

## Political Emotions and Political Atmospheres

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### Introduction

With the rise of Trump in America, the Brexit referendum in the UK, and the growing popularity of right-wing leaders across much of Europe, there has been talk of the increasingly nationalistic, isolationist political climate across the globe. The eruption of the Covid-19 virus, prompting international fear and blame, lockdowns, travel bans and border closures, has arguably intensified this climate of isolation and segregation. *Political climates* are taken to be broad, mood-like framings of a country, an era, or a population, providing fertile ground for certain political ideologies and actions, while staving off others (de Rivera & Paéz 2007; Fuchs 2013a). They are typically conceptualised on the ‘macro’ level—not applying to any particular situation or event but rather to a temporally and geographically extended time and place. We might, for example, talk of the political climate of fear that gripped Stalin’s Russia. *Political atmospheres*, on the other hand, are situation specific. Using the distinction proposed by de Rivera and Paéz (2007), where climates are intended to pick out a more abstract ‘mood’ or ‘tone’ that characterizes, say, an epoch or a nation, atmospheres emerge from concrete situations. Political atmospheres occur at the ‘micro’ level, at specific events such as political rallies, meetings, or speeches.

While there has been a burgeoning interest in atmospheres of late, as this volume is proof of, little consideration has been paid to specifically *political* atmospheres. Yet, political atmospheres are not only a particular kind of atmosphere, they harness, create and drive political emotions and action; they can be manipulated for political ends; and, as we will show, they can leave long shadows that impact

an individual's or a community's political commitments beyond the situation in which they arise.

In this chapter, we put forward an affective, perceptual, and essentially social model of atmosphere—which we dub 'interpersonal atmosphere.' Interpersonal atmosphere is a relational, bodily experience that discloses the emotion, mood or affective dispositions of others present; thus, they constitute a way of experiencing others and their affective states (Osler 2021a). Using this model, we understand political atmosphere as a specific kind of interpersonal atmosphere that relates to *political emotions*. We argue that political atmospheres deserve their own analysis as they not only encourage participation in shared political emotions in the moment but have a potentially long-standing impact on us due to the 'sticky' character of political emotions. This leads us to raise critical questions about issues of power and responsibility regarding the emergence of political atmosphere.

In the first section, we set out our interpersonal account of atmosphere. On this account, we experience interpersonal atmospheres when we bodily grasp the emotion or mood of others, but also the various interpersonal or intragroup affective relations at play. In the following section, we highlight how the material world influences our atmospheric perception of others and can be used, and indeed manipulated, to encourage the emergence of specific emotions or moods. In section three, we highlight how we engage with atmospheres; how they move and influence our own affective states, as well as how we can impact and contribute to an interpersonal atmosphere. Having set out our interpersonal understanding of atmosphere, we turn to *political* atmospheres, arguing that political atmospheres arise from and, in turn, engender specifically *political emotions*. In section four, we set out our account of political emotions, and provide a taxonomy of different types, with a particular focus on robustly shared political emotions, and in section five bring these threads together to highlight certain unique features of political atmospheres. We explore how experiencing a political atmosphere can: crystallize our grasp of individuals as part of a political community; prompt political emotions; help integrate us around a shared affective concern with other fellow-travellers present as well as, more broadly, into a political community; and, not only affect us in the moment but can have on-going implications for what political emotions we experience and which political groups we align ourselves with.

## Interpersonal atmospheres

### *Introducing atmosphere*

We often talk of social situations as having an atmosphere: the festive atmosphere of a party, the raucous atmosphere of a carnival, the sombre atmosphere of a funeral, the tense atmosphere of a family argument. These are examples of what we call *interpersonal atmospheres*. We experience these atmospheres as emanating from and between people through our felt bodies.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, we experience them as having a particular affective tone or texture; the tense atmosphere of a family dinner feels very different to the ecstatic atmosphere of a festival. The tone of the atmosphere *tells us something* about those to whom the atmosphere relates; our sensitivity to atmosphere informs our social understanding, informs how we might act in a social situation, and being insensitive to atmosphere can lead to awkwardness, faux pas, and social missteps. In everyday experience and discourse we are very familiar with interpersonal atmospheres. Yet, perhaps rather surprisingly, interpersonal atmospheres have received little attention.

Atmospheres, broadly speaking, have gained attention from a number of disciplines, such as architecture (e.g., Borch & Kornberger 2015; Pallasmaa 2014; Zumthor 2006), aesthetics (e.g., Benjamin 2008 [1936]; Dufrenne 1973; Wollheim 1993), management studies (e.g., Julmi 2016), psychology (e.g., Costa et al. 2014; Tellenbach 1968), geography (e.g., Anderson 2009, 2014), anthropology (e.g., Bille 2015; Bille et al. 2015; Daniels 2015) and sociology (e.g., de Rivera and Paéz 2007). Philosophical interest in atmospheres is also on the rise. Here, atmospheres have garnered a reputation for being particularly “slippery” phenomena (Böhme 1993)—something that we both feel and something that we experience as ‘out there’ in the world, both subjective and objective. Atmospheres are described in a multitude of ways, including: as a “felt co-presence between subject and object” (Böhme 2017a, 10), as “feelings poured out spatially” (Schmitz 2019, 97), as “tuned spaces” (Binswanger 1933, 174), as “spatialized feeling” (Lipps 1935, 187), as “force fields” (Stewart 2011, 445), as “tangible, forceful, qualitative ‘presences’ in experiential space” (Slaby 2019, 275), as “quasi-things” (Griffero 2014, 1).

In many ways, the ambiguous ontological status of atmosphere has come to dominate the philosophical discussion of atmosphere, often being invoked as a

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<sup>1</sup> One of the few things that atmosphere researchers agree on is that there is no such thing as an unfelt atmosphere (Böhme 2017a,b; Fuchs 2013; Griffero 2014, 2017; Slaby 2019).

tool to dissect, blur and dissemble dualistic ways of thinking about subjectivity and objectivity (e.g., Böhme 2017a, b; Griffero 2014, 2017; Schmitz 2019; Slaby 2020). On dualistic conceptions, we can more-or-less clearly divide our subjective experience with what happens in 'the world.' This seemingly mysterious experience of a 'spatialized feeling,' of affectivity 'out in the world,' puts pressure on such dualism. Schmitz, whose name has become almost synonymous with atmosphere in the last decade (e.g., Nörenberg 2020; Riedel & Torvinen 2019; Slaby 2020), provides a discussion of atmosphere that is primarily motivated by an attempt to revolutionise the way we think about emotions and embodied subjectivity. Schmitz aims at placing emotions in public space, rather than locked in the inner sphere of an individual, and uses the notion of atmosphere to capture what he describes as a realm of pre-personal affectivity (Schmitz 2019, 97). Similarly, Griffero (2014, 2017), greatly influenced by Schmitz, uses atmospheres as an example of a new ontological category he wants to establish called "quasi-things." Slaby (2020), on the other hand, has used the notion of atmosphere to bring together the neo-phenomenology of Schmitz with Massumi's (2002, 2015) work in affect theory, moving away from an understanding of affect that centres around human bodies and human experience.

