

# Transnational Experts in Social Reform, 1840-1880

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## Transnational Experts in Social Reform, 1840–1880

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**SUMMARY:** Who were the people at the cutting edge of social reform in Europe between 1840 and 1880, and how were they connected? This article proposes a method to locate a transnational community of experts involved in social reform and focuses on the ways in which these experts shared and spread their knowledge across borders. After a discussion of the concepts of social reform, transnationalization, and transfer, we show how we built a database of visitors to social reform congresses in the period 1840–1880, and explain how we extracted a core group of experts from this database. This “congress elite” is the focus of the second part of this article, in which we discuss their travels, congress visits, publications, correspondence, and membership of learned and professional organizations. We argue that individual members of our elite, leaning on the prestige of their international contacts, shaped reform debates in their home countries. We conclude by calling for further research into the influence that the transnational elite were able to exert on concrete social reforms in different national frameworks in order to assess to what extent they can be regarded as an “epistemic community in the making”.

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### INTRODUCTION

Nineteenth-century Europe oscillated between revolution, repression, and reform. Whereas it is common to analyse revolution and repression in Pan-European or comparative frameworks, national perspectives dominate the study of reform. The revolutions that took place in Europe between 1830 and 1848, their suppression, and their aftermath are often considered to be European phenomena.<sup>1</sup> In contrast, the reform movements

1. D. Dowe *et al.*, *Europa 1848: Revolution und Reform* (Bonn, 1998); W. Hardtwig (ed.), *Revolution in Deutschland und Europa 1848/49* (Göttingen, 1998); A. Körner, *1848, a European*

that emerged in the same period tend to be viewed mainly in their national contexts, without taking into account common origins, mutual influences, and transnational exchanges. Our objective is to look beyond national borders in order to highlight one of the international reform networks of the mid-nineteenth century.

The formation of our network coincided with the increased transnational interlinking of societies, which manifested itself in “the *conscious* creation of international movements and the cross-national dissemination of people, commodities, and culture”.<sup>2</sup> In terms of Pierre-Yves Saunier’s recent identification of “circulatory regimes” in the history of social policies, our network clearly belongs to the period of his first regime, which began to take shape in the first half of the nineteenth century, when “in order to resist, devise, support or change the response to problems stemming from the ‘world of revolutions’, churchmen and -women, political activists, entrepreneurs, men of learning, and migrants exchanged words and experiences in the North Atlantic space”.<sup>3</sup> Only later, after 1880, did some of these networks evolve into institutionalized bodies, gradually carving out official, internationally recognized roles for themselves in the world.

Reform is a broad concept, with political, military, legal, social, and economic dimensions. We concentrate on the social dimension, which in turn can be broken down into multiple components. We will reassess the scope of social reform in the period 1840–1880 by analysing the activities of experts, who looked beyond national borders to find, build and maintain a transnational space for knowledge exchange. Following Haas, we define “experts” as “persons with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to usable knowledge within that domain”.<sup>4</sup> The scope of a particular domain could be quite extensive in the period under investigation. Our focus is on the primary *locus in quo* of cross-border exchange: the international congress on social reform. We argue that visits to these congresses are indicators of the transnationalization of expert knowledge in this field: the more visits, the wider and deeper the process of transnationalization.

*Revolution? International Ideas and National Memories of 1848* (Basingstoke, 2004); W.J. Mommsen, 1848. *Die ungewollte Revolution. Die revolutionäre Bewegungen in Europa 1830–1849* (Frankfurt a/M, 1998).

2. M.H. Geyer and J. Paulmann (eds), *The Mechanics of Internationalism: Culture, Society and Politics from the 1840s to the First World War* (London, 2001), p. 2 [their italics].

3. Pierre-Yves Saunier, “Les régimes circulatoires du domaine social 1800–1940: projets et ingénierie de la convergence et de la différence”, *Genèses*, 71 (June 2008), pp. 4–25, 17.

4. Peter M. Haas, “Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination”, *International Organization*, 46 (Winter 1992), pp. 1–35, 3; for the concept of “usable knowledge”, see *idem*, “When Does Power Listen to Truth? A Constructivist Approach to the Policy Process”, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 11 (2004), pp. 569–592, 573.

Our method, which is explained in detail below, consists of two phases. First, on the basis of an extensive database of congress visits we identified a core group of people who participated in various social reform congresses. We then completed a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the transnational activities of this core group in order to arrive at an assessment of the extent and depth of the transnationalization of social reform. We clearly see elements of what has been labelled an “epistemic community” in our group. However, only a qualified use of the term is appropriate due to the rudimentary development of the international system and the multiplicity of ideas and solutions, which made it difficult to embark on a common policy enterprise.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, throughout this article, we shall use the phrase “epistemic community in the making”.

#### TRANSNATIONALIZATION AND “TRANSFER HISTORY”

Transnationalization is an ambiguous concept in the context of this formative period, in which both the nation-state and specialized reform knowledge were simultaneously taking shape. In its present-day meaning, transnationalization usually refers to post-nation-state rearrangements of markets, capital, labour, and information networks. Because in the nineteenth century the nation-state was still under construction all over Europe, transnationalization is to some extent an anachronism. We are using the concept, however, simply to denote the transnational mobility and exchange of people, products, and ideas across national borders.<sup>6</sup>

To some extent, this definition overlaps with the idea of internationalism as used by F.S.L. Lyons and further developed by Akira Iriye and by Martin H. Geyer and Johannes Paulmann.<sup>7</sup> Iriye defined internationalism as “an idea, a movement, or an institution that seeks to reformulate the nature of relations among nations through cross-national cooperation and interchange”.<sup>8</sup> We feel, however, that the concept of transnationalization, as we use it, places less emphasis on the organizational

5. For a comparable cautious use of the concept, see Sandrine Kott, “Une ‘communauté épistémique’ du social? Experts de l’OIT et internationalisation des politiques sociales dans l’entre-deux-guerres”, *Genèses*, 71 (June 2008), pp. 26–46.

6. J. Heilbron, N. Guillhot, and L. Jeanpierre, “Toward A Transnational History of the Social Sciences”, *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, 44 (2008), pp. 146–160, 146. See also P. Clavin, “Defining Transnationalism”, *Contemporary European History*, 14 (2005), pp. 421–439, and more recently A. Iriye and P.-Y. Saunier (eds), *The Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History* (Basingstoke, 2009).

7. Geyer and Paulmann, *The Mechanics of Internationalism*; A. Iriye, “Transnational History”, *Contemporary European History*, 13 (2004), pp. 211–222; F.S.L. Lyons, *Internationalism in Europe 1815–1914* (Leiden, 1963).

8. Iriye, “Transnational History”, p. 214.

dimension of relations, and therefore better captures their diverse and open-ended nature, which was typical of the mid-nineteenth century.

