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The Study of Social Movements in West Germany: Between Activism and Social Science¹

Dieter Rucht

The existence and activities of social movements, on the one hand, and social-scientific study of them, on the other, are usually linked closely together. The flourishing of social movements is likely to promote, although with some delay, a corresponding boom in research on social movements. West Germany did not follow such a pattern, though, for a long period of its existence. In the post-war period at least, the general public had mixed feelings about discussing social movements. This term was by no means neutral as it had been heavily exploited by the Nazi-regime. For many people, social movements were discredited per se as a means for influencing the political process. For a number of reasons, certainly going beyond mere terminology, the Nazi-movement did not induce sociological social movement analysis. Until today, this movement has rather been an object of study of political scientists and historians.

The labor movement also did not become a central object for sociology. The conflict between labor and capital had already been moderated and mediated during the Weimar republic. This processes continued in the period after the Second World War. Mainly due to the effects of the Nazi regime, but also as a result of profound socio-economic changes, the labor movement could not re-establish its once vital counter-cultural networks. It very soon crystallized into the institutionalized forms of unions and parties, and

1 An earlier and shorter version of this essay was presented at the Annual Conference of the French Society of Sociology, September 29-30, 1989, in Paris and published – in German – under the title »Die Analyse der neuen sozialen Bewegungen in der Bundesrepublik – eine Zwischenbilanz« in *Forschungsjournal Neue Soziale Bewegungen*, Sonderheft 1989. I am grateful to Roland Roth for comments on earlier versions of this article.

was thus hardly perceived as a movement, although its representatives tried to maintain such an image. Major efforts at studying the labor movement were undertaken only by historians and tended to focus on the 19th century and the early decades of our century. The category of »social movement« was used only as a label in this research, but not as a »conceptual key for analysis.

Surprisingly enough, the extra-parliamentary opposition (including the student revolt in the late 1960s) also did not lead to systematic sociological analysis. It was the object of many essays focusing on problems of democratic theory, Marxist thought, cultural critique, etc., of course. But it was hardly analyzed in terms of an empirically oriented social movement research (for one of the few exceptions, cf. Allerbeck et al., 1973). One reason for this lack of empirical investigation was the fact that, even in the 1970s, the study of social movements had not been institutionalized in the universities. There were no chairs devoted to social movements, never mind entire institutes.² The field of social movements was not treated as a subdiscipline of sociology; it was absent in most introductory volumes and textbooks in sociology. Another reason seems to be the fact that most of the theorists and activists who succeeded in getting positions at the universities retained a peculiar distance from their political past and preferred to study topics other than the movements of the 1960s. More significant attempts at analyzing the student movement, and its societal context in particular, have only recently been undertaken.

To be sure, social movements were an important object for the classical German sociology. But the great authors, such as Karl Marx, Georg Simmel, Ferdinand Tönnies and Max Weber, did not provide refined conceptual tools for the analysis of social movements. In addition, many of the social scientists of the Weimar era who had been close to social movement analysis, e.g. Karl Mannheim and Lewis Coser, or who, like Rudolf Heberle, devoted much work directly to the study of social movements, did not return from

2 It would be misleading to attempt to deduce the actual research interests from the names of institutes. For example, the unit »Institutions and Social Movements« in the social science faculty of the Frankfurt university is not actually engaged in social movement research.

emigration. From their positions abroad these scholars could hardly exert a strong impact on West German science.³

Given these conditions, the field of social movement analysis was largely abandoned. The old traditions had been broken off; the topic was not rooted in the academic sphere. Consequently, sociological journals in the postwar decades included only a few articles on social movements and most of them were not written with respect to current problems. This was also true for sociological work (Pankoke, 1970) focusing on the »social question« and social movements. A two volume reader on collective behavior (Heinz and Schöber, 1973), which was largely composed of translated essays by US scholars, did not gain much attention in the academic community. Even a book entitled »Soziale Bewegung« (social movement) by the Bielefeld-based sociologist Otthein Rammstedt, did not have much resonance in the first few years after publication – although it was published in the period when the so-called new social movements were flourishing. The reasons for this were, first, that it put a high emphasis on epistemologic questions. Second, the more systematic aspects of the essay, among them the ideal-typical model of a movement's life cycle, were not related to contemporary movements.⁴

It was not until the 1980s that an intense and increasingly professional reflection on social movements took place. This growing interest was clearly a reaction to the burgeoning of various movements which had developed after the student movement. Although this movement experienced a great decline after its spectacular peak in 1967 and 1968, in many respects it stimulated a variety of other groupings and movements. These ranged from the new women's movement (a direct offspring of the student revolt) up to the revitalized peace movement of the 1980s. Not surprisingly, many of these groups attracted the attention of social scientists who tried to document, analyze and interpret them. With respect to individual movements, a number of more or less scholarly books and articles were published in the mid-seventies (e.g. Krechel 1975, on the new women's movement, and Mayer-Tasch 1976, on the citizen initiatives). There was also a growing interest in their forerunners, particularly in the peace movement of the 1950s and 1960s (Otto,

3 It is worth mentioning, however, that Heberle's book on social movements (1951) was translated into German and published in 1967 under the title »Hauptprobleme der Politischen Soziologie« (Main Problems of Political Sociology).

