

A photograph of three people at a protest. A woman on the left and a man on the right are smiling and holding a large white banner. They are wearing red t-shirts with a yellow circular logo that says 'NUCLEAR POWER? NO THANKS' around a smiling sun. The banner features a large sunflower in the center and a portion of the European Union flag (blue with yellow stars) on the right. In the background, other protesters and signs are visible, including one that says 'e Euro' and another that says 'NUCLEAR POWER? NO THANKS!'.

The Environment and the European Public Sphere

**PERCEPTIONS,
ACTORS,
POLICIES**

edited by

Christian Wenkel,
Eric Bussière,
Anahita Grisoni and
Hélène Miard-Delacroix

The Environment and the European Public Sphere: Perceptions, Actors, Policies



**THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE EUROPEAN PUBLIC
SPHERE: PERCEPTIONS, ACTORS, POLICIES**

edited by

**Christian Wenkel, Eric Bussière, Anahita Grisoni
and Hélène Miard-Delacroix**

© 2020

The White Horse Press, The Old Vicarage, Main Street, Winwick,
Cambridgeshire, UK

Set in 11 point Adobe Caslon Pro and Lucida Sans

OPEN ACCESS version published 2023

Text CC BY-ND-NC (reuse of illustrations may not be permitted)

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-912186-14-3 e-ISBN 978-1-912186-19-8

doi: 10.3197/63811648691469.book

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contributor Biographies	ix
List of Abbreviations	xiii
Editors' Introduction	1
PART I. <i>The emergence of a European public sphere on environmental issues</i>	
<i>Chapter 1.</i>	
The First International Congress for the Protection of Landscapes: A European Convergence? <i>Charles-François Mathis (University of Bordeaux)</i>	19
<i>Chapter 2.</i>	
The Historical Roots of the European Culture of Catastrophes <i>François Walter (University of Lausanne)</i>	37
<i>Chapter 3.</i>	
Europe and Chernobyl: Contested Localisations of the Accident's Environmental, Political, Social and Cultural Impact <i>Karena Kalmbach (Eindhoven University of Technology)</i>	54
<i>Chapter 4.</i>	
The Western European Public Sphere and the Environment in Eastern Europe during the Cold War: Between Model, Utilisation and Denunciation <i>Michel Dupuy (Ecole normale supérieure)</i>	70
PART II. <i>The shaping and use of the European public sphere on environmental issues: About the influence of transnational activists and movements</i>	
<i>Chapter 5.</i>	
The Impact of East German Nature Conservationists on the European Environmental Consciousness in the Twentieth Century <i>Astrid Mignon Kirchhof (Humboldt University of Berlin)</i>	91

The Environment and the European Public Sphere

Chapter 6.

- Wetlands of Protest. Seeking Transnational Trajectories in
Hungary's Environmental Movement 108
Daniela Neubacher (Andrássy University Budapest)

Chapter 7.

- Towards a 'Europe of Struggles'? Three Visions of Europe in the
Early Anti-Nuclear Energy Movement 1975–79 124
Andrew Tompkins (University of Sheffield)

Chapter 8.

- Entering the European Political Arena, Adapting to Europe:
Greenpeace International, 1987–93 147
*Liesbeth van de Grift (Utrecht University), Hans Rodenburg
(Radboud University Nijmegen), Guus Wieman (Utrecht University)*

*PART III. From a public to a political sphere: The role of green parties and
parliamentary activity in setting an environmental agenda*

Chapter 9.

- The Development of Green Parties in Europe: Obstacles and
Opportunities 1970–2015 165
Emilie van Haute (Free University of Brussels)

Chapter 10.

- Will Europe Ever Become 'Green'? The Green Parties' Pro-
European and Federalist Turning Point since the 1990s 181
Giorgio Grimaldi (University of Genoa)

Chapter 11.

- A Touch of Green Amid the Grey. Europe During the
Formative Phase of the German Greens from the 1970s to the
1980s: Between Rejection and Reformulation 195
Silke Mende (Institute of Contemporary History, Munich–Berlin)

Chapter 12.

- Energy and the Environment in Parliamentary Debates in the
Federal Republic of Germany, United Kingdom and France from
the 1970s to the 1990s 205
Eva Oberloskamp (Institute of Contemporary History, Munich–Berlin)

Contents

PART IV. *Europeanising environmental policies from below?*

Chapter 13.

- Responding to the European Public? Public Debates, Societal
Actors and the Emergence of a European Environmental Policy 223
Jan-Henrik Meyer (University of Copenhagen)

Chapter 14.

- The Major Stages in the Construction of European
Environmental Law 244
Sophie Baziadoly (Cergy-Pontoise University)

Chapter 15.

- Multi-Level Learning: How the European Union Draws
Lessons from Water Management at the River Basin Level 263
*Marjolein van Eerd (Radboud University Nijmegen), Duncan
Liefferink (Radboud University Nijmegen)*

Chapter 16.

- Environmental Protection and the Evolution of the French and
German Energy Systems from 1973 to the 2000s 283
Christopher Fabre (Sorbonne University, Paris)

Chapter 17.

- Trajectories of European Environmental Governance since the
1970s 299
Anthony R. Zito (University of Newcastle upon Tyne)

- Index 323



CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

Sophie Baziadoly is a lawyer, specialised in the fields of European Union law, public finances and taxation, as well as being an assistant professor at the law department of the University of Cergy-Pontoise, interested in trans-sectoral issues, like European environmental law. She has published several books on this topic.

Eric Bussière is Professor Emeritus at Sorbonne University and Jean Monnet Chair in the history of European integration; and was founding director of the Laboratoire d'excellence 'Ecrire une histoire nouvelle de l'Europe' (2012–2018). A member of several scientific councils, he is also corresponding member of the Academy of History of Portugal. Author and editor of numerous publications on economic history and the history of European integration, he is editor of *Histoire, Economie et société* (HES) and co-editor of *The European Commission – History and Memories of an Institution 1958–2000* (3 vols, 2007–2019).

Michel Dupuy is an associated researcher at the Institute of Modern and Contemporary History in Paris. Following his Ph.D. on the history of forest ecology in France and in Germany, he held a fellowship at the Centre Marc Bloch in Berlin in order to investigate the environmental history of the GDR under various aspects, such as air pollution, hunting or forest recreation. His research also focuses on the media treatment of environmental issues.

Marjolein van Eerd is advisor on water quality and international collaboration at Rijkswaterstaat, the public works department of the Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and Water. From 2013 to 2018, she was a research fellow at the Radboud University Nijmegen, where she contributed to the Dutch 'Knowledge for Climate' research project. In her own research, she has dealt with transboundary climate adaptation governance and the reloading of implementation experiences in EU water governance.

Christopher Fabre holds a Ph.D. in history of energy, is a graduate of CentraleSupélec and attended IHEDATE and the XXVII Class of the French Ecole de Guerre as an auditor. After starting his career in public communication, then completing his thesis at ADEME, he joined the Public Affairs Department of the electricity distribution company Enedis in 2014. Since 2018 he has been Head of the Private Office of the Secretary General.

Liesbeth van de Grift is associate professor in history of International Relations at Utrecht University. She specialises in the history of political representation through the lens of rural and environmental governance in the twentieth century. She is currently leading the project 'Consumers on the March', which studies the rise of consumer governance and the role of consumer representatives within the European Community.

Giorgio Grimaldi holds a Ph.D. in history of federalism and European integration from the University of Pavia and is currently fellow researcher and adjunct professor at the University of Genoa, where he teaches history and institutions of the Middle East countries and holds supplementary courses on green political thought, history of global and EU environmental governance and green parties in Europe. His research interests and publications include green parties, history of European integration, EU environmental policy and global environmental governance.

Anahita Grisoni is a French sociologist and urban planner, affiliated to the research unit 'Environnement, ville, société' at the University of Lyon. Author of several books about green transition, she currently leads the French think tank 'La fabrique écologique'.

The Environment and the European Public Sphere

Emilie van Haute is chair of the Department of Political Science at the Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB) and researcher at the Centre d'étude de la vie politique (Cevipol). Her research interests focus on party membership, intra-party dynamics, elections and voting behaviour. Her research has been published in *West European Politics*, *Party Politics*, *Electoral Studies*, *Political Studies*, *European Political Science*, or *Acta Politica*. She is also co-editor of *Acta Politica*.

Karena Kalmbach is assistant professor in history at Eindhoven University of Technology. Her areas of expertise include social and cultural history of technology and the environment (with a particular focus on nuclear history), politics of memory and social studies of science and technology. She has done extensive research on the question of how national and international nuclear politics have influenced the debate on the health effects of Chernobyl.

Astrid Mignon Kirchhof is a senior researcher and project manager at the Saxon Academy of Science and Humanities in Leipzig, following positions at Deutsches Museum in Munich, Georgetown University in Washington, DC, and at Humboldt University of Berlin. Her research covers transnational nineteenth to twenty-first century German history in its social, ecological, technological and urban dimensions, especially the histories of nature protection, technology and energy, conflict and social movements as well as philanthropic and gender history. Recently she co-edited (with J.R. McNeill) *Nature and the Iron Curtain. Environmental Policy and Social Movements in Communist and Capitalist Countries 1945–1990* (2019).

Duncan Liefverink is assistant professor in the Environmental Governance and Politics Group at the Institute for Management Research, Radboud University Nijmegen, the Netherlands. His main research fields are European and comparative environmental politics, with a particular interest in the dynamic interrelationship between national and EU environmental policy making and implementation.

Charles-François Mathis is senior lecturer in history at Bordeaux Montaigne University. He specialises in the environmental history of Britain and France in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He is currently preparing a cultural and material history of coal in Britain from the 1840s to 1940. Former chairman of the French network of environmental historians, he is also a member of the board of the ESEH and is responsible for an environmental series for Champ Vallon publishing house. His *Greening the City: Nature in French Towns from the 17th Century*, co-authored with Emilie-Anne Pépy and translated from the French original, was published by The White Horse Press in 2020.

Silke Mende is a contemporary historian and deputy director at Centre Marc Bloch (CMB) in Berlin. In 2009, she received her doctorate with a thesis on the emergence of the West-German green movement in the 1970s and 1980s. In 2018 she qualified with a habilitation thesis on the history of Francophonie across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Her current research deals with the European history of democracy and parliamentarism in the last third of the twentieth century.

Jan-Henrik Meyer is a senior researcher at the Max Planck Institute for European Legal History in Frankfurt/Main, conducting research on the emergence of the environmental law and policy in the European Union; and an associate researcher at the Leibniz Centre for Contemporary History in Potsdam. His research interests include transnational environmental and energy history, notably nuclear history, and the history of the public sphere. He recently published the chapter on environmental policy in *The European Commission 1986–2000 – History and Memories of an Institution*.

Contributor Biographies

Hélène Miard-Delacroix is an historian and currently professor at the Department of German Studies at Sorbonne University in Paris. She is a member of the research group SIRICE (Sorbonne - Identités, relations internationales et civilisation de l'Europe). Her research focuses on the history of Germany since 1945, in particular the history of the Franco-German relationship and of the German contribution to the European integration process. Among her various publications is a transnational Franco-German history since 1963 published in French and in German (2011). She is also member of the Academic Committee of the House of European History in Brussels.

Daniela Neubacher studied Journalism and Communications in Graz and Saint Petersburg. After working in both fields, she completed a Masters in Central European Studies at the Andrásy University in Budapest. Currently, she is a Ph.D. candidate in history, focusing on cross-border protest movements and environmentalism in Central Eastern Europe during the 1980s. Since 2018 she has been working as a research associate at the Institute of the Danube Region and Central Europe (IDM).

Eva Oberloskamp is research associate at the Leibniz Institute for Contemporary History (Munich). She has published on the history of intellectuals, the history of European integration and the history of counterterrorism in Europe. At present, her main research interest is the influence of environmental thinking on energy policies in West Germany and the United Kingdom since the 1970s.

Hans Rodenburg is a staff member at Wetenschappelijk Bureau GroenLinks, the think tank of the Dutch Green Party. Previously, he worked as an historian at the Centre for Parliamentary History at the Radboud University in Nijmegen. His research focuses on the political history and future of the welfare state.

Andrew S. Tompkins is lecturer in modern European history at the University of Sheffield. He has previously worked at the University of Oxford and the Humboldt University of Berlin. He is the author of *Better Active than Radioactive! Anti-Nuclear Protest in 1970s France and West Germany* (2016). His current research examines transnational relations in everyday life along the French-West German and Polish-East German borders after 1945.

François Walter has been professor of early modern and modern history at the University of Geneva since 1986. His research focuses on Swiss history, urban history, landscape and territory history, the construction of cultures of risk, and the production of social identities. His numerous publications include *Les figures paysagères de la nation* (2004), *Catastrophes: une histoire culturelle* (2008), which was translated into Italian and German, and *Hiver: histoire d'une saison* (2014).

Christian Wenkel is associate professor of contemporary history at Artois University. After receiving a Ph.D. from the University of Munich and Sciences Po Paris, he was a senior research fellow at the German Historical Institute in Paris and at the Laboratoire d'excellence 'Ecrire une histoire nouvelle de l'Europe' at Sorbonne University. His research interests cover the Franco-German relationship, the Cold War, European integration and phenomena of Europeanisation in the long twentieth century. He recently co-edited a special issue of *Comparativ* on transnational spheres of communication in Europe from 1914 to 1945 (2018).

Guus Wieman is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of History and Civilisation at the European University Institute in Florence. He is interested in processes of quantification and economic knowledge production within international organisations. His cur-

The Environment and the European Public Sphere

rent research focuses on the history of Eurostat, the Statistical Office of the European Communities.

Anthony R. Zito is professor of European Public Policy at Newcastle University. He is currently co-director of the Jean Monnet Centre for Excellence at Newcastle University and co-editor of *Environmental Politics*. His research focuses on environmental governance and European Union decision-making. He has authored and co-authored numerous journal articles as well as *Creating Environmental Policy in the European Union* (2000) and *Environmental Governance in Europe* (2013).

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADLT	<i>Les Amis de la Terre</i>
AFP	Agence France-Presse
AP	Associated Press
ARD	<i>Arbeitsgemeinschaft der öffentlich-rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten der Bundesrepublik Deutschland</i> (Germany)
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BBU	<i>Bundesverband Bürgerinitiativen Umweltschutz</i> (Germany)
BEUC	Bureau européen des unions de consommateurs
BME	<i>Budapesti Műszaki és Gazdaságtudományi Egyetem</i> (Hungary)
BRD	<i>Bundesrepublik Deutschland</i> (FRG)
BUND	<i>Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz Deutschland</i> (Germany)
CAAG	Clean Air Action Group (Hungary)
CDA	<i>Christen-Democratisch Appel</i> (The Netherlands)
CDU	<i>Christlich Demokratische Union</i> (Germany)
CEGRP	Coordination of Green and Radical Parties in Europe
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CIS	Common Implementation Strategy
CJEU	Court of Justice of the European Union
CO ₂	Carbon dioxide
CSU	<i>Christlich-Soziale Union</i> (Germany)
DDR	<i>Deutsche Demokratische Republik</i> (GDR)
DG XI/ENV	Directorate-General for Environment (European Commission)
EAP	Environment Action Programme
EC	European Community or European Communities
ECGP	European Coordination of Green Parties
ECOROPA	Ecological European Action Group
ECPA	European Crop Protection Association
EDF	<i>Electricité de France</i>
EEA	European Environmental Agency
EEB	European Environmental Bureau
EEC	European Economic Community
EELV	<i>Europe Écologie Les Verts</i> (France)
EFGP	European Federation of Green Parties
EGP	European Green Party
ELTE	<i>Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem</i> (Hungary)
EMAS	Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EU)
EMU	European Monetary Union
ENEL	<i>Ente nazionale per l'energia elettrica</i> (Italy)

The Environment and the European Public Sphere

EP	European Parliament
ER-EER	<i>Erakond Eestimaa Rohelised</i> (Estonia)
ESF	European Social Forum
ETS	Emissions Trading Scheme (EU)
EU	European Union
Euratom	European Atomic Energy Community
EUREAU	European Federation of National Associations of Water Services
FBR	Fast Breeder Reactor
FD	Floods Directive (EU)
FDP	<i>Freie Demokratische Partei</i> (Germany)
FoE	Friends of the Earth International
FR3	<i>France Régions 3</i>
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
FV	<i>Federazione dei Verdi</i> (Italy)
G	The Greens (EP)
G/EFA	The Greens/European Free Alliance (EP)
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GDP	Gross domestic product
GDR	German Democratic Republic
GGC	Global Greens Coordination
GGEP	Green Group in the EP
GJM	Global Justice Movement
GL	Green League (Finland)
GLP	<i>Grünliberale Partei</i> (Switzerland)
GMO	Genetically modified organism
GNV	<i>Gabčíkovo-Nagymarosi Vízlépcső</i> (Hungary)
GPA	<i>Groen Progressief Akkoord</i> (The Netherlands)
GPEW	Green Party of England and Wales (UK)
GPS	<i>Grüne Partei der Schweiz</i> (Switzerland)
GRAEL	Green-Alternative European Link
GW	Gigawatt
HNF	<i>Hazafias Népfront</i> (Hungary)
HSZ	<i>Hrvatska Stranka Zelenih</i> (Croatia)
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IBB	<i>Internationales Bildungs- und Begegnungswerk</i> (Germany)
ICMESA	<i>Industria Chimica Meda Società Azionaria</i> (Italy)
ICPR	International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine River
IEA	International Energy Agency
IFRM	Integrated flood risk management
IGC	Intergovernmental conference
IGO	Intergovernmental organization

List of Abbreviations

IISH	International Institute of Social History (The Netherlands)
IKT	<i>Ifjúsági Környezetvédelmi Tanács</i> (Hungary)
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources
JEF	<i>Junge Europäische Föderalisten</i>
KB	<i>Kommunistischer Bund</i> (Germany)
KISZ	<i>Kommunista Ifjúsági Szövetség</i> (Hungary)
KPD	<i>Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands</i> (Germany)
kT	Product of the Boltzmann constant (k or kB) and the temperature (T)
kWh	Kilowatt-hour
LIFE	<i>L'instrument financier pour l'environnement</i> (EU)
LMP	<i>Magyarország Zöld Pártja</i> (Hungary)
LVZS	<i>Lietuvos valstiečių liaudininkų sąjunga</i> (Lithuania)
LZP	<i>Latvijas Zaļā partija</i> (Latvia)
LZP	<i>Lietuvos žaliųjų partija</i> (Lithuania)
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MER-FER	<i>Mișcarea Ecologista din România- Federația Ecologistă din România</i>
MP	<i>Miljöpartiet de gröna</i> (Sweden)
MP	Member of parliament
Mtoe	Megatons of oil equivalent
MZP	<i>Magyarországi Zöld Párt</i> (Hungary)
NABU	<i>Naturschutzbund Deutschland</i> (Germany)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NERSA	<i>Centrale nucléaire européenne à neutrons rapides SA</i>
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OCT	<i>Organisation communiste des travailleurs</i> (France)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ÖH	<i>Österreichische Hochschüler_innenschaft</i> (Austria)
OKTH	<i>Országos Környezet- és Természetvédelmi Hivatal</i> (Hungary)
OOA	<i>Organisationen til Oplysning om Atomkraft</i> (Danmark)
OP	<i>Oikologi Prasinoi</i>
PER	<i>Partidul Ecologist Român</i> (Romania)
PEV	<i>Partido Ecologista 'Os Verdes'</i> (Portugal)
PPP	Polluter pays principle
PSUC	<i>Partido Socialista Unificado de Cataluña</i> (Spain)
PV-MVDA	<i>Partidul Verde-Mișcarea Verzilor-Democrați Agrarieni</i> (Romania)
R&D	Research and development
RAF	<i>Rote Armee Fraktion</i> (Germany)
RAP	Rhine Action Programme
RAPF	Rhine Action Plan on Floods

The Environment and the European Public Sphere

RBC	River Basin Commission
RBMK	<i>Reaktor bolshoy moshchnosti kanalnyy</i> (reactor type)
RBW	Rainbow Group (EP)
REACH	Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (EU)
RIAS	Radio in the American Sector (Germany)
RSPB	British Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
RWE	<i>Rheinisch-Westfälisches Elektrizitätswerk</i> AG (Germany)
SCAPA	Society for Checking the Abuses of Public Advertising
SCPRI	<i>Service central de protection contre les rayonnements ionisants</i> (France)
SEA	Single European Act
SED	<i>Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands</i> (GDR)
SGC	Stichting Greenpeace Council
SMS-Zeleni	<i>Stranka mladih Slovenije-Zeleni</i> (Slovenia)
SO ₂	Sulphur dioxide
SPD	<i>Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands</i> (Germany)
SPÖ	<i>Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs</i> (Austria)
SPPF	<i>Société pour la protection des paysages de France</i>
SPV	<i>Sonstige Politische Vereinigung Die Grünen</i> (Germany)
SZ	<i>Strana Zelených</i> (Czech Republic)
TEU	Treaty on the European Union (Maastricht Treaty, 1992; Treaty of Lisbon, 2007)
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (Treaty of Rome, 1957)
TF1	<i>Télévision française 1</i> (France)
TMI	Three Mile Island (US)
TRS	<i>Trajnostni Razvoj Slovenije</i> (Slovenia)
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UPI	United Press International
US/USA	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VA	Voluntary agreement
VGÖ	<i>Vereinte Grünen Österreichs</i> (Austria)
VVD	<i>Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie</i> (The Netherlands)
WFD	Water Framework Directive (EU)
WGGP	West German Green Party
WHO	World Health Organization
WIR	<i>Wirtschaftsring</i> (Germany)
WSF	World Social Form
WTO	World Trade Organization
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

List of Abbreviations

ZA	<i>Zelena Alternativa</i> (Slovenia)
ZA-ZDS-ZB	<i>Zöld Alternatíva–Zöld Demokraták Szövetsége–Zöld Baloldal</i> (Hungary)
ZDF	<i>Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen</i> (Germany)
ZH	<i>Zeleni Hrvatske</i> (Croatia)
ZL-ORaH	<i>Zelena lista– Održivi razvoj Hrvatske</i> (Croatia)
ZPB	<i>Zelena Partija Bulgaria</i>
ZS	<i>Zelena Stranka</i> (Croatia)
ZS	<i>Zeleni Slovenije</i> (Slovenia)



INTRODUCTION

Is it child's play to formulate environmental policies today? In any case, it seems that the young initiators of and participants in the 'Fridays for Future' movement have understood one of the main mechanisms of environmental policies in Europe for more than fifty years. The success of the green parties in the May 2019 European elections and resulting debates in some of the other parties currently in power in several EU member states correspond to a setting of the strike students' demands on the political agenda. This movement, which mobilises young people from all European countries, and even beyond,¹ around the Swedish girl Greta Thunberg on the issue of climate change, is part of a long-term evolution, marked by the emergence of a new environmental consciousness within the European public sphere, which is emerging at the same time. This evolution includes the gradual institutionalisation of environmental movements, the placing of their themes on the political agenda and, above all, the formulation of environmental policies, following a growing convergence of debates within this European public and political sphere.

The history of environmental policies since the 1970s enables us to better understand the transformations of the political field in Europe in general and illustrates most notably the entrance of new actors, who are investing the political and public sphere, as well as the growing importance of the European level. Both phenomena call for a renewal of historiography. The existence of a link between the formation of the environment as a political object and that of Europe as a political actor is reflected by a certain parallelism between the two trends, an overlap that became noticeable especially during the first direct elections to the European Parliament in 1979 – a key moment, both for the construction of Europe and for the institutionalisation of environmental movements.²

The transformation of political culture and of the political field took place in the aftermath of the 1968 upheavals. Previously clearly circumscribed to and shared between a limited number of political actors, the political field has since then become much more complex. This transformation, which concerns first and foremost the decision-making process at all levels, has

1 It is a movement that is developing on a global level, but it originated in Europe and is more present there than anywhere else.

2 See the contributions to this volume of Emilie van Haute, Silke Mende and Giorgio Grimaldi.

The Environment and the European Public Sphere

been amplified by a new era of globalisation that began in the 1970s, as well as by the end of the Cold War in 1989–91.

But while the public sphere is becoming increasingly important in the decision-making process, research on the history of European integration, much influenced by the methods of the history of international relations and those of political history in general, continues to be based mainly on the study of the executive, considering the public sphere only as a secondary factor. However, it seems particularly worthwhile to reverse the perspective on the decision-making process by starting with a study of the public sphere and its long-term dynamics, particularly at the European level.

While the existence of national, regional or local public spheres and their importance for decision-making in European democracies is generally acknowledged, the question of the existence of a European public sphere is a matter for debate – a debate as old as European integration itself.³ In fact, any public sphere exists only as a corollary to a political entity. Thus, the creation of a new political entity necessarily calls for the emergence of a new public sphere. As far as the European Community is concerned, the unfinished state of its public sphere corresponds clearly to the unfinished state of the Union itself, at least from a political point of view. However, linguistic diversity and different political cultures within the Community are significant impediments too. Indeed, the European public sphere does not have a clearly identifiable existence, but rather presents itself as a possibility whose future contours are perceptible through a multitude of public spheres, at different – especially cross-border – levels, or even of communication spheres, which together foster an increasing convergence of debates. On environmental issues, one of the first communication spheres was initiated on a European level towards the end of the nineteenth century thanks to a few individual actors and their simultaneous presence in several national

3 On European public sphere, see R. Frank, H. Kaelble, M.-F. Lévy et al. (eds), *Building a European Public Sphere: from the 1950s to the Present* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2010); J. Habermas, *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge: Polity, 1989); A. Mercier (ed.), *Vers un espace public européen? Recherches sur l'Europe en construction* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003); C. Doria and G. Raulet (eds), *Questioning the European Public Sphere. L'espace public européen en question* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2016); C. Doria, 'Espace public et projet européen', in *Encyclopédie pour une histoire nouvelle de l'Europe* (2015) <https://ehne.fr/node/49> (accessed 11 Aug. 2019); J. Requate and M. Schulze-Wessel (eds), *Europäische Öffentlichkeit. Transnationale Kommunikation seit dem 18. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2002); J.-H. Meyer, *The European Public Sphere. Media and Transnational Communication in European Integration 1969–1991* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2010); more recently on the European citizen, see H. Kaelble, *Der verkannte Bürger. Eine andere Geschichte der europäischen Integration seit 1950* (Frankfurt a. M.: Campus, 2019).

Editors' Introduction

communication spheres.⁴ The existence of shared communication spheres or axes such as the continent's major rivers, facilitates this evolution, as do shared memories of a common history.⁵

The emergence of such transnational communication spheres in Europe, no longer limited to elites as in previous centuries and preceding the European integration process, was not called into question by the two world wars. By contrast, the wars and the economic or demographic crises of the first half of the twentieth century produced European experiences, especially through the phenomenon of a more or less forced migration of millions of Europeans, thus facilitating the development of networks and social ties at a transnational level.⁶ However, the emergence of a genuine European communication sphere, as described by Hartmut Kaelble, started only after the reconstruction of Europe following World War II, the first steps in European integration and the establishment of a climate of détente in East-West relations.⁷ This decisive transformation during the 1970s can also be seen as a first stage on the road to a genuine European public sphere.

The 1970s are characterised by numerous changes in terms of perceptions, political practices and institutions and were indeed a decisive decade, not only for the emergence of this European public sphere and the construction of the European Community, but also for the constitution of the environment as a political object.⁸ This decade can be considered as a bridge between,

4 See the contribution to this volume of Charles-François Mathis.

5 On European memories, see E. François and Th. Serrier (eds), *Europa notre histoire* (Paris: Les Arènes, 2017); P. den Boer, H. Duchhardt, G. Kreis and W. Schmale (eds), *Europäische Erinnerungsorte. Mythen und Grundbegriffe des europäischen Selbstverständnisses* (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2011).

6 On transnational communication spheres in Europe during the first half of the 20th century, see B. Lambauer and Ch. Wenkel (eds), 'Entstehung und Entwicklung transnationaler Kommunikationsräume in Europa zu Kriegzeiten, 1914–1945'. Special issue of *Comparativ* 28 (1) (2018).

7 H. Kaelble, 'Das europäische Selbstverständnis und die europäische Öffentlichkeit im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert', in H. Kaelble, M. Kirsch and A. Schmidt-Gernig (eds), *Transnationale Öffentlichkeiten und Identitäten im 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2002), pp. 85–109; see also H. Kaelble, *Auf dem Weg zu einer europäischen Gesellschaft? Eine Sozialgeschichte Westeuropas 1889–1980* (München: Beck, 1987); H. Kaelble, 'Die gelebte und gedachte europäische Gesellschaft', in H. Kaelble and J. Schriewer (eds), *Gesellschaften im Vergleich. Forschungen aus Sozial- und Geschichtswissenschaften* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1998), pp. 343–351; H. Kaelble (ed.) 'European public sphere and European identity in 20th century history'. Special issue of *Journal of European Integration History* 8 (2) (2002).

8 The literature on the 1970s is quite abundant. See, for instance, G. Migani and A. Varsori (eds), *Europe in the International Arena during the 1970s. L'Europe sur la scène internationale dans les années 1970* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2011); F. Bösch, *Zeitenwende 1979. Als die Welt von heute began* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2019); D. Hellema, *The Global 1970s. Radicalism, Reform, and Crisis* (New York: Routledge, 2018).

The Environment and the European Public Sphere

on the one hand, the beginnings of a movement for a return to nature, for the reform of life (*Lebensreformbewegung*) and for the protection of nature – a movement that was Europeanised following a major industrialisation and technological wave at the end of the nineteenth century – and today's European environmental policies on the other hand. The density of changes in environmental issues during the 1970s, described by Joachim Radkau in terms of a 'great chain reaction',⁹ is of crucial importance to further evolution in this field during the following decades. The present book therefore takes this period into particular consideration.

The new conception of nature in the long nineteenth century serves as a starting point for a patrimonialisation of nature as an integral part of the construction of national identities, in analogy with the patrimonialisation of culture.¹⁰ The link with the nation promotes the transformation of nature protection into a political object throughout Europe. International meetings and publications, such as Hugo Conwentz's book *The Care of Natural Monuments with Special Reference to Great Britain and Germany* (1909), both contributed to the emergence of a first transnational communication sphere around these issues, and led to a first wave of legislation in this field and the creation of national parks.¹¹ These developments are fostered in particular by the spread of a life reform movement (*Lebensreformbewegung*) with roots in Germany and Switzerland. If this movement evolved on the ground of a new conception of nature, widespread in Europe during the nineteenth century, it served itself as an ideological basis for the emergence of a new environmental consciousness from the 1960s and 1970s onwards.

The environmental movement was interrupted by the two world wars and their respective post-war periods. It regained momentum when growth began to decline in the Western world during the 1960s. With the increasing difficulties of the United States in winning the war in Vietnam and the battle for the Great Society within its own borders, both accelerating its economic crisis, the decline was looming not only of American power but above all of an American socio-economic model, with significant repercussions for

9 J. Radkau, 'The great chain reaction. The "ecological revolution" in and around 1970', in J. Radkau, *The Age of Ecology* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014), pp. 79–113.

10 On the conceptualising of heritage, see A. Swenson, *The Rise of Heritage. Preserving the Past in France, Germany and England, 1789–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

11 H. Conwentz, *The Care of Natural Monuments with Special Reference to Great Britain and Germany* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1909); see also the contribution of Charles-François Mathis in this volume.

Editors' Introduction

Western Europe.¹² Crises on various levels, whether political, economic, financial, oil, environmental or even cultural, overlapped during the 1970s and caused a major change in mentalities within European societies. In particular, the two oil crises of the 1970s contributed to raising awareness among Europeans of a new environmental reality. Simultaneously, energy security became a major challenge for Western European states in the same way as military or monetary security. This challenge was even more important because the United States' protection in these three security domains was no longer as unconditional as before. While the European NATO member states were called upon to participate in the United States' military protection of Western Europe (i.e. burden sharing), they were mainly confronted with the needs to organise their own monetary protection (resulting in the creation of the European Monetary System in the 1970s) and to find alternative energy suppliers (as shown by the construction of a gas pipeline to transport Soviet gas from the early 1980s onwards).

The new environmental consciousness results first of all from an awareness of the finiteness of natural resources, put at the centre of the debate by the reports of the Club of Rome, and of a new vulnerability to environmental disasters, which have become more visible through the latest mass-media developments. But this consciousness also emerges against the backdrop of the questioning of a model of almost eternal growth and constant technological progress, a questioning that goes hand in hand with the questioning of the political system by new social movements. In the specific Cold War context that fed the fear of a nuclear apocalypse, a generalised feeling of crisis thus gradually developed, generating fears of all kinds about the future.¹³ The environmental issue, however, seems to have been at the core of this widespread concern.

In the same way, the development of this new environmental consciousness was fostered by the emergence of the whole set of new social movements in the 1960s and 1970s, as they provided the environmental movements, initially rather limited, with a much broader base. A new attitude towards the environment was a constitutive element of almost all these new social

12 P. Melandri, *Le siècle américain. Une histoire* (Paris: Perrin, 2016); Edward D. Berkowitz, *Something Happened. A Political and Cultural Overview of the Seventies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

13 On how to deal with the future, see L. Hölscher, *Die Entdeckung der Zukunft* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2106); M. Giraudeau and F. Graber (eds), *Les projets. Une histoire politique (16e–21e siècles)* (Paris: Presses des Mines, 2018).

