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Being (dis)obedient

An analysis of the climate justice movement's
use of civil disobedience at COP21
in the light of the French state of emergency

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Master thesis

Human Ecology: Culture, Power, Sustainability

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Abstract

Within the climate justice movement there is a clear tendency in the last years towards actions of civil disobedience. The Red Lines protest in Paris during COP21 was meant to be one of the main events of the movement in 2015. However, the Paris attacks on November 13 and the subsequent state of emergency drastically changed the conditions for political protests.

This thesis provides an analysis of the power struggle between protesters and the police in the preparation and implementation phase of the Red Lines protest. By interviewing several organisers of and participants in the protest, I trace this power struggle with insights from different perspectives, providing a comprehensive image of the event. It becomes clear that the implications of the state of emergency and the climate justice movement's response initiated a process with several shifts of power, revolving around the question of being (dis)obedient. Thereby, this thesis sheds a light on the current climate justice movement, its use of civil disobedience and its powers in the interaction with the police. These insights might be useful for the movement in further actions of civil disobedience in the coming years.

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List of abbreviations

CJA	Climate Justice Action
COP	Conferences of the Parties
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

“Only mass social movements can save us now!”

Naomi Klein

“To change everything,
~~we need everyone” — People's Climate March 2014~~
we have to step out of line”

Red Lines protest 2015

“This is where problems begin...”

Bernard Cazeneuve, French minister of the interior

1 Introduction

It is the evening of November 13, 2015. After months of preparation we finally want to make it happen now: our bike demonstration from Copenhagen to Paris for the UN climate negotiations in December 2015. Everything is prepared and I just want to get a good night of rest before we set off the next morning on our three-week journey. Just a very last check of our common email address and then: terrorists have attacked several spots in Paris, first assessments talk about more than one hundred dead and several hundred injured people. Thoughts are running through my head – What does this mean for us? Should we still start cycling the next morning? Will the climate negotiations take place in Paris at all? And if so, is that the right place to go and demonstrate in a mass of people?

Exactly four weeks later, it is the evening of December 11. After an intense week in Paris with beautiful art workshops, inspiring speeches, and thrilling action trainings we want to make it happen the next day: the civil disobedience *Red Lines* protest, showing that the Paris Agreement is not sufficient for climate justice and that the movement will not be silenced by a state of emergency. I am joining our cycling comrades who came from London in order to have a last update for the next day and I hear: the protest has officially been authorised by the police. On my way back to our accommodation, thoughts are running through my head – What does that mean for us? No repression, fair enough, but can we still make our point? Did the police plan all this far ahead? And should I actually still go there?

These two very emotional moments are part of my most vivid memories of the past year. By then, I did not fully understand how they were linked but I realised that the Red Lines protest was a complex and fascinating case. Still in the phase of exploring the climate justice movement that I had just got involved in, I was curious to better understand the processes and nexus behind these happenings. Therefore, I decided to dedicate the research for my Master thesis to the climate justice movement, its Red Lines protest at the UN climate negotiations COP21 (Conference of the Parties) and its emerging element of civil disobedience.

1.1 Purpose of the research

Climate change, without any doubt, is a multi-issue and multi-level problem. Its complexity, scale, and interweaving with pretty much every aspect of public and private life might give reasons why so far on a global scale no adequate action has been taken. Such systemic failure on behalf of governments on various levels has contributed to the perception by activists that without a social movement there will be no solution to the threats posed by climate change (Hestres 2014: 326) - or as Naomi Klein (2014: 450) puts it: "Only mass social movements can save us now."

However, after years of symbolic human chains, vigils, and climate marches, several voices within the climate justice movement speak out for the 'normalisation' of civil disobedience as a common tactic of the movement. Consequently, it was planned to have a protest including civil disobedience at the end of the UN climate negotiations COP21 in Paris in December 2015, the so-called *Red Lines*. An analysis of the actions that took place in the unprecedented environment of post-terrorist attacks Paris as well as reflections of the organizing team on the process and the decisions taken, give an insights in the contemporary climate justice movement. Power struggles between activists and the police on the question of whether and how to stage the protest - despite the ban of all political demonstrations - are an opportunity to shed a light on the power of the movement and its emerging tactic of civil disobedience.

1.2 Research questions

Inspired by my own involvement in the movement and my participation in the protest, I dedicated the research of my Master thesis to the following question:

How was the Red Lines protest a power struggle between protesters and the police and what does this say about the climate justice movement's use of civil disobedience?

The following sub-questions will guide my research:

1. What characterised the climate justice movement's preparation of the Red Lines protest?

2. How did the climate justice movement plan to use civil disobedience in the Red Lines protest?
3. How were both the preparation of the Red Lines protest and its implementation part of a power struggle between protesters and the police?
4. What does the Red Lines protest say about the climate justice movement's use of civil disobedience?

1.3 Structure of the thesis

In order to answer these questions, I will start in the following chapter with my methodological approach for this thesis. I will shortly explain my epistemological stance, describe the process of my data collection, and reflect upon the limitations of this thesis.

In chapter three, I will lay out the theoretical framework I will draw on regularly throughout this thesis. This includes considerations on political opportunity structures as an established theory in social movement research, as well as explanations on disruptive repertoires of movements with a focus on civil disobedience. Moreover, I will reveal the approach towards power that I chose for this thesis and summarise key insights from the research field of policing protests that are relevant for this case study.

Chapter four is the main part of this thesis and, in combination with chapter five, will provide answers to the above stated research questions. Therefore, I will begin by characterising the contemporary climate justice movement, tracing its roots and its developments in the last years. I will then turn to the analysis of the context in which mobilisations for the Red Lines protest took place, applying theories from social movement research to grasp the relevance of COP21 for the climate justice movement. I will then provide an organisational-inside view on the mobilisations, establishing links to the above described characteristics of the movement. This will help to better understand the choice of objectives for the protest that will be stated afterwards, hinting at the intended use of civil disobedience in the protest. Following that, I will show the relevance of the Paris attacks and the subsequent state of emergency for the movement and how it affected the mobilisations. Subsequently, I will turn my attention to power struggles between protesters and the police in the final preparation and implementation phase of the Red Lines protest. I will analyse which power sources pro-

testers could build on in their interaction with the police about the central question on whether or not to stage the civil disobedience protest despite the state of emergency. Shifting my attention to the actual protest and the shortly before granted authorisation by the police, I will draw on a participant's perspective to better understand the effects of the authorisation and how the police regained control over the situation. The last part of this analysis is then dedicated to another shift in the power relations between protesters and the police, namely the spontaneous march after the official end of the Red Lines protest that turned it into a civil disobedience protest again.

In chapter five, I will then discuss the central insight from my analysis. I will show in what way the climate justice movement is using civil disobedience and will consider further aspects that might become relevant for the movement in the coming years. Finally, I will summarise my thesis and explore further research gaps.

2 Methodological approach

This chapter serves as a starting point to clear the ground for the present thesis. I will shortly characterise my epistemological stance for this research including reflections on my role as a researcher. I will then in detail explain my process of data collection, drawing on literature on the specific methods. This chapter will be concluded by the limitations of my own research.

2.1 Epistemological stance

The topic of this Master thesis, the Red Lines protest in Paris at COP21, overlaps with my personal increased involvement as an activist within the climate justice movement. My inspiration to dedicate my research to a movement that I am by now closely related to, stems from the idea of militant research which Russell (2015: 222) describes as follows: "research thus becomes the art of producing tools you can fight with." The commitment within militant research lies with a political milieu of activists whose praxis shall be improved through critical examination of it (ibid.: 223; 226).

Militant research can be seen as part of a wider approach that is referred to as activist research. Chatterton et al. (2007), identifying with this approach, see

themselves as 'academic-activists', eager to produce knowledge that is useful for social transformation. They consider it as an "urgent methodological as well as political imperative" (ibid.: 222) to have research contributing to activist work on protests and campaigns.

Being linked to the even wider approach of participatory action research¹ (cf. Kindon et al. 2007), certain epistemological assumptions come along with activist research. Not necessarily denying that there is a reality which is independent of our ways of thinking about it, it still emphasises that a single phenomenon might be interpreted in multiple ways and that a plurality of knowledges exists on certain issues (ibid.: 9; 13). What is also known as standpoint theory, is described by Russell (2015: 224) as follows: "Rather than interpreting the photograph as the presentation of truth, we must understand the act of taking a photograph as the production of a very specific and orientated knowledge." As a consequence, knowledge has to be regarded as situated and dependent on the social and historical context of the knower (Haraway 1988).

To shortly situate myself in this context relevant for the research on the mobilisations of the climate justice movement for COP21 in Paris: I am a white, male, 26-years-old student of German citizenship, actively involved in the movement since October 2015. I participated in the below described protest and eventually got involved in certain meetings for planning the action, giving me a partial-insider perspective on the organisation process. I would regard myself as an academic-activist (see above), interested in the processes within the movement. My ambition with this research is to help people in the movement to better understand the processes around the Red Lines mobilisation in order to draw lessons for coming actions and to provide an insight for academia in the contemporary climate justice movement. However, I also feel my personal limitations as I am neither an experienced researcher on social movements nor an experienced activist familiar with the climate justice movement for several years.

2.2 Data collection

In the following, I will describe the collection of data as it took place chronologically and will trace my own considerations within this process.

¹ Participatory action research starts from the idea that researchers and participants collaboratively identify a problem and engage in the search for solutions to that problem (Wadsworth 1998). However, as I did not engage in a process of commonly identifying a problem, I do not claim to conduct participatory action research.

2.2.1 Own experiences

Having only a vague idea that I wanted to dedicated my Master thesis to an analysis of the climate justice movement at COP21, although at that time having a different idea of what to relate it to, I participated in a preparation meeting of Climate Justice Action (CJA)² in October 2015. There I got involved with issues concerning the organisation of the Red Lines protest, as key themes and ideas were discussed in that meeting. Through private discussions with other participants, I got valuable insights into considerations around the objectives for the mobilisations for COP21 and got to understand the (non-)relevance of that happening from a movement-insider perspective. Apart from that, I made personal contact with people who later turned out to be core organisers of the Red Lines protest. These personal contacts were very valuable in order to get access to this group. Though I do not consider my personal notes from that meeting as perfectly focussed on what later became my research topic, I still regard them (and use them) as a valid source for my research purpose in terms of better understanding the conditions of the recent climate justice movement.

As a second phase, I consider my time being in Paris from the 5th until the 15th of December. Several experiences I made during this time, including the participation in an action training, the mental and physical preparations for the Red Lines protest (being embedded in a bigger group), or being part of a planning meeting a day before the protest, serve as starting points for further considerations. When possible, I also tried to get perspectives from other participants on the experiences relevant for this thesis via focus group discussions (see below).

2.2.2 Web articles and internal documents

A second source that I started to collect from in the weeks following COP21 and use as data, refer to web articles that were written for online magazines. They were particularly helpful to get a wider impression on how activists, environmental organisations, scholars, and journalists had perceived and classified the happenings in Paris. Besides that, I collected a number of official communiques by the Coalition21³ and materials provided by the CJA and D12 websites. Even more important for my research though, were texts that were circulated via activist

2 Climate Justice Action is a loose network of (European) grassroots movements.

3 This is a commonly used short-form for Coalition Climate 21, consisting of around 130 organisations from civil society and labour unions that was formed for COP21.

email lists, namely *coordination-climate-actions-2015* and *copandbeyond-orga*. Among these documents were a summary of a debriefing after the Red Lines protest that I had also attended and, as a follow-up from that, the responses of the core organising team of the Red Lines to some central questions raised at that debriefing.

2.2.3 In-depth interviews

In-depth interviews are a common tool in social movement research as they provide an insight into how actors make sense of their own actions and their environment (della Porta 2014: 230). In order to get a better understanding of the organising process, I conducted three in-depth interviews with members of the core team organising the Red Lines protests. Hence, they are key informants as they hold certain central information on mobilisation strategies and internal considerations (ibid.: 228). The first informant was chosen through a pragmatic approach as I had already established a personal contact with him. From there on however, I got recommendations to talk to other members of the team as they were known to have either an essentially different perspective on the process or a role that I was specifically interested in, i.e. being one of the contact persons for the police. A shortcoming in terms of my choice of informants concerns definitely a gender-imbalance as all the three of them were male. Only the first interview was conducted face-to-face while the other two were held via Skype. Though some aspects of a conversation might get lost and misunderstandings might occur more easily, it was not possible to conduct all the interviews face-to-face as two informants were living in France. Another shortcoming concerns the timing of the interviews. The first one was conducted in March and I had planned to have the others within one month after that. However, due to personal reasons and delayed email communication with my informants, the last one was not conducted until the end of May, so more than five months after the actual protest.

2.2.4 Focus group discussions

To complement the perspective of organisers, I decided to also have two focus group discussions with four participants of the Red Lines protest each. A focus group discussion has the advantage of direct interaction of the participants, potentially leading to revelation of differing perceptions and the emergence of new thoughts (O'Reilly 2009: 80). In research on social movements, focus groups are

of particular interest as they can reveal “topics that unify and divide movement participants” (Blee 2013: 604). I also chose focus groups because I hoped that the discussions among the participants would animate their memories as I was facing the same timing problems described above and the happenings of Paris dated back already four, respectively more than five months. The choice of participants followed again a pragmatic approach which means I asked people from my personal environment. I do not regard this as a problem as I do not claim to generalise their perceptions but rather wanted to diversify impressions from the protest. Therefore, it was important to choose participants who had different levels of pre-experiences in terms of movements and civil disobedience and different socio-cultural backgrounds. An interesting aspect also concerns the different experiences they made during the protest as all participants of my second focus group had ended up in the blockade of the bridge following the actual Red Lines (see Chapter 4.5.4), while all participants of the first focus group had not been able to make their way there in time.

In the following text, my informants are named according to whether they participated in an interview (I1, I2, I3) or in a focus group discussion (FG I 1, FG I 2, ..., FG II 4). Appendix I provides an overview of their names, their role in the protest and the date and location of data collection.

Both, interviews and focus group discussions were transcribed and subsequently coded according to themes that I had set up before the first interview. However, I also applied open coding, that is being open to discover what unexpected insights the text might reveal (Mattoni 2014: 30). Hence I established new codes that came up in different interviews and applied them also to those previously conducted.

2.3 Limitations

One of the limitations of my research certainly concerns the availability of data on the protest. Unfortunately, by the time of COP21, I had not yet decided that I would dedicate my research to the Red Lines protest. Otherwise, I could have done participant observations, probably allowing a much more focussed set of data. Instead, I can only draw on some of my own experiences and personal observations.

Certainly, the scope of this Master thesis also limited my data collection. It might

have been beneficial to conduct at least one more interview with a member of the core organising team in order to specifically trace the emergence of civil disobedience as a tactic in the movement. Conducting more focus groups with participants of the protest (including more diverse backgrounds) could have added other experiences and more insights in terms of their feelings. However, due to the complexity of the chosen case, both the conducted interviews and focus groups easily exceeded expected time frames so that the quantity had to be limited in order to not lose qualitative aspects.

A key limitation concerns my missing experience in social movement research. Gaining an overview in the vast field of literature was very time consuming and though I did extensive reading, I still do not feel certain that I have covered all the relevant approaches. This is also related to the choice of the case study. Delving ever deeper into the processes around the Red Lines protest, I found it to be an incredibly complex case, making my data collection a rich and inspiring process but also leading to problems in situating key happenings in the wider context and drawing conclusions from that.

