Politicization from below? The deportation issue in public discourse in Austria, Switzerland, and Germany

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Abstract

Deportation has become a central element of immigration control, particularly of asylum seekers whose application has been rejected. For a long time deportation has been a non-issue in public discourse, implemented without significant public opposition or publicity. More recently, however, feelings of unease and moral outrage have emerged among certain sections of the population and the general public, manifesting themselves in various forms of protest against the deportation of individuals: deportation has become contested and politicized. We analyse the politicization of deportation in three countries – Austria, Germany, Switzerland – between 1993 and 2013 drawing on media coverage on the issue. Different from immigration, which is top-down politicized by governmental and party actors, it seems that the politicization of deportation is mainly bottom-up. Individuals threatened by deportation and NGOs and churches are the dominant actors in protests against deportations. Protest is about as likely to focus on individual deportation cases than policy. Unconventional forms of political participation are common, but once the issue of deportation has become politicized political parties increasingly join the debate.
Introduction

While rates of immigration worldwide may remain relatively constant over time, they are certainly increasing for Western European countries (Czaika and Haas 2014). An increasing number of immigrants means increasing challenges to state sovereignty if immigrants deemed unwelcome are nonetheless staying in the country of destination – as is the case with failed asylum seekers who remain in the country of destination. Their continuous presence undermines the power to defining insiders (citizens, wanted immigrants) and outsiders who are not permitted to enter the country or settle therein (Anderson, Gibney, and Paoletti 2013; Rosenberger and Winkler 2014). The challenge to state sovereignty notwithstanding, many individuals in Western European countries are opposed to immigration, feel threatened by immigrants, or are otherwise at unease with immigration policies. In this context government and state actors have incentives to remove unwanted immigrants from the territory – bearing in mind that states have obligations to take in refugees, and there is a right to apply for asylum. State sovereignty plays a central role when asylum claims are not accepted, but many do not want to leave – just like immigrants without valid permit – (Ellermann 2009). Deportation is a means to counter the challenge to state sovereignty, but deportations are costly, and many of them happen out of public view. Increasingly, however, we observe moral outrage and protest against deportation (Fekete 2005). Such moral outrage often draws on the view that the affected individuals – because of long asylum procedures – have started becoming part of society (they are integrated), that deportation as such is not humane and always unacceptable, and borders as such are questioned (no borders movement). This leads to a politicization of deportation as a topic: different positions are taken up, and the topic is publicly debated, including how those affected by deportation should be perceived/portrayed.

Background

The politicization of asylum and protest against deportations appear to be different from the politicization of immigration and integration more generally: van der Brug et al. (2014 forthcoming) demonstrate that across Western Europe, immigration and integration tend to be politicized top-down, that is by governments, the legislative, and political parties. Figure 1 shows the percentage of claims by top-down actors in newspapers about immigration and integration in seven Western European countries. These claims – making statements about and calling for change in current policies – are also made by bottom-up actors such as civil society organizations, but less frequently. The politicization of asylum is likely to be different from immigration and integration more generally, especially because of deportations. Whereas restrictive immigration policies find widespread support both among mainstream political
Figure 1: Percentage of claims about immigration and integration by *top-down* actors in seven European countries, 1995 to 2009. Source: adapted from van der Brug et al. (2014 forthcoming)
actors and the general public, the case is more difficult when it comes to the forceful removal of non-citizens (mostly asylum seekers) from the state territory. Deportation represents a “deep intrusion into the private sphere” (Ellermann 2009, p.14) that poses high costs on the liberal state and, in particular, on those directly affected. Confronted with the fate of an individual who is about to be deported, public support for the unconditional implementation of restrictive immigration and asylum policies is much less enthusiastic. Consequently, policy makers have no incentive to draw the public’s attention to deportation. This, we argue, makes the deportation of rejected asylum seekers qualitatively different from the immigration issue more generally.

