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Citation for the published paper:

Denskus, Tobias. (2016). From Social Movement to Ritualized Conference Spaces : The Evolution of Peace Research Professionalism in Germany. Peace & Change, vol. 41, issue 3, p. null

URL: <https://doi.org/10.1111/pech.12160>

Publisher: Wiley

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FROM SOCIAL MOVEMENT TO RITUALIZED
CONFERENCE SPACES: THE EVOLUTION OF PEACE
RESEARCH PROFESSIONALISM IN GERMANY
by Tobias Denskus

The article employs anthropological ritual theory and the concepts of symbolism and liminality to provide a theoretical framework for analyzing ethnographic insights into the academic peace research community in Germany. Using secondary sources for a broader historical outline, I analyze the evolution of peace research discourses in Germany from the beginnings as a new social movement to a contemporary professionalized policy space in which knowledge discourses are (re)produced. Academic conferences and the routines around presenting theoretical papers have become institutionalized by the ritual dynamics of a small group of organizers and venues, fostering “indoor rituals” that represent transformations of the activities of the “outdoor” peace movement that was active in postwar Germany for many decades.

Every scholar, regardless of field, knows well the familiar proceedings of the academic conference. From the moment we put on our nametag we leave our “field identity” behind and enter the stage set with ninety-minute panels, two coffee breaks per day, and an ambition to network that is almost always shortened by the arrival of our taxi to the nearest train station or airport. Conferences are seen as a vital platform for exchange, but as ethnographic data reveal, they have become performances that leave participants anticipating more and more of what they are expected to say, how they are supposed to frame presentations, and what the range of suitable reactions or comments may be. Academic conferences and the routines around theoretical articles have become institutionalized by the ritual dynamics of a small group of organizers and venues, fostering “indoor rituals” rather than continuing an “outdoor” peace movement that was active in postwar Germany for many years.

This study of the academic conference as ritual practice is grounded in my ethnography of the Protestant Academy in Loccum, Germany, and an in-depth interview with its former director, who organized roughly three hundred workshops in his twenty-seven-year career. Loccum has become one of the central gathering places for the German peace community, an extension of its history as a conference space for activists, practitioners, and scholars from across the peace community. My analysis of the ethnographic data from Loccum starts with an overview of anthropological ritual theory and related concepts such as symbolism and liminality to provide a theoretical framework. Secondary sources and excerpts from post-fieldwork interviews form the basis for a broader historical analysis of the evolution of peace research discourses in Germany from their beginnings as a new social movement to contemporary professionalized policy space in which knowledge discourses are (re)produced. These insights from Germany have broader implications for peace studies scholars elsewhere. Scholars should break with some of the routines and rituals that often seem inevitable when disseminating research, and find accessible venues and opportunities for engaged discussions rather than sharing PowerPoint slides. Through the innovative use of technology, for example, different “outdoor” locations can easily be incorporated into “indoor” discussions.

THE USEFULNESS OF RITUAL THEORY FOR THE ETHNOGRAPHY OF PEACE RESEARCH AND ITS INSTITUTIONS

Before delving into the empirical findings and historical overview of the German peace research community and the conclusions they yield about the creation of knowledge through conferences, it will be orienting to lay out some of the core theoretical concepts around ritual theory. Three of the most relevant treatments of ritual theory—Catherine Bell’s *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, Eric W. Rothenbuhler’s *Ritual Communication*, and J. David Knottnerus’s “Theory of Structural Reutilization”—not only present a historical overview of the evolution of the concept, but they also present a comprehensive review of theoretical elements, their limitations, and significant critiques.

Rothenbuhler’s definition of ritual is short and precise: “the voluntary performance of appropriately patterned behavior to symbolically effect or participate in the serious life.”¹ It is important to note that the concept of ritual does not automatically carry a negative con-

notation. Rothenbuhler's subsequent elaboration on ritually structured conflict "in more episodic and anti-institutional events" provides an important point for consideration when analyzing the evolution of the German peace movement: "Sit-ins, protest marches, burning effigies, verbal threats, chanting and so on, are all performances patterned to symbolically effect the serious life—to refer back to our definition of ritual."² Bell's insights into the relationship between ritual and power, encapsulated in her statement that "[r]itualization is very much concerned with power. Closely involved with the objectification and legitimation of an ordering of power as an assumption of the way things really are, ritualization is a strategic arena for the embodiment of power relations," form another vital component of my approach to the empirical analysis of the rituals of peace research.³

A linear progression along the lines of "we are organizing an event to control the agenda or discourse" may often not be evident over the course of an academic conference. It is necessary instead to explore the capillary system of power around the meeting and the different spaces that make up the system—from coffee breaks to presentations or seating arrangements—as well as the preparation and dissemination of findings. Rituals are real and important, and Rothenbuhler stresses that "among the devices for order, [they are] one of the most gentle and most available to rational reform when it is needed."⁴

In their outline of the theory of structural ritualization, David Knottnerus's and David LoConto state that "[t]he theory of structural ritualization focuses on the role that symbolic rituals play in social life and the processes by which ritualization occurs and leads to the formation, reproduction, and transformation of social structure."⁵ Their theory is based on a formal outline, which helps to embed rituals and ritual theory in a practical and researchable context of "[r]itualized symbolic practices [that] refer to the common form of social behavior in which people engage in regularized and repetitious actions when interacting with others."⁶ Knottnerus's theory is useful, because it bridges the gap between the history of ritual theory and other key terms such as symbolism, performance, and liminality that are central to my theoretical overview. A key aspect that Knottnerus's theory stresses right from the beginning is what he calls "strategic reutilization." It underscores the fact that this is an active process in which members of the society have the ability as agents to "strategically engage in ritualized practices and actively foster the reproduction or transformation of social structures for various purposes [...]. Such

'strategic ritualization', in which actors utilize or manipulate a system of ritualized practices in order to realize certain outcomes can have profound consequences for members of society."⁷