Related to that, my thesis is limited to an activist perspective on the happenings. Due to a lack of French language skills, personal links and the necessary standing as an established researcher on protest policing, I was not able to conduct interviews with involved police men and women. Nevertheless, I regard the police and their actions as an important part of this thesis and therefore will draw on activists' perceptions on police's considerations and actions, though not claiming to be always exact.

3 Theoretical Framework

In the following, I will outline the frame for my analysis of the Red Lines protest. Firstly, I will draw on theories and literature from the vast field of social movement research, particularly political opportunity structures as a theory on mobilisation and civil disobedience as part of the disruptive repertoire of movements. Laying grounds for a later analysis of power relations around the Red Lines protest, I will summarise the chosen framework on the power of nonviolence as well as insights from the research field on policing protests.

3.1 Social Movements

An increasing number of social movements can be observed in the past decades; scholars even speak of *social movement societies* (Meyer & Tarrow 1998). In the present thesis, I will build on Tilly's understanding of social movements that are part of a political process including governments and involve "collective making of claims that, if realized, would conflict with someone else's interests" (2004: 3). The process of making these collective claims heard by joining forces and confronting elites and authorities, using a repertoire of collective action, is also termed *contentious politics* (Tarrow 2011: 4).

3.1.1 Political opportunity structures

Tarrow (2011) identifies four main theorists, emphasising different elements on why people act contentiously. While a Marxist analysis comes to the conclusion that people act out of class consciousness, Leninists see as a prerequisite the existence of an intellectual vanguard that organises the masses for political struggles. Contrasting the latter, a Gramscian school of thought emphasises the necessity of the 'organic intellectual' coming from the working class itself in order to create a countercultural consensus of the workers against bourgeois hegemony. Tilly, finally, considers favourable state structures and political conditions as the decisive factor for acting contentiously (see Tarrow 2011: 16-20). For this strand, also termed political opportunity structure, Tilly (1978) identifies opportunities and threats for protesters as well as facilitation and repression by police forces as the decisive criteria that determine the emergence or absence of contention. Building on that, Tarrow further develops this approach and comes to the conclusion that "people engage when patterns of political opportunities and constraints change", strategically applying a repertoire of collective action (Tarrow 2011: 28-29).

3.1.2 Repertoire of Social Movements

The repertoire of social movements describes a set of contentious actions that a movement has employed repeatedly and that is regularly drawn on within the movement. In Tilly's words, the term describes a "whole set of means [a group] has for making claims of different types on different individuals" (1986: 2). Building on this fundamental work, three different repertoires of contention can be identified, namely contained behaviour, violence, and disruption, with the latter

being named the “common coin of contentious politics” (Tarrow 2011: 99) as social movements seek to “break with routines, startle bystanders, and leave elites disoriented”. Kolb takes the same line stating that the “political power of mass disruptions stems from its ability to destroy the normal functioning of institutions” (2007:74). And della Porta (2007: 12) identifies a two-fold effect as it can serve as a proof of the movement’s determination as well as strongly drawing the public’s attention on their topic at the same time.

Civil Disobedience

One particular form of disruption is referred to as civil disobedience. The act of disobeying civil law has quite a prominent place in the social movements of the 20th century and, in some cases, is even presented as *the* decisive feature/tactic, deciding over triumph or defeat of a movement. For many, Henry David Thoreau serves as the “father” of civil disobedience in modern democratic societies. Thoreau refused to pay his taxes in 1846, not wanting to support slavery and the Mexican-American war by the US government, and accepted a jail sentence as consequence. Reflecting on his experiences, he claimed that to do justice means an active refusal of the cooperation with unjust laws (Thoreau 1849).

Quill identifies three features of civil disobedience: its occurrence in the public realm, the refusal of violence and a reformist rather than a revolutionary orientation, i.e. aiming for change in politics (2009: 14). In accordance to this notion, Hannah Arendt states that “[t]he civil disobedient accepts, while the revolutionary rejects, the frame of established authority and the general legitimacy of the system of laws” (1972: 77).⁴ Commonly invoked reasonings to use civil disobedience include to gain free speech, to call on international laws when domestic politics is violating them, reconciliation of one’s actions with one’s conscience, and finally civil disobedience as an act of necessity defence (Quill 2009: 9-12). The latter starts from the premise that no alternative course of action is available or, citing Arendt again (1972: 74), “that the normal channels of change no longer function and grievances will not be heard or acted upon.”

One aspect particularly interesting for this thesis concerns the relation between

⁴ The question on whether civil disobedience protests of the climate justice movement have a reformist or revolutionary character has to remain unanswered at this point. Though there are strong anarchist tendencies in the movement, there are also voices that see the movement's protests as appeals towards politics.

civil disobedience as a form of nonviolent protest and violence as a potential response towards it. Though state actors have the legal right to use violence to enforce the law, its legitimacy is called into question when used against openly non-violent protesters. Such an occurrence might lead to solidarity with the protesters among wider parts of the population; an absence of such violent reactions on the other hand has the potential to take away the foundation of this tactic as the nonviolent aspect does not become visible (Quill 2009: 17).

3.2 The power of nonviolence

Considering power relations in protests that make use of civil disobedience, it becomes relevant to examine protesters' ability to disobey law and ultimately the underlying power of nonviolence. Gene Sharp's (1973) classic *The Politics of Non-violent Action* serves here as a starting point to better understand power struggles around the Red Lines protest in Paris at COP21. In the first volume of his work, Sharp addresses the question of what the basic nature of political power is. Social power for him is "the capacity to control the behavior of others"; political power in turn is understood as "social power which is wielded for political objectives, [referring to the] total authority, influence, pressure and coercion which may be applied to achieve or prevent the implementation of the wishes of the power-holder" (ibid.: 7-8).

Sharp broadly divides theories on power in monolith theory and pluralistic-dependency theory. Monolith ideas on power are based on the assumption that governments *are* in power, have a rather fixed amount of power that is durable and self-perpetuating, and can only be overthrown by the use of force, namely another, more powerful state. This makes people dependent on the good will of their governments to not do them harm (ibid.: 8-9). On the contrary, pluralistic-dependency theory does not assume that rulers have an intrinsic degree of power but that all power is given to them by society. The amount of power is always dependent on the level to which a society allocates power to a ruler. Rather than people being dependent on the good will of governments, this theory argues that governments are dependent on people to be able to rule, or more precisely on their consent. Therefore, power is fragile as it is dependent on the daily reproduction of people's obedience to their governments. "[P]olitical power", writes Sharp (1973: 10; emphasis in original), "can most efficiently be controlled *at its*

sources". It is these basic assumptions that are at the core of a theory on power of nonviolent action.

Sharp (1973: 11-12) identifies six sources of power. *Authority* is the acceptance of command through social skills without threat of force. *Human resources* concern the quantitative number of people (dis-)obeying a ruler, while their *skills and knowledge* refer to their qualitative capacity to do so. *Intangible factors* include habits and mindsets in regards to obedience as well as the existence of an ideology or common ground to give/deny power to rulers. *Material resources* describe the ruler's control over property, resources, and means of communication. And *sanctions*, finally, refer to measures that can be taken in order to achieve obedience, such as fines, imprisonment, or strikes. Thus, one's power depends on the access to these six sources. However, Sharp's most important conclusion is that all of them are actually not internal features of the power holder but dependent on people's obedience to grant this power (ibid.: 11).

Obedience is regarded by Sharp as the consequence of an interplay between coercion and consent.⁵ While the relation between coercion and obedience is quite straight-forward and also applicable to monolith theories of power, it is the idea of subjects consenting to their domination that emerges with Sharp's theory. He argues that basically all forms of obedience are voluntary – after assessments of potential gains and losses (such as sanctions) due to (dis-)obedience – and in fact “the result of an act of volition” (ibid.: 26). Conclusively, he states that “*all government is based upon consent*” (ibid.: 28; emphasis in original).

3.3 The power of violence

In contrast to people's power as (dis)obedience, police forces draw their powers from their legally granted right to use violence to enforce their ability to create obedience. Interactions between protesters and police have called the attention of researchers over the past twenty years and created a field of research described as *policing protests*, what della Porta & Reiter (1998: 1) understand as “the police handling of protest events”. In their fundamental work, they identify five variables determining protest policing: institutional characteristics such as constitutional, defendants' or prisoners' rights; police culture and its varying

⁵ Most prominently, Antonio Gramsci (1971) made this point with his theory on the persistent dominance of capitalism through a combination of rule of force (coercion) and rule of ideas (hegemony).

rootedness in a democratic culture; configuration of political power or the visions of governments on legal enforcement; public opinion expressed through media assessments of legitimacy of using force against protesters; and former interactions with protesters (ibid.: 10-20). All these aspects are filtered through *police knowledge*, understood as "police's perception of their role and of the external reality" (ibid.: 22).

Generally, the policing of protests constitutes a major challenge to democratic states, especially as it is perceived as an indicator for the quality of democracy. State and police forces are expected to find a balance between, on the one hand civil rights in terms of political participation and freedom of expression and on the other hand the protection of legal order (della Porta et al. 2006: 3). Three main strategies for the control of protests have been identified: the *coercive strategy* entails the use of physical force and even weapons, a *persuasive strategy* strives for exchange and eventually agreement with protest organisers, and the *information strategy* aims to gather as much data on activists as possible in order to identify law-breakers without intervention at the spot (della Porta & Reiter 2006a: 13).

Analysis on general tendencies in the styles of policing protests differ. McPhail et al. (1998) identify a clear tendency from *escalated force* towards *negotiated management* since the 1980's. In a later work, della Porta & Reiter (2006b: 176) term *policing of transnational protest* as a third style with tendencies towards more use of force, the deterrence of protesters, and massive collection of data on activists. Wood (2014) then, in a more recent book, identifies from the analysis of similar cases an increased militarisation of protest policing which results from a neoliberal transformation that also reaches the public sector of police.

Considering persuasive strategies for policing protests, negotiations as a process between protesters and police become of central importance and have actually formed an own sub-field within this research area. A departing point for such considerations is Waddington's (1994) fundamental work with his findings on the extraordinary importance for police to "maintain control over their essentially precarious working environment" (ibid.: 127). However, he also provides the insight that police forces do not always see their coercive powers as the best way to achieve their goal of maximal control over the situations (ibid.: 101). Therefore, authorities have a great interest in getting protesters into negotiations on the

terms of the protest before the event (ibid.: 75).

But why would protesters agree to such negotiations? One reason, certainly, can be found in the hope of protesters to avoid violence that might undermine their political message and at the same time diminish space for political contention (della Porta et al. 2006: 11). Another reason, maybe even more importantly, is again provided by Waddington's research which concludes that protesters are more dependent on police than vice-versa. To ensure safety both from traffic incidents and police violence, protesters are dependent on a certain degree of state forces' goodwill. "Not invoking the law, *not* making arrests for minor offences and *not* confronting do not surrender power but use it" (1994: 199; emphasis in original). Peterson (2006) expands this dependence also in terms of how police acts towards different groups of protesters, creating divides between the 'good guys' as those willing to cooperate with the police and follow their terms and the 'bad guys' who refuse certain forms of negotiations or agreements. As this divide is caused by police interaction, she concludes that "[t]he parameters of protest are inexorably set, not by the challengers, but by the state itself" (ibid.: 73).

Scrutinizing negotiations also sheds light on what happens before the actual protest, which as such constitutes only the publicly visible tip of the iceberg. Indeed, Starr et al. (2011) criticise this narrow research focus and point to the importance of controlling dissent on a much broader scale. By what Noakes & Gillham (2006: 111-112) term *strategic incapacitation*, they show how people potentially dissenting are kept away from other protests by various means of control and self-control, leading to much easier control of the actual protest event (Starr et al. 2011: 14).

4. The Red Lines protest

The 'Red Lines' action certainly was the most controversial of activists during COP21. Framed from the beginning as an action of mass civil disobedience, its status became even more contested when the French state of emergency was instated after the Paris attacks on November 13, banning all demonstrations. Despite that, the organisations continued their activities and on December 12, the Red Lines were formed by more than 10,000 people on the Avenue de la Grande

Armée close to the Arc de Triomphe.

In the following case study, I will first focus my attention on the above stated research questions *What characterised the climate justice movement's preparation of the Red Lines protest?* and *How did the climate justice movement plan to use civil disobedience in the Red Lines protest?* More specifically, I will first trace key developments of the movement in the last years and second closely examine the conditions in which the initial planning for the Red Lines protest took place, both determining the objectives for the protest. Third, I will point out the effects that the Paris attacks on November 13 and the following state of emergency had on the mobilisations.

Subsequently, I will focus my attention on the research question *How were both the preparation of the Red Lines protest and its implementation part of a power struggle between protesters and the police?* I will analyse power relations in the preparation phase of the action between state authorities that had banned all kinds of political demonstrations during the state of emergency and the part of the climate justice movement that announced to keep on going with the planning. I will give special importance to the authorisation of the protest by the police on the evening before the actual event. I will then draw on perspectives from organisers as well as from participants to understand power relations in the implementation phase of the protest.

4.1 Characterising the contemporary climate justice movement

The following section contributes to the first above state research question and will lay the ground from which decisions within the movement have to be understood.

4.1.1 Radical movements

Roughly speaking, social movements can be divided along the line of whether they act inside or outside of the institutional framework of policy-making. Organisations doing advocacy work at international summits such as the COP are considered Non-governmental organisations (NGOs). On the other side, there are social forces that engage with the same issue as the respective summit (in this case climate change) but do so (deliberately) outside of the institutional framework.

That is what Pianta (2001: 190) terms *radical movements*. Bennett (2005: 214) builds on the dichotomy of *NGO advocacy order* and *direct activism*. The latter is characterised by mass activism, and aims at involving people in direct actions and empower them with the capacity to bring about value changes. My thesis will be concerned with the *radical* part of the climate justice movement, not trying to influence the negotiations from within but dedicated to direct action in the streets.

4.1.2 Transnational movements

In recent years, scholars have dedicated their attention to an emerging phenomenon in social movement research: the rise and new understanding of transnational movements (Keck & Sikkink 1998; della Porta 2007; Bandy & Smith 2005). Pianta & Marchetti (2007: 31) characterise global social movements as those that apply a global frame to the problems and a global scope to their actions. The climate justice movement that mobilized for the Red Lines action, can be characterised as such a global social movement as it addresses the global phenomenon climate change, and demands action on a global scale by protesting next to COP21⁶.

Transnational movements, in many regards, follow a different logic than local or national movements – and hence so does the climate justice movement. First and foremost, the nature of the problem of climate change is its globality, meaning that single states will not be able to find solutions on their own, and that an understanding on a global scale is necessary to address it appropriately. Second, climate change is not only a multi-level but also multi-issue problem. The emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases are closely linked to economic activities, food production, mobility, housing, etc. – virtually every aspect of private as well as public life. This leads to the challenge that there is not the *one* institution that is able to effectively combat climate change. There are always multiple institutions involved in and, affected by, addressing climate change. As Ciple et al. (2015) state, international economic forums or national politics on fossil fuels might be arenas at least as important for addressing climate change as the COP is. Pianta & Marchetti hint additionally to the missing *final authority* in questions of global governance: “no universally coercive power of law has yet

⁶ It will be discussed later in this thesis in what ways the climate justice movement actually addressed COP21 and demanded a different outcome or if Paris served only as a meeting point to strengthen the movement and coordinate for future activities.

emerged, and, more importantly, no democratic process of participation, deliberation, and voting have developed for the world's citizens" (2007: 30). Therefore, common theories on which aspects of the political process can be influenced by social movements (e.g. Kolb 2007) and the consequently following objectives of movements are not applicable. Remarkably, also explicit literature on transnational movements (Bandy & Smith 2005; della Porta 2007; Tarrow 2011) widely omits the question of objectives of movements working on a global scale but rather focusses on challenges of network building, repertoire merging, or support for local and national struggles.

