Dealing with political adversaries and disagreement in contentious politics

Preliminary draft –Comments welcome

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Blame attribution for outcomes of public interest is central to understanding politics as it reflects perceptions of political disagreement. It is an especially decisive matter in protest politics. When dealing with highly divisive issues, demonstrators point to different kinds of actors and in this way they express different views of political dissent. Some blame actors who hold opposing stances that challenge their beliefs (adversaries), others blame government competence, and others signal collective responsibility or point to broader socio-economic outcomes. This study questions to what extent does conceiving dissent as adversarial politics is related to political attitudes such as party identity or external efficacy, how those perceptions are affected by social movement organizations and under what conditions is influence stronger. Research on framing effects has dealt with "frames in thought" focusing on emphasis changes and from a mostly experimental approach with limited external validity. With protest survey data from 47 events on eight position issues that took place in eight European countries between 2009 and 2012, I find evidence for the importance of issue-specific contexts in explaining individual perceptions. Issue-divisiveness as expressed by public opinion is the strongest predictor for perceiving disagreement as adversarial politics. Social movement organizations also play a major role in making sense of the protest issues through frame alignment processes. Individual traits have a weaker power for explaining perceptions, but voting and party identity do matter in how individuals frame blame attribution. These findings are relevant to the study of political disagreement and its relation to influence and mobilization processes.

Keywords: Protest, political disagreement, political behavior, multilevel analysis

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Studies of political disagreement have focused on the sources to which people are exposed to disagreement and only recently have they attempted to explain how individual characteristics influence the perception of disagreement (Wojcieszak & Price 2012). The ways in which individuals attribute blame is central to understanding contentious politics as it can tell us a great deal of how political disagreement is perceived. When dealing with highly contested issues, individuals point to different culpable figures and in this way they express different views of political dissent. Some people point to other actors who hold opposing stances and who challenge their beliefs, others blame government for their incompetence, and others signal collective responsibility in a broad way. This study questions to what extent does conceiving dissent as adversarial politics (blaming adversaries who hold opposing positions) is related to political attitudes, how are those perceptions affected by influence processes (mobilization and framing by social movement organizations) and under what conditions is influence stronger (issue context).

Citizen engagement in politics implies the need to identify agency both as a matter of electoral choice, as well as in terms of ideological differences. In this sense, blame attribution can be taken as an indicator for political awareness. The identification of an agency dimension or of a culpable figure in public grievances is relevant to understand to what extent individuals perceive disagreement as a matter of ideological differences rather than as a matter of government competence or as social outcomes that may be related to politics. Previous studies have dealt with blame attribution as a framing problem. I follow research on attitudes, focusing on the cognitive understanding of a given situation at the individual level. This has been referred to as *frames in thought* (e.g., Goffman, Sweetser and Fauconnier, Tversky and Kahneman) and authors sustain that a frame is not exclusively a property of communication, but also an individual's representation of a situation and therefore it reveals what an individual sees as relevant to understanding that situation. Previous studies had made reference to this distinction by referring to frames *"embedded in political discourse"* and those that *"are internal structures of the mind" (Kinder and Sanders 1996)* as well as Scheufele's (1999) concepts of *"media frames"* and *"individual frames"*. Understanding blame attribution as *frames in thought* highlights the importance of the matter by considering existing evidence on framing influencing individual's interpretation of politics (Benford and Snow 2000) as well their policy views (Nelson and Kinder 1996; Nelson, Clawson and Oxley 1997) and behavioral intentions (Clawson and Waltenburg 2008) .

In a nutshell, I question how is blame attribution related to political attitudes and behaviors such as external efficacy or voting? To what extent are those perceptions related to demonstrators' involvement in social movement organizations? And under what conditions is influence stronger? I find evidence for the importance of the issue-specific context in explaining individual perceptions. Not surprisingly, public opinion approval of the demonstration issues, and thus issue-divisiveness, is the strongest predictor of perceiving disagreement as adversarial politics. However, organizations also play a major role in making sense of the protest issues through frame alignment processes. Individual traits have a weaker power when explaining perceptions, but voting and party identity do matter in how individuals frame blame attribution.

In a first part I situate my research subject in previous literature on framing and mobilization processes in social movement literature and establish some links with research on political disagreement. A second part introduces the research questions and hypotheses. I then propose a typology of position, valence and aggregate framing which is used as the dependent variable. A fourth part gives a brief description of the cases, data and methods. I conclude by discussing the results of the analyses in the three proposed levels individual, organizational and contextual, and discussing their relevance in the research on political disagreement and its relation to influence and mobilization processes.

Position, valence & aggregate issue framing
Attribution framing has been studied from different perspectives at the individual (micro), organizational (meso) and contextual (macro) level by three approaches that take one or two of these levels.

In first place, in the literature on political behavior and party positions, attribution framing can be explained as a response to public opinion on a given issue: majority agreement on policy choices determine *valence issues* and conflicting situations with divided opinions determine *position issues* (Stokes 1963). Positions are based on ideological, policy, or value based differences, while valence represents the evaluation of actors in particular issue dimensions.

Secondly, social movement research stemming from political psychology has focused on identity and group processes. In this line, blame attribution is either *adversarial* or *aggregate*. The objects

of adversarial framing are actors who stand in opposition to the movement organizations, their aims or their ideology (Hunt et al. 1994). Aggregate attributions do not have a clear agent, but they rather signal abstract subjects and general responsibilities. Aggregate frames attribute responsibility to impersonal institutions (capitalism, neoliberalism, corporatism, …) or outcomes (overpopulation, pollution, war, poverty, …) and therefore dilute the blame to a general "*we*" (Knight and Greenberg 2011).

A third approach to attribution framing is influence processes. Frames can then be thought of as ways to connect elite messages to cognitive elements such as thoughts, goals, motivations, feelings and attitudes. Individual frames can be taken as an interpretation that converts influential messages to structured and socialized meaning. Elites or social movement organizations set frames of reference that individuals use to interpret and discuss public issues, but people's information processing and interpretation are influenced by previously held attitudes (Wicks 2006). In this way, the mechanisms of framing effects need to distinguish between influence processes and individual traits, as the latter may affect interpretation directly as well as the selection of sources. Research on framing effects has widely dealt with individual changes produced as a result of exposure to media or social movement organization framing (ref). Individuals following elite cues can align themselves to a particular view or they can produce their own interpretations to a different extent. Previous research has used experimental approaches to control for individual differences, but the question of how much do individual traits affect framing is relevant for understanding the relationship between a particular interpretation of reality and political attitudes.

