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# INTERNATIONALIZATION OR NATIONALIZATION BY COMMUNICATION? THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION RELATIONS OF THE GERMAN SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT

Susanne Kinnebrock

## **The women's movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were closely connected by a network of manifold communication relations.**

To analyze the development of social movements and their transnational communication in a systematic way this article presents an analytical framework and then applies it to the German suffrage movement. Considering different stages of domestic social movements (initial phase, organizational phase, phase of establishment) and different types of media (personal letters among the inner circle, newsletters and feminist magazines for all activists and press releases for the general public), the input of international suffrage associations, in particular, is analyzed. It can be shown that, during the initial phase a transfer of ideas and image of suffragists predominated: the German suffrage activists were strongly affected by the international suffrage discourse and it was the international suffrage movement that ultimately caused the organizational structures of the German suffrage movement to be established. It was during the phase of establishment that nationally specific claims were developed. The latter will be discussed via the examination of the controversial debate on the British suffragettes and their tactics within the publications of the German suffrage movement and the German general public, and it will be shown how national patterns of selection and interpretation became the central point of reference within the German suffrage movement.

**KEYWORDS:** international feminist movement, suffrage, public sphere

# INTERNATIONALIZATION OR NATIONALIZATION BY COMMUNICATION? THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION RELATIONS OF THE GERMAN SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT

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'A movement no one talks about does not take place.' Raschke's (1988, 343) succinct *résumé* indicates the importance of the general public's response to the development of a social movement. Success and failure of a movement depend a great deal on how its claims, objectives and mobilizing efforts are discussed in the public sphere (Rucht, 1994, 337).

Although the public sphere undoubtedly plays a central role for social movements, its analysis remains difficult due to its complexity. Hence a wide range of different approaches exists in social sciences to define and explain the phenomenon of the public sphere. From a system-theoretical point of view the public sphere can be described as an intermediate *communication system* between the political system and other social systems (e.g. Etzioni, 1968; Gerhards, 1994; Gerhards and Neidhardt, 1991). Actor-centered perspectives define the public sphere as a *space or forum* where actors compete for attention and support of the audience in different arenas (e.g. Habermas, 1999 [1990]).<sup>1</sup> Process-oriented concepts focus on the audience and conceptualize the public sphere as the *communication process* a community goes through while creating a mutual understanding of itself and its goals. Since these concepts focus on the process of negotiating relevant issues, social rules and cultural identities, the audience is perceived as an active participant in public communication rather than a passive observer (e.g. Klaus, 1994, 2001, 2006).

All approaches described above have at least three aspects in common: First, each of them pays attention to the communicative exchange that seldom takes place symmetrically due to hegemonic power structures (Kaelble et al., 2002, 24). Second, even though the public sphere might theoretically be thought of as a holistic phenomenon or unity, in practice it consists of a variety of more or less fragmented and differently structured (counter) publics (Fraser, 1990; Führer et al., 2001, 1, 12; Latzer and Saurwein, 2006). Third, the boundaries of the public sphere are (often implicitly) linked to the borders of the national state. On the one hand this relationship results from the idea of the national political system as the main frame of reference for emerging publics. On the other hand the nation's citizens have been the primary target group of the media, both as audience and consumers, since media systems and markets originally developed within national borders (Kaelble et al., 2002, 23–5; Schultz and Weßler, 2005, 356–8).

How does this affect social movements that are operating nationally as well as transnationally like the women's movement? When analyzing the interplay of social movements and the public sphere, it is important to take into account first the variety of differently structured publics that are interacting – from subaltern publics up to national publics. And, second, we need to consider the dynamics coming in from other national public spheres (or 'foreign' public spheres) as well as the dynamics emanating from the international umbrella movement's transnational public sphere.<sup>2</sup>

In order to capture these multi-dependent communication processes between a national social movement, foreign movements and finally the international movement systematically, I will use an analytical framework that identifies typical forms of communication – first at the different levels of the public sphere and second for the different stages of a social movement. Therefore Klaus's actor- and process-oriented concept of the public sphere (2009), Wischermann's typology of the women's movement's channels of communication around 1900 (Wischermann, 2003; Klaus and Wischermann, 2008) and finally Mayreder's (1926) identification of typical stages of social movements will be elaborated into an analytical framework for the examination of (transnational) communication processes within social movements.

Based on this analytical framework I want to examine the interplay of international and national women's movements using the suffrage movement as an example. The framework, first, serves to analyze the interplay between transnational and domestic communication relations of social movements in a systematic and detailed way. Second, it helps us to understand how the German suffrage movement used its relations to international women's movements in order to develop and to mould public opinion in Germany.

## **Analytical Framework**

### *Stages of Social Movements*

According to Rucht a social movement is 'a temporary action system of mobilized networks of groups and organizations that is based on a collective identity and aims to induce, prevent or reverse social change by means of public protest' (1994, 338–9). Five aspects of Rucht's definition should be highlighted: By referring to temporality Rucht emphasizes that social movements are only set up for a limited period of time. Second, 'collective identity' encompassed both conceptions and feelings of affiliation among the involved activists. Third, 'social change' refers to the objectives of a social movement and 'public protests' to its primary means of empowerment. And, finally, 'groups and organizations' constitute the structure of a social movement.