Also useful for the analysis that follows is Knottnerus's identification of three different types of agents who engage in strategic ritualization: ritual legitimators, ritual entrepreneurs, and ritual sponsors. Legitimators "are actors who authorize, validate, or accredit what ritualized symbolic practices are associated with a particular group or collectivity," entrepreneurs are "actors who employ ritualized symbolic practices [...] in the carrying out of economic activities"⁸ and sponsors refer to "actors who develop and promote events comprised of ritualized symbolic practices that are associated with (i.e., are representative of) a particular collectivity."⁹ Knottnerus's application of his theory to the acculturation of the Chinese American community, the Italian American community, or the emergence of behavior codes on American golf courses all highlight a cross- and multicultural component, which is applicable in the context of peacebuilding.¹⁰

Finally, Knotterus's theoretical explorations introduce four key terms to assess the effect of ritualized symbolic practices on group structure and social interaction. Salience, repetitiveness, homologousness, and resources focus on interrelated acts within a domain of interaction, the frequency of performances, the similarity between different symbolic practices, and the material needs required to engage in ritualized practices. These key terms anchor the analysis of rituals in different spatial contexts, including, as the ethnographic evidence will show, those governing peace research.¹¹

SYMBOLISM, TURNER, AND LIMINALITY

In addition to a focus on "ritual," it is useful to branch out to related theoretical concepts such as secular symbolism. Barbara Myerhoff and Jay Ruby's overview of the emergence of postmodern theorists in anthropology point out that "[a]ll have in common an emphasis on interpretation, a view of the world as basically constructed and symbolic. Reality is not discovered by scientific tools and methods but is understood and deciphered through a Hermeneutic method. A profoundly different worldview is implied, 'a refiguration of social thought.'"¹² Their critical evaluation of symbolism is to some extent based on anthropological research of the era that was funda-

mental to expanding a qualitative, relational view on rituals and symbols. They also stress the reflexivity of symbolism and “issues of location” that informed my research at home (in my native country Germany) and “at home” (as a British-trained researcher who had lived outside of Germany for many years).

By analyzing my own research with ritual theory, I face a key philosophical dilemma that Joseph R. Gusfield and Jerzy Michalowicz identify in their overview secular symbolism: “What is symbolic and metaphorical in one context and for one audience may be literal and mundane for another group in a different context.”¹³ Turner’s ethnographies are an important contribution toward engaging with some of these challenges further. His analysis of the symbolic structure of Ndembu rituals in Zambia outlined three different levels of symbolic meaning that go beyond the description of the activity: Exegetical, operational, and positional refer to the meaning obtained from the person carrying out the ritual, the meaning equated with use of ritual objects, and meaning derived by observing the relationship between symbols.¹⁴

The fluidity and nuances of symbolic meanings and therefore rituals are probably best captured in Turner’s concept of liminality. Turner used these terms to describe social relations and forms of symbolic action that are unique to the ritual process. Derived from the Latin term *limen*, which means “threshold,” he defines liminality as representing “the midpoint of transition in a status-sequence between two positions.”¹⁵ All rituals include liminal phases, Turner argued, in which traditional status distinctions dissolve, normative social constraints abate, and a unique form of solidarity, or *communitas*, takes hold.

Despite critics’ assertions that Turner is idealizing a simple state of humanity in a Marxist and utopian fashion that uses a reenchantment imaginary, liminality is an important conceptual milestone with particular resonance to the study of performances.¹⁶ This is clear in Jeffrey Alexander’s and Jason Mast’s definition of performance studies as “a set of performative acts that, if properly deployed, will catalyze liminality in the broader social arena, destabilize the normative structure, inspire criticism, and reacquaint mundane social actors with the primordial, vital, and existential dimensions of life.”¹⁷

With the conceptual framework for understanding ritual, power, and performance in place, it is now possible to fruitfully explore some of the rituals around conferences of the German peace research community.

THE PROTESTANT EDUCATION ACADEMY IN LOCCUM

Wolfgang Meinhardt,¹⁸ who at the time of my first conference participation in 2005, was at the verge of retirement after more than twenty-five years of managing the academy, always personally welcomes the larger delegations arriving by shuttle bus and jokingly refers to his role as being “part of the inventory.” He is also very active in various German civil society networks and is known for his witty, well-organized ways of working as facilitator, speaker, and organizer. Attached to the academy is an old monastery and a guided tour through the main building with the director is a quasi-obligatory part of any conference. Even those who had been there a couple of times still joined the tour. Meinhardt knows everything about the place and tells stories about all the rooms, paintings and details. But most important, one gets the feeling that he is sharing all this with a group of friends. He was thoroughly enjoying his job and being the host. This seems one of the reasons why so many people return to Loccum. Most older participants (forty years and above) have been attending seminars regularly over the years and decades, and there is an “in-group” of participants who know each other and Meinhardt well and reconnected very quickly and intensely.

Shortly after the arrival, he noticed that I had been observing one of the “in-groups” and he looked at me quite pleased and said, “This always happens when you bring these people together—that is what this academy is famous for.”¹⁹ Prior to my doctoral studies, I had worked for one year in a research project and my senior colleague as well as the head of the small peace research institute also belonged to the “circle of friends” of the academy. When some of the international participants arrived, he talked to them with a heavy German accent and was clearly not used to making conversation in English. In recognition of his involvement in the German peace movement, he was appointed an honorary professor at a local university with a reputable political science department, but some of the “circle of friends” who have become full professors or are still in the waiting line at other German universities felt uneasy about “Professor Wolfgang,” because of his lack of academic research and, more important, publications.

At many conferences, there are hardly any outsiders involved. These conferences almost always look interesting and the list of speakers and participants always reads like a “who’s who” for the respective topic. This shapes the participants’ mind-set and expectations:

"I will learn something new and interesting from experts in the field," they believe. I observed all of these dimensions of the ritual practice of the academic meeting when I attended a conference entitled "Fragile States—Can Stability and Peace be Supported from the Outside?" in 2006.

