Chapter 12

Precarious Research in a Movement Society

Social Movement Studies in Germany

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Research on social movements in Germany started late and has never really managed to establish a stable foothold within the German university system. Even today there are only two chairs with a formal denomination on social movements—both in the field of contemporary history, a discipline that has only recently started to connect its historical research to the larger body of social movement studies.[1] A lively social movement sector with frequent and large-scale protests on many issues has not changed the marginal position of social movement research in political science and sociology in Germany. However, despite its weak institutionalisation, there is an active research community of mostly junior scholars which has produced a large corpus of theoretical and empirical research.

Earlier review articles (Rucht 1991a, 2011; Koopmans 1995; Hellmann 1999; Klein 2003, 2008; Rucht and Roth 2008a; Teune 2008) and edited volumes (Hellmann 1999; Klein, Legrand and Leif 1999) have mapped the terrain of social movement research in Germany and beyond. They largely agree on three aspects. First, from a tardy awakening, social movement researchers have since produced a broad body of research, although with strong focus on *new* social movements. Second, the field is dominated by merely a handful of researchers. And third, the initial focus on grand theories with weak empirical foundations has often been replaced by detailed empirical studies with weak theoretical underpinnings.

In this chapter I will not reiterate the findings of these review articles which provide very competent overviews of the field of social movement research in Germany. Instead I will highlight specific developments and works which are particularly important from this book's comparative perspective. The first part of this article briefly describes the institutional environment of social movement research in Germany, followed by a short section on early

theoretical debates. The main part of the article discusses core contributions to the field, paying attention to important academic publications as well as publications by movement activists. Finally, I discuss some desiderata for future research on social movements in Germany.

Long Tradition and Limited Infrastructure

It is no coincidence that Vincenzo Ruggiero's and Nicola Montagna's social movement reader (Ruggiero and Montagna 2008) opens with excerpts from four classical German thinkers: Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (1888), Georg Simmel (1950 [1908]) and Max Weber (1958 [1922]). From very different perspectives, the works of these authors addressed the structures and dynamics of social conflicts and highlighted the role of collective action of ordinary people in processes of social change. But this early focus on social movements (even though the now classical authors did not use this term) was lost in the post–World War II reconstitution of social sciences in Germany after twelve years of National Socialist rule.

Hubertus Buchstein (1992) has attributed the lack of research on social movements in the early years of the Federal Republic of Germany to two complementary trends: first, the dominance of an anti-pluralist perspective with a strong focus on the state and its institutions, and second, the self-identification with hierarchical forms of organisation by protagonists of a pluralist perspective, who often had their political roots in the labour movement. Consequently, the concept of social movements was absent even in progressive introductory texts on political science (Kress and Senghaas 1972), and is still missing in most current introductions.[2]

In the 1970s, during the expansion of the university system, the political climate was marked by overt suspicion against leftist ideas. An administrative order (*Radikalenerlass*) prescribed a routine screening of all applicants in the public sector for suspected 'radical' opinions, and thus made sympathy or even a flagrantly strong interest in the leftist protests of the time a career risk (Zoll 2010). Under these conditions researchers who succeeded in getting a position at the universities often distanced themselves from their former political engagement in the social movements of the 1960s and generally refrained from choosing social movements as a topic of their research (Rucht 1991a: 176).

The numerous, large and sustained mobilisations of the peace, antinuclear and other movements of the 1980s and 1990s have not led to a reexamination of social movement research in social science departments in Germany. The increased attention that social movements received in the pub-

lic sphere during 1988–89 did, however, create the opportunity for the establishment of a research unit on 'Public Sphere and Social Movements' at the Social Science Research Center Berlin (WZB), which became the focal point of social movement research in Germany until its dissolution in 2011.[3] Its long-time senior research fellow and co-director, Dieter Rucht, is certainly the most influential social movement scholar in Germany, as he has contributed like no other to the continuity and internationalisation of social movement research in Germany.

