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In search of clues for governments' communication and public diplomacy strategies

ABSTRACT

Purpose To introduce a theoretical frame regarding the meaning of legitimacy as an intangible asset of the public sector; to test a way of operationalizing legitimacy typologies that allows exploring and comparing how citizens from two countries evaluate the legitimacy of public policies; to suggest implications for governments' legitimacy-building strategies in shared international crisis, such as the refugees coming from the Syrian-region.

Design/methodology/approach Building on Suchman's typology, it was defined and categorized different types of legitimacy into concrete measurable, communication related statements concerning consequential, procedural, structural and personal. For the illustrative example, four focus groups were conducted in two different European societies as a mean to have two poles of comparison.

Findings The paper reports current understanding of legitimacy by citizens, discusses how different legitimacy types might demand different communication and public diplomacy approaches. The basis for hypothesis for further research on how governments should build legitimacy during emerging societal issues such as immigration policies is set.

Practical implications It proposes a typology and its operationalization, discusses how communication might shape legitimacy and profiles the challenge governments have in building it. Within a public diplomacy context, it brings clues for new strategies to the challenge of explaining policies on international crisis combining the tension of domestic with foreign publics.

Originality/value There is little research so far in search for clues for communication strategies for the legitimacy of policies on the 2015 European refugee´s crisis. This contributes to the emerging area of intangible assets in the public sector and tests a focus group research strategy with both hermeneutical and pragmatic aims. Combine public diplomacy theory with public sector intangible assets theory to respond to the tension of internal and external publics demands.

INTRODUCTION

Emerging risks and challenges are applicable concepts while describing today's global society (Beck, Giddens, & Lash, 1994). With it, government communication has been suggested to need improvement to be able to respond to those crises (Sanders & Canel

2013). This is more specially needed when the crisis is shared by governments from different countries, situations in which public diplomacy is particularly challenged as part of a government communication (Canel & Sanders, 2013, p. 88). One of the most recent examples of this setting is the ongoing crisis of more than a million migrants and refugees crossing into Europe since 2015, according to the UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration, IOM. Around 1342,878 had crossed the Mediterranean Sea during 2015 and 2016 (UNHCR, 2016). This figure is the highest since the 90s, and one in two of the migrants are from Syria (UNHCR, 2015). Official data reports that there are already 663 345 registered Syrian refugees in EU28, Norway and Switzerland in the last five years (Migration Policy Center, 2017).

This crisis is creating division and pressure in the EU, but also on international and national governments and public institutions, with subsequent increasingly polarized debates (Hatton, 2016).

Furthermore, present economic and financial crisis is adding to a decrease in trust in public institutions. 41 percent of the general population distrusts governments (Edelmann, 2017). Resources are as well coming under threat and citizens' expectations are being less satisfied than before, being thus governments impelled to legitimize their activities (Carpenter & Krause, 2012; Luoma-aho & Makikangas, 2014; Canel & Luoma-aho, 2015) and subsequently, to strengthen relations with citizens and civil society. 72 percent of the citizens that believe that the system is failing have fear of immigration and 83 percent fear of eroding social values (Edelman, 2017). Greater inequality associated with the crisis comes also with wider gaps between public organizations and citizens (Uslaner, 2010) and, as well, with loss of legitimacy of public sector organizations.

These common problems and challenges, that affect national governments from different countries, require reactions that are also commonly coordinated. In the same way that the refugees' crisis is shared by governments from different European countries who have undergone the Great recession crisis of 2008, it is also shared the challenge of their legitimacy, both at the national and international level. In addressing this challenge, governments cannot avoid to explore how their citizens are assessing their decisions about the refugees coming from the Syrian-region. Institutional theory stands that organizations need to gain and maintain legitimacy to survive, and organizations have legitimacy when

they conform to social expectations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Deephouse & Suchman, 2008).

These challenges raise questions like the following: How similar are social expectations from citizens in different countries regarding their government's policy on Syrian refugees? How should governments address the tension between their legitimacy within their own country, with their legitimacy abroad? How differences might affect these governments' public diplomacies and shape their legitimacy strategies?

We argue that intangible assets theory (and more specifically, the conceptualization of legitimacy as an intangible asset of governments) combined with public diplomacy theory can help in responding to these questions which, we are aware, are ambitious ones, and they are in the ultimate horizon of a research which is at an exploratory stage.

This article is organized as follows: First, the theoretical framework of intangible assets in the public sector is placed conceptually within the public diplomacy research field, stating how both literatures can complement each other and help responding to the crisis of refugees coming from the Syrian region. Second, the paper discusses the value of legitimacy as a central asset, presenting Suchman's typology of moral legitimacy to explore the legitimacy judgment, and suggesting a way to operationalize it. As an illustrative example, different categories of legitimacy are tested in comparable focus group settings of young adults in Finland and Spain. Based on discussion of exploratory findings, some hints for government communication and public diplomacy are suggested.