Our method stems from the recent explosion of interest in the history of cross-border connections, exchange, and “transfer”. This approach, although not new, has rapidly produced a vast research output, covering a wide range of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences.<sup>9</sup> The core theoretical insight that emerges from this body of literature is that national and other administrative borders do not bind culture and ideas. Connections and influences work in many directions, within and across borders, and in unexpected ways. The open-ended character of culture and ideas can best be traced by looking beyond the nation-state, which has prevailed as the basic unit of research since the nineteenth century (even in comparative history). Moreover, *histoire croisée*, or “entangled history”, has recently been proposed as a method of taking into account the multiplicity of directions and the complex cross-fertilization that are intrinsic to the continuous movement of ideas. As Joep Leerssen observes, social network analysis is a fruitful way of exposing the entangled history of the spread of ideas.<sup>10</sup>

Given the relative paucity of sources, it is not possible to apply an advanced variant of social network analysis, as has been proposed by Bruno Latour.<sup>11</sup> From the actor-network theory we borrow nevertheless two insights: first, we agree with Leerssen who writes that in order to understand social phenomena it is not enough to confine them to a particular social framework (e.g. the social, political and economic conditions of a nation-state), but that we should look for connections (“mapping relations”) between different spaces.<sup>12</sup> In our case, this means that we look not only across national borders, but also across scientific disciplines (law, penology, statistics, social sciences, medicine) and the spheres of action of single institutions (national and local governments, administrative bureaus, learned and professional societies, civil society institutions). Second, our interest in this article mainly lies in exploring *how* a network comes into existence, holds itself together, or in some cases disintegrates,

9. M. Espagne (ed.), *Les transferts culturels franco-allemands* (Paris, 1999); W. Kaiser, “Cultural Transfer of Free Trade at the World Exhibitions, 1851–1862”, *The Journal of Modern History*, 77 (2005), pp. 563–590; Pierre-Yves Saunier, “Taking up the Bet on Connections: A Municipal Contribution”, *Contemporary European History*, 11 (2002), pp. 507–527; Michael Werner and Bernard Zimmermann, “Beyond Comparison: Histoire Croisée and the Challenge of Reflexivity”, *History and Theory*, 45 (2006), pp. 30–50; *idem* (eds), *De la comparaison à l'histoire croisée* (Paris, 2004).

10. Joep Leerssen, “Bomen hebben wortels, mensen hebben benen, ideeën hebben vleugels. Een introductie”, *De Negentiende Eeuw*, 32 (2008), pp. 3–14.

11. Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (Oxford, 2005).

12. Leerssen, “Bomen hebben wortels”, p. 12.

and only to touch upon *why* it emerged. For the time being, we explain the latter by pointing to the sudden and dramatic impact of industrialization and urbanization in western and central Europe in the course of the nineteenth century, which, according to Abram de Swaan, triggered a sense of urgency among “activist administrators and reformist politicians”.<sup>13</sup>

Rarely could that urgency immediately be translated into concrete policy change. The relationship between the first wave of transnational reform activism and political and socio-economic power was anything but straightforward. The experts themselves were unable to stir up sufficient pushing power in their country of origin to realize new legislation, and there was a lack of direct institutional “goodness of fit” between the joint policy projects and the social and economic environment of the European states they worked in. States were simply too isolated and insufficiently acquainted with supranational agreements (in comparison to the present day) to be compelled by transnational policy coordination. This does not mean that our transnational reform network was without influence. The mechanisms of this influence, however, were indirect, and often required decades of refinement and adaptation before the ideas were put into practice.

### SOCIAL QUESTIONS

Following a number of authors who have analysed reform movements in various national settings, we define social reform as the drive towards finding and implementing solutions to a wide array of social questions emerging in different contexts.<sup>14</sup> Pauperism was thought to be at the heart of the matter. Issues related to crime, deviancy, punishment, public health, hygiene, and their moral side effects were almost equally important, and were often raised in connection with poor relief. Underlying the array of social questions and answers was the belief that the true nature of the problems afflicting society could only be unravelled on the basis of statistical evidence. The science of statistics, therefore, gained momentum, as the call for social reforms grew louder. Measurability became one of the salient features of reform issues. What could be counted and presented in tables could be solved.

Those who were known as statisticians rarely limited themselves to methodological questions. They were often among the first to become

13. Abram De Swaan, *In Care of the State: Health Care, Education and Welfare in Europe and the USA in the Modern Era* (Oxford, 1988), p. 175.

14. Gita Deneckere, *Sire, het volk mort. Sociaal protest in België, 1831–1918* (Antwerp, 1997); J. Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit: Britain 1870–1914* (London, 1994); T. Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte, 1800–1866. Bürgerwelt und starker Staat* (Munich, 1998); P. Rosanvallon, *L'État en France de 1789 à nos jours* (Paris, 1993); Joost Van Genabeek, *Met vereende kracht risico's verzacht: de plaats van onderlinge hulp binnen de negentiende-eeuwse particuliere regelingen van sociale zekerheid* (Amsterdam, 1999).

actively involved in concrete relief projects. Social reform, in sum, used to be a platform for many interests and convictions. For the late nineteenth century Christian Topalov has coined the term *nébuleuse réformatrice* (reform cloud) in order to capture the dense and entangled nature of the social reform movement in France.<sup>15</sup> However, the reform cloud had been hanging over other European countries than just France (and gaining volume) since the 1830s.

Although government, either at central or local level, eventually became the distributor of social welfare, in the mid-nineteenth century it was far from evident that the state should intervene in society to alleviate social problems. Government ministries, provincial and local authorities, but also philanthropical societies, learned societies, medical institutions, world exhibition committees, educational facilities, churches of various denomination, an array of interest groups, and private individuals were addressing the social issues that were emerging throughout Europe. Christopher Lasch christened them the “forces of organized virtue”.<sup>16</sup>

Public or private, the international congresses we examine here were evidently bourgeois initiatives, openly or indirectly providing alternatives to the endeavours of Marxists and other revolutionary groupings. The Belgian politician Charles Rogier made this quite clear in his augural speech to the international philanthropic congress held in Brussels in 1856, when he explicitly defended the congress programme against accusations that it was imbued with a materialist and a socialist spirit.<sup>17</sup>

Because of the specific conditions in which social reform movements emerged, the historiography often focuses on individual cases and countries.<sup>18</sup>

15. Christian Topalov (ed.), *Laboratoires du Nouveau Siècle: La Nébuleuse Réformatrice et ses Réseaux en France, 1880–1914* (Paris, 1999).

16. Christopher Lasch, *Haven in a Heartless World: The Family Besieged* (New York, 1979), pp. 168–169.

17. “Congrès International de Bienfaisance de Bruxelles. Session de 1856. Tome II. Annexes”, (Brussels [etc.], 1857). Similarly, in the spring of 1848, W.H. Suringar, in his address to the Dutch Prison Society, expressed his concerns about the upheaval in several European cities, where – as he put it – “released prisoners could play a pernicious role and could threaten and endanger the tranquility, possessions, health – yes the very lives of many in municipality or town”, and “assisted by wives, concubines and children, have formed a strong army that, having nothing to lose, had no thought of respect or fear whatsoever”; see Chris Leonards, *De ontdekking van het onschuldige criminele kind. Bestrafing en opvoeding van criminele kinderen in jeugdtegenwoordigheid, 1833–1886* (Hilversum, 1995), p. 165.

18. J.-P. Goubert, *Une histoire de l'hygiène: Eau et salubrité dans la France contemporaine* (Paris, n.d. [original edn, 1986]); E. Grimmer-Solem, *The Rise of Historical Economics and Social Reform in Germany 1864–1894* (Oxford, 2003); C. Hamlin, *Public Health and Social Justice in the Age of Chadwick, 1800–1854* (Cambridge, 1998); A. Kidd, *State, Society and the Poor in Nineteenth-Century England* (Basingstoke, 1999); Bernard Kruithof, “De deugdzame natie. Het burgerlijk beschavingsoffensief van de Maatschappij tot Nut van ’t Algemeen tussen 1784 en 1860”, *Symposion, Tijdschrift voor maatschappijwetenschap*, 2 (1980), pp. 22–37;

This seems logical, given that the pace of industrial and urban development differed so much from country to country. It is interesting to note, however, that a “reform vanguard” appears to have been in close contact across borders from the 1830s, at first by means of individual communication (visits, correspondence) but subsequently also through formal exchange forums, such as international congresses and associations.<sup>19</sup> The intensification of exchange across borders led to the formation of organized transnational expert groups, “epistemic communities in the making”, which either merely shared insights and findings or brought about fully fledged standardization (e.g. the metric standard).<sup>20</sup> In the second half of the nineteenth century the number of international congresses grew exponentially.<sup>21</sup> Their participants and topics varied widely; there were gatherings of experts and professionals, from telegraphers to astronomers, and thematic conferences on affordable housing and the abolition of slavery.