4.1.3 Roots of the climate justice movement

Newly emerging movements can often be analysed in terms of where their key thoughts and mobilisation base come from. The roots of the contemporary climate justice movement can be traced back to two precursors. First, it feeds on the more radical groups and organisations of the environmental movement. On the one hand, there is the environmental justice movement that emerged in the 1980s, with demonstrations against the unequal distribution of environmental benefits and risks, thereby coining the term *environmental racism* (Cole & Foster 2001). On the other hand, there is the radical wing of advocacy organisations from inside the UN climate negotiations that formed the *Climate Justice Now!* network between 2007 and 2011 (Reitan & Gibson 2012: 403-4). A second precursor is the global justice movement that had its main fields of engagement at protests against WTO or G7/G8 summits, calling for social justice in the process of globalisation. The global justice movement had a clear focus on direct action and civil disobedience, most salient at the WTO summit 1999 in Seattle, when activists managed to shut down the meeting as they blocked the venue (Bullard & Müller 2012: 55-6).

Hadden (2015) has shown how the global justice movement, after being confronted with increasing problems to frame their message in clear demarcations to politicians at the G8 summit in 2007, discovered climate change as a new topic, seeing the potential to frame it in a broader scope of systemic problems. "And as much as we were a movement without a story at that point, there was also a story without a movement: climate change" (cited in Hadden 2015: 34). This 'movement spill-over' (Hadden & Tarrow 2007) resulted in the joining of forces from the global justice movement and a formerly rather small climate movement,

bringing about a master frame of climate justice (Wahlström et al. 2013) for COP15 in Copenhagen in 2009. The movement's new ideas on the summit are best described in the words of Tazio Müller, a climate activist well-known in the movement: "Forget Kyoto - Shut down Copenhagen 2009!" (Müller 2008).

4.1.4 Long-term impacts of COP15

COP15 in 2009 represents a significant shift within the climate movement (on European grounds). Before the Copenhagen summit, COPs had hardly been a target for activists but rather a space for specialised advocacy organisations (NGOs) that were trying to influence the negotiations from within (Dietz 2014: 294-5). Through the above mentioned movement spill-over, December 2009 ended up on the agendas of many established and experienced activist networks. However, due to these two quite different orientations and backgrounds, it is not surprising that Hadden (2015) makes out a clear division among climate networks in Copenhagen, preventing that contention spread all over the present organisations.

Those organisations that were willing to apply contentious formats for the first time, spent quite some time and effort in harmonising tactics with and adopting strategies from the global justice movement (Hadden 2015: 137). However, due to an unprecedented high level of police repression and pre-emptive detentions, many of the planned actions did not achieve their goal (Russell et al. 2012). To name just one example, the Reclaim Power march - inspired by the idea of a "classic summit action" but acknowledging the importance of the conference itself - foresaw to trap negotiators until they had reached an ambitious agreement. Activists from outside were supposed to overcome the barriers around the venue of the COP and meet members from accredited NGOs coming from the inside to commonly hold the "People's Assembly for Climate Justice". However, this plan failed due to the strong presence of state forces hindering activists from outside to enter the area (Chatterton et al. 2013: 615-6). This failure of the plan seems to be the source of one of the major learnings from Copenhagen: setting achievable goals is crucial to not endanger long-term commitment of people. Hence, such goals cannot be "capture the building" or "influence the talks", as they are almost certainly doomed to fail (CJA meeting 2015, own notes).

Among the more moderate, advocacy-focused organisations many had put great hopes in "Hopenhagen" as an all-or-nothing summit. When it came to an end and

delegates had not been able to agree on an ambitious treaty, disappointments were respectively high:

I 1: My impression of the movement base: it felt like a massive failure and people were depressed, burned out, there was no energy and people disappeared. [...] The general sense was that the movement disintegrated, disappeared for a good few years.

For those that did not believe in the UN process, COP15 was not only a confirmation of their scepticism but made them question whether COPs were even the right places to demonstrate. For those who had been hopeful, it created strong doubts regarding the actual capacity of UNFCCC to come to an ambitious treaty (Hadden 2015: 174). Impacted by these experiences, in the following years, the (shrunk) movement mainly reorganised on the local level and focussed on struggles around energy production, infrastructure projects or transport.

4.1.5 Focus on direct action

Apart from the above mentioned disappointment related to the failures of recent COPs to achieve acceptable outcomes for the movement, a general tendency towards local struggles and direct action can be identified in the climate justice movement since 2009 (Brunnengräber 2014). Naomi Klein (2014) terms this trend of resistance against fossil fuel infrastructure *blockadia*, and calls upon the movement to engage in this kind of struggle. One of the organisers of the Red Lines who has been involved in the movement for several years states that “[the idea of civil disobedience] has been a desire from some kind of disparate conversations going on in different parts of the movement” (I 1).

However, it took until the summer of 2015 for the climate justice movement to apply this desire on a bigger scale with an international mobilisation. For *Ende Gelände*, a mass occupation of a coal mine in Western Germany, 1500 (far more than organisers had expected) people had shown up and successfully stopped the diggers in the mine. The importance of this event is reflected by statements of several informants:

I 1: I think people felt for example in *Ende Gelände* last year a big sense of achievement.

I 2: There is kind of a myth which is created about the action: “Oh, you have not been to *Ende Gelände* last August? You missed something.”

Certainly, the success of *Ende Gelände* spurred ambitions to use the momentum

and also have a civil disobedience action at the climate summit at the end of the same year.

4.2 Context of Paris mobilisations

Other major factors that have to be taken into consideration when trying to better understand the Red Lines mobilisations concern the wider context in which the movement was mobilising. This section is dedicated to the question: *What did the conditions for the mobilisations for COP21 look like?*

4.2.1 Progress of ongoing COP negotiations

Besides the above mentioned direct impacts of COP15 on the movement, there were already indirect ones, stemming from the actual results of the COP negotiations. As the Copenhagen summit had failed to provide a binding agreement that would ensure, amongst others, targets for emission cuts beyond 2012 (as foreseen by the Bali Roadmap), at COP17 in 2011 the Durban Platform was agreed upon which foresaw the adoption of a legally binding agreement, including all countries, at COP21. The years that followed were rather seen as sufficient time to set the scene for the negotiations in 2015, so that – unlike in Copenhagen – it would be possible to adopt such an agreement.

However, during these years, it became apparent how such an agreement – that needed the consent of all parties – could look like. The negotiations in 2013 in Warsaw showed that in terms of mitigation only a voluntary pledge and review approach would be accepted by some key states. And a year later, at COP20 in Lima, it was confirmed that the new agreement foresees *Intended Nationally Determined Contributions* (INDC) instead of “any rational sharing of the remaining available 'atmospheric space'” (Ciplet et al. 2015: 94).

4.2.2 Claims and potential achievements at COP21

As laid out above, while most of social movement theory in academia focusses on the national context, another kind of logic has to be applied looking at an international movement that is mobilising for a summit within the United Nations institutions. Different than in national political contexts, there is no electorate to be convinced of the importance of one's topic; parties can hardly be pressured by protesters if there is no national movement in their home countries (Pianta & Mar-

chetti 2007: 30); agenda-setting and contents of negotiations (cf. Kolb 2007: 33) have been decided upon long before; positions of parties are more or less clear already beforehand and will hardly change in a time span of two weeks; and the frame of what the agreement can actually contribute is already set (Ciplet et al. 2015: 177).⁷ Hadden (2015: 151-3) states that common objectives of outside movements influence the media discourse and even state leaders (if the movement has some kind of access).⁸ However, considering the roots of the movement in the global justice movement and certainly the experiences of COP15 in Copenhagen, more attention should actually be paid to “classical summit protests” which try to shut down the negotiations as the example of Seattle in 1999 had shown. Thus, spaces around summits get a transnational political meaning and become “loci of contentious politics” (Peterson 2006: 43). Starr et al. (2011) state that the objectives of such protests mainly aim to call into question the legitimacy of the respective summit. Through the cordoning off by police forces and by still attempting to enter the summit area, protesters try to create an image of *the people* being excluded from the talks. By this, summits become “sites where hegemonic power structures can be revealed, [...] a result of activists’ choice to *confront* summit meetings and to do so *spatially*” (ibid.: 25).

However, as laid out above, the climate justice movement had had its experiences with forms of direct action, trying to enter fenced and guarded areas. Considering then the choice of the venue by the French state⁹ – Le Bourget, a hardly accessible airport in the far north-east of Paris that delegates and especially head of states could use to enter and leave the city directly – it becomes apparent that an achievable target for a movement committed to direct action but not willing to bang its head against the same wall as six years ago, was not that easy to find. Besides the aspect of an achievable goal, movement organisers had drawn lessons from the inspiring, above mentioned *Ende Gelände*: that is the crucial im-

⁷ In fact, Ciplet et al. (2015: 177-9) argue that in terms of climate change, there had been other (maybe more important) opportunities to achieve change than at the actual summit as its outcome is highly dependent on state preferences built in the years before and climate change is also highly linked to other bodies of global governance such as the WTO.

⁸ She argues that the engagement of the climate justice movement in Copenhagen did have far-reaching consequences – though in some aspects not-intended ones as well – as they managed to establish the climate justice frame and to show their support to countries that were opposing the unambitious deals that were negotiated behind locked doors (Hadden 2015).

⁹ Starr et al. (2011: 29) identify the selection of the location of summits as one of four major mechanisms of control. They recognise a trend towards summits increasingly taking place in remote and easily defensible areas. It can only be speculated that the experiences from COP15 in Copenhagen have influenced the decision to hold the conference at Le Bourget instead of a more central place in Paris.

portance of having a direct and obvious impact for climate justice such as stopping a coal mine (CJA meeting 2015, own notes). Paris, however, did not provide such a target¹⁰, making COP21 an event that hardly fitted the current tendencies in the movement.

4.2.3 COP21 as a political opportunity

So why then was COP21 still seen as an important date in the calendars of the movement if the struggle for an ambitious treaty seemed already lost, if there was hardly anything to achieve for an international movement outside the negotiations and if the traumatising experiences from 2009 should not be repeated?

To provide a provisional answer to this, it is helpful to look at COP21 from the perspective of *political opportunity structures*. If COPs before 2009 were seen as merely technocratic meetings, Copenhagen made it a high-profile target for activists (Hadden 2015: 142). Despite the devastating consequences for the climate justice movement, mass protests around COPs were established in the years that followed. And by 2011, when the central outcome of COP17 in Durban stated that parties aim to achieve a legally binding agreement for all countries by 2015, it was clear that COP21 in Paris, due to its (seemingly) decisive character, would attract far-reaching attention of social movements. This was confirmed by my interviews with participants of the Red Lines action who anonymously stated that the media framing of COP21 as *the* decisive conference contributed to their decision attending it:

FG I 3: When there was the conference in Poland, I think no one of us thought about going there. But then when it came to Paris, it had a very different attraction to me to go there.

So movement-internally, it could be expected that COP21 would attract not only long-established activists, but also people who are supportive of the movement but before had not participated in one of its actions.

Due to expectable media coverage of summits, they also become an arena for movements not represented in the summit, as they receive some of its media attention for their message as well (Björk & Peterson 2002: 189-190 in Wahlström 2004). So although activists did not agree with the general discourse of the negotiations and did not believe in outcomes that would meet their demands, they

¹⁰ In fact, it had been discussed at a preparation meeting whether to occupy industrial sites or fossil-fired power plants but no elaborate plan developed out of this due to the lack of targets in the city of Paris (D12 organisers 2016).

were not willing to just ignore the negotiations, leaving this media attention only to the governments' and business' point of view on the negotiations. This is depicted amongst others in a press release of the Coalition21 that “call[s] the citizens to take advantage of the political and media coverage of this summit to get organised and mobilise widely” (Coalition Climate 21 2015b).

A third aspect concerns the internationality of the climate negotiations. Bullard & Müller argue that social movements are lacking the ability to create a “globality for itself”, that is “the global as a space of regulation and of conscious conflict between (organized) social forces” (2012: 57). Instead, movements are dependent on the previously created (global) political arenas in order to contest them. However, considering the internationality of COPs, they also represent opportunities for international activists to connect and collectively plan actions beyond their local or national contexts and ultimately the attempt to create such a globality outside of the climate negotiation framework.

I 1: I think we can create those mobilisation moments rather than react to conferences. [...] Rather than responding to other people's events, I think we need to create our own events and set our own agenda through those events. [...] The focus should be on building the resistance that we think is needed at the site of extraction and production.

All this taken together leads to an ambiguous assessment of COP21 as an event for the climate justice movement. On the one hand, it provides a political opportunity to get more people involved in the movement and use this convergence to organise for coming (international) actions. Besides that, it is a chance to make the movement's voice heard on the negotiation process as most activists also acknowledge that these summits in fact are useful and might be necessary in order to achieve climate justice. On the other hand, attendance of such summits by civil society also lends legitimacy to this summit (Jasper 2014: 161), though many activists did not see it as a legitimate and ambitious arena for a sufficiently strong agreement.¹¹

4.3 Objectives for the Red Lines protest

Having these conditions of the movement and the general circumstances in mind, organisers of the Red Lines action were aiming at achieving three main objectives. These objectives are logically interlinked and sometimes even hard to be

¹¹ In fact, several climate justice groups, dedicated towards direct action, did not consider COP21 as an important date for the movement and did not mobilise (CJA meeting 2015, own notes).

seen separately.

The first objective concerns **establishing civil disobedience** as a common strategy of the climate justice movement. As noted above, people in the movement had been talking about this for quite a while, and with *Ende Gelände* the movement had had a successful action just some months before COP21. So to capitalize on this momentum, organisers wanted to change the image of mass civil disobedience and normalise it. In the words of one informant:

I 1: Creating a more accessible space for people to step into disobedient activities rather than having the optics, the visual field of radical groups that the majority of people that had not been involved in these processes find intimidating; to try and change the accessibility, the look and the feel of the activity, but still have disobedience in it.

Usually, civil disobedience is regarded as a means to achieve (political) ends (Quill 2009: 9-12). For the climate justice movement at COP21, however, staging a civil disobedience protest first and foremost became an end in itself, serving the wider acceptance of this tactic. Recalling the movement's turn towards *block-adia*, it becomes clear that organisers aimed to “build the confidence and understanding to become involved in the future in more radical activities” (I 1).

The second objective was called a **narrative goal**, to have the “last word”. Strongly assuming that the negotiations would not sufficiently address the demands for climate justice¹² of the movement and that negotiators would try to pass the agreement as a success, organisers of the Red Lines actually did not regard the COP21 as a particularly important event. However, they sought to use the international media attention on Paris around December 12 to establish a narrative that would counter the one of an historic agreement:

I 2: We were quite convinced at that time that the COP21 won't be at all a success, we were also quite convinced that they will try to assume that it is a success and we really wanted to break this.