The Environment and the European Public Sphere

movements, thus contributing to a generalisation of various convictions and patterns of perception. And beyond the regional or national framework, the transnational links available to these different movements also facilitated the establishment of transnational networks between environmental movements across Western Europe.¹⁴

The growth of environmental consciousness across territorial and linguistic borders has also resulted from several environmental disasters and ensuing media coverage, which have left particularly strong images in the collective imaginary over the past few decades. Thus, the images of the shipwrecks of the *Torrey Canyon* in 1969 and the *Amoco Cadiz* in 1979, causing oil spills respectively in the United Kingdom and France, played a particularly strong role. So did technological accidents such as that of Seveso in 1976, polluting Northern Italy with dioxin; or that of Chernobyl in 1986, irradiating large regions in the Soviet Union – and sending a radioactive cloud to the Western part of the continent as a threat all the more treacherous because it was invisible. While there have always been technological accidents and failures, their impact on the environment as well as the perception of this impact has changed considerably since the 1960s for technological, demographic and also media reasons, further reinforcing the feeling of a worsening state of the environment and that of growing vulnerability to such accidents.¹⁵ But not only do environmental disasters demonstrate the vulnerability of the environment in concrete terms, as well as the limits of a widespread belief in technological progress at the time; they also reduce space because environmental damage no longer stops at territorial or linguistic borders, and neither do fears of a possible proliferation of the danger. These disasters are indeed increasingly perceived as phenomena involving the European sphere as a whole, which creates a certain congruence between geographical space and communication sphere.

The democratisation of colour television and the use of colour photographs in the tabloid press¹⁶ during these years encouraged a spatial concentration of communication spheres revolving around these environmental disasters.

14 On the transnational connections of the new social movements, see for instance M. Klimke, *The Other Alliance Student Protest in West Germany and the United States in the Global Sixties* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); M. Klimke and J. Scharloth (eds), *1968 in Europe. A History of Protest and Activism, 1956–1977* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

15 See, in particular, F. Walter, *Catastrophes: une histoire culturelle XVIe–XXIe siècle* (Paris: Ed. du Seuil, 2008); U. Beck, *Risk Society. Towards a New Modernity* (New York: SAGE Publications, 1992); see also the contributions of François Walter and Karena Kalmbach in this volume.

16 Colour television was gradually introduced in Western Europe from 1967. The first colour photo appeared in the West German *BILD* newspaper on 21 July 1969.

Editors' Introduction

The public had a front row seat to watch them, as well as the horrors of the war in Vietnam. Distant accidents turned into disasters for an environment which is potentially the same as that of each spectator, even those far from the affected places. The end of the Cold War and the development of new communication technologies accelerated this spatial concentration of communication spheres from the 1990s onwards.

If one of the obstacles to the emergence of a European public sphere is the linguistic, and consequently cultural, diversity in Europe, images of environmental disasters helped to build a communication sphere on a European level, by linking those at lower levels, separated in principle by the use of different languages. These images thus served as a focal point for environmental debates across Europe. The circulation of images facilitates the circulation of certain concepts, such as 'peak of oil', '*marée noire*' or '*Waldsterben*', which structured the debates through their omnipresence. A common vocabulary, necessary for the emergence of a Europe-wide communication sphere, found its origins in some key publications, such as *Silent Spring* (1962) by the American biologist Rachel Carson, translated into many languages and selling more than two million copies all over the world. Another type of transnational, and more apocalyptic, vocabulary was provided by the Club of Rome, a think-tank created in 1968 by scientists, economists and national and international officials, but also entrepreneurs, whose reports resonate in a semantic context that reflects Cold War patterns of perception.¹⁷

The circulation of ideas and concepts between different communication spheres and therefore the increasing convergence of debates may be particularly facilitated by the heritage of a centuries-long common history. One of the best examples is the Franco-German one, characterised by particularly dense and deep links, which played a twofold role in the emergence of the European public sphere as well as in the emergence of environmental movements in Europe.¹⁸ These links were, for instance, at the origin of the formation of a green list for the European elections in 1979 and facilitated the formation of a cross-border

17 See, for instance, B. Greiner, Ch. Th. Müller and D. Walter (eds), *Angst im Kalten Krieg* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2009).

18 On the Franco-German example, see M. Espagne and M. Werner (eds), *Transferts. Les relations interculturelles dans l'espace franco-allemand (XVIIIe–XIXe siècles)* (Paris: Editions Recherche sur les civilisations, 1988); or the Franco-German History, especially the last volume: H. Miard-Delacroix, *Le défi européen. Histoire franco-allemande de 1963 à nos jours* (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses du Septentrion, 2011); the relevance of Franco-German history for the development of transnational networks is also confirmed by numerous articles in this volume.

The Environment and the European Public Sphere

anti-nuclear movement in the Rhine Valley.¹⁹ It is therefore not surprising that the perceptions, debates, movements and environmental policies within this Franco-German area have been particularly well researched. For this volume, it served as a starting point while a firmly European perspective is adopted.

In any case, the environment is a challenge and a political object that in most cases cannot be dealt with at the national level and is addressed either at the local or regional level or most likely at a supranational or global level. And, for some aspects of the environment, only the global level really matters. Climate is thus an archetype of a global public good. The research conducted so far reflects this situation by examining environmental issues mainly on a global or a regional level. Yet very few studies are interested at the European level or adopt a European perspective to study the formation of the environment as a political object. However, such a shift of perspective seems to be justified precisely by the emergence of a new communication sphere at the European level since the 1970s.

As far as the European Community is concerned, the environmental policy framework has been developing in a discreet but effective way since the 1970s. While some European countries set up the first Environment Ministries in the early 1970s, the European Commission only created a unit for environmental issues within the Directorate-General for Industry in 1973. Transformed into an independent Directorate-General in 1981, it was constantly increasing in importance and number of staff.²⁰ The influence of the European Economic Community was twofold during the last five decades: firstly, in instigating environmental policies of the Member States; and secondly and mainly by developing ecological and environmental standards whose application even goes far beyond the Community's framework itself. One of the best examples of this second kind of action is the famous Seveso Directives in response to the technological accident in the ICMESA chemical plant on 10 July 1976, causing a toxic cloud that impacted several municipalities in the Lombardy plain, including Seveso. Since 1982, the successive so-called Seveso Directives have required Member States to classify all industrial sites that are potentially dangerous for the environment and to put in place preventive policies to anticipate any possible risks.²¹

19 See the contributions of Andrew Tompkins and Giorgio Grimaldi in this volume.

20 M. Dumoulin et al. (eds), *The European Commission 1973–86. History and Memories of an Institution* (Luxembourg: Publication Office of the European Union, 2014).

21 See the contribution of Sophie Baziadoly in this volume.

Editors' Introduction

The European level in this field seems in fact much more important than it appears at first sight. It even seems possible to invoke the emergence of Europe through the perception of environmental problems and the suggested solutions. The methodological challenge is therefore to grasp this level against a global issue on the one hand and the predominance of the national perspective in the political debate and its influences on political history on the other. The aim of this research is to reveal European characteristics of the way the environment is perceived, in order to identify the parameters of a specific European environmental consciousness and those of distinct European policies in this field.

By focusing on the simultaneous emergence of the European public sphere and the environment as a political object across Europe, this volume aims to contribute to a renewal of European history, which too often remains compartmentalised by a national prism. The theme provides an opportunity to contribute to a history of the Europeanisation of the continent beyond political turning points and limits. The aim is a European history of Europe that is not confined to any division, as for example that of the Cold War, but is rather based on long-term dynamics, transcending any project of integration or disintegration of the European continent, and shaped by the global challenges of our times.

While the concept of Europeanisation offers a broader vision of the history of Europe in the twentieth century,²² the theme of the volume makes it possible to study Europeanisation as a phenomenon at three levels: first of all, institutional Europeanisation, namely at the political, economic and legal levels, through the process of European integration; then, structural Europeanisation, resulting from intra-European transport, communication or migration flows and producing convergences of perceptions, representations, discourses and also values; and finally the interdependencies between these two forms of Europeanisation. Supra-national issues, such as the environment or the vision of the future, seems particularly suitable for this. In contrast to other topics, such as social issues, this suitability for the study of Europeanisation dynamics seems to depend not least on the relative novelty of the environment as a political object.

22 On the use of the concept of Europeanisation for portraying European history in the 20th century, see H. Kaelble, 'Europäisierung', in M. Middell (ed.) *Dimensionen der Kultur- und Gesellschaftsgeschichte* (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2007); M. Conway and K.K. Patel (eds), *Europeanization in the Twentieth Century. Historical Approaches* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2010); M. Osmont, E. Robin-Hivert, K. Seidel, M. Spoerer and Ch. Wenkel (eds), *Européanisation au 20e siècle: un regard historique. Europeanisation in the 20th century: the historical lens* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2012).

The Environment and the European Public Sphere

This volume also aims to contribute to a renewal of the historiography, especially in the field of international relations, but also beyond, by providing an analytical framework for the decision-making process that corresponds to long-term transformations in the political field since the 1970s and the arrival of new actors within that field. Based on a study of the convergences of debates within a European communication sphere, the volume examines the influence of such convergences on the formation of political objects and their setting on the agenda. The influence of converging public opinion on the formulation of internal or external policies is certainly not a new phenomenon in Europe, but the dimensions have changed with each new media development and especially since the emergence of a European public sphere. Decision-making and the formulation of policies in the environmental field seems particularly suitable for such an analytical framework. Further research is needed to determine whether this approach is also suitable to historical analysis of decision-making within other policy fields.

Taking the environment as its object and example, the volume offers to retrace the different stages of this very process, starting with the convergence of perceptions and debates that are gradually taking root at a European level between various regional or national communication spheres as a result of this global challenge, and ending with the setting of regional, national or European policies on the agenda in reaction to these converging debates at all levels. While the contributions in this book examine each step separately, taken together they provide a general understanding of the conditions and timelines of this process. Thus, the temporal dimension of the process is at the very centre of the overall analysis, although it is a subject at the crossroads of history, sociology, law and political science. The importance of long-term phenomena, such as the *Lebensreformbewegung*, and of connections with other long-term processes, such as industrialisation, globalisation of trade or technologisation, in order to understand the basis for possible convergences, make the historical dimension of the approach predominant.

The volume, with its four parts, follows the process of the emergence of a European public sphere and its impact on decision-making through environmental issues, focusing first on perceptions, then on actors before dealing with the policies themselves.

At the centre of the first part is the question of the convergence of perceptions and debates about the environment. These convergences occur in principle on a global level, but they are more substantial at a Western level, given that environmental consciousness nowadays is mainly formed in re-

Editors' Introduction

sponse to a high degree of industrialisation and technological development. But within this Western area, these convergences are even more clearly established on a European level, which can be related to the formation of a European public sphere and to the common heritage of this sphere. The differences between the European and North American regions in this field appeared as early as in the nineteenth century, visible for example through the different modalities at stake in the protection of nature on either side of the Atlantic. While American influences, particularly those of American discourses, should not be neglected, as shown by the history of the diffusion of Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring* in Europe and its influence in the emergence of a new environmental consciousness since the late 1960s, it is much more the cultural heritage that constitutes a favourable terrain for convergence in Europe.

In his chapter, Charles-François Mathis reveals the very first convergences on environmental issues at a European level at the beginning of the twentieth century. At a series of international conferences, leading experts from all over Europe met and formulated initial standards for the protection of nature, which were soon adopted by the legislation of various European countries. Mathis illustrates some form of Europeanisation of environmental issues prior to the beginning of World War I and we can thus state that a European communication sphere for landscape preservation was in the making at this very moment. François Walter's chapter goes back much further in time, exploring the historical origins of a specifically European way of dealing with environmental disasters. To investigate this question, he is interested in the perception and memory of such disasters from the seventeenth century, especially in the long-term relevance of a religious conditioning of these perceptions and memories, but also in the development of disaster research in Europe since the late twentieth century. More specifically, he argues for an examination of European 'risk culture(s)', based on specific historical experience, and explains the transition from a 'prevention society' to a 'risk society' as a result of changes during the 1970s, in particular the first oil crisis, and of the end of the Cold War. The formation of a 'risk society', as described by Ulrich Beck,²³ is also the subject of Karena Kalmbach's contribution, which describes the characteristics of a specific European risk culture, taking the example of the Chernobyl accident of 1986, its perceptions, experiences and memories. Although this environmental disaster did not immediately

The Environment and the European Public Sphere

trigger the emergence of a specific European public sphere, as Kalmbach shows, it was, in the long run, a decisive moment for the emergence of a communication sphere not only on radioactivity or on nuclear risks, but on modern risks in general throughout Europe, even beyond East-West divisions. The emergence of a pan-European communication sphere that was not limited by the Iron Curtain and in which environmental issues were tackled is also the theme of Michel Dupuy's contribution. He examines the Western European perception of environmental degradation in Eastern Europe, in particular when it affected the environment on the other side. The emergence of this pan-European communication sphere, which can be considered as a prelude to a European public sphere, is particularly evident if German history is taken as an example: Dupuy shows how East German dissidents could use West German media in the 1980s to draw the attention of the West as well as the East German public to environmental pollution in the GDR, which was largely concealed by East German officials.

In the context of an increasing convergence of perceptions and debates at a European level, environmental movements, which initially arose mostly on national, regional or local levels, are becoming more and more transnationalised, transcending national, linguistic and sometimes even ideological boundaries throughout Europe. The essential role of environmental movements in the formulation of environmental consciousness on a European level is the subject of the second part of the book. The plurality of social forms and action repertoires related to the environment, as developed on the continent, creates a complex picture of engagement and reveals different aspects of Europe, broadening the contours of an institutional Europe.

This Europeanisation of environmental consciousness and ecological action by social movements is taking shape in quite different ways. Astrid Mignon Kirchof's work reveals a cultural and social history of environmental protection in the East that has hitherto been poorly documented. Based on an in-depth study of the biographies of two East German environmentalists, her contribution tells us about the importance of individuals acting as mediators of currents and repertoires of action between different times and places; i.e. between different periods of the twentieth century, thus linking the *Lebensreformbewegung* to the new social movements of the 1970s; between East and West, especially between the two Germanies; but also within the countries of Eastern Europe. The Europe that emerges from this portrayal is far more geographical and cultural than institutional and political. It is a Europe made up of individual convictions and exemplary action, from one

Editors' Introduction

border to another. This history of environmentalism in socialist Central Europe is also described by Daniela Neubacher in her chapter 'Wetlands of Protest'. She finely demonstrates how militant mobilisation around the Danube is creating new links between Hungary and Austria, beyond the Iron Curtain and official contacts, thus contributing to the emergence of a Europe at grassroots level. In the West, the political system was in favour of the emergence of social movements with solid foundations, allowing even cross-border organisation to become sustainable. Andrew Tompkins describes this type of organisation in the chapter 'Towards a Europe of Struggles?' about the taking shape of anti-nuclear mobilisation in France, Germany and the United Kingdom. This type of transnational movement undergoing an evolutionary institutionalisation is also at the very centre of the study conducted by Liesbeth van de Grift, Hans Rodenburg and Guus Wieman on Greenpeace. Although the story of an NGO working at an international level and having to adapt to the European public sphere is a radical and militant one, the degree of organisation of this structure, created in 1971 in Canada, and the power of its action at the international level, have conferred on it a quasi-institutional standing within Europe, albeit not without difficulties of adjustment.

The beginnings of institutionalisation of environmental movements and the establishment of green parties in many Western European states took place in parallel with a major push for the institutionalisation of the European Community following the 1969 Hague Summit. Subsequently, this process of institutionalising environmental movements took great advantage of the European framework and in particular of the institutional one provided by the European Parliament since it was directly elected in 1979. Thus, green MEPs entered the European Parliament even before green parties were represented in most of the national parliaments in Western Europe. The third part of this book is therefore focused on the emergence of political parties dealing mainly with environmental issues in Europe and the introduction of such issues in parliamentary debates, a crucial link between public sphere and political decision-making. The perspective is a multi-level one, including a focus on the national level, a comparative case study and an approach that encompasses all EU countries.

Emilie van Haute emphasises the obstacles and opportunities specific to green parties in various European countries from the 1970s to the present, enabling us to understand the potential for affirming a new organisational model but also the reasons for its limitations. Giorgio Grimaldi traces the

The Environment and the European Public Sphere

development of the various European green parties throughout the federalist turning point of the 1990s. Silke Mende then sheds light on how the West German Greens dealt with European issues during their formative phase in the 1970s and 1980s, and thus shows how the European level has been adopted by one of the parties at the forefront of environmental presence at the Community level. Through a comparative approach, involving France, the United Kingdom and Federal Germany, Eva Oberloskamp examines how environmental issues were established in parliamentary debates between the 1970s and 1990s. This case study reflects the comparable importance of energy issues in the emergence of the environment as a topic for parliamentary debate within all three countries, a phenomenon that can be regarded as a characteristic of the emergence of a European public sphere. However, the highly contrasting picture reveals the limits of the phenomenon, as national specificities continue to dominate both in terms of energy security and of national representation in parliaments. All in all, this section underlines the extent to which nation states and their specific ways of organisation have hampered citizens' representation and political decision-making in the emergence of this common European sphere of communication and action.

Starting from reflections on the growing convergence of perceptions and debates as well as on the environmental movements emerging in this context since the 1970s and their institutionalisation at the parliamentary level, the fourth and final part of the book deals with the question of how these convergences determine the political agenda, both at the national level throughout Europe and at the supranational level in Brussels.

According to Jan-Henrik Meyer, the contribution of the European institutions in shaping European environmental policy has long been underestimated. Yet, this role has emerged from internal movements within Europe that are both interconnected and influenced by the internationalisation of debates in frameworks such as that provided by the Stockholm conference in 1972. The development of internal EU legislation is leading to a set of regulatory tools that will for example pave the way for major reforms in Central Europe in the context of the enlargement during the 2000s. Meyer analyses the origins of the construction of a public sphere through a series of very different case studies – Rhine pollution, the nuclear issue and the protection of birds – and explores the different ways in which public spheres function and are influenced by environmental movements. By presenting the various stages and the constitution of a European environmental law from the very first communication and the first action plan on the subject up to

Editors' Introduction

the Lisbon Treaty and the last milestones of this policy, Sophie Baziadoly shows how much the environmental question has become one of the central issues in European policies, especially from the decisive stage of the Single Act onwards. She highlights two main driving forces: internally, the role of civil society through the central place given to the citizens in environmental policies in Europe; externally, the global nature of the issue, which is also an element of policy impetus. She thus demonstrates the effectiveness of citizen action at several levels as well as the central position of the European regional level in the way a global issue is dealt with politically. Marjolein van Eerd and Duncan Liefferink point out the role of the management of large river basins in the rise of a European environmental policy, referring to the Rhine and the International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine River (ICPR). They show that we are thus moving from a functionalist approach based on *de facto* interdependencies and their necessary common management, to the convergence of experiences and thence to an active contribution in defining the EU's common policies. The presence of the European Commission within the ICPR and the adoption of directives of general interest that are of interest to the Union as a whole is a fundamental step in this politicisation.

The key element of the environmental challenge for European policies is the energy constraint, in particular through greenhouse gas emissions. The EU energy and climate change package implemented from 2008 onwards reflects the convergence of European energy and environmental policies. Drawing on the German and French cases, Christopher Fabre analyses how this convergence has developed by highlighting first the importance of the economic dimension (price) in reducing energy consumption and second the gradual empowerment of the environmental dimension of energy policies even beyond the oil counter-shock of the 1980s. He shows that Franco-German structural convergence is in fact part of the growing importance of a European policy that affects the entire EU. The analyses proposed by Antony R. Zito make it possible to examine the ways in which environmental policies are implemented and to identify some of the specific features of the European Union. Beyond the common guidelines that pass through the global level (UN) or the Western level (OECD), the European Union has long been distinguished by the regulatory dimension of its policies and by a political culture that is conducive to building consensus, as in the Netherlands or in Germany. The trend towards the use of economic instruments such as taxes is mainly due to the implementation of the Single Act. The example of

The Environment and the European Public Sphere

the United Kingdom clearly shows to what extent the evolution of British environmental policies is determined by its accession to the EU, thereby demonstrating the effects of integration on the country and indirectly how difficult it might be to undo them.

This volume is the result of a three-year research seminar, a couple of workshops and an international conference organised by the Research Center of Excellence 'Ecrire une histoire nouvelle de l'Europe' (Sorbonne University, with funding from the French *Agence nationale de la recherche*) and the German Historical Institute in Paris between 2014 and 2017. The editors want to thank all the participants in these various scientific events as well as those involved in their organisation and the subsequent editorial process, in particular Arby Gharibian for the translation of several contributions in French.²⁴

24. Chapters 1, 2, 4, 14 and 16.

PART I

THE EMERGENCE OF A EUROPEAN PUBLIC SPHERE ON ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES



CHAPTER 1.

THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS FOR THE PROTECTION OF LANDSCAPES: A EUROPEAN CONVERGENCE?

Charles-François Mathis

‘Nineteenth-century man entered nature like an executioner’: this quotation from the Russian writer and journalist Menshikov opens the article by Henri Cazalis (otherwise known as Jean Lahor), the French doctor and writer who in 1901 called for the creation of a society to protect French landscapes, which came into existence that same year.¹ Such criticism of the relations between human societies and the natural environment during the century of industrialisation and urbanisation emerged at various paces throughout Europe. It was based on a patrimonial conception of nature that expressed aesthetic, spiritual and patriotic values, and was itself inscribed within a broader movement of concern for the preservation of historical, artistic and increasingly natural heritage, which actively developed and became internationalised during the last third of the nineteenth century.² A desire to protect landscapes emerged everywhere, as they became the ‘beloved face of the homeland’ in the Briton John Ruskin’s memorable phrase, which has been repeated over and over again since.³ In his reference work on the topic, the historian François Walter evokes ‘the landscape figures of the nation’, which especially took form during the nineteenth century thanks to artists, scholars and intellectuals seeking to contain the ravages of modernity.⁴

This concern was not specific to Europe, for it was present in all territories where industrialisation and urbanisation had grown in scope and increasingly seemed to threaten landscape spaces, the United States in particular.⁵ The

- 1 Jean Lahor, ‘Une société à créer pour la protection des paysages français’, excerpt taken from the *Revue des Revues*, 1 Mar. 1901.
- 2 Astrid Swenson, *The Rise of Heritage. Preserving the Past in France, Germany and England, 1789–1914* (Cambridge: CUP, 2013).
- 3 See Jean Astié, *La Protection des paysages* (Lyon: Legendre, 1912), p. 14.
- 4 François Walter, *Les figures paysagères de la nation* (Paris: EHESS, 2004).
- 5 Also in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Argentina at the turn of the twentieth century. See for instance Maria D. Rivarola, Daniel Simberloff and Christy Lepannen, ‘History of protected areas

creation of Yosemite National Park in 1864 and later Yellowstone National Park in 1872 was a pioneering act, and invented a model that was broadly commented on in European countries. While this precedent offered inspiration, there was wariness toward strict imitation, and considerable variance from one country to another. This protection was, of course, also part of a movement of national construction in the United States and was accompanied by an aestheticising of nature. It nevertheless differed from European intentions through its desire to replay within national parks the original encounter between pioneers and the wilderness, and to emphasise the supposedly wild natural heritage whose wonders distinguished the American continent from an Old World marked by history.⁶ For all that, sensitivity to these differences varied considerably from one space to another: the Alps or large forests of Northern Europe could more easily resemble those seemingly untouched American spaces than other territories apparently more marked by human activity – for instance Fontainebleau forest in France, over 1,000 of whose hectares were protected in 1861. The American example thus served more as a reference point than a model, one that inspired landscape protection movements in unequal ways depending on the location.

These movements emerged with force throughout Europe, taking the form of associations such as the National Trust in England, founded in 1894–95; the Associazione Nazionale per i Paesaggi, established in Italy in 1906; and the Danish society for the preservation of natural beauty, which appeared in 1911. They gave rise to protective laws – the most famous being the law of 21 April 1906 by the Frenchman Charles Beauquier on ‘the protection of natural sites and monuments of an artistic nature’ – although they were also present, for instance, in Norway in 1910. They also led to preservation activities, as the first European national parks appeared in Sweden in 1909, also the year in which Ravenna’s pinewoods were protected in Italy, with Switzerland also creating a national park in 1914.⁷

Luigi Piccioni has underscored this surprising European convergence, and believes that this movement of landscape patrimonialisation emerged in

in Argentina: A seesaw of shifting priorities and policies in a developing country’, *Environment and History* (online first 2019).

6 Charles-François Mathis, ‘1864. Création du parc de Yosemite’, in Pierre Singaravélou and Sylvain Venayre (eds), *Histoire du Monde au XIX^e siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 2017), pp. 303–306.

7 Swenson, *The Rise of Heritage*, pp. 274–279.

The First International Congress for the Protection of Landscapes

the very early twentieth century, at the same time as its internationalisation.⁸ One of the most visible manifestations of this internationalisation was the First International Congress for the Protection of Landscapes, which took place in Paris in 1909. It has not been the subject of many specific studies, and is only mentioned in passing.⁹ This relative lack of interest can firstly be explained by the very minor historical traces it left behind,¹⁰ and by the fact that it was quickly forgotten, as the organisers of the major international events that followed in 1923 and 1931 hardly mentioned it.¹¹ It is precisely this discrepancy between the immediate satisfaction of an at-first-glance successful meeting and the weakness of its historical impact that offers an interesting angle for exploring how the internationalisation – or more precisely Europeanisation, as the United States went it alone on this issue – of environmental issues took place before the First World War around a few conceptions of nature, and what its successes and limits were.¹² Did this internationalisation of concerns surrounding landscapes and nature provide an opportunity for the emergence and development of a European space of communication¹³ and action on these questions, revolving around a civil society that was increasingly aware of these issues?

- 8 Luigi Piccioni, *Il volto amato amato della Patria* (Trento: Temi, 2016), pp. 124–129. To be published in English by The White Horse Press as *The Beloved Face of the Homeland* (2020)
- 9 See for example John McCormick, *The Global Environmental Movement: Reclaiming Paradise* (Hoboken: John Wiley, 1992), who only mentions this congress, then concentrating on the post-war period. The exception is the recent work by Caroline Ford, in which she offers a detailed presentation of this congress, but without lingering on it too long: Caroline Ford, *Natural Interests* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), pp. 116–117.
- 10 Nothing remains aside from a report by the organisers, and commentaries in the bulletin of the society that organised it.
- 11 See, for example, Raoul de Clermont, Fernand Cros-Mayrevieille and Louis de Nussac, *Premier Congrès international pour la Protection de la nature, faune et flore, sites et monuments naturels* (Paris: Guillemot et de Lamother, 1926), p. vi.
- 12 My linguistic abilities limited me to English and French sources: this article is based essentially on the archives of the Society for Checking the Abuses of Public Advertising (SCAPA), created in 1893 to combat abusive advertising, which became the primary contact in the United Kingdom for other associations in Europe; on the archives of the Société pour la protection des paysages de France (SPPF); and the publications surrounding the 1909 congress. This research must of course be extended to archives of German societies in particular, as well as those of the other European countries involved.
- 13 Here, once again, the role of the United States in this public sphere should be explored (although this would be the subject of a separate article); as stated earlier, its model was often signalled but rarely truly followed, with personal bonds apparently being weaker.

An international movement under formation

This European public sphere can be seen in the international coordination that was implemented during the early years of the twentieth century, which enabled the successful organisation of the 1909 congress. This European movement, made possible by the shared ideology of the patrimonialisation of nature, was based on numerous personal contacts between actors in landscape protection, along with constant sharing of activities and international meetings.

The transmission and sharing of experiences

It is striking to observe that each association for the protection of nature emphasised the achievements of its European neighbours, whether during general meetings, conferences or the publication of journals. Associations had the dual goal of invigorating their national movement, which was supported by the existence of foreign counterparts, and of suggesting new means for effective action, notably institutional and legislative ones. They consequently engaged in monitoring, which enabled them regularly to inform members about what was taking place beyond their borders. The *Bulletin de la Société pour la protection des paysages de France* (SPPF), for instance, had a 'foreign news' section that explored the laws and actions conducted in Germany, Switzerland, the UK, Belgium, etc.¹⁴ The same thing was true of the magazine *A Beautiful World*, published by the Society for Checking the Abuses of Public Advertising (SCAPA), or the one published by the *Selborne Society*.¹⁵ Closer links were sometimes established between foreign associations, for instance when SCAPA requested to become an associate correspondent of the SPPF, and subscribed to its magazine;¹⁶ the German society *Heimatschutz* mentions relations with Austria, Switzerland, Belgium, Sweden and Holland.¹⁷ This search for information was even encouraged by the British government, as the eminent environmental activist and member of Parliament James Bryce transmitted a request in 1903 from SCAPA, asking embassies in France, Germany, Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, Italy,

14 This interest was even highlighted in the report from the 1909 congress, which indicates all the issues relating to foreign countries: de Clermont et al., *Le Premier Congrès*, p. 34.

15 For example, *A Beautiful World*, no. X, Sept. 1909: 136–160, London Metropolitan Archives, A/SCA/V/3/2.

16 Letter from Anselme Changeur to Richardson Evans, 12 Oct. 1912, in London Metropolitan Archives, A/SCA/III/2/10 (Europe).

17 De Clermont et al., *Le Premier Congrès*, p. 43.

The First International Congress for the Protection of Landscapes

the Netherlands and the United States to report on the state of legislation regarding advertising.¹⁸ In similar fashion, in Germany Hugo Conwentz, a central figure in the patrimonialisation movement, took advantage of his position as the head of a Prussian administration dedicated to the protection of nature to collect all possible information on the subject in a library that drew people from long distances.¹⁹ Similar research was conducted for the drafting and application of the French law of 1906, and the reflections it prompted.²⁰ The French case was incidentally central to the reflections conducted in Italy during the same period.²¹

Personal bonds

These exchanges were facilitated, and sometimes simply made possible, by personal links established between actors in the environmental struggle. The outings conducted by the growing number of Alpine Clubs and Touring Clubs facilitated these encounters on both the national and international levels.²² They were sometimes undertaken simply to create a network, as when Conwentz went on tours of Europe that took him to Sweden, the UK, Austria and Denmark, for instance.²³ A correspondence was thus initiated between these figures, including Hugo Conwentz in Germany, Richardson Evans in the UK,²⁴ and Charles Beauquier, Anselme Changeur and Raoul de Clermont²⁵ in France: the environmental movement cannot of course be reduced to this handful of individuals, but they nevertheless played a driving role in leading it. Moreover, by becoming the essential intermediaries for

18 *A Beautiful World*, no. X, 1909: 136, London Metropolitan Archives, A/SCA/V/3/2.

19 Anna-Katharina Wöbse, 'Les liaisons sinueuses: les relations franco-allemandes en matière de protection de la nature dans la première moitié du XX^e siècle', in Mathis and Jean-François Mouhot (eds), *Une Protection de l'environnement à la française?* (Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 2013), p. 110.

20 Numerous legal works explore the question of landscape protection by drawing a parallel between France and its European neighbours: Jean Astié, *La Protection des paysages* (Lyon: Legendre, 1912), ch. 6; Louis Gassot de Champigny, *La Protection des sites et paysages* (Paris: Michalon, 1909), preface and ch. 1; Lucien Sorel, *La protection des paysages naturels et des perspectives monumentales*, Ph.D. thesis in law from l'Université de Caen, 1932, pp. 195–201.

21 Luigi Piccioni, 'L'influence de la France dans la protection de la nature en Italie au début du xx^e siècle', in Mathis and Mouhot (eds), *Une Protection*, pp. 97–107.

22 See, for example, Catherine Bertho Lavenir, *La roue et le stylo* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 1999); Olivier Hoibian, *Les Alpinistes en France, 1870–1950* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2000).

23 Wöbse, 'Les liaisons sinueuses', 109–110.

24 The founder and secretary-general of SCAPA.

25 Respectively the president, secretary-general and steering committee member of the SPPF.

other nations, they also sought to impose themselves in their own country. For instance, SCAPA enjoyed an aura abroad that its activity in the UK itself did not fully justify.²⁶ Strong links also existed between Conwentz and Jean Massart, one of the actors in landscape protection in Belgium, as well as Paul Sarasin, a central figure in the protection of nature in Switzerland.²⁷ Very concretely, this gradually expanding network also helped determine whom to seek out in order to obtain information, extend an invitation, etc.²⁸

The first international meetings on the European level

These personal contacts were of course supported by, and sometimes established during, international meetings attended by various actors in the movement at the turn of the twentieth century.²⁹ In 1900, a conference was held in London on wildlife preservation, but did not include the primary actors from the landscape protection movement. However, to consider only the case of the French, in 1905 Raoul de Clermont presented a paper at the Congrès International d'Art Public in Liège, which focused on the protection of nature.³⁰ In 1908, the SPPF also participated in the French-British exhibition held in London to present its bulletins, the text of the Beauquier law, paintings of protected areas, etc.³¹ This participation was explicitly designed to establish contacts in view of strengthening cooperation between France and Great Britain in matters of landscape protection, something that the SPPF considered to be part of the *Entente cordiale*.³² Finally, once again in 1908, the SPPF granted its support to the English branch of the Ligue pour la conservation de la Suisse pittoresque, which opposed the construction of a railway on the Matterhorn.³³

It was the existence of this network and international movements with similar objectives and comparable ideology that made it possible to envi-

26 It was no more than a cog in a broader movement led by more talented organisers. See Charles-François Mathis, *In Nature We Trust* (Paris: Presses Universitaires Paris-Sorbonne, 2010), pp. 369–400.

27 Walter, *Les figures paysagères*, p. 276.

28 Letter from Fritz Koch to Richardson Evans, 26 Apr. 1912, London Metropolitan Archives, A/SCA/III/2/10 (Europe).

29 The congresses held earlier focused chiefly on wildlife, birds in particular (the first congress for the protection of birds took place in Paris in 1895).

30 De Clermont et al., *Premier Congrès*.

31 *Bulletin de la SPPF*, no. 26, 15 Apr. 1908: 36.

32 *Bulletin de la SPPF*, no. 27, 15 July 1908: 62.

33 *Bulletin de la SPPF*, no. 25, 15 Jan. 1908: 304.

The First International Congress for the Protection of Landscapes

sion a major international congress for the protection of landscapes on the European level.³⁴

The first International Congress for the protection of landscapes

The goals of the Congress

It was France, by way of the SPPF, which took the initiative in 1907, at a time when the association was enjoying the success of the Beauquier law from the preceding year.³⁵ The invitations that were extended help grasp the specific objectives.

