



Monday marches, once again: Memories of the 1989 'Peaceful Revolution' in the far-right populist movement PEGIDA in Dresden

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Introduction



'Peaceful Revolution'

Leipzig, Monday, 9 October 1989



PEGIDA demonstration

Dresden, Monday, 22 December 2014



Introduction



“We observe with great concern that [the values of the ‘Peaceful Revolution’] are abused by the Pegida demonstrators in Germany and forces in other European countries these days and weeks.”

(Leipzig-based Foundation Peaceful Revolution 2015, <https://www.stiftung-fr.de/texte/sonstige-texte/erklaerung-der-stiftung-friedliche-revolution-zu-den-pegida-protesten/>)

a “farce”

(Jentsch 2016, 41–42)

“the instrumentalization of the GDR opposition’s courageous, defiant chant by the Right is one of the most disturbing phenomena of the German present”

(Frei et al. 2019, 184)



Introduction



The PEGIDA literature

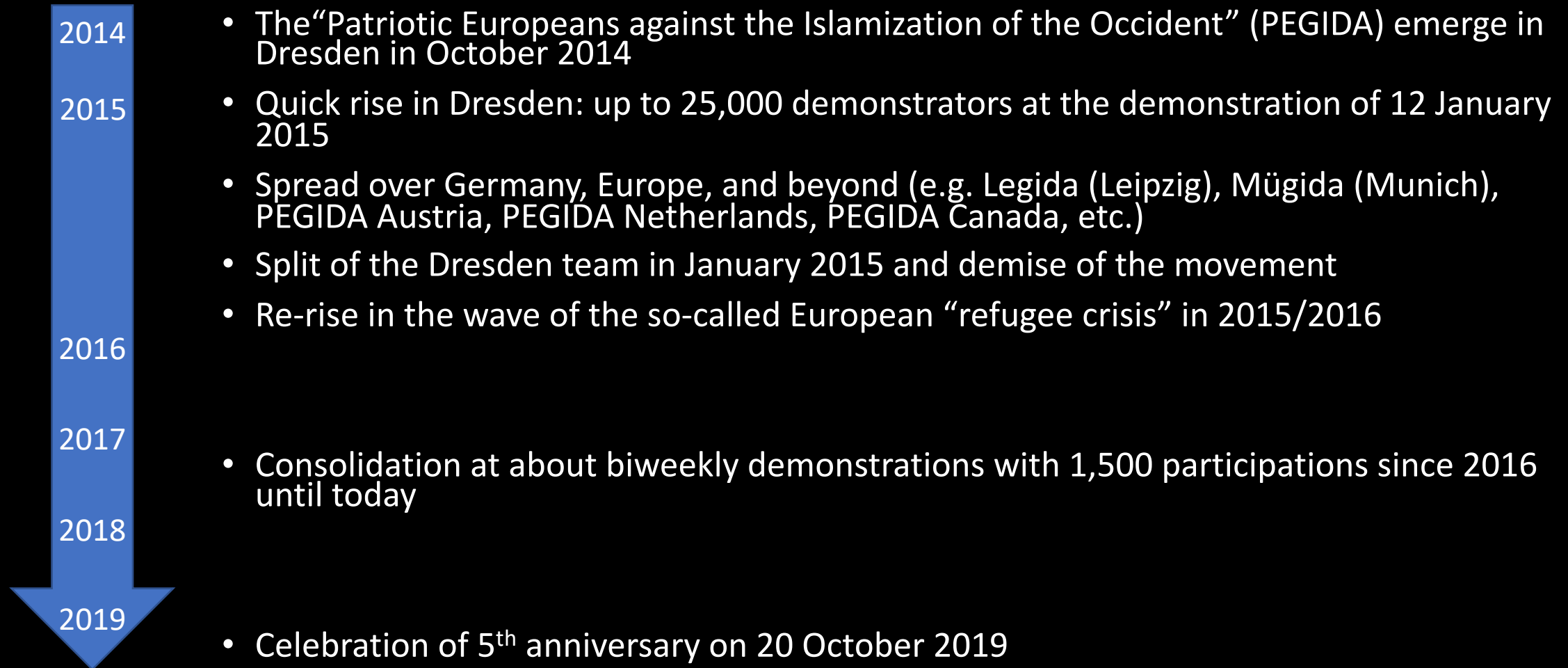
- Abundant in-depth empirical studies (quantitative/qualitative, interviews/focus groups/surveys)
- Use the lenses of (far-right) extremism, nationalism, nativism, neo-Nazism, populism, conceptualizing PEGIDA as a “right-wing movement of contention”, (Vorländer, Herold, Schäler 2018)
- Neglect the ‘memory-perspective’

Research Question

How and why does PEGIDA appeal to the historical memory of the 1989 East German ‘Peaceful Revolution’ against the socialist GDR-regime?



