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Disempowerment or New Opportunities

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TEXT NO. 1-2000

THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT
AND INTERNATIONALIZATION.

DISEMPOWERMENT OR
NEW OPPORTUNITIES?

BY
DRUDE DAHLERUP

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Abstract¹

Internationalisation implies a challenge, not only to the Women's Movement and to other social movements, but also to social movement theory itself. What happens when or if the "active commitment of the participants" at the grass root level, can no longer be considered the main resource of any social movement, because of the professionalization needed to act on the international scene?

This paper contains an explorative discussion of advantages and disadvantages for the Women's Movement facing internationalisation, the latter understood as global or regional decision-making as well as deregulation. The legacy of the Women's Liberation Movement of the 1960-80 is taken as the point of departure. The empirical data derives from a larger study of the Danish Redstocking Movement (1970-85), and the question asked is this: What kind of power did this non-conventional, radical and leftist Women's Liberation Movement create? Are the strategies used by second wave of feminism relevant in front of today's new combination of national and international opportunity structures, or have actions and demonstration by the many without many resources turned ineffective, because of lack of international arenas of deliberation and public discourse? Does internationalisation consequently disempower the Women's Movement and social movements in general, unless they give up their very character as movements?

1. Social Movements and Internationalisation

The Women's Movement has always been internationally oriented. From the very start during the second half of the 19th century, victory in one country, for instance access for women to the university or winning the suffrage, was soon reported to and used by the movement in other countries. International connections were assets to the movements in their fight to persuade their national governments and parliaments. Information came through newspapers, magazines and pamphlets, not seldom carried from one country to the other by committed (and rich) movement participants. During the new wave of feminism in the 1960-80s, ideas and organisational models also flew from one country to the another, increasingly through individuals and groups travelling around, but also through pamphlets and magazines and not least through extensive mass media coverage.

Today, mutual inspiration is not sufficient. Even if many political decisions and most public debates are still concentrated within the framework of the nation state, new arenas of decisions-making are evolving at regional (that is, often continental) and global arenas like IMF, World Bank, WTO, European Union, NAFTA, ASEAN as well as the UN. Moreover, the politics of deregulation and structural adjustment programmes have removed decisions away from the elected politicians to the invisible marked forces and large international corporations.

Yet, new international arenas for public deliberation and discussion have not been developed to any similar extent. And even if that was the case, what resources will it take to participate and influence the global discourse? Apart from the one-way communication of CNN, MTV and some other Western media, global fora for public discussion among citizens and between decisions-makers and citizens are scarce. This poses a general problem for democracy today. Elitist decision-making and lack of accountability to any body of citizens might be the result. The Internet, however, represents a new opportunity.

Globalisation does not have the same effect for all countries nor for different groups within each country, as many scholars not least from Third World countries have pointed out. Does globalisation, to put it very generally, represents a threat to democracy as we know it today, but also, at the same time, a threat to dictators all over the world. Internationalisation, so difficult to grasp, represents a challenge, not only to the women's movement, but also to all social movements - and in fact to social movement theory itself.

Does internationalisation empower or disempower social movements? Are some movements able to benefit from internationalisation while other types of movements do worse? The concept of *opportunity structure* has been attached to comparative studies of movement influence on the nation state, preferably using a comparative design (Jenkins & Klandermans 1995; Kitschelt 1986; Randall & Waylen 1998). It may, however, just as well be applied to

studies of what opportunities (positive or negative) that the local, the national, the continental (regional) and the international scene offer to social movements.

2. Does Internationalisation Empower or Disempower Social Movements?

The challenge of internationalisation to social movements may be discussed as a question of empowerment or disempowerment. Some researchers point to the new opportunities, which internationalisation offers to social movements. Looking at the effect of internationalisation on the environmental movement, Brian Hocking talks about a new 'catalytic diplomacy': Today, states are not the only player on the international scene, also local and regional governments as well as large companies and a lot of non-governmental organisations, NGOs, participate in the game. Through an illustrative case, the protests against clear cutting forestry in British Columbia, Brian Hocking shows how Greenpeace was able launch a very effective boycott campaign against imported wood from British Colombia among German consumers, the supposedly most environmental conscious consumers in the west (Hocking 1996). In general, Greenpeace has through direct actions been very effective in raising public opinion internationally, which for lack of international media, except for CNN and a few others, implies raising the same issue in many national debates simultaneously.

The crucial question is whether this kind of action requires a professional campaign organisation like Greenpeace? Can a membership-based movement without other resources than the commitment of the participants have the same effect? Can the democratic base of social movements survive in a globalised world?

A different, rather pessimistic view of the future of social movements is presented by Andrew Jamison, who also focuses on the environmental movement (Jamison 1993). In his view, the creation of a global environmental debate has led to the dissolution of the environmental movement. Organisations like Greenpeace is in his view not social movement, yes in fact not a NGO any more, but have been transformed into a kind of big industry, resembling big business. Based on his and Ron Eyerman's "cognitive approach" to the study of social movements (Eyerman & Jamison 1991), the rather pessimistic conclusion is, that the environmental movement during the last twenty years has undergone changes from an innovative, critical movement, which developed new 'cognitive practices' and new collective identities to today's professionalism in an environmental industry, which has more or less lost its transformative force. Its political legitimacy may even be questioned: Whom do these non-governmental organisations really represent, Andrew Jamison asks? (Jamison 1993).