I 2: We wanted to make D12 a time where we can communicate and say ‘This is a complete failure, this is a climate crime’.

Instead, the Red Lines action was supposed to shift the awareness away from the negotiations and to people taking action:

¹² There was not supposed to be the *one* Red Line as agreement could hardly be reached on that among the variety of actors in the movement. However, one prominent demand was that the Paris Agreement should make sure that 80% of known fossil fuel reserves are kept in the ground in order to comply with *minimal necessities for a just and liveable planet* (D12 organisers 2015c).

I 1: Make it more about the movement rather than the political process.

However, there seemed to be different understandings on whether to focus on addressing people already inclined toward the movement (I 1: “We need to make sure that people who are passive allies and not active yet are brought into action”) or trying to get the attention of mainstream media (I 2: “We wanted to do the head pages, to say ‘COP21 failure’”). However, it is questionable in what ways the latter might have been achievable as “[i]n the struggle over meanings in which movements are constantly engaged, it is rare that they do not suffer a disadvantage in competition with states, which not only control the means of repression but have at their disposal important instruments for meaning construction” (Tarrow 2011: 32).

The third objective then was aimed at **movement building**, strengthening and empowering it in terms of numbers and dedication. Learning from the devastating effects for the movement of COP15, Paris was not framed as *the* event the movement was striving for, but rather one happening in the course of more actions to come: “The idea of having a route or a path through Paris rather than we are just going to work towards this event” (I 1). Instead, the aim was to build up power, using Paris as an event for potentially big mobilisations: “As long as it's building power to the next thing, it's always going to be a success” (I 1).

What seems particularly interesting about these objectives is that in a sense they are all focussed on reaching inwards (Jasper 2004: 10), maybe depending on the degree to what extent the “last word” was meant to address mainstream media discourse or people already affiliated to the movement. Instead of further broadening and getting more people in to demonstrate against climate change (as the very broad message everyone can agree to), these goals reflect a growing tendency for stronger demands and more contentious tactics in the movement.

Besides that, it is striking that little attention was actually given to the actual outcomes of the negotiations but that they were anticipated beforehand (impressively precise¹³) and then hardly addressed any more. This shows how organisers used the appeal of COP21, created through media discourse, not merely to have people demonstrating against climate change in the first place, but rather as an

¹³ In a discussion document that was circulated in August 2015, four month before the end of the COP21, activists working on the framing of the Red Lines action, wrote “‘PARIS AGREEMENT SIGNED - PLANET SAVED ! :’ could well be the headlines on the last weekend of the talks” (D12 organisers 2015b).

opportunity for movement building.¹⁴ In sharp contrast to COP15 in 2009, Paris became primarily a space to make people acquainted with the movement and to set the tone for tactics that could escalate into direct actions both in 2016 and on a long-term basis. As one activist stated for a newspaper interview: “This is only a moment of coming together, where we reinforce each other, share our experience and take a common stance as the eyes of the world are on Paris” (Aronoff 2015a).

This also reflects tendencies, within the movement, away from protests at the yearly COPs and towards local struggles, mainly against fossil fuel industry. Seemingly contradicting, the mobilisations for COP21 were supposed to continue the already above described trend to make the COPs a less important space for the movement.

Nonetheless, the Paris mobilisations can also serve as an example of how things can change due to unforeseeable happenings, to which I will turn now.

4.4 Paris attacks and its consequences

On November 13, around two weeks before the planned People's Climate March and the start of COP21 the subsequent day, and four weeks before the Red Lines action, in the 'Paris attacks' more than 130 people were killed and more than 350 people injured. In response, the French state declared a state of emergency, including a ban on public demonstrations. The attacks and the state of emergency totally changed the context in which mobilisations for COP21 would be taking place. The People's Climate March planned for November 29 with expected numbers of 200,000 participants was cancelled. The Coalition Climate 21 (2015) however, in a press release three days after the attacks, stated:

While taking into account the exceptional circumstances, we are convinced that the COP 21 cannot take place without the participation nor without the mobilisations of the civil society in France. So, we shall put in all our efforts so that the mobilisations which we have organised will take place. In dialogue with the authorities, we shall continue to ensure that the safety and security of all is guaranteed.

Hence, mobilisations went on. But the Paris attacks had manifold influences on the initial plans. A final and comprehensive remark most probably will never be possible and it might be idle to keep coming back to the question what might

¹⁴ Though I do not regard different goals among organisers and participants as a particularly uncommon issue, this case shows that generalised statements on *the movement* are difficult to make.

have happened without the attacks. Still, I consider it as highly relevant to understand the effects of the Paris attacks, also to avoid premature conclusions on what should have been done differently (see e.g. Smith & Anderson 2016). Therefore, in the following I will outline how the attacks and its legal consequences affected mobilisations on different levels.

4.4.1 Terrorism

First and foremost, it has to be remembered that the Paris attacks happened in the city where the COP and the protests were supposed to take place only a few weeks later, and where most organisers of the Red Lines action were (already) living by November. This added a personal dimension to the consequences:

I 2: The first thing is shock and everybody follows the news from that time. It has been the same as the Charlie attacks. We were completely focussed on news, "What's happening, where are they, are they going to do some new attacks." And we were completely paralysed by what happened. [...] So we have also the personal things in it.

I 1: Obviously people were impacted directly through friends or family that were caught up in what had happened, killed or injured, so emotionally it put people in difficult situations. [...] Psychologically it became a really challenging and confusing organising space.

In terms of social movements, scholars have pointed to the importance of another terrorist attack that highly impacted actually one of the predecessors of the climate justice movement: after 9/11, the global justice movement, being on the rise, literally disappeared with some activists spilling over into the peace and anti-Iraq-war movement (Humphrys 2013). One informant describes how this example became one of the biggest fears of the organisers of the Red Lines:

I 2: We had a meeting with the core group of D12 and quite quickly, John told us about 9/11 and said, "At that time something really big was happening against WTO. And 9/11 blew all the movements against the WTO because of the peace movement against the Iraq war. It completely blew the movement at that time." So four days after the attacks we were completely panicked, and said "The COP will be in two weeks. We don't know what we are going to do."

Apart from the personal impacts, the fear of further terrorist attacks doubtlessly has impacted the numbers of people being willing to be in bigger groups and attend mass demonstrations:

FG II 4: For me it was a little bit scary, also for a lot of the people around me, some people actually didn't go because of that.

FG I 2: But it still does cross your mind, “what will happen if I am in a protest with thousands of people around if someone decided this was a legitimate target?”

4.4.2 State of emergency

Besides the direct impacts of the terrorist attacks, there were also legal consequences that profoundly changed the conditions for mobilisations. Immediately after the attacks, the French president François Hollande declared a national state of emergency which led to expanded powers of the police. For the Île-de-France area this meant that the police could ban public gatherings, conduct warrantless searches, and put suspects under house arrest (Anderson 2015).

Agamben refers to such measures as full powers, when, in a *state of exception*, the force of law via decrees is granted to the executive (2005: 5). He names such a *state of exception* “state power’s immediate response to the most extreme internal conflict” (ibid.: 2) in which the status of necessity makes questions toward its legitimacy obsolete. Several scholars have noted an increasing level of suppression of contention, building on laws against terrorism (della Porta & Reiter 2006b: 189; Tarrow 2011: 271; Olesen 2011: 7). Masferrer (2012) even speaks of a *state of permanent legal emergency* since 9/11 that is limiting basic rights and as such also the right to organise collectively and demonstrate.

And indeed, state authorities made use of their new powers: by end of November, three squats in Paris that were partly affiliated with the climate justice movement and might have served as accommodation for activists during the COP were raided by the police and computers and documents confiscated. Several activists had been assigned house arrests, accused of organising protests despite the ban (Neslen 2015). The state of emergency was openly used to prosecute political activists that in no way stood in any connection to the Paris attacks or potential other acts of terrorism. As one activist who was put under house arrest stated: “They weren’t looking for people like us activists – or if they were, it shows that they can target people for no reason at all” (ibid.).

What could be observed here is an almost classical example of controlling dissent. Starr et al. (2011) argue that nowadays research about policing protest falls short dramatically as it is focussing only on the act of protesting. Instead, they argue, one should take into consideration how dissent – with protests being only

one form of dissent becoming visible, but including disagreement on a much broader level – is controlled. Marginalisation of protesters and pre-emption become important strategies for state forces in the run-up to political protests to keep control over the situation (ibid.: 94-9) – and both could be linked to the above mentioned actions taken by the police. It is obvious that the state of emergency became a favourable pretext for the police to enforce measures of controlling dissent if one examines what kind of events were forbidden. For example, although they did not constitute lesser risks of becoming targets for terrorist attacks, sport events and Christmas markets were granted permissions while protests were not (Neslen 2015).

Being already on the way to Paris when we heard the news of police using their powers against climate activists, I personally felt the effects of the raids when we, as a group, entered into exhaustive discussions on whether to stay in squats (as initially planned) or to look for other accommodation for which we would have to identify ourselves, both creating a feeling of insecurity. Starr et al. cite an activist whose statement resonated with my feelings from that time: “five people's homes being raided leads to intimidation of millions of people” (2011: 96). These pre-emptive actions had palpable consequences also for organisers of the Red Lines action:

I 1: When the state of emergency and the house arrests started to be put in place [...] any of the kind of disagreement or challenges within the organising groups were amplified significantly because of the uncertainty and the fears and the anxieties that were caused after the attacks.

Such amplification of “disagreement and challenges” was particularly observable within the Coalition21. There had been struggles going on in the Coalition21 for months and finally they had come to an agreement to support the call for civil disobedience – the broadest coalition calling for it so far in the history of the climate justice movement. However, when the state of emergency entered into force, the Coalition21 split up again concerning the question of whether to demonstrate in a state of emergency or not. Doubtlessly, the movement lost momentum as those organisations withdrawing their call included for example Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace – organisations with a huge membership base and massive outreach to people in Europe. As a consequence, news was coming in from several environmental groups across Europe that they were cancelling buses that were supposed to bring people to Paris for December 12.

One aspect in this regard certainly concerns the fear of repression. As two participants of the Red Lines action stated:

FG I 3: For me it [the state of emergency] was definitely a factor that I was thinking about, also because we were thinking about police and police violence the whole time in Paris. Also by talking about that they have more rights and more possibilities to disperse crowds and to justify violence maybe... I found it intimidating.

FG I 2: It did make me expect oppression from the police in multiple ways. [...] I think it just heightened the sense of that would be the case that they would somehow misuse or abuse or exaggerate their emergency powers in order to control climate protesters.

For the organisers of the action, the fear of repression also added another layer – the fear that the movement might be crushed if they lead people into a situation where they experience harsh violence from police forces:

I 1: “What happens if this turns into a massive riot and there is huge amount of violent repression and lots of people who are turning up to an activity for the first time are put off doing anything like that ever again in the future?” It was a definite potential scenario.

I 2: We were afraid about the police repression we could have in this emergency state.

It is always hard to assess what the reasons were for people not to show up and maybe change their plans after the Paris attacks and the state of emergency. However, it is beyond doubt that the ban on demonstrations and the insecurity about eventually demonstrating in a state of emergency were major factors leading to a far lower participation in the events as expected initially. So I would argue that the implementation of the state of emergency served as a means for the French police to control dissent around COP21 and should be analysed as such.

All these aspects taken together led to an interesting phenomenon – instead of Paris being a great place and moment for the movement to gather, coordinate and build up strength, the Paris attacks turned it into a threat that one of the organisers termed “surviving Paris” (I 1). This statement gets to the heart of the intersection of the experiences of demobilisation after Copenhagen, the aspiration not to give in to the circumstances (and still make their point about the missing ambition of the COP negotiations), and the harsh and unprecedented circumstances of mobilising in a state of emergency.

Having described the context of the mobilisations and the immediate effects of the Paris attacks some weeks before the protest, I will turn my attention now to

the final preparations and the actual Red Lines action. I will regularly draw on the above described context in order to make decisions as comprehensible as possible. Power relations between protesters and police play an essential role in this regard. They open up an opportunity to understand the potential of civil disobedience as an emerging tactic of the movement, thereby providing an insight in the contemporary climate justice movement.

4.5 Shifting Power relations in the Red Lines protest

In the following, I will trace some of the major developments in the last weeks and especially the last days before the Red Lines protest. This chapter will answer the research question stated above *How were both the preparation of the Red Lines protest and its implementation part of a power struggle between protesters and the police?* In order to do so, I will apply Sharp's (1973) framework of power as laid out in chapter three in order to better understand the power of protesters' strategy of civil disobedience in their relations with state forces. I will also draw on theories of policing protests (as a counter-strategy) in order to better understand how obedience is created and enforced by police forces.

4.5.1 Phase I: Preparing for the Red Lines protest

First of all, one has to take into consideration the big efforts that were taken on the side of protesters in order to mobilise for the protests in Paris. As described above, within the Coalition21 efforts were taken in order to avoid division as had happened at COP15 (see Hadden 2015) and to “[prevent] the division of the movement between the 'good protesters' who participate at the authorized marches and the 'bad protesters' who do illegal actions” (D12 organisers 2016).¹⁵ As a result of these efforts, a broad coalition of environmental NGOs and grassroots groups supported the call for civil disobedience for D12 (D12 organisers 2016). This broad consensus was a powerful signal towards state authorities, showing that the movement is getting serious about this tactic and wants to normalise civil disobedience, moving it away from radical groups only and establishing it also among the bigger NGOs. However, this powerful momentum was taken away from the movement as soon as the state of emergency entered into force and many NGOs stepped back from organizing disobedient action in such a context (D12 organisers 2016). Applying Sharp's (1973) ideas on sources of power to

¹⁵ Starr et al. (2011: 95) name such a division, implemented by police and often reproduced in the media, as one form of marginalisation and policing of protests.

this development, it becomes apparent that the movement lost a great momentum as *human resources* and *material resources*, the main sources from which big NGOs draw their powers, were lost to a high degree. This was even amplified when police forces conducted house raids, put activists under house arrest and rumours were spreading about border controls. Besides that, a small demonstration that took place on November 29, the initial date for the People's Climate March, on Place de la République, was met by police forces with massive repression, applying a *coercive strategy* (cf. della Porta & Reiter 2006a: 13), and showing that they were willing to enforce the ban on demonstrations. All this taken together surely contributed to the above described *control of dissent* and the overall decline of expected participants.

Legitimacy

Legitimacy is maybe the most important currency that social movements have. They are constantly engaged in the struggle on being identified as an actor who is entitled to speak on behalf of the interests of many (della Porta & Diani 2006: 75). In the “discursive battle of where to draw the line between legitimate state repression of protests [...] and state repression as illegitimate and disproportionate” (Lindekilde 2014: 199), social movements usually can draw on a strong basis of legitimacy. The terrorist attacks, especially the fear of new attacks, and the state of emergency however, called into question this legitimacy to actually protest at all:

I 2: The public opinion at that time was completely scared about possible new terrorist attacks. We didn't want to focus police forces on us. Everybody was thinking at that time, “The climate movement is completely unaware and unconscious about what is happening right now and they took the police forces who should try to destroy terrorism or to prevent possible new attacks.”

