Mobilizing protest
The influence of organizers on who participates and why

Marije Boekkooi

The Arab Spring, Occupy, anti-austerity protests: all over the world, protest events seem to appear out of nowhere. But activists know that this is far from the truth. Someone somewhere has taken the hard and laborious task upon him or herself, to start an initiative, assemble a group of organizers and join forces to mobilize participants. This dissertation focuses on these preparatory organizing processes and the effects they have on who eventually shows up in the streets and for which reasons.

The study describes how ‘traditional’ types of organizing have different effects compared to the ‘newer’ and ‘online’ types. It develops a continuum of ‘organization types’ (called ‘mobilizing structures’), that range from the ‘traditional’ formal coalition, to the ‘new’ ad hoc social networking types of organizing. It describes how these different organizational types have implications for the organizing process, the mobilization strategy, and consequently for who participates and why.

The first part of the book explores how organizers build mobilizing structures, cooperate and negotiate together, what can go wrong in this process and how these problems can be overcome. The second part of the book focuses on the ‘results’ of the mobilization efforts; who participates in the events, how does the employment of different mobilization strategies impact on this, and how do different types of events, mobilization strategies and types of organizers, attract participants with different motivations.