LONELY IN THE MASSES

A comparative enquiry into the social embeddedness of protesters

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ABSTRACT:

LONELY IN THE MASSES. A comparative enquiry into the social embeddedness of protesters.

Social movement theory suggests the indispensability of formal and informal networks for the mobilization for collective action. Examining protest survey evidence of over 8,000 protesters in sixteen demonstrations, across countries and across issues, we find that in all demonstrations, a considerable amount of people shows up alone or with their partner or family. To account for these 'lonely' marchers that, apparently, have not been mobilized via social networks, we test several hypotheses. Our analyses show that political attitudes and mobilization patterns are most effective in accounting for different degrees of social mobilization and embeddedness. Protesters that attend a demonstration on their own or with their families are more preoccupied with the issue of grievance; they are more convinced by family and friends; they decide late to participate, enjoy little support in their friends networks and are far less members of organizing organizations. Finally, they are far more convinced that the demonstration they take part in will be effective. In short, auto-mobilizers are more preoccupied with the issue at stake, and believe more than others that collective action might change the unfavourable situation.

A comparative enquiry into the social embeddedness of protesters

based on large-scale protest surveying

INTRODUCTION

Stripping down social movement theory to its core, one comes to people. People are the cornerstone of both social movements and collective action. For social movements, membership figures and protest turnouts come first. The more members movements are able to attract, the larger their political impact, the larger their visibility, the larger their mobilization, and thus, once more, the more members they are able to attract. The same more or less applies to turnout numbers. Movement recruitment and protest mobilization are a movement's first concern. Both recruitment and mobilization are - this is perhaps the most central claim of the whole social movement and political participation literature – in essence *social* processes. In their seminal study on why some people participate while others do not, Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995) give a very straightforward answer: people participate because they *want* to, because they *can*, and because they are *asked* to. Wanting, being able and being asked all are social processes; people do not want, they are not able nor are they asked on their own.

The literature overwhelmingly states that participants – in this paper: protesters - are more socially embedded than non-participants precisely because mobilization/recruitment is a social process. In this study, we want to tackle the social embeddedness claim from a different angle. Our aim is not to reiterate the same research to come to the same conclusion that, indeed, the average activist is more socially embedded than her average passive counterpart. Rather, our study compares different groups *among* activists. Ours is the following research

question: *given the social 'bias' in the mobilization literature, are there any protesters who are observably <u>not</u> mobilized via social processes? If that is the case and we find such protesters, how can we explain that these people show up and participate anyway, although they are not recruited via social networks?* The sheer existence of these 'lonely' protesters would challenge the socially biased mobilization literature – it is possible for people to participate even without having been convinced, enabled and asked by others. Then, social networks are no necessary condition for mobilization and participation. In this paper, we want to go further and try to account for a-social mobilization. Therefore, the study will systematically compare the 'solos' among our demonstrators with the 'socios' and search for systematic differences between both groups. Are they any different? And can these differences explain their presence not being mobilized as the others? In short: what is the alternative for social mobilization?

How straightforward our research question might seem, until recently it was impossible to tackle it because the necessary data were lacking. Sure, in line with Barnes & Kaase (1979), since many years large scale datasets, based on population samples and containing participants and non-participants are being used to gauge for trends in non-conventional political particiapation . But the number of activists in these studies always remains limited making it difficult to compare between groups of activists (Jennings and Andersen 2003). An even more important problem these studies pose for our purpuse, is that they hardly tell us anything about actual mobilization, since they assess it *in general* and do not gauge specific mobilization processes. As these studies completely décontextualize participation they make it impossible to assess its (varying) degree of social embeddedness. Recently, though, an alternative research design started to gain popularity: protest surveys. Protest surveying consists of conducting surveys among actual protesters at protest events. Protest surveys are context dependent: they question participants in a *specific* protest event.

Consequently they are much better suited to embark upon the questions raised above. In this paper, we draw upon a unique dataset containing protest survey evidence on more than 8,000 participants in 16 different protest events in 8 countries and across 8 different protest issues. Such highly diverse and comparative evidence presents a very tough test for all theories, hypotheses and expectations. If we would find recurring patterns in all cases, this would make for robust findings.

First, we review the research literature and show that social embeddedness is widely considered as a necessary precondition for participation. Second, we present our data and explain the research design of protest surveying. Third, we turn to the evidence and assess whether lonely protesters – operationalized as people who show up on a demonstration on their own – exist across issue and across countries. Fourth, we briefly formulate some hypotheses how we might account for a-social mobilization. Fifth, we multivariately compare solos with socios. We end with a conclusion and discussion section.

1. MOBILIZATION IS A SOCIAL MATTER

Mobilization is the process whereby people overcome barriers to participate. *All* these barriers, the literature claims, are overcome in a social context. People become involved simply because they are close to people who are already involved in the movement and are preoccupied with its issues, and "… it is through these links that potential activists develop a certain vision of the world, acquire information and the minimum competences necessary for collective action, and learn from the example of those already involved, receiving both stimuli and opportunities."(della Porta and Diani 1999: 114) People are, thus, primarily mobilized through other people. Networks are preconditions for collective action; the literature claims it is (almost) impossible to imagine collective action without networks. Why?

Mobilization means transforming an often vague affinity with a movement and its stance, into a propensity to take part in one of its actions, and, finally, into effective participation. In between, many barriers, in terms of perceived costs and benefits, must be surmounted (Bedoyan, Van Aelst and Walgrave 2004; Klandermans 1984). Those in society that are sympathetic to a movement – the movement's *mobilization potential* - have to be convinced of the importance of the issue at stake. This is the process of *consensus mobilization* (Klandermans and Oegema 1987). These potential participants, in a next step, must be motivated to actually participate. In addition, they have to be able to overcome all practical problems related to participating (e.g. time pressures, other engagements, limited knowledge of place of protest, bad weather…). In technical terms: consensus mobilization needs to be turned into *action mobilization*. Analyses have shown that this process is a drop-out race: eventually, only a tiny part of the mobilization potential, not even 5%, undertakes concrete action (Klandermans 1984). At each step of the mobilization process people drop out.