From a historical point of view the beginning, the development and the end of a social movement are of particular interest. Hence, at least three stages of a social movement can be identified (Mayreder, 1926; Raschke, 1988, 377–8; Rucht et al., 1997, 34–49). In the *initial stage* a small group of charismatic leaders establishes (personal) relationships, negotiates the issues as well as ways of bringing about change and formulates the results of this negotiation process as a collective aim.

The initial stage is followed by a process of establishing organizational structures and permanent channels of communication within the social movement. This organizational stage is additionally characterized by strong mobilization efforts

which generally result in a continuously growing number of active supporters. In the final *stage of establishment* a further institutionalization and a professionalization (i.e. in regard to the organization management and public relations) take place, and the social movement gains power in the form of a growing influence on the political system. However, this stage is also characterized by stagnation as the number of the movement's members grows only slowly, and their activity and devotion decrease. Also, the programmatic development of the movement no longer leads to an intellectual elaboration of its objectives. Rather, the prevailing values of the political establishment and its mainstream patterns of interpretation are adopted – even values and interpretations that previously had been rejected (Mayreder, 1926; Zald and Ash, 1966). One might critically remark that such a phase model may lead to determinism because its stages are derived exclusively from the internal dynamics of the movement whereas external factors remain almost unnoticed (Raschke, 1988, 377–8; Rucht et al., 1997, 42). However, instead of using this model for prognostic purposes and creating untenable relations of cause and effect, the (partly overlapping) phases should be regarded as a first periodization for a systematic historical analysis.

#### *Levels within the Public Sphere*

Various and partly overlapping publics are another central aspect for the analysis of (trans-) national communication processes in relation to social movements. Referring to the process-oriented and actor-centered notion of the 'public sphere', it is defined as the *communication process* a community or society goes through while developing its self-understanding:

By naming, generalizing and interpreting experiences collective constructions of reality are being negotiated, consolidated, created or neglected. Social rules and norms get reinforced or modified, cultural goals verified and cultural identities constructed ... and finally the economic-political structure of a society is being discussed and legitimized. (Klaus, 2006, 96)

Following Gerhards and Neidhardt (1991), Klaus distinguishes three levels of the public sphere at which the process of societal self-understanding takes place: encounters, assembly publics and complex publics. Applying this model we are able to examine not only the communication processes within the nationwide 'general' or 'complex' public, which are primarily supported by mass media, but also those that arise within groups of the civil society (assembly publics) or that occur spontaneously in everyday life (encounters). The publics at the medium (assembly) level of the public sphere, in particular, foster processes of societal self-understanding by adopting issues, interpretations and evaluations of everyday communication

that otherwise would hardly enter the mass media and hence the complex public. Although the media provide complex publics with institutionalized communication channels that reach large parts of a society, the roles within the communication process are clearly assigned. In mass communication communicators (e.g. public figures) and mediators (e.g. journalists) can easily articulate their issues – in contrast to members of the audience. A change from an audience role to speaker roles normally does not take place.

Social movements usually operate at the medium level of the public sphere. However, they are also rooted in encounters where they pick up on the issues they aim to communicate to a broader audience. In order to promote their objectives and perspectives, social movements adapt to the operating mode of complex publics and the rules of mass media. Consequently, they operate at all three levels of the public sphere simultaneously (Klaus, 2006, 96).

#### *Levels of the Public Sphere within the German Women's Movement*

With reference to the first German women's movement around 1900, Wischermann (2003) distinguished three interdependent levels of the public sphere: first, *informal relationships and personal networks* among female activists, which are characterized as the movement's culture; second, the *public of the movement* including all the communication processes that took place within the women's movement, that is, at assemblies, in meetings or in publications that circulated among the movement's members; third, the *complex public*, whereby particularly the mass media such as the daily newspapers and popular magazines drew the general public's attention towards certain issues of the women's movement.

Feminist activists were operating at all levels of the public sphere (see Figure 1). At the lowest level they tried to establish a personal network among active individuals to create a feeling of solidarity; at the medium level they assured the movement's capacity to act by mobilizing supporters at assemblies and by means of the movement's publications; on the level of mass media they eventually struggled for the attention, public support and finally political influence (Wischermann, 2003, 268–9).

For the end of the nineteenth century Wischermann assumes not only one women's movement in Germany, but a variety of women's movements. That points to difficulties in allocating communication processes among feminist activists, not only along the three levels of the public sphere, but also within the boundaries of a social movement. These boundaries are not clear cut because social movements assemble various groups or even partial-movements (see Figure 2).

