

## **Summer school: Social movements in global perspectives – past, present and future**

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During the summer semester 2014, Stefan Berger and Sabrina Zajak from the Ruhr University Bochum's Institute for Social Movements (ISB) convened an interdisciplinary summer school entitled "Social movements in global perspectives: past, present and future." The summer school was organised within the frame of the university's inSTUDIES programme, aiming at the advancement of teaching and enhancement of individual student profiles. At the heart of the summer school was an international and interdisciplinary conference, which took place at the Ruhr University in September 2014.

During the ten day conference students from diverse disciplinary backgrounds and from different academic levels (from B.A. to Ph.D.), approached the topic of social movements from a variety of perspectives. The conference included general overviews of social movements, theoretical reflections, comparative analysis as well as case studies. It addressed the basic concepts and the history of social movements as well as contemporary social movements from a sociological perspective, taking political and economic perspectives into consideration at all times. The overall framework was shaped by thirty-seven national and international guest lecturers representing various disciplines—such as history, sociology, political science and anthropology—and providing their expertise in ten different panels. The experts delivered keynote speeches, gave presentations and discussed the current state of social movement research with participating students. At the end of the conference, national and international activists joined the discussions and provided inside perspectives on social movements. This report focuses on the major overarching questions and issues that were dominant throughout the conference.

### **Global aspirations and the Western bias**

The most central and repetitively emerging issue of the conference was the tension between the aspirations of developing a global approach to social movements and the status quo of research that has been dominated by Western European and North American scholars. Ludger Pries (Ruhr-University Bochum) opened the conference with a plea against "methodological nationalism," which takes for granted the nation-state as the primary unit of analysis, as well as against "methodological globalism," which takes the whole globe as a natural unit of analysis. He called for a "methodological transnationalism" that takes local, national, transnational, supranational and global entanglements of social phenomena into account. Therein he stated ambitions which not every talk was able to fulfil during the conference. Among other reasons, this was caused by a predominantly Western focus in most of the presentations. Even though a considerable number of guest lecturers included a

transnational comparison in their presentations, the focus of the conference lay predominantly on Western countries, in some cases only on Western Europe. Movements in the Global South were sometimes presented as only an appendix of their Western ‘role models.’ Stefan Berger (Ruhr-University Bochum) portrayed social democratic labour movements in the same line but, at the same time, he problematised this approach. Quoting Dipesh Chakrabarty’s notion, that Europe is “indispensable and inadequate” (Chakrabarty 2000, 16), he inquired as to whether it is possible at all to write the history of labour movements without starting in Europe, even if the conception of labour movements as “European export articles” may be inadequate in some cases.

The difficulty in overcoming the Western perspective as a starting point of reference may have been connected to the fact that we are used to differentiating movements by means of concepts that are deeply rooted in Western or European thought. For example, to justify his focus on Western countries, Frank Uekötter (University of Birmingham) emphasised that environmentalism is a predominantly Western concept. Environmental conflicts in the Global South, he argued, had a different character because of their firm linkage to social and economic problems. Thomas Lekan (University of South Carolina) re-framed the 1970s environmentalists’ call “think globally, act locally” and questioned how local actors - usually white male scientists from Western Europe and the United States - arrogate for themselves the task of “speaking for the earth.” Referring to Bernhard Grzimek and his romantic view on Africa, he further criticised the way environmentalism was connected to racist perceptions of ‘other’ parts of the world by Westerners. Focusing on peace movements, Holger Nehring (University of Stirling) tasked himself with exploring non-Western notions of peace or similar concepts in other contexts. He further asserted that European peace movements, defining peace as the absence of war in Europe, did not take into consideration wars in other world regions. At the same time, however, Western activists considered their concepts of peace to be valid for the whole globe. Therefore, Nehring called for a comprehensive historicisation of the meaning of peace in different spatial and ideological contexts.

The question of whether it is possible to approach social movements as singular entities, suggesting there is only one, for example, environmental, peace or women’s movement, was related to the participants’ effort to localise social movements and their underlying concepts in time and space. Ilse Lenz (Ruhr-University Bochum) answered this question for the case of women’s movements. By using the term ‘women’s movements’ in plural she underlined the subject’s plurality concerning issues, claims and forms of action as well as its changing characters throughout history.

