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Ecologies of Social Movements: Student Mobilization during the 1989 Prodemocracy Movement in Beijing¹

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Based on 70 interviews with informants who were mostly students during the 1989 Beijing student movement, the author found that the ecology of university campuses in Beijing enclosed a huge number of students in a small area with a unique spatial distribution and regulated their spatial activities. This ecology nurtured many close-knit student networks, as well as directly exposed all Beijing students to a collective action environment when the movement started. These ecological conditions not only sustained a high rate of movement participation but also facilitated the formation of many ecology-dependent strategies of student mobilization, which in turn patterned the dynamics of the movement.

After the late 1960s, social movement studies gradually moved away from traditional breakdown theories to resource mobilization approaches that emphasized the role of organizations and interpersonal networks in movement participation. The transition started with Pinard (1971) and von Eschen, Kirk, and Pinard (1971) who criticized Kornhauser's (1959) mass society theory and argued that organizational membership does not always draw people into routine politics while discouraging people's participation in social movements. Then, Oberschall (1973) proposed a model that argues that both communal and associational ties facilitate movement mobilization. In turn, Tilly's (1978) mobilization model emphasized organizations, and McAdam's (1982) political process model noted the importance of black churches and black college groups during the Civil Rights movement in America. Since then, this perspective—variously named re-

¹ The author would like to thank Maurice Pinard, Steven Rytina, Donald von Eschen, Suzanne Staggenborg, Robert Sampson, William Parish, John McCarthy, Craig Jenkins, Qin Chen, and the *AJS* reviewers for their insightful comments on the early versions of this article. Direct all correspondence to Dingxin Zhao, Department of Sociology, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois 60637.

source mobilization model I (Jenkins 1987; Perrow 1979), political process model (McAdam 1982), or solidarity model (Useem 1980)—has prevailed in social movement studies.²

When it came to the 1980s, studies of movement mobilization began to focus on microlevel issues and network-based mobilization. Most studies in this tradition suggest that people are recruited into social movements through social movement organizations or activist and friendship networks and that the number of ties with movement activists are correlated with movement participation (Klandermans and Oegema 1987; Marwell, Oliver, and Prahl 1988; McAdam 1986; McAdam and Paulsen 1993; McCarthy 1987; Opp and Gern 1993; Snow, Zurcher, and Eklund-Olson 1980; Walsh and Warland 1983). Recent studies by Gould (1991, 1993, 1995) used not only network ideas but also more advanced network techniques to reveal things that would remain uncovered with the conventional “counting the number of ties” type of studies.

The publications above, and most other works that were not discussed here, did not have the same agendas, and indeed there were many debates among them. Yet, because of this collective effort, one idea gradually formed and has now become conventional wisdom. That is, organizations and preexisting networks are the basis of movement mobilization.³ As a child of this tradition, I never intended to deviate from it. Especially, by 1992 and 1993, the time when this research was conducted, scholars had tried to explain the uprising in China and the East European revolutions in terms of the rise of civil society in totalitarian states.⁴ Although most of these analyses are very thin, they resonate with the resource mobilization paradigm. Thus, in interviews, I designed several questions to probe in that direction. As expected, I found many signs of network-based communication and mobilization. Yet, many of these instances could not be understood without taking campus ecology into account. Moreover, the

² The phrase *resource mobilization I theory* was coined to distinguish it from McCarthy and Zald's (1973, 1977) version of resource mobilization theory, which attributed the rise of social movements in the 1960s to the increased supply of resources (particularly discretionary time and money).

³ In this article, I define *organization* as a social group that is constructed to seek specific goals through coordinated effort. It usually has a nonrandom division of labor, power, and communication responsibilities (Etzioni 1964). Churches, unions, neighborhood associations, student and professional associations, and social movement organizations are some examples. I will discuss the concept of social networks later in this article.

⁴ For the Chinese case, see Huan (1989), Strand (1993), and Sullivan (1990), and for East European cases, see Di Palma (1991), Ost (1990), Poznanski (1992), and Tismaneanu (1990).

campus ecology had facilitated student mobilization beyond movement organizations and student networks.⁵ Let me provide an example.

Almost all campuses in Beijing are separated from the outside by brick walls with only a few entrances guarded by the university's own security forces. During the 1989 Beijing student movement (BSM), no police or soldiers had ever gone inside campuses to repress students. After talking to students, I found that the existence of campus walls was important for the development of the movement. Because of the walls, roads on campus are no longer part of the public road system, and police cannot get inside a campus without clear consent from school authorities. Here, even if some school authorities in Beijing were unsympathetic to the movement, they might not be interested in calling police to handle students. If they did so, they would alienate the students and would have more troubles in dealing with students after the police left. Therefore, the simple existence of walls has created a low-risk environment and facilitated student mobilization.

Discrepancies between the theories that guided my data collection and empirical results pushed me to look more seriously at the role of campus ecology in student mobilization. I found that the campus ecology affected student mobilization during the 1989 BSM in the following ways. (1) It facilitated the spread of dissident ideas before the movement and the transmission of news about a particular event during the movement. (2) It nurtured many dormitory-based student networks. These networks were the basis of mutual influence, even coercion, among students and, therefore, sustained a high rate of student participation. (3) It shaped students' spatial activities on the campus, creating a few places that most students had to pass or stay daily. These places became centers of student mobilization. (4) The concentration of many universities in one district encouraged mutual imitation and interuniversity competition for activism among students from different universities. (5) The ecology also facilitated the formation of many ecology-dependent strategies of collective action. Those actions patterned the dynamics of the movement.⁶ The above findings and their theoretical implications will be the focus of this article.

⁵ By *ecology*, I mean the impact of the campus physical environment on students and the reaction of students toward the environment. By *physical environment*, I refer to design factors of the architecture in each university and the layout of the entire university district in Beijing. The physical environment determines the spatial distribution and daily spatial activities of students, which shape student interactions through passive encounters and active networking.

⁶ *Ecology-dependent strategies* are a relatively stable set of mobilizing strategies. Their effectiveness and their likelihood to be adopted by movement activists are based largely on particular ecological conditions.

Scattered mentions of the impact of campus environment on movement mobilization have appeared in social movement literature. It was noticed that the campus environment had facilitated student movements in the United States during the 1960s (e.g., Berk 1974; Heirich 1971; Lofland 1970) and student movements in Russia (Kassow 1989) and China (Chow 1967; Wasserstrom 1991). For example, Heirich (1971, pp. 59–65) describes how changes in campus layout at Berkeley since the 1950s made Berkeley students more available for political recruitment during the 1960s. Kassow (1989) reports that the dining halls built by Nicholas II for students in Moscow to get cheap meals became meeting places where students could trade news, make new contacts, and hold assemblies. Chow (1967) and Wasserstrom (1991) note that the congested living condition on Chinese campuses facilitated student activism in early modern China. There are other nonstudent movement examples as well. In the 19th century in Western Europe, a nascent civil society coexisted with traditional communities, and most social movements occurring in that period, such as Chartism in England and the Paris Commune in Paris, were organized by formal organizations that relied heavily on the infrastructure of traditional community (with ecology implied) to extend their mobilizing potential (Gould 1995; Mann 1993, chap. 15). Additionally, community movements in the contemporary West (e.g., Delgado 1986; Perry, Gillespie, and Parker 1976) or the black riots in America also tended to have an ecology-dependent process of mobilization. As Feagin and Hahn (1973) and Fogelson (1971) mention, the sudden and massive black riots in some American cities were made possible partly because of the densely populated black ghettos and the fact that residents in those areas tended to spend a great deal of their leisure time on the street. However, these and other writers treated the ecological impact on movement mobilization in passing without much elaboration. Even Lofland's article, which may be considered an exception, only deals with the issue of homogeneity in an abstract way.

Nevertheless, ecological perspectives are not new in sociology.⁷ The approach adopted here resonates with human ecology, a paradigmatic perspective of early American sociologists. However, human ecologists have been interested in the forces behind the spatial order of urban communities, such as land values and the logistics requirements of an economy (Burgess 1925; McKenzie 1924; Park 1915, 1936; Warner 1963) or the con-

⁷ Beyond the ones that I discuss below, ecological perspectives have been adopted in the study of populations of organizations (Hannan and Freeman 1989). Also, in *Union Democracy*, Lipset, Trow, and Coleman (1956) have analyzed how the ecology of work, such as the substitute worker system, the activity pattern of workers on the night shift, and the structure of larger printing plants, facilitated the formation of social networks and print workers' participation in union activities.

conflict between peoples with different cultural, ethnic, and class backgrounds (Lofland 1973; Suttles 1968, 1972). In short, in these perspectives spatial relations have been treated as expressions of social relations.⁸ In contrast, the starting point of this article is a given spatial relation. I insist that while a spatial form of a community is socially constructed and reflects socioeconomic relations, once it is formed, it can act functionally as a social structure and its impact on social actions cannot always be reduced to social and/or class relations.