1. THEORETICAL FRAME:

1.1. THE CHALLENGE FOR GOVERNMENTS' PUBLIC DIPLOMACY IN MIGRATION CRISIS

The essence of public diplomacy is related to the explanation of governmental policies, as is referred to in one of the most often cited definition: public diplomacy is the "government´s process of communicating with foreign publics in an attempt to bring about understanding for its nation´s ideas and ideals, its institutions and culture, as well as national goals and current policies" (Tuch, 1990, p. 3). It is clear that this traditional definition means government communication with foreign audiences. There is, however, other demarcations of the concept in which a domestic audience is also deemed. Szondi, for instance, speaks of what he calls an "engaging" and an "explaining" approaches of

public diplomacy: "either as the domestic input from citizens for foreign policy formulation (engaging approach), or explaining foreign policy goals and diplomacy to domestic public (explaining approach)" (Szondi, 2008, p. 6). Despite those are defined as internal, Szondi argues that they are also relevant in foreign public diplomacy context (ibid), and we argue in this paper that in situations such the European crisis of Syrian refugees, this internal/external delineation of public diplomacy audiences no longer stands.

Looked from an European international perspective, the question rises if in the members' states of the EU can we talk about an internal or external perspective. Szondi (2010) considers that EU public diplomacy is external, only outside its borders. Therefore, there is a challenge for EU governments' public diplomacies, that of "achieving consistency and coordination is pivotal though it is utopian to call for a ´single voice´ for the EU, whose thrust is diversity" (ibid. p. 341). Being the case that domestic communication is mostly left up to the states governments, the latter are required to develop strategies that think of their audiences at two levels, the European and the national one; audiences whose aims and concerns might conflict each other. In the case of the European crisis of Syrian refugees, the question is, again, How should governments address the tension between their legitimacy within their own country, with their legitimacy abroad?

We argue that intangible assets theory combined with public diplomacy theory can help in affording this tension for two reasons. First, because public diplomacy literature can inspire governmental legitimacy strategies about those policies whose audiences go beyond national borders. As is discussed below, both the engaging and the explaining approaches of public diplomacy are considered on the light of legitimacy as an intangible asset. Operationalization of a legitimacy typology is revealing information about how domestic Spaniards behave about an international issue, that of Syrian refugees, and thus how the Spanish government should formulate its international/European policy about the issue (engaging approach); it is also revealing information about how people judge the legitimacy of the European migration policy on Syrian refugees as applied by two central governments, and thus the analysis will provide governments with clues about how they should be communicating it to domestic audiences (explaining approach). But again, the boundaries of audiences in this migration crisis are increasingly blurring and this entails that governments should search how exactly their audiences are behaving in order to attune the engaging and explaining public diplomacy strategies with the people they serve.

Second, because intangible assets literature can inspire public diplomacy research in addressing the challenge of going beyond a conventional public diplomacy approach to "put the 'public' back into diplomacy" (Snow, 2009, p. 7,8). Snow elaborates on the meaning of this challenge as follows: instead of involving citizens in an asymmetrical one-way, public diplomacy should go for a relational approach, focusing on mutual understanding, dialogic exchange, two-way symmetric and change in behavior (Snow, 2009, p. 7,8). We advance that public sector intangible assets literature can be helpful in this endeavor, since the notion and practice of intangible assets are essentially about searching and calibrating audiences' needs and expectations, and no asset can be built without a relational approach (Canel & Luoma-aho, in press).

1.2 LEGITIMACY AS AN INTANGIBLE ASSET

Intangible assets have become important factors of value in today knowledge economy. The concept has been largely developed in the private sector. It is seen as non-physical in nature, which value derives from legal and contractual rights, entailing mighty future profit (Lev & Daum, 2004). There is a wide variety of intangible assets (copyright, patents, intellectual capital, brand recognition, goodwill, reputation, etc.), and there are new concepts that are emerging along with new needs. It seems reasonable to think that new internationally shared problems such as that of migration policies are challenging national governments to build assets (in this case, the legitimacy of a policy) with value for audiences who have different valuing criteria.

In a fast paced changing world, unpredictable citizens' expectations emphasize the relevance of intangible value management in the public sector and, referring to the object of study of present article, the need of communicating to legitimize governments both nationally and internationally.

