

(DE)MOBILIZING DESCRIPTION?

TELEVISION NEWS COVERAGE OF PROTEST AND THE *DWUNC*NESS OF COLLECTIVE ACTION.

Ruud WOUTERS

STEFAN WALGRAVE

Published in: *Quand l'image (dé)mobilise. Iconographie et mouvements sociaux aux XXIème siècle*. Bénédicte Rochet, Ludo Bettens, Florence Gillet, Christine Machiels and Anne Roekens, Presses universitaires de Namur, 2015, pg. 111-130.

Visuals can be powerful tools of communication and mobilization. Some images are so powerful – they successfully manage to fire the imagination – that they have become part of our collective memory. The image of the unknown ‘tankman’, who individually obstructed the Chinese government’s tanks at Tiananmen Square in the fall of 1989, is one such an example. The lonely protestor showed courage and commitment against forces that far exceeded his own. As such, the picture efficiently represented the struggle of Chinese students against mighty authorities and heartened and encouraged those who shared the dreams and beliefs of the courageous demonstrator. Another iconic image is that of a young American taking part in an anti-Vietnam war demonstration. He stands in front of a line of National Guardsmen and places flowers in the barrels of their guns. The image shows how the potential aggressiveness of the Guardsmen is countered with worthiness and dignity, and communicates a message of peace, as opposed to the senselessness of war and violence.

The above examples lead to a straightforward question: what makes these snapshots of demonstrators so inspiring? Or, put differently: how come that such images succeed to move or mobilize others in return? In this contribution we offer a theoretical framework that can be used to study the persuasive or mobilizing power of protest. We argue that citizens observe protest actions primarily via the mass media and that, therefore, the description of protest in the media arena is essential to understand its mobilizing power. The theoretical framework we develop is based on the work of the prominent social movement scholar and historian Charles Tilly. According to Tilly¹, protest can have impact if it displays WUNC. WUNC is an acronym that stands for *worthiness, unity, numbers* and *commitment*. The more worthy, unified, numerous and committed protestors come across, the more impact Tilly believes their event will have. In a way, the WUNC elements can be used as a scorecard to measure the potential strength of a demonstration. To get back to the iconic images presented above, the Chinese tankman clearly displayed a huge amount of commitment, by standing in front of the tank and bringing his own life in danger. Maybe his commitment even compensated for the numerical weakness — he was on his own — that was displayed. The American peace protestor, on the other hand, displayed a high dose of worthiness, by answering aggressive gun provocation with peaceful flower power.

In this contribution, we argue that if protest is described in terms of WUNC in the media arena, it will become more likely that viewers of these news items start to sympathize with the protestors. The assertion that WUNC equals power is the premise of our study, we do not directly test this claim. What we do test, however, is whether protest is described in terms of WUNC in the media arena. The research question that drives our endeavor goes as follows: *Do news items present protestors as WUNC and, if so, how?* That protest is described in terms of WUNC is not self-evident. Content analyses of protest coverage found evidence for a so called 'protest paradigm' in media coverage of protest². Characteristic of this paradigm is that news items cover protest in a way that tends to marginalize, criminalize and even demonize protestors. Put differently, in the mass media arena, protest would be foremost presented as anti-WUNC. Here, we undertake a first attempt to measure how protest items are narrated in terms of WUNC. We not only measure WUNC elements, but also the flipside of each element (for instance, besides displays of worthiness, we also measure displays of unworthiness). As such we offer a more inclusive view on protest description compared to the existing 'paradigm' studies, which tend to focus exclusively on all things negative.

We proceed as follows. First, we present the theory of Charles Tilly on WUNC. Why is WUNC important? What do the different elements exactly signify? We also add a fifth element to the acronym: the "d" of *diversity*. Second, we present a short overview of literature on media coverage and protest. Is media coverage truly important for protestors? And, can we relate findings of the protest paradigm to displays of WUNC? We answer our research question by analyzing television news items of Brussels based protest actions that succeeded to attract media attention. Specifically, we use protest coverage of the 19 o'clock newscasts of both the Flemish public broadcaster (één) and the most important Flemish commercial station (vtm). The period under investigation runs from 2003 to 2010. In the results section we present a thick description of the five demonstrations in this period that achieved the highest and lowest dWUNC scores. We conclude that demonstrations are covered in terms of dWUNC (and its flipside) and gain insight in how journalists tend to narrate protest stories.

Charles Tilly on WUNC

The work of Tilly on WUNC is scattered across many publications³. In this section we present a first attempt at integrating this body of work. We believe that such integration is important, as we believe that the disconnected state of the WUNC literature is the main reason why the concept has received little resonance in writings about social movements and protest. Tilly considers WUNC both as (1) a definitional element of a social movement and as (2) a scorecard against which potential movement success can be measured. In the next few paragraphs we use this twofold structure to elaborate on Tilly's WUNC concept.

(d)WUNC as a definitional element

Tilly considers WUNC as a definitional element of the social movement. According to Tilly, social movements only originated when three elements converged. Social movements combine a certain *repertoire* (a set of performances like vigils, demonstrations, rallies, meetings,...) that displays WUNC (public representations of worthiness, unity, numbers and commitment) within a *campaign* (a sustained, public and collective claims-making effort). The combination of these three elements defines the social movement as a particular way of claims-making, says Tilly. Tilly distinguishes three types of such claims: *program* claims (what the movement wants), *identity* claims (who the movement is and how it behaves) and *standing* claims (who the movement knows; ties towards other political actors).

