Exploring the Backstage: Preparation and Implementation of Mass Protests in Germany

Rucht, Dieter

Rucht, Dieter

Article — Published Version

Exploring the Backstage: Preparation and Implementation of Mass Protests in Germany

American Behavioral Scientist

Provided in Cooperation with:
WZB Berlin Social Science Center

Suggested Citation: Rucht, Dieter (2017) : Exploring the Backstage: Preparation and Implementation of Mass Protests in Germany, American Behavioral Scientist, ISSN 1552-3381, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA, Vol. 61, Iss. 13, pp. 1678-1702, http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0002764217744135

This Version is available at:
http://hdl.handle.net/10419/180845

Article

Exploring the Backstage: Preparation and Implementation of Mass Protests in Germany

American Behavioral Scientist
2018, Vol. 61(13) 1678–1702

DOI: 10.1177/0002764217744135
journals.sagepub.com/home/abs
SAGE

Dieter Rucht[1]

Abstract
This article aims to shed light on the understudied backstage of mass street protest preparation and implementation. In this article, I present an exploratory framework for systematizing the basic tasks and challenges of organizing a mass protest in the streets or other places. I elaborate on the concept of backstage and provide an overview of the basic tasks and challenges in preparing and organizing mass protest. These tasks are fleshed out with empirical support in the article, followed by some concluding remarks.

Keywords
NGO, preparation, protest

Introduction

When a dozen or so protesters with a few handmade signs take to the streets, we may rightly assume the action required limited preparation—that it was not *such* hard work. To be sure, these people likely needed a prior agreement about when and where to show up, and maybe how to articulate their claims. They may have also needed to obtain a permit from local officials to stage their protest demonstration. Still, the investment in a small-scale collective action of this kind is relatively low. It may be even lower in the case of an individual asking his/her Facebook friends or Twitter followers to join a flash mob. Yet preparatory work is a completely different matter when it comes to orchestrating a protest that brings tens or hundreds of thousands of people onto the streets.

[1]WZB Berlin Social Science Center, Berlin, Germany

Corresponding Author:
Dieter Rucht, Bayerische Strasse 6, Berlin 10707, Germany.
Email: dieter.rucht@wzb.eu

Considering the importance of the streets as a long-standing site of contentious gatherings, it is puzzling how little attention external observers are giving to the work that goes into preparing and enacting mass public protests these days. Regardless of whether digital technologies are lowering the costs of mobilization, if direct participation is losing ground to professional management or even industry-management (Walker, 2014) in Western democracies, and although protest is sometimes unorganized, we should pay more attention to what is entailed in coordinating mass public demonstrations. Doing so is not onerous. Core organizers can, for instance, provide extensive lists of prior activities. These lists include countless phone calls; numerous meetings with potential contributors and donors; challenging discussions among organizing individuals and groups about the right place and time for the event, its form(s) of protest, key slogans, the wording of flyers; organizing the erection of a stage and sound system as well as the speakers and performers on stage; accepting or rejecting restrictions levied by authorities; organizing a press conference before the event; negotiating with the police on the spot; and so on. In short, organizing mass protest is an enterprise in its own right. This enterprise, as a rule, requires material resources, experience, know-how, talent, endurance, and, above all, time.

The importance of organization and resources in mobilizing large groups of people is not new to social movement scholars. In the second half of the 1970s, resource mobilization theory began directing scholarship on collective action to the idea that movement activities are largely rooted in an organizational fabric wherein resources channeled through social movement organizations (SMOs) and movement "entrepreneurs" play a crucial role (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). Despite becoming a cornerstone of social movement theorizing, few empirical studies were undertaken to demonstrate the actual requirements and processes of organizing protest (cf. Edwards & McCarthy, 2004). What insights we do have come largely from case studies of particular movements where organizing activities are treated as one factor among others or from case studies focused on a particular public protest event (i.e., possibly emphasizing its media resonance, framing of certain demands, or some form of official response) rather than the preparatory work that made it happen. Accordingly, social scientists, journalists, and the wider public audience tend to have scant knowledge of what work is going on behind the scenes during large-scale protest events as well as in the weeks, months, and sometimes years preceding such events.[1]

This article aims to shed light on the understudied backstage of mass street protest preparation and implementation. Although the evidence used here comes mainly from select cases of mass protests in Germany over the past few decades, the findings can be applied more broadly. For one, organizers of mass protest face similar basic challenges in all Western democracies, despite some variation in terms of the relative strength and organizational styles of preexisting SMOs, the rights of assembly, law enforcement systems, and performative protest cultures. Second, the reference cases in this article vary in the type of issue, claims, and form. They include rallies, marches, and acts of civil disobedience, as well as isolated events and those a part of coordinated campaigns of parallel or sequential actions. Third, selecting reference cases from the 1980s to the present (2017) allows for the study of changes over time in the ways mass protests are organized. That said, the cases I consider here are limited to mass protests in the streets, thereby sidelining other forms of mass protest, such as participation in official referenda, riots, consumer boycotts, telephoning representatives, petitions, or electoral rallies. When compared to all protests, mass protests in the streets or other public spaces are infrequent.[2] There is no commonly agreed minimum threshold for calling a protest a mass protest.[3] To me, it starts with a thousand or a few thousand participants but has no upper limit. I deliberately keep the lower threshold somewhat flexible to account for different contexts, forms, and expectations. A protest of 2,000 demonstrators in a big capital city, for example, may be considered tiny, while the same number in a small city can appear as a "mass." In a similar vein, 1,000 protesters engaged in blocking a highway can seem large, but the same number might be seen as very small at a rally organized by a trade union with several million members. In Germany, the greatest share of mass street protests, especially those with tens of thousands of participants and beyond, recruit from the progressive left or left-liberal side of the political spectrum. Mass protests representing the conservative side of the spectrum (e.g., on issues of homosexuality and abortion) are infrequent and, contrary to France and other countries, relatively small. These demonstrations rarely involve more than a few thousand people taking to the street. Right-wing populist protests (also involving right radicals) peaked twice with participant numbers ranging from 15,000 to 20,000. Since the end of World War II, street protests by groups that can be clearly classified as radical right or racist have never attracted more than 6,000 people.

In what follows, I present an exploratory framework for systematizing the basic tasks and challenges of organizing a mass protest in the streets or other places. In the first section, I elaborate on the concept of backstage and provide an overview of the basic tasks and challenges in preparing and organizing mass protest. These tasks are fleshed out with empirical support in the subsequent sections, followed by some concluding remarks. The analysis is empirically based on several sources: my own observations of protest events during the past decades, sometimes including participant observation in preparatory meetings; five semistructured interviews with experienced protest organizers carried out in September 2017; and the available literature touching on preparation processes, which, as previously noted, is primarily comprised of case studies on single protest events or campaigns.

Conceptual Tools

Several conceptual tools used in this article, most importantly meso- and micromobilization and consensus and action mobilization, are already well established in social movement studies. As such, these well-established concepts are only briefly described in the subsequent sections where they play a key role. However, the concept of backstage that is mostly used in a casual way in social sciences merits special attention.

Erving Goffman[4] introduced the terms frontstage and backstage, used widely in the world of theater theretofore, as concepts for understanding the micro level of social interaction processes in "real" life. In both the realms of theater and nonfictional life, the front stage is the place of publicly visible action meant to affect, impress, or entertain an audience and is therefore the space of (ritualized) performances.

When it comes to mass protests in the streets, organizers often literally use a physical stage as a focal point so that the audience can better see the speakers, moderators, musicians, and even sometimes professional actors. The audience of mass protest is not limited to those who are physically present as participants or casual bystanders. Particularly in the case of large-scale gatherings, the audience includes, and is meant to include, those who see the protest through the mass media. Through the mass media, the demonstration can potentially reach millions of additional people or even create the impression that the whole world is watching (Gitlin, 1980).

