THE COMPLEX AGENDA-SETTING POWER OF PROTEST: DEMONSTRATIONS, MEDIA, PARLIAMENT, GOVERNMENT, AND LEGISLATION IN BELGIUM, 1993-2000

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We conducted pooled time-series analyses to assess how number and size of demonstrations affect the political agenda in Belgium (1993-2000). Taking twenty-five issues into account, this study finds that protest matters for the political agenda setting. This study also advances scholarly understanding of the agenda-setting power of protest by showing that the causal mechanisms of protest impact are complex and contingent. The parliamentary, governmental, and legislative attention for issues is significantly and differently affected by preceding protest activities. The media act as an intermediary variable: media coverage emerges in response to protest and, in turn, affects the political agenda afterwards. Protests on some issues have more effect than on others: in Belgium, new social movements protests are especially effective in causing parliament and government to focus attention on the issue.

The most crucial question regarding social movements, at least for non-scholarly observers, is whether social movements and their protests have political consequences. To tackle that issue, we bring the theory and methods of the agenda-setting approach developed by policy agenda scholars into the sociological analysis of movement outcomes. Previous studies of social movement outcomes have been inspired by the policy-agenda perspective. We go beyond this work by systematically drawing on the policy-agenda methodology, by looking outside the US, and by comparing across issues and movements. Adopting a systematic agenda-setting perspective allows social movement scholars to make headway in explaining under which circumstances social movement protest matters. We argue that protest has complex, multi-staged, and direct and indirect effects on the policy agenda.

We conceptualize the impact of social movements as the effect protest events have on the political agenda—that is, the issues political actors on different levels and in different institutional settings are dealing with and devote attention to (Jones and Baumgartner 2005). We do not claim that agenda effects are the only, or even the most important, political outcomes of movements. We do contend, however, that agenda setting is a crucial element in the policy process and an achievement in its own right (McAdam and Su 2002). Garnering attention for an issue is a necessary condition for, and precursor of, any significant policy change (Jones and Baumgartner 2005). Being able to set the agenda is important for a social movement, whatever the aspect of a policy a social movement may want to change or preserve (Giugni 1999: xx).

Agenda setting is a theoretical approach that offers a clear conceptualization of the protest outcomes: Does collective action lead to an increase in political attention? It also comes with a powerful research design and offers a way to work with systematic and standardized data. This solves some of the methodological and empirical problems with which students of political outcomes have struggled. Methodologically, the main challenge is to

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assess causality and to reach generalizable conclusions. The agenda-setting design allows us to systematically incorporate alternative explanations for an increase or decrease in political attention and to check for spurious relations. It offers opportunities to control for the agendas of alternative actors within and outside the political system (Amenta, Caren, Chiarello, and Su 2010: 5-6). Agenda setting mostly draws on time-series analyses yielding a rich toolbox for rigorous causality testing. It permits researchers to go beyond case studies and thick descriptions (Giugni 1998: 373) by incorporating several issues or movements in a comparative setup. This is because the researcher does not need detailed information about each movement's precise political goals, but can rely on the simple assumption that reaching almost any political goal requires an increase in political attention.

Our study adds to the existing movement outcomes literature in several respects. In the first place, we extend extant theories by elaborating some precise tracks and conditions determining movements' impact on the political agenda. Our main claim is that movements' impact on the political agenda is a complex and multistaged process (for a similar quest see McAdam and Su 2002). We propose and test a complex causal structure that implies an array of different political agendas, the influence of intermediary actors, and differences between movements addressing different issues. By incorporating different types of issues addressed by different movements, we argue that diverse political agendas are affected differently by protest. We hypotheses about differential effects on a variety of political agendas, and theorize about the intermediary role of the mass media.

The study's second contribution is its comparative character. The vast majority of movement outcome studies have focused on US evidence. We draw on the US literature to develop some of our hypotheses, but apply them to an entirely different political system: the small European nation of Belgium. Differences between the US and Belgian political systems abound and, hence, we offer a rigorous test for existing knowledge. Also, our study is comparative in another dimension. We do not focus on a single movement or issue, or even a handful of movements and their issues, but rather, for the period in question, take protest regarding all possible issues into account. Finally, drawing on an extensive dataset, our research design is more elaborate than in most previous studies. We introduce a number of analytical improvements such that the causal relation between protest and political attention is more thoroughly tested.

SOCIAL MOVEMENT IMPACT AND POLITICAL AGENDA SETTING

Do social movements matter? The question has been hotly debated among social movement scholars. Amenta et al. (2010) echo an earlier complaint by Giugni (1998) by asserting that we still do not know much about movement outcomes (see similar statements by Soule, McAdam, McCarthy, and Su 1999; Tarrow 1999). On the other hand, the field of movements outcomes has surged recently, and our knowledge is quickly growing (Bosi and Uba 2009). The debate about movement consequences partly resides in longstanding differences about how they are conceptualized. The potential outcomes of social movements are very broad indeed (Giugni 2008). Contentious events, for example, not only have potential impacts on politics (legislation, budgets, etc.), but also on public opinion (persuasion), the movements themselves (recruitment), countermovements (mobilization or demobilization), cultural innovation, and long-term changes in mentalities (Bosi and Uba 2009).

Even limiting the effects of social movements to their political consequences—a dramatic reduction of their potential scope—does not solve the problem: political outcomes still can be conceptualized very differently. Extant political-effect studies have, for example, investigated whether movements produce the intended changes in legislation (Banaszak 1996), increase legislative activity (Costain and Majstorovic 1994), lead to increased public spending (Amenta, Carruthers, and Zylan 1992; Giugni 2004), stop or at least slow down a criticized policy

(Kitschelt 1986), affect parliamentary votes (Burstein and Freudenberg 1978; MacDougal, Minicucci, and Myers 1995), contribute to state-level adoptions of constitutional amendments (Soule and Olzak 2002), and so forth. This literature implies that social movements have a large variety of political outcomes. However, as these different outcomes may be produced by different configurations of causes and conditions, a cumulative body of evidence is still lacking.

We narrow down the scope of outcomes by focusing on movements' potential political-agenda effects. Do social movements and/or their protest affect the political agenda? The agenda-setting framework is one of the most popular and widespread approaches to public policy (Baumgartner and Jones 2002; Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Jones and Baumgartner 2005). It also has gradually pervaded the field of social movement studies. Table 1 presents a nonexhaustive overview of eleven of the most influential empirical studies drawing on the agenda-setting perspective to assess the impact of movements (for a thorough and exhaustive overview of more broadly defined political outcome studies we refer to Amenta et al. 2010). Although all these studies do not adopt an agenda-setting perspective, they assess the extent to which protest or movement activities lead to more attention by political actors (for example, an *increase* in congressional roll-call votes on the issue instead of the number of votes *in favor* of a certain policy).

Schumaker (1975) was probably the first to observe that one of a social movement's main political effects is to set the political agenda, which he called "agenda responsiveness" (1975: 494). Burstein and Freudenberg's research (1978) was one of the earliest empirical studies to take movement size or protest activity as the independent variable and political attention, in their case senate votes, as the dependent variable. Especially in recent years, research that implicitly adopts the agenda-setting perspective has gained momentum. Baumgartner and Mahoney (2005)—one of the rare studies to look across issues and movements—compare five issue areas in the US and test whether social movements contribute to setting the political agenda. They found that the number of social movement organizations (or membership) addressing issues pertaining to women, environmental, elderly, civil rights, and human rights issues affects the number of congressional hearings on these topics. Also, King, Cornwall, and Dahlin (2005) studied woman suffrage in the US, showing that each succeeding stage in the legislative process imposes constraints and becomes more consequential in terms of actual policy (see also Soule and King 2006). They find that social movements are especially influential at the start of the policy cycle, when the political agenda is set, rather than later on in the policy cycle when policies are actually decided upon and implemented.

Soule, McAdam, McCarthy, and Su (1999), in a study of congressional hearings and roll-call votes about women's issues, found that protest incidence is a *consequence* of political attention (hearings in the US Congress) and not a cause. In a second study, Soule and King (2006) did find effects from social movements on the agenda-setting of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) in the legislative branches of the US states. In yet another study, King, Bentele, and Soule (2007) take protest as the independent variable when trying to model US Congressional attention to a number of so-called "rights issues" while controlling for a whole range of alternative agenda setters. The number of congressional hearings increases when the number of protests goes up. This study is groundbreaking in that it compares different types of rights demands and explicitly addresses the generalizability issue. Nevertheless, their comparisons remain limited to a series of very similar issues.