The WUNC component of the definition clearly relates to the identity claims that movements make. WUNC behavior communicates a collective identity that is strong. Basically, WUNC actions say: “we are many, we agree among ourselves, we are committed and we will persist, we are worthy, disciplined and legal”. It therefore signals to authorities that the movement is an actor to be reckoned with; that it is a force that might enter the political arena and can cause existing power balances to shift. Protest actions that are WUNC claim public sovereignty, the essence of democracy. WUNC actions try to convey the message that they embody the will of the (or a) public at large. In terms used by political scientists: non-institutional WUNC actions align with the institutional logic of elections. These actions show that there is a voting bloc that might influence the outcome of future elections, and therefore, would better not be ignored.

(d)WUNC as a scorecard

Besides a definitional element, WUNC also is a scorecard that observers can use to discuss and evaluate protest in order to assess the protest's strength. One could argue that WUNC behavior is the ultimate marketing mechanism of social movements. By displaying WUNC, protestors can convincingly claim credit and assign blame. Protest that displays high doses of WUNC turns neutral bystanders into sympathizers, and as such helps movements to create critical mass. In a sense, WUNC displays are social movement PR and make movements attractive for the public at large. So, one can regard WUNC as a scorecard that measures the strength or potential impact of protest. In a simple formula Tilly states: $W \times U \times N \times C = \text{IMPACT}$.

The higher a movement scores on all elements, the higher the odds of movement success. Tilly does not argue that people really rationally calibrate each element in their mind and then calculate a total WUNC score for each action of a particular movement. Nevertheless he holds that these four components are frequently discussed by protest observers. The fact that participants, police, media and targets often disagree about WUNC elements, signals that they are of substantial importance. For instance, protest organizers often tend to estimate far

larger crowds compared to the police; or targets try to discredit the event by communicating that the protestors do not agree among themselves. Or, media reports zoom in on a few hotheads that destroyed property, rather than covering the 99 percent that displayed worthy behavior. So, WUNC descriptions present serious stakes for movements; they present battlegrounds of meaning construction.

Unfortunately, the WUNC scorecard is only theoretically developed in the work of Tilly. No real systematic effort is made to turn the concept into a manageable tool fit for empirical research. Basically, Tilly simply enumerates some potential behaviors that can relate to the WUNC elements. We summarize these examples here in bullet-point format:

- *Worthiness*: sober demeanor; neat clothing; mothers with children; presence of dignitaries; endorsements of moral authorities.
- *Unity*: matching badges, banners; marching in ranks, singing, chanting.
- *Numbers*: headcounts, signatures on petition, filling public squares and streets.
- *Commitment*: braving bad weather, resistance to repression, subscription, ostentatious sacrifice.

So, the WUNC acronym refers to very basic and familiar aspects of demonstrations and demonstrator behaviors. The numbers element probably is most straightforward. Numeric power is part of the DNA of representative democracy⁴. The worthiness element makes clear that the response of demonstrators to the perceived injustice needs to be civilized and eloquent. Clearly, this is a debatable issue: in social movement studies there is an ongoing debate on the effectiveness of violence and disruptive behavior of protestors⁵. Tilly clearly chooses a side in this debate. As few social movements can obtain their objectives in the short run, he argues, movements would better not choose direct action (which often goes hand in hand with some sort of violence) yet prefer worthiness in combination with commitment. Commitment signifies the willingness of protestors to bear costs for their actions, both in the short (resisting repression, braving bad weather) as in the long run (persistence).

Unmistakably, WUNC deals with demonstrator behavior, although this holds to a lesser extent for the aspect of unity: matching banners, collective singing and chanting are in the first place externalizations of a shared mindset. Although not really part of the acronym, Tilly⁶ points to some ambivalence in the concept of unity. Specifically, he brings up the issue of diversity. In some instances, the fact that a claim is backed up by many different persons, of all walks of life, gives movement strength. Diversity and unity hence do not necessarily contradict each other (although they can). If unity refers to agreement on the program claim (which can materialize in matching banners or badges) and to diversity to the composition of the crowd (who demonstrates), both components measure separate aspects of a demonstration. As diversity incorporates the scope of the affected public and therefore hints at the important democratic concept of representativeness, we propose to explicitly incorporate diversity as a fifth element in the scorecard. *Diversity*: a broad composition of the crowd, participants of all

walks of life, atypical participants, such as elderly in a youth demonstration, participants of the left and the right, and so forth.

Media Coverage and dWUNC

Media attention is a critical resource for social movements⁷ Media coverage validates and legitimizes a movement, can boost mobilization processes and enlarge the scope of a given conflict⁸. Kielbowicz and Sherer⁹ argue that mass media play a crucial role in the emergence, sustainment and success of social movements. In sum, for many social movements, media coverage is a matter of life and death. As most social movements are resource poor and lack direct access to the policy making process, they need media attention to get on the radar of politicians and citizens. So, media coverage can amplify movement power. By making news, movements can attract support of citizens, and as politicians are sensitive to public opinion, politicians might become active as well.

