The Dynamics of Protest Waves: West Germany, 1965 to 1989

Ruud Koopmans

THE DYNAMICS OF PROTEST WAVES:
WEST GERMANY, 1965 TO 1989[*]

RUUD KOOPMANS
University of Amsterdam

The dynamics of social movements after their initial emergence is still largely terra incognita. *I develop a theory of the dynamics of protest waves by comparing data on protests in West Germany between 1965 and 1989 with similar data from the Netherlands, Italy, and the United States. Striking similarities are noted among these different protest waves in the development of action repertoires, levels of repression and facilitation, and the involvement of different types of organizations. An explanation for these dynamic patterns combines external and internal factors: The interplay between facilitation, repression, and the chance of success defines a set of external constraints that combine with activists' choices among three strategic options — innovation, increased participation, or increased militancy.*

The fluctuation between periods of contention and periods of acquiescence has long been a source of fascination and scientific interest. Protests usually occur in waves that wash over a country, but in many cases they have an international character. "What needs to be explained is not why people periodically petition, strike, demonstrate, riot, loot, and burn, but rather why so many of them do so at particular times in their history, and if there is a logical sequence to their actions" (Tarrow 1989b, p. 13). Tarrow (1988) called this "the largest current problem in collective action research" (1988, p. 435), and McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald (1988) cited "our relatively underdeveloped knowledge about the dynamics of collective action past the emergence of a movement" among "the most glaring deficiencies in the literature" (p. 728; see also Rucht 1990, p. 168; McAdam 1983, p. 735). One reason for this lack of attention for movement development may be that dynamic processes of interaction are difficult to grasp theoretically and analyze empirically. This is already the case for relatively simple interactions, involving a few, clearly circumscribed actors, which suggests that analyses of the dynamics of pro-

test face formidable difficulties. Social movements are characterized by a low degree of institutionalization, high heterogeneity, a lack of clearly defined boundaries and decision-making structures, and a volatility matched by few other social phenomena. Moreover, the dynamics of protest are shaped by many actors. Social movements usually consist of informal, shifting, and often temporary coalitions of organizations, informal networks, subcultures, and individuals. In many cases, several such coalitions exist, each representing a usually vaguely bounded "current." In addition, social movements engage in cooperative or conflictive interactions with other actors, e.g., other social movements (including countermovements), allies within established politics, the police, and governments.

Given this complexity, a search for patterns in protest waves may appear doomed to failure. The sheer number of possible combinations of strategies and developmental trajectories make it unlikely that regularities will emerge among different protest waves. Any regularities that do exist may be buried under idiosyncrasies and be as easy to identify as a needle in a haystack.

However, recent studies of protest waves — the American civil rights movement (McAdam 1982), the Italian protest wave of the 1960s and 1970s (Tarrow 1989b), and new social movements in Western Europe (Duyvendak, van der Heijden, Koopmans, and Wijmans 1992; Koopmans 1992b, 1992c) — indicate that such

skepticism may be premature. These studies reveal striking similarities among protest waves of different movements in different political contexts, which suggest that, at least for stable, Western democracies in the postwar period, recurrent patterns can be traced.

Identifying such patterns is one thing, explaining them is more difficult. The shortage of theories of protest development, let alone the lack of clearly specified hypotheses, implies that the explanations presented here must be tentative and based primarily on inductive and exploratory analyses rather than rigorous tests of hypotheses. My aims are to sketch the broad contours of the *terra incognita* of protest dynamics and to point at some main roads for exploring it.

DATA

The analysis focuses on protest events produced by "new social movements" (NSMs) in West Germany between 1965 and 1989. New social movements include the peace, ecology, Third World solidarity, squatters', women's, gay, and student movements (including the radical Communist and terrorist groups that sprang from the student movement). These movements became the major form of social protest in Western Europe after the mid-1960s. This is especially true for West Germany, where they account for more than two-thirds of all protest events in the period studied (see Koopmans 1992c, p. 63).

The validity of the concept of "new social movements" is hotly debated and can only be touched upon here (Dalton and Kuechler 1990; D'Anieri, Ernst, and Kier 1990; Tucker 1991). I do not necessarily subscribe to the idea advanced by Touraine (1978) and Offe (1985) that these movements represent a new political paradigm whose form and content differ radically from those of "old" social movements, like the labor movement. What matters for my present purpose is that empirical research has shown that these movements share a common social base in sections of the new middle class and that levels of support for the various NSMs are strongly correlated at the individual level (Kriesi 1989, 1993). Moreover, the peaks and valleys in the levels of mobilization achieved by the different NSMs tend to be strongly clustered in time (see Duyvendak et al. 1992 for the Netherlands; Duyvendak 1992 for France;

Giugni 1992 for Switzerland; and Koopmans 1992c for West Germany). Together, this evidence indicates that NSMs form a "social movement family" (Della Porta and Rucht 1991) that is distinct, though perhaps not dramatically different from other movement families (e.g., movements of the traditional left or the extreme right).

Figure 1 shows that NSM protests in Germany were concentrated in two periods — one in the late 1960s and one in the 1980s. Protests by other movements, in contrast, were infrequent throughout the period and were hardly affected by the ups and downs in the level of NSM protest. For this reason, I exclude protest events produced by other movements from the analyses.

Both waves of NSM protest originated in changes in the political opportunity structures confronting these movements, particularly changes in the position of the West German Social Democrats (Koopmans 1992c; Kriesi, Koopmans, Duyvendak, and Giugni 1992).[1] My interest here, however, is in how the two protest waves developed after their emergence and the factors that contributed to their ultimate decline.

Data on protest events were obtained by content coding the Monday issues of the *Frankfurter Rundschau*, one of West Germany's leading daily newspapers. The concentration on Monday issues of the newspaper differs from other newspaper-based studies of protests, which generally have included all issues of a newspaper or are based on newspaper indexes. Whereas sampling is the dominant form of data gathering in many fields, protest event analysis is haunted by what Tarrow called "the fetish of thoroughness" (1989b, p. 363). However, sampling protest events substantially reduces the amount of time and resources needed for data gathering and thus may permit more studies and the inclusion of more movements, longer time periods, or several countries. For the analysis of many forms of protest (labor

---

[1] This political opportunity perspective also suggests why the developmental trajectories of other movements are unrelated to those of the NSMs. The labor movement, the extreme right, and farmers' movements have their own unique opportunity structures, so that political situations that stimulate the mobilization of NSMs may be totally irrelevant, or even detrimental, to the mobilization of these other movements.
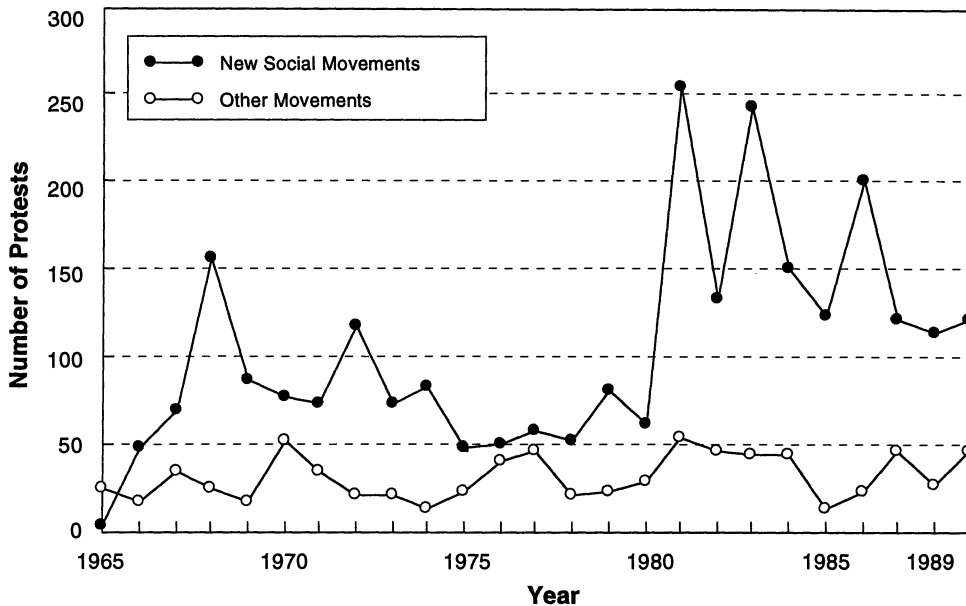
Figure 1. Number of Protests by Year for Types of Social Movements: West Germany, 1965–1989

strikes are the main exception) the use of Monday issues is a particularly efficient way of sampling. In modern Western democracies, protests are heavily concentrated on weekends.[2] This is especially true for important protests like mass rallies and demonstrations. Because some important protests take place on weekdays, I have also coded all weekday protests referred to in the Monday paper.[3] Important events that had taken place during the week were often referred to in announcements or follow-up articles in the Monday papers (for details of the sampling and coding procedures and the methodological issues involved, see Koopmans 1992c, pp. 247–69).

For 1975 through 1989, the period of the second protest wave, the sample included all Monday issues of *Frankfurter Rundschau*. For the period 1965 to 1974, the sample was limited to issues on the first Monday of each month. Thus, for the time series reported below, data for the

period 1965 to 1974 were weighted by a factor 4.33. The burden of proof, therefore, mainly rests on the data for 1975 to 1989; the data for the earlier period were included to test the generality of trends found in the second wave.

I also systematically compare the West German findings to similar data on protest waves in the Netherlands, Italy, and the United States. These data on protest waves of different movements in different countries provide a broad basis for generalizations on the dynamics of protest waves.

Variables

The analysis concentrates on the dynamic interplay of four variables: two characteristics of social movement mobilization (the action forms employed and the degree and type of organizational support) and two types of external interference in protest (repression and facilitation).

Action forms. I distinguish four main action strategies on the basis of increasing radicalness.[4] *Demonstrative* actions are legal actions

---

[2] In Germany and most Western European countries, Monday newspapers report the news of both weekend days. If a Sunday newspaper were published, the appropriate method would be to code Sunday and Monday issues.

[3] In such cases, the original report of the event was consulted to code the necessary information. Non-weekend events constitute about one-fifth of the sample (Koopmans 1992c, p. 258).

