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Visual framing in the German movements for gay liberation and against nuclear energy

DORNA SAFAIAN and SIMON TEUNE

While the framing approach in the field of social movements has relied on analysing texts to the neglect of images, recent attention to visual framing in the field of media and communication studies largely overlooks the visual communication of social movements. This article addresses this gap by adapting methods derived from art history to unpack the nuances of meaning in movement-constructed images. It analyses the visual framing in posters of two German social movements, the movement for gay liberation and the movement against nuclear energy. Highlighting the need for information about a given movement's history to socially contextualise how its images are likely to be read in context-specific times and places, we carve out the diagnostic, prognostic and motivational dimensions of visual framing. The analysis shows how images speak to viewers, arguing for visual analysis as an advisable supplement to studying textual framing in social movements.

INTRODUCTION

The merit of framing as a long-standing approach to social movement research is to understand movements 'as signifying agents, actively engaged in the construction and maintenance of meaning' (Benford and Snow 2000, 613). Within this framework, Snow and Benford (1988) have defined a set of tasks for activists to shape the perception of potential supporters and the general public about the causes of a problem, potential ways out, and opportunities to make change happen, i.e. diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing.

In the tradition of the framing paradigm, these processes have almost exclusively been studied using textual data. We argue that visual data are an important additional source for studying the three-tier movement framing processes introduced by Snow and Benford because in multimodal communication, they carry an inherent knowledge, separate from that enshrined in concepts and textual structure. Naming the capitalist, we assume, does not represent the same cognitive and emotional package as drawing a caricature of a capitalist.

Images are said to cause stronger physiological reactions than text, and to relay rapidly large chunks of multifaceted information, including emotional cues and pre-cognitive notions (for an overview of the specifics of visual information processing see Geise and Baden 2015, 50f). These attributes make images a central feature of social movement messaging, that is, however, not to be treated separately from non-visual language or other domains of knowledge production. In addressing visual framing, we bridge the established literature on movement framing and the emerging field of visual studies into social movements (e.g. Doerr, Mattoni, and Teune 2013; McGarry et al. 2019). In terms of methodology, we borrow from approaches to image analysis from art history and visual sociology (Imdahl 1996; Raab 2012).

The idea of combining visual analysis and the framing literature is not new. Interest in visual frames has developed rapidly in media and communication studies since the 2000s (Coleman 2010; Messaris and Abraham 2001). The level of theoretical and methodological discussion is now rather advanced in the field (e.g. Geise and Lobinger 2013). While this strand of research has helped scholars better understand how news stories are shaped by the use of images (e.g. Grabe and Bucy 2009; Messaris and Abraham 2001; Parry 2010), it has been limited to imagery produced for and distributed by newspapers and television. Protests are a recurring subject in this line of research. As they are often linked to controversy, the media coverage of protests has proven fruitful for examining visual framing (McLeod and Detenber 1999; Perlmutter and Wagner 2004; Corrigan-Brown and Wilkes 2012; Werenskjold and Sievertsen 2014). While this body of research understands the visual framing of movements as part of news production processes, we are interested in the images produced and distributed by social movement actors themselves. Pioneering work in this field has addressed images as symbols for injustice frames (Olesen 2013) and the amplification of social movement frames achieved by choosing a culturally resonant genre (Morrison and Isaac 2011). More recent work has underscored the role of images in movements' meaning production in a digital media environment, however, without reference to the framing approach (e.g. Kharroub and Bas 2015; Forchtner and Kølvrå 2017; Rovisco 2017).

Dorna Safaian is an art and media scientist. Her main research is on politics in visual culture. As a research fellow in the project 'Images of Indignation - Amateur Practices of Visualizing Protest' (Technische Universität Berlin/University of Siegen), Safaian focused on protest images and symbols of social movements in the 1970s and 1980s. Her current affiliation is at the University of Freiburg.

Simon Teune is a sociologist focussing on protests and social movements. His research interests include movements and media, visual culture, and the public sphere. Teune is a founding member of the Institute for the Study of Protests and Social Movements, a self-organised hub of research in the field. He is currently affiliated with the Institute of Advanced Sustainability Studies in Potsdam.

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Focusing on the diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing of social movements, we build our research on two aspects of visual framing in particular and visual communication in general that have been stressed both in media and communication studies and in visual sociology. First, we follow the recent discussion that understands visual framing as embedded in a sequential and multimodal process of communication (e.g. Meier 2013). Tackling visual framing as a process that involves selection, creation, and reception, leads to our second basic premise: Images of social movements can only be understood by putting them into a larger context. They are produced and understood on the basis of a time- and place-specific shared (visual) knowledge. This notion is emphasised in particular by scholars favouring discourse theoretical approaches or iconology in a social science context (Maasen, Mayerhauser, and Renggli 2006; Clarke 2012; Raab 2012; Hansen 2015).