While these are all interesting, and radical, philosophical explorations, the use of atmosphere in the service of these wider projects leaves aside discussions of how experiencing atmosphere might grant us *social* understanding, and rarely focus specifically upon atmospheres that arise from the expressive behaviour and interactions of people. This oversight of interpersonal atmosphere might also be attributed to the research on atmosphere being rooted in the realm of aesthetics, where atmospheres of objects and environments predominate (Böhme 2017b, 97). We propose a different starting point. In the following, we present an *interpersonal* account of atmosphere before turning to an analysis of political atmosphere. Importantly, this allows us to focus not just on what atmospheres *are* but what they *do*.

### *An interpersonal approach*

We suggest that we understand interpersonal atmosphere as a *way* that we experience others. We experience an interpersonal atmosphere when we grasp the expressive actions and interactions of others through our felt bodies.

Atmosphere, then, is not a *what* but a *how*. When we enter a party and experience the joyful atmosphere this is *how* we affectively experience the emotion, mood and/or affective interconnectedness of the party. Our sensitivity to the atmosphere tells us something about those present, gives us social understanding. The *tone* of the atmosphere, as happy, conveys the affective state of the party-goers. If the affective state of the party-goers changes, so does our experience of the atmosphere. For instance, if an argument broke out at the party and all those present stopped dancing and chatting, went quiet and looked at the arguing individuals nervously, the happy atmosphere shifts. It is replaced by a tense atmosphere. As the expressive behaviour and interaction of those present changes, so does our experience of the atmosphere. The atmosphere, then, arises out of the unfolding, dynamic expressivity of those present.<sup>2</sup>

Influenced by Merleau-Ponty, Fuchs emphasises that we do not just visually perceive others and their expressivity experience. Rather, it is through interacting with others, as another embodied subject, that we gain interpersonal understanding (Fuchs 2013b, 2–16; Fuchs 2016; Fuchs & de Jaegher 2009). Fuchs highlights the reciprocal, affective relationship between oneself and others as a fundamental part of our experience of others:

Our body is affected by the other's expression, and we experience the kinetics and intensity of his emotions through our own bodily kinaesthesia and sensation. Our body schemas and feelings expand and 'incorporate' the perceived body of the other. This creates a dynamic interplay which forms the basis of social understanding and empathy. (Fuchs 2016, 198)

Fuchs' point is that our bodies are feeling bodies that resonate and are affected by the bodies of others. Experiencing others is not some affect-free, purely cognitive experience but essentially involves our felt body. Our body is the medium through which we experience the world, and that applies to our experience of other people. When interacting with someone our interaction creates interaffective "feedback cycles" (Fuchs 2020), whereby my expressions affect you and your expressions affect me and as part of the interlocking affective

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<sup>2</sup> Note that this marks a crucial difference between our account and Schmitz's conception of atmospheres as a pre-personal realm of affectivity. While Schmitz conceives of emotions as atmospheres out in public space, it is not clear how atmospheres relate to the world more generally. As Böhme (2017a, 17) puts it: "Schmitz's approach suffers above all from the fact that he credits atmospheres with too great an independence from things. They float free like gods and have as such nothing to do with things, let alone being their product" – and we would add to this, too great an independence from the people who they relate to.

loop we both are attuned to, or resonate with, one another. The tense interaction between us arises not in your angry grimaces, nor my frustrated expression but in the interplay between us. What is key for our purposes is that Fuchs describes how, when individuals are engaged in such ‘interaffective’ situations, an interpersonal *atmosphere* is created:

This is accompanied by a holistic impression of the interaction partner and his current state (for example his anger), and by a feeling for the overall atmosphere of the shared situation (for example a tense atmosphere). (Fuchs 2016, 198)

The atmosphere, here, is not one individual’s grasp of the other’s discrete affective state but a bodily apprehension of the expressive interaction that arises from and between the two participants. While agreeing with much of what Fuchs says, we suggest that we can understand this bodily apprehension of others in a broader sense.<sup>3</sup> Audrey can, for instance, feel the atmosphere of a situation that she has only just come across, before she is an *active* participant in what is going on. For instance, Audrey may walk into a room and bodily feel the tense atmosphere of an arguing couple even if they have not noticed that Audrey has entered the room. Moreover, we suggest that this does not just apply to a dyadic interaction but to larger groups. For instance, the happy atmosphere of a party that arises out of the expressive interactions of a chatting, dancing, laughing crowd. Thus, we suggest extending Fuchs’ account of interpersonal bodily perception beyond being in the middle of a dyadic interaction to a wider notion of interpersonal atmosphere.<sup>4</sup>

On our account, we experience interpersonal atmospheres when we bodily grasp the emotion, mood, and interconnectedness of others. Atmospheres are subjectively felt but also arise from the expressive bodies and behaviour of others out there in the world. Like all perceptual experiences (Ratcliffe 2008; Zahavi

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<sup>3</sup> Indeed, we would go so far to defend the idea that we can bodily apprehend others even in the case of mediated social experiences online and thus can experience interpersonal atmospheres online. See: Osler 2020, 2021b; Krueger & Osler 2019; Kekki 2020; Osler & Krueger 2021 for work on online sociality that would underpin such an argument.

<sup>4</sup> For a more detailed account of our experience of interpersonal atmosphere as a fully-embodied form of empathy, see Osler (2021a).

2003), then, they are *relational*; thus, accounting for their subjective and objective character.

Three things should be noted here. First, saying that we bodily grasp the happiness of the party as an atmosphere is not to suggest that we must feel happy ourselves. Moreover, feeling an interpersonal atmosphere is not a case of emotional contagion either, where we catch the emotion of another through automatic imitation (cf. Hatfield et al. 2011; Scheler 1923[2017])—this would only reveal to us what we ourselves are feeling in a given situation, but would not give us the social understanding of the others. Consider how Audrey might experience the happy atmosphere of the party as accentuating her own tiredness. Her own affective state is in tension with the happy atmosphere and, as such, the atmosphere cannot be reduced to Audrey’s own affective state. As we explore below, being sensitive to an interpersonal atmosphere does not require us to be swept up by it and become affectively aligned with those to whom the atmosphere relates.