The overview in table 1 shows three things: (1) the listed studies are all American, (2) most do not compare between movements (issues), and (3) many do not exploit the analytical possibilities offered by the agenda-setting toolbox. The field is overwhelmingly dominated by US evidence, not only those studies focusing on agenda consequences, but also to the entire field of movement outcome studies (Bosi and Uba 2009; Uba 2009). Because the US political system and its movements are arguably different from many other Western democracies, it is not obvious that US findings apply to other contexts. Remarkably, *none* of the reviewed studies consider this to be a problem, and *none* raise concerns about the generalizability of

Table 1. Empirical Studies Assessing Movement Effects (Partially) on Political Agenda-Setting

Author(s), Year	Polity	Issue	Compare Issues	Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Time Unit	Alternative Independents	Lagged or Synchronous Model	Lagged Dependent	Results
Burstein and Freudenberg, 1978	US	Vietnam	No	Senate vote	Number of demonstrations	Month	Public opinion	Synchronous	No	Significant impact
Costain and Majstorovic, 1994	US	Women	No	Congress passed bills	(1) Number of protest events (2) Membership SMOs	Year	Public opinion	Synchronous	No	Impact only via public opinion
Soule, McAdam, McCarthy, and Su, 1999	US	Women	No	(1) Hearings (2) Roll call votes	(1) Number of protest events (2) SMO events (3) Number of SMOs	Quarter	(1) Cultural and economic change (2) Elections (3) Media	Lagged (partly)	Yes	No impact of protest but of SMO events and number of SMOs
McAdam and Su, 2002	US	Vietnam	No	Congress voting	(1) Number of protest events (2) Type of events (3) Size of events	Month	(1) Public opinion (2) Media (3) War events	Lagged	No (but tested)	(1) Direct impact of protest (2) Indirect via public opinion
Baumgartner and Mahoney, 2005	US	(1) Women (2) Human rights (3) Civil rights (4) Environment (5) Retired	Yes	Congress hearings	Number of SMOs	Year	None	Synchronous	No	Impact (no significance test)
King, Cornwall, and Dahlin, 2005	US	Woman suffrage	No	State-level legislation	(1) Lobby (2) Campaigning (3) Framing (4) Publications (5) SMO presence	Year	(1) Number of parties (2) Endorsements (3) Political "openness" (4) Cultural change	Synchronous	No	Significant impact (only lobby)

Soule and King, 2006	US	Equal Rights Amendment (women)	No	State-level bills introduced	Number of SMOs	Year	(1) Countermovement (2) Public opinion (3) Democrats' strength (4) Labor market participation (5) Political climate	Synchronous	No	Significant impact in interaction with Democrats' strength
King, Bentele, and Soule, 2007	US	Rights issues (elderly, abortion, disabled, etc.)	Yes	Congress hearings	Number of protest events (relative)	Year	(1) Strength of SMOs (2) Media (3) Public opinion (4) Passed laws (5) Court cases (6) Congressional Capacity	Synchronous	Yes	Significant impact
Johnson, 2008	US	Environment	No	(1) Hearings (2) Passed laws	(1) Number of SMOs (2) Membership (3) Staff size	Year	(1) Democrat Congress (2) Public opinion (3) Media (4) Countermovement	Synchronous	No	Significant impact on hearings, not on laws
Olzak and Soule, 2009	US	Environment	No	(1) Hearings (2) Passed laws	(1) Number of protest events (2) Number of institutional events	Year	(1) Democrat Congress (2) Democrat president (3) Public opinion (4) Media (5) Counter coalition (6) Real world pollution	Lagged	Yes	Significant impact of institutional events on hearings; no direct effect of protest on legislation
Johnson, Agnone, and McCarthy, 2010	US	Environment	No	(1) Hearings (2) Passed laws	(1) Institutional influence activities (2) Protest events (3) Number of SMOs	Year	(1) Democrat Congress (2) Democrat president (3) Public opinion (4) Media (5) Counter coalition (6) Real world pollution	Lagged	Yes	No. of SMOs + no. of protests + Dem. Congress significantly impact hearings; Protest + institutional influence activities impact legislation

their findings. This is remarkable, as some studies explicitly recognize the importance of the specific institutional context and the peculiarities of the political system for agenda setting by social movements (see, for example, Soule and King 2006). A recent meta-analysis of social movement outcome studies shows that movement impact depends on the political system attributes (Uba 2009).

Amenta et al. (2010) recently have challenged the political-effects literature for not being sufficiently comparative: "Only rarely do studies even compare across a few movements or issue areas" (Amenta et al. 2010; see also, Bosi and Uba 2009). Many studies assessing the political impact of movements are case studies with a rather narrow empirical scope. With some notable exceptions—for example, the study by Giugni and Sakura Yamasaki (2009) dealing with different movements (antinuclear, peace, and environmental) in three countries—most studies deal with one case, one movement, one policy field, or even one single decision. In her review of seventy-four political-outcome studies, Uba (2009) could classify virtually all studies under one single policy issue. This absence of comparisons across issues and movements thwarts the possibility for developing a strong cumulative body of evidence with robust generalizations about when movements matter (Bosi and Uba 2009; Giugni 2004). The specific agenda-setting studies suffer from the same weakness. Although some of the studies listed above did compare across several US states (for example: King et al. 2005; Soule and King 2006), only two agenda-setting studies reviewed in table 1 compare different issues and different movements (Baumgartner and Mahoney 2005; King et al. 2007).

Much of the reviewed work did not exploit the analytical possibilities offered by the policy-agenda perspective and its associated time-series methodology (for an exception in the broader field of political outcome studies, see Giugni 2004). As a consequence, some of the causal inferences may be challenged (for a methodological critique of social movement impact studies, see Earl 2000). In their recent overview, Lorenzo Bosi and Uba (2009) rightfully note that the methodological sophistication of the political outcome studies has increased considerably: different types of effects have been distinguished and scholars have increasingly relied on multivariate analysis. Still, according to the specific agenda-setting studies we reviewed, few studies have used predefined lags between independent and dependent variables. Many studies also relied on yearly (or quarterly) observations or have analyzed synchronous yearly changes, which considerably weakens the causal conclusions (Kriesi, Koopmans, Duyvendak, and Giugni 1995). Some recent studies, however, do include one-year time-lags (Johnson, Agnone, and McCarthy 2010; McAdam and Su 2002; Olzak and Soule 2009; Soule et al. 1999).

Additionally, the temporal structure of many analyses, drawing on yearly observations without specifying the assumptions of how the causal process works through time, challenges the causal inferences that are drawn. As McAdam and Su rightfully state, working with much "closer temporal connections" (months, weeks, days) reinforces the chance that one is dealing with true causal effects (2002: 700). Other work in political agenda setting has shown that parliaments and governments tend to react immediately to mass media coverage. It is a matter of days before political actors adjust their attention and adopt media issues (Vliegenthart and Walgrave 2009; Walgrave, Soroka, and Nuytemans 2008; Walgrave and Van Aelst 2006). We believe that for some political agendas these short-term effects are also likely when it comes to responding to specific protest events staged by social movements. For other political agendas it makes more sense that effects take a longer time to materialize. Moreover, few of the reviewed studies do take into account the problem of autocorrelation and control the impact of the independent variable (movement size, protest, etc.) on the dependent variable (political attention) for the dependent variable's own past (earlier political attention) (exceptions being: Johnson et al. 2010; King et al. 2007; Olzak and Soule 2009; Soule et al. 1999). These analytical problems undermine the causal inferences one can draw.

CASE SELECTION AND HYPOTHESES

Most previous work deals with the United States. The present study focuses on Belgium, a small consociational democracy (Lijphart 1999). It differs from the US in a number of key dimensions, and this could shape how protest affects the political agenda there. Belgium is a polity with very strong political parties (De Winter, della Porta, and Deschouwer 1996) and high party discipline (Depauw 1999). Rather than a two-party presidential system, it is a highly fragmented, multiparty parliamentary democracy typically governed by a large coalition government. The fragmented government, rather than parliament, is the entry gate to politics. In comparison to the US, one could consider Belgium to be a "closed" political system. There are many parties, but they are congealed together in large governments where parties do not have much room for maneuvering. In practice, the Belgian parliament has considerably less power than the US Congress. Additionally, the Belgian state is decentralized, with culturally and politically distinct French-speaking and Dutch-speaking parts. When protest is organized by a movement that only mobilizes on one side of the language border, chances are smaller that the national political institutions will pick up its signal. So, on the one hand, the closed character of the Belgian polity and its decentralization probably mitigate the impact of protest on politics.