Methodological approaches to visual framing analysis vary significantly from basic quantitative content analysis to in-depth image analyses rooted in art history. As no agreed-upon method is readily available and the most advanced approaches aim towards news media, we opted for a methodology that combines iconic image analysis and a context-sensitive interpretation. This combined methodology enables us to build on scholarship adopting image analysis from art history to identify meaning in images (Daphi, Lê, and Ullrich 2013). However, as we detail next, we put a stronger focus on the intrinsic structures of meaning associated with images and, therefore, work with a formal phenomenological approach of image analysis that uncovers these inherent semantics.

METHOD: IMAGE ANALYSIS AND VISUAL FRAMING

To break down the visual information produced by social movements in an image, we propose analysing the image along three dimensions: 1) the compositional dimension, 2) the scenic choreography of the image, and 3) the context in which the image is used. On the basis of this information, we identify the visual frames represented in an image. The first two levels of analysis refer to the iconic method of image interpretation developed by the art historian Max Imdahl. Imdahl's concept of the image presupposes two ways of seeing. The 'visualising seeing' (1996, 27) focuses on the formal pictorial composition as an integral element of conveying meaning. The 'recognising object seeing' (27) identifies the pictorial objects and their culturally transmitted meanings. Imdahl does not consider the two ways of seeing as separate processes. Each way of seeing provokes and conditions the other (27). The achievement of Imdahl's 'Ikonik' [iconic method], as opposed to Panofsky's iconology (Panofsky 1955), is to emphasise the significance of the formal and thus the pictorial quality of the image. Imdahl's method has also inspired the visual approach of the

documentary method (Bohnsack 2008, 2013) and other approaches in the sociology of visual knowledge (Raab 2012). While these approaches favour an open interpretation process, we focus specifically on the messaging of an image. Furthermore, we consider the context from which the image emerges, as key to understanding visual frames as part of a mobilising process. Visual sociology, by contrast, either refrains from systematically integrating such context knowledge (Bohnsack 2013) or overemphasises the context that the image is embedded in compared to the image-immanent analysis (Christmann 2008). We argue that for the analysis of images aimed at political mobilisation, a thorough examination of the image itself is as essential as the knowledge about the historical circumstances of its production. Thus, we analyse the context an image is set in as a further dimension of the image. Finally, we connect all dimensions of the image analysis within the framework of a three-tier frame analysis.

The first dimension of our analysis is the formal composition of a given image. This includes structural contrasts, parallelism and correspondence, and elements of an image the beholder usually perceives unconsciously, which nevertheless guide the gaze. The analysis aims at reflecting the dynamics of the inherent presuppositions that order the image as a whole. In his renowned study of Giotto's frescoes in the Arena, Imdahl (1996, 21) describes this image dimension as connections between the depicted body and space. He also refers to these connections as 'compositions' and describes them as those holistic systems in which the individual image values refer to the image format through size, form, direction and localisation in the image field and thus shape its organisational form (Imdahl 1996, 21). Semantic structures that are only accessible through the form include not only the compositional structure and the perspective but also the scenic dimension of the image.

In the second dimension, the analysis of the scenic elements, we look at the relations and modes of expression of the pictorial elements. Hereby we refer to Imdahl's concept of 'Szenische Choreographie' [scenic choreography] (1996, 19). Imdahl, who developed this iconic method on canonical works of art history, understood it as the scenic constellation of the figures acting or behaving in a certain way in their relationship to one another (19). We, on the other hand, broaden the concept of the scenic and explore how figurative and non-figurative pictorial elements are placed in the image. We analyse pictorial elements such as colour, typography, mimic, gestures, and other forms that induce expression, emotions and relations, thus generating pictorial relations and valuations. However, we do not include all pictorial elements that can be categorised in this way. Our analysis is a reconstructive synopsis of results that select, from the totality of all possible observations of the image, those that are relevant for the understanding of diagnostic, prognostic and motivational frames.

The third dimension of our analysis integrates the context of the image. In this step, we identify and explain motives and symbols used in the image. Referring to reception analysis in art history, Clifford Geertz (1983) emphasised the need for a 'social contextualisation' (12) to understand the making of meaning in images in contrast to assumptions about generalised rules according to which the images would be read. Providing information about the specific context in which the image was produced and distributed is part of this dimension. Taking this context into account, our approach borrows from visual discourse analysis which treats images as part of a broader stream of visually coded knowledge which, in turn, is part of a multimodal discourse (Clarke 2012; Hansen 2015; Maasen, Mayerhauser, and Renggli 2006).

After analysing the three dimensions of the image, we select and aggregate the observations according to their diagnostic, prognostic and motivational significance in order to identify respective frames.

Cases: two Posters from the Movements for Gay Liberation and against Nuclear Energy

Which images are we looking at and why? The research presented here is part of a larger project on the use of images or visual claims-making in German social movements. For the purpose of this article, we focus on two of our cases: the movement against nuclear power and the movement for gay rights.¹ Comparing these very different movements in a single national context can, in our view, shed new light on variations in the visual repertoires of social movements. Both movements were mobilising around the same time in Germany, but their conflict structures, the ways they addressed constituents, and their approaches to change-seeking were distinctive.