Second, while we might experience the party as having a happy atmosphere that spans all those present, this is not to say that all those present must be feeling happy or performing the same expressive gesture. At the party there are some individuals chatting away, some dancing, others listening to a funny story that is being told. There need not be a uniformity of expressivity across these individuals. Rather, the party has a certain tonal range or vitality (Stern 2010; Vendrell Ferran 2021) that spans their expressive movements. People present might be expressing themselves in different ways, undertaking different actions, but all these expressions are in the same ‘key’ or ‘affective *leitmotiv*’ (Walther 1922) as the others. The festivity of the party is not located in one individual, it is not just one person’s happiness, rather the festivity arises from and between those present.<sup>5</sup> It might even be the case that there are some individuals at the party who are not happy at all, who may be sullenly sitting in the corner. However, their sullenness may not be sufficiently discordant to disrupt the dominant mood of the party.

Third, we might be more or less sensitive to an atmosphere. Indeed, in certain instances we might even get the atmosphere wrong. We might be wrong in two

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<sup>5</sup> Though this is not to say that we experience the atmosphere as equally distributed across those present. There may, for instance, be a concentration of atmosphere around someone particularly expressive (Osler 2021a; Trigg 2020).

ways. First, we might simply get the tone of the atmosphere wrong. In the same way that one might mistake another's grimace for a smile, our experience of interpersonal atmosphere can be wrong. If Anders walks in with Audrey and remarks on the depressing atmosphere of the festive party, he has got the atmosphere wrong in an important way. This is because the atmosphere is not just a subjective feeling but reveals the emotion or mood of others and, like other forms of social cognition, is something that we can get wrong.

We might also be wrong about atmosphere in a more subtle way. Audrey might, for instance, experience the party's happy atmosphere as arising from the mood *of the group*; might take the happiness of those present to be something that they are robustly sharing as a shared emotion. Yet, it might be that those present do not experience themselves to be sharing that mood or emotion. Audrey might then experience individuals as bound together say by a common vitality or mood that they would not identify being part of. We will return to this, as it highlights how experiencing a political atmosphere can give us the potentially deceptive impression of having to do with a robustly shared political emotion.

### **Material Matters**

One concern with an interpersonal approach is that it seems to overlook how aspects of the environment also contribute to the atmosphere of a situation. For instance, at a party, the lighting, the music, the arrangement of the furniture can all impact the affective tone of an atmosphere (Slaby et al. 2019). If our atmospheric experience is a bodily grasping of other people's expressivity, how can we account for the role that the environment plays? We suggest that the environment can impact, shape and drive the emergence of expressive behaviour and interaction in a number of ways and, thus, plays an important role in shaping the emergence of particular interpersonal atmospheres.

(i) If people are in a café crowded with furniture, their behaviour and interactions will be restricted to some extent by the environment. The occupants could not, for instance, use sweeping gestures or dance a tango in this space. There is, then, an obvious practical sense in which environmental factors shape the expressive behaviour of those present and thus impact what tone of atmosphere might arise.



(ii) The material space of a setting might also *morph* the field of expressivity in certain ways that impact our experience of interpersonal atmosphere. In an echoey, high-ceilinged room, voices can be magnified, enhancing the sense of busy chatter that we might perceive as a bustling, dynamic atmosphere.

(iii) There is, though, a more intriguing and robust sense in which the material environment can influence the emergence of an atmosphere. Not only does the world practically constrain and allow certain styles of expressive action, it also *affords* different forms of interactive possibilities. We do not perceive our environments as neutral but as permeated with certain *affordances*, solicitations for particular actions or affective possibilities (Gibson 1986; Valenti & Gold 1991; Kiverstein 2015; Hufendiek 2016; Krueger & Colombetti 2018). By affording various action, social, and affective possibilities, the environment can *solicit and drive* particular forms of interaction. The importance of this is two-fold. First, the environment can promote the emergence of particular expressive behaviour. A library might have single-person desks that are set up to afford quiet and solitary study. This encourages an individual to sit and read on their own, while discouraging library visitors forming chatty groups with one another, encouraging a quiet, still mood to emerge and, thus, giving rise to a quiet atmosphere.

Second, by affording certain styles of action and interaction, the environment can also help *sustain* particular individual and shared emotions and moods (Krueger & Colombetti 2018, 225), and thus sustain a particular atmosphere. Environmental resources can provide on-going feedback. For instance, the music at the party does not afford dancing just at the moment someone hears it but for as long as the music is playing. As such, the environment can scaffold on-going affective regulation that can help drive on-going expressive behaviour and, thus, contribute to the emergence and sustenance of a particular atmosphere.

As we highlight below, this is of particular interest in the political context; where having control of a space can *empower* one to influence the emergence of certain atmospheres, which, in turn, encourages, drives, or sustains the emergence of political emotions.

## Engaging with Interpersonal Atmospheres

We do not only experience interpersonal atmospheres from the 'outside.' We can and do experience interpersonal atmospheres as: (i) sweeping us up, (ii) as something we can participate in and contribute to, as well as (iii) change. As such, our experience of atmosphere not only arises from our grasping interpersonal expressivity and dynamics but feeds back into these very dynamics, and can sustain and regulate the affective states of the participants; atmospheres, then, have a looping-effect. This will be of particular importance in the context of political atmospheres, for, as we shall argue, being exposed to political atmospheres does not just involve us being bodily sensitive to the political emotions of others but can engender, shape and drive political emotions in us, with potentially long-standing effect.

But first, let us consider each of these ways of engaging with atmosphere in turn:

(i) When we encounter others through interpersonal atmosphere, we do not have to become like them, their expressivity does not dictate a predetermined response. We are differently sensitive to the presence of atmospheres and we become affectively involved in them in different ways (Schmitz 2019, 100). However, we can (and often do) feel swept up by interpersonal atmosphere. Having entered the party in a grumpy mood, the happy atmosphere takes hold of Audrey, leading to her feeling swept up by the happiness around her, changing her mood. Note, though, that even when we are swept up by the same atmosphere, different individuals can experience this in different ways; analogously, people experience can the same type of emotion without all experiencing it in an identical fashion (Schmid 2009; Trcka 2017).