On the other hand, the Belgian polity is characterized by a large incidence of demonstration activism—*much* higher than in the US (Norris, Walgrave, and Van Aelst 2005). Worldwide, Belgium is among the countries where protest is most widespread. When Belgians disagree with a policy or demandd a new policy, they take to the streets (Van Aelst and Walgrave 2001). This suggests that protest is to some extent politically effective in Belgium, or is at least perceived as such by participants. The country has a strong civil society with large social movement organizations able to mobilize on a great scale. While many of these organizations have neocorporatist links with the state, they use protest as an alternative way to get what they want when direct negotiations fail. Thus, even though we have reasons to expect that Belgian protests affect the political agenda both more and less when compared to the US, Belgium presents a good test for the US findings. We do not derive any comparative hypotheses about the differences in protest impact between Belgium and the US because we do not have US evidence in this study, but we do elaborate expectations below about protest affecting different parts of the political agenda in both countries.

In many countries, demonstrations have become normal events (Barnes and Kaase 1979). As we mentioned earlier, this definitely applies to our Belgian case as well (Van Aelst and Walgrave 2001). The vast bulk of the demonstrations in our sample (see below) are legal, authorized, nonviolent, and orderly assemblies. The idea that moderate mobilization in itself may lead to policy change is the basic hypothesis of many studies of movements' political outcomes (Johnson 2008: 975), but not all scholars underscore it. Amenta and his colleagues (2009), for example, state that what helps challengers mobilize may sometimes thwart a movement's impact. Other scholars have suggested that, although agenda setting can be accomplished by protests, really influencing the actual decision requires organizational strength (Johnson et al. 2010; King et al. 2005). Yet others have suggested just the opposite (Soule and King 2006: 1898). Most studies seem to agree, though, that moderate protest matters. Almost all of the studies in table 1 that assess protest influence conclude that it significantly affects the political agenda, although sometimes only indirectly and in interaction with another variable. Our first hypothesis thus states: *Protest (frequency and size) on an issue increases the political attention for the issue* (H1).

Lohmann (1993) argues that the number of protesters is closely associated with the strength of the signal that is sent to decision makers who seek to make policies that are advantageous for a majority of the population. This argument has been echoed by Burstein and Linton's (2002) claim that the size of the protest gives political elites cues about public opinion and, thus, affects subsequent undertakings. Yet, most of the studies reviewed here

drawing on the agenda-setting perspective tap the number of events and not their size (some combine this protest measure with measures of the strength of the organizing SMOs), and most studies found effects of frequency. The only agenda-setting study directly comparing the effect of size and frequency of events is McAdam and Su's (2002). They found in the US that the size of protest events on the Vietnam War mattered more than their frequency when predicting the amount of roll-call votes in Congress. So, we hypothesize that *protest size has a stronger effect on political attention than protest frequency* (H2).

Both hypotheses postulate a simple and direct impact of protest on the political agenda. However, we anticipate that protest effects are often indirect (see also Olzak and Soule 2009), reflecting complex causalities and the of the contingent effects of mobilization (Bosi and Uba 2009). Andrews (1997, 2001) has shown that movement impact is a complex and contingent process, and that different measures of impact lead to different conclusions. In our view, the complexity of the causal agenda-setting chain is related to the presence of several political agendas. In fact, *the government agenda* does not exist. In any political system, government has different branches that react differently to incoming signals from the environment (Baumgartner et al. 2009; Jones, Sulkin, and Larsen 2003). The same is most likely the case for the signals given by the protest event. Movement activists shop around for venues at different levels of governance to advance their cause. King and colleagues (2005; 2006) argue that for US cases movement impact diminishes as one moves through the stages of the legislative process. Only three of the eleven US studies we listed (Johnson 2008; Johnson et al. 2010; Olzak and Soule 2009) measured diverging movement impact on several government agendas (see table 1). By and large, these studies seem to confirm the idea that protest—and other social movement activities as well—have a greater effect on "early" stages of the policy process (such as hearings in Congress) than it does on "later" policy stages (such as legislation).

In this study, we assess three political agendas in Belgium: (1) questions and interpellations in parliament, (2) decisions by the ministerial council (government), and (3) passed legislation. These three agendas represent distinct branches of Belgian government. They do not necessarily represent different stages of the policy process as in previous US studies comparing hearings and legislation. In Belgium, interpellations and questions are not precursors of legislation, and government decisions do not automatically follow from them. Rather, they represent discrete agendas each with their own finality and logic. Thus, we do not expect to find that protest would affect parliamentary questions more than government decisions.

In a parliamentary system as in Belgium, the government is by far the most powerful political actor (Ström 2000; Ström, Müller, and Bergman 2003); it is ultimately responsible and has the power to change things. In the US presidential system, there is more of a power balance between Congress and the president. Yet in Belgium, all heads turn to the government when problems or discontent emerge. When movements stage protests they target the agency that can solve their problem, and in Belgium that agency is the government; they primarily expect an answer from the cabinet. As parliament is the formal legislature, movements aiming for legislative change should target parliament. Yet, in most parliamentary democracies, government has largely taken over the legislative role from parliament. Laws must still be passed in parliament, of course, but it is the government who initiates the successful bills. Members of parliament (MPs), or even their parties, are incapable of getting laws approved without government support. This is the case in Belgium too (De Winter and Dumont 2000). If legislation is the aim, one has to work through the government. On top of that, passing legislation is a slow and cumbersome process. This implies that the direct link of legislation with protest is probably difficult to substantiate and weaker than the connection between protest and weekly government decisions.

As for parliament and its weekly questions and interpellations, previous research has shown that MPs do tend to react more strongly to media cues than does the cabinet. Opposition MPs use the media to provide them with information that can be held against the

government (Walgrave et al. 2008). Demonstrations, especially when they are big, do not need to be amplified by MPs in order to reach government. Their signal is already loud and clear. In many cases protests directly attack the government, and the protest signal does not need opposition MPs to interpret it and turn it into a challenging message. Hence, we expect that MPs in their weekly questioning of government would not be greatly affected by protest, and would restrain from following up on street protests in parliament. In a sense, we anticipate protest to act as a kind of functional equivalent of parliament's representative role: by staging protest events, movements directly reach government without the parliamentary interface. In other words, protest short-cuts representation. We do not have any specific expectations about the effects of protest frequency, protest size, or both. Based on these observations, we would expect confirmation of the following hypothesis: *protest has the strongest effect on the governmental agenda, followed by the legislative agenda, and the smallest effect on the parliamentary agenda of questions and interpellations*.

Starting with Gitlin's *The Whole World is Watching* (1980), there is a vast literature on media and social movements (for an overview see Vliegenthart and Walgrave 2010). One of the main topics in this literature is how and to what extent movements get access to the media and manage to draw attention to their issues. The prevailing answer has been that movements set up conspicuous protest events and attract attention to their issues via contentious gatherings (Oliver and Maney 2000). The size of the event is important: higher protest turnout results in more coverage (Oliver and Myers 1999). Additionally, a range of other event characteristics affects the quantity of coverage (Barranco and Wisler 1999; Myers and Caniglia 2004). Amenta and colleagues (2009) content-analyzed a century of *New York Times* coverage and found that disruptive strategies and resource mobilization contribute to frequent appearance of social movements in the news. Koopmans even argues that movements (only) interact with political elites *via* the mass media: "Authorities will not react to—and will often not even know about—protests that are not reported in the media" (Koopmans 2004: 368). So, the literature confirms that, in order to be successful, movements must use protest to attract attention from media, amongst others (for an early account of this idea, see Lipsky 1968).

Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993) state that media coverage, in turn, legitimizes the movement's existence and its claims, making it a relevant actor for those holding political power. Media coverage is a requirement for movements to influence politicians, policymakers, and political-agenda and decision-making processes. Indeed, a large body of work in communications and political science establishes that mass media coverage in general, and thus not only coverage related to social movements, can affect the political agenda (for an overview, see Walgrave and Van Aelst 2006). In short, our expectation is that media coverage partially mediates the effect of protest on the political agenda. This mediation is only partial, as we hypothesized above that there also would be a direct effect of protest on the political agenda (H1, H2, and H3). Thus, our fourth hypothesis states: *Mass media coverage partially mediates the increase of political attention as a consequence of protest* (H4).

