DISCURSIVE OPPORTUNITIES, FEELING RULES, AND THE RISE OF PROTESTS AGAINST AIRCRAFT NOISE[*]

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Social movement researchers propose different ways to incorporate meaning into structural approaches, notably into political opportunity structure (POS) theory. In this article we further develop one of the recent attempts to do so: discursive opportunity structure theory (DOS) as proposed by Koopmans and Olzak. We pay particular attention to the role of feelings. Although the DOS model correctly points toward the discursive construction of political opportunities, it does not explain why certain events are experienced as opportunities by potential activists. We propose the reason is two-fold: 1) discourse contains feeling rules and 2) discourse resonance implies the shaping of protest subjectivity. Our model is applied to a specific case: protests against aircraft noise annoyance in two countries. We show that feeling annoyed by aircraft sound is shaped by specific policy discourses, which then prepares the ground for protests.

Political process theory and political opportunity structure theory (POS) (Eisinger 1973; Tilly 1978; Kriesi, Koopmans, Duyvendak, and Guigni 1992; Kriesi, Koopmans, Duyvendak, and Giugni 1995; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001) are not well suited to show what actually moves people to engage in political action (Eyerman and Jamison 1995; Jasper 1998; Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta 2001; Ferree 2003; Goodwin and Jasper 2004; Meyer and Minkoff 2004). It is now widely accepted that political opportunities have to be perceived as such to affect political action. To understand how people conceive of political opportunities, scholars have attempted to combine political process theory with "identity" (Tilly 2005), "framing" (Snow, Rochford, Warden, and Benford 1986; Koopmans and Duyvendak 1995), discourse (Steinberg 1998, 1999; Ferree 2002), culture (for an overview see Polletta 2008), and emotion (Jasper 1998; Flam and King 2005). Discursive opportunity structure theory (DOS) as developed primarily by Koopmans and Olzak is an interesting attempt in this respect (Koopmans and Statham 1999; Koopmans 2004; Koopmans and Olzak 2004; Giugni, Koopmans, Passy, and Statham 2005). In this article we aim to elaborate on three aspects of their approach. First, we suggest more attention be paid to policy as a meaning-making process—policy discourses limit what can be said, felt, and demanded. Second, we think the DOS model should incorporate "feeling rules" (Hochschild 1979, 1983) into the analysis of the "working" of discursive opportunities—feeling rules and their changes are necessary to understand why and when people experience opportunities as such. Third, we show how policy discourse actually resonates in people's everyday subjectivity.

In the empirical section of the article we argue that the non-discursive POS approach cannot explain the rise of social movements against aircraft noise annoyance in the Netherlands and Switzerland. While many of the "opportunities" remained stable, the incidence of protests and the rise of social movements did not. This shows, as Koopmans and Olzak correctly argue, that to explain mobilization one needs to understand the "framing" or discursive construction of issues. To understand how this framing happens, we turn to changes

in noise annoyance policies. We argue that changes in the policy discourse introduced new framing rules (Hochschild 1983) and new feeling rules, which prompted the "public" to form new social movements or to support existing ones.

Aircraft noise annoyance is a case of great importance. Air mobility is a worldwide phenomenon; as Urry (2000: 63) states, it's the "quintessential mode of dwelling within the contemporary globalizing world." Two billion passengers a year and three trillion miles flown constitute an enormous "flow." Where this global mobility is localized, conflicts abound: airports have been sites of contention for at least half a century. While conflicts are often channeled through existing political processes, there are violent "contentious actions" too, as in the case of Tokyo Narita Airport in Japan (where 19 people were killed) or Frankfurt Airport in Germany.

Exposure to aircraft sound in itself is insufficient to explain annoyance, let alone contestation (Fields 1993; Miedema and Vos 1998; Bröer and Wirth 2004). Moreover, differences in annoyance hardly correlate with income, education, age, or sex (Fidell, Barber, and Schultz 1991; Fields 1993; Miedema and Vos 1998). Instead, distrust towards authorities, anxiety, the feeling that one cannot control the noise, and noise discourse all increase annoyance (Stallen 1999; Bröer 2006; Maris, Stallen, Vermunt, and Steensma 2007a, 2007b; Kroesen, Molin, and Van Wee 2008).

DISCURSIVE OPPORTUNITIES

Discursive opportunity structure theory starts by acknowledging that "political opportunity structures affect movement action only when they are perceived as such by (potential) movement activists" (Koopmans and Olzak 2004: 199). Potential activists and opportunities are linked by "framing" (Gamson and Modigliani 1989; Benford 1993, 1997; Benford and Snow 2000)—the strategic attempts of political entrepreneurs to make issues "resonate" within potential activists' existing cultural repertoires. But, as Koopmans and Duyvendak argue (1995: 249), neither framing as such nor objectivist explanations can explain the resonance capacity of certain frames: "the construction of grievances and social problems, and the degree to which they give rise to social movement mobilization, are rooted […] in political power relations." They favor combining "the framing and political opportunity perspective" with an examination of "the political conditions under which specific discourse become imaginable" (Koopmans and Duyvendak 1995: 249). While their approach may indeed explain why certain discourses become powerful in the political arena, it still does not explain why some political discourses have such a powerful mobilizing effect on potential participants of social movements.

In an attempt to bridge the gap between political opportunities and the perceptions of participants, Koopmans and Olzak later turned to the public sphere and media as a relatively independent explanatory factor: "In the public sphere, movement activists communicate messages to fellow activists and potential adherents, and they thereby gain crucial information about the actions and reactions of authorities, political opponents, allies, and sympathizers. To capture this role of the public sphere, we develop the notion of discursive opportunities." (Koopmans and Olzak 2004: 199).

Koopmans and Olzak refer to the "public arena" (Hilgartner and Bosk 1988) where different groups try to attract attention for their cause. They describe discursive opportunities as "the aspects of the public discourse that determine a message's chances of diffusion in the public sphere" (Koopmans and Olzak 2004: 202). A major part of this "chance of diffusion" is resonance: "Although gaining visibility is a necessary condition for communicative impact, the career of a discursive message is likely to remain stillborn if it does not succeed in provoking reactions from other actors in the public sphere. We refer to this dimension as resonance" (Koopmans and Olzak 2004: 204).

With this model, Koopmans and Olzak show violence against asylum seekers in Germany is related to newspaper coverage. If newspapers report about right-wing violence more favorably, the number of violent attacks increases; right-wing activists interpret the newspaper coverage—the discursive opportunity—as proof of the legitimacy of an anti-migrant position, shifting the normative limits of acceptance of their violent behavior (see Vliegenthart, Oegema, and Klandermans 2005 for a similar analysis). Still, this DOS model does not answer why certain opportunities are experienced as such. To answer this question, we think it is important to pay more attention to the role of feelings and feeling rules.