The early anti-nuclear movement emerging in the mid-1970s was characterised by its opposition to the Western German 'nuclear state.' This entailed a terrain of political conflict in which the expansion of the nuclear energy industry was strongly linked to the state's interest in a comprehensive nuclear power infrastructure. The movement developed as a broad alliance of the urban left and parts of the rural population in places where nuclear infrastructure was planned: Wyhl, Gorleben, Brokdorf, and others (Tompkins 2016). Each of these names became a shorthand for the trans-local resistance and also for a spiralling confrontation at the building sites. Because participation in the anti-nuclear movement was primarily directed at influencing the external political environment, scholars have classified it as an 'instrumental' movement (e.g. Kriesi et al. 1995).

The German gay liberation movement that was establishing at the same time is a sharply contrasting case, being 'the quintessential identity movement' (Bernstein 1997, 532). That

is, a 'subcultural movement' characterised by the use of actions and strategies oriented towards internal effects, towards personal change or identity affirmation, as opposed to influencing external ones (Kriesi et al. 1995, 83–87). The gay liberation movement aimed at 'normalising' homosexual desire and, in contrast to earlier associations of gay men, disrupting the heteronormative routine by going public. In large parts it was directed to defining gay identities and to provide gay people with an empowering and comforting environment.

The classifications of the anti-nuclear and gay rights movements as, respectively, instrumentally oriented and identity-oriented oversimplify their interactive, iterative qualities. Nonetheless, we think this distinction holds analytic utility for comparing forms of visual expression.

As preliminary investigations showed an abundance of images produced in these movements, we paralleled the sampling strategy of text-based framing studies using pivotal protest events as entry points. For this article, we restricted our comparison to events in the 1970s and early 1980s. Based on these events but allowing for some freedom to cover related movement activities, we searched for movement-produced images in social movement archives in Berlin, Hamburg, Lüchow, Siegen, Cologne, Freiburg, Munich and Münster. This search included printed materials, such as posters, leaflets, books, brochures, and periodicals for drawings, graphics, and photos. Photos were also examined to identify placards and flags, buttons and artefacts used during protest events. It is in this broad sense that we understand images and the range of visual framing in which social movements engage. For an analysis of media usage, we have supplemented our visual data with 15 guided interviews with social movement activists which serve as background information for the analysis we have done in this article.

To illustrate the typical visual claims-making of our two cases and our approach to analysing images, the next section presents the detailed analysis of one image produced by each movement. The selection of these images followed a three-step method. First, we reviewed the entire material to identify recurrent visual elements such as symbols and motives in our archive, which consists of 678 files for the anti-nuclear movement and 700 files for the gay liberation movement.² In an iterative process, we condensed the full spectrum of images to a selection of 20 images that were paradigmatic of the conflict and contained visual language central to the respective movement. Finally, we chose two images of the same kind: two posters from an early phase of each movement. Due to their functions and visual qualities, we consider movement posters to be a particularly appropriate object for a visual frame analysis. As a medium of 'flash communication', political posters transfer 'textually and/or pictorially highly condensed information' (Geise 2017, 13) with the aim of persuasion. For Western German social

movements in the 1970s and 80s, posters are arguably the most important visual genre to communicate their messages to both fellow activists and a larger public. Posters were used because they were easy to produce and reproduce, there were established networks to distribute posters and to put them up in public spaces, and, finally, posters helped reaching diverse audiences familiar with the genre (cf. Morrison & Isaac 2011, 67–69). In sum, posters are particularly fitting to explore diagnostic, prognostic and motivational frames of social movements at that time. After analysing the images in terms of their visual form and message referents, we turn to comparing

the visual framing of the anti-nuclear and gay liberation movements. We conclude by discussing the value of images for the study of framing in social movements.

ANALYSIS

Anti-nuclear Movement

Composition and Scenic Analysis

The poster is a three-by-four grid polyptych which is bordered by the place name 'Gorleben' and the epigram