A scepticism towards the Western bias was further presented by scholars with a research focus outside of North America and Western Europe. Focusing on the cases of sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab world Kathleen Fallon (Stony Brook University) and Nora Lafi (Centre of Modern Oriental Studies, Berlin) claimed that social protests in these regions, while not being considered as homogenous,

have their own long history that cannot be conceived adequately from a Western perspective. Both scholars stressed that these regions have a long tradition of existing networks of political mobilisation, which was demonstrated by Kathleen Fallon through the example of ‘the women’s war’ in Nigeria in 1929 and ‘the Harry Thuku protests’ in Kenya in 1922. Furthermore, Nora Lafi pointed out that the research on the Ottoman daftar (registers of petitions) proved the existence of an expression of collective identity and civic consciousness in the Arab world prior to colonisation. She further emphasised that “present social movements in the Arab world are in no way just exports of Western thinking, democracy or human rights” and asserted that the lasting culturalist clichés in approaches to the Arab world must be overcome.

As studies on social movements mostly focus on protests in democratic societies, some presentations brought to mind that protests in authoritarian states face different political opportunity structures. Analysing mobilisations for workers’ rights in China, Chris King-Chi Chan (City University of Hong Kong) showed how workers’ protests emerge in an authoritarian state, and are exposed to other forms of counteraction since juridical persecution and bargaining negotiations are organised in a different way. He further posed the question as to what extent civil society as a Western concept can be applied to explain developments in China, arguing in favour of the thesis of a semi-civil-society. Additionally, Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt (Australian National University) explored how missing political opportunity structures can hamper the emergence of social movements, even in a state that is nominally considered a democracy. She stressed that social movement theory based on Western concepts is not able to capture the way peasants in India, who lack access to diverse resources, protest against land grabbing. Looking at the case of Jharkhand, she further explained how a coalition of the state and economic forces exacerbated the frequency of protests by victims of land grabbing caused by extensive coal mining. Along similar lines, Kathleen Fallon (Stony Brook University) and Nora Lafi (Centre of Modern Oriental Studies, Berlin) argued that social movements in sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab world emerged even though preconditions expected by the Western social movement theory, such as democratic opening, were not present.

### **The distinction between ‘old’ and ‘new’ social movements**

Another contested concept of the conference was the widespread distinction between ‘old’ and ‘new’ social movements. Researchers of social movements with a social science background have focussed mainly on ‘new’ social movements. Therefore, historians had the prerogative of interpreting the developments of the ‘old’ labour movements. The presentations of Stefan Berger (Ruhr-University Bochum), Gerassimos Moschonas (Panteion University), and Kevin Morgan (University of Manchester) highlighted the emergence of labour movements out of social conflicts and pointed out the close affiliation of labour movements with a political party as an organisational principle. However, the question of whether labour movements lost their status as social movements based on prevalent definitions remained unanswered at this point. Moschonas

and Berger disagreed over the question whether social democracy has already been “ideologically defeated” (Moschonas) or is still adhering to its traditional agenda of “social justice and democracy” (Berger). The rigid dichotomy between ‘old’ and ‘new’ social movements was questioned by Kevin Morgan. He contested Claus Offe’s claim that new social movements had rejected “the organisational principle of differentiation, whether in the horizontal (insider vs. outsider) or in the vertical dimension (leaders vs. rank and file members)” (Offe 1985, 829). Contrary to this statement, Morgan argued that biographical approaches confirmed both horizontal and vertical differentiation of communist parties. He further claimed that communists have a strong ‘insider’ collective identity. At the same time, however, they are internally differentiated, depending on organisational hierarchy, cultural capital, social class, personal opportunity and status.