It should not be overlooked, that present trends of internationalisation partly is the effect of actual political decisions, rather than the outcome of mysterious, anonymous forces. The new global development consequently lead to straightforward research questions, important for social movement research: At what level are the decisions on various issues taken today, and what does that imply for the opportunities of social movements? What are the relations between nation states and national actors on one hand and international institutions/organisations and international actors on the other? To what extent have deregulation moved decisions from the political institutions to the market forces, and consequently diminished the ability of the political institutions to regulate. When is deregulation a consequence of political decisions, like e.g. The European Union's deregulation of the energy market, and when an example of non-decisions-making? Both transformation 1) towards new international arenas of decisions-making and 2) deregulation and the subsequent increase of the power of the multinationals, represent new opportunity structures for social movements in their attempt to promote social change.

Some researchers argue that with the decrease in the power of the nation state, also local arenas of decisions making have gained in influence. In my opinion, there is no solid empirical evidence of a general increase in local power and/or new forms for mobilisation *locally* - where in the world? Compared to when in history? Rather, we here see an example of international diffusion of an research hypothesis turned into "evidence". Also local decision-makers have lost in influence to the new international or regional fora as well as to the market because of deregulation, let's just again mention deregulation of the energy market as an example.

Do social movements have increased possibilities or do they face disempowerment because of recent global trends? As illustrated from research in the environmental movement, researcher does not agree. I will argue that this question requires a discussion about the very nature of social movement and the potential power of social movements.

3. Defining Social Movements

A common definition of social movements includes the following characteristics: A social movement is collective, conscious activities, which under a common ideological umbrella aim at promoting social change. The active commitment of movement participants constitutes the main resource of a social movement. Social movements represent a protest not only against the dominant norms and values, but also against the power structure in society.

3.1. Social movements: The Power of Numbers

Even if few researchers believe that social movements recruit first and foremost powerless people, the main resources of social movements are per definition not money and positions, nor contacts and professionalism. It is the commitment of the many participants, who join forces in the protest. Numbers count. As representatives of - per definition - those outside the established power structure, social movements have the capacity to mobilise many people in actions, demonstrations or even riots. Mobilisation through personal involvement is the strength of social movements.

But does personal involvement and numbers count on the international arena? What happens to the power of demonstration and actions on the local or national scene, if decisions are taken far away from the square where the demonstration takes place? Do movements more than ever have to take to violence to get attention? Take the example of the European Union in spring 1999, when all EU-institutions were closed down because a large demonstration of farmers were to take place in Brussels². *Is anybody listening?*

Lack of correspondence in place between the activists and the decisions-makers will probably become an increasing problem for social movements, who's activities used to be local in place, even when global in outlook. The power of numbers, a strength not least for the powerless, tend to loose its potential. What does a large demonstration in Stockholm mean, if the decisions in the matter are taken in Brussels by 15 ministers, of which only 1 will read about the demonstration in his or her newspaper?

It should be stressed that numbers are not enough to constitute a successful social movement. What differentiates a social movement from riots is the deliberate, conscious effort to challenge the dominant values and power structures. That demands some kind of organising. But most important is the movements' capacity to create new ways of thinking and acting.

3. 2. Social Movements: the Power of New Thinking

I have elsewhere developed the theory that the most important potential of social movements is their ability to create new thinking, defined as new ideas as well as new practices. To think the unthinkable, and to do what you are not supposed to do. And further to mobilise people behind the new thinking (Dahlerup 1998). This approach to the study of social movements focuses on the content of the protest and the very construction of that new thinking.³

The impact of a movement consequently includes two aspects: The development of new thinking constitutes a break through in itself. To break through the walls of traditional and

hegemonic ideas. And to act accordingly. This usually requires non-traditional forms of organising. The next step is the impact of the new thinking in society in general. Did the movement succeed in influencing society or segments of society with the new thinking?

This understanding of social movements raises crucial questions in times of internationalisation. Breaking through with new ideas and new practices in the wider society *requires arenas for deliberation and public discourse*. The international discourse is today limited to the elites, usually debating behind closed doors.

But at the same time, new arenas for discussion have been developed. When it comes to feminist issues, the United Nation has developed important new fora for discussion between NGOs from all over the world, especially at the alternative Forum in connection with the women's world conferences. Women's Studies and Gender Studies have also made extensive international networks. However, debate between decisions-makers and challengers at the international level is rare. The feminist NGOs are partly grass roots movements, partly highly professional lobbyists. In general, to some extent lobbyists will have to adapt to the institutions, they want to influence. Are social movements only allowed if they abandoned their very character of protest movements?

3.3. Two types of movements

For the discussion of movement strategy and movement impact, I distinguish between *policy movements* and *socio-cultural movements*. Policy movements are defined as movements, which major aim is to influence decisions taken by formal political institutions. Decisions taken by the institutions of the European Union, by the United Nations and other regional or global institutions may be added to the list of decisions taken by the nation state and local government. The environmental movement and the peace movement are examples of this type of movements.

Socio-cultural movements act primarily in the social and cultural sphere. Only occasionally, do they direct their activities towards the formal political institutions. The main aim of a socio-cultural movement is to change the way we think and act, and further to change interpersonal relations and social structures. The Women's Movement, the Civil Rights Movement and movements of gays and lesbians are examples of socio-cultural movements.

Both types of movements have a conflictual view of society, and focus on the distribution of power. Therefore Dieter Rucht's distinction between "identity-oriented movements", as the Women's Movement and "power-oriented movements", as the anti-nuclear power movement and the peace movement does not seem appropriate (see Rucht 1990). All types of feminist movements involve a protest against male dominance of society, and are per se

occupied with the question of power.