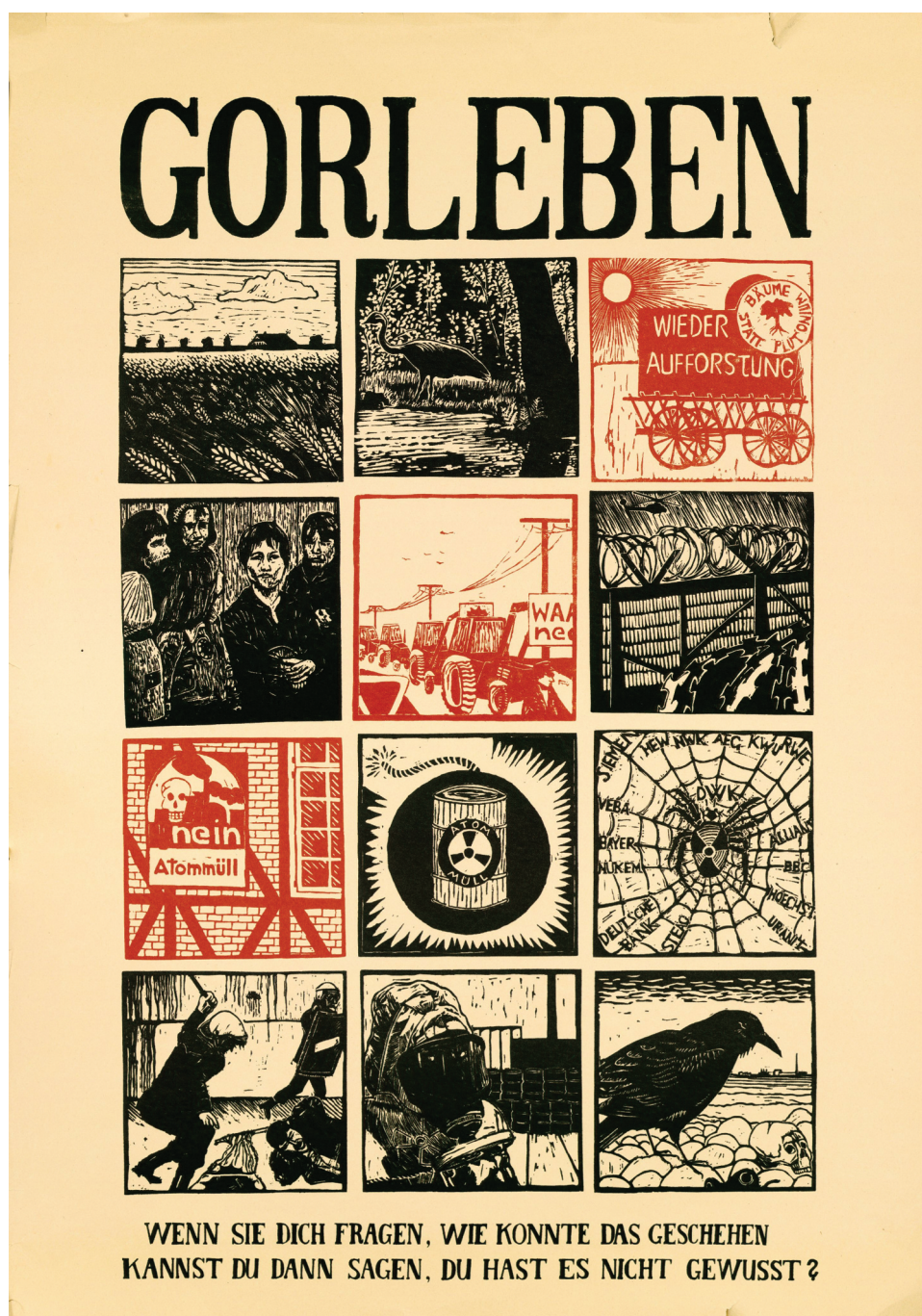


FIGURE 1. Mobilisation poster by Werkstatt Rixdorfer Drucke (1978), Gorleben Archiv e.V., 10-PLA-1-0044.

'Wenn sie dich fragen, wie konnte das geschehen, kannst du dann sagen, du hast es nicht gewusst?' [When they ask you: how could this happen? Will you be able to say, you did not know?]. The whitespace around these elements creates the impression of a frame that joins windows into twelve scenes. The composition is marked by the two-colour print with three diagonal pictures in red separating three black-and-white pictures to the top left from six images in the bottom right. While the diagonal creates a separation, there is also a horizontal link between pictures in each row. The link is created by a horizontal axis in the top row and the two bottom rows. The second row deviates from this pattern as the pictures are foreshortened with an orientation towards the right side of the poster. Moreover, the pictures are linked by the inclination or movement of elements (to the left in the first row, to the right in the last row) as well as by the continuation of lines and shapes.³

A grouping in content matches the diagonal, formal arrangement. For a detailed analysis of the scenic arrangement of the poster, the square picture elements are numbered from top left (1) to the bottom right (12).

Picture one shows a barley field, trees and a roof with horse-head gable adornments against the light backdrop of a bright sky with white clouds. Picture two takes the viewer to a wildlife scene featuring an egret that stands at a wooded shore. The black background contrasts with lucid leaves and reflections on the water which suggests the scene to be set at sunrise. Both pictures are connected by the inclination of central elements, the barley ears and the egret. The picture that completes the top left corner, number four, shows six young people, most likely children, against the backdrop of what appears to be a wooden fence. One person, right to the centre, is facing the viewer directly. Their look from a strikingly sunken face oscillates between blank and resolute. Except the person to the left, who can only be seen from behind, everybody in the picture looks at the central figure (Figure 1).

The diagonally arranged pictures in red depict scenes of protest in the rural landscape. Picture three captures a harvest waggon on a field or meadow under a gleaming sun in the top left corner. The wooden trailer carries protest signs facing the beholder and the opposite site. A rectangular sign that spans the full length of the waggon reads: 'Wiederaufforstung' [reforestation]. It is combined with a round sign that shows a tree circled by the slogan 'Bäume statt Plutonium' [Trees instead of plutonium]. Image five shows a procession of tractors, a power line along the road tops the scene. Protest signs are fixed to the shovel

loaders of the first two tractors. The sign in the foreground reads 'WAA nee' [no to the reprocessing centre]. The second sign is mostly covered. It shows the symbol of the anti-nuclear movement: a smiling sun. The protest in picture seven is expressed in a poster pasted to the wall of a half-timbered house. The poster shows the skyline of a reactor dome, a chimney emitting dark smoke and cooling towers. A giant skull fills the gap between them. Beneath the skyline there are two words: a white 'nein' [no] on a black background and the term 'Atommüll' [nuclear waste], written in black on a white background. The ascendent array of the squares creates a dynamic impression that links the pictures beyond the colouration.

