being fully out of the set) and 1 (being fully in). Kvist created a list of scores and attributed each with “verbal labels”; for example, a “fuzzy set” score of 0.85 would indicate that a case was “almost fully in the set,” while a score of 0.2 would indicate a case was “fairly out of the set,” and so on (479).

This method is perhaps best understood as a measure of closeness of fit between an ideal, hypothetical case and its associated real-world comparatives. Kvist (2007, 479-80) makes a strong justification for the use of both “fuzzy sets” and ideal type theory in qualitative research, particularly concerning how we can link qualitative judgments and score based assessments to theoretical relationships. The methods used in this research are a slight depart from those used by Kvist in three ways. First, the operationalization in this case is not of a hypothetical, but of an actual. Instead of measuring our cases against an imagined, ideal type, this analysis assumes that the Conservative Party’s discursive position on the crisis *is* the ideal type, and measures to what extent the Labour Party fits into that ideal type. Thus we are calculating the extent to which the Labour Party’s usage of each frame within each discursive field mirrors the same usage by the Conservative Party. This closeness of fit analysis of Labour to the Conservatives is our test

for divergence; if the scores are low, then this would indicate that the Labour Party was using a significantly different framing and narrating of the crisis.

The following formula outlines the calculation for the closeness of fit (β) for the use of a frame within a given variable (Fx), where LFx is the proportion of total claims containing a given frame by the Labour Party, and CFx being the same for the Conservative Party. For an example, imagine if our Fx in this case was the use of economic frame within claims offering prognosis. LFx would be the proportion of overall claims offering a prognosis which suggested an economic policy based prognosis, with CFx being the same for the Conservative Party. The formula below works out how close the Labour Party align to the ideal type.⁶

$$\beta Fx = \sqrt{1 - \frac{LFx}{CFx}}^2$$

A second diversion from Kvist's (2007) work is that each case in this analysis contains cases within cases which are of varying importance to the overall assessment. In other words, βFx will only tell us the closeness of fit of the use of one frame type by the Labour Party within a given discursive field, rather than the closeness of fit of the whole discursive field. Furthermore, these cases within cases are of varying degrees of importance to the overall fit of the discursive field. So while an aggregate score for each variable is needed, we should weight each individual case-within-case score (βFx) according to its overall size in the Conservative Party discourse. Thus, the overall "frame difference score" (β) for a discursive case (Vx) is calculated by the following, where q is the total number of different possible frames within a discursive field variable. Fy and Fz are further frames (or cases) within the discursive field.

$$\beta Vx = \frac{(CFx)(\beta Fx) + (CFy)(\beta Fy) + (CFz)(\beta Fz) \dots}{q}$$

Table 2 demonstrates how each calculation of fit (βVx) translates into Fuzzy Set membership score (as presented by Kvist 2007), and how this again translates into the verbal labels Kvist assigned each fuzzy set. As explained above, each individual subfield of the claims coded by the team is given its own individual closeness of fit score, which is then weighted according to how prevalent each particular frame is used in the overall ideal type (Conservative Party claims making) before being aggregated into a final closeness of fit score. The scores tell us to what extent the Labour Party cases for each

⁶ Subtracting the result of the percentage fraction from 1 derives how close the Labour Party use of each frame is to the Conservative equivalent (e.g., $25/50 = 0.5$, $1 - 0.5 = 0.5$ = the Labour Party usage of this frame is only halfway to that of the Conservatives). The squaring and following positive square rooting eliminates any negative indices which may result from the initial equation and converts them to positive numbers.

Table 2. Calculation of Fit Scores and Translation into “Fuzzy Sets”

Calculation of Fit	“Fuzzy Set” Fit Scores	“Fuzzy Set” Verbal Labels
0–0.99	1	Fully in the set
1–3.49	0.84–0.99	Almost fully in the set
3.5–5.99	0.68–0.83	Fairly in the set
6–8.99	0.51–0.67	More or less in the set
9–11.99	0.50	Cross-over point
12–14.99	0.34–0.49	More or less out of the set
15–17.49	0.18–0.33	Fairly out of the set
17.5–19.99	0.01–0.17	Almost fully out of the set
>20	0	Fully out of the set

subset of the claims fit into the way where the Conservatives (the ideal type) were making claims concerning the crisis. The above table then translates each overall closeness of fit score into “fuzzy set” scores. The verbal labels attached to each “fuzzy set” give us a qualitative assessment of how close the Labour Party claims making reflected that of their Conservative counterparts.⁷

The allocation of fuzzy set scores to calculation scores was not drawn up by some random or arbitrary measurement; a number of hypothetical experiments were run using the formula to calculate scores for invented discursive sets which we considered close together, neither too close nor too far apart, and those which were completely distinct from each other.⁸ After multiple rounds of testing, we produced the translations of formula scores to fuzzy set types which closely follow the logic used by Kvist (2007).