Figure 2 shows the number of deportations in the three countries over time. Voluntary returns are not included in these figures.\(^1\) We can see that the number of deportations has decreased in Austria and Germany, while in Switzerland the number of deportations has increased between 1993 and 2013. While the number of deportations to countries of origin has decreased in Switzerland since 2003, it is deportations to Dublin states that have more than compensated for this decrease: Since 2010 there are more deportations from Switzerland to Dublin states than to other countries. The magnitude of the decreases in Austria and Germany should not be overlooked: it is seven-fold in Germany, and six-fold in Austria – more gradual in Austria than in Germany. The increase in Switzerland is marked by an intermediate decline in deportations between 2002 and 2008.

**Theory & Expectations**

Deportations are used to remove individuals from the territory of a country when the affected individuals do not leave the country on their own accord, not even when threatened with deportation. Deportation can be classified as a policy of coercive social regulation, defined “as measures that control individual behaviour in highly intrusive ways, impose severe personal costs on the regulated, and often rely on the routine use of physical force for their enforcement” (Ellermann 2009, p.12). The concentration of high costs on identifiable individuals awaiting their forced removal from the state territory distinguishes deportation from the immigration issue more broadly, where the public is confronted with a rather diffuse social category like ‘immigrants’. Public opinion data suggest that people tend to be more supportive to individual immigrants as opposed to immigrants as a group or category (Iyengar et al. 2013; compare Ruedin 2013b; Pecoraro and Ruedin 2013). In line with this phenomenon, the deportation of individuals often raises feelings of sympathy and solidarity among the general public, often accompanied by various forms of protest against its implementation. This — together with active resistance by those affected — results in high costs of deportations also for the state, especially given that states have an obligation

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\(^1\)To the uninitiated, the term voluntary return can be misleading because it is used to count returns under direct threat of deportation; it does not refer to regular emigration at the end of a failed asylum application.
Figure 2: Deportations from Austria, Germany, and Switzerland, 1993 to 2013; the red lines are a LOESS trend lines
to use what are deemed humane means to carry out the deportation. Costs are also high because air carriers often refuse to carry individuals to be deported as their presence and potential of resistance can negatively affect other passengers. Consequently, government actors have no incentive to actively politicize the deportation issue: The more government actors are able to avert attention to deportations, the more cost effectively deportations can be carried out.\(^2\)

The situation is quite different for civil society actors, NGO, churches, or individuals who try to draw public attention to deportations and prevent individuals from being deported. Here we refer to these actors as bottom-up actors (Anderson, Gibney, and Paoletti 2013). Like other protest movements, individuals and organizations protesting against deportations are likely to focus on solidarity, the human side of deportations, and moral arguments.

\(H_1\): Given that most individuals threatened by deportation are failed asylum seekers, it can be assumed that they find it difficult to voice their discontent directly. Anti-deportation protests hence can be expected to reflect the features of solidarity movements characterized by political altruism (Giugni and Passy 2001) meaning that most protests are likely to be “on behalf” of those threatened by deportation – by NGOs and other civil society actors.

\(H_2\): Individuals and organizations protesting against deportation can be considered a social movement, and thus employing the protest repertoire typically used by other social movements (Opp 2009). This repertoire – above all so-called unconventional forms of political participation like demonstrations or occupations – works outside formal politics and can be used to challenge government actors and actors involved in deportations (DiGrazia 2014). It can therefore be expected that protests against deportations most commonly use unconventional political participation as forms of protest.

\(H_3\): With their aim to highlight the human side of deportations, it is likely that NGOs and civil society actors focus on individual cases (i.e. individuals and groups of individuals threatened by deportation) rather than calling for policy reform (Rosenberger and Winkler 2014; Freedman 2011).

\(H_4\): Protest against deportations are likely to be more successful if they highlight how vulnerable the individuals threatened by deportation are. This can happen by highlighting the unstable situation in

\(^2\text{In most situations deportations are carried out by direct flights to avoid potential problems in third countries, such as when an individual refuses to board a connecting flight. This also adds to the cost, although European countries collaborate to reduce the number of flights.}\)

\(^3\text{For the sake of simplicity at this stage we ignore the fact that government actors and other actors involved in deportations are individuals who might struggle with moral dilemmas regarding deportations and the treatment of the individuals deported.}\)
the country of origin, or by focusing on cases that involve families with children, or women (Freedman 2009; Freedman 2011; Rosenberger and Winkler 2014). It can therefore be expected that protests against deportations frequently mention the presence of women and children explicitly.