Picture six is the first beyond the diagonal formed by the three pictures described above. It is dominated by a massive steel fence topped with razor wire. The silhouette of a helicopter crosses the scene in the darkly hatched sky. In the foreground, at the right bottom, a close-up view of rolled razor wire adds to the fortification. Picture eight shows a circle with a lit fuse attached to it. It is at the centre of a bright starburst. On top of the circle is a barrel with a circular sign. The radioactive alert symbol at the centre is surrounded by the words 'Atom Müll' [nuclear waste]. Picture nine has a spider sitting at the centre of its spiral-shaped net with the radioactive alert symbol on its abdomen. Threads of the spider web carry the names of German companies related to the nuclear industry. Picture ten shows a policeman in riot gear bent forward to strike a person with a truncheon who is lying on the ground. The victim, visible head to belt, seems to have dropped a flag with the smiling sun symbol that lies between the two. The person's arms cover the head, their eyes are closed, and their mouth is open. In the background, another police officer with a riot shield passes the scene to the right. The background is a light wall stained by a dark fluid running down on the left side. Picture eleven is dominated by the head and chest of a person in the foreground to the left. The figure wears a gas mask and a protective suit that carries the warning sign for radioactivity on the collarbone. Rail tracks lead to a structure with a chimney in the background, in front of which barrels are piled up in two rows. Picture twelve shows what could be the same structure as a very distant background under a sky filled with dark clouds. A corvid, shown in the foreground, walking on pale round rocks, dominates the picture. To the right, under the bird's beak, a human skull blends in with the rocks. The skull is mirrored not only on the poster in picture seven but also by the sunken face of the person in image four. The shape thus links all three groups of pictures.

Contextual attribution

The poster we are taking a closer look at was produced by the art collective *Werkstatt Rixdorfer Drucke* in 1978. It is part of the conflict focusing on nuclear facilities planned in the Wendland Region that is referenced in the portrayal of typical architecture and landscape in pictures one and two. In the municipality of Gorleben, German electric power companies were planning a reprocessing plant and a nuclear waste disposal site. When the political decision for the nuclear centre was made in February 1977, critics were able to build on previous protests against plans for a nuclear power plant close to the site. The square picture elements in red are a reminder of this history of protest. Picture five brings up the use of tractors as a means of protest. As early as 1972, tractors symbolised the rural character of anti-nuclear protests. The harvest waggon turned protest sign (p3) references another protest event. It was put up next to a wooden playing ground that was built during a mass demonstration on the site of the planned reprocessing plant in March 1977. The term '*Wiederaufforstung*' [reforestation] that is opposed to *Wiederaufbereitung* (mirrored in the slogans 'trees instead of plutonium' and 'no to the reprocessing plant' in picture five) is not only a play of words, it also brings to mind the collective planting of trees on the designated construction site.

Pictures six and ten represent the confrontations with the police which had been a central characteristic of the movement. Particularly after the occupation of the construction site for the nuclear plant in Wyhl (Southern Germany) was successful in 1975, attempts to copy this tactic ended in more and more militarised battles over construction sites. After the experience of Wyhl, authorities fortified the ground for nuclear plants, first in Brokdorf in 1976, then elsewhere. The police fought back activists, who tried to occupy the area, using batons, water cannons and chemical irritants.

Frame analysis

The complex imagery of the poster can be analysed along three groups of pictorial elements. The three square picture elements at the top left show the nature (p2), the cultural landscape (p1) and the people (p4), untainted by the nuclear hazard. They picture what is at stake, what anti-nuclear activists aim to protect against the menace illustrated in the opposite area of the polyptych. The six pictures in the lower right define a conglomerate of the capitalist drive for profit and state power as the driving force behind the nuclear programme. They sum up the most important diagnostic sub-frames present in the movement: Nuclear infrastructure is shielded off from the public (p6) and pushed through with repressive force (p10). It is driven by a tightly knit corporate network that is sinister and dangerous as far as the spider is associated with these traits

(p9). Both the spider and its web have a history of being linked to the conspiracy of hidden circles, ultimately marked as Jewish (Kirschen 2015). The protagonists of nuclear technology continue their projects despite the dangers attached to it. Nuclear waste is most bluntly characterised as beyond control, a bomb that is about to go off (p8). The consequences are portrayed as catastrophic: The corvid, commonly associated with death, adds to the disturbing impression left by the skull that lies out in the open (p12). The bird roams a dystopian landscape that seems to be uninhabitable for humans. In a nutshell, the *diagnostic frame* conveyed in the poster is: *Capitalist greed and state actors have joined forces to push through a life-threatening technology that will ultimately result in a catastrophe.*