Other institutional structures have been more short-lived. Notable examples of collaborative research on social movements in the recent past are Sigrid Baringhorst's research group on 'protest and media cultures in transition' (2005–10) (Baringhorst et al. 2010); Martin Klimke, Joachim Scharloth and Kathrin Fahlenbrach's EU-funded Marie Curie training network on European protest movements since the Cold War (2006–2010) (Fahlenbrach, Klimke, and Scharloth 2016); or a research network on 'new perspectives on social movements and protest', funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) from 2012 to 2014 (Roose and Ullrich 2012).

Lacking sustained institutional support, social movement scholars in Germany have been more successful in establishing informal and communicative infrastructures. In an early overview of the state of social movement research in Germany, Dieter Rucht describes how a circle of thirty to forty social scientists interested in social movement research established a study group on (new) social movements in 1983 (Rucht 1991a: 189). The group was first loosely and later more formally affiliated with the German political science association (DVPW). In 1988 the group's newsletter developed into a quarterly journal, the *Forschungsjournal Neue Soziale Bewegungen* (FJNSB—*New Social Movements Research Journal*)[4] which publishes original research articles, policy papers, discursive political interventions and journalistic reports about movement- and research-related events (Rucht 1991a: 189; Klein 2008). Unlike the title suggests, the journal quickly broadened its focus to include a wide range of contributions on issues of civil society, civic engagement, associations, political parties and theory of democracy.

A closer look at the articles published in the research journal over the last twenty-five years reveals a picture that is strongly consistent with the low level of institutionalisation of social movement research in Germany. Figure 12.1 plots the number of articles that individual authors have published in the research journal. It shows a very skewed distribution, typical of a large research community of mostly junior scholars who only sporadically publish on social movements.

Of the 1,018 authors who contributed to the journal with original articles or reports, 78 per cent (795 authors) have published only a single article

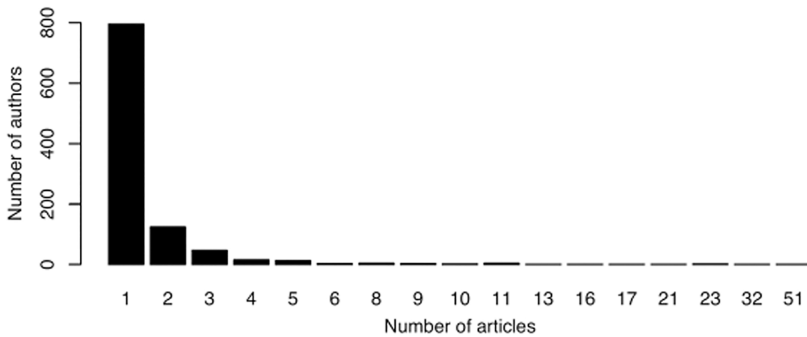

Figure 12.1: Number of articles per author in the *Forschungsjournal Soziale Bewegungen,* 1988–2013

in the journal; 994 authors (97.6 per cent) have written five or less articles in twenty-five years. Of the remaining twenty-four authors, nine have been part of the editorial team, leaving only a small group of fifteen authors with a continuous record of research on social movements and/or civil society who have published in the FJNSB. Not very surprisingly this short list of long-term social movement researchers is led by Dieter Rucht and Roland Roth, the editors of the two comprehensive volumes on social movements in Germany (Roth and Rucht 1991, 2008).

Grand Theories, Internationalisation and Terminological Debates

In line with the fragmented nature of the research field, social movement research in Germany has not produced strong schools or paradigms. The low level of institutionalisation leads to a pattern of publication where many authors publish only sporadically or merely for a short period as junior scholars on social movements and then move on to other issues.

When social scientists started to address the protests of the 1970s and early 1980s in Germany their research was influenced by widespread perception of fundamental social change. In a weaker version, social movements—or, to use the more common term at that time, citizens' initiatives (*Bürgerinitiativen*)—were interpreted in the context of a perceived crisis of parliamentary democracy as challengers of formal democratic majoritarian rule (Mayer-Tasch 1976; Guggenberger and Kempf 1978) or as countermovement to an authoritarian (*obrigkeitsstaatlichen*) mode of decision-making (Roth 1980). In a more far-reaching macro-sociological perspective, the 'new' social move-

ments were interpreted as expressions of a crisis of modernity (Brand 1982; Brand, Büsser, and Rucht 1983: 13), drawing a sharp line between the 'old' (i.e. labour movement) and 'new' social movements. Authors who followed this second perspective conceded that the mobilisations of the 1980s had many organisational and ideological links to earlier protests in the 1950s and 1960s but insisted on the newness of current social movements in terms of constituency (working class versus middle class), orientation (modernist and materialist versus post-materialist and post-modernist), and organisation (hierarchical versus decentralised) (Brand, Büsser and Rucht 1983: 242 ff.).