Legitimacy can be an intangible asset conferred on or granted to an organization by organizational stakeholders (Hamilton 2006, 332). It is "the degree of cultural support of an organization" (Meyer & Scott 1983, 201) and justifies the organization's role in the social system, as legitimacy is itself a resource (Ashforth & Gibbs 1990, 177). While increase of legitimacy affects an organization's ability to garner resources, loss damages external ties and taints reputation. Legitimacy is regarded by scholars as a key factor for

the survival of organizations as well as for their growth and success (Suchman1995; Hamilton 2006; Tyler 2006; Díez et al. 2010, 128).

The value of being perceived as legitimate might be becoming a crucial factor for the survival or public organizations in a context of crisis of trust. With the organizational needs for public support, legitimacy "provides a 'reservoir of support' for institutions and authorities" (Tyler, 2006, 381). It shapes also people's reaction to public measures and rules, facilitating the ability to gain decision acceptance and to promote rule-following, thus saving resources required by systems of deterrence strategies and incentives. "When the public views government as legitimate, it has an alternative basis for support during difficult times" (Tyler, 2006, 377). On those periods, legitimacy becomes a reservoir of goodwill that "allows the institutions of government to go against what people may want at the moment without suffering debilitating consequences" (Gibson, 2004, p.289; cited in Tyler, 2006). Finally, legitimacy is also associated with trust to the extent that legitimate organizations are perceived not only as more worthy, but also as more meaningful, predictable, and credible (Hamilton, 2006; Tyler, 2006).

In building this intangible asset, government communication might play a role to the extent that legitimacy is related with collective accounts and rationale explanations about what an organization is doing and why. In situations of international crises, the development of these collective accounts demands combining an engaging and explaining approach to public diplomacy strategies with different audiences.

1.3 WHAT DOES LEGITIMACY CONSIST OF?

The concept of legitimacy has been studied under various underpinnings, stemming from Suchman's definition as "generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions" (1995, p. 574).

There are other definitions relevant within this research proposal, that see legitimacy as judgment about an organization's actions, made by its strategic audiences, according to cultural norms and standards (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Suchman, 1995; Deephouse, 1996; Tyler, 2006; Bitektine, 2011). The key idea in conceptualizing and building organizational legitimacy is that this intangible asset connotes "congruence" between the

social values associated with or implied by organizational activities and the norms of acceptable behavior in the larger social system. Citizens' judgments of legitimacy of public institutions reveal certain logic between social values, norms and expectations with the actions, performance and outcomes of organizations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Suchman, 1995; Deephouse, 1999; Deephouse & Suchman 2008; Bitektine, 2011).

1.4 TYPES OF LEGITIMACY AND COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC DIPLOMACY STRATEGIES

There is extent literature which distinguishes types of legitimacy to differentiate analytical processing that yields different types of judgment, that can be rendered with respect to the organization based on the same set of observed characteristics (Scott & Meyer, 1991; Deephouse & Carter 2005; Golant & Sillince 2007; Díez et al. 2010; Bitektine 2011). Typologies are helpful conceptual tools to explore the dynamics of legitimacy and thus identify different aspects, angles and objects on which the legitimacy judgment is focused.

A seminal typology is the one provided by Suchman (1995) about moral legitimacy, and includes:

a) *Consequential legitimacy*, based on evaluations of outcomes of an organization's activity. The judge refers the judgment to what the organization accomplishes (outcomes, results and achievements), for what consequential measures of organizational effectiveness are applied.

b) *Procedural legitimacy* is based on favorable evaluations of the soundness of the procedures, processes and means (Berger, Berger & Kellner 1973, p. 53). Applied to the public sector, procedural legitimacy refers to the process followed in public management (such as dialogue, consensus seeking, following procedural requirements).

c) *Structural legitimacy* refers to organizational structures: "audiences see the organization as valuable and worthy of support because its structural characteristics locate it within a morally favored taxonomy category" (Suchman 1995, 581). This judgment focuses on the general organizational features, including buildings, resources, quality control, working policies, etc.

d) Finally, *personal legitimacy* refers to the person who represents the organization, either referring to his/her professional capacity or to personality features like, among others, empathy, communication and integrity.

How governments communicate will shape their legitimacy (Wæraas & Byrkjeflot, 2012), and legitimation has been seen as a particular mode of strategic communication in the public sector (Aggerholm & Thomsen, 2016); but legitimacy takes time to develop and extend (Grimmelikhuijsen & Meijer 2015). The elaboration of legitimacy typology was proposed to identify which is the angle citizens emphasize when assessing a central government's policy about refugees. For instance, Gustavsen and Pierre (2014) found evidence that the perceptions of legitimacy rooted in both procedure and performance of local government exist among citizens in Norway and Sweden in a synergetic and mutually reinforcing relationship; but differences were found by policy areas: the performance-based legitimacy appears to be regarded as more important in the case of elderly care, while procedural legitimacy is valued as more important in the case of building and planning policies. Researching the dynamics of these social judgments will contribute to the understanding on how to design public policies and to manage public institutions legitimacy to meet citizens' expectations and needs, and in the case of the policy which is the focus of this paper, about the national/international scope of peoples' concerns.