Here, my line of thinking is close to one of Simmel's ideas. In his discussion of mobile/immobile artifacts, Simmel concluded that when an artifact is immobile, certain social relationships must be ordered around it, and therefore, the artifact becomes a socially important pivot of human interaction (Spykman 1964, chap. 4). This Simmelian idea is the basis for research scattered on urban studies (Beckham 1973; Duncan and Duncan 1955; Fischer 1977; Krupat 1985), human geography (Garling and Evans 1991; Gold 1980; Gollege and Timmermans 1988; Werlen 1993), small group ecology (Baldassare 1975, 1977; Case 1981; Sommer 1967, 1969), and environmental psychology (Barker 1968; Loo 1972; Osmond 1957; Saegert and Winkel 1990; Schoggen 1989). It has been shown that design factors of houses and their overall spatial arrangements can encourage as well as discourage people's mutual interaction and communication. In general, other factors being equal, the closer a number of people live together (in both physical and functional terms), the greater the chance of unintentional contacts and active group making (e.g., Case 1981; Festinger, Schachter, and Back 1950; Michelson 1976; Whyte 1956), especially when there is a homogeneous population (e.g., Gans 1967; Michelson 1976; Newcomb 1961).⁹ However, high-density housing, especially high-rise housing, tends to discourage neighborly interactions (McCarthy and Saegert 1978; Mitchell 1971). The design factors and spatial distribution of houses also shape the opportunity structure of social action. Therefore, the crime rate of an area is strongly related to the spatial characteristics of physical settings (Newman 1973; Taylor 1987).

However, previous studies on relationships between physical environment and social action have been on elementary network relations or psy-

⁸ Similarly, Marxists also assume that human spatial relations reflect the reality of class domination (Castells 1978; Harvey 1985; Molotch 1979).

⁹ Festinger et al.'s (1950) work is particularly interesting. They found that people tend to make friends with immediate neighbors. Moreover, the design factor of a housing project such as the location of mailboxes and stairways, the position of an apartment in a courtyard or a building, and the door that an apartment faces would determine people's daily spatial movement, ability to make friends, and group formation in a community. Blau (1977) has also formalized similar ecology-centered propositions into theorems.

chological mechanisms. This article demonstrates that ecological conditions can be important to a political process as complex as a large-scale social movement and that its impact extends beyond networks and solidarities.

Before moving on, I would like to make clear that this article only intends to explain student mobilization (especially during the early stage of the 1989 BSM), not the later mass mobilization centered on Tiananmen Square. This is, in part, because early mobilization faced stronger repression and involved more uncertainties, so the campus ecology was then crucial to sustain it. After students successfully challenged the regime, the perceived risk to join a movement greatly declined. In fact, it was so diminished that, after mid-May, going to Tiananmen Square became a common pastime and a fun activity.

THE 1989 BSM

In the late 1980s, China's economic reform was in a deep crisis. Many Chinese, especially intellectuals and university students, were demoralized by emerging social problems such as high inflation, rampant official corruption, the decreasing economic status of intellectuals and students, and the slow process of political reform. In 1988 alone, over 200 demonstrations and other protest activities occurred at Beijing university campuses (Ren 1990). These early actions were contained by the government, yet social problems deepened into 1989.

On April 15, 1989, Beijing students seized the opportunity of Hu Yaobang's sudden death and started protest activities.¹⁰ The government's initial reaction to the movement was restrained. However, as the scale of the movement expanded, the government toughened its attitude by publishing a *People's Daily* editorial on April 26, which labeled the movement as an antirevolutionary turmoil agitated by a small number of people behind the scenes. Heretofore, people were discouraged by similar messages, which indicated an impending government repression. Yet to most people's surprise, instead of backing off, Beijing students defied the editorial with a large-scale demonstration on April 27. The success of the demonstration caused the government to adopt a soft strategy, which initially worked well. With a limited compromise from the government, the movement quickly declined during early May.

The effectiveness of this soft government strategy, however, caused a

¹⁰ Hu Yaobang was the general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party between 1981 and 1987. Forced to resign his position because of his soft attitude toward the student unrest in 1986, Hu became a widely respected figure among students and intellectuals.

small group of students to adopt more radical tactics. On May 13, around 300 students, mostly from Beijing University, staged a hunger strike in Tiananmen Square. Throughout the movement, the government's knowledge about the movement was superficial. Without knowing exactly what was going on, the government started to negotiate with a group of student activists who could neither agree with each other nor represent the hunger strikers. The fruitless negotiation went on for two days while the scale of the Tiananmen Square occupation quickly expanded. By May 15, when Mikhail Gorbachev, then leader of the Soviet Union, arrived at Beijing, students still occupied the square. Since many activities of the state visit had been originally arranged inside or around Tiananmen Square, the hunger strike interrupted the Sino-Soviet summit and insulted the government. During this period, the top state leaders in China became increasingly split. Since a limited soft-liner approach did not work, most of them wanted to return to a hard-liner strategy, whereas Zhao Ziyang, the general secretary of the Communist Party, insisted on a more substantial compromise. Eventually the hard-liners won and Zhao Ziyang lost his power. Martial law began on May 20.

In the meantime, the hunger strikers' health conditions were deteriorating. After May 15, more and more hunger strikers fainted, and the sirens could be heard almost everywhere in downtown Beijing. Most people in Beijing, including lesser government leaders, were concerned about the students' health and greatly annoyed by a silent central government. They were also greatly moved by the heroism that the hunger strikers had expressed. Since May 16, from factories up to the State Council, almost all the government, public, and private institutions in Beijing had semiofficially organized demonstrations to support the students and to urge the central government to negotiate with them.¹¹ The number of demonstrators rocketed to well above a million on both May 17 and 18. Students ended the hunger strike in the night of May 19, after they heard the news of the martial law, yet, the Tiananmen Square occupation continued.

During the night of May 19, even before the martial law was formally announced, about seven or eight divisions of troops (10,000–15,000 each) advanced on Beijing from all directions. The government might have expected that the sheer size of the army itself would be enough to deter any attempt at resistance. On the contrary, under a popular belief that the soldiers were going to hurt the students in the square, people went out in

¹¹ Most demonstrations during the hunger strike were semiofficial in the sense that the organizers could freely use public resources, the participants were given paid leave, and the whole action was either tacitly approved or directly led by the authorities of work units.

the hundreds of thousands and successfully stopped the army.¹² The troops had to withdraw after two days of stalemate; the Tiananmen Square occupation was preserved. The army invaded Beijing once again in the night of June 3. They met a violent resistance, yet with a resolute order from the government, the troops pushed their way to the square, leaving behind several hundred dead and thousands more wounded. Students managed to leave the square peacefully after more and more soldiers arrived. The movement was suppressed.

METHODOLOGY

The data used in this article were obtained from original interviews conducted between late 1992 and early 1993. Informants were recruited through a snowball method: after each interview, an informant was asked to suggest friends who might be willing to participate. The 1989 BSM has been a politically sensitive topic to most Chinese. A snowball method was thus appropriate because Chinese tend to put a lot of trust in friends. To ensure the representativeness of informants and to maintain efficiency in data collection, I made some decisions as to whether or not a suggested candidate should be interviewed. For example, I tried not to recruit two informants who were classmates (especially roommates) at the time of the BSM to minimize redundant information. Prior to the interview, I was also aware that undergraduates, students in key universities, and students of the social sciences and humanities were more active in the movement. I decided that my informants should reflect this fact.

Seventy people were interviewed in my study, 40 in Beijing and 30 in Montreal. Of the 70 informants, social science and humanities majors made up 44% ($n = 31$), compared to an 18.5% national average. At the time of 1989, 37 informants were undergraduate students, 11 were graduate students, 16 were political control cadres or teachers, and six worked in various cultural and academic institutions. In terms of the level of movement participation, six informants were student leaders, 21 had actively participated in the whole process of the movement (six of them were also hunger strikers), 17 were actively involved in the movement for a significant period of time, 20 participated in some movement activities, and six were nonparticipant adherents of the movement. The informants were from 18 universities and four cultural and academic institutions. Most of them were from Beijing University ($n = 12$), People's University

¹² At this stage, most troops were unarmed. After being stopped, soldiers usually did not push their way through.

