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**THREE DECADES OF PROTEST IN BERLIN LAND-USE PLANNING,  
1975-2005**

by

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## **Introduction**

The West German postwar political consensus was shaken in the 1970s by a wave of citizen protest. The protest was often directed at large, state-sponsored industrial projects such as nuclear and coal-fired power plants. Citizens objected not only to the environmental degradation caused by these projects, but also to a system of planning that excluded local residents from decisions that would affect the character of their communities. In this sense the protest was about democratic legitimacy. Focusing on the city of Berlin, I argue that the protests of the 1970s and 1980s resulted in both a more activist citizenry and a more participatory planning process. I then examine how participation in land-use planning has evolved in Berlin since German unification. I find that, while the desire to mitigate conflict has led planners to incorporate local citizen input, institutional and attitudinal barriers to inclusive, effective planning remain which keep the legitimization issue alive. Grassroots protest is still an oft-used and necessary tool to draw attention to the local effects of development decisions and to democratic deficits in the planning process.

This article draws connections between the social movement and urban planning literatures, which have remained largely separate. Cases of local conflict in land-use planning can speak to important questions about the nature of citizen participation in industrialized democracies. A look at citizen protest around planning issues over a thirty-year span in Berlin reveals the following:

1. Protesters intentionally politicized areas of policy making that had formerly been accepted as the purview of technical experts. The Berlin case shows how the protests of

the 1970s linked the goals of grassroots democracy and community quality of life in a way that has had lasting impact on the land-use planning process. The protesters asserted that only a democratic decision making process could produce legitimate and competent policy. This is a significant change from the technocratic mentality of the past, and it sits uneasily with the government goal of increasing bureaucratic efficiency.

2. Citizen protest is commonly viewed in the social movement literature as temporary or cyclical: As governments react to protest, either by suppressing it or by engaging in bargaining with the movements, the mobilization dies down. In fact, the movements of the 1970s in Germany did professionalize somewhat and become more a part of institutionalized politics. Protest mobilization, however, did not disappear in the ensuing decades, but rather, as Dieter Rucht points out, also became part of the "normal" repertoire of local citizens.<sup>1</sup> A look at the evolution of local planning politics in a single city over time helps explain this result. Citizen and state roles have both changed in Berlin; citizen participation is taken more seriously, while the state behaves less autonomously. This is a difference that the mobilization of the 1970s produced. But the struggle to find a workable, legitimate forum for citizen participation continues. New political parties and increased participation requirements in planning have not proven adequate. Grassroots protests are still commonly mounted in the name of community empowerment against what many see as unwanted encroachments by an industrial-bureaucratic growth machine.

The Berlin case yields insights into land-use politics in Germany as a whole. While the city's history is in some ways unique, in other, important ways Berlin is a kind of extreme case that can be instructive generally. The conditions that produced grassroots protest around land-use nationwide were particularly acute here. Hemmed in

by the infamous Wall, West Berlin in the 1970s and 1980s faced the challenges of urbanization without the means to disperse the negative effects. The state government's decision to expand the city's electrical capacity in hopes of fostering industrial growth would have negative implications for a substantial part of the population no matter where a new power plant was sited. The environmental costs of continued economic expansion became especially apparent where industry and populace were forced to coexist in a limited space. West Berliners also had little chance of influencing planning decisions by the neighboring East German government whose consequences they, too, would suffer. In this way the walled-in city served as a kind of future scenario for other urbanized areas whose environmental problems transcended their political borders and whose ability to deal with them by dispersion was limited. The "economy-ecology conflict" that prompted the rise of the environmental movement nationwide was particularly acute in West Berlin and produced a particularly active grassroots protest scene. But the kind of protest that occurred in Berlin also occurred around other large industrial projects and was responsible in part for the nationwide boom in grassroots organizations and the founding of green/alternative political groupings.

Today, too, Berlin faces magnified land-use problems which continue to spark grassroots protest. The challenges of unification are particularly stark in the only major German metropolitan area containing both eastern and western components. The sudden opening of borders to a sparsely populated hinterland has also made clear the need for functioning regional land-use planning. Here, too, Berlin holds lessons for the rest of Germany in its search for effective participatory planning instruments.

Bureaucratic/political attempts to streamline planning clash with citizens' demands to

shape their own community. The study begins by describing the conditions that sparked the mass mobilization of the 1970s.

### **West German Land-Use Planning and the Rise of Citizen Protest**

While the federal government sets the general framework for land-use planning, the concrete details are developed at state (*Land*) and local levels. Zoning, urban development, and landscape management are the responsibility of municipalities and counties. All matters involving the local governments are constitutionally their responsibility except where specifically assigned to other levels of government.<sup>2</sup> Mutual cooperation, however, is the norm. Alan Norton writes, "important as the separation of powers between territorial levels may be in law, in political terms there is...an intertwining of activities...and a high degree of interdependence between the *Bund*, *Länder* and local government and between them and other sectoral interests..."<sup>3</sup> City-states like Berlin are exceptional in that they possess state and local governments at the same time. Under the state government, which in Berlin is called the Senate (*Senat*), are city districts (*Bezirke*); while city districts lack independent fiscal power, they do participate in land-use planning. It was the state government of West Berlin, though, which controlled the administrative planning process in the 1970s, when our story begins. In this period the sectoral interests involved in the siting process were mostly energy firms themselves. The shared federal and state priority of economic growth led these authorities to want to expand energy capacity even in the face of stagnant demand.