A final factor that can help answer how and why protest matters comes from comparing the different movements and issues at stake. Such comparisons are important because similar protest events staged by different movements may have different agenda effects and the type of movement can moderate the agenda-setting effect of protest (see also Giugni 2004; Giugni and Yamasaki 2009). Indeed, the lack of comparative research, we argue, is one of the main lacunae of extant agenda-setting research (see table 1). Some policies are harder to influence through social movement mobilization than others, for example, those connected to prevailing cleavages, or which are very expensive, or for which public opinion is very strong (Amenta et al. Su 2010; Giugni 2004; Giugni and Yamasaki 2009). Moreover, these differences may not only be due to the substance of the issues but also to movement tactics. Some use insider tactics such as lobbying or informing, while others resort to outsider tactics and stage public protest events, and still others combine these strategies (combining strategies may be the most succesful strategy; see Johnson et al. 2010). Not all movements rely on the same tactics to the

same extent. In Europe, and in Belgium, the 1960s and 1970s witnessed the rise of the so-called "new social movements," dealing with issues such as the environment, women's issues, war and peace issues, the third world, and nuclear energy (Kriesi, Koopmans, Duyvendak, and Giugni 1995; Laraña, Johnston, and Gusfield 1994). Compared to other social movements, these new social movements have fewer members and resources (Meyer and Tarrow 1998), and tend to be political outsiders, certainly more so than many of the established movements in the polity. They are not part of an armada of advisory bodies and, as a consequence, they use protest as their primary means to draw political attention to the issues they care about. Many other social movements, at least in Belgium, are partly incorporated as stakeholders in a host of agencies that advise policymakers and often carry out public policy. These movements have alternative access channels to policymakers and do not necessarily resort to outsider protest to draw political attention. Protest is their last resort, if all other instruments have failed.

Therefore, we expect differences in tactics and the "outsider" status of the new social movements to be reflected in a differential impact of their protest on the political agendas. New-social-movement issues get on the agenda not through lobbying or negotiations, but by external signals like protest. So, our final hypothesis states that *protest regarding typical new social movement issues has a larger effect on political attention than protest regarding other issues* (H5).

DATA AND METHODS

Our study covers the period of 1993-2000 in Belgium. The choice of this period is determined by the availability of the data. Yet, the period under study is interesting and relevant. Earlier work has shown that demonstration activism in the 1990s in Belgium was particularly high, even compared to the so-called "roaring" sixties (Van Aelst and Walgrave 1999). The mid-1990s witnessed probably the largest wave of protest in Belgian history, following on the "Dutroux case"—a failed criminal investigation with justice and police making major errors searching for a child murderer (Walgrave and Varone 2008). In the 1990s, the teachers and nurses also took to the streets frequently, as can be seen in table 2.

This study's main analytical innovation is that we neither focus on one case of decision making, nor on one issue, or even on a series of neighboring issues. We instead take *all* issues and *entire* agendas into account. Based on a detailed codebook, we issue-coded all parliamentary questions and interpellations, all governmental decisions, and all passed legislation (dependent variables). We coded party manifestos during the same eight-year time frame (control variable). We coded newspapers and television news for the same period (intermediary variable). We also accumulated evidence on all recorded protest demonstrations—their number and their size—and coded them according to the same issue-coding scheme (independent variables).

Issue Categories

All codes for all data series are based on the internationally employed hierarchical EUROVOC thesaurus. EUROVOC is the detailed and multilingual system of classification that is designed and used for coding all EU-documents in all EU languages (see http://eurovoc.europa.eu). We reduced the total number of EUROVOC codes to twenty-five major issue categories constituting twenty-five issue panels. All of these panels are pooled in aggregate analyses. Each record in the dataset was coded using one issue code only, and the issue categories are mutually exclusive. The list of twenty-five issue codes employed here largely corresponds with the major codes being used by the American and Comparative Agenda Projects (see www.comparativeagendas.org/). It is based on the main tasks of the central state and more or less mirrors the competences of different ministers and government departments.

We acknowledge that analyzing twenty-five aggregated issues may conceal some differences within those broadly defined issues. However, it is a commonly used approach and especially suitable to detect general patterns (see, for example, Baumgartner et al. 2009). Table 2 summarizes the evidence and presents descriptives for all agendas and all twenty-five issues.

Dependent Variables

Parliament. This is the weekly number of interpellations and questions in the Belgian Parliament by each of the twelve political parties that were represented during our research period on any of the twenty-five issues. Questions and interpellations are the most important non-legislative activities of most parliaments. To obtain these data, we coded all parliamentary records for the period 1993-2000 (N = 10,556 questions and interpellations). We use a weekly aggregation level since it encompasses what one can call the shortest "political cycle" (question time is organized once a week). Those weeks in which no parliamentary activity took place are excluded, leaving 237 weeks during the eight years.

Government. Government's priorities are identified via the communication about the weekly ministerial meetings and concomitant decisions in Belgium, taking place on Fridays. These briefings contain the weekly government decisions and are coded in a similar way as the parliamentary interpellations and questions (N=5,088). We include 237 weeks in which the Ministers met.

Legislation. All passed legislation in the Belgian parliament during the research period has been assigned to an issue category (N = 1,198).

Independent Variables

Protest Frequency. Protest is conceptualized in this study as consisting only of demonstrations—that is, a group of people taking to the streets and moving from point A to point B to show their discontent and/or preferences. In Belgium, this is by far the most common type of protest (Van Aelst and Walgrave 2001). For the collection of the protest evidence we relied on the protest coverage in two main newspapers on both sides of the language border, *De Morgen* and *Le Soir*. We also examined the national police archives to supplement our newspaper data with direct police information. For the last three years in the research period (1998-2000) we got direct information from the national police. We did not sample events and, in total, we recorded 3,839 demonstrations between 1993 and 2000.

Protest event analysis relying on mass media coverage is a widely used method in social movement research. Yet, there is a vivid debate about the reliability of newspaper data (for a review, see Earl, Martin, McCarthy, and Soule 2004). The hard facts of the event are mostly reported in a relatively accurate way, but there tends to be a selection bias. Earl et al. (2004) argue that newspaper data on protest events do not deviate from widely accepted standards of quality and can be used. Especially regarding the assessment of protest impact, partly drawing on media coverage makes good sense (Earl et al. 2004: 76). The events covered in national newspapers are the relevant events (for the national political agenda) that get noticed by political actors. If events do not get noticed by the media, they simply may not exist for power holders (Koopmans 2004).

The selection of *De Morgen* and *Le Soir* as newspaper sources was based on an earlier test by Wim Ulens (1994), which compared protest coverage in several newspapers and found that *De Morgen* and *Le Soir* most accurately reported on protest in Belgium. Both of these newspapers, Ulens showed, have the most extensive coverage of protest and do not represent an ideological bias in their protest coverage—consequently, we do not have to control for

Table 2. Data Summary and Descriptives

				Daily (N = 2,504)		Weekly (N = 237)		Monthly (N = 96)	Control
Issue	**NSM Issue**	**Number of Protests (N = 3,839)**	**Average Size of Protests**	**TV (N =113,658)**	**Newspaper (N = 66,607)**	**Parliament (N = 10,556)**	**Government (N = 5,088)**	**Legislation (N = 1,198)**	**Manifestos (in %) (N = 31,783)**
Political Organization	No	83	343	2.054	2.400	1.759	0.228	0.510	7.764
SD				3.192	1.884	2.209	0.528	1.142	1.126
Institutions	No	0	0	0.525	0.284	0.308	0.021	0.083	0.384
SD				1.293	0.635	0.865	0.144	0.427	0.058
Executive	No	1	499	0.431	0.397	0.671	0.257	0.000	0.446
SD				1.564	0.843	1.436	0.687	0.000	0.222
State	No	159	277	2.691	2.707	6.899	2.304	1.667	7.514
SD				2.548	1.842	4.908	2.151	2.378	0.747
Development Aid	Yes	5	333	0.200	0.187	0.160	0.612	0.792	1.706
SD				0.562	0.456	0.495	0.884	1.698	0.440
Defense	Yes	186	931	3.475	2.722	2.565	1.363	0.563	2.136
SD				3.727	2.092	3.309	1.508	0.960	0.300
European Union	No	110	762	0.918	0.680	0.928	0.899	0.198	5.259
SD				1.659	1.180	1.535	1.049	0.573	1.109
Justice and Law	No	595	609	6.303	1.544	6.295	1.384	1.438	7.788
SD				5.220	1.407	5.228	1.256	2.046	1.304
Economy and Trade	No	50	736	1.142	0.884	1.329	0.734	0.292	5.119
SD				1.822	1.008	1.624	1.034	0.664	0.304
Finances	No	56	917	0.906	1.082	3.173	1.329	2.594	4.343
SD				1.540	1.189	3.346	1.427	2.983	0.289
Social Questions	No	533	529	4.650	3.588	8.249	3.080	1.240	28.651
SD				4.290	2.307	7.712	2.454	1.727	0.805
Leisure	No	35	289	1.093	1.354	0.422	0.388	0.052	3.283
SD				1.510	1.230	0.911	0.677	0.266	0.631