Those effectively overcoming all barriers are able to do so mainly because they are embedded in social networks – from formal movement networks to personal networks of family and friends – that act as recruitment channels. The list of studies underlining this point is sheer endless (Diani and McAdam 2002; Klandermans 1984; McAdam and Paulsen 1993; McCarthy 1996; Morales 2005; Passy 2002; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Snow, Zurcher, and Ekland-Olson 1980). The more one moves from mobilization potential, over consensus mobilization to action mobilization and actual participation, the more networks become vital. Disseminating information about upcoming protest events, the first step of mobilization, for example, is surely imaginable without social networks. Motivating people to participate, however, pre-eminently happens in social contexts in which people interact, discuss and convince each other (Walgrave and Klandermans 2006). Also taking the final, practical

barriers is more easily done socially. For example: if people agreed to go to a demonstration together but the weather turns out to be bad, chances are high that most of them will participate notwithstanding the bad weather; they feel obliged to keep their promises to each other and show up. Without an arrangement with others, they are more likely to stay at home: nobody expects them to keep their promise. In short: only the strong survive the knockout race; and 'strong' here means: socially embedded.

Social embeddedness can take many forms. Many social networks, from formal and organizational to informal and personal, can operate as functional equivalents when it comes to mobilization. People are mobilized for collective action through different mobilizing channels, ranging from movement-internal mobilization efforts (e.g. member meetings, leaflets, direct mail actions, advertisements, posters, www- and e-mail actions) to movement-external mobilization efforts (e.g. media reporting). These channels can be open, targeting the population at large (e.g. mass media), or they can be closed, targeting only a segment of the population with specific characteristics (Walgrave and Klandermans 2006). Either way, being integrated in a network increases the chances that one will be targeted with a mobilizing message. For example: people with friends or acquaintances that are already active within social movements are more likely to take part in movement actions than others (Della Porta 1988; Gould 1993; Klandermans 1997). This is what Passy (2002) calls the 'structural-connection' function of networks.

How the message about the protest event is disseminated is one thing, more important is how this information is processed by potential activists. Scholars seem to agree on the fact that this processing – motivating people, helping them to take barriers - happens in smaller, interpersonal networks that are either formal (associations of all kinds, churches…) or informal micromobilization contexts of colleagues, friends, neighbors and family (McAdam 1988; McCarthy 1996). Embeddedness in networks helps people to take positive decisions

about participation. Passy (2002) calls this the 'decision shaping' function of social networks. Motivation, in part, consists of a (rational) calculation of the costs and benefits of participation: do the pros outweigh the cons? These estimations and expectations about costs and benefits are hugely influenced by other people. In Granovetter's (1978) threshold model for collective behavior, for example, the major threshold for engaging in collective behavior is the amount of people that engaged in the action before them. Each person has a personal participation threshold depending on the amount of (perceived) other participants. Obviously, this information about other's willingness to participate is conveyed via social networks. People estimate the turnout based on what they see happening around them in their social networks. It is their expectation about others' behavior that motivates them, and these expectations are shaped in their networks and via social contacts (Klandermans 1984). There is an obvious difference between formal and informal networks. People who are embedded in formal movement networks are already convinced of the cases (consensus mobilization). The movement just needs to activate its action mobilizing machinery, by stressing selective incentives, collective benefits, and the importance of each individual's participation for the achievement of the collective action goals. In addition, as soon as the mobilizing machine is running, people know from past experience that enough others will participate: the individual thresholds in Granovetter's model are, hence, taken collectively. In informal networks, action mobilization is often a process of considerable discussion and convincing, whereby the same thresholds are more difficult to overcome.

The literature seems to recognize only one instance in which social networks seem to be less indispensable for mobilization. Indeed, some scholars recently coined the concept of 'moral shock' (Jasper 1997; Jasper and Poulsen 1995). These shocks result from information or events — usually public events, unexpected and highly publicized — that raise such a sense of outrage that people become inclined towards political action irrespective of whether

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they are part of a mobilizable network or not. They engage in an *active* search for protest possibilities and are not just inertly waiting for an action opportunity or an invitation by others. In such rare instances, the mere information about an upcoming event suffices to mobilize people. People, in a sense, mobilize themselves. When it comes to spreading mere information, the mass media are the natural sources. The literature, in fact, documents cases in which the mass media seemed to have been responsible for mobilizing the masses (Cardoso and Neto 2004; Walgrave and Manssens 2000). Yet, on the other hand, one could expect that the truly motivated participants that 'mobilize themselves' would also engage in trying to convince others. One could assume, then, that solos are also likely to be *more* socially embedded in social networks of friends and family. By and large, these cases of auto-mobilization are rare. Normally, mobilization is a process firmly embedded in social networks.

2. DATA AND METHODS

To answer the questions raised we draw upon an exceptional database containing a vast amount of individual protest participant evidence. All data were collected relying on an innovative *protest survey* methodology consisting of directly questioning participants at major demonstrations. Interviewing participants at protest demonstrations is not a common research technique. Favre and colleagues even speak of 'a strange gap in the sociology of mobilizations' (Favre, Fillieule, and Mayer 1997). To the best of our knowledge, protest surveying has only been used in a few studies (See among others: Jasper and Poulsen 1995; Waddington 1988). Most elaborate is the work of the French research team including Favre, Mayer and Fillieule, who developed a method designed to offer all participants an equal opportunity of being interviewed (Fillieule 1997). Their method was refined further for this study. The actual survey process used in this study to establish a random survey of

demonstration participants was twofold. First, fieldwork supervisors counted the rows of participants, selecting every Nth row, to ensure that the same number of rows was skipped throughout. Then a dozen interviewers selected every Nth person in that row and distributed questionnaires to these individuals during the actual protest march.

