Appendix A: Methodology of Protest Surveys in Eight Countries

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This book largely draws upon a central dataset comprising data collected in the eight countries under study. The main source is a survey conducted on the same day, February 15, 2003, based on a sample of almost six thousand demonstrators participating in massive protest events against the upcoming war on Iraq. This survey was conducted by eight local country teams using (nearly) identical questionnaires and a similar fieldwork method. The Belgian team, directed by Stefaan Walgrave, took the initiative for this endeavor. This team also provided the funding for data input and preparation. When the United States and the United Kingdom started to make clear in December 2002 that they would wage war on Iraq, the Belgian team began forging a network of social movement and political participation scholars to survey the potential demonstrations against the war. At that point, February 15 was still relatively far away. The international team adapted the questionnaire that the Belgian members had developed for previous protest surveys (Van Aelst and Walgrave 2001; Norris, Walgrave, and Van Aelst 2005), as well as their sampling procedure. Surveying is not a conventional or widely used method for analyzing protest events; rather, techniques such as participant observation, (qualitative) in-depth interviews, protest event analyses, life histories, text analysis, and so forth have been applied. So the application of survey techniques—widespread in other subdisciplines of political science and sociology—is rather novel for social movement research.

Opting for such a method also has quite a substantial effect on the logic of our research. Whereas previously applied methods mostly point to the motivations, behavior, and attitudes of individual participants in demonstrations,

the individual person here disappears in an N survey and becomes a row in a data matrix. At the end of the day, variables interest us much more than cases. The methodological literature has called this a "variable-oriented approach" rather than a "case-oriented approach" (Ragin 2004). The positive effect of such a method is that a concentration on variables, using large datasets, helps us increase causal leverage and obtain broader generalizations of our results. Indeed, we might be able to draw conclusions about how different variables work in different countries (or in our aggregated dataset as a whole). However, we also risk the negative effect that correlations lead us to conclusions based only on covariations instead of a rigidly performed in-depth causal analysis of a few cases. If we find, for example, that first-timers in demonstrations are more reluctant to use violence as a means of expressing their political opinions, then this is nothing other than a (possibly non-randomly appearing) covariation of two distinct variables, and we can include the causal nexus only with other analytical techniques. However, since the February 15 demonstrations offered us the (perhaps) unique opportunity to collect data from large samples in comparatively similar settings (similar slogans and aims in all countries; same date and, therefore, same current state of international politics; same issue, namely, the war in Iraq; etc.), we decided to expose the domain of protest events analysis—which has long been case-oriented in its methodology—to a rather new methodological perspective, namely, the variable-oriented one.

As the following discussion will show, this did not work entirely neatly. However, this was the lack of previous experience with survey techniques in protest research that led to problems in the application of the method, but rather the inherent characteristics of our object of research, that is, mass demonstrations. Indeed, mass demonstrations are embedded in different contexts (usually highly emotionalized ones, with fluid issues, and combining rather heterogeneous sets of actors, and so forth) than consumer behavior or voting patterns. Therefore, they are analyzed in very specific circumstances, so we first had to adopt strategies for coping with these specificities. In the following, we will explain our procedure and sampling method in more detail. Note that the method we have sketched out here has not been followed in great detail in all countries; sometimes, specific circumstances made it almost impossible to stick to the fieldwork method guidelines explained below, in particular.

As mentioned, interviewing participants at protest demonstrations cannot build on much previous methodological knowledge. 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, for example, Jasper and Poulsen [1995] and Waddington [1988]). Most elaborate is the work of the French research team including Favre, Mayer, and Fillieule, who developed a technique designed to offer all participants an equal opportunity of being interviewed (Fillieule 1997). Stefaan Walgrave and Peter Van Aelst refined their method further (2001).

The actual process of surveying demonstrators applied in this study, based on a random sample, was twofold. First, two fieldwork supervisors (each accompanied by a team of questionnaire distributors/interviewers) counted the rows of participants in the moving cortege, selecting every *n*-th row, to ensure that the same number of rows was skipped throughout the demonstration, and that the whole procession was covered. This should guarantee that all groups, no matter whether their members preferred to walk in the first or last part of a march (this issue is also linked to questions of visibility of a group in a march), have an equal chance to be part of the sample. One of the two groups of fieldwork supervisors and distributors started at the first row of demonstrators in the march and then gradually moved to the back, counting and skipping rows until the last one. The other group of fieldwork supervisors and distributors, the athletic ones (as they had to overtake the entire marching crowd), started at the end and gradually worked their way to the head of the march. Each time a row was selected by the fieldwork supervisor, the distributors selected every *n*-th person in that row and handed out questionnaires to these individuals. Ideally, the distributors alternated among demonstrators at the left side, at the right side, and in the middle of a row, again taking into account that some participants would prefer to march at the margins or in the center, respectively, of the crowd. Questionnaires were distributed in an addressed envelope, with postage paid by addressee. This sampling method, as simple as it may seem, aimed at guaranteeing an even distribution of the questionnaires over the demonstrating crowd and at giving every participant the same chance of being selected, no matter where and with whom she or he marched.