While government actors, the legislative, and political parties have a priori little interest in politicizing the issue of deportation, the situation changes as the topic gains salience (compare Opp 2009). Once the topic is on the political agenda, we can expect government actors and political parties to take an active role in politicizing deportations.

H₅: Over time – as the salience of the topic increases – the share of protests by party actors increases.

Data & Analytical Strategy

Data

This paper draws on a media analysis of all articles on deportations between 1993 and 2013 as the basis. It covers 5 newspapers in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland (in Austria: Presse, Standard; in Germany: TAZ, Süddeutsche; in Switzerland: NZZ).⁴ The article selection was deliberately inclusive, and used the following keywords (as stems): deportation, deported, right to stay.⁵ Among the 50,234 articles in the corpus there are many false positives, articles that are not about deportation, or not about immigrants or asylum seekers. Previous work suggests that print media are a good reflection of the actual debates, but we are aware of news filters and that many protests may only be reported locally (van der Brug et al. 2014 forthcoming). In this sense the media analysis captures a good part of the political debate around deportations, but it should not be seen as equivalent. It is obvious that not all protests about deportations are covered in newspapers. Furthermore, there might be a difference between actual protests, the media representations thereof, and the impact on the political debate (Smidt 2012). Since we are interested in the debate about deportations, media representation are relevant, as this is indeed the means by which most people come into contact with deportations as a topic. We are undertaking separate robustness test that compare the corpus based on national and regional newspapers with news reports in local newspapers, as well as online references (blogs, Twitter).

⁴future work will also include the French language newspaper Le Temps in Switzerland

⁵actual search string in German: abschiebung*, abschiebe*, abgeschoben*, ausschaffung*, ausschaffen*, ausgeschafft*, bleiberecht*
The period 1993 to 2013 was chosen to capture the – what based on previous research we assumed – increase in politicization. With this relatively long time span it will be possible to trace the developments of protests and the debate on deportations. For this reason, we focus on articles that are about protests – as opposed to articles that mention deportations in a different context. Keywords were used to identify articles that are likely about protests (as stems): protest, demonstration, signature, blockade, attack, occupation, boycott, arson, march, vigil, bomb, hostage, human chain, chain of lights, flash mob, open letter, sit-in, initiative, activist, supporter, whistle, church asylum, civil disobedience, action. We have 14,271 articles that are likely about protests against the deportation of asylum seekers. In the present paper, we have manually coded a random sample of 600 articles thereof. Many false positives remained, and the results are based on 111 articles which are relevant: they cover protests against the deportation of asylum seekers (table 1). We also included protests for deportation – although these protests are indeed rare. The intuition for doing so was to capture counter-mobilization if there is any. Below we show that the protests for deportations in our sample are of a particular kind. The 111 articles used in this paper are based on a random sample, and for that reason it is possible to make inferences about all articles between 1993 and 2013.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Selection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50,234</td>
<td>articles about deportation</td>
<td>keywords</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14,271</td>
<td>of which: articles about protests</td>
<td>keywords</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>600</td>
<td>of which: random sample</td>
<td>random</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>111</td>
<td>of which: relevant articles</td>
<td>manual</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Sample of articles coded

Analytical Strategy

The sample of newspaper articles was manually coded at the article level. Future research will use a more extensive codebook to capture details of protests that are important for this paper. Here simple descriptive statistics are presented; future research will use statistical models for more systematic hypothesis testing.

6actual search string in German: protest* demo demos demonstr* kundgebung* unterschrift* blockade* blockier* ansch?l* besetz* boykott* brandstift* mahnwache* marsch* bombe* geisel* lichterkette* menschenkette* farbbeutel* flashmob flash-mob “flash mob” “offene* brief”* sit-in* bürgerinitiative* aktivist* unterstützer* trillerpfeifen* hungerstreik* kirchenasyl* supporter “zivil” ungehorsam*” aktion*
Protests against Deportations

Volume of Protest

By plotting the number of articles about protests in the context of deportations over time, we can verify our assumption that during the period 1993 to 2013 the deportation of asylum seekers was increasingly politicized (figure 3). A LOESS trend line is included in the figure to smooth out year on year variance likely due to the relatively small number of articles per year. The larger number of news reports on the topic are indicative of such an increased politicization, which are compatible with accounts of increased outrage and that the topic is increasingly part of public debates. This increasing trend is particularly noticeable in Austria.