With regard to the first German women's movement the question arises as to whether an independent public of suffragists had been established at all, or if it should rather be subsumed under the public of the bourgeois women's movement,

or even under the public of the whole women's movement (bourgeois and proletarian). In order to identify an independent suffragists' public, it might be useful to distinguish various publics within a movement in relation to two aspects: agreement on elsewhere controversial issues and the existence of organizational and communicative structures. Applying these criteria, an independent public of the suffragist movement can clearly be identified (Kinnebrock, 2005; Wischermann, 2003).

It can be concluded that various issue-specific publics (co)existed within the German women's movement and some of them extended into political parties or the transnational publics of the international women's movement. The (assembly) public of the German suffrage movement consisted of political supporters (like Hellmut von Gerlach, a member of the Reichstag), but also of feminists who were skeptical about women's suffrage (like the head of the moderate wing of the bourgeois women's movement in Germany, Helene Lange) and international spokeswomen in the suffrage debate like the US activist Susan B. Anthony. Since the comments on suffrage issues made by these very different public figures were critically examined, all these communicators became part of the suffragists' public without ever being formal members of (German) suffrage organizations. The public of a social movement and all of its organized followers do not necessarily overlap completely.

### *Stages, Addressed Publics and Functions of Social Movements*

Within the three phases of a social movement the focus of communication processes changes, the different levels of the public sphere are addressed to a varying extent. A precondition for the formation of a social movement is the existence of a personal network. Therefore active interpersonal communication prevails in the initial phase of the movement. At the basic level of the public sphere the direction of the intended social change is negotiated, mobilization takes place and a collective identity emerges primarily as a result of personal communication (Wischermann, 2003, 155–75; see also Raschke, 1988, 193–5).

As the number of followers increases, the capacity to act as a movement has to be ensured. For this purpose organizational structures (e.g. local associations) as well as communicative structures are created. The latter are installed by organizing meetings (with a clear distinction between speaker and audience roles), but also by founding journals that facilitate communication and exchange between dispersed activists. Journals not only enhance communication, they also structure the communication process as their editorial boards allocate the roles of speakers and the audiences. It can be noted that during the organizational stage social movements communicate mainly at the medium level of the public sphere (Wischermann, 2003, 190–210).

As soon as a social movement has successfully set up a professional administration based on the division of labour, it has reached the stage of establishment. Mass media are now increasingly targeted by using (strategic) instruments of public relations. Publicity and acceptance within the general public should be gained (Klaus and Wischermann, 2008, 107).

However, also in the stage of establishment personal networks remain crucial to the movement's stability. They ensure the continuance of internal mobilization and the development of collective identities (Wischermann, 2003, 153f.). But the movement's activities now focus primarily on winning public opinion and gaining political influence (see Table 1).

At the various stages of a social movement different levels of the public sphere are addressed and thereby particular media and specific personal forums gain importance.

In order to maintain personal networks, activists at the beginning of the twentieth century mainly used letters as a medium. Communication within the movement was sustained by association publications (like association journals or newsletters) and copies of the associations' correspondence, whereas the movement communicated with the external general public primarily by publishing articles in newspapers and political magazines.

In personal forums, face-to-face conversation was the main means of communication. Conversations took place not only at 'official' meetings, but also 'in private', for example during joint leisure activities (Klausmann, 2000; Rupp and Taylor, 2001). Moreover, arguments were exchanged face-to-face among the movement's public as well, for instance during association meetings. Additionally, major congresses (that were set up not only for the movement, but that targeted the press as well) provided opportunities for personal exchange (see Table 1).

Up to this point general publics from abroad have not been taken into consideration because at that time transnational general publics hardly existed. There was no global audience that shared a similar knowledge because it received current news from the same set of media. An exchange of opinions on globally shared issues occurred (and occurs) rather seldom. Mass media generally remain nationally oriented and consequently set agendas on national subjects. Thus, the choice of topics, the commonly shared knowledge and established patterns of interpretation vary from country to country. As a result transnational publics emerge only with regard to certain issues (Hepp, 2005, 329–48; Klaus, 2006, 98).

What are the consequences for the 'transnationality' of a social movement's communication? What media can be used for transnational exchange? Letters as well as newsletters of associations could be easily addressed to an audience abroad as long as the issues were not too nationally specific. But when the movement tried to publish articles in national newspapers and magazines, usually did it not reach a transnational public.



This communication situation had lasting consequences for a social movement which, on the one hand, could make use of transnational communication structures provided by the international umbrella movement, but on the other could attract nationwide publicity, support and acceptance only by framing its issues in terms of the national agenda.

In the following I would like to elaborate the communicative impact of a globally active umbrella movement on the development of its national branches. Applying Deutsch's (1966, 97) idea of the nation as a 'communicating community' and a 'space of collective experience' to transnational social movements, we can assume that intensified communication between national branches and the international umbrella movement affects the processes of self-understanding.<sup>3</sup> As a result interpretations of reality as well as the objectives of the movement should slowly converge.