Directly related to this literal frontstage is a literal backstage. The back of the stage at mass demonstrations are often hidden behind a curtain crossing the platform or hidden in one or more tents (or trucks) on the ground level behind the stage. On this backstage, invisible personnel—people handling urgent messages, blocking unwanted "fans," and talking to police officers, as well as sound technicians, speakers, and musicians waiting for their performances—are actively working for a few hours or a full day to facilitate the frontstage performance and ensure the backstage remains behind the scenes. Although this backstage at protest events merits scholarly study, it is not the focus of this article. Instead, I explore another kind of back stage, which, for the sake of clarity, I call the *prep stage*.

The term prep stage is a metaphorical catchphrase for the ensemble of processes, structures, and actors that precede and make possible the actual protest event. As such, the prep stage is not a single physical place, but consists of a series of encounters and communications of various people and groups who engage in the process of preparing a single protest or a broader protest campaign and tend to meet in different places. This process may take a few days or last for 1 or 2 years. It is, for the most part, invisible to the larger public and even to the mass of activists and potential protesters who are targeted in the later steps of this process. This is not to say that all meetings, deliberations, and mediated forms of communication are closed shops. Some preparatory groups are very open, actively inviting constituents to join certain meetings.

Furthermore, when social movements and movement families are long-standing, one can identify a third kind of backstage. This is a deeper backstage composed of the ensemble of more permanent structures (e.g., social movement organizations, media groups, educational centers, sympathizing scientific advisers, and lawyers) that are not geared toward the preparation of a specific protest but rather represent a pool of potential resources and institutions that can be tapped by prep stage actors. In order to avoid confusion, I refer to these more permanent structures that may serve mobilization for multiple issues as the movement *infrastructure*.

Mass street protest *is* mostly preceded by lengthy and laborious preparatory work, hence the existence of a complex prep stage that tends to be buttressed by a more permanent movement infrastructure. There are, however, notable exceptions. In certain instances, mass protests emerge as an immediate, spontaneous response to a triggering event that many people perceive as outrageous. Take, for example, the fatal shooting of an unarmed student demonstrator, Benno Ohnesorg, by a policeman in civilian clothing during a protest against the Shah of Iran's state visit to Berlin on June 2, 1967. This act—an act the authorities flatly denied at first and then grossly misrepresented—provoked students and other left and liberal groups to take to the streets. While the initial protests opposing the Shah's visit in several cities were preplanned and directed primarily by a Berlin-based umbrella group of Persian dissidents living in Germany (CIS/NU), almost no preparatory work went into the mass protests that arose and accelerated in the wake of Ohnesorg's death. In the week following the incident, more than 100,000 people, mostly students, participated in various protests across Germany (Wesel, 2002).

Another striking departure from the general rule of intensive preparatory work is evident in the so-called "candle-light chains" (*Lichterketten*) against right-wing xenophobia that formed in the streets of many German towns and cities in winter 1992/1993. In the Bavarian capital of Munich, on December 6, 1992, approximately 400,000 people came together to demonstrate their opposition to various violent and sometimes deadly attacks directed at asylum seekers and other migrants. Unlike the Ohnesorg case, these mass gatherings were not an immediate, spontaneous reaction to a specific trigger event. By contrast, they resulted from gradually growing public concern about a rising trend in hate-driven political violence against refugees over the preceding months. In the Munich demonstration, four or five individuals not directly linked to preexisting protest groups, well-known journalists among them, took the initiative of calling for a nonhierarchical, highly symbolic mass public gathering—without speakers or banners, just with people carrying lights in the dark of an early December evening—only 4 days in advance. For this kind of mass action, neither physical infrastructure (e.g., a stage or loudspeakers) nor networking among existing organizations, such as civil rights groups, religious congregations, trade unions, or political parties, were necessary. Instead, the absence of any domineering organization, combined with the fact that initiating journalists held direct access to mass media conduits for launching the call, and a public primed to do something about the issue, appear to have made this call attractive and effective.

Turning to the class of "regular" cases of mass public protests, I identify a limited number of basic tasks and challenges confronting the initiators and organizers of mass protest. As the following sections will show, these tasks overlap in both substance and timing. However, for the sake of analytical clarity, they are identified as separate clusters and then described in general terms alongside case examples in which they are evident. The tentative list presents seven basic preparatory tasks or steps:

- Mesomobilization 1: The formation of core organizers
- Mesomobilization 2: Building an organizational structure
- Mobilizing financial resources
- Clarifying the specificities of the event
- Consensus and action mobilization
- Media work
- During and after the protest event

Mesomobilization 1: The Formation of Core Organizers

As with other forms of protest, the idea to launch a mass street protest primarily comes from an individual or small group identifying some social or political problem requiring state authorities, the broader public, and/or some other decision-makers to recognize and redress. Protest initiators often seek to persuade as many people as possible to take part in a coordinated public action because other means of influencing the decisions of a target (e.g., lobbying or financing a costly professional advertising campaign) are unavailable or deemed inappropriate. Mass protest efforts, however, routinely follow a "power of numbers" logic of influence (DeNardo, 1985), according to the motto "the more the better." And, indeed, both movement scholars and practitioners see the number of protest participants as crucial for gaining attention and bringing about change. Almost always, the initial move to initiate a mass protest comes not from novices, but from experienced organizers with an understanding of the necessary tasks and means for achieving this end. In some of these instances, protest preparation and sources for participants are anchored in a single organization, that is, a large trade union, a nationwide network such as the antinuclear *ausgestrahlt* in Germany, or a multitiered, national organization like the Sierra Club in the United States. In many other cases, though, mass protest organizers attempt to involve a range of groups and organizations in preparation process. Despite inevitable coordinating hassles, such protest coalitions or "event coalitions" (Staggenborg, 2015) enable expertise and cost sharing in the preparatory process,[5] and ultimately, the mobilization of many more people than what a single group can achieve.

Especially in the early stages of large-scale public protest preparation, the main effort is on mesomobilization (Gerhards & Rucht, 1992). That is, bringing together preexisting activist groups, organizations, or networks in which individuals are embedded rather than directly mobilizing individuals (on micromobilization; see Ward, 2015). Mesomobilization, at least for large and/or complex mass protests, occurs over several stages. First, it implies setting up a core group to develop a rough idea about the envisaged protest. Next, there may be an effort to enlarge the core group by involving groups that actively participate in defining the specificities of the planned protest event and sharing the burden and cost of the preparatory work. Third, usually at the late stage when most of the planning and preparatory work is done, additional groups are contacted to join the bandwagon; that is, to be listed among the nominal supporters, help to create the image of a broad alliance, and, hopefully, try to mobilize their own constituency.

The core group tends to play a crucial role throughout the whole process. Sometimes it is a routinized group that has already been around for several years with little fluctuation in membership. Sometimes it is a newly composed group or committee, especially when it comes to new issues or new (or rarely used) forms of protest. These core bodies nominally operate according to egalitarian principles even when the members come from formal organizations that differ largely in terms of resources. Unsurprisingly and given differences in what groups can contribute, closer examination typically reveals an informal hierarchy existing from the very start or emerging early on. Those actors who represent groups with more resources, more experience, and a more formal decision-making structures frequently occupy a higher status or a de facto leadership role in the committee than smaller or less coherent groups with only modest mobilization capacities and, probably also, with difficulties speaking in one voice. But there are also coordinating bodies that more strongly adhere to the principles of grassroots organization and internal democracy. This applies especially for the antinuclear network *x-tausendmal quer* and, more recently, the network *Ende Gelände*, which opposes the surface mining of brown coal. Both single-issue networks have organized mass acts of civil disobedience by occupying streets or production facilities. With regard to major campaigns, a coordination group and an explicit internal division of labor are set up.