The distinction between policy movements and socio-cultural movements is instrumental to the analysis of movement impact, because the direction of research will have to differ. To study the Women's Movement's influence on specific political decisions like abortion will throw light on only a part of the movement's activities. The impact analysis must reflect that the most important activities of the Women's Liberation Movement were processes of consciousness-raising, discursive changes and the development of a new feminist counterculture like feminist art and literature.

The distinction should be seen as creating two ideal types, since most movements in fact include both aspects, but with strong variation in emphasis. Studies of the history of the feminist movement also show variations between various branches of the feminist movement. During the new wave of feminism in the 1960-80's, the socio-cultural Women's Liberation Movement existed side by side with - sometimes in conflict with, sometimes in co-operation with - the contemporary more moderate and legislative oriented Women's Rights Movements (Freeman 1975; Dahlerup 1998).

Does internationalisation represent different challenges, problems or opportunities for these two types of social movements? Further research is needed, and the following should be considered an exploration into the problem. The point of departure is, that it takes some degree of professionalism to act on the international scene. This fact encourages the change from grass root movement to pressure group organisation, which many movements are taking during their life cycle, but which other movements, like most part of the rebellious Women's Liberation Movement, refused to take (Dahlerup 1998; Offe 1990).

For policy movements, this change may be less painful than for socio-cultural movements, although not without problems. The last decades we have witnessed a rapid increase in the formation of international lobby organisations and NGO (non-governmental organisations), when decisions and/or discussions have moved to the UN, EU or other international organisations. But for socio-cultural movements this represents some specific and serious problems.

In order to discuss present days problem of the feminist movement and social movements in general facing internationalisation, I will in the following discuss the impact of Women's Liberation Movement, which emerged in all Western countries in the late 1960s and developed during the 1970s and 80s.

In an world of increased international decisions-making combined with deregulation away from formal political arenas, *what happens to the power of the feminist movement, which was and is connected with processes of consciousness-raising, changing cultural norms and creating new public discourses about what women are, can, ought to and will?*

4. The Power of the Women's Liberation Movement

That the new wave of feminism of the 1960-80 had a profound influence on society, is beyond doubt. But we need further investigations into what kind of power the movement in fact was able to create, and by what means?

To study the impact of social movements raises several methodological problems, first and foremost because it is difficult to make a direct link between social changes and the activity of a certain movement, the development of which in itself was influenced by the wider social changes. In general, the chosen approach of the impact analysis must be closely connected to the very conceptualisation of social movements, in my understanding the potential for "new thinking", defined as new ideas as well as new practices is the main potential of social movements (Dahlerup 1998). Even if new thinking is seen as the main potential of all social movements, the impact of socio-cultural movements with their very comprehensive agenda is for obvious reasons more difficult to assess than that of policy movements.

For the purpose of this study of social movements and internationalisation, three important dimensions of the Women's Liberation Movement's impact are discussed in the following. The conclusion of the wider study of the Danish Redstocking Movement single these three dimensions out as very important. The empirical data comes from my extensive research on the Danish branch of the Women's Liberation Movement, named the Redstockings 1970-around 1985 (Dahlerup 1998). Link are made to the same type of feminist movement in other Western countries, which shared many characteristics because of their common roots and the lively interaction and inspiration between the countries.

Figure 1 shows the three dimensions of movement impact to be discussed in the following. Several other, not less important, dimensions are omitted here, such as cultural changes in literature, film etc. as well as overall changes in power relations between men and women and the gendered power structure of society (see Dahlerup 1998). The following only gives the conclusions.

The analysis will look at the movement's own strategies, its alliances or lack of alliances as well as media response. Any impact analysis faces a choice of what time span to chose for the analysis. The following discussion about the impact of the Women's Liberation Movement deals with its impact seen from the time span of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s.

Figure 1. Three Dimensions of Movement Impact.

1. Identity-changes and mobilisation. Construction of women as a group.
2. New single issues. Public and political agenda setting.
3. Discursive changes.

4.1. Identity changes. Construction of women as a group.

The Women's Liberation Movement successfully aimed at making women subject in their own lives, individually and as well as collectively. Maybe the most successful part of that movement's work was changing consciousness and identities, see also Mueller 1987.

The aim of women's liberation feminism was from the start not to stress differences between women. On the contrary, the new and challenging project was to create solidarity and community between women. Just as the later emphasis on differences among women may be understood as a reaction against the feminism of the 1960-80's, so the very strong urge to create solidarity between women in the Women's Liberation Movement was a reaction against what was seen as patriarchal society's splitting up women. The many actions against Miss competitions was a symbolic attack on what the movement saw as competition between women to the benefit of patriarchal society only.

Organisations and groups for women, not least the very popular consciousness-raising groups were a means to constitute women as a group "für sich", to create a sense of "we women", which would enable women to act together to change society. To make women subject of their own lives was for the movement a goal in itself as well as a means to change the wider society.

My research on the Danish Redstocking movement and its impact shows that the principle of "woman only groups" spread to political parties, trade unions, women's groups at the educational institutions, at work places, in sports clubs, in handicap organisations and many more. This was a U-turn compared to the general trend of the 1960's, in which period organisations for women were closed down - in the name of equality. In Denmark the women's organisations or committees within all political parties, except for the conservatives, were closed down in the 1960s. Only shortly after, in the 1970s, the principle of woman only groups swept through society.