PEGIDA

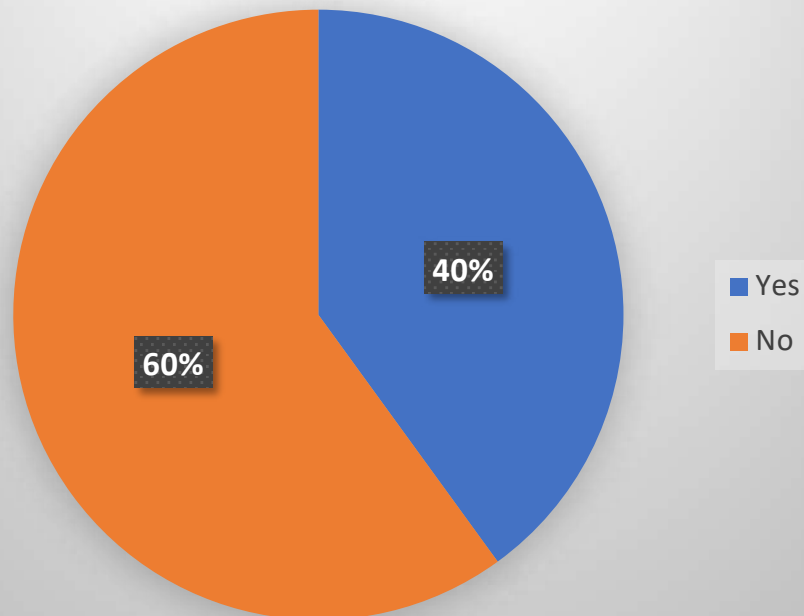




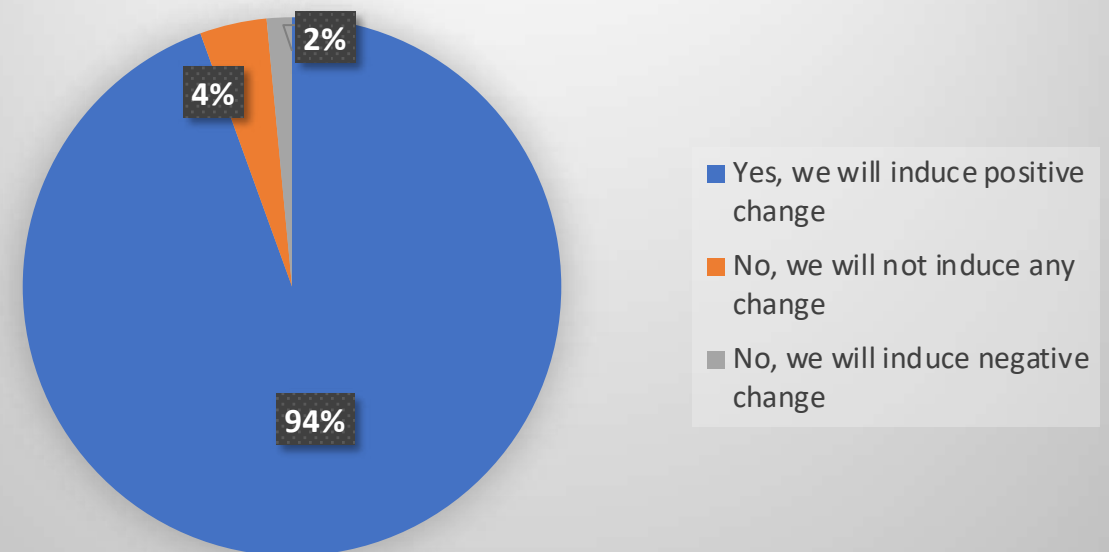
PEGIDA & 1989: Empirical findings

After Patzelt (2015) – caution with these numbers!

Did you participate in the
'Peaceful Revolution'?



As a 1989 demonstrator, do you think
Pegida demonstrations will induce
positive change in Germany?