These early German social movement studies largely ignore the existing literature on social movements from other countries or merely refer to it very superficially. The translation and publication of major contributions of the US collective behaviour literature (Heinz and Schöber 1973) and Alain Touraine's influential book on the post-industrial society (Touraine 1972) in the early 1970s initially showed no influence on social movement research in Germany.

But this limited national perspective was quickly abandoned. The junior researchers who were driving the development of the research field in Germany at that time rapidly broadened their perspective, and social movement studies increasingly began to cite American, British and a few French and Italian authors. A number of publications explicitly introduced an international perspective—among them Dieter Rucht's discussion of the resource mobilisation approach (Rucht 1984), and Karl-Werner Brand's edited volume with case studies on selected social movements in Germany, France, Great Britain, Sweden and the United States, as well as a brief comparative conclusion (Brand 1985). Furthermore, German researchers increasingly began to venture into the arena of the international scientific discourse (mainly derived from the United States) on social movements (Eder 1985; Kitschelt 1985; Offe 1985).

During the 1990s the field becomes thoroughly internationalised in terms of participation in international scientific networks and reception of the international literature, although still some idiosyncrasies persist. The often implicit normative assumption in much of the German literature that social movements would be inherently progressive actors becomes an issue of open debate in the context of the growing racist and radical right-wing mobilisations of the early 1990s (Leggewie 1994; Hellmann 1996a; Koopmans and Rucht 1996). As Koopmans has pointed out (Koopmans 1995: 95), this goes along with a usually too-narrow perspective of only the most recent 'new' social movements, as well as an insistence on categorical differences between the old and new movements.

Almost twenty years later these issues have only partially lost their relevance. The bulk of research still focuses on the 'good' and 'progressive' social movements of the left. Only occasionally have the tools of social movement research been applied to analyse radical right-wing (Virchow 2013) or religious fundamentalist (Reetz 2004) mobilisations. The predominant focus on *new* social movements has been attenuated by a new generation of historians who are increasingly starting to combine historical and social movement perspectives (Gilcher-Holtey 2001; Klimke and Scharloth 2008; Balz and Friedrichs 2012).

Important Contributions

An impressive body of research on social movements has accumulated since the late 1970s, but only a small number of publications have had a lasting impact on further research. According to Google Scholar, the most often cited German-language work on social movements is Joachim Raschke's encompassing historical study, in which he develops a taxonomy of historical specific forms of social movements, discusses the development of social movements in relation to large-scale social change, and analyses current social movements as *new* social movements of the post-industrial society based on a middle-class constituency, and with a focus on changes in the sociocultural sector (Raschke 1985: 411 ff.). Since Raschke's research has never been translated and because he never followed up on his initial work on social movements, his impact on social movement research outside the German-speaking scientific community remains negligible.

Among the conceptual contributions, Claus Offe's article on new social movements as challengers of the boundaries of institutional politics (Offe 1985), in which he claims that the *new* social movements politicise the institutions and standards of rationality and progress of advanced industrial societies, and thus challenge the boundaries between the private and the political, is the internationally most cited work of a German researcher on social movements. Raschke and Offe's contributions are usually cited in a summary fashion, but there is little research that explicitly builds on their works or engages with them in a more than superficial way.