The decision not to differentiate rigorously between ‘old’ and ‘new’ social movements was acknowledged, though sometimes implicitly, by the social scientists who focused on contemporary international cooperation of trade unions. In particular Sarah Bormann (Free University of Berlin) scrutinised how current trade union activities can still be considered as grassroots activities, adopting a typical action repertoire of social movements. Referring to recent workers’ protests in Greece, Markos Vogiatzoglou (European University Institute) pointed out that the whole “social movement environment” influences trade union’s activities and therefore the differentiation between ‘old’ and ‘new’ movements is no longer valid in the Greek case. He underpinned his argument by giving the example of “precarious workers unions”, which are direct-democratic organisations of grassroots entities.

Holger Nehring (University of Stirling) and Frank Uekötter (University of Birmingham) also raised doubts about the differentiation between ‘old’ and ‘new’ social movements. In regards to peace and environmental movements, they talked about the importance of the historical context of social movements and underscored the significance of continuities, which are neglected by the theory of ‘new’ social movements. Moreover, Håkan Thörn (University of Gothenburg) doubted the validity of the theory of ‘new’ social movements, pointing out that their roots did not always lay in the post-industrial society but often were rooted in anticolonial struggles in the Global South. By the end of the conference it had transpired that the differentiation between ‘old’ and ‘new’ social movements cannot be applied without sufficient reflection.

### **Interplay between different levels: from local to global**

Despite their transnationalisation, social movements still need to act and mobilise on the rank and file level, for example in the case of demonstrations. Therefore, the interplay between different scales of social agency from the local level on the one hand to the global level on the other, plays an important role for social movement research and belonged to the cross-cutting issues of the conference.

In her presentation on trade unions' multi-scalar comprehensive campaigns, Sarah Bormann (Free University of Berlin) gave an interesting example of this interplay. With reference to a T-Mobile USA workers' campaign she illustrated the movements' choices to act on different scales, and explained how they have been affected by the question of where the actors see the accountability for the problems posed: whilst workers in the USA acted on the shop-floor and the local level, they were also active on the national level by adopting action forms typical for social movements, such as leafleting and coalition-building with consumer groups, and called for international solidarity. This was reflected by the support of the German trade union ver.di and Deutsche Telekom's workers' council, which tried to pressurise the Deutsche Telekom management in support of their American colleagues.

Chris King-Chi Chan (City University of Hong Kong) and specifically Håkan Thörn (University of Gothenburg) outlined the importance of international civil society for protests and social movements in authoritarian states and therewith the importance of the global level for regional and national protest developments. Whilst Chan touched upon workers' protests in China that received support of the international civil society, Thörn focused on a social movement that took place on the global level but influenced South African politics on the national level. According to Thörn, the anti-apartheid movement was directly connected to the emergence of international civil society. Furthermore, Ilse Lenz (Ruhr-University Bochum) used a concept of "dialectics of internationalisation" to explain the correlation between the national and the global level in the case of women's movements. Women's movements mostly emerged in national contexts but created "blended compositions" in discourses on issues such as suffrage and prostitution. She further argued that the national organisations have sought to organise themselves internationally in order to strengthen their impact. This in turn led to the foundation of new national women's organisations, mainly in countries that previously lacked strong women's organisations.

## **Globalisation and social movements**

As globalisation has been an ongoing process for centuries, it is hardly surprising that even social movements developed internationalist tendencies since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as Stefan Berger (Ruhr-University Bochum) and Holger Nehring (University of Stirling) explained in the case of social-democratic labour movements and peace movements. According to Håkan Thörn (University of Gothenburg) anti-apartheid was the most important global social movement of the post-war era due to its geographical dispersion and diversity of participating groups.

The United Nations were considered a central actor for promoting social movements' issues on the global level in the 1970s. For example, Frank Uekötter (University of Birmingham) and Ilse Lenz (Ruhr-University Bochum) pointed out the significance of the 'UN Conference on the Human Environment' held in

Stockholm in June 1972 and the ‘UN Decade For Women’ (1976-85). They both claimed that these events contributed to the development of environmental and women’s movements and especially their transnationalisation. The 1970s also saw the rise in popularity of human rights movements, especially in Western Europe and North America. Jan Eckel (University of Freiburg) linked this development to the process of globalisation and identified “ethics of interdependence”, which made a global, but mainly Western, community feel responsible to support human rights in countries that had lacked basic rights such as the freedom of speech.