LOCCUM IN ACTION—HOW WORKSHOPS WORK

During the opening plenary session of the conference on fragile states, Karl Krause delivered what was considered the standout presentation to the group. He is a researcher at a think tank in Berlin. Krause is often referred to as one of "the new generation" of German peace researchers: He was a journalist who wrote a doctoral dissertation on fragile states that received numerous awards in Germany and is now referred to as "the person who invented the term fragile states for the German policy community." He is part of a huge, multiyear research project, primarily funded by one of the largest German research councils. He based his central arguments upon an existing framework, updating Dieter Senghaas' "civilizational hexagon" to develop a "fragile states hexagon." This was only one of his slides, but people asked immediately after the presentation whether it would be possible to have a photocopy of his hexagon—a graphic description and summary that fits on one page and that most people could relate to—mostly because they had encountered Dieter Senghaas' writings during their studies. This page, or "framework" as it was referred to, became one of the central artifacts and reference points of the workshop—less the experiences or discussions in the working groups on Nepal, Sudan, and Bosnia-Herzegovina which were all enriched by local experts (Figures 1 and 2).²⁰

The role of international participants and their contributions to the conference were also interesting to observe. Both the working group sessions on different fragile states (e.g., Nepal and Sudan) and the feedback in the plenary were led by the German participants, with the international guests only playing secondary roles. Some of the speakers in the introductory plenary had already left by the end of the second day of the conference, thereby missing the concluding sessions on Sunday that brought together the remaining group for a final plenary discussion. Most participants made deliberate efforts in the working groups to include international experts, but because of language differences it was difficult to bridge the divide between the German "in-group" and the international visitors. International experts were

Figure 1. Dieter Senghaas's Civilizational Hexagon.

reduced to “resource persons,” and the central question that emerged in the working groups was how German and European development cooperation and foreign policy should engage with fragile states—as opposed to listening to the few participants from fragile states to learn what it is like to live in such a country.

This conference is a first indication that the German community is linked into a broader transnational debate, but the rituals about whose expertise counts, how a conference is conducted, and how the challenges of fragile states are debated have not changed—probably due to the unchanging position of German experts as the “in-group.” The conference also shows, however, that some of the old networks and elements of the peace community are still alive and that they are flexible enough to adapt to new topics and discourses, even as they are built upon the models of the “founding fathers” of peace research as the example of Senghaas’s “civilizational hexagon” shows. The academy in Loccum then becomes a spatial manifestation of the processes of continuity and adaptation that the peace community has undergone over time and where ritual practices maintain a sense of community.

THE EVOLUTION OF LOCCUM—A DISCUSSION WITH THE FORMER DIRECTOR

Five years after observing both this workshop and another organized by a group of German peace researchers (which forms part of

Figure 2. Fragile States Hexagon. The different building blocks read (clockwise, from the top): oligopoly of force, limited affect control/ survival of the fittest, rent-seeking economy/ shadow economy, suppression/ instrumentalization of conflicts, hegemonic systems/ power-sharing models, politicized justice/ vigilante justice.

the basis for the analysis to follow), I had a chance to talk to the former director Wolfgang Meinhardt for almost two and half hours. He started the interview by declaring that he had organized about three hundred conferences throughout his twenty-seven-year-long career at the academy. His insights, especially on the early years of his work in the 1980s, are a rare and interesting account from someone who had been on the inside of the community and facilitated the emergence of a new German peace community in the mid-1990s. Loccum as a place and Meinhardt's career in particular represent in a nutshell some of the broader developments in the community and link them to the core topics of research, workshops, conferences, and ritualization.

The case study will start with excerpts from the interview in which Meinhardt comments on the earlier years of his career:

Loccum took off in the early 1980s and you may not even be able to imagine those days. There was a very strict separation of different milieus in all social discourses. The military discussed amongst themselves—if they discussed at all, the political parties along party lines and academia usually along political orientation or academic discourses. This was also the time when social movements gained momentum and I was particularly interested in the peace movement. I fell out with colleagues from other academies because my approach was that you cannot discuss security policy with only a small part of the spectrum of actors. I tried very hard from the beginning to bring together representatives of different parties, of the peace movement, of the army or from the corporate sector. This was really difficult at first.

[...]

From 1981 onwards I started to invite participants from Warsaw Pact states, e.g. from the GDR, USSR, Hungary or Poland. So there was something for everyone and something they did not find elsewhere. And if people liked it they came back—whether they were well-known deans or heads of departments, students or officers in the army.

[...]

You mention the word “ritual” in your research statement. I think that this is a very important observation. Nowadays, you only attend a conference because you feel that you cannot afford not attending it. You do not expect to hear something new and you do not really hear anything new anyways. This used to be completely different and it was very important for my work. I tried right from the beginning to include representatives from all parts of the security policy community. That was unheard of in the early days of my work. In the meantime many other academies and institutions have adopted a broader approach, but it took some of them a long time to get there. I would say that until about 1986 we were the only ones with such a broad-ranging invitation policy.²¹

Meinhardt’s account illustrates how he, as a ritual legitimator, was able to authorize and validate certain symbolic practices that were associated with the group that met in Loccum, especially with regard to the concept of “civilian conflict management” that

emerged in the early 1990s. It also shows how broader shifts in the performance culture, such as the increasing use of PowerPoint presentations or the rising importance of Berlin as a location for events, had a negative impact on events in Loccum and limited his influence over time.

Meinhardt notes:

The community aspect in Berlin is reduced to the organized program of the conference. But is important to talk on the side; that is how the emotional connections are established that seem to be equally important for your research as the topical connections. The emotional ties are longer lasting. You will remember the people even if you have already forgotten about the conference. These are key aspects. And such facilities make places like Loccum unique.²²

Meinhardt elaborated in some detail on how technology had changed presentation styles and also changed how they contributed to communication and discussion. Instead of dialogical processes, modern presentations tended to focus on ready-made PowerPoint presentations that disabled a dynamic discussion process and replaced it with ritualized communication that also changed the performative dynamics of presenting a topic rather than presenting oneself:

The bad price of increasing professionalism of the different communities is that the willingness to go into depth has been diminishing. There are, of course, academics who are specialized in one area, but in the social discourse there is a professionalism of knowing what you have to say, how you say it, what not to say and how to present yourself. You mentioned PowerPoint before. I think this is a disastrous development, because it is very harmful to the differentiation of arguments. If the aim to engage with each other during a conversation, this is very detrimental. I remember the 1980s when many of the presenters came to me on Friday evenings and apologized to me that they could not stick around and enjoy a beer and company because they went back to their rooms and incorporated new ideas they had heard throughout the day into their presentation. If presenters arrive these days with PowerPoint presentation it is all finished and polished and there is no space for changes and amendments. The technological change

changed the whole framework. I do not remember anybody asking for a flipchart for the past fifteen years, because he wanted to draft something; letting others participating in the process of developing an idea or argument thereby signaling that one is open for dialogue and willing to listen to the contributions of the others—that is over and gone.