They were firstly sent to all French and foreign societies, whether environmental, scholarly, agricultural or artistic, and 'tending, like [SPPF] to protect in each country the great artistic heritage represented by its forests, rock formations, beautiful and sublime landscapes, along with its picturesque sites and some of the monuments accompanying them'.³⁶ The SPPF remained faithful to its patrimonial conception, and therefore did not exclude any field of protection, combining the natural and the historical, the scientific and the artistic.

It established two types of goals for itself: to awaken public opinion on the broader environmental question, and to lay the foundation for a public sphere on the international level, one that was in fact first and foremost European:

In the presence of the constantly growing movement in favour of conserving [artistic heritage] in the general interest, this Congress seeks to inform public opinion regarding the serious danger that such outrageous excess and destruction represent for these invaluable elements of the nation's wealth.³⁷

The congress thus had a role as a pathfinder, as a guide for public opinion seeking information and advice: the aim was to address everyone across Europe who was concerned by these threats and destruction. Without of course specifying how it would be implemented, there was a desire to spark

34 There was no emphasis placed at the time on a European singularity that distinguished it from American vision or practice, as the United States remained a model whose achievements were praised. In other respects, there were indeed singularities between the approaches pursued by different countries of the Old World.

35 'Pour les paysages de France', *Le Figaro*, 9 Oct. 1909.

36 *Bulletin de la SPPF*, no. 26, 15 Apr. 1908: 17–18.

37 Ibid.

a European debate regarding the protection of nature, by providing people with arguments and examples supporting landscape preservation. While there was a strong European dimension, the space of action remained firmly national, as it was within each country where associations had to act, albeit on the basis of arguments developed during the congress.

As it happens, these arguments were founded on a moderate approach to the environmental struggle, as SPPF members did not criticise industrial society as a whole, but rather its 'excesses', the 'outrageousness' of certain attacks, and 'assaults' – in short everything that went beyond common sense and moderation. To do so, and to better guide public opinion, the other objective of the congress was to strengthen the links between national associations.³⁸ As a result, the primary goals of SPPF leaders were to compare different legislation, suggest new legislation and create or strengthen personal links. Anselme Changeur summarised these goals at the opening of the congress: 'If this event can contribute to spreading our principles and creating a few new links between nations, we will be pleased: what better common ground ... than beautiful landscapes!'³⁹

The 1909 Congress

The First International Congress for the Protection of Landscapes finally took place from 17–21 October 1909. It was organised around five major topics: protection and legislation; forests; rural landscapes; urban landscapes; and landscapes, sciences and the arts.⁴⁰

The sessions consisted of presentations by each national delegate on the actions undertaken by the respective association or country in connection with these topics. Contributions were made by Germany, Austria-Hungary, Belgium, Great Britain, Sweden and Switzerland.⁴¹ However, there were also discussions regarding measures implemented in Greece, Norway, China, Egypt, Serbia, etc. These communications were supplemented, toward the end of the congress, by more theme-based research on 'The landscape at school' or 'The protection of flora and fauna'.

The final session provided an opportunity to formulate certain demands intended for governments, public opinion and associations participating in

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid., 24.

40 *Bulletin de la SPPF*, no. 30, 15 Apr. 1909: 12.

41 Conwentz was German, De Munck Belgian, Koechlin Austrian and Boni Italian.

The First International Congress for the Protection of Landscapes

the congress. It is worth noting the originality and modernity of some of these proposals. There were suggestions to create national parks, and to save certain endangered species such as beavers, ibex and flamingos; to encourage heritage education for children and adults; to slow the uniformisation of cities by preserving their local characteristics and conserve their harmony by establishing an 'aesthetic zoning law'; to combat abusive advertising, in both the country and cities...⁴² Charles Beauquier gladly affirmed that 'we are all working for the same international cause, defending the shared heritage of humanity'.⁴³

In ending on such a vibrant note of international communion, the congress offered its participants, the press, and SPPF members reading the meeting summary the appearance of a resounding success. In the months that followed, its success was repeatedly celebrated in the *Bulletin de la SPPF*, which suggested a new era had begun. It is precisely this faith on the part of SPPF leaders that we will explore here: was the 1909 congress truly the vector for a hitherto unknown international dynamic,⁴⁴ or did it result from a pre-existing movement?

The legacy of the 1909 Congress

A short-lived dynamic

The central question is the legacy of the congress. Despite the outpouring of compliments in the columns of the *Bulletin de la SPPF*, the results were scant. The demands put forward were highly relevant, but concrete effects were long in coming. There were of course a few positive consequences directly inspired by the congress, undoubtedly including better knowledge of national legislation, which certainly strengthened the environmental cause. For example, in 1911 SPPF members believed that the passage in Belgium of a law for the protection of natural monuments was a direct effect of the Paris congress.⁴⁵ International meetings ensued.⁴⁶ In its wake, Charles Beauquier presented a bill to the French Parliament on plans for the extension and

42 De Clermont et al., *Le Premier Congrès*.

43 *Bulletin de la SPPF*, no. 33, 15 Jan. 1910: 65.

44 While attendance at this congress was European, its ambitions surpassed the sole framework of the Old World.

45 *Bulletin de la SPPF*, Aug. 1911: 13.

46 International Congress on Public Art, Brussels, 1910; Town Planning Conference, London, 1910. See *Bulletin de la SPPF*, no. 38, Nov. 1910: 17.

embellishment of cities.⁴⁷ Conwentz continued to praise French initiatives, and wanted to take inspiration from the SPPF's moderate approach in his struggle against industrial actors, and his alliance with professionals from the tourism industry.⁴⁸ Still, this activity and its foreign impact were most certainly more a continuation of exchanges and actions that preceded the congress than the sign of a new dynamism initiated by it.

This is no doubt demonstrated by the failure of its successors. In Paris, it was decided that the various associations that met in 1909 would continue to meet regularly, and that the next congress would take place in 1911. In reality, only two other congresses were held before the First World War: one in June 1912 in Stuttgart, the other in November 1913 in Bern. From the sole perspective of international participation, the first was a failure: Richardson Evans, who received a late invitation to come to Stuttgart in April 1912, responded a month after it was held. His correspondent urged him to participate, and to provide him with the names of other English figures who could attend, affirming that he had also written to the Secretaries of Public Education and 'Public Buildings',⁴⁹ asking them to send representatives as well. Even more surprising was the absence of delegates from the SPPF: Charles Beauquier, its president, Anselme Changeur, its secretary-general, and Raoul de Clermont, the primary organiser of the congress of 1909, all excused themselves from the meeting.⁵⁰ They nevertheless sent the communications they were supposed to present,⁵¹ which were read by other participants at a conference that appears to have chiefly brought together Central European countries. There were of course other French representatives, notably an inspector general of historic monuments, a member from Touring Club de France, and a former custodian of Fontainebleau forest, although the congress went almost unnoticed in France, not to mention the United Kingdom.⁵² The Bern congress brought together delegates from seventeen European and non-European countries (the United

47 *Bulletin de la SPPF*, no. 39, Dec. 1910.

48 Wöbse, 'Les liaisons sinueuses', 110.

49 To my knowledge, no such secretary existed.

50 The current state of research does not make it possible to formulate an explanation for this absence.

51 These communications were respectively about the protection of landscapes in France, the protection of villages and constitutive elements of the landscape, and the means available to address abusive advertising.

52 It is tersely and briefly mentioned in the *Bulletin de la SPPF*, no. 56, July 1912: 5; the Touring Club's magazine completely ignores it, along with the Bern congress. When Raoul de Clermont wrote a report in 1925 about the International Congress for the Protection of Nature held two years earlier, he mentioned the 1909 congress among its forerunners, but was entirely silent about

The First International Congress for the Protection of Landscapes

States, Japan, etc.), and agreed upon the creation of an Advisory Commission for the International Protection of Nature, which was nipped in the bud by the Great War.⁵³ At this point, the initiative seems to have escaped France, and the SPPF in particular: only Raoul de Clermont remained a favoured speaker at this meeting, which incidentally broadened its field of action by taking an interest not only in landscapes, but also flora and fauna.

The European dynamic consequently did not accelerate following the meeting in Paris. This failure, which partly originated from growing tension between European countries, also demonstrates in my opinion a new configuration of the international movement, which gravitated toward the Germanic sphere of influence.

From English influence to the German model

Luigi Piccioni has suggested the existence – even within a shared conceptual framework around the patrimonialisation of nature – of three distinct and influential cultural areas in Europe: the United Kingdom; Central Europe and Scandinavia influenced by Germany and its concept of *Heimat*; and a Latin zone embodied especially by France and Italy.⁵⁴ Alan Confino has also distinguished a Germanic space from the rest of Europe, seeing it as the only place where the nation could truly be identified with a landscape.⁵⁵ The 1909 congress helps show the bridges connecting these different areas, particularly between France and Germany, and confirms the relative isolation of Britain at the time.

The tutelary figure of nature preservation associations in France, Italy, and to a lesser extent in Germany was the Briton John Ruskin. His writing marked an entire generation of activists in the United Kingdom. He was one of the only Englishmen mentioned by Hugo Conwentz in his work *The Care of Natural Monuments with Special Reference to Great Britain and Germany*, the very fact of whose publication in 1909 demonstrates the in-

that of 1912 (de Clermont et al., *Premier Congrès*). The magazine *Nature*, which had mentioned the Paris congress, did not refer to the one in Stuttgart.

53 Martin Holdgate, *The Green Web: A Union for World Conservation* (Abingdon: Earthscan, 1999), pp. 10–11.

54 Piccioni, 'L'influence de la France', 98.

55 Alan Confino, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor. Württemberg, Imperial Germany and National Memory, 1871–1918* (London: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

fluence of these two countries.⁵⁶ In the founding article of the SPPF, Jean Lahor still mentioned Ruskin, along with William Morris, to whom he devoted a book in 1897. He also established a parallel between the activity of the future organisation, and that of the already numerous English environmental associations, which he subsequently enumerated. It is noteworthy that, throughout the article, England is the only country given such exhaustive presentation. Furthermore, by virtue of the vocabulary he used, Jean Lahor probably took inspiration from England, evoking the need for defenders of nature who want to achieve their ends – who abandon overly ‘sentimental’ arguments in favour of more ‘practical’ reasoning⁵⁷ – and by calling his opponents ‘the utilitarians’.⁵⁸ These were precisely the terms that framed the environmental debate in England.⁵⁹ It is possible that this is only a convergence; however it underscores the proximity of thought between Lahor and his British counterparts. The *Bulletin de la SPPF* tried to extend this proximity by mentioning the example of England from time to time. Even during the debate for the law of 1906, Ruskin was mentioned as a major source of influence.⁶⁰ For that matter, it is impossible to deny the relatively early dynamism of the British in matters of environmental protection, with strong and effective action beginning in the 1870s; in 1907, a law regarding the regulation of advertising and the ability of the National Trust to declare lands inalienable appeared as the crowning achievements of this activism.⁶¹

Still, it is evident that this English influence waned, especially during the 1909 congress: while almost all European nationalities were represented in the committees that organised and composed it, the United Kingdom was absent. In addition, no British delegate travelled to Paris, with only a single presentation by Richardson Evans being read, which naturally left centre stage for SCAPA, thereby somewhat distorting a more complex reality. While contacts were maintained, it was quite obvious that the direction of the movement no longer came from England, with British influence being replaced by the German model.

56 Hugo Conwentz, *The Care of Natural Monuments with Special Reference to Great Britain and Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1909).

57 Jean Lahor, ‘Une société à créer’, 527.

58 Ibid., 530.

59 Mathis, *In Nature We Trust*, ch. iv.

60 Maurice Faure, recorder of the law, *Journal des Débats*, 28 Mar. 1906, Sénat, p. 282.

61 Mathis, *In Nature We Trust*, pp. 398–404.

The First International Congress for the Protection of Landscapes

This model was clearly personified by Dr Hugo Conwentz, who as the Custodian of Natural Monuments in Prussia played an eminent role in the environmental movement in Germany. He was undoubtedly the most influential foreign figure at the SPPF, if one is to believe the association's bulletins, which mention his activities, cite him and praise his works, especially *On the Care of Natural Monuments*. He was of course the first person, just after Charles Beauquier, to head a working session during the 1909 congress. More generally, during the years preceding and following the congress, most of the articles in the *Bulletin de la SPPF* about protecting natural beauty presented German associations and legislation as a model to inspire the rest of Europe.⁶² It hardly comes as a surprise then that Charles Beauquier affirmed, during one of the sessions of the congress, that 'all we have to do is imitate what's being done in Germany'.⁶³

The German model was quite simply attractive, as it was the only country at the time with an administration tasked with the protection of landscapes. It was especially based on an ideology that French activists – and at least a part of Central Europe – were sympathetic toward, and that was personified by the *Heimatschutz* movement. Luigi Piccioni has quite rightly made it one of the three most important influences on the early twentieth century European environmental movement, along with the 1906 Beauquier Law and the national parks created in Sweden.⁶⁴ This association,⁶⁵ which was founded in 1904 and had offshoots in Switzerland and Austria-Hungary, protected the '*petite patrie*', as it was defined by the German delegate: 'respect for the image of the country is developed and [preserved] by this love of the local steeple, a basis for patriotic sentiment that is fully summarised in this word: *Heimatschutz*'.⁶⁶ In this framework, the conception of environmental protection was much larger than that in France or even in the United Kingdom, as it was not concerned solely with preserving urban or natural landscapes, but everything closely or remotely connected to national identity, including

62 See for example *Bulletin de la SPPF*: no. 25, 15 Jan. 190: 293–296; no. 30, 15 Apr. 1909; no. 35, 1 June 1910.

63 Charles Beauquier, in de Clermont et al., *Le Premier Congrès*, p. 12.

64 Piccioni, 'L'influence de la France', 107. Despite the importance of the movement in the UK, its international influence was actually limited, aside from the posthumous intellectual aura of Ruskin and Morris.

65 On *Heimatschutz*, see, for example, Confino, *The Nation*; William Rollins, *A Greener Vision of Home* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997).

66 Dr. Fuchs, 'L'œuvre du *Heimatschutz*', in de Clermont et al., *Le Premier Congrès*, p. 39.

animals, plants and historic monuments (within a broader movement that also sought to protect traditional clothing and folklore).⁶⁷

This approach by way of what German activists called ‘natural monuments’ quite evidently attracted the other delegates present in 1909. The French team, which had organised the meeting, was also very sympathetic to it, with there most likely being a passing of the baton of sorts between Lahor, who was more oriented toward the Anglo-Saxon world but who died a few months before the congress, and the team surrounding Charles Beauquier and Raoul de Clermont, who greatly admired the German model.⁶⁸ It was present during a resolution that was passed regarding the international conference on the preservation of natural resources being planned by US president Theodore Roosevelt in The Hague: the congress wanted this meeting to integrate the programme of *Heimatschutz*.⁶⁹ The British review *Nature* was not mistaken, emphasising this German influence in its report on the meeting.⁷⁰

This coming together around the German conception of the environmental movement can of course be explained by the concurrent eclipse of the UK, the successful activities taking place in Germany and most certainly by a common regionalist influence, at least with regard to France. Caroline Ford has rightly emphasised the close links between the SPPF and the regionalist movement, often with shared members and leaders, as well as identical values in the attachment to local traditions and landscapes that must be preserved.⁷¹ In 1909, Charles Beauquier distinguished, from the very opening of the congress, between the ‘*Vaterland*’ and the ‘*petite patrie*’, or ‘what we could call the “*matrie*”’.⁷² This intertwining of two scales of patriotism, the local and the national, was present

67 *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, issue on *L'Identité* 35 (1980); *Bulletin de la SPPF* No. 25 (Jan. 1908): 293–296.

68 It is possible that the biographical backgrounds of the various individuals also promoted this shift in influence, although this theory remains to be supported: Charles Beauquier and Raoul de Clermont were from Eastern France (from the Doubs); the latter was incidentally an attaché at the French embassy in Bern (See Yamina Larabi, Piotr Daszkiewicz and Patrick Blandin, ‘Premier Congrès international pour la protection de la nature etc. Hommage à Raoul de Clermont’, *Courrier de l'environnement de l'INRA* 52 (2004): 117–121).

69 De Clermont et al., *Le Premier Congrès*, p. 72. Theodore Roosevelt had sent invitations to 45 countries to meet at The Hague in 1909 regarding the question of natural resource preservation. This initiative was buried by his successor in the White House.

70 *Nature* 83 (2116) 19 May 1910: 345.

71 Ford, *Natural Interests*, pp. 108–109. See also Anne-Marie Thiesse, *La création des identités nationales* (Paris: Seuil, 1999).

72 De Clermont et al., *Le Premier Congrès*, p. 12.

The First International Congress for the Protection of Landscapes

throughout Europe according to François Walter,⁷³ although it was theorised and applied more vigorously in Germany, which quite naturally established itself at the head of the European movement. We are subsequently able to better grasp why – in the context of the growing international tension during the years following the Paris congress, and the increasingly sharp division of the continent – a dynamic led by Wilhelmine Germany ran out of steam. This reason is nevertheless insufficient on its own to explain the slowdown in international cooperation, particularly in Europe. Deadlock specific to the movement itself should also be taken into consideration.

Difficulty moving beyond the national scale

Goodwill was nevertheless present, as there was a desire to create an international society bringing together all the national organisations, in order to strengthen the movement. This wish had already been expressed in 1907 by Richardson Evans, in a letter to Anselme Changeur: 'My own very strong feeling is that if we are to succeed in our humanising mission, it must be by making the movement international, that is to say, bringing those in every country who feel similarly into touch with each other.'⁷⁴ If this was not an initial goal of the 1909 congress, which simply mentioned a 'moral bond between peoples', it ultimately became one in the form of an 'International Union for the Protection of the Motherland'.⁷⁵ Raoul de Clermont was subsequently entrusted with a new task, that of conducting an investigative commission for the creation of an 'International Federation of Societies for the Preservation of Natural and Regional Treasures':⁷⁶ the name simultaneously connected it to the conference sought by Roosevelt, as well as the extensive German concept of *Heimatschutz*. De Clermont was supposed to present the report on this topic at the next congress, although as we saw earlier he did not attend, and the contribution he sent was on an entirely different subject. He revived the idea

73 Walter, *Les Figures paysagères*, pp. 274–280.

74 Letter from Richardson Evans to Anselme Changeur, 18 Nov. 1907, London Metropolitan Archives, A/SCA/III/2/10 (Europe).

75 De Clermont et al., *Le Premier Congrès*, p. 43. Its ambition was clearly international, extending beyond the borders of Europe by including the United States. Yet it seems to me that there was a great deal of illusion on the part of the contributors to this congress. Raoul de Clermont's suggestion to include *petites patries* in the conference on the planet's energy resources being planned by Roosevelt a few months later was more the stuff of a pious pledge...

76 De Clermont et al., *Le Premier Congrès*, p. 72.

in September 1910 during a literary and artistic congress in Luxembourg.⁷⁷ In 1913, during the Bern Congress, he once again requested the implementation of an international commission to serve as a clearing-house for information on the protection of sites and monuments.⁷⁸

Beyond these stated ambitions, it was ultimately the ambiguity regarding the missions of such a federation that slowed its implementation. If it was simply a matter of putting people in relation with one another, as proposed by Evans, what was the purpose? This had already been done. Furthermore, there was already a great deal of information exchange. To justify a new alliance, especially within a tense international context, it was important to go further, although this would entail national associations submitting to a new governing body that would dominate them – something that both the French and Germans fiercely refused.⁷⁹ Hugo Conwentz, for example, always advocated a non-restrictive form of international cooperation. This resistance was present during the international conference for the protection of nature held in Bern in 1913 by the naturalist Paul Sarasin:⁸⁰ it took its place instead within a tradition that was parallel to the 1909 congress, as the central issue was the protection of flora and fauna rather more than landscapes. Still, the unavoidable Conwentz was present, as were French representatives from the Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle and the Touring Club. An advisory commission tasked with gathering and diffusing information on the protection of species was established,⁸¹ whose prerogatives were limited precisely due to openly expressed national resistance.⁸²

The source of this apparent unwillingness to establish an international federation can be traced to the difficulty of internationalising what was a national and even nationalist movement. Luigi Piccioni has shown the difficulty, notably with respect to patrimonial protection of nature, of transplanting a concept from one country to another. While the notions of 'landscape' and 'natural monuments' enjoyed considerable success, the French idea of 'natural

77 De Clermont et al., *Le Premier Congrès*, p. vi.

78 Holdgate, *The Green Web*, p. 10.

79 A simple governing body *coordinating* national activities would not have been of great interest.

80 Holgate, *The Green Web*, p. 11, briefly discusses this resistance.

81 Donato Bergandi and Patrick Blandin. 'De la protection de la nature au développement durable: Genèse d'un oxymore éthique et politique', *Revue d'histoire des sciences* 65 (2012): 116–117; and Anna-Katharina Wöbse, 'Separating spheres: Paul Sarasin and his global nature protection scheme', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 61 (2015): 339–351.

82 Wöbse, 'Les liaisons sinueuses', 113.

The First International Congress for the Protection of Landscapes

sites of artistic interest', which was the foundation of the 1906 Beauquier Law, struggled to spread, despite being unanimously praised abroad. The same was true of the Italian concept of 'natural beauty' (*bellezze naturali*), whose marginal success led to its abandonment in Italy itself.⁸³ Even more fundamentally, following the German model made the defence of national identity the primary reason for protecting natural and historic monuments, sometimes to the detriment of other arguments, such as economic or aesthetic ones. This helps explain why it was so problematic to found an international federation protecting the nation... At most, as suggested by Fuchs in 1909, such a union would help combat what he referred to as 'cosmopolitism', without a doubt implying a form of devastating modernity originating from the United States – one that took aim, he pointed out, 'first and foremost [at] the conservation of national characteristics'.⁸⁴ With this in mind, we nevertheless cannot see what purpose such a federation would have served, or how it could have acted.



All in all, the 1909 congress can be considered as both an outcome and a phase. Indeed it crowned the internationalisation of movements for the patrimonialisation of nature that had begun in the late nineteenth century, attesting to increased Germanic influence, to the detriment of the UK, as well as to the strong bonds that had been established between associations since the early twentieth century. While in the short term it did not trigger a European dynamic, it nevertheless was a stage in implementing – for lack of a genuinely European space for debate – a transnational space of communication in Europe bringing together intellectuals, artists, scientists and a few politicians around the question of preserving national landscapes. A certain amount of seemingly fairly favourable publicity was given to these exchanges in the press.

As in many other areas, the First World War would profoundly transform this movement, as the scope of destruction alarmed people more than ever about the harmful power of humans and the limits of the Earth.⁸⁵ The patriotic approach to the protection of nature would begin to diminish – without

83 Piccioni, 'L'influence de la France', 99–100

84 Dr. Fuchs, 'L'œuvre du *Heimatschutz*', 43.

85 Mathis, 'La Terre vaine. Mutations du sentiment de la nature', in Alain Corbin, Jean-François Courtine and Georges Vigarello, *Histoire des émotions* vol. III (Paris: Seuil, 2017), pp. 201–202.

disappearing, far from it – in favour of more scientific conceptions. François Walter has rightly asserted that ‘after 1920, discourse on the protection of nature cleared itself of nationalist accents’.⁸⁶ This enabled an internationalisation on new bases: the congresses of 1923 and 1931 no longer focused exclusively on landscapes, but also included endangered flora and fauna, more in keeping with the foundations established in Bern in 1913 than the conclusions of Paris in 1909; naturalists gradually imposed themselves, with ecology overshadowing the aesthetic-patriotic approach. These meetings took place, in a way, amid the ruins of the 1909 congress, as they often included the same men and even the same associations. While there were new faces, along with new highlighted issues, the networks established in 1909 were not completely wiped out. Finally, the links established between environmental engagement and regionalism did not fade entirely, as they were sometimes present during the structuring of the environmental movements of the 1970s.⁸⁷ France ultimately continued to play an important role in this internationalisation of the movement, although it did so by increasingly including its colonies, as did other imperial powers.⁸⁸ It was thus a ‘green’ international with a different face that became established during the interwar period, whose offshoots survived the Second World War and which served as a basis for creating the International Union for the Protection of Nature in 1948, in which Europeans had an important role until the 1960s.⁸⁹

86 Walter, *Les figures paysagères*, p. 279.

87 On this topic, see the divergences underscored by Martin Siloret between the environmental movement in Brittany, which was highly marked by regionalism, and that of Wales, which was less connected to it. Martin Siloret, ‘La structuration partisane de l’écologie politique: une comparaison Bretagne – Pays de Galles (1974-1995)’, Ph.D. in history under the direction of Jacqueline Sainclivier, Université de Rennes 2, 2017, ch. 2.

88 Ford, *Natural Interests*, ch. v.

89 Holdgate, *The Green Web*.

CHAPTER 2.

THE HISTORICAL ROOTS OF THE EUROPEAN CULTURE OF CATASTROPHES

François Walter

The environment occupies a prominent place among those historical fields attracting keen interest. Beginning with Michelet in the nineteenth century, it became common to consider the relations between humans and their environment as a long-term struggle, in which the former would inevitably win out by harnessing the forces of nature and mastering adversity. More recently, with the reversal of perspective prompted by the discrediting of overly anthropocentric views on the topic, it has become clear that, on the contrary, human societies are indeed the primary predator on the planet. Of course the bacteria of 3.5 billion years ago – the very ones that began the recycling of carbon and made life possible – changed the environment much more radically than we humans of the twenty-first century. Still, humans have emerged as a ‘macroparasite’ that incessantly transforms the planet, to the point of endangering it altogether. From there it is just a step to reflecting on history in general as a catastrophic scenario, a step that certain historians have no fear of taking.¹

In 1990, the philosopher Michel Serres began his book *The Natural Contract* by describing the duel with sticks (*Duelo a Garrotazos*) painted by Francisco Goya in 1820–23. Two men are fighting in a patch of quicksand, which Serres comments on in the following terms: ‘With every move they make, a slimy hole swallows them up, so that they are gradually burying themselves together’. The pace at which they sink depends on their aggressiveness. Yet ‘the belligerents don’t notice the abyss they’re rushing into; from outside, however, we see it clearly’. This blindness of human beings who are occupied with their small and large disputes, as if nothing were happening, prevents them from detecting the slimy ground in which society as a whole is floundering. The conclusion is clear:

1 This assessment received broad media attention after scientists such as James Lovelock sounded the alarm during the 1980s. Such suppositions are at the foundation of global history research on the Anthropocene. See, for example, among the classics, John R. McNeill, *Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth-century World* (London: Allen Lane, 2000).

earth, waters, and climate, the mute world, the voiceless things once placed as a decor surrounding the usual spectacles, all those things that never interested anyone, from now on thrust themselves brutally and without warning into our schemes and maneuvers. They burst in on our culture, which had never formed anything but a local, vague, and cosmetic idea of them: nature.

What was once local – this river, that swamp – is now global: Planet Earth.²

Natural hazards – events that are always unforeseeable and potentially threatening – and more or less vulnerable societies come face to face. Under certain circumstances, their interaction transforms into an extreme event that is both destructive and abrupt: this is what is commonly meant by the term ‘catastrophe’. A short and oft-cited phrase by Max Frisch ably captures what may seem obvious, but must constantly be pointed out: ‘Only human beings can recognize catastrophes, provided they survive them; Nature recognizes no catastrophes.’³

Moving beyond this observation, some authors believe that a desire for catastrophe is a constitutive element of postmodern culture, like the duty of remembrance that serves as its counterpart.⁴ Affective engagement with the past and catastrophic sensibility converge in practice. Without a doubt, the flow of memory characteristic of the system of historicity in place since the 1990s is linked to the great catastrophes of the twentieth century, including wars, the Holocaust and genocides. Furthermore, remembrance on other levels still remains a working-through of deep, often suppressed, social and cultural wounds, which burst forth brutally. Memory includes a sacred dimension from which history precisely tries to free itself, in an effort to provide a detached view of the break, one that is both constructed and distant. Hence, in studying alpine society, researchers have successfully emphasised the essential memorial component of the management of natural catastrophes.⁵ This includes a commemorative dimension that is codified and legitimised (monuments and scenographies). It also takes place through narratives and images, which constitute a genuine ‘collective knowledge of the catastrophe’.⁶

2 Michel Serres, *The Natural Contract*, trans. Elizabeth MacArthur and William Paulson (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), pp. 1 and 3. This reading is of course foreign to Goya, as the disappearance of the protagonists’ legs is simply the result of a poor restoration of the work!

3 Max Frisch, *Man in the Holocene*, trans. Geoffrey Skelton (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1981), p. 79.

4 This is the argument proposed by the collection of articles edited by Peter Gray and Kendrick Oliver, *The Memory of Catastrophe* (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 2004).

5 René Favier and Anne-Marie Granet-Abisset (eds), *Histoire et mémoire des risques naturels* (Grenoble: MSH-Alpes, 2000).

6 René Favier and Anne-Marie Granet-Abisset (eds), *Récits et représentations des catastrophes depuis l’Antiquité* (Grenoble: MSH-Alpes, 2005).

The Historical Roots of the European Culture of Catastrophes

This arrangement can be found in other European contexts, especially in the Mediterranean.⁷ This movement does not solely affect Europe, and includes a patrimonial dimension when the sites of extreme events are transformed into memorials or recognised by UNESCO's 'world heritage' label.⁸

Social sciences and catastrophes

Historical anthropology, which is primarily interested in the structuring of these experiences, has made the vulnerability of human societies a central notion since the 1980s. It is because the explanatory factors reside more in the society itself, rather than in natural conditions, that assessing the degree of vulnerability has become a central topic of research.⁹ Vulnerability, which results from economic and social inequality, is distinct, varying across the societies, historical periods, and modes in which the event qualified as catastrophic is perceived and represented.¹⁰ This concept inevitably relates to a characteristic of fragility, to something that is suffered. Yet it also opens onto resilience, either the mechanisms or technological resources that allow for confronting a catastrophe, which is to say the system's capacity to regain its previous state of balance. Catastrophes became a genuine historical subject approximately twenty years ago, when understanding an event itself was joined by new focus on the distinctive features of the social group and context that determine the capacity to anticipate, react, resist, and recover from the potential realisation of a risk. This approach includes the cultural resources that define how potentially harmful events are perceived and inscribed with meaning.¹¹

Research that is already well-established has explored catastrophic phenomena within a broad social context, by emphasising their almost

- 7 See Domenico Cecere et al. (eds), *Disaster Narratives in Early Modern Naples: Politics, Communication and Culture* (Rome: Viella, 2018).
- 8 A good example is the icon used for the 'Saguenay flood', which depicts the small white house in Chicoutimi (Quebec), in the heart of the memorial park commemorating the 1996 catastrophe. Among examples of patrimonialisation, one could cite the recent addition (Nov. 2018) to the intangible cultural heritage list of 'avalanche danger management', jointly received by Austria and Switzerland.
- 9 Regarding the inclusion of risk in the social sciences, see Claude Gilbert, 'Quels risques pour la recherche en sciences humaines et sociales?', in Dominique Bourg, Pierre-Benoît Joly and Alain Kaufmann (eds), *Du risque à la menace: penser la catastrophe* (Paris: PUF, 2013), pp. 217–236.
- 10 Susanna M. Hoffman and Anthony Oliver-Smith (eds), *Catastrophe & Culture: The Anthropology of Disaster* (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 2002), pp. 60–62.
- 11 Current research generally distinguishes five characteristics: 1) the catastrophe itself, always indexed to what humans suffer from it; 2) objective natural dangers such as hurricanes, lightning or avalanches; 3) social, economic, physical and psychological vulnerability; 4) resilience; 5) cultural resources.

structural nature and revealing a society's mentality.¹² It is also impossible not to cite the foundational article by Lucien Febvre, who over sixty years ago proposed studying the need for security and its various manifestations in Western culture.¹³ There is also no lack of monographs that have studied major urban fires, volcanic eruptions, and earthquakes.

In Europe, it was in the Germanic field in particular that research on risks and catastrophes (*Katastrophenforschung*) was established as a topic earlier than elsewhere.¹⁴ The expression, which is derived from the English terms hazard research or disaster research, does not have an equivalent in other European languages, which is due not only to the inventive flexibility of the German language,¹⁵ but also and especially to the existence of an authentic disciplinary field. This type of research is interested in the process of catastrophe management, and therefore in the conditions of action in situations of crisis (what is called disaster management, or *Katastrophenmanagement* in German).¹⁶ The context for this was no doubt awareness of the potential technological failures and environmental dangers of industrialisation and nuclear energy. More recently, it has turned toward analysis of the risks connected to climate change.¹⁷

For all that, the cultural history of catastrophes owes its rise and affirmation as an independent field of research to a historian specialising in the early modern period, Manfred Jakubowski-Tiessen (1948–), who wrote a study on the storm tides of 1717 that devastated North Sea coasts from the Netherlands to Denmark.¹⁸ Without neglecting the impact and management of the

12 I am thinking in particular of Jean Delumeau's explorations of fear and the feeling of security in the West, with natural calamities serving as one of the matrices: Jean Delumeau, *Rassurer et protéger: le sentiment de sécurité dans l'Occident d'autrefois* (Paris: Fayard, 1989).

13 Lucien Febvre, 'Pour une histoire d'un sentiment: le besoin de sécurité', *Annales E.S.C.* 11 (1956): 244–247.

14 See Walter François, 'Thinking the disaster: A historical approach', in Gabriele Duerbeck, Urte Stobbe, Hubert Zapf and Evi Zemanek (eds), *Ecological Thought in German Literature and Culture (Ecocritical Theory and Practice)* (London: Lexington Books, 2017), pp. 161–174.

15 In the early 1990s, there were no less than 82 compound words in German including risk either as a suffix or prefix! See Wolfgang Bonss, *Vom Risiko: Unsicherheit und Ungewissheit in der Moderne* (Hamburg: Hamburger Ed., 1995).