[4] This categorization is similar to that employed by Tarrow (1989b), except that Tarrow's "conventional" category is here termed "demonstrative." I reserve the label "conventional" for those political

that usually aim at mobilizing large numbers of people. Examples of such actions are demonstrations (legal and nonviolent), rallies, and petitions. *Confrontational* actions are also nonviolent, but they aim to disrupt official policies or institutions, and for that reason are usually illegal. Confrontational actions are associated with the strategy of "civil disobedience," e.g., blockades, occupations, illegal (but nonviolent) demonstrations, and disturbances of meetings of political adversaries. Actions involving *light violence* include limited forms of movement-initiated violence, e.g., breaking windows or throwing stones at the police during a demonstration. A demonstration was coded as violent only if it was clear from the report that demonstrators initiated the violence. Peaceful demonstrations that turned violent because of violent intervention by the police were coded as peaceful demonstrations. If the report contained conflicting versions of who initiated violence or if the evidence was inconclusive, the coders were instructed to give the demonstrators the benefit of the doubt and to code the action as a peaceful demonstration. Finally, actions involving *heavy violence* include severe and usually conspiratorial violence, directed against property (arson, bombings, sabotage) or people (political murders, kidnappings).

Organizational support. This variable indicates types of organizations mentioned in the newspaper report as organizers of a protest event. Protests for which no organizer was mentioned were coded as *no organization.* Of course, some of these protests may have been organized by a social movement organization (SMO) or by an external ally the newspaper failed to mention. Nevertheless, I assume that such events had a significantly lower level of organization than did protests for which an explicit organizer was reported. For protests for which an organizer was mentioned, four types of organization were distinguished. Among social movement organizations, *terrorist organizations* and *Communist vanguard groups* were distinguished from the much larger category of *other SMOs.* The fourth category consists of protests organized by or organized jointly with

actions that are usually associated with conventional or established politics, e.g., lobbying, litigation, and press conferences. For a full list of the action forms included in each category, see Koopmans 1992c, p. 264.

external allies, e.g., established political parties, labor unions, or churches.

Repression. Repression was measured using a simple dichotomous variable indicating the presence or absence of repressive intervention by the authorities. The most frequent types of repression reported were police interventions, such as arrests and violence. In other cases, repression was indicated if authorities depicted activists or organizers as criminals. In the case of conspiratorial forms of heavy violence (e.g., bombings or arson), the reports usually did not report a repressive reaction because the authorities' responses took place outside the public's view (police investigations), or only became known some time after the event (arrests, convictions). Therefore, I excluded these conspiratorial action forms when computing levels of repression.

Facilitation. This variable indicates the presence or absence of support from established political actors for an action. In the case of the NSMs, such support came primarily from left-wing political parties, labor unions, or churches. A protest event was coded as facilitated if an established organization was mentioned as an organizer or co-organizer, or if the protest was organized by a peak SMO that included one or more established organizations among its members.

TWO THEORIES

Two theories provide a promising starting point for a search for patterns in waves of protest.[5]

Karstedt-Henke: The Counterstrategies of Authorities

In her analysis of the emergence of terrorism in West Germany, Karstedt-Henke (1980) argued that protest waves typically pass through

---

[5] Three other bodies of theory also address aspects of the dynamics of protest: "natural history" models of revolutions (Edwards 1965; Brinton 1959); theories within the resource mobilization perspective on the development of social movement organizations (Zald and Ash 1966); and the population ecology model of organizational development (Hannan and Freeman 1987; Carroll 1988). However, these theories are not very helpful here. Revolutions are a unique type of protest, and, in addition, natural history models are descriptive and deterministic at the same time (for a devastating cri-

four phases. In the initial phase of mobilization, authorities overreact to the emergence of protest. In an attempt to quell unrest, they follow a strategy of repression, but because they are caught off guard they do so in an inconsistent and undifferentiated way that provokes public outrage and leads to further protests (1980, pp. 200–209). Their initial strategy of repression having failed, authorities, in the second phase, combine continued repression of some actions and organizations with efforts to appease other parts of the protest movement with concessions or facilitation. However, this double strategy cannot yet be implemented effectively because the authorities still have difficulty differentiating between "good" and "bad" protesters, and sometimes apply the wrong measures to the wrong group (1980, pp. 209–13). Thus, the radical and moderate wings of the movement continue to grow, but become increasingly distinguishable. In the third phase, this differentiation among activists, which often provokes internal conflicts, offers the authorities opportunities to exploit the double strategy. Moderate wings are integrated into the political system and will gradually abandon protest activities, while radical wings are not satisfied with the gains that have been made, and decisions about further protest activities increasingly become their exclusive domain. This radicalization of a movement's actions is reinforced by the authorities' reactions. Robbed of their moderate allies within and outside the movement, radicals are now confronted with full-scale repression. The result is spiraling violence and counterviolence, which produces terrorist organizations (1980, pp. 213–17). Ultimately, integration and radical-

izenation lead to a decline in protests — moderates are no longer interested in protest activity as their attention shifts to conventional channels of political participation, while the extreme actions of radicals become too costly for most social movement participants. Moreover, radical groups become closed to new participants because they are forced underground and because they develop an exclusive ideology and organizational structure. The combined result of these tendencies is the fourth phase: latency of the potential for protest (1980, pp. 217–20).

Tarrow: Competition Among Organizations

Tarrow's (1989a, 1989b) theory of protest dynamics is more complex than Karstedt-Henke's model. According to Tarrow (1989a), social movements emerge "when new opportunities are at hand — such as a less repressive climate, splits within the elite, or the presence of influential allies or supporters" (p. 51). Subsequently, protests spread through the diffusion of tactical innovations developed by early protesters to other themes, groups, and locations. Such diffusion is not a spontaneous process, however, but:

> follows an organized logic through competition and tactical innovation within the social movement sector . . . . Competition intensifies the evolution of the repertoire toward more radical forms, as movements try to show they are more daring than their opponents . . . . At the peak of mobilization the increased propensity to engage in disruptive collective action leads to the formation of new movement organizations and draws old organizations into the social movement sector. The competition between these SMOs for mass support leads to a radicalization of tactics and themes. The resulting intensification of conflict reduces the audience for social movement activity and triggers a spiral of sectarian involution, on the one hand, and of goal displacement, on the other. . . . [As a result,] the cycle declines through a symbiotic combination of violence and institutionalization. (1989a, pp. 8, 54; 1989b, pp. 14, 16)

Tarrow thus shares Karstedt-Henke's belief that violence and institutionalization are linked products of protest waves and that the combination of these processes is the main cause of their decline. However, the explanations for these developments differ. In Karstedt-Henke's model, factors external to the social movement, particularly the shifting counterstrategies of the

---

tique, see Rule and Tilly 1972). Theories of SMO development, like resource mobilization theory in general, address only organizational aspects of social movements. Moreover, the development of SMOs is not representative of the development of protest waves at large. As I show below, the growth of SMOs is more a product than a cause of protest waves. This problem is shared by the population ecology model. Moreover, the population ecology model's basic assumption of a relatively stable "carrying capacity" (Hannan and Freeman 1987, p. 912; Hilgartner and Bosk 1988, p. 59; for a critique, see Young 1988) of the social systems it analyzes seems to be untenable for the social movement sector, which, as Figure 1 indicates, is characterized by sharp fluctuations over relatively short periods of time.

authorities, determine the development of protest. Tarrow, on the contrary, emphasizes internal factors and sees competition among social movement organizations and between SMOs and established political organizations as the crucial mechanism.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ACTION REPERTOIRE

From the available studies of protest development, a surprisingly regular pattern emerges that conforms to Karstedt-Henke's and Tarrow's hypotheses about the shifts in action repertoires that occur over the course of protest waves.

In his study of the Italian protest wave between 1965 and 1975, Tarrow found that non-violent, confrontational actions like blockades and occupations peaked early in the wave. More moderate, demonstrative actions peaked a few years later, and they increasingly involved established allies like unions. Violence, finally, was most common in the late stages of the wave, after other forms of action had begun to decline (1989b, p. 70). Moreover, mass violence was increasingly replaced by more extreme forms of violence by small groups (Della Porta and Tarrow 1986, pp. 618–19; Tarrow 1989b, p. 306).

McAdam's (1982) study of the American civil rights movement provides additional evidence for these basic trends. Here as well, the wave started with confrontational actions like bus boycotts and sit-ins, gradually took on a mass character, and subsequently began to disintegrate as radicalization (e.g., ghetto rioting) and institutionalization (e.g., increased external support for the more moderate NAACP) set in (McAdam 1982, pp. 209, 222, 253).

Analyses of Dutch protests for the period 1975–1989 also confirm this pattern (Koopmans 1992a, 1992b). The initial protests around 1980 were disruptive, e.g. squatting and blockading nuclear power stations and ammunition transports. This was followed by a series of mass demonstrations by the peace movement that were strongly supported by political parties, churches, and labor unions. In the second half of the 1980s, protests declined, and violent action forms became more common and increased in intensity to include arson and bomb attacks. At the same time, institutionalization set in, which led to spectacular

gains in memberships for professional social movement organizations.

Similar developments can be traced in the two German protest waves. Figure 2 shows the occurrences of the four main strategies used by NSMs between 1965 and 1989. As in the Italian, American, and Dutch cases, confrontational actions were heavily concentrated in the initial stages of the two waves, around 1968 and 1981, respectively. As McAdam (1983) and Tarrow (1989a, 1989b) noted, these strategies often included important tactical innovations that enabled movements to transcend the constraints attached to traditional repertoires of contention (Tilly 1986, p. 4). In the 1960s, a whole range of new action forms were introduced in West Germany. Many of these actions crossed the Atlantic, having been developed first by the civil rights and anti-Vietnam-War movements in the United States: teach-ins, sit-ins and go-ins, occupations of universities and an overarching strategy of nonviolent civil disobedience. The tactical innovations that helped launch the second wave partly consisted of the extension of these forms of protest outside the student milieu and their adaptation to new goals. In addition, new tactics were introduced, of which site occupation[6] and squatting were the most important (see Koopmans 1992c, pp. 132–36). The authorities were generally unprepared for such strategies, whose novelty and spectacular nature ensured wide coverage in the media. Thus, these innovations partly offset the unequal balance of power between challengers and authorities, and their initial success contributed to the rapid diffusion of protests in the early stages of the two waves.