($n = 12$), Qinghua University ($n = 10$), Beijing Normal University ($n = 8$), the University of Political Sciences and Law ($n = 4$), and Beijing Chemical University ($n = 4$). Except for Beijing Chemical, the rest were also the most active universities during the 1989 BSM.

A set of questions was prepared before the interview. These questions served as a guideline for further probing. In the interview, informants were asked slightly different questions and probed differently. Therefore, the sample size for statistics extracted from the interview is usually smaller than the number of informants interviewed. Before each interview, I explained the purposes of the study and the anonymity of their information. I also told them that they could refuse to answer a question if it made them uncomfortable for whatever reasons. In fact, very few informants refused to answer any questions, and the Beijing informants showed no more restraint than the Montreal informants.

The interviews were conducted between late 1992 and early 1993, while the movement occurred in 1989. So there is the possibility of forgetting and distorting as the result of their current state of mind. These problems cannot be totally eliminated, but I have tried to minimize their impact by avoiding questions that probe into personal views, impressions, or experiences of a short-term nature. After the interview, I cross-checked the precision of an informant's narrative by the other informants' descriptions of the same event. Sometimes, when an informant's description was part of a major event, the published accounts were also used to check reliability. Possibly because the period before and during the 1989 BSM was so dramatic in most informants' lives, the narratives of my informants showed a strong consistency.

The interviews were carried out in Chinese. All the quotes in this article are my translations. Each quote was labeled by a number to mark the source of information while maintaining anonymity.

UNIVERSITIES AND STUDENT LIFE IN BEIJING

The Haidian University District

In Beijing, most universities are located in and around the Haidian District. As a legacy of state planning, the giant university compound acquired its current shape in two separate efforts during the 1950s. The first step was to restructure the existing universities and to establish People's University, while the second effort was to build a large number of Soviet-style polytechnic institutions (Du 1992). By 1956 Beijing had 31 universities with an enrollment of 76,700, compared with 13 universities and a total enrollment of 17,442 in 1949 (Zhang and Zhou 1989). This tendency continued. By 1989, Beijing had 67 institutions of higher learning with

162,576 boarding students at undergraduate and graduate levels (*Educational Statistics Yearbook of China* 1989; *Zhongguo gaodeng jiaoyu daquan* 1989).

Campuses in Beijing

University campuses in China are structurally similar. Since Beijing University is the center of student activism in Beijing as well as in China as a whole, this section uses Beijing University to illustrate the campus in Beijing.

As shown on the map of Beijing University (fig. 1), most universities in China are separated from the outside by a brick wall. Within a university, there are restaurants, student dining rooms, a cinema, a hospital, a post office, barber's shops, grocery stores, sports facilities, recreational areas, and so forth. It is so self-contained that hard-working students can live on campus for a whole semester without going outside once.

Most university students in China board and live in campus dormitories. Classmates are usually assigned to several connected rooms in a dormitory. In Beijing University, student dormitories occupy 49 buildings. They are located at the lower right side of figure 1. Buildings 28–43 are for undergraduate students. With six to eight students living in each dormitory room, these dormitories held a total of 9,271 students in 1988. Buildings 45–47 are for master's students, whereas doctoral students live in dormitories 25 and 26. With four master's students or two doctoral students living in each dormitory room, 2,893 students lived in these five buildings in 1988. Finally, buildings 16–24 are dormitories for young unmarried teachers. The remaining dormitories housed foreign and special students in short-term training programs.

Student Life on Campus

According to my informants, in the late 1980s, many students in Beijing University (and in other universities as well) did not study hard. The first class in Beijing University started at 8:00 A.M., but some students got up as late as 10:00. Some students would stay in the dormitory until lunch at about noon. A nap was common after lunch. The diligent students got up at 2:00 P.M., but others might get up at 3:00 or even 4:00. Dinner started at 5:00 P.M. Activities after dinner varied. Some went to the library or to conferences. Others went to dances, movies, or out with their boyfriends or girlfriends. Still others remained in the dormitory rooms chatting, playing poker, or mah-jongg. Most students returned to dormitories around 10:00. Curfew was at 11:00. Chatting after curfew was a common pastime;

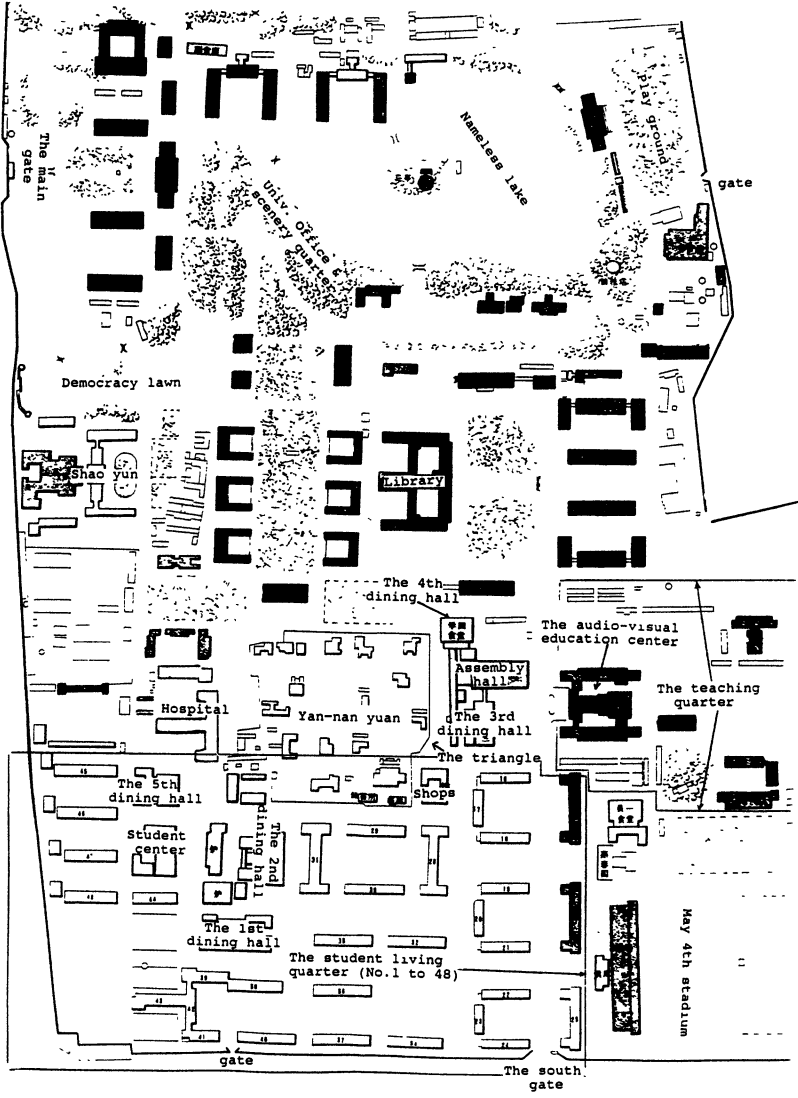


FIG. 1.—The map of Beijing University, showing the ecological concentration of students on campus.

students called this *wotanhui*, which means meeting while laying on bed. This *wotanhui* could go on as late as 2:00 in the morning.

CAMPUS ECOLOGY AND PATTERNS OF MOBILIZATION

In the interviews, I found that the campus ecology in Beijing had facilitated the transmission of dissident ideas and information about movement activities. It squeezed students into many small dormitory-based student networks, which sustained a high level of student participation, encouraged interuniversity competition for activism, and upheld many ecology-dependent strategies of collective action. I will discuss them in turn in this section. In the next section, I will present a case study of the April 27 student demonstration to show how ecology-based mobilization mechanisms manifested themselves in one of the most important events of the 1989 BSM. I will take the impact of homogeneity as an established fact and focus only on how design factors of Beijing universities shaped the density, distribution, and spatial movement of Beijing students in a way that facilitated student mobilization.