DISCOURSE AND POLITICS

Discourse analysis (Howarth 2000; Wetherell, Yates, and Taylor 2001; Howarth and Torfing 2005) reveals the political side of "language-in-use": the struggle for dominance implicit in the rendering of certain ideas, expressions, feelings, and aspirations as normal (Bakhtin and Holquist 1981; Laclau and Mouffe 1985; Hajer 1995; Steinberg 1998, 1999; Ferree 2002). Especially when certain discourses are anchored in institutions, they can be called hegemonic or dominant. Simply said, discourse accounts for the difference between what can potentially be expressed and experienced and what is actually expressed and experienced in a given situation (for a similar argument about the concept of cultural schemas see Polletta 2008).

Koopmans and Olzak analyze media coverage of social movement action. In newspapers they look for explicit justifications of social movement action: if non-movement members publicly justify certain actions, social movements will more likely repeat them. Koopmans and Olzak limit their approach to what is literally written in mainstream newspapers and count certain utterances. This rather quantitative understanding of discourses treats all discourse equally and cannot explain why specific discourses are powerful while others are not, or why some discourses resonate while others leave no trace. Furthermore, significant discursive opportunities can open up in domains other than the media, especially during policy processes. Here, people are informed directly by political actors, especially in interactive policy making. We apply Hajer's (1995) analysis of dominant policy discourses to find out which political frames are institutionalized in policy.

DISCOURSE AND FEELINGS

Koopmans and Olzak (2004: 202) write that through media coverage "activists learn about their own failures and successes but also gain information about the results of actions undertaken by other activists. In this way, successful strategies are adopted and replicated." This trial-and-error mechanism presupposes *strategic* action and seems to be largely cognition-based: political opportunities are recognized as such as participants gain information. What is lacking here is an account of the role feelings play in the identification of opportunities (Flam and King 2005, Goodwin and Jasper 2004, Goodwin et al. 2001).[1] As Jasper (1998: 404) argues:

> As an integral part of all social action, affective and reactive emotions enter into protest activities at every stage. Some help explain why individuals join protest events or groups, ranging from emotional responses they can have as individuals to those that recruiters can stir in them. Others are generated during protest activities, including both affective ties among fellow members and feelings toward institutions, people, and practices outside the movement and its constituent groups. These affect whether a movement continues or declines, and when.

Within the literature on feelings and politics, much attention is correctly paid to the emotional side of collective action. To bridge the gap between political opportunities and opportunities as experienced by participants, Arlie Hochschild's (1979, 1983) emotion management perspective is well suited. In our understanding, a discourse comprises both what

Hochschild calls framing rules and feeling rules. Framing rules refer to "the rules according to which we ascribe definitions or meanings to situations" (Hochschild 1979: 566). Hochschild (1979: 566) defines feeling rules as "guidelines for the assessment of fits and misfits between feeling and situation." Politicians and social movement leaders have the power to transform the feeling rules of potential activists. In this process, the latter learn to experience their emotions differently (for instance see Rutten 2006). When challengers in the political arena succeed in revealing the incompetence of power holders, this legitimizes discontent. As Hochschild (1979: 567) puts it: "One can defy an ideological stance not simply by maintaining an alternative frame on a situation but by maintaining an alternative set of feeling rights and obligations." Government policy, too, contains feeling rules: setting up a complaint agency turns individual troubles into public issues and legitimizes complaining.

The role of language in this process is very important. From the standpoint of discursive psychology, feelings can be assessed through an analysis of language use as it "applies the theory and methods of discourse analysis to psychological topics" (Edwards 1999: 271). It analyzes how "versions of the world, of society, events and inner psychological worlds are produced in discourse" (Potter 1997: 146). We do not need to reduce feelings to discourse to accept that language use is a primary way of learning how to feel. In language use, feelings are legitimized, questioned, or inhibited. Public discourse can institutionalize the right to be concerned or worried when issues are defined as legitimate social problems. Politics and policy are thus processes of emotionalization as much as rationalization.

DISCOURSE, RESONANCE, AND PEOPLE

A discourse presents opportunities and limits regarding what can be legitimately felt and demanded. Only certain feelings and arguments are available within a certain discourse. But how does this work? How does a discourse affect feeling and framing rules on an individual level? We call this mechanism *resonance*, meaning echo or repercussion. The concept of resonance is mostly used for effects of media coverage within the public domain. Here we extend it to include effect on individuals. Koopmans and Olzak (2004: 204) describe resonance the following way:

> Resonance has two types of ripple effects. First, resonance enhances reproduction of a message, because, in the eyes of journalists and editors, the message has become more relevant and the actors articulating the message seem more "prominent." Second, messages that resonate travel farther. Through the reactions of other claim makers, the message of the original speaker is at least partially reproduced and may reach new audiences.

Resonance happens when established actors express support for a social movement—a situation Koopmans and Olzak call *consonance*. When social movements are criticized, their standpoints and actions are nonetheless communicated; Koopmans and Olzak (2004: 205) call this *dissonance*. Dissonance is an interesting phenomenon: while a message is being criticized, it is at the same time amplified through repetition. A dominant discourse is backed by support *and* criticism at the same time.

But how and why are potential activists affected? In the framing literature, resonance is meant to explain why people adopt certain public frames. The idea here is that framing is more successful when it resembles pre-existing mindsets (in our terms: framing and feeling rules) (Schudson 1989; Steinberg 1998; Benford and Snow 2000; Ettema 2005). If a public frame "strikes a responsive chord" in people, it can affect perceptions of opportunities. This happens not so much by introducing completely new ideas but by pulling together existing ideas into a partly new whole.

Combining the framing and feeling literature with Koopmans and Olzak's discourse resonance model, we get the following model. Changes in public discourse can resonate in

daily life in two ways: depending on already internalized framing and feeling rules, people either reproduce the public discourse (consonance) or partly diverge from and partly reproduce it (dissonance). If people experience changes in public and political discourse to be in line with what they hold to be their own cognition and feelings,[2] they tend to reproduce it. *Consonance* means people perceive opportunities as they are defined in the dominant political discourse. When people are called to participate in a public enquiry and behave as expected, this is a *consonant* position. Discursive *dissonance* occurs when changes in public discourse "strike a chord" but are perceived to be inconsistent in themselves or inconsistent with already existing cognitions and feelings. Discursive dissonance is a situation in which activists often find themselves: while the dominant discourse presents opportunities for mobilization, adopting it also limits possibilities for critique (Hajer 1995; Ferree 2002).

Discursive dissonance (see Stapleton and Wilson 2008) is close to Festinger's (1962) cognitive dissonance theory (for an overview see Cooper and Carlsmith 2001). Festinger predicts that when people hold two inconsistent cognitions (knowledge, beliefs, attitudes), they will try to change one of them or avoid situations in which the inconsistency becomes manifest, for example, by "avoiding politics" (Eliasoph 1997). To resolve dissonance, people may use argumentative devices like ridiculing or exaggerating parts of a discourse. They may even actively deny the existence of political opportunities (Wilson and Stapleton 2008). Still, denial in itself proves that discursive opportunities affect people.