The 1970s also saw the rise of social movements organized not along traditional lines of economic conflict, but around new issues of quality of life and a critique of growth.<sup>4</sup> The upsurge in citizen protest began as West Germany's "economic miracle"

slowed and information on the harmful effects of pollution became widely available. Many local populations began to question the government's continued support of industrial growth at the expense of the natural environment and to formulate their critique in terms of an economy/ecology conflict. Local residents formed "citizen initiative" groups. These were generally single-issue neighborhood or local groups organized either to procure some service for the community or, as was overwhelmingly the case beginning in the early 1970s, to protest some government-sponsored project or policy. Near Frankfurt's busy international airport, plans to deforest a recreational area in order to construct a new runway drew mass protest. In West Berlin, a freeway extension project was blocked for decades by residents' objections. Mass mobilization reached its height in the protest against nuclear energy facilities, including reactors at Wyhl, Brokdorf, Grohnde, and Kalkar and recycling facilities at Gorleben and later Wackersdorf. At their peak, the environmental demonstrations drew hundreds of thousands of participants.<sup>5</sup>

Although the energy issue most clearly evoked critique of the growth mentality, energy protest was embedded in a larger array of citizen movements concerned with the quality of life and critical of what Jürgen Habermas termed the economic and administrative "system".<sup>6</sup> Women's rights, civil rights, antiwar, and labor groups had proliferated in the 1960s. Urban centers such as West Berlin became centers of a thriving left-wing student movement and alternative culture. Although there was little overlap between the protest groups of the 1960s and the environmental citizen initiatives of the 1970s, some of the later groups built on the communication network established by especially the left-wing organizations. The peace movement, composed of a variety of smaller groups, also emerged strongly in the 1970s and early 1980s, particularly after the stationing of nuclear missiles on West German soil.<sup>7</sup> Disgruntled citizens began to

question not only the substance of government decisions, but also the legitimacy of the form of decision making that produced them. They blamed the tight relationship between government and industry for policy decisions unrepresentative of the values of much of the population. They increasingly aimed their critique at the established political parties, which in their view had failed to transmit new impulses from the citizenry to political decision makers. The view spread among the activists that the problems were not merely a passing phase but indicated instead "a long-term structural crisis, whose cause lies in the industrial-technocratic growth society itself."<sup>8</sup>

By the mid-1970s more people described themselves as members of citizen initiatives than of all political parties combined.<sup>9</sup> Although the average participant was well educated and middle class, these groups contained a broad cross-section of citizens. While they opposed technocratic decision making, they were not generally backward looking; they supported technological solutions to environmental problems so long as these were reached democratically. Grassroots groups developed a broad palette of political activities, including petition campaigns, nature walks, information booths, demonstrations, site occupations, and festivals. Some of the left-wing and other citizen groups joined environmentalists to found new political parties and voting lists in the late 1970s, culminating in the 1980 formation of the national-level Greens.

The federal government responded with anti-pollution and construction legislation containing expanded provisions for citizen participation. Additions to the Federal Air Pollution Law linked the permit requirements for polluting facilities; now proposals would have to include precautions against environmental damage in order to qualify for construction permits. This change closed a loophole that had often allowed projects to begin construction before their environmental impacts had been assessed. The new law



permitted citizens to file objections, provided they could show that the proposed project would affect them negatively.

### **Energy Controversy in West Berlin**

In this setting, the controversy arose that would help reshape West Berlin politics. Berlin Power and Light (*BEWAG*) announced in the mid-1970s its most ambitious project to date, a planned 1,200 megawatt coal-fired plant to be built in a forested area in the northwest corner of the city. Rising demand, the utility claimed, mandated immediate expansion if the city were to avert an energy shortage. The subsequent debate over the construction revealed a conflict between the goal of revitalizing West Berlin's lagging industrial sector, a goal to which a plentiful and secure energy supply could contribute, and the goal of reversing the deterioration of the natural environment, whose accomplishment the project could hinder. The former goal clearly took priority among policymakers in the West Berlin state government, the latter among a substantial portion of the citizenry.

There were limited sites available on which to build the city's largest plant. The property chosen was away from residential areas but was squarely in the middle one of the largest areas of contiguous forest in the city. The initial siting choice was made by the Senate's energy bureaucracy, which was also the main permit authority for power plants, together with the utility. The public reaction was immediate and explosive: nearby residents formed a citizen initiative group that drew citywide attention to the site through demonstrations, information booths, weekend nature walks through the threatened forest, tree adoptions, and, finally, site occupation. The West Berlin group,

like other new social movements that formed around energy projects, linked the issues of environment and democracy:

My dream is neither to have a state led by citizen initiative groups nor a state constituted by industry and trade interests. My dream would be a government guided by the question of human survival, that would not push the costs of our current lifestyle onto the next generation like an ever-growing mountain, that would at least make an attempt to discuss the costs...with us instead of playing us for fools, and that would decide with us how these costs could be justly assigned...<sup>10</sup>

The activists objected to the scale and location of the project and its predicted negative environmental effects, but they also questioned the legitimacy of the form of decision making that had led to these planning choices. In this way they connected the aims of democracy and community quality of life - only an inclusive decision making process, they argued, could produce sustainable, community-friendly policy. Noting the negligible role of elected officials in energy policy making, the activists concentrated on grassroots action and direct confrontation of bureaucratic policy makers. The West Berlin Senate, faced with conflicting demands from the utility and the protesters, tried to bypass the parliamentary and citizen-participation provisions of the permit process. It exempted the utility from the legal requirement to submit a construction plan on the grounds that energy demand made large and rapid expansion imperative.<sup>11</sup>

Given the nature of the protesters' objections, this was exactly the wrong move. It reinforced the protesters' claim that the Senate's decisionmaking was undemocratic. The group filed suit in administrative court. Protesters literally threw themselves in front of bulldozers to block preliminary drilling at the forested site until the court could hear their

objection. The West Berlin Administrative Court sided with the protesters. The court nullified the exemptions from the citizen participation requirements of federal air pollution and construction laws. The judge said the energy shortage the Senate projected "was clearly the fault of the [Senate] itself through its own bureaucratic failures [and] cannot be considered an emergency situation of the kind that could justify an exemption from the existing planning obligations."<sup>12</sup>

The utility downscaled the project and moved the plant site to a less environmentally sensitive location next to an existing plant. The controversy then shifted to the permit processes. The citizen challenge, previously expressed through mass mobilization, was now increasingly aimed directly at the bureaucracy's source of legitimacy: its technical expertise. The permit authorities faced difficult adjustments. The new federal construction and air pollution laws dispersed decision-making power within the Senate bureaucracy. The Senator for Economy could no longer control the process as in the past; now the environmental and worker protection bureaucracies were also involved. Any lack of coordination between the branches, as well as permit authorities' overreliance on data supplied by the utility itself, quickly came to light in the permit hearings.

