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# Transnational Political Education: The German Political Foundations in Mexico

*Christel Adick and Gustavo Emmerich\**

## Introduction

Cross-border organisations that hold offices, staff and operations in several nations are getting under deeper scrutiny within the field of transnational studies. According to one of the leading scholars in the field of transnational studies, Ludger Pries, this kind of organisations build up *transnational spaces* of their own that go beyond the traditional national spaces defined by States' borders. Pries also sustains that these organisations can be characterised by two dimensions defining their configuration: distribution of resources, and coordination – in both cases between headquarters at their home country and branches abroad. Another insight from Pries is that cross-border organisations can constitute a link between the micro-level of sociological analysis – the individual – and the macro-level of political analysis the nation-State.

These theoretical assumptions are going to be tested in this chapter with particular reference to a special kind of cross-border organisations, the German political foundations. The article will focus on five political foundations headquartered in Germany and having branches in Mexico: the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) affiliated to the Social-Democratic Party dates back to 1925; the Friedrich Naumann Stiftung (FNS) founded in 1958 and affiliated to the Liberal Democratic Party; the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS), founded in 1964 and affiliated to the Christian Democratic Union; the Heinrich Böll Stiftung (HBS), which grew out of three smaller foundations in 1997, is affiliated to the Greens (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen); and the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (RLS), founded in 1999 and affiliated to The Left.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Hanns Seidel Stiftung (HSS), founded in 1967 and affiliated to the Bavarian Christian Social Union, has no office in Mexico and therefore will not be the object of analysis here.

In a broad sense the overall mission of all the German political foundations is »political education«, both in Germany and abroad. When fulfilled outside Germany, this mission is considered as part of the cooperation for democratic development sponsored by the developed countries; particularly, within the European Union context, it takes the forms of democracy assistance or of democracy in development (Emmerich 2009).

In our article, we will describe and analyse the German political foundations and their educational activities in Mexico in the context of discussions on transnationalism, transnational education, and formal and non-formal education. In its first part we give an overview on the specific nature of the German political foundations, considering especially their international work, and how they are treated in research, including research in transnationalism. The second part will define transnational education and introduce the foundations' mission of overseas political education in a broad sense. In the third part, the particular formal and non-formal educational activities of each of the foundations' branches in Mexico will be described and compared.

The article is based on a literature review and the analysis of the websites and documents of the German political foundations, especially pertaining to their headquarters in Germany and their offices in Mexico. Included are insights from expert interviews with several representatives of these organisations in Germany and in Mexico,<sup>2</sup> which were conducted in the years 2011 and 2012 as part of an ongoing international research project.<sup>3</sup> We expect the article would provide information on and assess

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2 Altogether 15 interviews were held with various representatives of those five foundations which have offices in Mexico. The interviews were conducted at the headquarters of each foundation as well as at its branch office in Mexico, except for the RLS, where no interview at the Mexican office was granted to the authors of this article. For reasons of anonymity, quotes from the interviews are only accorded to the organisations, but do not include the names or hints as to the position of the interviewees. Evidence was also gathered from the internet sources of the foundations, by consulting their respective German headquarter's as well as their Mexican branch websites, which are referenced in the text as listed at the end of this article.

3 We appreciate the funding of the research projects »Cross-border Personnel Mobility between Mexico and Germany – Changing Patterns of Organisational Coordination« by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) and »Virtualization of cross border labor mobility« by Mexico's Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología (CONACyT). Project partners include Ludger Pries and Christel Adick from the Ruhr-University Bochum in

what the German political foundations do not only in Mexico but generally speaking out of Germany.

## The German Political Foundations

Although political foundations do exist in many countries today, it seems that the German Political Foundations originated first and are thus somehow unique. This will be discussed in the first place. Their position in Mexico and the border crossing activities of the foundations are highlighted afterwards, before the focus will be directed to them as objects of research in transnational political education.

### The Uniqueness of the German Political Foundations

According to Bartsch (2001: 211f.) the uniqueness of the German political foundations lies in »their ambivalent nature as non-governmental, state-funded and party-related organizations«. Formally the German political foundations belong to the category of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as well as to the non-profit sector. In Germany they all operate under the status of a registered association (*eingetragener Verein*; e.V.); only the FNS is a real foundation by law (*Stiftung*) (Dakowska 2005: fn 1; Pogorelskaja 2009: 295, fn 8). In all cases, however, it is clear that they are restricted from making any profits whatsoever. Yet, the political foundations are almost entirely financed by the state, which leads to their classification as QUANGOs (quasi-NGOs). Their budgets mainly stem from the German Federal ministries of Economic Cooperation and Development (*Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung*, BMZ) and the Interior (*Bundesministerium des Inneren*; BMI), and the Foreign Office (*Auswärtiges Amt*, AA).

Their heavy dependence on the BMZ and the AA has resulted in calling them an »auxiliary support for the Federal Government's foreign policy« (Bartsch 2001: 206), or as Nuscheler (1993) puts it in the title of his article: as »think tanks and diplomatic assistant troops« (*Denkfabriken und diploma-*

*tische Hilfstruppen*). They can also be considered as an expression of »soft power«, as has been done by former Germany's president Roman Herzog (KAF 2009: 9). The German political foundations seem to value their role as think tanks, for example the FES boasts in its annual report for 2010 of having been ranked number 10 from 50 organisations worldwide (excluding US-organisations) by a study of the University of Pennsylvania (FES 2011: 9). Considering the latest ranking of the respective research group from the International Relations Program of the University of Pennsylvania on »Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program« for the year 2011 (McGann 2012), the following results in respect of all the German political foundations can be highlighted: Out of N=5,329 think tanks worldwide, among them N=194 from Germany, which were ranked in various categories, the category »best party affiliated think tanks« includes all of the German political foundations: KAS (1<sup>st</sup>), FES (2<sup>nd</sup>), HBS (3<sup>rd</sup>), FNS (6<sup>th</sup>), HSS (8<sup>th</sup>) and RLF (21<sup>st</sup>) (ibid.: 67). In the Top Fifty (non-US) think tanks worldwide the following of them are listed: FES (11<sup>th</sup>), KAS (19<sup>th</sup>), FNS 50<sup>th</sup>) (ibid.: 34f.).