(ii) One might not only experience being swept up by the prevailing mood of the party but also experience oneself *as part of* that atmosphere, as *contributing* to the happy atmosphere of the party. When we experience being swept up by the happy atmosphere of the party-goers, we can do so from the side-lines, enjoying the happiness sweeping over us while maintaining some detachment from the others present. Alternatively, we can join in with those present, entering into the fray. In interpersonal interactions we are not only "pre-thematically attuned to the expressivity of other" but are also "inherently concerned with how we appear to others" (Dolezal 2017, 238). As such, we not only experience our affective state aligning with those present but are aware of our own expressivity feeding into,

driving and sustaining the happiness at the party. We can, then, experience ourselves as a co-producer of an atmosphere (this is perhaps closest to the description that Fuchs gives of atmosphere).

(iii) It is not necessarily the case that one simply attunes and contributes to the on-going character of the atmosphere—one's presence might lead to a change in the interpersonal atmosphere. How we expressively act in relation to the others present impacts the affective tone of the atmosphere. For instance, if Audrey were to enter the party and immediately pick an argument with someone, she might be responsible for changing the mood of the party, shifting the atmosphere from a happy one to a tense one.

Some people might have more power than others to impact the tone of an atmosphere. Particularly expressive people, individuals with strong social cachet, figures of authority, and so on, all might exert a particularly strong influence over the interpersonal atmosphere that is co-produced. In turn, some people may have little sway over the behaviour of others, for instance marginalized individuals who are ignored or not even recognised as present (Fanon 2008; Honneth 2001; Jardine 2020). We will return to this below in discussing the power and responsibility that authority figures, for example, have in the context of creating political atmosphere.

All of this is to say that experiencing interpersonal atmosphere can prompt our own affective engagement and interaction with others. However, it is important to emphasise here that the extent to which one is recognised as an expressive subject, the power that one has to impact those around one, whether one's very presence is experienced as disruptive to a social situation, all impact one's ability to engage with an atmosphere. Political, social, and normative structures, therefore, underpin one's ability to enter into certain atmospheres and enact change (Ahmed 2006, 2014). Before we turn to what we dub 'political atmospheres,' it must be acknowledged that our atmospheric experiences are always *shaped* by politics. In a certain sense, there are no *apolitical* atmospheres, to the degree that all interpersonal experience, and its material and socio-technological vehicles, is normatively and politically saturated. However, *specifically political atmospheres*, we argue, arise from and engender *specifically political emotions* and have peculiar characteristics that warrant their own analysis.

## Political Emotions

We suggest that we experience a political atmosphere when we bodily grasp not just *any* emotion or mood of an individual or group but specifically *political emotions*. This has unique considerations with respect to how we engage with political atmospheres and issues of power and responsibility for shaping or encouraging the emergence of political atmospheres. To unpack the category ‘political atmospheres,’ then, we must first unpack the notion of political emotions.<sup>6</sup> Our discussion of political emotions will point to some distinctive characteristics of political atmospheres, in particular their normative force, which we will detail in the final section.

### *From ‘politically focused’ to political emotions: A multidimensional account*

Here, we outline a multi-dimensional account of political emotions. To begin with, consider some examples of paradigm cases of political emotions: a state-employee’s anger in the face of the social-democratic government cutting paid lunch-breaks, which leads him to vote for the opposition; or the state employees’ shared anger about this new policy, leading to nation-wide strikes; a citizen’s pride in belonging to a state whose head responds resolutely, yet compassionately, to emerging white-supremacist rhetoric from the opposition; resentment, feelings of powerlessness or hatred on the part of a minority over failed retributive justice in the wake of racist police brutality; cautious hope, or its frustration, that unparalleled shifts in the socio-economic fabric of global society in the wake of the Coronavirus pandemics will have positive effects on halting climate change.

These emotions have different political stakes and impact. Moreover, they express very different social relations between the individual(s) and their relevant political communities. Roughly, we can distinguish four types of political emotion:

(i) The garden-variety type of emotions in political contexts are what might be called ‘*politically focused emotions*.’ The ‘focus’ of emotions, following Helm’s (2001) conceptualization, can roughly be characterized as the aspect of emotions

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<sup>6</sup> For a more detailed account of political emotions, which we have adapted and revised here, see Szanto & Slaby 2020.

that indicates how the target of emotions (e.g., a given policy reform) is of a particular concern for the emoter (e.g., one's socio-economic status) and lends the target the evaluative property that the emotion tracks (e.g., the offense to one's hard-earned status).

The focus of politically focused emotions is a concern of some political import for the emoter but it is not related to any particular political community. The state-employee's anger in the face of a social-democratic government cutting paid lunch-breaks might change his voting behaviour but does not involve a robust affiliation to the opposition party, any solidarity with other state-employees or the sharing of anger with fellow victims of the policy. For this type of emotion to count as political in a minimal sense it won't suffice that the target (the policy) alone is of political relevance; rather the focus must indicate some politically relevant concern, a concern that has potential implications that go beyond the emoter's own, purely personal sphere and has others 'in view.' Audrey's repulsion of Boris Johnson as a despicable narcissist is insufficient to render her repulsion political. Even her repulsion of Johnson as a mendacious campaigner for Brexit will not suffice for it to count as a political emotion, as long as Brexit is only of her private concern, fearing, say, for her permanent residency in an EU-country. Her concern must, at least implicitly, involve Brexit as having an effect on others too.

(ii) Next, we have '*socially shared political appraisal*' (Rimé 2007; cf. Michael 2011). Here, an individual's affective appraisal of a political situation is influenced and modulated by others' appraisal of that situation. Think of the different perception of one's initially covert patriotic pride over the national team's victory when witnessing the manifestation of such pride nationwide on television reports; or consider individuals' xenophobic fears reinforced by polarized peer-discussions.<sup>7</sup>

(iii) Then we have what social psychologists call *group* or *group identification-based* political emotions. Think of feeling guilt, shame, indignation or pride 'in the name of' or 'on behalf' of a group that the emoter identifies with.<sup>8</sup> Such feelings

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<sup>7</sup> Such social appraisal mechanisms are partly responsible for so-called "emotional enclaves" (Hochschild 2016), especially if they are amplified by social or mass media.

<sup>8</sup> Note that the group with which one identifies might turn out to be imaginary; see Szanto & Montes Sánchez 2021.

are based on cognitive and evaluative self-categorization as a member of a certain group, which generate evaluative and emotional identification with that group.