However, as their novelty waned and authorities learned to respond more effectively, confrontational actions declined, although they made a modest comeback in the late stages of

---

[6] The strategy consists of occupying the site of a future nuclear power plant, runway, or road. This strategy had the advantage that, in most cases, the protesters were not immediately evicted because the authorities lacked a legal basis to intervene. Subsequently, the occupiers often constructed makeshift "hut villages" on the site, which developed into small, self-sustaining worlds serving as organizational centers and as places where solidarities could be forged, bridges between moderates and radicals could be built, and the continuity of mobilization could be assured (Ehmke 1987, pp. 67–76; Himmelheber and Philipp 1982).
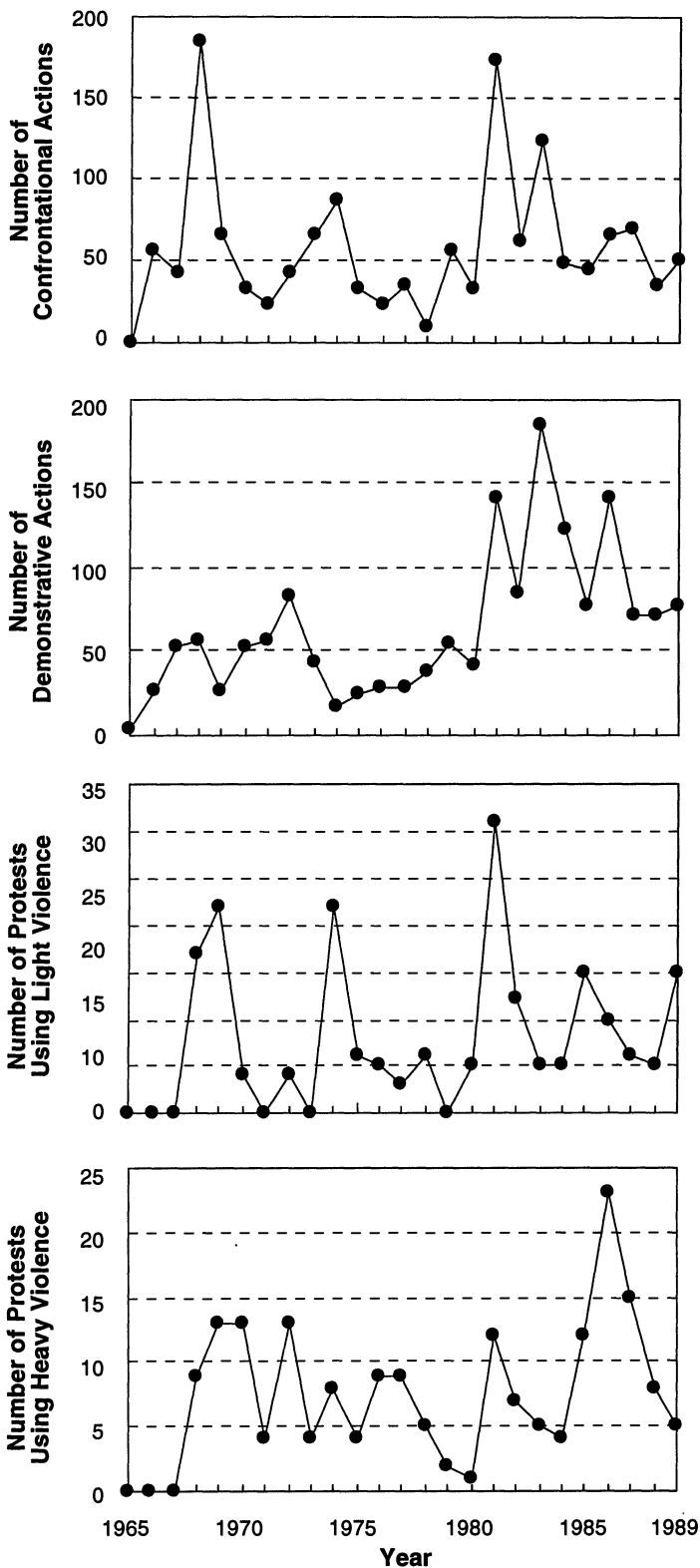
Figure 2. Types of Actions Used by New Social Movements, by Year: West Germany, 1965–1989

the two waves. In the periods immediately fol-
lowing the 1968 and 1981 outbreaks of pro-
tests, more moderate, demonstrative actions
that often mobilized large numbers of people
increasingly dominated the stage. As I will
show below, this tendency reflects the increas-
ing involvement of professional SMOs and ex-
ternal allies.

Protests involving light violence followed a
trajectory similar to confrontational protests,
with a somewhat stronger resurgence in the
waves' final stages. Activists often turned to
light violence as a response to increasing re-
pression of confrontational tactics. Thus, 1969
was the peak year for occurrences of light vio-
lence in the first wave, i.e., one year after the
peak year for confrontational protests. In the
second wave, confrontational protests and pro-
tests involving light violence both peaked in
1981. Confrontational actions, however, de-
clined sharply during the second half of the
year while the number of protests involving
light violence reached a maximum intensity in
late 1981 and early 1982, after the authorities
started an offensive against squatters (resulting
in the death of one activist) and violently
cleared an occupied runway construction site
near Frankfurt (Mulhak 1983; Rucht 1984;
Koopmans 1992c, pp. 178–94).

Thus, the seeds of institutionalization and
radicalization were planted by the growing in-
volvement of professional SMOs and external
allies on the one hand, and the increasing re-
pression of confrontational actions, on the
other. In the late stages of the waves, these
trends became increasingly prominent —
heavy violence peaked late in the two waves,
after the aggregate number of protests had al-
ready declined substantially. This trend is not
immediately clear for the first wave because
most actions involving heavy violence oc-
curred relatively early, between 1969 and 1972.
However, these figures obscure the radical-
ization that occurred within this category: Of
the protests involving heavy violence between
1968 and 1973, only 8 percent involved vio-
lence against people, whereas between 1974
and 1977, 50 percent were directed against
people. This trend culminated in a series of ter-
rorist attacks by the Rote Armee Fraktion (Red
Army Faction, RAF) and other groups between
1975 and 1977, in which several dozens people
were killed, many of them high-ranking politi-
cians, judges, and businessmen. In the second

wave, the increase in heavy violence was also
particularly pronounced for violence against
people. Of the protests involving heavy vio-
lence between 1980 and 1984, only 4 percent
involved violence against people, whereas
from 1985 onwards 25 percent involved vio-
lence against people. Thus Della Porta and
Tarrow's (1986) findings on the development
of different forms of violence are confirmed by
the German data.

Whether this tendency toward radicalization
in the late stages of the two protest waves was
accompanied by a trend toward institutionaliza-
tion can be answered only to a limited extent by
the protest event data. The increasing domi-
nance of demonstrative actions in the years
around 1972 and 1983 and the increasing in-
volvement of established allies in these actions
are the first signs of institutionalization. After
these years, however, the relative importance of
demonstrative actions and the involvement of
allies in protests declined again. However, the
movements did not de-institutionalize. At first,
institutionalization may lead to a shift towards
more moderate goals and actions and increased
involvement of established allies and profes-
sional SMOs in unconventional protest. As in-
stitutionalization proceeds, however, the move-
ment increasingly turns toward conventional
strategies and exits from the protest scene. This
may take several forms. SMOs may institution-
alize themselves by substituting a reliance on
access to the media and the conventional policy
process for mobilization of their constituency,
and by replacing the active involvement of ad-
herents with that of a few professionals, who
are paid with the membership contributions of
an otherwise passive constituency.

Institutionalization may also find expression
within the party system, either in the emergence
of new parties, or in increased support for es-
tablished parties. In the first wave, institution-
alization was primarily reflected in increased
support for the Social Democratic Party (SPD)
and its reform program. After 1968, the SPD
made large electoral gains and it even became
the largest party in the elections of 1972. More-
over, hundreds of thousands of new members
swelled the ranks of the party, particularly its
youth organization, the Jusos.[7] The most im-

---

[7] Similarly, in Italy the Communist Party enlisted
several hundred thousand new members (Tarrow
1990, p. 269). In the Netherlands, the New Left par-

portant form of institutionalization in the sec-
ond wave was the success of the Green Party.
Federal election results for the Green Party in-
creased from 1.5 percent in 1980 to 5.6 percent
in 1983 and 8.3 percent in 1987.[8] Moreover,
since 1985 — when the first coalition between
the SPD and the Green Party was formed in
Hesse — the Green Party has increasingly par-
ticipated in government on the state level. Fur-
ther signs of the institutionalization of protest
were the inclusion of NSMs' themes in the
SPD's program and the co-optation of several
movement leaders among its personnel. This
time, however, institutionalization was not lim-
ited to party politics. The late 1980s also saw
strong membership increases for several na-
tional, professional SMOs, primarily within the
ecology movement. The total membership of
such SMOs increased from about 100,000 in
1975 to well over one million in 1989. Mem-
bership gains were strongest after 1985, when
mass participation in unconventional protests
had begun to decline.

Thus the two German protest waves reveal
striking parallels in the development of their
action repertoire. In turn, the two German
waves parallel the development of NSM pro-
tests in the Netherlands, the Italian protest
wave of the 1960s and early 1970s, and the
American civil rights movement. Each of these
protest waves started with confrontational ac-
tions, subsequently entered a phase dominated
by more moderate mass mobilization, and
ended in a twin process of institutionalization
and radicalization.

REPRESSION AND FACILITATION

Although Karstedt-Henke's model may hinge
too much on a single explanatory factor — the
reactions of political elites — and is somewhat
deterministic in that it sees terrorism as an in-
evitable outcome of protest waves, it nonethe-
less offers valuable insights. Her explanation

for the seemingly contradictory development
of protest waves toward institutionalization and
radicalization, although perhaps incomplete, is
quite convincing. Political elites can choose
between two basic reactions to protest: con-
frontation or integration. Both repression and
facilitation typically are selective: Activists
with radical goals and strategies are more
likely to be subjected to repression, whereas
moderate wings are more likely to receive fa-
cilitation. Thus, different wings of social move-
ments receive different strategic cues.

Radical wings, which disproportionally con-
front repression, are likely to be further
radicalized and develop anti-systemic identities
that may escalate violence on both sides. Mod-
erates, on the other hand, receive cues that work
toward further moderation (see also Koopmans
1990, 1992c). Political parties may support the
moderate sections of a movement conditional
upon de-radicalizing demands and the strate-
gies used to advance them. State facilitation or
co-optation of social movement organizations
may occur as well, but again, it is unlikely to be
granted unconditionally. Thus, the reactions of
established political actors typically reinforce
divisions among the activists, which leads to a
twin process of moderation and radicalization.
This development need not be the result of a
conscious "divide and rule" strategy by the au-
thorities, as is suggested by Karstedt-Henke.
Members of the polity may themselves be in-
ternally divided, e.g., among government par-
ties, between government and opposition or
between political authorities who prefer inte-
grative strategies and law enforcement authori-
ties who prefer more repressive strategies.