The selected participants were asked to complete a questionnaire at home and to mail it back. The questionnaire maintained a common core - including the participants' profile, the mobilization context, and their political attitudes and behavior - with a few specific items adapted slightly for each demonstration. In addition to the mail-survey, a random sample of other demonstrators was interviewed in person before the demonstration's departure. The gathering crowd before the demonstration's departure was divided into sectors, and the interviewers each randomly selected a fixed number of respondents in 'their' sector. These (shorter) face-to-face interviews were used as a crosscheck to evaluate how far response to the mail-survey generated a representative random sample of demonstrators. Confidence in the surveys' reliability was strengthened by the fact that hardly anyone refused a face-to-face interview, and by the absence of significant differences between the two types of interviews. In this study we will only use respondents from the postal surveys.

Yet, surveys of demonstrations raise important questions about reliability and the representativity of sampling procedures. First, if the demonstration is large and fairly static, and if all the streets are congested with people, it becomes difficult for the interviewers to cover the whole march since they are also immobilized. This was the case in some of the covered demonstrations (e.g. London and Madrid). Second, it is impossible to get a good sample of respondents in violent and/or irregular demonstrations, although these kinds of protest events are usually small in number. Third, in some exceptional cases extremist groups of demonstrators *within* a peaceful event refuse to accept the questionnaires. Yet again, this is

rare and demonstrators, like many other types of political activist, are usually highly collaborative and anxious to give their views.

The database covers a large variety of 16 separate demonstrations all staged in the 1998-2004 period. Demonstrations differed extensively in terms of topic and national location. The dataset includes three different kinds of demonstrations: seven demonstrations around various issues in Belgium (1998-2001); eight anti-war on Iraq demonstrations in eight countries (all February 15th, 2003); and a follow-up anti-war demonstration in Belgium (March 20th, 2004).

First, the *Belgian Issue Protest Survey* (BIPS) covers seven of the biggest demonstrations held in Brussels during the 1998-2001 period (see: Norris, Walgrave, and Van Aelst 2005; Van Aelst and Walgrave 2001). A relatively small anti-drugs demonstration was also surveyed, to enlarge the issue diversity of the demonstrations and to include a new right demonstration in our sample. The demonstrations were staged by the 'White Movement' (protest against the malfunctioning of the justice system in a case of child abuse and murder), the anti-racist movement, the Global Justice movement, white-collar unions (nurses and teachers), general unions, and the movement against drugs. The events were organized by typical traditional interest groups as well as by new social movements. The selected demonstrations were not a perfect, representative sample of *all* demonstrations in Belgium, as the study lacks the typical student and farmers' protests, and we only focused on larger demonstrations in the capital. Nevertheless despite these limitations the selected events provide sufficient evidence to explore the issues raised in this study. The survey covers a random sample of demonstrators engaged in these seven different events, involving 2,276 respondents in total. The overall response rate for the BIPS postal survey was more than 44%, which is satisfactory for an anonymous survey without any reminders, which also increases confidence in the procedure (see Table 1).

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<Table 1 about here>

Second, the *International Peace Protest Survey* (IPPS) covers anti-war demonstrations in eight countries: Switzerland, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, the UK and the USA. All demonstrations were staged on February 15th, 2003. This was the worldwide action day against, then imminent, war on Iraq (see: Walgrave and Rucht 2006). February 15th, 2003, probably represents the largest protest event in history. An estimated 10 million people took to the streets in approximately 600 cities around the globe (Verhulst 2006). IPPS was fielded by an international team of social movement scholars in the eight nations under study. In all countries, a common questionnaire and the earlier described field work method was employed. IPPS covers a random sample of demonstrators engaged in eleven[1] different demonstrations in eight countries involving 5,772 postal questionnaire respondents in total. The overall response rate for the postal survey was about 46% with no country's response rate lower than 37%. Again, this is satisfactory for an anonymous survey without reminders (see Table 1). Yet, as indicated in table 1, the Italian team followed another sampling strategy and interviewed participants on trains on their way to the demonstration in Rome. Comparing the Italian train survey participants with a small amount of Italian non-train respondents yielded no significant differences. That is why we decided to keep the Italian data on board.

Third, the most recent data come from a survey of the March 20th, 2004, anti-war demonstration held in Brussels, exactly one year after the invasion of Iraq. This demonstration too, was part of an internationally coordinated protest event; yet, this time, we only dispose of Belgian evidence. By March 2004 the war had officially ended (in early May 2003) and the protests were thus primarily aimed against the occupation of Iraq, against further military actions in the Middle East, and they were also appealing for a diplomatic solution of the

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[1]   IPPS covered one demonstration in all participating nations, except for the US and the UK were we respectively covered three (Seattle, Washington, San Francisco) and two (London and Glasgow) marches. Since there were no significant differences between the respondents of these different locations, we aggregated the evidence on the country level.

Israeli-Palestine conflict. On the Brussels demonstration we got a rather low response rate of nearly 33% (see Table 1), which was in our opinion certainly partly due to the fact that the rain was coming down in buckets that day, and that many of our postal surveys were soaked by the time people would fill them out. We will treat the March 20 anti-war demonstration separately because its questionnaire is more elaborate than the others when it comes to mobilization. Based on the IPPS questionnaire we added several questions assessing in more detail the mobilization process and the social networks in which the respondent was embedded. We will use this evidence only in the final analyses of this paper, when we elaborate the impact of mobilization.

