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Politicians, mediatized street protest and responsiveness on social media.

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Abstract

Communicative responsiveness of politicians to public opinion signals has become increasingly important for politicians' electoral fate and citizens' sense of feeling represented. Although politicians can communicate directly with the public via social media, little is known about the extent, conditions and favorability of politicians' responsiveness on social media to public opinion cues. This paper scrutinizes politicians' responsiveness to one particular public opinion signal: street protest. Do politicians respond to street protest on social media? And if so, when and how do they react? We address these questions by means of two datasets: (1) a protest event dataset of all protests staged in Brussels (Belgium) between July 2017 and June 2019 (N=124); and (2) a social media dataset containing all Facebook messages (N=36.323) and tweets (N=142.596) by Belgian politicians (N=236) in the days surrounding each protest. Results show that politicians do respond to protest and its issue; the lion's share of social media messages supporting protesters. Protest that is large, (inter)nationally coordinated and organized on socio-cultural issues is more frequently discussed by politicians; left-wing, opposition and issue-owning politicians are more responsive as well. Whereas especially left-wing politicians endorse protests, right-wing politicians are more prone to discredit it. Responsiveness is asymmetric across the political spectrum. Our findings have implications for democratic representation and its challenges in hybrid media systems.

Intro

In contemporary democracies, communicative responsiveness of politicians to the public has become increasingly important (Manin, 1997; Mansbridge, 2003). With decreased voter stability and declining trust, politicians now more than before need to signal that they listen to the public, need to openly explain their policy positions and actions, and need to visibly take position in response to current issues and events (Esaiasson et al., 2013). By engaging in communicative efforts, politicians seek to highlight that they are in touch with society and take their job as representative seriously. This way, they want to make citizens *feel represented* (De Mulder, 2022). Simultaneously, communicative responsiveness also serves politicians' quest for electoral survival and is used as ammunition in party competition. By strategically putting their responsiveness on display, politicians hope to appeal to voters and aim to put pressure on political opponents (Hobolt & Klemmensen, 2008; Riker, 1989).

The significance—and prevalence—of communicative responsiveness undoubtedly has intensified with evolutions in political communication. Most notable in that regard is the stark diffusion of social media use among politicians (Larsson & Kalsnes, 2014; Van Aelst et al., 2017). The fact that social media allow politicians to communicate directly with the public and bypass as well as appeal to traditional media, make social media a key venue for politicians to exhibit responsiveness (Chadwick, 2017). By reacting to events and engaging in discussions on social media, politicians signal to voters, journalists and colleagues which topics they deem important and hope to shape these publics' attitudes and behavior (Peeters et al., 2021).

In this paper, we scrutinize the responsiveness of politicians on social media to one particular type of public opinion signal: street protest. For politicians, protest presents itself as a promising discursive opportunity. By responding to protest, politicians signal to voters that they keep close track of what is current and 'visibly' moving in society. Additionally, protest allows politicians to publicly position themselves, to elaborate on an issue and to present justifications of why they (dis)agree with a certain group. All these aspects of communicative responsiveness might appeal to potential

sympathizers, stir up or infuriate followers and corner political challengers. In sum, while protest can easily be considered as an opening move facilitating "continuing responsiveness" (Dahl, 1973), it also very much functions as a timely trigger for politicians to position themselves and "play" party politics.

Since little is known about the social media reactions of politicians to street protest, we ask two broad questions. First, and descriptively, we ask: *To what extent and how do politicians respond to protest on social media (RQ1)?* Second, and explanatory, we ask: *What factors explain whether and how politicians' respond to protest (RQ2)?* Our study contributes to literature on responsiveness, digital politics and protest impact. In terms of responsiveness, the lion's share of academic work studies responsiveness to public opinion as expressed in surveys (Soroka & Wlezien, 2010). With protest, we look at an alternative form of public opinion expression. Protest is a relatively costly (for participants) yet information rich (for politicians) public opinion signal that is on the rise in contemporary democracies (Barrie, 2021). As protest often has the explicit goal to kickstart debate, teasing out communicative responsiveness is particularly worthwhile.

Next, we contribute to the field of digital politics. Whereas most research on social media and politicians focuses on elections and campaigns (e.g., Jungherr, 2016; Vaccari & Valeriani, 2015), most research on social media and protest scrutinizes the qualities of social media for mobilizing and organizing (e.g., Boulliane, 2015; Steinert-Threlkeld, 2017). As a consequence, little is known about how politicians employ social media to respond to public opinion signals in between elections (but see Barbera et al., 2019; Barbera & Zeitzoff, 2018). This is surprising, as one of the key assets of social media for politicians, we believe, is that it allows them to build a following and consolidate a constituency by 'permanently' responding to public opinion.

Research on the impact of protest, finally, has dealt extensively with political responsiveness. Most of this work focuses on the parliamentary arena, however, not on social media (but see Freelon et al., 2018). A key finding of this strand of research is that protest is particularly potent at the beginning of the policy making cycle, in the agenda setting phase (King et al., 2007; Vliegenthart et al., 2016).

Studying social media allows us to deepen our knowledge exactly in this early stage, when protest gets on politicians' radar *outside* of parliament which might be followed up on *inside* of parliament.

We combine two original datasets to answer the above questions: a protest event dataset (N=124) of all televised protests staged in Brussels (Belgium) between 2017 and 2019; and a social media dataset containing all tweets (N =142.596) and Facebook posts (N = 36.323) in the days surrounding each protest by Belgian politicians (N= 236). The paper proceeds as follows: first, we elucidate communicative responsiveness to protest on social media in terms of its occurrence and favorability. Next, we forward hypotheses linking features of protest and politicians to communicative responsiveness. After introducing our datasets, we tackle our descriptive (RQ1) and explanatory (RQ2) research questions. We wrap up with a discussion on the relevance of communicative responsiveness to public opinion signals in hybrid media democracies.

Responsiveness to protest on social media

To what extent do politicians respond to protest on social media? To the best of our knowledge, as of yet, no empirical studies have addressed this question. Typically, research on the impact of protest concludes that the odds of *parliamentary* responsiveness are slim and highly conditional. Protest first of all needs to make it on the radar of politicians, which means it needs to be mediated. An extensive literature describes the political importance of media coverage for movements and their actions, holding that most politicians witness protest indirectly, in its (mass) mediated form, and only react to protest *if* and *as* presented in the media (Koopmans, 2004; Rohlinger & Earl, 2017). The odds of media selection being slim (Oliver & Maney, 2000; Wouters, 2013) and media framing frequently delegitimizing protest (Brown & Harlow, 2019), media—while being a matter of "life and death" for social movements on the one hand—thus constrain protest's political potential on the other.

Next, protest needs to compete with other events and issues for politicians to act upon it. This competition is fierce (Walgrave & Dejaeghere, 2017). Research on institutional behavioral responses—parliamentary questions, roll call votes etc.—is generally skeptical about straightforward

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protest impact (Gause, 2022). Ideal-typically, protest is staged by "minority actors with limited power" (Giugni, 2007, p. 54) who forward "more extreme, minoritarian stances and select, deviating priorities" compared to the median voter (Bernardi et al., 2021, p. 294). For protest to seep through the political agenda takes time and organizational perseverance (Soule & Olzak, 2004). And, the potency of protest is severely constrained by its context: lacking salient media coverage (Vliegenthart et al., 2016) or public opinion support (Agone, 2007), protest most frequently is quite toothless.

We believe that these constraints on the impact of protest are less severe in the *social media* arena and for *communicative* responsiveness. First, the affordances of social media platforms are far less restrictive compared to the rules in parliament. Whereas in parliament question hours are limited, scheduled, procedural and politicians operate within fractions under party surveillance (Russo & Wiberg, 2010), the band width of social media is infinite, it's production cycle immediate, and politicians dispose of more individual leeway (Kruikemeier, 2014). These affordances boost the opportunities for politicians to respond on social media to protest.

Next, also the dynamics of responsiveness are different on social media, we believe. A key distinction is that social media are much more visible and public-oriented compared to parliament. Just like in parliament, politicians who agree with the demonstrators will take advantage of the discursive opportunity shaped by protest to court protesters and their sympathizers online. For politicians who disagree with a protest, in contrast, social media responsiveness is a different ballgame. While in parliament their default condition would be one of strategic ignorance; discrediting protest, would be rational, strategic behavior on a more public forum. By adversarial position taking, discordant politicians seek to rally their constituents against the protesters, persuade undecided bystanders and cast doubt among the protester's support base.

In sum, we consider communicative responsiveness to protest by politicians on social media as a relatively fast and easy way to react to a public opinion signal. That does not imply, however, that all politicians will react, let alone do so in the same way. Communicative responsiveness can be

conceived as a two-step decision-making process. First, politicians need to decide whether they will respond to a mediated protest event or rather ignore it. They can do so by reacting to the protesters or by addressing the issue of the event. Next, politicians can "opt" for a supportive or critical response. We consider the favorability of their messaging a key aspect of communicative responsiveness. Altogether, communicative responsiveness thus is a matter of *whether* to react (yes or no), the *focus* of the reaction (protest event and/or issue) and the *favorability* of the reaction (supportive, neutral or critical). Given the absence of existing research, we start with a broad descriptive research question:

RQ1: To what extent and how do politicians respond to protest and its issue on social media?

Explaining responsiveness to protest on social media

Next to this descriptive question, we also pose an explanatory question: *Which factors drive whether and how politicians respond to protest on social media?* Broadly, we expect features of protest (the signal) and the politician (the receiver) to affect politicians' communicative responsiveness. *Features of the protest* inform politicians about the number and type of demonstrators and their demands (Gillion, 2012). Politicians use these cues to assess the strength of the protest and anticipate its possible impact. This protest signal, next, can be more or less in tune with *features of the politician*. Whether the politician is in opposition or not, for instance, makes protest more or less useful or not. Together, these elements influence *whether* and *how* politicians respond to protest on social media.

First, politicians are more likely to respond on social media to *large* crowds. In politics, power is in numbers and this holds for demonstrations too (McAdam & Su, 2002; Wouters & Van Camp, 2017). A large turnout signals that many citizens are concerned and articulates the existence of a potential voting block. Interested in re-election, politicians are sensitive to issues that stir larger masses, as ultimately their function depends on the extent of public support. Therefore, we expect politicians to be more likely to respond on social media to protest that draws high turnouts. Second and related, we expect that protest that attests of *large-scale coordination*, impresses politicians as well. If

protest is part of a national or international day of action, politicians are informed about the broad

saliency of the event and that a grief is wide spread (Della Porta & Tarrow, 2005). Third, we expect

politicians to be more likely to respond to *disruptive* protest. Disruption violates a key norm in

democratic states: that of a peaceful, non-violent behavior in the public space (della Porta & Diani,

1999). Publicly responding on social media to norm-violating protest is strategically smart. Disruptive

protest likely triggers (social) media attention as conflict generates clicks (Trilling et al., 2017).