Additionally, the speakers all agreed that economic globalisation influenced the developments of social movements. Whereas social movements in the 20<sup>th</sup> century mainly targeted the state, more and more activists have tried to influence economic actors such as firms. This development was outlined by Frank de Bakker (VU University Amsterdam). Bakker analysed how activist groups have tried to bring an institutional change to the economic field, urging firms to comply with their corporate social responsibility claims. Therefore, the activist groups used different tactics, radical or reformist—depending on their ideological positions—to bring symbolic or material damage (e.g. boycott, sabotage, petitions, negative publicity) or alternatively gain (e.g. “buycott”, cooperation or positive publicity) to the firms. Furthermore, Gerassimos Moschonas (Panteion University) asserted that, due to the present conditions of globalisation, social democracy was no longer an effective force for democratisation and had ceased to function as an agent to remedy inequalities and control economic modernisation.

According to Ludger Pries (Ruhr-University Bochum) trade unions have also been pressurised by the globalisation of the economy. Nevertheless, he made a clear statement against the lament: “capital is global, work is local, everything is fatal.” Adopting an institutional approach, Pries explored how the interplay between different kinds of labour regulation could make a difference in the globalised economy since not all value chains were exclusively imprinted by the market logic. Instead, considering companies as institutions would reveal that they act according to expectations that they perceive in their environment. This, Pries argued, opens the opportunity for other actors to influence the decisions of companies. In addition, Peter Waterman (Dublin/Lima) asked to what extent the international trade union movement has responded to the challenges of neoliberal globalisation. He claimed that the international trade union movement has responded defensively and in retreat, for example by compromising over rights, wage levels and work safety standards. He further questioned if there is any real basis for international labour solidarity and how effective transnational worker initiatives have been in countering the power of global capital.

The importance of inclusion of a political economy perspective in the analysis of social movements on a global level was underscored by Sabrina Zajak (Ruhr-University Bochum). She asserted that the political economic view brought advantages to the study of social movements such as seeing the connection

between movements, understanding the interplay of global and local levels in movements, and identifying new forms of transnational activism. Zajak further took the Polanyian idea of embeddedness as a starting point for the analysis of the role of social movements in the construction of national and international institutions governing capitalism.

A concrete example of challenges of globalisation was presented by Anannya Bhattacharjee (AFW International Secretariat, India), who introduced a particular campaign to improve labour regulations in the deeply globalisation-affected Asian garment industry. The Asian Floor Wage Campaign (AFWC) unites labour and other groups in order to pressurise the multinational companies to pay a 'living wage' to Asian workers in the garment industry. As a wage increase in a national framework made the companies leave the respecting countries and the power of strike was not present due to the competitiveness of the region's labour market, Bhattacharjee argued, the AFWC had to adopt the strategy of negotiation on an international level. This example illustrated that Western experiences of organising protest were not automatically transferable across spatial and temporal borders.

Additionally, an apparently non-economic movement such as the anti-apartheid movement was facilitated by the increasing economic interdependence as shown by Håkan Thörn (University of Gothenburg). He explained how the cooperation of Western companies and banks with the South African state was an incentive for protests in Western countries. Furthermore, Bengt Larsson (University of Gothenburg) analysed the case of transnational cooperation in the globalising economy, or the lack of it, in recent years, in Europe. He posed the question of what it is that hampers the transnational cooperation of movements through the example of European trade unions. Besides other reasons, he strongly emphasised that the trade unions have had difficulties in coordinating their agendas grounded in varying traditions and ideologies as well as in the different resources the trade unions could bring into a transnational coalition. Furthermore, Larsson came to the conclusion that 'hard' industrial relations factors have constituted more important obstacles to transnational cooperation in comparison to 'softer' factors such as cultural, linguistic and religious differences, whereas sectorial differences must be taken into account at all times. In his talk on peace movements in West Germany and the USA in the 1980s, Stephen Milder (Rutgers University) examined the extent to which transnational movement cooperation has been hampered by varying interests of different national movements. In this case, cooperation became difficult because the West German peace movement pursued a more radical aim (the removal of all nuclear weapons out of Europe) in comparison to their partners in the USA who favoured the 'Freeze-campaign' (the freezing of further armament). He further explored how the role of Petra Kelly in shaping green politics was perceived differently in West Germany and the USA.