Of course, there are different ways to set up and run a coordinating body for a single event or campaign coalition. One option is to establish a kind of quasi-parliament composed of selected members or delegates of preexisting groups. This body then discusses and decides on all matters it deems relevant for organizing the protest. Another option is to set up a group of volunteers or paid activists not necessarily belonging to or representing a particular organization. Here, the group is commonly charged with accomplishing more mundane facilitation work (e.g., negotiating prizes for advertisement or organizing bus rides), while strategic decisions and fundamental substantive matters (such as the wording of key demands) remain in the hands of the allied organizations. A third option is handing coordination over to one single—usually powerful—preexisting organization. As only one organization takes the lead in the preparatory process, this option is rarely chosen because other supporting groups also want to have a say. Whatever specific form coordinating and networking organizers takes, rudimentary coordination processes are key to preparing the ground for a mass protest. These early coordination requirements are essentially the same: forming a decision-making body to determine the date, location, basic form, and major rationale of the protest. Only after this foundation is clear will the first step protest entrepreneurs stand a reasonable chance of including or activating other preexisting groups and networks—collectivities that either stood apart or were deliberately kept outside during this first step.

Mesomobilization 2: Building an Organizational Structure

Once a rudimentary template for coordinating the preparatory work necessary to achieve the basic protest idea is in place or has sufficiently started to emerge on a somewhat ad hoc basis, there is the challenge of developing it into a directed organizational structure. This could be seen as a second step of mesomobilization. It critically produces a *Trägerkreis* (circle of supporters) or *Koordinierungsgruppe* (coordination group) accountable for ensuring the remaining stages are fleshed out and seen through. Starting with expanding the organizational base, convincing additional groups to step in and, hopefully, take an active role in one or several dimensions of the preparatory work depends on many things. Sometimes groups not involved thus far are invited to "buy" into an almost ready-made package of planned mass protest. This type of situation may result from a deliberate decision by the core group of initiators to reduce the transaction costs of a potentially cumbersome and conflict-ridden deliberation on fundamental aspects of the event. Thus, for example, a foundation related to one of the political parties that joins the existing platform are given little opportunity to influence the shape of the event. In other cases, especially when the actual event is not yet well defined or when powerful potential allies attach strings to their participation, the preparatory processes are kept more open and flexible. This allows late-joiners to more strongly identify with and probably contribute more to the organizational work and mobilizing efforts.

The coinciding subtask at this stage of planning is to create some sort of division of labor within the mesomobilization network. This entails specifying and attributing specific roles to certain groups and individuals. As long as this has not already emerged in a more or less organic way, now is the time to think about the range of tasks, how they shall be dealt with, and who will be accountable. To oversee this work, the *Trägerkreis* circle of key organizers can be solidified or even formalized. These core organizational representatives may be formally responsible for and committed to ensuring that specific tasks are completed, resources delivered as promised, and conflicts resolved. One can generally assume that the more ambitious the expected mass protest—its size, complexity, novelty, and so on—the more explicit and refined the division of labor. With regard to medium-sized protests, particularly those planned on relatively short notice, the division of labor is likely to be simpler so that one person or a small group is assigned several duties and improvisation may be needed. However, the idea that an outstanding movement leader would be able to handle all these processes is unrealistic (Rucht, 2012). Even more so, a meticulously planned and orchestrated mass protest is likely to rest on an elaborated division of labor and strategic reasoning (King & Walker, 2014).

Comparing across a number of mass protests organized in the past 15 years or so in Germany, a relatively stable structure for organizing mass protests appears to have arisen. This holds most notably for organizations addressing policy issues that bear a family resemblance to one another, such as energy, environmental protection, agriculture, and, more recently, international trade. The inner circle of the mesomobilization structure is made up of representatives from several big environmental organizations (BUND, Nabu, Greenpeace, and occasionally the WWF), the multi-issue organization Attac, sometimes various trade unions, and the largely web-based campaign group Campact.[6] Basically, the same set of organizations has worked together for years (Kaul, 2001). This prior coalition experience makes them pragmatic, efficient, and adaptable. More specifically, having discussed principal matters of planning together and learning from various mobilizations, they have a developed a solid framework for dividing labor among themselves. For instance, one member of the *NaturFreunde* usually manages permit procedures and serves as the named applicant (*Anmelder*) for mass protests. Another member of the preparatory core group, sometimes with a colleague or two, is responsible for drafting a call to action, which is then iteratively discussed by other members before eventually serving as the basis for the protest message—a message that will be conveyed in flyers, online, and through various other media. Before this message goes out, it is approved or tacitly accepted by all relevant support groups listed as members of the *Trägerkreis*. Other consistently needed, specific tasks are similarly assigned to one or more people of the inner circle of organizers. This notably includes mobilizing other groups, drafting a budget plan, and selecting the channels for publicizing the forthcoming protest.

The structure of networks that strongly endorse grassroots organizing combined with disruptive, strictly nonviolent protest forms is similar to the one seen among large and mostly formal organizations. This is especially true for the antinuclear network *x-tausendmal quer* and the overlapping group *ausgestrahlt*. More recently, the network *Ende Gelände* formed to oppose the surface mining of brown coal. A coordinating group with an explicit internal division of labor is usually set up in both kinds of networks to prepare major protests. These coordination bodies may include up to 20 people engaging in several months of preparatory work. Most of the coordinators are volunteers who, at best, are reimbursed for their travel costs. They communicate and deliberate in both telephone conferences and in physical meetings. Both networks have organized mass acts of civil disobedience by occupying streets or production facilities.

Finally, groups on the radical left spectrum occasionally try to stage mass protests. They do so either entirely on their own (e.g., on Mayday, in reaction to police raids evicting squatters, etc.) or in the context of mass protests organized by the more moderate coordinating bodies described above. In the latter case, this form of "spin-off" collective action often provokes strong critique from the more established, initiating organizations that fear for their own credibility, especially when the radicals turn violent. The international summits of political leaders (G7, G8, G20) are notable as occasions where moderate and radical progressive strands engaged in parallel and sometimes loosely coordinated protests. The prep stage activities of far left radicals are largely unknown. What is clear is that they have more limited financial resources.

Mobilizing Financial Resources

Most mass public protests cannot be prepared and implemented without major financial expenditures, but there are always some exceptions. Protests announced in response to widespread public uncertainty or unsettling trigger-events, when emotions are running high and the urgency of taking action is extreme, do not demand large financial outlays. Under such conditions, a call for protest may resonate broadly with the mass public and thereby attract large numbers of people without much prior, deliberate preparatory work, or financial investment.[7] Mobilization, in these instances, relies more on people informally spreading the word in conversation, on large organizations sending messages to their members, or on the mass media positively reporting on the forthcoming event, than it relies on the financial resources of big movement organizations. The utility of tapping into issues that are already on media agendas is evident in the previously mentioned 1992 candle-light chain demonstration in Munich. The financial investment was probably close to nothing in this unusual case.

Moreover, some forms mass protests by their nature do not require a costly material infrastructure. Take the example of human chains in which masses of protesters physically link places of symbolic and material relevance. As recently as 2017, a human protest chain linked some 50,000 people across the 80 kilometers from the German city of Aachen to Maastricht in the Netherlands to the nuclear reactor Tihange in Belgium.[8] In 2010, 120,000 protesters linked two outdated nuclear reactors over a distance of 120 kilometers in Northern Germany. And, further illustrating the human chain as a "modular" repertoire for effective but inexpensive collective action, about 200,000 people protested against the nuclear arms race by forming a human chain stretching from Ulm to Stuttgart in October of 1983. Activities of this scope definitely require a hard-working coordinating team, planning, and a great deal of time from many volunteers. Nevertheless, these chains required relatively little money. In line with protests responding to highly salient issues, contentious performances or tactics that are routinized and demand little material infrastructure, large financial outlays are also less necessary when it comes to annual protest events that are part of commemoration and collective memory. Consider the annual Mayday march in Berlin organized by radical leftist activists and others in the past few decades. This event, which rivals the morning trade union protest, starts at 6 p.m. and attracts up to 20,000 people. Because it is basically the same procedure every year, there is no pressing need to publicize the event, though there are calls on political websites and posters in the main neighborhoods of action. Furthermore, apart from a truck carrying a microphone, amplifiers, and loudspeakers, not much more is required in terms of hardware.