The uniqueness of the German political foundations lies, not least, in their distinct relation to a particular political party. Every political party which is at present elected into the German Parliament has its own foundation, which adheres to the philosophy of the party and holds regular contacts to it, but which, however, is legally and financially autonomous. At times this has provoked the criticism of a *self-service* system, because in fact the political parties as members of the parliament decide on the state financing of *their* foundations (Bartsch 1998: 186, fn 2). Their relative autonomy also opens the way to cooperate with like-minded political parties overseas, where they are, however, supposed neither to intervene overtly in favour of a particular political party nor into national political debates.

The German model of party-related political foundations has been adopted in other nations, at times with explicit support from the German sides (Bartsch 2001: 218f, fn 21), to name just a few examples such as the US-based National Endowment for Democracy, the French Fondation Jean-Jaurès and Fondation Robert Schumann, and the Fundación Pablo Iglesias, the Fundación Humanismo y Democracia and the Fundación Cánovas del Castillo in Spain. »As far as size and funding are concerned, however, none of these organizations comes close to their German counterparts.« (ibid.: 219) The German political foundations are also the most influential organisations in the European Network of Political Foundations

(ENOP), a network of similar organisations in Europe, which has been established not long ago (Kuhn 2011: 294).

### The German Political Foundations in Mexico

In Mexico, several political foundations operate, some of Mexican origin and some others coming from abroad, among them the German ones discussed here.<sup>4</sup> All the five German political foundations that operate in Mexico share some common traits, particularly in respect to organisational matters:

First, all operate under the figure of a *civil association* constituted under Mexican law. Civil associations are not-for profit organisations constituted by several individuals – usually nationals, but under special permission they can be foreign nationals- to pursue a common goal as a »moral person«, meaning a non-physical juridical person. Their main object shall not be primordially economical or of a political partisan nature, but academic, scientific, cultural, educational, artistic, sporting, etc.; they hold full legal standing and therefore can own property, obtain income, pay salaries,

<sup>4</sup> The most important ones stem from Mexico's national (as opposed to state) political parties. Mexico's national political parties are obliged by law to »sustain, at least, one centre for political formation« (COFIPE, Art. 38-1-i). Besides that, they must devote three percent of the huge public funding they receive to »political education and training, socioeconomical and political research, as well as publishing tasks« (COFIPE, art. 78-I). Therefore, the main national parties have formed foundations of their own -but legally independent from them- to fulfill these mandates. In this way, PAN has three linked foundations, all of them created in the 1990s: »Rafael Preciado Hernández«, the closest one to the PAN national directing body; »Humanismo político«, linked to the PAN fraction at the Senate; and »Miguel Estrada Inurbides«, linked to the PAN fraction at the House of Representatives. The PRI has the foundation »Colosio« (created under a different name in the 1980s) and the »Instituto de Formación y Capacitación Política« (ICADEP). On its part, PRD has the »Instituto de Estudios de la Revolución Democrática« (IERD) as its main foundation, but also the »Foundation for Democracy« linked to the party's founder Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas. PT has the »Lázaro Cárdenas del Río« Foundation.

Additionally, two USA-based political foundations are present in Mexico: the National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute, respectively linked to the Democratic Party and the Republican Party in the USA. Their presence and activities keep a low profile in comparison to the German political foundations; their main local counterparts seem to be the National Action Party (PAN) and the foundations linked to it.

make expenditures, and usually receive donations from within the country and/or from abroad (political parties, trade unions, charitable organisations and churches organise themselves under other juridical figures).

Second, they all are almost entirely financed from Germany, being virtually non-existent sources of local income like local donations, the selling of books or reports, or the charging of fees for attending their functions. Neither Mexico's government nor its political parties contribute financially to them.

Third, each foundation has an envoy, a German citizen hired in Germany under German law and making a career at his or her respective foundation, as its director in Mexico. Occasionally, a second German citizen, that can be also an envoy or someone already residing in Mexico and hired under Mexican law, can act as an assistant director. The remaining staff, making for a total of between half a dozen and an entire dozen at each foundation, is local personnel hired under Mexican laws and with Mexico-scaled salaries; occasionally, some of them are not citizens of Mexico but of other Latin American countries.

Fourth, all of them have single-family houses turned into offices as their seat in Mexico City. These converted houses are enough to lodge their small staff and can easily admit a limited number of visitors for conferences, seminars, etc.

Fifth, the directing of each foundation's branch in Mexico remains firmly in German hands, and is coordinated with the respective foundation headquarters in Germany; however, the particular strength and the uni- or bi-directional flowing of such coordination depends in degree on each foundation's cross-border organisational structure. Additionally, in order to operate locally in an effective way each branch needs local counterparts and local staff, these can have a strong degree of influence in the decision-making process.

The need for local counterparts can be considered a sixth commonality between all the German political foundations in Mexico. The foundations seldom organize an event or publish something on their own, preferring rather have counterparts involved in their efforts, since those counterparts are at the same time their main linkage to the local milieu as well as the potential spreaders of their message.

A seventh common trait derives from the fact that all the German-run institutions in Mexico, such as the DAAD (i.e. the German Academic Exchange Service), the German Foreign Schools and CAMEXA (i.e. the

German-Mexican Chamber of Commerce), meet frequently and act in a coordinated way under the auspices of the German embassy. Even the local salaries they pay are defined jointly with these other German institutions.

To end with this description of commonalities among the German political foundations in Mexico, it is important to mention that none of them boasts any links to the Mexican federal, state or municipal governments and/or agencies, and that they do not directly support any local political party. Their separation from the local governments is in part due to Mexico's traditional nationalism making such an eventual linkage politically inconvenient for both parts, and in part to the fact of Mexico not being any longer a recipient of foreign aid making the funds at hand of the German foundations' local branches truly irrelevant when compared to the governments' budget. Respecting political parties, German law forbids the foundations giving money to political parties both in Germany and abroad, and Mexican law forbids any financing or intromission from abroad in its political parties and/or electoral campaigns. Mexican law only allows national political parties

«to establish relations with foreign political parties or organisations, if and only if at every moment its absolute political and economic independence, as well as unrestricted respect to the integrity and sovereignty of the Mexican State and its organs of government are maintained» (COFIPE 2012: art. 36–1–i).

