conflictual events are overrepresented in the Madridian sample. For Barcelona we find no bias at all. As 8% of the Czech sample turned conflictual, such events are underrepresented. All in all, these results indicate that the dataset is not, to any considerable extent, skewed towards the inclusion of peaceful events.

Table A3: Results of Protest Event Analyses for the Netherlands, Czech Republic, and Spain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Search period</th>
<th>Articles found</th>
<th>Staged protests</th>
<th>Staged protests: conflictual</th>
<th>Sampled protests</th>
<th>Sampled protests: conflictual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>14.11.09 - 14.07.12</td>
<td>915</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>11.08.12 - 24.11.13</td>
<td>574</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain - Barcelona</td>
<td>21.01.10 - 17.07.10</td>
<td>458</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain - Madrid</td>
<td>28.02.10 - 22.05.11</td>
<td>3,010</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Not all of the sampled protests are listed as 'staged protests'. Three Dutch events, eight Czech events, and two Barcelonan events were sampled, but not identified by this media study. We presume this is due to the fact that these events were smaller than 2,000 participants (1,000 for the Czech Republic), peaceful and/or staged in the private sphere.
Chapter 6

With this dissertation, I sought to improve our understanding of street protests and their core actors, that is, demonstrators and the police. To do so, I conducted four empirical studies, which were all comparative in nature. In the following, I summarize these studies and present their main findings. After that, I delineate the theoretical, methodological, and practical implications of these results. Finally, I list the possible limitations of this dissertation and avenues for future research, and I provide an overall conclusion.

SUMMARY OF FOUR STUDIES

The research question of the first empirical study of this dissertation was: How do street protests differ in their level of politicization?

This study was presented in the second chapter of this dissertation. Based on collective action research (e.g., Franzosi, 2004; Lindekilde, 2013; Tilly, 2008), I hypothesized that a protest’s politicization level manifests itself in six ways. Participants of a more politicized event would feel angrier, and participate more out of collective motives than social or reward motives. Also, participants of a more politicized event would identify their opponent more clearly, and vilify their opponent more severely. Lastly, at a more politicized event, demonstrators would have a more specific claim, and would make their claim in a more combative way.

To test whether these hypotheses hold, I deployed a mixed-methods dataset of two Dutch street protests: a reactive protest against the Russian anti-gay law and the ritual Pink Saturday parade. These events were selected because I expected them to differ in their degree of politicization, the reactive protest being far more politicized than the ritual parade. As the demonstrations were not assumed to differ much otherwise, given that they were staged by the same social movement, in the same country, and in the same period of time, this constitutes a ‘most similar systems’ design (Przeworski and Teune, 1970: 31-46). With such a design, I can be fairly certain that any differences between the two events are related to their level of politicization. Data on the six indicators were collected in several ways: demonstrators reported their sense of anger and participation motives on questionnaires, researchers gathered observational data on whether (and how) an opponent was identified and a claim was made, protest organizers were interviewed about their opponent and claim, and media reports were gathered.

The results confirmed my hypotheses. Reactive protesters felt significantly angrier than ritual protesters did, and had more collective motives to participate. Also, reactive
protesters identified their opponent more clearly than ritual protesters did, and vilified this opponent more severely. Lastly, reactive protesters had a more specific claim, and made their claim in a more combative way. Based on these findings, I proposed that the six indicators constitute a model to study the degree to which protests differ in their level of politicization.

The second and the third empirical study of this dissertation sought to answer the questions: How do demonstrators perceive protest atmosphere, and why?

The second empirical study, which assessed demonstrators’ atmosphere perceptions by means of their own atmosphere reports, was presented in the third chapter of this dissertation. Based on environmental psychology (e.g., Mehrabian and Russell, 1974) and collective action research (e.g., Drury, Cocking, Beale, Hanson, and Rapley, 2005), I expected a demonstrator’s atmosphere perception to diverge on a dimension of pleasure, and to relate to his or her grievance, group identification, empowerment, and perception of police aggression. Moreover, I hypothesized that a pleasant atmosphere perception stimulates a demonstrator’s preparedness to engage in future collective action. This assumption was based on research by Mehrabian and Russell (1974), which indicated that a person’s affective state (i.e. pleasure-displeasure) engenders approach or avoidance behavior. Also, a study of peasant political mobilization in El Salvador between the 1970s and 1990s indicated that a demonstrator’s sense of pride and pleasure promoted his or her sustained collective action participation (Wood, 2001).