The conditions that limit the need for significant financial resources should be bracketed because the majority of mass street protests are costly enterprises. From the viewpoint of organizers, financing significantly influences the participant turnout. As I was told in conversations with organizers 10 or 15 years ago, a mass rally in Germany attracting several tens of thousands of participants typically required an investment of several tens of thousands of Euros. This rule of thumb—that the numerical turnout matches the financial investment—still applies to a number of more recent cases. Importantly, though, the amount of financial investment, calculated in relation to the number of participants, can be significantly higher and is trending in this direction. In part, higher costs reflect rising expectations as to which protest events *really* matter for both potential participants and the mass media. Accordingly, the average ratio of one Euro per participant may be steadily increasing to a ratio of two or more Euros per capita. This appears to have been the case in the April 2016 mass street demonstration in Hannover against the TTIP (U.S.-European countries) and Ceta (Canada-European countries) free trade agreement plans. Between 35,000 people (according to some media accounts) and 90,000 people (according to the organizers) took to the streets, while the financial investment across the 20 organizations supporting the event was around 150,000 Euros.

Clearly, some forms of protest require a bigger investment of monetary and nonmonetary resources than an average rally. Take, for example, the most recent campaign of the network *Ende Gelände* in 2017. In addition to organizing a more conventional, low-risk rally with several thousand participants, the campaign facilitated a "red line" of higher risk collective actions. The red line included a human chain with 3,500 participants. Moreover, the network organized three summer camps and several peaceful blockades of up to 1,200 protesters at a brown coal surface mining site over an extended weekend. In contrast to a short rally, such campaigns accrue significant additional costs for renting big tents, field kitchens, water and waste containers, toilets, and so on. Relative to approximately 6,000 participants across the various kinds of actions, the financial expenditure of between 80,000 and 90,000 Euros was extraordinarily high.

To date, the most expensive—though not the biggest—mass demonstrations in Germany took place on September 17, 2016, against the planned TTIP and Ceta free trade agreements. According to the organizers, 320,000 people in total participated in the rallies held in seven cities, but a handful of independent observers reported a significantly lower turnout.[9] Whatever the exact number of participants, the expenses were substantially higher than the one-to-one ratio, the old rule of thumb, would anticipate. Key organizers said that the overall investment in the seven rallies was close to one million Euros, almost half of which came from Campact (see below). A large proportion of the money was spent on paid labor in the preparatory process, including setting up offices with paid staffs in each of the seven cities to prepare the local protest. Another large chunk of the budget went to material infrastructure for the event itself (i.e., big stages, sound systems, truck-mounted video screens to visualize the action on stage, the travel and lodging expenses of invited speakers, the distribution of standardized banners and flags to participants, crowd stewards, etc.).

While this dispersed, 1-day protest was carefully planned and financed by big organizations,[10] networks of small and medium-sized groups with modest resources are also capable of organizing large-scale street demonstrations. Take the example of a rally against welfare cuts and unemployment in Berlin on November 1, 2003. To the surprise of its organizers who could only invest a small sum of money, the event attracted around 100,000 participants. The high turnout also came as a surprise to the major trade union leaders who chose not to collaborate on the event, though some local sections participated. Based on this experience, the trade unions opted to join the next big event. Moreover, they took an active role in the preparatory process and covered the bulk of the financial expenses. In the end, on April 3, 2004, mass rallies were held in the cities of Stuttgart, Cologne, and Berlin with a total participation of around 500,000 people of which roughly half were mobilized in Berlin. This was probably the largest protest event on social and welfare issues in postwar German history. While both events described above can be seen as successful in terms of attendance, the prep stage of the April 2004 protest was fraught with internal tensions and dismay among the majority of organizing groups. These groups felt that the trade unions leveraged their substantial financial contribution to dominate the shape of the actions, to dominate how the actions appeared to the public through their press contacts, and to ultimately position themselves as the main contributors in the eyes of the public. Although the success of the small group networks in the 2003 event is what brought the large trade unions to the table for the 2004 event coalition, their marginalization in the latter event diminished their readiness for future coalition activities with more powerful organizations.

Against this backdrop, it was probably no accident that the next wave of mass protest around similar social issues took a substantially different form. When the national parliament continued its austerity policy by passing the Hartz IV bill, a massive program to reduce unemployment provisions, no further single mass demonstration was set in motion. Instead, opposition to the governmental program crystallized in a series of weekly, so-called Monday-demonstrations that spread over several hundred cities across Germany. This fully decentralized protest wave was set off by the actions of a politically inexperienced and unemployed individual. Via a diffusion process spurred by mass media reports, individuals and small groups in other cities adopted similar actions. Almost no direct coordination went on between the local organizers and little to no money was needed to stage a local Monday-demonstration. For some initiators, especially in small cities with small turnouts, it was enough to simply announce the time and place of the gathering and grab a megaphone or a microphone and loudspeaker. In places with greater participation, the loading floor of a small truck sufficed as a stage for invited speakers or participants wanting to spontaneously convey a message to the audience. The prevalence of handmade banners and signs speaks to the improvised character of these events.

The minimal organizational and financial investment of the Hartz IV Monday protest wave closely resembles dynamics seen in later protest campaigns targeting other issues. The early phase of the quick-rising, xenophobic right-wing movement Pegida, which began in the city of Dresden in late 2014, relied on the pattern of weekly Monday demonstrations. Similarly, the pro-European Pulse of Europe movement emerged in Frankfurt/Main in late 2016 and engaged in weekly demonstrations, usually on Sunday, up to its prime in Spring 2017. These events took place in nearly a hundred cities in Germany and two dozen cities abroad.

These two more recent protest campaigns highlight how the Internet and social media tools can lower the organizational costs of public mobilizations—at least those mobilizations where the numbers of participants are more widely dispersed in space and time. As part of the larger over time dynamics in the different work that goes into highly centralized mass protest events where demonstrators converge on one location to highly dispersed, more high-frequency events, many of the underlying techniques (networking, spreading the word, determining the protest form, place, and time) and conditioning factors (e.g., media diffusion, modularity) remain relatively stable. Clearly, mobilizing financial resources ranks high among the preparatory steps generally required for preplanned, large-scale protests that are being considerably altered in the face of new digital technologies.

While the pace at which digital technologies are changing makes it difficult to predict their precise impact on the preparation and implementation work activists do, the interactive nature of protest mobilization has always made predicting and planning for the "right" amount of financial resources far from perfect. Protest organizers often decide to launch a protest without knowing, at least in the early stages, what the financial costs will be and where exactly the money will come from. Moreover, throughout the preparatory process and sometimes even in the days right before the actual event, it is sometimes unclear how many people will show up. So both costs and turnout may be miscalculated.

Last-minute needs prior to an event can create unexpected additional costs. This is exactly what happened at one mass demonstration when a well-known music band agreed to perform for free but insisted on the provision of a special sound system that generated a considerable, unforeseen expense shortly before the event. Also, if it becomes clear that attendance will be much higher than expected in the few weeks or days before an event, organizers may decide to install more loudspeakers and large video screens. Renting a single truck with a video screen, as was done at the TTIP/Ceta protests in 2016, costs about 8,000 Euro. Such uncertainty can push organizers to request monetary donations from the public before or even during the actual protest. It is not rare to see stewards, equipped with paper or plastic boxes, roam through the crowd asking participants for money. Organizers confronted with a substantial deficit can also try to compensate for it after the event by pressuring the supporting organizations to give a greater share than initially planned. In some cases, these groups have already agreed in the preparatory process on a deficit guarantee. In others, they may approach one or more wealthy individuals who are known to be sympathetic to the common cause.

It should come as no surprise then that negotiations and decisions about financing are delicate when coalitions contain groups notoriously lacking in such resources. In these situations, participating organizations often try to minimize their own financial contribution in the hope that other groups or a joint funding campaign can fill any gaps. Financial resource planning focuses on three broad, major expense categories: (1) paid labor, preferably five or more full-time workers engaged solely on preparatory tasks for several months; (2) event media, including advertisements, flyers, brochures, posters, and computers; and (3) material or physical infrastructure for the day(s) and places of action, such as stage, sound system, and video screen rental, a video crew, and security.