Disruptive protests thus give politicians a stage to get publicly noticed. Finally, also the issue of the

protest matters. We expect politicians to be more likely to respond to protest that is staged on socio-

cultural issues. Protest is situated in cleavages, and some cleavages are more contentious than

others (Hutter, 2014). There is reason to believe that more than the socio-economic cleavage, the

socio-cultural cleavage is the epicenter of political conflict and public debate nowadays (Hooghe &

Marks, 2018; Kriesi et al., 2008)[i]. Globalization has restructured political conflict with nationalist and

green parties driving opposite sides of a divide that pits camps on issues like migration, integration,

and traditionalism on the one hand, and lifestyle, ecological and cosmopolitan issues on the other. As

political parties increasingly vie for voters on these issues, we expect politicians to be more

responsive on social media to protest staged on these socio-cultural issues as well.

H1: Politicians are more likely to post about protest and its issue when protest is large
H2: Politicians are more likely to post about protest and its issue when protest is strongly coordinated.
H3: Politicians are more likely to post about protest and its issue when protest is disruptive
H4: Politicians are more likely to post about protest and its issue when protest is situated within the
socio-cultural cleavage.

Besides protest, also the receiver matters. First, protest plays into government-opposition dynamics.

As protest most often criticizes the government, we expect members of the *opposition* to be more

responsive. Broadly, research has found opposition parties to be more responsive to public opinion

(Klüver & Spoon, 2016). This has also been found for protest more specifically (Hutter & Vliegenthart,

2018; Giugni & Grasso, 2019). We expect opposition politicians to be more likely to respond to

protest on social media. Second, we expect politicians with an *executive* function—the few ministers

and junior ministers in a government—to be more responsive to protest on social media. Protest

directly challenges their department—or that of one of their executive peers. Being the "faces" of government, we expect ministers to be eager to respond on social media to rebut criticism and stress their merits. Earlier, research in Belgium already proved the potency of protest in drawing governmental attention (Walgrave & Vliegenthart, 2012).

Third, politicians of *left* parties are expected to be more responsive on social media to protest. The protest arena in Western Europe is dominated by the left (Borbath & Gessler, 2021). It are especially left-wing claims that are articulated, left-wing organizations that stage protest, and left-wing voters who are among the prime suspects that value protest. As a consequence, we expect that left-wing politicians are more likely to expand on protest or its issue on social media. Finally, the link between the protest issue and the importance of the issue for a politician's party is expected to matter. In theories of party competition, issue *ownership* is considered a crucial electoral resource (Petrocick, 1996; Walgrave et al., 2012). As parties seek to maintain issue ownership by being extra vigilant and communicative about the issues they own, we expect politicians to be more responsive to protest staged on issues owned by their party.

H5: Politicians of opposition parties are more likely to post about protest and its issue.
H6: Politicians who hold executive power are more likely to post about protest and its issue.
H7: Politicians of left-wing parties are more likely to post about protest and its issue.
H8: Politicians are more likely to post about protest and its issue when protest is staged on an issue owned by the party of the politician.

Building on the rationales above, we also forward four hypotheses on *how* politicians respond. First, we expect critical responses to be more likely for *disruptive* protest. Challenging social norms, politicians respond more negatively when protest is disruptive. Protest that does not go by the rules, enjoys less public approval (Norris et al, 2005). By referring to negative consequences such as traffic problems, damaged property or violent confrontations, politicians can easily discredit protesters.

Second, we expect *left-wing* politicians to respond more favorably. In Western-Europe, protest most frequently represents left-wing interests that are higher on the agenda of social-democratic and green parties. Moreover, there is a clear historical connection between these parties and the street

demonstrations of old and new social movements (Kriesi et al., 1995). Additionally, left politicians'

mindset is more prone to 'democracy from below' (Giugni & Grasso, 2019). Thirdly, also politicians of

opposition parties are expected to respond more favorably to protest. By endorsing protest and

subscribing to the demonstrators' view that a particular topic is mismanaged, opposition politicians

can 'blame' the government for the problem at stake (Thesen, 2013).

Fourth and finally, we expect that also *issue-ownership* affects the favorability of responsiveness. As

Issue-owners find their pet issue unbeatably important and want to signal to voters their capacity

and plans to deal with the issue, we expect them to be more likely to accommodate the protesters

and respond favorably, for instance by stressing the importance of the issue and that action is

needed (Arbour, 2014).

H9: Politicians are more likely to post critically about protest and its issue when protest is disruptive.
H10: Politicians of left-wing parties are more likely to post favorably about protest and its issue.
H11: Politicians of opposition parties are more likely to post favorably about protest and its issue.
H12: Politicians are more likely to post favorably about protest and its issue when protest is staged on an issue owned by the party of the politician.

Data and Methods

We study communicative responsiveness by politicians on social media in Flanders—the largest, Dutch

speaking community in Belgium. Belgium has a long tradition of street protests (Norris, et al, 2005)

and harbors many national politicians in a small multi-party, federal system. These traits make Belgium

a good case to start exploring variation in politicians' responsiveness to street protest. We study

responsiveness on two social media platforms: Facebook, the most popular social media platform; and

Twitter, the most used one by politicians—mainly to reach journalists and opinion leaders (Reuters

Institute, 2020). The research period runs from July 2017, when we began scraping social media

profiles, till June 2019, when legislatures ended.

Two datasets are combined to answer the above questions. We detail both datasets in Appendix A1

and only briefly introduce them here. The *Protest Event Dataset* contains all protests staged in Brussels

aired on the main Flemish public (VRT) or commercial broadcaster (VTM). Being the central located capital of Belgium, Brussels is the country's chief demonstration location and definitely that of those with national appeal. In total, 124 protests were covered—thus already surviving an important selection threshold—with considerable variation in terms of issue, turnout, etc. The *Social Media Dataset* contains all social media messages of regional and national politicians the day before, of and after each of the 124 protests, resulting in a dataset of 142.596 tweets by 236 politicians and 36.323 Facebook posts by 202 politicians. This three-day window allows us to study the short-term communicative responsiveness of politicians. For an overview of all politicians, see Appendix A2; for variable descriptives see Appendix A3.

Dependent variables

The dependent variables measure the *extent* and *favorability* of communicative responsiveness. We distinguish whether a politician referred to (1) the specific protest or its participants in a social media message; and (2) whether (s)he addressed the issue of the protest more generally. Whereas the first measure is clearly tied to the protest by explicit referral, the second measure is more loosely connected to the protest via its theme[ii]. Additionally, the (3) favorability of a politician's social media message was coded. For each message, we coded whether it contained elements that approached the protesters and/or the issue favorably, critically or neutrally. Example tweets are in Appendix A4. Both the selection of protest messages and the favorability coding were based on human coding. Two coders double coded all social media messages of ten percent of all demonstrations ($N_{demonstrations}$= 13; $N_{messages}$= 3.616) resulting in satisfactory Krippendorf Alpha scores. Intercoder reliability was tested for reactions to *protest* (0.92), its *issue* (0.86), as well as for *favorability* being critical (0.98), neutral (0.90) and supportive (0.97) on Twitter and critical (0.73), neutral (0.77) and supportive (0.79) on Facebook.

Independent variables

Protest features—four features of each protest were coded. *Turnout* (Alpha: 0.97) refers to the number of participants mentioned in the news report. The turnout variable indicates whether a demonstration

had a turnout of 5000 participants or more. *(Inter)National day of action* (Alpha: 0.85) refers to whether explicit reference was made to a protest with the same claim on the same day, be it domestically or internationally, in the news report or not. *Disruption* (Alpha: 0.85) refers to whether the protest was described as, or shown to be, disruptive. If demonstrators were arrested, wounded, property was destructed or a counterdemonstration was held, the protest was coded as disruptive. *Socio-cultural issue* refers to whether the protest dealt with the following issues: climate, energy, the environment, civil rights, women's rights, LGBTQ rights, peace, migration, racism, Islam, terrorism and European institutions.

Politician features—four features of politicians are leveraged. *Opposition* refers to those politicians whose party is not part of the governing coalition at the level they are active. *Executive* power refers to those politicians who are a (junior) minister in the governing coalition of a particular level. *Left party* refers to those politicians who are a member of a political party left of center (PVDA-PTB; Groen; SP.A—the communists, greens and social-democrats)[iii]. *Issue-ownership* was constructed by linking the issue of a demonstration to the 'pet' issue of a particular party. In line with previous research in the Belgian context (Van Camp, 2017), we linked protest staged on issues of austerity and taxes to liberal parties, of work to socialist parties, of climate to green parties, and of migration and nationalism to nationalist parties. We leverage a single control variable: the total number of tweets/posts of a politician across all days in our sample, as it directly affects the odds of responsiveness. In terms of data structure, our study leverages information on 124 protests, a max of 236 politicians, and 36.323 Facebook posts and 142.596 tweets.[iv] For our multivariate analyses we use cross classified multilevel regression models on protest-politician dyads (Total N = 124 protest*236 politicians=29.264), a specific type of multilevel regression as the levels of observation—politicians and protests in our case—are not hierarchically nested. Given space constraints, we report results on Twitter; comparable Facebook results are in Appendix A5.

Results

To what extent and how do politicians respond to protest and its issue on social media (RQ1)?

In total, 6772 tweets (4.7% of all politicians' tweets) and 1439 Facebook posts (4.0% of all post) were identified as dealing with either protest or its issue. 1505 tweets (22.2%) and 343 Facebook posts (23.8%) explicitly referred to a specific protest. Clearly, on a day-to-day basis, politicians post quite some content, of which messages referring to protest or its issue are only a slim fraction. This is not unexpected as politicians have different roles (local-national), work on multiple topics and also use social media to show a part of their 'private persona' (Enli & Skogerbo, 2013).