4 Rammstedt first tried to apply his life-cycle model to a specific movement in a later publication. In this work he examined the new peace movement (Rammstedt, 1989).

1977), the broad range of counter-cultural groupings (Hollstein, 1979) and the so-called extra-parliamentary opposition including the student revolt of the late 1960s (Bauß, 1977). The authors of these publications were in many cases (former) movements' activists or at least they took a sympathetic stance.⁵ In an overall view, these studies did not pursue ambitious theoretical and analytical goals, but rather aimed at describing, documenting, and promoting the movements. During this period movements were typically perceived as single phenomena. The authors tended to use the term »social movements« in the same way as the movements did in referring to themselves; it served simply as a label and did not raise any definitional and conceptual problems.

It was only in the late 1970s that the perception of these phenomena changed. Both the activists and the scientific observers began to interpret single movements as parts of a more encompassing ensemble that was initially referred to by various catchwords: »Zweite Kultur« (second culture, Peter Glotz), »Gegengesellschaft« (countersociety, Walter Hollstein), »neopopulism« (Jürgen Habermas, Bernd Marin), »alternative movement« (Wolfgang Kraushaar, Josef Huber, Joachim Raschke), »new social formations« (Adalbert Evers and Zoltan Szankay), etc. In this period the impression emerged that these movements would form a powerful force which would be willing and capable of challenging the overall social and political order.

Originating among social scientists, the concept of »new social movements« took hold and thus superceded the former catchwords.⁶ This label encompasses, in particular, the new women's movement, citizen initiatives focused mainly on housing, urban planning and marginalized social groups, the movement against nuclear power, the broad spectrum of the ecology movement, the so-called »alternative movement« comprised of self-help groups, co-operatives, self-run youth centers, squatters, etc., and the new peace movement. It is difficult to trace whether the label new social movement was drawn from abroad, e.g., from France, or if it originated independently in Germany. Although this category occasionally came under heavy attack, it was not replaced – probably due to a lack of convincing alternatives. It also has been assimilated into the language of established politics in the meantime and, despite its vagueness, seems to hold its ground.

5 For a remarkable exception, see Langguth 1976. An updated and revised edition of this book was published in 1983.

6 It is clear that this term was not introduced as a well-reflected analytical category. Roth (1982, 79) and Nelles (1983, 83) admit that the term arose only for lack of a better one.

In the early 1980s the phenomenon of new social movements became a more or less central point of interest in various monographies (Hirsch, 1980; Raschke, 1980; Evers and Szankay, 1981; Brand, 1982; Rucht, 1982). It was political scientists, in particular, and not so much sociologists⁷, who studied this phenomenon and its predecessors. It also became a topic of various conferences (see the readers edited by Grottian and Nelles, 1983; Hartwich, 1983; Falter, Fenner and Greven, 1984). An initial, basically descriptive, comprehensive study was soon published (Brand, Büsser and Rucht, 1983). It was followed by a series of writings focussed on specific conflicts, single movements, particular aspects of various movements and further comprehensive studies (e.g., Vester, 1983; Schmidt, 1984; Roth, 1985; v. Beyme, 1986; Rucht and Roth, 1987; Rolke, 1987; Rucht, 1989a; 1990; Roth, 1989; Wasmuht, 1989, Fuchs, 1990). There was also a growing interest in historical movements of the late 19th and the early 20th century which, in many respects, could be seen as forerunners of contemporary social movements (Conti, 1984; Linse, 1986).

Starting in 1983, a relatively intense cooperation between the respective social scientists took place. In the mid-eighties, this debate, which up until then had been centered only on West Germany, became broader. Systematic and more general aspects of the analysis of social movements were raised (Gerdes, 1984; Raschke, 1985; Neidhardt, 1985; Schneider, 1987; Nullmeier and Raschke, 1989; Huber, 1988); social movements and corresponding scientific analyses from other countries were discussed (Brand, 1985; Rucht, 1984; Japp, 1984; Mayer, 1985; Wasmuht, 1987, Rothgang, 1990).

Although the political impetus of the new social movement has gradually abated in the last few years, and most activists have shifted toward more pragmatic political concepts, social movement research in West Germany continues to flourish. An impressive body of literature⁸ has been produced to date which is, however, less than convincing in terms of quality.