Gamson and Modigliani's (1989) description of "Not In My Backyard" (NIMBY) reactions to nuclear power plants can be seen as a way of reducing the dissonance between two parts of the dominant political discourse: (1) nuclear power plants are inevitable; and (2) nuclear power is dangerous. If people internalize this discourse, they may experience the tension as fear. NIMBY-ism reduces this tension. Both parts of the dominant discourse remain intact while people have a way to express their fear in a politically meaningful way. People do not always strive for a coherent self-image and can handle some dissonance (Liebes and Blum-Kulka 1994). Discourses are never all-encompassing; often they are formed around specific issues. People can therefore experience opportunities on the basis of a discourse that is not (entirely) derived from the dominant discourse. This we call *autonomy*. Autonomy does not suggest the absence of social forces, but the presence of other discourses than the dominant one.

Taken together, discourse resonance is a mechanism through which public and political discourse is reproduced or challenged in everyday life by (potential) participants. When people adopt or struggle with public discourse they learn how to think, feel, and act. People have histories filled with "framing rules" and "feeling rules" which together constitute their subjectivity or personal discourse. Changes in media or political discourse can resonate with these existing personal discourses. This either leads to new personal feeling and framing rules (and possibly new experienced opportunities) or to conflict when people partly adopt and partly reject the new media or political discourse. Conflicts are the result of the coercive power of a discourse against which people struggle. Koopmans and Olzak do not fully extend their concept of resonance to people's experience, nor do they sufficiently research or theorize the mechanisms through which changes in political discourse actually affect mobilization. The relational perspective of our resonance model is meant to address these mechanisms, to discover whether and how discursive opportunities affect everyday life.

In the empirical section, we apply this approach to complaints and protests against aircraft noise to show that changes in policy discourse affect perception, and thus, mobilization. Policy implements "framing rules and feeling rules." It states what kind of problem aircraft sound is and who is entitled to make certain kinds of demands. The dominant noise policy resonates among citizens, leading to consonant or dissonant positions. We first show that everyday noise perception is influenced by noise policy discourse; this perception structures opportunities for mobilization. We then analyze noise complaints as a soft form of protest or "non-contentious action" (McAdam et al. 2001). Finally, we discuss the rise of protest groups in relation to discursive opportunities.

METHODOLOGY

If policy structures discursive opportunities for mobilization, we should be able to observe different conflicts, protest groups, and perceptions of problems in different policy settings. We therefore conducted research in two locations near major airports that are similar in many respects, but which have differing policies regarding noise. Both Amsterdam Schiphol Airport in the Netherlands and Zurich Kloten Airport in Switzerland are situated near their respective country's largest city, and flight paths cross the urban region. Part of the data were collected regardless of noise exposure or other characteristics, and part of the data collection took place in two local communities with similar noise exposure and socioeconomic characteristics: Amsterdam Osdorp and Zurich Schwamendingen. Both communities have the same kind of housing and infrastructure. They are both made up of a diverse population of about the same density (see table 1). Both airports serve as the national center for civil aviation. In 2002, when the cases were chosen, the number of flights was 423,000 at Schiphol and 236,000 at Kloten. This led to a noise load of 53 decibels on an average year basis (dB(A) Lden) in both neighborhoods.

Table 1. Population Density (per square kilometer) in 2005

	Amsterdam	*Zurich*
Neighborhood	4286 (Osdorp)[1]	4743 (Schwamendingen)[2]
City	4502[1]	4046[2]
Region	973 (North Holland)[1]	742 (Canton in 2006)[3]

Notes: [1] Statistical Bureau of the Netherlands; [2] Wikipedia; [3] Statistical Bureau of the Canton Zurich

Both the Netherlands and Switzerland have a long tradition of liberal democracy and international trade. Though Switzerland—with the most elaborate referendum system in the world (Klöti 2001; Lane 2001; Papadopoulos 2001)—is a much more decentralized polity than the Netherlands, both countries are similar in the informal, integrating, and neo-corporatist way authorities deal with protest. Similar "new social movements" (Kriesi et al. 1995) have arisen in both countries. According to Rucht (1999), both countries are comparable as well when it comes to the pressure environmental movements exert, the strength of green parties, ecological policy efforts, and changes in environmental quality. In the period that noise became an environmental issue in the Netherlands, the environmental movement was just a little stronger there than in Switzerland (see table 2). Looking at large environmental organizations, we see a steep incline in membership in both countries in the 1980s and 1990s (Van der Heijden 1997). In 1995, 13 out of 100 Dutch and 11 out of 100 Swiss were members of Greenpeace, World Wildlife Fund, or a similar organization. As far as attitudes towards the environment are concerned, the European Value Survey 2002/2003 shows comparable levels of support. To conclude: it seems fair to say that the Netherlands and Switzerland are rather similar when it comes to general characteristics.

Table 2. Membership in Environmental Organizations in 1995

	The Netherlands	*Switzerland*
Inhabitants	15,424,000	7,062,454
Member of environmental organizations	2,036,000	788,000
Members per 100 inhabitants	13.2	11.2

Source: Van der Heijden (1997) and national bureaus of statistics.

The same kind of data on policy and personal discourses were collected for the two cases during long-term fieldwork. Policy discourses were assessed through documents, public-relations material, web pages, interviews, and participant observation at complaint agencies, protest events, and public inquiries. Moreover, our work built upon existing analyses of noise policy discourse (e.g., Gallati 2002; Van Duinen 2004; Bijsterveld 2008).

Next to the data on policy, the following data on personal discourses were gathered and analyzed: 89 semistructured interviews with inhabitants of neighborhoods with the same amount of noise, 250 noise complaints, 148 letters in major newspapers, and 29 public enquiry statements. We sampled the material so as to maximize the chance of finding different expressions of noise annoyance, using "naturally occurring data" wherever possible (Silverman 2005). We specifically included both documents that were produced in direct interaction with policymakers and those that were not (as policy discourses more likely structure what people say or do in the former case; if the discourse remains prominent outside these direct interactions, it can be said to be more pervasive). In the personal documents, all utterances in which people speak about annoyance were singled out. We analyzed the arguments people used to support the statement that aircraft sound is or is not annoying and searched for all expressions which (implicitly) followed the argumentative structure "aircraft sound is (not) annoying because…." This was done in part with qualitative analysis software (Atlas.ti), which led to more than 1,400 coded segments. These arguments were inductively clustered into types. The amount of collected data allowed for descriptive statistics; while the types of arguments we found represented those found among the general population, our sampling procedure did not allow estimating their distribution. We deductively determined if the policy discourse resonated in the types of arguments we identified inductively. In sum, the research combines Foucauldian-style discourse analysis of policy (Hajer 1995), usually directed at the macrolevel, and microlevel discourse analysis (Potter and Wetherell 1987; Potter 1996; Wetherell et al. 2001). We now sketch the main elements of the noise policy discourse for Amsterdam Schiphol and Zurich Kloten before inquiring whether and how they resonated in citizens' perceptions.