(iv) Finally, we have what we conceive of as the fully-fledged sense of political emotions, *shared* or *collective political emotion*. To conceptualize these, we suggest applying an account to the political that has gained traction in recent debates on collective emotions, namely the collective affective intentionality account (Guerrero Sánchez 2016, 2020; see also Schmid 2009). Collective affective intentionality is the disposition of a group of individuals to *jointly* disclose situations or events in light of *shared* affective concerns.<sup>9</sup> Accordingly, collective *political* emotions are jointly felt appraisals of a politically relevant object, person or event in light of the given community's political concerns. Unlike in the above categories, here we have a type of emotional sharedness of political concerns that is typically expressed linguistically by the use of the first-person plural in a robust, non-summative sense: 'We are the 99%,' 'We are the Indignants,' etc. My anger, say, is not just felt 'in name of' or 'on behalf of' the group I identify with and caused by something that affects that group. I'm not just angry because of the racial injustice towards my ingroup. Rather, it is part and parcel of the very affective intentionality of *my* anger that it is *ours*.

But which of these types of political emotions can give rise to and, in turn, be generated, modulated or maintained by political atmospheres? We suggest that all four types can be involved in experiencing and engaging with political atmospheres, albeit with different degrees and (political) stakes. Political atmospheres may help carve out the affective focus of individuals' personal political concerns and how they relate to the others 'in view' (i); the socio-material aspects of atmospheres outlined above will play a key role here. Similarly, certain political atmospheres may facilitate, shape and frame when and how politically relevant information is socially appraised and communicatively shared among citizens (ii), while certain others, say, hostile or aggressively perceived atmospheres, will hinder such social transmission. Political atmospheres may also reinforce individuals' identification with a particular group (iii); again, socio-material aspects of atmospheres and the affordances of their dominant affective styles will chiefly factor in here. However, as robustly

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<sup>9</sup> Notice that the account doesn't require any emergent or supra-individual subject as the bearer of that disposition; rather it is actualized by individual members' ability to "feel-towards together" (see Guerrero Sánchez 2016).

shared political emotions (iv) are those that most typically involve embodied interaction between individuals, we suggest that they are most likely to give rise to a political atmosphere, as well as be driven by a political atmosphere. As such, we now outline this category in more detail. In particular, we explore the *normative* power of these political emotions, as this will pave the way for unpacking the distinctive normative power of many political atmospheres.

### ***Robustly shared political emotions***

There are four necessary and sufficient requirements for members of a community to affectively share political emotions in our robust sense:<sup>10</sup>

- (1) Two-dimensional affective intentionality requirement;
- (2) Public recognition requirement;
- (3) Reciprocity requirement;
- (4) Normativity requirement

Let us briefly elaborate on these in turn:

(1) First, the emotions of the members must have a *two-dimensional affective-intentional focus*: (a) a focus on the *same matter of political import*, and (b) a *background focus on the political community itself*. In other words, in collective political emotions, the sharedness of the concern and the political community itself, for which the given matter is of import, is part and parcel of the focus of those emotions. For example: For an emotion to count as a collective political emotion, it will not suffice that my repulsion of Johnson is grounded in my concern that Brexit is negatively affecting some others like myself; rather, the background focus of my emotion must also be a concern for *our political community* that is affected by Brexit in certain ways. Moreover, there is an implicit or explicit mutual *awareness* or *acknowledgement* of the sharedness of the political emotions and their import for the community. For, if one is not aware that others are sharing one's concern for our political community (and vice versa), I will not apprehend, let alone *feel*, those emotions as being shared.

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<sup>10</sup> For alternative, but similar, requirements for not necessarily political but collective emotions in general, see Szanto 2015, 2018; León et al. 2020.

(2) Members of a political community must not only acknowledge the concerns as shared; they also implicitly or explicitly *claim public recognition*, i.e., recognition by third-parties, of the emotions and their import for the polity (see also Kingston 2010, 46). To be sure, often the communities in question are not in a position to *make* any public claims, because they are epistemically or politically silenced, excluded from the public sphere or might even risk negative repercussions when laying claims.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, emotions are only political if they, at least implicitly, *bear some claim* to be recognized as such. The claims are typically, but *pace* Arendt (1958) not necessarily, explicitly raised in the public sphere.

This is what distinguishes *political* collective emotions from other collective emotions. Certainly, the celebration of fans at a netball match cheering for their team is also readily recognized publicly. However, there is a significant difference between sports fans and, say, a political protest group: In manifesting those concern, the latter group *makes a claim* to public recognition of their shared concerns while the former only *expresses* them without such a claim. As we will see, political atmospheres can work to magnify or silence claims for public recognition.

(3) The third requirement is that there must be certain *reciprocal* relations between the community's evaluative perspective, based on its shared concerns, and that of the members. The shared nature of political emotions must feed into the members' own affective concern for the polity, and indeed their very felt experience and emotional self-regulation. We may speak here of a certain episodic 'emotional self-transformation' in episodes of robust emotional sharing. Not only are members' emotional expression modulated by being shared but the very way in which they *experience* their own—shared—emotions. My anger over the government's policy, inasmuch as it is shared with my fellow concerned citizens, *feels* different when compared to my 'private' anger. I will also have different means to (*self-*)*regulate* it, i.e., to influence which emotion I experience, when and how I experience and express it.<sup>12</sup>

As we shall show, political atmospheres often serve to integrate the publicly shared and the personal level of political emotions, with regard to their experiential, regulatory, expressive, motivational or agential components.

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<sup>11</sup> Thanks to Michaela Mihai for pressing us on this point.

<sup>12</sup> See more on (disruptions of) social and collaborative emotion regulation in Szanto 2017a.



(4) The final requirement is that shared political emotions have a distinctive normativity.<sup>13</sup> This is arguably the most complex and most important feature for understanding shared emotions in the context of politics. The basic idea is that the sharedness of political emotions must have a certain *normative* impact on members' *emotion regulation*, their political *motivation* and *comportment* and on the *appropriateness* of their emotions. This not only places certain obligations on the emotions of members of a political community but also contributes to their integration, as well as to how individuals might feel going forward about certain matters.

First, consider the normative function and power of political emotions vis-à-vis political concerns. It is widely agreed that emotions have certain normative functions. For instance, certain emotions testify to and voice moral breaches and aim to enforce moral or social norms. The paradigm emotions here belong to the class that Strawson (1962) famously labelled 'reactive attitudes,' such as resentment, contempt, indignation, moral outrage or anger, and shame (see Rawls 1971; Nussbaum 2016; Locke 2016). If we look at the normative, and political, power of political emotions it seems obvious that collective forms of resentment, for example, are more conducive to retributive justice than (inter)personal ones, such as my own resentment of a certain politician.

