The Transformation of Environmental Activism in Berlin

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When scholars study social movement activity in a given country, they usually face a dilemma. Given the restrictions of available resources, they either concentrate on one or very few localities, assuming that these reflect by and large the overall situation. Or they focus on the national level, hoping that the picture drawn at this level is mirrored, though at a smaller scale, at the state and local levels. These assumptions are problematic. The dynamics and patterns of local movement activities may not only vary considerably from one locality to another but can be fundamentally different at various levels. For example, a study focusing on the national activities tends to privilege the larger and more formal groups which are less common at lower levels. Therefore, it would be ideal to undertake studies at different levels (local, regional/state-wide, national) and, in addition, to include various localities and regions/states. While such a design can hardly be strictly representative, it would certainly provide valuable insights in similarities and differences in both the horizontal and vertical dimension of comparison.

1 Paper prepared for presentation at the ECPR Joint Sessions, Grenoble, 6-11 April 2001, workshop on “Environmental politics at the local level”. We are very grateful to Annika Zorn who was heavily involved in the coding of the protest events, the organization of the standardized survey, the collection of information about environmentalism in the Oberhavel district, and the gathering of information about the conflict on the Transrapid train.
Such a design, however, was too ambitious in our study of environmental activities in Germany, which is part of a larger collective and cross-national study on “The Transformation of Environmental Activity” (Rootes 1999). In a more modest approach, we mapped environmental activism at the national level and in two localities: first the city of Berlin for which we have detailed and partly systematic information, second an adjacent rural area – the Oberhavel district - which we investigated mainly on the basis of interviews. The concentration on these two localities allows us to provide a fairly comprehensive mapping. The downside, of course, is that we do not know to what extent our findings on Berlin and one of its adjacent rural areas also apply to other areas in Germany. Only in terms of the frequency of environmental protests and the number of environmental groups, we can get a clear idea on whether or not the situation in and around Berlin is special. Our main purpose, however, is neither comparison nor generalization. Instead, we want to study in some detail the changes of environmental activities in these two localities.

Regarding the situation in and around Berlin, we are particularly interested in (a) the evolution and patterns of environmental activities, (b) the spectrum and patterns of environmental groups, and (c) the way how these interact with each other but also with groups and institutions in their local environment and beyond. Our key question is whether or not environmental activism has changed in its underlying structure, strategies and forms of action, and the way how conflicts are carried out.

Several close observers have claimed that the German environmental movement has institutionalised, or even compromised, and thereby lost much of its energy and zeal for radical change since the 1980s. While we did find little support for such an assumption at the national level for the period from 1988 to 1997 (see Rucht and Roose, 2001a), it is not clear whether this also holds for a large city such as Berlin. As a rule, protests carried out by the local and more informal groups tend to be less moderate than protests by large and more formal groups. Moreover, Berlin is generally considered to be a stronghold of left-alternative groups and movements. Hence the environmental movement in Berlin may differ considerably from what we have found at the national scale.

Overall, our starting point to answer these questions is not very favourable as far as the available literature is concerned. First, little is known about environmental activities at the local level in Germany. To be sure, some work has been done on the broader set of social movement groups and citizen initiatives at the local level, including also a sample of environmental groups in three localities (Dackweiler et al. 1990; Roth 1994). However, with the exception a study on environmental groups in the city of Konstanz at Southern fringe of Germany (Christmann 1997), no systematic attempt has been undertaken to map the variety of such groups and their activities in other localities. As for environmental groups in Berlin, we have some hints from a broader study on local social movement infrastructures (Rucht, Blattert, and Rink 1997). Moreover, there are some very specific studies, focussing on either on a subset of environmental groups, such as those dealing with urban transport (Schneider-Willkes 1995), or dealing with a particular conflict. Taken together, however, these literatures cover only a few spots. Moreover, they do not include the most recent period, and – above all – are far from providing a comprehensive picture of environmental activism in Berlin.
Based on various kinds of data, most of which have been generated within the TEA-project, we hope to fill, at least to some extent, this lacuna. In order to get a broad picture of environmental activism in and around Berlin, we rely on different kinds of sources. First, we will use systematic quantitative data on protest events in Berlin in the period from 1988 to 1997. This data have been collected according to the same methodology as those generated for Germany (and other countries) as a whole. The source for documenting environmental protests in Berlin activities was the local section of the Berlin-based nationwide newspaper “die tageszeitung” – a daily (Monday through Saturday) journal with a “left-alternative” leaning that is very sensitive to issues such as environmental protection, peace, human and civil rights, right-wing activism and, more generally, social movement politics. Our local data set includes largely standardized information on 523 protest events that occurred in or close to Berlin in the period mentioned above. In a very selective way, we will complement these data by a larger data set which covers all kinds of collective protests in Germany in a much longer period.

The second major source of information is a largely standardized survey of 108 environmental groups in Berlin which we have conducted, in addition to a survey of 56 national groups, in 1998/99. These survey data are complemented and contextualized by a few interviews with representatives of several Berlin-based environmental groups, and an earlier survey conducted in 1993 on the structure of local movement organisations, including a sub-sample of environmental groups.

Thirdly, regarding the rural area northwest of Berlin, we have collected written documents and conducted a number of telephone interviews with leading activists.

Fourthly, in order to get an idea on how environmental groups interact with both each other and with groups and institutions in their wider political context, we have studied in some detail two major conflicts about transport issues. One of them, the construction of a large tunnel (“Tiergarten tunnel”) and related infrastructures, is essentially restricted to the inner city of Berlin. The other issue, the construction of a technologically advanced electro-magnetic train system (“Transrapid”), is far from being a local problem only, since the system was meant to link the cities of Hamburg and Berlin, thereby affecting all areas along the planned route, including the rural area nearby Berlin we have studied. In our brief account on this conflict, we also take a look at the mobilisation against this project in a rural area adjacent to the city of Berlin. For both case studies, we rely on various kinds of sources, most importantly documents of the involved actors, newspaper reports, telephone interviews, and scholarly reports and studies.

In this paper, we will proceed in five steps. Firstly, we describe the institutional and political background in and around Berlin, including the effects of unification of the once divided city, that is relevant for understanding environmental politics in this

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2 In Berlin we identified based in various sources, including local directories (“Stattbücher”), a list compiled by local administrations, an address list from a major environmental group, and a list created in an earlier project, a total of 244 groups – not all of them still in existence as we learned later. As we got 108 (partly) completed questionnaires back, the response rate is 44.3 percent. On the national level we identified 96 groups. With 56 questionnaires completed, the response rate is 58.3 percent.
locality. Secondly, and most importantly, we will map the environmental conflicts, actors, and activities in Berlin mainly drawing on protest event data and survey data. Thirdly, we will briefly give an account on environmental activism in the rural area northwest of Berlin. Fourthly, we will illustrate the interaction between environmental groups and their reference groups (political parties, corporations, administrations, media, etc.) with regard to the two conflict cases mentioned above. Finally, we summarise our findings with particular emphasis on the aspect of changing strategies and action repertoires.

1 The Background of Environmental Politics in and around Berlin

In many ways, Berlin is a special place in terms of politics and policy-making in Germany.

First, with a total population of 3.3 million inhabitants, it is by far the country’s largest city. Second, Berlin was a divided city until late 1989. About one third of its total population was and is living in the Eastern part, which, until unification, was the capital of the communist German Democratic Republic (GDR). Economically, East Berlin was predominantly shaped by its role as the capital and its large public administrations, together with a moderately-sized local industry. In terms of infrastructure, East Berlin was better off than most parts of the GDR, though it too suffered from poor maintenance, a lack of investment etc.

As part of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), though with a very special political status, West Berlin was quite different. In general, it shared with the Western world the relative affluence and political freedom. Because of its economic disadvantage as a big city without hinterland and a lack of important industries and administrations, West Berlin was heavily subsidised by the FRG, thereby having an artificial economic status with an under-representation of the middle class, particularly young couples with children, and an overrepresentation of economically dependent groups such as elderly people, students, outdrops, young men avoiding military service (which was compulsory in the FRG but did not exist for those living in Berlin). West Berlin is also marked by many immigrants, notably Turks. Housing was relatively cheap and car traffic modest, partly due to the absence of commuters living in suburbs outside the city, and the well-developed public transport system.

This special economic situation was mirrored by a strange political situation. In many ways, Berlin was a island with an extraordinary status implying the heavy presence of troops of the formerly allied but then rival countries (USA, France, Britain vs. USSR), the restricted autonomy of the local government vis-à-vis the winners of World War Two, the omnipresence of the ideological and political conflict with a rival city and a rival state, and a highly politicised milieu of young people forming a loosely knit alternative milieu composed of many autonomous left-wing political groups which have emerged during or after the student movement in the 1960s. By contrast, such groups could hardly flourish in East Berlin, though a few of them began to emerge since the late 1970s but were forced to keep a very low profile or even to work semi-underground.
With the fall of the wall in November 1989, the situation changed in many ways. After a while, the two parts of the city became politically and economically integrated, though significant cultural divides persist. East Berlin became, and partly still is, a huge construction site. The decision of the German Bundestag to move, together with most parts of the government, from Bonn to Berlin, symbolically and materially changed the status of the now united city. Among other things, this implied the influx of tens of thousands of public employees, embassies, lobbying groups, corporate headquarters, tourists, etc., thereby triggering the renovation of old and the construction of new buildings, the re-modelling of the infrastructures in the broadest sense of the term, and the spread of a general sense of economic entrepreneurship.