The conclusion is that the Women's Liberation Movement all over the Western world succeeded in constituting women as a politically relevant group - for women themselves and for

the wider society, e.g. in nomination to political or other positions. The idea became widespread, that "women's liberation will only come true, when women liberate themselves", as one of the movement's songs went. A historically exceptional number of feminist groups, based on the principle of solidarity between women (woman only groups), emerged in the 1960-80's.

Critique came from more moderate feminists, who raised the old discussion, that men should be seen as allied for feminism. But vehement critique was soon voiced from non-white feminists especially in Britain and the United States and from Third World feminism, who challenged the notion of community among women, stressing the differences between women. Later, post-feminism and anti-feminists raised the same critique as a reaction against the idea of solidarity between women. Collective action was exchanged for individualism.

In the 1990s, most of the radical, leftist women's groups from the previous period had disappeared, but the idea of women's groups - new, and yet as old as feminism - still survived, although often stripped from its most controversial feminist connotations. The following quotation shows that building a woman only group in the 1990s remained an option for women who want to change the order of things:

"Maj Munk, ornithologist and member of the executive committee of Danish Ornithological Association, is one of the women behind the association's first course (over one week) for women only. About half of the association's 11.000 members are women, but it is the men who dominate, in internal as well as in external activities. Thus the women's course. According to Maj Munk the idea of the course is to give female ornithologists more self-confidence, so that they will dare to tell their opinion on the excursions looking for birds, trips that use to be dominated by dead-sure male ornithologists. 22 women aged 19-68 participated in the first women only course. Small notice in the newspaper Politiken, Aug.15, 1993.

But what was in fact the basis for the idea of solidarity between women in the Women's Liberation Movement of the 1960-80s? The questions are very complex, and misinterpretations are widespread. Looking at the empirical evidence of the Danish Women's Liberation Movement my conclusion is the following:

The basis for the idea of solidarity between women in the Danish Redstocking movement was not women's role as mothers or other part of the traditional role of women. Most of all, the redstockings wanted to abolish the full-time housewife, which had been the fate of their mothers' generation. On the contrary, the redstockings wanted to get rid of the traditional role of women, which was seen as one of the fundamental factors behind women's oppression. A new discussion of specific female values had started in the later years of the movement. This may be interpreted as an - in the history of feminism well known - reaction to the ideas of equality, which

in a male dominated society tend to make the male into a general norm. However, these ideas of female values did not evolve as a common basis idea of the Redstocking Movement. Consequently, the ideas of solidarity among women did not rest on a thesis of ontological commonalties among women, a common female existence. The idea of solidarity and community between women therefore did not, as later misinterpreted, rest on an assumption of all women being the same. Nor did the redstockings believe that all women had identical social position, after all they were socialists and saw society as divided by class. Rather, the conclusion is, that it was the *oppression of women* that was the foundation of the redstockings' ideas of 'sisterhood' and solidarity between women.

This was the strength of the Women's Liberation Movement generally. But the project had some serious contradictions, which became evident as it turned out, that in spite of its intention to unite all women, the movement in many countries was even unable even to make permanent alliances with other women's organisations.

To create a common platform for all women has been a central idea, but also the Achilles' heal for all feminist movements throughout history. The solution of the redstockings was this: All women are oppressed, and should therefore unite. Inequality, discrimination and oppression because of their female gender are a common condition for every woman. Women may live different lives, but their are all oppressed seen in relation to men of their own class (race and ethnic background was not an issue in Denmark in the 1970s). This programme succeeded in making women of all strains start to discuss women's position and look at their problems, as a structural, not just individual. The crucial problem was, however, that apart from issues like abortion, rape, birth, equal share of housework and shortage of child care, issues that were now successfully raised as common issues, the theory of shared oppression was too abstract. Consequently the movement did not succeed in overcoming the actual large differences in women's social lives. The Women's Liberation Movement remained a middle class movement in terms of the class background of the participants.

For a successful social movement the boundaries between the movement and its surrounding are never sharp. Viewed as concentric circles, the Women's Liberation Movement consisted of an inner circle of active redstockings who met in the women's centres in the bigger cities, *the participants*. The wider circle consisted of larger group of *sympathisers*, who shared the ideas of the redstockings and perhaps in their daily lives at home, at their educational institutions or at their workplace in practice tried to live after the new feminist ideas. *The outer circle* consisted of the many women, who were influenced by the movement's ideas, but who developed their own feminist agendas, be it individually or collectively, e.g. in the trade unions. This latter group of women would typically declare: "I am not a redstocking, but...." And the but' would contain angry arguments against unequal pay, unequal distribution of household tasks, or male dominance in their union or at their work place. In this way, the radical, leftist Women's

Liberation Movement contributed to profound changes in women's individual and collective consciousness, and a general mobilisation of women in organisational life - away from the image of the passive female. In this period, there was a close connection between the feminist mobilisation and the general mobilisation of women (Togebly 1994; Dahlerup 1998).

The strategy of the movement: consciousness-raising

What strategy did the Women's Liberation Movement itself use to change traditional identities and to construct women as a group? The principal strategy in this respect was the consciousness-raising group and other groups for women only. By their many direct action, which confronted the "establishment", like disturbing a Miss contest, or occupying the office of the editor of one of the woman magazines, the Women's Liberation Movement constructed in front of other women an image of a new type of young women: self-confident, disrespectful in front of authorities, a woman who without hesitation placed her own young body in the public room to protest against discrimination of women. My own investigation of the Danish movement shows, that in spite of the redstockings constant complains about the media coverage, the media coverage was extensive, and an essential part of the movement's message did come through, namely the image of a new type of young women, an image which in turn recruited many new young women to the movement organisations (Dahlerup 1998). These identity changes were furthered by the dramatic changes in women's roles and positions in the period from the mid 1960s to 1980s. However, a look at women in the East and Central European countries, reveals that increased labour force participation of women does not in itself create feminist rebellion.