Populism & Memory politics

Populist politics

- Construct the antagonism between 'the people' as a homogeneous, powerless group and 'the elites' as a corrupted, illegitimately powerful group (Mudde 2007; Laclau 2005)

Memory politics

- "strategies that political actors employ to make others remember in certain, specific ways" (Kubik and Bernhard 2014, 7)
- the means is heritage as "contemporary uses of the past" (Smith 2006)

→ Memory/heritage serve populist politics as tools to construct 'the people'

Analysis

Performance of '1989'

- Model of 'Monday demonstrations'
 - Monday is demonstration day in nearly 100% of the cases
- Physical space of Dresden (formerly also Plauen and Leipzig), particularly:
 - Reconstructed Old Town (the 'Baroque' city)
 - Frauenkirche (symbol of the peace movement)
 - Central Station (location of the confrontation with the police on 30 September/01 October 1989)
- Lights
 - Aesthetics of peace movement

Discursive appropriation of '1989'

- Self-reference as *Montagsdemonstrationen*
- Revolutionary chant '*Wir sind das Volk!*' ('We are the people!')
 - Unclear origin, probably chanted by the crowd
- Concept of 'peacefulness'
 - In initial name
 - Part of every speech



Analysis

“In 2014, a resistance movement grew again in East Germany – in Dresden, which, for already three years, critically of the government and Islam, opposes a government that, like in the middle of GDR-times, continuously decides against the majority of the people. The Merkel-regime has appropriated the past socialist structures, the people has to function, submission to the authorities is desired, also gladly in the voting booth.

This form of politics worked for twelve years, the people has diligently financed two expensive and unnecessary financial crises and the exit from nuclear energy. Yet, we opt out of the ‘refugee crisis’, which threatens our economy, our culture and our future!