Both West Berlin until the fall of the wall but also the united Berlin have another specificity which is shared by only two more German cities – Hamburg and Bremen. The legislative and executive powers have a dual constitutional status, being a city but at the same time a state within the German Federation. For most of its existence, West Berlin was a stronghold of the Social Democrats (SPD). Willy Brandt, Germany’s best known post-war Social democrat and chancellor from 1969 to 1974, was a highly respected mayor of West Berlin in the 1960s. The dominance of the Social Democrats ended in 1984, when the conservatives took over, later followed by a brief “red-green” coalition government in 1989/90, composed of the Social Democrats and the Alternative Liste that afterwards became a section of the Green party, now Alliance ‘90/The Greens. Since then, Berlin was ruled by a Grand Coalition, formed by the conservative Christian Democrats (CDU) and their junior partner SPD – a constellation that was rare in Germany in the 1990s. The Greens, together with the post-communist party PDS (Party of Democratic Socialism) that is an important force in East Germany including East Berlin, are in parliamentary opposition and do not have much influence at the level of city/state politics.

As this section should have demonstrated, few cities in the world have undergone such dramatic changes in less than a decade. It is obvious that such changes have also implications for environmental issues and the groups that are concerned by these. One important aspect was that environmental issues could be discussed openly and environmental groups could develop freely in the East; another aspect was that changes of the infrastructure and the overall economic situation put heavy burdens on environmental conditions in the city and its outskirts.

2 Environmental Issues, Actors and Activities

Given the urban character of Berlin which, as far as its Western part is concerned, was isolated for decades from its territorial surroundings, environmental issues in the city were, and predominantly still are, related to urban life. Therefore, of most importance are problems of housing, transport, urban restructuring, clean air, waste disposal, protection of parks and green areas which, relative to comparable cities, are quite numerous within the city borders. By contrast, there were relatively few industries in the city that were supposed to cause major environmental problems. Nuclear power, another issue which was and still is of great relevance in many places of the country, was only a brief concern as far as Berlin itself is concerned. In the 1960s, tentative plans leaked to built a nuclear reactor within West Berlin borders but were soon abandoned for a variety of reasons, probably most important the high population density in the area.
Nevertheless, Berlin-based groups were very active on issues of nuclear power, particularly on the issues of nuclear waste and reprocessing that were, and still are, salient in the district of Lüchow-Dannenberg, a rural area about 70 kilometres North-West from the city. Being a stronghold of all kinds of political mobilization, also Berlin-based environmental groups tended to engage in struggles far beyond the city borders. In the following, we first want to take a closer look at the characteristics of environmental groups and their activities in the city of Berlin, drawing mainly on our own data sets as described above.

2.1 Environmental Groups and their Structural Characteristics

In preparing our survey of Berlin-based environmental groups, we created a comprehensive list of all groups we could identify based on various sources mentioned above. Out of the total of 244 groups which we could identify, we successfully surveyed 108 by a mainly standardized questionnaire in 1998/99. As usual, not all groups provided information on all questions.

Out of the 108 groups, 94 (87 %) were groups or organizations (both, for reasons of convenience, we label groups in the following) with predominantly individual membership. Two had predominantly regular donors (instead of members), and twelve were networks, that is alliances or umbrellas of groups. The majority of the groups were founded after the fall of the wall in 1989 (62 %) with many groups being established between 1990 and 1994 (40 %). Only 5 % were founded before World War Two, another 4 % before 1970. On average, the Berlin-based groups (excluding national groups with their headquarter in Berlin) are younger than the nation-wide groups.

The vast majority of Berlin-based groups (63 %) had less than 100 members/regular donors and only one was beyond the threshold of 100,000 (see Table 1). The mean size of all groups with individual members or regular donors is 743, but due to the wide range of groups, with few having a large membership and most having only few members, the median is 50 members per group.

Table 1: Environmental Organisations in Berlin by Membership 1997

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Membership</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>in %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-49</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-99</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-999</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.000-9,999</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000-18,500</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>100,0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Members are formal members, informal members or regular donors. Included are only organisations with individual members.
Source: TEA Germany.
Considering extreme variation in size of membership, it is no wonder that this is mirrored in terms of annual budgets and numbers of staff. About one in six groups had no budget at all because it operated on a completely informal scale, with no office, newsletters, and the like (see Table 2). In such cases, the small expenses are usually covered by private money of the most committed activists. On the other end of the scale, there is a similar sized proportion of groups with an annual budget of one million Marks (roughly 510,000 Euro) or more. The top position occupies the Tierschutzverein Berlin, a local animal protection group with a budget of roughly seven million Marks. More than 40 percent of the groups have no employees and while only three groups have staff numbers between 100 and 245 (Table 3).

### Table 2: Environmental Groups in Berlin by Budget 1997

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget in DM</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>in %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-9,999</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000-99,999</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100,000-999,999</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000,000-7,000,000</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>100,0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: TEA Germany.

### Table 3: Environmental Groups in Berlin by Staff, 1997

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Staff</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>in %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>41,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0,5-2,5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>25,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3,0-9,5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,0-19,5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20,0-99,5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100,0-245,0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>100,0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All staff counts as full time equivalent.

Source: TEA Germany.

When looking for changes over time, we can see a significant increase in members, budget, and staff. This is not only true for average values but also when we categorise groups according to size, distinguishing small groups (defined as less than 1,000 members) and medium-sized groups (between 1,000 and less than 10,000 members; see also Rucht and Roose, 2001a). As a rule, growth rates are slower in the early period which is mainly an effect of the East Berlin groups that started in each respect on low

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3 We operationalised large organisations as having 10,000 members or more. We identified only one large organisation in Berlin – Tierschutz Verein Berlin.
levels but, in relative terms, expanded considerably during the 1990s. This growth is most pronounced in terms of staff that, in part, was fostered by state-funded programmes to create (temporary) jobs in various kinds of groups, including those dealing with environmental issues.

**Figure 1: Members of Environmental Groups in Berlin, 1988-1997**

![Diagram showing membership growth of environmental groups in Berlin, 1988-1997.](image)

**Figure 2: Budget of Environmental Groups in Berlin, 1988-1997**

![Diagram showing budget growth of environmental groups in Berlin, 1988-1997.](image)
2.2 Issues

Environmentalism is a broad generic category that includes a host of more specific issues, some of which – for example animals rights - are debated to belong to this broad category. Quite a number of groups is not restricted to one or two issues only but covers a broad range of concerns. This is particularly true for those groups which are local/state sections of broad and large national environmental groups (especially Natur- und Umweltschutzbund Deutschland/NABU 4 and Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz/BUND 5) or which are networks, alliances, umbrella organizations, foundations, and the like. Given the their urban location, it is no wonder that by far most groups focus on a domain which we categorized as “Pollution, urban and industrial”, followed by “Environmental Education/Information”. Broadly understood, the former category can be also supplemented by issues of transport which range on fourth position in Table 4. To our surprise, the category of “Nature Conservation”, which we expected to be salient in rural areas, was relatively important (nominated by 53.3 percent of the groups, rank number three). Not surprisingly, “Nuclear Energy” and “Animal Welfare/Hunting” range at the bottom.

4 The NABU is the modern version of the earlier Association for Bird Protection founded in 1899. In 1999, the organisation had about 1,500 local and district groups in 15 out of the 16 German states with a total membership of 241,000

5 The BUND, established in 1975, had some 2,100 local and district groups in all 16 German states with a total membership of 238,000 in 1997.
Table 4: Environmental Groups in Berlin by Issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue Areas</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>in %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pollution, Urban and Industrial</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>74,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Education/Information</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>57,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature Conservation</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>53,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biotechnology, alternative Research and Production</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>39,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>35,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable Agriculture, Food</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>33,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreational Activities, Tourism</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>27,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy (not nuclear)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>24,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuclear Energy</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal Welfare, Hunting</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>107</td>
<td>100,0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Due to multiple responses the sum of percentages exceeds 100%.
Source: TEA Germany.

Though we have no detailed data, we have no indication that this distribution of issues has considerably changed in the period prior to our survey. When scanning the groups listed in various editions of the directory of left-alternative groups (“Stattbuch”), we get the impression that issues of energy (both nuclear and non-nuclear) were more important in the past than in the presence.

2.3 Strategies and Activities

To some extent, our local survey also provides information on the range of activities carried out by the groups. The most important forms of activity among the environmental groups in Berlin were indoor assemblies (7.1 times per year on average) and lobbying (6 times per year on average). Other forms often used by the groups were press conferences (3.6), signature collections (3.5), cultural events (3.5) and non-commercial positive actions (3.1). Blockades, occupations or strikes are of minor importance (less than 0.2) according to the information provided by the groups. Overall, the demonstrative forms of action are most frequent among the groups, while confrontational forms are rare (see Table 5). We also asked the groups whether these forms of action were more or less important roughly five years earlier. For all three categories of forms of action the majority of the groups has not changed their action repertoire. Only for 6% of the groups conventional forms of activity have been less important previously, while 12.7% were carrying out fewer confrontational actions in the past (see Table 5). These answers do not indicate a de-radicalisation of the movement at the local level.
Table 5: Forms of Action of Environmental Groups in Berlin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forms of action</th>
<th>Change over time: Five years ago the form had...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... less importance (% of groups)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conventional</td>
<td>2.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>demonstrative</td>
<td>3.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>confrontational</td>
<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: TEA Germany.