Recalling the above-mentioned mass demonstrations in the policy areas of energy, agriculture, and international trade, a financing norm has emerged among the main organizational players in the past decade or so. The organizations are classifiable into three rough categories according to their financial power (which is often related to the number of members): big, medium, and small. The financing norm is that groups classified as "medium" should contribute around half of the amount given by "big" ones, and groups classified "small" are expected to provide half of the amount of medium-sized groups. Although attempts to gain financial and other forms of support from additional groups utilize this relatively straightforward standard, they are not always successful.[11] Because the mobilization of financial resources is geared toward generating and managing a large event turnout, groups unable to make a financial contribution are sometimes welcomed into the coalition circle for other reasons. They might, for instance, be able to mobilize many volunteers or expand the range of potential demonstrators by representing a distinct ideological strand or complementary area of policy debate. However, radical groups do not participate (and are not welcomed) in these kinds of preparatory coalition circles with (formally or informally) standardized practices.

When it comes to smaller protests organized by more informal or financially poor groups, other ways of covering expenses come into play. One option, one that continues to be relatively rare in Germany, is crowdfunding through Internet channels. Another option is generating funding through organizations specializing in protest activities. For example, the tax-exempt Movement Foundation (*Die Bewegungsstiftung*) provides selective support to specific campaigns or protest events. With some overlapping personnel, but operational independence, the Civil Courage Fund (*Fonds Zivilcourage*), which is rather an informal circle of donors than an institution, similarly supports acts of mass civil disobedience. The Fund awards organizers amounts ranging from 2,500 to 15,000 Euros per group or activity based on strict requirements, sometimes including that the money be paid back after the event.

Processes of financing medium-sized and large-scale mass protests, given their frequency when it comes to the moderate left and left-liberal spectrum, have become increasingly routinized and professionalized in the past decades. In comparison to more ad hoc, limited financing that went into the mass protests of the 1960s, financing today's mass protests is often—but not always—a matter of specific individuals or designated coordinating committees handling detailed Excel-tables and considerable sums of money. In this context, the mobilization group Campact.de has acquired a key role since it came on the scene in 2005. Due to its financial power,[12] the network is able to initiate major campaigns without much agonizing over financial details. In the past few years, this role has become so strong that Campact leaders, concerned about upholding principles of democracy and transparency, have decided to contribute only up to 50% of the actual costs of any given mass protest. Through this act of self-limitation, they hope to reduce the risk of dwarfing other participating organizations or setting a protest agenda based mainly on financial power.

Clarifying the Specificities of the Event

By this stage of preparation, a rough idea of the planned mass protest is in place (e.g., its date, location, basic form, and purpose). Establishing or broadening the network of organizing groups and figuring out what financial resources might be available would be difficult without this. The event details, however, only tend to become clearer during the middle stages of the preparatory process. For them to be clarified, certain questions commonly arise: Which group or organization should be named first or made most prominent? What are the key slogans and claims? Who are the main targets of political critique? Should specific claims be combined with a more fundamental critique of society and how should they be conveyed? Who are the main speakers and how much time should they each be given? Is there a need for stewards to facilitate the crowd and, if so, what are their responsibilities and limits? Should political parties be allowed to show their banners? How should potential counter-protesters be handled? Is there a need to designate a spokesperson or to organize a press conference for the event? Should organizers distribute standardized signs to the protesters?

While these clarifying questions may appear trivial or purely a matter of organizational cooperation, they regularly inspire intense debate in group or coalition meetings. Sometimes negotiating these points generates internal power struggles and heated disputes over strategies, politics, and ideology. Groups may even exit a coalition if they feel underrepresented in such meetings or misrepresented by the decisions (e.g., that the proposed messages and claims are either too moderate or too radical). Of course, certain choices are thornier than others. For instance, the handling of relations with political parties has reached a certain level of consensus among mass protest entrepreneurs in Germany. In many events, organizers are keen to keep political parties at arms-length to maintain their image of autonomy. As a consequence, organizers often ban signs and logos of any political party within a distance of 50 or 100 meters from the main stage. Organizers also tend to ban leading members of political parties from the stage to avoid the risks of appearing partial or irritating sympathizers of other political parties.[13]

When conflicts among coordinating groups go unresolved, dissolution is among the possible outcomes. Dissolution can mean a total collapse of the preparatory processes, but it can also take forms of more divided actions, such as two separate protest events focused on the same problem being organized for the same day or within a short period of time. This is what happened several times in Berlin during the commemorative Christopher Street Day gay-pride parades, in the marches of left-wing groups on Mayday (with separate marches of the trade unions and up to three different marches of groups embracing the idea of the "revolutionary" Mayday). It also happened in 2004 during a women's movement protest countering the annual "March for Life," and accounts for some Monday protests to fight unemployment in 2004. It is no wonder that sympathizers of an ostensibly common cause have difficulties understanding the prep stage rivalries in such cases and therefore struggle to decide which band to join.

Negative experiences with protest coalition politics has recently fueled a tendency toward coordinating a multiplicity of actions under the umbrella of larger, loosely defined campaigns or in response to an easily identifiable triggering event. A prototype of this strategic openness developed in campaigns against nuclear waste transports to northern Germany (Rucht, 2013). The transport routes themselves carried nuclear materials from a reprocessing plant in Western France to Germany on an almost annual basis from 1995 to 2011. In response, dozens of organizations and groups began engaging in various tactics to block, or at least delay, the transport of these containers (on railroad tracks and roads) to the storage site. Apart from a joint mass gathering, attended by up to 50,000 protesters at the beginning of the campaign, individual protest groups—formal or informal, local or nonlocal, farmers or students—independently decided where, when, and how to act. Taken together, these activist groups proffered an interesting panorama of different forms of protest: from colorful music performances by small, local groups to well-coordinated street blockades or acts of sabotage (e.g., weakening the rock bed underneath the railroad tracks). Although the autonomy of actions was clearly respected, an implicit consensus to minimize material damage and avoid violence against persons was also followed.

Similar patterns of independently planned and executed protest tactics appear in the protest campaigns against G7/G8 and G20 meetings in Germany[14] as well as ones against the financial industry and neoliberal capitalism in Frankfurt/Main. Excepting the protests against the 2015 G7 meeting, these campaigns were partially marked by the use of violent actions by actors on the radical left. In line with previously given examples, not to mention numerous studies of social movements, this division is not unusual. In preparation processes, moderate groups not only engage in the cumbersome negotiations about planning, financing, and public performances but also sometimes arrive at an explicit *Aktionskonsens* or consensus for action, which underlines principles of nonviolence across collective action forms. More radical groups rarely participate in fleshing out a consensus for action. Rather, they prefer to stay outside or on the fringe of the coalition protests that come with action-constraints. When preparing their own protests, these groups rely on more circumscribed membership circles and, in line with an organizational form conducive to preventing surveillance but contrary to moderate alliances, often carry out separate protest actions (as seen in the 2017 G20 protests in Hamburg). However, such groups occasionally participate in mass protests organized by moderate, mainstream groups without seeking prior consent. For good reason, the organizers of nonviolent protests fear the occurrence of violence, even when limited to a few activists, can lead to discrediting portrayals of the protest event as whole in the mass media (e.g., Teune, Sommer, & Rucht, 2017).

Alongside potential hurdles within and between groups in the field of activist organizations, organizers must also keep various state authorities and media actors in mind when determining the specifics of a mass street demonstration. Protest organizers negotiate with permitting authorities and the police to agree on the place of rally, the route of a march, and other specificities of their actions. They do so not only to gain access to the streets and possibly preempt any negative cooptation of their message by violent actors but also to better ensure they can protest where they can still disrupt business or politics as usual. In general, organizers try to protest close to meaningful targets (e.g., government buildings, banks, or the headquarters of large corporations) or places of symbolic meaning (e.g., the Brandenburg Gate), while authorities have little reason to open these spaces for collective action, especially when an escalation into violence or property damage is a concern. Activists' dependence on the mass media to attain a broader audience, legitimacy, and some response creates a related set of difficulties for protest organizers. Gaining any media attention, which is largely based on contacts, disruption, novelty, and offering a good storyline, let alone coverage that will advance the goals of the protest requires consideration (see the media work section below). In short, journalists are likely to be attracted by some of the very same things (i.e., surprises) that can be bad news for organizers, delegitimize them, lead police to use force instead of negotiation, and undermine future mass mobilization work.