This study aims at a three-stance approach to the individual, organizational and contextual level factors that determine blame attribution. It relies on empirical evidence from real-world conflicts at the three levels; survey data from demonstrators in multiple issues, social movement organizations and public opinion surveys. This approach is optimal for providing external validity to findings on the relationship between framing and attitudes and to disentangle this relationship from context effects. The sample is composed of highly engaged issue publics which are not representative of the general population and therefore the results are not expected to be generalizable. They are valid for understanding the dynamics of frames in thought between demonstrators across multiple issues and contexts.

4

3. Research questions and proposed hypotheses

How are political perceptions of disagreement in contentious politics related to attitudes? To what extent are those perceptions affected by mobilization processes and the influence of social movement organizations? And what conditions in the issue contexts affect blame attribution?

I argue that differences may be found in three distinct levels: A micro-level (individual characteristics), a meso-level (movement organizations through identity and mobilization processes) and a macro-level (demonstration, issue, and country context). The hypothesis will be presented in this order and are summarized in table 1.

Table 1 - Proposed Hypothesis for explaining Position vs. Valence or aggregate framing

Micro-level – Individual characteristics	Vote	↑
	Party identification	↑
	External efficacy	↓
Meso-level – Organizational involvement	Membership in issue association	↑
	Mobilized by an organization	↑
	Frame alignment	↑
Macro-level – Issue-context	Issue saliency	↑
	Issue divisiveness	↑
	Government opposing the issue	↓

Individual traits

Contentious politics in highly divisive issues can bring to attention social struggle, especially within issue publics or individuals who are directly affected by policy outcomes or who are involved in campaigning for particular stances. Demonstrators are therefore expected to be aware of ideological differences in opposing stances. Previous research has found strong links between frames and ideology and has highlighted the distinction between them: Ideology as a broad and stable set of beliefs and values (associated to social structures or not) and frames as amplifications or extensions of existing ideologies (Oliver & Johnston 2000). In this way, blame attribution to political adversaries is expected to reflect ideological values that are present in partisan politics. Furthermore, the demonstrations which are studied belong to highly divisive issues where the intensity of competition is expected to be strong. In most of the cases, the issue

stances correspond to ideological differences in right-left values (except for the regional/nationalist cases in Spain).

Ideological differences are also central to electoral preferences and therefore the demonstrators' relation to party politics is expected to play a key role in the conception of political struggle. Parties use position or valence frames strategically in order to highlight or conceal policy positions, competence or responsibility (De Sio 2010). This may lead to individuals perceiving disagreement through a party lens, but it is also plausible to expect negative attitudes toward government, politicians or governmental institutions being related with attributions of responsibility to government performance and thus to valence framing. Demonstrators who feel close to parties are expected to be more conscious about ideological differences, while those who are disenchanted of the role of politicians will hold their elected representatives accountable for their grievances instead of attributing blame to adversaries. I expect that party identity and participating in electoral politics play an important role in perceiving dissent as an adversarial matter based on conflicting positions rather than government performance. Conversely, negative attitudes toward politicians (external efficacy) are expected to be negatively related to adversarial framing.

H1.1: Party identity and vote – demonstrators who are more involved in electoral politics (vote and identity with political parties) will tend to frame attribution as a matter of ideological difference between adversaries.

H1.2: External efficacy – demonstrators who are skeptical about parties (cynicism) will not frame attribution as a matter of ideological difference (but rather as a problem of government performance).

Influence of organizations

As framing research has established, social movement organizations and issue-specific associations can also play some role in influencing individual perceptions. Influence may happen through everyday interactions in which multiple actors share their perspectives of particular issues or by formal organizational communications as in mobilization processes. Social networks are expected to affect framing processes as an outcome of negotiating shared meaning (Gamson 1992). Mobilization processes are determinant in translating structural dimensions of the political

context into the composition of the protesters and demonstrator's attitudes are affected by them in mobilization to protest (Walgrave and Rucht 2010). Consequently, blame can be attributed to political adversaries as a consequence of mobilization processes, everyday organizational interaction, or directly by the adoption of frames provided by mobilization agents.

The most straightforward effect can be expected through movement organizations' framing of issues instrumentally in mobilization processes, and in trying to establish a particular understanding of an issue. Demonstrators interact with social movement organizations in different degrees; some of them are members in the organizations staging the event, others are part of issue-specific organizations which are involved to different degrees in particular events and their organizational activity may vary as well. Some join organized action regularly, support the organizations and follow them as publics of movement media or issue-specific groups. Organizational influence is expected to be related to blame attribution and to augment accordingly to patterns of interaction and involvement. However, organizational influence will be definitive when there is frame alignment between the demonstrator's attribution of responsibility and the organizations'. Issue publics are expected to follow closely, and to acknowledge the expertise and intentions of social movement organizations when interpreting political conflict. If a central function of movements is to act as signifying agents and to engage in the production of meaning (Snow & Benford 1988), it is expected that demonstrators rely heavily on the attribution of responsibility that organizations make.

H2.1: Frame alignment – If organizations staging the issue attribute blame as an adversarial matter, demonstrators who are aligned with them will consequently perceive disagreement as an adversarial matter.

Macro level factors – Demonstration, issue and country contexts
The demonstrations in the sample were considered position issues based on an expectation of confronting interests which can be theoretically attributed to the actors. However, there are important contextual differences between the types of issues as well as between the demonstrations and the countries. Consequently, the analysis needs to account for these differences and explore the ways in which they can determine individual perceptions directly or reinforce the effects of individual attributes or mobilization processes.

Mobilization processes are expected to be context dependent. Being part of a minority implies going against the mainstream and this means that mobilization agents will have different challenges when motivating participation (Walgrave & Klandermans 2010). As organizations differ in how they attribute blame, I will deal with between issue and between country differences by considering the degree of general population agreement on the issue (issue divisiveness and the presence of counter-movements), the position of government and opposition on the issues, and on issue saliency (SMO-sector activity and subjective evaluation).