Data on local protest events provide us with an additional source of information on environmental activities, though it must be emphasised that these data ignore the more conventional activities such as lobbying, education, research, and so forth. On the other hand, protest event data are more reliable when it comes to the actual extent of more radical actions that, for understandable reason, tend to be underreported by non-anonymous respondents of a questionnaire.

The number of protest events in Berlin does not show a clear trend (see Figure 4). In 1989 and 1993 the numbers of protests were rather small, each time following a year with many protests. Overall, less protests were taking place in the later five-year period than in the former, but whether this indicates a distinct longer trend remains unclear. The number of participants has decreased considerably after 1988 and not recovered since then. Though the number of protests has risen again, in 1992 even to the level of 1988, the number of participants remained at a lower level throughout the 1990s.

Figure 4: Environmental Protests and Participants in Berlin
Half of the protests in Berlin focus on transport issues (see Table 6). The transport infrastructure is the main concern of environmental groups, which is not surprising as large projects have been planned during the period covered in our investigation (see chapter 4). Already in 1988 one third of the protests were about transport issues, but this share rose to more than 80% in 1992. In 1995, after several transport projects were finally decided, the share of protests about transport issues dropped to a third and further decreased thereafter. Protests against pollution make up more than a quarter of all protests. The pollution issue is of some concern over the whole years with a share between 20% and 40%. While nature conservation protests were on a level roughly between 5% and 15%, it was especially biotechnology and animal welfare protest that became more important between 1995 and 1997. Though roughly as many groups in Berlin are working on transport as on food and sustainable agriculture, protests around these latter issues are of low importance.

Looking at the forms of protest we find a close correspondence between our survey results and data from the protest analysis (see Table 7 and Table 5, above). Demonstrative forms are most important as half of the protests fall in this category. Conventional protests are, in comparison to our survey data, slightly underrepresented, partly because in Table 5 lobbying and the publication of scientific reports are included (but are excluded in our protest event data), but partly also because conventional protest forms are probably under-reported. Confrontational protests, however, are over-represented in the protest event data compared to the survey data. While according to the survey, 4% of all protest activities are confrontational, the respective share among the reported protests is 24%. This is probably not only an effect of over-reporting the confrontational protests, an assumption backed by news value analysis (Shoemaker et
also the more confrontational groups often have loose forms of organisation and avoid to complete questionnaires. For these reasons we assume that groups preferring confrontational actions are underrepresented in our survey sample.

**Table 7: Forms of environmental protests in Berlin, 1988-1997**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forms of protest</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>in % of all protests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>conventional</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>31.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>demonstrative</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>50.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>confrontational</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attack on property, violence</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>523</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Due to multiple responses the sum of percentages exceeds 100%.
Source: TEA Germany.

2.4 Cooperation within and outside the sector of environmental groups

In the survey of local environmental groups, we tried to get a rough measure of the extent and breadth of their co-operation. One question asked for the exchange of information with other groups to be named – regardless of the location of these groups; the other question referred to joint campaigns – a much more demanding form of co-operation.

Overall, co-operation among the local groups appears to be quite high but fairly decentralised. As for the mere fact of information exchange, the Green party (B90/Die Grünen) is the most important partner, followed by the BUND, Grüne Liga (an East German environmental network), NABU and Greenpeace. A largely similar ranking, though with the Grüne Liga now on top, exists for the frequency of information exchange. At the end of the scale ranges the European Environmental Bureau (EEB) which, due to its character as an umbrella organization of national groups, is of little relevance for local groups. Interestingly, also the Deutscher Naturschuterring (DNR), the national umbrella group in Germany with nominally more than five million members in the late 1990s, is of only moderate relevance for co-operation from the viewpoint of local groups.
Table 8: Information Exchange of Local Environmental Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information Exchange dichotom</th>
<th>Information Exchange Frequency*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>in %</td>
<td>order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B90/Die GRÜNEN</td>
<td>85,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUND</td>
<td>84,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grüne Liga</td>
<td>80,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>EEB</td>
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</table>

Source: TEA Germany.

All groups were asked in the questionnaire how often they cooperate with the listed groups (including a category “other” to be specified). Frequency refers to an index: the average of the answers never (0), seldom (1), sometimes (2) and often (3).

A similar distribution is to be found when it comes to joint campaigns. The rank order is not exactly the same, but if we would create, say, three broader categories, the list of groups on top, in the middle, and at the bottom was roughly the same. To our surprise, again the Grüne Liga is the leader, although it is essentially an East German group. Obviously, the physical neighbourhood of Eastern and Western groups in the same city facilitates co-operation. From our analysis of the national groups we know that the Grüne Liga does not occupy such a key position at the federal level.

Table 9: Joint Campaigns of Local Environmental Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Joint Campaigns dichotom</th>
<th>Joint Campaigns Frequency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>in %</td>
<td>order</td>
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<td>--------------------------</td>
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Source: TEA Germany.
All groups were asked in the questionnaire how often they cooperate with the listed groups (including a category “other” to be specified). Frequency refers to an index: the average of the answers never (0), seldom (1), sometimes (2) and often (3).

3 Environmental Activism in the Oberhavel district

Our analysis on local environmental activism would be very one-sided if we concentrated only on the city of Berlin and its predominantly urban issues. In order to compensate for this restriction at least to some extent, we have added an analysis of another area, that is the Oberhavel district. This selection was made for several reasons. First, it is a semi-rural area that contrasts with the urban Berlin. Second, this area, as all districts around Berlin, is located in the former GDR. As such, it reflects more clearly the heritage of the former communist state than East Berlin. The latter is strongly shaped by its Western counterpart which dominates the city as a whole in political, administrative and cultural terms. Third, the route of the planned Transrapid train between Hamburg and Berlin was crossing the southern part of the Oberhavel district. We were curious to know whether, and to which extent, the Transrapid project spurred mobilisation in this area -- an aspect we will briefly cover in the case study to be presented below.

The Oberhavel district is named according to the upper part of the Havel river that crosses this area. The district is situated north of Berlin and is part of the state of Brandenburg which completely encircles the capital. Whereas the district’s surface is about three times as much as in Berlin, it hosts only around 190,000 people, compared to the 3.3 million of the capital. While the latter’s population was slightly shrinking during the last few years in spite of the influx of immigrants from other countries, the Oberhavel’s population, like that in most districts surrounding Berlin, is growing. This is due to the fact that a sizeable proportion of Berliners – mainly young families – decided to live in the countryside.

In a structural perspective, the Oberhavel district can be divided in two halves which, administratively, were married in 1993. The northern section is characterised by large woods, many lakes and agricultural land. As a whole, it is less populated and infrastructurally developed than the southern section. In this sense, the real wealth is of the northern Oberhavel district is “nature”. To be sure, this nature is being far from wilderness -- something that hardly exists in any part of Germany.

The southern Oberhavel district is quite different from the North. It is much more influenced by its immediate neighbourhood to Berlin. For example, unlike the North, it is part of the joint developmental plan for Berlin and its surroundings. In the midst of the southern Oberhavel lays Oranienburg, with 28,500 inhabitants in the mid-1990s by far the largest city of the whole district. Southern Oberhavel is well-connected to Berlin by public transport and roads, including a highway circle surrounding the capital. Unlike the north, the southern district also has some industry but, in contrast to the North, little agriculture. Still being predominantly a green area, it has become attractive to people who live there but commute to Berlin as their workplace. Taken together, these developments have increased the differences between the two halves of the district. The southern section, being part of the so-called “fat belt” (Speckgürtel) around Berlin, is some sort of a relatively rich and economically developed but green “suburb”. It is marked by scattered towns and villages which are increasingly populated by
relatively well-off commuters. By contrast, the north, for good or bad, is an economically backward rural area with a higher rate of unemployment. Beyond its local population, it only attracts a significant number of tourists who long for peaceful nature instead of noisy entertainment.

Until 1989, the Oberhavel district, as part of the authoritarian communist GDR, hardly exhibited an associative life beyond that organised by the state. As far as we know, only two independent environmental groups in the whole district were active outside state-controlled frameworks such as such as the semi-statist Society of Nature (Gesellschaft für Natur und Umwelt). One of these was a small group of young people who met in the house of Helga Garduhn, a female teacher. The other was a group which wanted to protect a particular area. During the 1990s, this situation has changed considerably. Though far from being a stronghold in environmental activism, there emerged, and still exist, quite a number of environmental groups in the district.

