

BOOK REVIEW/COMPTE RENDU

Roger Karapin, *Protest Politics in Germany: Movements on the Left and Right Since the 1960s*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007, 336 pp. \$US 55.00 hardcover (978-0-271-02985-6)

Protesters use a variety of protest methods, such as squats, sit-ins, occupations, and demonstrations. Protest movements also manifest themselves in different forms; some are conventional, others non-conventional, and still others militant and even violent. The lifespan of social movements also differs; some are short lived, while others sustain their protests for a longer duration. In his book on social protest in Germany, Roger Karapin argues that these divergent manifestations can be explained by focusing on agency and the process of political interaction. This highly contextualized account of protest movements is intended as a critique of approaches that overdetermine the degree to which social, economic, and institutional structures shape the trajectory of protest movements.

Karapin's analysis of left and right protest movements in Germany examines nine cases within three policy areas (urban renewal, the construction of nuclear reactors, and the housing of asylum seekers). Protests emerge in response to grievances in the three policy areas, but the path taken by the protest movements is very different. This is explained by the highly contextualized political process of interaction between protesters, local authorities, political elites, and the police.

For example, in Berlin-Kreuzberg the anti-urban renewal protests of the late 1960s and the 1970s were "larger and more widespread" and "more militant than in Linden" (Hanover-Linden) despite their similar grievances. Karapin argues that the divergent paths cannot be explained by socioeconomic, political, or institutional variables. Rather, it is necessary to focus on the actions of political elites, public authorities, and protesters. In Berlin-Kreuzberg, alliances were formed between conventional, disruptive, and militant protesters. These alliances were subsequently legitimized by alliances with political elites. This large and expansive coalition was created to confront intransigent public authorities, but it also represented an organized response to tactical policing errors in the form of initial police passivity followed by overly aggressive crackdowns. In Hanover-Linden, in contrast, alliances between disparate pro-

test movements were less extensive because policing mistakes were less egregious and protesters received less support from political elites.

According to this analysis, anti-nuclear protests in Wyhl (Baden-Württemberg) and Brokdorf (Schleswig-Holstein) were also highly particularized. In both locations, common grievances caused citizens to object to the construction of nuclear energy plants in the late 1970s and the 1980s. However, protests were more effective, more expansive, and yet less militant in Wyhl than in Brokdorf. In Brokdorf, militant protests were more prevalent, while conventional protests dissipated. The disparate paths followed by these two anti-nuclear protests once again point to highly particularized political interactions between protesters, public authorities, and the police. In Wyhl, alliances between conventional and militant protesters, policing mistakes combining passivity and overreaction, and support by local political elites created a more robust, yet more peaceful protest movement than in Brokdorf.

Although right-wing and left-wing protests differ in terms of political issues and policy goals, Karapin argues that a similar process of political interaction determines the nature of right-wing protest movements. Five anti-asylum and anti-immigrant movements from the late 1980s and the early 1990s are examined: two in West Germany (in Munich-Südpark and in Kronshagen, Schleswig-Holstein); and three in East Germany (in Rostock, Hoyerswerda, and Riesa). As in the case of left-wing protests, right-wing, anti-immigrant movements responded to a set of grievances; in this case the housing of asylum seekers.

Anti-immigrant movements in Munich-Südpark, Rostock, and Hoyerswerda were more intense and of longer duration than in Kronshagen and Riesa. This was due both to the alliances forged between protesters and political elites, and to local authorities who were particularly intransigent to local demands. In Kronshagen and Riesa, alliances between protesters and political elites were absent, while city authorities were slightly more responsive to citizen demands. In the former East, in Rostock and Hoyerswerda, police were particularly passive towards the anti-asylum protests, permitting them to escalate and become particularly violent. Karapin explains the violence by the involvement of Neo-Nazis and extremists, pointing to the importance of alliances between protesters.

Protest Politics in Germany presents a highly particularized and contextualized account of protest movements in Germany. Karapin argues that protest movements follow diverse paths in response to the timing of reforms, alliances between protesters and political elites, and policing tactics. This emphasis on agency and the political process is intended to demonstrate the shortcomings of structural approaches. Although

Karapin is less critical of theories that are more attentive to agency, such as theories of protest cycles advanced by Tarrow and Koopmans, the author also contends that these latter approaches place too much emphasis on national structures and national movements.

Karapin's political interaction approach reminds us of the importance of agency and the degree to which local context and the "partial autonomy of subnational movements" often determines the nature of protests. The author should be commended for his highly detailed analysis. However, as important as this emphasis on agency is, these insights would be enriched if more attention was paid to the link between local, regional, and national politics. This is especially important since his political interaction approach is intended to complement more nationally oriented theories, and Karapin does note that "a particular protest cycle may influence a national cycle." Moreover, in the concluding chapter, Karapin mentions that left-wing protests were more successful and more sustainable because they were legitimized by the success of the Green Party in national politics. In contrast, on the right no equivalent national actor was present. The analysis would be enhanced if these links were made more explicit, and moving to the macro level would allow for a higher level of abstraction in an otherwise highly particularized analysis.

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