Armed with this pile of evidence including 8,310 respondents across eight issues and eight countries, we now tackle our research questions empirically. First, we examine whether some people appear to have been mobilized outside of social networks; second, we attempt to account for the presence of these lonely marchers.

3. LONELY MARCHERS

Social mobilization can be operationalized in many ways. If mainstream mobilization theory is correct and people are mobilized primarily via social networks, we would expect participating people to take the streets *in the company of others*. If one is mobilized by friends, for example, chances are very high that one will attend together with those friends. If one is mobilized by an organization one is member of, chances are high that one will attend the demonstration in the company of other members of that organization. Hence, we suppose that the kind of interpersonal network ties that drive people to the streets can also be found *on* those streets. Therefore, we consider the company in which people attend the 16 demonstrations under study as a measure of social embeddedness and as the dependent variable throughout our analysis. This means that people who are a member of an organizing

organization but show up at a demonstration with their wife and kids, or with their close friends who have nothing to do with the organization, are considered to be less embedded in formal networks than those who do show up with fellow movement members. If we would find many people attending the protest events on their own and not in the company of others – meaning in our operationalization that they are not socially mobilized – this would challenge classic mobilization theory considering social networks as a precondition. Is this the case?

Table 2 contains the evidence. Note that the categories in the table are rank-ordered and mutually exclusive: whereas people were given the possibility to give multiple answers (e.g. with family and with fellow members), we only considered the most formal and distant category, in other words: the category that comes closest to the expectations of mobilization theory (right-hand side of the table). Table 2 shows that a substantial amount of people, altogether almost one in ten, did not attend the protest events in the company of others. Classic social mobilization theory can not account for their presence. They are demonstrating anomalies. Systematically, in all countries and across all issues some people show up on their own. People who attend with their family members - in what seems to be family trips of dissent - do constitute, as well, a considerable minority of nearly twenty per cent. These people also challenge mainstream mobilization theory to some extent as these theories often emphasize the importance of formal networks as mobilizing devices. The next three categories – attending in the company of friends, colleagues and co-members - come closest to what mobilization theory would anticipate. With around seventy per cent the lion's share of demonstrators, indeed, attended in the company of friends, colleagues or co-members.

<Table 2 about here>

Table 2 makes it quite clear that both countries and issues do make a substantial difference when it comes to the social embeddedness of demonstrators. As the BIPS data show, issue type matters far most: differences in company between the different Belgian

demonstrations are tremendous. Traditional bread-and-butter protests staged by trade unions generate the most organized and formally embedded protesters. Demonstrations of the non profit sector, of the teachers, and about social security bring an overwhelming majority of people on the street that participate accompanied by colleagues or co-members (of their union). These are copy-book examples of closed 'bloc recruitment' (McAdam 1988; Oberschall 1973). On these demonstrations, one will hardly meet a participant in the company of family members, with friends or on her/his own. The opposite pattern can be observed for the demonstrations around 'new' issues: white march, anti-racism, and anti-drugs. The number of solos in these demonstrations is much higher and surpasses fifteen per cent for the anti-drugs demonstration. These protesters attend the demonstration in the company of family or friends, hardly with colleagues or with fellow-members. This empirically strongly underscores a point that has often been made regarding the new social movements: they are less organized and do not incorporate their members organizationally. Somewhere in between both extreme types lies the Global Justice movement with many solos but also with a lot of co-member demonstrators.

The IPPS evidence demonstrates that national contexts matter too when it comes to social embeddedness, but much less than issue type. The least embedded demonstrators came from the UK and Spain; the most social network integrated demonstrators took the streets in Italy; but differences are modest. The overall IPPS pattern resembles, as expected, the less socially embedded pattern of the new social movements. In some countries like The Netherlands (17.3%) and the UK (16.0%) an amazing amount of people came on their own.

To some extent, this evidence, covering a wide range of issues and a considerable amount of countries, challenges classic mobilization theory. Main stream theory postulates that mobilization is a social process presupposing integration in social networks. Although the majority of the demonstrators indeed seems to confirm social embeddedness assertions, a

sizeable minority of the people that showed up appears to have been mobilized outside of social networks. Social networks are *no* necessary condition for mobilization. A-social mobilization exists and is a potential alternative.

Yet, how does a-social mobilization work? How can we account for these people showing up, although their social networks, apparently, were not responsible for their presence? The rest of this paper will be devoted to answering this question. We will do so by systematically comparing the solos with the socios. Maybe the differences between both types of protesters can help us to make inroads into explaining how a-social mobilization functions? The dependent variable of the analyses below – the degree of social embeddedness - is the company in which people attended the demonstration. We will draw upon the five-category scale of social embeddedness presented in Table 2 rank-ordered from less to more socially embedded: (1) solo; (2) family; (3) friends; (4) colleagues, and (5) co-members. But first, we put forward some hypotheses about differences between solos and socios.

4. WHY LONELY MARCHERS?

In the empirical analyses below, we successively estimate models of social embeddedness drawing upon five groups of variables: socio-demographics, political attitudes, political behavior, mobilization, and issue and country differences. We believe each of these variables might be relevant to explain why and how people attend demonstrations.

In terms of *socio-demographics*, all participation literature invariably shows that the usual participant is highly skilled, mid-aged, male and professionally better-off (Crozat 1998; Dalton 1996; Norris 2002; Topf 1995; Van Aelst and Walgrave 2001). Since lonely protesters are not usual – they are in fact always a minority – we expect them to deviate from that classic picture.

Regarding *political attitudes*, our hypothesis is that lonely protesters are more radical. Still they participate, although they are not mobilized in a supportive network. We speculate that they do not need supportive networks to overcome barriers as they are more radical and more motivated to participate. Jasper and Poulsen (1995) claimed earlier that 'moral shocks' can compensate for the absence of networks. Yet, these moral shocks could equally well provoke intensive interpersonal networking efforts; the very motivated participants could, more than others, convince other people to join them in a demonstration.