Issue spaces vary between countries as public opinion agreement or support for opposing stances depends on many local circumstances, traditions and social processes. Issues that are strongly divisive in one country are less controversial in another and therefore the extent in which a grievance is a position issue needs to be settled empirically (Stokes 1963 in De Sio 2010). Research on this matter has concluded that an issue can be both positional and valence at the same time (Kitschelt 1994) and therefore position-valence classification can be seen as a continuous scale. In order to measure this feature, public opinion surveys are used to signal the extent of issue divisiveness as a matter of agreement on a given stance. Differences between countries and issues are expected to shed some light on how actual political differences are related to individual perceptions. The expectation is that highly polarized issues will make adversarial frames prominent. Although it seems tautological that position issues lead to position framing, there is a complex interaction of government stances, policy cycles and behavior of interest groups which can shape public perception of responsibility with stronger influence than public opinion.

H3.1: Issue-divisiveness – Higher levels of polarization regarding the issue by the public opinion at large will be positively related to position framing.

When dealing with individual attitudes towards electoral politics the behavior of parties in using responsibility attribution strategically was introduced. The identified mechanism is that parties rather than competing by making changes to their policy positions, will emphasize or conceal their actions and responsibility according to how the electorate values situations (de Sio 2010). When parties make explicit statements on their issue-positions they are expected to influence individual perception. Additionally, the effects of incumbents and challengers can be different;

8

incumbents are expected to oppose issues with low levels of public disagreement in order to blame others and to reinforce their position in an effort to present positive appraisals of their policy outcomes and avoid responsibility. In this case they are expected to be self-referential or to appeal to an aggregate frame of collective responsibility and influence individual perception in that direction. On the other hand, opposition can either blame government for bad performance trying to profit from voter dissatisfaction or they can try to highlight ideological differences in order to distance from government or weaken its framing on the issue (Katsanidou & Bloom 2010). When incumbents have an explicit stance opposing an issue or when they devote attention to the issue, they will highlight their role in the conflict and thus diminish the perception of adversarial politics.

H3.2: Role of government - Government involvement in the demonstration issue will be negatively related to demonstrators holding position frames.

The prominence and activity of counter-movements is also expected to alter the conditions for interpreting each issue. Salient issues or protest events which are uncommon are expected to raise awareness towards the conflict and the adversaries in each side. Saliency can also be determined by the way in which other actors respond to the event. In the context of adversarial politics, the size and strength of organized constituencies opposing the issue is expected to have a different effect than general population disapproval as constituencies can signal asymmetrical confrontation. An unambiguous presence of adversaries can have a considerable effect when they make themselves visible to demonstrate in defense of their stance. Some of the surveyed events faced counter-movements and even though their size, importance and media visibility differ, demonstrators who were exposed to contending demonstrations are expected to be more aware of ideological differences and actors opposing their stance.

H3.3: Issue saliency – Demonstrators in events with salient issues are expected to frame blame attribution as a matter of opposing positions.

4. Methods and Data

The methodological approach is a diverse case analysis in which individuals who attended massive street demonstrations on highly divisive issue are studied. Individuals are grouped according to the event they attended and country in order to look at within and between group variance. Differences in blame attribution framing between the demonstrators of each of the events are explained by looking into individual attitudes, mobilization processes and the contextual features for each issue.

Protest surveys were carried out in 47 major demonstrations in eight European countries between 2009 and 2012 for the project "Caught in the act of protest: Contextualizing contestation"[2]. The sample for this study is composed of eight issues. The demonstrations were selected from a sample of 80 events in order to limit cases to highly divisive issues where political disagreement is explicit between opposing stances. Issues such as labor rights (Mayday demonstrations) or democracy were not selected as to keep a convenience sample for studying the effects of exposure to dissimilar opinions.

The protest survey procedure is designed with the aim of having a probability sample by covering all the demonstration area in such a way that every protester gets the same chance to be surveyed. However, as mail-back questionnaires imply respondent self-selection, face to face short surveys are held during the event in order to control for differences between protesters on site and mail-back surveys completed[3].

The dependent variable – Adversarial framing

Blame attributions were coded from the English translation of individual responses to the open ended question "who is to blame for [demonstration issue]?" All the agents mentioned were coded, allowing multiple responses for each individual. The coding process was a two-step approach: manual coding of 2500 responses led to the definition and refinement of categories which were then used in automatic coding with word stemming (Feinerer 2012). The definition of

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[2] http://www.protestsurvey.eu/

[3] A complete description of the protest survey process is available in Walgrave & Verhulst 2009 - "Protest Surveying. Testing the Feasibility and Reliability of an Innovative Methodological Approach to Political Protest" in http://www.protestsurvey.eu/index.php?page=publications&id=1 and a bias analysis of the method in Walgrave, Wouters and Ketelaars 2012.

categories intends to include as many words as possible in order to make sure that the use of multiple concepts in every one of the responses allocated to each code was consistent and equivalent. In this way each code effectively replaces the words recorded for each respondent in order to reduce the original textual data to the code label. 25 categories resulted and these were joined into the three categories of interest: Position, valence or aggregate. A description of blame attribution codes by issue is presented in Figure 1 and the contents of coding categories in Annex 1.