Consensus and Action Mobilization

Some people take part in a mass protest for contingent reasons like spending time with a friend who is participating, curiosity, or the chance to take a few photos with the newly bought camera. But the larger share of participants join because they deem the issue and related claims important enough to take a public stand. They do so on the basis of moral and political values, personal beliefs and convictions, cognitive assessments, and emotions. The individual or collectively arrived at decision to engage in protest is usually the result of longer process that, for analytical purposes, can be divided into consensus mobilization and action mobilization (Klandermans, 1984).

As Klandermans and Oegema (1987, p. 529) note, "The intention to participate is by no means a sufficient condition" for subsequent action. To use a metaphor, consensus mobilization means preparing the soil and planting the seed for potential action. More concretely, it conceptualizes the intentional effort of people with a distinct position on an issue to convince other people to adopt this position—to agree and form a consensus that this position is the right one. This effort implies targeting particular social groups or the public at large in order to raise awareness and to problematize a situation, process, or decision so that the addressees come to share the perspective of the mobilizers and adopt the framing of the issue. With regard to a forthcoming protest event, processes of consensus mobilization are an integral part of creating supporters and sympathizers. Particularly relevant when new issues arise without sparking an immediate outcry, the seeds of consensus mobilization can either be planted years ahead of time and easily adapted to the change organizers are seeking or organizers will need to mobilize consensus to produce the basis for mass action.

Action mobilization, as the term itself indicates, is the process of motivating people to engage in action. In our case, it means convincing people to take part in a mass protest. Action does not automatically follow from successful consensus mobilization. Rather, it depends on a range of additional conditions. People have to be convinced that the proposed action is meaningful, necessary, timely, and can be effective. Ultimately, successfully mobilizing actors to take action implies the removal of barriers to participation (Klandermans & Oegema, 1987). Some barriers are more substantive (e.g., they fear reprisals, cannot identify with the group, or feel the claims are too extreme). Other barriers are more mundane (e.g., the effort of traveling to the protest location, bad weather, or alternatively tempting ways to spend their time). Accordingly, people engaged in action mobilization try to motivate potential participants by, among other things, dramatizing the problem, highlighting its relevance, announcing stirring speakers, making the event fun, or offering opportunities to cater the event to more personalized messages or forms of action.

The communication channel organizers' select plays an important role in the numeric (participant) outcomes of action mobilization. Success rates tend to be relatively high when large organizations make a concerted effort to mobilize their own members via their conventional means of communication (newsletters, e-mail lists, assemblies, etc.). By contrast, they tend to be low when an unfamiliar group places a paid advertisement in a newspaper. Along similar lines, creating the sense that the event is serious, that the organizers can be trusted, and that it will produce some results is a powerful element in action mobilization.

Contrary to Olson's (1965) theory that people will not take action if they know they can simply benefit from the labor of others taking action—that they will take a free ride—the expectation that the protest will be huge serves as a magnet rather than a deterrent for participation. In such cases, action mobilization becomes a nearly autocatalytic process in which positive signals trigger still more positive signals. On the other hand, when organizers register sluggish reactions to their call for action, they may intensify their mobilizations efforts by adding communication channels, investing more money in publicity, and/or modifying the form of action to make it more attractive.

The concept of action mobilization predicts it will work best when the target groups are addressed by several channels of information and receive consistent messages that resonate with personal experiences, identities, or concerns. Ideally, direct communication from trusted peers and friends will complement mass media accounts. Today, in the era of digital communication that intensifies the strong and weak ties of social networks, both elements can be combined. Still, the significance of newer channels of communication should not be overestimated. Organizers specialized in using old and new media formats agree that conventional means of communication—flyers, leaflets, posters, advertisement in newspapers, and cinema spots—continue to be effective tools of action mobilization.

Media Work

Over the past two decades, media work (or public relations) has become an increasingly crucial task for protest organizers. In large protest preparation processes, a subgroup within the broader organizational network is created to deal specifically with media work (when needed and when resources permit). This group usually comprises three to four people with experience doing media work in large formal organizations (mostly environmental organization, trade unions, welfare organization, etc.). In the advent of major protests, the media group issues several press releases and also organizes one or more press conferences. As media outlets provide some of biggest public front stages, which coalition representatives should serve on the panel at key press conferences immediately before or after the event is a matter of debate—a debate typically that concludes in sending spokespeople from the most powerful organizations that often have more people familiar with speaking to the press. The organizational experts who deal with the mass media also establish relationships with some journalists. In return, certain journalists become familiar with or sympathetic to the cause of the group's activities and therefore may receive privileged background information on the protest from their contact.

The design of public appearances, or "the arts of impression management" (Goffman, 1959), is closely related to media work. When it comes to designating speakers for the protest stage, selection criteria are not only about organizational affiliation and audience appeal but also about attractiveness to mass media actors. The wording of joint claims, slogans, and flyers (beyond the more specific materials offered by individual organizations) is similarly considered in light of possible mass media reactions. For example, in the wording of materials for mass protest events co-organized by big environmental organizations, such as Greenpeace, BUND, or

Nabu, explicit references to "capitalism" are taboo even if the term is common parlance for internal, prep stage conversations. Related to these sensitive issues is the effort to maintain a specific organizational image when part of a broader network (much as corporations work to maintain their "corporate" image amid competitors or protestors). Greenpeace Germany, for example, was eager to distinguish its trademark in the first decades of its existence. Therefore, it was reluctant to engage in close, formal alliances with other environmental groups. As recognizable as many brands, Greenpeace's preference for complete autonomy and distinctiveness diminished and it became willing to partner with other advocacy or activist organizations. Still, there are limits according to the issue, the form of protest, and the types of collectivities affiliated with the event. Greenpeace will not participate in joint actions cosponsored by for-profit corporations (even if they are engaged in the renewable energy sector) or influenced by political parties (such as the Greens, the Social Democrats, or Die Linke).

Media work often raises questions of a more principled nature. For instance, is it worth the risk to rely more on conventional mass media and their selection and description biases? Or should one invest in media the protest groups can more fully control? Should an event coalition be authentically transparent, revealing internal tensions, or craft the image of a unified, coherent front? Is it possible to demonstrate in ways that will appeal to the media and a broader public as well as effectively threaten political insiders (Turner, 1969)? Should one serve mass media's demand for personalization, celebrities, catchy phrases, sound bites, and spectacular pictures? In sum, how much investment should go into the front stage, public appearance, and how much should this be tailored to gaining mass media attention and possibly support?

Movement–media relations are fairly conventionalized in Germany (and much like the United States). More moderate, large, and professionalized groups tend to use multiple means of communication, including conventional media where they receive a relative fair shake. Radical groups rely more on their own communication channels because they have more difficulties attaining mainstream media access and coverage that is not marginalizing or discrediting. These groups, generally with few financial resources, use relatively cheap web-based communication, including the cross-national Indymedia platform. In exceptionally large campaigns, such as the protest against the G8 meeting in 2007, the more radical segment of protest groups set up two temporarily existing Independent Media Centers that were meant to compensate for the perceived gaps and biases of the official messages from organizers of the summit, press officers of the police, and mainstream media (Rucht & Teune, 2008, Zimmer, 2008). On this occasion, some left-leaning and liberal press made use of the "alternative" sources and the conservative press segment mainly ignored them. Other cases, however, present a different picture. For instance, in the 2010 iteration of the human chain repertoire the informal press group, which I had a chance to watch, was flooded with requests of information and interviews by all kinds of established media.[15] Movement research offers conflicting advice to activists about how to best get their messages out, but remains convinced that savvy media relations, savvy ways of catering to media routines can pay off.