POLICY DISCOURSES

Aircraft sound became a policy problem during the 1950s in both Amsterdam and Zurich. In Amsterdam, planners and policymakers raised the issue because they envisioned future problems (Bröer 2007). In response, politicians, the media, and eventually citizens began voicing concerns about noise exposure. In Switzerland, citizens were initially able to get noise high on the political agenda but were soon incorporated into established policy processes. In both cases, politicians, industry, and experts came to dominate policy discourse. Central to the dominant discourse in both cases is what we call the *trend argument*. Since the beginning of civil aviation, politicians and the industry have presented the growth of air mobility as a necessary and inescapable part of global competition. Air transport was linked to national history while the growth of the sector was presented as natural. The logic of growth "reified" (Berger and Luckmann 1967) the development of the sector, masked political decisions, and became the backdrop for noise policies that followed. Political decisions to build airports institutionalized the trend argument.

Noise annoyance policy in both cases incorporated the trend argument and focused on the mitigation of negative side effects. Policymakers asked scientists (acousticians, psychologists, sociologists) to determine noise annoyance criteria and limits for acceptable noise. But scientists had difficulty establishing such limits as the political decision to expose people preceded their research (Bijsterveld 2008). In both Switzerland and the Netherlands, noise annoyance became an issue in the 1950s, before large-scale commercial jet aviation and noise

exposure. Each country approached noise as a different kind of problem. This set the scene for their respective noise policy discourses, which remain to this day.

In the Netherlands, dealing with annoyance around Schiphol Airport has always been part of the strong Dutch spatial planning tradition (Faludi and Van der Valk 1994). Planning experts approached noise as a conflict between "transport" and "housing," to be tackled through nationally planned technical and infrastructural measures. While experts figured prominently in planning practice, citizens were treated as a passive population. From the 1980s, the planning approach incorporated the ideas and practices of "ecological modernization" (Hajer 1995), which paved the way for a positive-sum logic: policymakers now thought that expansion of the airport and reduction of noise could be achieved at the same time. Around 1990 the *mainport and environment discourse* rose to dominance. "Mainport" is the Dutch neologism for "hub and spoke": the concept in which certain airports have a central position in international aviation. It was tied to "environment" or ecological modernization. This meant that noise was reframed from an issue of local quality of life into a national environmental issue in the Netherlands between 1988 and 1995.

Parallel to this, the Dutch government began involving citizens in spatial planning and policy processes in many ways. Legally, citizens had the right to object to government planning proposals. Local, regional, and national government organized hearings and communication events. Policymaking became "interactive." The Dutch government redefined itself as "complaint responsive;" people were urged to articulate their personal interests and complaints. The policy process thus contained the feeling rule that citizens are entitled to be concerned and to express fears. At the same time, complaints and other individual expressions do not affect measures to regulate noise exposure. Noise policy measures dealt with the issues technically: through noise contours for large areas and populations. As in the Netherlands, politicians and experts in Switzerland employed existing practices to address the issue of aircraft noise. In the Swiss case, annoyance was approached as a problem of federal policy. The "federalization" of noise meant that noise was seen as a political problem, not a technical or planning one. The federal approach involved collaboration and bargaining between national, regional, and local political institutions. Citizens were addressed as active political subjects, for example through several referenda on airport expansion.

Federalization brought forth a *distribution discourse*, especially following a change in policy at the end of the 1990s. The liberalization of civil aviation led to more lenient noise abatement policies in Switzerland and the Canton Zurich pleaded for new flight paths under the banner of "distribution." Aircraft noise was redefined as something that had to be distributed differently; aircraft movements and flight paths became the defining characteristics of noise in the public debate. This was in contrast to the Netherlands, where annoyance was primarily defined as acoustic noise over large areas. The Swiss distribution issue unexpectedly gained momentum because, between 2000 and 2004, several policy processes called the number of flights and flight paths into question. Government, industry, and social movements informed citizens that all flights might be redistributed. The ensuing conflict, which even undermined existing consultation bodies, alarmed many neighboring communities and citizens. Noise seemed to threaten local communities, or as they say in Swiss German, the *Heimat*. Through local consultation and information, citizens were legitimized to stand up for the protection of their local "soundscape." Almost all actors addressed citizens as local stakeholders. Individual fears were defined as a legitimate motivation for political action. At the same time, the dominant discourse defined the situation as a zero-sum game which furthered the idea that all one could do was protect the local community. In sum, while the economic aspect of air transport was treated similarly in both cases, aircraft sound became a different kind of problem in Amsterdam and Zurich through diverging policy processes (table 3 provides an overview).

Table 3. Noise Policy Discourse in Amsterdam and Zurich

	Amsterdam	*Zurich*
Dominant discourse	Mainport and Environment	Distribution
Practice	Spatial planning Ecological modernization	Federal bargaining
Definition of air mobility	Trend	Trend
Definition of annoyance	Environmental problem Planning problem Objective Acoustic	Distribution problem Threat to local life Subjective Political
Solution	Possible Positive-sum game	Impossible Zero-sum game
Annoyance policymaking	National	Regional
Position of citizens in policy measures[3]	Passive	Partly passive, partly active
Position of citizens in policy process	Active: complaints and public enquiries	Active: referenda and public enquiries
Feeling rules	Be concerned Undergo annoyance Complain individually	Accept expansion Be afraid Undergo annoyance Complain individually and collectively

## NOISE POLICY DISCOURSE AND EVERYDAY NOISE PERCEPTION

Before people protest aircraft sound, they have to perceive it as a problem. As mentioned above, noise perception is not well explained by the sound itself. Instead, aircraft noise is shaped by policy in the two cases we researched. As soon as Dutch or Swiss people write or talk about aircraft sound, they explicitly relate it to policy and politics. In citizens' letters, complaints, interviews, and public inquiry statements, more than 40 percent of the annoyance arguments explicitly refer to government or policy (41 percent in Amsterdam and 45 percent in Zurich). Citizens typically say that aircraft sound is annoying because it shows that authorities do not care. People have a rather limited repertoire to describe the sound, but an elaborate repertoire to politicize the sound. Hearing sound means evaluating policy.

When citizens speak about annoyance, they do so in terms of the policy discourse. In the Netherlands, people describe noise as an environmental problem. In Switzerland, noise is less often seen as an environmental problem as it is not defined as such politically. Swiss people, however, more often mention local living conditions, in line with the debate about distribution and the perceived threat to their home and community, the *Heimat*. Sound in this perspective is annoying because it harms the quality of life in the neighborhood.