Taking as our starting point the international congresses on penitentiary reform, welfare, hygiene, social science, and statistics that were organized between 1846 and 1880, we have attempted to map the activities of those participants who travelled abroad to contribute to the exchange of evidence and ideas about significant aspects of social reform. Our analysis rests on two assumptions: first, the themes of the congresses we selected were important, representative aspects of social reform, not because we say so but because the participants cultivated that idea. Commenting on the international philanthropic congress held in Brussels in 1856, the architect Henry Roberts, who specialized in working-class housing, explicitly put this congress on a par with the penitentiary, statistical, hygienic, and social science congresses that had been held since the

A.F. La Berge, *Mission and Method: The Early Nineteenth-Century French Public Health Movement* (Cambridge, 1992); K. Laybourn, *The Evolution of British Social Policy and the Welfare State, c. 1800–1993* (Keele, 1995); L.F. Van Loo, *Arm in Nederland 1815–1990* (Meppel/Amsterdam, 1992).

19. Peter Becker and Jeroen Dekker, “Doers: The Emergence of an Acting Elite”, *Paedagogica Historica*, 38 (2002), pp. 427–432; Marie-Sylvie Dupont-Bouchat, “Du Tourisme pénitentiaire à ‘L’Internationale des philanthropes’: La création d’un réseau pour la protection de l’enfance à travers les congrès pénitentiaires internationaux (1820–1914)”, *Paedagogica Historica*, 38 (2002), pp. 533–563; Kaiser, “Cultural Transfer of Free Trade”; Lars Hendrik Riemer, *Das Netzwerk der “Gefängnisfreunde” (1830–1872). Karl Josef Anton Mittermaiers Briefwechsel mit europäischen Strafvollzugsexperten*, 2 vols (Frankfurt am Main, 2005).

20. Haas, “Introduction: Epistemic Communities”; Karin Knorr-Cetina, *Epistemic Cultures: How the Sciences Make Knowledge* (Cambridge, MA, 1999).

21. Chris Leonards, “Ter bestrijding van armoede, misdaad, oorlog en immoraliteit. Europese congrescultuur in de negentiende en vroege twintigste eeuw vanuit filantropisch perspectief”, in V. Kingma and M.H.D. van Leeuwen (eds), *Filantropie in Nederland. Voorbeelden uit de periode 1770–2020* (Amsterdam, 2007), pp. 49–62; “Les Congrès Internationaux. Tome 1: de 1681 à 1899, liste complète” (Brussels, 1960); G.P. Speeckaert, *Le premier siècle de la coopération internationale 1815–1915. L’apport de la Belgique* (Brussels, 1980).



mid-1840s.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, the regular cross-visits of a core group of experts attending different congresses, which are analysed in detail below, underline the common origins and comparable goals of our congresses.

A second assumption, following from the first, is that frequent congress visits stemmed from expertise in a specific subject matter and a general interest in social reform, in particular if a person attended different congress series. Social welfare, penitentiary reform, public hygiene, and statistics were part and parcel of the same liberal reformist agenda.<sup>23</sup> Our transnational elite constructed social reform as a programme for the gradual transformation of society, aimed at integration of the socially disadvantaged and public control of private morals.

#### PART I: SELECTING “TRUE” TRANSNATIONAL EXPERTS

The first step of our empirical research was to identify the members of the transnational “inner circle” of experts, both amateur and professional, in the realm of social reform in Europe between 1840 and 1880. Of course, at the start we had a rough idea of who they were, but we decided to extract our group from the historical sources available, i.e. lists of visitors to congresses held from 1840 to 1880.<sup>24</sup> The proceedings of each congress contained such a list, which either enumerated the participants in alphabetical order or grouped them according to country of origin or by specified categories. Besides enabling us to find quantitative evidence for our educated guesses, our methodology helped us to draw up a more extensive list of individuals involved in social reform throughout Europe. Moreover, it provided a means of evaluating the interconnectedness of different congress series, and gave us insight into the gradual transformation of congresses in the course of the nineteenth century.

In order to compose a shortlist of congresses relevant to transnational social politics, we used an allegedly complete list of international congresses originally compiled by Henri La Fontaine and Paul Otlet in the early twentieth century and edited and printed by the Union of International Associations in the 1960s.<sup>25</sup> This list gives concise information on the year, date, and location of 1,414 congress sessions between 1681 and 1899 (see Figure 1).

22. H. Roberts, “Report on the Congrès Internationale de Bienfaisance, and on the Association Internationale de Bienfaisance”, *Transactions of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science 1858* (London, 1859), p. 682.

23. Nico Randeraad, *States and Statistics in the Nineteenth Century: Europe by Numbers* (Manchester, 2010), p. 188.

24. Today congresses are often understood as singular events at a specific time and place. In the nineteenth century they were sometimes seen as social communities. To avoid a confusion in terminology here we use “congress series” to refer to all gatherings in time, whereas “congress session” is meant to point to one specific gathering in the series.

25. “Les Congrès Internationaux”.

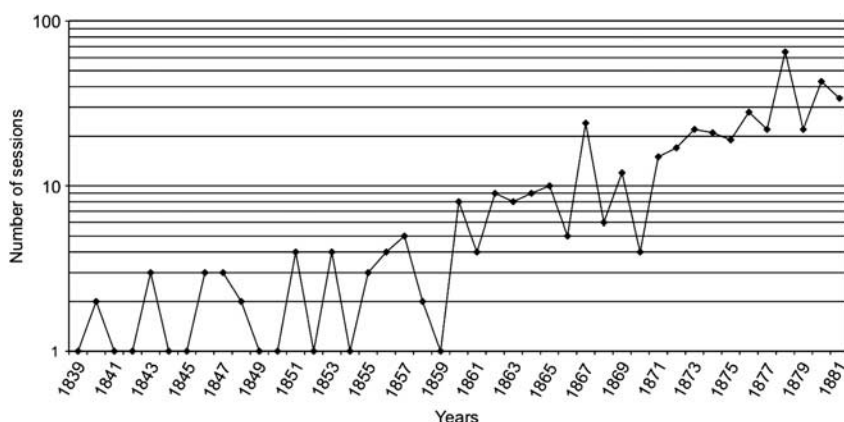


Figure 1. Number of congress sessions, 1840–1880 (semi-log).

From this full list we extracted a list of 71 congress sessions in the 1840–1880 period (see Annexe: Table 3, p. 238). Generally the gross list comprises congress series on statistics; penitentiary matters; hygiene; sanitary; welfare; social science; economics; anti-slavery; anti-alcohol; anti-prostitution; peace, liberty, and mediation; education; various subjects of social care, etc.

At this point we had to make several difficult decisions regarding the persons to be included in our sample. First, we decided to exclude individuals attending congresses in their own countries.<sup>26</sup> Our reasoning was that since we were chasing internationalists we needed to focus on those going abroad, though participants in congresses in their own countries may well have had internationalist intentions.

Second, we found out that most lists of participants in the congress sources differentiated between visitors and so-called “adherents” or members. Initially we decided to include the adherents, but they came to comprise 35 per cent of our data. A subsequent comparison of lists with and without adherents showed that the results were comparable. For these reasons, we eventually decided to omit adherents and use only the list of individuals who were actually in attendance to compile our sample of core participants. Our original list of 3,870 records was thus reduced to 2,482 actual visits (omitting 1,388 adherents). The adherents, however,

26. As we will discuss later, this may lead to some bias, as some congress locations became very popular in the course of the century. Of the 71 sessions in the gross list, 20 took place in Paris, 10 in Brussels, 10 in London, and 5 in Geneva. The others were mostly one-time events in 19 European cities and 3 transatlantic locations. See Annexe: Table 3 for an overview. Obviously, reformers who did not participate in international congresses have not been taken into account, although they may have maintained international contacts in other ways.