Identity changes and internationalisation

The distinction between policy movements and socio-cultural movements proves highly relevant: Most of the issues and problems, that social-cultural movements are concerned with, are not subject to decisions anywhere. How to make a link between internationalisation and identity changes?

International exchange of ideas and images can help and has helped in the process of consciousness changing. The mass media can help recruiting movement participants, and media might help challenging old traditions. Even if the more radical part of the Women's Liberation Movement was rather critical to the United Nations decade for women, analyses show that the decade and the Women's World Conferences, especially the Alternative Forum in Mexico, Copenhagen and Nairobi, perhaps to a lesser extent the one in Beijing, did further a feeling of solidarity among women world wide, even if conflicts and differences also were evident. But first and foremost, these conferences gave inspiration to actions nationally and locally by women's groups and their allies. The mass media coverage gave a new image of female strength, but also

revealed many conflicts among women.

But identity changes can not come through media. It requires more than 10 day's of intensive meetings! It requires personal involvement, which even for a world wide movement must happen locally, through groups or actions, where people live. It is my opinion, that fundamental changes of the kind evolved by the Women's Liberation Movement can never be given to women, but must be conquered. *It requires personal involvement in group processes over a longer period of time.*

Participation on the international scene takes many resources. To be an international women's lobby, or Women's Lobby to the European Lobby requires what Jo Freeman labels "specialised resources": expertise and positions. Even participation in the alternative UN fora requires skill as well as money. Contrary to this, grass root movements live from is "unspecialised resources": time and involvement (Freeman 1979).

But the problems for grass roots movements facing internationalisation is not just those of resources, but of their very nature as movements which challenge the established ways of thinking and the established power structure. This is a true paradox: Since new thinking seems to develop first and foremost in non-traditional organisational surrounding - non-traditional in relation to contemporary norms and traditions in each historical period - hierarchical organisations as well as specialisation and professionalisation tend to de-radicalise movements and consequently traditionalise their thinking.

From its studies of the history of the labour movement, the New Left was very much aware of these dilemmas. The Women's Liberation Movement, as a part of the New Left, shared this fear of de-radicalisation. In general, as a collective, the new Danish feminist movement was not willing to compromise, and consequently did not develop into a permanent lobby group or interest organisations, even if individual former participants did follow that path.

4.2. New single issues placed on the public and the formal political agenda

To raise awareness of new issues and to introduce new perspectives on old topics is a major strength of social movements. By various means, among others direct actions, demonstrations and new personal practices social movements have been able to influence *the public agenda*, thereby contributing to new understandings of women in general, to new discourses on women, see below⁴. This kind of power, however, has as a prerequisite *open arenas for public debate*, an well-functioning and an open "Öffentlichkeit". Seen in a world-wide perspective, freedom of speech, free media and democracy are important conditions for social movements in this respect.

The history of the Women's Liberation Movement in the Western world shows that the movement was able to place new issues placed on the public agenda. Alone or with the help of other actors, this non-conventional movement raised new issues, revitalised old problems and redefined the issues. The movement in all Western countries managed to raise issues from the so-called private sphere to public scrutiny. "The private is political", became a well-known slogan in many countries. Or phrased another way: "The personal is public". The implication was twofold: These issues should be brought forward in full daylight, and they should be subject to collective action by women, instead of just individual grievances. Thus the movement focussed on the oppression of women which took and take place behind the closed doors of the family, or in other person-to-person relationships between men and women, e.g. workplace relations between the boss and the salaried female workers. Among "private" issues that now reached the public agenda were sexual violence against women (rape, incest, wife beating), sexual harassment and all other kinds of open or hidden oppression and discrimination of women on account of gender.

With the new "body politics", abortion, menstruation, conditions at birth, health care in general, contraception, and menopause were brought to public debate. The movement succeeded in turning the debate on these issues into a question of women's right to self determination. In the 1970s and 80s, they also successfully criticised what they saw as the damage made to women by the fashion and cosmetic industry, which by its image of the ideal woman exploited women by playing on women's lack of self confidence in a patriarchal society. In the 1990s, however, this critique has stopped and the cosmetic industry is again booming. This example shows the importance of the time period chosen for the impact analysis.

The Women's Liberation Movement of the 1960-80s also gave new emphasis to the old issues of unequal pay, discrimination of women in hiring, promoting and firing and the lack of public interest on women's unemployment.

Vehement discussion were also raised on issues like sharing of housework ("men' exploitation of women's domestic services"), paternity leave for father, 30 hour work day, the problem to combine work and family, all discussed within the new concept of "double burden for women". The focus was men's lack of sharing domestic work as well as on the employer's lack of consideration for the family burden of their employees.

The Women's Liberation Movement and its offspring Women's Studies, later Gender Studies, heavily criticised, that previous research, teaching and museum exhibitions had neglected the work of women and the subordination of women to men. This critique has in fact been very successful, although much is still to be done in many disciplines. Women's Studies and Gender Studies have emerged almost everywhere all over the world.