Figure 3: Number of articles about protests in the context of deportations by year; black line is LOESS; all countries pooled

We note that the number of articles on deportations increased in Austria, while the number of deportations declined. In Germany the number of deportations also declined, while the increase in articles on deportations has not been as clear
as in Austria. Further research with a larger sample is necessary to understand whether there is a causal relationship between the two trends: whether the protests have caused the decline in deportations. In Switzerland, by contrast, the number of articles on deportations has increased at the same time as the number of deportations has increased. This is the inverse relationship to what we observe in Austria and Germany, suggesting that the number of protests on its own is not the reason why the number of deportations has decreased in Austria and Germany. Only a detailed study on the protests against deportations can give answers as to why there are such different patterns in protest.

Main Actors in Protests against Deportations

One reason why the number of protests against deportations is unrelated to the number of deportations may be that there are qualitative differences in the protests in the different countries. The main actors in the protests are one possible candidate for such qualitative differences. In a first step, however, we are interested to test whether protests against deportations are really driven by bottom-up actors (Anderson, Gibney, and Paoletti 2013; Pérö and Solomos 2011). Figure 4 combines data from all three countries, listing different types of actors by the frequency they occur (as a percentage of all protests recorded). We used red and blue highlights to distinguish between top-down and bottom-up actors. Unsurprisingly, bottom-up actors are indeed dominant in protests against deportations.

Looking at the types more closely, we note that NGOs, civil society organizations (CSO) and churches are most active in protests against deportations. In around 30 per cent of recorded protests they are the main actor. This is closely followed by protests by individuals affected by deportations: people who protest against their own deportation. In around a quarter of the recorded protests they are the main actor, a magnitude we did not expect. Yet we still note that indeed much protest is on behalf of others (H₁).

Other common actors in protests against deportations are individuals. This may reflect the moral outrage mentioned at the outset. Some of these individuals have a personal connection with the person to be deported, such as being a work colleague, a neighbour, or a friend. In other cases, individuals without personal connection protest, often in the form of a letter to the newspaper. Of the top-down actors, overall left-wing parties are the most active in protests against deportations. This is not unexpected given their closeness to NGOs and civil society actors, especially in the case of the Green parties.

In the following we examine the main actors in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland separately (figure 5). Because of the small number of cases involved, we do not focus on individual figures, but try to highlight significant differences from the overall picture. What is more, some of these differences may reflect differences in news reporting and the media landscape rather than differences in protest.
Figure 4: Main actors in protests against deportation; red=bottom-up, blue=top-down; 1993 to 2013 pooled, countries pooled
Figure 5: Main actors in protests against deportation by country; red=bottom-up, blue=top-down; 1993 to 2013 pooled
The first thing to note is that the dominance of bottom-up actors is the same in the three countries. In Austria, there are relatively more protests by left-wing parties, which refers to protests by the Greens. The proportion of protests by individuals is particularly high in Austria. This could indicate weaker organization of protests against deportations, that churches and NGOs have a different profile than in the other two countries, or simply reflect a particular reporting style in the media. In Germany churches play a comparatively greater role than in the other two countries, but when combined with protests where NGO and civil society actors are the main actors, the situation is similar in Germany and Switzerland.

Of the three countries, Switzerland is peculiar in that political parties play a non-trivial role. Contrary to Austria and Germany, it is the right-wing party (SVP/UDC) which appears as an actor, but crucially they campaign for deportation. They do so in the context of a popular initiative for the automatic deportation of criminal foreigners. This initiative which was later accepted by the majority of the Swiss voters includes asylum seekers because it applies to all foreigners. The protests in question are about a change in policy, not individual cases of deportations. At the same time, left-wing parties are largely absent as actors in protests against deportation, including the Green party. This is probably due to the fact that the topic of immigration (and asylum) is “owned” by the SVP/UDC (compare Ruedin 2013a). For that reason the left parties are likely to avoid the topic. Instead, it is NGOs and civil society organizations that play the role of the left-wing parties in Austria and Germany.