However, recent research on the relation between globalization and localization in the field of 'Lebenswelten' (lifeworlds), or the interdependence of internationalization and re-nationalization in the field of foreign policies indicates the opposite: whereas internationalization at the level of states currently proceeds, globalization is often accompanied by a return to national interests, cultures and local Lebenswelten within the private sector or civil society (e.g. Peters et al., 2005).

My assumption, therefore, is the following: the absorption or rejection of international and foreign influences partly depends on a national movement's stage of establishment and on the public the movement primarily addresses. International networks can give intellectual input in the initial stage of a movement when group identities are constructed, organizational structures develop and ideological objectives are formulated. In the organizational stage the international network can provide assistance with a systematic transfer of image, publicity and strategies. Moreover in this phase international support can strengthen a national movement, helping to legitimize its goals and preventing its marginalization. But as soon as a movement intends to increase its political influence by addressing mass media it tends to adopt the interpretive framework that has already been established in the respective national public. This adoption of a national interpretive framework involves the rejection of other (internationally common) patterns of interpretation – at least if they do not conform to the national ones (see Table 2).

## **Analysis of Transnational Communication Processes**

### *The Initial Stage of the German Suffrage Movement: Identity Construction and the Transfer of Ideas*

As shown in the analytical framework above, in the initial phase of a social movement transnational networks, foreign associations or international umbrella organizations can play a key role in the process of constructing (collective) identities

and developing organizational structures. Furthermore, they can influence a national movement by providing ideas and strategies of empowerment (Rupp and Taylor, 1999; Sperling et al., 2001, 1155–8).

The formation of the German suffrage movement was initiated at a conference of the International Council of Women (ICW) that took place in London in 1899. When the Committee Board of the ICW decided to invite to its Section on Political Rights speakers who opposed the right to vote, the official meeting of this section was cancelled. At the initiative of the Dutch suffragist Aletta Jacobs and the two German activists Anita Augspurg and Linda Gustava Heymann an alternative meeting was organized (without the opponents of female suffrage!). At their meeting they decided to found a new international suffrage association which was independent of the ICW (Bosch and Kloosterman, 1990, 7; Rupp, 1997, 21f.). Although this alternative meeting undoubtedly played a central role in the formation of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance (IWSA) in 1904, I would like to emphasize the *formation of a group identity* as suffragists. The development of an international network of suffragists took place at a time when no such association existed in Germany and the German media paid no attention to female suffrage at all. The women within this emerging transnational network, however, became important spokeswomen for suffrage within their countries. Three years after the meeting in London Anita Augspurg founded the first German suffrage association (Kinnebrock, 2005, 246f.) and a further four years later Aletta Jacobs became chair of the Dutch Suffrage Association (Bosch, 2005).

In Germany not only had the development of a group identity been initiated by external factors, but also the formation of organizational structures. In 1902 the US suffrage alliance, the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) invited foreign suffrage associations to its annual conference, which focused on the foundation of an international suffrage organization. To guarantee that German suffragists could attend the conference and take part in decision-making, they had to be appointed representatives of suffrage associations. Therefore six activists founded the German Suffrage Association (GSA) on New Year's Eve 1901 (Heymann, 1992, 110) and, as a consequence, the small German suffrage movement was officially involved in preparing the foundation of the IWSA right from the beginning. GSA-chair Anita Augspurg even became vice-president of an international committee of six women that organized the founding of the IWSA and formulated its political objectives, the 'Declaration of Principles' (Bosch and Kloosterman, 1990, 7–8; Lüders, 1909, 2–3; Rupp, 1997, 22).

Since foreign women's movements discussed suffrage questions more intensively than their German counterparts, these ideas flowed into the German women's movement primarily from abroad. It is noteworthy that this *transfer of ideas* had been impeded by adapting suffrage claims to the patterns of argumentation prevailing

in Germany's general public. This can be illustrated by comparing Augspurg's position in the negotiations over the international 'Declaration of Principles' to her statements published in the German daily press. In the founding committee of the IWSA she grounded her suffrage claim on natural law, whereas such a rationale can neither be found in articles she published in the German media nor in minutes or publications of the German suffrage movement. Instead of pointing to the individual human right to vote Anita Augspurg and the representatives of the German suffrage movement stressed the societal benefit that might derive from female suffrage. It was argued that an increase of women's political participation would improve education and welfare and thereby reduce social problems like crime, alcoholism, etc. (Kinnebrock, 2005, 243–57; Rosenbusch, 1998, 284–314).

Thus the movement intertwined the 'social question' and the 'women's question'. Temporarily it adjusted to the nationwide patterns of interpretation to such an extent that representatives of the GSA did not mention the main purpose their movement: that happened during an audience with Chancellor Bernhard von Bülow on the occasion of the foundation of the GSA in 1902. A few weeks later GSA chair Anita Augspurg justified this strategy in the women's page of the Berlin newspaper *Der Tag* (30 March 1902): 'Emphasizing female suffrage would have caused an academic digression which couldn't have led to any concrete success right now.'