16 See Wolf R. Dombrowsky, 'Sozialwissenschaftliche Katastrophenforschung und Sicherheitsdiskurs', in Siedschlag Alexander (ed.), *Methoden der Sicherheitspolitischen Analyse* (Berlin: Springer, 2014), pp. 223–236.

17 Martin Voss (ed.), *Der Klimawandel. Sozialwissenschaftliche Perspektiven* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2010).

18 Manfred Jakubowski-Tiessen, *Sturmflut 1717: die Bewältigung einer Naturkatastrophe in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1992).

The Historical Roots of the European Culture of Catastrophes

catastrophe, the author was attentive to contemporary discourse regarding the event. The task of interpreting its meaning was left to experts from the period, namely men of letters and essentially theologians. Their reading of it connected knowledge of the natural sciences with an analysis of divine intervention – nuanced by their belonging to either Lutheran orthodoxy or Pietism – and references to Enlightenment ideas. Without yet gauging the innovative impact of this decentring of the issue, Jakubowski-Tiessen had initiated the new approach of the cultural history of catastrophes.

The heuristic association of disaster research and cultural anthropology resulted from the rediscovery of the religious dimension. It was no longer possible, as had too often been the case, to preserve two major paradigms: one older and considered obsolete, interpreting the catastrophe as a supernatural and exogenous phenomenon; the other connected to modernity, presenting it as a natural and endogenous phenomenon, a subject of scientific knowledge. Henceforth, the religious and the symbolic also contributed to a comprehensive explanation over the *longue durée*. It is therefore important to avoid thinking that the disenchantment of the world, initiated by the Enlightenment, definitively relegated the validation of this type of intelligibility to the past. In fact, the rational ontological topos of modernity did not simply replace an earlier model of interpretation, but rather superimposed itself on the former, thereby increasing the number of explanatory hypotheses, which were so many resources available for societies confronted by the need to understand and explain the world. Rational and religious readings were not necessarily seen as being antagonistic to one another, and have cohabited over the *longue durée* up to the present.¹⁹ Crises and catastrophes are first and foremost indicators of an understanding of the world. As such, there has been a gradual development of the significations ascribed to natural events. Legitimacy of interpretation became a consideration, an opportunity for rivalry among those who possess the authority to produce theological, scientific, management or simply narrative discourse.²⁰

The field gradually developed from the environmentalist standpoint, which made it possible to connect information from the natural and social

19 On religious interpretation as a global explanatory model, see Manfred Jakubowski-Tiessen, 'Mythos und Erinnerung: einige kommentierende Anmerkungen über Städte aus Trümmern', in Andreas Ranft and Stephan Selzer (eds), *Städte aus Trümmern: Katastrophenbewältigung zwischen Antike und Moderne* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), pp. 274–286.

20 The symbolic and religious as a global explanation is the central argument of our cultural history of catastrophes. See François Walter, *Catastrophes: une histoire culturelle XVI–XXI siècle* (Paris: Seuil, 2008).

sciences.²¹ In the French-speaking world, the social history of catastrophes responded to the requests of local and regional authorities interested in the risks of avalanches and torrential flooding in mountainous environments.²² Not satisfied with their role as purveyors of old documents, which the natural sciences expected of them, researchers in the social sciences engaged in risk prevention projects in order to give their work on the memory and culture of risk genuine legitimacy, as well as to play a uniting role in this composite and necessarily fragmented disciplinary field.

Evoking a European culture of catastrophe calls for a dual approach: a history of 'cultures of risk' as well as a history of the 'culture of risks'. The first relates to the knowledge required by practices of risk management (from protection against catastrophes up through reconstruction).²³ The second especially emphasises the perceptions and behaviours of Western society in the face of environmental risks, along with the social and territorial differentiations that characterise their realisation.²⁴ Beyond their heuristic finality, these two approaches complement one another, and connect in a highly pragmatic way.

The interest of the social sciences in these questions is of course closely linked to the emergence of a public sphere in which social concerns are expressed. The major shift took place during the 1970s. A series of catastrophes highlighted the vulnerability of technological systems: the sinkings of the *Torrey Canyon* (1967) and the *Amoco-Cadiz* (1978); and the chemical

- 21 See F. Walter, 'Paysage et environnement en histoire: échapper au brouillage', *Information géographique* 3 (2014): 26–41. See also Christof Mauch and Christian Pfister (eds), *Natural Disasters, Cultural Responses. Case Studies Toward a Global Environmental History* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2009). A good review of late twentieth-century European literature from the perspective of an American historian can be found in J.R. McNeill, 'Observations on the nature and culture of environmental history', *History and Theory* 42 (2003): 5–43. For recent history in the field of catastrophes, see Stefan Willer, 'Katastrophen: Natur – Kultur – Geschichte. Ein Forschungsbericht', in *H-Soz-Kult* 13 Sept. 2018, <http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/forum/2018-09-001>
- 22 René Favier and Anne-Marie Granet-Abisset (eds), *Récits et représentations des catastrophes depuis l'Antiquité* (Grenoble: Maison des Sciences de l'Homme-Alpes, 2005); Favier and Granet-Abisset (eds), *Histoire et mémoire des risques naturels* (Grenoble: CNRS - Maison des Sciences de l'Homme-Alpes, 2000).
- 23 The cultural history of risks is notably illustrated by Emmanuelle Collas-Heddeland et al., *Pour une histoire culturelle du risque : genèse, évolution, actualité du concept dans les sociétés occidentales* (Strasbourg: Éditions Histoire et anthropologie, 2004). See also F. Walter, 'Pour une histoire culturelle des risques naturels', in Walter, Bernardino Fantini, and Pascal Delvaux (eds), *Les cultures du risque (XVI^e–XXI^e siècle)* (Geneva: Presses d'histoire suisse, 2006), pp. 1–28.
- 24 This research field was notably defined by Sandrine Glatron, 'Culture des risques', in Vincent Moriniaux (ed.), *Les risques* (Nantes: éditions du temps, 2003), pp. 71–87.

The Historical Roots of the European Culture of Catastrophes

accidents of Bolsover (1968), Bitterfeld (1968), Flixborough (1974) and Seveso (1976). The economic recession of the mid-1970s helped bring new attention to topics of risk and prevention. Growing concerns initially surrounding the proliferation of nuclear weapons (Euromissile crisis), which subsequently became very real with the Chernobyl (Ukraine) reactor fire in 1986, gave a planetary dimension to these preoccupations. It was initially in Europe that critical ecology revealed the apocalyptic blindness of a society capable of self-destruction. Philosophers such as Günther Anders and Hans Jonas theorised the planned catastrophe. The dark possibilities of climate change were grafted onto these foundations in the late twentieth century.

Multiple interpretive sequences

If we now try to structure into descriptive models the diverse representations that later underpinned practices for risk and catastrophe management during the last three centuries, three sequences emerge: 1) Societies of protection up to the eighteenth century; 2) Societies of prevention during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; 3) Risk society (since the late twentieth century).²⁵ The temporal divisions are purely indicative, as the duration of one attitude was not necessarily exclusive relative to the ensuing or preceding one: their temporalities are interlinked. In reality, complex practices overlapped, ceaselessly driven by new waves that did not, for all that, eliminate earlier realities. At each of these stages and crises, different social actors, based on their conditions and contexts, encoded information, reconstructed for their own use, and updated through power relations their confrontation with risks and catastrophes.

European societies and protection

When they experienced a catastrophe, whatever it might be, so-called traditional societies from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries knew quite well how to connect the event to natural factors. The hazards or dangers connected to the climatic or geographic context were well known, and were connected to the possible event, whose probability of realisation was totally unpredictable. Protective measures were therefore taken and ceaselessly improved depending on the experience of the catastrophe. Coasts exposed to storm tides (the North Sea) were lined with networks of dykes. In the

25 Here we are returning to and expanding the sequences sketched out in our article 'Catastrophes', in Dominique Bourg and Alain Papaux (eds), *Dictionnaire de la pensée écologique* (Paris: PUF, 2015), pp. 131–135.

Alps, villages threatened by avalanches were topped by protective forests, in which it was strictly forbidden to chop down trees. Beginning with the Middle Ages, cities issued construction regulations to protect against fire. Even though earlier societies clearly developed authentic knowledge of natural limits, we should be wary of overestimating ancestral knowledge. In many domains (avalanches, floods), knowledge remained fragmentary and evolving. Wisdom and good sense were not necessarily sufficient in the face of highly unpredictable risks.

If a catastrophic event took place despite these protective systems, it was probably because it was not entirely reducible to natural causes. Exceptional events had exceptional causes. This is where the supernatural dimension intervenes, the action of Divine Providence, which exercises its power of retribution. Many old engravings illustrating burning cities inevitably represent lightning in the sky, and above the clouds a punitive God. In Judeo-Christian traditions, lightning was one of the instruments used to punish humans. As a result, the essential question was to know why God decided specifically to punish a particular city at a particular time. The suppositions that served as answers were recorded in the great number of sermons that provided the meaning of the event, which incidentally were for a long time the only vehicles for diffusing information. To take just one example, when Saint Michael's church in Hamburg caught fire by lightning strike in 1750, no fewer than twenty sermons offered clever theological craft to explain the destruction of a church, while the neighbouring homes suspected of all kinds of turpitude were spared.²⁶ During the eighteenth century, occasional and later periodical publications also covered these events, and following the example of scientific texts, tended to minimise or even elide completely the Providentialist dimension of the catastrophe, which nevertheless remained highly present until the following century in traditionally Protestant countries.

The insistence on evoking the punitive action of God served not only to inform, but also and especially to influence future behaviour, in an effort to better protect against the hazard. The associated lexical field contains biblical vocabulary, including terms such as scourge, calamity, and disaster,

26 Walter, *Catastrophes*, pp. 114–115. For examples in a highly different context, see Armando Alberola et al. (eds), *Desastre natural, vida cotidiana y religiosidad popular en la España moderna y contemporánea* (Alicante: Universidad de Alicante, 2009).

The Historical Roots of the European Culture of Catastrophes

but very rarely ‘catastrophe’.²⁷

In simplifying, one could say that a moral and social disorder which contemporaries of the event strove to identify led to direct intervention by God, who momentarily changed the rules by which natural phenomena function in order to punish. In terms of managing the catastrophe, the direct consequence was the strengthening of norms, both technological (regulating construction) and moral (for instance a ban on behaviour deemed to be licentious, such as dancing, or restrictions on alcohol consumption). In addition, there was recourse to religious rites such as the invocation of patron saints, with whom the community symbolically concluded a contract. Pilgrimages and other processions could function over a very long period of time as reducers of uncertainty in the face of the unforeseeable nature of hazards. To take just one example, facing the advancing Aletsch Glacier threatening their pastureland and homes, inhabitants of the village of Fiesch (Valais Alps) committed in 1678 to mending their ways as part of a procession held each year on 31 July. The measure has worked so well that, in the early twenty-first century, with the glacier withdrawing beyond their expectations, the local community now fears water scarcity. As a result, in 2010 it took measures to obtain papal authorisation to invert the ritual’s direction, so as now pray for the preservation of the glacier. It would be wrong to wax sarcastic about the convictions of these mountain dwellers.

This reactive ensemble can be referred to as ‘restorative reaction’. Society reacts in an effort to return to the order preceding the transgression, often identified with an ethical fault, whether individual or collective, obvious or latent. With regard to fires, this helps us better to understand attitudes that our purely rationalist contemporary protective standards might consider absurd. When a fire occurs, the local community can hesitate over whether to first extinguish it, or to proceed with exercises in piety (collective prayer and rituals of intercession). The logic of this hesitation, along with the primacy granted to the spiritual attitude instead of the collective effort to fight the fire, is rooted in the conviction that there is no point in fighting against a material fire while divine anger remains unappeased.²⁸ The most pragmatic communities combine the two attitudes: while able-bodied men go about putting

27 The word was used occasionally, especially during the Lisbon earthquake (1755). On the different types of discourse, see Andrea Janku et al. (eds), *Historical Disasters in Context: Science, Religion, and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2012).

28 Maria Luisa Allemeyer, *Fewersnoth und Flammenschwert: Stadtbrände in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007).

out the fire, women, the elderly and children withdraw to one side to pray. This kind of scene became a commonplace in iconographic representations.

Earlier societies subsequently appear as societies of 'protection' against hazards, in the face of known and recurring risks. They process danger retroactively, through 'management carefully framed by uncertainty, and a method by which responsibility is shared between humans and non-humans'.²⁹

European societies and prevention (nineteenth to twentieth centuries)

Between our system of intelligibility for catastrophes and that of earlier societies, there is room for notions of planning and prevention. During an initial phase, which overwhelmingly concerns the nineteenth century, there was particular talk of 'planning', a concept related to that of chance, which is inherent in the hazards of existence. On an individual level, we also try to take into consideration a future that is not just the cyclical repetition of the past. However, a mentality that is concerned with preventing new disasters by taking a whole society into consideration can truly develop only when the struggle against natural forces, along with their mastery by sciences and technology, is seen as a purpose of human history. Instead of a fundamentalist conception of Providence, the interpretive framework is surely that of the nature/society dichotomy and the conflictual relations between the two. Instead of a fatality that is suffered, natural disasters enter the domain of 'prevention'. This is another term whose meaning has been expanded. Until the early twentieth century, the word 'prevention' was used primarily in law to designate the right to exercise a prerogative before a third-party. It was only gradually that it took on its contemporary meaning of measures seeking to diminish the risk of accidents or illness, in other words to include the future within the perception of hazards.

This change in perception was not straightforward, especially because it seemed to infringe upon the laws of Nature as sought by Providence. Was defending oneself from lightning by installing a lightning rod on one's roof, or avoiding illness through preventative vaccination, a way of avoiding the possibility of divine punishment? This type of questioning greatly disturbed minds in the eighteenth century.

Two domains served as experiments for preventive practices. The oldest

29 René Favier (ed.), *Les pouvoirs publics face aux risques naturels dans l'histoire* (Grenoble: MSH-Alpes, 2002).

The Historical Roots of the European Culture of Catastrophes

one is a concern for mitigating the damage caused by fire through construction norms and the first insurance establishments, which emerged in Germany and England during the second half of the seventeenth century, and in the remainder of Europe during the eighteenth century. Later, late nineteenth-century fears of health catastrophes were inscribed in a context in which prevention required the certainty of science. It therefore developed in the wake of Pasteurian discoveries regarding contagion, which clearly demonstrated that the wellbeing of an individual could depend on the behaviour of the person next to them. As a result, the fight against tuberculosis led to the establishment of a kind of medicalised establishment precisely known as a 'preventorium', before ill persons were treated in 'sanatoriums'. In an almost obsessive manner, it fell to public authorities to identify the vectors or to indicate those responsible for the risk, in order to eradicate the potential source of the accident or epidemic. This was dominant until the 1970s, when the public sphere expanded and grew more complex, and prevention chiefly took the form of information. This was the ideal of engineers and technicians, who were convinced that science and technology could master the forces of nature. It is also important to note that territorial management policies were born from this movement. From their very beginning, they constructed a legitimising discourse based on the perspective of a catastrophe to be avoided, whether in connection with forests (fight against flooding attributed to reckless clearing of high-altitude land), protection against avalanches, systematic use of dykes along rivers to guard against floods or sanitary control of water resources.

It was in this context that the word 'catastrophe' in its usual sense, as a major accident with horrendous consequences, gradually replaced within discourse (especially that of the media reporting about them) terms with stronger connotations (scourge, disaster) from the preceding period.³⁰ The new concept began to spread in the mid-nineteenth century, as the legitimate discourse for providing a plausible explanation distanced itself from the religious sphere of interpretation.

With regard to fires, this logic was particularly successful. The fires that devastated entire cities over the centuries became rare and even tended to disappear after 1850, which explains the media impact of major residual catastrophes, such as the Hamburg fire of 1842. However, traditional practices

30 The word 'catastrophe' originally belonged to the semantic register of dramatic theatre, denoting an ill-fated end to the plot. Its current meaning as an extreme event hardly dates back before the 1860s, although the word was sometimes used during the eighteenth century.

of a religious kind did not disappear. During major floods (which tended to become frequent with urbanisation and the trend of global warming), people made recourse to collective events of religious fervour, although these came after efforts to reinforce dykes.³¹ They proved highly effective, for as we know peak flooding is always followed by a drop in water level!

If we try to reduce this period to a simple pattern, one could say that it favoured a reactive sequence in which accidents were attributed to chance instead of Providence, or connected to bad fortune or breakdowns in technological measures. This led to a certain reduction in the sense of individual responsibility, in favour of intervention by the state, social institutions and insurance. Such an evolution was obviously connected to a new industrial civilisation that experienced increasing risks due to industrial and mining activity. When a catastrophe occurred, it was crucial to re-establish the situation that existed before the event. The reconstruction phase was an important part of the post-traumatic phase, with the primary goal of consolidating anything that could 'prevent' the probability of a hazard.

The situation is stabilised through reaction, with the catastrophe emerging more than ever as a social construction ascribing value to technological assets, engineering knowledge, civic solidarity, the competence of public authorities, the effectiveness of health systems and coverage by insurance establishments. This reactive model, which was used by those in power, seeks to minimise the responsibility of state authorities and economic leaders by attributing the errors to the inherent risks of technological development. Accidents are consequently part of the natural order of things, an inevitable aspect of the system that must be addressed by the insurance-based society, and eventually solved by technology.

The model seems to have functioned well, at least until a new type of catastrophe – sparked by what was called 'major technological risks' during the 1970s – challenged certain established certainties or methods for applying prevention. These methods would quickly spread across the globe, although experimentation with them initially took place in Europe.

31 See, for example, the 1866 floods of the Loire River in Guillaume Cuchet, 'Trois aspects de la crise des représentations de l'action de Dieu dans l'histoire au XIX^e siècle', *Transversalités* 128 (2013): 13–25.

The Historical Roots of the European Culture of Catastrophes

The 'Risk Society' (1990 to the present)

Since the nineteenth century, collective perception has slowly shifted from a vision based on protection, and later planning, to one based on risk, which is to say a notion oriented even more directly toward the future. While earlier societies were confronted with recurring risks, which were highly localised or regional, contemporary societies now also face new and emerging risks. The former only considered known risks whose danger was established by experience, and was confined to the uncertainty of the hazard. By way of precaution, the latter also took into consideration hypothetical and potential risks before their realisation, as soon as an intellectual process confirmed their plausibility. For that matter, the scale of extreme phenomena expanded, taking on not only a national but also an increasingly transnational and even global scale.

This distinction between objective probabilities, whose distribution we know, and probabilities that are simply constructed, is a recent one. It provides reassurance and support for the convictions of those who believe that contemporary society is capable of managing uncertainty. The very use of the word 'risk' to designate the condition of contemporary humans became common during the late 1970s. In Europe this concept was still unclear in its usage before the crisis of 1973–74 (called the first oil crisis), but later became pervasive, as if the word played a role as a rational substitute for the concerns sparked by the announced scarcity of energy resources. However, on a more general level, increased uncertainty and the awareness of vulnerabilities took their place within the context of societal changes: instability of labour markets, the dreaded effects of neoliberalism and globalisation of the economy and the environmental turning point. There was now the conviction that the dangers created by humans were infinitely more serious than any natural catastrophe!

Risk is always an intellectual construction. It is calculable, which means that it is grasped only when we measure its random character, in which we assess the chances of realisation of an encounter between a hazard and a vulnerability. Concretely, this means that it is possible to express the frequency of floods of a certain scope, but obviously not to specify the date. There is a certain confusion in public opinion on this topic, hence the surprise of residents near the rivers of Central Europe, who experienced the 'flood of the century' in 2002, before contending with the 'flood of the millennium' in 2013! The risk's probability of realisation in a way thwarted the formidable mechanism for distancing represented by the very notion of risk itself. There is also a misleading perception in the Alps, when various nivological services

daily evaluate the danger of an avalanche based on a scale of seriousness. It is clearly not a matter of specifying the level of risk, although among the public there is a tendency to equate danger and risk. Aren't experts there to calculate and minimise exposure to risk? In other words, the job of experts is to bring risks into existence using quantification and cartography. When the avalanche report announces maximum danger, the intended audience (off-trail hikers) understands maximum 'risk', which is clearly an extrapolation, for this risk – in the event it can be calculated (which is impossible in terrain as differentiated as that in mountainous environments) – varies from one slope to another depending on criteria such as gradient and exposure. This is why, when a terrible event occurs, the discourse of survivors vacillates between a number of equally irrational attitudes: some return to traditional considerations regarding the inscrutable intentions of Divine Providence, even if it means seeing the event as a warning. Others speak of the need to respect the mountain, whose natural and supernatural power punishes those who violate unwritten laws (especially city-dwellers with a penchant to see the snowy peaks as no more than a playground). Finally, at a push, Nature itself is suspected of striking in totally immoral fashion, for any type of catastrophe is out of place in a leisure or vacation setting. This attitude is glaringly present after the tsunamis that devastate tropical islands.

Some analysts go so far as to normalise our society's global perception as being that of a 'risk society'. This expression was proposed by the German sociologist Ulrich Beck, who believed that the major difference between the past and the present is that the latter is 'characterized essentially by a *lack*: the impossibility of an *external* attribution of hazards ... While all earlier cultures and phases of social development confronted threats in various way, society today is *confronted by itself*...' As a result, there is no longer anything external to the social world. Even nature is integrated, to the point that there is no longer 'any reserve to which we can reject the "collateral damage" of our actions'.³² Risks are produced by society itself. The immediate consequence of such an epistemological choice is to strip the natural catastrophe of its nature as an unforeseeable event, and to categorise it as an accident provoked by human incompetence. Yet are they still true dangers, or simply a modification of thresholds of tolerance? It is a question that bears asking, despite the lack of a simple answer.

32 Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, trans. Mark Ritter (London: SAGE Publications, 1992), p. 183. Unlike the two preceding sequences, the model refers to society in the singular, as this form of risk management has a transnational and global dimension.

The Historical Roots of the European Culture of Catastrophes

Formerly, in history, only urban fires belonged to this category, in which it is difficult to separate the effects of natural conditions from those linked to technological choices, lack of precaution or simple recklessness. Today, the tragic reality of major industrial accidents (such as black tides, chemical catastrophes, events with a global impact such as Chernobyl or Fukushima) has confirmed the relevance of this way of conceiving risks. 'Man-made hazards' henceforth dominate, inseparable from a society's degree of development. Previously, natural dangers and extreme events prompted specific social responses. In this new configuration, social practices themselves – by heightening dependence on technological systems that are highly vulnerable due to their interconnectedness – are helping to transform hazard into catastrophe!



What are the paradigms of this new way of thinking? Very briefly stated, it is based on references from the physical sciences that are diverted by the social sciences, and then transformed into social phenomena. An example of this is the Second Law of Thermodynamics (Law of Entropy), which underscores a system's tendency toward disorder and the irreversibility of change. Next, it is important to note the propensity to quantify risks, which is so pronounced that no risk whatsoever can exist until it has been duly mapped and quantified in its probabilities of occurrence. Risk management is based on statistics. This is how we protect ourselves against the possibility of a flood, which is based on a threshold that must not be passed within a given range of time. Nuclear reactors must be shielded from high-water levels, which are statistically measured based on their occurrences and a limit that on average can be surpassed only once every 10,000 years! And yet... Due to the rapid mediatization of potentially catastrophic events, contemporary societies are increasingly aware of their extreme vulnerability. The more sophisticated the technological systems developed during this second period, the more their exposure to collapse proves evident. Extreme dependence on interconnected networks (energy, information, transportation) actually increases vulnerability.

To put it plainly, this means that the average citizen, who is continually reassured by the discourse of experts, is less and less prepared to suffer the hazards of everyday life, whatever they may be. For that matter, new activities (athletic ones in particular) realise threats that had hitherto remained potential. Finally, how does one form an opinion regarding phenomena as complex as climate change, in which real and observable signs (the shrinking

of glaciers for example), which are sometimes counter-intuitive (recurring cold spells), must be integrated within hypothetical and virtual scenarios (the progression of average temperatures). Overall, contemporary society has been unable to narrow the margin separating natural hazards from social vulnerability. Civil society, which is hostage to the media attention that transforms models into realities, seems to be increasingly deprived of critical distance.

An illustration of this is the 2010 eruption of a volcano in Iceland with an unpronounceable name (Eyjafallajökull). In itself, this natural phenomenon was not a catastrophe, as it took place in an uninhabited area. However, it became one in the ensuing hours and days, as it covered a large part of Northern Europe with ash, paralysing air traffic on a global scale.

In the face of rising uncertainty, a proposal has served as a panacea since the 1990s and guides management by public authorities, namely the 'principle of precaution' (already institutionalised in 1987): taking proportionate measures to prevent irreversible risks at an acceptable economic cost. The limits of this new dogma have already been tested by terrorism, new pandemics, and Fukushima (12 March 2011). The latter catastrophe, which will over time undoubtedly mark a shift in our relation to risks, personifies the essence of post-industrial risk: it is global, simultaneously invisible and furtive, organic and mutating, and incessantly adapting.

At the same time, the new concept of resilience has tended to supplant that of vulnerability. Originating from the field of psychology approximately twenty years ago, it designates the capacity to overcome post-traumatic stress. While the notion of vulnerability has a connotation of passiveness, resilience places greater emphasis on the confrontation of reality and capacity for action, with the goal being to re-establish the balance of the social system.³³

There remains the sensitive question of the particularity of Europe, which has been continually underscored in the preceding pages. Of course, the shifts discussed appear to be inseparable from the pace of an increasingly industrialised and urbanised society. From this point of view, the public sphere in which the culture of catastrophe developed was initially European and Western. It was in the European space that public management of the consequences of catastrophic events was tested beginning in the eighteenth

33 On this subject, see Gilbert Claude, 'De l'affrontement des risques à la résilience. Une approche politique de la prévention', *Communication & langages* 176 (2013): 65–78.

The Historical Roots of the European Culture of Catastrophes

century.³⁴ Destructive earthquakes (Lisbon in 1755, Messina in 1908), epidemics (cholera in 1831–32) and the slaughter of the two world wars were so many events that forged expertise (for better and for worse). It is hardly possible to disregard the weight of this history when confronted by today's planetary risk society. In this sense it is legitimate to speak of a European culture of catastrophe.

In looking more closely, and not simply being content with listing the advances of cultures of risk, history can help teach us to live with danger despite our knowledge and efforts to protect ourselves from it. It helps make a reflexive and proactive risk management more credible by mobilising civic responsibility to a much greater degree than before. This attitude – potentially a new practice model for risks – appears increasingly necessary in a world confronted more than ever by uncertainty, one that is not yet sufficiently accustomed to functioning in just-in-time mode across all domains. It is not a lack of technology that generates insecurity, but rather the difficulty in admitting that risk is henceforth inherent to the way of life. Managing external hazards is no longer sufficient, as what matters is realising how much the unthinkable and the uncertain are part of normal life, something that is illustrated by today's outward signs of climate change, which was long deemed to be improbable. The world of possibilities has transformed into the fulfilment of the probable. It is important for us to take this into account if we want to continue to endure.

34 For the beginnings of a comparative history, see Gerrit Jasper Schenk, *Historical Disaster Experiences: Towards a Comparative and Transcultural History of Disasters across Asia and Europe* (New York: Springer Verlag, 2017).

CHAPTER 3.

EUROPE AND CHERNOBYL: CONTESTED LOCALISATIONS OF THE ACCIDENT'S ENVIRONMENTAL, POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL IMPACT

Karena Kalmbach

Considering the global dimension of the Chernobyl debate, does it actually make sense to inquire into a connection between Chernobyl and a European public sphere – as suggested by the editors by inviting me to contribute an article to this compilation? It does indeed. Because the question of Chernobyl's 'Europeanness' has been debated in a very particular public sphere – creating a discourse which claimed itself to be in the position to define what Europe actually is.

Was Chernobyl an accident in a European nuclear power plant? As simple as this question might seem, every trivial answer of 'yes' or 'no' implies far-reaching statements: on the geo-political boundaries of Europe as well as on nuclear issues. First, this question touches upon the issue of Ukraine's integration into the European Union – a highly politicised issue that triggered a civil war in this country in 2013. Second, an answer to the question of Chernobyl's 'Europeanness' touches upon crucial nuclear political debates and includes statements on reactor safety, nuclear emergency plans and science diplomacy. The changing discursive localisation of the accident's environmental, political, social and cultural impact as inside or outside Europe thus points to two historical transformations that took place over the last 30 years: the changes within Europe and the changes within nuclear politics. In bringing together these two discourses and pointing out their partial interconnectedness, this chapter sheds light on how changing definitions of 'Europeanness' and changing boundaries of 'nuclearity'¹ have co-shaped the coming to terms with the Chernobyl accident, in particular regarding the allocation of responsibilities and the formulations of 'lessons learned'.

If we consider the institutional level of the European Communities and the European Union, Chernobyl has definitely played an important role in the

1 Gabrielle Hecht, 'Nuclear ontologies', *Constellations* 3 (2006): 320–331.

Europe and Chernobyl

legal and technological integration processes. In 1986, Chernobyl triggered the establishment of uniform dose limits for radioactive contamination of foodstuff within the European Communities; and, in the 2000s, its legacy paved the way for implementing Western European security standards and thus technologies in Eastern Europe, as conditions for Eastern European countries joining the European Union. In this way, Chernobyl nuclearised the European trade in foodstuff and Europeanised the nuclear techno-political system of the Western part of the former Soviet Union.

But this chapter is not primarily concerned with these legal, institutional and technical histories; it is interested in the question of how *Europe* as geographical, political and cultural entity was defined and negotiated through Chernobyl narratives. Therefore, it investigates Western European Chernobyl narratives that have been present in public discourse over the last thirty years. It starts from a consideration of the various aspects that are negotiated within Chernobyl narratives: from health effects of low-level radiation to risk-taking in modernity. Understanding these multiple layers of Chernobyl narratives and the discursive fields they are interlinked with is crucial for understanding the significance of a narrative localisation of Chernobyl as *inside or outside Europe*. After laying this groundwork, the chapter will delve into concrete Chernobyl narratives brought forward by specific actors at specific moments in time and shed light on the political implications of these narratives – political implications that reach far beyond the field of nuclear politics. In a last step, the chapter will expand on the question of the politics of the Chernobyl discourse itself and turn to sociological concepts which build upon a certain interpretation of Chernobyl. Looking at Chernobyl from this angle allows us to enlarge the question of how Europe is geographically and politically defined and negotiated *through* the Chernobyl discourse, to a contemplation of the question of how a certain interpretation of Chernobyl has created a specific communication sphere on modern risks.

This focus on ‘Europe and Chernobyl’ should, however, not overshadow the fact that European Chernobyl debates have remained very much contained in their national frameworks. Not only have the varying regional and local agricultural problems shaped the specific national Chernobyl debates.² The

2 Comparing the cases of Corsica, northern Sweden and the British Lake District sheds light on the variety of problems the Chernobyl fallout triggered in Western Europe: in Corsica, we still have a vivid debate about the question of whether the Chernobyl fallout actually caused thyroid cancer in children on this island. Through this public debate, many people in Corsica have become familiar with the debate about health effects of low-level radiation. It has probably become common

perception and interpretation of Chernobyl has also depended on various national political and cultural specifics such as, for instance, in Western Europe, the formation, role and status of nuclear ‘experts’ and ‘counter experts’; the shape, political role and protest culture of the anti-nuclear movement; or the media system. But a comparative history of Chernobyl narratives not only tells a story of divergences. As we will see, it is precisely in the question of the ‘Europeanness’ of this accident that joint narratives cut across local, regional, and national particularities.

Chernobyl: Where, when, and what?

Chernobyl is not just the punctual event that took place in the form of an explosion in a nuclear power plant on the night of 25 to 26 April 1986. It is an ongoing disaster, both from environmental and social perspectives. Neither its environmental impact nor its social impact are limited to the geographic location of the power plant.³ Chernobyl caused fallout of radionuclides across the northern hemisphere, and severely contributed to the breakup of the Soviet Union. And it directly affected the life and health of countless people, in particular in Ukraine, Belarus and Russia.⁴ What is more, the history of the punctual event of the explosion does not start in 1986. The measures taken to mitigate and control the impact of the explosion and the release of radioactive particles have a long prehistory. This prehistory is shaped by the Cold War arms race and the Atoms for Peace programme. But the history of diverse

knowledge among them that radioactive iodine accumulates in sheep milk, which is pillar of the diet of many Corsican farmers. For reindeer farmers in northern Sweden, the knowledge about environmental effects of Chernobyl rather concerns the accumulation of caesium in lichen and moss. For them, Chernobyl as an event meant the mass slaughtering of their flocks. And sheep farmers in the British highlands had to learn about soil specifics that enabled the formation of radioactive hotspots on their pastures. ‘Chernobyl’ in these terms meant restrictions on the sale and movement of one fifth of the British sheep population.

3 Karena Kalmbach, *The Meanings of a Disaster: Chernobyl and Its Afterlives in Britain and France* (New York: Berghahn Books, forthcoming 2021); Susanne Bauer, Karena Kalmbach and Tatiana Kasperski, ‘From Pripyat to Paris, from grassroots memories to globalized knowledge production: the politics of Chernobyl fallout’, in Laurel MacDowell (ed.), *Nuclear Portraits: Communities, the Environment, and Public Policy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), pp. 149–189.

4 Adriana Petryna, *Life Exposed. Biological Citizens after Chernobyl* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Olga Kuchinskaya, *The Politics of Invisibility. Public Knowledge about Radiation Health Effects after Chernobyl* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2014); David Marples, *The Social Impact of the Chernobyl Disaster* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988).