Helga Garduhn, now in retirement, continued to be an environmental activist. Today, she is a member of the regional section of the NABU and the Society to Protect the Landscape Oberes Rhinluch. In addition, she heads both the regional section of the Association for the Protection of German Forests (Schutzgemeinschaft Deutscher Wald) and its regional youth section (Deutsche Waldjugend). After the fall of the GDR, most members of the group that more or less secretly met in Garduhn’s house joined the Western-based German Forest Youth which, like many Western organisations ranging from trade unions to the Automobil Club, expanded into the East. Among other things, this local group of the German Forest Youth maintains a centre for nature protection (Naturschutzzentrum Berliner Nordrand e.V.) in the Southern Oberhavel. Altogether, the regional section of the Protection of German Forests, with its 60 fee-paying members of which a dozen are committed activists, is among the largest environmental groups in the district. Broadly speaking, these groups can be divided into local/district sections of larger if not nation-wide environmental groups and independent citizen initiatives.

Besides the Forest Youth, there are a few more sections of larger groups. The natural candidates for this are the NABU and the BUND which generally were very successful in establishing local groups not only in the West but later also in the East. In the Oberhavel district, however, these organisational efforts showed mixed results so far. While the BUND, similar to the NABU, has a few dozens of fee-paying members, these are largely dispersed at the local and regional level and do not form an active face-to-face group. With two local groups in Oranienburg and Fühlsdorf, the NABU is organisationally stronger in the district. The Oranienburg group is essentially an outgrowth of the nature protection group Kremler Luch - one of the two independent

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6 The organisational density of the BUND and NABU is generally higher in West than in East Germany. This does not come as a surprise because these organisations could only expand to the East after 1989. The BUND has an average of 0.3 members per 1,000 inhabitants in the state of Brandenburg, 0.7 members in Berlin (East and West combined) and 2.9 members on average in the whole country in 1997. The NABU had 1.4 members per 1,000 inhabitants in Brandenburg, 0.8 in Berlin and 2.6 in the whole of Germany in the late 1990s. Generally, the NABU has more members in East Germany compared to the BUND. This can be explained by the fact that most members of the former state-controlled Gesellschaft für Natur und Umwelt became members of the NABU. An exception, however, was the Oberhavel district where most members of the Gesellschaft joined the BUND.
groups that existed already in the former GDR. Interestingly, another traditional environmental organization, the Naturfreunde (Friends of Nature) was also successful in forming a local group in the district. The Naturfreunde were created in the late 19th century within the framework of the labour movement. After World War Two, they were re-established only in the West but never played an important role in West Germany’s environmental movement. Nevertheless, the example of the Oberhavel group demonstrates that the Naturfreunde were successful to gain at least some ground in the former GDR, though this local group with its 13 members is the exception rather than the rule, while the same cannot be said for the BUND and the NABU.

Unlike the groups mentioned so far, the Grüne Liga (Green League) is an original product of East Germany. It mainly grew out of segments of the state-controlled Gesellschaft für Natur und Umwelt (Behrens and Benkert 1992). As a group in its own right, the Grüne Liga emerged during the so-called Wende, the short period of massive public demonstrations which eventually brought down the communist state. As one of the few truly Eastern-based and Eastern-shaped interest groups, the Grüne Liga is essentially restricted to the former territory of the GDR. Overall, it is a loose network rather than a firmly established and hierarchically structured organization. Similar to the local situation of the BUND, the adherents of the Grüne Liga hardly form a body of one or several active face-to-face groups in the district. Its members concentrate in the Northern part of the district and engaged only occasionally in local and regional environmental conflicts. The same cannot be said for various “autonomous” groups in the area.

There existed, and mostly still exist, 15 to 20 free-standing local environmental groups that intervened in local or regional environmental matters. All these groups are rather small, for the most part involving only 5 to 15 people. The following list may be not fully complete, but it certainly covers all groups that were of some significance in terms of their degree of visibility and activism in the 1990s:

- *Landschaftsförderverein oberes Rhinluch*: a formal but small association headed by a scientist which cares about nature protection and wants, thus far without success, to create a nature reserve in the area which group carries in its name.

- *The Verein zum Schutze des Briesetal*: a formal association that, in 1995, was successfully in preventing the picturesque Briesetal valley from various infrastructural projects. Birkenwerder, a town of 5,000 inhabitants located in the valley, later became a stronghold in the regional opposition against the Transrapid train (see below).

- A small citizen initiative in Birkenwerder which urged for a reduction of noise stemming from the nearby circle highway around Berlin. Today, this group is no longer existent.

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7 Most active members, however, either live or work in Berlin but still engage in environmental activities in the rural district.
- **Pro Natur Henningsdorf**: a small conservationist groups that cares to protect relatively small natural biotopes.

- An informal citizen initiative in Oranienburg to prevent the further construction of certain roads.

- An informal citizen initiative that seeks to abolish cobblestone roads in their neighbourhoods in order to reduce noise.

- An informal citizen initiative against the expansion of the B96 road.

- An informal citizen initiative that opposes the regulation of small rivers which, in turn, would affect the habitat of beavers and otters.

- An informal citizen initiative in the Boksdorf town which opposed the planned cutting of a nearby forest.

- Two informal groups that support and maintain so-called forest schools, i.e. a set of educational devices (such as posters, pictures and signs) along a path in the woods to educate particularly children about the local flora and fauna and the need to protect nature.

- **Agenda 21 groups in Oranienburg, Birkenwerder and Kremmen**: these groups were created within the EU-sponsored Agenda 21 framework. They are also financially and otherwise supported – including one staff person for each of the groups - by local administrations and care about a broad variety of environmental issues such as local planning and restructuring, housing, energy, public transport, noise, ecological gardening, and the protection of tropical rainforests. Today, each of the groups comprises some 30 to 40 people of which roughly half regularly participate in group activities. Plans to create specialized sub-groups materialized only for a short period due to a shortage of committed activists.

- **Leben und Arbeiten im Briesetal – Ohne Transrapid** (Living and Working in Briesetal – Without Transrapid): a semi-formal citizen initiative that was created in October 1996 in the Birkenwerder area in the Southern Oberhavel district to oppose the Transrapid train whose route would cut across a valley of natural beauty. In its prime, this group activated about 60 people.

In quite a number of cases, particularly in the Southern part of the district, the activities of these groups are strengthened by those who moved from Berlin to the rural areas. This is also true for the key figure in the regional mobilisation against the Transrapid train. These people, precisely because they were fleeing the noise and pollution of the big cities, are extremely sensitive to environmental burdens and threats in their new neighbourhood. Moreover, trained as lawyers, architects, city planners, natural scientists, engineers and so forth, these people often offer professional support desperately needed in local initiatives characterised by much good will but little expertise.
Though the groups listed above may appear as distinct entities, most of them are much fluid. They shrink or grow within short periods. Moreover, they have vague boundaries and considerable overlaps. Some individuals such as the retired teacher mentioned above are active in several groups. Some groups co-operate on some issues. Some groups are hardly more than a key person (or a married couple, as in the case of the Naturfreunde) who, occasionally, manages to activate some friends to write a letter or to sign a petition. Probably the most formalised and most stable form of co-operation between the groups is the existence of the Landesbüro der Naturschutzverbände (State Bureau of Nature Protection Associations) that was established in 1993. Its creation was triggered by the new federal environmental law which granted well-established and officially recognised environmental organisations the right of formal participation according to clause 29 of the Federal Nature Protection Act. To facilitate the use of this right, the state of Brandenburg financed five staff people who basically study and comment on plans which have environmental implications for the whole of the state. The bureau officially represents the interests of five environmental associations that we also found to be present in the Oberhavel district, namely NABU, BUND, Grüne Liga, Schutzgemeinschaft Deutscher Wald and Naturfreunde. In addition, also the Hunters Association is represented by the bureau.

In concluding this section, we want to stress the fact that during the 1990s the Oberhavel district has developed a significant associational life in terms of environmental groups. Relative to the size of the population, we speculate that this life is not less active and developed than that in Berlin, particularly when compared to East Berlin. As in Berlin, transport issues do play a prominent role in this semi-rural district. Different to Berlin, of course, the protection of natural areas is another important, probably the most important, concern in the area. Also different to Berlin, it seems that environmental activity in the small cities and the country side is slightly more conventional in its forms and less driven by general ideological concerns and party politics. As one activist put it in an interview, referring to a famous statement of Rudi Dutschke, a leader of the student rebellion of the 1960s: “We are not the people who intend to march through the institutions.”

Protest activities such as rallies do take place in the Oberhavel district. However, disruptive actions virtually absent. Even the massive environmental burden that would result from the implementation of the Transrapid cutting across the southern part of the district did only provoke modest levels and forms of resistance in this part of the country, as one of the following case studies shows.

4 Two Case Studies on Local Conflicts

German unification and the subsequent decision of the federal parliament and government to move to Berlin had strong repercussions for the city. Among other things, this led to a completely new transport infrastructure during the following years. The management of transport, especially car traffic, had to be adjusted to the new situation of a united city. At the same time, rail links between Berlin and surrounding areas as well as other west German cities had to be modernised and re-designed. This situation required a revision of transport policy in general and the role of regional and local public versus private transport in particular. Additional aspects were the presentation of the „new capital“ as a global city to overcome the peripheral image of

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the former West-Berlin. The main problem was that the infrastructure had to be changed in a short time span as the fall of the Berlin wall affected Berlin’s traffic situation within weeks. Therefore, traffic within the city limits, the links to the immediate environment of the capital and to the major cities particularly in West Germany had to be re-organised.