To conclude, in its initial stage the German suffrage movement reacted to many impulses from transnational networks or international organizations. But as soon as the German suffrage movement had established its own organizational structures, it focused on gaining publicity and support in its domestic public sphere. It tended to formulate primarily those claims that were generally acceptable in its home country. It seems that as the suffrage movement proceeded it gradually reached the organizational stage.

### *The Organizational Stage of the German Suffrage Movement: Transfer of Publicity, Image and Strategies*

In general, resources of foreign or international movements can also be used by national ones. According to Rucht (1994, 348, 2002, 341), the general public's attention and positive resonance are the main resources of a social movement. In particular, young movements can benefit from the publicity that well-established foreign or international umbrella movements already enjoy.

German suffragists seem to have realized the possible benefit of a *publicity transfer*. An incident that occurred during the planning of the ICW congress of 1904 illustrates the competition for publicity among different women's movements. Both the foundation of the IWSA and the ICW congress were to take place in Berlin at the same time. But since the foundation congress of the international suffragists was scheduled a bit earlier than the ICW congress, the German members in the

ICW steering committee worried that the general public's and the media's attention would mainly focus on the first event, the foundation congress, and that the press would lose interest in attending ICW assemblies. Moreover, famous US suffragists like Susan B. Anthony and Carrie Chapman Catt were going to participate in the IWSA foundation congress. The German ICW representatives therefore urged the US ICW chair, Mary Wright Sewall, to cancel or postpone the suffragist congress, or at least exclude the public from it. The German representatives even threatened to vote Sewall out of her position if she did not prevent this interference with the ICW congress. Finally Sewall negotiated an agreement that the foundation of the IWSA should only have private character (Hackett, 1976, 572–4).

In Germany this conflict was also affected by a rivalry between the moderate and radical parts of the bourgeois women's movement. Most moderates were members of the Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine (BDF) or ICW whereas the radicals were actively involved in the German suffrage movement and regarded the IWSA as 'their' new international association. This dispute contributed to the ongoing struggle for publicity.

In order to prevent the IWSA suffering a 'deadly blow' from the lack of public attention (thus Augspurg in the newspaper *Der Tag*, 10 June 1904), the press were allowed access to the founding congress, despite the agreement negotiated by Sewall. As a result all important German newspapers reported extensively on the concerns of the IWSA and the GSA. The press even remarked on a 'remarkable upsurge' (*Hamburgerischer Correspondent*, 9 October 1904) of the German suffrage movement. The general public was no longer able to avoid a debate on women's suffrage.<sup>4</sup> Even the conservative newspaper *Der Tag* (26 June 1904) concluded: 'The conference had strong impact on the public opinion. Even if not everyone agreed with the ideas presented at the conference, the grandeur of the event, the speakers' unanimity and the significance of the issue still impressed the public.' For the first time the 'women's question' became the topic of the day (Gerhard, 1990, 210–13), whereby 'mainly the German suffragists felt that they had made an important step forward', as the liberal newspaper *Berliner Tageblatt* (16 June 1904) summarized it.

The famous US suffragists who attended the congresses in Berlin played an important role addressing the 'women's question' in general and female suffrage in particular. The attendance of Carrie Chapman Catt, chair of the NAWSA at that time, and especially the presence of the *grande dame* of the US suffrage movement, Susan B. Anthony, attracted the media's attention. Even the social democratic newspaper *Vorwärts* was fascinated by the charisma of the two spokeswomen, although it usually commented critically on the emerging middle-class suffrage movement. According to *Vorwärts* (5 June 1904), Anthony deeply impressed by her personality and Chapman Catt additionally convinced as a brilliant speaker.

Anthony, in particular, was able to support the young German suffrage movement with her publicity and her *image* as an internationally famous suffragist and upright democrat (Greenspan, 1986, 367–71). Together with other suffragists Anthony was received at an audience by the German Empress, which indicated the increasing public acceptance of the (German) suffrage movement. The press reported on the audience extensively and the *Berliner Tageblatt* (16 June 1904) concluded:

The Empress and Miss Susan B. Anthony had a delightful conversation. When the Empress offered her hand to Miss Anthony, she shook the Empress' hand strongly instead of kissing it. The Empress sent for an armchair and asked the old lady to sit down which the outgoing republican accepted without hesitation. Anthony took this opportunity to inform the German Empress personally about the suffrage movement and she continuously asked the Empress to talk to the Emperor. The Empress used to answer: 'The gentlemen usually don't want to listen!' Anthony replied enthusiastically: 'Your Emperor and our Roosevelt are such great men, they will listen!'

Although a slightly patronizing undertone pervades the depiction of this audience, and even though the objectives of the suffrage movement are not mentioned, the picture of a friendly activist prevails. Susan B. Anthony ignored the ceremonial rules of the court, but was still capable of holding a 'delightful' conversation with the Empress. With her friendly appearance, her open-minded and forthright nature, and her strong commitment to female suffrage a positive picture of a suffragist was drawn, whereas usually the image of an ugly, bullheaded spinster predominated in the German press, especially in editorial cartoons (Kinnebrock, 1998). To sum up, at quite an early stage of development, in the so-called organizational phase (in which usually the internal public of a movement is primarily addressed), the German suffragists had already started to focus on the general public. And their efforts were quite successful, because they benefited from the publicity and image of the international suffrage movement.