Europe and Chernobyl

technologies such as satellite systems,⁵ and in particular the history of medical investigations into the health effects in Hiroshima and Nagasaki⁶ also play a prominent role. Furthermore, the actions undertaken in 1986 cannot be understood without knowledge of the history of the emergence of a specific safety culture within the Soviet nuclear programme;⁷ the history of radiation protection;⁸ and the history of the central actor within the international nuclear-political system – the IAE.⁹ If we apply this *longue durée* perspective, Chernobyl transforms itself from a punctual event in the nuclear power plant *Lenin* located a hundred kilometres north of Kiev, into a network of related geographies, events and actors that have been woven together into a wider story about risk-taking in modernity, in particular by Ulrich Beck.¹⁰

Historical studies which specifically put their focus on nuclear risk-taking normally stop in 1986, such as the recent book by Christoph Wehner.¹¹ Practical reasons, like the inaccessibility of archival material, can of course justify stopping an historical investigation at a certain point in time. But it is no coincidence that these works stop in 1986: the underlying assumption is that something fundamentally changed with Chernobyl. Numerous political scientists and sociologists have applied the same assumption, and in this way justified only considering the period after 1986. Social scientists' strong interest in 'focusing events'¹² and the impact of such events on mobilisation, agenda-setting and public opinion have shaped many works discussing Chernobyl's political impact. So we have come to think of Cher-

- 5 Johan Gärdebo, *Environing Technology: Swedish Satellite Remote Sensing in the Making of Environment 1969–2001* (KTH Stockholm: Ph.D. thesis, 2019).
- 6 Susan Lindee, *Suffering Made Real: American Science and the Survivors at Hiroshima* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).
- 7 Sonja D. Schmid, *Producing Power. The Pre-Chernobyl History of the Soviet Nuclear Industry* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2015).
- 8 Samuel J. Walker, *Permissible Dose. A History of Radiation Protection in the Twentieth Century*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Cyrille Foasso, *L'Histoire de la sûreté de l'énergie nucléaire civile en France, 1945–2000* (Université Lumière Lyon II: Ph.D. thesis, 2003).
- 9 Elisabeth Röhrlich, 'The Cold War, the developing world, and the creation of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), 1953–1957', *Cold War History* 16 (2016): 195–212.
- 10 Ulrich Beck, *Weltrisikogesellschaft. Auf der Suche nach der verlorenen Sicherheit* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2008); Ulrich Beck, *Risikogesellschaft. Auf dem Weg in eine andere Moderne* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986).
- 11 Christoph Wehner, *Die Versicherung der Atomgefahr. Risikopolitik, Sicherheitsproduktion und Expertise in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und den USA 1945–1986* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2017).
- 12 Thomas B. Birkland, 'Focusing events, mobilization and agenda setting', *Journal of Public Policy* 18 (1998): 53–74.

nobyl as a breaking point and have divided academic research into historical 'before Chernobyl' and political 'after Chernobyl' stories. This periodisation, however, obscures the many continuities, in particular with regard to the aspects of the important *longue durée* perspectives which I pointed out above. We can't take for granted that Chernobyl was a 'turning point or catalyst in European environmental policy and politics'.¹³ And we can't take for granted that it triggered the formation of a European public sphere focused on environmental problems.

The problems caused by Chernobyl, the reactions that these problems triggered and the memories that these problems and reactions created are different all across Europe. They do not just differ between the two sides of the former Iron Curtain. They also differ all across Eastern and Western Europe and even within one and the same country.¹⁴ But the same memories can also be found in different geographical locations. Within these various communities of memory, Chernobyl has come to legitimise the most diverse forms of action. Depending on the discursive context, Chernobyl works as argument for anti-nuclear manifestations (anti-nuclear groups); for charity activities for Ukrainian, Belarusian and Russian children (solidarity movement); or for closer collaboration amongst emergency response forces (radiation protection institutions). These three communities of memory allocate a high historical importance to Chernobyl and consider the accident an event worth commemorating. However, there exists also the interpretation of Chernobyl as an event that is not particularly worthy of commemoration. Pro-nuclear activists and the nuclear industry have framed Chernobyl as one amongst many other industrial accidents. These actors have stressed the low number of immediate human casualties. In this narrative, Chernobyl has

13 In this regard, it makes complete sense to put a question mark after the statement: 'Chernobyl – Turning Point or Catalyst?' as did the organisers of an international conference at the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung in Berlin in November 2016. Focusing on 'Changing Practices, Structures and Perceptions in Environmental Policy and Politics (1970s–1990s)' the conference aimed at thinking the decades 'before Chernobyl' and 'after Chernobyl' together and embedded them in their broader social-political context. The fact that almost all the presenters did not halt their narrative in 1999 but included present day developments shows that Chernobyl is not only an ongoing disaster, but also an enduring reference point in environmental and energy politics. The presentations were filmed and are available online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KpW5n9GVOtg> (accessed 12 May 2020).

14 Karena Kalmbach, 'Radiation and borders. Chernobyl as a national and transnational site of memory', *Global Environment* 11 (2013): 130–159; id., 'Tchernobyl – angle mort', in Étienne François and Thomas Serrier (eds), *Europe notre histoire – L'Héritage européen depuis Homère* (Paris: Les Arènes, 2017), pp. 316–318; Melanie Arndt (ed.), *Politik und Gesellschaft nach Tschernobyl: (Ost-) Europäische Perspektiven* (Berlin: Christoph Links Verlag, 2016); id., 'Memories, commemorations, and representations of Chernobyl', *Anthropology of East Europe Review* 30 (2012): 1–12.

Europe and Chernobyl

come to legitimise the further intensification of the nuclear programme.

Chernobyl's 'death toll' has thus become a battlefield on which pro- and anti-nuclear activists fight each other. The dispute amongst scientists about the health effects of low-level radiation – which started long before 1986 – allows for the wide range of numbers that each claim to be the 'true' Chernobyl death toll. This debate is not only important for the present and future of the evacuated people and areas around Chernobyl. It gains importance on a global scale, as it influences the evaluation of the health impact of reprocessing plants, nuclear power plants, uranium mines – and, of course, other nuclear accidents. Claims about the Chernobyl death toll directly imply statements on the health impact of the 2011 Fukushima accident: the assumption of a certain number of Chernobyl victims caused by the released levels of radionuclides in 1986 indeed directly implies assumptions of a certain number of Fukushima victims caused by the released levels of radionuclides 25 years later.

Entangled in these global dimensions of the Chernobyl debate lies a discourse that is very much concerned with Europeanness, a discourse in which Chernobyl narratives became a tool of identity politics. It is this particular dimension of the Chernobyl debate to which we turn now our attention.

Negotiating Chernobyl's Europeanness

Ever since the first news reports about Chernobyl, *Europe* formed an inherent part of Chernobyl narratives. Countless accounts published in 1986 stated that large parts of *Europe* were affected by the radioactive fallout and that there was a lack of coordination amongst *European* governments, resulting in very different counter measures taken by each and every country. Statements defining the nuclear-political lessons to be learned from Chernobyl and the sanitary consequences, however, did not refer to *Europe*. These statements instead applied a Cold War mapping, stressing that *the West* did not need to worry about either severe health effects or challenges to its nuclear enterprise.

The evaluations brought forward by politicians, nuclear industry representatives and other nuclear state and industry experts from Western Europe stressed the East-West divide in particular: it was a Soviet nuclear reactor design (the RBMK reactor) that had caused the accident. For example in an interview published in the newspaper *Le Parisien* on 30 April, a representative of the French national radiation protection agency SCPRI stated:

a major accident like the one in Chernobyl just cannot take place in France because of the difference in design that exists between the plant concerned and the type of

plants which we build ... Our quality, safety and maintenance controls are a lot more rigorous than those in the USSR.¹⁵

Thus, the Western European public sphere that inquired into the accident, worried about its consequences and explained why it happened, located Chernobyl outside of its own geographic territory. The event happened in the Soviet Union, not in Europe. In the problem allocation, the political entity was given priority over the geographical entity. Given the context of the Cold War, this geographic alienation is in no way surprising. But it is interesting to see that this narrative of the 'Soviet accident' has remained powerful ever since, despite the fact that the transnationality of the accident's environmental consequences was a key element in gaining knowledge about the event. It was indeed at the Swedish nuclear power plant Forsmark that the release of radioactive particles was detected before anybody in Western Europe had heard about the accident. This material proximity might also, even as early as 1986, have let journalists and politicians locate Chernobyl in their narratives within Europe. After all, the RBMK design was also implemented in Lithuania, a country whose 'Europeanness' has hardly ever been questioned. But Chernobyl was not framed as a European nuclear accident. The fact that fallout from an accident in a Ukrainian nuclear power plant could be detected in a Swedish nuclear power plant was narrated as a sign of the accident's severity (which led to intense rumours about very high numbers of immediate radiation deaths), and not as a representation of the geographical closeness and entanglement of Eastern and Western Europe.

These alienation politics were a common feature across Western Europe. They aimed at stripping any hint of Europeanness from the accident, in order to keep Chernobyl's political, social and economic consequences on the Eastern side of the Iron Curtain. The way nuclear officials, both from the industry and public institutions, explained Chernobyl and its consequences to the wider public thus also had common features across Western Europe. Official statements stressed the safety of national nuclear power programmes and the limited harm caused by the accident outside the immediate surroundings of the plant. For instance, in the UK, 'MPs were assured by both the Prime Minister and the Environment Secretary, Mr Kenneth Baker' that 'Britain has escaped the effects of the nuclear plant disaster in the Soviet Union'.¹⁶

Stories about careless, drunken Soviet plant operators who were neither

15 'Le nucléaire en France: la sécurité avant tout', *Le Parisien*, 30 Apr. 1986.

16 Alain Travis, 'No radiation threat to the UK, Commons told', *The Guardian*, 30 Apr. 1986.

Europe and Chernobyl

aware of the dangerous material they were handling nor able to properly control it became a very popular way of explaining the origins of the accident. A popular science book published in 1988 – whose author claimed to have delivered ‘an historical account of what happened before, during and after the accident’¹⁷ – went as far as including a photo of a bottle of Ukrainian vodka amongst its illustrative pictures.¹⁸ This narrative of ‘Soviet nuclear carelessness’ gained central political and economic importance in 2004 and in 2007. When the Eastern European countries joined the EU, they had to apply Western European security standards to their nuclear power plants¹⁹ – and Lithuania had to dismantle its RBMK reactors in Ignalina. There was no way that a reactor design like the one that had caused Chernobyl could be tolerated within this newly defined geo-political *Europe*.

So, while the former Western part of the Soviet Union was discursively transferred into *Eastern Europe*, the nuclear political discourse continued to locate Chernobyl outside Europe. However, this narrative – which was foremost shaped by state and industry actors – had already become severely challenged by civil society actors, mainly anti-nuclear groups and charity organisations. These groups have stressed the European dimension of the accident, particularly in their memory work around the Chernobyl anniversaries. In this regard, in November 2010, the German Association for International Education and Exchange (Internationales Bildungs- und Begegnungswerk, IBB) initiated the foundation of the European Chernobyl Network. This network was intended to become the forum of exchange of the various solidarity groups and the basis for the preparation of joint commemorative activities around the 25th anniversary of Chernobyl across Europe. This is in no way self-evident. Chernobyl memories and the meanings that are implied in the commemorations of the event differ profoundly among European countries. In France, for instance, the commemoration of Chernobyl implies a radical criticism of the state elite system,²⁰ while in Germany, where anti-nuclear convictions have become mainstream, commemorating Chernobyl rather serves the purpose of keeping the anti-nuclear fight alive. But despite these different connotations and implications of Chernobyl remembrance,

17 Richard F. Mould, *Chernobyl: the Real Story* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1988), p. ix.

18 Ibid., p. 48.

19 Thomas R. Wellok, ‘The children of Chernobyl: Engineers and the campaign for safety in Soviet-designed reactors in Central and Eastern Europe’, *History and Technology* 29 (2013): 3–32.

20 Karna Kalmbach, *Tschernobyl und Frankreich. Die Debatte um die Auswirkungen des Reaktorunfalls im Kontext der französischen Atompolitik und Elitenkultur* (Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 2011).

anti-nuclear groups and charity organisations across Eastern and Western Europe together have increasingly stressed the European dimension of the accident. This European dimension consists of shared responsibilities: both that to help the victims of the accident and that to prevent another nuclear accident to happen. And these shared responsibilities stem not least from the fact that Chernobyl is a place *within Europe*.

With Fukushima, anti-nuclear groups expanded on this European level of shared responsibilities and have come to stress the wider international level of nuclear responsibilities. The International Chernobyl Day is a telling example in this regard. Immediately in 2011, the International Chernobyl Day incorporated the Fukushima victims into the events that this loose network of anti-nuclear initiatives has organised for the public remembrances of the Chernobyl victims every year all across Europe.

But highlighting the Europeaness of Chernobyl also still plays a major role in anti-nuclear campaigning. The Greens in the European Parliament, in particular Rebecca Harms, have continuously put the topic of Chernobyl on the European institutional political agenda. By commissioning the TORCH report (short for: The Other Report on Chernobyl)²¹ and thus critically challenging the Chernobyl narrative provided by the IAEA and WHO, the Greens in the European Parliament have paid particular attention to the long-time health effects of the Chernobyl fallout across Europe. Stressing the European dimension of the accident's environmental and sanitary effects has become increasingly important since the early 2000s, when pro-nuclear actors started to proclaim a 'nuclear renaissance' and called for public subsidies for this 'low-carbon electricity supply'. For European energy politics, this 'greening' of nuclear energy has very practical implications: if nuclear energy is considered a renewable energy, the new build of nuclear power plants qualifies for the relevant EU subsidies. It is thus in the context of the renegotiation of the EU energy politics in the framework of climate change mitigation actions that the question of the Europeaness of Chernobyl has gained major political importance. Anti-nuclear Chernobyl narratives have thus discursively moved Chernobyl from the past Soviet Union into the geopolitical present of Eastern Europe.

But it is not only the anti-nuclear movement that has argued against the dominant state and industry alienation politics that locate Chernobyl outside

21 Ian Fairlie and David Sumner, *The Other Report on Chernobyl* (Berlin/Brussels/Kiev: The Greens in the European Parliament, 2006), <http://www.chernobylreport.org/torch.pdf> (accessed 12 May 2020).

Europe and Chernobyl

Europe. The Chernobyl solidarity movement also stressed the Europeaness of the accident. The term Chernobyl solidarity movement is self-coined and means the collective of nongovernmental groups that provide humanitarian aid to the regions in Belarus, Ukraine and western Russia which have been most affected by the radioactive fallout. These groups are mainly known to a wider public through their organisation of recreational holidays abroad for the 'Chernobyl children' and the collection of clothes, medicine and presents for these children. Furthermore, many of these initiatives collect money that is invested in the infrastructure of hospitals and orphanages. Through bringing hundreds of thousands of children to Western Europe for recreational stays, and motivating thousands of people to travel to the affected regions to help and meet the people there, the solidarity movement has built many individual bridges across the former East-West-divide.²² Stressing the European dimension in this shared responsibility to help the victims has been considered as an integrative factor.

As we have seen, the localisation of Chernobyl as inside or outside Europe has gained particular importance in the framework of Western European nuclear politics. But the implications of this discursive localisation reach far beyond this specific techno-political field. Hand in hand with the question of the accident's Europeaness went the question of which parts of the former Soviet Union should actually be considered part of the cultural or political entity 'Europe'. Every answer to this question implied a concrete statement on present and future responsibilities in overcoming the accident's sanitary and environmental impact – and in preventing future nuclear accidents from happening. Furthermore, the question of Chernobyl's Europeaness also implied statements on past responsibilities: if Western European nuclear experts were so quick in indicating all the shortcomings of the RBMK plant

22 IBB (ed.), *Tschernobyl und die europäische Solidaritätsbewegung* (Dortmund: IBB Dortmund, 2011); Astrid Sahm, 'Auf dem Weg in eine transnationale Gesellschaft? Belarus und die internationale Tschernobyl-Hilfe' *Osteuropa* 56 (2006): 105–116; Melanie Arndt, 'Verunsicherung vor und nach der Katastrophe: Von der Anti-AKW-Bewegung zum Engagement für die "Tschernobyl-Kinder"', *Zeithistorische Forschungen* 7 (2010): 240–258. With regard to the environmental effects of Chernobyl, these recreational stays, however, might have rather alienated Chernobyl from Western Europe by providing the image that these children would only need to stay for a couple of weeks per year in healthy Western European environments to improve their health conditions. It would be interesting to know if the presence of 'Chernobyl children' in, for instance, the British Lake District reminded the people there that their environment, too, had experienced severe consequences of the Chernobyl fallout in 1986 / 1987; or if the presence of these children rather had the effect of allocating Chernobyl's consequences to a region far away – a region to which these children would return after having experienced the uncontaminated and healthy environment of the Lake District.

design, why did they not raise their voices earlier? Within the framework of science diplomacy, wasn't it indeed these experts who had moved relatively freely across the Iron Curtain? Why was the blame solely put on the Soviet plant operators and the Soviet nuclear techno-political system when the international community of nuclear experts was well aware of what was going on? After all, within this international community of experts, Western Europeans played a central role – so what was their responsibility? Sure, there were just a few voices in the Chernobyl debate that stressed the complicity of Western Europe in the causes of the accident. But the fact that these voices exist shows how multi-layered the question of Chernobyl's Europeanness actually is.

Chernobyl and the emergence of a (European?) communication sphere on modern risks

In a last step, this chapter will expand on the European politics implied in the Chernobyl discourse and inquire into sociological concepts that build upon a certain interpretation of Chernobyl – and inquire into the communication sphere in which these sociological concepts became powerful.

Although the Chernobyl experience differed profoundly for people across Western European local, regional and national settings, there is one feature that many of these experiences have in common: the open disagreement amongst experts. In the days and weeks following the first news of the accident, Western European mass media offered a forum to nuclear experts in which they contested each other's evaluations of the accident's impact. Possible health effects caused by the fallout, the very level of the fallout rates, the way how fallout measurement should be taken: all was up for debate. If we believe in the claim that loss of trust in expertise is a characteristic of postmodern society, Chernobyl might well have worked as catalyst in this process. But while we should be cautious in creating such universal narratives – for instance, in the UK, Chernobyl didn't challenge at all the credibility of nuclear experts – it is interesting to see that the Chernobyl experience is the cornerstone of one of today's most popular theories of the postmodern society: the risk society, developed by Ulrich Beck, later extended to the global risk society. In the (global) risk society, it is no longer a specific group defined by location, class, gender or race that is threatened by a particular risk. In the (global) risk society, risks become universal – and they can turn into a concrete threat for literally everybody.

Beck's theory is so closely linked to Chernobyl that his notation of 'an-

Europe and Chernobyl

thropological shock' is sometimes used as a metaphor for the accident itself. The reason for this is not only that Beck provided one of the first sociological analyses of Chernobyl²³ but also that the book that made him world-famous was published in the accident's direct aftermath.²⁴ Beck finished the writing of *Risikogesellschaft* (Risk Society) shortly before the Chernobyl accident, so it did not influence the text itself. However, it did lead him to write in May 1986 a pre-preface with the title 'Aus gegebenem Anlaß' (Due to Recent Events)²⁵ which was added to the publication, though not included in the English translation. So while the theory developed in *Risk Society* was not framed by Chernobyl, Beck's perception of Chernobyl was fully framed by his theory, as can clearly be understood from his pre-preface. As he himself declared, Chernobyl unfortunately proved his theory right.²⁶ Chernobyl was for Beck 'das Ende der "anderen"' (the end of "the others").²⁷ From the moment of the accident on, due to the 'Allbetroffenheit'²⁸ the distinction between us, the non-infected, and them, the infected, no longer existed. In this perspective, Chernobyl represents a turning point in history – the moment in which the era of the risk society established itself beyond any doubt.

If we have a closer look at the argument Beck developed in *Risk Society*, we see how his theoretical framework allowed him a certain reading of Chernobyl's immediate aftermath as he could identify in the public discourse some of the dynamics he had just generalised in his writing. According to Beck, the risks faced by people of the risk society are, in the first place, due to toxic threats to their health. These threats are caused by industry and high technology and appear as pollution in the air, water, soil, foodstuff, clothes and furniture, as well as in the unknown consequences of genetic manipulation or irradiation. In this regard, Beck provided a theoretical framework to the concerns raised by environmental movements since the 1970s. Ra-

23 Ulrich Beck, 'Der anthropologische Schock. Tschernobyl und die Konturen der Risikogesellschaft', *Merkur: Deutsche Zeitschrift für europäisches Denken* 8 (1986): 653–663.

24 Beck, *Risikogesellschaft*.

25 Ibid., p. 7.

26 Ibid., p. 10: 'Die Rede von der (industriellen) Risikogesellschaft ... hat einen bitteren Beigeschmack von Wahrheit erhalten. Vieles, das im Schreiben noch argumentativ erkämpft wurde – die Nicht-wahrnehmbarkeit der Gefahren, ihre Wissensabhängigkeit, ihre Übernationalität, die "ökologische Enteignung", der Umschlag von Normalität in Absurdität usw. – liest sich nach Tschernobyl wie eine platte Beschreibung der Gegenwart. Ach, wäre es die Beschreibung einer Zukunft geblieben, die es zu verhindern gilt!'

27 Beck, *Risikogesellschaft*, p. 7.

28 Ibid.

radioactivity, which Beck himself in his book puts foremost into the context of its civilian use in terms of the production of electricity, rather than its military use, plays a special role in Beck's concept of risk: 'By risks, I mean above all radioactivity, which completely evades human perceptive abilities'²⁹. The risks of the risk society are 'particularly open to social definition and construction' as they 'initially only exist in terms of the (scientific or anti-scientific) knowledge about them and thus they can be changed, magnified, dramatised or minimised within knowledge'. In this context, we also find Beck's observation of an 'Opening up of the Political' as he claims that, due to this open definition and construction, 'the mass media and the scientific and legal professions in charge of defining risks become key social and political positions'. Despite the social definition and construction of knowledge about the risks, this 'knowledge gains a new political significance' as it can be the key to survival: 'in risk positions consciousness determines being'.³⁰ It could be argued that this emerging academic field of risk sociology reflects the emergence of a wider public discourse on risk-taking in modernity. It would be worth investigating to what degree this emerging public discourse on risk took on a specific European dimension. In any case, Chernobyl came to occupy a central role in risk theory, and thus it is important to shed light on the kinds of Chernobyl narratives present in these works.

Like Ulrich Beck, Wolfgang Bonß in his book *Vom Risiko* (On Risk)³¹ strongly referred to Chernobyl in order to underpin and exemplify his arguments. According to him, Chernobyl illustrated the devastating consequences that were possible in the event of a failure of tightly interlinked high technologies and he integrated his reflections on the discursive reactions toward Chernobyl in his theorisation of coping with risks and uncertainties in modernised modernity.

But there was also disagreement with making the Chernobyl experience the lynchpin of modernisation theories. Niklas Luhmann wrote his book *Soziologie des Risikos* (Risk: A Sociological Theory)³² as an answer to, or rather a criticism of, Ulrich Beck. In the first chapter, Luhmann stated: 'Sociology has finally also turned its attention to the problem of risk; or at least laid claim to the term of risk. Following the ebbing of anti-capitalist

29 Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society* (London: Sage Publications, 1992), p. 22.

30 Ibid., p. 23.

31 Wolfgang Bonß, *Vom Risiko. Ungewißheit und Unsicherheit in der Moderne* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1995).

32 Niklas Luhmann, *Risk: A Sociological Theory* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1993).

Europe and Chernobyl

prejudice, it now finds a new opportunity to fill its old role with new content, namely to warn society.³³ The footnote at the end of this sentence referred to Beck's *Risk Society*. According to Luhmann, Beck's attempt to theorise modern society through the category of risk fails completely. The problem that Luhmann basically had with Beck, but also with the majority of theoreticians in the field of sociology, was that they did not apply his theory of systems and, more concretely, that there was no definition of risk one could work with profitably. Therefore, Luhmann saw it as his main task to develop a definition of risk himself. He came to the conclusion that risk is basically a 'highly hierarchical contingency arrangement' that can best be approached – as is the case in general within his system theory – through a distinction. For Luhmann, the distinction that must be applied in this case is the one between risk and danger.³⁴ Risk is for Luhmann something that cannot increase. There are no more risks in the world now than before. All that has changed is the perception that people have to take more and more risky decisions. From Luhmann's point of view, this is due to the fact that in the past people just did not have a fully developed decision awareness as they had greater trust in divine forces.³⁵ So, according to Luhmann, a risk is nothing that can be avoided, as it is not there as such; it means only that we cannot predict the outcome of our decisions.

This concept of risk provides Luhmann with a view on public debates in post-modern society that is opposed to Beck's. Where Beck calls for more participatory rights in order to decrease risks, Luhmann asks for an application of his definition of risk in order to

cool down considerably the unnecessarily heated public discussion on risk-related topics, and allow a more moderate tone to prevail ... There is no risk-free behaviour [and] ... no absolute safety or security ... One cannot avoid risks if one makes any decision at all ... And in the modern world not deciding is, of course, also a decision.³⁶

Looking from Luhmann's point of view at the immediate response to

33 Ibid., p. 5.

34 Ibid., p. 17; in Luhmann's words: 'The distinction presupposes (thus differing from other distinctions) that uncertainty exists in relation to future loss. There are then two possibilities. The potential loss is either regarded as a consequence of the decision, that is to say, it is attributed to the decision. We then speak of risk – to be more exact of the risk of decision. Or the possible loss is considered to have been caused externally, that is to say, it is attributed to the environment. In this case we speak of danger.'

35 Ibid., p. 7.

36 Ibid., p. 28.

Chernobyl, as well as at the long-term debate about the health impact of the radiation released by the accident, one obtains a very different image from the one Beck describes. Contrary to Beck, neither does Luhmann specifically integrate Chernobyl in his argumentation. He sees nuclear power as a risk, but as a risk can never in itself be a problem, an argument against nuclear power, from Luhmann's point of view, cannot be based on the statement that it is too risky, as this risk perception is in any case only a social construction.³⁷



The reasons why I am elaborating so extensively on these two different conceptualisations of risk are threefold. First, they mark the two extremes of the debate about the role of risk in the (post-) modern society. Second, internationally, Beck and Luhmann have become main reference points for theoretical approaches to risk sociology. Third, and most importantly, these two theories reflect the fact that theories in the field of risk sociology are profoundly shaped by individual risk perception of the author him- or herself. Over the last decades, social science research has turned Chernobyl into a central basis for theories on public risk perception, public understanding of science, expert lay person interaction and agenda setting.³⁸ But it is here, at the very foundation of the conceptual thinking about the constitution of modern societies, that theorisations of Chernobyl have become the most powerful in terms of their fundamental impact on social science research.

Chernobyl has thus created a specific academic communication sphere on modern risks. It is a striking fact that this communication sphere on modern risks has been severely imprinted by the Chernobyl experiences of two distinct West-German, middle-aged, middle-class, white, male sociology professors. In this regard, Chernobyl's contested Europeanness gains central importance in relation to the emergence of a public communication sphere on modern risks, urging us to further reflect on the question to what

37 Ibid., p. 101; in Luhmann's words: 'Nuclear power generation is a risk, even if we may be certain that a serious accident will occur only once every thousand years – although we do not know when. In this question it is a matter of the degree of sensitivity of probabilities and the extent of loss – that is to say to social constructs subject to temporal influences.'

38 Karena Kalmbach, 'Revisiting the nuclear age. State of the art research in nuclear history', *Neue Politische Literatur* 62 (2017): 49–69.

Europe and Chernobyl

degree this public communication sphere on modern risk actually defines itself as inherently shaped by *European* experiences and to what degree it forms a cornerstone of twentieth century European identity.

CHAPTER 4.

THE WESTERN EUROPEAN PUBLIC SPHERE AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN EASTERN EUROPE DURING THE COLD WAR: BETWEEN MODEL, UTILISATION AND DENUNCIATION

Michel Dupuy

After the fall of the Berlin wall, the West seemingly discovered for the first time, apart from the Chernobyl disaster, the environmental damage in the East, with the drying of the Aral Sea serving as an archetypal symbol. Environmental damage in Eastern countries had nevertheless been noted at the level of senior administration in the West, although without becoming a part of East-West relations for lack of genuine political considerations. Only the USSR during the 1970s strove, during the Helsinki Conference, to make the environment a part of diplomacy, for it knew that the West was divided on the question, especially with regard to acid rain. The conference's final act on security and cooperation in Europe included the topic in the second basket.¹

However, recent research in environmental history on the topic of communist Europe has demonstrated that environmental issues emerged at the same time on both sides of the Iron Curtain, with the East being on par with the West, including in matters of scientific ecology, with the Soviet geochemist Vladimir Vernadsky's formulation of the concept of the biosphere in 1926.² In addition, the environment became institutionalised at the turn of the 1970s, with the creation in both the West and the East of dedicated ministries, along with a series of laws seeking not only to protect nature but also to combat pollution, including in the GDR (1970), Czechoslovakia (1973), France (1976), the FRG (1976), etc.

In fact, until the late 1960s, environmental damage in Eastern countries

1 Eugeny Chosudovsky, *'East-West' Diplomacy for Environment in the United Nations* (New York: UNITAR, 1988); Michel Dupuy, 'Science, pouvoir et pluies acides en RDA', in Laurent Coumel, Raphaël Morera and Alexis Vrignon (eds), *Pouvoirs et Environnement. Entre confiance et défiance, XVI-XXI^e siècle* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2017), pp. 159–173.

2 Coumel and Dupuy, 'Les trois écologies à l'Est. Quel tournant environnemental en RDA et en URSS?', in Anahita Grisoni and Rosa Sierra (eds), *Nachhaltigkeit und Transition: Politik und Akteure. Transition écologique et durabilité: Politiques et acteurs* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2018), pp. 229–252.

The Western European Public Sphere and the Environment in Eastern Europe

was not ignored by national media in the West, whether it involved the pollution caused by the use of lignite in the GDR, or Lake Baikal or the Volga in the USSR. At the time, there were particular fears of radioactivity following nuclear tests in the atmosphere, which the USSR and the US renounced in 1963. These fears were transmitted, among others, by scientists from the US, notably within the *St. Louis Citizens' Committee for Nuclear Information*.³ The notions of 'environmental crisis' (1967), 'ecocide' (1970) and 'environmental catastrophe' invented in the West initially referred to the damage caused in capitalist countries, for instance through the use of napalm on the rainforests of Vietnam, or the sinking of the *Torrey Canyon* oil tanker (18 March 1967), which affected French and British coasts. The expressions 'environmental catastrophe' and 'environmental crisis' appeared in the East German press beginning in 1973, but were used to designate environmental damage in the West.⁴

The West focused on environmental damage in the East if it was directly concerned, as in pollution of the Baltic Sea, the paper mill in Blankenstein (GDR) that polluted the city of Hof (FRG), the Elbe laden with industrial waste from Czechoslovakia and especially the GDR, and Chernobyl (1986), among others. Other instances of environmental damage gradually appeared in the media during the early 1970s with the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment (1972), where the West questioned its development model. For all that, in the late 1970s Eastern Europe was increasingly affected by an environmental crisis (water and air pollution), which called the communist system into question. Movements with an environmental sensibility developed in most countries in the East despite dictatorship, and established public spheres on the topic, subsequently opening the way for protest.

When the environmental issues of Eastern European countries were mentioned in the Western European public sphere, it was of course the sign of a shared concern for environmental matters, but also a challenge to the model of growth. This presence within a Western European public sphere nevertheless provided an opportunity for environmental movements in communist countries to expose the damage they had suffered, by counting on a space of communication beyond the Iron Curtain via Western media including the BBC, Radio Liberty, Radio Free Europe and West German

3 William Krasner, 'Baby tooth survey – first results', *Environment* 55 (2013): 18–24.

4 Fjodor Krotkow, 'Der Menschheit droht keine Katastrophe', *Berliner Zeitung*, 29 Apr. 1973; 'Leben nur im Gleichgewicht mit der natürlichen Umwelt', *Berliner Zeitung*, 12 Aug. 1973.

stations such as ARD and ZDF, whose shows were listened to and viewed in the East.

The construction of a field of shared concerns

While there were shared concerns in environmental matters between Western and Eastern Europe, along with equal enthusiasm for leisure activities in 'natural' spaces (mountain, sea, forest), the East raised questions for the West with respect to its environmental protection policy. The true division, however, was connected to civilian nuclear power.

Shared concern between the West and the East

Regarding the protection of nature, during the 1950s and 1960s there was a European market of images for animal shows on television, including in the USSR. For instance, Frédéric Rossif regularly sought them out for his show *La Vie des Animaux* [*The Life of the Animals*] (1952–1966) on TF1 (French television channel 1). The West German zoologist Bernhard Grzimek, who produced the show *Ein Platz für Tiere* [*A Place for the Animals*] (1956–1987), began filming in the USSR in 1963.⁵ The book by the French naturalist Jean Dorst, *Avant que nature ne meure* [*Before Nature Dies*], was published in 1965, and translated into Russian in 1966.⁶ Nature protection was indeed a common concern.⁷

Still, the environment was not given its own column in the press, or its own section on television. The topic began to emerge in the late 1960s among Western European and North American editorial boards, all while remaining marginal in comparison to other subjects (political, economical, cultural), and in competition with journalists reporting on scientific and technological developments.⁸

In both the West and the East, scientists nevertheless tried to use the press to share their concerns. For instance, on 24 October 1967, the Swedish daily *Dagens Nyheter* published an article by Svante Odén, an agronomist

5 Claudia Sewig, *Der Mann, der die Tiere liebte: Bernhard Grzimek. Biografie* (Cologne: Bastei, 2009).

6 This book was translated into English in 1970. Jean Dorst, *Before Nature Dies* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1970).

7 Douglas R. Weiner, *A Little Corner of Freedom. Russian Nature Protection from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

8 Dupuy, 'Scientifiques, télévision et écologie: entre vulgarisateur et lanceur d'alerte', *Temps des Médias* 2 (2015): 182–199.

The Western European Public Sphere and the Environment in Eastern Europe

tasked by the Swedish government with drafting a report on the increasing acidification of rainwater due to sulphur dioxide emissions from Central Europe:⁹ the discussions surrounding acid rain had begun in Europe.