Second, collective affective intentionality exerts normative powers with regards individual members' emotional regulation and expression, and ultimately the very way they (ought to) feel. Consider the difference between a personal and collective commitment to feel<sup>14</sup> something. If I sincerely share my anger with my fellow-travellers, and am thus committed to the emotion's shared focus, it will not be appropriate to only half-heartedly join demonstrations, and even less so to ridicule in private my fellow-travellers for their naïve behaviour. If I do so, they will likely, and rightly, be sceptical of my emotional commitment to *our* cause, and might question my membership altogether. On pain of *feeling*, or in

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<sup>13</sup> Note that ordinary individual emotions are also subject to and guided by what sociologists of emotions call 'feeling rules' or 'emotion norms' (Hochschild 1983; see Szanto & Slaby 2020). But the way and grade in which normativity permeates shared emotions are distinctive of these. For related differences regarding the normativity of individual and collective imagination see Szanto 2017b and Szanto & Montes Sánchez 2021)

<sup>14</sup> When we talk about 'collective commitment to feel,' a word of caution is in order: we do not endorse here the prominent but much-criticised problematic, "joint commitment" account of collective emotions of Gilbert (e.g., 2002, 2014), but only use the notion to highlight *one* specifically *normative* difference between individual and collective emotions—in contrast to Gilbert who takes it to be in fact definitive of collective emotions.

fact *being*, excluded from the community, I regulate, monitor, express and enact my emotions accordingly. In that sense, what and how I *ought* to *feel*, is partly determined by *what* and *how* we to feel *together*, and how we, as members of a community, ought to express, voice and enact our emotions.

The normative powers of (political) emotions are typically internalized, namely by means of what Hochschild (1983) calls “feeling rules.” Hochschild argues that we guide and police the appropriateness of our emotions with regard to their display, suppression and duration by tacitly employing socioculturally inherited “emotion norms.” More recently, Hochschild (2016) has introduced the concept of “deep stories.” These are narratives that we are told and re-tell ourselves about how, given our political identifications and allegiances, we *ought* to feel about certain sociocultural and political issues.

Feeling rules and normatively laden emotional narratives, framed and coded by particular political communities, also apply to the perceived appropriateness of specific *types* of emotions vis-à-vis specific emotional *targets*. Telling examples are locutions such as ‘We are not *complainers* like those welfare-benefit recipients’; ‘*War-refugees* don’t deserve compassion, they are traitors and should rather fight for their freedom, as *we* have’; ‘These are *liberal* sympathies, not *ours*’ (see Hochschild 2016). As Hochschild arrestingly puts it, often “people are segregating themselves into different emotionally toned enclaves—anger here, hopefulness and trust there” (2016, 6). When such norms and internalized narratives sediment themselves abidingly, they constitute what has also been described as a particular “emotional habitus” (Illouz 2007).

Political emotions, then, are key in—normatively—*integrating* individuals’ affective concerns into the broader network of the political community’s concerns. They (re-)align individuals around a shared emotional perspective and enforce the political identity of groups. As such, we can conceive of experiences of robust political emotions as being ‘sticky.’ Sticky in the sense that (i) they not only impact how we *ought* to feel in a particular moment but how we *ought* to feel in similar moments going forward and (ii) they work to strengthen one’s sense of belonging to a political community and reinforce one’s political identity.

Finally, there is another central dimension of normativity, which is best conceived of in terms of emotions’ so-called ‘fittingness’ (D’Arms & Jacobson 2000). Whether an emotion is fitting depends not on which emotions are morally

'good,' or when it is wise to feel or express them or not; nor does it depend on which emotions are conducive to certain political goals. Rather, an emotion is fitting if its intentional object actually has the evaluative features that the emotion discloses to the emoter. Notice that with the notion of fittingness we need not appeal to any 'objective' evaluative properties; hence, the notion doesn't depend on the endorsement of value-realism nor on any particular normative political framework (liberalism, republicanism, etc.). As such, the concept allows us to ask whether an emotion's focus picks out *those* evaluative properties that really *matter to the emoters themselves* (for more, see Szanto forthcoming).

## **Political atmospheres**

### *Grasping a political atmosphere*

What, though, does all this mean for an analysis of political atmospheres? In a simple sense, our interpersonal model of atmosphere suggests that we experience a *political* atmosphere when we bodily grasp not just any group emotion or mood but specifically political emotions, and in particular robustly shared ones. For instance, if we attended the Christchurch massacre commemoration service, we not only bodily feel the grief of those present, we grasp the robustly shared political emotion of grief—a grief not just for those killed but a broader grief of the political community. Accordingly, the focus of this grief is not just the death of the victims but grief for this attack against religious freedom, the attack against tolerance, and equality.

We can understand this difference in terms of the demand for public recognition that this political expression of grief makes. If one stumbled across a private wake, it is likely that one would experience the wake as having a grieving atmosphere that emerges from the expressivity of those present, their tears, their hushed voices, their acts of consolation. However, what is significant about the political atmosphere of grief at the commemoration service, is that the grief of those present is not merely expressed, it makes a demand on others that the grief of that political community and their shared concern for the community be recognized (and adhered to). Even when a third party, who is not participating or contributing to the political atmosphere of grief, feels this atmosphere, they can be sensitive to this demand for recognition.

Remember that this is not to say that experiencing a political atmosphere is to experience a political emotion oneself. The political atmosphere of grief at the commemoration service can be experienced by someone who has no sympathies for the cause. Indeed, they might have their own reactive political emotion to such a situation, such as feeling angry at the display of public political grief that is in conflict with one's own political community, or a reactive personal emotion, such as being annoyed that the gathering disrupts one's daily walk in Hagley Park. One can experience a political atmosphere, then, while feeling in tension with it.

Importantly, being exposed to a political atmosphere does not simply give us social understanding of the political emotion of those to whom the atmosphere relates. It can have the effect of solidifying the third party's recognition of a political community. For instance, experiencing a group of diverse individuals coming together to share a robust shared political emotion of grief with others in the wake of an attack, can work to cement the identity of that political community not just for the members of that community (as we discuss below) but also for observers. Our third party might not be swept up by or contribute to the political atmosphere of the commemoration service (perhaps staying back and observing from the side-lines) but in experiencing the political atmosphere spanning those present, it can knit together those present as a political group or community not just in that moment but going forward. The emergence of a political atmosphere, then, can have important implications for delignating, crystalizing, and sustaining the identity of political communities.