Because of this straightforward mechanism, we contend that the media arena is the main stage where protestors would want to display dWUNC. It is through media coverage that protest is perceived and it is to media cues that observers of protest react. How protest is described in the media arena therefore is key. Movements that are covered in the media as unworthy, not unified, not committed and little in numbers are likely to fail. Protest actions that succeed to come across as dWUNC, on the other hand, might create momentum. Of course, the media image of a protest action is a construction. Whether protestors are really unified, for instance, or with how many protestors really were, is less important. As argued by Koopmans¹⁰ citizens and elites react to protest *if and as* it is covered by the media. Only few observe protest actions as they unfold in real life. Reactions of most of us are reactions to the stories that journalists create when covering a march. This does not mean that reality is entirely redundant. The maneuvering space for a journalist to construct an image is not endless. We simply wish to draw attention to the fact that media images of protest actions are constructions, and that it is to these constructions that observers tend to react.

Research on media coverage of protest has primarily been done in the area of communication studies. Numerous studies in this field have established that protest coverage is subjected to a 'protest paradigm.' Protest paradigm studies argue that journalists cover protests following a routinized pattern. This fixed, implicit script tends to marginalize, criminalize, and even demonize protestors. Characteristic of the paradigm are a focus on characteristics of the event and the behavior of the demonstrations rather than on the grievance or issue that fueled the protest. Devoid of such an issue context, protest can appear meaningless and irrational to the audience. Another aspect of the paradigm is reliance on official sources. By not granting the demonstrators standing, the coverage discredits the protestors. Most importantly, however, are the numerous negative frames that are found in protest coverage: protest is depicted as a criminal activity, or as some sort of carnival. Protestors are presented as emotional and

irrational. In sum, media coverage of protest is considered to have a demobilizing function, protecting the status quo.

In this contribution we want to challenge these protest paradigm studies by measuring dWUNC. Protest paradigm studies have exclusively focused on negative portrayals of protest. Here, we will code not only the dWUNCness of collective actions (positive portrayals), but also the flipside of each component (negative portrayals). As such, we hope to get at a more inclusive and nuanced understanding of how journalists cover protest.

Data and Methods

In order to answer our research question, we performed a content analysis of television news. All Brussel based protest actions that were organized from 2003 to 2010 (N = 4.582; police archive of Brussels) and that succeeded to attract television news attention (N = 544) were coded. Specifically, the 19 o'clock newscast of the public broadcaster (Eén) and the most important commercial station (VTM) constitute the population out of which we drew protest items. As we had no clear idea of how journalists would cover demonstrations in terms of dWUNC, and as we suspected that the dWUNC elements could be interpreted highly subjectively, we organized an implicit panel coding. We worked with five coders, and each coder scored all 544 news items on each of the five dWUNC elements. None of the panel coders was the master coder; none of them was more "right" in assigning a score than another. The five coders were first instructed about the theoretical meaning of the five components; they received no explicit training in coding media stories for dWUNC, however. The idea was rather to tap into people's subjective perception of the dWUNCness of a demonstration as covered in the news. We expected these subjective perceptions to vary a lot between coders. Some viewers may consider the behavior of protesters on TV as unworthy and rowdy, others may consider the same behavior as worthy and upright. That is why we organize a kind of 'panel vote' and did not expect to find high correspondence among coders. Each coder scored each demonstration on each of the dWUNC components by means of five five-point scales. Besides ticking a box, coders also needed to substantiate their choice and write in a text field what aspects of the news item made them consider the item as displaying a certain degree of a certain dWUNC element. Below, we show the basic code scheme.

"Use the scales to indicate to what extent the following characteristics of the protestors or the protest event were displayed in the news item. Substantiate your answer in the textbox."

Worthiness:	Unworthy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Worthy	Text:
Unity:	Divided	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	United	
Numbers:	small scaled	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	large scaled	
Commitment:	uncommitted	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	committed	
Diversity:	homogeneous	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	heterogeneous	

It needs to be said that the coders were forced to score the demonstrations on each scale, even if the component was not really present or applicable. For all scales except for the numbers scale, the middle category was the zero point. The middle of the numbers scale marks demonstrations of about one thousand participants. In a way, one could argue that we made the implicit scorecard that Tilly considered somewhat more explicit for our five coders. Based on these subjective implicit coding by every coder, we computed a total dWUNC score for each protest report. This total dWUNC score was computed by simply adding the scores on each component for every coder. The maximum score is 125 ($5 \times (5+5+5+5+5)=125$), the minimum score is 25 ($5 \times (1+1+1+1+1)=25$). It is these total dWUNC scores that we will work with in the analyses.

Results

First, we present some general descriptives for each dWUNC component separately as well as for the total dWUNC score. We also discuss each component and give examples of the protest demonstrations that present the minimum and maximum value for that component. Next, we present an in depth qualitative analysis of the five highest and five lowest overall dWUNC demonstrations. Table 1 presents the general descriptives.