Considering *political behavior*, we expect the solos to be less politically active compared to the socios. Since embeddedness is strongly associated with all kinds of political behavior – be it conventional or unconventional – we expect solos to be least engaged in associations, less participating in protest events, etc.

We also expect *mobilization* variables to play a key role. Solos will be less informed about the upcoming event by organizations, they will have taken the decision to participate relatively late, will have traveled less far to participate… Of course, employing mobilization variables to explain a-social mobilization comes close to tautology. But it can at least demonstrate to what extent our company variable is systematically associated to other measures of mobilization. If this association is high, what we expect, this would mean that showing up on your own is no coincidence but rooted in a truly different and a-social, or at least less-social, mobilization process. Furthermore, this way we can also get more clarity in the construction of the dependent variable itself.

Finally, in terms of *country and issue* differences, we convert the bivariate findings of Table 2 into the hypothesis that, also in multivariate analyses, old social movement's events will be more populated with socially embedded participants than new social movement's events. We do not have clear expectations about differences between countries, although we expect countries to make a difference as they did bivariately.

We organize our presentation of the results of simple linear regression models following this rank-order of variables, one by one adding another cluster of variables.

5. EXPLAINING LONELINESS VS. EMBEDDEDNESS

Table 3 estimates an OLS regression with the scale of embeddedness (company) as dependent variable drawing on socio-demographics as only independents. We use aggregate data which is, for BIPS, evidence about demonstrators on seven protest marches in Belgium and, for IPPS, participants in anti-war protests in eight countries.

<Table 3 about here>

Socio-demographically speaking, socios and solos are hardly different: the R^2 of both models is low. There are some significant differences in terms of professional categories, but these are not consistent between BIPS and IPPS as evidenced by their contrasting signs: there are no universal mechanisms at work. In BIPS, manual workers, office workers and students are significantly more embedded than professional workers and people who are not working. In other words, working in jobs where people mostly have close colleagues, or being a student, is conducive to network embeddedness. In the IPPS dataset, things are very different: not one professional category can account for the degree of protesters' embeddedness. On the contrary, both workers and not-workers of all kinds are less embedded than, in this case (but not significant), students. But, on the whole, people who come on their own are – at least regarding sex, education, and profession – not significantly different from people who show up in group. The only consistent difference between both datasets is age: the older the demonstrators are, the more they are socially embedded and attending with others. Young people tend to come more on their own. This is not a surprising finding as social embeddedness tends to rise with the years. Does this finding hold when we introduce political attitudes in the model?

It does, as Table 4 shows. In fact, age even becomes a better predictor of embeddedness. Do not that, since we do not dispose of exactly the same attitudinal measures, our comparison between BIPS and IPPS is imperfect.

<Table 4 about here>

Also this enlarged model is unsatisfactory in grasping the differences between solos and socios: the adjusted R^2 remains low. Quite some attitudinal IPPS variables are significant, some of which are not available for BIPS. In the worldwide anti-war demonstrations in 2003, less embedded people were more right-wing. At first sight, this goes against our expectation that attitudinal radicalism makes people overcoming barriers of participation even without supportive social networks. Yet, since February 15th, 2003 was an event staged by left-wing organizations who mobilized their members (Diani 2006), the finding that people who did not show up with co-members (of left-wing organizations) were on average more right-wing is not really surprising. Some of our attitudinal measures underpin our hypothesis that solos tend to be more radical: they are more dissatisfied with the way democracy in their country functions and they feel more powerless. In simple terms: solos tend to be angrier than socios. Their outrage, indeed, seems to be able to compensate partially for their lack of supportive social networks. They are more interested in politics, which indicates towards political sophistication. Maybe the dissatisfaction of the solos might, in line of the argument of the social capital theory (Putnam 2000), be explained by the fact that they are less active political participants?

<Table 5 about here>

Table 5 displays that introducing political behavior variables does not affect the explanatory force of both dissatisfaction measures for IPPS - solos remain more dissatisfied (and thus more radical) - nor does political behavior reduce the effect of age for both BIPS and IPPS – solos still are older. Political interest disappears as a factor but instead come

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strong behavioral predictors. This is witnessed by both models' substantially higher adjusted R^2. Three political behavior variables are strongly significant, two of which are consistent among BIPS and IPPS: solos have been less active in demonstrations in the previous years; they are less members of organizations and they have less experience with other repertoires of protest (IPPS only). In short: people showing up on their own or with their families are less politically active citizens. This makes perfect sense. It ties in with our expectations and with the bulk of the (protest) participation literature: people that are more socially embedded at demonstrations are more embedded outside of them. Both integration in organizations and previous protest experience "… makes it more likely that the individual will value the identity of 'activist' and choose to act in accordance to it" (Friedman and McAdam 1992: 170). Hence, people who attended one of our fifteen protest events alone or with their families did not so by chance or accident. Coming alone or with family, in fact, reflects a diverging general participation pattern.

Instead of solving the conundrum of a-social mobilization, however, these findings even sharpen the puzzle of solos' participation in protest events. These people do not have the habit of participation, in protest nor in organizations. As protest is a practice that must be learned, thresholds for participation are definitely higher for people without protest experience. The first time is the hardest time. We would expect that overcoming this barrier can only be done as one is strong and part of a supportive social network. After all, that is what all social mobilization theory is about: it tells us that taking barriers can only be done socially. Yet, this is not what happens if one looks at the participation indicators: those people come more on their own indicating the *absence* of supportive networks. To examine this further, let us turn to the actual mobilization process. In the end, previous participation is only a potential factor while *actual* mobilization processes might effectively help people take participation barriers.