Continuing the mobilisations

All my informants mentioned great doubts whether to go on with the preparations and mobilisations. However, after the Coalition21 stressed the importance of civil society participation at COP21 despite the state of emergency (Coalition Climate 21 2015b), in the end, it was decided to keep the Red Lines organisation going. Maybe this decision was rather led by fear about what would happen if the

protest was cancelled¹⁶; nevertheless, it was a clear call to state authorities that the ban of political demonstrations would not be accepted. Parallel, a new frame (cf. Snow & Benford 1988) arose that linked the consequences of climate change to terrorism under the slogan of *climate state of emergency*. And several authors were stressing the necessity of still protesting in the streets of Paris and not leaving the discourse around COP21 to politicians only (Aronoff 2015b; Klein 2015; Malm 2015). The strongest expression of power of the movement in this phase however was created by the people, *human resources* as a source of power, that kept announcing to go to or were already showing up in Paris, eager to protest despite the ban.

I 1: I felt there was a lot of momentum by that amount of people turning up at the briefings and seeing thousands of people. I think it actually was one thing that forced the police to permit it, they were like “shit these people are actually organising and there is lots of people turning out and they are relatively normal” and I think that put a lot of pressure on.

In this regard, the announcement to have the Red Lines action as an act of civil disobedience turned out to be robust. Certainly, there were fears of greater repression due to the state of emergency¹⁷, but being in Paris I heard many people say that the ban on demonstrations did not make such a big difference for them as they were preparing to do something illegal anyway.

Trainings as a means for empowerment

Besides that, it was exactly this commitment to a civil disobedience action that lend the greatest power to protesters in the preparation phase. As laid out above, referring to Sharp's (1973) pluralistic-dependency theory, power of governments over people is dependent on people obeying and, respectively, people's power stems from their ability to disobey. This power was strengthened even more as activists participated in action trainings in the ZAC¹⁸ that were supposed to make them more familiar with disobedient tactics, possible legal consequences or structures of how to create a safe space via buddy pairs or affinity groups.

¹⁶ I 1: “If we don't have something really concrete and we can communicate it to people then it's actually likely to resolve in a situation that would be damaging to the movement again because when people are standing around getting impatient then that's when it can bubble over, when there is not something clear to do.”

¹⁷ Participants from both focus groups have stated that their concerns on repression were definitely raised by the state of emergency.

¹⁸ The Zone d'Action pour le Climat (ZAC) was the activist space during the second week of COP21, organised by the Coalition21, and served as a hub for people to get informed about the negotiations and planned actions such as the Red Lines.

FG I 2: I very much appreciated the general stuff in the training to do with civil disobedience and some advice regarding good practice at demonstration with it. [...] It was good to be part of it, it gave me a bit more confidence as an activist to have been in a training session like that.

FG II 3: That also gave me lots of confidence required to take that step of actually demonstrating in a more explicit way. –

FG II 2: Yeah, because it's getting more concrete. You see what you have to fear and how to react to that. And you can grasp it better than just imagine yourself being in a group of violent police people. You imagine it more concrete and that makes it more possible to deal with it. And also to know that there is so many people there with you that have the same determination. I think that changes a lot.

FG I 1: We had this final briefing and I really had the impression of being at war preparation almost and they told us what to do when police beat us up, and what to do when they use tear gas and what to do if they use pepper spray.

Besides that, a recurring theme in both the action trainings and speeches held at the general assemblies in the ZAC, was the necessity to disobey the ban on demonstrations and the history of civil disobedience as *the* crucial aspect of successful social movements in the last century, such as the Civil Rights or the Feminist movement. This motivational frame (cf. Snow & Benford 1988) in my very own experience contributed to a strong feeling of belonging, standing in one line with these great movements of our time, created a feeling that now it is the *right* and *necessary* thing to do to deny obedience and thereby challenged the habit of obeying. These *intangible factors* and the *skills and knowledge* (cf. Sharp 1973: 11-12) on the action served as a source of power since a committed and well-prepared group of protesters symbolises a much greater threat to state authorities and public order. As mentioned, in these action trainings the legal consequences of civil disobedience actions were addressed and arguments were given for and against bringing an ID to the action.¹⁹ In terms of the imposition of *sanctions* as the strongest source of state power, it becomes apparent that protesters increased their power as they mentally prepared to disobey and take on potential legal consequences or find ways how to avoid them even if they were to be imposed on them.

¹⁹ This touches upon one interesting aspect of recent actions of the climate justice movement: by organising mass actions of civil disobedience with hundreds or even thousands who refuse to give their ID, protesters overstrain the bureaucratic state apparatus trying to identify them in order to impose sanctions for minor offences such as trespassing. As a result, more than once protesters have been released without having been identified. This signifies an interesting hybrid of being willing to take on sanctions for breaking civil law in the name of disobedience to an unjust law (cf. Quill 2009), but if possible trying to avoid these exact sanctions by refusing identification.

Starr et al. state that authorities at summit protests often “facilitate the organization of countersummits consisting of discussions in large buildings, often far away from the summit site” (2011: 40) as a strategy to channel dissent. The above described ZAC is a perfect example for such a convergence space. However, it also served as a space for the movement to empower itself and openly call for disobedience towards the French state of emergency.

Choice of place

One of the major power struggles between state authorities and protesters arose around the choice of place. Starr et al. (2011: 25) state that “summits have become places where hegemonic power structures are revealed and challenged spatially by movements”. The control of space is of essential importance for both, police and protesters. For police, it signifies both means and ends for control (Wahlström 2010: 825); protesters strive for it in order to temporarily lend new meaning to this space (Peterson 2006: 46).

The initial plan, before the Paris attacks and the state of emergency, was to surround the conference centre in Le Bourget, creating Red Lines that represent *minimal necessities for a just and liveable planet*. The idea was that negotiators, when leaving the conference hall after the end of the negotiations, would have to physically cross these Red Lines²⁰, thereby depicting that the Paris Agreement does not meet these *minimal necessities*. Certainly, Le Bourget as the place of the negotiations would have been a good choice as in such *spaces for representation* movements receive an increased level of (media) attention (Wahlström 2010: 812). Besides, the idea to lend new meaning to a space is reflected in this statement:

I 1: And this concept of escalating and challenging the process; not necessarily critiquing - this is from my perspective not necessarily saying that the UN process is a waste of time or we need to close it down because it's actually going in the wrong direction. More of just challenging what this space is and how effective it's going to be in bringing about the change that we need to see.

Assuming that the negotiations would not come up with a sufficiently ambitious treaty, organisers wanted to hint at the idea of people saving the climate while states are failing in the COP. At the same time, the initial plan foresaw a direct

²⁰ Probably, it was assumed that police forces by then would have been busy trying to dissolve these Red Lines.

link for future acts of civil disobedience, creating a space to “discuss[...] where the redlines will be drawn during the 2016 actions” (D12 organisers 2015c).

However, the state of emergency foreclosed this space:

I 2: It was real tough direct action. We were supposed to block the airport. We were supposed to block a highway. We were supposed to block the whole traffic of the North-East of Paris. It was a real massive civil disobedience action. And we quickly thought that it was completely too much concerning the atmosphere at that time.

Reasons to let go of this plan A, besides the then expected massive police repression, also concerned the communities living in that area:

The likely repression on those communities (mostly Muslim who had already seen thousands of house raids since the state of emergency) – regardless of the revised tactical approach – would be adversely impacted by that plan (D12 organisers 2016).

I 3: We would also state the fact that white people can do whatever they want even if there is a state of emergency whereas in unpopular neighbourhoods people can hardly move.

The new plan of the protesters then, after some back and forth, targeted the occupation of Avenue de la Grande Armée, a major street between La Defense, the business and finance district of Paris, and the Arc de Triomphe. And this is where negotiations with the police started.

4.5.2 Phase II: Negotiating with the police

One and a half weeks before D12, state authorities were calling on organisers of the Red Lines to come to negotiations with them about the action. As a first step, this can be regarded as a *persuasive strategy* (cf. della Porta & Reiter 2006a: 13) of the police, standing in sharp contrast to the above shortly described *coercive strategy* applied to the protest on November 29. This is in line with Fillieule & Jobard (1998: 75), identifying the prevention of trouble through intelligence and planning as the first principle of French protest policing. As laid out above, police has a big interest in getting protesters to the negotiation table to keep control over the situation and protesters often agree as they are dependent on a certain degree of police support (Waddington 1994: 75). However, mass civil disobedience undermines this dependency to a certain extent as protesters never intend to stay within legal boundaries and, in the case of Paris, also developed a plan of

how to stop traffic from endangering protesters.²¹ So the main reasons for organisers to actually talk to the police at all concerned the matter of trust:

I 3: We agreed that we would at some point talk to the police about D12, just to inform them about our intentions [...] to maintain the possibility for them to trust us on the site of the action, so even on Le Bourget.

However, as losing control is not an option for the police (Wahlström 2010: 820), they started putting pressure on organisers to reveal details about the action, such as the designated place. Starr et al. (2011: 35) hint at the importance for the police to have a say in where a protest takes place as it allows them to pre-structure this space in their interest and exercise more control.

Despite of that pressure, there were different opinions among organisers whether to get in contact with the police or not. On the one hand, organisers feared a very high level of repression in case they would refuse to cooperate with the police at all: “With the kind of fear that the police would just respond ridiculously if we didn't give them any kind of information” (I 1). Moreover, it was clear that the place had to be revealed at a certain point to the participants in order for them to be able to reach that place in time, meaning that by then the police would know as well and would probably have enough time to prepare.

On the other hand, there were voices saying that this non-cooperation touches exactly on the central point of civil disobedience and that telling the police about the place would actually endanger the whole plan:

I 2: If we told we wanted to do something on Avenue de la Grand Armée, we were completely sure that nobody would be able to put a foot on Avenue de la Grande Armée.

In the end, it was decided to let the police know where the action is supposed to happen, however not seeking permission for it but just informing the police that “we are doing it whatever you think” (I 1).

Struggles over space

The new place then revealed to the police was on Avenue de la Grande Armée as close to the Arc de Triomph as possible. However, demonstrations in this area had never been allowed before:

²¹ It was planned that a critical mass of bikes would ride around the Arc de Triomph, shutting it down for car traffics and then enter Avenue de la Grande Armée, blocking the street over the whole width so that no cars would be left on the street before others would join from the sides of the streets.

I 3: This is a place where people never demonstrate. We had old activists coming to us [...] saying “it has been 50 years or 60 years that I'm doing actions and demonstrations. This is the first time that I did something in this neighbourhood.”

The Arc de Triomphe is one of the most important symbols of Paris. It includes a soldier memorial and the roundabout (l'Etoile) with the Champs-Élysées as one of the most important traffic arteries of the whole city. As such, these are two of the *representational spaces* (cf. Lefebvre 1991: 39) of Paris²² that police is probably willing to “die in a ditch” (Waddington 1994: 42) for in order to keep protesters away. So when Red Lines organisers announced to the police three days before the action that it would be taking place on Avenue de la Grande Armée, the police got quite nervous about it.

I 3: They were clearly showing that they were not really happy with that decision. [...] Apparently they did not know so much about our plans. I can't swear that they had discovered that we were going to target Avenue de la Grande Armée on that day but I can't be sure that they knew either.

As a consequence, the police offered other places in Paris where they would accept the protest to take place and, after this had been rejected by protesters, tried to keep it away from the Arc de Triomphe as far as possible:

I 3: They made us a proposal to be on Avenue de la Grande Armée but on the bottom, so very far from the Arc de Triomphe and with a lot of police, including bags being searched and many other things that we did not accept.

Regularly conferring with a bigger group of activists, the organisers kept their strategy to not seek for permission for the action but to just inform state authorities about their plans.

Summarising, protesters announced that they would stage an occupation of a street close to one of the most *representational spaces* of Paris where protests had never taken place before, all this in absolutely unfavourable conditions for the movement:

I 3: Again, it was state of emergency, there were people under house arrest, there was harsh repression on the 27th November²³, the Coalition was divided

22 Indeed, one of the plans discussed before the permit included an occupation of the roundabout - though this was always seen as quite unlikely to be achieved.

In terms of the representational importance of the Champs-Élysées, I made the experience two days earlier when I was cycling there in a critical mass with a group of around 120 people who had just arrived from London. Within minutes, we were stopped by a police line in full riot armour, leading us onto the sidewalk and kettling us there before we were released to actually continue our ride on one lane.

23 In fact, he refers to the repression against a demonstration on Place de la République on the 29th November.

on the issue “is it legitimate to take the streets after the attacks, are we not going to use police forces to handle demonstrations and actions whereas they should probably focus on chasing the terrorists.”

These conditions and the recent state of the movement (see chapter 4.1), the break-down following COP15 and the related fact that many of the protesters were participating in a civil disobedience action for the first time, doubtlessly created some dependencies towards the police to not enforce the law (cf. Waddington 1994: 199).

I 1: If we think that it starts serious, it could break the movement. [...] For me personally that was a big concern thinking about how to mitigate the risk of a really violent oppression. That was at the core of a lot of other thinking with the action design and location, target choice and how that changed because of the state of emergency.

Having this context in mind, it becomes apparent that police's power of *sanctions*, not as legal consequences but rather as the threat of violence, is still the dominant power in relation towards protesters, despite their preparations. The consequences of the state of emergency cannot be underestimated in this regard as it essentially broadened the space that state forces had to legally, but also legitimately use violence against protesters.

Despite all this, organisers met police delegates from a position of strength, that is the strengths of numbers. Sharp's (1973) *human resources* as a source of power becomes absolutely salient in the negotiations:

I 3: They realised that we were going to mobilise several thousands of people. [...] I'm sure that they knew that many people were going to come. And probably they attended the training that we were doing, so they knew that the mobilisation was going.

Expecting several thousand protesters that have done trainings (as shown above, increasing *skills and knowledge* as well as working on *intangible factors*), it becomes apparent that the police was facing a hardly controllable situation.

I 3: Civil disobedience is something they can and know how to handle when it involves 10-50 people. It's much harder already when it's 100 or 200 participants. But when it's in the thousands, then it's another story. [...] And you can't repress 10,000 or 15,000 people in a smooth way.

Protesters' ability of *sanctions* against state forces – namely by discrediting them in the media as part of a “police state” that makes use of an inappropriate level of violence – are generally regarded as weak (Wahlström & Oskarsson 2006: 138) and in the scope of this research, it could not be elaborated further upon.

However, what definitely should be regarded as important aspects for this case study concern *political opportunities for protests*, drawing on Tarrow's (2011) framework laid out in chapter three. Della Porta & Reiter (2006b: 187), also using this term, emphasise the importance of it in determining control strategies for transnational protests, but fall short on including in their model the content of the summit as well as the local context in which the protest is staged – two aspects of great importance in the negotiations for the Red Lines protest.

On the one hand, the day after the protest, regional elections in the whole of France were scheduled to take place. Activists familiar with the French context see this as an important factor in determining orders given to the Parisian police:

I 2: The day after there were major election in France. The socialist government in France would have been damaged by the police repression. So they couldn't repress us.

On the other hand, and probably even more importantly, the climate negotiations were supposed to be concluded on the same day as the protest. It had been assumed by activists months in advance that governments would celebrate the Paris Agreement (cf. D12 organisers 2015b) and were eager to have the right disposition for that:

FG II 3: I'm pretty sure that if the negotiations weren't as they were actually maybe the situation would have been another one. [...] It was more like "Okay, in this context, tomorrow more or less at the same time we are going to have an agreement, it's going to sound good and we don't want smoke around Paris. We don't want images of police."