2.   ILLUSTRATIVE   EXAMPLE   OF   LEGITIMACY   ASSESSMENTS: METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The aim is to take this real situation of the migrant crisis, transversal across European countries, as content based approach for a case study. Due to the fact that this issue is now being discussed in the public sphere and is well known, it is quite interesting to find out the perceptions on the minds of the citizens related to the categories of legitimacy as well as the course of the discussions. Due to research design resources, we decided to limit data collecting to two European countries, one from the south, Spain and other from the north, Finland, as a mean to have two poles of comparison.

There are interesting differences between Spain with Finland: anecdotal evidence suggests that while Finnish society seems to trust more in the system than in civil servants, Spanish society does the opposite. Spain has shown lower trust and satisfaction rates than Finland in public services. Some changes have been going on since 2011: while Spain shows a continuous increase of confidence and satisfaction in the public sector, Finland shows a slight deterioration in the image of the public administration (EUPAN, 2011, p. 7).

As the refugees' crisis is being discussed intensively on a European level, it is also an opportunity to study if there is on the first sight differences between countries. "There is a disjuncture between public opinion and policy developments and that liberal immigration policies have emerged because negative public opinion is not factored into elite decision making or institutional developments" argues Lahav (2004, p.1151).

Consequently, our Research Questions are:

RQ1 - How do European young adults assess legitimacy of the central government on the policy of refugees?

This question has the following sub-questions:

a) Do four categories of the moral typology apply to young citizens in Spain and Finland?

b) Is there a predominant category?

c) What comparisons between countries tell about legitimacy?

RQ2- What can be said about possible practical implications for the building of legitimacy as an intangible asset of governments and subsequently, about engaging and explaining public diplomacy strategies about the European crisis of Syrian refugees?

The paper aims to test whether the four categories of moral legitimacy suggested by the literature and theory apply in Spain and Finland, on the case on central governments' policies about refugees coming from Syrian-region. Furthermore, it aims on an explorative research striving for a hermeneutic interest with a high "face validity" in a setting, as group interaction is also translated into data. Krueger (1994) points the Focus Group as a method that has the previous mentioned characteristics. Focus Groups allow "to observe the process of collective sense-making in action" (Wilkinson, 1998, p. 181)

In the present research, in April 2016 the focus group was conducted among young adults with high education in Spain and Finland (8 people in each group) to identify their judgments as well as their prioritization on the above four types of legitimacy. To respect homogeneity of the groups, students from the same area of study were chosen. The focus group was performed with the maximum time of one hour. Participants were confronted with some open questions regarding a thinking logical component on government policies

about refugees and also emotional and rational moral personal connotation. Further questions were focused on the handling part and a moral judgment around the action from the government. The last open question was about the specific government in power at the country and the same moral judgment based on "doing right" and "doing wrong".

On a second step, reduction into categories after a semantic clustering was conducted, according to a pre-created sorting cards and prioritization, as well as a game of a priority "diamond". Participants were given 12 cards, each one including a statement about the governmental policy on refugees. There were four statements referring to every type of legitimacy. In that, both activities, individual and group priority, as well as negotiation was performed before the consensus and agreement. Beside the questions, this situation allowed us to observe processes and the meaning negotiation, as well as the positions for communicative propositions along the matrix of opinions. Therefore, not only positive prioritization was done, but also negative.

3. DATA ANALYSIS

3.1. HOW DO SPANISH YOUNG PEOPLE ASSESS LEGITIMACY OF THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT ON THE POLICY OF REFUGEES?

So far, there is little research on the legitimacy judgment about the central government in Spain. There is quantitative analysis which shows that the economic crisis is modifying the way people judge the government and, more particularly, trust it. A trend in time is found between 1995 and 2010 according to which the more the economic crisis approaches, the more people refer their assessment about trust to experiential variables (public policies outcomes) versus inertial (ideology preferences). It seems that when in crisis, people tend to trust the Prime Minister if they have a job and the economy goes well (Canel & Echart, 2011; Canel & García-Molero, 2013). However, in 2011 and associated with a higher visibility of corruption scandals, Spanish citizens seem to care more about the legitimacy of the process (honesty, transparency and dialogue) than the legitimacy of outcomes (Canel, 2014).

How do Spanish young adults assess legitimacy in 2016? Participants were asked first to eliminate from the given 12 cards those which they thought were less important. The most excluded ones were those referring to the consequential legitimacy (see Table 1).