Table 6 contains the, by now, well-known models complemented with the mobilization variables. We would expect that people coming alone and with their family are not mobilized through others. This is indeed the case.

<Table 6 about here>

People on the 'lonely' end of our social embeddedness scale show a mobilization pattern that, consistently across BIPS and IPPS, tallies with their supposed a-social mobilization: they took the decision to participate relatively late (IPPS only), they are less member of an organizing organization, and they heard about the organization via mass media or informal channels, not via organizations (both BIPS and IPPS). In fact, in both models, the mobilization variables are the strongest; they boost the models explanatory power considerably. For IPPS the mobilizatory variables completely obliterate the effects of political attitudes; for BIPS they even wipe out the previously strong effects of the political behavior variables.

Until now, we only drew upon individual level evidence trying to account for the presence of solos at protest events. Yet, as Table 2 has shown, there are quite a number of differences between the fifteen protest events under scrutiny. Do these differences hold in a multivariate setting? They do, as Table 7 testifies. The explaining power of the IPPS model grows only modestly by introducing country dummies. In Italy demonstrators significantly participated more in the company of colleagues or organization co-members. This reflects the more organized character of February 15th, 2003, in this country (Diani 2006). Issues matter much more: the scale variable distinguishing new from old social movements' events is the single strongest predictor of social embeddedness. Participants in events staged by the trade unions almost never participate on their own. In contrast, participants in new social movements' events tend to come more on their own, or with family members. This does not

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seem to affect the other factors: all remain significant in the BIPS model. The explaining power of the BIPS model reaches satisfying levels now.

Let us emphasize the relevance of this finding. We found that people who are concerned with *universalistic* topics such as peace, anti-racism, and global justice are more able to mobilize themselves, even in the absence of dense supportive networks, than people who demonstrate for *particularistic* reasons like (their) wages and employment. This is an interesting finding. It directly challenges rationalist assumptions that when people have to gain directly and personally from participation, they do less need collective stimuli (networks) to participate. Yet, we seem to find the exact opposite: more collective stimuli (networks) seem to be present when people have private gains to expect. Otherwise, people with no personal gain show up more on their own, which suggests the absence of collective stimuli. Note that this difference is *not* caused by people's socio-demographics nor by their more radical attitudes, their protest experience, or their mobilization network, as the multivariate analyses keeps all of them constant. This suggests that, under certain circumstances and for specific issues, people are indeed able to mobilize themselves in a process we would like to call *auto-mobilization* (and, consequently, they show up much more on their own). This empirically underpins Jaspers' idea of moral shocks and their mobilizing appeal. In a final empirical section of this study, we will try to specify these findings drawing upon complementary data.

But first, let us summarize our results so far. People who attend demonstrations on their own or with family are, in contrast to people who come with colleagues or co-members, younger; being more dissatisfied with the functioning of democracy and feeling themselves politically ineffective, solos are more angry and radical; they are much more inexperienced with participating in organizations and protest events (amount as well as type of protest); they are mobilized via open (non-organizational) channels and are less member of an organizing

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organization; finally, they are more likely to take part in demonstrations about 'new' than about 'old' issues. In general, it is as if solos are suddenly struck by the importance of an issue and start undertaking an *active* search for mobilization possibilities (Jasper 1997) surpassing all mobilization thresholds on their own.

<Table 7 about here>

6. AUTO-MOBILIZATION

On March 20th, 2004, a few thousands of Belgians took the streets to protest, 'One Year Later', against the ongoing war, or occupation, of Iraq. In contrast to the protests the year before, a smaller amount of people took the streets and they looked grimmer and angrier. After all, the alleged weapons of mass destruction had not been found, the supposed link between the Iraqi regime and international terrorism was feebler than ever, and the war had not brought peace and democracy to the Middle-East. Again, we surveyed this demonstration drawing upon our standard questionnaire. Yet in order to get grip on the auto-mobilization whereby people seem to mobilize themselves, we added a number of questions gauging mobilization in more detail. We especially tapped the presence of supportive networks. Can this one survey tell us more about the solos and how they differ from the other protesters? We carried out similar OLS regressions with our new mobilization variables but, this time, we carried out a backward procedure skipping all non-significant variables to get a neater model. Since the N is relatively small, we set the significance threshold at $p < 0.1$.

For one thing, the results in Table 8 indicate that we much better grasp the differences between solos and socios. With an R^2 of .412 the explaining power of the model is much higher than before. Age does not play a role anymore, yet another socio-demographic variable is slightly significant: office workers come less on their own. We have no ready explanation

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for this. Office workership has been a significant variable before (in BIPS) but was not consistent and dropped out in later analyses. Interestingly, two attitudinal variables play an important role: less embedded people consider themselves to be more interested in politics, and they are more fierce opponents of war. Again, this confirms findings discussed above: attitudes can compensate for social networks. The more outraged people are - in this case about the war - the less they need networks to be mobilized and to overcome barriers. Technically: a strong moral shock leads to a spill-over from consensus mobilization to action mobilization. Once their 'boiling point' is reached, people hit the streets regardless their social network embeddedness. The political interest variable, probably, points towards more politically sophisticated people. As they follow politics closer, it is easier for them to inform themselves about protest events.

<Table 8 about here>

The key to explain why people show up alone or with only family, however, is, overwhelmingly, mobilization. Our new mobilization variables turn out to be powerful predictors. They completely shove away political behavior that was such a powerful factor before. Solos decide late to participate. They make up their mind in the spur of the moment just before the demonstration, which is consistent with the idea of moral shock and holy indignation as drivers. They are less member of an organizing organization. Their friend network is not conducive to mobilization: as their immediate friends seem not to be soul mates when it comes to the Iraqi war, they decided to come on their own or with their family. Most of them were convinced by nobody to participate, others by their friends or family. Few of the people at the lonely end of our embeddedness scale have been mobilized by colleagues. Finally, the solos do believe more than the other protesters that the demonstration will make a difference; they are more optimistic about its outcome. As perceived efficacy is generally considered as an important motivator (Klandermans 1984), this, once again, shows that people

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who come on their own and with friends are more motivated and committed than others. Their engagement (and hope) compensates for the fact that they have no supportive network.