In the 1970-80s many feminist issues reached *the formal political agenda* in most countries of the world, as well as the agenda of the international organisations. Research is

needed here country by country, organisations by organisation. The conclusion of the study of the Danish Redstocking Movement is that the influence of the movement on the policy changes of this period was largely indirect (Dahlerup 1998). Many other actors were active. The redstockings worked primarily as an extra-parliamentary group, and they did not direct their main activities towards the state - but towards women. Also the family and the labour market were for them more interesting than public policy.

Only seldom did the redstocking groups act directly towards the formal political institutions. The leftist, radical women's liberation feminism obviously was not able to win success through the established political institutions. The redstockings did not ask for, neither were they invited to sit on public committees and boards, except for a few cases. Even if the radical, leftist feminism thus did not have much direct access to the formal political institutions, and did not want to have it, they nevertheless firstly had a considerable influence through the public debate that they created on many single issues. Secondly, the radical movement contributed to a certain radicalisation of the more moderate equality feminism (which in the same period moved from equal opportunity to a demand for equality of result).

Thirdly, women's underprivileged position now reached the formal political arena. Anti-discriminations legislation was passed, and special institutions were set up to deal with these questions ('equality machineries' UN-terminology). I have argued that this (moderate) equality policy was strengthened by the unique combination of a strong and radical feminist movement *outside* the political institutions, and a growing number of women's politicians *inside* the institutions. The question is, whether this strong combination was possible only in the previous decades? Further, is this combination possible on the international arena?

Local feminist projects constitute an exception to the general pattern. In the Danish case as well as in many other countries, new feminist projects were established - often supported by public money - like centres for battered women, projects for unemployed women, women-only productions houses for immigrant women and many more.

The conclusion of the analyses of the Danish case is, that the Redstocking Movement influenced public policy of the 1970s and 80s indirectly through its contribution to the general mobilisation of women, and through its ability to raise new issues to public debate. The movement also had a considerable effect on the changes that occurred in the general public discourse on women and gender, see later.

The Strategy of the Movement on single issues

In order to influence public debate, the Danish Redstocking Movement like many of its sister-movements in other countries, made use of a whole battery of actions-repertoires: Direct actions, often involving person-to-person confrontation, demonstrations, mass meetings, women's

festivals, projects, theoretical discussions, numerous pamphlets and books on women's oppression, reports and campaigns on single issues like women's unemployment. And the participants' own new daily life practices.

In the third of the Redstocking Movement's three stages (Dahlerup 1998), alternative feminist institutions were created like centres for battered women, women's studies centres, a Women's Museum, a Folk High School for women, and many local projects were established (Dahlerup 1993 & 1998).

Internationalisation and single issue campaigns

Single-issue campaigns can very well benefit from internationalisation, in which debates raised in one country can provoke debates in another country. During the 1970s, 80s and 90s, many feminist claims flew across the borders. International conventions (like CEDAW) and other initiatives and documents from the United Nations have influenced the agenda even in dictatorships, where no free public debate exists. International conferences and exchanges have exploded in numbers during the last decades. In Europe, the European Union, the Council of Europe and OCSE have all given room for international exchange of feminist ideas, but not without heavy lobbying from women's organisations.

This international scene is being opened to women, but at the same time new arenas are constantly being built without much influence from women, not to speak of feminist influence: WHO, The European Commission, the World Bank and IMF. The structural adjustment programmes of the latter two have involved serious cuts in the social programmes of Third World countries, in Latin America and in the former communist countries and have been heavily criticised by feminist organisations and feminist scholars (see e.g. Randall & Waylen 1998).

Recent trends to render more power to the judiciary, raises the issue of the sex and age of the judges. Moreover, international courts might without doubt give citizens more rights. But when such courts, like the European Court, enter traditional political subjects like for instance whether to accept affirmative action or not (e.g. the Kalanka and the Marshall cases), a debate is needed about the fact, that these judges are isolated from the public debates on the issues, which are still mostly national.

Discrimination against women, malnutrition of girls and lack of education for girls, exploitation of female workers, female genital mutilation, rape as part of any war - these are some of the issues which have reached public awareness through global discussions during the last decades. The UN women's conferences and other international gatherings have been very productive new arenas in this respect. But public debate is still first and foremost conducted within national and/or linguistic boundaries. The few existing international mass media like CNN or MTV cannot not be seen as friends of feminism, on the contrary, they produce a westernised

and an increasingly sexualised and often sexist image of women.

Through their own channels of communication, the idea of building centres for battered women spread from one country to the other. But social movements are very dependent on *mass media* attention, and thereby the power of mass media becomes a crucial issues for social movements. However, the *Internet* offers new and extraordinary possibilities for social movements in terms of information and exchange of ideas, even if also the net is mostly used by the privileged of the world. In general, there is a heavy demand for international public debates. As it is today, the unspecialised resources of social movements are not sufficient to create and to influence new public areas for international discussion, apart from the Internet.

Social movements are per definition not well-organised interest organisations, which have access to political decisions-makers as acknowledged representatives of a special group. Such lobbyist organisations often do not need public debate in order get influence. In fact, many of the strong lobbyists do not have any problems with decision-making behind closed doors of new fora like WHO, The Commission and Councils of the European Union, NAFTA. *But for the less powerful social movements, open and democratic decisions making and many competing arenas for public debate are crucial.*

4.3. Discursive changes

As all kinds of feminist movements, the Women's Liberation Movement worked hard to change the general discourse on women in society - defined as the public debate on and the general understanding in society about women's position and about what women are, can, should and want.