After these introductory remarks including a first broad overview of the development of the study of social movements, I will deal more systematically with (1) theory and concepts, (2) methods, (3) empirical results, (4) in-

7 Probably the first genuine sociological essay on new social movements was that of Eder (1983) presented at the convention of the Sociological Association in 1982. In 1985, the section on »Sociological Theories« held a conference on »Social Movements and Social Evolution« in Munich.

8 See the recent bibliographies in Nullmeier and Raschke (1989), Wasmuth (1989), Roth and Rucht (1990, forthcoming).

stitutional aspects of research and (5) debates and open questions in this field of study.

I. Theories and Concepts

It has already become at least implicitly clear that theoretical and conceptual interests had remained underdeveloped for a long time in West Germany. Even for the present it can be observed that theorizing in this field is far from being very advanced. In general, only tentative propositions have been presented. Distinct theoretically oriented »schools« have not been established thus far. Sharp theoretical controversies have also not taken place, but are likely to occur in the near future.

As in many other European countries the category »social movement« is typically used in West Germany to refer to a collective effort at promoting a fundamental societal change. With this definitional element – in contrast, e.g., to the resource mobilization approach – a boundary is drawn between a social movement and pure group interest politics centered around single issues or a specific clientele. Unlike such approaches as that of Alain Touraine, in Germany the term social movement is not necessarily linked to the category of class. This relatively broad understanding, however, implies some difficulties in distinguishing between social movements, on the one hand, and political or cultural movements in the strict sense, youth religions, terrorist groups, short-lived political campaigns, more spontaneous collective actions and diffuse ideologic currents, on the other.

In general, *structural* concepts and theories are clearly dominant among the West German theoretical approaches to social movements. Several variations of these structural approaches can be found. For instance, Habermas (1981) interprets the emergence of new social movements as a reaction to the process of the »colonialization of life world« following the imperatives of the economic and the political systems. Raschke (1985), in his encompassing historical and systematic analysis of social movements, relates the *new* social movements to a post-industrial type of society and assumes that these movements focus on problems of the way of life (»Lebensweise«). Brand (1989) and Rucht (1988) refer to versions of modernization theory which still have not yet been well elaborated. These authors link (new) social movements to breakthroughs of modernization in the realms of economy,

politics and culture. Eder (1982; 1986) relates the new social movements to a new societal stage of morality and collective consciousness, although he has recently raised some doubts about the »progressive« potential of these movements (Eder, 1989). Offe (1985; 1990). Other sociologists (e.g., Nedelmann, 1984; Halfmann, 1984) base their interpretation of new social movements on changes of interest mediation in contemporary welfare states. Still other authors (Hirsch and Roth, 1986; Roth, 1989a; Mayer, 1985), who adhere more closely to the marxist tradition, draw on the economically oriented »regulation« school and assume a crisis of the Fordist mode of capitalism. In this line of thought, the new social movements are seen both as results and catalysts of an emerging pattern of »post-Fordism«.

These structurally-oriented concepts are combined in part with such theorems as the shift to postmaterial values (drawing on Inglehart's work), a change of political generations (e.g., Fogt, 1982), or an overload of modern welfare states due to an »inflation of expectations« (Klages, 1980). It can be said for nearly all of these macrostructural concepts that they pay little attention to the constitution and mobilization processes of movements on a micro level.

Compared to the broad range of the structural concepts mentioned above, *actor-centered* theories are clearly marginal. There are, however, some proponents of a methodological individualism who, mainly drawing on theories of rational choice, are trying to explain individual engagement in the context of social movements (e.g., Opp 1984; 1988). Simply for systematic reasons, however, these concepts do not apply specifically to *new* social movements. One of the few actor-centered approaches which does not focus on the individual, but on collective actor, is that of Gerdes (1985). His study on regionalist movements in France was theoretically inspired by phenomenology and symbolic interactionism.

Worth mentioning also is a not yet further elaborated approach represented by Japp (1984). Influenced by the work of Touraine, he centers on the aspect of the self-constitution of social movements, and at the same time, aims at integrating some of the premises of Luhmann's functionalist theory.

(New) social movements have only quite recently been discussed in the light of a straightforward functionalist systems theory (Luhmann, 1986; Bergmann, 1987; Ahlemeier, 1989). Here, emphasis is given to aspects of societal self-monitoring and self-mobilization as key functions of social movements, whereas aspects of their genesis, organization and strategy have been largely neglected.