All this makes perfect sense. The findings about the March 20, 2004, demonstration in Brussels confirm the general picture: some people mobilize themselves. Although their environment is less conducive to protest participation, they manage to take the streets without help our stimulation of others; their strong belief makes them 'march' against main stream mobilization theory.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Arriving at the end of our quest, first, we hope to have shown that a considerable minority of protesters attend protest events on their own or with their family. Across issues and countries, and relying on ample empirical evidence, we found that about 10% of the demonstrators came on their own; another 20% came with family members. This evidence, especially the systematically substantial amount of solos across countries and issues, goes against social mobilization theory which considers social embeddedness and supportive networks to be indispensable preconditions for mobilization. Although social mobilization theory can account for the majority of attendants, a significant amount of activists do not seem to obey its laws.

Second, we found that solos and socios are, in fact, different people. Differences between both groups are not dramatic but often significant. Although analyses drawing upon the *Belgian Issue Protest Survey* and the *International Peace Protest Survey* were not always consistently pointing in the same direction, they often did. By and large, solos are younger, angrier, more interested in politics, less participative and protest prone, more active around new and universalistic issues, and much less embedded in mobilizatory networks than their more socially embedded fellow protesters. Their outrage and political sophistication seems to

compensate for their lack of mobilizing networks. To a certain extent, our finding that solos are not mobilized via networks might seem somewhat tautological. Yet this result makes the existence of solos even more challenging for social mobilization theory. These people are not lonely on the streets by sheer coincidence, but because also off the streets they are less socially embedded.

What is next? Our analyses suggest that outrage and indignation are key to understand social or a-social processes of mobilization. But our survey indicators of outrage were limited and shallow. If we would be able to take the real temperature, to gauge the emotions and the holy indignation of protesters, to capture their anger and passion, we might get a better grip on moral shocks and their mobilizing effect. That way we might account better for the loneliness of some protesters. This is not an easy task for survey research. But it may not be impossible.

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Table 1: N's and response rates per demonstration

	N	Response Rate %
Belgian Issue Protest Survey (BIPS)		
White March	246	45.5
Anti-Racism	416	48.1
Non Profit	374	36.3
Social Security	337	35.1
Education	282	47.1
Anti-Drugs	266	58.7
Global Justice	355	37.8
BIPS sum + average	**2,276**	**44.1**
International Peace Protest Survey (IPPS)		
Belgium	510	46.4
The Netherlands	542	54.2
Switzerland	637	53.1
Spain	452	37.7
Germany	781	52.1
US	705	47.0
UK	1,129	35.9
Italy	1,016	100.0*
IPPS sum + average (without Italy) *	**5,772**	**46.6**
March 20 anti-war	262	32.7
Overall sum + average	**8,310**	**41.6**

* Because of the divergent sampling method of the Italian protesters, the Italian sample was not included for calculating IPPS' average response rate.

Table 2: Degree of embeddedness per demonstration

	Degree of Embeddedness				
	Alone	**Family**	**Friends**	**Colleagues/ co-students**	**Co-members**
BIPS					
White March	15.0	*50.0*	*29.2*	0.0	5.8
Anti-Racism	10.6	22.2	21.0	7.2	38.9
Non Profit	2.2	0.3	0.5	*64.3*	32.7
Social Security	7.2	5.1	7.5	25.4	*54.9*
Education	4.7	2.2	1.4	63.3	28.4
Anti-Drugs	*15.2*	37.7	19.8	1.6	25.7
Global Justice	9.7	3.2	28.1	20.9	38.1
BIPS Total	**8.8**	**15.3**	**15.0**	**27.0**	**33.8**
IPPS					
Belgium	9.3	27.6	35.1	8.7	19.3
The Netherlands	*17.3*	27.1	36.3	7.9	11.5
Switzerland	11.3	15.7	*50.1*	12.7	10.2
Spain	5.2	*36.6*	49.4	0.0	8.8
Germany	9.6	23.5	42.7	12.2	12.0
US	13.9	19.8	40.4	9.9	16.0
UK	16.0	34.6	32.3	8.0	9.1
Italy	4.1	12.1	49.0	*13.1*	*21.7*
IPPS Total	**10.6**	**23.4**	**42.2**	**9.8**	**14.1**
March 20 anti-war	8.4	12.6	26.0	6.9	45.8
Total	**9.3**	**17.1**	**27.7**	**14.6**	**31.2**

Table 3: Embeddedness by socio-demographic profile

		BIPS		IPPS	
		beta	Sig.	beta	Sig.
Socio-demographics					
Sex		-.003	.863	.002	.890
Age		**-.084**	.002	**-.081**	.000
Education		-.029	.194	-.002	.912
Profession	Manual worker	**.165**	.000	**-.052**	.009
	Office worker	**.256**	.000	**-.075**	.004
	Higher profession	-.026	.382	**-.082**	.000
	Not working	-.019	.617	**-.095**	.000
	Student	**.103**	.003	.042	.110
Adjusted R^2		.088	N=2,276	.037	N =5,772