Institutions in the Netherlands are set up to collect individual noise complaints, and people in the Netherlands more often complain individually. These complaints have a wider impact not on policy directly but on people's perception. Even those people who are not annoyed know about the complaint statistics. Complaints, these people say, prove that sound is annoying. In interviews and letters, therefore, people more often refer to complaints in the

Netherlands than in Switzerland. Figure 1 shows these differences, together with the percentage of "acoustic" arguments, that is, utterances in which noise is described as a problem of loudness or pitch. Interestingly, it is not common to describe sound that way in either case. Citizens generally adopted the logic of the policy. Around Schiphol Airport it is much more common to describe noise as a positive-sum problem, a problem that can be solved by developing the airport and noise control at the same time. Around Zurich, zero-sum logic prevails: people think that someone will gain and others will lose.

Figure 1. Percentage of Annoyance Arguments in Amsterdam and Zurich
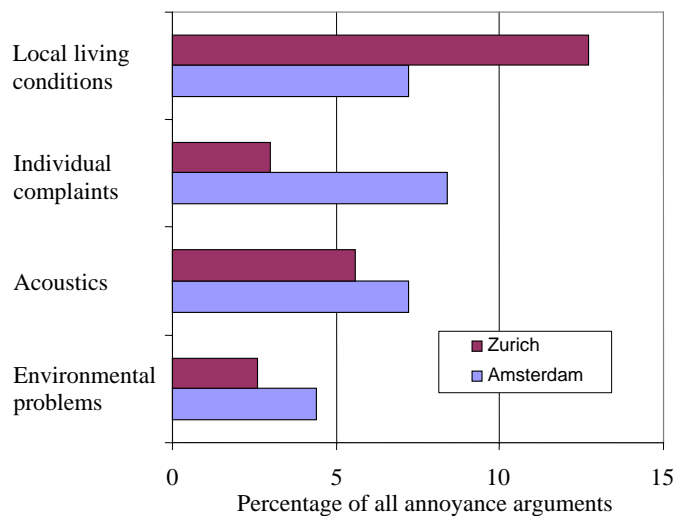
Policy is visible in the dissonant arguments as well. In the Netherlands, the dominant "mainport and environment" discourse is confronted with two dissonant discourses: the first—"don't complain"—favors airport growth, stresses the economic or "mainport" argument, and ridicules complainants. The second dissonant discourse—"free state Schiphol"—is a critique of the ideology of airport growth. Here economic and political interests are said to rule. While people distrust the official policy, this does not lead to activism: the "free state" discourse entails cynicism and the perception of a lack of citizens' power. Noise and air mobility are defined as the "runaway train" of modernity. The dominant discourse about noise at Schiphol Airport stimulates people to raise their voice only as individuals, while neither of the dissonant discourses point to collective action as a solution.[4]

In Switzerland, one finds three dissonant discourses. One is quite similar to "don't complain" in the Netherlands; the other two are clearly different. The "local resistance" discourse calls attention to the perceived threat of noise exposure to the point where local action is necessary. Below we will see how this fueled the rise of social movements. The third dissonant discourse ("limits to distribution") defines noise as a general, not a local problem. It calls for institutionalized political action like referenda, inquiries, and legal action. In sum, the oppositional discourses vary with the dominant discourse.

In this purposive sample, about 45 percent of all arguments in both cases are consonant with the policy discourse. Another 45 percent of all arguments are dissonant: the main policy is partly reproduced and partly criticized. About one-tenth of the arguments can be labeled "autonomous": they neither refer to nor struggle with the dominant policy. In this sense, citizens have internalized the dominant discourse. Differences *between* people in the two cases can be explained by the framing and feeling rules of the dominant policy. Differences

between people *within* each case can be understood as dissonance: people develop perceptions of noise in contrast with the dominant framing rules. Dissonant discourses comprise feeling rules too: people urge themselves and others (not) to complain, they call for distrust and detachment (the Netherlands), anger and outrage (Switzerland's "local resistance"), or reasonable arguments instead of emotion (Switzerland's "limits to distribution" discourse). Below we show how this emotion management affects non-contentious (in the case of complaints) and contentious action.
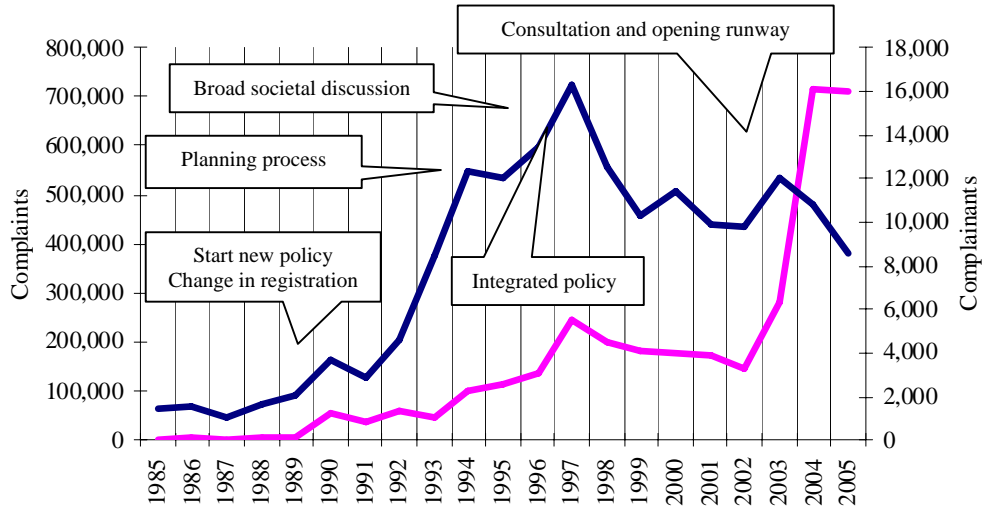
COMPLAINING

Both Amsterdam Schiphol and Zurich Kloten have legally established complaint agencies for aircraft noise. While Amsterdam Schiphol has received millions of complaints in recent years, complaints about Zurich Kloten register only in the thousands. This can be understood as the effect of framing and feeling rules. In the Netherlands, a complaint procedure for aircraft noise has existed since 1967. Complaints per year numbered in the hundreds or thousands until the late 1980s, when complaining gained significance within the "mainport and environment" discourse. The Dutch government at this time informed citizens about the complaint procedure and involved them in the policy process while the complaint agency informed people how to complain. This turned complaining into a vote on planning policy; it became a way of expressing concern about future noise. Each time policy offered a window of opportunity and stimulated people to use the opportunity (for example, when a decision about a new runway was debated with citizens), the number of complaints increased. Between 1989 and 1990 the agency furthermore switched from registering people to emphasizing separate complaints; the complaints agency and protest groups handed out forms showing people how to file large numbers of complaints. Each plane noise was now registered as a single complaint. Between 1989 and 1990, the number of complaints per person increased from 2.5 to 15, making 1990 the year of the birth of the "serial complainer." In Switzerland, in contrast, the complaint agency never had a prominent role in policymaking. It was much more geared towards "providing information" and made no sharp distinction between complainant and complaint. Complaining was not related to policymaking, and therefore the number of complaints remained much lower.