Citizen pressure began to stir both the administrative courts and the West Berlin state parliament to cast a more critical eye on utility and Senate data. But the narrow technical debate frustrated the citizens' attempts to raise general questions regarding the form and goals of policy making. Permit authorities were simply not required to take broader considerations of the goals of planning into account. The activists increasingly targeted the political parties in the legislature for failing to provide an independent forum for energy debate and for failing to take up their institutional right to oversee Senate

policy making. Local activists, including many Reuter-West protesters, formed their own voting list, the Alternative List (AL), which first won seats in 1981 with 7.2% of the vote. AL members immediately brought the planning/energy debate to parliament. The AL prompted the formation of two special commissions to study energy policy and to prepare the legislature to take on its supervisory role.<sup>13</sup>

The biggest challenge for the utility was complying with air pollution standards. *BEWAG* was able to do that by modernizing or shutting down parts of older plants while constructing the new one at half the originally proposed capacity. West Berlin's already marginal air quality would not be worsened, and in some parts of the city would actually improve, through these measures. This was a victory for citizen activism. The controversy also forced the government to comply with the new federal laws by including a wider range of considerations in individual planning decisions. This change would also invite a wider range of participants into the process. The need for a more synoptic approach became clear during the legal battle. The activists' viewpoint repeatedly won the support of the courts. Plant opponents won a further victory, for example, when the administrative court voided the construction permits on grounds that the permit authorities had failed to take air pollution control standards into account in awarding them. The authorities had argued that environmental considerations belonged to a separate permit process under air pollution law and were not properly part of construction permitting. Federal law no longer allowed these authorities to compartmentalize different aspects of planning.<sup>14</sup> Likewise, the open discussion of interests - how, for example, environmental and economic concerns should be weighed in planning - became part of the legal as well as the parliamentary discussion. It was now considered irresponsible for

elected officials *not* to examine critically the planning decisions of the bureaucracy and the utility.

The universal recognition that energy policy involves choices between political goals was in part the achievement of a decade of legal wrangling over the Reuter-West power plant. The protesters and the AL intentionally politicized what had been a technical discussion. They connected in the public mind grassroots democracy in planning with community quality of life.

### **Results of 1970s-1980s Grassroots Protest in West Berlin and Nationwide**

The West Berlin controversy occurred in the context of widespread grassroots protest against state-sponsored industrial projects. Everywhere, the protesters challenged not only the negative environmental consequences of planning decisions but also the legitimacy of the technocratic planning system. Citizen protest led to the founding of green and alternative parties and networks of citizen groups throughout West Germany. These parties formed a lasting tie between the challengers and the political establishment.<sup>15</sup> Pushed by the new activists, parliaments in almost all the federal states established principles and guiding goals for land-use planning.<sup>16</sup> In West Berlin, the AL augmented its support through the 1980s and became part of a short-lived governing coalition with the Social Democrats in 1989.<sup>17</sup> The AL, though, like many green and alternative parties, was unable to force much institutional change in the democratizing direction the citizen movements wanted.

Citizen protest like that in West Berlin did result in substantive changes to the planning process. Since the 1970s, a wide range of building, planning, and environmental legislation has mandated grassroots involvement in decision making.<sup>18</sup> Environmental

impact tests, which incorporate public participation, have been required for particular projects since 1985. EU-level initiatives such as Local Agenda 21 have encouraged local governments to include residents in planning for sustainable development. 1998 amendments to the Federal Planning Law and more recent administrative guidelines have continued the trend. A broad range of societal actors has participated in working groups or steering committees that have collaborated informally with legislative and bureaucratic policy makers, exchanging information and recommendations.<sup>19</sup> Mediation has become more common as a non-confrontational way to resolve differences. Futures workshops bring different participants together to conceptualize new projects such as green belts surrounding urban areas.<sup>20</sup>

Rainer Stierand writes that a new constellation of actors is especially noticeable in planning for major technical projects like nuclear power plants and toxic waste dumps. Not only is the circle of participants larger, but their interaction has changed; citizen initiative groups and environmental organizations have taken their place as "conflict partners" next to industry and economy representatives.<sup>21</sup> He says the term "corporatism", commonly used to describe the kind of cooperation that occurs in planning, no longer captures the range of actors, which, next to the large, entrenched labor and capital organizations of the classical model, also now includes a wide array of individuals and groups that did not need to be taken into account in this form before the protests of the 1970s. It also fails to capture the nature of the interaction. These are not just NIMBY protesters; they are informed participants in the process. The government's role in these new forms of decision making is often a good deal less authoritative than the corporatist model of the 1970s would indicate. Instead, government organs now

commonly function more as managers, mediators, advisors, or monitors. We have seen in the West Berlin case that this transition occurred largely because of citizen protest.

Some municipal governments, including Berlin's, have actively sought cooperation with urban protest groups that mobilized successfully against development projects in the 1970s and early 80s. Tight budgets during the Kohl years forced them to look for ways to lower costs, such as bringing in citizen groups to help implement their programs.<sup>22</sup> Planners and applicants have generally cooperated in the measures to enhance local participation. Many projects require long-term investment and long-term planning efforts. Recognizing that a project may be delayed or derailed altogether by citizen protest, applicants now put more effort into averting such protest and working to legitimate their plans by promoting citizen involvement.

We have seen how grassroots protest in West Berlin and throughout West Germany led to changes in the role of citizens in planning. What have been the lasting results of that activism? What forms does citizen participation take today in planning, and how are these similar to or different from those of the earlier decades? Returning to the Berlin case, we will see that, despite the innovations in the process that the earlier movements achieved, it has proved difficult to create a consistently inclusive conversation about planning in the united city.