If a social movement wants to be supported by the general public, its claims have to be accepted and its activists must appear to be legitimate representatives of its cause (Gerhards, 1992, 308). Young social movements are confronted with several problems as there is no consensus on their goals yet and their activists are not known within the general public. But the legitimacy of their concerns can be supported by referring to foreign movements and the international umbrella movement. The German suffrage movement, for example, referred to the positive experiences of other countries when discussing the appropriateness of the German voting system. They considered social welfare and other socio-political successes as immediate results of the introduction of female suffrage (Noppeney, 1998).

Moreover foreign and international women's movements provided moral support. The emotional impact of sharing claims at international meetings should not be underestimated – the activists' letters and diaries document not only encouragement and affirmation, but also feelings of felicity (e.g. Bosch and Kloosterman, 1990, 8–42). And even among the general public satisfaction with the transnational dimension of the event was articulated. The journalist and supporter of the women's movement, Martha Strinz, in the conservative newspaper *Der Tag* (26 June 1904), considered the 'world-spanning power of great common ideas' to be the most important achievement of the two conferences in Berlin. National as well as international suffragists legitimized their claims, activities and protests on the basis of the worldwide discrimination against women, and the international opposition towards suffragists (Zimmermann, 2002, 281f.). The emphasis on the universal and global dimension of the 'women's question', as well as the reference to the international movement and its transnational public, also served as some compensation for the suffragists' isolation within the national public (Kinnebrock, 2005, 392–417, 489–514, 544–8).

In the organizational stage, the German suffrage movement tried to absorb not only the publicity, image and legitimizing strategies of international partner movements, but also the mobilizing *tactics* that had been successful abroad. Some of the measures that were adopted intended to strengthen internal communication and mobilize activists (e.g. regular fundraising projects like the annual 'summer offering', which were promoted by the movement's journals). Other measures addressed the general public in order to extend publicity and to increase the number of followers. So called 'suffrage stamps', for example, were sold by the journals of the GSA and used as stickers on postcards – an action that was first taken in the USA, later in France and finally in Germany. And, last but not least, the colors of the German suffrage movement – purple, white and green – originated from the British suffragettes and were used for flags, suffrage badges and the decoration at assemblies (Bruns, 1985, 191–219).

One form of protest that attracted most attention from the media at that time was street demonstrations. Parts of the German suffrage movement tried to organize parades like those set up by the British suffragists' movement in London, with thousands of women participating peacefully. But since street demonstrations were regarded as a socialist form of protest in Germany, they caused controversy in the (deeply bourgeois) suffrage movement. As a consequence only a single street demonstration was staged, in form of an inoffensive carriage ride in 1912 (Kinnebrock, 2005, 335–6; Wischermann, 2003, 245–9). This carriage ride can be interpreted as a national adaptation rather than a transfer of strategy. And it indicates the transfer to the stage of establishment.

*The Stage of Establishment of the German Suffrage Movement: Dissociation from the (British) Suffragettes*

As pointed out above, a movement begins to adapt to established national patterns of argumentation and interpretation when it enters the stage of establishment. It now focuses increasingly on gaining the support of the national public. This process can be described as the 'nationalization' of a domestic movement (Zimmermann, 2002, 287–8). Part of it is the dissociation from the objectives of foreign or international movements, which are increasingly regarded as deficient for national purposes. In the following this process of nationalization will be examined with respect to the German suffrage movement and its reaction to the militant part of the British suffrage movement: the suffragettes – to be distinguished from the peaceful suffragists.

Since 1906 the German press had occasionally reported on the spectacular activities and increasingly militant protest of the British suffragettes, but it was not until spring 1912 that the suffragettes' protests received regular coverage. The smashing of shopping windows in London's exclusive West End, however, was registered by the German press with great interest. Its reactions were mostly dismissive – often with a misogynistic tone. Most articles were characterized by a lack of understanding, severe criticism or even a condemnation of the protests (Kinnebrock, 1999, 151–7).

The German debate on the British suffragettes intensified after Käthe Schirmacher, a protagonist of the German suffrage movement, justified the violent protests. Initially Schirmacher had only commented on the issue in the journal of the GSA, but her remarks were taken up by the daily press and denounced. The main positions in the public debate of 1912 can be outlined as follows:

*First: the British suffragettes fight for a just cause and their actions are justifiable because they are part of a struggle for freedom.* But only a few activists of the German suffrage movement supported this view. Even suffragists who usually called for women's suffrage vehemently now carefully refrained from the militant protest of the British suffragettes. The *grande dame* of the German suffrage movement, Hedwig Dohm, for example, sympathized with the impatience of the British suffragettes, but also stated in the moderate newspaper *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* (24 July 1912): 'Importing suffragettes' [strategies] to Germany would be a total failure propaganda for female suffrage.' Her statement reflects the position prevailing in the bourgeois press.