Table 4: Embeddedness by socio-demographic profile and political attitudes

		BIPS		IPPS	
		beta	Sig.	Beta	Sig.
Socio-demographics					
Sex		.009	.738	-.001	.979
Age		**-.132**	.000	**-.008**	.000
Education		-.038	.176	-.006	.699
Profession	Manual worker	**.135**	.001	-.137	.130
	Office worker	**.219**	.000	-.093	.200
	Higher Profession	-.052	.144	-.166	.032
	Not working	-.026	.565	**-.233**	.005
	Student	.060	.176	.143	.070
Political attitudes					
Interest politics		.003	.917	**-.219**	.000
Left-right self placement		—	—	**-.102**	.000
Satisfaction with democracy		.050	.069	**.120**	.000
Political efficacy		-.058	.044	**.121**	.004
Opposition to war		—	—	.094	.083
Adjusted R^2		.086	N=2,276	.089	N=5,772

Table 5: Embeddedness by socio-demographic profile, political attitudes and behavior

		BIPS		IPPS	
		beta	Sig.	Beta	Sig.
Socio-demographics					
Sex		.016	.587	.029	.101
Age		**-.137**	.000	**-.131**	.000
Education		-.075	.018	-.003	.877
Profession	Manual worker	**.174**	.000	-.018	.460
	Office worker	**.282**	.000	-.039	.252
	Higher profession	-.022	.549	-.043	.153
	Not working	.025	.635	-.069	.018
	Student	.110	.014	.035	.233
Political attitudes					
Interest in politics		.044	.178	-.031	.089
Left-right self placement		—	—	-.033	.096
Satisfaction with democracy		.023	.454	**.068**	.001
Political efficacy		-.022	.507	**.069**	.001
Opposition to war		—	—	.001	.938
Political behavior					
Party vote (L-R)		-.019	.509	.012	.509
Protest frequency		**.096**	.001	**.229**	.000
Active organization member		**.146**	.000	**.096**	.000
Action repertoire experience		—	—	**.128**	.000
Adjusted R^2		.132	N=2,276	.178	N=5,772

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Table 6: **Embeddedness by socio-demographic profile, political attitudes, political behavior, and mobilization.**

		BIPS		IPPS	
		beta	Sig.	Beta	Sig.
Socio-demographics					
Sex		-.001	.979	.023	.245
Age		**-.162**	.000	**-.153**	.000
Education		-.010	.782	.008	.697
Profession	Manual worker	.054	.269	-,003	.912
	Office worker	.110	.103	-,046	.220
	Higher profession	**-.099**	.033	-,043	.214
	Not working	.011	.853	**-,063**	.050
	Student	.078	.123	,022	.507
Political attitudes					
Interest in politics		.072	.042	-.027	.507
Left-right self placement		—	—	-.022	.185
Satisfaction with democracy		.028	.436	.038	.312
Political efficacy		-.032	.382	.038	.100
Opposition to war		—	—	-.019	.094
Political behavior					
Party vote (L-R)		.020	.543	.024	.227
Protest frequency		.060	.058	**.155**	.000
Active organization member		.054	.100	**.055**	.008
Action repertoire experience		—	—	**.052**	.031
Mobilization					
Distance traveled		—	—	.024	.232
Participation decision		.025	.425	**.078**	.000
Member organizing organization		**.176**	.000	**.062**	.007
Know member organizing organization		—	—	.039	.089
Information channel (scale open-closed)		**.273**	.000	**.197**	.000
Adjusted R^2		0.227	N=2,276	0.224	N=5,772

Table 7: Embeddedness by socio-demographic profile, political attitudes, political behavior, mobilization, and issue/country

		BIPS		IPPS	
		beta	Sig.	Beta	Sig.
Socio-demographics					
Sex		.001	.975	.025	.216
Age		**-.178**	.000	**-.152**	.000
Education		.001	.970	.004	.851
Profession	Manual worker	.022	.646	.001	.974
	Office worker	.051	.444	-.041	.275
	Higher profession	-.092	.043	-.034	.324
	Not working	.015	.797	-.056	.082
	Student	.087	.082	.030	.361
Political attitudes					
Interest in politics		.036	.318	-.028	.192
Left-right self placement		—	—	-.029	.195
Satisfaction with democracy		.067	.059	.028	.243
Political efficacy		-.034	.344	.047	.047
Opposition to war		—	—	-.019	.365
Political behavior					
Party vote (L-R)		.004	.908	.035	.117
Protest frequency		.060	.057	**.035**	.000
Active organization member		**.077**	.018	**.058**	.006
Action repertoire experience		—	—	**.066**	.011
Mobilization					
Distance traveled		—	—	-.019	.487
Participation decision		.051	.109	**.079**	.000
Member organizing organization		**.082**	.032	**.065**	.005
Know member organizing organization		—	—	.037	.105
Information channel (scale open-closed)		**.256**	.000	**.196**	.000
Issue/country					
Old vs. new issue		**-.230**	.000	—	—
Belgium		—	—	.024	.369
The Netherlands		—	—	.007	.827
Switzerland		—	—	-.033	.247
Spain		—	—	—	—
Germany		—	—	.017	.552
UK		—	—	.001	.963
Italy		—	—	**.071**	.027
Adjusted R^2		0.252	N= 2,276	0.226	N=4,615

Table8:   Embeddedness of March 20, 2004, demonstrators

		March 20 Anti-War demonstration	
		beta	Sig.
Socio-demographics			
Office worker		.175	.069
Political attitudes			
Interest in politics		**-.310**	.002
Opposition to war		**-.224**	.018
Political behavior			
Mobilization			
Decision to participate (late to early)		**.319**	.001
Member of organizing organization		**.234**	.015
Friends agree with you being here		**.291**	.003
Convinced to participate by:	Family	-.198	,093
	Friends	**-.298**	,040
	Colleagues	**.223**	,039
	Nobody	**-.335**	,027
Chance that demo will enhance realization of goals (1 to		**-.307**	.002
Adjusted R^2		.412	N=262