Religion and Cultural Identity	No	10	314	0.299	0.318	0.219	0.017	0.010	0.080
SD				0.818	0.659	0.738	0.129	0.102	0.005
Education	No	687	559	0.680	0.748	0.477	0.118	0.125	4.964
SD				1.360	0.898	0.972	0.372	0.417	0.510
Communication and Information	No	4	210	0.439	0.695	0.785	0.633	0.083	1.707
SD				0.821	0.851	1.399	1.326	0.278	0.599
Science	No	0	0	0.099	0.190	0.059	0.215	0.010	0.401
SD				0.523	0.427	0.270	0.478	0.102	0.135
Companies	No	220	560	1.116	1.271	0.624	0.046	0.177	0.677
SD				1.550	1.223	1.057	0.211	0.543	0.313
Labor and Employment	No	397	801	2.533	1.704	2.101	1.338	0.583	7.158
SD				2.931	1.649	2.409	1.522	1.053	0.584
Mobility	Yes	150	922	1.872	1.062	3.325	0.553	0.156	3.163
SD				2.317	1.121	3.982	0.766	0.549	0.423
Environment	Yes	154	541	1.107	0.827	1.030	0.422	0.250	5.332
SD				1.460	0.937	1.391	0.682	0.562	0.416
Agriculture and Food	No	248	221	0.643	0.309	0.924	0.257	0.260	1.350
SD				1.370	0.622	1.400	0.642	0.567	0.181
Production	No	0	0	0.251	0.162	0.211	0.190	0.260	0.851
SD				0.622	0.399	0.649	0.659	0.837	0.202
Energy	Yes	13	83	0.061	0.046	0.241	0.135	0.073	0.527
SD				0.305	0.214	0.649	0.400	0.299	0.319
Industry	No	1	99	0.081	0.050	0.620	0.004	0.010	0.064
SD				0.320	0.206	1.057	0.065	0.102	0.092
Other	No	142	696	0.000	5.900	1.165	0.093	0.083	0.332
SD				0.000	3.207	1.757	0.319	0.313	0.321
Mean		154	449	1.343	1.244	1.782	0.665	0.460	4.000
SD				2.637	1.884	3.469	1.287	1.278	5.671

editorship. By analyzing both a Dutch-speaking and a Francophone newspaper we control for the geographic bias of newspaper coverage. Both newspapers are national newspapers based in the capital of Brussels but aimed at their respective language communities. An over-representation of events in Brussels is possible, but not very likely, as we recorded large amounts of non-Brussels events (see below). A large majority of the protest events in the newspapers were not reported on the front page but on the inner pages.

The overlap of newspapers and police archive data is considerable. Counting each event only once, 49 percent of the demonstrations in our dataset were only recorded in the police archives, 13 percent only in *Le Soir*, 18 percent only in *De Morgen*, and the remaining 20 percent in a combination of these three sources. Thus, the police archives are by far the most complete source: in total, 67 percent of the demonstrations in our dataset were included in the police archive. Police data are more systematic and consistent too. When waves of protest hit the country, newspapers lose interest after a while as they turn to other issues. This does not happen with the police. They keep covering and recording the protest events even at the end of a protest cycle. There may be a bias in the police data toward the demonstrations that have requested a police permit. Still, there are many demonstrations that were not formally authorized or requested but were recorded in police archives and coded.

The Belgian police archive data are, of course, biased too. They display similar biases as the newspapers, leaning toward larger and more contentious events (Van Aelst and Walgrave 2001). Yet, the police do cover small events too, even more than newspapers do. The problem with the national police archive data is that the quality of the central data archive depends on the reliability of the local police yielding data about local events. Reviewing the data reveals that all major cities are well represented and that protest events in Brussels are most heavily represented (±30 percent). This makes sense, and we are confident that the bulk of the major demonstration events in Belgium in the research period are covered in our dataset.

Protest Size. Drawing on the media accounts and police archives, we recorded the number of people that took to the streets at the demonstration events. In total, 4,034,789 people were recorded to have participated in one of the almost 4,000 demonstrations. This total is of course not precise as it is based on almost 4,000 separate estimations. Pretests showed that the police figures are the most reliable, and certainly the most comparable across demonstrations (Van Aelst and Walgrave 1999). So, when we have police figures at our disposal, we use these. Virtually all of the entries in the police archives contained estimations of the number of participants. When media cover a demonstration, they also almost always mention the number of participants. Demonstrations without information about participants were deleted. When we have only media accounts, we multiply the media turnout figure with a coefficient (0.75 for *De Morgen* and 0.72 for *Le Soir*) based on the demonstrations for which we have both figures.

Both police data and especially newspaper coverage are, not surprisingly, biased toward larger events. The larger the demonstration, the higher the chance it is part of our dataset. For example, demonstrations only available in the police archives had an average size of 566 participants; protest covered by all three sources had an average size of 7,000 participants. In order to incorporate demonstration size in the same models as the number of demonstrations while also avoiding multicollinearity, we use the mean number of participants per demonstration per issue/time period. Scores are divided by 1,000 for reasons of interpretation.

We acknowledge that our protest measures are rather crude. We only record one type of protest (demonstrations), albeit the most frequent; we only code the issue; and we only record the number of people showing up. Most other studies regarding protest impact recorded in table 1, though, rely on similar general measures; many did not even record the number of participants. Ideally, we would have data about the disruptiveness of the protest events (violence, etc.), and also about the specific target of the protest. Yet, we are confident that our measures capture a great deal of the relevant protest in Belgium in the period of study. If we

find effects drawing on our rather crude measures, this would reinforce confidence that protest matters.

New Social Movement Issues. Five of the issues listed in table 2 were dummy-coded as being new social movement issues (environment, development aid, defense, mobility, and energy). The choice of this limited set of "typical" new social movement issues is based on an assessment of the strength, mobilization, and issue domain of the different new social movements in Belgium in the 1990s. The environmental movement (environment and mobility), the third-world movement (development aid), the peace movement (defense), and the anti-nuclear movement (energy) were by far the most active Belgian new social movements in the research period (Walgrave 1994). Naturally, it may be the case that some other movements demonstrated about typical new social movement issues or vice versa. In the research period, though, the boundaries between new social movements and others were still quite pronounced. Only the surge of the global justice movement after the turn of the century started blurring the boundaries in Belgium. Hence, we can safely consider this strictly defined set of issues as covering the key domain of the Belgian new social movements in the period under study.

Intermediary Variable

Media. Our media evidence comprises the main evening news of the four major television stations, two Dutch-speaking (*TV1* and *VTM*) and two French-speaking (*RTBF* and *RTL*), and five major newspapers (Dutch-speaking: *De Standaard*, *De Morgen*, and *Het Laatste Nieuws*; French-speaking: *La Libre Belgique* and *Le Soir*). We only coded front-page newspaper stories, with the exception of the newspapers that appeared on Tuesdays and Thursdays, on a daily basis. As the large majority of the protest events recorded through newspaper coverage were not drawn from the front page but from the inner pages, the protest variable is not conflated with the media variable. The prime time television news (7:00 p.m.) is coded in its entirety on a daily basis. Taken together, the Flemish and French-speaking media database contains 180,265 news items (113,658 television items and 66,607 newspaper items). Belgian newspapers are not issued on Sundays. Therefore, for the various television channels, a mean score for each issue for Saturdays and Sundays is calculated to substitute the original Saturday score, while the Sunday score is deleted in order to keep data comparable with the newspaper data. Furthermore, newspaper data for Tuesdays and Thursdays that are typically not coded are estimated based on previous and subsequent values. Correlations between issue-attention scores in the various outlets are above .65 for the daily level and even higher if we aggregate data to weekly or monthly levels. Elsewhere, it is shown that the media studied here influence each other considerably (Vliegenthart and Walgrave 2008). When assessing the influence of protest on media coverage, we use daily-level analysis, since this is the typical "news-cycle" for traditional media such as newspapers and television. For some analyses, we treat newspapers and television broadcasts separately. Since all television news is broadcasted in the evening, we use the same-day protest events to predict this coverage. Since all newspapers are issued in the mornings, we use previous-day protest events to predict this coverage. In analyses where media coverage is an independent variable, we combine newspaper and television coverage to avoid multicollinearity problems.

Control Variables

Party Manifestos. Using the same coding scheme, we coded party manifestos drawn up before the elections of 1991, 1995, and 1999 for each party that gained parliamentary seats. Party manifestos are issued in the months preceding a national election, and we coded the party manifestos from the eight parties that took part in all three elections in the research period. Manifestos were encoded per (quasi)sentence following the methodology devised by the

Manifesto Research Group (Budge et al. 2001). In total and aggregated, 31,783 sentences of party manifestos were issue-coded. We calculated the share of attention devoted to each issue. This series thus indicates the aggregated importance all parties together attributed to each of the twenty-five issues. We use those values until the publication of the next party manifestos.