I 2: If they repressed us the media had written a lot about repression and not about the climate negotiation success.

I 3: The least thing that the government wanted would be to celebrate the Paris Agreement on the one hand, and then have pictures of activists being clashed by the police on the other. [So that we would be] able to say "Well, look, in order to celebrate their Paris Agreement they have to oppress us."

This is also linked to the construction of who is actually protesting. While acceptance of repression against small, militant groups such as the black bloc is rather high (Starr et al. 2011: 143), this is a different issue with lots of "relatively normal" (I 1) looking people that were showing up at the ZAC. As one organisers notes:

I 2: They [politicians] can make you look like fanatics, medially speaking, or like an authoritarian minority trying to impose their way of seeing the world. [...] When you manage to bring one thousand people or let's dream, two,

three, five, ten thousand people to a massive civil disobedient action, this is not just activists, this is not just a minority.

As such, their demands gain another weight in terms of legitimacy as they can claim more credibly to represent a large part of civil society. Repression against them is much harder to justify and therefore is sought to be avoided. And consequently, the policing strategy in Paris became an issue not only for the *préfecture de police de Paris* but for the national government:

I 3: I think they had instructions from above and they made clear that it was not only coming from the ministry of interior but probably from the prime minister himself or from the presidency. [...] I think they were not in a situation where their first approach was to say “We are going to repress them at any cost.” So they were really in that perspective where their goal is not to create a bigger trouble than the trouble we are going to create.

As interviews with French state authorities could not be conducted, it remains unclear how much importance they actually gave to the political context or what other reasons played an important role for them. And though credits for the police's decision to not suppress the protest were attributed differently among my informants, it seems clear that both, activists' dedication to still stage the civil disobedience protest as well as a *political opportunity for protest* contributed to the final outcome. Considering the recent state of the movement and the eagerness to actually avoid harsh repression, it turns out to be a remarkably bold strategy of protest organisers. Here it becomes apparent that the knowledge of protest organisers about this political context and the “classic dilemma position” (D12 organisers 2015c) of the French state gave them a far-reaching advantage in the negotiations.

In the end, this strategy – not to negotiate but just to roughly inform the police about what would happen – eventually worked. On Thursday evening, one and a half days before the Red Lines protest was supposed to take place, authorities gave clear hints that they would tolerate and not suppress it. The police asked the contact persons of the protesters to come back the next day to talk about a concrete proposal; in the words of I 3: “If the police says 'We are going to make you a proposal' it means 'You are going to have a permit.'” On Friday, December 11, at 7:30pm, the police sent a permit that was revised by the organisers and finally decided to be signed (see Appendix II) as it contained “basically everything we asked for, everything we wanted to do” (I 3). The permit officially authorised a “Rassemblement statique” on the Avenue de la Grande Armée between the Arc

de Triumph and the Place de la Porte Maillot from 11:45 until 13:00 on December 12.

4.5.3 Phase III: An authorised protest

A first reaction obviously would be to regard the permit as a victory of the movement as they forced the police to agree to their terms. Applying Sharp's framework on power, he speaks of *accommodation*; that is, granting concessions due to nonviolent coercion without fundamentally changing mindsets on the issue at hand in order to “undercut internal dissension, minimize losses, avoid a larger disaster, or save face” (1990: 15). However, I will not limit myself to this understanding but rather explore participants' reactions to the permit and apply ideas on policing protest in order to get a more differentiated understanding of this move.

In the following, I will display the reactions on some of the protesters when they heard about the authorisation. I do not claim any generalisation of these statements but I rather want to show some of the emotional effects that certainly also have impacted how the Red Lines will be thought about by them.

The authorisation

On the one hand, there was a certain sense of relief as the uncertainty on what is actually to be expected from the protests that were dominating the days before suddenly disappeared:

FG II 4: Personally I was a little relieved because then I knew I was not ending up in a situation where I had to choose whether I was going to take any risks or not.

FG I 2: I felt in a sense a bit of relief because I knew that the atmosphere wasn't going to be really tense.

Besides that, there was an acknowledgement of the movement's power to force the police to accept its terms in a state of emergency:

FG II 1: In my experience the movement made it inevitable and at that point the government said “Okay, go ahead.” So it's still the movement that achieved this.

However, among my informants a feeling of frustration dominated that the actual contentious protest would now lose a lot of its power...

FG I 1: Just over the whole day it dawned to me how clever they actually did play that. In the very first moment I didn't grasp the significance of them allowing what we are doing. It was like "Okay, nice so we don't get beaten up". But then "Wait a minute", and then another hour later "Wait a minute!" (*getting louder*), "Wait a minute!!!" (*shouting angrily*).

FG I 2: The permission removed the significance of that and it tamed what could have been potentially a radical day. It was frustrating.

... and the insight that the timing of the authorisation could hardly have been worse for the movement,...

- FG I 4: Just to see the kind of tactic: in the very last minute when of course not everybody who had planned to come can make it anymore.
- FG II 2: It was like "There is so many people that didn't come because of that. There is so many people that worked on this for a year." And I felt it was a deliberate act of keeping it as marginal as possible and in the last minute saying "Okay, you can do it."

... contributing to the feeling of being outsmarted by authorities:

FG II 3: I guess it was a consensus of "This is exactly what was going to happen." I mean the government had all the tools to decide what we are going to do. And this way of actually using us as they wanted.

FG I 4: Maybe also a bit a feeling of "We are the stupid ones", betrayed in the sense of "We are the stupid ones who..." -
FG I 1: "...didn't see it coming"

I remember quite clearly my own emotions coming up after having heard about the authorisation at a briefing and then returning to our accommodation in the south of Paris, about 40min by bike: I had mentally prepared to be disobedient for the first time in my life, and I felt that I was ready to face a certain degree of police repression in order to state our opinion that the Paris Agreement (at that time still in process) would not be enough in order to come somewhere close to climate justice. So with every kilometre that I biked through the city, I became more angry as I felt that by this authorisation the police had taken away our most effective way of voicing this message.

The protest

The actual protest then took place, as permitted by the police, on December 12 on the Avenue de la Grande Armée, as a static assembly with the official objective to honour the victims of climate change (see Appendix II). Organisers and the media spoke of ten to fifteen thousand people that had gathered there.

The protest followed the idea of what Peterson (2006: 46) describes as territorialisation strategy, that is the temporary occupation of space such as public squares or streets in order to redefine power relations and to lend a new meaning to the space. Indeed, Avenue de la Grande Armée had been chosen as it provided the potential to draw narrative connections between climate change and the Arc de Triomphe as a symbol for imperialism and war (and terror) as well as climate change and its roots causes represented by La Defense (at the other end of the avenue), being *the* business and finance district of Paris (D12 organisers 2016). However, the police permit foresaw a massive police barrier around hundred meters away from l'Etoile in order to keep protesters away from the Arc de Triomphe and the Champs-Élysées. Additionally, in all streets leading into Avenue de la Grande Armée and on all sidewalks along the street, there was massive police presence in riot gear, ultimately leading to a strong boundary between protesters and the wider public. Referring to *dividing spaces*, Starr et al. (2011: 38-9) describe this isolation as a common police tactic to keep control over protests, despite them being permitted.

Apart from a minute of silence in order to honour the victims of climate change, the general mood in the protest was described unanimously as joyful:

FG II 3: You could definitely see that people felt happy to be there and to demonstrate.

FG II 4: Yeah, it was a happy atmosphere. I think it was very, very fun.

However, having been not yet fully able to accept the disappointment of the day before, some described their emotions as follows:

FG II 2: I was very frustrated. I was very grumpy. I couldn't feel the energy of the street.

FG II 1: It felt a bit tame, for sure. There was no confrontation that everyone had expected from the beginning on. So for me the demonstration in itself felt a bit like "Okay, now we are here anyway, let's make sure that we have some good photos or whatever so that at least we sent out the message."

Some feelings openly contrasted the atmosphere that was more than once described as a big street party:

FG II 2: I felt like "I don't have this positive energy at the moment. I actually feel quite frustrated and we are not showing that frustration at the moment." And I actually felt it should be a little more angry.

FG II 3: Guilty might be a good way of saying it, like “We should be doing something else. We should be actually discussing how to make a bigger impact now, organising something maybe more radical, or maybe just going to the place where these people are negotiating and demonstrate there.”

My own feelings coincide with the above described as I felt an urgency to get away from this static atmosphere, get into action and even do something desperate, as long as it would be the act of disobedience that I had been preparing for.

An analysis

These emotions show the ambiguity present in this case and contribute to a better understanding of the power of mass civil disobedience for the climate justice movement. On the one hand, the announcement to disobey and to eventually take on sanctions broadens the scope of the movement's ability to pursue its goals. The case of the Red Lines protest in Paris shows the tremendous power as authorities were forced to accept the conditions despite their extended competences in the state of emergency.

On the other hand, the disobedience aspect turns out to be a weak point in the interaction with the police as it is still them who ultimately determine what is obedient and what is disobedient behaviour. One should recall that the dominant narrative after the state of emergency was built around the notion that it was necessary for climate justice to disobey the ban on demonstration, aligning it to other civil disobedience actions such as during the civil rights movement. So through the authorisation, the police allowed the movement to achieve its ostensible objective to demonstrate at all, but deprived it of its ideological reasons to disobey – what Sharp refers to as *intangible factors*. The rather emotional statements quoted above show that for many protesters it was much more about “*how we resist, not only what we resist*” (Buckland 2016; emphasis in original). However, such resistance is hard to symbolise if the legal system does not regard an action as illegal (Nobles & Schiff 2015: 477). Therefore, one could foresee that the movement's objective to have the “last word” would be hard to reach, assuming that an authorised demonstration would cause far less attention than several thousand activists being dispersed by police forces in the middle of Paris.

Following this line of thought, I want to pick up a central conclusion of the work by Starr et al. on the control of dissent. From their analysis on the social control

of space, they conclude that it “is not about preventing dissent completely but rather about channelling and controlling the form of protest” (2011: 147). This is in line with other authors (Waddington 1994; Peterson 2006; Wahlström 2010) emphasising the crucial importance for the police to keep acting instead of reacting and to exert control over a situation – which they did by changing the conditions for the protest. One informant described this as follows:

FG I 1: What they did is pull back the wall just a couple of meters so we wouldn't run up against it. So they allowed our actions, so we were still playing around in the safe area just a few meters in front of the wall. And we were thinking that we are running just against it. We had our battering ram and we came there and there was just nothing there anymore because they just moved it a little bit.

Instead of regarding the authorisation as purely giving in by the police, I rather see Lukes's (2005) three-dimensional view on power at work. This perspective also takes those powers into consideration (and names them as such) that manage to keep potential issues off the table without a salient conflict (2005: 28). By authorising the protest, the police managed to drastically reduce its visibility for the wider public, as an authorised and cordoned off demonstration by far does not attract the same attention as police forces trying to dissolve a blockade of thousands of people. I would regard the authorisation as both, an act of obeying (to protesters' power) and creating obedience at the same time. In line with Waddington's (1994: 200) statement that “[p]olicing by consent' is still *policing*”, I argue that the permission of the Red Lines protest, though compelled by the climate justice movement in conditions as unfavourable as hardly ever experienced, was still a way of exerting control over a situation that otherwise might have hardly been foreseeable for the police in any way. However, things changed again when the one hour granted by the police for the protest came to an end.

4.5.4 Phase IV: Marching in the middle of Paris

For 2pm on that same day, Alternatiba²⁴ had scheduled an (authorised) human chain at the Eiffel Tower. A march towards this place was neither planned nor had it been part of the discussions with the police at any time. However, organisers stated that they had very well considered this as something that might evolve:

I 3: “They [the police] did not anticipate the march (we did :-)”²⁵.

²⁴ Alternatiba is a French organisation that was part of the Coalition21 and had withdrawn their support of the Red Lines protest when the state of emergency entered into force.

²⁵ Email conversation with the author.

I 1: What the police was saying needed to happen on the day, [...] like “people will leave in pairs and be allowed...” – I think everyone who was involved in the process when that was said, was like “okay, fair enough, how is this ever going to be managed...” I couldn't visualise it in my head. [...] So there was always this “the end is going to be interesting, I don't know how it's going to end.”

The march

The march started at the Western end of the Red Lines, close to Place de la Porte Maillot. According to participants, the police shortly tried to dissolve it and only let people leave in pairs²⁶ but soon gave up and rather secured the march from accidents with traffic. The crowd was then led by Via Campesina and the Climate Guardians²⁷ the two kilometres towards the Eiffel Tower with rising moods. In contrast to the static, permitted and isolated protest on Avenue de la Grande Armée, the march changed the protest to a dynamic, powerful and embedded one:

FG II 1: I was really happy that that was happening because then finally you could really take the streets and send out the message to the people that saw the march.

FG I 3: It was quite many people to distract and to disturb the traffic and to make some commotions in the streets and people were also chanting.

FG II 2: I felt putting the protest out on the street and actually marching and seeing people that were locked in that street and couldn't drive their car anymore but supporting it and seeing it. I think that was for me a very positive experience and to know that this message has also reached people that lived there and not just this isolated thing that was going to happen.

These statements reveal important aspects of the perceived self-efficacy of protests. Breaking this isolation and overcoming clear boundaries between protesters and the public increase the perceived effectiveness of the protest. Others hint at the feeling of a common identity created through this march.

FG II 3: I guess that this was the best moment because it felt a bit like a relief, like “Okay, we are not that many, they are screwing us with the negotiations but still we are marching! These are my comrades in some aspects. I like to march with these people.”

26 Groups of more than two people sharing a political message were regarded as political gatherings and forbidden during the state of emergency. Therefore, before the Red Lines were officially permitted, organisers had called on participants to arrive in pairs to the protest.

27 Via Campesina is an international movement of small-scale farmers, many of them indigenous; the Climate Guardians are an Australian theatre troupe protesting against climate change by dressing in angel costumes.

The bridge

Once fuelled with new energy, when arriving at the Eiffel Tower, some people being in the front of the march spontaneously decided to take it a step further and occupy Pont de l'Île, a bridge leading over the Seine directly at the Eiffel Tower. A barricade was built with inflatable cobblestones²⁸ and people performed a sit-in on the bridge. By some, this was described as the climax of the disobedience moment within the protest (D12 organisers 2016). As the blockade of this prominent point was going on for around one hour, the present police forces started to put pressure on those regarded as organisers of this action:

I 3: The police called me several times to ask me to get them to move and stop blocking the bridge. Which I didn't do, arguing that our action was over but they kept pressing me telling me that this was "my people".

However, trying to spontaneously coordinate the people sitting on that bridge, turned into a moment of failed communication and ultimately confusion:

FG II 4: Yeah (*laughing*), I didn't understand it was civil disobedience before I had been sitting there for 5-10min. I was like "What are we actually doing?"

When more and more people started to leave the bridge towards the Eiffel Tower, protesters in the front of the blockade tried to get a vote of the crowd whether to stay or also go. As this attempt did not work out, with shrinking numbers on the bridge and increasing police presence at the spot, a call was made from the front to lift the blockade and move under the Eiffel Tower. Once there, a marching band started playing again and people started dancing until the group slowly dissolved.