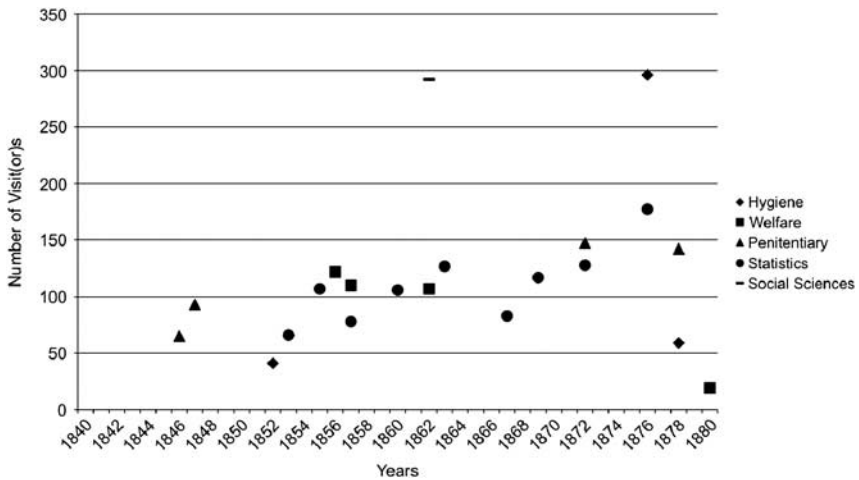


Figure 2. Number of visit(or)s to 21 selected congress sessions, 1840–1880.

were not completely eradicated from our research, as we used the count of adherents to fine-tune our shortlist of top conferees.

Third, for this article we processed data from 5 out of 16 series of congresses: penitentiary, statistical, welfare, hygiene, and social science congresses (see Figure 2).<sup>27</sup> The 2,482 actual visits to 21 congress sessions are evenly dispersed over the full period under investigation, although data from the statistical congresses are slightly overrepresented.<sup>28</sup>

The next step was to count the number of visits made by individuals, taking into account the kind of congresses they had visited. This enabled a cross-tabulation of the frequency and diversity of congress visits, where frequency is the number of visits per visitor and diversity the number of different congress series that a person visited, be it penitentiary, statistical, hygienic, welfare or social science congresses (see Table 1). The 2,482 visits in our database were made by 1,961 individuals. Most of them visited only one congress session, but others were truly frequent visitors, attending up to 13 of the congress sessions in our selection. Moreover, some individuals attended sessions of up to 5 different congress series.

From this we calculated several priority lists, according to frequency and diversity, and then figured in the number of times a person had been

27. For *congrès de bienfaisance* we use the somewhat anachronistic term “welfare congress”, whereas the term “philanthropic congresses” is used only as an overarching term for several congress series dealing with aspects of social reform, including welfare congresses.

28. In our sample of five series, Brussels served as a congress venue six times, London three times, Paris twice, Frankfurt am Main twice, and eight congress sessions were held in other European locations. See Annexe: Table 3, p. 238 for an overview.

Table 1. *Frequency and diversity of congress visits.*

Frequency/diversity*	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL
1	1,683					1,683
2	117	64				181
3	20	21	6			47
4	13	4	4			21
5	3	3	3	1		11
6	3		3			5
7	2	2	1	1		6
8		1	1	1		3
9					1	1
10						0
11			2			2
12						0
13				1		1
TOTAL	1,841	95	20	4	1	1,961

\* X axis: Diversity: different series of congresses; Y axis: Frequency: number of congress visits.

noted as an adherent to reach a final ranking.<sup>29</sup> In doing so we arrived at a sample of 20 transnational experts in the realm of social reform in Europe between 1840 and 1880 (see Table 2).<sup>30</sup>

At the top of our final list is Dutchman Marie M. von Baumhauer, who visited thirteen congress sessions of four different series (total score: 52). At the bottom is Ramon de la Sagra of Spain, with four visits to three congress series, and two mentions as an adherent (total score: 14). These scores do not indicate that Von Baumhauer was four times as transnational as De la Sagra. The list should be seen as one core group of transnational reformers.

#### TRANSNATIONAL EXPERTS' PROFILES

The first striking observation based on this list is that we encounter the elite of an epistemic community *avant la lettre* that has largely escaped the attention of historiographers. To be sure, some of these men, such as

29. Transnational expertise = (Frequency × Diversity) + Adherence. See Table 2 [T = (F × D) + A].

30. Of course there is an artificial element in quantifying the activities of transnational experts in this way. However, different calculations do not result in radically different lists. The names at the top of the list remain more or less the same. It should be noted, though, that it was relatively easier for Germans to enter the top 100, since we counted Germans from German states until 1871 as different nationalities (i.e. we included all non-Prussians in our list based on a congress held in Berlin in 1863). Belgians, on the other hand, may be underrepresented, as several congresses took place in Brussels and only visitors from abroad were included in our sample.

Table 2. *Core group of transnational experts in social reform.*

	Name	Country	Frequency	Diversity	Adherence	Transnational expertise*
1	Von Baumhauer, Marie Matthieu	NL	13	4	0	52
2	Varrentrapp, Johann Georg	GE (Hesse)	9	5	4	49
3	Engel, Ernst	GE (Saxony)	11	3	2	35
4	Wolowski, Louis	FR (Poland)	8	4	3	35
5	David, Christian Georg Nathan	DK	11	3	1	34
6	Cieszkowski, August	GE (Poland)	7	4	2	30
7	Von Hermann, Friedrich	GE (Bavaria)	8	3	0	24
8	Asher, Carl Wilhelm	GE (Hamburg)	7	3	1	22
9	Bertini, Bernardino	I (Piedmont)	5	4	0	20
10	Moynier, Gustave	CH	6	3	2	20
11	Ackersdijck, Jan	NL	6	3	1	19
12	Dael von Koeth, Friedrich	GE (Hesse)	6	3	1	19
13	Chadwick, Edwin	GB	5	3	2	17
14	Brown, Samuel	GB	8	2	0	16
15	Duval, Jules	FR	5	3	1	16
16	Suringar, Willem Hendrik	NL	5	3	1	16
17	Mittermaier, Karl Joseph Anton	GE (Baden)	4	3	4	16
18	Block, Maurice	FR	7	2	1	15
19	Visschers, Auguste	BE	7	2	0	14
20	De la Sagra, Ramón	SP	4	3	2	14

\*T = (F × D) + A.

Edwin Chadwick (poor law and sanitary reform) in Britain and Karl Joseph Anton Mittermaier (penal law) in Germany, have been noticed as prominent actors in national reform movements. Individuals such as Von Baumhauer, Ernst Engel, (Johann) Georg Varrentrapp, Louis Wolowski, and Christian Georg Nathan David (the top five) enjoy a certain status in specialized historical research from their country of origin, but they can hardly be ranked as national political figureheads. As a group, they have been invisible to historians. The figures at the top of our list, however, met regularly, and saw themselves as a community sharing a strong interest in social questions. As we shall see, international congresses were just one of their communication channels. It should be noted that the selection criterion of attending international congresses excludes some reformers, even renowned ones such as Frédéric Le Play, who had built an extensive international network of like-minded investigators by the 1850s but appeared just once in our database.

A second remarkable observation is the diversity of countries of origin, a conclusion that remains valid if the list is extended. The idea of social reform was widely and fairly evenly spread over western Europe. The smaller countries are strongly represented, in particular if we consider the German states separately (which we did until 1871). The fact that six congresses took place in Belgium put the Belgian participants at a disadvantage (the numerous Belgians visiting these congress sessions were not included in our database). Only one Belgian representative, Auguste Visschers, can be found among our selection, whereas well-known transnationalists such as Adolphe Quetelet and Édouard Ducpétiaux did not make the top twenty. (They are ranked 35th and 40th, respectively, on our extended list.) Nevertheless, the large number of international congresses held in Belgium (with Quetelet and Ducpétiaux in prominent roles) is in itself proof of the country's leading position in the struggle for social reform. With respect to their international orientation it may not be entirely irrelevant that Maurice Block and Wolowski were born outside France (in Berlin and Warsaw, respectively) and that David and Block were of Jewish descent.