Figure 1 – Blame attribution by Issue (Coding descriptions and procedures described in Annex 1)
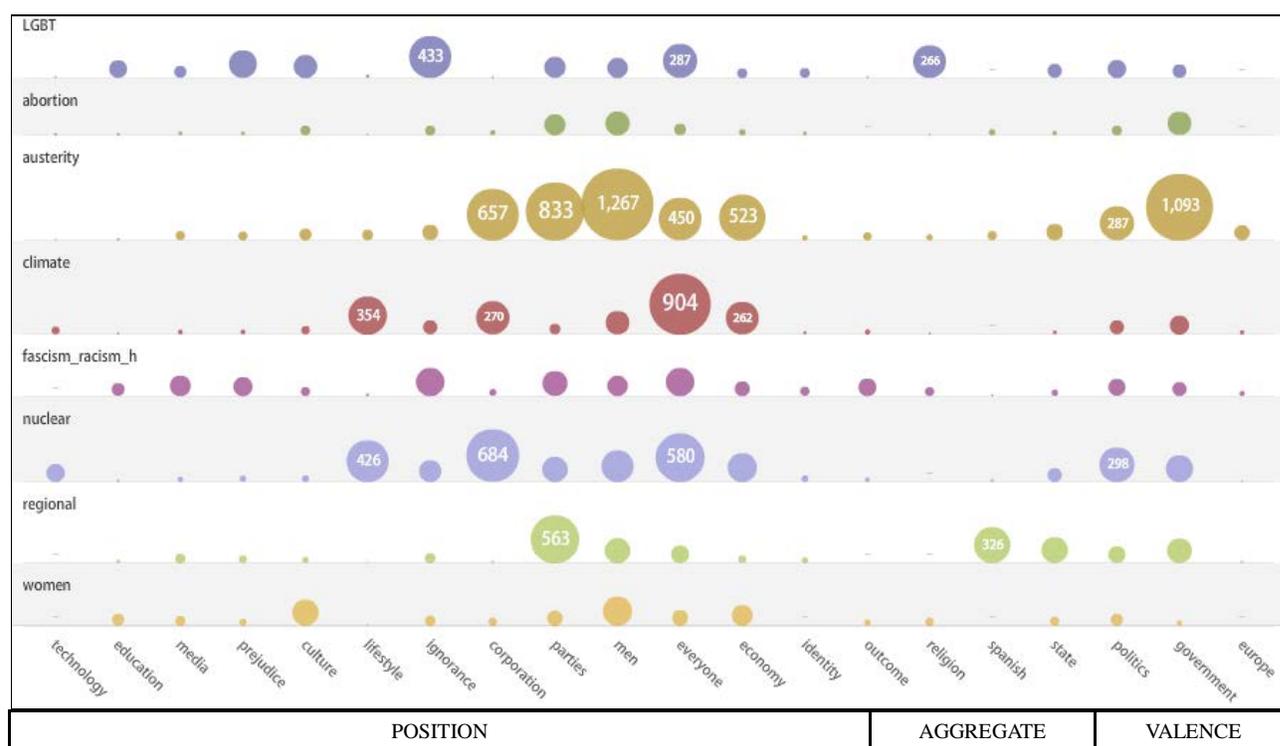
The definition of which codes constitute position or valence framing is issue-specific and classifying actors and institutions as adversaries depends on the nature of the issues as well as on the stage of public policy in each case. Code aggregation into position, valence or aggregate categories was based on the results of cluster analyses and on the particular characteristics of each event.

Coding attributions into position, valence or aggregate frames is not straightforward as almost 25% of the respondents did not provide an attribution frame or considered the question of blame inappropriate or impossible to respond. An additional 41% of the respondents identified one actor

or mentioned an aggregate frame with no particular actor (neither explicit or tacit) and the remaining 59% provided more than one answer. This complicated the operationalization as some of these individuals framed adversaries, government and no particular agents simultaneously as presented in figure 2.

Two variables were created in order to undertake the analysis. A dummy variable which identifies every position frame response (without considering if individuals mentioned multiple actors) in comparison to responses that only mention valence or aggregate frames (Figure 2A) and a dummy variable which identifies exclusive position frame responses in comparison to responses that only mention valence or aggregate frames (dropping every mixed response) Figure 2B.

Figure 2 - Individual framing of blame attribution
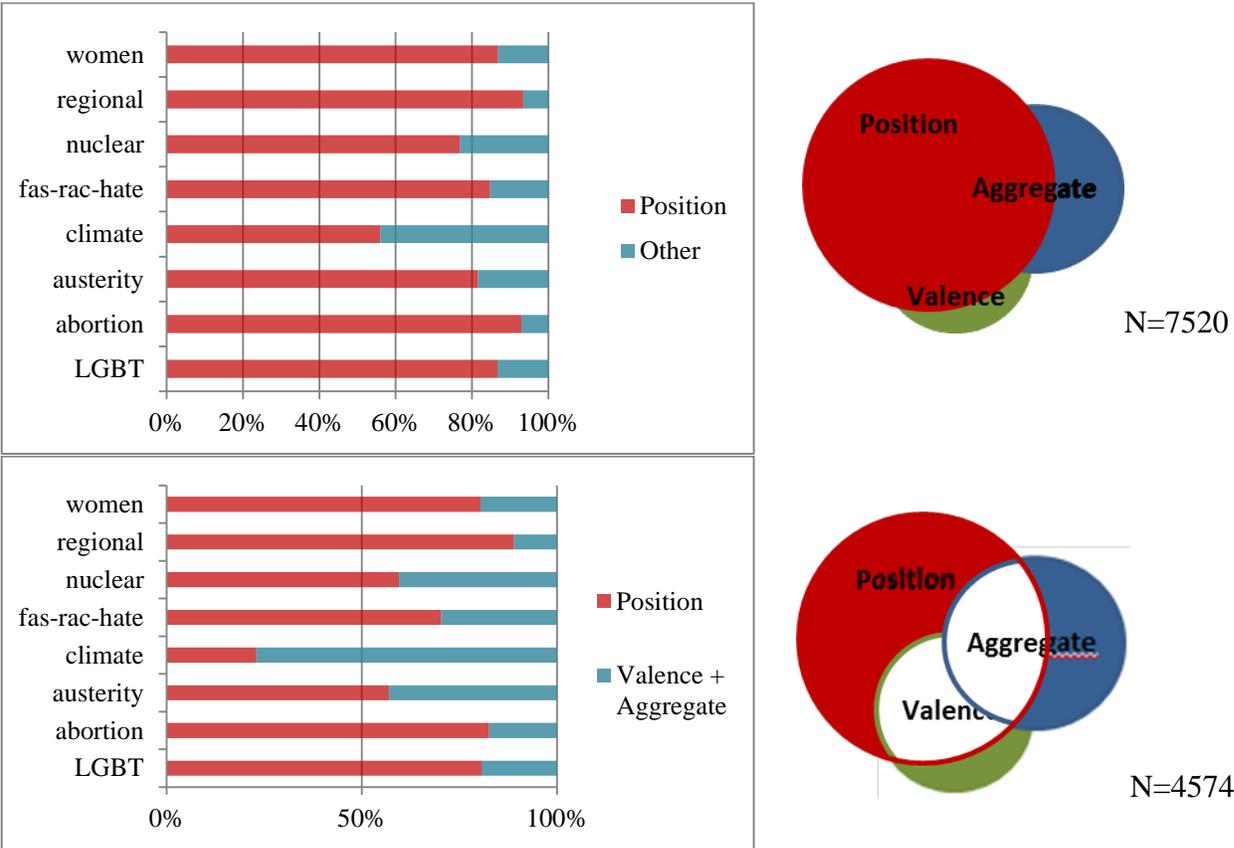
Independent variables

The analysis involves three levels in order to deal with individual, organizational and contextual data. At the individual level, attitudes towards parties and the political system, as well as vote recall were tapped in the protest survey. Question wording is presented in Annex 2.