Although only a fraction of their total agenda, communicative responsiveness to protest is not negligible. Of the 236 politicians active on Twitter, no less than two in three (67,4%) responded at least once by explicit referral to a particular protest—a responding politician doing so for on average five protest events (Min=1; Max=24). Moreover, no less than four in five politicians (82.6%) also discussed at least once the issue of protest in the days surrounding an event. Politicians do so by means of on average 27 tweets (Min=1; Max = 763) across on average nine protests (Min=1; Max=42). In sum, politicians do tend to respond to at least some protest events, and they do so more frequently on Twitter compared to Facebook.

Figure 1 visualizes the extent of responsiveness to protest on Twitter. Each point in the scatterplot represents a politician; rounds are left-wing, squares are center and crosses are right-wing politicians. The x-axis shows the number of protests the politician responded to; the y-axis the number of tweets by the politician explicitly referring to a protest.

Figure 1: Distribution of communicative responsiveness on Twitter about here***

Firstly, Figure 1 shows quite some variation across politicians on both axes. Politicians clearly respond to protests (up to 24 events) with quite some tweets (up to 58 tweets). Second, responsiveness to protest is visibly skewed: select politicians count for the lion's share of social media responses—the

outliers in the upper-right corner of the plot. Thirdly, among the more responsive politicians, we see especially left-wing (dots) and quite a few right-wing politicians (crosses).

We also wondered *how* politicians respond to protest. We first assess the favorability of communicative responsiveness at the tweet level. Interestingly, tweets favorable of protesters and their issue stance (60%; N= 4060) outweigh tweets containing critical position taking (27%; N=1826). Relatively few tweets are neutral (15%; N= 1016). In sum, communicative responsiveness especially takes the form of endorsements. The favorability ratio differs significantly, however, across tweets referring to the protest and tweets discussing the issue. In tweets that explicitly mention the protest, politicians are more likely to 'show their colors': only 3.7 percent of these tweets are neutral (vs. 18.2% of issue tweets; Chi^2=195.43; p<0.001) whereas 63.2 percent (vs. 59.0%; Chi^2=8.44; p=0.004) are positive and 36.3 percent (vs. 24.3%; Chi^2=85.26; p<0.001) are negative. This indicates that the means (protest) rather than the ends (issue) are more frequently frowned upon online.

It also makes sense to measure favorability at the protest-politician level, as the overall favorability of a politician's tweets about a particular protest represents a politician's stance. This average favorability score is positive as well, although only slightly so (0.89), showing quite some variation (SD=1.317)[v]. Figure 2 presents the average favorability across all demonstrations for each politician. In the scatterplot, each round, cross and square again presents a politician, ranked according to party membership from left to right on the x-axis. The y-axis shows the mean favorability score of politicians' responsiveness. If a politician scores zero, then he or she on average reacted neutrally to the protest. Scores above zero show on average more positive tweets; scores below zero more negative tweets.

Figure 2: Favorability of communicative responsiveness on Twitter from left to right** here

Eyeballing Figure 2 shows a clear relationship between left-right placement and favorability of communicative responsiveness. Left and center politicians overwhelmingly react positively towards

protest. Right-wing politicians respond less favorably and show far greater variation along the entire support-critique spectrum.

Zooming in on two outspoken cases in both figures helps better making sense of politician's communicative responsiveness. Theo Francken—the right-wing Flemish Nationalist junior minister of 'Asylum and Migration' and one of the most active and well followed Belgian politicians on the platform (6,804 tweets in our database; 129,8K followers)—is the politician who directly addresses most protests (one in five, N=24). Incorporating issue messages as well, Francken engages in twitter discussions related to about half of the protests (45%), posting no less than 310 tweets (or about five percent of his total twitter agenda). 'Outlier' two is Kristof Calvo, the leader of the Green's party fraction in the federal parliament and one of the most followed Belgian left-wing politicians (57.4K). Calvo addressed 18 different protest actions by means of 58 tweets explicitly referring to the protest. Including issue tweets, Calvo engaged in discussions related to 36 protest actions (29%) by means of 186 tweets, accounting for about 10 percent of his twitter agenda.

We highlight both politicians because their tweeting behavior is very similar, using the platform frequently to articulate what they stand for, but at the same time very different in terms of support. Situated at opposite ends of the left-right spectrum; one in opposition, the other in government, Francken and Calvo are each other's political antipodes. It is therefore no surprise that they can be found at opposite sides of the favorability spectrum (Figure 2). The following examples of their social media messaging further illustrates the favorability of their communicative responsiveness.

On January 27th 2019, the day of what will become the biggest climate demonstration in Belgian history, Calvo first sends a picture of a crowded train platform:

> *"Crazy how many people 💚👍 In #Mechelen. We can't get on the train. Already 3 completely packed trains passed by."*

Sharing that he is on his way to the demonstration, Calvo signals to be—literally—*with* the protesters. And, by highlighting the magnitude of the crowd, he seeks to play up the legitimacy and urgency of the demonstrators' claims:

> *"I am not an expert in estimating turnouts, but this is HISTORICAL* 💚 *Such a massive cry-out for more climate ambition cannot be ignored. Climate protest is not a flash in the pan; it will continue to grow if things don't change soon."*

Also Francken reacts to the same protest, but very differently. He expresses skepticism of the climate protests by ridiculing the youngsters and stressing how radical and naïve they are. He retweets a message that subsequently goes viral:

> *"Dad? Where is my cell phone? Gone! When do we go skiing? Never again. Where do we go on holiday this summer? Home. Is the central heating on? Yes, 18 degrees—wear a sweater. Do you bring me to soccer practice? Take your bike. Dad, why do you behave like this? Sorry kid, you convinced me that we must act differently. Climate measures."*

The next week, on January 31st, after another climate demonstration, Francken tweets:

> *"If you're not screaming louder than the climate activists today, you're considered a climate denier. That framing is harmful and a form of fundamentalism."*

The messaging of Francken and Calvo illustrates how communicative responsiveness of politicians can make (some) citizens feel represented, yet simultaneously, how politicians use social media to position themselves and play party politics.

Which factors explain whether and how politicians respond to protest on social media (RQ2)?

Table 1 shows the results of four logistic regressions; Model 1 and 2 predict whether politicians engage with the *issue* of protest, Model 3 and 4 whether politicians explicitly refer to the *protest*. We show separate models testing H6 and H8: opposition and left-party status cannot be included in the same model given multicollinearity (r=0.863) as all left parties were in opposition.

Table1 about here

Hypotheses 1 and 2 are straightforwardly confirmed across all regressions: the size of the crowd and protest being part of an (inter)national day of action matters. Politicians are more likely to address the protest directly and to expand on its issue, if protest shows that many people care about the issue, on multiple locations. Predicted probabilities of politician's referring to the protest rise from 0.7 to 6.2 percent when protest mobilizes more than 5.000 participants, and from 3.9 to 9.9 percent

for engaging with the protest issue.[vi] The effects of a (inter)national day of action are more modest: predicted probabilities rise from 3.9 to 8.4 for issue engagement and from 0.9 to 2.0 percent for protest referral. Hypothesis 3, that expected politicians to be more responsive to disruptive protest, is rejected. We follow up on this null-finding in the conclusion. Hypothesis 4, finally, expected politicians to be more responsive on social media to protest staged on socio-cultural issues. H4 is confirmed in so far that politicians expand on the issue of socio-cultural protests, but does not hold for protest tweets. Predicted probabilities for politician's engaging with the issue of protest are 6.8 percent for socio-cultural protests, and 3.0 for other protests. Not all issues are equally contentious among politicians on social media.

Next to features of protest, we also expected features of politicians to matter. H5 is confirmed: opposition members are more likely to engage with the issue (from 4.2 to 6.7%) and with the protest itself (from 0.9 to 2.1%) compared to majority members. Politicians with a specific executive function (H6) are more likely to respond to protest as well. They do so, however, only by addressing the issue of the protest, not the protesters themselves. The probability of an executive politician expanding on the protest issue is 7.6 percent, of non-executive politicians 4.5 percent. Hypothesis 7 similarly stated that politicians from left-wing parties would engage more with protest on social media. Also H7 is borne out by the facts, both for issue (from 4.4 to 6.8%) and protest tweets (from 1 to 2.2%). Issue-ownership (H8), finally, works as expected and across the board. Politicians probability of referring to protest rise from 1 to 3.3 percent; the odds of engaging in issue discussions rise from 4.2 to 10.8 percent.

Table2 about here

Finally, we also sought to explain *how* politicians respond to protest. Table 2 analyzes the drivers of favorability. Hypothesis 9 expected politicians to respond more negatively to disruptive protest. Although the sign of the coefficient goes in the expected direction, H9 does not stand up to scrutiny. More generally, characteristics of protest have little explanatory power. This is in sharp contrast with

characteristics of politicians. Left-wing politicians (H10) generally respond more favorably to protest on social media, both in terms of the issue (moving from 0.287 to 1.043 on a -2 to +2 scale) and the protest (from -0.004 to 1.001). Similar yet less outspoken results are found for opposition politicians (H11): predicted values rise from 0.106 to 0.673 for protest favorability and from 0.365 to 0.673 for issue favorability. Lastly, also issue-owners respond more favorably (H12) in terms of the protest (rising from 0.068 to 0.923) and its issue (from 0.337 to 0.823). Hypotheses 10 to 12 are all confirmed. Appendix A5 show that results for communicative responsiveness on Facebook are highly similar, yet more so for *whether* politicians respond than for *how* they respond. We discuss our findings in the concluding section.

Conclusion

To what extent, when and how do politicians use social media to respond to public opinion cues? In this paper, we studied the short-term communicative responsiveness of Belgian politicians on Twitter and Facebook to street protest, a particular type of public opinion signal. Theoretically, we expected features of protest (the signal) and politicians (the receiver) to determine responsiveness on social media, both in terms of *whether* and *how* politicians would respond.

Our theory largely held the track. Politicians are more likely to respond to protest that draws larger crowds and that attests of (inter)national coordination. In sum, to protest that signals broad public saliency. Also protest staged on socio-cultural issues is more likely to trigger social media engagement: clearly, some conflicts are more contentious than others. In contrast to our expectation, disruption did not significantly affect responsiveness. Probably responsiveness to disruptive protest is more conditional: whereas some disruptive protests are discredited by being ignored, other disruptive protests lead to fierce debate, with supportive politicians stressing the relevance of claims and opposing politicians the inappropriate means.

Also features of the politician matter. Opposition and left-wing politicians are not only more prone to respond to protest, they also are more favorable towards protesters and their claims. This makes sense as opposition politicians use protest to point out flaws in how government runs the country and left-wing politicians' agenda is simply more in line with that of the protest arena.[vii] Interestingly, also politicians with an executive function are more responsive, be it that they engage with the issue of the protest and do not give protesters credit by direct referral. Politicians whose party owns the issue of protest, finally, are more likely to respond as well and do so more favorably as well.