Nevertheless, the data suggest that repres-
sion and facilitation are also employed strate-
gically in attempts to create or reinforce divi-
sions among protesters. Figure 3 shows, for the
period 1975 to 1989, the percent of protests
using each of three main social movement
strategies that were repressed or facilitated (ac-
tions involving light violence or heavy vio-
lence are combined).[9]

---

ties and the Communist Party were the main ben-
eficiaries of the institutionalization of protest
(Koopmans 1992a).

[8] The Green Party was less successful in the elec-
tions of 1990, in which they received (in former
West Germany) only 4.8 percent of the vote. How-
ever, these elections were unusual because they
were heavily dominated by the issue of unification.
In state elections, support for the Green Party has
been relatively stable since 1987.

[9] Because the numbers of violent protests and
confrontational protests were low in some years, I
combined data for the periods 1975–1977, 1978–
1980, 1981, 1982–1984, 1985–1987 and 1988–
1989. (Figures for 1965–1974 are not shown for the
same reason). The figure for 1981 refers to that year
only, to permit a test of Karstedt-Henke's idea of
initial overreaction.
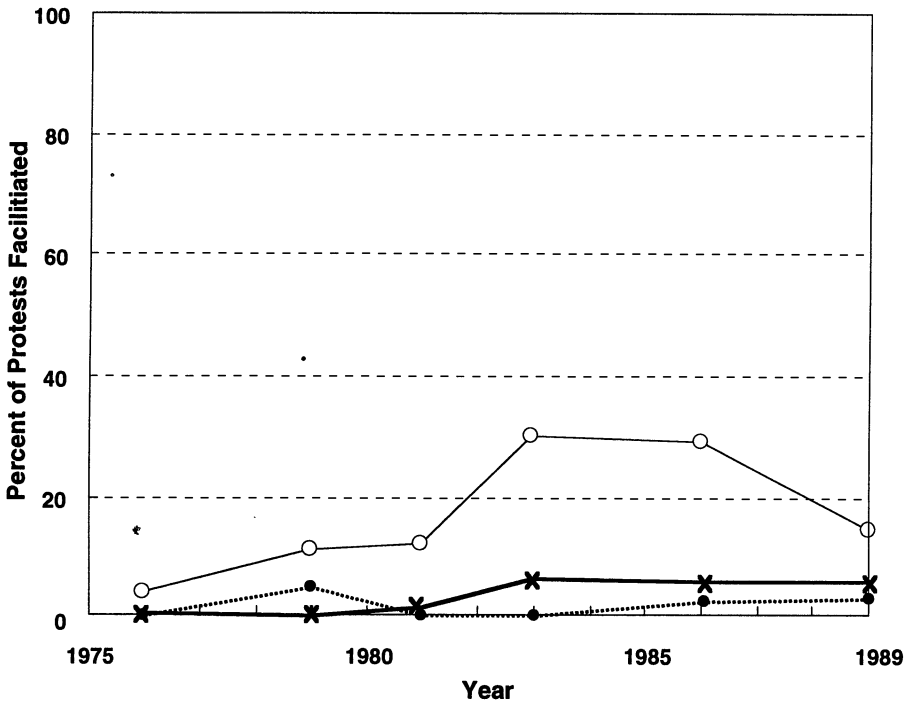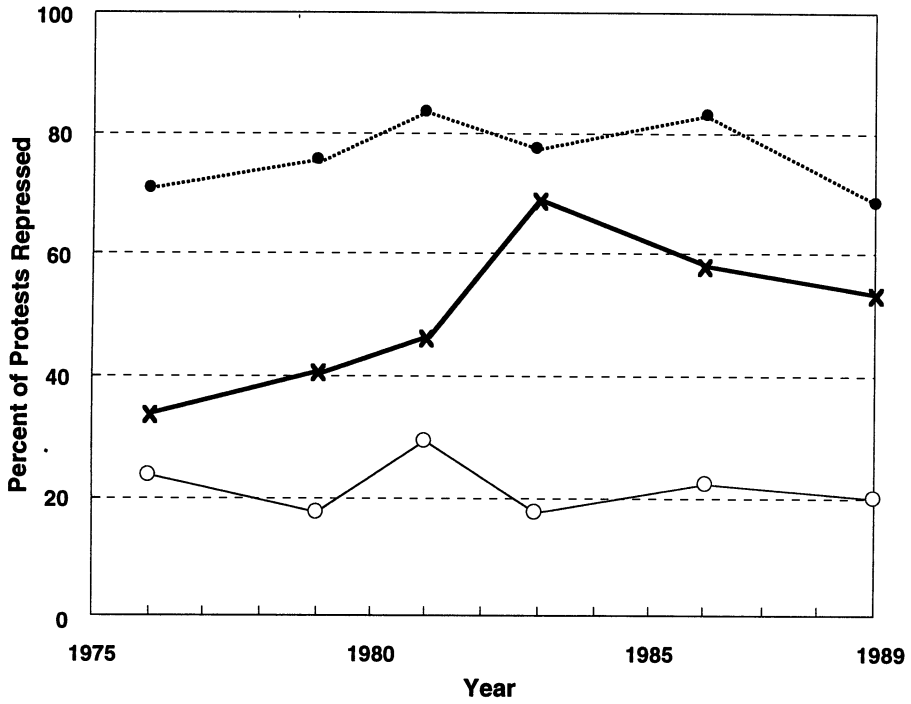
Figure 3. Percent of Protests Repressed and Facilitated by Year for Three Types of Protests: West Germany, 1975–
1989

Clearly, repression increases with increasingly radical strategies used by protesters. More interesting, here, however, is the development of repression over time. Karstedt-Henke's hypothesis that authorities overreact to initial protests receives only limited support: For all three strategies, repression is somewhat higher in 1981 than it is in the preceding years, but the differences are rather small. However, the changes in the use of repression after 1981 are more significant. The percent of violent protests and demonstrative protests that encounter repression remains relatively stable throughout the period — about 75 percent of violent protests and 20 percent of demonstrative protests. However, repression against confrontational protests changes considerably over the course of the protest wave. Initially, repression against such actions resembles that for demonstrative actions, but then increases substantially and ends up at a level close to that for violent protests. Interestingly, a similar pattern can be traced for the 1980s protest wave in the Netherlands (Koopmans 1992b).

Thus, instead of a general rise or decline in repression over the course of the wave, only repression against confrontational but nonviolent protests increases. This strategic increase in repression is perfectly suited to the creation of divisions within movements.[10] As nonviolent disruption becomes more costly and its practitioners are depicted and treated as criminals, protesters who use such strategies are increasingly forced to choose sides. The increased costs of nonviolent disruptions favor a turn to more moderate actions, a trend that is often reinforced by the involvement of established actors in the protests. Figure 3b shows that the increase in facilitation by established political actors in the course of the 1980s wave was heavily concentrated on the more moderate demonstrative protests. The percentage of demonstrative protests that were supported by

established political parties,[11] labor unions, or churches rose from 4 percent in the 1975 to 1977 period to a maximum of 30 percent in the 1982 to 1987 period. By contrast, external support for confrontational protests increased slightly from 3 percent in the 1975 to 1977 period to 7 percent between 1982 and 1989. Facilitation of violent protests was negligible throughout the wave. Thus, intensified repression increased the relative costs of nonviolent disruptions over the course of the wave, while facilitation by established actors decreased the relative costs of moderate protests.[12]

On the other hand, increased repression may have provoked some activists to turn to violence. Repression against nonviolent protest de-legitimizes the state's monopoly on violence and strengthens the position of those activists who see reactive violence as legitimate. Moreover, the shift to violence is facilitated because the cost of violence compared to the cost of nonviolent disruption decreases. The final result of these countervailing pressures is an erosion of the middle ground of the action repertoire — nonviolent confrontations — and the simultaneous development of moderation and radicalization as hypothesized by Karstedt-Henke.

ORGANIZATION AND SPONTANEITY

Two Views on the Role of Organizations

Tarrow's explanation for the changing repertoire of protest emphasized the role of organizations and the competition among them. In the early phase of a protest wave, competition among SMOs, which try to outbid each other in radicalness and determination, still plays a posi-

---

[10] That such a strategy was at least partly deliberate is indicated by a "New Internal Security Strategy for the 1980s," that was unfolded by a leading police theorist in an article in the journal of the German police and in a book published in early 1982. Although this strategy envisaged a more tolerant approach to moderate sections of the NSMs, a tougher line was recommended against militant minorities to isolate them from the rest of the movements (Brand 1988, p. 212).

[11] The Green Party is not included within this category. Including the Green Party does not significantly alter the results. The main difference is that the increase in facilitation for confrontational protests is somewhat larger, from 3 percent in 1975 to 1977 to a maximum of 15 percent between 1982 and 1984.

[12] McAdam (1982) found similar patterns in the reactions of authorities and external supporters to the civil rights movement. Repression focused on the more radical organizations like SNCC and CORE, whereas the NAACP received more benevolent treatment. The sharp increase in external support after 1964 benefited the NAACP, while support for the other groups declined (McAdam 1982, pp. 209–17).

tive role and accounts for the diffusion of disruptive tactics: "The expanding phase of the cycle is the result, not of pure spontaneity, but of the competition between movement organizations and their old competitors for mass support" (Tarrow 1989b, p. 10; see also pp. 186, 193). However, as new organizations are attracted by the successes of pioneer SMOs, the social movement sector becomes increasingly crowded, and organizers are forced to adopt more radical strategies in order to maintain their organization's positions or to create a niche for themselves. "In a competitive social movement sector, when the most extreme groups adopt violent stands, it is difficult for any group to come out against violence" (Tarrow 1989b, p. 284). This violence turns people off and ultimately draws the protest wave to a close.[13]

Tarrow's view of SMOs as sources of disruption and violence differs sharply from the view of Piven and Cloward (1977), who argued, "Whatever influence lower-class groups occasionally exert in American politics does not result from organization, but from mass protest and the disruptive consequences of protest . . . . Protest wells up in response to momentous changes in the institutional order. It is not created by organizers and leaders" (p. 36). Thus, organizations are not the driving force behind protest expansion and disruption, but on the contrary, take the disruptive sting out of protests, by diverting resources into more conventional — and in the view of Piven and Cloward less effective — channels.[14]

---

[13] Della Porta and Tarrow (1986) explained the particularly high level of violence in the Italian protest wave in a similar manner: "To the extent that violence is a tactical differentiation within an overcrowded social movement sector, it is the size of the "market" for social protest that determines the extent of violence that will result from it. And Italy's was surely a highly developed social movement sector" (p. 629). This is not confirmed in the German data. Although the protest wave of the 1980s was more "developed" in every respect than the wave of the 1960s, and thus more "overcrowded," violence played a much larger role in the action repertoire of NSMs in the first wave (Koopmans 1992c, pp. 89, 100).