The typical regional traits of the scenes, wide and fertile fields, the low German house (p1) as well as the marsh at the river Elbe (p2) are linked to the people, who are threatened. At the same time, their resolve appears to be part of the solution (p4). The attachment to the region is a key motivational frame to draw support to the anti-nuclear movement. This connection also comes to the fore in the three pictures in red. They connect regional, agrarian characteristics with a culture of resistance by reviving images from past protests. The visual reminder of powerful events and the amalgamation of the home country and anti-nuclear resistance make it more compelling for locals to join the movement. Charging the toponym 'Gorleben' with this conflict, the poster also attracts adherents from more distant places to a vibrant community in what is presented as a key arena to confront the 'nuclear state'. The arrangement of the images can be read as a narrative central to the anti-nuclear movement: What stands between the nuclear disaster on the one side and the goods to be protected is the engagement of caring and determined people (p3, p5, and p7). Protest is literally imagined as the red line between the menace of the 'nuclear state' and the homeland. The *prognostic frame* in the poster can thus be read as: *Recent protests, rooted in this region, have shown that the intact nature and our local culture can be saved by confronting the hazard of the nuclear state.*

The epitaph '*Wenn sie dich fragen, wie konnte das geschehen, kannst du dann sagen, du hast es nicht gewusst?*' [When they ask you: how could this happen? Will you be able to say, you did not know?] also suggests a backward reading of the pictures. It takes the viewer to a dark forlorn future and, in a performative turn, asks what they are willing to do to prevent what they are seeing on the poster from happening. Zooming in, the narrative is repeated in the skull that can be found in the dystopian picture twelve and as a warning on the poster in picture seven. It can also be read in the sunken face of the boy (p4) and the protester who was knocked to the ground (p12). The drastic style is a constitutive feature of the imagery used in the anti-

nuclear movement. It is supported by the technique of the woodcut that highlights contrasts. This narrative is rendered even more dramatic by the subtle allusion to the recent German past. The rails leading to the nuclear facility echo the rails leading to Nazi extinction camps. Also, the fact that stones on picture twelve have the same shape and size as the skull evokes the imagery of the industrialised murder of European Jews. This impression is substantiated by the epigram. It can be read as a reference to the widespread illusion that the Holocaust took place without most of the German

people knowing. The sense of moral obligation and urgency lead to the *motivational framing* of the poster: *Who chooses not to get active against the reprocessing plant is complicit in the devastations to come.*

Gay Liberation Movement

Composition and Scenic Analysis

The composition of the poster can be divided into an upper and a lower half that contrast in terms of visual language. While the lower half is characterised by



FIGURE 2. Mobilisation poster by Homosexuelle Aktion Westberlin (1975), photographer: Ludwig Reinhold Hilgering, Schwules Museum Berlin, Sch-B-132.

a horizontal composition, three-dimensionality, depth, and a variety of visual elements, the upper half is shaped by a two-dimensional, strictly central and vertical composition that consists of few visual elements on a green background. The upper half is dominated by a centred pink triangle and lettering. Divided into four lines, it reads: 'Wir – sind – schwul – und steh'n dazu' [We – are – gay – and stand by it].⁴ The word 'gay' is placed at the base of the triangle, whose tip points to the horizontal line 'und steh'n dazu'. This composition creates a centre of gravity along the vertical, which runs along the words 'wir', 'sind', the triangular sign with the letter 'W' and the pivot leg of the person holding it.

The lower half of the image is characterised by the dynamics of a variety of visual elements, a strong horizontal pull and the unified appearance of the group of six men standing in the front. This impression is underlined by the close vertical lines of the legs and the slightly ascending horizontal marked by the tables from the very left to the very right. The two-point-perspective, with an emphasis on the right vanishing point outside the picture, adds to the compact character of the formation and creates a stage-like impression. Underlining this effect, the group is framed by two horizontal arrangements. The first is the horizontal, albeit irregular, line of the triangular signs held by the men. Corresponding with this horizontal line, the two-line information text⁵ rounds off the group at the bottom (Figure 2).

A look at the scenic arrangement of the image provides us with further insights into the visualisation of the group. The men stand relatively close together so that only six at the front who face the viewer in one line are visible from head-to-toe. Their facial expression varies from cheerful to serious. They are dressed casually in jeans, dark-coloured trousers, t-shirts and shirts. The people in the background fill the space between the six men and to either side of them, thus creating a notion of density within the group.

Further central elements of the image are the pink triangular signs presented by the group and their particular typography. Each of the six men in the front holds the base of the triangle below their neck or chin so that their faces and thus their individuality are highlighted. The only exception is the man whose face is covered by the 'H'-triangle. That man introduces yet another irregularity to the horizontal line and thereby dynamises the space occupied by the group. With the exception of the man who carries the letter 'L' at the very right, the tips of the pink triangles are covered by hands and thus seem visually 'defused'. The letters on

the triangles combined read 'schwul' [gay]. The letters are without colour filling, they are contoured and handwritten. The nonchalant inexactness and individuality of the handwriting contrasts the dense, harsh and mechanical technicity of the word 'schwul' in the pink triangle at the top of the poster. The sans serif machine typography at the top has a clearly vertical trait. The distance between each letter is narrow, which creates a dense, strict visuality. The different visual interpretation of the upper and lower triangles forms the central contrast in the picture. It is also constructed by the colour scheme, which co-structures the composition. In this respect, the triangles stand out from the rest of the picture, which is dyed dark green. The rich pink makes them stick out in the picture, reinforced by the dark green as a contrasting colour.