Excluded Categories -Spain		
Number of times excluded	**Type of legitimacy**	**Statement**
1	Consequential	Governments should find a way to maintain balance in society despite the refugee crisis
5	Consequential	As long as the crisis is solved somehow, the government is allowed to say whatever necessary
3	Consequential	Achievements and results are more crucial than the process followed by the government
5	Personal	The top individual politicians working with the refugee problem do so with their whole hearts and dedication
3	Personal	The top individual politicians are competent to address the issue
1	Process	Transparency with citizens about Government negotiations is more important than the final outcome
2	Structure	The political system in Europe has been established to solve such problems

Table 1. Excluded categories for Spain

Figure 1 represents the diamonds in which cards were prioritized by participants of both groups. There seems to be relevant coincidences: both groups gave the first priority to the same card, which is the one referring to structural type and is worded as follows: "The ministries and public organizations involved in the refugees' issue should be qualified to address this challenge". For both groups almost the consequential legitimacy does not appear in the first three rows (only once for the first group). Finally, the structural, personal and procedural legitimacies have quite a similar presence in the first three rows in the diamond.

Regarding the process of completing the diamond, it could be noticed some meaning negotiation through communication that will be described, after the outcome of the prioritization. First, three categories of the moral typology apply to young adults in Spain when judging the central governmental policy on refugees: structural, procedural and personal. In the first three rows of the diamond, at least one of each of these types is included. Second, the structural category seems to be predominant in both diamonds, even more than the personal and the procedural. Third, the consequential category seems to be the less important. It was the mostly excluded in the first step of the group discussion, and it only appears just once in the first three rows and only in one of the diamonds.

Replies given by participants to the open question "Independently from the cards, which of the four types is most important to you" show a moving towards the dimension of structure. While one said at first that outcomes of a public policy is what matters the most,

the others added the relevance of the other dimensions, up to the point of explicitly underlying the structure as an important dimension:

"A qualified politician guarantees good processes as also results; but if you focus on results, you might not have good results"; "If you have a good process, your chances of getting good results are higher"; "You need to have good structures to have all the rest good".
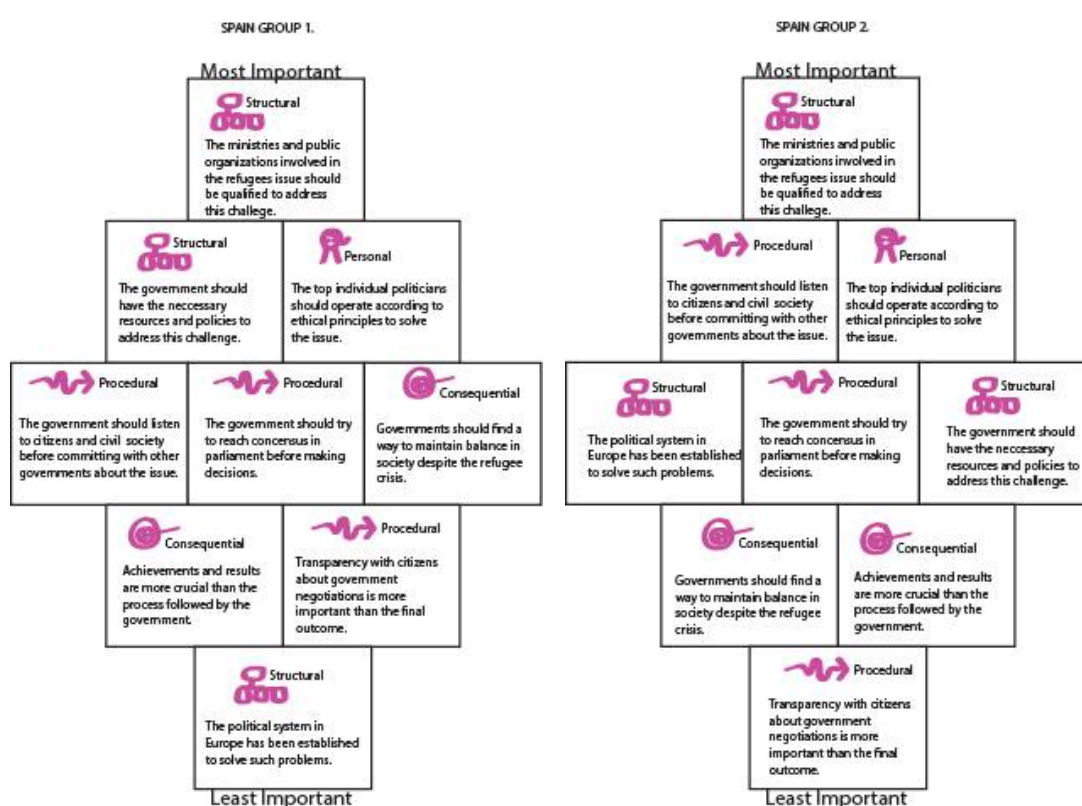
Figure 1. The legitimacy typology diamonds in Spain