In sum, our results show that active citizens' demands have an influence on the public debate and often lead to a (rhetorical) reaction of policymakers. Mediatized protest events seem to matter. At the same time, our analyses elucidate the very strategic use of responsiveness on social media by politicians. Issue-ownership (dealing with the core identity of a party) and protest size (dealing with public salience and support) by far matter most. Often described as 'simply politics by other means', our analysis of protest suggests that responsiveness on social media largely is 'simply politics by another medium'. More normatively speaking, the asymmetry in responsiveness to protest we find for left and right-wing politicians—both in their extent and favorability of responsiveness—is worrisome we believe. While Dahl (1971) claimed continuing responsiveness to be a key value of democracies, it might be that in our highly inflammable hybrid media societies, the continuing yet asymmetrical responsiveness of politicians on social media is doing democracy more bad than good. The effect of elite responsiveness to protest on societal polarization, presents itself as a fruitful avenue of future research in that regard.

A key limitation is that our findings are likely to hold for democratic countries only, and far less so for autocracies, where matters of state surveillance rather than responsiveness dominate (Earl et al, 2022). More comparative research is needed to understand the role of political system characteristics on politicians' responsiveness. Additionally, future research would do good to bring the dynamics of social media more into the analysis. Here, we modeled responsiveness as the

consequence of a protest cue. Yet responsiveness on social media is also very likely a function of the

platform, its algorithm and audience engagement dynamics. Early reactions of politicians likely

compel other politicians to join the debate, causing 'reactions-breed-reactions' dynamics, in which

algorithms, the activity of a politician, his followers and the use of hashtags and likes likely play a role

next to the more traditional features of protest and politicians we explored here. Teasing out such

'true' social media effects on dynamics of (communicative) responsiveness is particularly worthwhile

we believe.

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Tables

"Word on the street"

Table1: Multi-level logistic regressions predicting communicative responsiveness on Twitter

	Issue				Protest			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.
Turnout	1.205***	0.288	1.205***	0.300	2.541***	0.380	2.541***	0.406
Coordination	0.972***	0.261	0.972**	0.286	0.830*	0.362	0.828*	0.416
Disruption	-0.123	0.348	-0.123	0.376	0.392	0.468	0.391	0.621
Socio-cultural	1.012***	0.227	1.013***	0.275	0.307	0.428	0.311	0.595
Opposition	0.583**	0.170	-	-	0.903***	0.211	-	-
Left	-	-	0.566**	0.196	-	-	0.920***	0.247
Executive	0.673**	0.225	0.633**	0.243	0.156	0.279	0.100	0.299
Issue-owner	1.246***	0.074	1.248***	0.077	1.392***	0.118	1.386***	0.120
Total tweets	0.813***	0.068	0.821***	0.073	0.722***	0.080	0.732***	0.095
Constant	-5.916***	0.201	-5.889***	0.300	-7.735***	0.344	-7.696***	0.773
Variance Politician	0.999	0.135	1.008	0.137	1.089	0.175	1.086	0.194
Variance Protest	1.536	0.233	1.536	0.252	2.189	0.389	2.189	0.534
Wald Chi² (df)	519.330*** (8)		468.160***(8)		350.740*** (8)		285.740*** (8)	
Log Likelihood	-5512.325		-5513.272		-2391.818		-2392.550	
N Politicians	236		236		236		236	
N Protest	124		124		124		124	
N Total	29.264		29.264		29.264		29.264	

* p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001

Table2: Multi-level regressions predicting favorability of responsiveness on Twitter

	Issue				Protest			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.
Turnout	-0.084	0.139	-0.086	0.139	0.092	0.174	0.102	0.172
Coordination	0.323*	0.135	0.320*	0.135	0.023	0.180	0.024	0.178
Disruption	-0.061	0.185	-0.068	0.185	-0.109	0.235	-0.102	0.233
Socio-cultural	-0.034	0.129	-0.033	0.129	-0.316	0.174	-0.333	0.173
Opposition	0.308**	0.110	-	-	0.567***	0.129	-	-
Left	-	-	0.756***	0.104	-	-	1.005***	0.118
Executive	0.271*	0.136	0.357**	0.120	0.182	0.171	0.250	0.147
Issue-owner	0.486***	0.067	0.431***	0.066	0.855***	0.093	0.766***	0.091
Total tweets	-0.107**	0.040	-0.097**	0.035	-0.153***	0.043	-0.128***	0.035
Constant	0.277*	0.133	0.184	0.129	0.187	0.178	0.066	0.171
Variance Politician	0.200	0.032	0.200	0.032	0.268	0.050	0.154	0.037
Variance Protest	0.291	0.053	0.291	0.053	0.337	0.078	0.330	0.076
Variance Residual	0.921	0.030	0.921	0.030	0.636	0.038	0.643	0.038
Wald Chi² (df)	133.480***(8)		133.480***(8)		157.770***(8)		236.900***(8)	
Log Likelihood	-3063.798		-3063.798		1034.253		-1015.794	
N Politicians	197		197		159		159	
N Protest	111		111		84		84	
N Total	2,086		2,086		760		760	

* p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001

Figures

"Word on the street"

Figure 1: Distribution of communicative responsiveness on Twitter
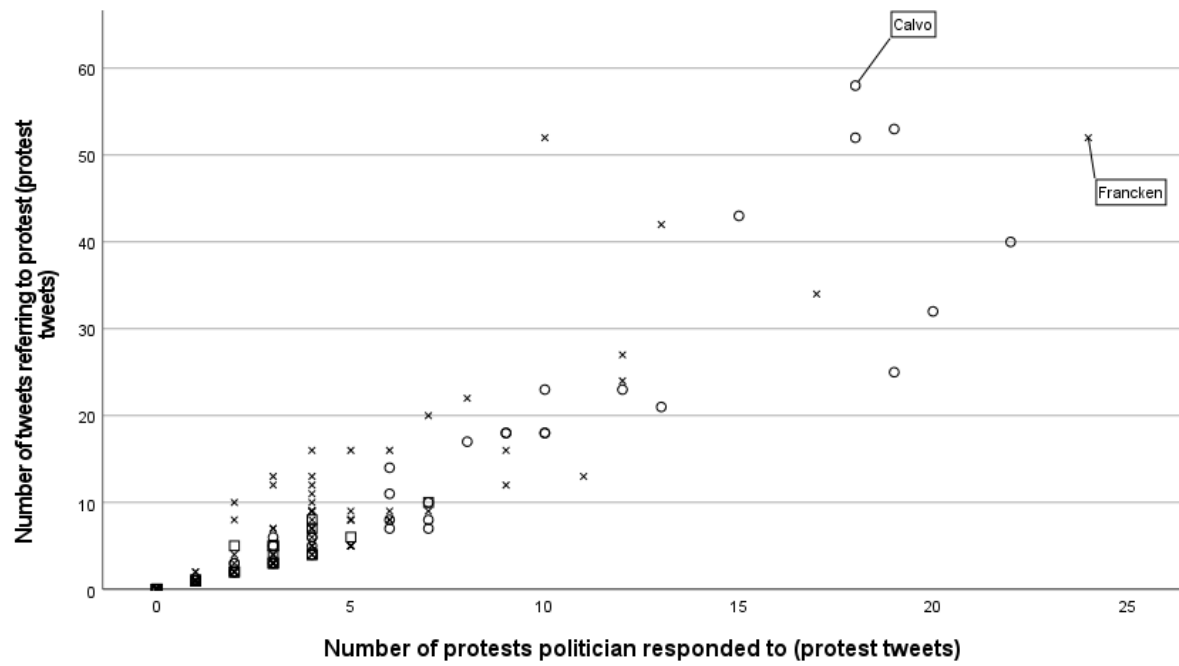
Figure 2: Favorability of communicative responsiveness on Twitter from left to right
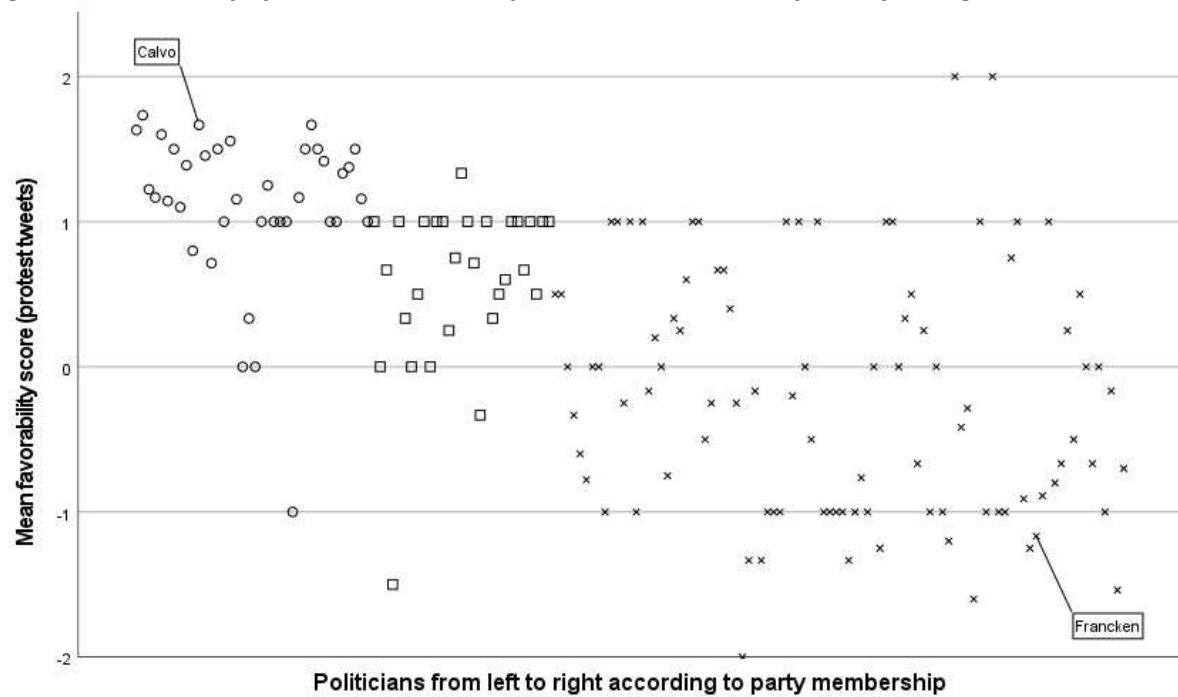
Appendix

"Word on the street"

Appendix A1 – Introducing the datasets.