This situation was not only a challenge for urban planners but also for environmental groups that called for improvements in public transport and a reduction of environmentally negative means of transport. Thus it is no surprise that transport policy became a highly contested policy field in Berlin during the 1990s. Two cases will be discussed here in some detail: the construction of the Tiergarten tunnel and the proposed construction of a high speed maglev train (Transrapid) to link Hamburg and Berlin. Both projects became major conflicts which involved actors in and beyond Berlin and, in addition to their substantive issues, also acquired a symbolic significance.

4.1 The Tiergarten Tunnel

The Tiergarten is the central park in Berlin, an area in the West of the Brandenburg gate, covered by small woods, bushes, ponds and meadows of roughly 413 acres (167 hectares). For good reasons, the park has been called the green lungs of Berlin. As the park became an obstacle for growing traffic, already in the 1930s proposals were submitted to build a tunnel along the north-south axis under the Tiergarten. These plans did not materialise but they were promoted -- and turned down again -- during the following decades by the West-Berlin government. Already in the 1980s the idea of the Tiergarten tunnel was highly contested. Therefore, the coalition government of social democrats and greens rejected the project (again) as soon as they came to power in 1989. However, one year later the situation changed completely when the wall came down.

In 1990, the then still separated governments in West- and East-Berlin favoured a central railway station (Lehrter Zentralbahnhof) and a tunnel for rail and possibly also cars under the park. Already by the end of this year, the coalition government of social democrats and greens fell apart. New elections put the conservatives (CDU) in front (39.6%) of the social democrats (31.2%) -- a disastrous result for the latter party that was once so dominant. The new government was formed by the conservatives and a shattered social democratic party SPD.

In December 1991, six months after the decision to shift the national government from Bonn to Berlin, the Berlin government decided to build the tunnel under the Tiergarten for rail as well as cars. There was hope that the project would be mainly or exclusively financed by the federal government. The tunnel was deemed necessary to avoid a major traffic jams along the existing road, or a parallel new road, that crossed the Tiergarten close to the partly new government and parliamentary buildings. The driving force behind this decision is the conservative CDU, while parts of the SPD opposed the project. Only one day after this decision, the federal government (also led by conservatives) refused to finance the car tunnel whose costs, at that time, was estimated as 730 million DM (ca. 373 million Euro). Even more, the federal government also

9. The additional costs for the rail tunnel were an estimated 3.5 billion DM (1.79 billion Euro). As rail tracks are financed nationally, these costs are taken over by the national government (source: hearing in the Berlin parliament, Abgeordnetenhaus von Berlin, Drucksache 12/5338, p. 7250).
rejected that argument that the tunnel is needed as a consequence of the new
government centre. Also the construction of a central railway station close to
government buildings was met with scepticism. Only the rail tunnel was promised to be
financed by federal money.

The main argument of the Berlin government was that no major road should run along
the governmental complex and therefore the tunnel was needed. Though the federal
government backed this view, it refused to simply accept the tunnel. Instead, it argued
to search for other and, above all, less expensive options. However, due to the federal
structure of the FRG the federal government is not entitled to make concrete
suggestions, let alone to take key decisions. It therefore abstained from proposing
alternatives. Whether car traffic in the north-south direction makes the tunnel really
urgent remained an open debate. According to one study, car traffic in the direction of
the proposed tunnel decreased after the fall of the wall by 7%. Some voices even claim
that the close links between the construction industry and the Berlin Senate (the name of
the government – not the parliament) was the main reason for promoting the extremely
expensive tunnel. Though there is no proof for this suspicion, it does not come out of
the blue. Members of the Berlin administration and key figures of the construction
industry were involved over the past decades in series of scandals.10

In May 1994, the Senator (minister) for urban planning gave the symbolic start signal
for the construction of the Tiergarten project as a rail and car tunnel. At this very day it
was still unclear to the public, and probably even the politicians, how to finance the
project. The next day, the national government changed its position and agreed to fund
not only substantially the rail tunnel but also the car tunnel. Contrary to its earlier
position, it also accepted that the tunnel is a needed as a consequence of the
governmental move to Berlin. Though the financial burden from this – and a few other -
high prestige projects nearly led to the bankruptcy of the public institutions in Berlin,
the construction of the tunnel continues and will be probably completed in 2002.

As indicated above, the Tiergarten tunnel was met with considerable resistance by
environmental groups in Berlin. In the following, we will distinguish four conflict
phases according to the strategic choices of these groups, and their opportunities and
constraints.

4.1.1 Transport Planning in Berlin after the wall

In July 1990 the Senate of West Berlin and its counterpart in East Berlin proposed plans
for a central railway station, combined with a rail tunnel, under the Tiergarten. Only two
months later the citizen initiative „BI Westtangente“, an environmental group which
discussed and challenged transport policy in Berlin since 1971, presented a counter
proposal with decentralised rail traffic based on 11 stations for regional and four
stations for long distance traffic. The basic idea of the concept is to substitute the central
station with various smaller stations where passengers can change trains. Passengers
were supposed to get into the inner sectors of the city by public local transport. This

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10 According to a very recent report, the number of official investigations on corruption in the public
service in Berlin has nearly doubled from 1999 to 2000, reaching a peak of 648 investigations (die
concept is much cheaper than the proposed Tiergarten tunnel and could be realised much faster.

With the concept, which became the basic reference point for the local environmental movement, the groups proved their competence in local transport planning. Also, they demonstrated their ability to propose a concrete alternative to the official plans. But a comprehensive public discussion about the future transport infrastructure in Berlin with a comparison of different concepts never took place. Instead, in December 1991, while the public was busy in preparing for Christmas, the head of the Berlin government pushed for a fast decision in favour of the tunnel. After a few days of intense conflict between CDU and the SPD (parts of the SPD opposed the tunnel), the government decided to go ahead with the project.

4.1.2 From Proposals to Protest

The decision for the Tiergarten tunnel faced strong criticism right from the start. The federal government opposed the plan mainly for financial reasons, but also because of the risk that the move of the government to Berlin might be delayed. The concerned city districts in Berlin opposed the tunnel because they feared an increase in car traffic. Also environmental groups rejected the tunnel and organised a large protest rally. On 10 May 1992 approximately 10,000 people demonstrated in Berlin against the increase of car traffic due to the construction of a circle road in the inner city and the Tiergarten tunnel. The protests of this day and in the following months concentrated on the inner circle road. Partly militant protest focused on the opening of a bridge as part of this circle. One year later in May 1993, a whole “protest week” was proclaimed against the Tiergarten tunnel. In the course of these protests various environmental groups in Berlin collaborated. Most active were the BI Westtangente, the BUND and the Baumschutzgemeinschaft (Alliance to Protect Trees), sometimes jointly, sometimes on their own. While the protests intensified in summer 1993, Michael Cramer, the transport policy expert of the Greens in the Berlin parliament, addressed various politicians on the federal and Länder level and urged them to oppose the tunnel. He argued that their interests are affected by the use of federal money for the tunnel in Berlin, thereby undermining other and more useful projects. Though Cramer got some positive responses nearly all federal politicians refused to interfere in inner Berlin affairs.

In the meantime, the Berlin government had to change its plans for the tunnel because of serious technical problems. Moreover the national government repeatedly refused to finance the car tunnel. Nevertheless, the project in general was never questioned. The Berlin government was and is determined to push the Tiergarten tunnel through against all resistance.

4.1.3 From the Streets to the Court Rooms

In September 1993 the BI Westtangente took the initiative to create the Anti-Tunnel GmbH (Gesellschaft mit berechtigter Hoffnung – society with justified hope), a network of about 50 local environmental groups. In 1994 this network organised procedural complaints as part of the official planning process of the Tiergarten tunnel. For the formal hearing of citizen concerns in early 1995 the Anti-Tunnel GmbH gathered 18,500 complaints. These were turned down during the hearing that lasted for 18 days.
Participants complained about the biased moderators of the discussion and ignorance among the official staff. „In theory the officials are supposed to discuss the issue with concerned citizens and to take their views into account. But what happened was exactly the opposite, most obviously documented by the fact that the wider public was excluded from the hearing.“

During 1994 the collection of formal complaints was accompanied by public protest against the Tiergarten tunnel. The BUND awarded a prize for photos of the Tiergarten with the slogan „So lange er noch steht“ (as long as it’s still alive). Thereby the group drew a parallel to the situation after the World War Two, when the trees of the Tiergarten were cut down for heating houses. The replanting of trees in the Tiergarten had become a symbol for the recovery in Berlin. Other groups organised walks along the planned tunnel and informed about its expected negative effects.

Two facts came for these activities as a blow. Firstly, the national government gave up its resistance against the car tunnel and agreed to co-finance the project. For the first time the tunnel was financially realistic. Secondly, the national train company took over the lead in the planning process of the car tunnel. Thereby the procedure became an issue of national rather than Länderlaw. This implied that local environmental groups lost their juridical leverage. Whether this „trick“ was legal is disputable. Therefore the Anti-Tunnel GmbH decided to litigate and try to win back their legal standing. To cover the costs of a case which might be lost, the Anti-Tunnel GmbH had to collect 70,000 DM, which was one of the main activities during 1995. Though the activists had difficulties to gather this sum, they finally succeeded. In 6 October 1995 legal action was taken. The official organisation challenging the planning process for formal and substantial reasons was a member of the Anti-Tunnel GmbH, flanked by four concerned citizens who went to court as well, applying for a temporary injunction to stop the felling of trees.