Dissident Ideas and Movement Information Transmission

Most students live in campus dormitories. Six to eight students live in each dormitory room, a few dozen classmates of the same sex live in several closely located dormitory rooms, and several hundred students stay in each building. A dormitory area of a university in Beijing can accommodate up to 10,000 students. Without the knowledge of student dormitories, the patterns of communication and mobilization on campuses during the BSM cannot really be understood.

Many informants reported that they usually chatted in the dormitory room for one to several hours each day. Although politics and political grievances were not always the topic, they did constitute a major theme when the socioeconomic situation in China worsened. Dormitory rooms were the primary location where nonconforming ideologies spread and achieved dominance. Frequent chatting among students of the same or nearby dormitory rooms narrowed students' attention. Dormitories also nurtured the friendship networks necessary for student mobilization.

During the 1980s, enthusiasm for newly introduced or reintroduced Western philosophies and political thought occurred repeatedly on campus, thereby forming numerous "fevers" such as Freud fever, Nietzsche fever, Sartre fever, cultural fever, and political reform fever. Almost every fever involved a large number of students in its heyday. Some fevers, such as the Nietzsche fever, even attracted the majority of students in some major universities. Yet, in a study of 2,005 students in eight universities,

Li (1988) reported that only about one-third of the students tried to read original books by Nietzsche during the Nietzsche fever. Most students got to know Nietzsche and his ideas when students in the same or nearby dormitory room who were reading Nietzsche shared their reading in dormitory conversations. During the 1980s, many students got new ideas also from various conferences held on campus.¹³ Students in the same or nearby dormitory rooms frequently informed one another and went to conferences together.

During this period, nonconforming intellectuals in China spread their ideas by publishing student-oriented books and holding conferences in universities. Those students who were sensitized by them then spread the ideas through dormitory rooms. When a student got interested in politically related matters, his/her reading would probably be a recurring topic of discussion in his/her dormitory room. As one student (no. 54) reported: "The major topic in our dormitory room was reform, . . . mainly market economy and privatization. One student in our dormitory room strongly supported the market economy. He read the *World Economic Herald* a lot.¹⁴ He also read many books by Fang Lizhi and Li Yining. When he read those books, he passed these messages to us [in the dormitory room]. We then debated [these ideas]." Here, dormitory rooms have a convergence function but not in the sense that students would eventually agree with each other. The same informant continued: "During the debate, I and another student were strongly against his idea, while one student supported him. The rest were in the middle." Students seldom simply agreed with each other. However, continuing discussions of similar issues, which were often social problems that had no easy solutions, made students more sensitive to these issues, and gradually they came to some consensus on a few basic points as the social problems were prolonged or even worsened. Therefore, during the late 1980s, more and more students believed that democracy and capitalism were better solutions for China and had lost hope for the reform (Liu 1990).

Communication of dissident ideas was also facilitated by the ecology of the Haidian District. The distance between most universities in Beijing is less than half an hour by bicycle. Such short distances made interuniversity communication extremely easy. Before the 1989 BSM, famous dissidents and liberal intellectuals were often invited to give talks in various universities. If a talk was held by someone famous, students from the

¹³ In 1988 and early 1989, major Chinese universities were the sites of numerous anti-establishment conferences held by dissidents or liberal intellectuals. My informants referred to this as "conference fever."

¹⁴ *World Economic Herald* was an outspoken newspaper published in Shanghai during the 1980s. It has stopped publishing since 1989.

other universities would go there by bicycle. As soon as the movement was started, the very first action of many activists was to go to other universities (especially the major ones) to see what was happening. They went there to read big character posters, listen to speeches, and establish connections. Thus, campus ecology made a largely spontaneous movement look like a coordinated action from the very beginning.

Sanction to Free Riders

In his study of the 1989 BSM, Calhoun (1994, p. 170) noticed that students often marched together during a demonstration by school, class, and often major. According to Calhoun, this manifested Chinese culture, which encourages solidarity, loyalty, and friendship. Calhoun's observation and explanation are not without any foundation. However, explaining a sign of group solidarity in terms of a group culture is tautological. More important, this line of reasoning neglects the structural basis of the solidarity and runs the danger of assuming that all the students participated in the movement for the same reason. In my study, I found that students not only often marched together by school, class, and major but also by dormitory room. However, they did this not just out of a sense of group solidarity but because the campus ecology and dormitory-based student networks were the basis of mutual influence, persuasion, and even coercion among students.

The key here is the dense living environment on campus, especially dormitory rooms. With six to eight students living in the same dormitory room for a period of four years, it is as if every student was forced to play an Axelrodian game in which cooperation is the only optimum long-term solution.¹⁵ Therefore, once movement participation was regarded by most students as a moral action, avoiding participation became very difficult for those who actually did not intend to do so in the beginning. Among 56 student informants, 14 reported open attacks of active participants on less active ones in dormitories. Students in the same or nearby dormitory rooms often checked each other's behavior. As one student commented: "All students joined the movement after several demonstrations. Students who did not go would feel isolated and hated. For example, when the

¹⁵ In game theory language, this is a prisoner's dilemma game involving a small number of people and with a large number of iterations. As Axelrod (1984) has nicely demonstrated, repeated encounters between two players in this game make cooperation the only robust and optimum long-term solution. In other words, it is actually unnecessary to introduce Chinese culture at this point because a sense of group solidarity or friendship will at most only function as an initial condition of the Axelrodian game to speed up the rise and dominance of conformist behavior.

government asked us to resume class, only one student went to class. As a result, that student was accused of being a renegade” (no. 4).

Another student described what happened in his dormitory room on the evening of April 26, which made him eventually join the April 27 student demonstration:

[When the April 26 *People's Daily* editorial was published,] students in our dormitory room were very angry. Many of them decided to go to demonstrate. They asked me. I said I did not want to go. . . . They were mad at me. . . . They quarreled with me angrily. I found this unbearable and thought that we were fellow students, why should you talk to me like this? . . . There was a party member in our dormitory room who did not want to go either. . . . He told us that they just had a meeting. It was explained in the meeting that there would be a lot of policemen on the way the next day. He asked the other students not to go. . . . Then people poured their anger toward him. (no. 42)

Because of high student density in a dormitory building, coercion among students could sometimes go beyond a dormitory room. One student (no. 62) had given a vivid account of this:

During the whole process of the movement, one event left me with a very deep impression. In the law department, there were quite a few graduate students of the 1989 class who did not care about the movement at all and played mah-jongg in their dormitory rooms everyday. I knew this from a notice board in no. 46 building. It read: “Since the hunger strike, several scoundrels on the fifth floor have not cared about the movement at all and have lost all their consciousness. They have been locking themselves in their dorms and playing mah-jongg everyday. We belittle them very very much. . . .” I also remembered a line in a big character post. It said: “Those red noses and black hearts are playing mah-jongg even when the other students are on a hunger strike. Beware of your dog noses!”

However, most pressure was more subtle. When a follow-up question was asked (“What did you think of those students who did not participate in the movement at all?”), the following was a rather typical response: “We did not care about those students. Because these people did not interact with classmates even at regular times, no one paid much attention to them” (no. 37).

These students were labeled as deviants by their classmates. Obviously, such mutual checking and comparing for activism could effectively sustain movement participation largely because of the particular living condition.

Interuniversity Competition for Activism

Most of the 67 universities in Beijing are located close to one another. The close distance between universities facilitated mutual imitation and

interuniversity competition for activism, which also sustained student participation.¹⁶ In the interviews, I found that some students from People's University were proud of being the leading troop in the April 27 demonstration, which was considered a highly risky action. Students from Fada [University of Political Science and Law] were proud of their numerous firsts earned during the movement, despite being a small university: "Later, we calculated that Fada owned 13 firsts. We were the first university that went to demonstrate on the street and went on a class strike. The first chairman of the Autonomous Student Union was our student. The headquarters of the dialogue delegation was located in our university, and many others. . . . We were very proud of that. The fame of Fada has grown thereafter" (no. 59).

Finally, when students from Beijing University talked about their activities during the 1989 BSM, they talked as if they were the unquestionable leaders of the movement. Their most elegant slogan was "The whole nation does not fall asleep as long as Beijing University is still awake" (no. 51). One student leader in Fada commented on Beijing University in a Fada-centric way: "When Fada demonstrated on the street on April 17, Beijing University rushed to Tiananmen the same evening. . . . Students in Beijing University always feel they are different from other universities. Therefore, when they felt they might lose the leadership [as in early May] they came out with the radical tactic, that was the hunger strike" (no. 60).