The professional background of the top twenty is rather varied. Most networkers had attended university and studied law, economics, engineering, or medicine. Exceptionally, Dutch philanthropist Willem Hendrik Suringar was a self-made man, who lived from his earnings as a wine-seller. Very few had just one career that lasted their entire lifetimes. The most notable exception was Von Baumhauer, who remained an official in the statistics department at the Dutch Ministry of the Interior until his death.

At some time during their careers most men on the list were employed by the state (as civil servants or as members of governmental commissions), or occupied a political position for some time, e.g. as representative in national or provincial parliaments or as members of town councils, except Samuel Brown, who remained a privately employed actuary

throughout his life. Very few, however, were strictly speaking state officials (only Von Baumhauer and Engel). Nonetheless, by the 1870s many of them served as official representatives of their government at the congresses in which they participated. They often assumed prominent positions at the congresses, such as vice president, chairman of a section or *rapporteur*.

Friedrich Benedikt Wilhelm von Hermann, Jan Ackersdijck, and Mittermaier were university professors in economics and law and also occupied administrative posts in their countries for certain periods. Georg Varrentrapp and Bernardino Bertini were medical doctors. Friedrich Dael von Köth-Wanscheid, who had doctorates in law and philosophy in addition to profound botanical knowledge, worked as a judge in his native Mainz before retreating to his country estate in Sörgenloch, where he dedicated himself to viticulture (he was cofounder of the international ampelography commission in 1873).

They were all idealists, but did not lose sight of reality. Politically, they tended to be liberals, believing in progress and responsible government, but socially they clung to upper-class and bourgeois values. Nevertheless, some had links with Fourierism, from the moderate Ackersdijck who wrote a mild review of one of the few attempts to spread the ideas of Charles Fourier in the Netherlands, to the passionate French journalist and economist Jules Duval, who was a fervent supporter of Fourier's ideas throughout his active life.<sup>31</sup> Spanish naturalist and economist Ramón de la Sagra, too, was to some extent inspired by the philosophy of the French utopians, notably Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, with whom he briefly had close contact in Paris around 1840. However, their ardent convictions were not enough to push our reformers beyond the pragmatic. They belonged to an "acting elite of doers", who wanted to accomplish change.<sup>32</sup> They were willing to search the highways and byways of their native country but also those of other countries to find evidence, show results, and liaise with kindred spirits.

Women were rarely seen during the deliberations at the international congresses. Some congresses, such as the international statistical congress, had a special programme for the wives of male conferees. While the men attended congress sessions, their wives took excursions to places of interest. Many congresses also had formal dinners and "soirées"; at the Brussels Peace conference of 1848, for example, women played an almost purely representational role.<sup>33</sup> In 1856, at the Brussels gathering of the international welfare congress, Frederika Bremer from Sweden contributed

31. Hans Moors, "Ackersdijck (parfois Ackersdijk), Jan" [electronic version]. Available at [http://www.charlesfourier.fr/article.php?id\\_article=436](http://www.charlesfourier.fr/article.php?id_article=436), last accessed 14 August 2008.

32. Becker and Dekker, "Doers: The Emergence of an Acting Elite".

33. A. Lehardy de Beaulieu, a congress visitor, voiced the following "sentiment" at the soirée: "The Ladies! May they instill to the minds of the rising generation in all countries the

a paper which “was read by Mr Vichier, one of the members of the council – well read, and attentively listened to”.<sup>34</sup> Likewise, Florence Nightingale’s contribution to the international statistical congress in London in 1860 was presented by a male participant. Gradually, however, female participation became more pronounced and autonomous. At the London penitentiary congress of 1872 Mary Carpenter delivered a paper on the “principles and results of reformatory and certified industrial schools” to an audience of at least 18 women conferees from Britain and the US.<sup>35</sup>

## PART 2: COMMUNICATION CHANNELS IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY SOCIAL REFORM

In this section we further analyse the transnational activities of our core group, while continuing our focus on social reform. Apart from the rather new national and international congresses, nineteenth-century channels of scientific knowledge included correspondence, travel, publications (books and journals), and learned and professional societies. By following our core group in each of these communication fields we were able not only to find further evidence of the ways in which they spread and shared their knowledge, but also to show the extent to which this network gathered strength.

To begin with, the international congresses in our selection were not the only gatherings that our core group of twenty attended. The early peace congresses give clear evidence of a significant overlap in themes and visitors. Of the individuals on our list, Visschers, Suringar and De la Sagra visited the 1848 peace congress in Brussels. As a regular visitor, De la Sagra voiced anarchist-socialist ideas, Suringar acted as vice president, and Visschers chaired the Brussels meeting.<sup>36</sup> They debated the subject of “Arbitration for the Determining of National Disputes” with Ducpétiaux, Inspector-General of Prison Care and Welfare. Not surprisingly, the international congress of economists, held in Brussels in 1847, also attracted a fair number of our transnational experts. Of many congress

sentiments of Peace and universal Brotherhood [*sic*], “The Peace Congress at Brussels on the 20th, 21st and 22nd of September” (London, 1848), pp. 44–45.

34. Frederika Bremer, *Two Years in Switzerland and Italy*, I (London, 1861), p. 165.

35. “International Congress on the Prevention and Repression of Crime: including penal and reformatory treatment, Middle Temple Hall, London, July 3rd to the 13th: Programme of prisons, reformatories, and other institutions interesting to representatives, lists of representatives and subscribers” (London, 1872), p. 786. For more on the role of women in e.g. the abolition and international peace movement, see Annemieke van Drenth and Francisca de Haan, *The Rise of Caring Power: Elizabeth Fry and Josephine Butler in Britain and the Netherlands* (Amsterdam, 1999). See also Maartje Janse, *De Afschaffers. Publieke opinie, organisatie en politiek in Nederland 1840–1880* (Amsterdam, 2007).

36. For a short time De la Sagra was one of the editors of the anarchist journal *El Porvenir*. After the 1848 Paris upheavals, he was expelled from France for his socialist ideas.



series listed in Figure 2 it can be assumed that they attracted participants from a broad population of internationalists interested in social reform.

In the discourse of the time, alcoholism and prostitution, for example, were directly connected to poverty and misery, and discussing them at specialized congresses was therefore of great importance to social reform in general.<sup>37</sup> Nonetheless, it is striking that even at the peace congresses social problems, such as poverty and juvenile care, were recurring themes. In the official Brussels peace congress proceedings there is an account of Von Baumhauer and Suringar visiting the French agricultural youth colony, Mettray. Solitary confinement of prisoners was as important at the 1857 welfare congress as it was at the early penitentiary congresses.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, at the London Statistical Congress of 1860 Carl Wilhelm Asher presided over a section on “Criminalia”, whereas mining inspector Visschers appeared at Gustave Moynier’s side at the Welfare Congress in Brussels in 1856 and at the Geneva Diplomatic Conference in 1864.<sup>39</sup>

Our activists were eager travellers. For most of them, their congress visits were just the tip of the iceberg. Some of the individuals on our list made the traditional “grand tour” after finishing their studies. Others, such as August Cieszkowski, could be found shuttling restlessly across Europe, as his biographer notes: “Paris, Berlin, Warsaw are all equally home to him as, for varying periods, are Baden, Aix or Rome”, before returning to Posen/Poznan in the mid-1840s.<sup>40</sup> A majority travelled with the explicit intention of studying and learning in their field of specialization. Engel, trained as a mining engineer, had studied with Frédéric Le Play at the École des Mines in Paris, and had met with Quetelet during his stay in Brussels. Because of his extensive contacts with economists, statisticians, and reformers in France, Britain and Belgium, Engel was able to provide his students at the Statistical Seminar in Berlin, Gustave Schmoller and Lujo Brentano, with many letters of reference.<sup>41</sup>

De la Sagra was one of the few European reformers in our sample who ventured outside Europe. He made a long visit to Cuba in order to study

37. Of Ackersdijck it is known that he was also an anti-slavery activist in the Netherlands. See Janse, *De Afschaffers*, p. 53.