Table 1: Descriptives of dWUNC elements

	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Dev</i>	<i>N</i>
Worthiness	6	24	16,19	3,38	544
Unity	10	24	18,92	1,98	544
Numbers	5	25	12,42	5,60	544
Commitment	12	24	17,89	2,49	544
Diversity	7	24	12,53	4,01	544
Total dWUNC	53	115	77,96	10,39	544

What conclusions can we draw from these data? First of all, the five dWUNC variables show considerable variation. It appears that our dWUNC elements tap characteristics of demonstrations that tend to vary in protest coverage, or at least when we force coders to give an answer. The theoretical range for each variable runs from 5 to 25; for the numbers component this theoretical range is fully utilized. Also the scores for worthiness and diversity have a respectable range. This is less the case for commitment and unity. Whereas for these variables a similar maximum score is obtained, the minimum scores (10 for unity and 12 for commitment) are higher. Adding information of the mean values and the standard deviations to this picture, our results suggest that there is less variation in the portrayal of protest when it comes to unity and commitment, and that overall, protestors are portrayed as more united ($\mu = 18.92$) and committed ($\mu = 17.89$) compared to numerous ($\mu = 12,42$), worthy ($\mu = 16.19$) or diverse ($\mu = 12,53$). Histograms of the distributions (not shown) help us to better understand the nature of protest description in our dataset. Based on both descriptives and

histograms, our interpretation of these results is that unity and commitment (and their flip sides) are rarely salient or explicitly addressed in news reports of protest events. Journalists believe that most of the time, it is self-evident that protestors agree with each other, or that demonstrators are committed (they showed up, so they must be). News, however, does not focus on the self-evident. Deviations from rules is what attracts media attention. In other words, the relatively high scores and the little variation for unity and commitment may be a consequence of the fact that unity and commitment are considered default features for protest events. Only if protestors truly and excessively deviate from this expectation, by behaving extremely (un)committed or extremely (un)unified journalists will start to pay attention to these aspects. But, as said, these seem to be the exceptions rather than the rule.

Interestingly, the distributions of the numbers and diversity variable are positively skewed. They have a tail to the right, which means that most values concentrate on the lower side of the scale. For the diversity variable, this suggests that most protests are not heterogeneous in their composition. This seems plausible: many demonstrations are vehicles for special interests (workers of a certain factory that is confronted with lay-offs; older people against changes in pension legislation; refugees that want asylum status...). Demonstrations that succeed to mobilize people from different walks of life most probably are rarer. The results for the numbers variable, with a somewhat lower average and a small positive skew, indicate that most demonstrations are situated at the left hand side of the midpoint of the scale, and thus mobilized less than 1000 people to participate. Big demonstrations are no exceptions either however, as quite some demonstrations (26) reach a maximum score of 25, and about 11 percent of the demonstrations score better than 20 on the numbers scale. It must be added that most of the time our coders wrote exact numbers in the provided textboxes and that their scores were remarkably similar. This suggests that numbers most of the time are very explicitly mentioned in news items. For journalists, protesting seems to be a numbers game. Previous studies already showed that large demonstrations more easily make it into the news.¹¹ Put differently, the numbers variable is part of the filter that selects some demonstrations for coverage and keeps the news gates closed for others. Here, we find that journalists explicitly size up as good as all demonstrations. Besides in selection, size seems to matter in description as well.

Before we turn to the description of the five most and five least dWUNC demonstrations, we shortly present some information on demonstrations that were evaluated with minimum and maximum scores for the five components.

Worthiness. Demonstrations that scored high on worthiness often took the form of vigils, and were organized around consensual issues like for instance senseless violence. So, a silent march for a jeweler that got shot in the Matonge neighborhood, a march through Brussels for the victims of terrorist Al Qaida attacks in Madrid, and a call for political attention to the issue of suicide, were demonstrations that clearly displayed worthiness. Participant behavior was

one of silence and modesty. On the other side of the spectrum are demonstrations that were far more noisy, and that attracted more attention of police officers. A demonstration of angry French and Italian fishermen targeting the EU ended in a riot with cars turned upside down, arson and property damage. 74 demonstrators got arrested. Also demonstrations of firemen, milk farmers and Palestinians ended with property damage, police actions and arrests. Journalists talked about aggressiveness of demonstrators, inappropriate behavior, all very unworthy. Visuals of fully armored policemen added weight to this picture. In sum, it seems that worthiness comes more easily across on some issues than on others, although this is not necessary the case. The issue of the Iraq war elicited protest actions that were judged both as worthy (a vigil for the victims of the war) as disruptive and rowdy (the visit of President Bush to Brussels)

Unity. Coverage of demonstrations that elicited high unity scores showed many protestors making the same claim on camera, or had the voiceover explicitly stating that all participants agreed among themselves (“All want the same”, “they are here together for one single purpose”). Collective chanting of slogans, collective silence, applauding, wearing clothes in a similar color, or many banners with the same symbol on it: these kind of indicators expressed unity according to the coders. More explicitly present in news reports, however, were the instances of division and disagreement among demonstrators. Migrant protestors who disagreed about the itinerary of the demonstration, discord between Flemish and Walloon farmers on whether protest was the right action strategy, demonstrators in asylum marches making different claim, or even quarrels about who should walk in front of the demonstration, all were clear examples of divided demonstrations.