The selected participants were asked to complete a ten-page questionnaire at home and to mail it back. The questionnaire used for February 15 in each of the countries had a common core, including questions on the participants' profiles, the mobilization context, and political attitudes and behavior, plus a few specific items in some of the countries. The answers had to be short and succinct and were very often formulated in a multiple-choice format, in yes/no responses or in coded evaluations of opinions. In addition to the mail survey, a random sample of other demonstrators in Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the United Kingdom was interviewed face-to-face

before the start of the demonstration. To do this, before the start of the demonstration the gathering crowd was divided into sectors, and each interviewer randomly, often following a specific procedure, selected a set number of respondents in his or her sector. These short interviews were used as a crosscheck to evaluate how far the different attitudes in responding to the mail survey might have biased the result of the postal interviews. Confidence in the reliability of this comparison was strengthened by the fact that hardly anyone refused to participate in a face-to-face interview: Rüdig assessed this systematically in the Glasgow part of the survey and found that the response rate there was no less than 95.3 percent (2006). However, in this volume we have only drawn on respondents from the postal surveys, since these questionnaires cover more variables, we did not carry out face-to-face interviews for all the countries under research, and face-to-face data are only used to test the representativity of the postal answers.

As all surveys, those used here for demonstrations also raise important questions about the reliability and the representativity of sampling procedures. Here, in since this is unknown territory, this is even more so: we do not have any information whatsoever about how sociodemographic factors or political attitudes might influence the response behavior. An undesired effect could be, for example, that demonstrators with more radical opinions and/or attitudes would be more likely to refuse a response than others (alternatively, they might be even more motivated to participate in a survey—but also this would cause a bias). This is further exacerbated because we had reason to believe that the February 15 demonstrations were not routine events. Indeed, this was many demonstrators' first protest experience (see chapter 8).

However, there are also practical difficulties in conducting a truly random sample: first, if a demonstration is large and fairly static and the streets are congested with people, it becomes difficult for the interviewers to get through the whole march and cover all kinds of groups, since they are simply immobilized. Second, it is impossible to get a good sample of respondents in violent and/or irregular demonstrations (or in violent sectors of an otherwise peaceful demonstration), even if we know that these forms of protest are usually small in number. Third, in some exceptional cases, extremist groups of demonstrators within a peaceful event refuse to accept the questionnaires—something that, of course, lowers the degree of representativity and biases the result. Yet again, this is rare, and, in general, demonstrators who have deliberately chosen to express their political opinion on the street are likely to collaborate and may even be anxious to share their views with researchers. Fourth, the weather conditions also play a role when one is conducting research literally "in the streets": when it is raining cats and dogs,

for example, the distributed questionnaires can become soaking wet and can no longer be filled out and returned. Additionally, if it only starts raining when a demonstration has already started, questionnaires that were distributed before the rain shower are much more likely to be sent back than the others.

In terms of the February 15 sampling, the weather in the cities we surveyed was mild. We can assume that the differences in temperatures did not play any important role. Furthermore, the demonstrations we covered were not irregular nor were they violent, nor had they violent sectors. Instead, they were for the most part orderly processions without running or accelerating segments. There were hardly any extremist demonstrators around, so this did not pose a problem, either. However, it turned out that the unexpectedly high numbers of demonstrators in some of our city cases made it simply impossible to strictly follow our field survey method. For example, some interviewers got stuck on the stairs in subway tunnels, or the crowds in the streets did not move at all and the interviewers became completely stuck because of the enormous attendance. When either the interviewers or the crowd were static, the sampling procedure could not always be applied This was the case in London, Madrid, and, for the most part, Berlin: in these cities, the static sampling procedure of dividing the standing crowd in sectors was adopted also for the distribution of the postal questionnaires, which implies fewer guarantees that a representative sample of demonstrators was drawn. Furthermore, not all interviewers and supervisors had previous experience with such the fieldwork method developed by the Belgian team; this also caused some confusion and misunderstandings here and there. Although in many instances we managed to follow the fieldwork procedure and sampling method quite in detail, this was not always the case. We are unsure about the effects different modes of application of the method had on our sample, and we cannot test them. Yet, since we know that the disturbances to the strict application of our sampling methods were not very big, we have reason to believe that our samples in the different demonstrations are, by and large, comparable. Social science often is forced to look at dynamic, spontaneous forms of behavior and activity—not systematically evolving ones—so that the methods it uses cannot be "exact," as in the natural sciences or as in more experimental settings of social science research. This is even more the case for demonstrations, which are, by definition, fast moving, hardly controllable, quickly changing objects of research: that even the strictest method has to be applied flexibly. Saying this, we believe that the distortions in the sample should not make us worry too much, since the high number of questionnaires and the dominance of cases in which we were able to apply the method in