38. Ackersdijck, Suringar and Von Baumhauer also were regular visitors of the Dutch agricultural congresses (*landhuishoudkundige congressen*), which had been held regularly since 1846. For Suringar and Von Baumhauer it was – among other things – the place to promote a “Dutch Mettray”, a rural colony that, after the French example, would help to educate children “in danger”.

39. Through follow-up research on the other congress series we hope to find more evidence of what appears to be arbitrary agenda setting.

40. A. Liebich, *Between Ideology and Utopia: The Politics and Philosophy of August Cieszkowski* (Dordrecht [etc.], 1979), p. 215.

41. Grimmer-Solem, *The Rise of Historical Economics and Social Reform in Germany 1864–1894*, p. 129.

and teach botany as director of the botanical garden in Havana, followed in 1835 by a five-month stay in the United States to study economic, social, and political issues. As a correspondent of the Institut Royal de France he reported on American mentally ill and deaf-mute people. In 1839 he once again left Spain for Belgium and Holland to study schooling, welfare institutions, and prisons, and met with Dutch philanthropist Suringar.<sup>42</sup>

De la Sagra was not the only one who travelled extensively. In 1832 Varrentrapp visited Germany and Austria; in 1838 he went to the Netherlands, Belgium, and England, where he met Chadwick, and in 1847, as a follow up to his visit to the penitentiary congress in Brussels he visited England once again. Eventually, in 1852 – after visiting the Brussels hygienic congress – he visited England for the third time to increase his knowledge about the sanitary movement there. The main drainage system constructed in Frankfurt in the 1860s was an indirect result of Varrentrapp’s “knowledge transfer”.<sup>43</sup> Suringar, who eventually became an ardent exponent of solitary confinement for prisoners, is said to have visited at least fifty prisons outside the Netherlands before reaching this conclusion.<sup>44</sup> Ackersdijck is also known to have been a restless traveller. Prior to the late 1840s, Ackersdijck’s journeys resembled the model of eighteenth-century scientific travel, known as *ars apodemica*. Thereafter, when the international congress period began, he combined his travels with congress visits.<sup>45</sup>

Everyone on our list without exception was a member of a national learned society or professional association, usually more than one. Some of these associations already had a respectable history, such as the Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques (one of the academies of the Institut de France), and the Dutch educational institution Maatschappij tot Nut

42. “J’ai aussi rencontré en cet endroit l’un des plus ardents philanthropes de la Hollande, M. Suringar, qui depuis longues années consacre toute son existence au soulagement des prisonniers, à leur réforme morale, et s’efforce de leur procurer les moyens de vivre honnêtement”; see Ramón De la Sagra, *Voyage en Hollande et en Belgique sous le rapport de l’instruction primaire, des établissements de bienfaisance et des prisons, dans les deux pays*, 2 vols (n.p., 1839), I, p. 158. For more on De la Sagra, see Infante Ascensión Cambrón, Paul Estrade, and Marie-Claude Lecuyer (eds), *Ramón de la Sagra y Cuba*, 2 vols (Sada – a Coruña, 1992–1993).

43. E.P. Hennock, “The Urban Sanitary Movement in England and Germany, 1838–1914: A Comparison”, *Continuity and Change*, 15 (2000), p. 273.

44. a.o. Cleve, Düsseldorf, Cologne, Darmstadt, Basle, Neufchâtel, Lausanne, Geneva, Berne, Altorf, Zürich, Ludwigsburg, Boppard, Mannheim, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Norrköping, Karlskrona, Berlin, Spandau, Hamburg, Elberfeld, Eberbach, Nassau-Dietz, Weimar, Frankfurt a/M., Würzburg, Bamberg, Lichtenau, Munich, Kaiserslautern, Landau, Spiers, Zweibrücken, Braunweiler, Paris, Tours, Vilvoorde, etc.; see E. Laurillard, *Levensschets van W.H. Suringar* (Leiden, 1873).

45. Nico Randerad, “De statistisch reizen van Jan Ackersdijck”, *De Negentiende Eeuw*, 32 (2008), pp. 15–26.

van 't Algemeen; others were new and reflected the booming interest in welfare and social sciences, such as the French Société d'Économie Politique, established in 1842, the Société d'Économie Charitable (1847) and the Société d'Économie Sociale (founded by Le Play in 1856), the British National Association for the Promotion of Social Science (1857), the Howard Association (a penal reform organization founded in London in 1866), the Sanitary Institute of Great Britain (1876).

Our transnational experts were not silent members of these (and many other) organizations. They used them as venues to test their ideas or disseminate knowledge from abroad, and were frequently dispatched to international congresses as official representatives of these associations. Chadwick and Brown promoted their interest in sanitary reform, workers' rights, uniform weights and measures, and life insurance at the Statistical Society of Manchester (1833) and the Statistical Society of London (1834). Suringar founded the Nederlandsch Genootschap tot zedelijke verbetering der gevangenen (1823), the Dutch Society for the Improvement of Prisoners. Brown was one of the founders of the Institute of Actuaries, and served as its president from 1867 to 1870. Engel was among the founders and an active member of the Verein für Sozialpolitik (1873). Inspired by transnational debates through their travelling members, these national associations were powerful mediators between governments and societal interests. As various authors have shown, the Verein für Sozialpolitik, enlightened by British examples, provided strong arguments for a more active state in welfare provision.<sup>46</sup>

The individuals on our list were also active in numerous governmental commissions and inquiries in their home countries. It was clear that governments were taking them seriously as experts on poor relief, prison reform, sanitation, statistics, and the like, precisely the areas in which the mid-nineteenth-century state was expanding its action. In the Netherlands, for example, Von Baumhauer and Suringar – high on our top-twenty list – were known as ardent supporters of penitentiary care for juveniles. This issue had emerged as part of the larger debate on deviancy, surveillance, and re-education taking place in several countries. Various new classifications drawing lines between different categories of prisoners, between adults and juveniles, and between incorrigible criminals on the one hand and (young) offenders and neglected children who could be reintegrated into society on the other hand, were developed and discussed at international congresses.

46. Dietrich Rueschemeyer and Ronan Van Rossem, "The Verein für Sozialpolitik and the Fabian Society: A Study in the Sociology of Policy-Relevant Knowledge", in Dietrich Rueschemeyer and Theda Skocpol (eds), *States, Social Knowledge, and the Origins of Modern Social Policies* (Princeton, NJ, 1996); David F. Lindenfeld, *The Practical Imagination: The German Sciences of State in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago, IL [etc.], 1997); Grimmer-Solem, *The Rise of Historical Economics and Social Reform in Germany 1864–1894*.