### **Land-Use Planning Controversies in Berlin Since 1990**

In 1990, Berlin found itself politically united and with a newly accessible hinterland, two enormous challenges to land-use planning. East Germans had their own experiences with land-use planning whose legacy is still felt. Discontentment over environmental wrongs compounded their disenchantment with what was viewed as

dehumanizing residential planning and likely contributed to the downfall of the East German regime.<sup>23</sup> With unification, city planning had to be rethought from the ground up. The public showed great interest in how the new Berlin would look, and the Senate took pains to initiate a general conversation. The City Forum was launched in 1990 as an advisory body to the Senator for City Planning and Environmental Protection.<sup>24</sup> Run by a steering committee of five professional planners, its sixty members - "personalities from important political venues in the city" - discussed predetermined planning topics before a largely mute audience. Residents pilloried the City Forum for functioning more as a legitimating tool for Senate planning than as a public forum. Only after 1995 was its structure decentralized. The Forum was recently reconvened after a hiatus of several years. It remains to be seen whether it can become a vehicle for citywide communication.

One accomplishment of the 1970s movements was to activate parliament as a locus of discussion. The AL, which formally became part of Alliance 90/The Greens after unification, has tried to keep planning on the parliamentary agenda and in the public consciousness. Berlin has had a volatile political party scene, moving from social-democratic to conservative-led coalition governments in the 1980s, to a short-lived red-green coalition of SPD and AL in 1989, to conservative-led "grand coalitions" with the SPD in the 1990s and finally to a left/center-left coalition of SPD and the revamped socialist party of the east, PDS, since 2001. None of these coalitions has achieved much change in the role of parties and parliaments in planning. While the movements have a continuing liaison to parliament through the Greens, the Greens have been unable to expand the role of the legislature in planning beyond what they achieved in the 1980s. While the planning process has become more complex, with more bureaucratic as well as



more private participants, it is still quite opaque. The trend since the 1990s has been away from party/parliamentary control and toward public/private partnerships.

It became clear during the Reuter-West controversy that bureaucracy's role in planning was also problematic, both in coordinating the process and in including citizen voices. As a city-state with both district and state-level planning authorities, Berlin has formidable coordination challenges. Recognizing the need for institutional reform, the Berlin Senate recently began a wide-ranging program of "administrative modernization." The goal, according to the Senate, is to model government after private business: to streamline its organization and outsource some of its functions, to increase its flexibility and responsiveness, and to reduce inefficiencies. One of the targeted sources of inflexibility and inefficiency was the micromanagement of bureaucratic action by the political branch. The Senate aimed to remove the parliament from the day-to-day functioning of the administration, having it guide the administration instead through general agreements about goals.<sup>25</sup> Ironically, this was exactly the institutional avenue that the activists of the 1970s had opened up - they had forced parliaments to take up their function as overseer of the bureaucracy and to lead a discussion of goals as well as the appropriate means for achieving them. The latest reforms seemed aimed at preserving the goal-setting function while putting the details back in the hands of the bureaucracy, thereby restoring some of the technocratic features the activists had tried to curtail.

The Senate also took steps to improve lateral communication between bureaucratic branches. In the Reuter-West case, the state government's new environmental responsibilities complicated and lengthened the approval process. Construction authorities had to consider environmental effects in their deliberations, and environmental permits were now required under federal law. As more bureaucratic

authorities have become involved in planning, and more efforts have been made to decentralize the process, the interval from application to construction has skyrocketed. Werner Klinge writes about the construction plan approval process in the western Berlin district of Charlottenburg, where the average length of the process is now eight years and four months. This extraordinary slowness cannot be blamed on increased citizen participation requirements. It is more the result of new district planning responsibilities and new requirements for coordination between district and state authorities.<sup>26</sup> Elizabeth Strom explains that the local bureaucratic agencies, set up to operate largely independently of one another, have developed different institutional cultures that are hard to reconcile.<sup>27</sup> The problem we saw in the 1970s of coordinating the work of different administrative branches has not been solved; if anything it has worsened.

Licensing authorities have, as in the Reuter-West case of the 1970s, often tried to accelerate the process by exempting applications from some required steps. This poses a continuing problem for citizen participation. In the Charlottenburg example, says Klinge, consensus among the political and bureaucratic authorities is so difficult to achieve that the construction authorities often issue legally questionable exemptions in order to keep the process moving. But such actions weaken the legitimacy of construction decisions, just as they did in the past.<sup>28</sup>

Outsourcing is supposed to help alleviate red tape and improve lateral communication in the bureaucracy. A form of outsourcing was used in the redevelopment of Adlershof in the 1990s. Adlershof is a large, mixed-use area of southeastern Berlin. The Senate wanted to site a large business and science park there which would also include university institutes and even housing. The mix of uses mandated the participation of several branches of the state administration, and, according

to Katja Simons, conflicts between them plagued the initial stages of the project.<sup>29</sup> In order to alleviate the problems of coordinating bureaucratic activity and to consolidate expertise on the details of the complex project, the Senate formed a development agency to act as trustee for the state government. The Senate would bear the costs and the risks of the development, but this new entity would make the relevant private contacts and decisions.<sup>30</sup> This was supposed to accelerate the process and make it more flexible and closer to market actors. But it also removed the process from popular control, thus reintroducing the legitimation problem. As Berlin's economy stagnated in the 1990s, the development authority insisted on ever more control and greater public investment. Neither the Senate nor the Berlin parliament could monitor the increasingly controversial investment effectively. The creation of the development agency was an attempt to circumvent hierarchical, inflexible planning in the name of efficiency. The legitimacy of the project suffered, however, from a lack of accountability.

Even where citizen participation requirements are fulfilled, the timing of the participation may nullify its effectiveness. Simons says the formal citizen participation in the Adlershof project was designed mostly to win consensus for decisions already made. With regard to office-space planning in the united city, Uwe Altrock similarly finds that the Berlin state government involves the legislature and the public only at a stage where the important decisions about a project have already been reached.<sup>31</sup> This does not mean, however, that residents' interests are not taken into account at all. Some planning alternatives are rejected out of hand by the authorities in anticipation of citizen objections. This practice, says Altrock, distinguishes current planning from that of previous decades. Those early deliberations are not communicated effectively to the public, however, which only sees the lack of accommodation in later project stages. The

difference from the 1970s is that compromises are made in anticipation of public protest. The similarity is that the state's attempt to avoid conflict leaves a legitimation deficit with frustrated citizens, who see no choice but to protest.