Partly in the context of some of the concepts mentioned above we also see a growing interest in the analysis of particular aspects of (new) social movements. This is true, for example, for questions related to their collective identity (Nelles, 1984), their internal communication and interorganizational relations, the institutionalization and professionalization of movements, and strategies (Leif 1985; 1990; Nullmeier, 1989; Roth, 1987; 1989; Rucht, 1984; 1990; Kretschmer and Rucht, 1987). Largely unconnected with these writings, a considerable body of literature has been produced in the framework of the still less institutionalized women's studies focusing on the feminist movement.⁹ Only recently, some feminist writers have also taken a critical stance toward the new social movements literature (see section V). Finally, there are also approaches centered on more specific areas or issues such as subcultures (Schwendter, 1973), youth protests (Scherer, 1988), right wing groups (Dudek and Jaschke, 1984; Rau, 1985; Feit, 1987; Stöss, 1989), political extremism (Infratest, 1980; Backes and Jesse, 1989), political violence (Zimmermann, 1989) or terrorism (Bundesminister des Innern, 1981-84; Hess et al., 1988). In most cases, these studies dealt only indirectly with social movements.

II. Methodological Approaches

Given the relatively late start experienced by social movement research in West Germany, it is not surprising that the methodological discussion, as far as this field is concerned, is still underdeveloped. Only few writings deal more generally with methodological issues (Gerdes, 1984; Nullmeier and Raschke, 1989). In the period up to the early 1980s, most of the work was based only on an unsystematic use of methods and sources. Among these were reports from journalists, interviews with movement leaders, surveys, case studies, documents from social movement organizations and participant observation. These sources were used for analysis with very different pur-

⁹ See, for instance, Schenk (1980), Knafla and Kuhlke (1987); Clemens (1989) and Rubart (1987). Most of this literature deals only with specific aspects of the movement. Compared to several thorough historical studies of the German women's movement, there is still a surprising lack of information on the new women's movement. There are no comprehensive and empirically detailed studies available on the new women's movement (Clemens, 1989, 255).

poses and points of attention. Various methods and sources were often combined without, however, really being applied in a sophisticated, exhaustive and well-documented manner. Moreover, this type of ad-hoc analysis was not always explicitly guided by theories and research hypotheses. As a rule, most of this work was carried out by a single person usually lacking in the resources to develop and implement research using more ambitious and costly methods. Partly due to this lack of resources, but also to the complexity of the new social movements, most of the encompassing studies are based on secondary analysis (Brand, Büsser and Rucht, 1983/1986; Raschke, 1985; Roth 1985; Rolke, 1987).

Studies relying on particular methods such as content analysis, personal interviews with activists, participant observation, etc. were usually narrow in their spatial, temporal and/or sectoral scope. The focus on particular questions, however, occasionally involved other methods, when a specific aspect was interpreted to be part of a broader phenomenon that could only be grasped by such specific methods. This was true for several case studies on specific conflicts within the context of broader movements. Similarly, most of German cross-national work and studies of movements in foreign countries were also based on primary analysis of interviews and documents together with a secondary analysis of already published studies (Gerdes, 1985; Mayer, 1985; Wasmuht, 1987; Rucht, 1989; 1990a; Rothgang, 1990; Liebert, 1986).

Survey research, as far as representative polls are concerned, dealt only marginally with social movements or suffered from pragmatic restrictions that could hardly allow for generalized findings. For example, empirical data from survey research focussed on party alignment and voting behavior with regard to the Green Party were used simply as data on the new social movements in general (e.g., Bürklin, 1984). In these cases, the fact was ignored that many participants in these movements took a skeptical stance towards political parties in general or were involved with other parties such as the Social Democrats or the Liberal Democrats.

One exception was the Eurobarometer-surveys which were implemented in various Western European countries including West Germany. Among other things, these surveys referred explicitly to various new social movements starting in 1982. In the meantime, the respective data have been used by several authors to discuss new social movements (Watts, 1987; ZEUS, 1989; Inglehart, 1989) without, however, taking into account various methodological deficits (Fuchs and Rucht, 1990). At least for West Ger-

many, we have additional data which, up to now, has not been fully exploited for empirical analysis (Pappi, 1989; Fuchs, 1990; Schmitt, 1989). Another useful source, although generally based on surveys which are only indirectly related to social movements, would be the work focussed on political participation and unconventional/radical behavior (e.g., Barnes, Kaase et al., 1979; Kaase, 1982; Kaase and Neidhardt, 1990; Infratest, 1980).

Only very recently have several major research projects on new social movements been initiated which are expected to be more ambitious in terms of methodology and methods (see section IV). In part, these projects also put more emphasis on quantitative analysis largely neglected thus far.

III. Some Empirical Findings on New Social Movements

Despite their usually unsystematic use of empirical data, many of the early descriptions and analyses of the new social movements in West Germany exhibited a convergence in most of their empirical findings. By and large, these tentative results were confirmed by more recent and more ambitious empirical work. In the following I will briefly present some of these findings organized around key aspects without, however, referring to the respective literature in most cases.