My hypotheses were tested with a mixed-methods dataset of two Dutch protests: a rally against the Russian anti-gay law and an anti-monarchy rally. I selected these events, because I expected them to differ substantially in their atmosphere, and, thus, in demonstrators’ atmosphere perceptions. During these events, demonstrators completed a paper-and-pencil questionnaire, in which they, inter alia, reported and explained their atmosphere perceptions in their own words. To triangulate these findings, I also asked other protest actors to assess the atmosphere: researchers made field observations, organizers and police officers were interviewed, and media reports were gathered.

The results partially confirmed my hypotheses. As expected, demonstrators perceive protest atmosphere on a dimension of pleasure. Also as expected, a pleasant atmosphere perception relates positively to a demonstrator’s grievance (only for anti-monarchists), group identification, and empowerment. Not as expected, however, a pleasant atmosphere perception does not relate to a demonstrator’s perception of police aggression. Also not as
predicted, a pleasant atmosphere perception *deters* a demonstrator’s willingness to engage in future collective action (only for anti-monarchists). However, a pleasant atmosphere perception also *stimulates* a demonstrator’s sense of group identification and empowerment, which, in turn, *stimulate* his or her future action preparedness (only for anti-monarchists). Besides, at the anti-monarchy demonstration, a demonstrator’s grievance proved to *stimulate* his or her perception of a pleasant protest atmosphere and his or her future action preparedness. So, in statistical terms, perceived protest atmosphere has a negative direct effect on future action preparedness, which is suppressed by its positive indirect effect (via group identification and empowerment), and by the positive confounding effect of a demonstrator’s grievance.

The *third empirical study*, which sought to understand demonstrators’ atmosphere perceptions in terms of intergroup conflict, was presented in Chapter 4. Based on social movement and crowd behavior studies (e.g., Reicher, Stott, Drury, Adang, Cronin, and Livingstone, 2007; Uhrich and Benkenstein, 2010), I operationalized (perceived) protest atmosphere as demonstrators’ perceptions of police-demonstrator interactions. Then, I hypothesized that these perceptions range from non-conflictual to conflictual, due to demonstrators’ individual characteristics and those of the protest they participate in. On a demonstrator level, I assumed that demonstrators who are male, young (11-29 years of age), and have recent protest experience (especially in direct action and violent forms of action), would be more likely to perceive a conflictual atmosphere than a harmonious one. On a demonstration level, I expected the police conduct to be decisive. So, at protests where the police deploy repressive tactics, or that are large and moving (and, hence, prone to police repression), demonstrators would be more likely to perceive a conflictual than a harmonious atmosphere.

These hypotheses were tested with a multilevel dataset of 75 street protests, which were staged in 9 European countries (Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom) between 2009 and 2013. For these events, demonstrators completed a questionnaire in which they, *inter alia*, evaluated the conduct of the police and other demonstrators, and indicated their previous protest participation and demographics. In addition, various protest actors reported contextual information about the protests (e.g., size, location, and the police conduct): researchers completed factsheets, protest organizers and police officers were interviewed, and media reports were gathered.
My analyses indicated that demonstrators perceive four types of protest atmosphere (in terms of intergroup conflict): harmonious, volatile, tense, and chaotic. As expected, these perceptions are shaped by demonstrators’ individual characteristics and those of the protest they participate in. When demonstrators are male, young, and have recently participated in a demonstration, direct action, or violent forms of action, they are more likely to perceive a conflictual (i.e. volatile, tense, or chaotic) atmosphere than a harmonious one. Those demonstrators who participate in large events, moving events, or events that are repressed by the police also have a greater chance to perceive a conflictual (rather than a harmonious) atmosphere. A subsequent comparison of the standardized coefficients of the mentioned demonstrator and demonstration characteristics indicated that police repression is the single most important predictor of a demonstrator’s conflictual atmosphere perception.