The emphasis placed on changing public awareness shows that this was and is not an aim in itself to feminism, but constitutes a central means to change attitudes and actions in every corner of society. As a leftist kind of feminism, the Danish Redstocking Movement theoretically saw the societal discourses as derived from two fundamental social structures: capitalism and patriarchy. But in their practice, the redstockings worked hard to change the basic discourse on women right now. Society was formed by clashes between conflicting interests, according to the redstockings' worldview, and consequently public debate to them constituted a battlefield about what should be the dominant (hegemonic) discourse. The more moderate feminism usually sees discursive changes as social changes in themselves. Even if the Women's Liberation Movement did not share that view, the radical, leftist movement placed no less emphasis on changing public discourse.

As we know now, the Women's Liberation Movement, along with the rest of the New Left, did not succeed in overthrowing capitalist society! No socialist community or communities took over. The socialist discourse of the 1970s and early 80s was on the contrary replaced by the new dominant discourse of neo-liberalism and individualism. In just two decades, the revolutionary dream of the New Left was totally gone.

However, the feminist movement all over the world did manage to contribute to fundamental change in the general discourse on women and gender. The general discourse is not the sum of individual attitudes, and can from a methodological point of view not be analysed by making a simple survey among a representative sample of the population at a given point in time. Changes in the discursive structure of society requires identification of and analyses of the fundamental debates in a society or in sections of a society, be it limited by local, national or global boundaries. The approach is that of political theory analysis. Surveys of individual attitudes may be a supplement to the interpretations derived from the analysis of the dominant ideas. After a short notice of changes in individual attitudes, this section will concentrate on changes in the general discourse on women.

Changes of individual attitudes and behaviour. Data about longitudinal changes of opinion on feminist issues are unfortunately rare. There is no doubt that the Women's Liberation Movement contributed to changes in individual attitudes on women's position in society. The scattered surveys in Western countries confirm, that fundamental changes have taken place, for instance in the general view of women's work outside home, sharing of housework, kindergartens, women's ability as politicians and the need for more women in politics (Sapiro 1991; Togeby 1994). Fundamental changes in behaviour and life cycles have also occurred since the days of the full time housewife of the 1950s and early 1960s in the West. The Women's Liberation was a consequence of these fundamental social changes and contributed itself to these changes.

Discursive changes. The fundamental issue of women's oppression was placed on the public agenda by the Women's Liberation Movement - or rather revitalised. The argument that women are oppressed, subjected or discrimination against, and that these should be and can be changed, is the core position of all feminism, new as well as old. The Women's Liberation Movement managed to construct *women's position as an issue in the general public debate*. The position, that something was wrong in the way society in general treated women, and the way women thought about themselves, became accepted as a public issue. It is exactly therefore, that the 1960-80s came to represent a new culmination in the history of the feminist movement in Western society.

A revolt against *biological determinism* was another successful impact of the feminist movement of that period, which took former feminist more timid revolt to its logical conclusion. In the 1950s and 60s, it was in the Western world still a widespread belief, that women from their

nature were less capable than men to learn mathematics, to think politically (being too emotional), to become genius in music, to know their way in a new town or to repair a bicycle or play the trumpet. By contrast, men were by nature supposed to be stronger, physically and mentally, to be much less apt to take care of infants, to have more overview geographically and mentally, to be more rational and out of their group to foster the world's genius - and to be unable to do the laundry! By the end of 1980s, in most Western world, biologism was on return in schools and the educational system, and, but to a lesser degree, in the work place.⁵

The constitution of *women as subjects* in their own lives and partly collectively also formed part of a new discourse on women.

A revolt *against male dominance* was always inherited in any type of feminism, but now the Women's Liberation Movement brought the revolt to all arenas of society: politics, the workplace, the street, the trade unions, the movements, the family, in art - and in bed. In the Nordic countries, it was a breakthrough for a totally new discourse on gender that eventually made all male assemblies loose in democratic legitimacy. Strong public critique, not only from feminists, would now follow every appointment of committee with only male members, no matter how important all those men were. Even if the resistance against quotas for women remained strong, in reality every appointing person or body would search for women in order to avoid criticism. The "acceptable minimum" of women (15%, 30% or 50%?) was, however, still subject to must debate.

Looking at the history of the Danish Women's Liberation Movement it becomes clear, that the issues, which the movement raised, were never formulated in public debate in the way the movement had wanted it. In general, the redstockings turned any sign of success into another example of 'repressive tolerance' or 'new forms of patriarchy'. The optimistic world view of the New Left, that fundamental changes in society was possible and not far away, was, also in the Redstocking Movement, mixed with a pessimistic discourse of ever new forms of oppression. But the researcher's conclusion is nevertheless, that the Redstocking Movement was a very important agent behind those extensive changes that took place in the discourse on women from the 1970s and during the following two decades. The longer effects are more difficult to judge.

Other actors contributed to these changes of the public discourse. Among these were the more moderate feminist organisations, which in the Danish and in general in the Nordic case had been present at the scene ever since their building in the 1870s and 1880s. Women in the political parties, especially on the left and in the Social Democratic parties were also increasingly active on feminist issues. In other social movements and organisations women started to demand their share of power and influence. Most of these actors, however, did not shared the radical and leftist views of the redstockings, but made their own agenda, influenced by the non-conventional feminism of the Redstockings.