(1) *The new social movement sector as a whole*: In the self-image of most of the followers of the new social movements there is a relatively clear dividing line between these and earlier movements, and in particular, the labor movements and its heirs, the labor unions and Social Democrats. These organizations are perceived to represent an »old« concept of progress, based on personal discipline, bureaucratic structures, representative forms of politics, high division of labor, economic growth, etc.

The New Left, and in particular the mobilized students of the 1960s, were the first significant force to challenge this concept – though they still shared many ideas of the Old Left. Despite the fact that some analysts of new social movements are divided over the question whether the New Left was really the first new social movement, rather than an intermediary between these and the previous progressive movements, there are hardly any doubts that the student revolt marked a breakthrough in West Germany's political cul-

ture, and thus, opened a breach which could be widened and filled by the ensuing movements.

While the student movement quickly lost momentum and soon broke apart, the following major movements proved to be relatively stable despite some periods of internal crisis and a temporary decline of their activities. Since the early 1970s, West Germany experienced the rise of several movements centered around social and urban problems, gender roles and feminism, nuclear power, environmental issues, youth protests, and military strategy and disarmament. Broadly speaking, these protest activities were based on two major ideological currents. While the first strand was an emancipatory, offensive current full of hopes and expectations, the second strand was more defensive and pessimistic, focusing on the negative side-effects of continuous modernization and economic growth. These currents merged together over the years and formed a highly active and politicized movement sector with considerable overlaps by the end of the 1970s without losing its political and organizational heterogeneity.

Today, this movement sector has lost its radicality and capacity to challenge the elites in power to a great extent. There is, however, hardly a sign that this sector has become weaker in terms of protest activities and organizational strength. On the contrary, indications from ongoing research suggest that protest activities have significantly increased in the 1980s.

(2) *Social structure*: According to most of the studies, younger, well educated people from the »new middle class« are strongly over-represented in the new social movements. Particularly high is the percentage of professionals and employees from the human service sector. This tendency seems to be weaker the more one moves from core activists to mere contributors or sympathizers. Although women are still under-represented among the social movement's activists, we have indicators that their percentage is higher in the movements compared to their percentage in parties and interest groups.

(3) *Political orientation*: Depending on the concerns of the various movements, people from a very broad political spectrum can be found as adherents of the new social movements. There are some issues, such as environmental pollution or low-flying military planes, where activists from all political positions joined movement organizations and protest activities. For the majority of the other movements, however, like those focusing on women's liberation, nuclear energy, alternative economy and peace, most of the adherents lean toward to the political Left, ranging from social democrats to radical communists and the so-called »autonomous groups«, whose ideas are

close to anarchism. Surveys have shown that left-postmaterialists are heavily over-represented among those who strongly approve the major new social movements (Müller-Rommel, 1985; Pappi, 1989, Fuchs and Rucht, 1990).

While the late 1970s were marked by relatively strong »antisystemic« attitudes and, in consequence, a sharp division between challengers and the establishment, this polarized constellation has become blurred during the 1980s. The mainstream of the new social movements has become more pragmatic; close interaction with, and even financial support from, public authorities is widely accepted. This trend, however, has also strengthened radical tendencies at the fringe of the movements. It is obvious that a small but highly active sector of »anti-imperialist« and »autonomous« groups has emerged. These groups are prepared for disruptive and militant protest whatever the occasion, be it the conference of the World Monetary Fund hosted in Berlin, be it a major meeting of the New Right which has recently, with the rise of the »Republican Party«, become relatively strong in the electoral area.

The overall tendency toward a more pragmatic political concept is also reflected within the West German Green Party. Both the so-called fundamentalists and the more traditional left-wing groups, who still have a marxist leaning, are losing ground within the party, whereas the »realists«, favoring a close cooperation or even an alliance with the Social Democrats, are steadily getting stronger.

(4) *Organization and infrastructure*: A characteristic of the overall organizational structure of the new social movement sector is its heterogeneous and decentralized nature. Bureaucratic organizational forms are usually rejected for ideological reasons. Despite this prevailing »anti-institutional attitude, it cannot be denied that more conventional structures, e.g. national associations based on individual membership, are becoming increasingly important. There is, however, no movement in which single organizations could attain hegemonic positions.¹⁰ The women's movement and the alternative movement, based to a large extent on grassroots groups, appear to have the greatest degree of organizational decentralization whereas the environmental movement ranges on the other side the scale.

10 The new peace movement in the 1980s was a special case. Many of its activities were directed by a national coordinating committee composed of a broad spectrum of various organizations and more diffuse networks (Leif, 1987; 1990). This committee was heavily dependent on the support of grass-roots groups, however.

