

Online Appendix 2: Information on focus groups

Research team

The data used in this article were collected as part of the EOS RepResent project (FNRS-FWO n° G0F0218N), between April 2019 and February 2020. The data collection was coordinated by Guillaume Petit and was supervised by Karen Celis, Kris Deschouwer (VUB), Virginie Van Ingelgom and Benoît Rihoux (UCLouvain). Guillaume Petit (UCLouvain-VUB), Kenza Amara Hammou, Louise Knops (VUB), Ramon van der Does, Soetkin Verhaegen, and François Randour (UCLouvain) recruited and moderated the focus groups.

Data summary (Focus-Groups' Transcripts)

Focus group	Number of participants	Date	Duration	Video	Audio	Language
Yellow Vests	4	15/04/2019	2h45	Yes	Yes	NL
Youth for Climate	6	23/04/2019	2h50	Yes	Yes	FR
Molenbeek	5	22/10/2019	2h25	Yes	Yes	FR
European Parliament	4	27/02/2020	1h00	No	Yes	FR

Note: Background information about the participants is presented in Online Appendix 1.

Recruitment

The research project set out to examine the relationship between democratic resentment and political representation in Belgium. The fieldwork was further defined to the Brussels region. For this purpose, focus groups were organized with members of populations where resentful affect might be expected: contemporary movements of contestation, as well as individuals who are in a socially disadvantaged position. For the former, participants of the Yellow Vests and of Youth for Climate were recruited. Researchers approached these participants at political events (meetings, demonstrations...). Prospective participants were explained what a focus group is, and what the purpose of these focus groups is (understanding what people in Belgium think about the most important societal challenges). When interested, prospective participants were given a flyer with more information, and were invited to share contact details so that the researcher could contact them again in the next few days so as to inquire about their interest in and availability for participation, and to answer any questions the prospective participant would have.

To recruit people in socially disadvantaged positions, a spatial proxy was used to reach the target population. Based on statistics on the socio-economic situation of various neighborhoods in Brussels, the main commercial street of Molenbeek was selected as a place of recruitment. Researchers went door to door explaining the project to inhabitants, inquiring about their interest to participate, providing them with a flyer with more information and contact details, and inviting them to share contact details (as for the recruitment of the Yellow Vests and Youth

for Climate groups). Similarly, a spatial proxy was used to recruit participants to the focus group with blue-collar workers in the European Parliament. Here, the researchers gained access to the European Parliament building in Brussels, allowing them to walk around and talking to people they encountered working in service and maintenance. The same strategy of conversations, flyers and follow-up calls as for the other groups was used here as well.

Topic guide

All focus groups were structured by using the same topic guide. The aim of the focus groups was to let participants discuss the topics introduced by the moderator. The moderator would let the participants run their own conversation, yet when necessary, the moderator would introduce a follow-up question, a new topic, or ask for clarification. The topic guide provided the moderator with topics that should be addressed and possible follow-up questions.

1. Welcoming – 5 min.

Introduction by moderator:

- Presentation of the research project and the researchers: who we are, what we do, what we are interested in, what we will do tonight.
- Permanent watch for newcomers by assistant researcher
- Information on confidentiality and informed consent (incl. consent form)

2. Introduction – Round Table discussion: getting to know each other – 10 min

Round-table discussion:

- What is your name/pseudo?
- A short question in link with focus group's segmentation.
 - *What does it mean for you to be [group label]?*

Variations:

- *When did you take part in [political activity] for the first time?*
- *When did you join [political organization]?*
- *How long have you been living in [place]?*
- *How long have you been working in [place]?*

3. Block 1 – Societal challenges – 40 min.

Opening question: In your opinion, what are the most important societal challenges that Belgium is facing today?

Use 3 or 4 post-it to write your own answers. One answer = One post-it.

Inner deliberation: Each participant writes his/her answers on post-its (5 min)

Tour de table: Each participant shares his/her answers (10 min)

Collective discussion: Reactions and discussion (10 min)

Follow-ups: (15 min)

Possible follow-up: Have there been any moments, or important changes, or evolutions that stood out for you? Who is to blame?

[15-minute break]

4. Block 2 – Societal challenges and political solutions – 40 min.

Opening question: How should these societal challenges be resolved?

Follow-up: Who is responsible? Who should take care of those issues?

Collective discussion: Reactions and discussion (10 min)

Stimuli (pictures): Here are some examples of ways in which people try to solve / address these problems. What comes to mind when you see these pictures? What do you think about that? How do they relate to our discussion so far?

Note to moderator: Please let the participants freely associate first, and pick the pictures they want to talk about. The follow-ups below for each picture (in case something like that does not come up spontaneously) can also be a way to explain what's on the picture if this question is posed to the moderator. In any case, let participants first explain what they associate with the general description. If they ask about specific topics (e.g. what are they protesting against?), we can let them come up with the possibilities too.

Description of pictures

1. Voting [+ elections; referendum]
2. Citizens coming together to talk about the issues [+ citizens coming together to talk about the problems and potential solutions; citizen summit that gives advice to the government; citizen summit that can make decisions for the community]
3. Demonstrate
4. Helping people that are having a hard time
5. Experts getting together to make decisions [+ experts = scientists; professionals in their field; *experts du vécu*]
6. Violent protest

Collective discussion: Reactions and discussion (20 min)

Follow-up on governance levels: In the discussions, you mentioned the mayor/Belgian government/EU, Brussels/Flanders/Wallonia a few times, but there are also other places where decisions and laws are being made, like local/federal/Belgium/EU/Brussels/Flanders/Wallonia. What do you think about these levels? What are the problems or good things about this? (up to 15 min, if people have something to say)

Note to moderator: all levels are mentioned above, it should of course be adapted to what has (not) been mentioned already.

5. Block 3 – ‘us’ vs. ‘them’ – where do we stand? – 20 min.

Opening question: In all of this, what about the [label of the group]? What are your ways to be represented?

Follow-ups:

What does it mean for you to feel represented?

Who should take care of that?

6. End of focus group – Thanking participants, background questionnaire and remuneration

Research ethics

All data have been anonymized. All participants to the focus groups have approved and signed a comprehensive consent form, informing them about the use of the focus group discussions for research purposes, and our commitment to respect the latest GDPR rules in terms of data collection, use and storage (form: “inventaire des activités de traitement de données personnelles” sept.18).

In addition, participants under 18 have provided a duly signed parental approval form. For some of the focus groups, researchers who recruited participants personally have also made a series of additional ethical commitments vis-à-vis the participants themselves:

- A commitment to maintain contact, as much as possible, with the participants in view of informing them of research results. This responds to the ethical consideration of ensuring feedback opportunities with investigated groups and people.

A commitment to ensure appropriate use of the data: one that is restricted to research purposes only, and that respects the identity and personal stories of participants.