4.1.4 Failure and internal quarrel

Unimpressed by the criticism of its extra-parliamentary opponents, the Berlin government continued the planning process. In October 1995, nine days before the election in Berlin, chancellor Helmut Kohl officially started the construction of the Tiergarten tunnel. During the ceremony the police pushed back the small group of protesters. In the evening, 500 people joined a protest march through the city.

In the subsequent elections, the conservative party lost some votes (37% instead of 39% in 1991). For the social democrats, however, the results were disastrous (23% instead of 31% in 1991) -- the worst outcome since World War Two. The greens improved their position (13.5% instead of 9% in 1991).

Only a few days later the temporary injunction was rejected by the court and three of the four concerned citizens as well as the environmental groups were not granted standing. Only one of the plaintiffs was accepted for trial.

11 Interview with a representative of the green party, Berlin, 26 April 1995. The interview was conducted by the student project „Conflict about the Tiergarten tunnel“, Prof. Dr. Dr. Leggewie, 1995/1996. We are grateful for the Atlas-archive, Technical University Berlin for the data.

12 The Anti-Tunnel GmbH is not a formal organisation and therefore not able to take legal action.
After the election, at the eve of negotiations with the conservatives, members of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) agreed not to spend any money for the Tiergarten tunnel. This position, however, was not binding and did not become part of the later coalition contract. Interestingly, the environmental groups did not publicly support the SPD agreement as they themselves were caught in a deep conflict. The environmental groups reacted to the start of construction work with increased activity. Several protests took place at the construction sites. However, the mobilisation was rather weak. For an announced „major demonstration“ (Großdemonstration) only 60 people showed up. Other protests took place with a handful of protesters only.

These actions as well as a call for a referendum against the Tiergarten tunnel were organised in the name of the Anti-Tunnel GmbH, but in fact carried out by a small subgroup without consultation of the other members of the network. The missing consultation in combination with the failure to mobilize many participants led to an open conflict. The cleavage between direct action groups and moderate groups favouring formal complaints became obvious in the meeting of the Anti-Tunnel GmbH in December 1995. The radical groups argued for intensified action. The problems with the Tiergarten tunnel have to be made public and a strong public opinion against the tunnel would be able to stop the project. Especially useful for this undertaking would be a public referendum. The moderate groups argued against this proposal as it needed 90,000 signatures in Berlin. This number seemed to be unrealistic as the network has had already difficulties to mobilise only 18,500 complaints against the tunnel. The effect of a successful referendum would be just another discussion of the issue in the Berlin parliament, they argued. The same result could also, and much easier, be achieved with a request of a green MP who is also member of the Anti-Tunnel GmbH. By contrast, a failure of the referendum would damage the image of the Anti-Tunnel GmbH.

The discussion about the referendum is only an indication of deeper cleavages in the network. The moderate groups wanted to organise via the network a critical debate of official positions and a participation in formal procedures to object the tunnel. The way to do this was, first, the formal hearing, then legal action. They proposed a well-researched counter expertise, and viewed „professionalism“ as the central criterion for adequate activism. The direct action groups want to alarm the public. They saw no chance to convince the officials. One representative put this quite clear: „And then – at the latest – you ask yourself whether you are dealing with people who’s actions are sound of mind“\(^1\). Rather these groups wanted to mobilise against the tunnel in the context of broader political dissent. Their central idea was „participation“ regardless of the availability of expertise.

Both sides aimed to get media resonance and to influence public opinion. They regarded the legal action despite of the costs and its eventual failure as a success because the media covered the issue. However, the proposed way to influence public opinion was totally different among the two camps. While the moderate groups tried to convince by

\(^1\) Interview with representative of an environmental group, Berlin, 26 April 1995. The interview was conducted by the student project „Conflict about the Tiergarten tunnel“, Prof. Dr. Dr. Leggewie, 1995/1996. We are grateful for the Atlas-archive, Technical University, Berlin for sharing with us the data.
superior arguments, the direct action groups tried to evoke moral indignation. Accordingly, the groups differently interpreted their activism in the formal hearing and the court room. The one side interpreted these actions as raising awareness of unfair and illegitimate decision practices while the other side tried to convince the officials.

The conflict between the two sides led to a split in the Anti-Tunnel GmbH. The BI Westtangente, the most important moderate group, left the Anti-Tunnel GmbH, other groups with a lobbying orientation withdrew their support. This split weakened the Anti-Tunnel GmbH considerably. Work on the legal action was continued mainly by the BI Westtangente as members of this group were already in charge earlier. However, the one citizen who was granted legal standing by the court died in January 1997, shortly before the court was prepared to make a decision. Because of the death, the case was turned down and the protest against the tunnel faded away.

To conclude this story, we want to emphasise that the tunnel conflict was not only consequential to the local environmental movement because the battle was lost and the huge tunnel will materialise. The conflict was also significant because, due to the split within the Anti Tunnel GmbH, it left behind a fragmented movement which found it difficult even to cooperate in later periods. The strategy of combining many and heterogeneous environmental forces in the Anti-Tunnel network turned out to be a failure. In retrospect, the poor turn-out in the rally against the tunnel at the very day when chancellor Kohl started the construction work was a symbol of the failure of the movement to attract wide and determined public support.

4.2 The Transrapid

The second conflict study centres on the Transrapid project. Transrapid is a shorthand for a fast train based on magnetic technology (English: maglev). The train is literally running in the air along a magnetised trail that, unlike a conventional one, is based on a concrete construction some meters above the ground. The initial design was based on a study carried out in 1971 which stated a „speed gap“ (HSB 1971). This gap was to be filled by the maglev technology that was supposed to produce trains slower than planes but faster than conventional trains. The Transrapid was developed in the following years and in the 1980s a test track was installed in the Emsland area in northern Germany.

Several routes were discussed for a long distance track in Germany to present this technology to both domestic and foreign investors. However, the Transrapid met resistance in every German region where a potential track was suggested. Besides opposition on environmental grounds, the Transrapid came under severe attack as the technology is not compatible with regular trains. Moreover, is much more expensive than regular high speed trains. Also the speed gap, “discovered” in the early 1970s, had been closed in the meantime by the high speed train technology of the French TGV (train à grande vitesse) and the German ICE (Inter City Express).

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14 In mid-1997 a so-called creative committee tried to bridge the gaps between the environmental groups by organising discussions about cooperation in the movement. However, participation was low and reconciliation did not take place.
4.2.1 Planning the route Hamburg-Berlin

The fall of the wall in the autumn of 1989 provided a push for the supporters of the Transrapid. While other possible track routes were problematic because of public resistance, the connection between East and West German cities, especially linking Berlin to the West, opened a window of opportunity. The federal government wished to improve the infrastructure, including transport, with extensive and costly programmes. The proposal to link Hamburg and Berlin with the Transrapid emerged as the combination of two ideas: first, it was a transport link from west to east fostering the economic development in East Germany; second, it was the reference route for the Transrapid which allegedly would enhance the chances to export this new technology.

In 1992 the Transrapid was for the first time included in the federal infrastructure plan (Bundesverkehrswegeplan) as an option to link Hamburg and Berlin. Already in the same year, first public discussions about the Transrapid arose near Hamburg, organised by BUND and VCD (Verkehrsclub Deutschland – German Traffic Club). Surprisingly, the Transrapid project was largely ignored by the Berlin-based environmental groups, probably because the plans were still vague.

4.2.2 Planning Process and Rising Opposition

The national rail company announced in early 1994 that it would not connect Berlin and Hamburg by the high speed train ICE. This system would have allowed for nearly the same travel time – around 1 hour - as the Transrapid. Instead, the slower IC-connection was discussed on the assumption that it would take 2.5 hours of travel time, thus making this option unattractive. Even the scientific board of the ministry for transport, known as conservative and supportive to new technology, heavily criticised the Transrapid project. The planning was called „a crazy collection of best case scenarios“ (die tageszeitung, 23. February 1994: Offensive der Bedenkenträger).

At the same time, the BUND announced its resistance against the project and predicted the rise of citizen groups all along the planned route. In the following, the BUND acquired the role of a national coordinator to fight the project. A newly founded network „Citizens against the Transrapid“ gathered 60 local groups, largely coordinated by the BUND offices in Kiel, Schwerin and Berlin. Also the national NABU declared its opposition against the Transrapid.

In spite of this growing opposition, the cabinet and, a few months later, the first chamber of the national parliament (Bundestag) passed the maglev-planning bill as the legal basis for securing the Transrapid plan in principle. However, the decision by the Bundesrat, the representation of the state governments at the federal level, turned out to be not merely an act of routine. In a surprising move, not only the conservative-led government of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern but also the social democrats in Berlin rejected the bill. During the following consultation process the social democrats in Berlin changed their mind so that the bill passed with the support of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and Berlin. The Länder governments, for which the social democrats held

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15 Rumours emerged that the IC-connection was purposively presented to be slower than technically possible, thereby underlining the superiority of the Transrapid. See parliamentary inquiry, Drucksache 12/7116, inquiry of 14. March 1994 by Reinhard Weis, SPD, Stendal.
a majority, agreed to the bill. Obviously, they wanted to avoid the allegation that the SPD was hostile towards new technology, a view that was typically held by the conservative and liberal parties. This position of the SPD has to be seen in the light of forthcoming national elections.