The Dutch became more annoyed when it was politically more accepted to be annoyed. Figure 2 shows the number of complaints and the number of complainants concerning noise at Schiphol. The whole period is marked by a "double goal" in policy: building a new runway and reducing noise annoyance at the same time. The graph shows the rapid growth of complaints after 1989. The next steep increase—until 1994—coincides with the public planning process in which citizens' participation was encouraged by the government, industry, and social movements alike.

The following increase up to 1997 parallels a "broad societal discussion," another interactive policy process initiated by the government. The policy process ended with an "integrated policy vision" in 1997, which meant a more or less definite policy for the years to come; the number of complainants and complaints decreased until 2002. After an extensive round of consultation and participation that framed the new runway as a threat, the opening of the new runway in 2003 led to massive complaints in the newly exposed area and a small temporal increase in the number of complainants. Mass complaining comes from a small number of people that is highly dissatisfied with the noise policy. In sum, the number of complaints follows calls by policymakers to be involved in the noise policy process. The separate effect of social movement action is only discernable around 2000 when "Milieudefensie," the Dutch branch of Friends of the Earth, held its final round of protests and actions against the new runway.

Figure 2. Noise Complaints, Complainants around Amsterdam Schiphol, and Policy Changes

Note: Number of complainants included to show that Netherlands people can and do file numerous
         complaints per person.

 Figure 3 presents the number of complaints in Zurich. Since complaining is less politi-cized
and not presented as an opportunity, the number of complaints is lower. There is also a less
direct relation with the openings in interactive policy processes, with one exception: prior to a
temporary relocation of flight paths, politicians urged the complaints agency to inform people
about their "right" to complain and linked complaints to possible financial compen-sation.
The number of complaints peaked during this window of opportunity.

Figure 3. Noise Complaints Around Zurich Kloten Airport and Main Policy Changes
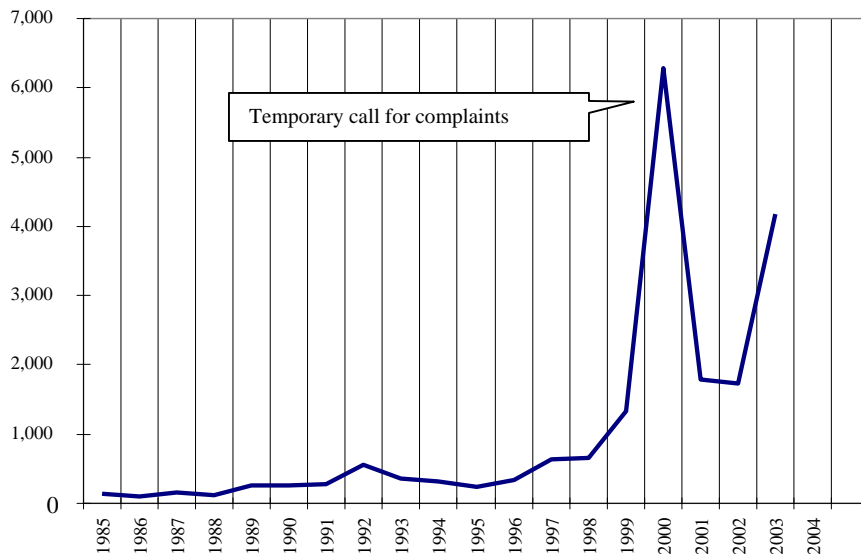
Citizens have internalized this discursive dissonance and react with distrust and negative expectations. While the dominant policy practice is used as an opportunity and triggers oppositional frames, the opposition is weak: it depends on the dominant discourse insofar as reactions remain largely within it. People evaluate the policy negatively on the basis of the expectations the policymakers raised in the first place.

To sum up, citizens' complaint behavior follows the framing and feeling rules of the specific noise complaint policy. This goes beyond strategic behavior, as we observe in the case of dissonant complaints. If citizens were just acting strategically, they would only file the information asked of them by the complaints agency. Instead, we see people challenging the dominant rules while using them; the same happens within public inquiries, informational gatherings and other forms of institutionalized opposition. Was this also the case for more visible and contentious forms of protest?

PROTEST MOVEMENTS

In both the Netherlands and Switzerland, protests against aircraft noise ranged from rallying and marching to obstruction and small-scale violence. But apart from these general similarities, noise met with different kinds of protests in Amsterdam and Zurich. In the Netherlands, about five years after the implementation of the initial noise annoyance policy in 1955, local protests began in the neighborhoods that were expected to suffer noise in the future (De Maar 1976, Dierikx and Bouwens 1997). Citizens formed the first protest group in the mid-1960s. One of the first originated in the small town of Zwanenburg and called itself "The Annoying Zwanenburgers." The group came into existence after the chief scientist of the national committee for noise annoyance contacted Zwanenburg's mayor. The scientist warned the mayor about plans for a new runway that would lead the flight path directly over the village. The mayor in turn spread the news to the citizens of the village who organized the first rallies. In the following years, several local groups took up the issue. The "Annoying Zwanenburgers" radicalized in the 1970s and 1980s. Among other actions, they placed smoke bombs in the airport. Simultaneously with contentious action, they aligned themselves with the dominant planning discourse and pleaded for technical solutions (like noise contours and an airport in the sea). Next to this group, there were only about five to ten local groups protesting aircraft noise and airport expansion until the 1980s. These groups rallied against noise as a disturbance of local living conditions. They were partly organized into regional "federations" in which broader environmental concerns were expressed.

The organizational structure, extent, and content of antinoise activism changed in the 1980s. Again, this followed changes in noise policy. Halfway to the end of the 1980s, planners, scientists and policymakers started to approach noise annoyance as an environmental issue, described in the paragraph on policy discourse above. Gradually, noise even became the central benchmark for the environmental impact of the airport. This opened new possibilities for social movements. Five years after the beginning of the new national noise policy, "Milieudefensie" (Friends of the Earth Netherlands (FOE)) jumped on the bandwagon. Concerned with the growth of the air transport sector and carbon dioxide emissions, FOE saw noise annoyance as a means to mobilize locally and get to the table nationally. Limiting noise, they figured, would also limit the growth of the air transport industry and carbon dioxide emissions. FOE followed the dominant framing rules to achieve a nondominant policy goal; it joined commissions and received funding to organize opposition. The group set up local chapters while existing antinoise groups became part of a national social movement structure. The action repertoire was similar to that of earlier protests, but with more people involved. Like the policymakers, FOE told citizens that it was in their best interest to be concerned, to complain, to use public inquiry procedures, and to start legal action. They subscribed to main parts of the dominant policy discourse and used all noncontentious means possible. This

moderately increased the number of complaints (and less so of complainants, as noted above) and led to a large number of citizens' statements in public enquiry procedures.