[...]

What we are seeing today is that the participant who is doing a presentation on, say, child soldier integration in Liberia, excuses himself shortly afterwards, remarking that he had planned to stay for the full duration of the conference, but, unfortunately he has to leave early. And then he is gone and he is unable to listen to the next presentation with insights from, say, Uganda.²³

At the end of his reflections, Meinhardt made a remark on how the “reality” of the conferences is connected to “real” work and projects outside of Loccum and that it is difficult to establish any real impact. He also remarked on the role that his facilitation or the space Loccum played in initiating a new project:

Sometimes I think that Loccum is almost seen as a space for projecting your ideal ways of connecting and discussing in a conference setting and I do believe there will be a need for such spaces in the future.

[...]

I often learned years after the conference that two or more people who had met in Loccum were now working together on a big project. I mostly learned about these developments by chance. The important aspect of the conference is that something gets initiated and connections get established and it mostly takes place without the initiator actually noticing it. This feeling has been present all through the years.²⁴

Meinhardt’s detailed and vivid account helped tremendously to place my fieldwork into a broader historical perspective, but it was nonetheless worthwhile to “attend” another conference of peace researchers in the following paragraph.

A SECOND WORKSHOP IN LOCCUM

It is no coincidence that I found myself in the Protestant Academy again only a few months after the conference on fragile states. Since a few participants arrived from Berlin and others from the west and south of Germany, Loccum seemed to be a practical place to meet in the middle, between the centers of German peace research. The group comprised about fifteen peace researchers at different stages of their careers—a few doctoral students, some younger professors in their early forties, and a core of middle-aged, middle-career academics who have not managed to find “proper” academic employment yet, that is, being full professors at one of the respected universities with dedicated departments for peace research. This specific working group is a subgroup of the German Association for Peace and Conflict Studies that was established in 1968 as an umbrella association for different strands of peace research.²⁵ Their annual conference is a highlight for the community and usually attracts the “who’s who” of German-speaking peace research. Working groups organized by several themes meet outside the annual conference and are loosely managed by an established academic to discuss draft papers and to get feedback in a small, safe space.

During a chat with Wolfgang Meinhardt, Lars Reincke arrived at the venue and welcomed the director and myself. Lars is an academic in his early forties who has never lived, worked, or researched outside of Germany, but has an impeccable academic career; he is also very active in participating in conferences and workshops and is an advisor to the German government. When Lars moved on, Wolfgang turned to me and said, “Lars reminds me a lot of [professor and director of a development research institute in Germany]. They both have been coming to Loccum since their student days and I have seen their careers thrive ever since.”²⁶ About six months later, Lars became a full professor for peace research at a German university.

The event was highly structured, and centered on papers unified through commentary by a discussant who had been sent the papers for review only a few days in advance. This shortened time frame reflects a significant change in the purpose that conferences serve for scholars who come to present their work. In the past, authors tended to read out papers and demanded a lot of time and attention from the participants. During one of the breaks in the proceedings, Lars told me that the papers used to be treated as work in progress of the

authors, but most papers nowadays tended to be long, theoretical papers that often represented the researcher's long-standing interests, that is, themes s/he has been working on for many years and that would easily comprise twenty-five to thirty-five pages of single-spaced font. Papers engaged with normative aspects of the discipline such as constructivism as an approach to peace research, the democratic peace debate, or the history of peace research in Germany. Michael Schmidt presented his work on the limits of statehood and remarked that he will be sending one of his doctoral students to the Democratic Republic of Congo to collect empirical data. Michael is part of the younger, research-active crowd, many of whom enjoy secure employment and institutional resources, but are less engaged with any type of field research or exchanges with the policy community. Michael was one among several researchers who seemed to focus on abstract and theoretical debates with a long history inside the German peace research community.

The events created a "formalized informality" that helps to conserve a tradition of German peace research that is aware of its inner workings and bureaucratic developments, yet is to some extent unaffected by developments outside this circle of friends and colleagues. Regardless of whether they are in contact with the international research realm, especially outside traditional political science peace research or on the ground in fragile states, the events served the purpose of grounding participants in the history of German discourses in peace research. Here, Knottnerus's concept of theoretical structuralization mentioned in the introductory paragraphs comes to mind. Lars became a "ritual entrepreneur" who was able to build social capital using the ritualized symbolic practices that animate the group in the academy in Loccum. Although he is unlikely to have had a direct monetary gain from the conference, by acquiring financial support for the workshop and being able to host an event in Loccum and potentially preparing a publication after the event, he was able to increase, or at least to solidify, his "market value" in the German peace research community.

It was also interesting to be in the same place for a second time after the bigger event of the fragile state conference and to meet some participants who attended both events. The academy in Loccum seemed to contribute to the timelessness of events, or, more precisely, of being in a time-research "bubble" that seems largely resistant to inputs from the outside world. However, this event is more than a

ritualized performance of an academic workshop of peace researchers. The networking that took place during the breaks, and especially during the evenings, was a critical site for the exchange of information about job and funding opportunities, the promotion of members, and the dissemination of career advice for the younger observers, some of whom were looking for places to start a PhD. Built within the framework of the academy, and embedded within the space that Lars Reincke and other senior participants had created over the course of the weekend, was an informal network of academic patronage. The senior participants within this network allowed the next generation to participate and present, but limited the discussions to political science methodologies and traditional theoretical approaches. The analysis that follows sheds light on the means by which a specific kind of empirical knowledge became a privileged commodity whose production was often more important than its application or critical review.