Thomas Lekan (University of South Carolina) scrutinised how the emblematic power of the image of the globe as a symbol of globalisation influenced environmental movements. He outlined the history of the 'blue planet' as an

icon of environmental movements since it was first photographed from the universe in 1968 until the creation of Google Earth. Lekan asserted that this icon drew its power from the ability to make national interests, famines and other factors with negative connotations invisible. As the climate change is a border transcending issue, Matthias Dietz (University of Bremen) introduced the climate movement as a transnational actor. He explored how the movement's crisis, caused by the failure of the Copenhagen summit, did not lead to the end of the climate movement but instead was overcome thanks to the implemented survival strategies, which eventually led to the revitalisation of the movement. He described a process of radicalisation and the search for new partners and projects as the most important survival strategies and posed the question of whether similar survival strategies could be found in other social movements.

### **Diffusion of movement ideas and practices**

The importance of taking the diffusion of social movements' tactics into consideration was put forward by Graeme Hayes (Aston University) who argued that it enables us to detect how tactics are interpreted, negotiated and transformed. He further underlined that political opportunity structures, as well as the cultural mapping of movement tactics, have a crucial influence on the process of diffusion. He asserted how a seemingly strong case of 'modular' repertoire diffusion produced very different outcomes and subsequently very diverse trajectories in different countries. Through the example of mobilisations against genetically modified crops, he showed how activist groups in Belgium and Great Britain adopted an action form derived from the French group, but reframed it due to varying police tactics, criminal persecution and 'group culture.' Based on these findings he emphasised that even seemingly identical actions may not be the same actions in other contexts. He further highlighted how varying institutional configurations created different advantages for distinct actors. In the panel on peace movements, Jared Donnelly (Texas A&M University) and Sean Scalmer (University of Melbourne) focused on the transcontinental diffusion of civil disobedience and Gandhi's Satyagraha. Portraying how civil disobedience and direct action was implemented in the West German peace movement in the 1960s, Donnelly raised doubts about the concepts considering diffusion as a linear process. He explained that the tactic's diffusion from Gandhi's Salt Satyagraha to a sit-in in front of army barracks in Dortmund was a nonlinear process full of twists and turns that was driven by key individuals in the movement. Scalmer further explored the diffusion of Gandhi's concept of Satyagraha as the way of nonviolence and explained why it took several decades for this concept to be adopted in the Western world. According to Scalmer, the influence of cultural misunderstandings and institutional and contextual barriers in the world threatened by organised violence between the 1930s and the 1940s, were the main reasons for the slow diffusion of nonviolent protest. Both Donnelly and Scalmer put forward the importance of key individuals in the process of diffusion, who experienced the

movements' tactics in the region of their emergence and experimented with them in their countries.

Taking the process of transnational diffusion into account, Ulf Teichmann (Ruhr-University Bochum) focused on linking 'global 1968' with the 1968 movement in Bochum. Asking if and how the characteristics of 'global 1968' reached the movement's periphery in Bochum, he claimed that the perspective on processes of transnational diffusion has to be widened. Arguing that the global level of social movements encompasses more than the connection between international movement centres, his presentation was a plea for taking local and regional, as well as transnational levels of social movements into account, even if a global framework is intended. Holger Nehring (University of Stirling) further examined to what extent protests in different parts of the world have been interlinked. He explored how the translation and transfer of protest across the borders in the case of peace movements led to the reinvention of protest methods and argued that the categories changed their meanings during the transnational transfer.