As already mentioned above, there are large overlaps between the adherents of various movements. According to surveys, a considerable share of those interviewed belonged to two or more movements. This tendency is also reflected in the willingness of different movement organizations to ally for common campaigns and protest activities. Support for these close links between various strands within and between movements can be also found on the local level where »alternative milieus« have been formed over the years. These milieus are based mainly on personal relations, similar lifestyles and cultural codes, and a common political background. Particularly in the late 1970s, some observers saw the rise of a »Zweite Kultur« (second culture) with regard to these alternative milieus whereas others discussed the danger of forming – willingly or not – a type of ghetto.

In addition to the existing organizational infrastructure of each specific movement a more general infrastructure has been formed. It ranges from local up to the national levels, including self-run restaurants, political clubs, youth centers, kindergardens, co-operatives, but also, more complex institutions such as publishing houses, research institutes, an »alternative« bank and a left-libertarian daily newspaper. Of course, many elements of the Green Party can also be considered as parts of this general infrastructure.

The establishment of movement milieus, and their corresponding infrastructural institutes including the »alternative« press (Stamm, 1988) may also explain their broad, and sometimes surprisingly successful mobilizations even in regard to issues and areas where no particular movement had previously existed. For example, the national census carried out in 1987 provoked considerable resistance among activists of the new social movements.

(5) *Strategies and forms of action:* Corresponding to the broad ideological spectrum of the new social movements, a reliance on very different strategies and forms of action can also be observed. Looking only at the media coverage one could be misled because it often over-emphasizes large and/or radical actions which make good headlines in the mass media. Most of the activities are less spectacular, however, coming closer to the conventional action repertoire of interest group politics, e.g. collecting signatures, distributing leaflets, organizing hearings, contacting political representatives, etc.

In regard to the use of strategies and action forms over time, there were several periods in which the more radical forms of action peaked. Although we do not yet have thorough quantitative analyses, these periods of high conflict intensity appear to have been marked by the height of the student rebel-

lion of 1967/68, the antinuclear protests of 1976-78 and 1985/86, and the youth protests and the squatter movements of 1980-83). It was primarily in such periods that elements of these respective movements clashed violently with the police. The new peace movement, which had its boom between 1982 and 1984, brought the country's largest mass mobilization, but – given the movement's central aim of peaceful co-existence – without violence. Many participants in this movement, however, sympathized with or even participated in various acts of civil disobedience which previously had been only used by small minorities. Among these were not only radical leftist but also Christian groupings.

In addition to the peace movement, which was able to mobilize up to one million people in the country's largest mass demonstrations and to collect five million signatures against the deployment of cruise missiles, various other movements also had a considerable mobilization capacity. This was not only true for the anti-nuclear power movement, but also, for movements focussing on less spectacular issues. For example, the local movement against the extension of the Frankfurt airport was able to attract more than 100,000 participants in a mass demonstration in 1981.

(6) *Impacts and outcomes*: Except for some case studies, the societal and political impacts of the new social movements have not yet been studied systematically. Once again, we end up with a very differentiated picture. In regard to specific conflicts, e.g. struggles against large-scale industrial projects or critical political decisions, there have been a few outstanding successes of protest groups, and certainly, a much larger share of defeats. In the great majority of cases, however, I believe we would find at least partial successes. Similarly, a closer look at the impact of the new social movements on various policies would probably reveal an uneven balance, ranging from partial successes to only marginal influence. With a few exceptions, no significant procedural gains could be made, e.g. extending the possibilities for citizen participation in government. The long-term effects of institutional bodies which have been created in public administration due to the pressure of protest groups (e.g., agencies for women's rights) cannot yet be adequately measured. These bodies may in part be purely symbolic, but they may also have considerable aggregate effects through a variety of minor changes.

Both established politics and protest movements have lost much of their mutual antipathy since the early 1980s. On the local level in particular, many groups and organizations now play mediating roles, thus weakening the pre-

judices on both sides and contributing to forms of cooperation which, at least in some areas, would have been impossible before the 1980s.

In trying to assess the impact of movement activities on policy styles, political conflict management, values and the political culture in general, one can only speculate as so many intervening variables come into play. I would argue, however, that the new social movements did have a tremendous effect in »opening« and »normalizing« a West German political culture hitherto characterized by a wishful desire for harmony and an antidemocratic authoritarian heritage.

IV. Institutional Aspects of Social Movement Research

Many of those who began the study of new social movements in West Germany already had practical experience in the movements. These observers were predominantly young and barely established in the social sciences. Usually they had no institutional backing and pursued their movement studies in addition to their primary duties at universities or elsewhere. Partly due to this weak institutional basis, partly also because of their proximity to the objects they were studying, these scientists organized themselves in fashions similar to these movements, forming loose, decentralized networks based on personal relationships and informal communication. This was, and still is, also true for the national study group on new social movements. It was established in the fall of 1983 as a discussion circle which developed a loose affiliation to the political sociology section of the German Society of Political Sciences (DVPW). Since its formation, the study group organized two or three meetings per year, each attended by 30 to 40 social scientists, who ranged from graduate students to more experienced researchers. A small newsletter initially served the purposes of internal communications. Early in 1988, due to the initiative of some members, this very provisional newsletter was transformed into a regular journal appearing quarterly (»Forschungsjournal Neue Soziale Bewegungen«). This journal focusses exclusively on the study of new social movements. In the meantime, it has become an attractive forum for students of social movements in the German-speaking countries. Although the journal's explicit aim is to mediate between movements' activists and researchers, it serves mainly the latter group and is becoming more and more professional.