THE CONTEXT AND IMPACT OF THE GERMAN PEACE MOVEMENT IN POLICYMAKING: A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

Although the meetings detailed thus far are small and specific, they reside within much broader and clearly significant historical currents. The evolution of the German peace research community provides a good example of how policy spaces, performances of research and policy advice, as well as rituals of influencing discourses, develop over time.

One of the most important developments of the peace research community has been a transformation from a social and academic community (outside or loosely linked to) the policy discourse to a more organized and professionalized community inside the sphere of policymaking in its broadest sense. Tracing this transformation requires a historical overview of the relationship between the peace movement and state institutions, an assessment of the post-1998 context after the election of the first Social Democratic-Green Party coalition, and, finally, an analysis of some of the key epistemological questions about contemporary peace research in light of my own field research. I will present a twofold argument in this part.

The German peace movement and the broader social, political, and cultural context in which it emerged and had an impact on politics that has been analyzed extensively, especially in the context of “new social movements” and the role of civil society in European

Cold War policymaking.²⁷ There are many publications in German, ranging from popular books to academic papers and doctoral dissertations. The archive of the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt, one of the first peace research institutions that was established in 1970, lists more than three thousand publications of its staff between 1962 and 2009.²⁸ In particular, Steve Breyman and Alice Holmes Cooper, who conducted field research in Germany and reviewed substantial amounts of German and English literature for their research, are able to help us to understand the social and political climates in those decades. In fact, many of the members of the peace research and peace-building community who I met during my field research referred to them at some point in our conversations, thus offering insights into the broader discursive space in which debates in Germany have been taking place. In his conclusion to *Movement Genesis*, Breyman writes:

The 1980s German peace movement [...] emerged against a domestic background of legitimacy crisis, party failure, postmaterial value change, and an ample supply of experienced activists. [...] Citizens grew afraid, organized and looked for alternative parties and policies. They gathered resources, mobilized consensus, and acted in pursuit of goals.²⁹

His analysis is complemented by Cooper's, which also takes the transition period at the end of the Cold War and the start of the Social Democratic-Green Party government in 1998 into consideration. For many observers, this was a milestone in the "march through the institutions" that many activists had demanded in the past decades.³⁰

Breyman and Cooper summarize the overall perception of the impact of the peace movement on German politics that is shared by most researchers, activists, and practitioners. The historical discourse of a successful social movement that brought peace-related topics into the political mainstream of German policymaking continues to have a powerful impact on debates inside the community in Germany today. However, the challenges that any "institutionalization" brings to a social and political issue are less frequently discussed.

In order to better understand the German peace movement and the development of the current discourse coalition, the unique role of peace research and peace researchers needs to be taken into account. Analysts agree that the cooperation between the growing academic

community of peace researchers and activist organizations was one of the key features of the German peace movement, as Jeffrey Herf explains: “[P]eace research in West Germany had an explicit and proudly proclaimed desire to unit theory and practice, to be more than a ‘merely’ academic exercise.”³¹ Breyman shares a particularly vivid account of the close cooperation between theoretical, academic findings within the broader social debates and activism:

Research results were integrated into the prodigious output of topical defense policy books pouring forth from the typewriters and word processors of journalists and other movement sympathizers during the early eighties. Peace researchers performed an enormously important service for the movement. Without the alternative strategies proposed by researchers [...] the movement would have remained simply a negation. The alliance between movement and peace researchers was indispensable and one of the movement’s greatest strengths.³²

This alliance between peace researchers and university departments did not only provide alternatives to the “hard” facts of the defense and security studies community, but also, more importantly, established a new knowledge base within the peace community. Some of the roots of the current knowledge management discourse that I encountered during my field research—and the idea that bringing together various groups of experts and practitioners is in itself a valuable exercise—lie in those early links between the peace movement and the broader constituencies of peace research. It is also noteworthy that the role of the counter-experts that Breyman describes has been changing in today’s professional and professionalized world of peacebuilding and peace research so that divergent ideologies are marginalized. During the Cold War, in particular, the counter-experts were understood to be instrumental in bridging the knowledge gap between topical experts (e.g., on missile issues), the activities of the movement (e.g., demonstrations, blockades, or petitions), and the passive support of large parts of the public as expressed in opinion polls. In an atmosphere of general distrust in government or the NATO political–military complex, the counter-experts gained legitimacy as public intellectuals.³³ Today, ritual entrepreneurs like Lars Reincke think more strategically about research funding, engaging with policymakers and maintaining a status which does not exclude them from the inner circles of the community.

PEACE RESEARCH AND PEACEBUILDING POLICYMAKING SINCE
1998

Cooper sums up the situation in the years following the election of a Social Democratic-Green coalition government in 1998 as follows: "The SPD-Green government in power since 1998 marks one of the high points of this institutionalization of left-libertarian social movements. And yet, within a year of taking office, the new government had already dashed many hopes for significant reform."³⁴ She is referring to Germany's engagement in the military action in former Yugoslavia, particularly the air strikes on Serbian targets. This marks the beginning of a new foreign, security, and development policy. Even before these new developments, Cooper noted significant challenges to the German peace movement that hurt genuine movement mobilization and the inclusion of larger part of the public. The so-called war on terrorism was perceived as a genuine threat to Western societies, including Germany, and its contribution to NATO troops in Afghanistan was widely regarded as a necessary contribution to global security. Foreign policy was also regarded as more complex and less of an existential issue than during the Cold War confrontation, as the threat of nuclear annihilation was replaced by a public discourse of more manageable military operation in the framework of global expectations of Germany.³⁵

While the peace community lost some of its constituents and momentum in the wider society and on the streets, the institutionalization within the policy community became more important and powerful than ever before. A cornerstone of the federal government, after its reelection in 2002, was the "Civilian Crisis Prevention, Conflict Resolution and Post-Conflict Peace-Building," which has become a significant point of reference for the peace community. In one of the few detailed accounts of how the Action Plan came into existence, peace researcher Christoph Weller describes in detail how an editorial team was set up to draft the plan under the supervision of the Foreign Office and how experts from ministries, civil society, and academia consensually drafted a seventy-page government white paper. After including feedback from various interest groups, the document was accepted a year later as official government policy and presented to the public.³⁶