Table 2 - Individual traits (Micro-level)

Issue	Vote			Party identification			External efficacy		
	Mean	SE	N	Mean	SE	N	Mean	SE	N
GLBTQ	0.757	(0.013)	1,100	0.535	(0.015)	1,154	0.661	(0.007)	1,129
Abortion	0.926	(0.016)	283	0.722	(0.026)	302	0.730	(0.014)	294
Climate	0.919	(0.004)	3,732	0.834	(0.006)	3,876	0.687	(0.004)	3,787
R/F/Hate	0.890	(0.008)	1,423	0.943	(0.006)	1,449	0.577	(0.007)	1,424
Nuclear	0.867	(0.013)	647	0.875	(0.013)	679	0.628	(0.01)	667
Regional	0.897	(0.007)	1,797	0.834	(0.009)	1,848	0.567	(0.005)	1,811
Women	0.896	(0.01)	906	0.758	(0.014)	933	0.696	(0.008)	921

Organizational data comes from individual responses regarding their interactions organizations and from interviews to organizations staging the demonstrations. Blame framing from the organizations staging the events was coded manually for the 98 organizations that were surveyed using the same 25 categories as for the individual responses of the dependent variable. Frame alignment between organizations and individuals was defined as matching blame attribution, considering the three categories of interest (position, valence or aggregate).

Table 3 - Organizational variables (Meso-level)

Issue	Mobilized by an organization			Membership in issue association			Frame alignment w/staging org.		
	Mean	SE	N	Mean	SE	N	Mean	SE	N
GLBTQ	0.272	(0.014)	1,012	0.153	(0.011)	1,154	0.328	(0.014)	1,154
Abortion	0.223	(0.025)	287	0.318	(0.027)	302	0.56	(0.029)	302
Climate	0.512	(0.008)	3,479	0.188	(0.006)	3,876	0.363	(0.008)	3,876
R/F/Hate	0.532	(0.014)	1,313	0.157	(0.01)	1,449	0.603	(0.017)	848
Nuclear	0.316	(0.019)	608	0.024	(0.006)	679	0.311	(0.021)	488
Regional	0.323	(0.011)	1,734	0.203	(0.009)	1,848	0.426	(0.016)	916
Women	0.26	(0.015)	885	0		933	0.309	(0.015)	933

In order to study the issue context, public opinion surveys for each country were used to identify general population agreement on each issue and local researchers provided expert opinion on other features of the issue context. The public opinion data comes mainly from Eurobarometer except for Switzerland as described in Table A2.2 (Appendix 2). Issue divisiveness scores were calculated as continuous scale for each issue by taking the maximum divisiveness case (50% oppose 50% favor) as the maximum value and complete agreement or complete disagreement as the lowest. (Issue divisiveness=1 -2ABS(0.5-General population agreement).

Table 4 – Macro-level - Contextual features

Issue	Demo	City	Country	Frame alignment	Issue divisiveness	Government opposes	Opposition opposes	Counter-movement	N
Austerity	Against Labor Law	Madrid	ES	0.16	0.40	0	1	0	308
R/F/Hate	Against racist politics	Stockholm	SE		0.44	0	0		191
Austerity	Against the Europe of Capital, Crisis and War	Barcelona	ES	0.12	0.40	1	1	0	77
Nuclear	Anti Nucleair demo	Amsterdam	NL	0.44	0.62	1	0	1	448
Nuclear	Anti Nuclear Manifestation	Beznau	CH		0.82	0	0		472
Nuclear	Anti-nuclear	Muhleberg	CH		0.82	0	0		460
Nuclear	Anti-nuclear demonstration	Stockholm	SE	0.29	0.72	0	1	0	279
Climate	Climate Change	Brussels	BE	0.71	0.20	0	0	0	334
Climate	Climate March	Utrecht	NL	0.41	0.28	1	0	0	242
Climate	Climate demo	Copenhagen	SE	0.64	0.38	0	0	1	272
Austerity	Culture demo Amsterdam	Amsterdam	NL	0.29	0.88	0	1	0	176
Austerity	Culture demo Utrecht	Utrecht	NL	0.35	0.88	0	1	0	171
Abortion	Demonstration Against Abortion	Madrid	ES	0.56	0.95	0	1	0	302
Regional	Demonstration against language decree	Santiago	ES	0.33	0.41	1	1	1	323
Austerity	Demonstration against the new labour law	Santiago	ES	0.55	0.40	0	1	1	168
Austerity	Florence 10+10/Joining forces for another EU	Florence	IT	0.16	0.96	0	0	0	134
Austerity	For employment, not capital reforms	Vigo	ES	0.56	0.40	0	0	0	168
Nuclear	Fukushima never again	Brussels	BE	0.58	0.70	0	1	0	189
LGBT	Gay Pride	Bologna	IT	0.57	0.86	1	1	1	216
LGBT	Gay Pride Geneva	Geneva	IT	0.30	0.86	1	0	0	197
Austerity	General Strike	Florence	IT	0.57	0.96	1	1	0	235
LGBT	Pride Parade	London	UK	0.20	0.52	0	0	0	193
Austerity	March for Work	Brussels	BE	0.61	0.94	0	0	0	129
Austerity	Marcia Perugia-Assisi	Assisi	IT	0.50	0.96	0	0	1	264
Austerity	Military demo	The Hague	NL	0.37	0.88	1	1	0	204
Women	Million Women Rise	London	UK		0.30	0	0		178
Climate	National Climate March	London	UK		0.36	0	0		243
Climate	National Climate March 2010	London	UK		0.36	0	0		358
Austerity	No to Austerity	Brussels	BE	0.40	0.94	0	0	1	144
R/F/Hate	No to Hate Crime Vigil	London	UK	0.34	0.84	0	0	0	169
Austerity	Non-Profit Demonstration	Brussels	BE	0.11	0.94	0	0	0	197
LGBT	Pink Saturday Parade Survey	Haarlem	NL	0.10	0.36	0	0	0	101
LGBT	Prague Pride	Prague	CZ	0.44	0.90	0	0	1	135
LGBT	Pride demonstration	Zurich	CH	0.31	0.30	1	0	0	150
LGBT	Rainbow Parade	Gothenburg	SE	0.25	0.26	0	0	0	162
Austerity	Retirement demonstration	Rotterdam	NL	0.59	0.88	1	1	0	294
Regional	Self-determination is democracy	Barcelona	ES	0.48	0.41	1	1	0	301
Austerity	Stop budget cuts	The Hague	NL	0.21	0.88	1	0	0	293
R/F/Hate	Stop racism and exclusion	Amsterdam	NL	0.53	0.40	1	0	0	125