In 1995, two more bills on the rapid train passed the Bundestag and Bundesrat (allgemeines Magnetschwebebahngesetz and Magnetschwebebahnbedarfsgesetz). In the weeks before the decision, the BUND and a host of citizen initiatives tried to mobilise resistance against the parliamentary bills. Again the social democrats were split, with some parts strongly opposing the project while other parts supporting it. Finally, three of the five Länder where the Transrapid would run voted against the project. Again, the social democrats in Berlin supported the Transrapid, though they had earlier announced their opposition.

4.2.3 Protest in Brandenburg – Support from Berlin

In 1996 the local planning procedures in the concerned Länder started. Berlin and Brandenburg agreed on a joint procedure in light of an expected merger of both Länder. In October the environmental department of Brandenburg invited 150 representatives of environmental groups, communities and other interest groups to attend a public hearing. At the end of January 1997 the administrative planning group finally proposed a northern route because this would cause less ecological damage. By contrast, the public-private Transrapid partnership favoured the southern route, arguing that it would be shorter and cheaper.

In April 1997 environmental groups presented a people’s initiative signed by 27,538 Brandenburg citizens to ask their state government to reject the Transrapid. The proposal was discussed by the Brandenburg parliament in June without getting the majority. In response, the environmental groups started a people’s request in Brandenburg. This meant to mobilise at least 80,000 supporters to initiate a referendum. While mobilisation against the Transrapid was low in Berlin, the Berlin groups supported their allies in Brandenburg to collect the required numbers of signatures for the people’ request.

Support for the request varied greatly across Brandenburg. Whereas in many areas distant from the planned Transrapid route few citizens signed the request, mobilisation was quite strong in some areas that were directly affected. As far as the Oberhavel district - which we have discussed in some detail above - is concerned, the town of Birkenwerder became a stronghold of opposition. It was the place in the broader area were the only relevant citizen initiative against the project was created. Beyond this

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16 The merger of Berlin and Brandenburg failed due to a lack of support in the referendum in May 1996. However, the joint planning commission stayed in place.

17 For a people’s initiative any person can try collect a specified number of signatures in the concerned Land, thereby forcing the parliament to discuss topic. If the parliament rejects the proposal, a people’s request may follow. In case of a successful people’s request with a threshold much higher than for the people’s initiative, a referendum about the proposal has to be carried out. If a majority supports the proposal in a referendum, this proposal becomes a law. The threshold for a people’s initiative in Brandenburg is 20,000 and 90,000 in Berlin. The threshold for a people’s request in Brandenburg is 80,000, the respective number for Berlin is 244,000 (10% of the population entitled to vote).
group, only few people in the district became actively engaged in the campaign. In the inaugural meeting of the Birkenwerder group, nearly 100 people participated. A key figured was Peter Ligner, an experienced activist who was earlier member of a small left-wing political party (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Westberlin) in Berlin. After moving to Birkenwerder, he became active against the Transrapid and later involved in the local Agenda 21 group. He was also one of the six spokespeople in the state who represented the alliance against the Transrapid in Brandenburg. In Birkenwerder, out of 4,000 people entitled to participate in the people’s request around 1,000 supported it. This result stands in stark contrast to the average support in Brandenburg which was only around 4 percent.

During the time of the people’s request the social democrats had their national party convention. Although the majority of the delegates voted against the Transrapid, a cleavage remained with some party officials supporting the project. As already said, a number of SPD strategists wanted to avoid the image of a party hostile to new technology particularly on the eve of national elections.

In March 1998, with nearly 70,000 signatures the environmental groups failed to pass the threshold of 80,000 in Brandenburg. As a consequence, the main activity shifted from there to Berlin.

4.2.4 Protest in Berlin – Support from Brandenburg

Already in early 1998, even before it became clear that the people’s request in Brandenburg would fail, the network against the Transrapid in Berlin and Brandenburg discussed the chances of a people’s initiative in Berlin. Shortly before the initiative in Brandenburg has failed, the alliance against the Transrapid formally decided to go ahead with a people’s initiative in Berlin, thereby gaining new momentum.

The chances for a successful initiative in Berlin were quite good. Though a minimum of 90,000 signatures was needed, these could be collected in the crowded streets. By contrast, in Brandenburg citizens who wanted to sign the request had to go to the offices of various administrations. Also in the Berlin initiative groups from Berlin and Brandenburg closely cooperated. The central co-ordination was again taken over by the BUND, this time by its Berlin office. Martin Schlegel, now coordinator of Berlin people’s request, had already got valuable experience in the coordinating office in Brandenburg. Similar to the earlier campaign, the initiative in Berlin, too included, besides environmental groups, the green party, the socialist party PDS, and some representatives of the social democrats. And again, the social democrats were split as over the issue, with leading figures of the Berlin section supporting the Transrapid and many of the rank and file being opposing it.

Passing the threshold of 90,000 would result in a new debate in the Berlin parliament, but probably not going beyond. The governmental coalition in Berlin, composed of social democrats and conservatives, has had welcomed the Transrapid plans earlier. Hence it seemed unlikely that it would change its mind in reaction to the people’s initiative. Moreover, the final decision about the Transrapid was not at the level of the Länder governments (which could only present their views) but with the federal government. The effect expected by the initiators of the people’s initiative was only
indirect, targeting the national government rather than the administration in Berlin. The national elections scheduled for September 1998 were expected to bring a new coalition formed by social democrats and the greens – the latter strongly opposing the Transrapid plans. Accordingly, there was hope that, unlike the present powerholders, the new government would not support the Transrapid in the light of public opposition expressed in the Berlin initiative. „The talk about the construction of the Transrapid pretends that the project cannot be stopped. But it is not until the national elections that a final decision about the Transrapid is taken. The stronger public resistance, the smaller is the chance that the project will survive the coalition bargains in Bonn.“ (Martin Schlegel, BUND and coordinator, in die tageszeitung, 7. Mai 1998)

Within the first two weeks the initiative collected 2,000 signatures. A broad coalition of very different groups participated in the campaign. Environmental groups organised collections of signature at central places in Berlin; organic food shops asked their customers to sign. Even the traditionally conservative hobby gardeners collected signatures. After one month the left-alternative newspaper die tageszeitung moved from coverage of the campaign to active support. It listed 150 places where people could sign; one month later the list comprised 250 places. Around thirty environmental groups with hundreds of volunteers became active in the network whose main purpose was to collect signatures.

During this process, key figures of the involved industries and the national government tried to force the decision for the Transrapid. Though local planning procedures in Berlin had not even started, the national minister of transport gave a symbolic green light go ahead with the construction. In press conferences environmental groups pointed out that a final decision was still pending and the signals sent by the minister of transport were premature. At the same time, the conservative national government required a report to find out whether a people’s request in a Land can legally oppose a project promoted by the national government. This concern can be read as sign that the national government did not perceive the initiative in Berlin as being irrelevant.

In September 1998 the environmental groups intensified their activities. Eventually, on 1 October, the environmental groups handed over 122,910 valid signatures to the Berlin parliament – a number far above the threshold of 90,000.

4.2.5 National elections and the end of the Transrapid

On 27 September 1998 social democrats and greens together won the national election. For the first time in the FRG’s history, a federal government was voted out of office instead of demising for other reasons. During the election campaign, Gerhard Schröder (SPD), the later chancellor, had supported the Transrapid. By contrast, the greens strongly opposed the project and gave their view high priority in the coalition negotiations. Because also considerable parts of the social democrats opposed the Transrapid, chances to prevent the project were high.

In Berlin, the parliament had to discuss the project again due to the successful people’s initiative. The cleavage within the social democratic party and the social democratic MPs had become deeper when environmental groups directly addressed the social democrats. In a public letter the BUND asked the local MPs to vote against the
Transrapid. The BUND also encouraged citizens to send letters to the MPs. Yet in February 1999 a majority in the Berlin parliament, consisting of conservatives and parts of the social democrats, voted for the Transrapid. However, this support became irrelevant soon.

During the coalition negotiations it became clear that the costs of the project have risen by another 2.8 billion DM (1.4 billion Euro). This did not really come as a surprise but was rather the result of the former government’s information policy. Already in 1995 experts had pointed out that the costs for the project would be twice as much as the official estimates. Unlike its forerunners, the new government was neither prepared to be silent about the cost estimates nor to accept an increase in federal financial contributions. During the coalition negotiations social democrats and greens agreed to fix the public share of the costs to a final sum of 6.1 billion DM (3.1 billion Euro), based on earlier official (but unrealistic!) calculations. This compromise was an easy way out for both parties in government: the social democrats stuck to earlier promises and did not have to reject the project explicitly; for the Greens, there was no more need to reject the project on principal grounds. For key figures in both parties it was clear that the industry was not prepared to cover the remaining costs which, in the light of more realistic calculations that were hidden before, were prohibitive.

In February 2000, after further but fruitless negotiations between industrial companies and the national government, the participating companies decided not to engage in a Transrapid route between Berlin and Hamburg. In reaction to this, the federal national parliament annulled its previous laws that stated the need of the Transrapid. Eventually in May 2000, environmentalists celebrated the end of this Transrapid project. With more today’s vague plans to build the Transrapid in another area in Germany and China’s decision to buy the technology, this may not be the definitive end of the story.