Suringar and Baumhauer's brochure on the French agricultural colony for wayward children was presented at various congresses and also circulated nationally, where it served the cause of the *Nederlandsch Genootschap tot zedelijke verbetering der gevangenen*, which advocated imprisonment and reformation of children in the countryside rather than in antiquated, ill-suited inner-city prisons.<sup>47</sup> Although initially rejected, and overtaken by yet another prison-like solution in the city of Alkmaar, the idea was eventually adopted and implemented by the Ministry of Justice and its Inspector-General of Prisons. Amidst opposing national views and interests regarding penitentiary care for minors, the brochure's reference to foreign examples and internationally acclaimed experts, and the backing of new penitentiary ideas by an active and well-connected Dutch prison society had a decisive, albeit belated impact on national decision making.<sup>48</sup>

National organizations were also springboards for international contacts. Many of our transnational experts were corresponding members of foreign societies and associations. Chadwick, for example, was elected a corresponding member of the Institutes of France and Belgium, and the Societies of Medicine and Hygiene of France, Belgium, and Italy. Varentrapp, David, Mittermaier, Visschers, and De la Sagra were honorary members of Suringar's Dutch prison reform society. In 1860 Ackersdijk was invited by the *Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques* to attend its meetings and inform the members about the latest political and economic development in his home country. Visschers visited the World Exhibition of 1851 as a member of the Central Statistical Commission of Belgium. Afterwards, he and the Commission's president, Adolphe Quetelet, presented a proposal calling for an international statistical congress to be convened. The fact that they were speaking in the name of a recognized and respected body added weight to the proposal. Moreover, they could direct state subsidies towards an international event.

The members of our group were active writers and recipients of letters. Letters were undoubtedly the most important means of communication throughout the nineteenth century. In contrast to the classical period of the Republic of Letters, the correspondence networks of experts in the nineteenth century have not been studied extensively. Some important correspondence has been published, and more is on its way. It is certainly revealing that fourteen of our twenty transnational experts appear in Mittermaier's correspondence, and fifteen are listed among Quetelet's correspondents.<sup>49</sup>

47. Marie-Matthieu Von Baumhauer, *De landbouwkolonie te Mettray (in Frankrijk), een voorbeeld voor Nederland* (Leeuwarden, 1847).

48. Leonards, *De ontdekking van het onschuldige criminele kind*, pp. 192–194.

49. Riemer, *Das Netzwerk der "Gefängnisfreunde" (1830–1872)*; L. Wellens-De Donder, "Inventaire de la correspondance d'Adolphe Quetelet déposée à l'Académie royale de Belgique" (Brussels, 1966).

As Lars Hendrik Riemer has observed, the main function of the exchange of letters between men of learning was to disseminate “knowledge about knowledge”.<sup>50</sup> Experts informed each other about relevant publications and developments. To stay abreast of things, specialists needed access to a network of correspondents, such as Mittermaier’s. It was Varrentrapp who informed Mittermaier in February 1846 about Ducpétiaux’s idea of organizing a congress of “friends of prison reform”, the meeting that would initiate our sequence of international gatherings on social reform.<sup>51</sup>

Many of our activists were also prolific authors. Some of them, such as Mittermaier, Varrentrapp, Ackersdijck, and Suringar, were also known to possess large, specialized libraries. The dedications in books belonging to Suringar’s library provide additional insight into his wide network (not surprisingly, we find a large number of names from our list). It is beyond the scope of this article to even begin to cite from the numerous books and articles our experts wrote. Being a productive writer no doubt raised one’s stature as an expert, but it was not the only criterion. Ackersdijck, for example, published little, but was known as an excellent speaker.

An important activity of some members of our group was the publication and editing of journals and other periodicals in the field of social reform. The physician Varrentrapp, for instance, was editor of the influential *Jahrbücher für Gefängniskunde und Besserungsanstalten*, published between 1842 and 1849. Similarly, Engel edited (and contributed to) the authoritative journals on statistics which he had founded in Dresden and Berlin. As early as 1834, Wolowski began publishing his *Revue de législation et de jurisprudence*, and somewhat later Dael launched his *Statistische Mitteilungen über Rheinbessen im Allgemeinen und dessen Land- und Forstwirtschaft im Besonderen*. In 1863 Duval founded *L’Économiste français, organe des colonies, de la colonisation et de la réforme sociale par l’association et par l’amélioration du sort des classes pauvres*. From 1856 to 1879, Block was editor of *Annuaire de l’économie politique et de la statistique*. De la Sagra founded the *Revista de intereses materiales y morales* and *El Porvenir*. These periodicals and others were also used to give voice to the concerns and convictions of like-minded reformers, thereby giving more weight to our transnational community.

The breadth of the transnationalists’ outlook as manifested in books and periodicals not only reflects their multiple practical concerns, but also highlights the scope of their scientific interests. It was not eclecticism that led them in seemingly diverse directions, but rather the utopian wish to achieve unity. It was the age of synthesis, of the Humboldtian quest for cosmopolitan knowledge. The social sciences had just begun their

50. Riemer, *Das Netzwerk der “Gefängnisfreunde”* (1830–1872), p. 104.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 701.

advance, largely modelled on the supposedly fixed laws of natural science, but around the mid-nineteenth century it was far from clear where they were going. Statistics would become a cornerstone of the art of government and virtually all social legislation promulgated in the late nineteenth century and in the twentieth century. However, the encyclopedic scope of our transnational network was also an impediment to its effectiveness.

Many of the reform issues that our conferees discussed and systematized gradually evolved into state-sponsored social provisions. Social policies, however, as many studies have shown, were long in the making, and had many different roots.<sup>52</sup> The market for welfare policies is an imperfect one. Each state had its own trajectory of social legislation, and it is difficult to link legislation directly to impulses from the transnational arena. For instance, though the penitentiary congresses of the 1840s generally held that solitary confinement was the best way to deal with the moral depravity and corruption of criminals, the system as such was not put into practice uniformly throughout Europe. In France, the youth prison, La Petite Roquette, had adopted a cellular system in the 1830s. In contrast, in the Netherlands children were hardly ever subjected to solitary confinement and panoptical prisons for adults were put in place only gradually after the 1850s, despite fierce advocacy by the Dutch Prison Society and its president Willem Hendrik Suringar.

Although his official position was inspector of mines, Auguste Vischers of Belgium was deeply involved in a number of welfare projects (sickness benefits, pensions, saving banks, working-class housing, penal reform), which he strenuously defended at international congresses and in his home country. He used successes at one level to promote issues at other levels – a strategy frequently adopted by regular conferees who hovered between local, national, and transnational spheres. Nevertheless, it is not easy to link transnational debates, suggestions, and conclusions to specific policy measures in European countries. While transnational exchange no doubt helped frame aspects of social reform, direct influence is difficult to measure.

There is also a time gap. The congresses we selected were held between 1840 and 1880, but the bulk of social legislation came later. During that period, state bureaucracies were relatively small and characterized by a low degree of specialization. Within their national or local bureaucracies the permanent state officials among our congress elite (Von Baumhauer, Engel, and Visschers) and those who held administrative positions for

52. S. Kott, *L'Etat social allemand: Représentations et pratiques* (Paris, 1995); P. Thane, *Foundations of the Welfare State* (London [etc.], 1962); J.R. Horne, *A Social Laboratory for Modern France: The Musée Social & the Rise of the Welfare State* (Durham [etc.], 2002); E.P. Hennock, *The Origin of the Welfare State in England and Germany, 1850–1914: Social Policies Compared* (Cambridge, 2007).

shorter periods (Chadwick, Varrentrapp, and Ackersdijck) must have frequently felt as though they were crying out in the wilderness. Kindred spirits were more likely to be found abroad. The gap between the transnational and national or local levels was wide. Distilling “policy-relevant” knowledge from transnational debates and tracing its implementation at national or local level is no easy task, and one which can only be assessed by carefully mapping individual reforms.

With the professionalization of government and the social sciences our transnational community dissolved and was succeeded by a growing number of more specialized networks. In the 1880s some of these networks began to assume institutionalized forms, such as the International Institute of Statistics (1885), the Comité permanent international des accidents du travail et des assurances sociales (1889), the International Association for Labour Legislation (1900), and the International Labour Office (1919), to name but a few international organizations in the field of social policy.