The Berlin state bureaucracy has also increasingly tried informal and direct instruments of cooperation with the movements themselves. Margit Mayer describes how the Senate in the 1980s promoted cooperation with some of the groups that had protested in the 1970s, including citizen initiatives, tenant groups, housing activists, and squatters. The Senate was interested mainly in lowering costs and avoiding conflict with grassroots groups by outsourcing certain functions directly to them. Some Berlin citizen groups formed an umbrella organization to try for public funding for their projects. Aware that the Senate was trying to coopt them, they framed their demands initially in opposition to the "new voluntarism" of the conservative government.<sup>32</sup> The included groups did tend to become more professionalized, opening new lines of conflict between them and other, excluded groups. The grassroots scene was thus partially but not entirely coopted by the bureaucracy.

In sum, the controversies of the earlier decades in Berlin contributed substantially to the more recent reforms. These include changes in the role of parliaments, efforts to overcome bureaucratic red tape, and efforts to establish a more direct relationship between planning/licensing authorities and the public. Not all of these were designed to allow citizens to take part more substantively. As the above examples show, the efforts to increase communication with citizens while also increasing efficiency in planning have been problematic. Despite enhanced citizen participation in formal planning, there is still no institutionalized forum for a real, ongoing conversation between community residents, politicians, bureaucrats, and applicants during the planning process. Therefore,

grassroots mobilization still has an important role to play in forcing a public conversation about planning and achieving a sense of local control over residents' own destiny. Only when mass mobilization occurs around an application, Altrock says for the case of office space planning, do citizen misgivings get much of a hearing; otherwise, residents' participation in the process is trivialized and their suggestions largely ignored. When diverse groups come together in protest, such as happened with the "NOlympia" campaign against Berlin's bid to host the 2000 Olympics, they can force a conversation about the broader goals of planning. Groups like this "tend to go beyond particular community interests and...raise questions of democratic planning that urban elites concerned with interregional and international competitiveness would like to downplay."<sup>33</sup>

A good number of the new grassroots groups are in the former East Berlin, where protest activity has followed a trajectory similar to that in the west.<sup>34</sup> Grassroots protest has also begun to occur more frequently at the edges of the metropolis, and it seems to be following the familiar pattern in which local groups raise general questions of democracy and community empowerment. Here, as in the city proper, citizen mobilization has functioned as a corrective to higher-level and local planning that fails to take the wishes of local populations into account.

Ulf Matthiesen writes about a citizen movement in Grünow, a municipality on southeastern edge of Berlin. The local planning authorities had scheduled Grünow for infill development that included large amounts of residential and commercial construction. A residents' group mobilized successful protest against the "unecological-oversized" local development policy and "immoderate" land-use and construction plans. Reminiscent of the citizen initiative group that opposed Reuter-West, the Grünau

protesters came to connect a grassroots democratic planning process with ecologically sound planning outcomes. They advocated a nonhierarchical, citizen-centered politics and sustainable development. This normative position, says Matthiesen, widened their mobilization potential.<sup>35</sup> Recognizing the need for unified regional planning, the states of Berlin and Brandenburg had combined their planning authorities in 1995. In keeping with the land-use politics of the more recent period, the Grünau group forged a strategic alliance with planners in the joint Berlin/Brandenburg administration, who looked askance at the outsized development plans proffered by the local government. Activists needed both grassroots protest and cooperation with government actors to achieve their goals.

### **Results of Land-Use Planning Controversies Since 1990 in Berlin and Nationwide**

Some of the issues that inspired the grassroots protest of the 1970s in Berlin remain unresolved, and recent trends have focused renewed public attention on them. The Berlin case reflects nationwide trends in planning policy and citizen participation. Primary among the ongoing issues is the difficulty of finding an institutional forum for citizen participation. The Greens still advocate for environmental and community interests. But their success in activating parliament as supervisor of planning is threatened by the new trend toward outsourcing planning functions. Moreover, political parties are increasingly problematic as public mouthpieces for community concerns. Party membership has dropped off, and voter participation has declined steadily in Berlin and elsewhere since the 1970s.<sup>36</sup> In a recent survey, only 32 per cent of respondents said they could imagine joining a political party, while 51 per cent said they'd consider joining a citizens' action group.<sup>37</sup> Unmediated forms of local citizen participation, such as

referenda, are becoming more popular. Many states also now permit the pooling of votes on the ballot, which allows citizens to vote for candidates from more than one party or candidates not at the top of the party list. Direct election of mayors has strengthened the office of mayor *vis a vis* local councils at the expense of party influence.

Declining interest in political parties and in partisan elections does not mean declining participation *per se*. In Berlin, citizen mobilization around land-use issues has continued. This is true of Germany generally, both with land use and with other issues advocated by new social movements. Contrary to expectations, writes Dieter Rucht, "such movements have maintained their resources and infrastructures and even grown in some domains, such as environmental protection."<sup>38</sup> Moreover, the structures and forms of protest popularized by citizen initiatives have now been adopted by some mainstream groups - such as police unions and professional groups - who never shared the broader ideological critique raised by the protest movements. Where parties and bureaucracy are increasingly viewed with suspicion, these less formal instruments are becoming more popular: "Political involvement is hardly decreasing, but it is being channelled less and less by large, formal organisations. Instead, more flexible, looser, more contingent forms of engagement have become attractive, particularly among the younger generations. This trend keeps movement politics alive and generates issues that are hard for parties and interest groups to adopt."<sup>39</sup>

Citizens' declining interest in formal organizations coincides with the government's efforts to promote informal planning instruments and cooperation with private actors in the planning process. Their success can be judged in part by their popularity: according to one estimate, such informal instruments now outnumber the official regional planning bodies four to one.<sup>40</sup> With the amendment of the Land-Use

Planning Law in 1998, state and regional planning officials were instructed to promote cooperation between the public and private actors crucial to the successful implementation of land-use plans.