The illustrative results show evidence of more care about the structures and process, less about leaders, and much less about results. Part of the explanation for these findings can be found through analysis of the sociological context where the present situation is embedded. The issue of immigration in Spain is not a new one, and the Syrian-region refugees does not represent the hit of the immigration problem on one side. It was in the year 2005 when regulation was very flexible for immigrants, and then in 2007 and 2011, that the number of immigrants in Spain became the highest. After that, and probably because of the economic

crisis, the flow of immigrants became significantly lower. It might be happening that, at present, people are more sensible to the suffering of the refugees ("it is a matter of protecting human rights" said one of the participants) than to the domestic balance of immigrants with national citizens.

In fact, in the focus group talk, the problem was framed by participants not in terms of a matter of having to include refugees in the Spanish society, but rather the opposite, the government not fulfilling the commitment with the European Union to receive 18000 refugees from the Syrian-region. The aspects which were stressed in assessing the government were: first, passiveness and lack of action to solve the problem and to fulfill what had been compromised at the European Union.; second, failures in communication about the issue: the government carries a "more rational than emotional" communication ("the government forgets about the suffering of the people", a participant said), while at the same time moves at a "cosmetic" level, trying to appear welcoming to refugees but not doing anything to in fact accept them; finally, there is a problem of lack of credibility that "this government has, like it does in other issues".

It could therefore happen that having "outcomes" solved (at present there is not in Spain an overwhelming problem of immigrants) and at failing leaders, people care about structures in an attempt to guarantee from them, subsequent outcomes and processes. Regardless what the cause is for this, what seems to be shown by these evidences is that concerns of the Spanish audience are more driven by international/European matters (they negatively judge their government for not fulfilling the commitment with the European Union to receive refugees) than by domestic matters (the possible negative consequences of the coming of the refugees). Finally, it can be accentuated the particular stress given to procedures and more specifically to communication as part of the process, confirming thus previous research findings about the increasing concern about processes (Canel, 2014).

3.2 HOW DO FINNISH YOUNG PEOPLE ASSESS LEGITIMACY OF THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT ON THE POLICY OF REFUGEES?

In Finland, as in Spain, participants were asked first to eliminate from the given 12 cards those which they thought were less important. The most excluded ones were those

referring to the consequential legitimacy (see Table 2) and some referring to personal legitimacy.

Excluded categories for Finland		
Number of times excluded	**Type of legitimacy**	**Statement**
5	Consequential	As long as the crisis is solved somehow, the government is allowed to say whatever necessary
2	Consequential	Achievements and results are more crucial than the process followed by the government
2	Personal	The top individual politicians working with the refugee problem do so with their whole hearts and dedication
1	Personal	The top individual politicians are competent to address the issue
5	Structure	The political system in Europe has been established to solve such problems

Table 2. Excluded categories for Finland

Figure 2 represents the diamonds in which cards were prioritized by participants of both groups. The resulting legitimacy diamonds were quite similar. In fact, both groups listed as the most important statement "Government should find a way to maintain balance in society despite the refugee crisis", which refers to consequential legitimacy. The less important was the statement referring to personal legitimacy worded as "the top individual politicians and leading authorities are competent to address this issue". The personal legitimacy almost does not appear in the first three rows (only once for the first group).

There were three further points of analyses. First, three categories of the moral typology apply to young adults in Finland when judging the central governmental policy on refugees: consequential, structural, and procedural. In the first three rows of the diamond at least one of each type was included. Second, the consequential category seems to be predominant. As already mentioned, it was selected by both groups as the most important one. Although in the second and third level mostly structural and procedural issues could be found. Third, as the least important in the diamond, both groups in Finland listed the personal aspects of legitimacy, with the statements "the top individual politicians and leading authorities are competent to address this issue" and "the top individual politicians working with the refugee problem do so with their whole hearts and dedication", hinting to the low relevance of individual politicians and the low importance of personal legitimacy. This is in line with previous findings on societal values, where the Nordic