The research question of the fourth empirical study of this dissertation was: To what extent has strategic incapacitation diffused to national European protests?

This study was presented in the fifth chapter of this dissertation. Based on protest policing research (e.g., Della Porta and Zamponi, 2013; Gillham, 2011), I expected the police to deploy more strategic incapacitation tactics at national European protests that are more threatening to them and/or the establishment. Still, even threatening protests would rarely witness the most aggressive tactics of this policing style (e.g., the use of less-lethal weapons). So, the diffusion of strategic incapacitation from transnational protests to national European protests was expected to be limited.

To test this hypothesis, I deployed a dataset of 78 national protests, which were staged in 8 European countries (Belgium, Czech Republic, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom) between 2009 and 2013. To take into account that the police’s use of strategic incapacitation would be related to the threat that they (and/or the establishment) consider a protest to pose, I first categorized the demonstrations under study into three threat levels: non-threatening, somewhat threatening, and threatening. To do so, I assessed whether the demonstrators had revolutionary goals, had previously engaged in direct action, and were young in age. This information was derived from structured, pre-event interviews with the protest organizers, and questionnaires completed by demonstrators, respectively. A subsequent assessment of protest organizers’, demonstrators’, and researchers’ evaluations of the police conduct at these three types of events validated my typology. As expected, these actors considered the police significantly less cooperative and more
aggressive at somewhat threatening and (especially) threatening protests, compared to non-threatening ones.

In continuation, I assessed to what extent the police deployed strategic incapacitation tactics to manage the three types of protest events. For this assessment I used researchers’ and protest organizers’ direct observations (and, for the latter actor, evaluations) of five dimensions of strategic incapacitation, being: selective and one-sided communication, mass arrests, the use of force, extensive surveillance, and the control of space. As expected, my results indicated that the diffusion of strategic incapacitation to national European protests is limited, even when events are threatening to the police and/or establishment.

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

In this dissertation, I developed a model to determine how street protests differ in their level of politicization. Also, I introduced the concept ‘perceived protest atmosphere’, along with two models that explain variation in demonstrators’ atmosphere perceptions (based on their own accounts and their evaluations of police-demonstrator interactions, respectively), and a model to assesses the effect of demonstrators’ atmosphere perceptions on their future action preparedness. In addition, I systematically tested Gillham’s (2011) and Della Porta and Zamponi’s (2013) premise that threatening national European protests are managed in the same way as transnational street protests: by strategic incapacitation. In continuation, I explain how these new insights advance academic research on street protests and their core actors.

Protest Politicization

At present, scholars do not differentiate between street protests’ politicization levels. That is to say, scholars have implied that protests may differ in this regard (e.g., Klandermans, Van Stekelenburg, Damen, Van Troost, and Van Leeuwen, 2014; Tarrow, 2011), but they have not scrutinized the matter. This gap in the literature is probably due to the fact that protests’ politicization levels are hard to determine. After all, Fillieule (1997: 42) argued that ‘the political nature of a demonstration is […] the most difficult to isolate’ (my translation), because it would often be invisible (during the event) and/or might be unintended (Ibid.). By systematically comparing two street protests, which were expected to differ substantially in their level of politicization, but not much in another way, I have been able to assess protests’
Perceived Protest Atmosphere

Presently, ‘protest atmosphere’ is a lay term. Scholars (and other protest actors) widely refer to protest atmosphere (Adang, 2009; Della Porta, Andretta, Mosca, and Reiter, 2006; Drury et al., 2005; Fillieule, 1997; Tilly, 2003), or one of its synonyms (e.g., ‘mood’ or ‘climate’) (Bessel and Emsley, 2000; D.P. Waddington, 2007). However, to the best of my knowledge, no scholarship has been devoted to the concept. So, to indicate what particular atmosphere is meant, scholars use a variety of adjectives, such as ‘good’, ‘positive’, ‘tense’, or ‘volatile’ (e.g., D.P. Waddington, 2007; Schreiber and Adang, 2006). And to explain why a particular protest atmosphere is perceived, scholars generally provide a portrayal of the event (or a particular aspect of it). For example, Reicher (1996: 124) described the atmosphere of a student demonstration (London, 1988), as ‘hostile’, because ‘certain people [i.e. protesters]
Based on the two atmosphere studies that this dissertation comprises, I maintain that the atmosphere concept forms a valuable addition to protest scholarship.