an ideal setting might outweigh the practical problems that occurred in some instances.

In one case, the national team opted for a different sampling method. In Italy, the team, led by Donatella della Porta and Mario Diani, decided to draw mainly on face-to-face interviews, conducted before the Rome demonstration. Because the Italian team feared that response rates for the postal surveys would be too low, they interviewed the demonstrators on trains on their way to the protest in Rome. Of course, this might pose serious challenges to the comparability of the Italian sample with the other national samples. Interviewing on the spot might indeed lead to different answers than would filling in a questionnaire quietly at home. Moreover, on packed trains, it is very difficult to conduct interviews in private. Hence, social desirability and group pressures may affect the answers. Interviewing on trains might also lead to a bias since only demonstrators who travel by train have a chance to be part of the sample. However, whether a demonstrator opts for the train or another means of transport (or whether she or he simply lives close enough to the venue) might also correlate with other sociodemographic and attitudinal factors that could influence the representativity of the sample. For example, we expect people traveling by train to be more likely to be members of an organization and to come from farther away (see chapter 9), which, consequently, might be an indicator of their high motivation.

In short, the differing sampling procedure in Italy might have substantially affected the Italian sample. However, the team also distributed a limited number of postal questionnaires at the Rome demonstration. In fact, a comparative analysis of differences between the train face-to-face surveys and the Rome postal ones did not reveal any statistically significant differences between the two groups with regard to either their sociodemographic characteristics or other variables. Thus, although it is still to some extent a leap of faith, we are confident in including the Italian sample in our systematic comparison with the other countries. However, especially when it comes to comparing the mobilization patterns of the Italians with those of the Belgians, Germans, and so forth—as we do in chapter 9 of this volume—we think it is important to take the differential recruitment of respondents into account and to be very cautious, as our sampling is quite likely biased on the dependent variable (mobilization pattern).

We conducted surveys in eleven major cities in the eight covered countries. Apart from including the major demonstrations in the capitals of these countries, in most cases (London, Rome, Madrid, Berlin, Amsterdam, Brussels, and Bern) or in a major metropolis, in the United States (New York), we also fielded our survey in Seattle and in San Francisco (United States) and

in Glasgow (United Kingdom). As we wanted to analyze these data at the country level, the variation of the political and societal context is our main independent variable. Therefore, we checked whether we could detect any significant differences in the main variables between the different cities in the United States and the United Kingdom. This proved not to be the case: the Seattle demonstrators are very much like those in New York and San Francisco, and the London and Glasgow protesters hardly differed, either. That is why we consider it safe to merge the respective city datasets into one single set for the United States U.S. and one single set for the United Kingdom. In most chapters we use these (merged) country datasets, but is some chapters, for specific reasons, the authors split up the UK sample and deal with the London and Glasgow demonstrations separately.

We relied on a double sampling strategy in some countries: we distributed postal questionnaires using our strict sampling method during the march and asked people to send them back (we had paid the postage beforehand); and we selected a smaller number of people, using on a less strict sampling procedure, which gave the interviewers more leeway as they conducted a short interviews on the spot. In this volume, we only use the completed postal questionnaires. We used the face-to-face interviews to test the representativity of the questionnaires that were sent back. As mentioned, we used face-to-face interviews in Belgium, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and Switzerland. In Italy, almost all surveys were conducted face-to-face but since that was been done in an entirely different way, we do not include the Italian data in our test of representativity.