### Research on the German Political Foundations' Cross-border Activities

The creation of the above-named political foundations targeted the enhancement of democracy; in reaction to the Hitler-regime and the Second World War the idea was to increase the political enlightenment among the post-war German population. Later on these foundations widened their focus to include international fields of action and expanded with offices overseas. Today their work abroad (*Auslandsarbeit*) excels their activities in Germany (*Inlandsarbeit*). All of them have offices overseas; the KAS and the FES are practically known all around the world (Pogorelskaja 2009: 294f.).

The *Auslandsarbeit* of the foundations began in the 1960's in Africa, Asia and Latin America, i.e. in the so-called developing countries, where they ventured to support political parties, trade unions, civil society

organizations, journalists, scientists and others in their strife for democracy, participation and lawful statesmanship.<sup>5</sup> This led to a steady involvement into the German foreign policy and into the newly emerging development (aid) policy of Germany, which is reflected in the dependence from financing by the BMZ (Pogorelskaja 2002: 20f.). Although acting as autonomous bodies, the foundations are routinely conferencing with the BMZ, the AA, and also with the German embassies in the countries in which they have their offices, which shows their embeddedness into the official German policies (ibid.: 36f.). It has been debated if the interventions of the foundations should be seen as partnership or rather as external imposition on the countries where they operate (ibid.: 37f.).

Research on the German political foundations is rather scarce. Apart from publications which stem from the organisations themselves, like reports of varying kinds, many publications rest descriptive and compile synoptic views without any outspokenly empirical research design, be it qualitative, quantitative or a mixed methods approach. Some of them contain a good overview and analysis on the basis of documents from the foundations, but because of time elapsed would need to be followed up to the present situation. For example, Wagner (1994) discusses the international activities of all of the then existing foundations in Latin America. In his article he also presents a concise summary of the arguments in favour and counter to the *Auslandsarbeit* of the foundations, including the development of finances allocated to them (from 1962–1992; ibid.: 173, tab. 1), which would need updating.

Other authors discuss the international activities of just one or two organisations. The FES and the KAS in Latin America (with a case study on Venezuela) is analysed in a book (Kress 1985); whereas a short article presents the FES in Central America (Maihhold 1996). Other publications, like the one of Von Hofmann/Vinnai/Benzing (2010), summarise the work of the FES in various countries, in this case Indonesia, Tanzania and Central America, since the 1960s. Thompson (1994), when studying Argentinean think tanks, describes how FES, KAS and FNS financially supported some of them which they considered close to their own ideological positions.

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<sup>5</sup> The German political foundations' presence in Europe and in North-America in order to foster inter-European and transatlantic cooperation will not be considered in this article.

Among newer publications the empirical research of Egger (2007) stands out for applying a mixed methods approach including longitudinal analyses, interviews and participant observations. In her dissertation the author focuses on the FES in Mexico (*ibid.*: 248–268) as an example for long-established experiences in the *Auslandsarbeit* of this foundation, from which the more recent expansion into another country – Poland – might have profited. The comparison of the cases of Mexico and Poland serves her main research perspective, if any organisational learning processes in the FES have taken place from experiences in one country that might be transported and adapted in another one. Such learning might result from the rotational mobility of expatriates and from conferences which cut across different departments of the organisation, which are common practices in the FES (but also elsewhere).

Of particular interest is the graduation monograph written by Fernández Rocha (2009) analysing the role of KAS in Colombia. She sees the German political foundations as very much linked to the policies sustained by Germany's AA and as an expression of the latter's soft power and calls the KAS

«an organization that permeates international relations by crossing states' borders with some singular characteristics: generating synergies for the attainment of common ends, opening doors for the development of bilateral relations, falling into the shaping of Colombia's image before German instances, and building up platforms for fostering and generating mutual trust» (*ibid.*: 3).

Ernst Hillebrand and Uwe Optenhögel (2001), authors working for FES, coincide substantially with the previous author by saying that globalisation requires

«applying a range of instruments that goes far beyond from traditional diplomacy and its tools. The German political foundations are part of that variety of instruments, and one of the most interesting all over the world for a foreign policy based on civil society's influence.»

On her part, Susanne Gratius (n.d.) examines the role of democratic assistance in Venezuela, including KAS and FES. According to the author, KAS is supporting political parties that oppose Hugo Chávez's government; and KAS, after a short period of collaborating with such government, is now distanced from it and devoted to political coaching, public debates on Venezuela's future, and governance and public management (*ibid.*: 7–8).

On the basis of field observations and expert interviews with representatives of KAS and FES in Nigeria, Perouse de Montclos (2012) notes that these foundations are (still) present in Nigeria, even though their success in imparting principles of good governance is doubtful due to lack of evaluations or empirical research. He concludes that the proclaimed democratising mission of the foundations and their efficiency by no means can explain their presence in a foreign country, but instead their primordial aim focuses »at relaying the diplomatic interests of their home country. German political foundations play the role of »parallel« embassies, which are more flexible than accredited diplomats« (ibid.: 241).

### German Political Foundations and Transnationalism

Since about the last decade, German Political Foundations have occasionally been discussed with references to transnationalism. These (few) publications deal with the concept of transnationalism in a rather general and broad way, not specifying these organisations as distinctly *transnational* in comparison to other types of border crossing organisations.

Scott (1999) analyses the role of political foundations and think-tanks in promoting democracy across borders. In his survey, he also includes the German political foundations, which he analyses as prominent players in the »international politics of democratization« (Scott 1999: 146). Referring to works of Rosenau and Sikkink, the author characterises political foundations (and think-tanks) as transnational phenomena, because »these actors are part of a growing *transnational democracy issue network* woven from their webs of interaction« (ibid.: 147; italics in the original). In summary, he concludes: »As part of this transnational issue network, political foundations and think-tanks straddle the line between states and non-state actors and blur traditional distinctions between domestic and international actors« (ibid.: 164).

According to Bartsch (2001), the German political foundations are »Linking the Worlds of Foreign Policy and Transnationalism«. Whereas governmental activities are bound to the official foreign policy and restricted to instruments of political diplomacy, these foundations have access to other non-state actors in their international activities. Unfortunately, Bartsch does not make any further references to theoretical debates on transnationalism.