We combine two datasets to answer our research questions: a protest event dataset and a social media dataset.

The *Protest Event Dataset* contains all protests staged in Brussels aired on the main Flemish public (VRT) or commercial broadcaster (VTM). Brussels is the capital of Belgium; it harbors all main political institutions and is the country's chief demonstration location. Given the relatively small territory of Belgium, the centrality of Brussels, and the fact that all major regional and national political institutions are located there, Brussels is the place to be for demonstrators seeking the eye and ear of the country and its national and regional politicians. Activists mobilizing on issues of national interest and relevance thus stage their actions in Brussels, which makes Brussels as the sole manifestation territory a legitimate choice (for similar approaches, see: Van Aelst & Walgrave, 1999; Walgrave & Vliegenthart, 2012; Wouters, 2013). Television data was gathered from the Electronic News Archive, a continuous news monitoring service that collects all Flemish television broadcasts[1]. In total, 124 protests made it to television news during the research period. Obviously, mediated protests are not a random sample of all protests. A significant visibility threshold—the being selected for coverage—was survived by the demonstrations in our dataset. Most politicians are informed about protest via mass media however, and television news broadcasts the most noteworthy protests. As such, the dataset contains protests to which all politicians could plausibly been exposed. The many protests that do not make it to television news, let alone all the protests that are organized in small municipalities, and are of little (national) significance, are not in our dataset. Logically, our results thus hold for mediated protests and not all protests; and we consider it very likely that protests that are not covered have far less potential

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[1] See https://www.nieuwsarchief.be/

to become the object of politicians' social media messaging. In that sense, our measure of responsiveness might not be conservative, but we do think it is valid—taking in consideration the excess zero's that another protest event gathering strategy would add. That being said, while all 124 protests were covered, they show considerable variation in terms of issue, turnout, disruption etc. allowing for a good test of the theory we forward. For a study on media selection of protests by these exact two stations, see Wouters, 2013. Examples of demonstrations in the database are the protest wave of school striking youngsters demanding ambitious climate policies; trade union actions against the government's pension reform plans; marches against deportation policies of the state secretary of migration and social justice actions by Yellow Vests.

The *Social Media Dataset* contains all social media messages of politicians the day before, the day of and the day after each of the 124 protests. We scraped days surrounding protests as politicians might post mobilizing messages *before* the event, and as a one-day window *after* the event is sufficiently close to link politicians' messages to a specific protest. Clearly, our measure of responsiveness does not capture responsiveness in the long run. Rather, we deal with short-term responsiveness. We believe this makes sense: the longer the time period between the actual protest event and the politician's response, the more likely it is that other factors are into play in explaining the responsiveness of the politician. Specifically, all Twitter and Facebook accounts of Dutch speaking members of the federal, Flemish and Brussels' parliament as well as those of its respective ministers and party leaders were scraped, resulting in a dataset of 142.596 tweets by 236 politicians and 36.323 Facebook posts by 202 politicians. On a total universe of 267 politicians, missing politicians either did not have a public Twitter or Facebook account before June 2019. Some politicians did post zero messages across all selected days; in some cases data could not be generated due to privacy settings.

Appendix A2 – Overview of politicians

Overview of politicians in dataset: Facebook (N=202)

	First name	Name	Name facebookpage
1	Alain	Top	Alain Top
2	Alexander	De Croo	Alexander De Croo
3	An	Moerenhout	An Moerenhout
4	An	Christiaens	An Christiaens
5	An	Capoen	An Capoen
6	Andries	Gryffroy	Andries Gryffroy
7	Anke	Van dermeersch	Anke Van Dermeersch
8	Ann	Brusseel	Ann Brusseel
9	Ann	Soete	Ann Soete
10	Anne	Dedry	Anne Dedry
11	Annemie	Turtelboom	Annemie Turtelboom
12	Annick	De Ridder	Annick De Ridder
13	Annick	Lambrecht	Annick Lambrecht
14	Axel	Ronse	Axel Ronse
15	Barbara	Pas	Barbara Pas
16	Bart	Caron	Bart Caron
17	Bart	Tommelein	Bart Tommelein
18	Bart	Dochy	Bart Dochy
19	Bart	De Wever	Bart De Wever
20	Bart	Somers	Bart Somers
21	Ben	Weyts	Ben Weyts
22	Bert	Wollants	Bert Wollants
23	Bert	Maertens	Bert Maertens
24	Björn	Anseeuw	Björn Anseeuw
25	Brecht	Vermeulen	Brecht Vermeulen
26	Carina	Van Cauter	Carina Van Cauter
27	Caroline	Gennez	Caroline Gennez
28	Cathy	Coudyser	Cathy Coudyser
29	Chris	Janssens	Chris Janssens
30	Christoph	D'Haese	Christoph D'Haese-pagina
31	Cindy	Franssen	Cindy Franssen.
32	Daniëlle	Vanwesenbeeck	Daniëlle Vanwesenbeeck
33	Dirk	Van der Maelen	Dirk Van der Maelen
34	Egbert	Lachaert	Egbert Lachaert
35	Elke	Sleurs	Elke Sleurs
36	Els	Van Hoof	Els Van Hoof-pagina
37	Emmily	Talpe	Emmily Talpe - Burgemeester Ieper
38	Eric	Van Rompuy	Eric Van Rompuy
39	Filip	Dewinter	Filip Dewinter
40	Francesco	Vanderjeugd	Francesco Vanderjeugd
41	Franky	Demon	Franky Demon
42	Freya	Saeys	Freya Saeys
43	Freya	Van den Bossche	Freya Van den Bossche
44	Geert	Bourgeois	Geert Bourgeois
45	Grete	Remen	Grete Remen

46	Griet	Smaers	Griet Smaers
47	Griet	Coppé	Griet Coppé
48	Guy	D'haeseleer	Guy D'haeseleer
49	Gwendolyn	Rutten	Gwendolyn Rutten
50	Gwenny	De Vroe	Gwenny De Vroe
51	Güler	Turan	Güler Turan
52	Hendrik	Bogaert	Hendrik Bogaert
53	Herman	De Croo	Herman De Croo
54	Hermes	Sanctorum-Vandevoorde	Hermes Sanctorum
55	Hilde	Crevits	Hilde Crevits
56	Inez	De Coninck	Inez De Coninck
57	Ingeborg	De Meulemeester	Ingeborg De Meulemeester
58	Jan	Bertels	Jan Bertels
59	Jan	Jambon	Jan Jambon
60	Jan	Peumans	Jan Peumans
61	Jan	Penris	Jan Penris
62	Jean-Jacques	De Gucht	Jean-Jacques De Gucht
63	Jef	Van den Bergh	Jef Van den Bergh
64	Jelle	Engelbosch	Jelle Engelbosch
65	Jo	Vandeurzen	Jo Vandeurzen
66	Johan	Verstreken	Johan Verstreken Vriendenpagina
67	Johan	Van Overtveldt	Johan Van Overtveldt
68	John	Crombez	John Crombez
69	Joke	Schauvliege	Joke Schauvliege
70	Joris	Vandenbroucke	Joris Vandenbroucke
71	Joris	Poschet	Joris Poschet
72	Karim	Van Overmeire	Karim Van Overmeire
73	Karin	Temmerman	Karin Temmerman
74	Karin	Brouwers	Karin Brouwers
75	Karl	Vanlouwe	Karl Vanlouwe
76	Karolien	Grosemans	Karolien Grosemans
77	Kathleen	Krekels	Kathleen Krekels
78	Kathleen	Helsen	Kathleen Helsen
79	Katrien	Partyka	Katrien Partyka
80	Katrien	Schryvers	Katrien Schryvers
81	Koen	Metsu	Koen Metsu
82	Koen	Van den Heuvel	Koen Van den Heuvel
83	Koen	Geens	Koen Geens
84	Koen	Daniëls	Koen Daniëls
85	Koenraad	Degroote	Koenraad Degroote
86	Kris	Peeters	Kris Peeters
87	Kristien	Van Vaerenbergh	Kristien Van Vaerenbergh-pagina
88	Kristof	Calvo	Kristof Calvo
89	Kurt	De Loor	Kurt De Loor
90	Leen	Dierick	Leen Dierick
91	Lies	Jans	Lies Jans
92	Liesbeth	Homans	Liesbeth Homans
93	Lieve	Maes	Lieve Maes
94	Lionel	Bajart	Lionel Bajart
95	Lode	Ceyssens	Lode Ceyssens

96	Lorin	Parys	Lorin Parys
97	Ludo	Van Campenhout	Ludo Van Campenhout
98	Luk	Van Biesen	Luk Van Biesen
99	Lydia	Peeters	Lydia Peeters
100	Maggie	De Block	Maggie De Block
101	Manuela	Van Werde	Manuela Van Werde
102	Marc	Hendrickx	Marc Hendrickx
103	Marino	Keulen	Volg Marino Keulen op de voet
104	Marius	Meremans	Marius Meremans
105	Marnic	De Meulemeester	Marnic De Meulemeester
106	Martine	Fournier	Martine Fournier
107	Mathias	De Clercq	Mathias De Clercq
108	Matthias	Diependaele	Matthias Diependaele
109	Mercedes	Van Volcem	Mercedes Van Volcem
110	Meryame	Kitir	Meryame Kitir
111	Meyrem	Almaci	Meyrem Almaci
112	Michèle	Hostekint	Michèle Hostekint
113	Miranda	Van Eetvelde	Miranda Van Eetvelde
114	Nadia	Sminate	Nadia Sminate
115	Nahima	Lanjri	Lanjri Nahima
116	Nathalie	Muylle	Nathalie Muylle
117	Nele	Lijnen	Nele Lijnen
118	Orry	Van de Wauwer	Orry Van de Wauwer
119	Ortwin	Depoortere	Ortwin Depoortere
120	Patricia	Ceysens	Patricia Ceysens
121	Patrick	Dewael	Patrick Dewael
122	Paul	Van Miert	Paul Van Miert
123	Paul	Cordy	Paul Cordy
124	Peter	Luykx	Peter Luykx
125	Peter	Wouters	Peter Wouters
126	Peter	Persyn	Peter Persyn
127	Peter	De Roover	Peter De Roover
128	Peter	Van Rompuy	Peter Van Rompuy
129	Peter	Buysrogge	Peter Buysrogge
130	Philippe	De Backer	Philippe De Backer
131	Philippe	Muyters	Philippe Muyters
132	Piet	De Bruyn	Piet De Bruyn
133	Pieter	De Crem	Pieter De Crem
134	Raf	Terwingen	Raf Terwingen
135	Renaat	Landuyt	Renaat Landuyt
136	Rik	Daems	Rik Daems
137	Rita	Gantois	Rita Gantois
138	Robrecht	Bothuyne	Robrecht Bothuyne
139	Roel	Deseyn	Roel Deseyn
140	Sabine	de Bethune	Sabine de Bethune
141	Sabine	Vermeulen	Sabine Vermeulen
142	Sander	Loones	Sander Loones
143	Sarah	Smeyers	Sarah Smeyers
144	Servais	Verherstraeten	Servais Verherstraeten
145	Siegfried	Bracke	Siegfried Bracke