14

Austerity	Stop the Government	Prague	CZ	0.01	0.98	1	0	0	186
Austerity	Together strong for public work	The Hague	NL	0.48	0.88	1	0	0	348
Austerity	'TUC's March for the Alternative: Jobs,	London	UK	0.42	0.78	0	1	0	211
R/F/Hate	Unite Against Fascism National Demo	London	UK	0.14	0.84	0	1	0	194
Regional	We are a nation, we decide	Barcelona	ES	0.12	0.41	1	1	1	309
Austerity	We have alternatives	Brussels	BE	0.25	0.94	1	1	0	169
Women	Women demonstration Geneva	Geneva	CH		0.92	0	0		206
Women	World March of Women	Bern	CH		0.92	0	0		150

5. Analysis

Multilevel analyses for both versions of the dependent variable show the relative importance of each level of analysis. The larger part of the variation in the propensity to frame position is attributable to characteristics of the demonstration, followed by the issue context and to a very low extent to the differences between countries (Table 5).

Table 5 – Multilevel analysis – Random intercept models (Mixed-effects logistic regression)

	All Position vs. other	Exclusive Position vs. other	
Second level	variance partition coefficient	variance partition coefficient	Number of cases
Demonstration	17.26 %	28.63%	47
Issue	13.65%	22.45%	8
Country	1.93%	3.23%	8
	N=9345	N=4570	

Considering the reduced number of cases or data for each level, I use a multivariate regression with country and issue fixed effects (Table 6). The first model has a dependent variable that takes the value 1 for all position frames, independently of how many actors were identified, and 0 for the exclusive responses of only valence or only aggregate framing. The second model takes the value 1 for exclusive position frames 1 and 0 for the exclusive responses of only valence or only aggregate framing. Individuals who identified more than one frame were dropped from the sample (position ∩ valence, position ∩ aggregate, valence ∩ aggregate). The analyses include demographic controls as well as ideological position. A robustness check was performed with a categorical variable taking apart valence and aggregate frames and with an additional model considering the women issue which has no organizational framing data.

Table 6 – Multivariate regression analyzes for position framing (Marginal effects)

	All Position vs. other		Exclusive Position vs. other	
Voted in last election	0.037**	(0.017)	0.097***	(0.027)
Party identity	0.043***	(0.016)	0.080***	(0.028)
External efficacy	-0.059***	(0.021)	-0.087**	(0.034)
Mobilized by an organization	0.022**	(0.011)	0.015	(0.017)
Member of an issue-specific org	-0.001	(0.013)	-0.001	(0.022)
Alignment w/Org. framing	0.153***	(0.016)	-0.209***	(0.035)
SMO frames position	0.029*	(0.018)	-0.075***	(0.028)
Alignment*SMO frames position	0.030	(0.022)	0.329***	(0.043)
Issue divisiveness	0.356***	(0.102)	0.636***	(0.146)
Countermobilization	-0.036**	(0.017)	-0.011	(0.029)
SMO sector activity	-0.106***	(0.024)	-0.097**	(0.038)
Government opposes the issue	0.024	(0.017)	-0.079***	(0.028)
Opposition opposes the issue	-0.002	(0.014)	-0.007	(0.022)
Political attention	-0.136***	(0.021)	-0.131***	(0.033)
Issue saliency	0.078***	(0.013)	0.067***	(0.021)
Woman	0.010	(0.010)	0.010	(0.017)
Age	0.000	(0.000)	0.000	(0.001)
Tertiary education	0.010	(0.011)	0.002	(0.017)
Ideology (Right)	0.004	(0.003)	0.007*	(0.004)
CZ	-0.087	(0.073)	-0.254***	(0.078)
IT	-0.225***	(0.051)	-0.218***	(0.055)
NL	0.017	(0.025)	0.062*	(0.034)
SP	0.197***	(0.052)	0.214**	(0.088)
SW	0.203***	(0.028)	0.291***	(0.038)
CH	0.232***	(0.044)	0.383***	(0.057)
UK	0.192***	(0.030)	0.172***	(0.052)
LGBT	0.413***	(0.066)	0.505***	(0.066)
Abortion	-0.101	(0.193)	-0.088	(0.181)
Austerity	0.209**	(0.087)	0.040	(0.095)
Fascism –racism – hate	0.279***	(0.072)	0.284***	(0.086)
Nuclear	0.172**	(0.070)	0.090	(0.077)
Regional	0.420***	(0.075)	0.565***	(0.078)
Observations	5577		2662	
PseudoR-squared	0.1634		0.2440	

Standard errors in parentheses * p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

Climate – Reference category for Issue

BE – Reference category for Country

6. Discussion

I have engaged in analyzing how demonstrators against highly divisive issues frame blame attribution. My main aim was to shed some light on the individual, organizational and contextual factors that may explain perceptions of political disagreement. A sample limited to position issues has allowed a better understanding of adversarial politics in contrast to perceptions of political conflict based on government performance or on wider socio-economic problems. The comparison of demonstrators in eight issues across eight countries provides a strong test to conclude on micro, meso and macro-level determinants.