Several publications by Dakowska focus party affiliated foundations as transnational actors in the European Union. In one of her articles the author takes the example of Poland joining the EU and analyses the influences of the KAS and the FES in this process (Dakowska 2002). She also reminds readers of the fact that the German political foundations do not only have offices abroad, such as in Poland, but also an official representation at the EU in Brussels (ibid.: 286). In another article (Dakowska 2005), she argues that studies on the process of EU enlargement are mostly government-centred or restricted to intergovernmental research perspectives. Publications would thus largely exclude transnational actors such as the German political foundations and others, which act across borders and for example influence the transformation and integration of newcomers into the EU. The German political foundations appear as very specific transnational actors, which in this case mediate transnational cooperation between national parties and the European party federations in the EU. In yet another study (Dakowska 2009), this line of argumentation is continued by focusing on the general influences of *national* political party foundations on the formation of European *transnational* party federations, which are affiliated to the established party federations in the European Parliament. For instance, the Centre for European Studies is the transnational political foundation of the European People's Party, or the Foundation for European Progressive Studies being aligned to the Party of European Socialists (ibid.: 214, table 1). Considering this process of proliferation of political party organisations from the national to the transnational level she concludes:

»The German political foundations are interesting case studies for the analysis of transnational networks and informal politics in Europe. Their involvement in the transnational promotion of democracy and their resources are unparalleled in most other European foundations.« (ibid.: 205)

This is probably due to the fact, that »the Federal Republic of Germany has the longest tradition of publicly financed associations affiliated with political parties« in Europe (ibid.: 201).

Transnational agency of the German political foundations is also highlighted in an article in which the Orange Revolution in Ukraine is researched for its external influences. The author opines that in the explanation of this democratic revolution national actors and domestic influences are in the centre of analysis, whereas transnational actors tend to be overlooked or are suspicious of a »Western-funded conspiracy«

(Brucker 2007: 297). In his analysis, however, he traces the democratising advances of the FES, HSS and KAS, the three organisations present in Ukraine since the early 1990s (ibid.: 308ff.), stressing the interplay between external and internal influences. Without going into detailed definitions of transnationalism at large, Brucker calls them transnational »norm entrepreneurs« (i.e. »agents with strong ideas about the right behaviour in their community«; ibid.: 301), the aims of which are »to strengthen democratic and pluralist structures in developing and transition countries« (ibid.: 303).

### German Political Foundations as Transnational Organisations?

According to Ludger Pries (2008b), the concept of transnationalism might be applied either in a rather broad way, or in a more specific sense, when research on cross-border organisations is concerned. »Transnational Studies in a broader sense could be understood as all research focusing on border crossing and pluri-local objects of study« (ibid.: 6). In such a broad view, three ideal types of social spaces might be promising for studies in transnationalism: everyday life (at the micro-level), organisations (at the meso-level), and institutions (at the macro-level).

In a more specific approach, Pries stresses the special interest which research should devote to *transnational organisations*, i.e. the meso-level of social spaces, questioning if they might be »the micro-macro link in transnational studies?« (ibid.: 15). In this approach the meaning of »transnational« needs to be linked to discussions on different varieties of border crossing organisations. In this respect, Pries is concerned about a typology of four ideal types of border crossing organisations (2008a: 64f., 70ff., 163ff.; 2008b: 15ff.; 2008c: 161ff.; 2010: 80ff.; and others). In his debates he builds on a typology of Bartlett/Ghoshal (1989) and other authors, who have participated in this discourse, and develops it further. He proposes to distinguish between four types of border crossing organisations according to the distribution of their resources, for example investments, employment, facilities etc. (central vs. decentralised) and the way control is exercised (weak vs. strong). Organisations with a rather decentralised distribution of resources and weak coordination mechanisms are called *multinational organisations*; those which show a rather centralised distribution of resources and strong control are called *global organisations*, and organi-

sations depicting centralised resources and weak coordination are called *international* or *focal organisations*. Pries decides to call the latter *focal*, in order to avoid misunderstandings with the widely used term *international* for diverse cross border phenomena, and he stresses that a centre-periphery-structure would be a strong indication for a *central* distribution of resources, whereas the absence of a powerful centre would be allied to decentralised structures (cf. Pries 2010: 81, table 4).

»In this framework, *transnational organisations* are characterised by their decentralised resources and, at the same time and opposite to multinational organisations, intense coordination. Therefore transnational organisations could be understood as highly decentralised and border-crossing pluri-locally distributed and, at the same time, intensely coordinated, stable and dense cooperation frameworks with membership rules, deliberately established and variable structures, as well as more or less explicit goals and intentions.« (Pries 2008b: 16)

According to Pries, the above-named typology might not only apply to profit-organisations, for which it actually had been established, but also to non-profit-organisations, even though their organisational arrangements and structures have been far less researched than profit-organisations (2008a: 165f.). He demonstrates this taking the example of the European Works Council of General Motors, which is a non-profit border crossing interest organisation (2008c: 167ff.; cf. 2010: 84ff.).

Taking the former considerations as a starting point the German political foundations may be conceived mainly and in all cases as global organisations; notwithstanding, some of them have also a few limited elements of focal organisations. They are global since their resources are heavily centralised in Germany and their activities in other nations are strongly coordinated from that country. Actually, all the five foundations are constituted in Germany under German law; they are to almost 100 per cent government-funded under rules devised by the *Deutscher Bundestag* (the German lower house of parliament); and they have boards of directors and trustees composed solely by German citizens. Strong coordination from Germany is noticeable in the fact of their branches abroad being funded from their German headquarters and generally having German career officers as their directors, who are controlled and supported by specialised regional departments at each of the foundations' headquarter, and they are periodically audited by government authorities. Additionally, the foundations' branches in the host countries act concertedly together with other German institutions (like the Goethe Institute or the DAAD) under the

aegis of the respective German embassy. Within this tight resources and coordination framework, some foundations grant a wider leeway to their branches abroad, which tend to concert their activities with local foci, so giving them a limited element of a focal organisation.

## Political Education

In this section the German political foundations will be considered primarily as educational organisations venturing abroad. This necessitates discussions on transnationalism, as they have been propelled by Pries and others, and the widening of the horizon from formal schooling to non-formal educational settings outside the official national education systems.

### The German Political Foundations as Transnational Educational Organisations

Education comes under different names in the self-portrayal of the organisations, for example in their websites and brochures, and in publications. Originally, in Germany, the overall mission of these organisations was political education (*politische Bildung*) – at the beginning directed to the German populace to teach them democracy, and later also included into the international activities of the foundations. Even though the organisations or literature in English sometimes describe their respective activities as *civic education*, we decided for 'political education' because it more aptly describes the double nature of their *political education*: on the one hand it is education about political matters and on the other hand it is political in itself by transmitting the specific world views or ideology of each foundation.