Comments as such may not be taken too literally. However, it does reveal an intensive interuniversity competition during the 1989 BSM. It was the ecology of the Haidian District—the concentration of so many universities in such a small area—that made such competition detailed, instantaneous, and interactive.

The Development of Ecology-Dependent Strategies of Mobilization

So far, I have shown how the campus ecology facilitated student mobilization and why patterns of student mobilization during the 1989 BSM cannot be properly understood without the knowledge of campus ecology. At this level, my analysis still points to student solidarities and, therefore, supports resource mobilization theories and especially Gould's analysis on mobilization during the Paris Commune. In the following, however, I will present another set of findings that is equally important to the student mobilization but is, nevertheless, not clearly related to student networks.

Most universities in Beijing have a similar spatial layout. The design

¹⁶ The interuniversity competition was induced also because, when the ideological legitimacy of the state greatly declined, some students took activism as a point of honor and equated the level of activism with the prestige of their university.

factors regulate the daily life and spatial movement of students on a campus, which in turn facilitated the formation of many ecology-dependent strategies of student mobilization. For example, in each university, big character posters and announcements were concentrated and mobilization was initiated only in specific places. These places emerged because they were central to students' daily life. The famous Triangle in Beijing University, the third student dining hall in People's University, and the tenth dining hall in Qinghua University are such places. For example, the Triangle is located between student dormitories, the library, classrooms, and several dining halls (fig. 1). The post office, bookstore, and several other shops are also in the vicinity. Whenever students go to the classroom, library, dining hall, post office, or back to dormitories, they have to pass the Triangle.

This kind of spatial layout makes mobilization extremely simple. In Beijing University, for example, when student activists wanted to organize a demonstration, all they needed to do was just "put several posters at the Triangle, write down the time, location of gathering, and purposes of the demonstration and slogans to be used, and then waited in the place and brought students out on that day" (no. 69). In case not enough students showed up, the activists usually brought those who had come to march inside the campus on the avenues between dormitory buildings. In my study, I found that marching through avenues between dormitories before demonstrating on the street was a standard way that Beijing students used to achieve a high level of mobilization, and this is another example of the ecology-dependent strategy of mobilization. For instance, in the evening of April 17, 1989, around 200 students of Beijing University initiated a demonstration at the Triangle. They marched inside the dormitory area first. As they were chanting and making noises, more and more students were attracted and came out. The size of the formation swelled from a few hundred to between 5,000 and 6,000, and eventually the students marched out of the campus. This was the first large-scale student demonstration by the students of Beijing University.

Now, to what extent can this type of mobilization process be understood in terms of networks and solidarities? The closest network explanation of this event is that Beijing University had two types of networks during the 1989 BSM; an activist-based movement network and many structurally equivalent dormitory-based friend networks. Strong ties existed in each type of network. Within each dormitory-based network, some students were exposed to dissident ideas earlier and were sympathetic to the movement. Thus, when they saw the demonstration outside, they persuaded and even coerced their fellow roommates to join in. Here, campus ecology was important only to the extent that it simultaneously bridged a social movement network with all the dormitory-based networks. If one is preoc-

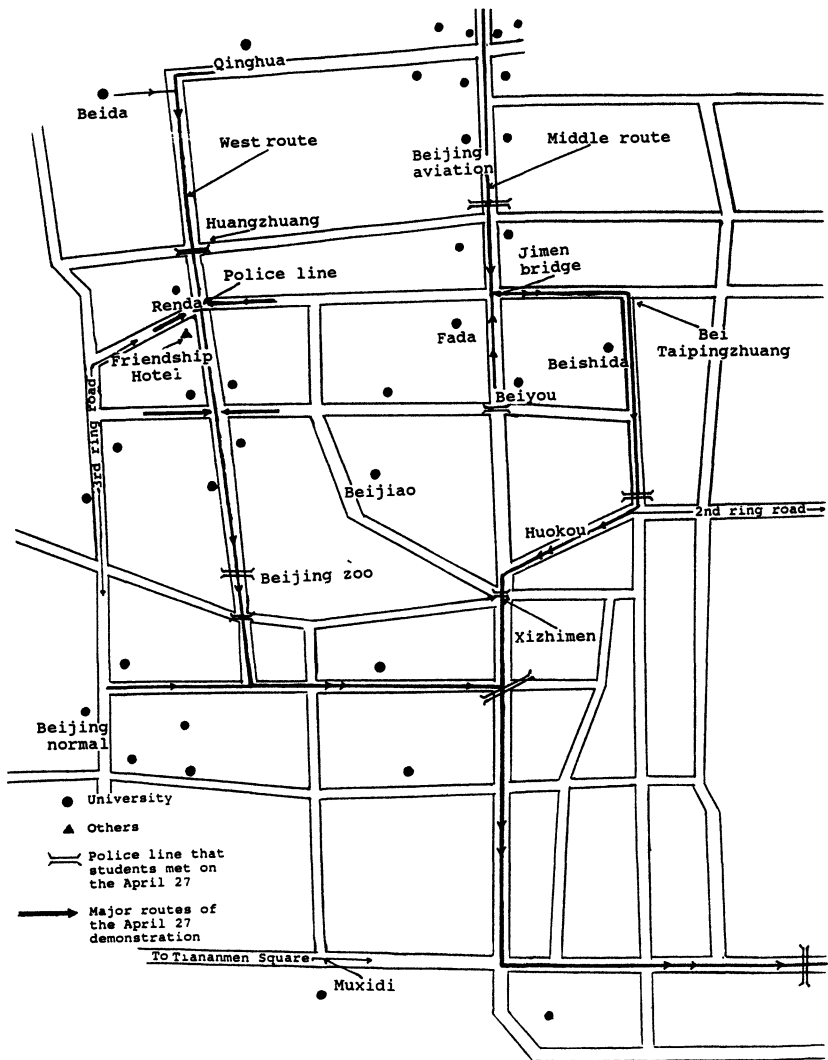


FIG. 2.—The west and middle route of student protest and police lines during the April 27 demonstration.

cupied with modeling movement mobilization as a networking process, one may consider the ecological linkage as “structure holes” (Burt 1992) or weak ties (Granovetter 1973).

The network explanation is not totally unreasonable. Even with the size of Beijing University, it could still be argued that all students might be in the same network through either chains of friends or a certain structural equivalency. However, this explanation has two problems. First, it is very difficult to conceive chanting and making noise in a place as a network mode of communication to those who can hear it. Social networks are commonly defined as a finite set of nodes (actors) linked by lines (social relations) (Laumann and Pappi 1976; Wasserman and Faust 1997). To make network analysis a meaningful tool in sociology, those lines are usually confined to social relations that are relatively stable and can be specified prior to a study. They are also restricted to privileged and specific information and resources exchanges or boundary overlapping among actors (Laumann and Pappi 1976; Laumann and Knoke 1987, pp. 12–13). For example, if there is a loud clap of thunder in the middle of the night that wakes up many people, it cannot be said that these people acquire information of the storm through social networks. However, if someone is not wakened by the thunder and does not know about the storm until informed by a friend, it can comfortably be said that the latter acquires this piece of information through a network relation.¹⁷ Obviously, in that evening those students who chanted outside targeted everyone who lived in the dormitories rather than a specific group of people. In other words, information about the demonstration was not passed through prior existing ties but through a near simultaneous direct contact with all who lived on campus. The mode of information transmission was thus diffused and nonprivileged. Network analysis loses its analytical power if information transmission of this kind is interpreted as networks.

Second, the role of networks in movement mobilization is not just communication but solidarity. In other words, if it is argued that students were mobilized that evening through networks, then the students who came out of their dormitories should be roughly of two categories: most came out of a sense of solidarity and some came out because they were persuaded or coerced by their roommates. However, this was not the case that evening. This was still April 17, two days after Hu Yaobang’s sudden death. At this stage, most students in Beijing had not been mobilized politically. Therefore, in that evening while some joined the march out of various grievances or a sense of solidarity, most followed the march without

¹⁷ In reality, the distinction is not always that clear. A general rule is that the more the linkages among the nodes are privileged and specific, the more such linkages are subject to meaningful sociological analysis.

a political reason.¹⁸ In fact, according to one of my informants (no. 63), more than half of the students came out of dormitories and followed the march wearing slippers and gradually left the march before it arrived at Tiananmen Square, and many of his friends including himself followed the demonstration simply because they wanted to *kanrenao* (literally, watch the fun).¹⁹ In short, there was no clear evidence of persuasion and coercion among students that evening. No common grievances, identity, or network-based mobilization could be constructed.