I personally remember feeling quite misplaced partying under the Eiffel Tower. By then, news had arrived that the Paris Agreement was signed and, as it was expected, that it was far from making sure that the symbolic Red Lines would not be crossed. And the climate justice movement was celebrating - not knowing exactly what, maybe just themselves. As it turned out later, these exact party images from the Eiffel Tower were used by a TV channel to accompany the final

28 Tarrow (2011: 266) points at the importance for movements to build on understandings inherited from their *ancestors*. The cobblestones are one beautiful example from the protests in Paris as they combined two histories from Paris related to people's power: one is the student movement in 1968 that dug out tons of cobblestones from the streets in Paris to use them in street fights with the police; the other is the building of barricades during the French revolution. Again Tarrow (2011: 30) notes on that: "Parisians build barricades because barricades are inscribed in the history of Parisian contention".

announcement of the negotiation result with the headlines “people celebrating the agreement”.²⁹

An analysis

The march certainly marks another turning point in the Red Lines protest. As described above, on Avenue de la Grande Armée, the police was exercising total control over space, keeping protesters at distance from the Arc de Triomphe and the wider public. However, the start of the march revealed that this was indeed a rather fragile control. Knowing about the numbers in their backs was still a decisive source of power for those leading the march so that they could disobey the order of dispersing in pairs. An additional and maybe even more important aspect concerns *intangible factors*: most people being in the Red Lines shared the commitment of denying power to the authorities and, due to the authorisation, had not had the chance to do what they had prepared for. Now, with an idea on how to actually do so:

FG II 3: Everyone does some sort of analysis and says “Okay, maybe this is the part that is worth it.” I mean, we are definitely doing it in a pacific way, we just want to walk towards the Eiffel Tower and if they want to break this march, well, then it's worth it to disobey them in this sense.

Due to the limited scope of this thesis, it remains unclear what the actual reasons for police forces were to let the march happen after shortly trying to disperse people. However, it is clear that they – again – had to give in to not risk a situation that would be totally out of their control and that would produce undesired images.

The occupation of the bridge in front of the Eiffel Tower has to be seen in a different light. While in terms of the march there was a clear feeling among participants of my focus groups that this a great idea and worth it, the occupation of the bridge seemed rather arbitrary: “I felt like that' it was completely pointless to be there sitting” (FG II 3). The consequently shrinking numbers of protesters on the bridge also meant a loss of power to keep the occupation going. As laid out above in detail, it is protesters' greatest power to act in masses that allow for disobedience with smaller risks of repression. Being now confronted with less sup-

²⁹ I have not seen this myself but a participant of my focus group discussion stated: “We went to a café and [...] they were showing on the TV the final announcement of the agreement and in a tiny part of the screen the images of the Eiffel Tower with the headlines “People celebrating the agreement” (FG II 3).

port from other protesters and more police forces showing up, it tipped the scales again and allowed the police to regain control over the situation.

However, what remained from the march and the following occupation, is the changed dynamics and the notion of civil disobedience that, although taken away by the granting of permission the day before, was brought back into the action.

I 2: So in a way during that day we had a massive civil disobedience action, an illegal march in the middle of Paris. So in a way we had it! It was not at all scheduled but we had it.

Recalling that building up the movement was one of the central goals for the mobilisation, it becomes apparent how crucial the aspect of being disobedient was in the face of the authorisation. Unanimously, organisers have stated that the march and the occupation of the bridge saved the Red Lines protest from being a total disappointment for many. Instead, those who were part of the march described a feeling of empowerment:

FG II 4: It felt very powerful because then you get the feeling of many people and there was a lot of different singing, and shouting and... -
FG II 1: ... a feeling of "They can't stop us! We can do this, we can take the streets, we still have the power."

I will consider the relevance of this insight, among the other central results from this analysis, in the following chapter. As the protest was characterised by a high level of complexity, I will limit myself to the most important aspects.

5 Discussion

The objectives for the Red Lines protest clearly show that the climate justice movement is in a phase of establishing civil disobedience as a common tool for its protests. Though the Paris attacks and the subsequent state of emergency made many organisations withdraw their call for it, a considerable part of the movement was so strongly committed to keep mobilisations for the Red Lines going. What happened subsequently was a phase of exploring and learning about the power of civil disobedience under very difficult conditions. In the following, I will discuss some of these lessons learnt and will add other aspects that might become relevant for the movement in its further application of civil disobedience. Thereby, I will answer the above stated research sub-question *What does the Red Lines protest say about the climate justice movement's use of civil disobedience?*

In the conclusion finally, I will summarise my findings and answer my overarching research question.

5.1 Acting *en masse*

Among social movement scholars, civil disobedience counts as an established part of the disruptive repertoire (della Porta & Diani 2006: 185). I have shown at length that the announcement of the Red Lines as a mass disobedience action was the strongest power that the movement could draw on, both in the contact with the police and during the actual protest when starting the unauthorised march. These insights can be useful in actions of mass civil disobedience of the climate justice movement that are certainly to come.

Reflecting on their experiences from Paris, activists have argued that the limitations of mass actions were revealed, as many organisations were not able to adapt to the changed circumstances in the state of emergency (see Aronoff 2015a) or the non-confronting way of policing the protest (see de Marcellus 2016). Though I do see great advantages in mass actions, it is certainly right that they are not the best strategy in all cases. Indeed, in Paris we also saw the establishment of decentralised, small-scale actions under the umbrella of *climate games* – a tendency that was continued in 2016 with an action laboratory at a climate camp in the Rhineland.

These developments both show that the movement is in a phase of exploring the power of civil disobedience and learning about its appropriate use for different arenas and objectives.

5.2 Disobeying whichever law

Above, I have referred to Thoreau (1849) as the pioneer of civil disobedience and his basic idea to disobey *unjust* laws. This notion was forcefully implemented for example in the Indian Independence Movement³⁰ or the US-American Civil Rights Movement³¹ and it turned out to be a very powerful tool. In regards to climate change, however, there is not the one (or the set of) unjust law that needs to be disobeyed. The climate justice movement in Paris rather made use of the disobedience towards some law in order to gain (media) attention. Due to the state

³⁰ Initiated by Mohandas Gandhi, thousands of Indians broke the law by extracting salt from sea water as the British officials were taxing salt production and deemed local practices illegal.

³¹ Very famously, Rosa Parks resisted racial segregation by refusing to take her designated seat in the back of a bus, starting the Montgomery bus boycott.

of emergency, this turned out to be breaking the general ban on demonstrations.³² Though this ban certainly was regarded as an *unjust law* by many demonstrators and seen as a way to suppress dissent, it is not directly linked to the causes of climate change; or, put differently, climate change is not immediately affected by undermining a ban on demonstrations.

So through the authorisation, even though the movement had reached its aim of staging a protest at all, the previously set objectives of the movement were affected: due to the consequent status of an ordinary demonstration and the impossibility to stage it at Le Bourget (as a *space for representation*), (media) attention was dramatically reduced so that the movement did not manage to have the “last word”.³³ The goals of movement building and establishing civil disobedience were certainly also affected, although the picture as to how this exactly took shape is not particularly clear.

However, what became apparent in the Red Lines protest is the importance of the link between means and ends of civil disobedience. Quill argues that protesters who use the *necessity argument* for civil disobedience – as it was done by the climate justice movement – have to establish “a direct causal relationship between the act of disobedience and the imminent harm” (2009: 11). The absence of this causal relationship became very salient during the occupation of the bridge in front of the Eiffel Tower:

FG II 3: And of course this kind of decisions, just like in any demonstrations, start with “This is what we need to do! This is what is moral! The fucking governments are destroying the world and you need to stay here!” [...] People had to make a decision to do something and that felt to some degree like the civil disobedience that we had been looking for. But at the same time it felt like no one was really convinced that it made any sense to stay on that bridge.
 – FG II 2: That was the point! It wasn't... We didn't know what was the goal of sitting down.

The movement's choice of target plays an important role for this imminent link as it provides a story of the movement, both for participants and their audience. This resonates with the considerations on the choice of targets of one of the organisers:

³² It can be assumed that even without the state of emergency, it would probably have been breaking the ban on demonstrations in a certain area, namely around Le Bourget where certainly a *Red Zone* (cf. Starr et al. 2011: 36) would have been put in place.

³³ In fact, pictures from the protests were misinterpreted/used by media channels to underline the celebratory mood after the Paris Agreement had been adopted. This would certainly not have been possible with pictures of police dispersing protesters.

I 1: For me it comes down to what the outcomes of the activities are going to be. Activities around conferences in cities are always highly symbolic. We are not reducing emissions. So the level of risk that I would encourage people to take closing down a coal mine or a power station or a fracking site theoretically at least would be higher than in a space where you're only going to achieve a symbolic victory.

In such arenas, the imminent link is much stronger. Disobeying the state of emergency and still demonstrating in the streets of Paris surely is only a *symbolic victory*, but hardly related to preventing further carbon emissions. However, these considerations allow an insight in the actual role that COP21 was supposed to play for the climate justice movement. Earlier I have described movement building and establishing civil disobedience (besides having the “last word”) as goals of the mobilisations. Here, it becomes apparent that Paris was rather a step towards bigger things than an end in itself, thereby highly contrasting with the mobilisations for COP15 in 2009. Without any doubt, partly it was about being disobedient and temporarily taking a street in Paris in order to be able to pass the message of the movement on to the media. But even more so, it was about preparing people to become disobedient at other places and times when there is more to achieve than a purely symbolic victory. And rightly so, in the aftermath of D12, a global week of action was announced to take place in May 2016, continuing the movement's shift away from protests at the yearly COPs towards direct actions and *blockadia*.

5.3 Framing people's power

Another aspect to learn from the Red Lines concerns the framing of the protest. Goffman (1986: 10-11) refers to frames as “definitions of a situation [that] are built up in accordance with principles of organization which govern events – at least social ones – and our subjective involvement in them.” Social movements actively try to influence such *subjective involvement in events* via framing. A frame analysis (cf. Benford & Snow 2000) of the Red Lines mobilisation shows that it is centred around *people's power*. In this case, it serves as both, a prognostic frame (what is the solution?) and a motivational frame (how are people mobilised?). Examples for that are statements such as:

“We are the ones we have been waiting for” (D12 organisers 2015a),

“Community power is rising up beyond 2015 with real people-powered solutions” (Climate Justice Action 2015),

“Through our presence, our mass and our cohesion, we will show that we are the solution” (Coalition Climate 21 2015a).

Recalling Sharp's (1973) understanding of power as people's (dis)obedience towards their government, it becomes apparent that this framing and tactic go hand in hand. Civil disobedience hereby becomes not only a way of bringing forward whichever political claim, but also inherently representing resistance and conflict (Nobles & Schiff 2015: 477).

5.4 Being (dis)obedient

My focus group discussions have shown that this framing actually played a role in the way participants were mobilised and prepared for the protest³⁴ and consequently that they felt encouraged to take this power. However, when the police authorised this meant-to-be civil disobedience protest, they did not only regain control over the situation; they also communicated that they were the ones who held the power and were able to set the (legal) frame in which the protest was to take place. Here, the Red Lines protest gives interesting insights in the construction of (dis)obedience. State authorities could have reacted violently on the denial of consent by protesters. Instead, they changed the conditions of the protest so that protesters consented again – even if this meant consenting to the claims they had brought to the negotiations. Indeed, it put state authorities into a position where some participants of the protest regarded them as the dominant power who had planned all this in advance, though organisers in the negotiations stated that the movement determined what would be happening. Considering the above at length described context of the mobilisations, most probably it was the right decision to inform the police of the plans. However, movement organisers, when contacting the police, should be aware of this weakness of civil disobedience: being (dis)obedient ultimately depends on state authorities who can therefore transform a contentious action into an ordinary demonstration. Otherwise, a strong framing of people's power might lead to a strong feeling of disappointment.

In Paris, the opportunity to scale up the action and spontaneously start a (disobedient) march towards the Eiffel Tower in the eyes of several organisers has prevented the whole protest from being a disempowering experience.

³⁴ This is also reflected by feelings of disappointment during the authorised protest and rising moods when there was the opportunity to actually be disobedient as soon as the march towards the Eiffel Tower took off.

I 3: So without the march [...] I think frustration would have been higher because a lot of people would have said: "Well, what have we done? We have done a big stand or whatever."

Its relevance might become apparent having in mind that state forces – just as protesters – “adjust their intervention tactics to the tactical repertoires and scale of political protests” (Wahlström 2016: 3). Interestingly, the policing of *Ende Gelände* 2016, the first mass civil disobedience action of the European climate movement after COP21, though being a totally different arena with different goals, bears certain similarities with the one in Paris. Instead of trying to enforce the law and violently keeping activists away from the coal mine or the rail tracks leading to a power plant, the police apparently came to the conclusion that they might handle the protest best if they just let it happen. As analysed for Paris, certainly it was the high numbers and extensive preparation of participants that led, not to an official authorisation, but to police's toleration of trespassing and occupation for more than 48 hours. Certainly, it is too early to speak of diffusion of policing practice (cf. McCarthy & McPhail 1997: 104) to handle mass civil disobedience, especially as protest arenas and following logics are fundamentally different. But these two experiences make it even more important for protesters to be able to react to this style of policing, as considered by one of my informants already some weeks before *Ende Gelände*:

I 1: How could the authorities make *Ende Gelände* feel like a disempowering experience? They would allow people to just go to the mine. And I think it's important to look at that and how that impacts people's sense of achievement and motivation moving forward. So what's the thing that we have in reserve that we can bring? In Paris this was the spontaneous march.

One way for movement organisers to create this *thing that we have in reserve* could be to include a scenario in their planning of police permitting/tolerating the mass civil disobedience action.

5.5 Empowering the movement

Another way aims at the further empowerment of activists, which Rye understands as the “capacity and opportunity to effectively express social or political goals in a public arena” (2015: 309). Civil disobedience then becomes not only a tool to achieve a movement's political goal, but also a means to alter “the relationship between those who govern and those who are governed by asserting an element of spontaneity and freedom into the order of things” (Quill 2009: 165).

Climate activist Kevin Buckland (2016) observes an emerging *culture of resistance*, that is promoting horizontal and self-organised projects, and questioning hierarchies also within the movement itself. Considerations rather go in the direction of enabling people to take decisions into their own hands.

I 1: It's not necessary to make a disobedient activity take place but it is to create this space for people to feel empowered and strong enough to be disobedient in the future.

And here, the Red Lines protest provides an example of how this could look like. Due to trainings and preparations, and ultimately due to the authorisation of the protest, “by accident, what we achieved with the Red Lines was creating a space where people felt empowered to be disobedient rather than being led into a disobedient situation” (I 1). The march and the subsequent occupation of the bridge were described as “something it [the hub] should/could not be coordinating as it had taken on a life of its own” (D12 organisers 2016).

Seeing this in the light of organisers' objectives of movement building and establishing civil disobedience, it becomes apparent why a clear assessment of the Red Lines action is so difficult. On the one hand, the authorisation prevented activists from staging a civil disobedience protest as planned and thereby it stood in the way of making more people confident with this tactic. On the other hand, precisely this authorisation created a space in which activists spontaneously could take power into their own hands and explore the potential of it themselves. Certainly, there are disadvantages to such an unplanned and uncoordinated action, a criticism that was also voiced by some of my informants. But it also shows the tremendous potential of a movement if its participants have the skills and knowledge to spontaneously scale up their activities and achieve their political goals despite changing conditions.