Still, the case that made it past the Iron Curtain was Baikal. This lake was praised by Jules Verne in *Michel Strogoff*, while from 1958 onward industrial projects had been proposed and criticised in the Soviet press by defenders of nature. In the West, the issue appeared in an AFP news dispatch from 12 May 1966, following a collective letter that appeared in *Komsomolskaya Pravda* on 11 May, signed by academics and scientists against the creation of a cellulose factory.¹⁰ It was reprinted by the *New York Times* and *Le Monde* the following day.¹¹ The news item highlighted the media warning issued by scientists, as well as its reception by the accused company, the cellulose factory, which had to implement a technical solution to remedy the pollution.

In the run-up to the Stockholm Conference in 1972, references to Baikal increased, as witnessed by the digitised press archives of both Switzerland and the FRG.¹² It became a symbol of the struggle against water pollution for both the budding environmental movement and sympathetic communists. On 29 April 1973, a documentary on Siberia presented in the collection *Lettres d'un bout du monde*, directed by Jean-Emile Jeannesson with the participation of the State Committee for Soviet Television on Siberia, raised the issue of Baikal, prompting the journalist to say: 'In Irkutsk people told me that "The Americans pollute their natural water reserves. We prevented that!" Scientists prevented the chemical industry from setting up on the lake's shore'.¹³ The transfer of the Baikal affair toward Western Europe was promoted by Soviet authorities, who used it to display their effectiveness in combatting pollution, and with it the superiority of the communist model.

Environmental damage in both the USSR and other countries in the East was available to the French, West German and Swiss press, in the event that it focused on the subject, which it hardly did. In fact, this was not a topic

9 Svante Odén, 'The acidification of precipitation', *Dagens Nyheter*, 24 Oct. 1967.

10 Slava Lubomudrov, 'Environmental politics in the Soviet Union: The Baikal controversy', *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue canadienne des slavistes* 20 (1978): 529–543.

11 'Soviet conservationists see peril to Lake Baikal', *The New York Times*, 13 May 1966; 'Des savants soviétiques protestent contre l'installation d'une usine sur les rives du lac Baïkal', *Le Monde*, 13 May 1966.

12 O. Lainé, 'Au bord du Baïkal: une usine qui ne pollue pas la nature', *Journal de Genève*, 25 May 1972; 'Sowjet-Union: "Wir töten die Erde"', *Spiegel* 4 (1972).

13 USSR-Siberia: Part 2, *Lettres d'un bout du monde* 2, 29 Apr. 1973.

of interest for correspondents in Eastern Europe, who were specialised in more distinguished subjects such as diplomacy and politics. Pollution was absent even in personal accounts of stays in the East, even though nature was present. Still, there were articles in both the Soviet press and that of the GDR, in accordance with the concerns of civil society. Publications within French documentation mentioned it, but without outlets in the press, nothing transformed into a sustained affair or societal issue. The media attention given to whale hunting by the USSR is symptomatic in this respect. The Soviet state was of course accused alongside Japan in the mid-1970s, although most articles devoted to the subject discuss Japan.

Between model and condemning industrial society

The emergence of environmental protection as a political issue in both the West and the East naturally raised the question of political model, and also led to questions regarding industrial society in the wake of the 1972 report for the Club of Rome. In a 1970 report on the environment in the USSR, the geographer Alain Giroux provided a list of the damage: dropping water level in the Caspian and Aral Seas, soil degradation, pollution of the Volga, Lake Baikal, etc. He especially underscored both the ineffectiveness and absence of sanctions, and concluded that industrial society was endangering the environment.¹⁴

With the politicising of environmental questions and their presence on the agenda, there emerged a genuine questioning of economic model. In the USSR, the topic of the planet's limits was debated in November 1972 within the pages of the journal *Voprossi Filosofii*, among others.¹⁵ This looming lack of resources called for the development of civil nuclear power, placing the economy within a closed process without waste, and spreading socialism on a global scale. Previously censored works on environmental issues in the USSR and the GDR also appeared, but without resonating in the West.¹⁶

This same socialist model was highlighted in the West. For instance, a

14 Alain Giroux, 'Mise en valeur et protection de la nature', *Problèmes politiques et sociaux* 13 (1970): 26–38.

15 Dupuy, 'Shortage of resources and political model in the GDR: 1971–1989', (paper presented at the *The Right Use of the Earth* conference, Paris – Ecole Normale Supérieure, 29 May–1 June 2018).

16 Dupuy, 'Justifying air pollution in the GDR 1949–1989', in Eli Rubin et al. (eds), *Ecologies of German Socialism* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2019), pp. 115–145; Jürgen Kuczynski, *Das Gleichgewicht der Null. Zu den Theorien des Null-Wachstum* (Berlin: Akad.-Verl, 1973); Evgenij K. Fjodorow, *Die Wechselwirkung zwischen Natur und Gesellschaft* (Berlin: Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, 1974).

The Western European Public Sphere and the Environment in Eastern Europe

report on air pollution in Poland, broadcast on TF1 on 9 October 1970, took Katowice as an example. Jean-Pierre Alessandri condemned the capitalist system: 'Humans must live in harmony with nature, and must be capable of understanding it and subordinating it to their needs; capitalist industrial activity has lasted 150 years. It has shaken the invigorating balance of the forces of nature.'¹⁷ The discourse is voluntaristic, seeking to control nature by making better use of its power and wealth. It shows the Polish state in action, with the application of laws requiring new factories to equip themselves with filters or to risk fines, along with the education and mobilisation of citizens within workers' councils. The tone is optimistic. France was invited by the journalist to strengthen its legislative arsenal, fines and citizen action.

On 22 November 1975, the French environmental journal *Combat nature* published an article on Warsaw and its architecture. 'In Warsaw the quest for individual profit does not exist; one can see and appreciate a more human environment thanks to abundant green spaces that compensate for concrete', a remark that the author, Alain de Swarte, extended to Polish cities by boasting about the absence of cars in city centres.¹⁸ This was incidentally one of the very rare articles devoted to Eastern Europe by the environmental press in France. The populations of Eastern Europe also wanted cars – the symbol of the capitalist world par excellence – although they were condemned by Marxist East German philosophers sensitive to environmental thinking, such as Wolfgang Harich and Robert Havemann, who saw them as promoting private property, a sign of capitalism. Industrial development was also called into question in the GDR in connection with the Protestant church and international ecumenical conferences – albeit without explicitly condemning socialism – especially in a booklet produced in Wittenberg in 1982, entitled '*Die Erde ist zu retten*': *Umweltkrise, Christlicher Glaube, Handlungsmöglichkeiten* [*The Earth is to Save: Environmental Crisis, Christian Faith, Possible Actions*].

On 8 June 1974, the Bulgarian journalist Stéphane Groueff was invited on the *Homo Sapiens* show airing on FR3 (French television channel 3) to discuss his book *L'homme et la terre* [*Man and the Earth*], in which he condemned Soviet dams and river diversions in Siberia, especially the diversion of the Pechora river toward the Volga in an attempt to solve dropping

17 'En Pologne: quatrième exemple la planification', *XXème siècle* 9 (Oct. 1970).

18 Alain de Swarte, 'Varsovie: sauvegarde architecturale et déclin de l'urbanisme', *Combat nature* (Nov. 1975): 15–18.

water levels in the Caspian and provide irrigation water for farmland.¹⁹ In his remarks he denounced this Promethean vision of humans facing nature, but not communism.

As a result, a shift slowly began to unfold: it was no longer an ideological or economic system that was being questioned, but actually a form of growth based on the exploitation of natural resources, directly in line with the Club of Rome's 1972 report. However, the discourse against industrial society was based on examples taken from the West rather than the East.

Civil nuclear power: A division

The question of civil nuclear power in Western Europe played a key role in the development of environmental movements.²⁰ However, in the East, scientists and environmental organisations saw nuclear energy as an alternative to pollution, while citizens did not express any true opposition.

The handling of the Kyshtym disaster is particularly revelatory in this regard. On 29 September 1957, the explosion of nuclear waste in the Urals affected 20,000 km² of land. The accident, which had been kept secret for a long time, began to generate attention after the English popular science journal *New Scientist* published an article on 4 November 1976 by Zhores Medvedev, a Soviet radiobiologist who defected to the West in 1973.²¹ His demonstration was based on articles that had appeared in the Russian radiobiology press about the Kyshtym area.

In reaction, on 8 November 1976 the *Times* of London published an interview with Sir John Hill, president of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority. He believed that it was impossible that the 'Russians' had not followed security norms, and cast doubt on whether the explosion took place, qualifying it as 'pure fiction, rubbish and [a] figment of [the] imagination'. One day later, following an AFP news dispatch, UPI, Reuters, AP and *le Monde* published an article on the subject, repeating the conclusions of Sir John Hill and French nuclear authorities.²²

19 Book of the month, *Homo Sapiens* 3, 8 June 1974.

20 Franz-Josef Brüggemeier and Jens Ivo Engels, *Natur- und Umweltschutz nach 1945* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2005).

21 Zhores Medvedev, 'Two decades of dissidence', *New Scientist* (Nov. 1976): 264–267.

22 'However, British and French nuclear circles are much more reserved regarding the nuclear accident discussed by M. Medvedev today. They especially emphasize that it was in fact waste, and that a nuclear explosion is impossible', 'Un accident nucléaire s'est effectivement produit en Union Soviétique en 1957 ou 1958', *Le Monde*, 12 Nov. 1976.

The Western European Public Sphere and the Environment in Eastern Europe

On 13 May 1978, Medvedev was invited by the environmental organisation *Amis de la Terre* [Friends of the Earth] to hold a press conference at the Collège de France, in the laboratory of Marcel Froissart, a member of the Groupe de Scientifiques pour l'information sur l'Energie Nucléaire [Group of Scientists for the Information on Nuclear Energy]. The conservative newspaper *Le Figaro* did not send a journalist, for they were not 'interested in Russian dissidents who were not pro-nuclear', such as Andreï Sakharov.²³ This defiance with regard to antinuclear remarks from the East was also present on 18 January 1978, when TF1 planned to begin its evening news with an interview with Medvedev, which was cancelled at the last moment.²⁴ Medvedev published a book on this topic in German in April 1979, and then in the US in July. The author was interviewed on the channel ARD on 9 July for the show *Bilder aus der Wissenschaft*, which aired at 21:50. His book was only translated from English to French in 1988, despite being announced for 1979 in an interview with *Paris Match*.²⁵

When news of the disaster spread publicly in Western Europe, it was met with opposition by public authorities, who knew it would be impossible for Western journalists to visit the site, as the area was kept behind a wall of secrecy. Furthermore, in the West European public sphere, dissidents engaged in discourses on human rights and freedom of expression, but not on ecology. The Kyshtym disaster remained in the memory of the environmental movement, as did Windscale (10 October 1957) in Great Britain, but without reaching the symbolic impact of the Chernobyl disaster. French and British authorities broadly developed a policy of casting doubt on this event, first by denying the reality of the event, and then by communicating very little on the subject.

In the West the subject of energy was central to building and mobilising the environmental movement, whether it involved nuclear energy or

23 Interview between P. Erskine and Jaurès Medvedev, 'Marx aurait-il été antinucléaire?' *La Gueule ouverte* 216 (June 1978): 14.

24 'Int savant russe Medvedev', *IT1 20H*, 1, 18 Jan. 1978. The news anchor nevertheless preserved the following summary: 'The USSR began to construct nuclear reactors in 1945. But the problem of managing radioactive waste was made without sufficient precautions. The accumulation of waste caused an explosion that dispersed it in the air above industrial areas. This waste was of course radioactive.'

25 Zhores A. Medvedev, *Bericht und Analyse der bisher geheimgehaltenen Atomkatastrophe in der UdSSR* (Hamburg: Hoffmann u. Campe, 1979); Zhores A. Medvedev, *Nuclear Disaster in the Urals* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1979); Zhores A. Medvedev, *Désastre nucléaire en Oural* (Cherbourg: Isoète, 1988); 'La grande catastrophe atomique soviétique', *Paris Match* 1577 (1979): 3–17.

the two oil crises.²⁶ However, in the East, the attention of populations and environmental movements focused firstly on water and air pollution, with nuclear power appearing as a healthy alternative.

The environmental crisis extends to countries in the east

With the Prague Spring and the publication of books by dissidents such as Alexander Solzhenitsyn, the communist world experienced a moral and economic crisis, which was compounded by an environmental crisis. It was economically and materially incapable of addressing the causes behind pollution, which became a sensitive and even secret subject, despite making it past borders via numerous outlets.

The environmental crisis

In 1978, the West German publisher Possev (Sowing) published a work in Russian by Ze'ev Wolfson (alias Boris Komarov) on the destruction of nature in the USSR. The book was written in the USSR, and secretly sent to the West. From 1970 to 1977, Wolfson had worked on educational television programmes on the environment, as well as in the Soviet government's department of biology. His work was translated into German in 1979, English in 1980 and French in 1981, the year in which the author emigrated to Israel; then into Italian in 1983.²⁷ For the first time a Soviet author had published a book on the destruction of nature in a socialist country. The terms 'environmental crisis' and 'environmental catastrophe' henceforth applied to the East. In 1979, the German weekly *Der Spiegel* spoke of an ecological crisis in connection with the destruction of nature in the USSR.²⁸ On 26 October 1983, taking up an AFP dispatch from the previous day, the *Gazette de Lausanne* spoke of an 'environmental catastrophe' in the Ukraine in connection to the pollution of a river by ammonia following an explosion in a factory.²⁹ In the late 1970s, Radio Free Europe also adopted a critical tone toward environmental management in the GDR,

26 Mark Landsman, *Dictatorship and Demand: The Politics of Consumerism in East Germany* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).

27 Boris Komarov, *Le rouge et le vert. La destruction de la nature en. U.R.S.S.* (Paris: Seuil, 1981); Marshall I. Goldmann, 'The identity of Boris Komarov – at least', *Environmental Conservation* 12 (1985): 180.

28 'Soll doch die Taiga eingeeichert werden', *Der Spiegel*, 12 Nov. 1979.

29 'AFP, Pollution d'ammoniac dans le Dniestr', *La gazette de Lausanne*, 26 Oct. 1983.

The Western European Public Sphere and the Environment in Eastern Europe

in programmes such as *Spiegel* (beginning in 1978), using data produced by East German scientists.³⁰

This crisis now affecting countries in the East took its place within the globalisation of environmental crises: the hole in the ozone layer, destruction of the Amazon, and especially acid rain with the disappearance of forests due to forest dieback (*Waldsterben*).³¹ In this context, the forests of the Ore Mountains of Bohemia became a stand-in for the German, Swiss and French press, as their fate prefigured that of German forests. The damage was caused in large part by Czechoslovakian industry, and drew the attention of environmental groups, along with neighbouring populations in the GDR and Czechoslovakia.

This environmental crisis was being felt just as environmental groups were emerging in Eastern Europe, especially in 1978 in the GDR under the authority of the Protestant church following debates sparked by the Club of Rome. In January 1986, the Stasi counted 42 environmental groups in the GDR, including 28 active ones forming an alternative public sphere.³² In Lithuania the count reached fifty.³³ These groups began to emerge in Poland from 1979 onward, with the Polish Ecological Club, as well as during the 1980s in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, etc. East German groups found outlets, notably in the FRG with the journalist Peter Wensierski, who in 1981 published *Beton ist Beton*, in which each chapter was written either by a member of the Protestant Church in the GDR, such as Peter Gensichen, or collectively, as with the Working Groups of Wittenberg or Greifswald.³⁴

This environmental crisis in the East was, as in the West, connected to an energy crisis, which was compounded by a crisis of planned economies. The rise in oil prices implemented by the USSR (except for Poland), along with the growing indebtedness of countries in the East in comparison to the West, weakened their economic system.³⁵ The environment became a national issue in this context, transforming into eco-nationalism. For example, one month

30 'Umwelt: lenkt die DDR ein?' *Der Spiegel* 39 (1978): 18–19.

31 Dupuy, *Histoire de la pollution atmosphérique en Europe et en RDA* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003).

32 Hans-Peter Gensichen, 'Christen und Kirchen in der DDR', in Peter Bohley (ed.), *Erlebte DDR-Geschichte: Zeitzeugen Berichte* (Berlin: Links, 2014), pp. 57–75.

33 Jane I. Dawson, *Eco-nationalism. Anti-nuclear Activism and National Identity in Russia, Lithuania, and Ukraine* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996).

34 Peter Wensierski and Büscher Wolfgang, *Beton ist Beton. Zivilisationskritik aus der DDR* (Hattungen: Edition Transit, 1981).

35 André Steiner, 'From Soviet occupation zone to "new Eastern states". A survey', in Hartmut Berghoff and Uta Andrea Balbier (eds), *The East German Economy, 1945–2010, Falling Behind or Catching Up?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 17–51.

before Chernobyl, 350 Armenians called for the closing of a nuclear power plant located in a seismic zone.³⁶ The Chernobyl disaster challenged the nuclear option in Eastern European countries, Poland in particular, where the building of a nuclear power plant at Żarnowiec (near Gdansk) was now the subject of protest.³⁷ The enlargement of the Ignalina nuclear power plant (Lithuania) also sparked contestation, and led to strong popular opposition in 1988.³⁸

These different manifestations drew increased attention in Western Europe to environmental damage in countries in the East, especially in France, where the journal *La nouvelle alternative, revue pour les droits et les libertés démocratiques en Europe de l'Est* devoted an entire column to it beginning in 1986.

Information crossing borders

In the face of censorship and control over Western journalists, access to sources of information on Eastern countries took place through non-public channels. In April 1984, an Alsatian naturalist association organised a tour through Eastern Europe to observe the damage caused to forests by acid rain. The group included engineers, scientists, and journalists. The GDR and Poland refused to grant the group access to their territory; only Czechoslovakia accepted, but without journalists. *Le Monde* ultimately published an article on 25 February 1985, as it had commissioned one of its engineers to provide a report on his observations.³⁹

Information circulated through multiple networks, notably those of the church. On 26–27 April 1986, *Le Figaro* published an article entitled 'Pologne: grave menace écologique' [Poland: serious ecological threat], whose source was a Paris-based journal close to the Polish episcopate, *Znaki Czasu* (Signs of the Times). In Czechoslovakia, a report from the academy of sciences on the country's ecological situation made its way into the hands of a Charter 77 member, and later passed to the West via the network surrounding the Christian association Entr'aide et action [Help and Action]. It was ultimately the subject of an article in *Le Monde* on 7 January 1984.⁴⁰

36 Letter dated 31 Mar. 1986 to M. Gorbachev / Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty Archive AS 5822.

37 Agnieszka Laddach, 'History and present. The Żarnowiec nuclear power plant. Proposition of research project', paper presented at the *Not Just Chernobyl* conference, Poznan, 21–22 April 2016.

38 Dawson, *Eco-nationalism*.

39 'Le massacre a commencé en Tchécoslovaquie', *Le Monde*, 25 Feb. 1985.

40 The association published a bulletin that included Jean-Marie Domenach in its liaison committee. 'L'Académie des sciences a établi un rapport alarmant sur la situation écologique', *Le Monde*, 7 Jan. 1984.

The Western European Public Sphere and the Environment in Eastern Europe

Of course the development of green movements that established links with the West facilitated the exchange of information, while during periods of relative liberalisation, information on environmental damage became more free in a few Eastern European countries. This was the case in Poland from August 1980 until the declaration of martial law on 13 December 1981, as demonstrated by the article regarding pollution in the voivod of Katowice that appeared in the *New Scientist* on 22 October 1981, which was translated in the ecological journal *Le Courrier de la Baleine*.⁴¹ The data presented in this article came from a report drafted by scientists from the Polish Ecological Club. In the USSR, perestroika also freed up speech in the media on these matters.⁴²

Tensions surrounding environmental issues between Eastern European countries even appeared in Western European media starting in 1985, revealing that the communist bloc was also not united, and that the environment was a source of tension. On 8 April 1985, *le Monde* exposed the dispute between Hungary and Czechoslovakia surrounding construction of a dam on the Hungarian side of the Danube, and returned to the topic on 25 September 1985. The weekly *l'Express* covered it on 10 April 1987. This emergence of a cross-border public sphere also resulted from the creation of The Danube Circle-Duna Kör, a movement consisting of intellectuals opposed to the dam, knowing that Hungarian authorities were no longer inclined to proceed due to the cost of the works, and therefore allowed information to filter through.⁴³

On 20 December 1986, in an AFP news dispatch, Poland denounced Prague's failures in connection with the effects on the Oder River of fuel oil pollution originating in Czechoslovakia. On 14 November 1987, an AFP dispatch reported on a chlorine cloud over the city of Ruse in Bulgaria, a cloud that had originated from a chemical factory in Romania, the site of a caustic soda production factory since 1984.⁴⁴

However, none of this environmental news transformed into a closely

41 Lloyd Timberlake, 'Pologne: Le pays le plus pollué du monde', *Le Courrier de la Baleine* 60 (1982): 14–17.

42 Serhiy Choliy, 'People had voice: Individual initiative and population relocation process in late Soviet Union (1986–1991)', paper presented at the Not just Chernobyl conference, Poznan, 21–22 April 2016.

43 See the contribution by Daniela Neubauer in this volume.

44 AFP, 'Un nuage de chlore sur la ville de Rouse à la frontière roumaine', 14 Nov. 1987; Vladimir Socor, 'A row with Bulgaria over Pollution: the Giurgiu Chemical Plant', *Radio Free Europe Research*, 25 Nov. 1987.

monitored case or major societal issue. Some of them reappeared regularly in the media, but at intervals stretching over multiple months or years, such as the Baikal affair or the construction of a dam between Hungary and Czechoslovakia, sometimes ultimately becoming a part of environmental memory or symbols. This reflected a gradual rise in environmental concerns within editorial boards, although they remained marginal during the 1980s.⁴⁵

Environmental matters appeared in the media, notably in France and the FRG, but continued to be minor, with the exception of the cross-border pollution affecting Western Europe (Elbe River, Baltic Sea, etc.). Moreover, the protests against environmental damage were not necessarily passed on to the West, whether the activities of environmental groups in the Protestant church within the GDR, or in the USSR during perestroika.

Being present in the Western European public sphere to be heard in the East

Aside from Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, and the BBC, Eastern European countries also picked up Western television channels, for instance in Estonia (Finnish television). The GDR was beneath the waves of RIAS, Radio in the American Sector, whose broadcasts reached Western Poland and Northern Czechoslovakia. East Germans could also watch West German channels (ARD, ZDF). The influence of West German media could be gauged in the aftermath of the Chernobyl disaster, when East German parks were emptied of children for a number of weeks, as worried parents followed the instructions of West German television.⁴⁶ Svetlana Alexievitch has gathered a number of accounts from Belorussia that mention listening to Radio Free Europe following the Chernobyl disaster.⁴⁷ The ability to pick up media from the West encouraged environmental groups in the East to pass on information to the West, knowing that they would enjoy media coverage, with West German outlets being particularly important.

45 Dupuy, *Traitement et représentations du concept de biodiversité à la télévision* (Paris: INRA, 2018).

46 Melanie Arndt, *Tchernobyl. Auswirkungen des Reaktorunfalls auf die Bundesrepublik Deutschland und die DDR* (Erfurt: Landeszentrale für politische Bildung Thüringen, 2011).

47 Svetlana Alexievitch, *La supplication: Tchernobyl, chroniques du monde après l'apocalypse* (Paris: J'ai lu, 2005).

Taking advantage of the West German public sphere

West Germany offered East German intellectuals and dissidents a space for publication. In 1981, the East German novelist Monika Maron published *Flugasche* [*Fly Ash*] in the FRG, in which she directly tackled pollution in the city of Bitterfeld. She had actually been negotiating its publication in the GDR since 1976, under the title *Und morgen komme ich wieder* [*And Tomorrow I'll Be Back*].⁴⁸ However, literary authorities wanted the author to make corrections that described, according to East German minister of culture Klaus Höpcke: 'not only the destructive, but also the positive consequences of work for human beings'.⁴⁹ After protracted negotiations Maron refused to accept new corrections, and passed her manuscript on to the West, where it was published by S. Fischer.

Political exiles in the West, such as Roland Jahn, tried to help environmental groups in the GDR from their side of West Berlin by sending equipment to print their booklets via diplomats, members of the Bundestag and journalists, who were not searched at the border. Jahn even sought to contact major companies in the West such as Siemens, Sony, Xerox and Toshiba to obtain printers and video cameras, in order to pass them on to environmental groups in the GDR, often in vain. In the summer of 1986, he nevertheless succeeded in sending a VHS camera to the GDR, an uncommon and costly piece of equipment at the time. He was also in contact with Peter Wensierski, who worked for the *Kontraste* programme airing on ARD (West German channel 1), and who was banned from visiting the GDR in 1984 following his publications on the state of the environment in that country.⁵⁰ The first film produced, entitled *Uns Stinkt's* [*It Stinks to Us*], was aired on 3 March 1987 on ARD. Two others followed, the first directed by Michael Beleites on the exploitation of uranium ore in the GDR, broadcast on 3 November 1987; and the second on the city of Bitterfeld, scheduled for 27 September 1988, filmed by a West German journalist and an ecologist who was a member of the Arche group (East Berlin).⁵¹

48 Büro für Urheberrechte, 'Aktennotiz', 19 Jan. 1981, BArch: DR 1 16910.

49 Klaus Höpcke made this declaration to West German journalists during the Leipzig book festival after the publication of Monika Maron's book. Uwe Wittsstock, 'Verordnetes Schweigen', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 14 Apr. 1981.

50 Stefan Wolle et al., *Operation Fernsehen. Die Stasi und die Medien in Ost und West* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008).

51 Michal Beleites, 'Uranbergbau in der DDR', ARD Reihe Kontraste, 3 Nov. 1987; Arche, 'Bitteres aus Bitterfeld', ARD Reihe Kontraste, 27 Sept. 1988.

The show on Bitterfeld was viewed by both local inhabitants and others living across the GDR, for instance a man from Freiberg who sent a petition (*Eingabe*) to the East German minister for the environment on 2 October 1988: 'We know that numerous measurements have been carried out in the Freiberg area. Why have the results and conclusions not been communicated to the public?' He added:

Furthermore, we find it very regrettable that such information only reaches people in the GDR through Western mass media, and never through our own press. From this I can only conclude that you are powerless in the face of these things or, as I have already suggested, that you have no knowledge of them.⁵²

On 5 October 1988, the authorities reacted by drafting a report from the industry and raw material department of the Central Committee. It was written in collaboration with local authorities from the area surrounding the industrial chemical combine of Bitterfeld. Counterarguments were provided to local administrations, data were challenged and special emphasis was placed on the fact that pollution was far worse in Western European countries.⁵³

Again with respect to pollution, the German Institute for Economic Research, located in West Berlin, conducted an investigation beginning in 1984 on sulphur dioxide (SO₂) emissions in the GDR, which had committed that same year to a thirty per cent reduction in emissions by 1993 as part of the *Convention on Long-distance Transboundary Air Pollution*. The emissions data were intended for the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe in Geneva. The GDR sent falsified data, reporting 4 kt of annual SO₂ emissions since 1980 (in reality 4.4 kt). The study by the Berlin institute was published on 25 July 1985, with emissions estimated for 1982 at 4.9 kt (in reality 4.5 kt). These estimates were made based on East German publications and by crosschecking information. The institute demonstrated in particular that given its energy needs, the GDR could not meet the thirty per cent reduction in SO₂ emissions by 1993. These conclusions were reprinted by the daily newspapers *Die Welt*, on 25 July 1985, and *Frankfurter Rundschau*, on 31 July 1985.⁵⁴ The issue became political, forcing the GDR to make the real data public.

52 https://landesarchiv.sachsen-anhalt.de/fileadmin/Bibliothek/Politik_und_Verwaltung/MI/LHA/externa_alt/89_06/8990_Juni_Protest_9.htm (accessed 22 Dec. 2018).

53 https://landesarchiv.sachsen-anhalt.de/fileadmin/Bibliothek/Politik_und_Verwaltung/MI/LHA/externa_alt/89_06/8990_Juni_Umwelt_3.htm (accessed 8 Aug. 2017).

54 Jochen Bethkenhagen et al., 'Luftverunreinigung in der DDR: die Emission von Schwefeldioxid und Stickoxiden', *DIW Wochenbericht* (1985): 337–346.

Becoming rooted in the West

Among intellectuals from the East who published their writings on political ecology in the West, it is important to cite Wolfgang Harich and Rudolf Bahro. Harich was sentenced in 1957 to ten years in prison, as he was an advocate for democratic socialism. At the time he was already aware of matters of global ecology through the work of the limnologist August Thienemann. In 1971, following the debate surrounding the Club of Rome report, he engaged in favour of ecology. In 1975 he published *Kommunismus ohne Wachstum? Babeuf und der 'Club of Rome'* [*Communism without Growth: Babeuf and the 'Club of Rome'*] with the tacit agreement of the East German regime. His work was translated into Spanish in 1978 and into Swedish in 1979. From 1979 to 1981, he was authorised to travel to the West after recovering his title as doctor, of which he had been stripped in 1957. He took part in conferences in Austria, the FRG, Switzerland and Spain.⁵⁵

Rudolf Bahro was a journalist deeply marked by the Prague Spring in 1968. He subsequently began a reflection on the environment. In 1977 he published his work *Die Alternative* in the FRG.⁵⁶ Its publication was accompanied by an interview with a journalist from *Spiegel* on 22 August, along with a self-interview for *Rias*. On 23 August, Bahro was arrested. Support committees immediately sprang up in the FRG, France (François Maspero), Italy, Great Britain, etc.⁵⁷ His book was translated into English in 1978, and into French in 1979. He was freed on 11 October 1979, and extradited to the FRG one week later. In the meantime, François Maspero had founded the journal *Alternative*, in order to defend human rights in countries in the East.⁵⁸

The two authors developed a Marxist critique of the ecological crisis, condemning the communist system, which for them had set out on the capitalist path. Yet in the West, journalists saw them as dissidents, and expected a discourse against communism. In his press conferences Harich attacked the roots of consumerism, which he situated in the West, and also spoke about the environment, whereas the journalists wanted to hear about dissidence. Faced with this discourse, the German magazine *Stern* refused to publish an

55 Siegfried Prokop, *Ich bin zu früh geboren* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1997).

56 Rudolf Bahro, *Die Alternative: Zur Kritik des real existierenden Sozialismus* (Cologne: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1977).

57 Liselotte Julius, 'Le combat pour Rudolf Bahro', in Bahro (ed.), *Je continuerai mon chemin* (Paris: Maspero, 1977), pp. 19–38.

58 Luc Pinhas, 'François Maspero, le passeur engagé', *Documentation et bibliothèques* 56 (2010): 187–194.

interview with him on 9 November 1979. He was convinced that the longer the solution to the environmental crisis – connected to the unreasonable exploitation of raw materials – was delayed, the greater the need for an authoritarian regime. He believed that communist society was better equipped to resolve this crisis, as it referred to use value rather than exchange value.⁵⁹ Bahro had to contend with the same questions as Harich at the outset. Just a few months after his extradition, he criticised a media system that wanted to make him into a dissident and critic of the GDR.⁶⁰ Still, in order to address fellow citizens on ecological matters, dissidents from the GDR had to use the West German public sphere, such as *Radio Glasnost*, which had been broadcasting shows on these topics from West Berlin since August 1987.⁶¹

Despite his critiques, Bahro engaged, on the advice of Carl Amery and Rudi Dutschke, in the FRG's green movement, in which he was the representative for this radical ecology, alongside socialist, realist and eco-libertarian ecologies.⁶² For Bahro it was essential in particular to deindustrialise and not to collaborate with political authorities. From 1982 to 1984, he was even a member of the leadership of the Greens, and resigned in 1985 after refusing the realist path that had taken them over. His Marxist critique resonated in France with Pierre Juquin, who was one of the founders of eco-socialism along with André Gorz, Murray Bookchin, etc. This branch within the Eurocommunist movement was quite marked in Spain, where Bahro and Harich were invited. In addition, the translation of Harich's book into Spanish owed much to Manuel Sacristán, a Marxist philosopher and member of the PSUC (Unified Socialist Party of Catalonia), which had also been affected by the Prague Spring.⁶³



Environmental matters in Eastern European countries interested the West on the political level when the communist system was called into question.

59 Prokop et al., *Ein Streiter für Deutschland. Auseinandersetzung mit Wolfgang Harich* (Berlin: Edition Ost, 1996).

60 Rudolf Bahro, *Elemente einer neuen Politik* (Berlin: VielFalt bei Olle & Wolter, 1980).

61 Paul Hockenos, *Berlin Calling* (New York: The New Press, 2017).

62 Udo Baron, *Kalter Krieg und heisser Frieden* (Hamburg: Lit Verlag Münster, 2003).

63 José M. Faraldo, 'Entangled Eurocommunism: Santiago Carrillo, the Spanish Communist Party and the Eastern Bloc during the Spanish transition to democracy, 1968–1982', *Contemporary European History* 26 (2017): 647–668.

The Western European Public Sphere and the Environment in Eastern Europe

After the Soviet system's collapse, journalists could freely travel to these countries, and published an increasing number of reports presenting living conditions amid a polluted universe, truly exposing the regime. While the ecological movement in Western Europe did not at all develop in relation to what was happening in the East, the environmental movement in the East was able to extend beyond borders and create a European public sphere to raise awareness of the true state of its environment (Komarov), and to inform the populations of these countries through different media. After the collapse of popular democracies, the transition to a post-Fordist economy, and adherence to environmental norms following EU membership, Eastern Europe practically disappeared from Western media, with the exception of Chernobyl and a few symbolic sites that were already familiar to naturalists before 1989, such as Baikal or Bialowieza Forest on the border between Poland and Belorussia.