Everybody pays lip service to citizen involvement; that is a result of the protests of the 1970s and 80s. But the government's main goal in promoting the new cooperative, informal relationships is economic efficiency, while the activists' goal is more direct democracy. These two goals do not work in the same direction, as we see in the Berlin case. "On the whole it is clear," writes Katja Simons, "that the implementation of large projects depends on certain prerequisites that systematically violate important criteria for democratic legitimation, such as transparency, accessibility, and participation."<sup>41</sup> The new attempts to streamline bureaucracy in the direction of informal planning arrangements and private/public partnerships have sometimes produced the familiar result that local communities feel disempowered. In Berlin, part of the streamlining effort has involved reducing the parliament's intervention in planning. Less parliamentary oversight of bureaucracy, however, means potentially less citizen voice; certain organized groups will have more direct influence, but there will be less of a connection to the citizenry in general.

It is clear that planners must now take greater pains to justify their incursions into the community. This has resulted in red tape; the evidence from Berlin indicates that it is increased bureaucratic complexity, however, rather than citizen participation, that has produced this result. As the responsibilities of the administrative branch increase, the participants in its decision processes try to come to agreement through informal means. We saw this in the Adlershof, Charlottenburg and office space examples in Berlin. While the structure of government in Berlin makes the problem especially acute, this dynamic is



also evident in Germany generally. According to Rainer Stierand, applicants often meet informally beforehand with planning authorities to resolve major conflicts in advance of the formal process. This saves time and money but limits substantive public participation. By the time the process is opened up for input from residents, the authorities are ready to sign off on the project; citizen participation is just window dressing. "If, next to the legal and grassroots [avenues], the parliamentary possibility for control is also lacking, the opposite of openness in the planning process may be achieved."<sup>42</sup> Thus, points out Stierand, the supposedly completely new ways of planning that have arisen through privatization and the shrinking of state responsibility in certain areas actually present some of the same challenges to substantive citizen participation that the old, expert-oriented policy making of the 1970s did. They raise the legitimation problem anew: "Ever more urgent is the question of how...possibilities for democratic control can be retained [within] the new systems of negotiation and the new functions of the bureaucracies."<sup>43</sup>

For these reasons, in Berlin and elsewhere, grassroots protest continues to be a necessary supplement to more institutionalized forms of participation. The Reuter-West example from the 1970s and the Grünau example from the 1990s suggest that protest is important not only for democratic politics, but also for appropriate community planning. The siting battle over Reuter-West provoked a continuing discussion about what physical spaces (such as the forest area the plant would have bisected) are most important for the quality of life in the city. Citizen activism helped scale down what would have been an oversized plant inappropriate to actual energy demand and destructive to West Berlin's limited open space. Local mobilization often forces applicants and government authorities to make better use of existing resources and conditions and to integrate

projects better into the community. Without such mobilization, planning decisions are made that may exacerbate the disorientation that rapid change has already wrought. Aside from the mitigating the physical impacts of development, citizen protest movements also try to shore up community in the face of what they see as dehumanizing bureaucratic and economic processes. In the Reuter-West case, the citizen group critiqued not only the project at hand, but also the "industrial-technocratic growth society" that produced it. Matthiesen writes that some of the new groups at Berlin's eastern edges are trying to reassert a local identity against Europeanization and globalization processes and against planning decisions far removed from local context. Contrary to those forces that seem to break down solidarity and belonging, these groups initiate a "re-embedding process" that asserts "here are my new roots."<sup>44</sup>

Elsewhere in Germany, local involvement has also helped forestall or reshape projects that, in retrospect, higher-level authorities agree would have been destructive to local communities. Konukiewitz and Wollmann cite the example of urban renewal, where "the trend towards rehabilitation of old buildings instead of their replacement has been brought about mainly by neighborhood residents protesting their removal and by planners who sympathised with them."<sup>45</sup> Another example is spatial policy, where postwar state and federal governments tried to bolster lagging rural regions by developing an infrastructure to rival that of the more industrialized regions. Environmental groups have successfully fought off such policies in an effort to preserve an ecological balance in an already heavily populated and industrialized country. Blanket industrialization and urbanization in order to equalize economic conditions among the German federal states is no longer considered a worthwhile goal. Local input has moved higher-level authorities to the viewpoint that developing or preserving particular special assets of a region -

natural assets included - can both help economically and preserve a sense of local character that keeps communities vital.

## **Conclusion**

Citizen protest over three decades, in Berlin and in Germany generally, has achieved some important changes in land-use planning. For one, it has delegitimated technocratic planning. Citizen initiative groups have legitimated grassroots participation and activated parliaments as a locus for a broad discussion of the goals as well as means of policy making. Citizen input has also been institutionalized in planning. There is now an expectation of local participation that makes the new land-use politics different from the old. The struggle for a long-term forum for substantive discussion of land-use issues, however, continues. On the one hand it is clear that citizen objections are anticipated and the concept of citizen participation is taken seriously; on the other hand, this anticipation has led to new bureaucratic attempts to circumvent interaction with citizens which, combined with the general trend toward divesting parliaments of their duties to monitor the bureaucracy, look to many residents like a withdrawal of access to dialogue over planning. The expanded citizen participation requirements of the permit process have led to attempts to anticipate citizen responses without actually involving citizens. This has left in some cases a legitimation deficit that will be hard to correct without finding a setting for real, ongoing political discussion between all the participants. Grassroots citizen protest is still a necessary companion and corrective to the institutionalized planning process. The Berlin case helps explain why, despite new opportunities for direct cooperation with planning authorities, protest mobilization persists.

This article has put the planning literature in the broader context of changes in participatory democracy. What connects the importance of these groups as social movements to their importance as participants in planning is their commitment to empowering citizens to shape their own communities. The Berlin story helps explain Rucht's observation that protest mobilization did not die out after the boom of the 1970s and 80s, but rather has become part of the repertoire of citizen initiative groups and part of the normal planning process. Protest often seems both more effective in individual cases and more legitimate to the public than party and bureaucratic channels.

The protests of the 1970s and 80s encouraged lay citizens to take a substantive role in deciding issues that were previously considered the purview of technical experts. Our analysis of land-use planning in a single city over time highlights this important but under-studied result of grassroots citizen mobilization. This result will prove lasting only if the public remains mobilized and informed. The new trend toward privatization, while making the state less authoritative in some ways, ironically makes the public less empowered in others. The informal inclusion of certain mobilized groups helps those groups to become part of the process, but it does little to inform the citizenry generally. Authorities can no longer cite the technical nature of decisions in order to exclude the public, but economic efficiency concerns and a preference for private interaction may achieve the same result. The failure to find an institutional home for grassroots participation may prove a detriment to German democracy in the long run. At the very least, it necessitates continued protest mobilization in order that community voices be heard and that democratizing demands be taken seriously.