In the early 1980s, the study of new social movements was dominated by political scientists although they were not very well equipped with the appropriate theories and analytical frameworks for this task. After some delay, sociologists also looked toward this new area. They usually had better conceptual tools and dealt with the phenomena in a more systematic manner, focussing also on concepts of social movements in general. After considerable progress in this field of study, the differences between these two disciplines no longer play a major role.

Contacts with researchers from other European countries and the USA were established starting in the middle of the 1980s. The international state of the art was gradually incorporated into the West German debate on social movements. International exchanges have also intensified. Indicators for this trend are several international workshops and publications in which German researchers took part (Klandermans, Kriesi and Tarrow, 1988; Klandermans, 1989; Dalton and Kùchler, 1990).

Another sign of the growing professionalization and institutionalization of this field is the initiation of several ambitious research projects conducted by individuals or teams of social scientists. Worth mentioning are projects on the relationship between socio-structural changes and social movements (Oertzen, Vester et al. in Hannover – cf. Geiling and Vester, 1990), the development of local movement milieus since the mid-sixties (Roth et al., Berlin) and a historical and cross-national comparison of middle class radicalism (Brand, 1989). Another indicator of the growing institutionalization of social movement research is the establishment of a research unit on »The Public Sphere and the Social Movement«, headed by Friedhelm Neidhardt, at the Science Center Berlin for Social Research (WZB). Since its formation in 1988/89, this research team has initiated a series of projects. Among these are a study of the relationship between movement activities and public opinion, an analysis of protest events since the foundation of the Federal Republic (Rucht and Ohlemacher, 1990) and studies on social movements in a cross-national perspective.

V. Debates and Open Questions

As can be seen from the discussion above, the study of social movements is a vigorous but still very recent field of research in West Germany. Given this

situation, it is no wonder that both the theory and the methodology in this field are not yet very sophisticated. Only in the last few years could social scientists from West Germany catch up with the state of the art in the international community.

Since most of the work done on various social movements was and still is mainly descriptive, and theories were only proposed in a tentative manner, few controversies have arisen among the students of social movements. Another consequence of the brief existence of this field is that social scientists have raised many more questions than they have been able to answer through systematic research.

The first significant criticism on the dominant approach to new social movements was made by Richard Stöss (1984), a researcher specializing in political parties. His criticism dealt mainly with the category »new social movements«. This concept appeared highly unclear to him as it was used in many ways and because various writers identified very different single movements which they attributed to the complex of new social movements. Stöss provocatively took the position that new social movements were more a myth than reality. This critique was, however, more epistemological than substantial. Nevertheless, it fueled the still ongoing discussion on the question of what is »new« in the new social movements, a debate which had already begun in the early 1980s (Eder, 1982). Surprisingly enough, Stöss appears to have reconciled himself with the concept in so far as he has started to use it without raising his former objections (Stöss, 1987).

Another critique of the mainstream of the new social movement approach came from certain feminist writers (e.g., Kontos, 1986; Clemens, 1989). They did not question the usefulness of this approach in general, but its tendency to subsume the women's movement – which they perceived to be a very special case – under this broad label. In particular, these critics attacked (male) proponents of the new social movement approach for ignoring the key category of patriarchy which was neglected in the prevailing explanations for the rise of new social movements. Other feminist writers (e.g., Metz-Göckel, 1987) admit that the women's movement shares at least some common features with movements such as the environmental and peace movements. Still other women researchers, outspoken feminists and more moderate social scientists, do not have any problems at all in interpreting the women's movement as a constitutive part of the broader sector of new social movements (e.g., Knafla and Kuhlke, 1987; Rubart, 1987).