This disappearance can partly be explained by the coming of democracy, as the space of regulation was henceforth national. The eco-nationalism that had served to affirm an identity against the USSR in Baltic countries, Armenia and Poland gave way to global environmental issues, such as the protection of biodiversity following the Rio Summit, the struggle against global warming and promotion of sustainable development. This was joined by Western eco-colonialism that raised concerns regarding GMOs, industrial waste pouring into Eastern Europe due to its laxer norms in comparison with Western Europe and the promotion of nuclear power in the name of energy independence,⁶⁴ which was rehabilitated in Lithuania and Armenia after having been despised. This took place in countries feeling the full force of the political and economic transition, with subsequent mass unemployment. Eco-tourism emerged as a possible path; in Latvia, with support from the WWF and local ecologists, the natural reserve of Slitere was transformed into a national park in the name of preserving biodiversity, with no regard for the local population, whose activities did not mesh with the WWF's pre-agrarian vision.⁶⁵

While environmental groups in the East used the West European public sphere before 1989, environmental organisations from the West were present in the Eastern European public sphere during the 1990s, bringing with them

64 Krista Harper, *Wild Capitalism. Environmental Activists and Post-Socialist Political Ecology in Hungary* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

65 Katrina Z.S. Schwartz, *Nature and National Identity after Communism* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006).

Michel Dupuy

global concerns, including ones that were not yet shared by environmental actors in the East.

PART II

THE SHAPING AND USE OF THE EUROPEAN PUBLIC SPHERE ON ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES: ABOUT THE INFLUENCE OF TRANSNATIONAL ACTIVISTS AND MOVEMENTS



CHAPTER 5.

THE IMPACT OF EAST GERMAN NATURE CONSERVATIONISTS ON THE EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.

Astrid Mignon Kirchhof

When the German Democratic Republic (GDR) became part of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) on 3 October 1990, the unified Germany acquired five new national parks (Jasmund, Vorpommern, Müritz, Harz and Sächsische Schweiz), six biosphere reserves and three nature reserves. Codified in the Unification Treaty, the protected tracts of land are often referred to as the ‘crown jewels of German unity’.¹ The legal codification of these crown jewels was the result of persistent political commitment during what were literally the last days of the foundering GDR. The person responsible for designating the fourteen large-scale protected areas was agricultural scientist and biologist Michael Succow, Deputy Minister for Nature Conservation, Ecology and Water Management in the period January to May 1990.² Supported by a committed team of colleagues, he enacted East Germany’s national park programme, placing 4.5 per cent of the country’s surface area under protection³ while the state was crumbling all around. Designated tracts of land along the former German-German border are now integrated into the European Green Belt. Over dozens of years, a stretch of valuable biotopes had developed along the Iron Curtain, untouched by human interventions. Now, the death strip

- 1 Ulrich Messner, ‘Nur einmal im Leben: Der Kampf um die Müritz und die Entstehung des Nationalparkprogramms’, in Nationalpark, *Wo Mensch und Wildnis sich begegnen*, No 149, 03/2010, pp. 21–24.
- 2 With no more than two nature conservation officials employed at the central level at the GDR Ministry for Agriculture, the establishment of a separate Ministry of Nature Conservation was considered an urgent necessity. Cf. Michael Succow, ‘Persönliche Erinnerungen an eine bewegte Zeit’, in Michael Succow, Lebrecht Jeschke and Hans Dieter Knapp (eds), *Naturschutz in Deutschland: Rückblicke – Einblicke – Ausblicke* (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 2012), pp. 63–70, here p. 63.
- 3 Originally, the protected reserves were to cover 10.8% of the total surface area. However, with the People’s Chamber deciding in August upon the GDR’s swift unification with the Federal Republic on 3 October 1990, the national park programme was reduced to the extent achievable in the remaining period of time. As a result, only 4.5% was placed under protection: see mail from Uwe Wegener to the author dated 5 Oct. 2017.

between Eastern and Western Europe was turning into a unifying lifeline. Driven by a joint commitment to protect nature, cooperative action between European states ensued.⁴

The following article proposes that the ideas and concepts of pioneering GDR nature conservationists were instrumental in the emergence of environmental consciousness in Europe. Among the trail-blazers of the concept of European nature conservation were the two pioneers of environmental protection in the GDR, Erna and Kurt Kretschmann.⁵ Their belief in a good life in harmony with nature found an echo in the ideas of the GDR's ecological movement in the 1980s and even survived the end of the East German state: Not only were the convictions of the couple and their fellow campaigners codified in the Unification Treaty, they also manifested themselves in the establishment of a Europe-wide exchange network for nature conservationists. Hence, the protected areas along the Iron Curtain, which made history as the European Green Belt, also have their roots in the visions held by East German nature conservationists and ecologists.

A life dedicated to nature conservation

Born in Stettin in 1912, Erna Jahnke was two years the senior of Kurt Kretschmann, who was born in Berlin in 1914. Before dedicating their lives to nature conservation, they both practised different professions: Erna was a nursery teacher and Kurt was a qualified tailor. In an interview held in late 1990, they explained how they came to be nature conservationists. While Kurt Kretschmann referred to his critique of life in big cities, which awoke his longing for nature, Erna declared that her life was changed when she met Kurt. At the time, Kurt had already turned his back on Berlin, sharing a simple life with a friend in a forest hut in Brandenburg. Both men fell in love with Erna who lived in the neighbouring village of Rüdnitz.⁶ Dur-

4 'Das grüne Band: Vom Todesstreifen zur Lebenslinie' ('The green belt: From death strip to lifeline') is the title of a brochure on the German and European Green Belt published by the Bundesamt für Naturschutz at <https://www.bund.net/gruenes-band/> (retrieved 13 Jan. 2020).

5 Erna Kretschmann: b. Stettin, 12 Nov. 1912; d. Bad Freienwalde, 6 Jan. 2001. Kurt Kretschmann: b. Berlin, 2 March 1914; d. Bad Freienwalde 20 Jan. 2007. In recognition of their services, the Kretschmanns received numerous awards during their lifetime. Cf. 'Nabu-Ehrenpräsident Kurt Kretschmann deutscher Gesamtsieger beim Europäischen Umweltpreis', in *Nabu Pressedienst*, 101 (Nov. 1999), Erna-und-Kurt-Kretschmann-Archiv (KreA), 280.

6 Marion Schulz, *Ein Leben in Harmonie. Kurt und Erna Kretschmann – für den Schutz und die Bewahrung der Natur* (Neuenhagen: Findling, 1999), p. 13.

The Impact of East German Nature Conservationists

ing this era, Kurt Kretschmann's philosophy of life was moving towards reform-based beliefs and he was striving for a life in nature, far from the big city. The reform movement was a melting pot of various ethic beliefs and reform-based approaches which were all connected and cannot be separated one from another: vegetarianism, critique of capitalism, anti-alcoholism, rejection of technology and big cities, pacifism and affinity with nature.⁷

Kurt was drafted into the army in 1936 and deserted his post eight years later. Looked after by Erna, who had become his wife, he hid for a number of weeks in an underground shed in Bad Freienwalde (Brandenburg) where the couple lived most of their lives. Since the end of the National Socialist dictatorship came as a great relief to the Kretschmanns, they wanted to give something back to the new state and be actively involved in its establishment and preservation:

Free at last. An incredible feeling. A miracle beyond words. We had survived and wanted to express our gratitude. At once, we joined the Communist Party. My wife became a member of the district council and I became one of the 4 local party leaders. In charge of the agitation and propaganda sector, I was also responsible for political education which I oversaw for a period of four years. After that, we launched our nature conservation work.⁸

Introduced directly after the war, the GDR government's nature conservation activities were based on three pillars – politics/administration, science and civic engagement – and were also implemented at three different levels: the Ministry for Agriculture and Forestry (Ministerium für Land- und Forstwirtschaft), the Institute for Landscape Planning and Nature Conservation (Institut für Landschaftsforschung und Naturschutz) and the GDR's Cultural League for the Democratic Renewal of Germany (Kulturbund zur demokratischen Erneuerung der DDR), a central mass organisation.⁹ In the early days, the Kretschmanns focused predominantly on the Cultural League. Having become members of the local Freienwalde group of the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) in 1945 and the So-

7 Kurt Kretschmann, *Erinnerungen an meinen im Hitler-Krieg gefallenen Freund Herbert Marquardt* (Biesenthal: Hoffnungstaler Werkstätten, 2002); Kurt Kretschmann, *Gedichte gegen den Krieg – 'Gewalt ist die Waffe des Schwachen, Gewaltlosigkeit die des Starken' – Mahatma Gandhi*, with the assistance of Daniel Fischer [n.p., n.d.]; Kurt Kretschmann, *Unsere Eß- und Trinkgewohnheiten unter die Lupe genommen – Erfahrungen aus 70-jähriger fleischloser Ernährung* (Bad Freienwalde: [n.d]).

8 Ibid., p. 30.

9 Hermann Behrens, 'Naturschutz in der DDR', in Stiftung Naturschutzgeschichte (ed.), *Wegmarken, Beiträge zur Geschichte des Naturschutzes, Festschrift für Wolfgang Pflug* (Essen: Klartext, 2000), pp. 189–258, here p. 206.

cialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) in 1946, the couple now joined the Cultural League's Central Committee of the Friends of Nature and Heimat. Erna Kretschmann was also active in the Cultural League's Central Expert Committee for Landscape Planning and Nature Conservation and held the position of District Secretary for Nature and Heimat at the Frankfurt/Oder¹⁰ branch of the Cultural League.¹¹

Eventually, the Kretschmanns extended their commitment beyond the voluntary level and started working within the context of the government's nature conservation programme. Up until 1964, Erna Kretschmann held various positions, among them District Councillor for National Education and Consultant for Landscape Planning and Nature Conservation on the Council of the District of Oberbarnim.¹² Kurt Kretschmann, in turn, was employed as Special Representative for Environmental Protection Matters by the Brandenburg Ministry for Agriculture and Forestry as of 1951 and took over the State Office of Nature Conservation in Brandenburg. The Kretschmanns launched two large-scale projects which were to become pioneering, unique enterprises. One project involved setting up ecological training courses at *Müritzhof* – the first of their kind worldwide; the other entailed their lifestyle and resource management at their self-designed *Haus der Naturpflege* (house of nature care), which Erna Kretschmann referred to as the 'crucible of nature conservation in the GDR'.¹³

Müritzhof, a farm in Mecklenburg, in what was then the GDR's largest protected area in today's county of Mecklenburgische Seenplatte, was set up as a 'central training establishment for nature conservation' in 1954.¹⁴ The Kretschmanns ran the institution for six years, until 1960. Taking on a total of 1,200 trainees who worked at the lowest level in villages and communes, they instructed them in effective, hands-on nature conservation. Among other aspects, the Kretschmanns taught their charges how to approach the authorities and deal with their objections. Both during this period and before they had taken over the management of *Müritzhof*, the couple had repeatedly

10 From 1952–1990 Bad Freienwalde was a city in the district of Frankfurt/Oder.

11 Cf. CV of Erna Kretschmann, in Haus der Naturpflege e.V. (ed.) *Erinnerungen an Erna Kretschmann* (Bad Freienwalde: 2012), pp. 18–19.

12 Ibid.

13 Schulz, 'Ein Leben in Harmonie', 26.

14 Ludwig Bauer, 'Naturschutzarbeit der 1950er und 1960er Jahre in der ehemaligen DDR', in Stiftung Naturschutzgeschichte (ed.), *Natur im Sinn. Zeitzeugen im Naturschutz* (Essen: Klartext, 2001), pp. 47–61, here p. 53.

The Impact of East German Nature Conservationists

locked horns with official institutions. Their rule violations and unyielding, militant conduct represented a challenge to the SED state and its need to exert control, leading to friction with superiors and administrative offices. Their unconventional actions and the unconditionality with which they sought to change prevailing circumstances according to their own philosophy transgressed the narrow world of bureaucrats and functionaries. As well as discontinuing their work at *Müritzhof* in 1960, Kurt and Erna Kretschmann also took the fundamental decision to move back to Bad Freienwalde. Living largely independent of any official structures, they set up a centre of nature and culture, their *Haus der Naturpflege*, which they managed until 1982.¹⁵

Impact of the *fin de siècle* reform movement on the Kretschmanns' intellectual roots

In terms of the history of thoughts, the philosophy adopted by Kurt and Erna Kretschmann is rooted in the reform movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The holistic approach adopted by the life reformers awakened the Kretschmann's interest in non-European, specifically Asian traditions, such as Buddhism or Confucianism, in which holism plays an eminent role. At an event in Berlin in the 1930s, Kurt Kretschmann had met the Swiss life reformer Werner Zimmermann, whose teaching was to have the most profound effect on the couple.¹⁶ Zimmermann advocated anarchy, anti-capitalism and socialism in freedom as well as life reform in the sense of a transformation of human life, organic farming and free sexuality.¹⁷ Zimmermann's specific philosophy not only promoted the replacement of the prevailing way of life with life in its natural state but also called for an anarchic economic system – the so-called free economy. In 1934 Zimmermann founded the *Wirtschaftsring* (WIR), a self-help initiative which simultaneously represented 'a practical form of free socialism'.¹⁸ Zimmermann combined his model of life and economic system with nutritional reform and advocated a new form of sexuality where sexual union was independent of lust.

15 See Behrens, 'Wende-Wege', 106.

16 See Florentine Fritzen, *Gesünder leben. Die Lebensreformbewegung im 20. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2006), p. 295.

17 Meike Sophie Baader, *Erziehung als Erlösung: Transformationen des Religiösen in der Reformpädagogik* (Weinheim: Juventa, 2005), pp. 230–234. Also: Kretschmann, *Gedichte gegen den Krieg*, p. 64.

18 Günter Bartsch, *Die NWO-Bewegung Silvio Gesells. Geschichtlicher Grundriß 1891 – 1992/93* (Lütjenburg: Gauke, 1994) at http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/~roehrigw/bartsch/geschichte/1_II_29.htm (retrieved 15 Mar. 2018).

The reform movement emerged in reaction to industrialisation and urbanisation. Its proponents no longer relied on government reforms and instead believed in self reform. Their idea was that, although a lifestyle in harmony with nature should be adopted by the individual, the aggregation of these individual lifestyles should lead to the desired social reforms. Rather than production, they focused on the reform of consumption which they hoped would result in the creation of a harmonious and conflict-free society. For the reform movement of the late nineteenth century, the social question was predominantly one of morality, which meant that their critique was directed exclusively at the moral consequences of civilisation, as opposed to social inequity. This reduction of social ills to moral circumstances allowed reformers to individualise causes and possible solutions and distanced them from a view where socio-structural causes or economic conditions are at the root of the problem.¹⁹

The propagated materialism and centrally-guided economy of the GDR were diametrically opposed to this belief, not only because they focused first and foremost on the manner of production as opposed to consumption, but also because, under Marxism, reforms are the exclusive remit of the state instead of the individual. Official nature conservation and environmental protection policy also followed this dictum. The 1970 Socialist Land Cultivation Act (*Gesetz über die planmäßige Gestaltung der sozialistischen Landeskultur*) once more sanctioned the fundamental reference to Karl Marx who maintained that it is the being that determines the consciousness.²⁰ With this theorem, Marx distanced himself from his teacher Georg Hegel who had posited that consciousness determines being, a philosophy which was taken up again by new social movements, among them the environmentalists, in the Federal Republic in the 1970s, and a few years later in the GDR. The socialist idea, which still underpinned the West German student movement of the 1960s and its focus on production rather than consumption and unequal economic conditions, thus lost some of its cohesive force amongst opposition members in East and West.

Kurt and Erna Kretschmann were certain that the GDR was morally superior to the Federal Republic, and they never lost their belief in a just and

19 Cf. Eva Barlösius, *Naturgemäße Lebensführung. Zur Geschichte der Lebensreform um die Jahrhundertwende* (Frankfurt/Main: Campus, 1997), pp. 170 et seq. and 198 et seq.

20 Hugo Weinitschke, *Ein Jahr Landeskulturgesetz in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik – Probleme und Erfahrungen aus der Tätigkeit des Deutschen Kulturbundes*, p. 10, Freilicht- und Volkskundemuseum Schwerin (FVS), KB, Landeskultur/Umweltschutz/Naturschutz, 27, 1.

The Impact of East German Nature Conservationists

fair world. The communist philosophy of a classless society and the absence of private ownership, the historical legitimacy of which they took as a forgone conclusion, did not conflict with their reform-based ideals: quoting Bettina von Arnim, Erna Kretschmann put it like this: 'there will, however, come a time when, despite all deception and force, truth will imbue the hearts of the people, of the poor, and the reign of the wealthy will come to an end'.²¹

The fact that ideas and beliefs are transformed upon their conveyance and reception, adjusted to new circumstances and modified in the process explains why, for a long time, the Kretschmanns managed to live in harmony with themselves, undisturbed by the state: adapting their concepts to the prevailing circumstances in the GDR, they merged their reform-based ideals with those aspects of the socialist vision that were in tune with their basic outlook. By contrast, although the members of the GDR environmental movement of the 1980s adopted the concept of the good life promulgated by the older nature conservationists as well as referring back to the individualisation theory, they were subject to much greater repression due to their clear critique of the communist doctrine and the SED party.

By linking their reform-based model with the Communist vision, the couple created its own counterworld²² but avoided any perilous opposition to the system. As the historian Thomas Lindenberger expounds, it was indeed possible to articulate interests and needs in the GDR and, one might add, to live one's own life, as long as one avoided any serious conflicts with the powers that be.²³ That Erna and Kurt Kretschmann's activities did not go unnoticed by the Ministry for State Security (MfS) has been corroborated

21 Quote by Gisela Heller, 'Geliebt und verstanden werden ist das höchste Glück', in *Erinnerungen an Erna Kretschmann* (Bad Freienwalde: Haus der Naturpflege, 2012), pp. 5–8, here p. 7.

22 See the introduction to a Special issue on this concept: Nina Leonhard and Astrid Mignon Kirchhof, 'Gegenwelten', in *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 41 (1) (2015): 5–16.

23 See Thomas Lindenberger, 'Herrschaft und Eigen-Sinn in der Diktatur. Das Alltagsleben der DDR und sein Platz in der Erinnerungskultur des vereinten Deutschlands', in Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung (ed.), *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte. B 40/2000*, <http://www.bpb.de/apuz/25409/herrschaft-und-eigen-sinn-in-der-diktatur> (retrieved 1 Oct. 2018). Although the *Eigensinn* (stubbornness) concept introduced by Thomas Lindenberger may provide some explanation for the lifestyle of the Kretschmanns, it does not sufficiently account for the ambivalent relationship many nature conservationists had with the GDR. I therefore speak of counterworlds which allowed hosts of environmental activists to create niches where they could escape the clutches of the state although they were neither hostile nor opposed to the socialist state, and in some cases even declared themselves to be apolitical. In the examples I have chosen, this counterworld lifestyle (which was certainly more than just a behavioural variety) was often founded on nature- and reform-based beliefs which, on the one hand, compellingly suggested a 'free' lifestyle and, on the other, advocated ideological proximity with socialism. Cf. Leonhard and Kirchhof, 'Gegenwelten', 71–106.

by the unofficial collaborators who watched them over many decades. While in the 1950s, Kurt was still seen as a ‘crank’²⁴ whose pronouncements the District Control Committee considered implausible,²⁵ assessments of the Kretschmanns became significantly more moderate over the coming decades, and they were described as an apolitical couple whose primary objective was nature conservation.²⁶ The state’s tacit conclusion that the Kretschmanns had no political clout was, however, very much mistaken.

The missionaries of the house of nature care

Upon their return to Bad Freienwalde in 1960, Kurt and Erna Kretschmann set up a new home and became predominantly self-sufficient, emulating a way of life they had already tried and tested in the 1930s. Over the years, they also established a public ‘centre of nature and culture’ which regularly attracted visitors from Germany and the rest of Europe. People called on the Kretschmanns to discuss ideas on nature conservation and link up with fellow campaigners. In the 1970s, informers reported 70,000 to 80,000 visitors²⁷ over a period of fifteen years, approximately 5,000 a year, who came to ‘talk about nature conversation with Erna and Kurt’.²⁸ Among those who flocked to the *Haus der Naturpflege* were veterinarians, farmers, professors, musicians, authors, nature conservationists, teachers, politicians, students and ordinary people.²⁹ At the same time, the couple was in contact with

24 Letter by the Bad Freienwalde District Office to the State Security Regional Office regarding Kurt Kretschmann, 21 Feb. 1958, p. 15, Behörde des Bundesbeauftragten der Stasi Unterlagenbehörde (BstU), Bezirksverwaltung (BV) Frankfurt/Oder, Kreisdienststelle (KD) Bad Freienwalde, ZMA 4884.

25 Letter from the Bad Freienwalde District Office to the State Security Regional Office regarding Kurt Kretschmann, 28 Feb. 1958, p. 23, BStU, BV Frankfurt Oder, KD Bad Freienwalde, ZMA 4884.

26 Report by the informal collaborator in special operations (Inoffizieller Mitarbeiter für einen besonderen Einsatz, IME) ‘H. Hockum’ on Kurt and Erna Kretschmann, 1988, p. 94, BStU, BV Frankfurt Oder, KD Bad Freienwalde, ZMA 4884.

27 For the figures, see *Operativ-Information* 3/77, 28 Apr. 1977, BStU, Bezirksverwaltung für Staatssicherheit (BVfS) Frankfurt Oder, dept. X 300, folio 38. 7,000 visitors per year are mentioned by the writer Gisela Heller in her contribution to the brochure in memory of Erna Kretschmann. Cf. Heller, ‘Geliebt und verstanden werden ist das höchste Glück...’, p. 6..

28 Cf. Sybille Knospe, ‘Kurt Kretschmann – Naturschutz kennt keine Mauern’. Presentation at the conference *Über die Mauer. Deutsch-deutsche Kontakte im Naturschutz*, Potsdam – Haus der Natur, 5 Dec. 2014, http://www.haus-der-naturpflege.de/uploads/PDF/TagungPotsdam20141205_Rede_SKnospe.pdf, pp. 3, 4, and 8 (retrieved 8 Jan. 2020).

29 Cf. articles in the commemorative brochure entitled *Erinnerungen an Erna Kretschmann* (Bad Freienwalde: Haus der Naturpflege, 2012).

The Impact of East German Nature Conservationists

hundreds of others,³⁰ establishing the basis of their Europe-wide nature conservation network. Their exchanges were, however, not limited to written correspondence but also led to personal meetings. It was mostly Erna who maintained the written correspondence: 'Rather an impressive achievement, given that the Kretschmanns' circle of friends and acquaintances was constantly growing, both privately and through their nature conservation work, and Erna never wrote any run-of-the-mill letters',³¹ remembers Rolf Göpel from Bremen. Having been invited to *Müritzhof* by the Kretschmanns as a student in the 1950s, he returned for numerous visits over the following decades and later acted as a multiplier. He delivered nature conservation material from the Federal Republic of Germany to the Kretschmanns and established contacts with West Germany, for example with Hartmut Heckenroth, then head of the State Ornithological Institute of Lower Saxony, who visited the Kretschmanns several times.³²

The Kretschmanns also maintained close written and personal contact with other West German nature conservationists, such as Carl Duve, the Head of the Nature Conservation Authority of Hamburg (Naturschutzamt Hamburg). In the 1950s, Duve, who also headed the Hamburg branch of the Verein Naturschutzpark (nature reserve association), talked with the Kretschmanns about one of their lifelong ambitions, the creation of national parks, suggesting the integration of the Eastern bank of the Müritz into a transnational European nature reserve. Moreover, on Carl Duve's recommendation, Kurt Kretschmann was to become the GDR's representative at the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN).³³ To Kretschmann's great disappointment, this plan did not come to fruition, presumably because it was unclear in what form East Germany could join this international body. Based on its recently adopted Hallstein Doctrine, West Germany had filed an

30 As pointed out by the archivist of the Erna-und-Kurt-Kretschmann archive, Gebhard Schultz, *Erna-und-Kurt-Kretschmann-Archive – Online-Findbuch Schriftgutbestand* at http://www.haus-der-naturpflege.de/uploads/PDF/KreA_Online-Findbuch_2011.pdf, introduction to the search index, p. 13 (retrieved 12 Jan. 2020).

31 Rolf Göpel, 'Kontakte zu Kurt Kretschmann – Praktische Erfahrungen seit 1956', presentation at the conference *Über die Mauer. Deutsch-Deutsche Kontakte im Naturschutz*, Potsdam – Haus der Natur, 5 Dec. 2014, http://www.haus-der-naturpflege.de/uploads/PDF/TagungPotsdam20141205_Rede_RGoepel.pdf, (retrieved 8 Jan. 2020).

32 Wilhelm Breuer, 'Wahrscheinlich ist Liebe im Spiel. Hartmut Heckenroth im Porträt', in *Nationalpark – Wo Mensch und Wildnis sich begegnen*, Nr. 167, 03/2015, pp. 34–35, http://www.egeeulen.de/files/nationalpark_169_15_heckenroth.pdf (retrieved 15 Mar. 2018).

33 Knospe, 'Kurt Kretschmann', 2–3.

objection against the GDR's admission when the East German Institute for Landscape Planning and Nature Conservation applied for membership of the IUCN in 1956. Espoused by the West German government the preceding year, the Doctrine claimed an exclusive mandate to represent Germany at the international level and opposed the recognition of the GDR as a separate state. In the end, although the GDR could not join the Union as a state, the IUCN decided that membership of individuals and organisations was permissible. After years of being relegated to guest status, the East German Institute for Landscape Planning and Nature Conservation finally became an official member of the IUCN in 1965 – ten years after Carl Duve and the Kretschmanns first discussed their ambition to create a national park in East Germany.³⁴

In the 1970s, the Kretschmanns' European network expanded further thanks to their establishment of the White Stork Working Group (Arbeitskreis Weißstorch) in Bad Freienwalde. The Kretschmanns had become aware that there were very few storks left in the region, so Erna set about investigating the matter: 'After weeks of writing letters and talking on the phone, my wife found out that only 5 out of an original 34 stork couples were left in our district'.³⁵ Kurt and Erna decided to do something about this. Taking their first steps to save the white stork in their immediate environment, they soon focused on the rest of the GDR and eventually on other countries, stimulating a debate at the international level. With the help of her correspondents, Erna Kretschmann swiftly set up a European interest group for the protection of the white stork.³⁶ Thanks to a local teacher who spoke six languages and provided the necessary translation services, the Kretschmanns were also able to communicate with activists abroad. Nevertheless, many of their fellow campaigners also spoke German, for instance Andrej Stollmann, a frequent visitor and host of the Kretschmanns from Czechoslovakia.³⁷ The Erna-and-Kurt-Kretschmann Archive contains a list from the 1980s which specifies the home countries of their contacts

34 Hans-Werner Frohn, Jürgen Rosebrock, 'Naturschutz im geteilten Deutschland. Deutsch-deutsche Naturschutzkontakte 1945–1969', *Natur und Landschaft. Zeitschrift für Naturschutz und Landschaftspflege* 83 (7) (2008): 325–328.

35 The founding date, 1978, can be found in the following brochure: Kurt Kretschmann, *Dem Weißstorch zuliebe – Ein Gruß aus dem Storchmuseum im Storchenturm von Rathsdorf-Altgau*, published by Naturschutzbund Deutschland (NABU) e.V. (Bonn: [n.d., 1990s]); Kurt Kretschmann, *Erna Kretschmann – ein Nachruf*, n.d., KreA, 014.

36 Kretschmann, *Dem Weißstorch zuliebe*, p. 10, own count.

37 See, for instance, Letter from Erna and Kurt Kretschmann to Andrej Stollmann, 15 Jan. 1981, KreA, 279.

The Impact of East German Nature Conservationists

in Eastern and Western Europe: Austria, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, France, FRG including West Berlin, Hungary, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Soviet Union and Spain.³⁸ With individuals and organisations in these countries, among them members of the Ornithological Union in Copenhagen, the Natural Science Faculty in Cordoba and the Natural History Museum in Vienna, Erna and Kurt Kretschmann swapped slide shows, films, books, magazines and display boards from exhibitions on the subject of white storks in Europe. The couple also initiated an international white stork count in 1984 and organised visits to Bad Freienwalde.³⁹

Wishing to set an example for their host of visitors, guests and followers, the Kretschmanns demonstrated how to maintain, protect and sensibly manage nature. Not only did they encourage their visitors to get involved, they also practised what they preached, for instance experimenting with organic fertilisers and solar energy at their *Haus der Naturpflege*.⁴⁰ The supporters of the GDR's future environmental movement and numerous individuals who were indirectly involved saw them as an oasis of calm, as representatives and conveyors of a nature-centred concept of a better life. Throughout their life-long 'educational work',⁴¹ the Kretschmanns perfectly complemented each other, generated public attention and consistently played a missionary role, even beyond their death. Individuals remained loyal to the concept of nature conservation and reflected the beliefs of the Kretschmanns in their work for influential social institutions, for instance *Nabu*, the Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union. Among these individuals are the couple Mechthild and Christoph Kaatz who set up Storchenhof, a centre for injured storks and other big birds in Loburg, Saxony-Anhalt, in 1979. According to Mechthild Kaatz, their contact with the Kretschmanns still benefits the Storchenhof centre today: 'We are honouring the legacy of the two Kretschmanns by carrying on their work in NABU's national white stork working group'.⁴²

38 List of white stork protection groups with which Erna and Kurt Kretschmann were in contact, KreA, 316. See also Correspondence with the Danish Ornithological Union, KreA, 316.

39 See Letter from Kurt and Erna Kretschmann to Mr Shifter of the Natural History Museum, Vienna, 2 Nov. 1983; Letter of the Natural Science Faculty of the University of Cordoba, 22. May 1983; Letter from Tommy Dybbro of the Danish Ornithological Union to Kurt Kretschmann, 25 Aug. 1980, KreA, 316.

40 Schulz, 'Ein Leben in Harmonie', 25-30.

41 Anita Tack, 'Beeindruckendes Lebenswerk', in Haus der Naturpflege e.V. (ed.), *Erinnerungen an Erna Kretschmann*, Supplement

42 Mechthild Kaatz, 'Ihr schaute die Menschlichkeit aus dem Gesicht', in Haus der Naturpflege e.V. (ed.), *Erinnerung an Erna Kretschmann*, pp. 11-12, here p. 12.

When it came to their lifelong ‘educational work’⁴³ Erna and Kurt complemented each other perfectly despite, or perhaps precisely because of their rather different personalities:

Much of what he [Kurt, AMK] preached with the tongues of angels back then actually became law nationwide. Some people who heard him at that time will object here that Kurt appeared to him rather as an archangel who interferes with the flaming sword. Yes, he was a zealot, an inconvenient one.⁴⁴

Erna Kretschmann, by contrast, was a source of calm and stability, both within their marriage and in contact with the hosts of visitors who referred to her as a ‘ray of sunshine who lifted people’s spirits, a quiet revolutionary’⁴⁵ with ‘diplomatic skills’⁴⁶ and a ‘conciliatory yet energetic and purposeful manner’.⁴⁷ According to Anita Tack, former Brandenburg Minister of the Environment, Health and Consumer Protection, Erna Kretschmann ‘found kindred spirits, brought them together and united them in the pursuit of shared values and objectives’.⁴⁸

The couple’s pervasive influence is also reflected in the enduring relationship that developed between the Kretschmanns and the above-mentioned Michael Succow. Having visited the Kretschmanns for the first time at age twelve, Succow remained a lifelong friend. Thinking back on their relationship, Succow repeatedly states that they acted both as his spiritual parents and as the pioneers of nature conservation and environmental protection in the GDR.⁴⁹ Not only did they teach him ecological concepts in his youth, they also advised him in later years, with Kurt Kretschmann admonishing him at some point: ‘Censorious bystanders will not advance the cause of nature conservation’.⁵⁰ Succow took this advice to heart and endeavoured to further the cause from within the system in his capacity as biologist and

43 Tack, ‘Beeindruckendes Lebenswerk’, Supplement.

44 Heller, ‘Geliebt und verstanden werden ist das höchste Glück’, 6.

45 Ibid., 7.

46 Tack, ‘Beeindruckendes Lebenswerk’, Supplement.

47 Kaatz, ‘Ihr schaute die Menschlichkeit aus dem Gesicht’, 12.

48 Tack, ‘Beeindruckendes Lebenswerk’, Supplement.

49 Michael Succow, Lebrecht Jeschke and Hans Dieter Knapp, ‘Unsere Ostdeutschen Vordenker’, in Michael Succow, Lebrecht Jeschke and Hans Dieter Knapp (eds), *Naturschutz in Deutschland* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2012) pp. 35–44, here pp. 39–40.

50 Quote by Michael Succow, see Uta Andresen, ‘Succows Programm’, in *Berlin Tageszeitung*, 19 Mar. 2005, <http://www.taz.de/ArchivSuche/?633967&cs=Uta%2BAndresen&SuchRahmen=Print/> (retrieved 5 Feb. 2019).

The Impact of East German Nature Conservationists

university professor.⁵¹ In 1970, the year he gained his doctorate, Succow took up one of the Kretschmann's key concerns, sending a petition to the GDR's parliament which suggested the establishment of national parks. The petition was unsuccessful. Tracing back to nineteenth century ideas, the national park concept also had other proponents in the GDR aside from Succow.⁵² The Kretschmanns had submitted three proposals for various national parks since the 1950s.⁵³ They were supported by Reimar Gilsenbach, author and human rights activist from the Lower Rhine region, who had moved to Saxony in 1947. As editor of the Cultural League's *Friends of Nature and Heimat*, Gilsenbach wielded a sharp pen, fighting eloquently for the establishment of national parks.⁵⁴ At the time, the Kretschmanns were unaware that forty years later, as the GDR was entering its last throes, this dream would actually come true. In contrast to Kurt and Erna Kretschmann, Gilsenbach, who was ten years their junior, was actively involved in the GDR's nascent environmental and peace movement. Michael Succow was one of the participants of the 'Brodowin talks' launched by Gilsenbach, which provided authors, environmentalists, state and cultural officials, employees of large companies, scientists and artists with an opportunity to discuss nature and environmental conservation issues as well as the national park scheme.⁵⁵ Succow remembers it as 'a movement that brought together bright minds who set out to reform the GDR system'.⁵⁶ In his capacity of East Germany's Deputy Minister for the Environment, Succow eventually proposed a national park scheme as pursued by the Kretschmanns and other GDR conservationists and implemented the idea in the form of a national park programme.