[14] Adherents of the resource mobilization approach have challenged this position and have demonstrated the important role of organizations in the diffusion of disruptive protests, even in the cases studied by Piven and Cloward (Gamson and Schmeidler 1984; Morris 1984; Valocchi 1990).

These two diametrically opposed views of the role of organizations cannot both be true. Tarrow's interpretation implies two hypotheses: (1) Disruption should be highest when organizational competition is strongest; (2) protests in which organizations are involved should be more disruptive than "unorganized" protests. The first hypothesis is proven wrong by Tarrow's own data: Nonviolent disruptions peaked early in the Italian protest wave, in 1968 and 1969 (Tarrow 1989b, p. 81). However, in those same years, unorganized protests peaked as well (Tarrow 1989b, pp. 65–66). In other words, organizations declined in importance at a time when protests spread spectacularly and their disruptiveness peaked. It is hard to see how competition can be strongest at a time when the "market" expands dramatically and the number of competitors is at its lowest point relative to the size of the market.

With regard to the second hypothesis, however, the Italian evidence seems to confirm Tarrow's expectation: Protests that involved no organizations were the least disruptive; protests in which a union was involved were slightly more disruptive; protests in which an "external group" was involved were much more disruptive; and protests involving a union *and* an "external group" were even more disruptive. Therefore, Tarrow concluded that "competition for worker support was a direct cause of disruption and thus of the high point of social movement mobilization" (Tarrow 1989b, p. 186). However, apart from the fact that this conclusion contradicts Tarrow's other findings, other reasons cast doubt on this conclusion. Tarrow's claim would have been strong if his data referred only to attempts to mobilize a worker constituency. However, Tarrow combined all protests, including the many protests in which "extreme left- and extreme right-wing groups attacked one another's headquarters or engaged in physical confrontations in the streets" (Tarrow 1989b, p. 232). In other words, not all protests between 1966 and 1973 were designed to mobilize workers. In fact, a sizable proportion of the "external groups" were mobilizing against that constituency. Violent conflicts between left-wing and right-wing groups can hardly be interpreted as competition for a single "market."[15]

---

[15] Tarrow remarked that almost all violent conflicts in his sample were of this type (Tarrow

Organization and Spontaneity in the West German Protest Waves

What is the relation between the spread of protests, organization, and the radicalness of the action repertoire in Germany? Is the diffusion of protests the work of SMOs, or is it spontaneous? Are disruption and violence a result of competition among organizations, or does organization lead to a moderation of the action repertoire? Figure 4 shows the development of the number of protests that involved particular organizations. Consistent with Tarrow's data, for each wave the year with the greatest increase in the number of protests (1968 and 1981) was also the year in which the proportion of protests that were unorganized[16] was highest (56 percent in 1968; 64 percent in 1981). These years were also characterized by a particularly high level of confrontational events (see Figure 2). In other words, as in Italy, the involvement of organizations and the competition among them cannot account for the rapid spread of protests or their disruptive character.[17]

However, organizations were more important before and after these peak years. Thus, organizations were heavily involved in the early stages of the 1960s' protest wave. Until 1966, most protests were organized by two national SMOs, the Socialist German Student League (SDS), and the peace movement's Campaign For Disarmament. However, after 1967, the roles of these organizations declined sharply. After the SDS and the Campaign For Disarmament had cleared the ground, protests began to diffuse much more spontaneously, often as a direct reaction to repression, e.g., the shooting of a demonstrator in June 1967 and the assault on student leader Rudi Dutschke in April 1968. By 1970, both the SDS and the Campaign For Disarmament dissolved because they had lost control of events and were torn apart by factional strife (Fichter and Lönnendonker 1977, pp. 140ff.; Otto 1977, pp. 172ff.).

As Figure 4 indicates, their place in the protest scene was taken over by other, rather different, organizations. The increase in protests brought more moderate external allies into the social movement sector. Most prominent among these were the youth organizations of the SPD, the liberal Free Democratic Party (FDP) and the unions. Although the goals supported by these allies were generally much more moderate than the goals of the period around 1968, facilitation was an important vehicle for extending protests to a mass public: On average, facilitated protests mobilized over four times as many people as unfacilitated protests. These tendencies toward institutionalization were accompanied by radicalization of sections of the movements. Like their comrades in Italy, these radical sections saw the creation of tightly structured vanguard organizations as a prerequisite for the continuation and radicalization of protests. Thus, from 1969 on, the number of protests produced by radical Communist groups or terrorist organizations increased.

Figure 4 illustrates the transitional character of the mid-1970s, which bore the imprint of the

---

1989b, p. 304). In other words, violence within the Italian protest wave can only to a limited extent be seen as the result of competition for a single constituency. This violence can more aptly be described as a "war" between the extreme left and the extreme right. Of course, wars can be interpreted in terms of competition, but competition that aims to destroy competitors differs sharply from the competition among parties for the support of the electorate or the competition among SMOs for the support of a constituency. In the case of war, the most violent competitor is indeed likely to win. In a competition for a constituency, violence is only one option and probably not the most effective choice, since competition for a constituency often hinges on winning the support of the moderate center.

[16] "Unorganized" protests are not purely spontaneous outbursts of collective action by isolated individuals, as suggested by "classical" models of collective behavior. In many cases, such protests originate in informal networks and subcultural and countercultural infrastructures, i.e., in the social organization of a movement's constituency. The term "unorganized" conveys only that such protests are not the result of mobilization by formal SMOs, although they may be an unintended by-product of such efforts.

[17] The analyses of strike waves in Haimson and Tilly 1989 confirm this conclusion. In their introduction to the volume, Haimson and Brian concluded: "This process of 'deinstitutionalization'

[wildcat strikes] was to a degree characteristic of all the major strike waves scrutinized in this volume" (Haimson and Brian 1989, p. 39). Cronin summarized the conclusion of his contribution as follows: "Strike movements built unions, but unions did not overall do a great deal to increase strike propensity" (Cronin 1989, p. 98).
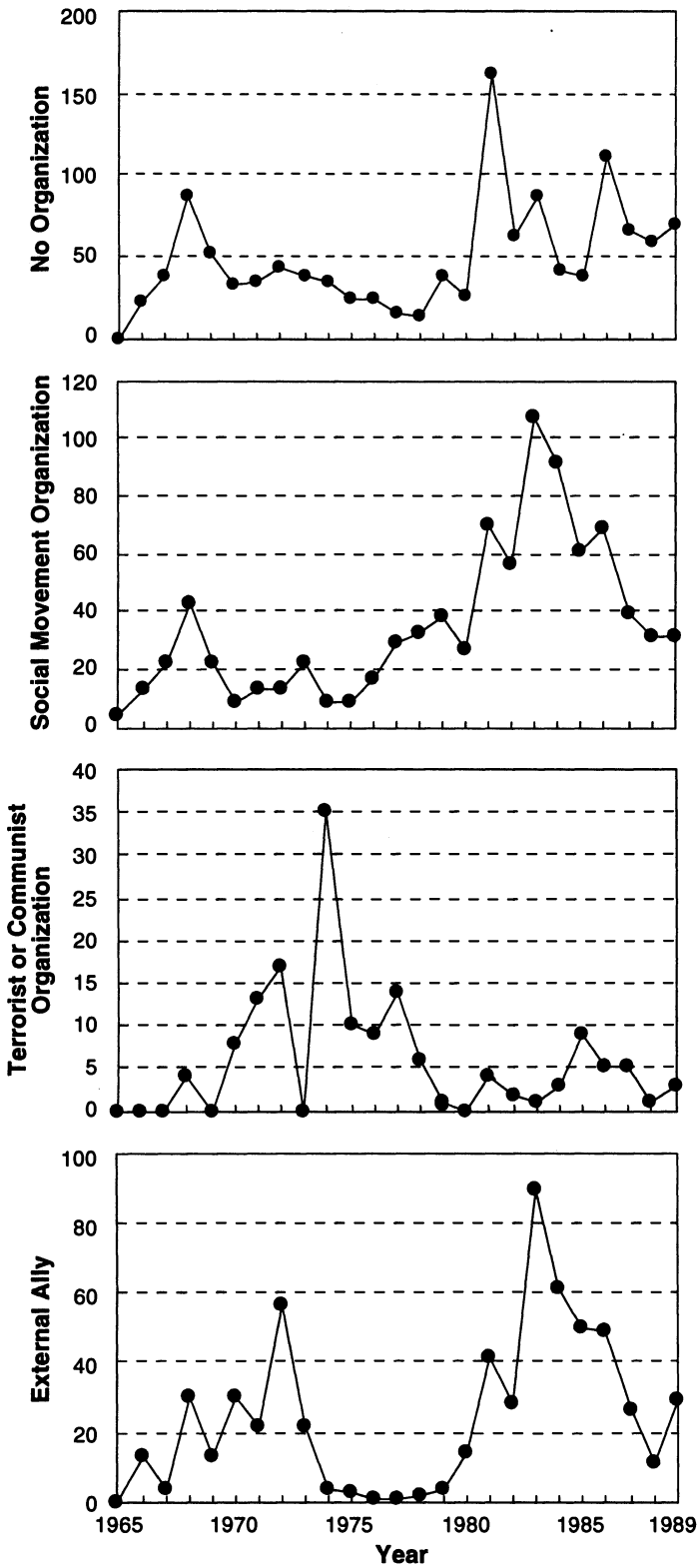
Figure 4. Number of Protests by Year Involving Different Organizations: West Germany, 1965–1989

decline of the first wave and signaled the rise of the second wave. Protests that were supported by an external ally declined sharply after 1972 as a result of the SPD's turn toward conservatism following the resignation of Chancellor Willy Brandt. The involvement of Communist groups reached its zenith around the middle of the decade, but subsequently these groups were quickly marginalized. The actions of terrorist groups increased until the fall of 1977, but declined rapidly after the suicides of the RAF's leaders in Stammheim prison. Meanwhile, however, protests organized by other SMOs began to increase, dominated in this period by a new type of organization, the so-called *Bürgerinitiativen* (civic initiatives), which were locally-based, nonideological, loosely organized groups that mobilized heretofore acquiescent sections of the population. Thus, as in the 1960s, organizations played an important role in the initial phase of the second protest wave. Again, the role of organizations was more modest in the period during which protests spread most spectacularly: Between 1978 and 1981, the increase in unorganized protests was over five times greater than the increase in protests organized by SMOs.