A remarkable conceptual contribution from the same period is Friedhelm Neidhardt's short article, 'Some Ideas towards a General Theory of Social Movements' (Neidhardt 1985), in which he argues, against the mainstream American social movement literature of the time, that social movements should neither be understood as aggregations of individuals nor as a

specific form of organisation, but as 'mobilised networks of networks' (Neidhardt 1985: 197). Today this idea has gained currency with many scholars, although it is not associated with Neidhardt but rather with Mario Diani, who several years later introduced—independently and without knowledge of Neidhardt's German article—his network-centric definition of social movements as 'network[s] of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organisations, engaged in a political or cultural conflict, on the basis of a shared collective identity' (Diani 1992: 13).

The standard work on social movements in Germany is Roland Roth's and Dieter Rucht's handbook on new social movements in Germany. The first edition was published in 1987 and updated and expanded after the German re-unification (Roth and Rucht 1991). This handbook contains several contributions on social movements in general (e.g. Brand 1991; Raschke 1991), various case studies on major social movements in Germany (gay movement: Holy 1991; women's movement: Knafla and Kulke 1991; anti-nuclear movement: Kretschmer and Rucht 1991; peace movement: Wasmuth 1991), articles on the organisational structure of social movements (Roth 1991; Rucht 1991b) and their embeddedness in macro social structures (Geiling and Vester 1991), and on the relationship between social movements and political parties (e.g. Pappi 1991; Wiesendahl 1991). These latter articles on organisational structures and democratic innovation address one recurring question that has preoccupied more than just social movement scholars: the impact of social movements on democratic procedures, institutions and norms (Hollstein 1979: Roth 1980; 1994; Rucht, Blattert and Rink 1997). The importance of this question in the German discourse on social movements reflects the assumption that social movements are often interpreted not just as means to attain specific political goals with unconventional forms of action, but as symptoms of democratic deficits and democratic innovators in the transformation of the authoritarian German post-war society towards a more open and tolerant 'movement society' (Neidhardt and Rucht 1993).

Roth and Rucht subsequently published a completely new edition of the handbook (Roth and Rucht 2008) with a strong focus on movement-specific case studies, now covering a much broader array of movements and mobilisations, and following a similar structure with sections on the respective movement's history, motives, structures, effects and forms of action. Apart from the two editors, Karl-Werner Band is the only author who contributed both to the 1991 and 2008 version of the handbook—another sign of the discontinuity of the research field in Germany. Notable additions in the 2008 handbook are articles on urban social movements (Mayer 2008), the

third world solidarity movement (Olejniczak 2008), citizens' movements in the GDR (Rink 2008), the autonomous and anti-imperialist movements (Haunss 2008), and the global justice movement (Rucht and Roth 2008b).

The handbook's focus on single movement case studies aptly reflects the larger landscape of German social movement research publications. Many monographs provide sometimes historical, often rather descriptive accounts of one single movement or a specific aspect or period of one movement. The particular importance of these works lies in their detailed and in-depth information about individual movements or whole policy fields, such as Arno Klönne's history of the German workers movement (Klönne 1980), Ute Gerhard's history of the first wave of the German women's movement (Gerhard 1990), Ilse Lenz's book on the new women's movement (Lenz 2009), Herbert Kitschelt's study on nuclear energy policy in Germany (Kitschelt 1980), and Werner Balsen and Karl Rössel's analysis of the third-world solidarity movement (Balsen and Rössel 1986). Sometimes these case studies offer unexpected insights, like Thomas Leif's book on the German peace movement in the 1980s, where the author analyses the movement as much less direct democratic and much more centralised than its public image would have it (Leif 1985). The downside of many of these individual case studies is that they only occasionally refer to each other and to more general research on social movements, and thus produce largely dispersed and unconnected knowledge about social movements.

Few studies follow an explicitly comparative approach. The most elaborated is certainly Felix Kolb's book on the political outcomes of social movements, in which he develops in a qualitative comparative analysis a set of causal mechanisms to explain success or failure of anti-nuclear movements in eighteen OECD countries (Kolb 2007). On a much smaller scale, Christian Lahusen and Britta Baumgarten compare protest of the unemployed in France, Germany and Sweden (Lahusen and Baumgarten 2006; Lahusen 2013). Sebastian Haunss compares processes of collective identity in the German autonomous movement and the second gay movement and points to s urprising similarities between these otherwise rather different mobilisations (Haunss 2004). Thomas Balistier compares forms of street protest across time and between movements, diagnosing a differentiation of protest forms and a general trend towards less violent forms of protest (Balistier 1996).