Contextual Attribution

The poster was produced by the gay liberation group *Homosexual Action West Berlin* (HAW) that was founded in August 1971. An active HAW member recalls that the poster was hung up in gay bars and in university premises in Berlin (personal communication, December 2018). The introduction and distribution of the pink triangle as a symbol of gay liberation can be traced back to HAW activities.

The *Schwules Museum* dates the poster at hand to 1975 with reservation. It is, however, certain, that the lower half of the poster depicts a scene in front of a HAW's information stand at the *Kurfürstendamm* Boulevard in Berlin. According to the *Schwules Museum*, the photograph was taken during a meeting at Pentecost in 1974. Put in the context of historical documents, it could also plausibly be dated to 1975. Pentecostal meetings were held annually by HAW from 1972 onwards and included information stands, demonstrations and sometimes other activities, such as theatrical performances. The performance on the poster is peculiar in two ways. Firstly, according to Holy (2017), the term 'schwul' was still a 'feared slur' (42) in the 1970s. Secondly, the appropriation of the pink triangle was an inscription in a history of victimhood, referring to the time of National Socialism.

The symbol of the pink triangle goes back to the National Socialists who used it to mark male homosexual inmates in concentration camps. The impulse to use the pink triangle, came from a controversy in the context of a Pentecostal meeting in 1973. The conflict, known as '*Tuntenstreit*' [drag queens' dispute], was triggered by the appearance of drag queens from Italy and France at the first

homosexual demonstration in West Berlin. While parts of the gay community rejected their performance as they would confirm prejudices against homosexuals and undermine socialist goals (Holy 2017, 51 ff.), others supported their unadapted appearance. The dispute led to the formation of a 'Feministengruppe' [feminist group] within HAW, who supported the drag queens. In the wake of the dispute over gay visibility, this group advocated for the introduction of the pink triangle as a symbol for HAW and homosexuals across Western Germany. Guided by the idea that 'the pink triangle will force every gay individually and HAW as an organisation to show their colours' (HAW Feministengruppe 1973, 22), they argued for a visual marker specific to gay liberation.

After the proposal of the 'Feministengruppe' was initially rejected by the HAW plenum in 1973, the pink triangle was presented as the official HAW sign in 1975 (Egmont and Jochen 1976, 67; Holy 2017, 56). It can therefore be assumed that the poster was produced and distributed from 1975 onwards.

Frame Analysis

As the compositional and scenic analysis has made clear, the central tension on the poster revolves around the juxtaposition of two forms of representation of the pink triangle. The contextual attribution allows for the visual significance of the symbol on a political and historical level. This is key to identifying the *diagnostic frame* conveyed in the poster. The diagnosis works on several levels: The central pink triangle in the upper half symbolically condenses the National Socialist practice of criminalising homosexuals. In a centralised and strict composition that comes across as dominant, sharp and threatening, the triangle floats over the heads of the group. The word 'gay' with all the pejorative load implied at the time the poster was produced is placed in the symbol in a jammed, narrow typography. This design enables the viewer to correctly decipher the symbol and to emphasise its repressive character. The reference to the past is juxtaposed to the present in two ways: On the one hand, the words 'Wir sind' [we are] in present tense, just above the triangle, imply a present actor in first person plural. On the other hand, the symbol connects to the present through young, individually and contemporary dressed persons holding the same triangle with the same word. Those men represent the 'we' referred to in the upper half. This presence of the past in the present can be summarised as the following *diagnostic frame*: *The stigmatisation*

and persecution of homosexuals that the Nazis pursued is continuing today.

The poster also provides a visually constructed solution to the problem. It is the line framed along the top beam of the pink triangle in the upper half of the picture. Like an arrow, the triangle points to the concluding phrase 'und steh'n dazu' [and stand by it]. The distance between this part of the sentence and the previous one creates a visual punch line and a distance to the previous part of the sentence in terms of its content: The 'Wir sind schwul' [We are gay] is followed by an affirmative 'und steh'n dazu' [and stand by it]. In German, the word 'stehen' [stand] was shortened by leaving out the unstressed letter 'e' and replacing it with an apostrophe. This is a form of shortening that is used in everyday language and gives the phrase a defiant and unadapted tone. The people in the lower half of the picture appear as the illustration of these words. They are represented in a composition that visually challenges the structure of the upper part of the picture. The men stand closely together in a public space, conveying a sense of solidarity; they are loud (open mouths) and exposed (shadows on the floor), thus making gays a social reality. Moreover, the activists literally put 'hands on' the pink triangles. By holding them casually and associating them with individuality (handwritten lettering) they reinterpret the pink triangle in a way that highlights their youthfulness and communality. This image forms a *prognostic frame*: *If we make our homosexuality public collectively, we can break the prevalence of discrimination and experience our individuality in a solidary community.*

This *prognostic frame* is closely linked to the mobilisation of the viewer to take action. In order to grasp how and which action is motivated, it is first of all important to identify the addressees of this poster. The information at the bottom of the poster indicates that it is linked to the offer to become part of the group. However, the poster also restricts the category of 'homosexuals' as a target group. The poster represents male homosexuals of a young generation who do not adapt to the social conventions, but rather demand their place in society in a self-assertive affirmation of difference. Consequently, female, older and male homosexuals who sought to blend in are not addressed.