According to Spitzenpfeil (1996: 46ff.) the cross border activities of the foundations mirror the BMZ policy and terminology, in that they can be grouped under political education (*gesellschaftspolitische Bildung*) and social-structural assistance (*Sozialstrukturhilfe*) which in practice may be overlapping. The foundations venture to support and enlighten formal associations, informal groups and individuals in the society of the host country, like youth associations, political parties and trade unions, scholars,

journalists, research groups, business associations and others. The projects that can be realised are very diverse; nearly anything goes, as long as the projects adhere to principles of democratic order and to the particular ideology of each foundation, that is, their respective Christian, liberal, social democratic, ecological or socialist views. At this point the author adds, that valuable as these aims may be from a »Western« point of view, they might nevertheless be considered as kind of »cultural imperialism« by the recipient countries (ibid.: 47). In her dissertation Spitzenpfel presents findings on the main regions and sectors of activity of the then existing foundations (using data until about 1994) (ibid.: 86ff.). For instance, the FNS has been active mostly in Latin America until app. 1983, but re-shifted budget allocations to Eastern European regions after the end of the East-West-conflict. It concentrated its efforts in the sectors of adult education, political dialogue, self-help organisations and media assistance.

Egger (2007) also summarises the international activities of the German political foundations abroad. In general, she posits that in the 1990s due to restricted budgets there was a shift from the above-mentioned (more costly) social-structural assistance projects to the support for local élites (*Elitenförderung*), i.e. those in charge of making decisions, political elites, middle and higher management personnel etc. (ibid.: 51ff.). Instruments in these cases are seminars, conferences, workshops, study tours, publications, scholarships, experts' meetings etc., i.e. well-known formats which are more or less closely related to education. She also refers to institutionalised examples such as the Centro de Estudios Democráticos de América Latina (CEDAL) in Costa Rica, an adult education centre founded by the FES in 1968, which since then has expanded with subsidiaries in other Latin American countries (ibid.: 244).

At present, there is not yet any educational research devoted explicitly to the political education performed by the German political foundations abroad. The topic only appears indirectly in publications which are mainly focusing the organisations from Social or Political Sciences' perspectives. This may stem from the pre-dominance of what has been called »the nation-state paradigm« in Comparative Education (Adick 2005: 244ff.): Education in foreign countries and comparisons of educational systems around the world are conceived as *national* in character and mostly restricted to the sector of state-regulated formal schooling, i.e. the core of a *national education system*. This perspective, however, excludes non-national actors as well as educational arrangements that take place outside the

school. If the German political foundations are to be analysed as *educational organisations acting overseas*, then, the perspective needs to be directed to transnational actors and include non-formal education.

### Transnational Organisations in Education

*Education* may stand for various forms of upbringing, instruction, school teaching and learning or other training arrangements. In comparison to socialisation, *education* always carries some intention to transmit or acquire knowledge, values or skills. Conforming to internationally applied terminology (Evans 1981), *formal education* is generally used for what is commonly known as the *official* education system of a given country. Formal education is highly formalised and systematically organised, basically state-regulated, and issues standardised certificates and diplomas. It includes private schools, if they are recognised by the state as part of the *official* education system. *Non-formal education* refers to organised forms of instruction and learning which occur outside the formal education system and can be subdivided into »*complementary* education, which rounds out the school curriculum; *supplementary* education, which adds on to schooling at a later time and place; and education which *replaces* schooling« (ibid.: 19). Non-formal education thus refers to arrangements like adult education, language schools, literacy programmes, seminars or weekend courses on whatever topic and often also results in some special certificates.

Seen from the perspective of Comparative Education a basic distinction between national, international and transnational educational spaces has been proposed (Adick 2008: 132ff.). *National* educational spaces refer to what has been mentioned already as the *nation-state paradigm* above, and encompass everything pertaining to the *official* education system. The differentiation between *international* and *transnational* education, however, owes a lot to Ludger Pries' clarification of the terminology for different sorts of cross-border relations (for example 2008a: 77ff.). According to the concept applied here (Adick 2008) *international* educational spaces embrace intergovernmental relations, programmes and organisations, in which state actors decide and determine educational policies, institutions or projects, for example youth, student or teacher exchange programmes, the mutual acknowledgement of certificates or the implementation of programmes for international education from the United Nations Educational, Scientific

and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) into national curricula. The term *transnational*, then, refers to non-state actors operating in educational fields across borders along their own lines and at their own risk, for example by erecting a private branch campus overseas, exporting tutoring and testing schemes, supporting and advocating the education of local populations in the host country with external finances, experts and concepts. *Transnational* activities are, then – in contrast to *international* – those, which operate privately (non-state) and pluri-local on different territories across borders, but *beyond* or *outside* intergovernmental contracts, which does not imply that they may not cooperate with national governmental and/or intergovernmental actors in their headquarters and in their host countries. In this distinction between *international* and *transnational* education Ludger Pries' concept of a *broad view* on transnationalism is applied, as referred to above (instead of the rather specific distinction between global, focal, international and transnational types of cross border enterprises, which still needs to be tested in detail for its applicability to educational organisations).

## The Political Education of the German Political Foundations in Mexico

The relevance and contents of the foundations' educational activities in Mexico can be ascertained by comparing one foundation to the others. Here, those activities are classified under formal and non-formal education, and are considered as programs only if they show a degree of organicity and continuity. Their comparison can be considered as a relative indicator of the extent to which each foundation's branches in Mexico pursue educational goals. Their preferred topics, as well as the national origin of authors and speakers, will be considered, since these are integral to educational activities pursued, and at the same time are evidence and consequence of ideological biases and cross border coordination proper to each foundation. Additionally, local counterparts are listed for two reasons: in some cases these are the ones organising educational activities (that are financially sponsored by the foundations' branches), and they suggest to which sectors their education activities are specifically directed to. Informal education is also present at each foundation, but usually as on-the-job training for its own local staff, and for attendants to various working

meetings. The foundations' scholarship programs were already considered above, reason for which here only the Sur place scholarship programs will be mentioned.