*Second: the militant suffragettes are a typical British extravagance. German women and their suffrage movement are unlikely to act in such a foolish manner.* A statement of the German suffragist and journalist, Lucia Dora Frost, in the same issue of the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* illustrates this point of view:

The British mind is more violent than the German one; it is straightforward and indulgent to the intentions of the individual. One has to keep this in mind to understand the actions of the British suffragettes. We Germans would have never been attracted to such terrorist tactics.... Respecting German public opinion the leaders of the women's movement are committed to the adoption of knowledge and consideration. This leads to a tactic which is more subtle and perhaps even more effective. Since the German suffragists are supported by parties, governments and the media, they have no reason to use violent methods.

Despite the questionability of these remarks on the British national character and the acceptance of the German suffrage movement (it was supported by the German political establishment), the statement illustrates that the German suffragists wanted to see their movement as in accordance with central institutions of state and civil society. Consequently they committed themselves to a social consensus conveyed by the media.

*The third position in the debate on the British suffragettes considered the claims and actions of the suffragettes as inappropriate, but did not regard them as a 'British extravagance' but as the logical consequence of women's emancipation.* In response to a defense of the British suffragettes by Käthe Schirmacher the conservative newspaper *Berliner Neueste Nachrichten* (14 December 1912) summarized this third position as follows:

Women becoming hyenas to achieve a pointless aim are hailed as heroines and role models for contemporary and future women. What a terrible confusion!... Even if the German suffragists have not yet adopted the British forms of protest, the German suffragists themselves and their objectives have to be judged equally.

Equating the British suffragettes and German suffragists seemed to endanger the further establishment of the German suffrage movement. The board of the bourgeois umbrella organization (Council of German Women Organizations) even worried that every future effort of the bourgeois women's movement would be discredited. Consequently, in March 1913 the board distributed a press release announcing that the Council dissociated itself from the British suffragettes. In order to prevent an image transfer, militant forms of protest were condemned 'under every circumstance and for every woman as a violation of her nature'.<sup>5</sup>

According to the analytical framework introduced above, the German women's movement as well as its partial-movement, the German suffrage movement, had already entered the stage of establishment. At that time the debate on the British suffragettes took place primarily in the daily press and no longer among the movement's public. The German women's movement, as well as parts of the German



suffrage movement, drew on established patterns of interpretation by referring to clichés like 'British extravagance'. They argued that German women respected their 'other' nature and consequently refused any kind of extremism. Instead they would pursue the general welfare.

Two parallel developments can be identified: the German suffrage movement had started to address the general public and increasingly adopted nationwide established patterns of interpretation. At the same time it refrained from involvement with foreign movements. It started to reject a transfer of publicity, image and strategies from abroad and no longer referred to the global dimension of the movement. The decreasing significance of the international suffrage movement also explains the suspension of international contacts by large parts of the German suffrage movement at the outbreak of the First World War.

## Conclusions

In order to examine transnational communication processes it is important to differentiate between the stages of a movement and its various publics. The example analyzed illustrates that the German suffrage movement benefited from international contacts in its initial stage. German activists had been involved in international suffragist networks which led to the adoption of objectives that had been formulated on an international level. This *transfer of ideas* was accompanied by the *emergence of a new group identity* as explicitly political suffragists – to be distinguished from the mainstream of the bourgeois women's movement in Germany that focused primarily on education, access to qualified professions and social questions. And, finally, the international suffrage movement also initiated the construction of organizational structures within the German movement.

International and foreign suffrage organizations also supported the German suffrage movement in its *organizational stage*. In particular, the founding congress of the IWSA in Berlin enhanced mobilization because it illustrated acceptance of an objective on an international level that still had to be achieved on the national level. Furthermore, it enhanced the attention of the general public and the creation of a positive image of the German suffrage movement (*publicity and image transfer*). In subsequent years the German suffragists used strategies of mobilization and protest that had been successfully employed abroad (*transfer of strategies*). Means of mobilization within the public of the movement were adopted without remarkable modifications, whereas forms of protests were adjusted in order to trigger a positive response from the national public. Hence, the only demonstration of the bourgeois suffragists was staged as carriage ride instead of a 'proletarian' march.

This leads to another important conclusion: despite the importance of transnational communication to the development of a social movement, the domestic general public is usually confined by the borders of a nation. In order to achieve publicity

and nationwide acceptance, the movement has to adopt those topics and patterns of interpretation that are already well established within the national public sphere. These national constructions of reality can be diametrically opposed to those of the international movement – as the German movement’s position on the British suffragettes illustrated. While elsewhere the suffragettes were partly regarded as freedom fighters, the German press denounced them as criminals and psychopaths. Most of the German suffragists and bourgeois feminists finally agreed with the condemnation of the British activists. This can also be considered a consequence of entering the *stage of establishment*. The German suffrage movement focused on acceptance and support within the national public, therefore the suffragettes served as an (*anti*) *model*, to demonstrate the dissimilarity of the German and other suffrage movements. Although several German suffragists might have been attracted to the ‘veritable international spirit’ (Kirchhoff, 1921, 252) of the international suffrage movement, national patterns of selection and interpretation remained the central point of reference for the German women’s movement and most parts of the German suffrage movement.

