

Mass Mobilization

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Mass mobilization (also known as social mobilization or popular mobilization) refers to mobilization of civilian population as part of contentious politics. Mass mobilization is often used by grassroots-based social movements, including revolutionary movements, but can also become a tool of elites and the state itself. The process usually takes the form of large public gatherings such as mass meetings, marches, parades, processions and demonstrations. Those gatherings usually are part of a protest action.

Mass mobilization usually starts in places where individuals have significant ties to their communities (peasant villages, urban craft and worker guilds and labor unions, or religious communities). News or rumors of political change (or political opportunity) are common triggers for mass mobilization, which aim is to call attention to economic distress of the community. Peasant rebellions are an example of such an occurrence.

The extent to which mass mobilization is organized versus spontaneous, and the extent to which it relies on reason versus emotions are still debated by scholars. Informal mass mobilization is usually seen as more spontaneous and emotional.

Informal mass mobilization occurs usually suddenly, in response to a crisis (opportunity), when individuals join the protest actions through networks based not on an organizational structure but through interpersonal relationships, such as friendship, workplace, or neighborhood. Increasingly modern technology, such as mobile phones or the Internet, is used to generate informal mass mobilization. Demonstrations such as the Monday demonstrations in GDR or those during Iranian revolution are examples.

Another term for mass mobilization is grassroots lobbying. This refers to the average citizen contacting their legislator to persuade them about an issue.