The first reason why studying protest atmosphere is important is that it expands our knowledge of people’s protest experiences. These experiences are relatively understudied from a demonstrator’s perspective (i.e., based on demonstrators’ own accounts). We know much less about demonstrators’ protest experiences than about, for example, their political attitudes (Della Porta and Reiter, 2012; Klandermans, 2010) and their demographics (Saunders, Grasso, Olcese, Rainsford, and Rootes, 2012; Walgrave et al., 2010). A few studies indicated that demonstrators generally experience positive affect (e.g., pride and/or joy), because they are aware of a shared grievance, identify with other crowd members, and feel empowered (e.g., Britt and Heise, 2000; Drury et al., 2005; Wood, 2001). My assessment of demonstrators’ atmosphere perceptions nuances these findings: Demonstrators experience their protest participation on a dimension of pleasure, because of their grievance, group identification, and empowerment. So, if demonstrators do not share a grievance, do not identify with other demonstrators, and do not feel empowered, they experience displeasure. This has rarely been found (but see Drury and Reicher, 2005; Drury et al., 2005).

In terms of intergroup conflict, research on demonstrators’ protest experiences is not rare. Social psychologists developed a model that explains how and when intergroup conflict erupts, the so-called elaborated social identity model (ESIM) (e.g., Cocking, 2013, Reicher et al., 2007; Stott, 2009). In a nutshell, the ESIM posits that demonstrators’ perceptions of police repression may contribute to the escalation of conflict. Also, sociologists identified various aspects of street protests and their participants that engender intergroup conflict, such as demonstrators’ previous behaviors (e.g., participation in direct action) and particular protest features (e.g., large events). While both fields have yielded valuable insight into intergroup conflict, neither one indicated in a systematic way how demonstrators experience such conflict. This is because the ESIM is mainly based on case studies, which lack a comparative design, and sociological research does not take an individual’s perspective. By studying how demonstrators experience protest atmosphere (by means of their evaluations of police-demonstrator interactions) and how these experiences are shaped by individual and demonstration characteristics, I provide new, systematic insight into demonstrators’ protest experiences. In doing so, I corroborated the ESIM, and united this social psychological model with sociological research on street protests.
The second reason why scholars should study protest atmosphere, is because it influences demonstrators’ preparedness to engage in future collective action. Such insight is relevant, because we know little about sustained participation (Klandermans, 1997; Louis, 2009). A few studies on the topic indicated that a demonstrator’s positive protest experience stimulates his or her sustained participation (e.g., Wood, 2001). My research of protest atmosphere (based on demonstrator’s own atmosphere accounts) indicates that this effect is not so straightforward: a pleasant protest atmosphere deters a demonstrator’s future action preparedness and also stimulates his or her sense of group identification and empowerment, which, in turn, stimulate their action preparedness. This effect makes perfect sense, given that people do not merely protest to enjoy themselves, but to voice a particular grievance (e.g., Collins, 2001).

**Protest Policing**

In the last few years, some scholars argued that national street demonstrations that are threatening to the establishment and/or police forces are managed by strategic incapacitation (Della Porta and Zamponi, 2013; Gillham, 2011). This repressive policing style was created to handle transnational demonstrations (i.e. demonstrations ‘that mainly address international targets and involve a substantive number of protesters from different countries’; Della Porta and Tarrow, 2012: 126)\(^1\), which generally constitute a threat to the establishment and police. While this diffusion premise is consistently supported in the United States (e.g., Gillham, Edwards, and Noakes, 2013; Vitale, 2007), it is not in Europe. On the old continent, strategic incapacitation was identified at a few threatening national protests (Della Porta and Zamponi, 2013), but at several others it was not (e.g., Stott, Scothern, and Gorringe, 2013), or only in part (Wahlström, 2010). Although these inconsistent findings suggest that the diffusion of strategic incapacitation is limited, this conclusion could not be drawn at present. This is because the reported studies focused on a few street protests only, and did not differentiate between protests’ threat levels. So, the protests where strategic incapacitation was employed might well have been more threatening than those where it was not.