Results

According to the dataset the framing employed by both parties during the crisis is remarkably similar. Variations from Government to Opposition periods also

⁷ By proxy, we are also measuring how close the Labour Party fit into the Thatcherite, neoliberal frame, as we are assuming that this is the framing of the crisis which the Conservative Party used. This assumption is based on the aforementioned neoliberal normalization and convergence literature, which asserts that it was the Conservatives who began the process of normalization of neoliberalism as an ideology, with Labour under Tony Blair converging and continuing this process. There has been no noted change of track by the Conservatives in these literatures.

⁸ Five rounds of testing with the formulas above examined the outcomes to ensure that the range and distribution of possible scores accurately reflected the corresponding qualitative fuzzy set labels. Distributions of the calculation score for each frame within each subfield were carefully inspected when drawing up the scores so as to ascertain the full range of scores coming out from the formulas, and to check that the formulas did not unnaturally “heap” claims and subfields into any categories. Experiments also sought ways to restrict the set scores tending toward infinity (e.g., by replacing each 0 in the Conservative cases with 0.001). See the Appendix for full information about how the scores were calculated and fit into the overall fuzzy set scores for each subfield.

largely map across both parties. For instance, both parties use economic framing of the crisis in their diagnostic narratives in over two-thirds of claims while in government, but both switch to using political diagnostic framing in over 50 percent of all claims making during years in opposition. Substantively, this indicates that both parties went from mostly discussing the crisis as having economic causes during their years in opposition, but then during terms in opposition chose almost exclusively to point to political causes (namely, their opponents in government). Some similarities remain static through both government and opposition periods, with both parties using economic prognostic frames (indicating they believe the solution to the crisis being in economic policies and/or action) in again around two-thirds of all claims making across the study period. In terms of value framing, the claims making of both parties is once again dominated by the economic frame; most strikingly around three-quarters of all claims made during governmental years for both parties employs this frame. This indicates that, while in office, both parties were strongly stressing the need to take action (or inaction) on the crisis for the good of economic prosperity or the protection/assistance of economic markets and institutions above all else (as opposed to other institutions or groups such as Trade Unions, workers, families, and so on). The largest difference was found in the actor blame attribution while in Government. Here there was a very significant divergence with the Conservative Party choosing to blame government actors 50 percent of the time but their Labour counterparts instead blaming economic actors in the same proportion of cases as their dominant choice of frame. The full list of subfields and frame usage can be seen in the Appendix.

Table 3 shows the results of the closeness of fit of the Labour Party's discursive framing from each discursive subfield into that of their Conservative Party rivals. It also shows the closeness of fit translated into Fuzzy Set scores. As we can clearly see, only in two cases were the Labour Party nearing an entirely different use of frames—their diagnostic and blame framing during government. Overall, eight of the total ten cases analyzed pass over the crossover point and tend toward 1: the Conservative position. Considering this, it does not appear there has been a clear break away from the Conservative Party's framing of the crisis and hard times that were followed by the Labour Party.

The Labour Party twice used framing almost entirely matching that of their Conservative counterparts: their prognostic and blaming frames while in opposition. When we look at years in Government, Labour Party framing here is less close to that of the Conservatives than it is during their time in opposition, with no cases exceeding a value of 0.75. However, three of the five cases do show significant degrees of similarity with the framing used by the Conservative Party during their years in government. Furthermore, the significant break in the two subfields noted above could potentially be explained in other terms; while in these cases the Labour Party spent a significant proportion of their crisis discourse during their years in government blaming economic actors and diagnosing the crisis as of economic causes, the Conservative Party campaigned for the 2010 election on a position which

Table 3. Closeness of Fit and Fuzzy Sets Scores of Labour Crisis Discourse in Government and Opposition