4.3 Activism From Outside: Two Conflicts in Comparison

We do not suggest that the two cases can be regarded as representative for environmental conflicts in general, neither for Berlin nor for Germany. But at least we can point out some similarities and draw some lessons about environmentalism in the 1990s.

First, there were hardly attempts to engage in the early planning process and to establish contacts with policy-makers, leading party figures and technical experts at the outset. Thus the policy machine, largely in favour of the projects, was already set in motion when the environmental groups began to awake. As we know from policy studies, such a situation is hardly favourable for late-comers with voices dissenting from the mainstream.

Second, the two case shed light on a particular kind of strategy applied by environmental groups – a strategy which we call “activism from outside”. Informal talks, lobbying, participation in expert discussions at both the national and Länder levels seemed to be rare. Instead of trying to widen differences of opinions or even splits among the established forces, environmental groups were mainly trying to build up pressure in the streets, to activate people to write letters to decision-makers, to sign petitions, to support referenda, to participate in – usually late – public planning
hearings, and – in the case of the Tiergarten tunnel, to litigate. In this case, it was only the BI Westtangente which proposed a fairly thoroughly elaborated alternative transport plan. The problem, however, was that the group was largely unable to feed in this plan into the politically relevant circles and committees.

In its more early period, the Transrapid project was commented by national environmental groups, whereas the regional and local groups, who were more directly concerned, became active only later when the official planning procedures had already started.

At the core of the various strategies applied is a specific perception of politics exemplified by the voice of an activist who characterised the Berlin government as being „obstinate, ... arrogant, ... fixed on market solutions“ (quoted in Schneider-Wilkes 1995: 69). The view prevailed that the political system in Berlin cannot be influenced by arguments. Only outside pressure seemed to make an impact, thus resulting in engagement in formal procedures, litigation, and initiatives to give the people a voice. However, on several occasions this has proved to be unsuccessful, especially since the 1991 law for rapid planning of transport routes largely abolished effective means of citizen participation (Ludewig 1997).

Probably few of the involved groups were naïve about the prospects of such outsider strategies. In part, they were assuming that such strategies are not necessarily a promising means to directly stop the project but rather a tool to initiate a broad public debate which, in turn, would then impress the policy-makers. This worked pretty well in the case of nuclear power. To some extent, this also worked in the case of the Transrapid in conjunction with other favourable conditions (splits within the Social Democrats, new federal governmental coalition with the inclusion of the Greens; rising costs in the situation of a growing public deficit). Overall, however, transport issues like those presented here are unlikely to mobilise masses. In the case of the Tiergarten tunnel, many car drivers were probably embracing the opportunity to rapidly cross the city under the surface. To uninformed people sympathetic to the environmental cause, the tunnel appeared as safeguard rather than a threat to the green lungs in Berlin. Similarly, many people simply did not bother about the Transrapid which, unlike nuclear energy, neither represented a major risk nor, as in the case of animals rights or direct health problem due to severe pollution, was conducive to create moral indignation. Being still some sort of a train, many tended to perceive The Transrapid as more environmentally friendly than a major highways. Right or wrong, such perceptions were difficult to overcome by the environmental groups.

A close inspection of the way how the groups interacted and co-operated shows that this was far from being easy in the tunnel case. The creation of a special network, the Anti-Tunnel GmbH, was probably too demanding in light of the heterogeneity of groups. Joint action within this framework was possible as long as participation in the public hearing was the dominant activity. After the failure of procedural complaints and litigation, the coalition fell apart due to disagreements about strategic issues. In reaction to this negative experience, coalition building in the campaign against the Transrapid was very different. First, groups based in Berlin and the Brandenburg state co-operated on practical grounds. Second, instead of a creating an umbrella group which, as in the tunnel case, claimed to represent the a heterogeneous set of distinct groups, in the
Transrapid case one well-staffed organisation, the BUND, took the lead and coordinated most relevant activities. The people’s initiative was represented by five spokes people and largely excluded or ignored the more radical groups which, in the tunnel conflict, had contributed to the paralysis of the Anti-Tunnel GmbH network. Groups fighting the Transrapid usually used acted on behalf of themselves, using their name only, or, when acting with other groups, simply avoided to present themselves under a unifying brand name.

Whereas the failure of the anti-tunnel campaign taught the groups opposing the Transrapid to create a more flexible structure, in both cases activism from outside remained the dominant strategy, though with a remarkable twist in the Transrapid case. The people’s initiative in Berlin was not expected to immediately stop the project but was rather planned and scheduled to impress the newly elected federal government. Together with other factors beyond the control of the environmentalists, this proved to be more successful than an fruitless debate over disruptive versus assimilative strategies. Because both conflicts occurred in roughly the same area and the same period and, in part, involved the even the same actors, a learning process was facilitated. We doubt, however, that such a learning is a more general pattern in the German environmental movement.

5 Conclusion

This paper tried to shed some light on environmental activism in Berlin and an adjacent semi-rural area from the late 1980s to the present. Neither did we engage in a systematic comparison between environmentalism at the local and the national level, nor did we compare the situation in the Berlin area with other regions in Germany. Therefore, we cannot determine whether or not the situation in the Berlin area is special. Based on selective pieces of information on other regions, however, we do not assume that an analysis of the situation in another big city, say Hamburg or Munich, would provide a remarkably different picture. Event data from another project18 not presented here show that relative to the size of the population there were fewer environmental and anti-nuclear protests in Berlin than in cities such as Hamburg, Munich and particularly Frankfurt in the 1990s. Data from the TEA project, drawn from the nation-wide section of newspaper die tageszeitung (thus excluding the Berlin section analysed above), show a similar pattern with Berlin in the middle ground (24 protests per million inhabitants for the period from 1988 to 1997), Frankfurt on top (72), Munich (30) slightly above Berlin, and Cologne (7) at the very end.

To be sure, due to its past as a divided city completely cut off from its hinterland, the rapid changes and strong repercussions brought by German unification, and the subsequent move of the federal government and parliament to Berlin, the new capital is a unique place. In many ways, these factors also implied a number of challenges to environmental groups. Probably the most consequential element of change relevant to environmental concerns was the quick restructuring of existing and the introduction of new large infrastructures, notably in the transport sector. No wonder that issues of transport and related environmental problems and burdens prevailed during the 1990s.

18 The sources for this data collection were two nation-wide newspapers: Frankfurter Rundschau and Süddeutsche Zeitung.
though it is obvious that also a variety of other environmental issues are present, ranging from the protection of alley trees to nuclear power to the preservation of tropical rainforests.

Overall, Berlin has a fairly vital, dense and stable network of local environmental groups which vary considerably in structural terms (age, size, degree of formalization), issue orientation (single issue or multi-issue), strategies (moderate or radical) and preferred kinds of activities (education, protest, lobbying, referendum, litigation, practical engagement, etc.). As we know from our other work not to be presented here, the same heterogeneity can be found at the national level. What is different at the national level, however, is the greater weight of more formal and larger groups. For example, only one group classified as “large” in our national sample did exist at the local level.

Taken together, the environmental groups in and around Berlin form a loose, decentralised network which is far from being dominated by a few groups, let alone one central organisation. As a rule, co-operation among these groups does not tend to be overly problematic and often follows the pattern of an implicit division of labour. However, as our case study on the Tiergarten tunnel has shown, there are occasions when conflict over strategic issues arises and, eventually, may even result in bitter conflict within the movement. On the other hand, our second case study on the Transrapid conflict demonstrates that groups are able to learn from such a negative experience and create less fragile and better-tuned forms of co-operation – in this case with one group taking the lead.

Interactions with reference groups outside the local movement – public administrations, parliaments and established parties, industry, media, scientific experts, etc. - are not easy to summarise. Forms of interaction are highly contingent on factors such as the actors involved, their ideological background, and the nature, stake and phase of the conflict. While in the Tiergarten case the “established system” was perceived by the groups – and actually was! - more or less intransigent, this is less clear in the Transrapid case, and certainly not true in a number of minor conflicts not to be presented here. Particularly when bracketing transport issues, we could not find the polarised, clear-cut situation with unified challengers on one side and equally unified established forces on the other – a picture that, at least in public perception, prevailed in the 1970s and early 1980s and sometimes it is even used to define a social movement. Rather we find a more complex constellation with varying and mouldable alliance and conflict systems (for these concepts, see Klandermans 1989; della Porta and Rucht 1995), zones of agreement, disagreement and compromise, crucial intermediary institutions and brokers, and the like.

When looking at changes over time, we were unable to find, at a general level, dramatic shifts in structures, actor constellations, strategies, and action repertoires. The only significant exception was transport policy which, in the city of Berlin, was dominant in the first half of the 1990s. Generally, we can neither claim that conflicts have become more tense nor that the environmental movements have been co-opted and thereby lost much of their mobilisation capacity. In that sense, the phrase with which we characterised the national situation, namely “neither decline nor sclerosis” (Rucht and Roose, 2001a), also applies to the situation in the Berlin area. Environmental issues are
likely to remain an important part of the local political agenda and we have no signs that they are forms of interaction in the near future.

6 References


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