By systematically assessing the police’s use of strategic incapacitation tactics at a large number of national European protests, which were categorized as non-threatening, somewhat threatening or threatening to the establishment and/or police, I provided systematic

\(^1\) In this dissertation, I defined national street demonstrations as protests that mainly address national targets (e.g., national governments or companies), and/or involve protesters from the country in which the protest is staged.
insight into the diffusion premise. My findings corroborate European studies on the matter, but also nuance them: The police hardly use strategic incapacitation to manage national European protests, but (at least some of) the tactics that pertain to this policing style are more likely to be used at more threatening events. In a sense, this corroborates Gillham’s (2011, also see Gillham et al., 2013) theorizing that strategic incapacitation is reserved for threatening street protests. However, even threatening protests do not necessarily witness this policing style, or parts of it.

This new insight may revitalize the academic debate on the policing of protest at both sides of the Atlantic. After all, my findings do not only validate and nuance European studies on the matter, but also contradict American protest policing research, which corroborated the diffusion premise. Do these differential findings result from the fact that American researchers have not systematically assessed the police’s use of strategic incapacitation tactics at protests of different threat levels? Or do they pinpoint a bifurcation in protest policing between Europe and the United States? Future research may provide the answer.

**METHODOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS**

This dissertation is founded on the international collaborative research project ‘Caught in the act of protest: Contextualizing Contestation’ (CCC). That is to say, two empirical studies exploited parts of the CCC dataset (Chapters 4 and 5) and two studies were conducted on datasets that had been compiled in (partial) agreement with the CCC project’s methodology (Chapters 2 and 3). In continuation, I explain how the CCC dataset and methodology advance protest research in general, and how they have facilitated my research in particular.

**The Virtue of Comparison**

The CCC project examined ‘how variations in street demonstrations result from differences in the context and how demonstrations interact with these contexts’ (Van Stekelenburg, Walgrave, Klandermans, and Verhulst, 2012: 251). In doing so, the project sought to remedy ‘one of the main limitations of the mainstream empirical literature of protest’ (Walgrave and Rucht, 2010a: xiv): its lack of contextualized comparison.

Most protest studies are not comparative in nature, because they are based on single or multiple case studies (e.g., Reicher, 1996). While case studies provide contextualized insight into street protests and their participants, they do not allow researchers to test their theories on diverse cases and to generalize findings (Van Stekelenburg et al., 2012; Walgrave and Rucht,
2010a). Comparative research on protest (participation) that does exist is generally decontextualized. This is because most of this research is based on general population surveys (e.g., Barnes and Kaase, 1979), which do not contain information of (individuals’ participation in) specific protest events.

To address this methodological deficiency, protest scholars have recently started to survey demonstrators in the act of protest. Most notably, an international team of researchers gathered the ‘International Peace Protest Survey’ (IPPS) at 11 anti-Iraq war protests in 8 different countries on February 15, 2003 (Walgrave and Rucht, 2010b). Also, Verhulst (2011) surveyed demonstrators at 10 Belgian protests (2006-07), which were staged on a variety of issues. What the results of these studies showed is that protests are highly context dependent, both in space and in time. For example, the worldwide anti-Iraq war demonstrations proved to differ greatly in their size and composition (Verhulst, 2010a; Walgrave et al., 2010). And demonstrators’ participation motives proved to differ considerably across the different-issue Belgian demonstrations (Verhulst, 2011). So, contextualized, comparative research on protest participation provides more fine-grained insight into street protests and their participants.