What about the intensive persuasion and coercion inside the dormitory, which I discussed earlier? There was a threshold: the majority of students only acted as sympathetic audiences most of the time during the movement, and they did not care about their fellow roommates' decisions about movement participation. However, on some occasions the state's reaction to the movement was deemed unreasonable by most students. At that point, students started to share their anger in dormitories, and more committed students also started to persuade and even coerce the less active ones to join protest activities.²⁰ Students' reaction to the April 26 *People's Daily* editorial is one such occasion.

THE APRIL 27 DEMONSTRATION

I chose the April 27 student demonstration as a case study to illustrate the importance of campus ecology in the process of mobilization. The demonstration was one of the most important events of the 1989 BSM. It marked the first large-scale open defiance of Chinese to the state since the Communists took power. The success of the demonstration in many ways shaped the subsequent dynamics of the movement, which finally led to the crackdown. Equally important, the demonstration was perceived by many students as extremely risky, perhaps even more so than the protest activities on the night of June 3. Some students even wrote wills before

¹⁸ The demonstration was spontaneously initiated when someone came back from downtown and announced at the Triangle that Fada students had demonstrated at Tiananmen Square in the afternoon. The activists who gathered at the Triangle did not plan this demonstration beforehand, nor did they have a clear purpose. Several hours after the march (they almost arrived at Tiananmen Square), student leader Zhang Boli was still asking Wang Dan about the purpose of the demonstration, and Wang Dan replied: "I do not know. It is you guys who started this" (Zhang and Bai 1993, pp. 49–51).

¹⁹ When they arrived at Tiananmen Square, the size of the demonstration was only around 2,000, which also included many students that they picked up from other universities along the way.

²⁰ The distinction made here bears similarities with Tilly's (1978, p. 73) defensive and offensive style of mobilization.

joining the demonstration. Though the demonstration was not suppressed, the state did set up many police lines to try to stop the students from entering Tiananmen Square. The existence of state force and the perceived danger pushed students to utilize any possible resources, including ecological conditions, to make the demonstration successful.

Background

Since the movement started as mourning for Hu Yaobang's death, the government was unable to take any major action before Hu Yaobang's state funeral on April 22. On April 24, a politburo meeting was held to deal with the movement. The result of that meeting was the April 26 *People's Daily* editorial, which labeled the movement as a turmoil instigated by a small number of antirevolutionaries. Major excerpts of the editorial were broadcast on the April 25 evening news. Students in Beijing were deeply alienated by the outdated language that the editorial used. The Autonomous Student Union decided to defy the editorial by a demonstration on April 27.

The government tried to prevent the coming demonstration. It demanded that university authorities, including student control organizations, prevent students from going to the street. Their efforts failed to stop students. The government also mobilized all the police forces in Beijing, including some troops, and set many police lines on the street to try to stop the demonstrators from entering Tiananmen Square. The major police lines are marked on figure 2.

The Demonstration

After hearing the editorial and the news of the proposed demonstration, students as well as activists gathered in dormitory rooms to express their anger and to discuss what would happen if they went out. Most expected a harsh crackdown, but many still decided to participate. The feeling of injustice was too strong for students to succumb to threats.

However, most students were also extremely worried. Here, except for the coercion that I discussed earlier, more determined roommates also acted as counselors to the less committed ones. As one student (no. 59) recalled:

Several of my roommates were extremely worried about possible consequences of the next day's demonstration. I had to comfort them. They said that I was very persuasive and should share my ideas with other students in the university. They suggested that I use the intercom in the porter's room. The intercom was installed for the porter to get a particular student when there was a phone call for her or him. . . . We turned on all the switches

so that people in every dormitory room could hear but no one outside would know.

Meanwhile, the Autonomous Student Union broadcast stations in many universities repeatedly aired speeches from student activists, young teachers, and famous dissidents to denounce the editorial and the government, and to boost the morale of students. Places like the Triangle in Beijing University were crowded with people for the whole day of April 26. They made speeches, chanted slogans, and sang songs. Activists' emotions were kept high.

The demonstration took three routes to Tiananmen Square. Beijing University, People's University, Qinghua University, Northern Communication University, and Beijing Agriculture University took the west route. The Fada University, Beijing Normal University, and eight big institutions of higher learning took the middle route. Finally, a few other universities took the east route (Wu 1990). Figure 2 illustrates the paths of the demonstration of the west and middle route.

However, students did not march to Tiananmen Square directly. They zigzagged. In what follows, by centering on People's University and Fada's path of demonstration, I will explain how and why students marched this way, as well as other ecology-related issues.

In the morning of April 27, some students appeared at People's University. Yet, under enormous pressure, no one dared to march out of the campus as planned. One informant (no. 39) even saw a student leader with a red microphone announcing that the demonstration was canceled, but many students remained. After quite some time, one student came out and suggested marching inside the university. Many followed. However, after marching and chanting for five or six rounds in the university, more and more people were attracted and joined in. Students also became increasingly excited. Eventually they rushed out of the gate. However, when they were out, they did not march directly to Tiananmen Square. A police line was at the Friendship Hotel intersection, which was not far away from People's University. Students were too afraid to encounter the police, so they marched in the opposite direction to try to meet the students from Beijing University and Qinghua University.

Here, many liaison men played an important role. Most liaison men were not assigned to do the job by movement organizers. These were students (almost all of them were male) who wanted to see more of the demonstration. When they saw that students of People's University had come out, the liaison men rushed to Beijing University on bicycles and chanted in front of the gate of Beijing University: "People's University has come out. What are you waiting for?" Students in Beijing University then came out.

There was a police line at the Huangzhuang intersection. However, with students from Beijing University, Qinghua University, and People's University on two sides of it, the police line collapsed. The students joined and marched back to the Friendship Hotel intersection. This time, the Northern Communication students and students from some other universities also arrived at the southern side of the intersection but dared not push away the police line. With students from Beijing University and Qinghua University at the back and students from many other universities at the other side of the police line, the students led by People's University students easily pushed away the police line at the Friendship Hotel intersection.

This was a historical push for students of the west route as well as the middle route. Many students who had stayed outside the formation joined in.²¹ Liaison men spread in different directions to inform the students of their own universities. The size of the formation expanded enormously. An informant (no. 70) vividly described what was happening at the Friendship Hotel intersection:

When students of People's University met the police lines, they dared not march forward and asked students from Beijing University to go first. But students of Beijing University did not want to go either. . . . At the moment, quite a few self-appointed organizers from the outside stepped in and commanded demonstrators to line up well, to keep a good order, and so on. As the intersection became more and more crowded, people from the outside repeatedly chanted: Go . . . go . . . Let's go together! Finally students of People's University started to move forward. When they confronted the police lines, students talked to policemen about constitutional rights. The policemen had no reaction. Then students started to push. The police lines collapsed soon after. On seeing this, organizers and students from different universities rushed back to get their own students. I heard a student from Beijing Industrial University say, "We lost face today," and rushed back quickly.²² Students from those universities then waited at different intersections. The scale of the demonstration expanded enormously.

During that morning, many liaison men rode their own bicycles from one university to another. On their way, they passed the news of what was happening elsewhere. By doing this, they had consciously or uncon-

²¹ The student demonstration was separated from urban residents by picket lines on each side. In the past, the government often charged that student demonstrations created riots and looting in Beijing. Therefore, students developed this strategy to make sure the demonstrators were bona fide students.

²² Here, the student said his university lost face because students in his university did not participate in the Friendship Hotel incident for it was perceived as too dangerous. See the section on interuniversity competition for activism for more discussion on this issue.

sciously coordinated the movement. One of my informants (no. 57) was one of them on that day:

When I got up in the morning, I saw students in Beijing Teacher's were already marching at the campus stadium. I wanted to know what was happening in People's University. I went there by bicycle. At the time that I arrived, students of People's University had gone north to meet students from Beijing University. I then followed. By the time that I met with students of People's University they had already joined with students from Beijing University and moved back again. I then rode back to the Friendship Hotel intersection and watched. There were police lines there and students from Northern Communication were stopped by them on the south side. When the big troops [of students] arrived, with the efforts from both sides, the police line soon collapsed. . . . As soon as students pushed policemen aside, I rode back to Beijing Teacher's to see what they were doing. I saw that students were sitting on the sidewalk outside their university. I passed the message: go quickly in Chegongzhuang direction, students from other universities are coming.