Weller's account of how the Action Plan was created is an important example of how the policy process that eventually led to the

government's reference document was structured. He references an "innovative arrangement" (in the area of foreign and development policy making), however, does not offer insights as to what was discussed during the meetings, or who introduced certain ideas into the discussion. Also, though more implicitly, Weller's description says a few things about meetings, workshops, or the more institutionalized formats that do not seem to be part of the policy process itself. There are no references to individual participants who are only described through their institutional affiliation (identified as "experts from. . ."), acting on behalf of seemingly larger institutional rationales. The black box of policymaking remains closed and the final document is treated as the single aim of the process. The peacebuilding discourse only becomes real the moment a lengthy document is presented to the public. In the summary on the Foreign Office's website, the Action Plan becomes indistinguishable in language and style from any other policy document.³⁷

The questions remain about how powerful and influential the new, institutionalized policy arrangements that have been emerging in the phase of professional peacebuilding from the second half of the 1990s onwards have really been. Gnther Maihold is the only academic in Germany who has written critically about the Action Plan and the advisory board. He concludes that the arrangements are more bureaucratic and they miss the opportunity to establish a structural link between approaches and actions that would enable a comprehensive conflict prevention strategy; instead, it stresses the bureaucratic principle of ministerial self-regulation rather than thinking outside the policymaking box.³⁸

Overall, it appears that maintaining rituals in the peace research community was one way of dealing with some of the new, seemingly contradictory challenges that the community faced in the early 2000s. Dieter Lutz, the director of a peace research institute, who had been active in the community from the early 1970s until his death in 2003, remarked in one of his last presentations that "[o]bviously, peace research supported by the state has failed to prove convincingly its legitimacy to the Realpolitik in the past decades and to win over a sufficient and growing number of political decision-makers, i.e. financial supporters."³⁹ Marcel Baumann recalls another lecture by a founding father of peace research in which he expressed his unhappiness about the impact of peace research on the German Realpolitik "within the agendas of political science and international relations" and how

peace research “has always been governed or dominated by the methodologies of the two subjects.”⁴⁰ Baumann also quotes from an interview with another long-time peace researcher who pointed out that “peace science has failed to deliver a new notion of science that is directed toward the future and aimed at developing ideas, strategies, and theories that can be applied to future threats or crisis scenarios.”⁴¹ On the other hand, there are more optimistic voices. In outlining some of the achievements of peace research and the challenges for the next generation of scholars, Sabine Fischer and Astrid Sahm conclude that “it can be stated that the fourth generation has significantly changed and enhanced the scope of topics of peace and conflict research. They are working on their empirical topics in more detail and formulate their normative motifs and aims less explicitly than the previous generations.”⁴²

What these examples show is that notwithstanding some challenges to the mainstream discourse the division between the inner and outer worlds of policy and academia remains relatively unchallenged. Neither do the texts have an I, a personal and capable subject, nor do they relate their theoretical and often abstract reflections to the professional work, institutions, and discourses in which they are engaging. This phenomenon is evident in the proceedings of academic conferences, during meetings of the board of the German Peace Foundation, and in the interplay between the advisors to government bodies (such as the board for civilian crisis management) and the Federal Foreign Office in the consultations that form part of the government’s dialogue around the Action Plan. Such a critical engagement does not seem possible at the moment or in the near future, as many discussions during my field research indicated how just deeply positivistic epistemology continues to be embedded in the prevailing discourse.

Interviews with junior academics who work at peace research institutions or university departments confirmed a very stable core community that goes hand in hand with developments in other, similar communities. The younger peace researchers also confirm that different parts of the research community still struggle with the concept of self-reflexivity and often remain inside historical academic mind-sets and rituals. One of them explains:

You mentioned “the peace community” earlier, but in my understanding there are more like three active communities in Germany. I grew up with the quantitative community at the

University of Constance. Then there is the traditional peace research community and third a kind of think tank community featuring [think tanks in Berlin]. But they all follow similar patterns, but hardly communicate with each other, except for coming together at a few conferences throughout the year. The traditional peace research community is very, very consensual, very conservative and fixated on traditions and traditional events. [...] So there are similarities, but I would say it is almost impossible to talk about “the” peace research community.⁴³

As mentioned before, when it comes to the framework of the analysis, the historical overview of the evolution of the German peace research community is a good example of how policy spaces, performances of research, and policy advice, as well as rituals of influencing discourses, develop over time. Most notably, changes over time, governments, and sociopolitical discussions take place within a stable framework of acceptable input into the public sphere and are regimented through ritual—whether those guiding the creation of policy or those governing academic research.

The range of advisory capacities for peace researchers has increased, as has the number of commissioned research projects and events, such as workshops and conferences. In short, the performances may have changed over the years, but within the framework of a growing professionalization of the community the ritual pillars remain firmly in place. This is less a question of whether there is less activism today than there was previously, because Rothenbuhler reminds us that outdoor protest activities can be as ritualized as a discussion in a conference venue.⁴⁴ However, it is noteworthy that the location of the performance has shifted to some extent from public spaces (both indoor and outdoor) of parliamentary speeches, marches, or well-attended events in universities, to semi- or quasi-public spaces, like those inside meeting rooms or academic conferences. This locational shift has important implications for the continued production of the discourse of knowledge.

Coffee breaks at conferences, travel time and space, or other informal side events can be easily subsumed under this concept. The example of the Action Plan fits into this model, as Weller’s previous descriptions hint at an open space, a process for discussions with a range of stakeholders, and a seemingly open-ended dialogue through

which a commonly agreed-upon product in the form of the Action Plan was created. But what these new spaces miss is an important element of struggle, ambiguity, and a state that Turner described as “betwixt and between the structural past and the structural future.”⁴⁵ Many workshops in Loccum in the pre-digital era up to the mid-1990s may have had an element of liminality at the point when participants engaged the process of developing new models, using the tensions between different political views to stimulate discussions and generate potential for discovering new knowledge and promoting shifts in opinions.