The conclusion is that the Danish Redstockings Movement did not succeed in changing the general discourse into one that shared their socialist and revolutionary points of view. The feminist movement shared this failure with the rest of the New Left, even if the leftist discourse did become very dominant, especially among the younger generations in the 1960-80s. An essential point of the leftist and radical feminist ideas of the Redstocking Movement was that women's liberation did not imply women's entrance into the hierarchies of men, but a totally new society without any hierarchies. When the left discourse dissolved, then the specific feminism of the Redstocking Movement, a radical and leftist type of feminism, disintegrated. The equality politics or equal opportunity policy took precedence over the radical leftist redstocking ideology. But the Women's Liberation Movement had contributed to fundamental changes in the discourse of women as subjects, the revolt against biologism, the lack of legitimacy of male dominance and to a different view of women's body. The discourse on women and gradually also on men had changed.

Contrary to what the activists in the Women's Liberation Movement truly believed then, the new general discourse on women was not conquered once and for all. History does not move forward in any linear way. Therefore the discourses that were new two decades ago, in the late 1990s have partly been replaced by different discourses. History does not repeat itself, but certain aspects of the discourse on women do seem to return again and again, for instance the debate of women only organisations, on sameness or difference and whether feminists should make alliances with men.⁶

5. Conclusion: Internationalisation and change of discourse

The movement worked hard to influence public debate, as mentioned above. Of special importance were also the strategies of creating a *feminist counter culture*. This even found its linguistic expression in new concepts like *kvindeteater*, *kvindelitteratur*, *kvindepolitik* (directly translates: womantheater, womanliterature, womanpolitics). The development of Women's Studies and Gender Research has been a more permanent outcome of this strategy. In general, to influence public debate and to create a feminist counter culture needed local organising as well as mass media attention.

Internationalisation and change of discourse. Conclusion.

Feminism of the 1960-80 was able to make certain fundamental issues of women's position into a global debate, which was taken up by many international organisations and institutions. Increasing internationalisation has been very fruitful to feminist movements. In this respect,

internationalisation has mostly meant empowerment for feminism. Other social movements, especially the environmental movement has in the same way been able to create a new global debate.

The problem is, that public debates are still first and foremost conducted within national and/or linguistic boundaries, while decision-making on certain issues are to a larger and larger degree regional or global. In these new structures, women and women's organisations lack power. After years of having conquered some influence in the national parliaments, *women are today spectators to a small group of men's many summits*. The general structural changes in the world are to some large extent decided in these new fora, including the process of deregulation, which moves important decisions away from the formal political institutions to the market forces and the multinational companies.

To sum up, internationalisation so far has resulted in empowerment as well as disempowerment of women. However, women's position is not part of the summits of the international political and economic elites, and the effect of deregulation is, that public discourses in many respects loose its strength. Without democracy, public debate loses its meaning⁷.

For social movement in general, internationalisation in the same way represents opportunities as well as problems. It seems to be a general problem, that it takes professionalism to act on the international scene, and that social movement in their transformation into lobby organisations tends to loose their critical potential. The history of the Women's Liberation Movement has shown that there is a lot of critical potential in non-specialised, non-conventional grass roots movements. The growing internationalisation need a parallel development of regional and international arenas of public deliberation and debate, which is also open to people and organisations, that are able to develop *new* thinking. The Internet is a great potential. However, processes of change through new thinking will probably continue to require that people meet as they have done for centuries in social movements.

Notes

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- ¹ Discussion-paper prepared for the NOPSA, meeting of the Nordic Political Science Association, August 19-21, 1999 in Uppsala. The paper is a slightly revised edition of the paper presented to the Women's World Conference in Tromsø in June 1999
- ² A number of MEP's protested against the closure.
- ³ This approach may be labeled "social coinstructionist approach" and it is inspired by Jamison and Eyerman's "cognitive approach" (Eyerman and Jamison 1991).
- ⁴ By the public agenda is meant, what is publicly discussed, not least in the media. The political agenda is defined as the issues that have reached the agenda of the formal political institutions.
- ⁵ A new and frightening biologism is emerging because of the many new biological techniques.
- ⁶ Half of the redstockings had mothers who were full-time house wives, according to the *Redstocking-survey*, a questionnaire answered by 1,296 former redstockings (Dahlerup 1998).
- ⁷ I do not believe in the political consumer as a strong force to take over, when deregulation diminished the power of formal political institutions.

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GEP - THE RESEARCH PROGRAMME GENDER, EMPOWERMENT AND POLITICS

THE RESEARCH PROGRAMME GENDER, EMPOWERMENT AND POLITICS (GEP) deals with the changing political importance of gender in modern societies. During the last 30 years, women have moved from a position of political powerlessness to political presence and influence in the Danish democracy. Women's new role in politics has had deepgoing consequences - not only for women but also for men.

The aim of the programme is to analyse the interplay between gender relations and discourses of gender on the one hand and changes in the European welfare states and models of democracy on the other. The basic hypothesis is that politics is a determining factor for the construction of gender - and conversely that gender relations influence the political discourses and the political institutions. From this double assumption, new questions concerning the interconnection between civil, political, and social citizenship are analysed.

The programme emphasises two factors: First analysing processes and patterns behind the double tendencies toward empowerment and social exclusion of social groups in terms of gender and class. Secondly, the differentiation within the group of women and men analysing the interplay between gender and class. Maintaining the perspective of gender, these differentiations will make visible the differences of generations as well as the differences between the educated/employed and the marginalized groups.

Questions connected with public equality politics, the increasing representation of women, women's participation in the local political communities and the political elite, as well as strategies against marginalization and poverty will be discussed through projects and case studies.

The project is carried out by six scientists from four different institutions.

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