### **How different actors shape social movements**

If we define social movements as "a network of individuals, groups and organizations" (Rucht forthcoming 2015), it is clear that social movement scholars come across a broad range of diverse actors. Consequently, the question of how different actors have shaped developments of social movements in general, and their globalisation in particular were present over the ten days of the conference. For example, Carola Betzold (University of Gothenburg) examined how the strategies of NGOs in international climate negotiations have been imprinted by their different characters. She emphasised that environmental NGOs apply more outside advocacy (addressing the negotiators via the public) while business groups prefer to use inside advocacy (addressing the negotiators directly). She assumed that this choice of strategy has to do with the easier access of business groups to power-holders in comparison to NGOs. The finding that social movement actors with a higher institutionalised power choose different ways of acting had already been brought in by Sarah Borman (Free University of Berlin) who introduced her case study of a transnational campaign against T-Mobile.

Furthermore, by focusing on revolutionary social movements, Kevin Morgan (University of Manchester) pointed out that social movements' actors always constitute minorities. Through the method of life history and prosopography he tried to answer what kind of minorities, for what reason and with what implications, participate in social movements. Marica Tolomelli (University of Bologna) examined different actors within the 1968 movement. She scrutinised the interclass cooperation between workers and students in Italy and West Germany and showed how the socio-structural proximity of these two groups as well as ideological commonalities led to a well-marked cooperation between students and workers in Italy in contrast to West Germany. Additionally, a

milieu-transcending approach was presented by Traugott Jähnichen (Ruhr-University Bochum). He elaborated on the transformation of the relations between Protestantism and the trade union movement during the 20<sup>th</sup> century and explained how the continuous socio-political cooperation contributed to overcome the alienation between milieus.

## **Historical and contemporary transnational comparisons of social movements**

With regards to a particular aspect of the tensions between the national and the global approaches, several speakers presented transnational comparative perspectives on social movements in order to deepen the understanding of emergence, developments and outcomes of diverse social movements.

Throughout his comparison of slavery in the Americas and serfdom in Eastern Europe, Enrico Dal Lago (National University of Ireland) argued that “little attention has been paid to the crucial element of landownership as a means of economic and social control by the slaveholding and serfowning elites.” Additionally, “the consequent importance that both slaves and serfs attached to owning land as an indispensable corollary to the acquisition of freedom and an indispensable requisite for the completion of the emancipation process” has not yet been sufficiently taken into consideration. He further compared the reasons for and outcomes of two revolts against slavery and serfdom during the 18<sup>th</sup> century: the Haitian Revolution and Pugachev’s Revolt in Russia. A historical transnational comparative approach was further applied by Marica Tolomelli (University of Bologna) who analysed commonalities and differences of the outcomes of the students’ movements in Italy and West Germany. Due to the different developments of the student movements in ‘1968’ they developed divergent stances towards the working class in its aftermath. Whereas students in Italy united with workers on the basis of identifying of overcoming capitalism as a common aim, most student activists in West Germany considered the workers’ movement in Germany as having lost its central role in the revolution.

Furthermore, Liviu Mantescu (Humboldt University Berlin) questioned how various aspects of social life were influencing environmental activism by comparing protests against fracking in Romania, the ‘Fuck for Forest’ initiative in Berlin and the case of environmental degradation of a protected area in Spain, excused by the implementation of ‘sustainable development’ through the production of renewable energy. Referring to these examples, he underlined the influence of social life and its daily practices on the understanding of social movements. Moritz Sommer and Franziska Scholl (Free University of Berlin) introduced a particular methodological approach of studying crisis protests comparatively in the Eurozone. Through the examples of Greece and Germany, they applied discursive actor attribution analysis to explore how crisis protests in these two countries were publicly interpreted. They argued that this particular method “brings the actor back in” and adds a new dimension to study of public discourses by analysing “who is to blame” and “what is to be done.” Additionally, Hans-Jörg Trenz (University of Copenhagen) analysed citizens’

resilience strategies in times of crisis, particularly how citizens' contestation in different European countries transforms the European Union. Above all he observed a "crisis of legitimacy" of European politics, expressed by protests connected to the emergence of the 'indignados' and 'Wutbürger.' Comparing crisis protest forms in Germany, Spain and Greece, Alissa Starodub (Ruhr-University Bochum) introduced a method of participatory action research. She described how she gathered empirical material for her study by participating in protests in the respective countries and taking part in everyday life of her fellow demonstrators.