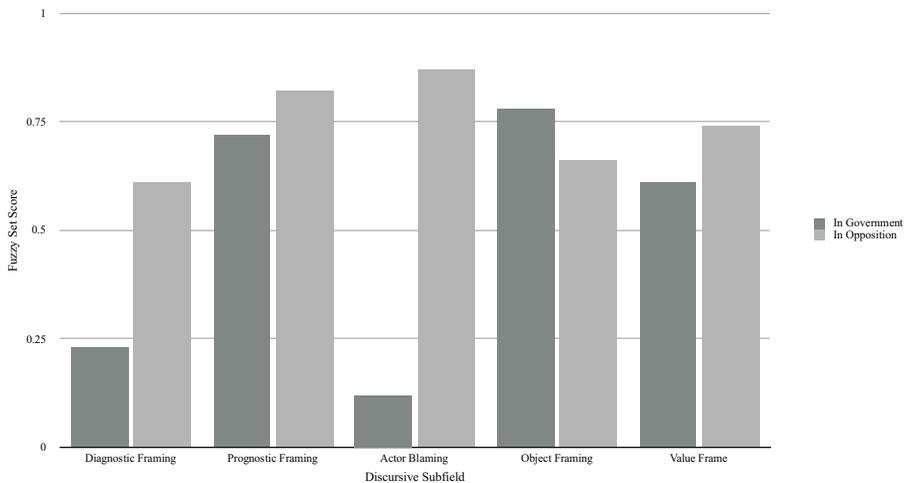
Period	Labour Party Scores				
	Diagnostic Framing	Prognostic Framing	Actor Blame Attribution	Object Framing	Value Frame
Government (Closeness)	16.63	5.28	18.45	5.06	7.05
Opposition (Closeness)	7.2	3.7	3.2	6.74	5.1
Government (Fuzzy set)	0.23	0.72	0.12	0.74	0.61
Opposition (Fuzzy set)	0.61	0.82	0.87	0.63	0.74

blamed the then-current Labour Party administration itself for the crisis. The Conservatives continued to hold and further this position during their years in government, electing to blame the previous administration for the crisis more often than economic actors. The difference then in these two discursive subfields is perhaps better explained as the result of a strategic electoral ploy by the Conservatives which the Labour Party, in power at the beginning of the crisis with three previous Labour administrations before them, were unable to follow. This seems a reasonable explanation for this observed difference than any conscious discursive breakaway on the part of the Labour Party. Rather than choosing not to follow suit and blame the previous government for the crisis, the Labour Party realistically could not.

Figure 1 visualizes the above observations clearly showing the Labour Party scores tending closer toward 1 during Opposition years, with both the Diagnostic and Blame framing appearing as something of outliers in an otherwise fairly stable picture. That picture suggests no real, substantial differences between the narrating of the crisis and the hard times which followed by both the Labour and Conservative parties.

Regarding our hypotheses, since the only clear breaks from the Conservative discursive cases observed in the data can be largely explained as a result of Conservative Party electoral tactics rather than a conscious divergence by the Labour Party, and all other cases show significant convergence, the data presented in this research suggests that Hypothesis 1 does not hold: the Labour Party did *not* take the opportunity of the crisis to undertake a significant diversion away from its convergence with the Conservatives. Hypothesis 2 does not fare any better. According to the data the greatest divergence was actually with the Labour Party in Government, rather than in Opposition. Thus the results reject the hypotheses and instead suggest that in keeping with the theme observed by previous scholars since the 1980s, the Labour Party converged toward the Conservative position both in and out of government.

Figure 1.
Labour Party Fuzzy Set Scores in Government and Opposition



Conclusion

The results from a media claims analysis presented in this article have shown that the Labour Party broadly occupied the same positions, consistently using the same framing and narrating of the crisis both in and out of government, as the Conservatives on the key economic issue of the past decade—the financial crisis. This suggests that (a) the British political consensus continues to be maintained, and thus (b) the critical juncture of the economic crisis did not challenge the consensus between the Labour Party and Conservatives. These findings attest to the strength of the neoliberal consensus in British politics and the extent to which the two largest and most successful parties continue to converge upon the same “political space.” The legacy of Thatcherism thus appears remarkably resilient even in the face of significant external shocks. The crisis is discussed as a crisis of markets, needing only market-based solutions (see Temple *et al.* 2016). Our results show that Thatcher’s legacy survives in the Labour Party, particularly in terms of its economic liberalism (see Bara and Budge 2001, 602). This Thatcherite stance is heavily reflected in the data, with prognostic framing dominated by economic policy solutions and economic prosperity the dominant “value” of claims made by the Labour Party (see Appendix). That the party’s discourse is so heavily driven by economic prognostic solutions and values reflect the wider positions and prognoses of the party which have been dominated by individualism and market-based solutions—in return reflecting to a great extent the values of the Conservative Party (Bara 2006; Bara and Budge 2001; Green and Hobolt

2008). Further research should attempt to test these mechanisms further. In particular, it will be interesting to explore whether these patterns will evolve with the new Labour leadership under Jeremy Corbyn, which began in 2015.