Numbers. Numbers probably was the easiest and most straightforward variable to code. The actual amount of demonstrators most of the time was explicitly mentioned in the report, and numbers ask little interpretation of the coder. Among the largest demonstrations in the dataset were: a union demonstration on the issue of retirement (90.000 participants); a silent march in remembrance of the murdered teenager Joe Van Holsbeeck (80.000 participants); a demonstration of 68.000 trade union members against European austerity policies, and, 25.000 motorcyclists demanding better road surfaces. Also protest against the imminent Iraq war (71.000; 45.000) bombings in GAZA (30.000) and climate change (15.000), attracted many protestors. Big number demonstration in Belgium nevertheless foremost seem to be the domain of the trade unions. They have a large constituency, and therefore succeed to mobilize massively on a more regular basis. Small demonstrations that nevertheless made the screen were for instance ten Rwandan migrants who remembered victims of the genocide, or about twenty divorced dads who wanted to see their children more often. Such small demonstration often made it into the news because their issue suddenly was newsworthy (or because they behaved extremely disruptively, like 5 farmers who blocked traffic in Brussels).

Commitment. Examples of acts that displayed high commitment were, for instance, asylum seekers on a hunger strike whose health was under serious risk; employees of the non-profit

sector who demonstrated for the fourth time in four weeks demanding a sectoral agreement; or students physiotherapy who announced future actions in the coming days. Climate protestors who braved cold weather and succeeded to mobilize more people than expected despite a train strike, were also explicitly mentioned as committed. Commitment was associated with risk sometimes as well: asylum seekers climbing in cranes, or anti-nuclear activists who tried to enter the NAVO building, knowing that they would probably be chased and arrested. High commitment thus can potentially be associated with low scores on worthiness. A final recurring display of commitment dealt with activists who travelled from abroad to let their voice be heard in Brussels: Kurds demanding human rights and rejection of the entry of Turkey in the EU, Spanish sugar beet growers, etc. Low commitment scores were assigned to the employees of the national bank, who were eating ice-cream and had their hands in their pockets when demonstrating in front of their own building, demanding better personnel management. Low commitment scores were assigned when activists 'underperformed': by just gathering on a square or in front of a building, standing still, and talking with each other, some protest events came across more as receptions than demonstrations.

Diversity. Were any demonstration compositions diverse, mobilizing constituents from different social movement sectors? The answer is: yes. The climate demonstration staged before the Cancun summit attracted participants from 80 different organizations, among which environmental, youth, north-south and trade union organizations. Another indicator of diversity was when several political parties decided to join the demonstrators, for instance in case of the Iraq war or gay marriage. Focusing on atypical demonstrators -like Jews in a Gaza demonstration, or young people in a retirement demonstration- were another way by which journalists conveyed a message of diversity. Sometimes, the voiceover added to the impression of diversity, by stating that "people of all walks of life participated" or alluding to the presence of entire families, fathers and mothers with their children. Judged as the least diverse demonstrations were for instance the actions of Islamic women demanding the right to wear a headscarf in public services, the actions of Flemish pigfarmer wives, or Sobelair employees.

Having discussed every dWUNC element separately, we now turn to combinations of dWUNC elements and give an in depth discussion of the five highest and five lowest scoring demonstrations in the dataset. Table 2 presents the five highest dWUNC demonstrations.

Table 2. dWUNC SCORECARD: Five demonstrations with the highest total dWUNC scores

Score (x/125)	Date	Topic	Diversity	Worthiness	Unity	Numbers	Commitment
115	23/04/06 (Eén)	Against random violence; Remember Joe Van Holsbeeck	Young people up front Old people, famous people, normal people, politicians	Worthy explicitly mentioned	“All together” Collective Silence; Collective Applause	80.000 participants; more than expected	No explicit mentioning
		Score	24/25	24/25	23/25	25/25	19/25
114	15/03/03 (Eén)	Iraq: peace, war	For not All sorts and kinds of people, politicians, ministers, celebs; other actions in the world	Dance, music, carnival; arrests violence	Disagreement: Abou jah Jah at head of demo, not liked by other org Collective dancing; no war for oil symbol	Police: 30.000 Org: 55.000 Journalist: many ten thousands	Nth-action in a row, next action planned Friday, people are very committed; it is worth the effort.
		Score	23/25	20/25	23/25	25/25	23/25
113	15/02/03 (Eén)	Iraq: peace, war	For not Broad coalition of organization, many families, young and old, citizens; Actions in more than 600 cities across the world	Modest protest; but also carnival	One message: no war for oil; Collective slogan chanting, dancing, noise making, chain of humans	Org: 70.000 Journ: 50.000; Both say more than expected	“Despite bitterly cold, many people show up...”
		Score	24/25	18/25	24/25	25/25	22/25

112	15/02/03 (vtm)	Iraq: peace, war	For not	Normal people, families with children who rarely demonstrate; Muslim women; Arab league, extreme left. More than 600 cities.	Worthy explicitly mentioned; modest protest; but also dance, music, carnival	All here for the same reason; Collective noise, dancing, chain of humans,	Police: 42.000 Org: 100.000 Journ: many ten thousands; both org and jour say more than expected	No explicit mentioning of commitment
			Score	24/25	20/25	24/25	25/25	19/25
110	05/12/09 (Eén)	Climate Change; summit Copenhagen		Environmental, third-world and unions. Politicians (green, Christian democrats); Man with child on shoulders; Actions in Berlin, London,...	Music playing, noise making	“the message is clear as day and everywhere the same: act now, before it is too late”; collective slogan, noise, flags, blue shirts symbolize water	Jour: 15.000 participants; more than expected.	Man holding child on shoulders during interview.
			Score	23/25	16/25	24/25	25/25	22/25

Specifically, table 2 lists the total dWUNC score (first column), the date of the action and the broadcaster that aired the report (second column), describes the demonstration topic (third column) and briefly summarizes whether and how the dWUNC components were discussed (column 4 to 8). As explained earlier, the total dWUNC score was computed by simply adding the scores of each of the five panel coders.