It has become clear by now that stability in change is part of the evolutionary process that the peace community has been witnessing in the past decades. Given the scale of national and international social and value change between the 1960s and today, it is striking to note how managed and contained the debates and interactions inside the community in Germany have remained. As such, one never knows whether their presentation, paper, book, or article may have some influence in the end. Ritual and communication are vital, interconnected aspects of both knowledge creation and social action; Rothenbuhler links them together when he describes the outcome of ritual processes as “communication without information.”⁴⁶

CONCLUSIONS

My observations from two conferences, excerpts from interviews with German academics, and the analysis of relevant historical texts clearly indicate that structural ritualization is a suitable concept for capturing the “stability in change” that has taken place in the German peace community over at least three decades. Additional and related concepts such as liminality and performance help to develop a fuller understanding of the shifts from open-ended discussions of content to professionalized exchanges that have taken place and of the increase in ritualized patterns that are readily observable at conferences and events.

At this point in the analysis, it is possible to link the empirical insights formed from the ethnographic data to Knottnerus’s four key terms that are essential for structural ritualization. There is an increasing interrelatedness in the interaction domain of the peace community (salience): As Berlin becomes a more representative locus of the events of the peace community, ritual communication takes place within the

broadier “bubble” of lobbying in the capital. PowerPoint presentations that can be used for different audiences without adapting them create more homogenous communication materials (homologousness) that are repeated in other areas, for example, in publishing or producing different communication materials. Events not only follow routines, but also are repeated and multiplied (repetitiveness) and become an essential part of the *raison d’être* for knowledge management and learning. Resources are available (Lars Reincke’s workshop, for example) and members of the community position themselves as ritual entrepreneurs to manage liminal spaces in ways that reduce their potential to become transformative spaces. They instead remain spaces for the discursive management of more acceptable knowledge that will not lead to protest or resistance.

Key assumptions about the influence of academic research and scholarly debates about shaping policy have changed very little over time. Conferences are seen as a vital platform for exchange, but the performances have become more professionalized. Increasingly, participants enter the conference space anticipating what they are expected to say, how they are supposed to frame presentations, and what suitable reactions or comments may be. This professionalization, which started in the 1990s, stemmed from two sources. The first came from government and policymakers opening new avenues of dialogue, as it did in consulting with civil society over the Action Plan. The second grew out of the response from civil society, which was to become more organized in such ways as establishing umbrella organizations like the Platform for Civilian Conflict Management. To engage with one another and coordinate among themselves, different parts of the community moved inward, into new indoor spaces where conferences, meetings, and knowledge production now take place. Even specific institutions were set up with the mandate of “managing knowledge” between different stakeholders of the peace community. Performances have been part of the peace movement from its earliest days, but they have grown in sophistication and are now an essential part of the organizational repertoire for “influencing policy” through knowledge production and management.

On the surface, notions of liminality seem to be remarkably stable. Conferences and workshops have always been shaped by liminal spaces, whether in the transition from a panel, side conversations in the break-out group, the gathering at the plenary, or the coffee, lunch, or dinner break. Traveling, moving, and networking have

always been part of the experience, and as Wolfgang Meinhardt pointed out, very often the whole conference experience itself became a liminal space for learning and planning a new project. Clearly, however, the balance has shifted over time. Whereas unique panel discussions used to be an incentive to attend a conference and enjoy the presentations, academic observers confirm that they basically only attend because of the networking and informal exchanges. It is as if the former liminal space has become an institutionalized space and knowledge sharing has become part of the ritualized experience. The other important factor is that liminal spaces seem to have become more stable and less fluid, especially with the emergence of policy, research, and networking hubs such as Berlin and Bonn. There is also the assumption among researchers and policymaking professionals that spaces like Berlin have almost become permanent liminal spaces given the sheer number of workshops and amount of planning time, respectively. This falls in line with the broader social and cultural developments in academe, such as raising one's profile, expanding one's network, and seizing opportunities to promote oneself or one's organization—all of which have become part of normal working routines, especially in busy places such as Berlin or Bonn.

These shifts may also indicate that liminality has lost some of its appeal as a concept when different or unequal counterparts meet in a unique space. Nowadays, as Meinhardt confirms, most people know what is expected from them when they attend a conference. Rather than using liminal spaces as opportunities for new approaches or critical learning, the challenges of such spaces are either silenced inside the conference or workshop, or replaced with more comfortable rituals, often linked to producing publications and "more of the same" products such as working papers, edited books, or round table discussions. It is worth noting here that in the case of Germany no powerful organization, let alone a conspiracy, is in place to suppress critical, new, or nonmainstream knowledge. One of the values of using a qualitative approach that combines sociological and historical insights with ethnographic data is that it provides a more complex picture of how power works within some of the more mundane developments of the production of peace and conflict knowledge.

Not surprisingly, communication patterns have become more ritualized as well. As Rothenbuhler mentions, performing has become more important than informing. The response to the hexagon that Karl Krause presented on a PowerPoint slide at the fragile states ple-

nary is a good example of how stable the influence of broad, visualized concepts is. It also shows how developing such concepts has become an important marker along the rite of passage to becoming an expert in the community. This may have to do with broader academic and research discourses in Germany, but Krause's hexagon nonetheless registered just how powerful such symbols had become. Rather than focusing on the expertise and practical examples of the international participants at the workshop, the discussions continually went back to Krause's model and the hexagon.

The increase in PowerPoint presentations, some of which most likely have been or will be recycled at other events, further increases the ritualized aspects and reduces discussions and evolutionary process of co-constructing knowledge among a very small audience. In the end, ritual entrepreneurs take advantage of the needs of professional communities and create a marketplace for material and immaterial goods or personal exchanges. In Germany, academic conferences and the routines around theoretical papers have become institutionalized by a small group of organizers and venues, fostering "indoor rituals" rather than an "outdoor" peace movement that was active in postwar Germany for many years.

Peace researchers have a responsibility to challenge the professional "habitus" of academic conferences even if many academic systems increasingly focus on "impact" and formal conference presentations as boxes that can be ticked on performance review sheets. Whether they employ participatory publication tools, for example, a "book sprint," social media, or communication technology to reach out to different stakeholders in their communities depends on the topic and audience. Shorter presentations, fewer formal sessions, and open space for sufficient networking are only a few simple first steps toward creating more engaging gatherings and disseminating critical ideas in crowded and mediatized public spaces.