### The Friedrich Naumann Foundation (FNS)

The focus of FNS political education, both in Germany and abroad, is to prepare Liberal politicians to become leaders or at least »multipliers [...], that is, people who will spread the knowledge they have acquired in their societies« (FNS, n.d.b: 6). That is why its activities include not only party programme development but also media skills (FNS, n.d.a: 24), which are »the techniques necessary to succeed in political competition« (FNS, n.d.b: 6). To this respect, one of the interviewees said:

»We call it political adult education [...] Abroad, we do this educational work through our counterparts, and they work with target groups; generally, to encourage leaders to take responsible decisions for themselves and for their communities on topics of our interest.«

In Mexico, FNS holds one programme in the formal education sector, the Theodor Heuss Guest Professorship. It annually brings an academician from Germany – in 2011 it was an economist lecturing on the »Euro crisis« – to briefly teach at Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (a private institution preparing elite economist and political scientists, usually hired by the Mexican governments) and Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (the country's biggest university).

In the non-formal sector, FNS sustains two academies and many seminars in Germany, which host guests from all over the world, Mexico included. *The International Academy of Leadership (IAF)* at the *Theodor Heuss Academy* in Gummersbach, Germany, is the FNS »centre and forum for international dialogue and cultural exchange«. IAF brings to Germany

»promising senior and junior participants from the project regions [that] are able to establish contacts with representatives from public life, and discussions are held with government agencies, parties and associations, corporate bodies, organisations and projects in Germany and Europe. Another aim is a know-how transfer from the project countries to Germany.« (FNS, n.d.b: 24–25)

Linked to the IAF, there were 13 seminars and 16 delegation visits in 2011, in which 400 executives from 60 project countries participated (FNS, n.d.a:

35). The virtual academy or International e-Academy organises online seminars in which about 90 people of all over the world participate; the 25 best participants are then chosen to attend a seminar at the IAF in Germany (FNS-HQ).

Additionally, one of the interviewees reported: two to three information trips each year to Germany and Brussels on subjects like environment, European institutions or municipal affairs, to which politicians, staff from think tanks and economists are invited. International conferences in Germany and Brussels, for instance on India-Pakistan and Palestine-Israel (trying to promote mutual understanding between the parts), economic development, and country-specific events like Argentinean elections. In total, these activities move around 80 Latin Americans to Europe each year, being in themselves good examples of transnational political education.

Regarding political educational programmes conducted solely out of Germany, these »Public conferences organised by FNS about developments in the project countries reached at least 1,000 experts in their fields« (FNS, n.d.a: 35). Some of these were conducted in Mexico, to mention just a few ones in 2012:

- Publishing a booklet written by Mexican authors in support of some institutional changes in Mexico (Dworak et al. 2011.).
- A round table on »Freedom and authoritarianism. What to wait from the elections?«
- A conference: »Agenda for Liberty. Liberal proposals for Mexico«.
- A call for a contest on juvenile political debate.
- Hosting an academic seminar on Mexico's 2012 elections.

On topics: The prevailing ones for 2008–2011 were Freedom and property, Freedom and civil society, and Freedom and the rule of law (FNS, n.d.b: 5); the ones for 2012–2015 are going to be: Freedom and progress, Freedom and religion, and Freedom and participation (FNS n.d.c: 10–11). Although these topics are quite encompassing, they seem to be related to a particularly German-based conception of Liberalism. Actually, Liberal political institutions and ideology are quite new in Germany when compared to Latin America; although certainly they seem to have been much more functional and widely respected in the latter than in the former. Therefore, FNS recognises that knowledge must flow bi-directionally, by saying:

»We [FNS] want to intensify the transfer of liberal approaches from abroad into Germany's social discussion. An open and productive dialogue cannot be one-sided. As a German political foundation, we do not want just to impart knowledge abroad but to learn ourselves and to encourage society's learning process in Germany as well.« (FNS, n.d.b: 7)

Consequently, authors and speakers of FNS activities in Mexico are mostly Mexican or Latin American, with the exception of star-speakers as the Theodor Heuss Guest Lecturer. Moreover, FNS promotes local authors to develop, discuss and publish their ideas. Counterparts, due to the lack of a true Liberal party in Mexico, are intellectuals and think tanks of a Liberal orientation, alongside with some universities.

### The Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS)

KAS is probably the German foundation doing the greatest effort in political education in Mexico. This is coherent with its stated philosophy:

»We have been involved in international cooperation for the last 45 years. Influenced by our Christian heritage, we are particularly engaged in promoting civic education as a way to improve the political, social, economic and ecological basis of existence. Strengthening democracy and economic development are the primary goals of our international cooperation activity.« (KAS 2009: 9)

Elite formation is the intention behind KAS educational activities, including its scholarship programmes. May be this preference for elites is due to their roles as multipliers and decision-makers, may be due to KAS Conservative-leaning views, but anyway is quite diverse from what some other foundations propose in educational terms. KAS itself says: »[...]we have taken great care to develop effective networks [...]; their members now belong to the local political and social elites« (KAS 2009: 9).

In the field of formal education, KAS-Mexico has supported in 2012:

- Chairs on social market economy at two private, Catholic universities in Guadalajara<sup>6</sup> and Chihuahua<sup>7</sup>. These universities are a symbol of elite education, since only 30 percent of Mexico's university students can pay tuition at private universities.

<sup>6</sup> Occidental Institute for Technological and Superior Studies (ITESO, by its Spanish acronym).

<sup>7</sup> La Salle University.

- Conferences, seminars, publications and other academic activities are often sponsored by KAS at several Mexican universities, for instance a seminar on climate change at the state-owned Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez (KAS-Mex).
- Additionally, KAS-Mexico grants scholarships to students pursuing graduate studies in Mexico and other Latin American countries (particularly Chile) on many areas, including journalism and the arts, or – as in 2012 – on the tense relationship between Chile and Peru.

KAS supports also many activities in the field of non-formal education. For instance, in 2012 it supported:

- A diploma course on social market economy at the Catholic Diocese of Teotihuacán, near Mexico City.
- Fora in the city of Oaxaca on the long-lasting political and social divisions there and on how improving the state's education that has been affected by many union-strikes in the last years.
- Fora on the 2012 electoral process, social movements, climate change, the rule of law, etc.

Regarding the latter activities, one interviewee described them in the following words:

«We have basically two modalities for this: a) small workshops for five to ten people; b) bigger seminars. Participants usually are PAN politicians, students, scientists, entrepreneurs, trade-unionists, churches. Additionally, in Mexico and Chile we have «diplomados» (short formal courses) on market social economy.»