On April 12, 2006, the seventeen year old Joe Van Holsbeeck, waiting on a friend in Brussels central station, refused to give in to two youngsters who pressed him to hand over his MP3-player. A minute later, Joe was stabbed several times in the chest. He collapsed, fell on the floor and died in the crowded station. It was rush hour. The aggressors managed to escape and were caught one month later. Friends, acquaintances and classmates of Joe, calling themselves the 'Friends of Joe, started a petition 'against random violence' resulting in a quarter of a million signatures handed over to the prime minister. The parents of Joe—the killing was widely discussed in the mass media—called for a demonstration. They explicitly wished for the march to be non-partisan and silent. Only eleven days after the killing of Joe, 80,000 participants showed up in Brussels to make a claim against random violence. The 'March for Joe' was the largest demonstration in Brussels of that period. Media coverage stressed the heterogeneous composition of the crowd: people of all colors and walks of life participated. The Friends of Joe walked up front together with Joe's parents, but also older people, families, celebrities and politicians were present. At the very last minute, a diverse group of civil society organizations (trade unions, third world organizations...) decided to endorse the march. But they did not display their traditional colors at the march. In fact, the march was united in white. Participants shared their grief and solidarity with the victims and were unified by the fear for themselves and their own children. Moments of collective silence—which was 'deafening' according to the news coverage—were alternated by moments of collective applause. The atmosphere at the march was emotional and journalists explicitly praised the worthy behavior of the participants. Their commitment was not stressed in the media, but the disciplined collective behavior made a strong impression. All subjective coders assigned at least a four on the five-point scale for each of the dWUNC components (except for the commitment) making the March for Joe the demonstration with the highest total dWUNC score in our dataset (Table 2).

Media coverage of the Brussels climate change demonstration on the eve of the international summit in Copenhagen in December 2009 stressed all dWUNC components (Table 2). Participants were diverse. Environmental, third-world and trade union organizations joined forces. Also politicians were present. Similar actions were held in Berlin and London to name a few. Participants were united. The voiceover said: "The message is clear as day and everywhere the same: act now, before it is too late". Blocks of participants were wearing blue T-shirts and banners, representing a giant wave. Participants were numerous: 15,000 persons showed up, more than expected. A demonstration of 15,000 participants is a large demonstration according to Belgian standards. Participants were not extremely worthy.

Besides music playing, there was a lot of noise making and some activists were captured on camera doing strange choreographies dressed as polar bears or trees. Of all components, the march scored lowest on worthiness (16/25). The commitment of the participants, finally, was exemplified by an interview with a dad holding his son on his shoulders stating that he was committed to the cause because of his son's well-being and the next generation of human beings.

Finally, three reports about the imminent war in Iraq in 2003 appear on top of Table 2 as well. We focus on the demonstration of February 15th, 2003, the worldwide day of action against the imminent war in Iraq. As both TV-stations covered the event (and both reports show up in the top-five), it is telling how the very same event was covered differently in both newscasts. Although both total dWUNC scores are similar (112 on VTM [commercial station] and 113 on Eén [public station]), the differences highlight the fact that news items are constructed, and that these constructions differ in how they mirror or distort reality. Whereas the descriptions of diversity and unity are very similar, the public TV-station explicitly addressed the worthiness of the marchers and it mentioned how bitterly cold the weather was, whereas none of this is explicitly mentioned on the private station. Also the numbers are different. Although both stations state that more participants showed up than expected, the numbers range from 50,000 to 100,000 according to the different outlets.

The above five examples summarized in Table 2 offer a thick description and illustrate that the dWUNC components indeed are used by journalists to tell the story of demonstrations. Moreover, the dWUNC components do not necessarily contradict each other. The five demonstrations presented above score high across the board. Although some components may be inversely related (for instance, high commitment lowers worthiness; or increasing numbers decrease the odds of unity), in some news items, dWUNC is displayed at full power and the components do add up. Table 3 presents the demonstrations with the lowest dWUNC scores. The pictures that arises from these demonstrations is somewhat different. Remember that the absolute low dWUNC score is 25. All coders then would have assigned a value of 1 for each component. Interestingly, Tilly¹² argues that demonstrators can violate the purpose of dWUNC maximization in function of gaining visibility. By unworthy behavior, for instance, protest can become newsworthy. This reasoning might apply to some extent to the protest actions presented below.

The least dWUNC demonstration in our dataset was organized in November 2008. Migrants from Congo demonstrated against the war and genocide in their home country. Although there was no explicit mention of diversity, the participants were all migrants from Congo and hence scored low on diversity. The demonstration was small. With a hundred participants, our coders gave a score of 6/25 for the numbers component. The worthiness of the demonstrators was average at best: there was explicit mentioning in the voiceover that the protest was noisy, and protestors were pulling and pushing each other to appear on camera. The fact that

participants were dancing, shouting and whistling could be interpreted as a sign of commitment, but probably lowered the dignity of the marchers as well. Although the shouting and dancing was collective, and the claim of the protestors was clearly expressed in the voiceover, the fact that the organizers were quarrelling about the demonstration route and at a certain moment even (shortly) split up, countered the impression of a unified block. The demonstration was vibrant, but also rather chaotic. It scored 53 out of 125 points, or 42%. All in all that is not that bad. Yet it is the lowest dWUNC demonstration in the database.