In sum, we note that there are many protests by individuals threatened by deportation, that NGOs and churches play a central role, and as predicted there are few top-down actors involved in protests against deportation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actor</th>
<th>before 2003</th>
<th>after 2003</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Person affected</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSO/NGO/churches</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experts/ad-hoc groups</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party: left</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party: centre</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party: right</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government/administration</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Main actors in protests before and after 2003
With an increasing salience of the topic, however, we expect that top-down actors, in particular political parties, are increasingly involved in more recent years. To this end, we compare the main actors before 2003 and after 2003 (the midpoint in the data; table 2). Future research with a larger number of articles will go beyond such a simple contrast.

The proportion of protests by individuals threatened by deportation has remained relatively constant over time. By contrast, protests by NGOs, civil society organizations, and churches have decreased. It is the protests by churches that have declined. This is a decrease in relative terms because we observe the same number of protests in both decades considered. Similarly, there are relatively fewer protests by protests and ad-hoc groups. Were it not for the protests by individuals, it would be tempting to talk of a relative shift away from protests on behalf of those threatened by deportation.

While there are only a few protests by government actors and the administrations – they have strong incentives to depoliticize deportations –, the number and proportion of protests by political parties has increased over time. This is particularly true for left-wing parties, and in the case of Switzerland the right-wing party. With that we observe an increase in protests by top-down actors, a trend towards mainstream (=party) actors, but it should be stressed that among organizations NGO and churches remain dominant in protests against the deportation.

**Whom are the Protests About and What Form Do They Take?**

In this section we examine the contents of the protests in more detail, going beyond the fact that the protests are about deportations. We theorized that the nature of deportations means that most protests are about specific cases. When all countries are pooled, 43 per cent of protests are about policies. This still leaves 56 per cent of protests against deportations to focus on specific cases – be this individuals, or particular families or groups. The situation is somewhat different in Switzerland where protests around the popular initiative on the automatic deportation of criminal foreigners led to protest against (proposed) policies. We would argue that this constitutes a peculiarity and that these protests happened in addition to the kinds of protests found in Austria and Germany (table 3).

While the numbers support our hypotheses, we were surprised about the still relatively large number of protests which target policies. A closer reading of the articles revealed than in most of these cases, a specific deportation – threatened, imminent, or just carried out – is the trigger for the protest. The focus of the protest, however, is on the policies that led to the deportation. Put differently, the individual case falls into the background, at least the way the protest is
reported in the media. Interviews with activists dispel the speculation that the involved actors sometimes give up hope on individual cases and therefore focus on the larger picture. Instead they highlight that in their view individual deportations are symptomatic of a larger ill – namely the policies in question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affected</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>AT</th>
<th>CH</th>
<th>DE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policies</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: About whom is the protest?

There is indeed a qualitative difference between protests by those threatened by deportations and those who protest on their behalf. Of the protests by those directly affected 96 per cent of the protests have the aim to prevent the deportation in question; of the protests made on behalf of those who could be deported, 45 per cent are about specific deportation cases, while 55 per cent focus on policies in general. The high proportion of protest focusing on policies are therefore a consequence of the many protests made on behalf of those affected.

As noted, almost all protests against deportation take a specific case as a trigger to protest – irrespective of whether the protest primarily aims to prevent the deportation in question or change policies. While deportation cases are arguably well suited to get media attention, we argued that this is particularly the case of the cases involve children and women who could be portrayed as particularly vulnerable. However, few of the articles explicitly mention young children (9 per cent of articles) or women (3 per cent of articles). References to families are more common, but often it is not specified whether young children are present. This indicates that children and women are not often instrumentalized to get media attention in protests against deportation.

There are different forms protests deportation can take. Here we differentiate between protest forms that are generally considered conventional forms of political participation, protest forms that are generally considered unconventional forms of political participation, and violent forms (Milbrath and Goel 1977; Barnes et al. 1979; Ruedin 2007). Conventional forms of participation take place within formal politics in a large sense; unconventional forms of participation are not less common put take place outside formal politics. Violent forms of protest are also a form or unconventional political participation (Muller 1979).