The *Bürgerinitiativen* had experimented with new forms of action and organization, and their successes had raised the public's belief in the efficacy of protest. Nevertheless, in doing so, they had opened up space for protests that to a large extent was filled by others — initially by relatively spontaneous actions (e.g., the squatters' movement), and later by the Green Party, the SPD, the churches, and the unions, as well as professional SMOs.

Radicalization in the second wave differed from that in the first wave. The confrontational and violent protests after 1968 were dominated by Communist vanguard organizations and terrorist groups, but the radicals of the 1980s tended to reject organization, not least because of the failure of their radical predecessors' organizational models. Thus, although Figure 4 shows a modest increase in the actions by terrorist organizations in the second half of the 1980s, the majority of the violence in this period was produced by small and nameless circles of activists, as reflected in the revival of unorganized protests.

Summarizing, the role of organizations varies over the course of a protest wave. Informal, loosely-structured organizations that rely more on the commitment and imagination of activists than on other resources (e.g., the SDS and the civic initiatives) are important at the start of a protest wave. In this initial phase, protests require strategic planning and patience. However, once early protests have shown the way, the costs and difficulties of staging subsequent protests decrease. Actions that might require months or even years of preparation in less conducive circumstances may be accomplished almost instantaneously at these times of general arousal. Leaflets, rumors, intensified media coverage, or brutal police repression may then do the job of movement organizers, who often are unable to control the energies their pioneer actions have unleashed. In that sense, the diffusion of protests is neither spontaneous nor organized, but rather an often uneasy combination of the two.

After disruptive protests have peaked, the importance of organizations increases again. However, the organizations that dominate in this period often differ from the organizations that started the wave. Basically, these later organizations reflect the twin tendencies toward radicalization and institutionalization. External allies try to profit from the mobilization by entering the social movement sector, which extends protests to a wider public and exerts a moderating influence on goals and actions. In addition, pre-existing or newly founded professional SMOs may try to get a slice of the protest pie. Radicalization may be accompanied by the formation of new organizations, too, although the high degree of organization characteristic of the radicalism of the 1970s seems to be a result of the Marxist theories and Leninist models of organization that predominated at the time.

Table 1 shows the relationship between the involvement of organizations and the action repertoire. Contrary to Tarrow, moderate protests more often involved SMOs or external allies than did the more radical protests. Two-thirds of demonstrative protests were supported by established allies, "other SMOs," or a combination of the two. The large majority of the more radical protests did not involve an organization: Only one-third of confrontational events and one-fifth of the protests involving light violence were supported by an SMO or an established ally.[18]

---

[18] The relation between organizations and type of protest seems to change at the far radical end of

Table 1. Percentage Distribution of Protests by Involvement of Organizations, for Types of Protest: West Germany, 1965–1989

Type of Organization	Demonstrative Protests	Confrontational Protests	Protests Using Light Violence	Protests Using Heavy Violence	Total Protests
No organization	37.3	63.8	79.7	63.6	47.7
Communist	1.2	2.4	2.0	0.0	1.5
Terrorist	0.0	2.7	2.7	30.7	2.9
Other SMO	27.4	20.1	11.5	4.3	23.1
External ally	15.6	5.8	1.4	0.7	11.5
Other SMO + external ally	18.5	5.1	2.7	0.7	13.3
Total percent	100.0	99.9	100.0	100.0	99.9
Number	1,296	412	148	140	1,996

The patterns of involvement of organizations that appear in the two German protest waves are confirmed by studies of other protest waves. Dutch protests in the period 1975 to 1989 reveal a remarkably similar pattern: Loosely-structured organizations and ad hoc initiatives dominated in the initial phase of the wave, but few organizations were involved in the rapid spread of protests between 1980 and 1982. Subsequently, professional SMOs and external allies dominated, while protests — organized and unorganized — involving violence also increased. As in Germany, unorganized protests were the most radical in the Netherlands, while protests involving SMOs or external allies were more moderate (Koopmans 1992b).

Killian's (1984) analysis of two campaigns of the civil rights movement in Tallahassee, Florida, also found that the initial phase of a protest wave is characterized by a "mixture of planning and spontaneity . . . . Spontaneity is especially likely to be important in the early stages of a social movement and during periods of transition from one type of action to another" (pp. 777–80). Oberschall (1978), studying the

the action repertoire. Protests involving heavy violence were more organized than protests involving light violence. Moreover, among protests involving heavy violence, those directed against people involved an organization in two-thirds of the cases, a level similar to that for demonstrative protests. This is, of course, related to the conspiratorial nature of such protests, which require careful planning: Kidnappings or political murders do not happen spontaneously.

role of SMOs in the American protest wave of the 1960s, concluded:

Created hastily and expanding rapidly, SMOs controlled but a small part of their total social interaction field. Only a small fraction of the total resources expended upon movement activity by transitory teams and the wider circles of sympathizers actually passed directly through a central leadership group with a resource allocation capacity. The communications network between the leadership and rank and file was rudimentary, and relied heavily on the mass media over which SMOs had little direct control. (p. 267)

McAdam's (1982, pp. 147–48) study of the civil rights movement found that the grassroots organizations that dominated the movement's early phase gradually became less prominent, while the involvement of formal movement organizations and external support increased.

These findings support Piven and Cloward's argument that the involvement of organizations has a moderating influence rather than a disruptive influence as Tarrow suggests. The blockades and violent demonstrations after the assault on Dutschke in April 1968 were not orchestrated by organizations. Similarly, the 1981 squatters' protests were more a result of spontaneous imitation and the mobilization of pre-existing networks of activists than of careful planning and organization. Nevertheless, the role of spontaneity in the spread of disruptive protests should not be overemphasized. These episodes would never have occurred without the groundwork laid by organizations like the SDS and civic initiatives, which successfully experimented with new strategies and introduced new issues into the political agenda.

Only after the peak of disruption do organizations become a moderating force, as professional SMOs and established allies join the movements to exploit the pool of members, adherents, and voters revealed by the eruption of protests. Thus, Piven and Cloward's stress on the spontaneity of disruptions and the moderating influence of organizations, and their critics' emphasis on the importance of organizations in preparing the ground for disruption, both contain an element of truth. The main difference between these interpretations is their focus on different types of organizations and different periods in the mobilization process.

DISCUSSION: DETERMINANTS OF THE RISE AND FALL OF PROTEST WAVES

The findings presented point to striking regularities in the development of protest waves that are independent of the particular themes addressed and movements involved and that can be found in countries as divergent as Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, and the United States. Karstedt-Henke's explanation for these regularities, which emphasizes the effects of repression and facilitation by established political actors, finds more support in the data than does Tarrow's focus on competition among organizations.

Nevertheless, Karstedt-Henke's explanation is not wholly satisfactory: It assumes that the fragmentation of social movements into moderate and radical components and the ensuing decline in protests are the result of cunning counterstrategies devised by the authorities, and that social movements are powerless victims in their hands. Although repression and facilitation can have powerful effects on the relative costs and benefits of different strategies open to social movements, Karstedt-Henke's explanation ignores the fact that authorities cannot *force* activists to institutionalize or build terrorist organizations. The theory must consider why, within the constraints set by their environments, social movement activists consciously choose one strategy and not another.

What are the basic strategic options available to social movements in their efforts to change existing policies? Different answers have been proposed to this question. Some authors, especially those working in the classical tradition, have stressed violence as the basic resource available to social movements (Gurr 1970). De Nardo (1985), on the other hand, emphasized the "power of numbers," although he acknowledged that "violence can be used to compensate for inadequate support" (p. 200). Tarrow (1989a) argued that "the power of protest lies neither in its numbers . . . nor in its level of violence, . . . but in its threat to burst through the boundaries of the accepted limits of social behavior" (p. 7; Piven and Cloward [1977] argued in a similar vein). Rochon's (1990, p. 108) view that all three elements of movement power — which he labels *militancy, size,* and *novelty* — are important seems more realistic than a reductionist emphasis on one of these elements. These three elements are particularly relevant here because they can be easily linked to the three main action strategies: Demonstrative protests aim primarily to mobilize the power of numbers; confrontational protests are most suited to capitalize on the advantages of novelty; and violence clearly aims to change policies through a display of militant force and determination.

Social movements derive power from large *size* because the more people who are mobilized, the more the legitimacy of the authorities and their policies is called into question. Moreover, in democracies, participants in social movements and their sympathizers are also voters, so that size can become a considerable electoral factor.

The power of *novelty* lies, apart from the media attention it attracts, in its unpredictability and the insecurity it provokes among established actors about the limits and consequences of protests (Tarrow 1989b, p. 59). Moreover, novelty gives protesters a strategic advantage — authorities are unprepared for new strategies, political actors, and themes. Given the inertia of institutional politics, effective responses develop slowly, whereas in the early phase of rapid diffusion, social movements are highly flexible — they appear and disappear in ever-changing guises at unpredictable times and places.

Militancy is the most direct power available to social movements. Radical protests, especially when they involve violence, almost invariably attract media coverage. Moreover, the authorities are forced to react to serious disturbances of law and order that challenge their monopoly on the use of violence. However, violence employed by social movements is a risky tool. The individual costs are likely to be

high for those arrested, and the probability of backlash is high. Nevertheless, if the violence is sufficiently enduring and massive, it may succeed. Repression can backfire, especially when it is excessive and badly directed. Moreover, repression is costly, and in some situations these costs may induce authorities to give in to the movement's demands.