Fada University took the middle route in the April 27 demonstration. Initially, students in Fada were not able to get out. The president and a few other university authorities were standing in front of the gate. They claimed that it was too dangerous to go outside. They requested that the students confine their activities on the campus for their own safety. The president even begged the students. However, a few students had already gone to other universities to see what was happening there. When the news came back that Beijing Aviation had broken one police line and were marching in their direction, students in Fada rushed out and moved south in the direction of Tiananmen Square. Meanwhile, picket lines were formed outside the demonstrators. Only about 200 students were inside the picket lines. Including followers, the formation was no greater than 600 or 700 people.

When they marched to Mingguanchun, a police line stopped them. Fada students dared not march further. They withdrew and moved north to the University of Posts and Telecommunication. As one student (no. 60) recalled: "When we arrived at the University of Posts and Telecommunication, we chanted loudly outside their campus. I saw a lot of students who were stopped inside their gate by some teachers. Many students were waving at us over the window of their dormitory rooms. We shouted: Come down! Come down! Then more and more students jumped over the campus wall. Eventually students inside the University of Posts and Telecommunication pushed their way out of the gate."

Meanwhile, many Fada students came over from the campus and more and more students outside the picket lines joined in. Students within the picket lines increased to some 700 or 800. Some other universities from

the south such as the Central Finance University also joined. They then continued to march north. At Jimen bridge they met with students from Beijing Aviation University, Beijing Medical University, and many other universities. The above quoted informant (no. 60) recalled that he was already unable to see the two ends of the student formation after the merging. Together they moved east to Taipingzhuang then south to meet with students of Beijing Normal University.

During this entire time, liaison men continuously passed news on what had happened in the west route, a route taken by several of the most prestigious universities. As they arrived at Beijing Normal University, news came from the west that students of Beijing University and People's University had broken the Friendship Hotel police line. Students in the middle route cheered. They decided to join the west route. So they marched southwest, pushed away a police line at Huokou, and eventually met the west route after Xizhimen.

Several witnesses recalled the moment as unforgettable. By the time the two groups met, all the intersections were filled with students and civilians. People who stood on the Xizhimen overpass could not see where the crowds ended in all the directions. A renowned student leader (no. 69) told me with emotion that he had never seen such a magnificent scene in his life. At this point, most students were no longer worried about their safety. But it was not until they broke the last police line at Liubukou and entered Tiananmen Square that they realized that the government was totally defeated. Their joy was fully expressed on their way back to their universities as they cried, chanted, and sang songs. Many students walked back. By the time they got back it was already midnight. They had walked for nearly 20 hours.

What had made the April 27 demonstration so successful? Higher levels of grievances and government restraint did play a role here. However, the dormitory factors, the campus environment, and, most important, students' successful use of ecology-dependent strategies were also crucial. Often, students did not march directly out of the campus. If they did so, not many students would follow. The crowd size was still not large enough, people were not yet excited, students were too afraid. Instead, they marched inside the campus first. By marching and shouting, not only did they attract more and more students but they also created an atmosphere of excitement and heightened the pitch of their anger. Finally, they built up enough courage to march out.

Although full of anger, students felt deadly afraid once on the street. They avoided confronting the police when they did not feel strong enough. Therefore, they tried to bypass the police line and get more students from other universities. With so many universities around, they were al-

ways able to do so. When they had to confront the policemen, the police lines were already overwhelmed by the masses of students coming from all over.

Finally, the instantaneous interactions among universities were also very important. Students in many universities would never demonstrate outside the campus if liaison men had not passed the news that other universities were already on the street. On the other hand, students who were already outside of their campuses might not go very far if students from other universities did not join in. These ecology-dependent strategies were highly effective exactly because of the physical environment of the campuses and the whole university district.

DISCUSSION

Is my emphasis on the importance of the physical environment in movement mobilization a new insight? If this article is summarized into the following two propositions suggested by a reviewer—(a) when organizations of a similar type (e.g., schools or factories) are clustered geographically, collective protest among the groups in them will be more common; and (b) when communities are tightly knit and physically isolated, they have a higher capacity to protest—then the arguments may not seem to be really new. These are the founding insights of the resource mobilization perspective developed by Charles Tilly. Even Marx (1985a, pp. 227–28) has argued in the *Communist Manifesto* that the concentration of workers into a small number of factories will enhance the political capacity of the proletariat. However, the ecological model presented here differs from these two propositions.

First, this article is not so much about density and homogeneity as it is about the spatial distribution and patterned spatial movement of a population caused by design factors—which have been neglected by resource mobilization theorists. Moreover, one should not misconstrue resource mobilization theory and Marx. The key insight of resource mobilization theory (and Marx) is that the density and homogeneity of a population matters to movement mobilization *only* to the extent that they facilitate group solidarity. Therefore, when Tilly (1978, p. 62) discussed “netness,” he referred to group solidarity created by “a specific kind of interpersonal bond.” When he put “catness” and “netness” together, he equated them to organization. Finally, when Tilly and his associates measured the level of mobilization, what was actually measured was the level of organization (Tilly 1978, pp. 69–84). This is understandable because what is implied in the resource mobilization theory is that high density and homogeneity actually lead to a low mobilization potential if a population is assembled

simply as “a sack of potatoes” as Marx (1985*b*, p. 317) commented about the 19th-century French peasants.

This article is by no means trying to undermine the importance of organizations and networks in the mobilization process. However, it does show that the design factors of Beijing universities, the accompanying density and distribution of a population, and its patterned spatial movement had great importance to the formation of student networks on campus. This importance cannot be properly understood without the knowledge of campus ecology.²³ Therefore, the analysis at this level bears similarities to Festinger et al.’s (1950) classic study, a perspective that has not been adopted by many resource mobilization scholars.

Moreover, my study suggests that some ecology-dependent process of mobilization cannot be reduced to networks and organizations. The zigzag route of demonstration, the specific places where students put their big character posters and made speeches, the march inside the dormitory areas, and so forth had much more to do with the spatial layout of the campus and university district than the organizations and networks of the movement. Trying to explain these kinds of mobilizing strategies in terms of networks and solidarities will not only blur our sensitivity toward variations behind the seemingly similar process of movement mobilization, but also stretch the common definition of social networks to an extent that every kind of social relation becomes a network relation and every kind of knowledge transmission is network-based communication.

The importance of ecology to movement mobilization lies in the fact that, other factors being equal, the mobilizing potential of a population will be different if the same population is spatially arranged in even a slightly different way. During the 1980s, student movements in Beijing had two rather consistent patterns: Students who came to the universities from places outside Beijing had a higher participation rate than students from Beijing, and graduate students had a lower participation rate than undergraduates.²⁴ The patterns can be interpreted in a few ways, yet both can be simply explained in terms of the spatial positions that different categories of students were in: Beijing students were able to go home after the April 22 class strike so they were not exposed as much to movement

²³ For example, as I have discussed earlier, without a clear awareness of the campus ecology in Beijing, Calhoun was led to explain the phenomenon he found in terms of students’ sense of solidarity rooted in Chinese culture (Calhoun 1991, 1994).

²⁴ A study conducted in Beijing University also indicated that the participation rate of an earlier student movement in 1986 was 49.6% for city students, 58.9% for rural students, and 68.2% for small-town students (Liu and Huang 1989). The same article also reported that graduate students participated considerably less than undergraduates.

activities as were students who remained in the dormitories. On the other hand, each graduate student dormitory room housed only two to four students. As some were married and lived off campus, the real occupancy was often lower than the capacity. Therefore, it was more difficult, if not impossible, to form any kind of majority in a room.

I also found that when a university had two campuses with one inside and another outside the Haidian District, the one outside the district had a much lower rate of movement participation. For example, Beijing Normal University had two campuses, and the one outside had a much lower rate of participation than the one located inside the university district. The following narrative from a student of that university explains why: "My first year university life was spent on the campus near Beihai. We did not join in the class boycott. We also participated in very few demonstrations. We did not go to the main campus very often. We knew little about what was going on over there" (no. 33).

In other words, to participate in the movement, one had to be at least exposed to the environment. This is a very good controlled case. Since the differentiated participation occurred at the same university, it is very difficult to imagine that factors other than the spatial location of campuses contributed to the level of student participation.