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this article we have identified a group of transnational social reform experts, and we have traced their relations across different communication channels. Our sample taken from five series of penitentiary, welfare, social science, hygiene, and statistical congresses resulted in a list of twenty leading transnational experts. As a group they are not widely known in mainstream European historiography, but their personal biographies show an unmistakable heterogeneous and multilevel interconnectedness in the field of social reform. Evidence from our research into their professional, political, and associational activities and their travels, publications, and writings suggests that we can safely speak of an “epistemic community” *avant la lettre*. In the current notion of the concept, coined by Peter M. Haas, such a community consists of “a network of knowledge-based experts” who define for decision-makers what the problems are and how they are to be solved.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, though, much of this was still to come. At that time, the line between experts and decision-makers was not yet distinct and the experts’ claim to specific, authoritative knowledge did not go unchallenged.<sup>53</sup> Our conclusion that this was an “epistemic community in the making” is evidenced by the diverse means our group’s members deployed to claim authority and build their network. They obviously enjoyed attending congresses, in addition to the more traditional personal meetings and study visits. No doubt all of them wrote letters to keep in touch and exchange viewpoints, although only a

53. Haas, “Introduction: Epistemic Communities”, p. 2.

small portion of their letters have survived. Many also contributed articles to general and specialized periodicals, or wrote monographs, thus adding to the expanding body of social scientific knowledge. Yet others added to the group's expertise and developed new insights through membership of and active participation in professional associations.

The diversity of its interests, however, made it difficult for the network to act as a full-fledged epistemic community, translating a shared outlook on the need for social reform into policy-relevant knowledge. Social reform in the period under consideration was not a single issue, but comprised numerous subfields, ranging from poor relief to penal reform, and from public hygiene to moral education. The meaning of the concept varied locally and nationally, and it was only through the zealous activity of our congress elite that it acquired a transnational connotation.

This article has focused primarily on *how* a network came into existence, and how it was maintained. We have devoted less attention to *why* the community formed itself and what its impact was. The hybrid nature of our “epistemic community in the making”, characterized by fluid interests in social reform, makes it particularly difficult to pinpoint causal relations between the transnational discussion forums and social policies. In our introduction we pointed to urbanization and industrialization as typical catalysts for social reform, but this does not fully explain the profusion and simultaneity of social reformist ideas and activities. For this, we should further explore the interplay of action and reaction generated by different paths of economic growth in nineteenth-century Europe and, of course, attempts at convergence by our transnational community.

To determine the effectiveness of our community we could look at (the beginnings of) modern poverty relief systems, sophisticated penitentiary and youth care institutions (solitary confinement, reformatories), better health care, legislation on child labour and (un)employment, and the degree of statistical standardization achieved in each European country by the turn of the century. The extent to which these policies can be attributed to our transnational experts is a question that requires further study. Reconnecting the transnational space we revealed, with national, regional, or local reform performances is the next step in what could become a full-scale *histoire croisée* of social reform in Europe's long nineteenth century.



## ANNEXE

Table 3. *List of congresses related to 'social reform', 1840–1880.*

Year	Name**	Location
1840	Convention antiesclaviste mnd	London
1843	Convention antiesclaviste mnd	London
1843	Cng I de la Paix	London
1846	Convention mnd antialcoolique	London
1846	<i>Cng I pénitentiaire*</i>	<i>Frankfurt</i>
1847	Cng I des economists	Brussels
1847	<i>Cng I pénitentiaire</i>	<i>Brussels</i>
1848	Cng I de la Paix	Brussels
1848	Cng I d'agriculture	Brussels
1849	Cng I de la Paix	Paris
1850	Cng I de la Paix	Frankfurt a/M
1851	Cng I de la Paix	London
1851	Cnf I sanitaire	Paris
1852	<i>Cng général d'hygiène</i>	<i>Brussels</i>
1853	Cnv mnd antialcoolique	New York
1853	<i>Cng général de statistique</i>	<i>Brussels</i>
1853	Cng I de la Paix	Edinburgh
1855	<i>Cng I de statistique</i>	<i>Paris</i>
1856	Soc I des études pratiques d'économie sociale	Paris
1856	<i>Cng I de bienfaisance</i>	<i>Brussels</i>
1857	<i>Cng I de statistique</i>	<i>Vienna</i>
1857	<i>Cng I de bienfaisance</i>	<i>Frankfurt a/M</i>
1859	Cnf I sanitaire	Paris
1860	<i>Cng I de statistique</i>	<i>London</i>
1862	Cnf I de la tempérance et de la prohibition	London
1862	<i>Cng I de bienfaisance</i>	<i>London</i>
1862	<i>Cng I de l'Asn I pour le progrès des sciences sociales</i>	<i>Brussels</i>
1863	<i>Cng I de statistique</i>	<i>Berlin</i>
1863	Cng I de l'Asn I pour le progrès des sciences sociales	Ghent
1864	Cng I de l'Asn I pour le progrès des sciences sociales	Amsterdam
1865	Cng I de l'Asn I pour le progrès des sciences sociales	Berne
1866	Cnf I sanitaire	Constantinople
1867	Cnf I anti-esclavagiste	Paris
1867	Cng I de la Paix	Geneva
1867	<i>Cng I de statistique</i>	<i>Florence</i>
1869	Cng de la Ligue I de la Paix et de la Liberté	Berne-Lausanne
1869	<i>Cng I de statistique</i>	<i>The Hague</i>
1871	Cng de la Ligue I de la Paix et de la Liberté	Lausanne
1872	Cng de la Ligue I de la Paix et de la Liberté	Geneva
1872	<i>Cng I pénitentiaire</i>	<i>London</i>
1872	<i>Cng I de statistique</i>	<i>St Petersburg</i>
1874	Cnf I sanitaire	Vienna
1876	Cnf I de tempérance	Philadelphia
1876	Cnf I de la Fed abolitionniste I	London
1876	<i>Cng I de statistique</i>	<i>Budapest</i>
1876	<i>Cng I d'hygiène, de sauvetage et d'économie sociale</i>	<i>Brussels</i>

Table 3. (Continued)

Year	Name**	Location
1877	Cng de la Ligue I de la Paix et de la Liberté	Geneva
1877	Cng I de la Féd abolitionniste	Geneva
1878	Cng I feminist	Paris
1878	Cng de la Ligue I de la Paix et de la Liberté	Geneva
1878	Cng I d'agriculture	Paris
1878	Cng I des institutions de prévoyance	Paris
1878	Cng I de démographie	Paris
1878	Cng général de statistique	Paris
1878	<i>Cng I d'hygiène publique</i>	<i>Paris</i>
1878	Cng I pour l'étude des questions relatives à l'alcoolisme	Paris
1878	<i>Cng I pénitentiaire</i>	<i>Stockholm</i>
1878	Cng I du patronage des prisonniers libérés	Paris
1878	Cng U pour l'amélioration du sort des aveugles et des sourds-muets	Paris
1878	Cnf I de la Féd abolitionniste I	Paris
1878	Cng I de la Paix	Paris
1879	Cnf I de la Fed abolitionniste I	Liège
1879	Cng I libre de l'éducation	Paris
1880	Cnf I de tempérance	Melbourne
1880	Cng I libre de l'éducation	Paris
1880	Cng I pour l'étude des questions relatives à l'alcoolisme	Brussels
1880	<i>Cng I de bienfaisance</i>	<i>Milan</i>
1880	Cng I de l'amélioration du sort des sourds-muets	Milan
1880	Cng I d'hygiène	Turin
1880	Cng I de la Féd abolitionniste	Gênes
1880	Cng I libre de l'éducation	Paris

\* The twenty-one congress sessions in the sample are in italics.

\*\* Mnd = Mondial; Cng = Congrès; I = International; Cnv = Convention; Cnf = Conférence; Soc = Société; Asn = Association; Féd = Fédération; U = Universel.