146	Sofie	Joosen	Sofie Joosen
147	Sonja	Becq	Sonja Becq
148	Sophie	De Wit	Sophie De Wit
149	Stefaan	Vercamer	Stefaan Vercamer
150	Stefaan	Sintobin	Stefaan Sintobin
151	Steve	Vandenberghe	Steve Vandenberghe
152	Steven	Vandeput	Steven Vandeput
153	Sven	Gatz	Sven Gatz
154	Theo	Francken	Theo Francken
155	Tim	Vandenput	Tim Vandenput
156	Tine	van der Vloet	Tine van der Vloet
157	Tine	Soens	Tine Soens
158	Tinne	Rombouts	Tinne Rombouts
159	Tom	Van Grieken	Tom Van Grieken
160	Valerie	Van Peel	Valerie Van Peel
161	Valerie	Taeldeman	Valerie Taeldeman
162	Veerle	Heeren	Veerle Heeren
163	Veli	Yüksel	Veli Yüksel
164	Vera	Jans	Vera Jans
165	Vera	Celis	Vera Celis
166	Vincent	Van Quickenborne	Vincent Van Quickenborne
167	Vincent	Van Peteghem	Vincent Van Peteghem
168	Ward	Kennes	Ward Kennes
169	Werner	Janssen	Werner Janssen
170	Wilfried	Vandaele	Wilfried Vandaele
171	Willem-Frederik	Schiltz	Willem-Frederik Schiltz
172	Willy	Segers	Willy Segers
173	Wim	Van der Donckt	Wim Van der Donckt
174	Wouter	Raskin	Wouter Raskin
175	Wouter	Van Besien	Wouter Van Besien
176	Wouter	De Vriendt	Wouter De Vriendt
177	Wouter	Beke	Wouter Beke
178	Yoleen	Van Camp	Yoleen Van Camp
179	Zuhal	Demir	Zuhal Demir
180	els	Robeyns	Els Robeyns
181	Brigitte	Grouwels	Brigitte Grouwels
182	Bruno	De Lille	Bruno De Lille
183	Carla	Dejonghe	Carla Dejonghe
184	Charles	Michel	Charles MICHEL
185	Cieltje	Van Achter	Cieltje Van Achter
186	Daniel	Bacquelaine	Daniel Bacquelaine
187	Denis	Ducarme	Denis Ducarme
188	Dominiek	Lootens-Stael	Dominiek Lootens-Stael
189	Els	Ampe	Els Ampe
190	Fouad	Ahidar	Fouad Ahidar
191	François	Bellot	François Bellot
192	Hannelore	Goeman	Hannelore Goeman
193	Khadija	Zamouri	Khadija Zamouri
194	Liesbet	Dhaene	Liesbet Dhaene
195	Marie Christine	Marghem	Marie Christine Marghem

196	Paul	Delva	Paul Delva
197	Peter	Mertens	Peter Mertens
198	René	Coppens	René Coppens
199	Sophie	Wilmès	Sophie Wilmès
200	Stefan	Cornelis	Stefan Cornelis
201	Willy	Borsus	Willy Borsus
202	Didier	Reynders	Didier Reynders

Overview of politicians in dataset: Twitter (N=236)

	First name	Name	Screen name (without @)
1	Alain	Top	alain_top
2	Anne	Dedry	annededry
3	Jo	De Ro	jo_dero
4	Jo	Vandeurzen	JoVandeurzen
5	Johan	Klaps	JohanKlaps
6	Johan	Verstreken	JohanVerstreken
7	Johan	Danen	JohanDanen
8	Johan	Van Overtveldt	jvanovertveldt
9	John	Crombez	johncrombez
10	Joke	Schauvliege	JokeSchauvliege
11	Joris	Vandenbroucke	JorisVDBroucke
12	Joris	Poschet	JorisPoschet
13	Jos	Lantmeeters	joslantmeeters
14	Jos	De Meyer	JosDeMeyer
15	Karim	Van Overmeire	KVanOvermeire
16	Karin	Temmerman	karintemmerman
17	Karin	Jiroflee	KarinJiroflee
18	Karin	Brouwers	BrouwersKarin
19	Karl	Vanlouwe	KarlVanlouwe
20	Karolien	Grosemans	KaroGrosemans
21	Kathleen	Krekels	KathleenKrekels
22	Annemie	Turtelboom	ATurtelboom
23	Kathleen	Helsen	KathleenHelsen
24	Katia	Segers	katiasegers
25	Katja	Gabriëls	katja_gabriels
26	Katrien	Partyka	katparty
27	Katrien	Schryvers	KatrienSchryver
28	Koen	Metsu	MetsuKoen
29	Koen	Van den Heuvel	KVDHeuvel_VP
30	Koen	Geens	Koen_Geens1
31	Koen	Daniëls	koendaniels
32	Annick	De Ridder	AnnickDeRidder
33	Kris	Peeters	peeters_kris1
34	Kris	Van Dijck	KrisVanDijck1
35	Kristien	Van Vaerenbergh	kris10vanvaer
36	Kristof	Calvo	kristofcalvo
37	Kurt	De Loor	kurtdeloor
38	Leen	Dierick	leendierick

39	Lies	Jans	lies_jans
40	Liesbeth	Homans	LiesbethHomans
41	Annick	Lambrecht	LambrechtAnnick
42	Lionel	Bajart	LionelBajart
43	Lode	Ceyssens	LodeCeyssens
44	Lorin	Parys	lorinparys
45	Luk	Van Biesen	LukVanBiesen
46	Lydia	Peeters	Lydiapeeters
47	Maggie	De Block	Maggie_DeBlock
48	Manuela	Van Werde	manuelavanwerde
49	Marc	Hendrickx	marc_hendrickx
50	Marino	Keulen	KeulenMarino
51	Axel	Ronse	axelronse
52	Marius	Meremans	MariusMeremans
53	Martine	Taelman	martinetaelman
54	Martine	Fournier	martine_menen
55	Mathias	De Clercq	mathiasdeclercq
56	Matthias	Diependaele	MDiependaele
57	Mercedes	Van Volcem	MercedesVVolcem
58	Meryame	Kitir	MeryameKitir
59	Barbara	Pas	Barbara_Pas
60	Meyrem	Almaci	MeyremAlmaci
61	Michel	Doomst	micheldoomst
62	Michèle	Hostekint	mhostekint
63	Miranda	Van Eetvelde	mveetvelde
64	Monica	De Coninck	MonicaDeConinck
65	Nadia	Sminate	NadiaSminate
66	Nahima	Lanjri	NahimaLanjri
67	Nathalie	Muylle	nathaliemuylle
68	Nele	Lijnen	Nelelijnen
69	Orry	Van de Wauwer	orry_vdw
70	Bart	Caron	BartCaron
71	Ortwin	Depoortere	OrtwinDepo
72	Patricia	Ceysens	patriciaceysens
73	Patrick	Dewael	PatrickDewael
74	Paul	Van Miert	VanMiertPaul
75	Paul	Cordy	PaulCordy
76	Peter	Luykx	peerlux
77	Peter	Wouters	Peterwouters6
78	Peter	Persyn	peter_persyn
79	Peter	Vanvelthoven	VvelthovenPeter
80	Peter	De Roover	PeterDeRoover1
81	Bart	Nevens	BartNevens
82	Peter	Van Rompuy	Petervanrompuy
83	Peter	Dedecker	peterdedecker
84	Peter	Buysrogge	PeterBuysrogge
85	Philippe	De Backer	debackerphil
86	Philippe	Muyters	philippemuyters
87	Piet	De Bruyn	PietDeBruyn
88	Pieter	De Crem	pieterdecrem

89	Raf	Terwingen	Rafterwingen
90	Renaat	Landuyt	RLanduyt
91	Renate	Hufkens	RenateHufkens
92	Rik	Daems	RikDaems
93	Rita	Gantois	RitaGantois1
94	Rita	Bellens	BellensRita
95	Rob	Van de Velde	robvandevelde
96	Rob	Beenders	Robbeenders
97	Robrecht	Bothuyne	RobrechtB
98	Roel	Deseyn	roeldeseyn
99	Sabien	Lahaye-Battheu	SBattheu
100	Sabine	de Bethune	SabinedeBethune
101	Sabine	Vermeulen	Sab_Vermeulen
102	Alexander	De Croo	alexanderdecroo
103	Bart	Tommelein	Barttommelein
104	Sander	Loones	SanderLoones
105	Sarah	Smeyers	SarahSmeyers
106	Servais	Verherstraeten	ServaisV
107	Siegfried	Bracke	sthbracke
108	Sofie	Joosen	SofieJoosen
109	Sonja	Becq	SonjaBecq
110	Sophie	De Wit	DeWitSophie
111	Stefaan	Van Hecke	SVHecke
112	Stefaan	Vercamer	Stefaanvercamer
113	Bart	Van Malderen	bartvanmalderen
114	Stefaan	Sintobin	StefaanSintobin
115	Steve	Vandenberghe	steve_vdb
116	Steven	Vandeput	svandeput
117	Sven	Gatz	svengatz
118	Theo	Francken	FranckenTheo
119	Tim	Vandenput	TimVandenput
120	Tine	van der Vloet	TinevanderVloet
121	Tine	Soens	TineSoens
122	Tinne	Rombouts	TinneRombouts
123	Bart	Dochy	BartDochy
124	Tom	Van Grieken	tomvangrieken
125	Valerie	Van Peel	valerievanpeel
126	Veerle	Wouters	Veerle_Wouters
127	Veerle	Heeren	veerleheeren
128	Veli	Yüksel	veliyuksel
129	Vera	Jans	verajans3620
130	Vera	Celis	Vera_Celis
131	Vincent	Van Quickenborne	VincentVQ
132	Vincent	Van Peteghem	vincent_v_p
133	Bart	De Wever	Bart_DeWever
134	Ward	Kennes	ward_kennes
135	Werner	Janssen	WernerJanssen00
136	Wilfried	Vandaele	WilfriedVdaele
137	Willem-Frederik	Schiltz	wfschiltz
138	Willy	Segers	Willy_Segers