Knowing this, the CCC project has taken protest survey research a step further by combining two types of contexts in one single design: space (i.e. nation) and issue. So, protests were sampled in different countries (i.e. Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom)\(^2\) and on a variety of issues (e.g., budget cuts on higher education, climate change, racism, and LGBT rights). Besides, at the protests under study, researchers did not only survey demonstrators, but also gathered evidence from other protest actors (i.e. protest organizers, police officers, researchers, and media reporters\(^3\)). Allowing researchers to assess protest (participation) across different contexts and from different vantage points, the CCC dataset (or methodology) provides more specific insight into street protests and their participants than previous research (designs) yielded (Van Stekelenburg et al., 2012). In continuation, I delineate how this applies to my work.

\(^2\) As mentioned in Chapter 1 (p. 11, footnote 7), the CCC project also sampled protests in Poland and several Latin American countries. In this dissertation, the Polish protests were not taken into account, because they were sampled after I had written Chapter 4, and had started to write Chapter 5 (November 2013 and June 2014, respectively). Further, the Latin American protests were not included in my analyses, because their contextual settings were considered too different from the European ones to provide for systematic comparisons.

\(^3\) Worth noting is that IPPS also conducted media analyses for the events under study (see Verhulst, 2010b).
**Exploiting the CCC Dataset**

In Chapter 4, the CCC dataset allowed me to systematically assess how demonstrators perceive protest atmosphere in terms of intergroup conflict. After all, I could deploy the evaluations of police-demonstrator interactions of 15,999 demonstrators at 75 European events. Thanks to the size of this dataset, I believe that my finding on the matter—a typology of four types of (perceived) protest atmosphere—is robust. Further, to assess why demonstrators perceive a particular atmosphere, I deployed the CCC project’s data on demonstrator and demonstration characteristics that are known to induce threat. Given that these data were retrieved from various vantage points, and integrated in one multilevel model, which was tested with a multilevel regression analysis, I maintain that the explanation of demonstrators’ atmosphere perceptions is robust as well. Next to being robust, the model provides an *integrated account* of demonstrators’ atmosphere perceptions (i.e. it explains these perceptions based on demonstrator *and* demonstration variables). In protest research, such integrated models are rare, because they require a large, hierarchical dataset, that is to say, a dataset in which a large number of demonstrators is nested in a large number of demonstrations. To the best of my knowledge, the CCC dataset is the first to meet those requirements.

In Chapter 5, I was able to study to what extent the police manage national European street protests by strategic incapacitation, because I could exploit detailed and direct observations of the police conduct at 78 national European demonstrations. To the best of my knowledge, such data are unique. The CCC dataset was especially apt to provide insight into strategic incapacitation, because the reported observations related to most (five out of eight) of the dimensions of this policing style. Given that these observations were reported by two different actors (researchers and protest organizers), who also appeared to agree which each other, I believe the data have allowed for a valid test. This test could be performed for different types of protests, in terms of the threat that they posed to the establishment and/or police forces. To the best of my knowledge, such an assessment has not yet been deployed. This might be due to the fact that it is hard to obtain information about the establishment’s and police’s threat perceptions. The CCC dataset did not include such information either. What it did have, however, was information about the protest organizers (i.e. revolutionary goals) and demonstrators (i.e. past direct action participation and young age) that is known to induce threat. Based on these data, I was able to categorize the demonstrations in three threat levels. By assessing the police conduct at the three types of events through the eyes of various protest actors, I was able to validate my categorization. So, for the various identified reasons,
I believe that the CCC dataset has allowed me to provide a valid insight into the extent to which strategic incapacitation is deployed to manage national European street protests.

**Using the CCC Methodology**
To explore how protests differ in their level of politicization (Chapter 2), and how and why demonstrators perceive protest atmosphere (Chapter 3), I needed comparative data on these matters. The CCC dataset did not contain such information, but it did illustrate how such information could be gathered: at different types of events, in the act of protest, and from various vantage points. So, in line with the CCC project’s methodology, I gathered data at three demonstrations⁴ to assess protest politicization and (perceived) protest atmosphere, respectively. However, my approach deviated in one important way: I did not select protests that were expected to differ in terms of space or time, but in terms of the dependent variables of the two studies (i.e. protest politicization and (perceived) protest atmosphere). In fact, I sought to keep the time and space of the protest samples constant, so that any differences between the events would probably be related to protest politicization and (perceived) protest atmosphere, respectively. Such most similar systems designs were, in my view, more appropriate, given the exploratory nature of these studies.

**PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS**

This dissertation has implications for protest organizers, demonstrators, and police forces. Protest organizers will be interested to know how demonstrators perceive protest atmosphere, given that demonstrators’ atmosphere perceptions influence their willingness to participate in future collective action. To promote sustained participation, organizers should create an event that is entertaining, but also has a clear political aim. Such ‘serious enjoyment’ entails that demonstrators are aware of a shared grievance, and experience a sense of group identification and empowerment. Awareness may be engendered by protest framing: clearly identifying what the group’s collective grievance is and who is to blame (Simon and Klandermans, 2001). Group identification is promoted by the awareness of a shared grievance, but organizers may further stimulate this feeling through movement symbolism. For instance, the organizers of a protest against the Russian anti-gay law made demonstrators feel related by means of, *inter alia*, gay anthems and rainbow flags. Finally, organizers may stimulate demonstrators’ sense

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⁴ With the three demonstrations I created two samples of two protests. One of the events (i.e. the protest against the Russian anti-gay law (Amsterdam, 2013)) was part of both samples.
of empowerment by mobilizing a lot of people. Also, assertive speeches may engender this feeling (Blake, 2014; Casquete, 2006; Drury et al., 2005; Stryker, Owens, and White, 2000).

Protest organizers and demonstrators may benefit from knowing that the police hardly deploy strategic incapacitation tactics to manage national European protests, even if these events are threatening to them and/or the establishment. Hence, participants of these events would not be considerably more likely than in the past few decades to be caught in intergroup conflict. Still, the realization that the police might deploy some tactics that pertain to the strategic incapacitation repertoire may help protest organizers and demonstrators to prepare for their event. For example, organizers may choose to deploy tactics that are unlikely to elicit police repression, such as ‘Pink and Silver’, that is, ‘a street tactic that usually involves a bloc dressed in glamorous pink and silver clothes, chanting and performing cheerleading steps accompanied by a samba band’ (Scholl, 2010: 81). And demonstrators may be trained how to respond to strategic incapacitation tactics, such as mobile nets (i.e. ‘kettling’).

The police forces will benefit from knowing how demonstrators perceive protest atmosphere (in terms of intergroup conflict), and how these perceptions are shaped by particular individual and demonstration characteristics. In fact, on an individual level, my findings largely confirm the police’s perceptions of demonstrator threats. That is to say, the police see demonstrators as ‘the opposition’ (P.A.J. Waddington, 1994: 112-113) when they are experienced (i.e. have ‘protested about virtually everything’) (Op cit.: 113), and/or have engaged in direct action, and violent forms of action (Ibid.; Della Porta, Peterson, and Reiter, 2006; Della Porta and Reiter, 1998). Worth noting though, is that my research does not indicate why experienced protesters, and those that engaged in direct action and/or violent forms of action, are more likely to perceive a more conflictual atmosphere. While I presume that they are more willing to participate in events where clashes with the police are expected, they may also be more likely to be repressed. Future systematic case studies on police-demonstrator interactions could provide more insight into this.

On a demonstration level, my findings clarify how the police shape intergroup conflict themselves, at least in the minds of demonstrators. After all, police repression proved to be the single most important predictor of a (perceived) conflictual atmosphere. Also, large and moving events are more likely to be considered conflictual, probably because the police use more force to manage these ‘situational threats’ (Earl and Soule, 2006). These insights may persuade police forces to decrease their use of force to the minimum necessary, especially

5 For other ‘frivolous’ protest tactics see Scholl (2010: 63-100).
since demonstrators’ perceptions of a conflictual atmosphere may well lead to an escalation of conflict (e.g., Reicher et al., 2007).

POSSIBLE LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In the following, I report the possible limitations of this dissertation, and suggest how they can be addressed by future research.