It is possible to see affinities between my work and Gould's work on mobilization during the June uprising in 1848 in Paris and the Paris Commune in 1871. Gould essentially argues that, because of the Haussmann projects, the new Paris residential areas were no longer class based. Consequently, the mobilizing base of the Paris Commune was no longer working-class consciousness, as was the case of the June uprising in 1848, but neighborhood solidarity.²⁵ To the extent that both Gould and I intend to show how the spatial arrangement of people contributed to movement mobilization, our works share similarities. However, while Gould focuses on the impact of the macrodesign factors of the Haussmann project on movement mobilization, this article studies the ecological impact not only at the level of the university district, but also at the level of individual campuses and even dormitories. These microlevel ecological dimensions determined the mobilizing potential as well as the strategies of the movement. Moreover, Gould intends to let networks speak for an ecologically embedded social structure. His idea is, thus, tied to the conventional—

²⁵ For example, Gould (1991, 1995) shows that the recruitment system of the National Guard during the Paris Commune was residentially based, and thus, guardsmen in two districts shared a certain level of neighborhood ties. He is able to find that when the resistance at one district was strong and a large number of guardsmen in that district was recruited from another district (implying more ties with the people in another district), then the resistance of the other district would also tend to be strong, even if these two districts were spatially remote.

group solidarity—wisdom. My strategy, on the other hand, is to let the ecology speak for the mobilization, and I have shown that the mobilization during the 1989 BSM was assisted not only by ecology-based student networks but also directly by the campus ecology itself.

Recently, resource mobilization theories started to move away from a narrow perspective that emphasizes only the role of formal organizations and social movement networks in movement mobilization to a more flexible concept called “mobilizing structures” (McCarthy 1996; Tarrow 1994, chap. 8). At this stage, the concept of mobilizing structures is still confined to organic social relations, namely, the formal and informal ties between people that “can serve as solidarity and communication facilitating structure” (McCarthy 1996, p. 143). This article may be viewed as a further development along this direction. I have shown that the spatial layout of a physical environment has a significant impact on the mobilizing potential of the population that lives in it, yet such an impact cannot always be reduced to interpersonal ties and solidarities.

Now, as a mobilizing structure, how important is ecological mobilization to a social movement in general (obviously, a perspective with little generalizability is not desirable)? Here, I argue that the importance of ecology to social movement mobilization depends on the nature of the movement as well as types of regime.²⁶ Some social movement mobilization is done primarily through formal organizations. This happens, for example, in mainstream society of the contemporary West where associational life is highly developed and politically sensitive individuals are situated under what scholars call “multiorganizational fields” (Curtis and Zurcher 1973; Fernandez and McAdam 1989; McAdam and Paulsen 1993; Rosenthal et al. 1985). Since most organizations of this kind are not territory based and have more effective infrastructures to reach their members, ecological conditions are less likely to be heavily used in movement mobilization. Some social movements in the contemporary West, especially some of the new social movements, have a mobilization process approximate to this ideal type.

Most mobilizing processes, however, involve a mixture of formal organizations, interpersonal networks centered around people’s immediate living and working environment, and direct ecological exposures. No systematic research has been conducted. However, as mentioned in the beginning of this article, studies on student movements, social movements in 19th-century Europe, community movements, and black riots in America

²⁶ Scholars generally agree that the mobilizing structures of a social movement are primarily shaped by the nature of a state and state-society relations (Kriesi 1996; Rucht 1996; Tarrow 1994).

do point to the importance of ecological conditions to movement mobilization.

Finally, mobilizing processes of some social movements seem mainly ecologically based. It typically occurs in places where intermediate associations are underdeveloped and associations beyond state control are illegal. In such cases, the ecology and ecology-based networks and communications become the only means that a movement mobilization can count on. Many social movements in strong authoritarian regimes have a mobilizing process close to this extreme because those states suppress volunteer associations. In a sense, the 1989 BSM is an ideal case to study the impact of ecology on movement mobilization. As a student movement and, more important, as a movement occurring in an authoritarian regime where associational life was sanctioned, ecology became critical. By studying a movement of this kind, the extent to which a physical environment can influence movement mobilization can be explored.

A final issue that I would like to bring out is that an environment that allows easy communication and mobilization may also facilitate state control. Therefore, I must also explain why the same university environment that contributed to the repeated rise of student movements in the 1980s, did not lead to any sizable student uprising during Mao's era.²⁷

The answer lies in the weakening of the student control system in universities. Different from the control system in most East European countries, political control in Chinese universities depended mainly on the cooperation of students with nonprofessional political workers, which is also known as "internal control" (Schurmann 1968). As I have argued elsewhere (Zhao 1997), this control method is particularly sensitive to the ideological legitimation of the state and the economic and political reward patterns in the larger society. In the 1950s and 1960s, many students who more or less believed in communism felt it was moral to turn in students who expressed independent thinking. Moreover, during that time every university student was assigned jobs upon graduation by the state. Students who were politically more active (including checking upon other students' political conduct) usually got better positions. Therefore, during Mao's era, the high student density and other spatial characteristics of the campus had actually extended the effectiveness of student control. After the economic reform, however, the ideological legitimation of the Communist state greatly declined while other avenues of status attainment outside the realm of state control opened up.²⁸ Participating actively

²⁷ I exclude the Red Guard movement during the 1960s because it was mainly a state-sponsored mobilization.

²⁸ For example, during the 1980s many students preferred to go abroad, to work in better paid foreign and joint venture companies, than to work in the state-controlled public sector.

in mutual supervision became neither a moral nor necessarily a profitable activity. Therefore, the campus environment, which once facilitated political control over students, became conducive to student mobilization.

CONCLUSION

To date, scholars who are interested in the impact of the physical environment on social action have focused on elementary social relations or psychological mechanisms, and scholars of social movements have tended to believe that formal movement organizations and interpersonal networks are the primary base for movement mobilization. They both have neglected the fact that ecological conditions—in the sense of the spatial characteristics of a physical environment and the accompanying density, distribution, composition, place-based relations, and routine spatial activities of a given population—could function as a “social structure” and achieve predominance in the mobilization.

This article argues that ecology is relevant to movement mobilization because it determines the structure and strength of social networks as well as the spatial position and routine activities of people in a community. It shows that, as a result of state planning of higher education, most universities in Beijing are located in one area and have a similar structure, and most students live in dormitories located at one corner of the campus and have similar rhythmic spatial movement. During the 1989 BSM, this campus ecology greatly assisted the information transmission and mobilization of Beijing students at the dormitory, university, and the Haidian District levels. As illustrated by the April 27 student demonstration, students also actively made use of the campus ecology, so that it encouraged movement participation and invalidated the normal state control measures. They had also created a rather stable set of ecology-dependent strategies of collective action which gave many unique characteristics to and, to some extent, patterned the dynamics of the 1989 BSM.

In the past, scholars generally thought that communist regimes were highly stable because their repression was assisted by modern infrastructural and military technologies. This totalitarian myth was broken after revolutions swept across Eastern Europe in the late 1980s. Thereafter the question, “How can autocratic regimes that appear to have such awesome power over their citizens collapse so quickly?” (Olson 1990, p. 16), became a puzzle. Restricted by conventional wisdom, most scholars have tried to address the question by emphasizing the role of civil society during East European revolutions. In the light of this article, these studies are possibly limited. Judging by the nature of the former East European regimes, it is conceivable that even in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Poland, where civil society was more developed, their initial movement mobilization

might depend more on ecology and ecology-dependent strategies than on formal organizations or political networks.

For instance, similarities can be seen between the mobilizing strategies of the Beijing students and the Polish workers during the Gdansk and Gdynia strike in 1970 as described Laba's (1991) book on the root of the Solidarity movement. At the initial stage of the strike, a few activists chanted from one workplace to another to attract followers; they also pushed a sound car to different shipyards to draw more people (Laba 1991, chap. 2). The existing organizations such as the Workers' Defense Committee (KOR) or the Catholic Church had nothing to do with the strike at this stage. The importance of shipyard ecology is clearly revealed even though Laba does not mainly focus on the issue of movement mobilization.

An authoritarian regime may crush intermediate associations, but it is not able to destroy ecology-centered human interactions. In fact, as it is revealed in this article, the process of centralization under an authoritarian regime often strengthens ecology-based human interactions. The huge capacity of ecology-centered mobilization at the time of political crisis explains, in part, why the seemingly mighty Communist regime is actually fragile.

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