The addressees of the poster are invited to a mimetic action. They are challenged to 'stand by' being homosexual. The poster thereby refers exclusively to actions of making oneself public. The stage-like nature of the performance underscores the exposed, person-focused aspect of this form of public display. The pink

triangle conveys the radical stance of this performance. Using the symbol means to be recognisable as a homosexual and to condemn discrimination. In other words, whoever accepts being gay and stands by himself is, according to this poster, someone who shows this publicly in an activist context. The semantic constriction and linking of standing-by-it with making-it-public, politicises the private. It polarises it in an either-or-semantic, which creates pressure in the targeted observer to join the depicted. The 'rationale for action' (Snow and Benford 1988, 202) that is constructed along this *motivational frame* is, therefore, identified in this manner: *A self-confident, modern homosexual man wears the pink triangle in public, thus making himself recognisable as a homosexual.*

CONCLUSIONS

The reconstruction of interpretative frames in two posters of the movements against nuclear energy and for gay liberation has shown the richness and the peculiarity of images as carriers of meaning. At the same time, the analysis has highlighted the mobilising potential of the poster as the key genre of social movements in the 1970s and 80s. The visual frames in the posters expose the differences in the conflict structure of each movement and the motivational appeal to the onlooker. As a movement that focuses on the situation of a stigmatised group, providing a safe space in the community is key to the gay liberation movement. By standing in the public side-by-side, activists seek remedy for a hostile environment and the personal need to live in accordance with non-heteronormative desire. The poster provides a visual model for acknowledging a gay identity. It offers to collectivise individual processes and emotions connected to them by going public and making the private political.

The anti-nuclear movement, by contrast, is built on a different notion of identity. On the one hand, it encompasses non-human nature and regional culture as what nurtures activists and what is to be protected. On the other hand, identity forms by taking sides. Those who are willing to confront the nuclear state are promised to become part of a diverse community of activists.

In a performative combination of text and image, prognostic and motivational frames, both posters create a threshold situation. Onlookers are urged to make a decision: are they part of the respective community? Or do they keep at arm-length from the conflict? The anti-nuclear poster provides a look ahead into the future and options to take action, thus creating an intrinsic urge to become part of the movement. The same is true for the poster by HAW: addressing the gay

community, it shows activists who have taken the step to go public. This step is provided as the solution to both a personal crisis and a social injustice.

Differences in the conflict structure are also visible in the ways in which repression appears in both posters. The gay liberation movement emerges as state repression subsides. Nonetheless, the cultural repression is a significant issue for which the pink triangle represents a symbol. The anti-nuclear movement, in comparison, is shaped by the confrontation of activists on the one side and corporate and state actors on the other side. State repression by police and courts are part and parcel of the anti-nuclear imagery. Both movements, however, display community as a way to confront repression.

The analysis presented here showcases the value of combining a thorough image analysis borrowed from art history and a context-sensitive reading of the image inspired by sociological approaches to visual discourse. Whereas image analysis provides tools to understand the immanent dynamic of a given image, visual sociology helps grasping the social background in which the image is produced and read. This context knowledge is crucial when looking at the public, visual communication of a conflict. This method leads the way to reconstructing meaning beyond common sense plausibility – an implicit approach in many studies of social movement images. The fine-grained analysis of the formal structure of an image is suited to uncover social movement frames as soon as it is combined with the context to situate time- and space-specific knowledge. This method is suited to do justice to the consecutive process of framing that involves not only the selection and presentation of information but also the reading established in a specific historical setting.

NOTES

- [1] The research project 'Images of Indignation. Amateur Practices of Visualising Protest' (2017-2020) was led by Prof. Dr. Susanne Regener and Dr. Simon Teune. In a comparative approach, the project aimed at understanding the use of images in the German anti-nuclear, gay rights, and *völkisch* movement.
- [2] The data may consist of multi-page scans of journals or capture several images (such as posters, flags, and buttons on the photography of the protest event). Moreover, images reappear in different settings. One motivational statement may appear on a sticker or a postcard, and we find variations of motivational framings on several

posters. As a result, it is not possible to provide a final total number of images collected in the archives.

- [3] For instance, the third row contains circular forms, in the bottom row the horizontal shape of the wall continues in the building, which, in turn, is matched by the dark body of the corvid.
- [4] The dash marks a line break.
- [5] 'Homosexual Action West Berlin/1 Berlin Kulmerstraße 20a, 3. Yard IV, Phone: 2 153 742/Open Meeting Friday and Saturday evenings· Newcomers' coffee Sundays 3.00 p.m.'

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