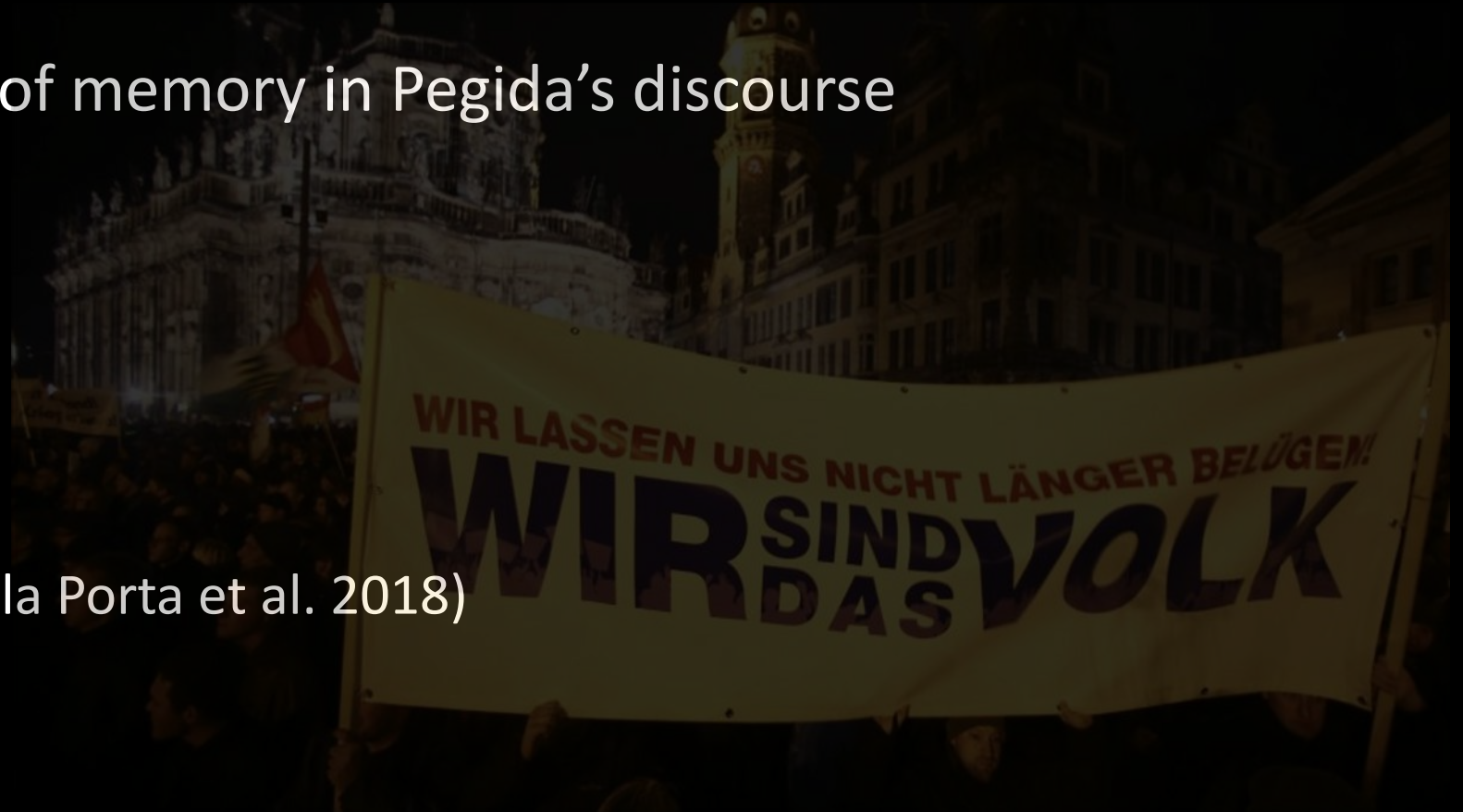
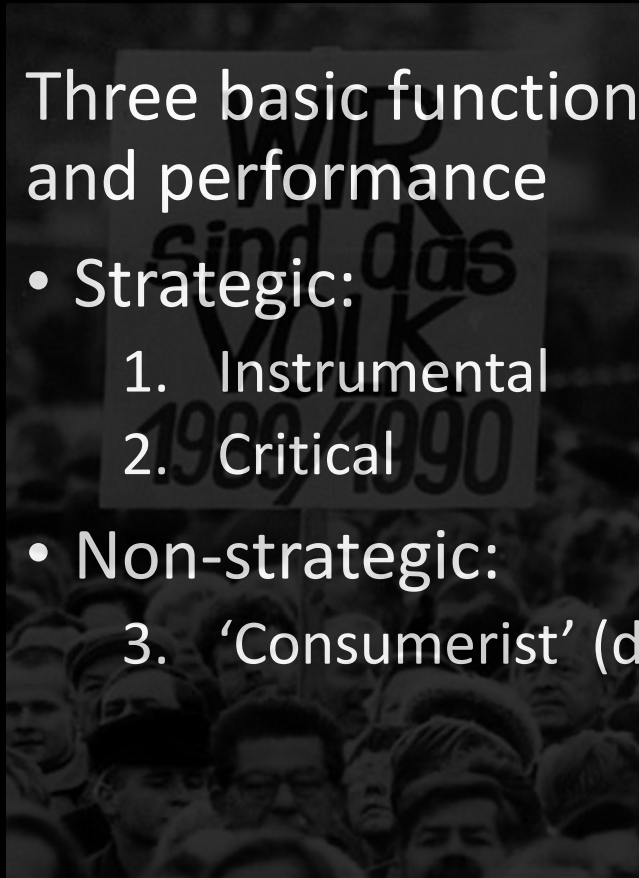
PEGIDA goes ahead in these times and, just like 28 years ago, it looks like a regime will be brought down for the second time within one generation. We are the people!”

(Pegida website, November 2017, <https://www.pegida.de/news/28-jahrestag-des-mauerfalls.html>)

Discussion

Three basic functions of memory in Pegida's discourse and performance

- Strategic:
 1. Instrumental
 2. Critical
- Non-strategic:
 3. 'Consumerist' (della Porta et al. 2018)



Strategic uses of memory

- Instrumental
 - to mobilize participants via the collective action frame of 'resistance against illegitimate authority'
 - to construct 'the people' via a 'chain of equivalence' (Laclau & Mouffe 1985) which equals 'the people' as an empty signifier with 'the anti-authoritarian resistance fighters', 'the peaceful revolutionaries', 'the true (East) Germans', etc.
 - to legitimize the movement via a 'mythopoesis' (van Leeuwen 2007)
- Critical
 - to question the outcome of the 1989 'Peaceful Revolution' as Germany's 'only successful revolution'
 - to strike a parallel between the current German liberal democratic state and the GDR
 - to construct East Germans as 'the true democrats'
 - PEGIDA as a phenomenon of 'delayed transformational fatigue' (Kubik 2018)?