Of the conventional forms of political participation, in figure 6 two stand out
Figure 6: Forms of protest, blue = conventional political participation, green = unconventional political participation, red = violent protest; 1993 to 2013 pooled, countries pooled
in terms of frequency: press conferences, and statements/interviews. In both
the media play a central role. In the case of press conferences, members of the
press are invited to attend (who then decide whether to do so), in the case of
statements and interviews, it is the journalist who seeks views and opinions
about deportations. Only one other form of conventional political participation
is relatively frequent, namely court cases, legal action, recourse, and petitions in
legislative bodies. These forms seem relatively common in Switzerland.

Unconventional forms of political participation are also frequent, particularly
demonstrations. Church asylum is a form of protest that is particular to depor-
tations, and it is a relatively common form to protest against deportations. It is
particularly common in Germany. We also frequently came across candlelight
vigils and other events, like a barbecue against deportations. Occupations are a
particular form of protest that seems relatively frequent in the protest against
deportations when compared to protests related to other topics. They seem
more common in Germany than in the other countries.

In the case of protest against deportations, violent forms of protest are almost
exclusive to individuals threatened by deportation. Hunger strikes seem the most
common form of violent protest, followed by self-harm (compare Biggs 2003) –
which we recorded particularly in Austria –, and in rare cases people going on
a rampage (which we classified under riot). Future research will pay attention
to the diffusion of forms of protest within and across countries (Lohmann 1994;
Grund 2009).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Media initiated/important</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventional</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unconventional</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of which: unconventional</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of which: violent</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Forms of protest

Table 4 combines specific forms of protest to focus on the distinction between
conventional and unconventional forms of political participation. Once forms of
protest where the media play a central role are considered separately, it becomes
clear than protests against deportations most commonly use unconventional forms
of political participation. These unconventional forms of political participation
are favoured by NGOs, civil society groups, and churches (55 per cent of protests),
and ad-hoc groups (50 per cent of protests). By contrast, unsurprisingly political
parties and government actors use conventional forms of political participation all the time. We also note that individuals who protest against deportations use unconventional forms of political participation in only 21 per cent of cases, clearly preferring conventional forms of political participation.

Individuals threatened by deportation are likely to use violent forms of protest, or at least these forms of protests are likely to be featured in news reports (48 per cent of protests). Only in 20 per cent of protests do affected individuals use conventional forms of political participation. We assume that this focus on violent forms of protest can be explained with attention seeking in order to prevent the deportation (compare Finkel and Muller 1998). As individuals with a precarious legal status and with a limited social network (compare Walgrave and Wouters 2014), individuals threatened by deportation may find or believe that violent forms of protest are the only way to get enough attention so as to prevent the deportation.

Conclusion

This paper presented the main actors in protests against deportation in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland. People who are threatened by deportation are common actors, and they are likely to use violent forms of protest to gather enough attention in an attempt to prevent the deportation. NGOs, civil society organizations, and churches, by contrast, are also common actors in the case of deportations. They protest on behalf of those affected, and they commonly focus on the policies in place rather than specific deportations. Nonetheless, usually specific deportations – whether threatened, imminent, or already executed – are used as a trigger to protest against deportations in a wider sense (see table 5 for a summary of the hypotheses).7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>H_a</th>
<th>Prediction</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>most claims by NGO, and others not affected</td>
<td>supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>unconventional forms of participation</td>
<td>supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>(NGO) focus on individual cases</td>
<td>supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>women and children mentioned</td>
<td>not supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>over time more party actors</td>
<td>supported</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Summary of Hypotheses

7In future work, we will examine to what extent the bottom-up nature of protest against deportations outlined here is influenced by the methodology – notably the focus on protest. This will lead to a reflection to what extent it is warranted to speak of politicization; the involvement of a variety of actors a priori suggests that this is the case.
Between 1993 and 2013, the number of newspaper articles has increased. It appears that the topic of deportations has become salient enough in recent years to become part of mainstream politics. This means that, increasingly, mainstream political actors – political parties – are active in protests against deportation. It is in particular left-wing parties who become involved, but in the case of Switzerland also the right-wing party who mobilized for deportations. Despite this trend towards the mainstream, NGO and churches remain the dominant actors who protest on behalf of individuals threatened by deportation. In this sense, protest against deportation remain largely bottom-up in nature.

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References