These three sources of power for social movements are also associated with specific phases in the development of protest waves. Clearly, in the initial phase of a wave, novelty is the most important basis of power. Because the public at large is not yet mobilized, pioneer movements attract few participants, which rules out strategies that depend on large size. Violence is also not an attractive option because the public and the media have serious moral objections and will consider violence only as a last resort. Moreover, in the initial phase, protesters can attract attention with less militant and less risky actions. Thus, pioneer activists are likely to opt for actions that are novel and unconventional enough to attract media attention and militant enough to concern authorities but that do not depend for effectiveness on large numbers of participants. Confrontational protests, like occupations, sit-ins, and blockades, satisfy these criteria and thus are important in the expansive phase of a protest wave.[19]

Similar considerations affect the organizational support for protests. Formal, professional movement organizations do not play dominant roles in the initial phase of a protest wave. Such organizations, if they exist when protests start, tend to suffer from the same structural inertia as do established political actors. Therefore, they are unlikely to spawn tactical and thematic innovations. Also, in the face of insecurity about the outcomes of such "experiments," they are reluctant to risk their resources (e.g., access to decision makers or to

---

[19] Of course, what is novel and unconventional may vary over time and among countries. Thus, civic initiatives in West Germany initially attracted attention by their mere existence, although their action repertoire initially mainly consisted of moderate actions like petitions and small demonstrations. In West Germany, the average citizen has long been politically passive. Thus, the fact that citizens who did not belong to the small radical fringe were challenging decisions of the authorities was novel enough to be of interest to the media and to concern the authorities.

the media, mass membership, subsidies, salaried staff, etc.). Nor are the pioneers of protest waves likely to opt for formal organizations because such organizations require an already mobilized mass constituency that offers members and funding. Oberschall (1979) argued that in a group that is not yet represented by an existing SMO or political organization, "the first individuals to attempt organization run high personal risks as a result of innovator-loss dynamics; there are free rider tendencies; and the sheer length of time that would pass before SMO efforts might bring relief, even if they could get under way, . . . make an organized challenge unlikely" (p. 63). Moreover, formal organization would not be fruitful strategically. Unpredictability, novelty, and fluidity are an emergent movement's main resources, whereas the involvement of formal organizations makes a movement's boundaries clearer, its leaders identifiable and accountable, and its strategies more predictable.

However, this initial strategic model is inherently unstable, and alternative strategic options gradually become more attractive. Tactical innovations, like site occupation and squatting, lose their ability to surprise and are no longer attractive to the media — and authorities learn to deal with such actions more effectively (Freeman 1979, p. 186; Hilgartner and Bosk 1988, pp. 62–63; Rochon 1988, p. 186).

Similarly, the initial model of loosely structured organizations is difficult to sustain (Oberschall 1979, p. 67). In the initial phase of a protest wave, such organizations often have the field to themselves. However, as the wave progresses, they are increasingly faced with competition from professional SMOs and external allies on the one hand, and from radical groups on the other. Because they lack the resources and internal coordination to compete effectively with professional SMOs and established allies for media access and mass support, and because they lack the strong identity that underlies the mobilization capacity of radical groups, these organizations become increasingly marginal. As Oberschall (1978) argued, this marginalization will be reinforced by the reactions of the media and the authorities, who are interested in "structuring" protests by focusing on a few identifiable leaders and organizations — "the media contributed in making leaders out of some who otherwise might not have been, and created more structure in the move-

ments than they actually possessed" (p. 272). When protests begin to decline, the positions of the loosely structured parts of social movements become even more precarious. To survive declining participation, social movements must have either an enduring organizational structure with resources that do not depend on mass participation (McAdam et al. 1988, pp. 716ff.), or a strong identity that allows them to continue to mobilize even under unfavorable circumstances. The organizations and spontaneous collectives that dominate the initial phase of protests possess neither of these traits and are therefore likely to be the first victims of decline (Jenkins and Eckert 1986, p. 816).

Social movements must compensate the loss of novelty by increased numbers or increased militancy. A strategy to increase numbers is favored if established political actors, pre-existing SMOs, and social movement entrepreneurs are interested in allying themselves to movements. However, support from these groups is often accompanied by a moderation of strategies and goals, which may lead to friction with the more radical activists who do not wish to compromise on the original strategies and demands. Since these radicals are unable to outstrip the moderates and their allies in numbers, they resort to increased militancy, and some of them ultimately to violence, to make themselves heard. The presence of a radical minority may in turn strengthen the moderate faction's tendency toward moderation and institutionalization. "The presence of 'extremist' SMOs can actually help to legitimate and strengthen the bargaining position of more moderate SMOs [and may encourage] funding support for the 'moderates' as a way of undercutting the influence of the radicals" (McAdam et al. 1988, pp. 718–19).

Thus, over the course of a protest wave social movements split over strategy, and the moderate and radical wings are increasingly separated. This division need not have immediate negative consequences on the protests. Initially, the involvement of allies may broaden public support for the movement's activities and enhance the media presence of the movement. Nevertheless, if institutionalization and radicalization continue, protests will ultimately decline. When established allies incorporate a movement's demands into their programs, when "movement parties," like the Green Party, enter parliaments or governments, and

when professional SMOs gain acceptance as representatives of a movement's demands in the media and in policy making, many movement sympathizers find protests less urgent. Because participation in social movements is relatively costly and time-consuming compared to voting for a sympathetic party or joining an SMO, institutionalization leads many to shift to such alternatives.

Increased radicalism may also lead to a decline in protests. Few activists are prepared to endure the repression that radical actions entail. Moreover, the increasingly hostile reactions of the authorities and the increased efficiency of repressive measures push radical groups toward covert actions involving a small activist core. The repression and marginalization of these groups also stimulates sectarian conflicts and distrust among activists, which diverts energy from external activities and discourages outsiders from participating (De Nardo 1985). Finally, if radicalization escalates to extreme violence or terrorism, it may provoke a backlash that undercuts the general legitimacy of protests.

A decline in protests may be reinforced by a decline in the chance of success of protests, which makes participation less attractive. I hypothesize that the chance of success erodes over the course of a protest wave. Social movements tend to succeed first when opportunities are most favorable, e.g., by focusing on issues with large public support and on which elites are divided. Being rational actors, activists focus on such "ripe apples" first. As a printed guide for movement organizers stated, "It is desirable to make the first organized project of the group a short term one that has a high probability of success. Your first issue should be an attainable goal which will provide you with your first victory" (as quoted in Fireman and Gamson 1979, p. 30). Once success has been attained or a compromise has been reached on these initial demands, the movement must continue mobilization on issues for which opportunities and public support are less favorable. Thus, subsequent successes are increasingly difficult, which gradually erodes the motivation to participate.

The increasing lack of success may reinforce tensions between moderates and radicals. While the prospects for success are favorable, different factions may find a common ground, or at least agree to a "peaceful co-existence." Once things go wrong, however, strategic de-

bates often erupt in full force, and these internal conflicts can substantially weaken a movement. This happened to the German peace movement after the government decided to deploy Cruise and Pershing missiles in 1983 (Koopmans 1992c, pp. 201–206).

Summarizing, my explanation for the dynamics of protest waves combines external and internal factors. The progress of a protest wave is the outcome of the interplay between the external constraints of facilitation, repression, and success chances, and activists' choices among the different strategic options. These factors provide a plausible explanation for the trajectories of action repertoires and involvement of organizations discernible in the protest waves discussed in this article.

Because theory and empirical research on the development of social movements after their emergence are still in their infancy, my explanation provides only a rough map of the territory of protest dynamics. Besides action repertoires and organizational forms, other aspects of protests to explore in a dynamic perspective include patterns of territorial diffusion and thematic shifts (Tarrow 1989b; Snow and Benford 1992). Further, the empirical base for generalizations is still rather narrow. Additional studies of protest waves of different movements and in different political and cultural contexts can show whether the trends found in the four cases examined here reflect general patterns. Protest waves may differ in nondemocratic countries in which the constraints on social movement activity are much stronger. Further, the dynamics of social movements that address economic issues (e.g., the labor movement) rather than political authorities may differ from the dynamics of the movements discussed here. Another question to investigate is whether the model developed here is limited to left-wing, progressive movements, or whether it extends to right-wing movements, like the recent anti-foreigner actions in Germany.[20]

---

[20] Social movement mobilization in East Germany during and after the revolution of 1989 has some interesting parallels with the model presented here. The revolution started with small actions organized by loosely structured civic initiatives like *Neues Forum*. These were followed by a series of illegal demonstrations that were largely spontaneous initially, but quickly drew the attention of (primarily West German) political parties. The elections of March 1990 provided further evidence of

RUUD KOOPMANS is a research fellow of the Dutch Organization for Scientific Research (NWO) at the University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands. He participates in a research project on the development of new social movements in Western Europe, and in that context has co-authored a book on the Netherlands and completed a dissertation on West Germany. Together with the other members of the research group, he is currently working on a book comparing social movements in France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. In addition, he has begun a study focusing on the roles of political elites and social movements in the recent revolution in the Soviet Union.

REFERENCES

Brand, Enno. 1990. *Staatsgewalt: Politische Unterdrückung und innere Sicherheit in der Bundesrepublik* (State Violence: Political Repression and Internal Security in the Federal Republic of Germany). Göttingen, Germany: Verlag Die Werkstatt.

Brinton, Crane. 1959. *The Anatomy of Revolution*. New York: Vintage Books.

Carroll, Glenn R., ed. 1988. *Ecological Models of Organizations*. Cambridge, MA: Ballinger.

Cronin, James E. 1989. "Strikes and Power in Britain." Pp. 79–100 in *Strikes, Wars, and Revolutions in an International Perspective: Strike Waves in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*, edited by L. H. Haimson and C. Tilly. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

D'Anieri, Paul, Claire Ernst, and Elizabeth Kier. 1990. "New Social Movements in Historical Perspective." *Comparative Politics* 22:445–58.

Dalton, Russell J. and Manfred Kuechler, eds. 1990. *Challenging the Political Order: New Social and Political Movements in Western Democracies*. Cambridge, England: Polity Press.

Della Porta, Donatella and Sidney Tarrow. 1986. "Unwanted Children: Political Violence and the Cycle of Protest in Italy: 1966–1973." *European Journal of Political Research* 14:607–32.