Entropy. King and colleagues (2007) suggest that the competition from related issues might limit the attention devoted to a specific issue.[1] Translated to our study, it might well mean that if the agenda is dominated by one or several big issues—for example, international or economic crises—it will be more difficult for movements to exert influence. To capture this suppressing effect, we use a measure of agenda diversity, or entropy. The higher the entropy, the more equally the attention is divided across issues and the easier it might be for movements to affect this agenda by protesting. More specifically, we use Shannon's H, which has the following formula:

$$H = -1 * \sum_{i=1}^{n} p(x_i)\ln(p(x_i))$$

where per time-unit (daily, weekly, monthly) the share of attention for each of the 25 issues—or, more formally, the probability that a unit of analysis falls within a certain category (issue)—is multiplied by the natural logarithm of that share of attention. Since the logarithm of zero cannot be calculated, in cases of no attention we consider the score for that issue to equal zero. The higher the H score, the higher the entropy (see Jennings et al. 2011 for an elaborate explanation of the measure in an agenda-setting context). Like all other independent variables, the variable is lagged one time period. While we might expect a positive main effect—the more diverse the agenda, the bigger it is—we are especially interested in the interaction with protest frequency and protest size: if the competition logic holds, one expects larger protest effects with higher levels of entropy, and thus positive interaction effects.

Model

To test the idea that protest impact is a complex and multistage process, we conduct various analyses, each time considering another dependent variable (parliament, government, legislation, newspapers, and television news). It is important to note that we use different aggregation levels for each analysis. In fact, the temporal structure of the different data series varies extensively. Mass media coverage is recorded on a daily basis, as there is new news every day. The analysis with mass media as the dependent variable is based on daily (media, demonstrations) or interpolated daily (parliament, government, legislation, government agreement, party manifestos) data. We expect media to react the same day (for television) or the next day (in newspapers). For parliament and government the time unit is one week. Question Time in parliament is once a week and it makes sense that MPs would react immediately after a protest event. The same applies to the Council of Ministers. The models with legislation as the dependent variable draw on monthly data; we aggregate all legislation that has been passed in an entire month (as legislation is much rarer). The independent variables in the legislation models are lagged by one month but consist of the sum of their values during the three preceding months. This makes sense as legislation takes more time to be passed. Only very exceptionally does a law get passed in less than a month.

Note that due to the different temporal structure of the data we will only control "upstream" and cannot each time control for the "slower" agendas. For example, as legislation is aggregated on a monthly level, it does not make sense to test whether daily media coverage is affected by monthly legislative processes. Technically, legislation is constant during a month and cannot lead to daily coverage differences within that month.

Our data have certain distinct characteristics that require a careful consideration of the appropriate analysis technique:

1. We use a pooled data structure, including multiple scores for the 25 issues. For the various analyses we have 62,575 (2,503 days * 25 issues), 5,775 (231 weeks * 25 issues) and 2,232 (93 months * 25 issues) observations.

2. Our data take the form of time-series, with daily/weekly/monthly values as the units of analysis. As previously mentioned, this approach allows for a more convincing demonstration of causality although it requires adequately modeling the dynamic structure of the series.

3. A third relevant element concerns the structure of our variables. The variables measure the occurrences of certain issues on certain agendas. They are counts and resemble a Poisson distribution. Furthermore, data are mostly overdispersed: the variance is usually larger than the mean. This latter characteristic makes the use of a negative binomial regression instead of a Poisson model appropriate.

The study's data suggest the use of a longitudinal, pooled negative binomial model. However, within this type of analysis, again various options are available. The following considerations are of importance here:

1. The first question that needs to be addressed is whether the series are stationary—that is, whether the mean of each series is affected by a change of time origin. We use the Fisher test that is based on the results of augmented Dickey-Fuller tests for each individual issue series. Results indicate that for all our dependent variables the null hypothesis of non-stationarity can be rejected. Consequently, the series do not have to be differenced.

2. To establish the preferred type of analysis, it is generally recommended to first check for heterogeneity. Heterogeneity indicates the presence of panel-specific (in our case issue-specific) differences in the dependent variable that are not captured by the independent variables in the model. Considering what we are dealing with here, it is highly likely that heterogeneity is present in our data: there are substantial differences across issues with some issues receiving much more attention from media and politicians than other issues. Fixed-effect analyses confirm heterogeneity for all our media.

3. Taking into account this heterogeneity and the fact that we use a negative binomial regression, we have to choose between a fixed-effects or a random-effects analysis. In the case of negative binomial regressions, the fixed or random elements in the equation deal with the differential level of dispersion across issues (Allison 2009). Depending on sample size (number of panels and time points), one or the other is more efficient. However, with a large number of time points the difference between the two ultimately disappears. For all our analyses we conducted both a fixed effects and a random effects variant and compared the parameters for each of the independent variables using a Hausman test. This Hausman test indicated no or hardly any differences in the parameters obtained with both types of analyses. In general, the random effect models are slightly more efficient and, therefore, we report the results from those models. Furthermore, to account for the heterogeneity across issues, we conduct fixed-effects regressions, meaning that we include as additional independent variables dummies for each issue minus one. These dummies and their coefficients are omitted in the presentation of the results.

4. The last question that needs to be addressed is how to deal with the temporal structure of the data. Diagnostical statistics indicate that all dependent variables, except for the legislation, exhibit autocorrelation, indicating that the current value is correlated with the previous value(s). To control for this autocorrelation, we include the lagged value of the dependent variable as an independent variable. Additionally, inspection of residuals after analyses with the lagged dependent variable suggests that the daily and weekly series' own history on a somewhat longer term also exert an influence. To capture this longer-term influence, we construct a new variable that is the sum of the values of the lags 2 to 5 (media) and 2 to 3 (government and parliament). This strongly reinforces our claim that we are dealing with causal effects of protest and reduces the chance that we are only having correlations due to spurious relationships or due to the exact reverse causal direction.

In sum, we estimate pooled negative binomial regressions with controls for the dependent variable's own history. Each analysis furthermore controls for all other political agendas that have a lower or similar aggregation level. All those values are lagged one or a few time periods in order to fulfill one of the basic requirements of causality: the cause has to precede the consequence. We report model fit (log likelihood) and incidence rate ratios that have a more intuitive interpretation than coefficients in log-linear negative binomial models.

The possible mediating role of media coverage requires a formal test of mediation. Since the different analyses that include the media as dependent and independent variables are conducted on different levels (daily and weekly/monthly), a test like the Sobel test is not feasible. Therefore, we relied on the Baron and Kenny approach. They argue that a relation is (partially) mediated if: (a) the independent variable influences the dependent variable; (b) the independent variable influences the mediator; (c) the mediator influences the dependent variable; (d) the influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable shrinks when the mediator is included. The latter assumption is not part of the analyses presented here, but is tested and confirmed in all instances where we discuss mediation in the results section (Baron and Kenny 1986).

RESULTS

The results of the analyses are presented in tables 3 to 6. We ran ten pooled negative binomial regression time-series analyses, first with main effects only, and next with interaction effects, each modeling the attention devoted to all twenty-five issues in the television news, in newspaper coverage, by parliament, by government, and by the legislature. Tables 3 and 4 present the results for the daily analyses having newspaper and television coverage as the dependent variable. Table 5 presents the results for parliament and government. Table 6 looks at legislation.

A first general observation is that most agendas are determined to a large extent by their own past. Especially both media types, but also parliament and government, act path-dependently: their issue attention is quite continuous, and yesterday's (or last week's) attention pattern affects their present day/week attention for issues. Legislation is much less affected by what the legislature passed during the period before. That political attention is so strongly determined by its own past makes it harder to substantiate that protest matters; a lot of the variation has already been taken away by continuity.

Second, we find influences amongst both media agendas and amongst the political agendas in the models. Parliament affects government; parliament affects legislation; government influences the legislature; television and newspapers mutually interact. All of these effects are expected—a political system may be diverse but it is integrated—and these findings reinforce the idea that we are dealing with a realistic modeling strategy.

Third, the control variable party-manifesto attention is a strong predictor of governmental attention (see table 5). When parties, in manifestos preceding the beginning of the parliamentary term, devote ample attention to issues, the cabinet devotes considerably more attention to these same issues. Parties set the political agenda as the mandate model would predict.

Fourth, we also find the expected positive main effects of entropy on issue attention for all agendas. The interaction between entropy and our protest variables is often positive, but only significant in one instance: protest frequency has a stronger impact on television coverage when the issue agenda is more diverse. We organize our further discussion of the results by following the order of the five hypotheses and jumping from one table to the other.