Appendix: Individual Frame Scores and Associated Case Scores/Labels

The following tables show the individual set scores from within each type of frame both during Government and Opposition. The percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number. Also included in the tables are the Closeness of Fit score and associated Fuzzy Set labels.

In two instances, a particular frame is shown as being used by the Conservative Party in 0.01% of circumstances. In order for the respective Labour Closeness of Fit scores to be calculated a figure >0 is needed in each Conservative frame. In reality, where 0.01% is seen this actually indicates that the frame was not used by the Conservative Party in that particular instance. The 0.01% figure is only present so as the Closeness of Fit calculations can be made.

Diagnostic Framing—In Government				
	Conservative	Labour	Closeness of Fit	Fuzzy Set Label
Economic frame	66%	80%		
Legal/administrative frame	14%	14%		
Political frame	9%	2%		
Other framing	9%	5%		
Overall	100%	100%	16.63	Fairly out of the set
	<i>n</i> = 54	<i>n</i> = 44		

Diagnostic Framing—In Opposition				
	Conservative	Labour	Closeness of Fit	Fuzzy Set Label
Economic frame	26%	20%		
Political frame	52%	66%		
Legal/administrative frame	16%	10%		
Other framing	7%	4%		
Overall	100%	100%	7.2	More or less in the set
	<i>n</i> = 31	<i>n</i> = 0		

Prognostic Framing—In Government				
	Conservative	Labour	Closeness of Fit	Fuzzy Set Label
Economic frame	66%	74%		
Political frame	5%	8%		
Admin/regulatory/legal frame	13%	10%		
Other framing	16%	8%		
Overall	100%	100%	5.28	Fairly in the set
	<i>n</i> = 56	<i>n</i> = 50		

Prognostic Framing—In Opposition				
	Conservative	Labour	Closeness of Fit	Fuzzy Set Label
Economic frame	64%	61%		
Political frame	18%	22%		
Admin/regulatory/legal frame	9%	4%		
Other framing	9%	13%		
Overall	100%	100%	3.7	Fairly in the set
	<i>n</i> = 22	<i>n</i> = 23		

Blame Framing—In Government				
	Conservative	Labour	Closeness of Fit	Fuzzy Set Label
Blame economic actor	22%	51%		
Blame government	51%	29%		
Blame other political body	8%	10%		
Blame others	19%	5%		
Overall	100%	100%	18.45	Almost fully out of the set
	<i>n</i> = 37	<i>n</i> = 21		

Blame Framing—In Opposition				
	Conservative	Labour	Closeness of Fit	Fuzzy Set Label
Blame economic actor	4%	9%		
Blame government	90%	87%		
Blame other political body	4%	0%		
Blame others	4%	4%		
Overall	100%	100%	3.2	Almost fully in the set
	<i>n</i> = 29	<i>n</i> = 45		

Object Framing—In Government				
	Conservative	Labour	Closeness of Fit	Fuzzy Set Label
Economic actor	45%	39%		
Government	8%	11%		
Other political actor	5%	1%		
People/citizens	19%	29%		
Other actors	22%	20%		
Overall	100%	100%	5.94	Fairly in the set
	<i>n</i> = 95	<i>n</i> = 70		

Object Framing—In Opposition				
	Conservative	Labour	Closeness of Fit	Fuzzy Set Label
Economic actor	36%	37%		
Government	31%	20%		
Other political actor	0.01%	9%		
People/citizens	18%	25%		
Other actors	15%	9%		
Overall	100%	100%	6.94	More or less in the set
	<i>n</i> = 39	<i>n</i> = 65		

Value Framing—In Government				
	Conservative	Labour	Closeness of Fit	Fuzzy Set Label
Fairness, ethics	4%	12%		
Economic/market prosperity	73%	79%		
Social justice/wellbeing	8%	6%		
Other values	15%	3%		
Overall	100%	100%	7.05	More or less in the set
	<i>n</i> = 86	<i>n</i> = 66		

Value Framing—In Opposition				
	Conservative	Labour	Closeness of Fit	Fuzzy Set Label
Fairness, ethics	11%	21%		
Economic/market prosperity	65%	65%		
Social justice/well-being	11%	8%		
Other values	14%	6%		
Overall	100%	100%	5.1	Fairly in the set
	<i>n</i> = 37	<i>n</i> = 62		

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