139	Wim	Van der Donckt	vanderdoncktwim
140	Wouter	Raskin	RaskinWouter
141	Wouter	Van Besien	WouterVanBesien
142	Wouter	De Vriendt	WouterDeVriendt
143	Wouter	Beke	wbeke
144	Bart	Somers	BartSomers
145	Yasmine	Kherbache	Kherbache
146	Yoleen	Van Camp	YoleenVanCamp
147	Zuhal	Demir	Zu_Demir
148	els	Robeyns	elsrobeyns
149	Brigitte	Grouwels	BGrouwels
150	Charles	Michel	CharlesMichel
151	Ben	Weyts	BenWeyts
152	Cieltje	Van Achter	CieltjeVAchter
153	Daniel	Bacquelaine	DanBacquelaine
154	Denis	Ducarme	ducarmedenis
155	Dominiek	Lootens-Stael	DominiekLootens
156	Els	Ampe	ElsAmpe
157	François	Bellot	francois_bellot
158	Hannelore	Goeman	HanneloreGoeman
159	Khadija	Zamouri	KhadijaZamouri
160	Bert	Wollants	BertWollants
161	Marie Christine	Marghem	McMarghem
162	Paul	Delva	Paul_Delva
163	Peter	Mertens	peter_mertens
164	Sophie	Wilmès	Sophie_Wilmes
165	Stefan	Cornelis	CornelisStefan
166	Willy	Borsus	wborsus
167	Didier	Reynders	dreynders
168	Annemie	Maes	annemiemaes46
169	Arnaud	Verstraete	ArnauVerstraete
170	Bert	Moyaers	MoyaersBert
171	Griet	Coppé	GrietCoppe
172	Jef	Van Damme	Jefvandamme
173	Johan	Van den Driessche	jvddriessche
174	Bert	Maertens	MaertensBert
175	Björn	Rzoska	BjornRzoska
176	An	Moerenhout	anmoerenhout
177	Björn	Anseeuw	bjanseeuw
178	Brecht	Vermeulen	VermeulenBrecht
179	Carina	Van Cauter	CarinaVanCauter
180	Caroline	Gennez	carogennez
181	Cathy	Coudyser	cathycoudyser
182	Chris	Janssens	chrisjanssensVB
183	Cindy	Franssen	FranssenCindy
184	An	Christiaens	AnTongeren
185	Danielle	Godderis-T'Jonck	DanielleTJonck
186	Daniëlle	Vanwesenbeeck	Danielle_VWB
187	Daphné	Dimery	ddumery
188	David	Geerts	GeertsDavid

189	Dirk	De Kort	Dirk_de_Kort
190	Dirk	Van Mechelen	DirkVanMechele1
191	Dirk	Van der Maelen	dirkvdmaelen
192	Egbert	Lachaert	egbertlachaert
193	Elisabeth	Meuleman	Elisameuleman
194	An	Capoen	ancapoen
195	Elke	Sleurs	ElkeSleurs
196	Elke	Van den Brandt	elkevdbrandt
197	Els	Van Hoof	ElsVanHoofcdenv
198	Emmily	Talpe	emmilytalpe
199	Evita	Willaert	EvitaWillaert
200	Fatma	Pehlivan	pehlivan_fatma
201	Filip	Dewinter	FDW_VB
202	Francesco	Vanderjeugd	FrancescoFV
203	Franky	Demon	FrankyDemon
204	Andries	Gryffroy	gryffroy
205	Freya	Saeys	FreyaSaeys
206	Freya	Van den Bossche	freyabos
207	Geert	Bourgeois	GeertBourgeois
208	Goedele	Uyttersprot	G_Uyttersprot
209	Grete	Remen	GreteRemen
210	Griet	Smaers	grietsmaers
211	Guy	D'haeseleer	GuydhaeseleerVB
212	Anke	Van dermeersch	Anke_online
213	Gwendolyn	Rutten	RuttenGwendolyn
214	Gwenny	De Vroe	Gwenny_De_Vroe
215	Güler	Turan	Turan_Guler
216	Hendrik	Vuye	HendrikVuye
217	Hendrik	Bogaert	hendrikbogaert
218	Hermes	Sanctorum-Vandevoorde	hermessanctorum
219	Ann	Brusseel	AnnBrusseel
220	Hilde	Crevits	crevits
221	Imade	Annouri	ImadeAnnouri
222	Ine	Somers	IneSomers
223	Inez	De Coninck	inez_deconinck
224	Ingeborg	De Meulemeester	borgdm
225	Ingrid	Pira	IngridPira1
226	Jan	Durnez	JanDurnez
227	Jan	Bertels	jan_bertels
228	Ann	Soete	AnnSoete
229	Jan	Van Esbroeck	JanVanEsbroeck
230	Jan	Jambon	JanJambon
231	Jan	Spooren	SpoorenJan
232	Jan	Vercammen	JanVercammenNVA
233	Jan	Penris	JanPenris
234	Jean-jacques	De Gucht	jjdegucht
235	Jef	Van den Bergh	jefvandenbergh
236	Jelle	Engelbosch	JelleEngelbosch

Appendix A3 – Descriptives

Table A2 presents descriptives of all variables used in the analyses. DV stands for dependent variable; IV stands for independent variable. Given that we analyze responsiveness to protest on two social media platforms, the DVs and IVs related to politician features are shown both for twitter and Facebook.

Table A3: Descriptives

	Variable	Mean	Std. dev.	Min	Max	Obs
DV: Twitter	Responsiveness Issue	0.071	0.257	0	1	29,264
	Responsiveness Protest	0.026	0.159	0	1	29,264
	Favorability Issue	0.507	1.314	-2	2	2,086
	Favorability Protest	0.325	1.383	-2	2	760
DV: Facebook	Responsiveness Issue	0.032	0.176	0	1	25,048
	Responsiveness Protest	0.010	0.099	0	1	25,048
	Favorability Issue	0.395	1.019	-2	2	797
	Favorability Protest	0.332	1.150	-2	2	250
IV: Protest	Turnout	0.202	0.401	0	1	29,264
	Coordination	0.242	0.428	0	1	29,264
	Disruption	0.129	0.335	0	1	29,264
	Socio-cultural	0.565	0.496	0	1	29,264
IV: Politicians twitter	Opposition	0.246	0.431	0	1	236
	Left	0.203	0.403	0	1	236
	Executive	0.114	0.320	0	1	236
	Issue-owner	0.135	0.342	0	1	29,264
	Total tweets	604.210	996.718	1	10,302	236
IV: Politicians Facebook	Opposition	0.180	0.388	0	1	202
	Left	0.140	0.352	0	1	202
	Executive	0.139	0.346	0	1	202
	Issue-owner	0.123	0.329	0	1	25,048
	Total posts	179.817	225.397	3	1576	202

Appendix A4 – sample of example tweets and posts

In total, 6.772 tweets (4.7% of all politicians' tweets) and 1.439 Facebook posts (4.0% of all post) were identified as dealing with either a protest and/or its issue. To clarify our coding, we present a sample of examples; which were translated from Dutch to English. Table A4a presents messages explicitly referring to protest; Table A4b presents messages that mention the protest issue, without explicit reference to protest; Table A4c and d present the favorability coding for protest and issue respectively. For each message, the publishing politician; the publication date, the protest issue, and the actual post are shown.

Table A4a: Protest – explicit reference to a protest event

Politician	Date	Protest	Post
Jan Jambon	10/07/2017	Protest against discrimination and terrorism	*Muslims on the street against terrorism = important signal https://t.co/AmFTr4qTGQ*
Barbara Pas	07/12/2017	Protest for the freedom of prisoned politicians in Catalonia	*Catalan people rally: The Brussels police says there are 45.000 people on today's demonstration #wakeUpEurope in #Brussels, the largest demonstration in the history of the city 🤳🏼 https://t.co/sVIoDdLunq*
Peter Mertens	02/10/2018	Pension strike	*WOW! 15.000 people at the pensionstrike in Antwerp! Much more than expected. From all sectors. […]https://t.co/XnukIKYToc*
Meyrem Almaci	02/12/2018	Climate strike	*The Biggest One Ever. And they have 1 message: Action, now! #ClaimTheclimate https://t.co/1YMgynE5y7*
Imade Annouri	16/05/2018	Pension strike	*#ItCanBeDifferent #Pensionstrike https://t.co/8s1XqyGSWl*
Hannelore Goeman	27/06/2018	Climate protest	*Loud and clear: we want clean air! #brussels #filtercaféfiltré https://t.co/aQMIquWCYV*
Peter Van Rompuy	24/01/2019	Climate protest	*March for the future 💪 https://t.co/VIZEoG4l0W*
An Moerenhout	31/03/2019	Climate protest	*Wat a turnout! Stop pollution, we need a solution. #climatestrike @groen https://t.co/5D6y01CGS0*
Kristof Calvo	24/05/2019	Climate protest	*What. A. Crowd. #climatestrike #Brussels https://t.co/5BcRQXEW6E*
Katia Segers	18/05/2019	Belgian gay pride	*We fight for love together! #AllforLove #Belgianpride https://t.co/X2ZrLgJr3i*

Table A4b: Protest issue – no explicit reference to a protest event

Politician	Date	Protest	Post
Jan Van Esbroeck	04/11/2017	Protest for the freedom of prisoned politicians in Catalonia	@EU_Commission @JunckerEU @TimmermansEU, did you sleep well? This is how Spain is treating their political prisoners! Shame! https://t.co/65rfOzIFFF
Koen Geens	24/11/2017	Women's March	Sexual intimidation and violence against women are unacceptable, also at work. I do not tolerate this behavior! https://t.co/5I8XLYOnvS
Vincent Van Peteghem	14/12/2017	Protest for the freedom of prisoned VUB-professor Djalali.	I demanded the Iranian ambassador to release Ahmadreza #Djalali, the VUB-professor who was threatened with death https://t.co/opmDkQTE1D
Wouter Beke	19/12/2017	Pension strike	It's the task of our government to give the people certainty about their pensions […].
Sophie De Wit	15/05/2018	Protest against violence in Palestine	The bloodshed between Gaza and Israel is a shock for every right-minded person https://t.co/Job0uNfwDr
Alexander De Croo	17/05/2018	Belgian gay pride	There is still too much discrimination, lack of understanding and violence based on sexual preference. Also in our country. Let's do something about it! https://t.co/qJnxlw5di5
Khadija Zamouri	26/11/2018	Women's March	Stop violence against women! #stopviolenceagainstwomen https://t.co/2OPWLsgGdS
Maggie De Block	16/12/2018	Protest against the VN Migration law	No lax migration law! As I proved, I will be firm but fair https://t.co/UPKx35YB8s!
Annemie Turtelboom	31/01/2019	Climate protest	Could a new superplant solve the climate crisis? https://t.co/XLiPnabyAi via @financialtimes #storemorecarbondioxide #slowdownclimatechange
Koen Van den Heuvel	29/03/2019	Climate protest	We choose the way forward; and take concrete actions. We will provide 75 million euros extra for concrete climate actions and set up an expert panel.