### **Scholarship and activism**

The question of how the political stances of scholars influence their research on social movements emerged repeatedly throughout the conference, as most social movement scholars traditionally seem to sympathise with their subjects of study (the activists). At the very beginning of the conference, Ludger Pries (Ruhr-University Bochum) stated the legitimacy of critical sociology that has a considered stance towards its subjects. Holger Nehring (University of Stirling) underscored that researchers focusing particularly on peace should critically reflect on their attitudes towards their research subject. He further invited the participants of the conference to reconsider the role research on social movements can play for their subjects and the relevance of 'critical theory' for this enterprise.

These discussions culminated in a heated debate between Dieter Rucht (Berlin Social Science Center) and Alissa Starodub (Ruhr-University Bochum) on the extent to which research on social movements should (or can) be neutral. Whereas Rucht warned of the identification with the subject of research and pleaded for a division between the roles of scholars and activists in order to meet scientific standards, Starodub questioned the possibility of neutrality and pointed to the necessity of an honest reflection on the interplay between these roles. Rucht further emphasised the difficulty of "changing hats" as a researcher and an activist and argued for finding a balance between closeness and distance to the subject of study.

### **Perspectives of representatives of social movements**

The last panel was dedicated to 'social movements in action' and included discussions with national and international representatives of social movements. Dieter Rucht (Berlin Social Science Center) opened the panel with the analysis of activists' main problems: "how to organise" (horizontal versus vertical) and "how to strategise" (moderate versus radical). He concluded that organisational and strategic flexibility is needed to adequately adapt and react to changing conditions and underlined the importance of "tolerance for ambiguities and contradictions." His presentation served as a basis for following discussions with members and followers of social movements who shared their

opinions and experience. A local perspective was brought by Wolfgang Schaumberg (Forum Arbeitswelten) who presented labour struggles in the automobile industry with a particular focus on the Opel production in Bochum. He further elaborated on the exchange of experience between German workers' representatives and their counterparts in China. In the round table on the Gezi Park protests in Turkey Yusuf Doğan Çetinkaya (Müşterekler/Başlangıç) shared his experiences of protests in Istanbul in 2013 and explained the background, course of events and implications of these protests for Turkish politics. The session on the Arab spring with a particular focus on Tunisian revolution was led by Emma Ghariani (Pour une Tunisie des libertés), who discussed the revolutionary events in the Arab world with round table participants and shared her opinions on possible future developments in Tunisia. Furthermore, Victor Strazzeri (Partido Socialismo e Liberdade) explained reasons for social protests in Brazil, particularly taking into consideration protests against the last football World Cup. Whereas these experts mainly focused on contemporary social movements in a national context, Bettina Musiolek (Entwicklungspolitisches Netzwerk Sachsen) and Bilge Seçkin Çetinkaya (Clean Clothes Campaign Turkey) focused on a transnational perspective introducing the Clean Clothes Campaign and explaining field research on working conditions in garment industry in Eastern Europe and Turkey.

### **Final remarks**

The conference provided a broad perspective on social movements from the local to the global level and emphasised the necessity to analyse the interplay between these various levels. The sometimes-criticised Western bias and the focus mainly on European countries was reflected straightforwardly and revealed desiderata for further research. Furthermore, transnational comparative perspectives contributed to overcoming tensions between national approaches and international structures of social movements. The conference led to a process of mutual inspiration between historians and social scientists in social movement research. Historians provided a broader context, the sensitivity for the historicity of central concepts and explored how comparisons with historical movements can contribute to our understanding of current developments. Social scientists acknowledged the importance of linking contemporary studies of social movements to historical developments and addressed current social movements, their actors, mobilisation strategies, action repertoires and current challenges. The fruitful exchange between historians and social scientists indicated that it is necessary to strengthen an interdisciplinary approach in social movement research in order to fully assess temporal and spatial scopes of social movements. With the help of the scholars from various disciplines as well as the students, the conference drew a line from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to a possible future of social movements and led to further reflections on how research on social movements can contribute to our understanding of societies in the present and the future.

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