NOTES

1. Eric Rothenbuhler, *Ritual Communication* (London: Sage Publications, 1998), 27.
2. *Ibid.*, 45.
3. Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 170 (emphasis in original).
4. Rothenbuhler, xiii.

5. David Knottnerus and David G. LoConto, "Strategic Ritualization and Ethnicity," in *Sociological Spectrum* Vol. 23, No. 4 (2003): 428.
6. *Ibid.*, 429.
7. David Knottnerus, "The Theory Of Structural Ritualization," in *Advances in Group Processes* Vol. 14, No. 1 (1997): 275.
8. Knottnerus and LoConto, "Strategic Ritualization and Ethnicity," 431–432.
9. *Ibid.*, 433 (my emphasis).
10. Jin Guan and David Knottnerus, "A Structural Ritualization Analysis of the Process of Acculturation and Marginalization of Chinese Americans," in *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations* Vol. 25, No. 1 (1999), 43–95; Knottnerus and LoConto, "Strategic Ritualization and Ethnicity," 428; Monica Varner and David Knottnerus, "Civility, Rituals, and Exclusion," in *Sociological Inquiry* Vol. 72, No. 3 (2002), 426–441.
11. Cf. Varner and Knottnerus, "Civility, Rituals, and Exclusion," 428–429.
12. Barbara Myerhoff and Jay Ruby, "Introduction," in *A Crack in the Mirror: Reflective Perspectives in Anthropology*, ed. Jay Ruby (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982), 7 (my emphasis).
13. Joseph Gusfield and Jerzy Michalowicz, "Secular Symbolism," in *Annual Review of Sociology* Vol. 10, No. 1 (1984), 421.
14. cf. Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967).
15. Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1974), 237.
16. Jeffrey Alexander and Jason Mast, "Introduction," in *Social Performance. Symbolic Action, Cultural Pragmatics, and Ritual*, ed. Jeffrey C. Alexander, Bernhard Giesen, and Jason Mast (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 11.
17. *Ibid.*, 12.
18. Although some informants did not object to being included with their real names, all names and institutional affiliations have been anonymized.
19. Wolfgang Meinhardt, Skype interview with author, December 10, 2010.
20. Dieter Senghaas, "The Civilisation of Conflict," in *Berghof Handbook of Conflict Transformation*, eds. Alex Austin, Martina Fischer and Norbert Ropers (Berlin: Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management, 2004), 6.
21. Meinhardt, interview.
22. *Ibid.*
23. *Ibid.*
24. *Ibid.*
25. More information on the German Association for Peace and Conflict Studies is available on their website, including a historical overview "Die AFK, ein Selbstportrait" at <http://www.afk-web.de/afk-home/ueber-die-afk.html>; accessed 25 April 2016.
26. Meinhardt, interview.
27. Cf. Steve Breyman, *Movement Genesis* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998); Steve Breyman, *Why Movements Matter* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2001); David Gress, *Peace and Survival* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1985); Jeffrey Herf, "War, Peace, and the Intellectuals," in *International Security* Vol. 10, No. 4 (1986); Alice Holmes Cooper, "The West German Peace Move-

ment and the Christian Churches," in *The Review of Politics* Vol. 50, No. 1 (1988); Alice Holmes Cooper, "Public-Goods Movements and the Dimensions of Political Process," in *Comparative Political Studies* Vol. 29, No. 3 (1996).

28. See <http://hsfk.de/Library.7.0.html?&L=1> for more information on the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt's library.

29. Breyman (1998), *Movement Genesis*, 199.

30. Alice Holmes Cooper, "Social movements in the Federal Republic," in *Germany at fifty-five: Berlin ist nicht Bonn*, ed. James Sperling (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).

31. Herf, "War, Peace, and the Intellectuals," 180.

32. Breyman (1998), *Movement Genesis*, 69.

33. cf. *Ibid*, 71.

34. Cooper, "Social movements in the Federal Republic," 221.

35. Cooper, "Public-Goods Movements and the Dimensions of Political Process," 112.

36. Christoph Weller, "Zivile Konfliktbearbeitung im Aufwind?," in *Friedensgutachten 2004*, ed. Bruno Schoch, Corinna Hauswedell, Christoph Weller, Ulrich Ratsch and Reinhard Mutz (Muenster: Lit Verlag, 2004), 281.

37. Bundesregierung, Aktionsplan "Zivile Krisenprävention, Konfliktlösung und Friedenskonsolidierung" (Berlin: Bundesregierung, 2004) (available online at http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/DE/Aussenpolitik/Friedenspolitik/Krisenpraevention/Grundlagen/Aktionsplan_node.html).

38. Günther Maihold, "Die sicherheitspolitische Wendung der Entwicklungspolitik," in *Internationale Politik und Gesellschaft* No. 4/2005 (2005), 37.

39. Dieter Lutz, "Friedensforschung-normativ, interdisziplinär, praxisorientiert," in *Friedens- und Konfliktforschung in Deutschland. Eine Bestandsaufnahme*, ed. Ulrich Eckern, Leonie Herwartz-Emden and Rainer-Olaf Schultze (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2004), 31.

40. Marcel Baumann, "The Trouble with the Peace Science's 'Trouble-Makers,'" in *Peace Review* Vol. 20, No. 4 (2008), 455.

41. *Ibid*, 457.

42. Sabine Fischer and Astrid Sahn, "Friedensforschung und Normativität," in *Die Zukunft des Friedens. Die Friedens- und Konfliktforschung aus der Perspektive der jüngeren Generationen*, ed. Egbert Jahn, Sabine Fischer, and Astrid Sahn (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2005), 70.

43. German peace researcher, Skype interview with author, October 20, 2010.

44. Rothenbuhler, 45.

45. Victor Turner, "Dewey, Dilthey, and Drama," in *The Anthropology of Experience*, ed. Victor Turner and Edward Bruner (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1986), 41.

46. Rothenbuhler, 22.