Whereas the Congo demonstration more or less told a story with dWUNC elements as building blocks, this was far less the case for the news item on the march of Godiva employees against lay-offs. All demonstrators were of the same factory, they blocked a road for some time (which resulted in an interview with an angry driver standing in the traffic jam), and apart from the fact that they wore union jackets, little seemed to happen that inspired the journalist: even the number of participants –the visuals suggested not many- was not mentioned in the item. Workers of Touring, also demonstrating against lay-offs, clearly presented them on the factors of unworthiness and commitment. They blocked the entry of the headquarter of their company in the streets of Brussels. The potential disruptiveness of the situation was accentuated by images of policemen standing in line, ready to interfere in case when the situation got out of hand. An interview with one of the leaders of the blockade underlined the commitment of the protestors. If their demands would not be met, future actions had to be feared. Clearly, these demonstrators were not seeking support or sympathy from bystanders. Their action was of a more direct nature.

Table 3. dWUNC SCORECARD: Five demonstrations with the lowest total dWUNC scores

Score (x/125)	Date	Topic	Diversity	Worthiness	Unity	Numbers	Commitment
53	12/11/08 (Eén)	Migrants from Congo against genocide and war	No mention of diversity; Congolese migrants	Explicit mention of noisy protest; pulling and pushing	Organizers could not agree on itinerary of protest; Collective noise, dancing, flags	100 participants	No mention of commitment; shouting, whistling
59	16/03/10 (Eén)	Workers of Godiva (pralines) against lay-offs	No mention of diversity; but all Godiva workers	No worthiness mentioned; form is blockade	Wearing union colors red, green and blue	Not mentioned	Not mentioned; but form is blockade
60	07/12/09 (Eén)	Workers of Touring against lay-offs	No mention of diversity; All workers of Touring	Blockade; nuisance; police in line	No explicit mention of unity	Not mentioned	Warn for future actions
60	30/07/08 (Eén)	Asylum seekers occupy cranes	No mention of diversity	noisy; push and pull; occupation; confrontation with police; asylum seekers arrested	No explicit mention of unity; some stop occupation, 1 continues	10 participants	1 asylum seeker continues occupation; threatens with suicide; other asylum seekers

							continue their hunger strike
			8/25	12/25	14/25	5/25	21/25
62	22/07/09 (Eén)	Farmers against low milk prices	Only Walloon farmers; Flemish farmers do not take part	Noisy; violence by small group; throwing objects; causing traffic jam; negative reactions; police in action	Not explicitly mentioned	300 farmers	Block road; stand up and speak up against police
		Score	8/25	12/25	15/25	10/25	17/25

A similar strategy was employed by 10 asylum seekers in the summer of 2008. Because of construction works in the neighborhood of train station “Brussels North”, huge cranes were marking the city skyline. Hopeless asylum seekers drew media, spectator and police attention by climbing high and occupying the cranes, hindering the construction workers to do their job. The news item primarily focused on the police intervention, and the resistance of asylum seekers during arrest. The item stressed the risky behavior of the occupiers, being high in a crane without safety protection. In the end, all but one asylum seeker stopped the occupation. Whereas scores on numbers and diversity were low, the asylum seekers excelled in commitment. The final demonstration of table 3 deals with protest of milk farmers against low milk prices. The fact that only the Walloon milk farmers demonstrated, and that the Flemish farmer organizations preferred negotiation, decreased diversity and unity scores. With 300 farmers the demonstration was not following a logic of numbers. Rather, a logic of disruption was presented: the protest was noisy, a small group of farmers was violent and threw objects at buildings. Police officers had to take action. The farmers blocked traffic which caused a traffic jam. Again, a combination of relatively high commitment, low worthiness, and little diversity by a group limited in numbers is the pattern we observe. For groups in great despair, this seems to be the standard recipe to draw attention.

Conclusion and Discussion

This contribution started with the simple and straightforward observation that most people perceive protest via mass media coverage of protest. Extant research on media description of protest has found evidence of a so called ‘protest paradigm’: a routinized template that journalists use to cover protest. This template tends to portray protestors negatively. Protest coverage would serve to marginalize and criminalize protestors, and hence would foremost have demobilizing consequences. We made the argument that protest paradigm studies have focused one-sidedly on all things negative in protest coverage. To balance this view, we integrated the theory on (d)WUNC (*diversity, worthiness, unity, numbers and commitment*) proposed by Charles Tilly and applied it to media coverage of protest. Tilly’s argument is that protest is impactful if it succeeds to come across as dWUNC. In this paper we asked how protest can come across as dWUNC in television news coverage. We organized a panel vote, and as such made the implicit scorecard proposed by Tilly more explicit. We believe that by focusing on potentially positive elements of protest portrayal, we gave the flipside of the protest paradigm a voice. This was about time. What have we found?