In the selection of topics, published authors, and speakers, many come directly from Germany. Speakers from Mexico's federal and state government are frequent ones. However, one of KAS-Mexico central topics is typically German, since the expression *social market economy* was coined by Konrad Adenauer himself.

Regarding KAS counterparts, it is important to mention that «Concrete fields of activity of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Latin America are: cooperation with Christian democratic parties and democratic people's parties with related basic value orientation» (KAS-HQ). The Partido Acción Nacional (PAN), a party of Christian-democratic orientation with some Liberal influences, is KAS' main local counterpart in Mexico. In an interview it was said that «we have [...] [in Mexico] a strong counterpart, the PAN», and abounded that those counterparts «are mainly the PAN and

its two foundations, but also universities, entrepreneurs, and trade unions». However, the KAS-Mexico web page (KAS-Mex) does not mention PAN as a counterpart, but half a dozen different organisations close to it.<sup>8</sup>

### The Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES)

FES' intent lies in providing »Civic/political education in order to reinforce the fundamental values of social democracy [...] [through] qualification and activation of citizens, dialogue between society and politics« (FES-HQ). This philosophy is quite different from the leaders' preparation typical of FNS and the elite-leaning orientation of KAS. FES sees that, at least »In Germany [...] [there is] a continuing decline on the reputation of political and economical elites« (FES 2011: 13). Consequently, FES' political education is oriented to empowerment of the common individual, and principally the disadvantaged ones – including women and minorities – for political engagement and participation.

At first sight, FES-Mexico does not make many efforts in education programmes. In one of the interviews it was said that FES' citizens' education programmes in Mexico

»[...] are very small; they represent just five percent, may be 15 to 20 percent of our efforts. We work on technical issues, with political counterparts. For instance we have an international dialogue, in preparing an international conference on climatic change, or a meeting on the G-20 and Mexico's role. Additionally we organise or participate in seminars on topics like »Progressive Leaderships«, »Young People and Young Peoples' Politics«, or »Civil Society and Young Peoples«, to which we invite members of our political counterparts.«

However, another interviewee stressed political education as one of FES' three main activities, by mentioning its »main work areas: political dialogue, political advice and political education«.

<sup>8</sup> These are: Centro Nacional de la Promoción Social, a center reuniting trade-unionist of a Christian orientation; Fundación Rafael Preciado Hernández, one local political foundation linked to PAN; the already mentioned Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Occidente (ITESO); Movimiento Ciudadano por Oaxaca, a citizens' grouping interested in overcoming social and political tensions in Oaxaca; Organización Demócrata Cristiana de América (ODCA), a Latin American confederation of Christian democratic parties; and Unión Social de Empresarios de México (USEM), an entrepreneurs' association promoting corporate social responsibility.

The researchers were able to identify a few non-formal educational activities in Mexico, which are mainly fora, seminars, report presentations, roundtables, workshops, etc., for trade-union leaders, politicians, academicians. FES-Mexico's central activity seems to be to promote research, studies and discussion on local issues, which are the basis for *dialogues* on several arenas, for instance:

- The International Dialogue refers to Mexico in the multilateral arena, Mexico before the Americas, and Cooperation between Mexico and Germany.
- The Trade Union Dialogue is centred on Mexico's issues as consolidating the social observatory, collective negotiation, strengthening knowledge and strategies vis-à-vis the economic crisis, internal reforms on contents and structure, progressive public policy making. The transmission of European/German experiences is quite obvious in some of these issues, though.
- The Political dialogue is oriented towards strengthening the capabilities of young leaders and generational replacement, and has as its themes: democratisation processes, progressive public policy, democratic transformation of the state-society relationship (FES-Mex).

Many of these topics are supported by research conducted directly at FES-Mexico, which has some analysts/researchers in its staff, or through nearby organisations or think-tanks. Therefore, when inspecting publications from FES-Mexico, most authors turn out to be Mexican ones – including some Latin Americans and a few Germans; the same can be said about speakers at most events sponsored or organised by FES-Mexico.

In non-formal education, there are also information trips to Germany, for instance for left-wing representatives; and FES-Mexico employees usually go to Germany to take actualisation or administration courses. In this context, the following statement in one of the interviews points out that local political leaders are taken to Germany not only to learn, but also to teach or convey their own experiences and ideas: »We take people to Germany every day. They do not go to take contact with the German/European reality, but for more precise reasons.« The interviewee gives the example of one person, who »was sent to Germany for a dialogue on climate change [...] Other example: taking people to meetings parallel to those of the G-20.«

In respect to topics, it was said in an interview:

»We are giving first priority to organised crime as an international issue, and second to the trade-unions, particularly in what respects the automotive sectors and reforms to the Ley Federal del Trabajo (Federal Act on Work), in which we are collaborating with the UNT.«

Organised crime is an issue typical to Latin America nowadays, and trade unions and labour laws are typical to Mexico.

Regarding counterparts, one interview partner pointed out that until 2000 its main counterpart was the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), which from a populist-nationalist point of view had ruled the country for decades. From that year on, FES-Mexico began to work with three leftist political parties: Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD), Partido del Trabajo (PT) and Movimiento Ciudadano (MC).

»Among the trade union centrals, Confederación de Trabajadores de México (CTM), which is officially part of the PRI, is still a counterpart, but FES-Mexico prefers to collaborate with the more independent Unión Nacional de Trabajadores (UNT).«

It remains to be seen if these counterparts are to change again regarding that in 2012 PRI has won Mexico's presidency again. In any case, consequently, attendees or participants at FES-Mexico public activities usually include trade unionists, young political leaders from left-wing political parties, and academic experts.

### The Heinrich Boll Stiftung (HBS)

HBS-Mexico defines its main activities with the following words, which imply an educational role in the non-formal sector: »We organise dialogues, seminars and conferences on specific themes belonging to our fields of work: environment and climate change, democracy and gender democracy, security and human rights, as well as common goods.« (HBS-Mex)

Dialogues, seminar and conferences constitute actually an apt description of HBS non-formal education activities. Additionally, in an interview it was stated, that HBS staff

»[...] go to Germany when needed for training. For instance, an interviewee of Mexican nationality went eight times to Germany to be trained on climatic change. The same is true (going on the basis of needing training). The accountant goes more or less every two years, to meet with the technical team and get training on

new programs». Besides, Mexican nationals go to other countries/regions «frequently, to attend specific regional and global meetings.»