Hypothesis 1 stated that protest would matter and would affect the political agenda. The evidence supports the hypothesis. We record statistically significant main effects on government and legislation, but not on parliament (see tables 5 and 6). When protest in the form of demonstrations is organized, chances increase that, the week afterwards, government will

Table 3. Daily Pooled Negative Binomial Regression Time-Series Analyses. Television Coverage of Protest Issues

Dependent Variables →	**Television (day)**		**Television (day)**	
	Main Model		*Interaction Model*	
Independent Variables	IRR	z-value	IRR	z-value
Protest frequency (t-1)	1.003	.77	.938**	-2.98
Protest size (t-1)	1.013**	3.09	.989	-.60
Television (t-1)	1.046***	32.31	1.045***	32.22
Television (t-[2-5])	1.013***	28.30	1.013***	28.38
Newspapers (t-1)	1.097***	29.19	1.097***	29.35
NSM issue	2.006***	9.30	2.002***	9.28
Entropy (t-1)	1.580***	40.44	1.572***	39.72
NSM * protest frequency (t-1)	-	-	1.012	.69
NSM * protest size (t-1)	-	-	1.000	-.01
Entropy (t-1)* protest frequency (t-1)	-	-	1.038***	3.33
Entropy (t-1) * protest size (t-1)	-	-	1.013	1.32
Log Likelihood	-75603.312		-75594.532	
N	62,475		62,475	

Notes: * p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001 (one-tailed tests)

Table 4. Daily Pooled Negative Binomial Regression Time-Series Analyses. Newspaper Coverage of Protest Issues

Dependent Variables →	**Newspaper (day)**		**Newspaper (day)**	
	Main Effect		*Interaction Effect*	
Independent Variables	IRR	z-value	IRR	z-value
Protest frequency (t-1)	1.013***	3.39	1.011**	2.42
Protest size (t-1)	1.021***	5.83	1.021***	5.87
Television (t-1)	1.030***	30.49	1.030***	30.49
Newspapers (t-1)	1.164***	72.81	1.165***	72.80
Newspaper (t-[2-5])	1.003***	4.89	1.003***	4.88
NSM issue	.106	-1.40	7.560	1.11
Entropy (t-1)	1.246***	17.02	1.246***	17.01
NSM * protest frequency (t-1)	-	-	.983	-.82
NSM * protest size (t-1)	-	-	.989	-.84
Entropy (t-1) * protest frequency (t-1)	-	-	1.000	.10
Entropy (t-1) * protest size (t-1)	-	-	1.003	1.24
Log Likelihood	-71329.186		-71327.860	
N	62,475		62,475	

Notes: * p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001 (one-tailed tests)

Table 5. Results of Weekly Pooled Negative Binomial Regression Time-Series Analyses Estimating Parliamentary Questions and Government Decisions

Dependent variables →	**Parliament**				**Government**			
	Main		*Interaction*		*Main*		*Interaction*	
Independent variables	IRR	z-value	IRR	z-value	IRR	z-value	IRR	z-value
Protest frequency (t-1)	1.002	.62	1.043	1.32	1.007*	2.11	.990	-.14
Protest size (t-1)	.989	-.97	.896	-1.31	1.006	.48	1.050	1.31
Media (t-1)	1.003**	3.06	1.003**	3.06	1.002*	1.75	1.002	1.58
Parliament (t-1)	1.022***	5.63	1.022***	5.62	1.013**	3.10	1.013**	3.11
Parliament (t-[2-3])	1.027***	12.26	1.027***	12.29	-	-	-	-
Government (t-1)	1.000	-.10	.998	-.22	1.069***	6.08	1.068***	6.08
Government (t-[2-3])	-	-	-	-	1.021**	2.90	1.021**	2.84
Party manifestos (t-1)	1.018	.87	1.022	1.05	1.055*	2.09	1.055*	2.09
NSM issue	.271***	-4.19	1.074	.32	.934	-.23	.923	-.28
Entropy (t-1)			1.489***	7.08	1.180**	3.10	1.180**	2.84
NSM * protest frequency (t-1)	-	-	1.126**	2.53	-	-	1.162**	2.74
NSM * protest size (t-1)	-	-	1.026	.95	-	-	.969	-1.11
Entropy (t-1) * protest frequency (t-1)	-	-	.980	-1.27	-	-	1.008	.23
Entropy (t-1) * protest size (t-1)	-	-	1.044	1.15	-	-	.978	-.96
Log Likelihood	-8213.365		-8208.6089		-5148.096		-5144.0418	
N	5,850		5,850		5,850		5,850	

Notes: * p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001 (one-tailed tests)

Table 6. Monthly Pooled Negative Binomial Regression Time-Series Analyses. Passed Legislation on Protest Issues

Dependent variables →	**Legislation**			
	Main		*Interaction*	
Independent variables	IRR	z-value	IRR	z-value
Protest frequency (t-1)	1.000	.01	.978*	-1.74
Protest size (t-1)	1.009*	1.68	1.048**	2.50
Legislation (t-[1-3])	.975*	-1.11	.972	-1.26
Media (t-[1-3])	1.000	.29	1.000	.40
Parliament (t-[1-3])	1.003*	1.85	1.003*	1.89
Government (t-[1-3])	1.032***	5.02	1.032***	4.84
Party manifestos (t-[1-3])	.942	-.92	.932	-1.11
NSM	.161**	-3.03	.669	-.94
Entropy (t-[1-3])	1.489***	4.49	1.489***	4.03
NSM * protest frequency (t-[1-3])	-	-	1.020	.81
NSM* protest size (t-[1-3])	-	-	.965	-1.54
Entropy (t-1) * protest frequency (t-[1-3])	-	-	1.015	1.60
Entropy (t-1) * protest size (t-[1-3])	-	-	.976*	-2.05
Log Likelihood	-1552.3757		-1550.0421	
N	2,325		2,325	

Notes: * p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001 (one-tailed tests)

devote attention to the issue in its Ministerial Council. The incidence rate ratio of 1.007 (table 5) indicates that with each demonstration about an issue that is taking place, the number of times that the issue is discussed in ministerial meetings increases by 0.7 percent. The number of demonstrators that takes to the streets affects the legislation that is passed up to three months later. With an average increase of 1,000 demonstrators per event, the percent attention devoted by the legislature to the issue in the next three months goes up by almost 1 percent (see incidence ratio 1.009 in table 6). These effects are not huge, but considering our stringent design and our crude measure of protest, we are confident that they are robust and capture real agenda-setting effects of protest.

Hypothesis 2 maintained that protest size rather than protest frequency would matter. The data only partly confirm our expectation. We record a significant impact of protest frequency on government and (for new social movement issues) on parliament, while we find a significant direct influence of protest size on legislation (see tables 5 and 6). This yields some credibility to the existing claim formulated in the US context that power holders are primarily thinking about public opinion when they observe protests. The larger the numbers, the more likely it is that legislation—arguably the most substantial form of devoting attention to an issue and a clear indicator of real policy change—is affected.

Hypothesis 3 formulated more specific expectations as to which political agenda in Belgium—parliament, government, or legislation—would be relatively more affected by protest. The idea is that government is most directly targeted by protest and is most likely to react while (oppositional) parliament does not strongly draw on protest signals to challenge the government. We anticipated that protest effects on legislation would lay somewhere in between since attracting legislators' attention is a long and cumbersome process. The hypothesis receives support. Parliamentary questioning is only affected by protest frequency of specific new social

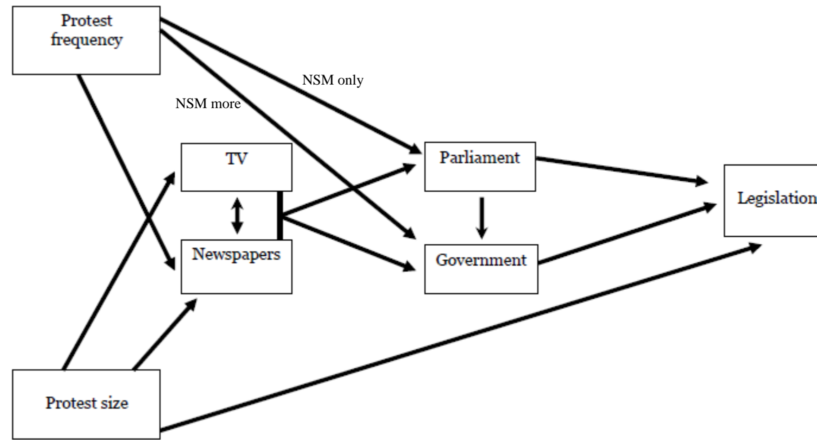
movement events. Also, government is affected more than parliament by the frequency of new social movement events, but it is more widely affected by other protest events too (see table 5). The legislator's agenda is directly affected by protest size of any type of demonstration (see table 6). It seems to be true that government reacts most, that legislation reacts less, and that MPs' weekly questioning is least affected by what happened on the streets beforehand. It is important to note that parliament partially acts as a mediating variable toward government and toward legislation. If protest manages to affect the parliamentary agenda, which we showed is only the case to a limited extent, the parliamentary agenda, in turn, affects the decisions the cabinet takes and the laws passed. Also, when protest influences the governmental agenda, this in turn strongly affects the legislation that is passed the following months. Comparing the effects of protest on the three political agendas and the effects of these agendas on each other testifies to the fact that protest impact is a multistage and indirect process.