At the same time, FOE tried to establish an oppositional collective identity and engaged in contentious action too. On February 15, 1995, the first large-scale demonstration against Schiphol took place: about 10,000 people participated (De Kruijf 2002). In the days before, FOE activists had already climbed the central hall of the airport to install banners ("Schiphol Big Enough!"). The relatively large turnout might have to do with another action that started a year earlier. FOE had bought a piece of land that was designated for the new runway. They planted trees and called it a "wood." With this, they had a legal means to stop or delay the runway. More importantly, the "wood" symbolically contributed to the reframing of the issue: nature versus culture, small versus big, David versus Goliath, people versus profit. Earlier, the protection of a wood at Frankfurt Airport contributed to large-scale mobilization too.

The first large-scale rally had a friendly character, with children playing and FOE calling upon politicians not to build a new runway. Several months later, the government decided to start building the runway. This led to different actions: protests at the parliament (October 1995), a runway blockade (November 1995), and taking possession of a gate at Schiphol (May 1996). In October 1996, FOE tried to block all air traffic with foil balloons, but this was stopped by court rule. In May 1997 there was another public protest, and in October activists occupied the national department of transport, followed by a flyer protest in the backyard of parliament. There were repeated unsuccessful actions of that kind, ranging from a "picnic" (1997) to occupying a plane (1998) or an air traffic tower (1999). The last obstacle was FOE's "wood." After several court procedures (1997-2001), a sit-in, blocking the road, and a permanent "wake" (2001-2002), the last piece of the "wood" was cleared in early 2002 and the runway opened in 2003.

In retrospect, FOE supported large parts of the policy discourse. The "mainport and environment" discourse allowed them to position themselves as the central actor in the protest against Schiphol Airport. FOE thereby strengthened the ecological, acoustic, and centralistic approach to noise. At the same time, they opposed parts of the policy with a mixture of contentious and noncontentious action. In the two phases described here, social movements followed the policy discourse both in time and content. In Switzerland, protests against aircraft noise at Zurich Kloten began in the 1950s. A small group of law professors and lawyers set up the "Swiss League Against Noise" and began a campaign for silence as a basic right (Gallati 2002). They did not follow an established noise discourse but tried to frame the issue themselves, with an approach based on principles of law and a critique of modernization. Noise, to them, was part of a larger problem: technical and economic developments threatened to dominate individual rights. They derived their "feeling rule" about noise from an existing basic assumption that the law has to protect the private sphere. In terms of the resonance model, the league operated on the basis of an autonomous discourse.

As noise was seen as a problem of modernization in general, the league appealed to the national government. The national parliament responded sympathetically, partly because high-ranking politicians were members of the league. The national government set up a committee on noise (including aircraft noise) and invited the league to participate. The issue, however, was reformulated in the committee. Rather than being a basic right, silence was approached as one of many citizens' interests, all of which had to be balanced. The federalization of aircraft noise started at this point. The national government went on to formulate noise annoyance standards (which took almost four decades!) and simultaneously delegated the issue to the canton, the regional government. The canton set up a new institution: the "Protection Agency for Zurich Airport Neighbors." The agency consisted of the mayors of airport communities and focused on the protection of local communities (instead of silence as a basic right). Thus, over the course of a decade, the noise issue became an established political problem, but framed in a way the first "activists" had not thought of at all. The new institution was successful in the sense that citizens' concerns were incorporated; non-governmental actors only spor-

adically took up the issue. While Friends of the Earth became the most prominent opposi-tional force in the Netherlands, its Swiss chapter was only marginally involved most of the time as the dominant policy did not link noise to environmental concerns and the national government (where FOE aims).

Instead of a national environmental movement, Switzerland witnessed an explosion of local protests between 2001 and 2003. First, two regional and a handful of small local protest groups organized demonstrations that mobilized no more than a couple of hundred citizens. These activists mostly lobbied at the regional political level. Based on an inventory of protest groups by the Protection Agency for Zurich Airport Neighbors—which we compared with newspaper coverage—citizens formed more than 50 new protest groups between 2000 and 2003 (we excluded all local party chapters or governmental organizations that presented themselves as channels for protest).

The sudden rise in organizations went together with a steep increase in the size of demonstrations. In 2001, a demonstration organized by the Protection Agency for Zurich Airport Neighbors drew about two hundred supporters. In an interview that year, the head of the agency explained to us that airport neighbors have never been keen on protesting. Only a year later (June 2002), 5,000 people attended the next demonstration, followed by 6,000 in both November 2002 and March 2003, and 10,000 in July 2003. As their memberships grew, the newly established groups stimulated legal action and participation in public inquiries. In three public enquiries between 2001 and 2002, people filed 4,500, 16,000, and 6,500 legal ob-jections respectively. In one of the more activist villages, people aimed fireworks at airplanes and disturbed pilots with sharp lights at night.

All of these new protest groups had a distinct local goal: to protect their *Heimat* from flight movements. Even the shooting at aircrafts with fireworks can be interpreted as a radical form of the right to protect one's local community. This right was strongly propagated through the dominant policy discourse. The canton and a large number of local governments had alerted citizens in informational campaigns, directly and through print media. Even the airport had organized a "road show" of 39 meetings in villages around the airport in which they outlined future flight operations. At least two local protest groups were formed at these meetings. In the same period (2000-2003), three national planning procedures about future airport policy were presented to the public. They included the legal right to object to the policy; local governments helped their inhabitants to file legal objections. Finally, the bankruptcy of the national carrier Swiss Air made it easier to protest against air mobility.

Local groups partly clustered regionally, but the strong local discourse prevented the emergence of a single antiaircraft noise movement. In 2007, the citizens of Canton Zurich voted in a referendum over limiting the number of flights and lengthening the night curfew. This was set up by Friends of the Earth Switzerland and other less local organizations. But even now, different regions position themselves differently; this may have contributed to the lack of support for the restriction. In regions where local protest groups supported the refer-endum proposal, a majority of citizens voted in favor of it. Once again, the dynamics of local political action were structured by the dominant policy. In sum, citizens were alarmed about aircraft noise and were urged to protect their *Heimat*. The dominant policy framed noise as a threat which people had the right to fight against locally and collectively—and so they did.