According to one of the interviews, in the formal educational sector HBS-Mexico holds a *sur place* scholarship programme bringing each year five students from Central America and the Caribbean to Mexico to pursue master's studies in the latter, making ten to 15 bursars in Mexico at any given year. Through an agreement with CONACyT, this number will jump to 20 new students per year.

Topics include some typically German/European ones like opposition to nuclear power, which is not surprising since the Green movement started precisely in Germany. Other topics can be considered global, like energy conservation, climate change and gender equality. Still some others are linked to Mexican/Latin American issues, like public security and international migration (HBS-Mex).

Authors are varied, including many Mexicans and Latin American experts in the case of publications in Spanish; additionally, publications in Spanish tend to be generated locally to deal with local aspects of global problems, rather than being just a translation. In the case of English- and German-language publications, authors are mostly Germans and some other Europeans. Speakers are Mexican in most cases, and when they are non-Mexicans they came from other countries of Latin America – not necessarily from Germany. Many women can be counted among authors and speakers.

HBS-Mexico counterparts are mainly civil society organisations, since it has dropped the Partido Verde Ecologista de México (PVEM) after this was suspended from the Green International for supporting the death penalty. Occasionally, it grants small funding to some of these organisations' own projects.

### The Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (RLS)

In RLS' view, political education and advocating for [genera] education abroad are integral to its work on international cooperation, whose

«main aim is to promote social and democratic development, and to strengthen social-political education and communication together with international partners. The international projects pursue the objective of providing people with equal access to basic social goods such as democratic co-determination, peace and non-

violence, employment, education, access to healthcare, social security and a liveable environment.« (RLS 2010b: 32)

According to a statement by the Director of the RLS Centre for International Development:

»The worldwide politico-educational work of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation in the international departments is very complex and interesting and it is very challenging. It is complex because in our international offices we are not mainly dealing with self-representation, but carrying out projects together with our partners [...] it is about learning together in many ways [...]. Our political-educational work ranges from solidarity cooperation with grass-roots activists to providing advice on issues of constitutional or labour law.« (RLS 2010b: 33)

RLS' educational work abroad in 2010 »was supplemented by approximately 200 events, including several large conferences planned, organised and carried out by the international offices in their own responsibility« (RLS 2010b: 33). Part of this was done in Mexico, as an interviewee explained:

»We have three lines or ways: organising our own events as seminars or conferences; concerting with specific counterparts as NGOs or universities for a given event [...]; working with our medium- and long-term counterparts. Therefore, the contribution of our local counterparts is very significant [...] Our educational mission points towards a balanced society. For that we focus on marginalised groups, inviting all our counterparts but also representatives from political parties. In particular, it should be taken into account that in Latin America popular education is more advanced than in Germany; therefore we use progressive formats for workshops and other events.«

Main topics of events held in Mexico in 2012 were: human rights, natural goods, development alternatives, Mexico's presidential elections, alternative education, and political or cultural developments in Costa Rica, Cuba, El Salvador. Several booklets and books published by RLS deal with Latin American originated ideas as »good living« or »extractivism«, study local situations as elections in Guatemala or the private sector in Cuba, or examine Latin American Countries' concerns as the treatment of migrants in the USA. Some of these publications were authored by Latin Americans, particularly – but not solely – the ones produced in Mexico. Additionally, RLS-Mexico holds a media center as a space for study.

Speakers in events held in Mexico were basically Mexicans, including some invitees from neighboring countries and from Europe, but not

necessarily from Germany. RLS-Mexico counterparts are mainly civil society organisations, but not any Mexican political party.

## Conclusions

As seen, the five German foundations present at Mexico run non-formal political education activities there, and three of them have additionally some activities in the formal educational sector. The intensity of these activities varies among foundations, and seems to depend on budgetary considerations as well as oldness of the respective foundation's presence in Mexico. Since these activities are conducted from each foundation own point of view, they are unable of reaching the general public, but only political and social activists, government officials, and intellectuals linked to each foundation's local counterparts.

Why is Germany funding these foundations that are trying to convey political education abroad? Fernandez Rocha (2009: 48), referring to just one foundation in Colombia, asserts:

»KAS is an effective link between civil society and governmental instances; is an instrument on the service of development policy, of foreign policy, and of the interests of the Christian Democratic Union, at the same time that it benefits the strengthening of [democratic] political processes in Colombia.«

However, in Mexico the foundations' relevance, and even their visibility for the general public, is very modest. Possibly, then, the effective influences of German foundations in Mexico need to be considered from case to case. An interview partner of FES-Mexico confirmed this when saying: »It would be overestimating our capabilities to think that we could change things or political culture in Mexico.«

Modest or not, the German foundations play in general terms a positive role in Mexico. Although the foundations are strongly ideological and their respective tenets are opposed in many ways, they contribute by the spreading of their particular ideas to the acceptance of the »we have agreed to disagree« democratic principle, as in the following quote:

»By being involved in [a] pluralistic system, accepting differences in political dialogue and opening them up to discussion by asking questions which do not necessarily need to lead to clear answers and which go beyond the politics of the

day, the foundations represent a model for dealing with political differences which is of interest beyond Germany's borders.» (RLS 2010b: 3)

Furthermore, the foundations' transnational activities do not only pose a model for non-German countries, but are also positive for Germany itself. All the foundations analysed here conceive – at least declaredly – the relationship between their headquarters in Germany and their respective branches all over the world not just as a one-way-road but as a mutually learning opportunity, so giving in some cases a considerable degree of relative autonomy to their branches abroad. Additionally, local counterparts and staff can have a greater or lesser degree of influence in local decision-making.

In any case, the German political foundations can be considered as agents of both transnational political education and transnational politics. They form a very distinct category of actors in realms of political education operating mainly outside the official formal education system of the host countries, for example by seminars, workshops, and public debates. Different from other non-national actors, for example educational enterprises, their educational arrangements are free of charge; and different from politically independent NGOs, they operate close to political parties and their specific ideology. They build their own transnational educational and political spaces across borders. And in those spaces they act as a link between the individuals involved in the learning process (authors, speakers, audiences) and the national societies the latter ones belong to. So, as organisations they build – willingly or not – a bridge between the micro and the macro levels of transnational social and political action (Pries 2011: 28).

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