5.6 Assessing the protest

Trying to assess the outcomes of the Red Lines protest from the perspective of the climate justice movement is a big challenge and certainly not possible within categories of “good” or “bad”. Indeed, during the preparation for my interviews, participants showed interest in participating because it would allow them to reflect in a structured manner once more on what happened, hoping to get some more clarity about this issue. For some, this process seems not to be concluded yet, even month afterwards: “I’m still under shock about what happened at that

time" (12).

As such, I also got assessments of the COP21 mobilisations that differed widely, from being a great success till being a total failure, however everyone recognised the special circumstances. For those who considered it a success, the main arguments were that the movement managed to mobilise more than 10,000 people for a (meant-to-be) civil disobedience protest despite the state of emergency, which exceeded all hopes by far³⁵; that more people prepared for and seem to be willing to take action in 2016³⁶; and that the movement seemingly had its powerful and disobedient moments despite the authorisation when marching towards the Eiffel Tower and occupying the bridge. For those considering it a failure, it was mentioned that despite all the preparations for civil disobedience, in the end it was only a normal, rather uncontentious demonstration that was low in numbers due to its framing as an act of civil disobedience and the last-minute authorisation; that the movement did not manage to achieve its goal of having the "last word"; and that its narrative was completely contrasted by images of delegates in Le Bourget and the movement being portrayed by some media as celebrating the deal, although it actually wanted to challenge it.

From my point of view, there are three central insights that the movement can take away from Paris. The first is that civil disobedience puts the movement in a very strong position to implement their plans for a protest. With this insight, even within the state of emergency, the movement was able to determine the conditions of the protest and force the police to give in to their demands. Another one is that, indeed, the authorisation of a meant-to-be civil disobedience protest can take away much of its power and momentum. My interviews and discussions with several people within the movement have shown that the experience of the Red Lines protest due to its last-minute authorisation did not meet expectations at all and was regarded as disappointing. A third insight is that an authorised civil disobedience protest has a great potential to still be disobedient, maybe just in another way. Trainings and mental preparation to participate in an act of civil disobedience certainly increased people's eagerness and finally enabled the spontaneous march towards the Eiffel Tower and the subsequent occupation of the

³⁵ Certainly, before the Paris attacks organisers were expecting even more people to participate but with the circumstances changing drastically the more than 10,000 people were widely regarded as a success.

³⁶ By the time of the hand-in of this thesis, the *break free* campaign has already taken place, with the European movement having a widely regarded success at *Ende Gelände* with around 3,000 people participating in direct action to shut down a coal mine and a coal power plant.

bridge to take place.

Continuing the path to make more people familiar with the movement's action repertoire, preparing them to be confident to confront state power and ultimately empowering them to take power into their own hands seems to me the way forward to build a stronger climate justice movement.

6 Conclusion

This thesis was inspired by the desire to better understand the complex nexus around the Red Lines protest in Paris during COP21. It was guided by the research question *How was the Red Lines protest a power struggle between protesters and the police and what does this say about the climate justice movement's use of civil disobedience?*

In the beginning of this thesis, I have shown that a variety of factors characterised the climate justice movement's preparation of the Red Lines protest. On the one hand, there were movement-internal aspects like the experiences from the Copenhagen summit that, due to harsh police repression and unfulfilled hopes in the COP process, led to the temporary disappearance of the movement. As a direct consequence, the movement had shifted its focus towards direct action on the local level. Additionally, movement-external factors such as the foreseeable shortcomings of the Paris Agreement in terms of climate justice and the generally ambiguous relationship of radical movements towards summits, contributed to the notion that COP21 was indeed not the movement's favourite arena. However, as I have argued, mobilisations should be understood from the perspective of political opportunity structures, that is using the prominence of the COP to state one's message and to win over new people for a long-term engagement in the movement.

These factors made organisers of the Red Lines protest agree on three central objectives for the mobilisations, namely establishing civil disobedience in the repertoire of the movement's actions, having the "last word" in order to influence the way how the Paris Agreement would be regarded by the wider public, and strengthening and empowering the movement for future activities. These objectives hint at the intended use of civil disobedience as an end in itself and as a

means to gain attention for the movement's cause.

However, as I have shown, the Paris attacks and the subsequent state of emergency fundamentally changed the organising space and called into question the reachability of these objectives and ultimately the whole mobilisations *per se*. I have analysed that the ban on demonstrations and the legal rights granted to police forces in the state of emergency facilitated their use of pre-emptive measures against climate activists, contributing to the control of dissent.

Applying Sharp's (1973) understanding of power and drawing on literature on policing protests, I have then shown in detail how power struggles between protesters and the police evolved in the preparation and implementation phase of the Red Lines protest. It became apparent that the plans for a civil disobedience protest were quite robust as they were not dependent on police's agreement. Taking the state of emergency into account, movement organisers intentionally changed the place of the protest to avoid disproportionate repression. My analysis has shown that protesters drew their greatest power from their numbers, their level of preparation, and ultimately their commitment to disobey. It gave them a very strong position in the contact with the police so that they did not have to negotiate terms but rather just informed the police about what they would be doing – with or without police's consent. Though there is no certainty about this due to the lack of police informants, I traced the probable motives for authorities to not repress the protest: a very sensitive political context with elections the subsequent day and the eagerness of the French government to celebrate the Paris Agreement without pictures of repression against activists who tell another story.

My interviews with organisers and participants of the Red Lines protest have shown the manifold effects that the subsequent last-minute authorisation of the protest had. Although they acknowledged the movement's power to stage the protest despite the state of emergency, among my informants a strong feeling of disappointment was dominant, hinting at the fact that *how* to protest was at least as important to them as *for/against what* it took place. A central point I make in this thesis is that the authorisation of the Red Lines protest should be regarded as a way of policing this protest – even though the police gave in to protesters' demands. I have shown that by authorising this meant-to-be civil disobedience protest, the police regained an otherwise unachievable control over the situation. However, the Red Lines protest has also shown that protesters' eagerness to be

disobedient was not diminished by the authorisation. The start of a spontaneous march brought back the notion of disobedience and finally led to a feeling of empowerment. It shows the great potential of trainings and preparations for being able to react to changing circumstances in order to scale up activities in the face of authorisations, and still turn it into an empowering experience.

Finally, I have discussed the relevance of these insights and additional aspects for the movement's future use of civil disobedience. I have argued that the movement is still exploring its powers, not only in terms of mass actions for which the Red Lines protest can serve as an important lesson, but also taking decentralised, small-scale activities into consideration. Second, I have shown that the movement has used civil disobedience both as an end in itself and as a means to gain attention. However, a missing link between the disobedient action and the causes of climate change can turn out to be problematic. Nevertheless, this discrepancy is certainly of less relevance considering the general shift in the movement towards direct action linked to *blockadia*. I then discussed the symbiosis of civil disobedience with a framing of *people's power* as applied by the movement. However, drawing on the insights of the Red Lines protest, this power is called into question through the construction of (dis)obedience that is ultimately dependent on state authorities. I have argued that this aspect might be a future tool to police civil disobedience protests as similarities were observable in the movement's biggest action in 2016. One way to react to such changing circumstances implies the empowerment of protesters through trainings and a *culture of resistance*. The spontaneous happenings after the official end of the Red Lines protest can be seen as a hint as to how a further empowered climate justice movement envisions its actions.

Coming back to my overarching research question for this thesis, I have shown how the Red Lines protest was a power struggle between protesters and the police characterised by shifts of power: from the ban on all protests and extended means of control through the state of emergency, to the announcement to protest anyway, to the permit and great level of control during the actual protest, to the unauthorised march in the middle of Paris. Civil disobedience as a strategy of the climate justice movement thereby was in the centre of this power struggle as it enabled the movement in the first place to (re)gain power in the interaction with the police. Civil disobedience's inherent questioning of power (holders) al-

lowed the movement to make power relations visible and created a space where it could express their demands for climate justice despite the very difficult circumstances.

Further research

Although my research for this Master thesis got quite extensive, a lot of interesting and pressing questions had to be left out or cannot be answered yet.

The movement certainly has been on the rise during the last few years and it had remarkable successes with their emerging strategy of civil disobedience. However, the resilience of both, the movement and its strategy will only become apparent once they face harsh repression or once they unanimously fail to achieve their objectives. Police strategies of controlling both decentralised/small-scale and mass actions of civil disobedience will play a role in this and it will be interesting to observe how this evolves over the coming years. I have mentioned the tolerating and temporising strategy at *Ende Gelände 2016* which should be considered in the light of the Red Lines protest but also having in mind the failed approach to keep activists violently away at *Ende Gelände 2015*. However, I regard it as very important for this kind of research to have access to police forces in order to achieve robust and more valid results on their actual intentions and therefore will leave this to more experienced researchers in this field.

For me the Red Lines protest is a fascinating case in many regards. However, the one event that certainly determined many of the ensuing happenings were the Paris attacks and the subsequent state of emergency. Discussing my research ideas with people in the movement, concerns were voiced that these attacks might not have been singular events that will not happen again but rather a foreshadowing on how the conditions in which social movements have to operate might look like in the coming decades. I could not fully address this question due to the scope of this thesis but I hope that this case study might give hints on the potential of the climate justice movement in how to handle increasing repression.

A downstream issue then certainly also touches upon the question of how to get across the movement's message in times of terrorism and other topics (seemingly) more urgent than climate change. The final choice of place for the Red Lines protest can be regarded as a first attempt to link climate change to enfold-

ing crises of a capitalist world system but certainly more thoughts will have to be put in this question in the coming years.

The Paris Agreement, which by now has not yet been ratified by all countries, remains an ambiguous treaty and its actual affects will show only within a few years, when countries are supposed to fulfil and revise their pledges. However, it remains clear that there will definitely be a need for an ambitious transnational movement to strive for climate justice. Whatever the exact conditions for the climate justice movement will be, their challenges will not become smaller in a warming world.

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Appendices

Appendix I: List of interviews

	Name	Role	Type of data collection	Date and location
I 1	Oliver*	Core organising team	In-depth interview	17/03/2016, Berlin
I 2	Francois*	Core organising team	In-depth interview	20/04/2016, via Skype
I 3	Nicolas	Core organising team and police contact	In-depth interview	26/05/2016, via Skype
FG I 1	Ben*	Participant of Red Lines protest	Focus group	09/04/2016, Copenhagen
FG I 2	Phil	Participant of Red Lines protest	Focus group	09/04/2016, Copenhagen
FG I 3	Lukas	Participant of Red Lines protest	Focus group	09/04/2016, Copenhagen
FG I 4	Anna*	Participant of Red Lines protest	Focus group	09/04/2016, Copenhagen
FG II 1	Joep	Participant of Red Lines protest	Focus group	27/05/2016, Lund
FG II 2	Bernadette	Participant of Red Lines protest	Focus group	27/05/2016, Lund
FG II 3	Pedro	Participant of Red Lines protest	Focus group	27/05/2016, Lund
FG II 4	Bergitte	Participant of Red Lines protest	Focus group	27/05/2016, Lund

* Name is changed to preserve the informant's anonymity

Appendix II: Official permit for the Red Lines protest



Direction de l'Ordre Public et de la Circulation

DEPOT d'une DECLARATION de MANIFESTATION

En application des articles L 211-1 et L 211-2 du Code de la Sécurité Intérieure, les cortèges, défilés, rassemblements de personnes et toute manifestation sur la voie publique sont soumis à l'obligation d'une déclaration préalable auprès du Préfet de Police.

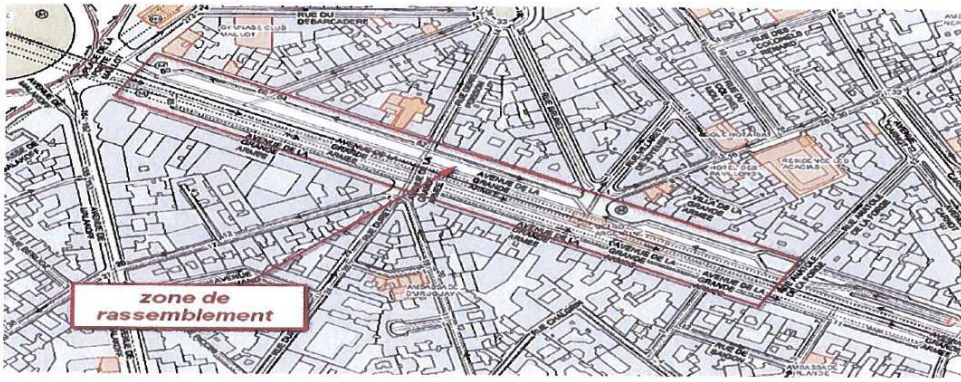
En application de l'article 431-9 du code pénal, constitue le délit de manifestation illicite, puni de six mois d'emprisonnement et de 7.500 euros d'amende, le fait :

1° D'avoir organisé sur la voie publique une manifestation n'ayant pas fait l'objet d'une déclaration préalable dans les conditions fixées par la loi.

2° D'avoir organisé sur la voie publique une manifestation ayant été interdite dans les conditions fixées par la loi.

3° D'avoir établi une déclaration incomplète ou inexacte, de nature à tromper sur l'objet ou les conditions de la manifestation projetée.

Paris, le 11 décembre 2015

1 - Dates : samedi 12 décembre 2015 Objet de la manifestation : hommage aux victimes du réchauffement climatique
2 - Noms, prénoms, domicile et numéro de téléphone des organisateurs : [REDACTED] « sortir du nucléaire » association 350.org [REDACTED] [REDACTED] « Confédération Paysanne » [REDACTED] « Attac » [REDACTED]
3 - Heure de rassemblement : 11 heures 45 Lieu de rassemblement : Avenue de la Grande Armée voir plan ci dessous
4 - Itinéraire du cortège : - Rassemblement statique 
5 - Heure de dispersion : 13 heures 00 Lieu de dispersion : sur place
6 - Observations particulières : bannière , drapeaux , 5000 tulipes , cubes gonflables l'association vélorution participant à l'événement doit déclarer son itinéraire pour accéder au site , à l'issue du rassemblement pas de cortège lors de la dispersion , favoriser les transports en commun

« Les soussignés déclarent disposer des moyens propres à assurer le caractère pacifique de cette manifestation et s'engagent à prendre toutes dispositions pour en assurer le bon déroulement jusqu'à complète dispersion. »

« Ils reconnaissent la nécessité de concilier l'exercice du droit de manifester avec le respect des autres libertés publiques et s'engagent, en conséquence, à limiter les nuisances sonores et préjudices que pourraient subir riverains et professionnels du fait de cette manifestation. »

« Ils déclarent avoir pris connaissance, au verso, des lois et règlements relatifs à la participation délictueuse à une manifestation ou à une réunion publique ou à un attroupement »

Une copie du présent, pour valoir récépissé, leur a été remise.

VISA DE L'AUTORITE DE POLICE
Le Directeur Adjoint de l'Ordre Public et de la Circulation
[Signature]

« Lu et Approuvé »
(Signature des Organisateurs)
Pour Solidaires
Pour 350.org
Pour Réseau Pour Attac
Pour la Fédération Paysanne
Pour le Réseau Nucléaire