Some studies provide methodological innovations. Dieter Rucht and his collaborators' ethnographic and comparative study on the five parallel and competing First of May demonstrations in Berlin 2002 provides a fascinating analysis of protest forms and rituals (Rucht 2003). Drawing on McPhail's earlier works (McPhail and Wohlstein 1983; McPhail 1994) this study has

helped to (re-)establish the research practice of systematic observation of demonstrations which has more recently been employed in various other social movement studies (Andretta et al. 2003; Della Porta et al. 2006; Rucht and Teune 2008; Klandermans 2012). Jürgen Gerhards' frame analysis (although he does not use frame terminology in the original German article) of the protest mobilisations in Berlin against the 1988 IMF and World Bank meeting in Berlin is one of the most convincing empirical applications of the concept. It provides a clear-cut operationalisation and strong explanatory power for the discursive cohesion of the broad protest coalition (Gerhards 1991; Gerhards and Rucht 1992).

Among the great diversity of research projects on social movements in terms of scale, one project merits special attention: Dieter Rucht, Friedhelm Neidhardt and Simon Teune's long-term project on protest event analysis (PEA) in Germany (Prodat).[5] Working from 1993 right up to 2011, the participating researchers compiled a dataset on protests between 1950 and 2002 based on the coding of articles in German quality newspapers (Rucht 1998, 2001; for a more general discussion of PEA, see: Koopmans and Rucht 2002). Building on this comprehensive dataset, Rucht and his collaborators demonstrate that participation in protest has fluctuated heavily with a trend of growing protest participation since the 1980s, to the extent that protest has indeed become commonplace in Germany today. The data shows the student movement's mobilisations of the late 1960s as a distinct peak in protest activity, but reveals that only a comparatively small number of activists participated in these student protests and that the protests had already reached their peak in terms of participation in 1967 (Rucht and Roth 2008a: 646). The Prodat project design was adopted by Doug McAdam, John McCarthy, Susan Olzak and Sarah Soule for a similar project in the United States (Dynamics of Collective Action), and inspired Ruud Koopman and Paul Statham's Merci and Europub projects in which they developed the political claims analysis (PCA) method, addressing several shortcomings of the protest event analysis approach (Koopmans and Statham 1999).

Beyond the strictly academic research literature, there is a large field of journalistic, popular science and movement literature which has so far been ignored in reviews of German social movement research. Yet, the dividing line between scientific and popular literature on social movements in Germany is often quite blurred and more a question of perspective and style than one of scientific rigour. The main research journal, the *Forschungsjournal Soziale Bewegungen,* is a case in point. It mixes contributions from engaged activists and politicians with scientific articles and reports about movement (research) related events. In the landscape of German social science publish-

ing (e.g. Vorgänge, Berliner Debatte Initial, Prokla, Feministische Studien, Peripherie) this is not an uncommon combination.

The literature addressing international solidarity and the global justice movement is a typical example where academic and movement publications sometimes share the same authors and differ more in style and intended readership than in analytic depth (Walk and Boehme 2002; BUKO 2003). Research on the radical leftist, autonomous movement in Germany consists on the one hand of articles written from a limited theory-of-extremism perspective with the aim of discrediting and preventing the suspected political phenomenon (Pfahl-Traughber 1998, Jaschke 2006, Baron 2011), and on the other hand of analyses from (former) movement activists (Schultze and Gross 1997; Geronimo 2002; Haunss 2004), with only a few studies from critical observers (Busch 1989; Golova 2011). The women's movement is a prime example where scientific contributions and political interventions in movement debates have often been intrinsically interwoven (Linnhoff 1974; Krechel 1978; Dackweiler 1995), not just because of the duality of roles of activist and researcher but because they are explicitly meant to be inseparable as a result of the feminist critique of the 'abstract masculinity' (Hartsock 1983) of male normal science (Braun 1995).[6]

Other movements have been largely ignored in the social sciences, although activists have often written well-researched movement histories and analyses. The literature on the second gay movement in Germany has been documented—with very few exceptions—by (former) movement activists (Salmen and Eckert 1989; Holy 1991; Pretzel and Weiß 2012), and the same is true for the lesbian feminist movement (Dennert, Leidinger and Rauchut 2007), or migrants' mobilisations (Bojadžijev 2008).