Similarly: the AfD

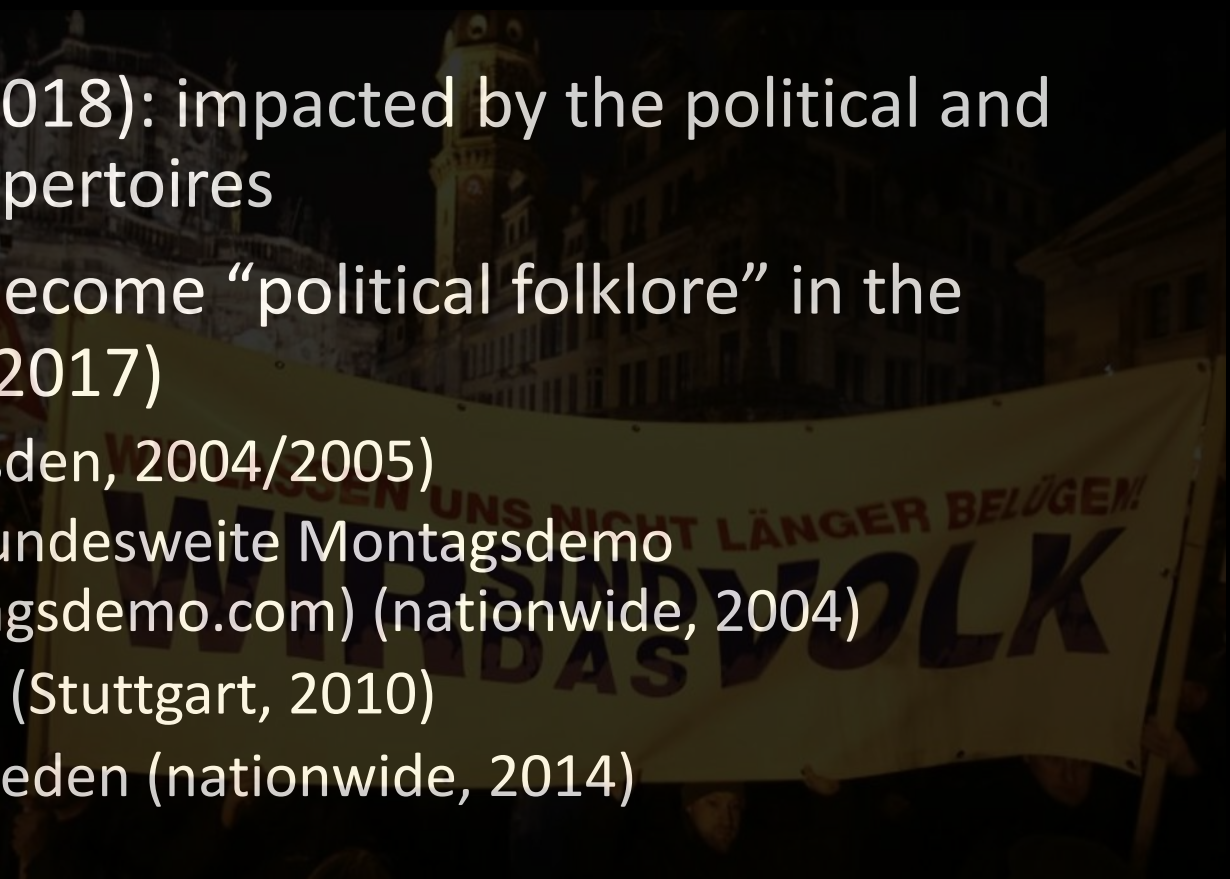




Non-strategic uses of memory

'Consumerist' (della Porta et al. 2018): impacted by the political and cultural context of contentious repertoires

- Monday demonstrations have become "political folklore" in the former GDR and beyond (Weiß 2017)
 - Anti-bridge demonstrations (Dresden, 2004/2005)
 - Anti-Hartz 4 demonstrations & Bundesweite Montagsdemo (<http://www.bundesweite-montagsdemo.com>) (nationwide, 2004)
 - Anti-Stuttgart 21 demonstrations (Stuttgart, 2010)
 - Montagsmahnwachen für den Frieden (nationwide, 2014)
 - ...





Thank you for your attention!

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Joseph Goebbels
Berlin, 1944



Wirmer Flags
Dresden, 2015



FATIGUE



Carl Theodor Körner
Dresden, 1813/14



PEGIDA demonstration
Dresden, 6 February 2015



**Myth of Martin Luther
Wittenberg, 1517**



**PEGIDA-organizer Lutz Bachmann
Dresden, 2015**