A third challenge to the new social movement approach came from Michael Greven (1988), a left-wing political theorist. He, too, questioned the appropriateness of the category of new social movements, arguing that it is unclear, and that so little empirical evidence has been offered thus far to demonstrate the common features of the various movements under discussion or to distinguish between the old and new social movements. Moreover, he criticized the high degree of specialization shown by some social movement researchers, their sympathetic attitude toward their research objects, and their tendency to idealize the movement's internal structure which, according to Greven, was not as democratic as many would assume. This attack, published in the newly established »Forschungsjournal Neue Soziale Bewegungen«, provoked responses in the next issue of the journal (Brand, 1989a; Roth and Rucht, 1989). The respondents argued that only some of the points made by Greven were acceptable and that most of these had – ironically – already been explicitly discussed by those researchers who Greven intended to criticize. Other counter-arguments referred to Greven's highly selective reading and the inappropriateness of some of the criteria he used in his critique. After this first round of discussion, the debate was picked up by other social scientists in the subsequent issues of the journal. It seems that the focus of the debate is now shifting from methodological and conceptual questions of the new social movement approach to their role in West Germany's political culture and problems of the civil society in general.

Still another challenge to the new social movement approach is a more theoretical one. Some social scientists have begun to treat the topic of (new) social movements on the basis of functionalist systems theory, drawing in particular on the work of Niklas Luhmann (Bergmann, 1987; Ahlemeier, 1989). It is clear that social movements would by no means be conceived as social actors with a capacity to influence the course of history from such a perspective. Luhmann (1986) himself has a tendency to perceive contemporary social movements only as dysfunctional and anachronistic elements in a highly differentiated modern society. According to him, they mainly produce »noise« and, at least, have a certain capacity to indicate problems, but are far from understanding how society works. A closer reading of Luhmann's statements reveals that there may not only be theoretical arguments, but also personal sentiments, coming into play here. This is not the case for Ahlemeier (1989), who strongly adheres to Luhmann's general approach nevertheless. The theoretical debate advanced by this approach has been largely implicit up to now. Proponents of the new social movement approach, in

particular those closer to an actor-centered perspective, have not yet reacted to the functionalist challenge. A reason for this silence is probably the fact that these first functionalist writings on social movements have been highly abstract, containing virtually no empirical evidence, whereas most of the other researchers are not so interested in a type of general theory which, as many would argue, is schematically applied to virtually all social phenomena without consequences for empirically oriented research.

Turning finally to open questions in the field of social movements, it is quite clear that the variety and richness of contemporary movements in West Germany could not adequately be grasped by observers of limited experience and poorly equipped both conceptually and institutionally. Therefore, much of the work which has been done in this field is closer to investigative journalism than social research.

Though we have some knowledge regarding the »surface« of the new social movements, i.e. their ideologies, their main organizations, the basic characteristics of their adherents, their major protest campaigns, etc., we still lack in-depth information on all these aspects (Nullmeier and Raschke, 1989, 250). For instance, little work has been done on processes of micro-mobilization. Moreover, our knowledge of both micro and macro aspects of various movements is very unbalanced. Little is known, e.g., about the organizational structure of the women's movement, the so-called autonomous groups and the more culturally oriented movements. This is, of course, partly a result of the fact that it is more difficult for researchers to get access to these groupings. In addition, the interaction within and between various movements, including the dynamics of movements and counter-movements, has rarely been studied in detail. Moreover, there is a significant lack of cross-sectional, cross-national and long-term comparisons of social movements. Such studies would be particularly helpful in clarifying the specific features of the new social movements and providing a broader empirical basis for general theories of social movements in modern societies. Finally, we have only scant knowledge of the political and societal impact of these movements on different levels.

It is likely that the study of (new) social movements in West Germany will continue to attract many researchers in the near future. First, many academics, among them also social scientists, participate in social movements. It is this group, in particular, which is sustaining a continuous process of self-monitoring within the movements. Second, former activists, now rooted in the academic field, are continuing to analyze the movements using both

earlier insight and gradually improved conceptual tools. In part, these researchers have maintained their ambition of not only being close observers of the movements, but also, intervening in their discourse. Together, groups of both current and former movement members are forming the type of »reserve army« mentioned by Klandermans and Tarrow (1988, 16) which will keep the study of social movements alive. Third, a group of »pure« academics, originally closer to such fields of study as social change, party politics, interest mediation, political participation, etc., has become increasingly interested in the study of (new) social movements. This shift of attention also has to do with the continuing vitality of the movements themselves insofar as they were formerly considered to be only a short-lived transitory phenomenon. In addition, the recent outbreak of oppositional movements in Eastern Europe, including the GDR, has also led researchers in both German states to analyze these phenomena. First attempts at networking individuals engaged in ongoing and planned research have been already been initiated, and will probably intensified, in the near future.

Taking all these aspects into consideration, there is a high probability that the study of social movements in Germany, which was first neglected for many decades and became only relevant in the 1980s, will continue to flourish. Hence, the field of social movements, which was an important one in the heyday of classical sociology, is likely to regain its relevance and become a constitutive element of political sociology. At present, it seems that most analysts in this field are still more concerned with political activism at the expense of social science which, of course, does not exclude political engagement. There are indications, however, that social movement research in Germany will move toward a better balance between activism and professionalism.

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