Della Porta, Donatella and Dieter Rucht. 1991. "Left-Libertarian Movements in Context: A Comparison of Italy and West Germany, 1965–1990" (Discussion paper No. FS III 91–102). Science Center Berlin, Berlin, Germany.

this trend toward institutionalization. The dissident groups that started the revolution fared poorly, while the established West German parties received the support of the large majority of the electorate. In this view, subsequent anti-foreigner protests can be interpreted as the revolution's radical offshoot, which carried the theme of nationalism and the slogan "We Are One People" to xenophobic and violent extremes.

De Nardo, James. 1985. *Power in Numbers: The Political Strategy of Protest and Rebellion.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Duyvendak, Jan Willem. 1992. *The Power of Politics: New Social Movements in an Old Polity. France 1965–1989.* Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Political Science, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

Duyvendak, Jan Willem, Hein-Anton van der Heijden, Ruud Koopmans, and Luuk Wijmans, eds. 1992. *Tussen verbeelding en macht: 25 jaar nieuwe sociale bewegingen in Nederland* (Between Imagination and Power: 25 Years of New Social Movements in the Netherlands). Amsterdam, the Netherlands: SUA.

Edwards, Lyford P. 1965. *The Natural History of Revolution.* New York: Russell and Russell.

Ehmke, Wolfgang, ed. 1987. *Zwischenschritte: Die Anti-Atomkraft-Bewegung zwischen Gorleben und Wackersdorf* (Way Stations: The Anti Nuclear Power Movement Between Gorleben and Wackersdorf). Cologne, Germany: Kölner Volksblatt Verlag.

Fichter, Tilman and Siegward Lönnendonker. 1977. *Kleine Geschichte des SDS: Der Sozialistische Deutsche Studentenbund von 1946 bis zur Selbstauflösung* (A Small History of the SDS: The Socialist German Student League from 1946 to its Dissolution). Berlin, Germany: Rotbuch Verlag.

Fireman, Bruce and William A. Gamson. 1979. "Utilitarian Logic in the Resource Mobilization Perspective." Pp. 8–44 in *The Dynamics of Social Movements: Resource Mobilization, Social Control, and Tactics,* edited by M. N. Zald and J. D. McCarthy. Cambridge, MA: Winthrop Publishers.

Freeman, Jo. 1979. "Resource Mobilization and Strategy: A Model for Analyzing Social Movement Organization Actions." Pp. 167–89 in *The Dynamics of Social Movements: Resource Mobilization, Social Control, and Tactics,* edited by M. N. Zald and J. D. McCarthy. Cambridge, MA: Winthrop Publishers.

Gamson, William A. and Emilie Schmeidler. 1984. "Organizing the Poor." *Theory and Society* 13:567–85.

Giugni, Marco G. 1992. *Entre stratégie et opportunité: Les nouveaux mouvements sociaux en Suisse* (Between Strategy and Opportunity: New Social Movements in Switzerland). Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Political Science, University of Geneva, Geneva, Switzerland.

Gurr, Ted Robert. 1970. *Why Men Rebel.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Haimson, Leopold H. and Eric Brian. 1989. "Introduction to Part II." Pp. 35–46 in *Strikes, Wars, and Revolutions in an International Perspective: Strike Waves in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries,* edited by L.H. Haimson

and C. Tilly. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Haimson, Leopold H. and Charles Tilly, eds. 1989. *Strikes, Wars, and Revolutions in an International Perspective: Strike Waves in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries.* Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Hannan, Michael T. and John Freeman. 1987. "The Ecology of Organizational Founding: American Labor Unions, 1836–1985." *American Journal of Sociology* 92:910–43.

Hilgartner, Stephen and Charles L. Bosk. 1988. "The Rise and Fall of Social Problems: A Public Arenas Model." *American Journal of Sociology* 94:53–78.

Himmelheber, M. and K. Philipp, eds. 1982. *Startbahn 18 West, Bilder einer Räumung* (Runway 18 West, Images of an Eviction). Darmstadt, Germany: Minotaurus Projekt.

Jenkins, J. Craig and Craig M. Eckert. 1986. "Channeling Black Insurgency: Elite Patronage and Professional Social Movement Organizations in the Development of the Black Movement." *American Sociological Review* 51:812–29.

Karstedt-Henke, Sabine. 1980. "Theorien zur Erklärung terroristischer Bewegungen" (Theories for the Explanation of Terrorist Movements). Pp. 198–234 in *Politik der inneren Sicherheit* (The Politics of Internal Security), edited by E. Blankenberg. Frankfurt, Germany: Suhrkamp.

Killian, Lewis M. 1984. "Organization, Rationality and Spontaneity in the Civil Rights Movement." *American Sociological Review* 49:770–83.

Koopmans, Ruud. 1990. "Bridging the Gap: The Missing Link Between Political Opportunity Structure and Movement Action." Paper presented at the ISA Congress, Jul. 7–10, Madrid, Spain.

————.1992a. "Van Provo tot RARA. Golfbewegingen in het politiek protest in Nederland" (From Provo to RARA: Waves of Political Protest in the Netherlands). Pp. 59–76 in *Tussen verbeelding en macht: 25 jaar nieuwe sociale bewegingen in Nederland* (Between Imagination and Power: 25 Years New Social Movements in the Netherlands), edited by J. W. Duyvendak, H. A. van der Heijden, R. Koopmans, and L. Wijmans. Amsterdam, the Netherlands: SUA.

————.1992b. *Patterns of Unruliness: The Interactive Dynamics of Protest Waves.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, 20–24 Aug., Pittsburgh, PA.

————. 1992c. *Democracy from Below. New Social Movements and the Political System in West Germany.* Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Political Science, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

Kriesi, Hanspeter. 1989. "New Social Movements and the New Class in the Netherlands." *Ameri-*

can Journal of Sociology 94:1078–1116.

———. 1993. Political Mobilization and Social Change: The Dutch Case in Comparative Perspective. Aldershot, England: Avebury.

Kriesi, Hanspeter, Ruud Koopmans, Jan Willem Duyvendak, and Marco G. Giugni. 1992. "New Social Movements and Political Opportunities in Western Europe." European Journal of Political Research 22:219–44.

McAdam, Doug. 1982. Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

———. 1983. "Tactical Innovation and the Pace of Insurgency." American Sociological Review 48:725–53.

McAdam Doug, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald. 1988. "Social Movements." Pp. 695–737 in Handbook of Sociology, edited by N. Smelser. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Morris, Aldon D. 1984. The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change. New York: Free Press.

Mulhak, Renate. 1983. "Der Instandbesetzungskonflikt in Berlin" (The Squatting Conflict in Berlin). Pp. 205–52 in Großstadt und neue soziale Bewegungen (Large Cities and New Social Movements), edited by P. Grottian and W. Nelles. Basel, Switzerland: Birkhäuser.

Oberschall, Anthony. 1978. "The Decline of the 1960s Social Movements." Pp. 257–89 in Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change, vol. 1, edited by L. Kriesberg. Greenwich, CT: JAI.

———. 1979. "Protracted Conflict." Pp. 45–70 in The Dynamics of Social Movements: Resource Mobilization, Social Control, and Tactics, edited by M. N. Zald and J. D. McCarthy. Cambridge, MA: Winthrop Publishers.

Offe, Claus. 1985. "New Social Movements: Challenging the Boundaries of Institutional Politics." Social Research 59:817–68.

Otto, Karl A. 1977. Vom Ostermarsch zur APO. Geschichte der außerparlamentarischen Opposition in der Bundesrepublik 1960–70 (From Easter March to APO: A History of the Extraparliamentary Opposition in the Federal Republic of Germany 1960–70). Frankfurt, Germany: Campus.

Piven, Frances Fox and Richard A. Cloward. 1977. Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail. New York: Vintage Books.

Rochon, Thomas R. 1988. Mobilizing for Peace: The Antinuclear Movements in Western Europe. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

———. 1990. "The West European Peace Movement and the Theory of New Social Movements." Pp. 105–21 in Challenging the Political Order: New Social and Political Movements in

Western Democracies, edited by R. J. Dalton and M. Kuechler. Cambridge, England: Polity Press.

Rucht, Dieter, ed. 1984. Flughafenprojekte als Politikum: Die Konflikte in Stuttgart, München und Frankfurt (Airport Projects as a Political Issue: The Conflicts in Stuttgart, Munich, and Frankfurt). Frankfurt, Germany: Campus.

———. 1990. "The Strategies and Action Repertoires of New Movements." Pp. 156–175 in Challenging the Political Order: New Social and Political Movements in Western Democracies, edited by R. J. Dalton and M. Kuechler. Cambridge, England: Polity Press.

Rule, James and Charles Tilly. 1972. "1830 and the Unnatural History of Revolution." Journal of Social Issues 28:49–76.

Snow, David A. and Robert D. Benford. 1992. "Master Frames and Cycles of Protest." Pp. 133–55 in Frontiers in Social Movement Theory, edited by A. D. Morris and C. McClurg Mueller. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Tarrow, Sidney. 1988. "National Politics and Collective Action: Recent Theory and Research in Western Europe and the United States." Annual Review of Sociology 14:421–40.

———. 1989a. "Struggle, Politics, and Reform: Collective Action, Social Movements, and Cycles of Protest" (Occasional Paper No. 21). Western Societies Program, Center for International Studies, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY.

———. 1989b. Democracy and Disorder: Protest and Politics in Italy 1965–1975. Oxford, England: Clarendon Press.

———. 1990. "The Phantom at the Opera: Political Parties and Social Movements of the 1960s and 1970s in Italy." Pp. 251–73 in Challenging the Political Order: New Social and Political Movements in Western Democracies, edited by R. J. Dalton and M. Kuechler. Cambridge, England: Polity Press.

Tilly, Charles. 1986. The Contentious French: Four Centuries of Popular Struggle. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Touraine, Alain. 1978. La voix et le regard (The Voice and the Eye). Paris, France: Seuil.

Tucker, Kenneth H. 1991. "How New Are the New Social Movements?" Theory, Culture and Society 8:75–98.

Valocchi, Steve. 1990. "The Unemployed Workers Movement of the 1930s: A Reexamination of the Piven and Cloward Thesis." Social Problems 37:191–205.

Young, Ruth C. 1988. "Is Population Ecology a Useful Paradigm for the Study of Organizations?" American Journal of Sociology 94:1–24.

Zald, Mayer N. and Roberta Ash. 1966. "Social Movement Organizations: Growth, Decay and Change." Social Forces 44:327–41.