What can be learned from the systematic comparison of both interview types? Overall, the results tell us that there are, indeed, a few differences between the two interview types (even statistically significant ones) but that these differences remain limited. They are, of course, not surprising. The associations between the interview type and the responses can be traced to three diverging methodological biases: mail survey non-response bias, face-to-face survey selection bias, and face-to-face versus mail survey social desirability effects. As we cannot determine for sure which method effect is causing which kind of bias, we can only undertake an informed guess about what causes these differences.

First, men and younger people are significantly overrepresented among the face-to-face interviews. It seems that our interviewers, also young and predominantly male, tended to select more male and younger conversation partners, or, perhaps, that female and older respondents sent back the questionnaire more reliably. Thus, the observed gender and age differences between interview types might be due either to a response (mail) or selection

(face-to-face) bias. Second, some variables regarding the company in which the interviewee attended the demonstration yielded significant differences, all pointing toward a selection bias in the face-to-face interviewing: directly interviewed people attended the demonstration to a lesser extent with family, colleagues, and co-members than mail respondents did. It makes sense that interviewers tended to address participants who came on their own rather than those who were part of a group. Third, we noticed that the face-to-face interviewees were more likely to agree with the Likert items they were confronted with; this is commonly known as the acquiescence effect of face-to-face interviews. This was especially observable for four statements in the questionnaire ("War is always wrong"; "War on Iraq is waged to secure national oil supply"; "I am satisfied with my government's efforts to prevent war on Iraq"; "War to bring down a dictatorial regime is justified"). Finally, we did not find any significant differences between the two interview types for many variables. There is no difference, for example, in the level of political interest, previous type or frequency of protest participation, political left-right self-positioning; perceived political efficacy of the demonstration. By and large, we did not find a strong evidence of a systematic response bias in the mail sample. However, we found traces of a probable selection bias and of a social desirability effect in the face-to-face sample. Hence, we think we can rather safely consider the mail survey respondents a fair sample of the population. Similarly, Wolfgang Rüdig, the leader of the UK team, has carried out an extensive in-depth analysis comparing postal and face-to-face questionnaires in the Scottish (Glasgow) subsample (2006). His results, also, show that there are no substantial differences between the two interview types and reinforce our confidence in the reliability of the mail survey data.

Response rates for the February 15 mail survey vary between countries, but an overall response rate of almost 47 percent is clearly quite satisfying for a postal survey for which no reminders were sent out. In previous protest surveys covering a variety of demonstrations on very diverse sets of issues in Belgium, we got, on average, a response rate of nearly 44 percent. Thus, the February 15 rates are by no means exceptional or disturbing for this kind of research. We can say that peace demonstrators or anti-Iraq War demonstrators tend to send back their questionnaires after they got home to about the same extent as antiracist, anti-drugs, global social justice, education, or social security demonstrators. Figure A.1 contains the February 15 response rates by country.

As we see, differences among countries appear substantial. In the United Kingdom only a bit more than one in three selected demonstrators sent back a completed questionnaire. At the same time, more than half of the sampled protesters answered our questions in the Netherlands, Switzerland,

	Number of mail survey respondents	Response rate for mail survey (percent)	Number of face-to-face respondents
United States	705	47.0	–
United Kingdom	1,129	35.9	503
Spain	452	37.7	–
Italy	1,016	–	–
Netherlands	542	54.2	100
Switzerland	637	53.1	181
Belgium	510	46.4	196
Germany	781	52.1	–
Total	5,772	46.6	981

Figure A.1. Response rates in the eight nations

and Germany. At this point, we have neither a clue as to where these inter-country differences come from nor a way to look systematically for an explanation. It could well be that the sociodemographic composition of the marches in the different countries led to different levels of conduciveness to this kind of survey research; as shown in chapter 5, we did find significant differences in the sociodemographic profile of the demonstrators across countries. Also, the mood and radicality of the demonstrators and the political position of government and opposition in the eight countries might have made a difference. More in general, political cultural differences between the countries could have caused diverging response rates. Residents of the United Kingdom, for example, might in general be less willing to participate in survey research than Dutch citizens. Still, we believe that the response rates in the different countries are similar enough that we can systematically compare the covered demonstrators across nations.

Finally, we are aware that the method employed in this study raises questions and that we might not have been able in this appendix to answer all of them satisfyingly. After all, survey techniques are a fairly new method for the analysis of protest events, and they must be explored further and tested more profoundly than this has been the case until now. The Belgian team that developed the protest survey method is working, at present, ion developing a much more thorough test of the reliability and representativity of the fieldwork method. We hope to make further headway with this approach in the very near future.

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