Table A4c: Favorability coding for protest tweets

	Favorable response	Critical response	Neutral response
	• *Impressive demonstration, I wish #catalunya lots and lots of negotiated autonomy with mutual concessions and that all political prisoners be freed. […]* (Axel Ronse, 07/12/2017 –Catalunia independence protest) • *Together with a lot of beautiful people at the march against racism. United against racism, together for social rights! […]* (Meyrem Almaci, 24/03/2018 – March against racism) • *Respect for #OccupyForclimate* (Kristof Calvo, 25/03/2019—climate demonstration)	• *The socialist union showed her most asocial side today! No support for their strike […].* (Alexander De Croo, 27/02/2018 – Pension demonstration) • *Stop the climate madness! Sending toddlers on the street and using them to diffuse political ideas is morally unacceptable! […]* (Stefaan Sintobin, 01/02/2019—Climate demonstration) • *An extreme right march that encourages violence and hate […]. It makes me sad.* (Sabine de Bethune, 16/12/2018—March against Marrakech)	• *#pension #demonstration: watch my interview from this morning @BelRTL @Le_Bux* (Daniel Bacquelaine, 19/12/2017—Pension demonstration) • *Demonstration in front of Homans' cabinet related to austerity measures #integrationAgency. Personnel demands answers related to debt creation and brutal lay-offs. Only external screening will lead to transparancy. #deochtend* (An Moerenhout, 23/01/2018—working conditions integration agency) • *Too frequently confronted with the consequences of school striking when I was a teacher. Won't join the climate strikers. But youth engagement deserves support, so I invite them next Wednesday afternoon. https://t.co/60JgveKriZ (*Peter de Roover, 09/01/2019—Climate demonstration*)*

Table A4d: Favorability coding for issue tweets

	Favorable response	Critical response	Neutral response
	• *Jailing democratically elected government leaders = more than bridge too far. Political discussions = political solutions.* (Karl Vanlouwe, 02/11/2017—protest to free Catalonian politicians) • *We choose the way forward; and take concrete actions. We will provide 75 million euros extra for concrete climate actions and set up an expert panel.* (Koen Van den Heuvel, 29/03/2019—climate demonstration) • *There is still too much discrimination, lack of understanding and violence based on sexual preference. Let's do something about it!* (Alexander De Croo, 17/05/2018—Gay pride)	• *Free doormat "illegals NOT welcome" for all restaurants in town!* (Filip Dewinter, 15/09/2017, protest for migration rights) • *The left hypocrisy has to stop! […]. Real climate protection is ecorealistic.* (Annick De Ridder, 31/01/2019, climate protest) • *When it comes to Mawda's death, we have to look at the real criminals: human traffickers, not the police!* (Theo Francken, 23/05/2018, vigil for Mawda)	• *"Hope to have clarity by the end of the year whether inspection services judge #deliveroo couriers to be self-employed or employees. #plenaire @DeKamerBE (Kris Peeters, 23/11/2017)* • *Question hour this afternoon by @ecolo @groen about declaration president Trump related to Jerusalem and the Belgian/European reaction. #dekamer #hetkananders #villapolitica #jerusalem https://t.co/y0enHju9f6 (Wouter De Vriendt; 07/12/2017)* • *Interesting discussing about the Catalan crisis tonight in @deafspraaktv with @KRLS (Peter Persyn, 25/09/2018, protest to free Catalonian politicians)*

Appendix A5 – Facebook Results

Results for communicative responsiveness on Facebook are similar compared to those on twitter.

Table A5a shows that for the protest features turnout, coordination and socio-cultural protests

matter, disruption not. Issue-owners are more responsive both in terms of issue and protest

responses and executive politicians respond by discussing the issue, not referring to the protest.

Different from the twitter data is that opposition and left-wing status is not significantly associated

with issue responsiveness while it is for protest responsiveness, whereas for responsiveness on

twitter both variables were significantly associated with responsiveness across the board. In sum,

except for this latter deviance, the drivers of whether politicians respond are highly similar on twitter

and Facebook.

TableA5a: Multi-level logistic regressions predicting communicative responsiveness on Facebook

	Issue				Protest			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.
Turnout	1.080**	0.336	1.077**	0.334	2.144***	0.374	2.143***	0.388
Coordination	0.900**	0.319	0.899*	0.352	1.185**	0.402	1.181**	0.415
Disruption	0.136	0.386	0.139	0.425	0.597	0.454	0.595	0.511
Socio-cultural	1.429***	0.309	1.429***	0.357	0.947	0.684	0.954*	0.436
Opposition	-0.168	0.237	-	-	0.800**	0.284	-	-
Left	-	-	-0.020	0.293	-	-	0.807*	0.329
Executive	0.624*	0.242	0.672**	0.238	0.450	0.346	0.318	0.349
Issue-owner	1.293***	0.146	1.278***	0.173	1.524***	0.215	1.525***	0.223
Total tweets	3.333***	0.381	3.264***	0.475	3.518***	0.467	3.839***	0.515
Constant	-7.035***	0.402	-7.053***	0.633	-9.504***	0.618	-9.512***	0.449
Variance Politician	.801	0.145	.801	0.171	1.145	0.261	1.147	0.289
Variance Protest	1.221	0.235	1.220	0.272	1.898	0.449	1.895	0.482
Wald Chi² (df)	161.350***(8)		100.87*** (8)		156.720***(8)		183.02***(8)	
Log Likelihood	-2716.617		-2716.899		-994.356		-994.758	
N Politicians	202		202		202		202	
N Protests	124		124		124		124	
N Total	25.048		25.048		25.048		25.048	

* p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001

Table A5b show the results for the favorability analyses. Here, twitter and Facebook tend to deviate

more from each other. The models show little leverage of our drivers on favorability, only left-party

politicians appear to be significantly more favorable in their communicative responsiveness towards

protest both in terms of issue and protest responses, which is fully in line with the twitter analyses.

Both coordination (for issue responses) and issue-ownership (for protest responses) matter as well, and they did so too in the twitter analyses, but the results are less across the board, and other variables (opposition, executive) that showed their potency in the twitter arena fail to leave their mark on Facebook.

TableA5b: Multi-level regressions predicting favorability on Facebook

	Issue				Protest			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.
Turnout	-0.010	0.122	-0.023	0.120	0.266	0.166	0.262	0.167
Coordination	0.249*	0.122	0.253*	0.120	-0.126	0.180	-0.127	0.181
Disruption	0.212	0.165	0.222	0.163	0.053	0.224	0.036	0.225
Socio-cultural	-0.203	0.129	-0.189	0.127	-0.103	0.194	-0.105	0.194
Opposition	0.117	0.140	-	-	0.110	0.202	-	-
Left	-	-	0.646***	0.136	-	-	0.710***	0.196
Executive	0.067	0.129	0.136	0.112	-0.366	0.216	-0.242	0.185
Issue-owner	0.025	0.105	-0.038	0.101	0.678***	0.160	0.559***	0.158
Total posts	-0.523**	0.190	-0.508**	0.161	-0.527*	0.266	-0.453	0.225
Constant	0.549***	0.142	0.469**	0.138	0.375	0.235	0.230	0.230
Variance Politician	0.191	0.038	0.138	0.032	0.286	0.079	0.193	0.068
Variance Protest	0.163	0.044	0.156	0.042	0.178	0.071	0.181	0.070
Variance Residual	0.555	0.032	0.562	0.033	0.477	0.058	0.489	0.059
Wald Chi² (df)	15.420*(8)		40.110***(8)		38.920***(8)		54.87***(8)	
Log Likelihood	-1010.1205		-1000.832		-320.261		-314.884	
N Politicians	155		155		86		86	
N Protest	98		98		59		59	
N Total	797		797		250		250	

*p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001*

[i] Hooghe, Marks and colleagues refer to the GAL-TAN cleavage, standing for green, alternative and libertarian versus traditionalist, authoritarian and nativist. Kriesi and colleagues refer to the integration-demarcation cleavage.

[ii] Note that such an issue-link is how all agenda-setting studies link protest to attention of politicians.

[iii] Based on voting data from the federal elections in Belgium in 2014, 69,7% (N=62) of people who voted for PVDA-PTB, 59,3% (N=178) of people who voted for Groen, and 59,7% (N=197) of people who voted for SP.A positioned themselves left or extreme left on a left-right scale (10pt-Likert scale)..

[iv] This is the total amount of Facebook posts and tweets by politicians in our sample, across all (days surrounding each) protests, thus including posts and tweets that do not deal with the protest or it's issue.

[v] The favorability score is calculated as positive tweets minus negative tweets per politician-protest dyad, recoding values lower than -2 (N=157 tweets; 6.2%) and higher than +2 (N=344; 13.7%) to -2 and +2 respectively.

[vi] A log transformed continuous turnout variable—given a negative skew in the turnout distribution—yields similar significant results. Categorical operationalizations of the turnout variable shows 5.000 participants to be a key threshold. Turnout thus matters for responsiveness, but not so in a linear way across all "turnout steps"— it seems that it is a matter of being perceived as large or not, which in our dataset hovers around 5.000. Additional analyses show the effect of turnout on responsiveness to be partially mediated by news item duration: larger demonstrations are associated with longer news items, which are more likely to be referred to by politicians.

[vii] While opposition status and left-right orientation could not be introduced in the same model due to multicollinearity, running separate models for left- and right-wing politicians shows that opposition status within right-wing parties matters significantly.