countries are often described as relying on the system and institutions (institutionalized trust).
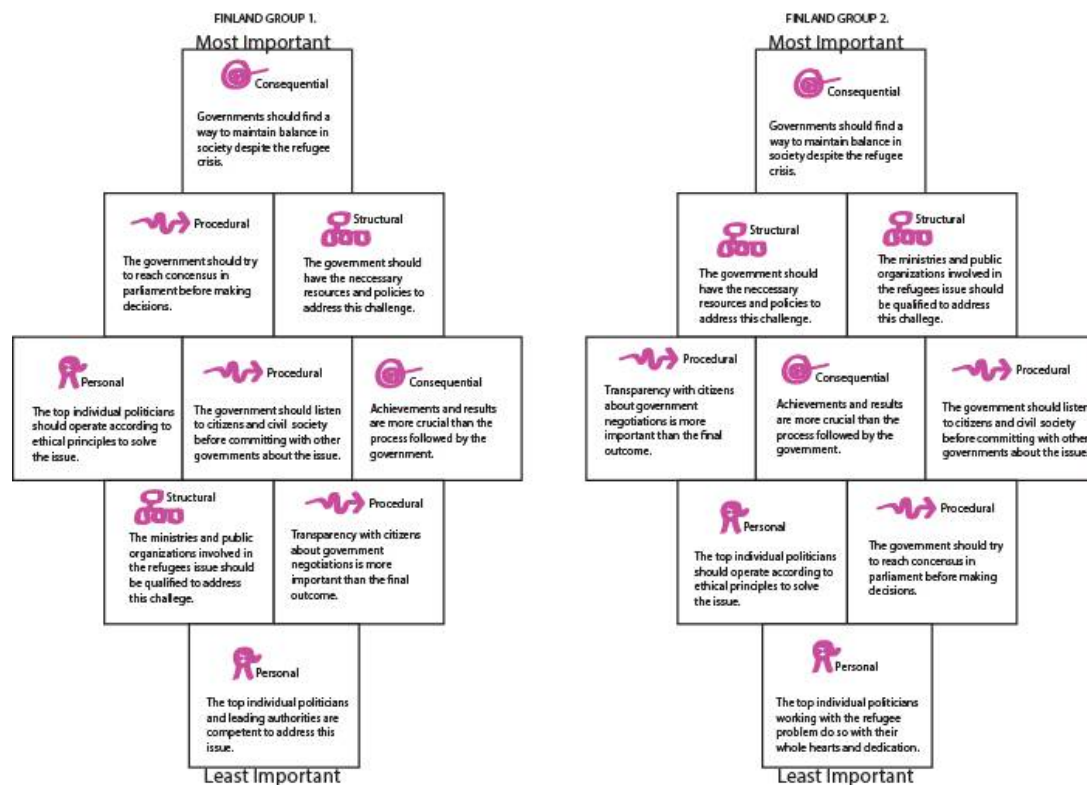

Figure 2. The legitimacy typology diamonds in Finland

It seems then that what matters in Finland is mostly results. As the group discussion progressed, it was clear that since the issue had shaken Finnish society deeply, keeping balance in society between national citizens and immigrants was a number one priority. Mass immigration is a novel phenomenon in Finland, since after the WWs, no major immigration has occurred.

Because of the universal nature of the country welfare state, immigration of the 30 000 Syrian refugees that arrived during 2015 is seen as a major disruption and responsibility for the Finnish people paying for it as well as the overall society and its atmosphere, because the system needs to equally receive and rehabilitate all arriving individuals into the country. With a population of merely 5 million, the amount of arrivals has a major impact, especially during a financial recession, when people in society are already dissatisfied to a certain degree. Hence, the balance in society has been shaken, and the harmonious nature of the Nordics is a priority to return.

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS AND OUTLOOK

Though this was a preliminary look into the legitimacy estimations of the two countries, the results highlighted well some clues about what are common dynamics of citizens' legitimacy judgments as well as cultural differences regarding the same issue in Northern and Southern parts of Europe; and thus, it has provided some evidence to support the statement that exploring the intangible asset of legitimacy can give hints about what should be taken into account when crafting government communication and public diplomacy strategies about the Syrian refugees crisis. It was found that in both countries what was left out by both groups was the same. Both in Finland and in Spain most participants excluded almost unanimously one of the statements referring to consequential legitimacy: "As long as the crisis is solved somehow, the government is allowed to say whatever necessary". Though the crisis seems to be quite challenging for the Finnish society, apparently citizens don't grant the government discretional margin to hold and release the information they deem necessary as long as the crisis is solved. The same happens in Spain. In both countries, people care about what governments say. This stresses the idea that in addressing a shared crisis, governments should attempt to somehow coordinate among them their communication and public diplomacies strategies, trying to portray with common frames the problem they share; but they need to do so parting from good analyses of the audiences to which they address the strategies. And this research has shown that exploring the intangible asset of legitimacy has revealed two different audiences in two different countries.