During and After the Protest Event

Suffice it to say that even when previous steps in the preparatory process were meticulously thorough and adaptable, the challenges on the day of the actual mass protest are often hard to pin down. Counter-protesters may block access roads to the site of protest, police may impose on-the-spot restrictions, an eminent speaker may drop out, the sound system may not work properly, and radical factions may resort to violence and thereby change not only the course of the event but also the way it is perceived. In light of such experiences, organizers try their best to reduce or rule out such surprises by preparing to handle various potential scenarios in advance. Although a detailed discussion of common organizational tasks arising at the event is beyond the scope of this article, two of the main issues organizers are likely to consider are described.

A central contingency is the turnout. Despite this consideration, actual participation can be significantly lower than expected and therefore undermine the returns on investment (financial and otherwise). While an overestimated turnout does not equate with failure, it can have myriad negative repercussions—for coalition solidarity, media coverage, influence, morale, and so on. In other cases, mobilization acquires a positive dynamics in the final days leading up to the event so that the organizers are overwhelmed by the scope of attendance. This happened to organizers throughout Europe and beyond when they called to protest against the imminent war in Iraq on February 15, 2003.[16] Here again, wrongly anticipating the turnout surely does not equate with failure, but it may strain relations with permitting authorities, dilute carefully crafted messages about ways to solve the targeted problem, and generally create problems down the road in terms of long-term strategic aims.

Another key issue is that the end of the event does not mean the work of the organizers has come to an end. Requests for interviews remain to be answered, false accusations have to be addressed, an evaluative press conference may be held, and bills must be paid. In some instances, ones that are most certainly a nightmare for the organizers, a financial deficit or loan has to be compensated for in the weeks following the protest. Additionally, if disruptive actions occurred as a result of conflict escalation or as part of deliberately planned acts of civil disobedience, or if police went beyond the range of legal action, a subgroup of organizers dealing with juridical matters may need to take action. This can create event-related activities lasting for years after the event. It is also very likely that such a subgroup will seek the cooperation of permanent legal-aid groups, such as the *Rechtshilfebüro Hamburg* (Bureau for Legal Assistance), whose lawyers specialize in helping defendants or in indicting police officers for misbehavior.

Summary and Conclusions

As the preceding discussion makes clear, organizing a mass street protest is a multifaceted challenge that, in most cases, requires intense, laborious, and sophisticated preparation. Unlike the protest event itself, these earlier processes take place behind the scenes.

That is, they are rarely in the spotlight not only of the mass of protesters but also of journalists and, more astonishingly, social scientists studying political protest and social movements.

In this article, I have tried to shed some light on what I refer to as the prep stage of preparatory work. In my efforts to flesh out a framework for these preparatory processes, I identify a set of basic tasks and challenges that are neither mutually exclusive nor arise in a neat chronological order but can be parsed into steps or stages of sorts. I have illustrated the tasks within these steps with examples almost exclusively from the German protest sector. Nevertheless, they are by no means limited to this country. This assessment is based in my familiarity with social movement protest event research in other countries, witnessing mass demonstrations in other countries, and having interviewed, on three occasions, core organizers of such events in Brazil, Greece, and, most recently at the March for Science in April 2017, in Washington, D.C.

In a final attempt to speak to the generalizability of my observations and insights, I underscore three aspects of planning and enacting mass street demonstrations that demand greater scrutiny. First, there is no single pattern in the ways to prepare mass protests. Protests of a similar form, say a stationary mass gathering at a public place with a similar number of participants, may be based on strikingly different structures. On the one hand, such an event can be the result of a relatively short preparation process based on voluntary work and without much financial investment. On the other hand, a mass protest can rest on a preparatory period of a year or more, involving dozens of groups and organizations, the employment of five or more full-timers designed just for this task. Two examples show some of this variation. One is a stationary mass rally involving a costly material infrastructure: a big stage, a powerful sound system, and two or three large video screens. The other is a volunteer-intensive, low-cost human chain in which a hundred thousand people link to symbolic places (e.g., two nuclear reactors).

Second, the relatively rare cases of radical leftist groups staging mass protest appear to lack an elaborated organizing structure. While this is possibly due to a lack of financial and other resources, we also simply know less about the prep stage for these protests because of the closeness of organizing circles and their fear of surveillance by intelligence services. As outsiders we can only see the calls for action placed on the Internet, in the radical press, and, more rarely, on posters presented in the late stage of mobilization. With these strikingly different cases in mind, we must be careful about sweeping generalizations about the requirements and processes of preparing mass protest.

Third, in spite of the previous caveats, it seems safe to identify some general trends in mass protest preparation over the past few decades. One trend is the gradual accumulation of not only organizational experience but also mutual recognition and trust within the moderate spectrum of protest groups. They know about each other's strengths and weaknesses as well as with whom it is easy or difficult to work with and on which grounds. These protest entrepreneurs also know the difficulties cooperating with the more radical groups can present, and vice versa, including the fact that both sets of actors conventionally act independently from one another. Interestingly, this increasing degree of mutual estrangement led to the 1999 formation of the *Interventionistische Linke*, an informal network of left radicals who want to overcome the isolation of activism at the left margin. To do so, the network attempts to bridge the ideological and organizational gaps between moderates and radicals by embracing, for example, the broader idea and practice of civil disobedience.

Another broad trend is the expansion and solidification of a general infrastructure beyond single issues and their respective protests and protest campaigns. Elements of this overarching infrastructure are evident in progressive media groups (e.g., Indymedia), multi-issue campaign groups (e.g., Campact), individuals and groups specializing in moderate protest methods by providing counseling and training for non-violent action, progressive research groups and think tanks (some associated with foundations related to leftist parties), as well as financial institutions such as the multi-issue *Bewegungsstiftung* (Movement Foundation) and the feminist foundation, *filia*, which support protest groups. This more encompassing and durable infrastructure serves as an additional layer of organizational fabric for channeling resources to issue-specific protests and larger campaigns.

Taken together, these trends point to an increasing degree of overlap between the prep stage and the deeper movement infrastructure. More specifically, leaving aside the outlier cases of mass public outcry to triggering events followed by imminent mass action and Internet-aided actions that occur at high frequency but involve smaller participant numbers at each event, the overall trajectory in the orchestration of large-scale protest over the past few decades is toward greater routinization, professionalization, sophistication, and, relatedly, a growing division of labor. This tendency affects all basic organizational tasks. However, it is most apparent in putting together a core group of organizers, broadening the number and spectrum of supporters in the processes of mesomobilization, public relations, and providing scientific and judicial advice. When considering the German case, there are strong indicators for the establishment, growth, and refinement of what, in a perspective of admiration or a critical attitude, has been called a *protest industry*. However, the focus on this "industry" should not make us oblivious to the fact that the great bulk of protests (if not participant number) are small and medium-sized, resting on relatively modest preparatory work, voluntary engagement, and little if any financial investment.