Individual level factors

At the micro level, both attitudes and behaviors are related to particular perceptions of politics. Identification with political parties and voting are significant predictors of positional framing. Considering that adversaries in a big part of the issues are not clearly charged ideologically (GLBT, climate, women and fascism/racism/hate issues), this result speaks for the importance of parties in highly divisive issues, even within protest politics. The result for external efficacy also shows the prominence of parties. Cynicism (opposite of external efficacy) turns out to be the only attitude toward government that influences responsibility attribution. As expected, individuals who believe that politicians do not respond to citizens attribute responsibility to government competence.

Organizational level factors

Individual alignment with organizational adversarial framing turns out to be a good predictor for adversarial framing. The interaction of organizations framing position and individuals aligning with organizational frames leads to individuals using position frames. This result signals to consistent understanding of issues by individuals and organizations, but no causal relation can be implied. Individuals may follow organizational cues, but they may also choose organizations according to their understanding of particular issues.

Being mobilized by an organization staging the demonstration turned out to have a very weak relation to individual framing and involvement in issue-specific associations is not a significant factor. These results confirm the power of the sense-making function of social-movement

organizations in political conflict.

Context

Issue-divisiveness is the strongest predictor of adversarial framing as expected. Public opinion support for the issues turns out to have a stronger effect than elite behavior and social movement organizations' frames. The expectations for issue divisiveness are substantiated. Differences between issues and countries provide a good test for

In the same line as individual-level factors, the role of governments plays an important role in context-level factors. An explicit position opposing the issue by the incumbent has a strong negative effect on adversarial framing as well as government attention to the issue. Governments do seem to draw the attention on themselves and weaken the role of adversaries when expressing an explicit stance on the issue. On the contrary, the role of opposition doesn't turns out to be relevant for explaining individual perceptions.

The role of counter-movements was expected to make adversaries salient, but it turns out to affect individual framing of responsibility negatively. Few events had counter-demonstrations and in these cases counter-movements may have had a low profile as they compete for media attention with big demonstrations. Furthermore, in events with high levels of polarization such as the anti-abortion demonstration in Spain or the LGBT demo in Bologna, counter-movements can have extreme discourses which are difficult to be acknowledged by demonstrators as legitimate adversaries.

Highly polarized issues are perceived as adversarial conflict when considering public opinion support but not in the presence of counter-movements. A divided public opinion may be acting as a way to raise awareness toward the issue. On the contrary, counter-movements may be less visible, even in issues with high levels of activity such as climate change and austerity policies, where adversaries are not as easily identifiable as in other position issues. The fact that lower levels of issue activity are significantly related to adversarial framing, may signal that infrequent demonstrations raise awareness towards the conflict and the adversaries in each side.

7. Conclusion

Exploring perceptions of political disagreement is relevant for improving our understanding of individual judgment in contentious issues. Differences between individual perceptions of issues as adversarial politics or rather as a matter of government performance or socio-economic outcomes can tell us about the way in which politics is experienced; in this way, looking into individual perceptions can advance our understanding on the effects of political disagreement and its important consequences on political attitudes and behaviors. Disagreement has been treated as a sealed concept and although its determinants and consequences have been widely analyzed, perceptions of disagreement remain an understudied matter. This study provides evidence for broadening the scope on the conception of political disagreement by studying determinants of individual perceptions. The findings confirm previous definitions of disagreement as a matter of contextual effects (as in exposure to dissonant stances in social environments) and of network influence. It advances research on the topic by looking into detailed features of issue- specific contexts and by providing evidence on the mechanisms of organizational involvement and influence as well as on individual features.

Perceiving political disagreement as adversarial politics is strongly related to the particular issue context and to some extent to electoral politics, both through demonstrators' perceptions of parties and voting practices, as well as to party positions and the attention they provide to the issues at stake. Thus, adversarial politics is related to ideological differences and group interests as stated in party positions and group conflict. Divisive issues, and especially when they are most salient, are clearly related to an awareness of conflicting others or political adversaries. However, the evidence also suggests that organizations play an important role in negotiating shared meaning. Framing processes are central to individual perceptions and they act independently of group identity or other network effects that can be produced through associational life. The role of alignment between individuals and organizations in their blame attributions reveal the importance of the sense-making function of social movement organizations beyond the mobilization processes and group identity formation dynamics.

Individual traits were also expected to explain a big portion of the variance on the perception of disagreement according to the results. However, negative attitudes toward the role of parties

(political cynicism / low external efficacy) and party identity turn out to be relevant but very weak explanatory factors. The fact that differences between demonstrators in their levels of political interest, their perception of political competence (internal efficacy) or their involvement in other forms of participation are very small, can hide the importance of individual differences. Nevertheless, the fact that the demonstrators can be assumed to be highly interested in issue politics, and thus quite knowledgeable about the conflict at hand, provides a strong test for the expectations.

The three levels of analysis presented suggest a stimulating view of political disagreement. They need to be better integrated theoretically and sturdier methodological approaches can be explored in order to deal with the richness of the data. Understanding the interactions between individual and organizational features and between these and the issue context can be a good challenge to develop the definitions of political disagreement.

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Appendix 1 – Coding aggregation

corporation	industry companies plant corporat business lobbies multinationals profit private money financ
inequality	inequality unemployment overpopulation welfare insecurity segregat immigrat
ignorance	ignorance stupidity fear afraid egoism selfish inform knowledge scapegoating short-sighted aware passiv accept indifferen laz nonsense lack of infor- mation
government	government minister president ombudsman polic
media	media press tabloids
education	education School
men	men male

economy	economy capitalism system development western nations progress market rich countries rich
everyone	everyone everybody mankind population people us human ourselve
ideology	parties cleavage left right vote conserv progressive ideolog mentalit liberal socialist PVV CDA VVD pp psoe psc
state	State democracy laws tribunal court constitution
spanish	spanish nationali spain centrali
technology	tech scien
identity	identity group

lifestyle	lifestyle consume fuel emissions gas energ production cheap greed pollut waste planet
culture	culture attitude values tradition moral patriarc respect gender general convic- tion
prejudice	prejudice difference phobia extrem discriminat intoleran hate hatred anger bigot hypocri fundamentali racis
politics	politics politicians political system
religion	religion church catholi
europe	europe