In more specific terms, this paper asserts that not all of different categories of moral typology apply; and that they apply to some extent differently. Building on previous studies, like European Social surveys, democracy studies and societal comparisons, Finns would be more inclined to lean on structure and process, whereas the Spanish would be more likely to lean on individual legitimacy (Luoma-aho, Moreno & Verhoeven, 2017). This was partly the case in the results, as in the top three most important in Finland were consequential, structural and procedural, whereas the top three in Spain were structural, procedural and personal. This might be delineating an important difference in audience

that need to be taken into account when thinking of public diplomacy strategies: while concerns of the Spanish audience are more international/European-policy oriented (they illegitimate their government for not fulfilling the acquired commitment with the European Union to welcome 18000 Syrian refugees), concerns of Finnish people are more domestic (top priority is consequential legitimacy, the possible negative impact on their society that coming refugees might have). While the Finnish government might be able to still focus on a domestic-concerned audience when undertaking both engaging and explaining public diplomacies (with the hurdles that this means for building its legitimacy at the European Union), the Spanish government deals with a more blurring audience, what might be advantageous: in engaging with the European Union in migration policies, the Spanish government will have the support of an audience that is more *Europeannish*-concerned, and thus when communicating migration policies at home, its legitimacy will be tied by its legitimacy abroad.

Causes for this difference might lay on cultural characteristics ("it is a matter of human rights" for Spanish people); or it could be that it is the urgency of the issue what determines legitimacy: top priority of consequential legitimacy in Finland seemed to arise from the urgency of the issue challenging society, while mass immigration is not a new issue for Spain, and as such it was seen as a structural more than urgency one. It could be argued from here, that a clue to find out how the legitimacy judgment is going to be primed in a country can be shown in the intensity of the challenge and with it, give orientation to communication and public diplomacy strategies.

Second, this exploratory research has also shown that, at least in the case of Spain, a failed communication process might have lead the judgment to (dis)trust, whatever the outcomes were. In other words, outcomes in this country are shadowed by a government communication seen by its recipients as too rational and less human, and far from citizens' concerns. This means that the (lack of) credibility about domestic policies might be influencing the legitimacy judgement about how it is acting abroad; also the reverse could apply, that the lack of legitimacy about the government's performance abroad (not standing by the commitments acquired at the European level) could shape the legitimacy judgement about domestic policies. In a way these findings are saying that, at the European Union, the explaining approach (telling your citizens what you do abroad) of public diplomacy might end converging with the engaging approach (telling abroad what your country and citizens do), and particularly so at the sort of policies associated to migration crises where the international/domestic line gets blurred. It could be asserted

from here that in cases of more European policies-concerned audiences like that of Spanish citizens, governments should combine their communication strategies with their public diplomacy strategies. This means that in addressing shared crisis such as the refugees one in the European Union, governments should explore better what the possibilities are for legitimacy strategies that they could share with the governments of other countries. It also would imply involving actively in the arenas in which public discussion is developed to establish the social criteria against which the legitimacy judgment about refugees will be formulated. And finally, it would entail transformations in the way the communication function is organized in a government, in order to coordinate better the central unit with those governmental entities that have responsibilities in foreign policies.

These exploratory findings corroborate the conclusion reached in studies about government communication in different countries (Sanders & Canel, 2013) that suggests that governments need to move their communication function from tactic to a strategic approach in order to build intangible assets. In managing legitimacy, governments should track public opinion for a continuous legitimacy gaps calibration. In this sense, the outcomes also have shown that intangible assets research can inspire in undertaking the challenge of "putting the public back to diplomacy" above referred to: exploring how much people care about domestic versus European issues helps governments calibrate better different value criteria, and thus, a better interaction with their audiences in crafting their public diplomacy strategies.

Finally, regarding the methodology design of the focus group, this research tested a strategy with both hermeneutical and pragmatic aims, as a mean to find positions along the matrix of opinions with positive and negative prioritization; and observes sensemaking processes and meaning negotiation. Specially the game in a form of a priority "diamond", where 12 cards were given to participants with statements to perform a task, was successful as mean to collect data on individual and group priorities, as well as negotiation performed before and while the process of consensus and agreement building. Still, cultural differences should be noticed, as the discussion was much livelier in Spain, whereas the Finnish groups were more task-oriented focusing on fitting their own views onto the shared diamonds.

Proposing a typology for moral legitimacy with four dimensions and having evidence that those cannot only be operationalized into research but also use as a hermeneutic

knowledge to do further technical and even critical research, is a major contribution of this article. The paper was also able to verify by the empirical work, that the four dimensions are tied to cultural differences and that every culture and group, or country, have their own judgment and expectations priorities. Despite, it should be reminded that the fact that only two countries, with one focus-group and two groups are little for comparison. Consequently, the replication of the study in more countries and various groups could be a possibility to further reveal detailed insights and maybe some main patterns.

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