Future Directions of Social Movement Research in Germany

The future development of social movement research is highly uncertain. One reason for this is the loss of the only pillar that has guaranteed some institutional stability, the research group on 'Public Sphere and Social Movements' at the Social Science Research Center Berlin, which has dissolved. An initiative to establish an institute for protest and movement research[7] hopes to compensate for this loss to some extent, but without solid and secured financial backing the prospects are uncertain (Haunss and Ullrich 2013).

As a result of the beneficial internationalisation of social movement research, it makes little sense to formulate substantial desiderata at a national

level. Maybe the biggest challenge for current social movement research—not just in Germany—is to understand the relationship between current profound social transformation processes associated with the catchwords post-Fordism, neoliberal governmentality, globalisation, network society or post-democracy and the formation and decline of protest and social movements. Currently systematic social-theoretical reflection only takes place at the fringes of the research field. Apart from some early works, which were influenced by French neo- and post-Marxism debates and which understood social movements explicitly as expressions of macro-social processes of change (Touraine 1988; Melucci 1989), Charles Tilly's global historical perspective (Tilly 1984, 2004), and various not particularly fruitful system-theoretical approaches (Hellmann 1996b; Luhmann 1996), recent movement research usually remains limited to middle-range theories (Rucht 2011: 34). Currently a rationalist-strategic perspective with its 'instrumentalist-structuralist lens' (Johnston 2009: 3) is dominant—a result of the formative influence of US movement research and its perception of movements as specific groups of actors among others, in the pluralistic competition between interest groups (Eyerman and Jamison 1991: 27).

What are also needed are more systematic comparative studies across movements, time and polities. Existing comparative studies (Gelb 1977; Giugni 1995; Kriesi et al. 1995; Koopmans and Statham 2000; Kolb 2007) show how promising this approach is to gain deeper insights into the mechanisms and conditions that structure the chances of success and failure of social movements in achieving their policy goals. For social movement research in Germany this poses a specific problem, because meaningful comparative research usually has to be conducted in multi-national cooperative research projects; but without stable institutional structures, long-term cooperation is hard to establish.

Beyond research, a strong desideratum for social movement research in Germany would be the establishment of structured academic teaching and training programs to secure the transfer of knowledge about social movement research in a less coincidental manner.

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Notes

1. The two full and assistant professorships are at the Institut für soziale Bewegungen (Institute for Social Movements) at Ruhr-University Bochum. Only recently has the institute broadened its so far exclusive focus on the labour movement to include protest movements of the 1960s to 1980s.
2. The notable exception is the most recent edition of Bernauer et al.'s introduction to political science, which has a brief ten-page chapter on social movements (Bernauer et al. 2013: 357 ff.).
3. The original research unit was established 1988/89 and headed by Friedhelm Neidhardt. This was followed by two research groups with slightly different foci, on 'Political Communication and Mobilization' (headed by Dieter Rucht) and 'Civil Society, Citizenship and Political Mobilization in Europe' (headed by Dieter Rucht and Dieter Gosewinkel).
4. The journal changed its name to *Forschungsjournal Soziale Bewegungen* in 2011; the journal archive is available at: http://www.fjnsb.de/.
5. Further information about Prodat and the complete downloadable dataset is available at the project website (http://goo.gl/Tp5ntc). A more qualitative attempt to create a comprehensive chronology of protests in Germany and to provide background information on as many protests as possible so far only covers the period between 1949 and 1959 and shows no visible progress since 1996 (Kraushaar 1996).
6. A core journal of feminist research in Germany aptly reflects this dual character in its title 'contributions to feminist theory and practice' (*Beiträge zur feministischen Theorie und Praxis*).
7. Information on the initiatives and ongoing research projects of the institute are available at http://protestinstitut.eu/.

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