Appendix 2 - Public opinion data for Issue divisiveness

Table A2.1 -

	GLBTQ	Abortion	Climate	Nuclear	R/F/Hate	Regional	Regional	Women	Women	Austerity
	7-10 Would feel comfortable about having a homosexual in the highest elected political position in COUNTRY	Totally in favor in abortion	Climate change is a serious a problem at the moment	The current level of nuclear energy as a proportion of all energy sources should be reduced	There is very widespread discrimination on the basis of ethnic origin in COUNTRY	7-10 Considers themselves Galician Nationalists	The level of autonomy in Catalonia is insufficient	Domestic violence against women is unacceptable and should always be punished	Women do not have equal rights with men in your Country	Personally, would you say that to emerge from the crisis rapidly, EU Member States should...? - First, reduce public Spending (vs. first invest in Measures to boost the economy)
BE			0.9	0.35						0.53
CH	0.85ª			0.411					0.46	
CZ	0.55									0.49
DK			0.86							
ES		0.474				0.206	0.618			0.80
IT	0.57									0.48
NL	0.82		0.81	0.31	0.8					0.56
SE	0.87		0.88	0.36	0.78					
UK	0.74		0.82		0.58				0.85	0.61
Eurobarometer	Special Eurobarometer 317 – 06/09 Discrimination in the EU In 2009		Eurobarometer 12/08/2009 - Europeans' attitudes towards climate change	Special Eurobarometer 324 – 10/09 Europeans and Nuclear Safety	Special Eurobarometer 370 – 06/11 Social Climate report				Special Eurobarometer 344 – 03/10 Domestic Violence against Women	Eurobarometer 77.2 03/12 The crisis and the economic governance in Europe
Country-specific studies	Study on Homophobia, Transphobia and Discrimination on Grounds of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity 2010	CIS – 2860 – 01/11 PREFERENCIAS SOBRE LOS PROCESOS DE TOMA DE DECISIONES POLÍTICAS		Demoscope - February 2010		Estudio no 2.829. Barómetro autonómico II. Galicia Enero-Marzo 2010	CEO - Baròmetre d'Opinió Política 06/10			Gallup International Association – Voice of the People

ª This value was estimated according to a general description of public perceptions as no empirical data was found

Appendix 3 - Question wording

Dependent variable

Responsibility attribution
4. In your opinion, who or what is to blame for ISSUE?
Open response question coded into 25 options which were grouped in 3 categories - position, valence, aggregate – as explained in the text.

Independent variables – Individual level

Party identification – transformed into dichotomous (any party, none)
25. With which party do you most closely identify right now?

External efficacy
27. Most politicians make a lot of promises but do not actually do anything.
- - Strongly disagree
- - Disagree
- - Neither
- - Agree
- - Strongly agree

Independent variables – Organizational level

Membership in associations
17. If you have been involved in any of the following types of organisations in the past 12 months: please indicate whether you are a passive member or an active member. If you are a member of several organisations of the same type, tick the box for the organisation of that type in which you are most 'active'.
- - Church or religious organisation
- - Trade union or professional association
- - Political party
- - Women's organisation
- - Sport or cultural organisation
- - Environmental organisation
- - Lesbian or gay rights organisation
- - Community or neighborhood association
- - Charity or humanitarian organisation
- - Third world, Global Justice or Peace organisation
- - Anti-racist or Migrant organisation
- - Human or civil rights organisation
- - Other

Mobilized by an organization
8. How did you find out about the demonstration? Was it via: (tick as many as apply)
- - Radio or television

- Newspaper(s) (print or online)
- Alternative online media
- Advertisements, flyers, and/or posters
- Partner and/or family
- Friends and/or acquaintances
- People at your school or workplace
- (Fellow) members of an organisation or association
- An organization (magazine, meeting, website, mailing list, etc.)
- Online social networks (e.g. Facebook, Twitter)

8b. Which of the above information channels was the most important?

Frame alignment with staging organizations – Dummy variable
Indicates if the respondent's attribution of responsibility matches the organisation's response (coded position, valence, aggregate)

Independent variables – Context

Size of the Issue specific SMO-sector	Inter-item correlation of Number of people and Number of organizations
	1. Is the Issue specific SMO-sector a large sector? With many different organizations? (compared to other SMO-sectors in same country)
	- Very small
	- Rather small
	- Quite large
	- Very large
SMO-sector activity	Inter-item correlation of activity and frequency of protest
	2. Is the issue-specific SMO-sector an active protest sector? With many protest events that are staged? (compared to other SMO-sectors in same country) [IMC_cont]
	- Not at all
	- Rather
	- Quite
	- Very
	4. Is the demonstration about an issue that causes on average a lot of protest or not in your country? [IMC_freq]
	- A lot below average
	- Somewhat below average
	- About average
	- Quite above average
	- A lot above average
Government (Opposition) opposes the issue	8. For each political party (government and opposition), does it have an explicit position on the issue at stake? And, is it in favor, against, neutral or divided towards the demonstration's claims?
Political attention	7. Now before the demonstration, do the major political institutions (government, parliament etc. devote a lot of attention to the issue of the demonstration, or not?
	- None at all
	- Quite a bit
	- A lot
Issue saliency	9. To what extent is the demonstration issue a salient issue in the population at large?

-     Not at all salient
-     Somewhat salient
-     Quite salient
-     Very salient

Control variables

Education

What is your highest educational qualification?

1. None, did not complete primary education
2. Primary or first stage of basic
3. Lower secondary or second stage of basic
4. Upper secondary
5. Post-secondary, non-tertiary
6. First stage of tertiary
7. Second stage of tertiary
8. Post tertiary (PhD)

Class

People sometimes describe themselves as belonging to the working class, the middle class, or the upper or lower class. Would you describe yourself as belonging to the…?
-     Upper class
-     Upper middle class
-     Lower middle class
-     Working class
-     Lower class
-     none

Ideology

28. In politics people sometimes talk of "left" and "right". Where would you place yourself on this scale, where 0 means the left and 10 means the right?

Left   *Right*

    0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   *Do not Know*