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1. Although Habermas (2006) recently described the public sphere as an intermediate system, he still locates it between the state and society.
  2. In the following I use the term 'transnational' to refer to the interactions between people or groups on a global scale, whereas the operations of organizations that work on an international level and rely on well-established structures will be described as 'international'.
  3. For similar recent references to Karl Deutsch's concepts that originally applied to the nation-state see Weichlein (2011).
  4. These findings are based on the analysis of a large corpus of press articles about the suffrage and women's movement, that are stored at Bundesarchiv (BA: R 8034 II 7955–7971), Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischen Kulturbesitzes (GSTA: HA Rep.77 Innenministerium, CBS 573) and at Hamburger Staatsarchiv (HStA: P.P. S 9001 I–IV)
  5. See 'Zur Kampfesweise der Suffragettes' in Landesarchiv Berlin/Helene-Lange-Archiv: Fiche 13–47.

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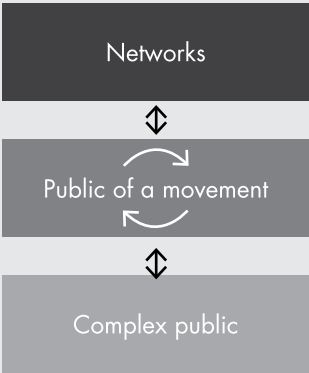
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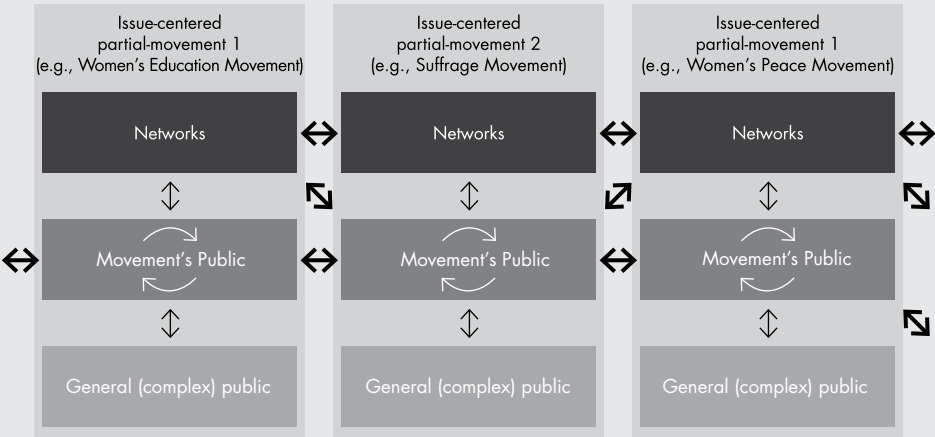
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FIGURES

1. BASIC SCHEME OF THE COMMUNICATION PROCESSES OF A SOCIAL MOVEMENT



2. EXTENDED SCHEME OF THE COMMUNICATION PROCESSES OF A SOCIAL MOVEMENT CONSIDERING COMMUNICATION PROCESSES AMONG PARTIAL-MOVEMENTS AND WITH THIRD PARTIES



- ↔ Communication processes within issue(s)-specific partial-movements
- ↔↔ Possible communication processes between issue(s)-specific partial-movements



**TABLES****1. STAGES OF A MOVEMENT, LEVELS OF THE PUBLIC SPHERE, FUNCTIONS, MEDIA AND FORUMS OF COMMUNICATION WITHIN A NATIONAL MOVEMENT**

	<b>Levels</b>	<b>Function</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Personal forums</b>
Initial stage	Networks	Group-) identity formation Internal mobilization	Letter	Private occasions
Organizational Stage	Public of the movement	Collective learning processes Collective capacity to act	Association publications Association correspondences	Association meetings
Stage of establishment	General (complex) public	External mobilization Public support/acceptance	Newspaper (Political) magazines	Conferences

**2. COMMUNICATIVE IMPACT OF INTERNATIONAL AND FOREIGN MOVEMENTS ON NATIONAL BRANCHES**

	<b>Levels of the public sphere</b>	<b>Function of domestic communication</b>	<b>Functions of transnational communications</b>
Initial stage	Networks	(Group-) identity formation Internal mobilization	(Group-) identity construction Exemplary models of organization Transfer of ideas
Organizational Stage	Public of the movement	Collective learning processes Collective capacity to act	Transfer of publicity Transfer of image Transfer of strategies Legitimationg Compensation of national isolation
Stage of establishment	General (complex) public	External mobilization Public support/acceptance	Models to reject and to sharpen the national profile