Hypothesis 4 explicitly dealt with indirect effects and postulated that mass media coverage is impacted by preceding protest and, in turn, affects the political agenda. If movements manage to get in the news without directly affecting political attention, they may still get what they want in an indirect way. The evidence supports the first link of this mediating logic. Both television news and newspaper coverage are affected by the protests. For television, only protest size exerts influence (see table 3). For newspapers, protest frequency matters as well, but protest size is a stronger predictor (see table 4). Television and newspapers react more to large protest than to frequent protests. This makes sense, as the media look for spectacular stories that are easy to cover and are deemed newsworthy (Shoemaker 1991). The data also corroborate the second part of the hypothesis, namely that media coverage has an effect on the political agenda. Both the parliamentary questions as well as the cabinet decisions are affected by (pooled) media coverage (see table 5). In line with earlier findings in the field of political communication, mass media attention attracts the attention of government agencies. Both findings together give ample credence to the idea that protest's political agenda-setting power is partially indirect and mediated by mass media coverage. When discussing hypothesis 3, we mentioned that the interaction among the different political agendas indicates that protest effects may be mediated. The media findings also reinforce the claim, encapsulated in hypothesis 2, that size matters more than frequency: large protests attract the media's attention more frequently than frequent protests. Thus, the indirect effect of protest is more present when it comes to large protests.

Hypothesis 5 formulated the claim that protest may matter more for some specific issues than for others. In the Belgian context, we anticipated that, in particular, protest events staged by new social movements would attract political attention. To test this in our models, we incorporate a new social movement issue dummy (main effects) and we interact the dummy with protest size and protest frequency (interaction models) (see tables 5 and 6). The coefficient for the main effect of the new social movement dummy has little informative value, since dummies for separate issues are included as well. The expectation that events by new social movements exert more political agenda-setting power than events by other movements is supported by the data. The interaction terms are significant for the parliament and government models (see table 5). When new social movements demonstrate frequently, this clearly has a stronger effect both on parliament and government than when other movements mobilize. For parliament, for example, the results suggest one additional protest event on a new social movement issue increases parliamentary attention for that issue by 12.6 percent, while it does not significantly alter parliamentary attention for other issues.

Figure 1 summarizes our findings. It sketches the complex and multistage causal processes emerging from protest events; only significant relations are shown. One can clearly observe that protest matters directly but also indirectly—both via mass media and via intermediary political agendas. For example, legislation can be directly "reached" by protest but also indirectly, via the governmental agenda and via parliament. The graph also documents that protest size probably matters more than protest frequency and that Parliament is sometimes bypassed.

Figure 1. Summary: The Complex Causal Structure of Protest Impact on Political Agendas



Notes: p < .05; all arrows indicate significant effects.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The study elaborated and tested the idea that protest impact is a complex and multistaged process working via different mechanisms. Some protest events characterized by some features staged by some movements sometimes have a direct and sometimes an indirect effect on some political agendas. We specified these conditions by introducing differences between protest features (frequency and size) and between political agendas, by assessing the intermediary role of the mass media, and by specifying the differential effects of different movement types. Protest matters for the political agenda, but the presence and size of the protest event effects vary.

While most studies investigating and confirming the agenda impact of protest were conducted in the US, we find that protest matters as well in a very different political system. Protest measurably affects the political agenda both in a presidential two-party system with weak parties and a modest protest tradition as well as in a very fragmented parliamentary system with strong parties and ample protest incidence. Drawing on previous studies, we cautiously corroborate the expectation that protest size matters more than protest frequency. The legislature seems to be especially sensitive to big events. When movements want to directly affect legislation they need to go for big numbers, not for a proliferation of many small events. This seems to make sense, as passing legislation is a long and difficult process that needs a strong triggering event to create enough incentives to overcome all barriers and friction hindering legislative change. Our evidence was not entirely straightforward, though, and we need more research to establish with more certainty that protest size is the key driver.

Some political actors are more affected by protest events than others. In the Belgian polity the most reactive player is the government. The government is targeted directly by social movements and is held responsible for addressing their demands. We do not have evidence that the Belgian government effectively fixes these problems, but we did present evidence that government increases its attention to issues that have been signaled by protest. Parliament in Belgium plays a different role. It is the venue where opposition and government parties clash, but it is not the first place where movement issues are passed on to the government. It seems as if parliament and protest are to some extent functional equivalents. The legislative agenda is largely dominated by government, and affecting the governmental agenda implies that the legislative agenda may also be impacted. Notwithstanding the sticky process of passing legislation, we also found direct influences of protest on legislative change.

This finding highlights the importance of comparative research assessing protest impact in different political contexts. Earlier US research concluded that movement influence varies mainly according to the different phases of the legislative process. As protest issues move up through the policy cycle to more consequential and constrained political agendas, they lose traction (King et al. 2007; King et al. 2005). This does not seem to be the case in Belgium, where protest has effects on even consequential and constrained political agendas. Asking questions and interpellating the government in Belgium is neither regulated by stringent rules nor has important consequences, and is least affected by protest. Legislation, in contrast, constrained and consequential, appears to be directly affected. Our findings also show that, in Belgium, success at later stages of the policy cycle is not conditioned on success at earlier stages; we found a direct impact of protest on legislation. We are not sure our findings that different agendas are differently affected by protest would hold in other countries. Political systems differ in their division of tasks and internal dynamics. The different stages of the legislative process may be more or less connected. Our claim is only that, depending on the political system and its actors, agenda-setting effects of protest vary. We call for studies in more countries to test whether movements' agenda-setting power differs across political agendas in a similar or dissimilar way than what we found here.

Protest can have direct and indirect effects on the political agenda. We examined how the mass media mediate between street protest and political actors. Especially when protest is large, both newspapers and television increase their attention for the underlying issue. This media signal is picked up later by both parliament and government who start publicly caring about the issue. This evidence speaks to the extensive literature on the interaction between mass media and social movements. This work mainly focuses on how movements get into the news. We confirmed earlier findings that protest gets movements into the news. But, we showed for the first time that getting into the news bears direct political consequences. Mass media matter for movements because they matter for politics. This mediating role of the media, we believe, is not a typical Belgian phenomenon. General studies gauging the media agenda-setting power in other countries, including the US, have shown that media in general may be influential agenda-setters (Walgrave and Van Aelst 2006).

Some protest events affect the political agenda more than others. Especially less organized and less resourceful movements must resort to protest in order to get their message across. Movement actors that are political insiders and routinely have access to political elites stage protests as well, but their protests are less consequential. We expect that differences among movements in other countries would also be associated with their links to established government agencies and other insider channels.

The main limitation of our study is that it only focuses on one type of impact: political agenda setting. We argued that getting political attention is a precondition for attaining policy change, but acknowledge that getting attention is not the same as getting the *desired* attention or having the requested policy change. In fact, movements may push actors to focus on their issues, but that may lead to exactly the opposite decisions the movements stood for. In a broader perspective, some movements may be less focused on political outcomes altogether; they may value political attention (and consequent political decisions) less than others. We acknowledge that narrowing down movement impact to political agenda-setting power could have affected our findings. For example, the labor movement does not only target politics but also employers and companies. The movement may actually reach a part of its goals without involving government in any way. So, we must be cautious about equating political attention with movement success. Movement success may lay elsewhere.

The study outlines an agenda for future work, and especially calls for studies drawing on comparative and cross-national evidence. The agenda-setting approach and associated design allow for comparative work as the dependent variable (political attention) and the independent variables (different types of protest) can be measured in a straightforward, standardized, and formalized way. We need more evidence comprising more countries in order to get a better

grasp on the conditions and mechanisms of social movement impact. Also, our key claim that movements' impact on politics is complex, often indirect, and multistaged can be extended further by incorporating more diverse intermediary agendas. For example, it may be a good idea to test whether and how protest affects the priorities of political parties (party manifestos) or of established interest groups. We leave it to other work to pursue these tracks.

NOTES

[1] King et al. (2007) additionally suggest that the capacity of the agenda is important. Indeed, when an agenda is smaller, it is less likely to incorporate new issues that are brought forward by protest. The agendas we include in our study, however, seem to be relatively stable in size: the same media outlets are analyzed throughout the research period and their size does not change much during the period. For the analysis of parliamentary questions and ministerial statements, we deleted the weeks that parliament and government did not meet. Finally, legislation does not show any cyclical or linear trends.

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