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<sup>1</sup> Sidney Tarrow, for example, writes about the downturns in recent "cycles of protest": "As participation was channeled into organizations, the movements, or parts of them, took on a more political logic - engaging in implicit bargaining with authorities. In each case, as the cycle wound down, the initiative shifted to elites and parties." (Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 168. Dieter Rucht, on the other hand, finds that, while parts of the movements in Germany did indeed engage in bargaining with authorities, protest mobilization has not died down. This result is surprising, he writes, given the predictions of the social movements literature (Dieter Rucht, "The Changing Role of Political Protest Movements," in Herbert Kitschelt and Wolfgang Streeck, eds., *Germany: Beyond the Stable State* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2004), 153-176, quote on 158-159.

<sup>2</sup> Udo Bullmann, "Germany: Federalism under Strain," ch. 4 in John Loughlin, ed., *Subnational Democracy in the European Union: Challenges and Opportunities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 88.

<sup>3</sup> Alan Norton, *International Handbook of Local and Regional Government* (Brookfield, VT: Edmund Elgar Publishing Co., 1994), 259, 266. See also Gerhard Henkel, *Der Ländliche Raum* (Berlin/Stuttgart: Gebrüder Borntraeger Verlagsbuchhandlung, 2004), 278-279. The state governments can take the reins on a project from the district government if the project has implications for the broader public good.

<sup>4</sup> Much of this section is adapted from Carol Hager, *Technological Democracy: Bureaucracy and Citizenry in the German Energy Debate* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995). Roland Roth offers a typology of groups in "Neue soziale Bewegungen in der politischen Kultur der Bundesrepublik - eine vorläufige Skizze," in Karl-Werner Brand, ed., *Neue soziale Bewegungen in Westeuropa und den USA* (Frankfurt a.M.: Campus, 1985), pp. 20-82. See also Bernd Guggenberger and Udo Kempf, eds., *Bürgerinitiativen und repräsentatives System*, rev. ed. (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1984), Roland Roth and Dieter Rucht, *Neue soziale Bewegungen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Frankfurt a.M.: Campus, 1987), and Suzanne Berger, "Politics and Antipolitics in Western Europe in the Seventies," *Daedalus* 108, no. 1 (winter 1979): 27-49.

<sup>5</sup> Hager, 64-65. See also Dieter Rucht, *Flughafenprojekte als Politikum* (Frankfurt a.M., Campus, 1984) Gottfried Orth & Adalbert Podlech, eds., *Testfall Startbahn West* (Wuppertal: Jugenddienst-Verlag, 1982), Roman Arens, Beate Seitz, and Joachim Wille, *Wackersdorf: Der Atomstaat und die Bürger* (Essen: Klartext, 1987), Dieter Rucht, *Von Wyhl nach Gorleben: Bürger gegen Atomprogramm und nukleare Entsorgung* (München: C.H. Beck, 1980), Horst Karasak, *Das Dorf im Flörsheimer Wald* (Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1981), and Christian Joppke, *Mobilizing Against Nuclear Energy: A Comparison of Germany and the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

<sup>6</sup> Jürgen Habermas, "The Tasks of a Critical Theory of Society," in *The Theory of Communicative Action*, v. 2 (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), 374-403, Claus Offe, "New

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Social Movements: Challenging the Boundaries of Institutional Politics," *Social Research* 52, no. 4 (winter 1985): 817-68, and John Keane, ed., *Civil Society and the State* (London: Verso, 1988).

<sup>7</sup> See Alice Holmes Cooper, *Paradoxes of Peace: German Peace Movements since 1945* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996). Cooper's process model shows how peace activists used the general *Systemkritik* of the time as a mobilizing resource (chs. 4 & 5). My argument is that this ideology or *Systemkritik* is constitutive of the movements in the first place. The 1980s peace movement was a different one, with different activists, than earlier peace movements. See also Thomas Rochon, *Mobilizing for Peace: The Antinuclear Movements in Western Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

<sup>8</sup> Burkhard Schaper, "Die Entstehungsgeschichte der AL," in Michael Bühnemann, Michael Wendt, und Jürgen Wituschek, eds., *Die Alternative Liste Berlin: Entstehung, Entwicklung, Positionen* (Berlin: LitPol, 1984), 52.

<sup>9</sup> Klaus-Georg Wey, *Umweltpolitik in Deutschland* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1982), 171.

<sup>10</sup> Bürgerinitiative Oberhavel/Oberjägerweg, *Festschrift*, undated.

<sup>11</sup> According to Werner Klinge, such exemptions were a favored method for accelerating the construction plan process. Eventually, though, the exclusion of citizen participation by means of exemptions led to a delegitimation of the whole sector (Werner Klinge, "Konfliktbewältigungsstrategien der Berliner: Die Charlottenburger Bauverwaltung in der verbindlichen Bauleitplanung," *RaumPlanung* 78 (September 1997): 197-205, here 202-203.

<sup>12</sup> West Berlin Administrative Court decision, Thirteenth Chamber, Judge Grundei, VG 13 A 419.76, 14 December 1976.

<sup>13</sup> These were the Energy Enquete-Commission "Future Energy Policy," formed by the state parliament in January 1982, and Energy Enquete-Commission "Berlin Energy and Power Plant Policy," formed in March 1984. Michael Buehnemann, Michael Wendt, und Jürgen Wituschek describe the rise of the AL in *Die Alternative Liste Berlin: Entstehung, Entwicklung, Positionen* (Berlin: LitPol, 1984).

<sup>14</sup> Hager, 184-185.