Scope
The second and third study of this dissertation (Chapters 3 and 4) constitute first assessments of perceived protest atmosphere, at least to my knowledge. So, I had to limit these studies’ scope in several ways. Firstly, the two studies take the perspective of demonstrators (either based on demonstrators’ own reports or on their evaluations of police-demonstrator interactions). Therefore, I cannot say how other protest actors, such as protest organizers, police officers, and media reporters, perceive protest atmosphere (although Chapter 3 gives some clues), and why (and whether these actors’ perceptions also shape their (intended) behavior). Future research could provide insight into these matters. Such research could be based, for example, on interviews and questionnaires.

Also, the first atmosphere study (Chapter 3) identified one dimension of demonstrators’ atmosphere perceptions: pleasure. However, people’s atmosphere perceptions might well diverge in more than one way. At least, this is what Mehrabian and Russell (1974) suggested. Future research could determine whether, for example, arousal constitutes another dimension of protest atmosphere. Paper-and-pencil questionnaires could be used for this.

Two Events
To explore how protests differ in their level of politicization (Chapter 2) and how and why demonstrators perceive protest atmosphere (Chapter 3), I deployed two sets of two protest events. I believe that the datasets were well suited, because they provided substantial variation in protest politicization and perceived protest atmosphere, respectively, but not in many other ways (i.e. most similar systems designs). Still, these findings beg for generalization by research based on larger protest samples, on more issues, in more countries, and with different groups of protesters.
**Selection Bias**

The CCC dataset, which was used to study demonstrators’ atmosphere perceptions (by means of their evaluations of police-demonstrator interactions) (Chapter 4) and the police handling of national European protests (Chapter 5), is not necessarily representative of European protests. This is because the CCC project did not sample protests in all European countries. Besides, the project deployed four selection criteria: demonstrations needed to be large (≥3,000 expected participants), foreseen to be non-violent, staged by various social movements, and known to the researchers at least two weeks beforehand. While protest event analyses indicated that the dataset is not considerably skewed towards peaceful events (see Appendix 3 of Chapter 5), it simply does not represent certain countries, and certain types of events, that is, small protests, spontaneous protests (e.g., flash mobs), and protests staged by certain social movements, such as extreme-right movements, and immigrant movements. Future research should provide more insight into demonstrators’ atmosphere perceptions and the police conduct for such countries and events. In other countries, the CCC methodology could be applied. To sample other types of events, this will only be possible in part. Measures are easily transferrable, but this does not hold for all procedures. For example, small protests do not lend themselves for questionnaires, given that they yield small samples with little statistical power. And spontaneous protests do not seem to lend themselves for pre-event interviews with protest organizers and the police.

**Causality**

The causal inferences that are made in this dissertation, such as the effect of police repression on demonstrators’ atmosphere perceptions (Chapter 4), and the effect of demonstrators’ atmosphere perceptions on their future action preparedness (Chapter 3), are based on correlational data. This means that the supposed effects may also go in the opposite direction (e.g., demonstrators’ atmosphere perceptions shaping police repression), or, that changes in both variables are engendered by third, unmeasured variables. Future panel studies may provide insight into this.

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6 In the Czech Republic, the size threshold was lowered to 1000 (foreseen) participants (see Chapters 4 and 5).
OVERALL CONCLUSION

Based on comparative designs, this dissertation shows how the relative politicization of street protests may be discerned, how and why demonstrators perceive a certain protest atmosphere, how demonstrators’ atmosphere perceptions influence their future action preparedness, and to what extent European police forces have adopted strategic incapacitation as a policing style. These insights add to our knowledge of street protests and their core actors in various ways, and open up new avenues for future research.

By means of its contributions to scientific and practical knowledge, this dissertation showcases the added value of comparative research. Without comparative designs, none of the questions under study could have been answered. So, in a way, the dissertation responds to Walgrave and Rucht’s (2010a) call for more comparative research. As these authors said, ‘contextualizing protest can help us make important inroads toward better comprehending it’ (Op cit.: xiv).

REFERENCES

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