First, our results show that the dWUNC scorecard makes sense. Journalists narrate protest stories by using dWUNC elements as building blocks of their story. Second, not every component appears to be as prominent or salient, though. Numbers are a core ingredient of protest coverage. Journalists almost always present information on the numerical strength of protests. This suggests that demonstrations are to a large extent ‘number games’. Unity and commitment show least variation. Probably for most demonstrations, unity and commitment

are perceived by journalists as some sort of default feature, and therefore not really interesting as building block in news stories. News is about the unexpected or the spectacular. Unity and commitment is business as usual for demonstrations. Only in case of strong violation (protestors disagree, or appear as uncommitted) or extreme confirmation (protestors act as one, or are extremely committed) unity and commitment become apparent in news items. A third conclusion that we can draw is that the dWUNC components do not necessarily contradict each other. One could have expected that an increase in numbers leads to less unity, or that high commitment leads to low worthiness scores. Our in depth description of the five most dWUNC demonstrations shows that this is not necessarily the case. Protest can score high across the board on the dWUNC scorecard, although these events may be rather exceptional.

It has to be said that this paper presents only a first attempt to look at the dWUNCness of protest coverage. We believe it is an important first step, but we agree that this paper probably raised more questions than it answered. Many pathways for future research lie ahead. We name a few. First, this paper took a rather qualitative approach to get to the heart of *how* journalists cover protest. A more quantitative approach could do a better job in answering the question *to what extent* journalists use certain ways to construct images of protest. For instance, if the dWUNC elements are battlegrounds of meaning construction, one could be interested to what extent numbers in demonstration coverage are contested. Do journalists present the estimate of the organizers, of the police, or of the target? Or, to take diversity as an example: how often do journalists zoom in on atypical participants –the young people in a pension demonstration, the parents in a student demonstration- to bring the image of diversity across? Second, and further on the quantitative path, the exact relationship between dWUNC components could be studied: which factors are positively related and which are negatively associated? And, in what kind of circumstances do protest actions succeed to come across as highly dWUNC? A final avenue for further research steps away of content analysis and focuses on experiments. By exposing observers to manipulated television news items that systematically vary in terms of dWUNCness, one could start to ascertain the premise this paper builds on. That is: whether coverage that is dWUNC truly is a form of mobilizing description or not.

¹ TILLY C., *Social Movements, 1768-2004.*, Paradigm Publishers, London, 2004.

² MCLEOD D., HERTOG J., Social Control, "Social Change and the Mass Media's Role in the regulation of Protest Groups" in DEMERS D., VISWANATH K. (Ed.), *Mass Media, Social Control, and Social Change: A Macrosocial Perspective.*, State University Press, Iowa, 1998, p. 305-330.

³ TILLY C., "Social Movements as Historically Specific Clusters of Political Performances" in *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, 38, 1994, p. 1-30; TILLY C., *Popular Contention in Great Britain, 1758-1834*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA., 1995; TILLY C., "From Interactions to Outcomes in Social Movements" in GIUGNI M., MCADAM D., TILLY C. (Ed.), *How Social Movements Matter*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1999, p.253-270; TILLY, C., *The politics of collective violence*, Cambridge University Press., New York, 2003; TILLY C., *Social... op.cit.*, 2004;

TILLY C., "WUNC." in SCHNAPP J. T., TIEWS M. (Ed.), *Crowds*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2006, p. 289 - 306;
TILLY C., *Contentious performance*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2008.

⁴ DELLA PORTA D., DIANI M., Forms, "Repertoires and Cycles of Protest" in DELLA PORTA D., Diani M. (Ed.), *Social Movements: An Introduction*. Blackwell, Oxford, 1999, p. 163 - 192

⁵ GIUGNI, M., "Was It Worth the Effort? The Outcomes and Consequences of Social Movements" in *American Review of Sociology*, 24, 1998, p. 371-391.

⁶ TILLY C., *Popular Contention in Great Britain, 1758-1834*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA., 1995.

⁷ Lipsky, M., "Protest as a Political Resource" in *The American Political Science Review*, 62(4), 1968, p. 1144-1158.

⁸ GAMSON W., WOLFSFELD G., Movements and Media as Interacting Systems. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 528, 1993, p. 114-125. - GAMSON, W., "Bystanders, Public Opinion and the Media" in SNOW D., SOULE S., Kriesi H. (Ed.), *Blackwell Companion to Social Movement Studies.*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2004, p. 242 - 261

⁹ KIELBOWICZ R., SHERER C., "The Role of the Press in the Dynamics of Social Movements" in KRIESBERG L. (Ed.), *Research in Social Movements, Conflict and Change*, JAI Press, 1986, p. 71 - 96

¹⁰ KOOPMANS R., "Movements and media: Selection processes and evolutionary dynamics in the public sphere" in *Theory and Society*, 33(3-4), 2004, p. 367-391.

¹¹ MCCARTHY J., MCPHAIL C., SMITH J., "Images of Protest: Dimensions of Selection Bias in Media Coverage of Washington Demonstrations in *American Sociological Review*, 61(3), 1996, p. 478-499.

¹² TILLY C., "From Interactions to Outcomes in Social Movements" in GIUGNI M., McADAM D., TILLY C. (Ed.), *How Social Movements Matter*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1999, p. 253-270.