This has implications in cases where certain political groups struggle to gain public recognition for their political emotions; for if such groups fail to gain public recognition, fail to have their political emotions recognized as *political* emotions and grasped in terms of *political* atmosphere, this can undermine their recognition as a political community. A recent example of this might be the activities of Black Lives Matter protesters where their anger failed to be recognized (at least in some quarters) as a political anger and led to protesters often, incorrectly, being perceived *as a mob* creating a chaotic atmosphere rather than as political activists. Getting a political atmosphere wrong, then, has broader implications than mere social misunderstanding. Note, too, that this potentially gives third parties the power to actively undermine political identity if they

wilfully refuse to recognize an emotion or an atmosphere as political, thus calling into question the relevant groups' status as a properly political community.

An inverse case should also be highlighted, namely where the experience of a political atmosphere can mislead us into thinking we are encountering a robust political community. For instance, one might perceive a political atmosphere as arising from a robustly shared emotion or collective experience, when, in fact, some or most of those involved may not experience themselves as sharing in a political emotion. Cases in point are the highly ambivalent experiences of participants in the notorious Fascist or Nazi propaganda gatherings (see Ehrenreich 2007, chap. 9). One might (as we explore below) also bodily grasp and be swept up by a political atmosphere and experience oneself as part of the political group, but you can also be wrong in this. You realize this, when others start looking at you with a quizzical expression or react hostile towards your enthusiasm. In short, we can be wrong about the scope or degree of the sharedness present (see also Szanto 2015). This reveals both the potential power and the potential problems that might emerge when we experience political atmospheres—as they can solidify the identity of a political community, even when the individual members of that community have themselves ambiguous political emotions and commitments. Political atmospheres, then, can work as powerful tools for creating the impression of robust political communities when the reality is actually more nuanced and complex.

### *Being swept up by a political atmosphere*

Let's now consider how we might not simply *feel* the presence of a political atmosphere but how we might *engage* with one. Like other interpersonal atmospheres, one might not just experience a political atmosphere but feel swept up by it. We suggest that we can be swept up by political atmospheres in a thin and a thick sense. One is swept up by, say, the political atmosphere of grief at the Christchurch massacre commemoration in a thin sense, when we feel that atmosphere transforming our happy mood into our own sense of grief.<sup>15</sup> Note, though, when we are swept up by the grief in terms of coming to feel sad

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<sup>15</sup> See Schmitz (2019) for an interesting discussion on the “authority” that certain emotions have over others.

ourselves, we may do so without experiencing a robust political grief together with the others.

However, we experience being swept up by that political atmosphere in a thick sense when we not only feel the atmosphere as revealing the *political* emotion of grief of the community but are swept up by that political grief in terms of feeling grief for the victims of a political attack as well as having a background concern for the political community affected by the attack. This can lead us to not only being swept up by the grief but experiencing oneself as robustly sharing in that political emotion, as part of the grieving political community.

This reveals another power that political atmospheres can have. They not only allow us to grasp the political emotions of others, not only can align our affective state with others present in a thin sense but can align and integrate our political concerns with a political community in this thicker sense. Moreover, as mentioned above, political emotions are 'sticky'; they not only impact how one feels in a given moment but can affect one's identification with a political community, one's political values and norms, as well as one's future political emotions and actions. If, for instance, a previously apolitical individual experiences being swept up by the political grief of the commemoration service in a thick sense, they might not only undergo a robustly shared political emotion with that group in the moment but might come to identify as a member of that political community going forward, might be motivated to join various political movements and activities, might shape their voting behaviour and cause them to undergo other political emotions (of various types) in the future. When one experiences being swept up by a political atmosphere in the thick sense, there is what we might call an on-going 'hangover' effect. This is notably different to being swept up by a non-political atmosphere. For instance, being swept up by the grief of a private wake does not necessarily have this deeper impact on one's social identity or political affiliation. As we will see, it is this power of political atmospheres that make questions of manipulating, driving and controlling such atmospheres so urgent.

### *Participating in political atmospheres*

As highlighted above, one might not only have one's affective state changed when we experience an interpersonal atmosphere, we can feel our own

expressive actions as participating in and contributing to the atmosphere. This occurs when we not only experience our affective state aligning with those around us but engage with others in a way that our own expressivity and interactions contribute to the overarching emotion or mood.

Given the normative character of political emotions, we can understand political atmospheres as not only engendering engagement in terms of experiencing oneself swept up by that political atmosphere but as having a distinctive effect in terms of how one participates in a political atmosphere. Remember that robustly shared political emotions have a distinct normative impact on the members' emotional regulation and comportment. One not only experiences, say, political grief with the others but the way this grief is expressed and regulated is tightly structured by feeling rules.

In the third section, we outlined how interpersonal atmospheres do not *dictate* how one affectively reacts to them. Things are not so simple in the case of political atmospheres. When one participates in the political atmosphere of the commemoration, this not only involves an alignment of our affective state with others but guides and polices *how one ought to act* in that situation. As outlined above, when we share a robust political emotion, we often feel pressure to not do so 'half-heartedly' but to act and express ourselves in a way that demonstrates our commitment to the shared concern. At the commemoration service, one may feel more pressure to show one's emotional engagement with the political emotion for fear of being called out for lacking sincerity or authenticity. Moreover, this is further impacted by our internalization of "feeling rules," which guide not just how to act but indeed how to feel at public political events, and how to express one's emotions as appropriate to the concern of a political community; for example, in terms of openly expressing solidarity for the relevant political concern. Our participation, then, in a political atmosphere is more deeply and robustly normatively modulated than in non-political, interpersonal cases.

Interestingly, this might lead to a certain uniformity of expression in cases of shared political emotions as the members abide by the felt demand to engage with others and express one's commitment *in a certain way*. This can lead to a powerful political atmosphere arising as the expressivity of those present is

tightly regulated and synchronized by these normative powers and, thus, the expressive tone of the group is both homogenous and intense.

Our experience as a co-producer of a political atmosphere not only has important implications for how our personal experience becomes integrated with the political community; it can also sustain the political emotion manifest in the atmosphere. Remember that when we experience ourselves as participating in an atmosphere, we are sensitive to how our own expressivity feeds into and drives the overarching emotion or mood, we recognise our own interaffective impact on *others*. This not only regulates our own commitment to and involvement with the relevant political emotion but can also work to regulate the commitment and involvement of those others, who are also sensitive to the political atmosphere at large.