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to Beth Gharrity Gardner who served as a language editor and also provided some useful hints on relevant literature. Furthermore, I wish to thank the participants of the colloquium "Politics from Below," especially Simon Teune, for their useful comments on a draft version of this article.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Notes

1. The mobilization to protest against the meeting of the IMF and World Bank in Berlin in 1988 started 2 years before the meeting. At least 136 different groups were involved in the process, and 417 publicly announced meetings were registered (Gerhards, 1993).
2. Out of the 1,653 protest events in Germany I identified using the daily newspaper *die tageszeitung* from 2010 to 2015, 144 events had at least 20,000 participants. When excluding signature collecting, petitions, and strikes, 58 protests (or 3.5% of all events) of the 144 were rallies and marches. Based on examining the same source from 1993 to 2009, I found that of the 11,139 protests in total, 366 events included at least 20,000 participants. A total of 185 of these large-scale protests (1.7% of all events) were marches or rallies. Comparing the two time periods suggests an increasing proportion of big marches and rallies over time.
3. Probably mainly for pragmatic reasons, several researchers focus on protests of at least 10,000 participants because these protests also make up the bulk of participants overall (Biggs, 2016). Still, it remains arbitrary whether to set the threshold for "mass protests."
4. This metaphor was popularized by Erving Goffman, who, mainly with regard to performances of individuals, distinguished between "front stage," "back stage," and "off stage" (Goffman, 1959).
5. Similar observations were made in the coalition protesting against the WTO meeting in Seattle in 1999 (see Levi & Murphy, 2006).
6. Campact, established in 2005, was inspired by the U.S.-based group MoveOn. It engages in a broad number and range of issues.
7. To give another example, only 2 weeks after the nuclear accident in Fukushima, the antinuclear movement in Germany, relying on its preexisting infrastructure and experience, managed to organize mass rallies in four cities on March 26, 2011. According to the organizers, around 250,000 people participated in these rallies in total. The investment, relative to size of the events, was relatively low at several ten thousands of Euros.
8. This human chain was proposed—without the support of more established groups who doubted the likelihood of successful mobilization—by the key organizers of the antinuclear network *ausgestrahlt*. This network financed just two people to work full-time over several weeks to launch the campaign. Volunteers and activists mainly based in the region the human chain was crossing, however, did the lion's share of the preparatory work. On the German side, the local newspaper *Aachener Tageszeitung* was extremely supportive in the mobilization process by devoting one full page to the topic every week for each of the 10 weeks prior to the protest.
9. In Berlin, both the organizers and the police gave an estimate of 70,000 protesters—a number that the observation group of which I was part found far too high (our account was 30,000 protesters at maximum; see https://protestinstitut.eu/zahlenspiele-wie-viele-haben-demonstriert).
10. Big organizations such as the BUND and Greenpeace Germany had a budget of 49 and 58 million Euros, respectively, in 2015.
11. Consider a case involving the World Wildlife Federation (WWF) environmental group. When asked by other environmental organizations to cover its share of the expenses of a

planned protest, the WWF representative argued that allowing the use of the WWF logo (something other actors or institutions usually have to pay for) already constituted a financial contribution. To the dismay of the other groups, the WWF was not ready to make a more concrete financial commitment.

12. Campact's budget was about 6.5 million Euros in 2015.
13. Alternatively, each left political party may be invited to send a speaker.
14. Major protests were staged at the occasion of the G7 meeting in coastal location Heiligendamm in June 2007 (see Rucht & Teune, 2008; Teune, 2012), the G8 meeting in the Bavarian Elmau in June 2015, and the G20 meeting in Hamburg in July 2017.
15. At least a dozen of mostly young people sat around a large table in an office room in Hamburg. Each was equipped with a computer and some with a telephone and headset. They were kept busy for hours reacting to media requests in, according to my impression, a highly professional and effective way.
16. At this occasion, around 500,000 people attended the rally in Berlin. Turnout on this day was much greater in a few other places, such as Rome and Barcelona, where an estimated 3 million and 1.3 million, respectively, took part (Verhulst, 2010). Many participants, approaching from various directions, could not even manage to get within sight of the stage.

References

Biggs, M. (2016). Sizes matters: Quantifying protest by counting participants. *Sociological Methods & Research*. Advance online publication. doi:10.1177/0049124116629166

DeNardo, J. (1985). *Power in numbers: The political strategy of protest and rebellion*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Edwards, B., & McCarthy, J. D. (2004). Resources and social movement mobilization. In A. D. A. Snow, S. A. Soule, & H. Kriesi (Eds.), *The Blackwell companion to social movements* (pp. 116-152). Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Gerhards, J. (1993). *Neue Konfliktlinien in der Mobilisierung öffentlicher Meinung. Eine Fallstudie* [New lines of conflict in the mobilization of public opinion.]. Opladen, Germany: Westdeutscher Verlag.

Gerhards, J., & Rucht, D. (1992). Mesomobilization: Organizing and framing in two protest campaigns in West Germany. *American Journal of Sociology*, *98*, 555-595.

Gitlin, T. (1980). *The whole world is watching: Mass media in the making and unmaking of the new left*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. New York, NY: Doubleday.

Kaul, M. (2001, March 3). Die Bewegungsmanager. [The Movements' Managers.] *Die tageszeitung*.

Klandermans, B. (1984). Mobilization and participation: Social-psychological expansions of resource mobilization theory. *American Sociological Review*, *49*, 583-600.

Klandermans, B., & Oegema, D. (1987). Potentials, networks, motivations, and barriers: Steps towards participation in social movements. *American Sociological Review*, *52*, 519-531.

King, B. G., & Walker, E. T. (2014). Winning hearts and minds: Field theory and three dimensions of strategy. *Strategic Organizations*, *12*, 134-141.

Levi, M., & Murphy, G. H. (2006). Coalitions of contention: The case of the WTO protests in Seattle. *Political Studies*, *54*, 651-670.

McCarthy, J. D., & Zald, M. N. (1977). Resource mobilization and social movements: A partial theory. *American Journal of Sociology*, *82*, 1212-1241.

Olson, M. (1965). *The logic of collective action: Public goods and the theory of groups*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Rucht, D. (2012). Leadership in social and political movements. In L. Helms (Ed.), *Comparative political leadership* (pp. 99-118). Houndmills, England: Palgrave Macmillan.

Rucht, D. (2013). Social movement structures in action: Conceptual proposition and empirical illustration. In J. van Stekelenburg, C. Roggeband, & B. Klandermans (Eds.), *The future of social movement research: Dynamics, mechanisms, and processes* (pp. 169-190). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Rucht, D., & Teune, S. (Eds.). (2008). *Nur Clowns und Chaoten? Die G8-Proteste in Heiligendamm im Spiegel der Massenmedien*. [Only Clowns and Slobs? The G8-Protest Coverage in Mass Media.] Frankfurt/Main, Germany: Campus.

Staggenborg, S. (2015). Event coalitions in the Pittsburgh G20 protests. *Sociological Quarterly*, *56*, 386-411.

Teune, S. (2012). *Corridors of action. Protest rationalities and the channeling of anti-summit repertoires* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Free University of Berlin, Germany.

Teune, S., Sommer, M., & Rucht, D. (2017). *Zwischen Emphase und Aversion. Großdemonstrationen in der Medienberichterstattung*. [Between Emphasis and Aversion. Media Coverage of Large Demonstrations.]. Berlin, Germany: Institut für Protest- und Bewegungsforschung. Retrieved from https://protestinstitut.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/ipb-Forschungsbericht-Großdemonstrationen-in-der-Medienberichterstattung.pdf

Turner, R. H. (1969). The public perception of protest. *American Sociological Review*, *34*, 815-831.

Verhulst, J. (2010). February 15, 2003: The world says no to war. In S. Walgrave & D. Rucht (Eds.), *The world says no to war: Demonstrations against the war on Iraq* (pp. 1-19). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Walker, E. T. (2014). *Grassroots for hire: Public affairs consultants in American democracy*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Ward, M. (2015). *Social movement micromobilization*. Retrieved from http://www.sagepub.net/isa/resources/pdf/Social%20Movement%20Micromobilization.pdf

Wesel, U. (2002). *Die verspielte Revolution: 1968 und die Folgen* [The playful revolution: 1968 and the episodes]. München, Germany: Blessing.

Zimmer, S. (2008). Eine andere Medienwelt ist möglich: Zur Rolle des unabhängigen Medienzentrums. [Alternative Media are Possible: On the Role of an Independent Media Center.]. In D. Rucht & S. Teune (Eds.), *Nur Clowns und Chaoten? Die G8-Proteste in Heiligendamm im Spiegel der Massenmedien* [Only Clowns and Slobs? The G8-Protest Coverage in Mass Media] (pp. 169-190). Frankfurt, Germany: Campus.

Author Biography

Dieter Rucht is a retired Professor of Sociology, formerly working at the Free University of Berlin and the Berlin Social Science Center. His research interests include political participation, social movements, political protest, and public discourse.