<sup>15</sup> See Ulrich Linse, Dieter Rucht, Winfried Kretschmer, and Reinhard Falter, *Von der Bittschrift zur Platzbesetzung: Konflikte um technische Großprojekte* (Berlin: Dietz, 1988). Herbert Kitschelt classifies the new parties as "left-libertarian" (Kitschelt, "Left-Libertarian Parties: Explaining Innovation in Competitive Party Systems," *World Politics* 40/2 (1988), pp. 194-234.

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<sup>16</sup> Rainer Danielzyk, Kerstin Hanebeck, Jörg Knieling, Frank Reitzig, "Raumordnung und Öffentlichkeitsbeteiligung: Praxis, Anforderungen und Empfehlungen bei der Aufstellung von Raumordnungsplänen," *RaumPlanung* 112 (February 2004): 31-36, here 32. Also Konukiewitz & Wollmann, 95.

<sup>17</sup> Der Landeswahlleiter für Berlin, [www.statistik-berlin.de/wahlen](http://www.statistik-berlin.de/wahlen). The AL's results were:

1981: 7.2%

1985: 10.6%

1989: 11.8%

<sup>18</sup> Bullmann, 111. Many citizen participation requirements, however, says Bullmann, came under pressure during the recent debate on accelerating public approval procedures.

<sup>19</sup> Danielzyk et al, 31. Jeff Sellers provides evidence that the inclusion of local citizen initiative groups and green parties in urban planning has contributed to the comparative success of German cities in containing sprawl, providing environmental amenities, and minimizing spatial polarization between rich and poor (Jeffrey Sellers, *Governing from Below: Urban Regions and the Global Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 35 and ch. 2.

<sup>20</sup> Bullmann, 110-112. He notes that a lack of public funds means these forms of local participation are underutilized, but "longer-term, systematic participatory projects such as Local Agenda 21 could prove the catalyst for further development" (113).

<sup>21</sup> Rainer Stierand, "Neuorientierung in der Planungstheorie?," *Raumplanung* 61 (June 1003): 143-144.

<sup>22</sup> Margit Mayer, "The Career of Urban Social Movements in West Germany," in Robert Fisher and Joseph Kling, eds., *Mobilizing the Community: Local Politics in the Era of the Global City* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1993), 149.

<sup>23</sup> Robert Kaltenbrunner, "Prämiert und ausgeschieden," *Raumplanung* 95 (June 2001): 113). Brian Ladd supports this view: "Participants in the mass demonstrations of September and October 1989 pointed to the visibly poor condition of old buildings and neighborhoods throughout the German Democratic Republic (GDR) as evidence of the regime's failure (Brian Ladd, "Local Responses in Berlin to Urban Decay and the Demise of the German Democratic Republic," in John J. Czaplicka and Blair A. Ruble, eds., *Composing Urban History and the Constitution of Civic Identities* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2003), 263).

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.Berlin.de>. See also Elizabeth Strom, *Building the New Berlin: The Politics of Urban Development in Germany's Capital City* (Landham, MD: Lexington Books, 2001), 151.

<sup>25</sup> [www.Berlin.de](http://www.Berlin.de), Verwaltungsmodernisierung, Rückblick 1994 bis 2001.

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<sup>26</sup> Klinge, 200-201.

<sup>27</sup> Strom, 25.

<sup>28</sup> Klinge, 203.

<sup>29</sup> Katja Simons, *Politische Steuerung großer Projekte* (Opladen: Leske & Budrich, 2003), 179.

<sup>30</sup> Simons, 19.

<sup>31</sup> Uwe Altrock, "Büroflächenpolitik in Berlin 1981-99: Kreative nachholende Modernisierung oder Rückfall in autoritäre Muster?," in Jörg Bogumil, ed., *Kommunale Entscheidungsprozesse im Wandel* (Opladen: Leske & Budrich, 2002), 285-304.

<sup>32</sup> Mayer, "The Career of Urban Social Movements in West Germany," 149 and "Social Movements in European Cities: Transitions from the 1970s to the 1990s," ch. 6 in Arnaldo Bagnasco and Patrick Le Gales, *Cities in Contemporary Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 138.

<sup>33</sup> Mayer, "Social Movements in European Cities," 140-141.

<sup>34</sup> Dieter Rink, "Local Citizens' Initiatives during the (East) German Transformation," in Pierre Hamel, Henri Lustiger-Thaler and Margit Mayer, eds., *Urban Movements in a Globalising World* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 189).

<sup>35</sup> Ulf Matthiesen, "NIMBY und LULU am Stadtrand - Bürgergesellschaftliche Streitformen um lokale Raumnutzungen und Raumkodierungen im engeren Verflechtungsraum," in Matthiesen, *An den Rändern der Deutschen Hauptstadt*, 177, 181.

<sup>36</sup> Participation in elections for the Berlin state parliament since 1970:

1971: 88.9%

1975: 87.8%

1979: 85.4%

1981: 85.3%

1985: 83.6%

1989: 79.6%

1990: 80.8%\*

1995: 68.6%

1999: 65.5%

2001: 68.1%

\*united Berlin. The addition of East Berlin does not account for all of the drop - voting participation in the western districts has declined since unification (Der Landeswahlleiter für Berlin, [www.statistik-berlin.de/wahlen](http://www.statistik-berlin.de/wahlen)).

<sup>37</sup> Bullmann, 85, citing Roland Roth.



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<sup>38</sup> Rucht, "The Changing Role of Political Protest Movements," 171.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 172. Also Hanspeter Kriesi, "Movements of the Left, Movements of the Right: Putting the Mobilization of Two New Types of Social Movements into Political Context," in H. Kitschelt et al, eds., *Continuity and Change in Contemporary Capitalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>40</sup> Danielzyk et al, 32.

<sup>41</sup> Simons, 188.

<sup>42</sup> Stierand, 145.

<sup>43</sup> Stierand, 144.

<sup>44</sup> Matthiesen, 183. Matthiesen is cautious about the community-building potential of the eastern German protest movements. While these groups may encourage social ties and solidarity within their membership, he writes, they may also tend to cut off their group or neighborhood from others. The evidence even from his own cases, however, suggests that the universalizing ideology of these groups is quite strong.

<sup>45</sup> Konukiewitz & Wollmann, 103. The authors point out that citizen protest is effective when it reinforces a viewpoint already represented in the planning community.