As such, we can see a powerful looping effect here: where the political atmosphere not only reveals the political emotions of others, not only might sweep us up but, in turn, encourages us to act in ways that help sustain that political atmosphere, thus sustaining and regulating the shared political emotion across those present. Consequently, political atmosphere not only *arise* from political emotions but also *engender* and *sustain* them.

### *Driving and influencing political atmosphere*

We highlighted above a number of ways both individuals and the environment can help drive the emergence of an atmosphere, as well as sustain or change an atmosphere. Given the power that political atmospheres can have, not only in the moment but in their aftermath, it is crucial to acknowledge the responsibility and power that certain people have in manipulating the emergence of political atmosphere.

Consider again the Christchurch massacre commemoration: the New Zealand government clearly strived to create an atmosphere of shared and inclusive grief and a culture of cross-cultural understanding, compassion and solidarity, rather than divisive fear and hatred; it did so by means of the appropriate material, discursive and symbolic scaffolds.

Let us first consider the role of Jacinda Ardern, the Prime Minister of New Zealand. As discussed above, certain individuals have particular sway over the



emergence of a particular atmosphere. For instance, a particularly expressive individual at the party might, so to speak, 'set the tone' of the group. People with particular social cachet or power also have disproportionate control over a group's emotions and, as such, effect on the group's atmosphere. People in positions of authority and power, for instance, might attract closer attention, their emotion or mood perceived as more salient, and, therefore, have greater impact over the group dynamics (even those who are not directly interacting with them, may be more sensitive to that individual's expressivity over others). Empirical research into charismatic leaders suggests that leader-figures are more likely to influence the mood of a group than non-leaders (Erez et al. 2008), particularly when the leader figures are highly expressive individuals (Gooty et al. 2010; Johnson and Dipboye 2008; Sy et al. 2013).

Given this, political figures such as Ardern, have a particular responsibility when it comes to political atmospheres, due to their influence over their emergence and tone. At the commemoration service, Ardern's choice of dress (a traditional Maori cloak), the tone and content of her speech, and her expressive behaviour all worked to 'set the tone' for the event. By expressively embodying the political emotion she wanted to share with her political community, and in light of the influence she has over that community as its charismatic figurehead, Ardern encouraged a particular kind of political atmosphere to emerge. Her expressivity both designated and afforded the kinds of emotions and interactions that resulted in the emergence of a political atmosphere of grief and solidarity.

Power to encourage the emergence of a political atmosphere can also be exercised in terms of manipulating the material environment in ways that are likely to afford particular political emotions in a given setting. It was not only Ardern's own affective, expressive, and behavioural style and influence which drove the political atmosphere of grief and solidarity at the commemoration. Material features were also used to help scaffold a particular political atmosphere. For instance, situating the commemoration service outside in the green fields of Hagley Park, to engender feelings of openness and accessibility to all; the performance of Cat Stevens (both in terms of his soft musical style and perhaps, symbolically, in light of him being a white man who converted to Islam); putting up photos of the victims. The scene, then, was tailored in specific ways to afford affective possibilities of coming together with others, of grieving in solidarity rather than riling up anger, of focusing on New Zealand as a multicultural state

rather than instilling fear of ‘outsiders,’ of highlighting tolerance and sympathy not aggression and hostility.

Indeed, consider how a different material setting could have afforded the emergence of a very different political atmosphere; say if the government had pinned up posters of the attacker with slogans demanding for retribution, if people had not been able to occupy one shared space but been forced to sit or stand in different areas, if angry music had been played, and so on. What this emphasizes is that having control over material environments can also give one power in terms of encouraging certain political atmospheres (and thus emotions) to emerge.

If one comes from a grassroots political community, with little access to material space, this way of influencing the emergence of a political atmosphere is not as easily available to you – you must ‘make do’ with the environments you have, rather than tailor them to your own ends. This can add to the obstacles that certain political communities face in gaining public recognition for their political emotions and atmospheres, as well as their political community more generally.

Importantly, this suggests that we are not all equal when it comes to political atmospheres—our actions and expressivity do not have equal weight when it comes to encouraging the emergence of a political atmosphere and their political emotions. This should be of particular concern when we think about how figureheads might use their power to manipulate the emergence of certain atmospheres that will benefit their political community over others, or indeed benefit their own personal political agenda within a political community.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, we have presented an interpersonal model of atmosphere and used this to explore specifically political atmospheres. As political atmospheres arise from and engender expressions of political emotions (in particular robustly shared ones), we suggest that political atmospheres have various unique features. Grasping a political atmosphere can crystalize our recognition of political groups; being swept up by a political atmosphere can align not only our affective state with the group but our political identity; experiencing oneself as a co-producer of a political atmosphere can further integrate our own and others’

experience of sharing a robust political emotion; having power (in terms of having control over the social and material environment of a situation) can allow one to manipulate and shape the emergence of a political atmosphere. Political atmospheres, then, are powerful tools for both driving political emotions and for forging and sedimenting political communities and political identities. Perhaps, though, what is most interesting about political atmospheres and the political emotions they involve is that they not only affect us in the moment but can shape our on-going political engagements, political affiliations and political actions.

It is worth noting that in the above, we have presupposed that our experience of an interpersonal political atmosphere occurs when we are in the same physical spaces as the relevant others. However, many of our political interactions take place in the online sphere (Papachrissi 2015). Indeed, for many of us this might be our main arena for engaging with political communities, political events and political expression. By adopting an *interpersonal* model of political atmosphere, whereby we understand our experience of political atmosphere in terms of our bodily grasping (and engagement) with the political emotions of those present as atmosphere, there might be concern that our approach sheds little to no light on political emotions or atmospheres in the online world. However, this concern, we suggest, is premised on a conception of our experience of others online being disembodied and our online interactions as being unable to be interaffective. We suggest, contrary to this conception, that we can and do experience others' expressivity online and that we can and do experience one another interaffectively online (Osler 2020, 2021b; Kekki 2020; Osler & Krueger 2021). Thus, we take it that our account of political atmospheres can be readily applied to the online sphere. The affective nature and political force of atmospheres will not evaporate or become merely 'virtual,' when people share their political concerns online. Quite the contrary, atmospheres underpinning and shaping online political engagements can be just as 'real' as those experienced in physical co-presence, and given their virtually infinite scope may even be more powerful.

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