CONCLUSION

In order for protests to start, citizens have to recognize political opportunities. This idea is at the root of various recent theories of social movements. Koopmans and Olzak's discursive opportunity theory is a recent contribution to enhance the work on political opportunity through a media-discourse approach. We sympathetically criticize their DOS approach since it does not fully address the political power of discourse: how it influences what can and

cannot be said, thought, and felt. DOS theory stresses information and cognitive framing but neglects feelings; moreover, DOS limits itself to what happens in the media and pays less attention to interactions during policy processes. In contrast, we conceptualize framing rules and feeling rules as central to discourse, and by doing so we can explain how a discourse affects feelings and strategies of social movement participants. To this end, we propose a discourse resonance model. Discourse resonance takes the form of consonance (citizens use the opportunities as framed in the dominant discourse) or dissonance (citizens partly accept and partly reject the dominant discourse). When dominant framing and feeling rules change, this resonates in people's emotions and perceptions.

We have applied this resonance model to antiaircraft noise protests. Citizens' struggle against aircraft noise cannot be explained by sound pressure levels; the same amount of noise triggers largely different responses. Nor can protests against aircraft noise be explained by the classical, nondiscursive political opportunity approach. Take for example the entry point for contentious action in the two cases discussed here: Amsterdam Schiphol in the Netherlands and Zurich Kloten in Switzerland. While highly centralized noise policies have offered opportunities for mobilization in the Netherlands since the 1950s, protests were most often "localized" until the 1980s because local governments facilitated it. It was only when a national noise policy discourse turned national environmental groups into potential stake-holders that a national movement developed. In Switzerland, at the beginning of the antinoise movement, the universal claim to silence was put forward within a decentralized polity. In ensuing years, the policy of local noise distribution mobilized local fears, a kind of protest often labeled NIMBY-ism. Indeed, people protested the noise in their backyard, but only when this "backyard" was made relevant by political actors. NIMBY-ism occurred when two framing and feeling rules became dominant: (1) noise is a threat to local social life and people are urged to be concerned; and (2) air mobility is inevitable and its growth is an iron trend people cannot change. If one accepts both, NIMBY-ism in the Swiss case is a meaningful response (comparable to the analysis of Gamson and Modigliani 1989). In the Netherlands, we saw less NIMBY-ism among social movement participants because noise was not framed as a *local* problem. While people were urged to be concerned individually, the problem was defined as a national environmental and spatial planning issue.

That noise became an environmental issue in the Netherlands and not in Switzerland cannot be explained by the strength of the environmental movement or citizens' support for ecological issues, because these differed only slightly. Noise was defined as an environmental issue in Dutch policy and five years later, FOE used this discursive opportunity. Conversely, the Swiss chapter of FOE tried to claim the noise issue but remained a marginal actor because aircraft noise was not defined as an environmental problem by other actors.

"Political culture" does not explain antinoise protest either. The incidence and content of protests and complaints change so swiftly within countries that we cannot assume a stable culture. "Cultural traits" are used according to the occasion. The Swiss claim to have a long history of protecting their native soil, if necessary with force. Interestingly, it took 50 years before this idea became the driving force for social movements challenging aircraft noise. A specific political context and policy was needed to activate the idea that the local *Heimat* was at stake.

To understand anti-noise protests, one has to start with the origins of noise perception. The same aircraft sound is experienced differently in Amsterdam and Zurich. Framing and feeling rules of policy discourses explain the difference. As Koopmans and Olzak correctly suggest, policy discourse was often conveyed to people through the mass media, though this does not explain the origin of the discourse nor its markedly political content. But the framing of aircraft noise annoyance also took place outside of the mass media: the Swiss and Dutch governments directly "communicated" their policy discourses to citizens, as did the industry and social movements. Citizens' perceptions altered through information campaigns, refer-

enda, interactive policymaking, complaint procedures, rallies, and other interactions outside of the mass media.

As Koopmans and Olzak suggest, dominant policy discourses indeed offered opportunities for mobilization. We have pointed out, for example, that complaining about noise was presented by the Dutch government as a legitimate form of protest. The number of complaints and the content of the complaints closely followed the opportunities offered by the policy discourse and by policy measures. In the Swiss case, the antinoise issue was framed as a local problem in response to the discourse on local redistribution. People, however, mobilized not only because they were informed about the possibilities, as Koopmans and Olzak would suggest. As we have shown, they conceived of these openings as real opportunities because they started to *feel* differently about their situation and their capacity to change it. The Dutch complaint procedure included feeling rules: people were stimulated to be annoyed, concerned, or even angry and to express their feelings individually. The Swiss distribution discourse included the legitimization of fear and a sense of local community.

We show that protests do not simply follow discursive opportunities. Dominant discourses produce both consonant and dissonant responses. The within-case variation of noise perceptions is the result of struggle with the dominant aircraft noise discourse; discourses trigger both support and certain forms of opposition. This opposition partly agrees and partly disagrees with the dominant discourse. Thus, for example, the Swiss local resistance opposition accepted and radicalized the right to defend its native soil. But the local resistance discourse also rejected the reification of economic growth. In this sense, the dominant Swiss distribution discourse (necessary growth, zero-sum distribution problem, legitimizing local concern) triggered its own typical opposition (rejecting growth, accepting zero-sum definition, stressing local concern).

Policy discourses delineate what can and cannot be said, done, and felt. This may seem a gloomy picture if even opposition against noise is largely shaped by dominant discourses. But the clash between people's framing and feeling rules and the rules of dominant discourses give participants some leeway to develop counterdiscourses. Nevertheless, we claim that in the researched cases, the feeling rules of the dominant discourses—as they established the right to feel annoyed and angry—were very difficult to resist. The catch was that noise annoyance policies legitimized not only annoyance but also airport growth at the same time; the right to be annoyed was part of expansion policy. People are called upon to be involved, to see themselves as stakeholders, and to expect relief. In this sense, citizens experience their feelings of anger as legitimate. At the same time, annoyance policy tries to fix the problem technically, explicitly framing the problem as nonemotional. Thus even when people's emotional commitment is welcomed, it is portrayed as unhelpful. Whereas the *feeling* rules of the dominant discourse in both Switzerland and the Netherlands evoke political commitment, the *framing* rules clearly state that solutions have to come from technical experts, innovation, and negotiations. This contradictory approach further frustrates citizens and leads to a growing negative evaluation of policy and noise. The institutionalization of the right to feel annoyed and threatened explains why annoyance rises even when noise decreases (Bröer and Wirth 2004). Discursive opportunities then determine whether this translates into private suffering or collective action.

NOTES

[1] *Mobilization* published a special issue on emotions in 2002.

[2] This is irrespective of the fact that—judged from the outside—a dominating discourse is new or in opposition to prior convictions.

[3] The policy explicitly or implicitly assumes how citizens behave. A policy measure like noise contours assumes that citizens passively receive sound. Setting up a complaint procedure assumes active citizens.

[4] Kroesen and Bröer (forthcoming) found the same dissonant and consonant discourses in a retest of the Dutch case with a different, quantitative method.

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