51 Typewritten CV of Michael Succow, 1991, KreA, 152.

52 Introductory: Friedemann Schmoll, *Erinnerungen an die Natur. Die Geschichte des Naturschutzes im deutschen Kaiserreich* (Frankfurt/Main: Campus, 2004) pp. 113 et seqq.

53 Succow, Jeschke and Knapp, 'Naturschutz in Deutschland', 39-40. Letter from Prof. Dr. Otto Rühle to Kurt Kretschmann, 25 Feb. 1959, Studienarchiv Umweltgeschichte (StUG), 027-32.

54 Reimar Gilsenbach, 'Die größte DDR der Welt – ein Staat ohne Nationalparke. Des Merkens Würdiges aus meiner grünen Donquichotterie', in Institut für Umweltgeschichte und Regionalentwicklung (ed.), *Naturschutz in den neuen Bundesländern – Ein Rückblick* (Marburg: BdWi, 1998), pp. 533-546.

55 Ernst Paul Dörfler, eco-chemist and co-founder of the Green Party in the GDR, confirms that the national park concept was discussed at the Brodowin talks. See mail to author of 24 Oct. 2017.

56 Cf. Reimar Gilsenbach, Hannelore Gilsenbach and Harro Hess (eds), *Wer im Gleichschritt marschiert, geht in die falsche Richtung* (Bad Münstereifel: Westkreuz, 2004), p. 282.

Europe's Green Belt

Thanks to the Bavarian branch of the German Federation for the Environment and Nature Conservation (Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz Deutschland), which first set out to map the birdlife along the German-German border in 1979/80, knowledge about the diversity of species and habitats in the border region was already available before the Fall of the Wall. On 9 December 1989, just one month after the fall of the Wall, *Naturschutzbund* took initial steps to safeguard the areas flanking the border.⁵⁷ Initially, its focus was on integrating protected areas into the German Green Belt to safeguard and develop the core area and bordering tracts as a habitat, especially the extensive surviving semi-natural pieces of land. In addition to the national parks and other nature reserves situated along the former border, the project comprised numerous other areas, including 789 nature reserves, 402 landscape conservation areas and 9,100 natural monuments⁵⁸. It was against this background that the national park concept pursued by Gilsenbach and the Kretschmanns since the 1950s was revisited and a proposal was made for the establishment of parks stretching from the Baltic Sea to the Bavarian Forest. At close to 1,400 kilometres from top to bottom, the conservation areas along the former border represent the longest continuous system of biotopes in Germany, linking seventeen natural landscapes from the Baltic Sea in the north to the Saxonian Vogtland in the south.⁵⁹ The creation of this network in the 1990s was not a smooth process, with leftover mines requiring detection and defusing and a number of municipalities refusing to give up their natural landscapes without a fight. The district town of Oelsnitz in the Saxonian Vogtland, for instance, wanted to use the former border strip for agricultural and forestry purposes, while the district town of Plauen, just ten kilometres down the road, did not raise any objections.⁶⁰

57 See Rolf Weber, 'Vom "Todesstreifen" zum "Grünen Band" – dargestellt am Beispiel der sächsischen Grenze zu Bayern', in Institut für Umweltgeschichte und Regionalentwicklung e.V. (ed.), *Naturschutz in den neuen Bundesländern – ein Rückblick*, Halbband II (Marburg: BdWi, 1998), pp. 659–69; here p. 659.

58 The national park in the Harz mountains is part of the Green Belt, see Das Grüne Band – vom Todesstreifen zur Lebenslinie, <https://www.nationalpark-harz.de/de/veranstaltungen/vk-20-03-2018-Das-Gr%C3%BCne-Band-%E2%80%93-vom-Todesstreifen-zur-Lebenslinie> (retrieved 27 Dec. 2019).

59 Franz August Emde, 'Naturathlon wirbt für Naturlandschaften im Osten', in *Informationsdienst Wissenschaft* (ed.) (1.10.2004), <https://idw-online.de/de/news86538> (retrieved 5 Feb. 2019).

60 Weber, "Vom Todesstreifen" zum "Grünen Band", 662.

The Impact of East German Nature Conservationists

After the turn of the millennium, in 2003, the European Natural Heritage Foundation (Stiftung Europäisches Naturerbe), the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (Bundesamt für Naturschutz), the German Federation for the Environment and Nature Conservation (Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz Deutschland) and the IUCN joined forces to launch the cross-border European Green Belt initiative with the aim of preserving the diversity of the European natural heritage along the former Iron Curtain for future generations. Crossing 24 different countries, the belt stretches over more than 12,500 kilometres from the borders of Norway, Finland and the former Soviet Union across Europe all the way to the Black Sea coast between Bulgaria and Turkey. Analogous to the former German-German border, the erstwhile no-man's land along the European Iron Curtain had allowed nature to develop largely undisturbed by intensive human use.⁶¹

To ensure smooth coordination, Europe's Green Belt has been divided into three main sections, the first comprising the Scandinavian countries, Russia, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, the second central Europe and the third the Balkan region. Section coordinators are responsible for promoting the exchange of information, effective coordination and the implementation of projects. Each of the countries involved has appointed a representative of the responsible national ministry who is in charge of coordinating national activities. These so-called National Focal Points are tasked with promoting cooperation and communication between the work of the national ministries and the Green Belt activities. On top of this, the project also involves a maximum number of national and international non-governmental organisations.⁶²

Although brought to fruition in the national park programme and absorbed into the German and European Green Belts, the Kretschmanns' vision did not remain unchallenged, even after the demise of the GDR. Both during the GDR era and after, the project attracted juxtaposing ideas, each claiming to provide the panacea for a better life in harmony with nature: while one school of thought strictly opposes any interference with nature, another believes in managing nature and placing conservation areas into the service of infrastructure, tourism or agriculture. In years past, the creation and preservation of the German network of biotopes was 'threatened by arable

61 Katharina Grund, *Linie des Lebens statt Eiserner Vorhang. Grünes Band soll grüner werden*, in *Euro-natur*, Vol 3/2016, p. 20.

62 Cf. website of the Green Belt Organisation, <http://www.europeangreenbelt.org/> (retrieved 12 Jan. 2020).

land conversion, assignment of residential and commercial areas, harbour and road construction, depletion of materials and tourism'.⁶³ Moreover, as early as the 1990s, individual areas whose definitive protection status was still outstanding saw their temporary protection orders expire due to a shortage of staff and financial resources at the level of the responsible state authorities, as well as the absence of an overriding concept that received general agreement.⁶⁴ Many a time, this uncertainty brought concerned nature conservationists onto the scene. They drew attention to the uniqueness of the protected areas and supported their preservation by acquiring Green Belt share certificates from ecological associations. According to BUND, the purchase of these securities is an effective response to renewed interference with nature: 'It's a straightforward deal: nature for cash'.⁶⁵



Throughout their lives, Erna and Kurt Kretschmann had made it their mission to promote a good life in harmony with nature, an objective they pursued unconditionally. They managed to establish a European network and were engaged in a lively written and personal exchange with nature conservationists in both Eastern and Western Europe over many decades. One of their main objectives, the creation of national parks, was adopted by the GDR environmental movement which gained momentum in the 1980s. I have chosen a concrete case, that of the GDR's last Deputy Minister of the Environment Michael Succow, to show the long-term impact of these spiritual and mental roots. It is against this background that projects were kick-started even before the demise of the GDR, for instance the designation of natural reserves in East Germany, which resulted in the German Green Belt after the fall of the wall and, subsequently, integration into the European Green Belt. Up until now, research investigating the spiritual roots of the GDR environmental movement regularly singled out the international and West German debates on civilisation critique and their impact on the

63 Weber, "Vom Todesstreifen" zum "Grünen Band", 668.

64 Ibid.

65 Sebastian Knauer, 'Grünes Band - Die Endlos-Debatte über den Todesstreifen', in *Spiegel* online 4 Nov. 2005, <http://www.spiegel.de/wissenschaft/natur/gruenes-band-die-endlos-debatte-ueber-den-todesstreifen-a-383228.html> (retrieved 23 Dec. 2019).

The Impact of East German Nature Conservationists

East German environmental movement.⁶⁶ With reference to these critical voices, my article has advanced the thesis that the rootedness in East German nature conservation and recourse to the ideas of its pioneers and guides had a decisive influence on the contents and actions of the GDR environmental movement as well as on individual protagonists and subsequent projects. Given that ideas neither endure nor spread if there are no actors who can support and convey them, this study presents the Kretschmanns in this mediating role, because they functioned both as a source of inspiration and as ideal promoters. The article establishes the couple's roots in the history of ideas and argues that recourse to these roots has had a significant impact on the direction and content of subsequent nature conservation projects. Accordingly, the ideas and concepts pursued by GDR nature conservationists, among them Kurt und Erna Kretschmann, played a key role in shaping the emergence of a European environmental conscience.

66 Michael Beleites argued that the roots of the GDR peace, human rights and independent environmental movement tied in with Western debates. According to Beleites, important impulses had come from the green movement in the West and the debates about the 'limits of growth' (Club of Rome report) as well as from various international church conferences, see Michael Beleites, *Die unabhängige Umweltbewegung in der DDR* in Hermann Behrens, Jens Hoffmann, Institut f. Umweltgeschichte u. Regionalentwicklung e.V (eds) *Umweltschutz in der DDR. Analysen und Zeitzeugenberichte. Vol. 3 Beruflicher, ehrenamtlicher und freiwilliger Umweltschutz* (Munich: Oekom Verlag, 2007), pp. 129–224; here pp. 184 et seqq. The sociologist Detlef Pollack is also convinced that 'reception of the Western critique of capitalism and civilisation [had been] decisive' for alternative political groupings. He believes that the critique of capitalism had delivered an argument for the inclusion of the GDR as a modern industrial society in the critique of modernism. Cf. Detlef Pollack, *Politischer Protest. Politische alternative Gruppen in der DDR*. (Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 2000), p. 257.

CHAPTER 6.

WETLANDS OF PROTEST. SEEKING TRANSNATIONAL TRAJECTORIES IN HUNGARY'S ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT

Daniela Neubacher

Arguing that the project would risk the water supply of hundreds of thousands of Hungarians along with the flora and fauna of a 200-kilometre-long-strip, the activists of the so called *Duna Kör* (Danube Circle) mobilised masses at the dawn of system change in Hungary. As early as November 1984 the protest movement collected around 10,000 signatures¹. Four years later they were able to increase the number to 150,000 for a petition requesting a referendum about the Gabčíkovo–Nagymaros² dam project.³ Meanwhile, on the other side of the Iron Curtain, about two hundred kilometres upstream, environmentalists were protesting against a dam project of the Austrian government. The successful protest in the Danubian wetlands of Hainburg in 1984 has been called birth date of the Green Movement in Austria and laid the foundations of a strong political force henceforth. This paper deals with the social actors of the Hungarian environmental movement in the 1980s, concentrating mostly on the activities on the leading group *Duna Kör*. Taking the concrete campaign of *Duna Kör* and its foreign partners, we will outline the transnational aspects by raising the following typological questions. Who were the main actors of the movement and how did they interact? How did they prepare and plan their actions? Which means and protest forms did they use and what common goals can be identified? In addition, the self-images and perceptions of the activists are aspects that can be analysed. Which similarities and differences do they identify among themselves? On what ideological foundations did they build up a collective identity? The focus of these research questions lies on cross-border activ-

1. Estimate provided by the activists.

2. Hereafter the dam project (Hungarian) will be referred as GNV (Gabčíkovo –Nagymarosi Vízlépcső / Gabčíkovo –Nagymaros Dams/Waterworks).

3. See Miklós Haraszti, 'The beginnings of civil society. The independent peace movement and the Danube movement in Hungary', in Vladimir Tismaneau (ed.), *In Search of Civil Society* (New York: Routledge, 1990), pp.71–87, here p. 80.

Wetlands of Protest

ism between opponents of the GNV in Hungary and environmentalists in Austria. The research intends to interpret this cross-border cooperation as a form of 'Europeanization from below'⁴ that is based on processes of identity-building, solidarity and shared interests. Based on archive research and interviews the study reconstructs a fluid but strong network of activists that includes politicians and scientists as well as journalists and dissidents.

The ethnical, bilateral and juridical aspects of the conflict about GNV have been discussed in several papers and research works.⁵ Among these studies, the development of protest and transnational activism is, however, underrepresented. Only a few researchers, such as Hubertus Knabe, Barbara Jancar-Webster and John Fitzmaurice, have raised related questions. Besides the study of Maté Szabó and Szabina Kerényi, which dealt with 'transnational influences on patterns of mobilisation with environmental movements in Hungary',⁶ this specific part of Europe's transnational history has not been covered by historians. The Hainburg case has been extensively studied in Austria as a breaking point of Austria's environmental politics and as the factor of success for the Green party, which entered the parliament in 1986 with eight mandates.⁷ Seeking trajectories of transnationalism means creating a novel typology. Understanding transnationalism as a process of social as well as institutional networking, based on common ideas and a collective identity, requires environmental actors to be analysed in both their campaigns and in their self-image. This paper illuminates a part of transnational history that presents an Iron Curtain with eyes, ears and even openings to both sides. Before we take a closer look at the transnational activities of environmentalists, it is necessary to follow back the different trajectories of our actors: Where did they come from? How did they find each other, what motifs kept them together and which organisational character did they establish? For this, we need to outline the major discursive developments and context of environmentalism on the eve of Hungary's transformation. In the next step, we seek to find common ground on analysing tendencies

4 Donatella Della Porta and Manuela Caiani, *Social Movements and Europeanization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)

5 John Fitzmaurice, *Damming the Danube. Gabčíkovo and Post-Communist Politics in Europe* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1998).

6 Szabina Kerényi and Maté Szabó, 'Transnational influences on patterns of mobilisation within environmental movements in Hungary', *Environmental Politics* 15 (2006): 803–20.

7 Ortrun Veichtlbauer, ETA: Environmental History Timeline Austria. Zeittafel zur Umweltgeschichte Österreichs seit 1945 (2007) Online: <http://www.umweltgeschichte.aau.at/index,3191,Links.html> (accessed 29 Sept. 2017).

of transnationalism, in order to identify the cross-border dimensions of environmentalists in Hungary and their fellows in neighbouring countries. By focusing on the Hainburg case in Austria and its approximate equivalent in Hungary (GNV), we then get a more differentiated picture of their gradually growing cross-border activities beyond the Iron Curtain.

A discursive history of dissidence

There is no way of speaking of opposition to the communist regime in Hungary without mentioning the uprising of 1956. The experience of success after joining forces against the regime but meeting Soviet tanks and merciless repression afterwards has deeply influenced the memory of Hungarian dissidents. In the following years Hungarian society and the regime were living under restricted circumstances.⁸ According to the author and historian György Dalos, most of the activists of the uprising in 1956 who stayed in Hungary preferred to stay calm afterwards. Dalos was charged in 1968 due to 'subversive activities' and was banned from publishing his works.⁹ What was left from the once strong and strategically working movement of dissidents and reformers 'was of a symbolic, cultural, discursive, and communicative character', as Maté Szabó puts it.¹⁰ Open protests like marches or blockades were avoided and only used by small radical groups. 'The main bulk of the protest was dissident intellectuals produced critical essays, poems, and analysis, which were then censored and publicly criticised by partisans of the regime'.¹¹ Some of them were canalising their thoughts in philosophical discourses, like the students and colleagues of György Lukács, who formed the Marxist critical, so-called 'Budapest School'.¹² Broad criticism rather

8 György Dalos, 'Ungarn: Die intellektuelle Formierung der Opposition seit den 1970er Jahren', in Hans-Joachim Veen, Ulrich Mähler and Peter März (eds), *Wechselwirkungen Ost-West. Dissidenz, Opposition und Zivilgesellschaft 1975–1989* (Köln/Weimar/Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 2007), pp. 61–64, here p. 61.

9 Alfrun Kliems, 'Der Dissens und seine Literatur. Die kulturelle Resistenz im Inland', in Eva Behring, Alfrun Kliems and Hans-Christian Trepte (eds), *Grundbegriffe und Autoren ostmittel-europäischer Exilliteraturen 1945–1989. Ein Beitrag zur Systematisierung und Typologisierung*. Vol. 20 'Forschungen zur Geschichte und Kultur des Östlichen Mitteleuropa' (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2004), pp. 203–84, here p. 265.

10 Maté Szabó, 'Hungary', in Martin Klimke and / Joachim Scharloth (eds), *1968 in Europe. A History of Protest and Activism, 1956–1977* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 209–18, here p. 214.

11 Szabó, 'Hungary', p. 214.

12 Dalos, 'Ungarn', p. 61.

Wetlands of Protest

found new ways in culture, with a growing youth subculture following a Western lifestyle and cultural orientation.¹³ To give two examples: one of the dissident art groups in Budapest was called *Inconnu*. With exhibitions such as 'The Fighting Cities' (1986) it commemorated the uprising in 1956. The censorship system confiscated the collected paintings of the group and observed their activities.¹⁴ In the field of music, the members of the punk-rock group *Coitus* were sentenced to two years in jail. Szabó states that, in comparison to other Warsaw Pact countries, Hungary was 'relatively open to outside influences'¹⁵. One explanation for this is the high number of ethnic Hungarians living in Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia, producing and consuming media and books in Hungarian. Furthermore, it was easier to travel to these countries than to travel to the West. The BBC, Radio Free Europe or the Voice of America, which were broadcasting in Hungarian, fostered access to dissent and protest against the communist regime and strongly influenced the transnational relations of Hungarians. According to Szabó, the student protest of 1968 in Eastern Europe influenced the Hungarian public much less than conflicts and protest within the Eastern Bloc.¹⁶ 'All in all, people in Hungary could reach a wide range of official and unofficial sources of information', Szabó concludes.¹⁷ 'By around 1985, the regime had begun to lose the support, not only of old "dissidents" but also of previously loyal intellectuals and technocrats',¹⁸ John Fitzmaurice points out:

Much of this evolution was subterranean. It was not easily visible behind the unchanging façade of communist power. Indeed, this low-key, patchy barely visible development was inherent in the new post-1968 generation of activists all over Central Europe and certainly in Hungary and Czechoslovakia.¹⁹

On the diplomatic stage Austria and Hungary have been considered a role-model for the friendly relationship between two neighbour countries with different societal and political systems.²⁰ Due to the visa stop Austrians

13 Ibid.

14 Derek Jones (ed.), *Censorship: A World Encyclopedia*, Vol 1–4 (New York: Routledge, 2001).

15 Szabó, 'Hungary', p. 214.

16 Ibid., p. 215.

17 Ibid.

18 Fitzmaurice, *Damming the Danube*, p. 49.

19 Ibid., p. 44.

20 Maximilian Graf, 'Eine neue Geschichte des "Falls" des Eisernen Vorhanges', in Andrassy Universität Budapest (ed.), *Jahrbuch für Mitteleuropäische Studien* 2014/2015 (Vienna: new academic press, 2016), pp. 347–72, here p. 354.

have been able to travel to Hungary since 1979.²¹ This liberalisation offered activists and politicians the chance to visit the neighbour country's protest events. 'In fact, Vienna and Budapest like to describe their relations as a "model" for East-West cooperation', Radio Free Europe reported in 1986. 'Ironically enough, it is precisely this context of a good atmosphere, visa-free travel, and the rest that has facilitated the concerted action of Austrian and Hungarian environmentalists ...'²² Increasing contacts and networks beyond the Iron Curtain also favoured solidarity between the countries. During these years *Samizdat* and *Tamizdat* established a small and elite European public with a strong belief in the need of a transnational solidarity and civil society. One main discourse of intellectuals in both Eastern and Western Europe was the concept of Central Europe.²³ Emil Brix called Central Europe an 'identity container'.²⁴ 'The idea of a distinct Central European region had from the very beginning much to do with the wish to create a political perspective that was neither distinctly East nor West (Isván Bibó, Jenő Szűcs).'²⁵ By re-imagining an 'imaginary cultural landscape'²⁶ the intellectuals questioned the bloc-system. Their dialogues established a counter public space which tried to overcome the 'mental map of Cold War'.²⁷ Civil society actors such as the activists of *Duna Kör* contributed to this by organising transnational campaigns, knowledge transfer and the establishment of a collective 'green' identity.

Being 'Green' in Hungary: Between co-existence and subversion

Based on this short contextualisation, which seeks to strengthen the understanding of external influences and the reality of civil society actors on the

21 Ibid., p. 353.

22 Herbert Reed, 'Hungarian "Greens" petition Austrian parliament', in Radio Free Europe, *RAD Background Report* 96, 11 July 1986, pp.1–4.

23 Ibid.

24 Emil Brix, 'Austria and Central Europe', in Günter Bischof, Fritz Plasser, Anton Pelinka and Alexander Smith (eds), *Global Austria. Austria's Place in Europe and the World*. Contemporary Austrian Studies Vol. 20 (New Orleans: University of New Orleans Press, 2011), pp. 201–11, here p. 202.

25 Ibid., p. 203.

26 Ibid., p. 210.

27 Jan C. Berends and Frederike Kind 'Vom Untergrund in den Westen. Samizdat, Tamizdat und die Neuerfindung Mitteleuropas in den Achtzigerjahren', *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 45 (2005): 427–78, here 437.

Wetlands of Protest

eve of Hungary's system transformation, we will particularly focus on the evolution of 'green' ideas. The development of a 'green' or environmental movement in the first half of the 1980s in Hungary was surprising not only for the Hungarian regime, but also for international observers.²⁸ Hungarian environmentalists were considered as pioneers of public disagreement against the authoritarian regime of János Kádár. During the 1980s they developed to be a powerful single-issue movement, which consisted of scientists, engineers and intellectuals in the beginning. By protesting against GNV, they established a gravity centre for different oppositional powers like no other social movement in the Soviet bloc had done before. 'It was this issue that brought oppositional ideas and strategies together with citizens' involvement for the first time on a scale that demanded political reaction from the Party leadership', Kerényi and Szabó state.²⁹ To understand the movement's special role in the course of protests against the communist regime it is crucial to outline the preliminary activities for nature conservation as well as the possibilities and boundaries of civil engagement. The Kádár regime tolerated civil engagement in nature conservation to a certain extent. Some groups and initiatives were supported by the regime as long as they would submit regular reports and schemes of activities. Since 1972 the Hungarian People's Front (HNF) has officially called the 'Conservation of Environment' a part of its tasks. Approximately 600 people have worked in the respective boards throughout Hungary for environmental affairs.³⁰ In the late 1970s the Communist Youth Association (KISZ) decided to get active in the conservation of environment. The members created activities such as tree planting, summer camps and courses trying to raise awareness among the youth. With the Youth Council of Environment (IKT) KISZ built up a board of young experts, addressing people via small awareness campaigns in the media. However, when the critics against the GNV got louder, IKT was not able to make an official statement against the dam project.³¹ Today's still existing Clean Air Action Group (CAAG) has its roots in the early 1980s as well. Before the non-profit environmental or-

28 See, among others, N.N., 'Klippen und Schwellen', *Der Spiegel* 51 (1984): 122–23.

29 Kerényi and Szabó, 'Transnational influences on patterns of mobilisation', p. 806.

30 Hubertus Knabe, *Umweltkonflikte im Sozialismus. Möglichkeiten und Grenzen gesellschaftlicher Problemartikulation in sozialistischen Systemen. Eine vergleichende Analyse der Umweltdiskussion in der DDR und Ungarn* Vol. 49, Bibliothek Wissenschaft und Politik (Köln: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1993), p. 159.

31 Knabe *Umweltkonflikte im Sozialismus*, pp. 166–67.

ganisation was founded in 1988 its members were active mainly in three different groups: the Club of Conservationists of the ELTE University, the Green Circle of the Budapest Technical University (BME) and the Group of Esperantists for Nature Protection. András Lukács, the founder and leader of CAAG, came from the latter group. Lukács and the group participated in the demonstrations of *Duna Kör*, but 'decided not to get involved' at the very beginning, Lukács says in an interview.³² Till 1988 it was almost impossible to establish an association for environmental issues.³³ It was easier to found a '*Klub*' or '*Kör*'. These groups were not allowed to create a bank account and had to have ties to an organisation or institution, such as a student dormitory, university or cultural organisation. The rising number of clubs and circles showed an increasing interest in the environment in the first half of the 1980s.³⁴ Although there were different green groups to cooperate with, 'all wanted to keep their absolute independence from everybody and everything, even from one another, allying only on specific issues when necessity demanded it', Barbara Jancar-Webster reported in her study. The ELTE Club of Conservationists, which was one of the oldest unofficial organisations, served as a centre and information point in this fluid network of 'Greens'. Not only was cooperation within the local network difficult, but also that with Greens in other Eastern European countries. With 'Greenway' the ELTE Club started an English-language newsletter which reported on activities of activists. Later on, the *Danube Movement* tried to set up a stronger network – without success.³⁵

Seeking trajectories of transnationalism

When analysing actor's common ideas and self-image, campaigns offer a useful subject of interest. In 2002 Christian Lahusen tried to create a typology for analysing transnational protest forms. He recommended using the characteristics of campaigns. According to him campaigns are planned, and prepared sets of communication activities aiming to achieve or prevent a change of attitudes, behaviour or decisions. Furthermore, with campaigns

32 Interview with András Lukács, July 2017. Archive of the author.

33 Knabe, *Umweltkonflikte im Sozialismus*, pp. 168–69.

34 Ibid.

35 Barbara Jancar-Webster, 'The East European environmental movement and the transformation of East European society', in Jancar-Webster (ed.), *Environmental Action in Eastern Europe. Responses to Crisis* (New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 192–219.

Wetlands of Protest

one aims to convince a certain group of people. Summing up, campaigns can be analysed by the scale, the planning, the defined goals and addressees.³⁶ To analyse the cross-border cooperation of *Duna Kör* and its foreign partners, we will focus on typological questions that seek to identify the main actors and their interactions, their preparations and planning as well as the means and goals of their campaigns including dimensions, perception, ideology and identification in regard to Della Porta and Caiani's idea of 'Europeanization from below'. Della Porta and Caiani, who studied social movements and their influences on creating a European public, see an enormous potential in transnational activism:

During transnational campaigns activists begin to identify themselves as part of a European or even a global subject. Action in transnational networks also enables the construction of transnational identities through the recognition of similarities across countries.³⁷

Based on the hypothesis that the Austrian and Hungarian environmentalists contributed to the establishment of a common public sphere by their cross-border cooperation, the following section seeks to answer some of the questions posed earlier.

Wetlands of protest: The cases of Hainburg and Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros

Europe's second-longest river flows 2,888 kilometres from its source in the German Black Forest to its delta in the Black Sea and passes through ten countries, irrespective of political borders. Of all European rivers it was the Danube that created a basis for conflicts in Central Europe in the 1980s. The two hydro-electric dam projects that led to the Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros and Hainburg cases raised economic, political and environmental questions. This was not only in Austria, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, but also in other countries of the Western and Eastern Blocs. GNV and Hainburg became historical milestones of civil engagement, political opposition and transnational protest. When Czechoslovakia and Hungary agreed on the project in 1977, damming this section of the Danube had already been discussed for decades.³⁸ Hydro-electric dams were considered an industrial investment by

36 Christian Lahusen, 'Transnationale Kampagnen Sozialer Bewegungen. Grundzüge einer Typologie', *Forschungsjournal Neue Soziale Bewegung* 15 (1) (2002): 40.

37 Della Porta and Caiani, *Social Movements and Europeanization*, p. 162.

38 Fitzmaurice, *Damming the Danube*, p. 3.

the communist system. 'Big mega-projects ... were an advertisement of the building of the communist industrialisation', János Vargha says. Before becoming an activist and founding member of *Duna Kör* in 1984 the biologist worked as an environmental journalist and collected information about damming projects of the communist regime.³⁹ Not only did its vast size generate huge environmental concerns, but the fact that 140 kilometres of the Danube form a natural border between Czechoslovakia and Hungary also increased the complexity of the GNV controversy. Opposing this project the so-called *Danube Movement* was formed. It consisted of the three main groups: *Duna Kör*, the *Dunáért Alapítvány* (Foundation for the Danube), and *Kékek* (Blues). The *Duna Kör* with Janos Vargha as its most prominent face led the single-issue movement. The critics of GNV reach back much further, though, than the founding of the *Danube Movement*. 'I think that all the environmental movement activities have a history of criticism from scientists and engineers', Vargha says. Among the critical voices were the engineers Mihael Erdelyi, György Hábel and István Molnár, as well as the architect and urbanist Károly Perczel, who, among others, had published critical articles as early as the 1970s.⁴⁰ Even top-ranked scientists criticised the project plans. According to Vargha, Sándor Szalai, a renowned professor of sociology and member of the presidium of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, criticised it behind the scenes.⁴¹ Nevertheless, no group other than *Duna Kör* could mobilise more people to openly disagree. The committee of *Duna Kör* consisted of two biologists, Béla Borsos and Vargha (who was then working as a journalist), András Szekfű, sociologist, and László Vit, who was working as an engineer. Recruitment worked via letters of recommendation from an existing member.⁴² The difficulty of reconstructing the preparation and planning activities of civil actors in the 1980s is due to the nature of underground activism. The German historian, Hubertus Knabe was one of the few scientists who tried to reconstruct the rapidly changing landscape of environmentalists during Hungary's transformation period. He set one main starting point of the *Danube Movement* in January 1984, when opponents of the GNV met in *Rakpárt Klub* in Budapest. Back then it was considered the

39 Interview with János Vargha by the author, Budapest 2017. Archive of the author.

40 Vargha Interview, 2017. Also Perczel Károly (ed.), *A bős-nagymarosi vízlépcső regionális terve (háttér tanulmányokkal)* (Budapest: VÁTI, 1978).

41 Vargha Interview, 2017.

42 Article by János Vargha and Béla Borsos, 'Duna Kör', 30. Nov 1988. In: OSA 205–4–140 Box 37.

Wetlands of Protest

headquarters of the HNF.⁴³ About fifty people remained there after the official event ended. Vargha remembers the foundation of the 'Danube committee' on that evening with the simple words: 'Somebody said, we should do something'.⁴⁴ Some of them went to the private apartment of Ferenc Langmár and discussed what could be done next against GNV. Further public debates were organised, at the BME and at the Karl Marx University (now known as Corvinus University). The young journalist Ádám Csillag, who later produced the documentary '*Dunaszaurus*' dealing with the GNV, attended these very first debates by invitation of Anna Perczel, daughter of the architect and GNV critic Károly Perczel. He also recorded them. Besides the university groups, the Association of Hungarian Writers was also hosting a debate.⁴⁵ First as '*Független Duna Kör*' and later as '*Duna Kör*' the group set several protest activities against the GNV. One of the first was a petition that was handed over to the Hungarian National Assembly and the government, demanding that construction stop. The petition was printed and distributed together with some background information on the risks of the project. In this edition of *Vizjel*, published on 2 October 1986 the activists warn against severe damage to the drinking-water supply and to agriculture, and other risks for the local population. Calling the halting of the construction a 'matter of life' they consider their demands legitimate through being 'common interests' of all the people who live along the Danube.⁴⁶ According to Knabe, the committee increased to 300 members within a few months. Subsequently they tried to become an association, which would have had to be officially connected with the National Office for Environmental Protection and Nature Conservation (OKTH). Although they negotiated for a long time, they could not succeed. Besides Knabe's study, the highly-active agent network of the Hungarian State Security provides insights; the content of the reports needs to be interpreted with critical distance though. Starting in the early 1980s, State Security regularly observed members of *Duna Kör*. Starting with reports on the activities of 'a group, which is against the Gabčíkovo Vízlépcső, the agents reported on a core group of about 160 members. 'Thirty are very active' and 'consistently well-trained', a report said. János Vargha was called a leading 'propagandist'.

43 See also Vargha Interview, 2017.

44 Ibid.

45 Cf. Vargha Interview, 2017. Remark: the BME discussion was restricted to being video recorded by the rector of the university. According to Vargha, Csillag recorded the sound in secret, though.

46 See Knabe, *Umweltkonflikte im Sozialismus*, pp. 187–88.

Together with the engineer Langmár and the lawyer László Sólyom he would spend most of his income on keeping in touch with foreign contacts, traveling abroad and smuggling out propaganda material.⁴⁷ According to an agent called 'László János', mistrust towards new members and inner conflicts about the goals, the means and the self-image of the group dominated the discussions of *Duna Kör*. Another report says that some of the core members didn't want to cross legal boundaries. Vargha was criticised for approaching the members of *Charta 77* and for not being a 'good leader'.⁴⁸ The 'radical wing' wanted to use the Hainburg case 'for taking further actions'. As far as we know from these reports, the group organised a personal meeting and went to Vienna and Hainburg. To get in touch with Hainburg activists they would ask an Austrian journalist to accompany them. According to 'László', they wanted to study the movement in order to find out how environmentalists could act through parliament and institutions.⁴⁹ 'We wanted to call the attention [of the Austrian environmentalists] to the problem, that after they stop Hainburg, the Donaukraftwerke [Österreichische Donaukraftwerke AG] will do the same thing just 200 km downstream', Vargha remembers. As main contacts the *Duna Kör* leader mentions, among others, Peter Weish, who made the famous speech 'The spirit of Hainburg', and Günter Schobesberger, as well as the two famous leading activists Freda Meissner-Blau and Günther Nenning.⁵⁰ Born in Upper Austria, the biologist Günter Schobesberger had a house in Hainburg, close to the area that was occupied by activists in December 1984. Schobesberger's name was mentioned in an article in the Hungarian newspaper *Magyar Hírlap*, where he was called a 'sympathiser of Duna Kör'.⁵¹ The author and journalist Günther Nenning, who was expelled from the Austrian Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) in 1985, was a famous voice of the protest and wrote a text for the infamous protest group *Konrad-Lorenz-Volksbegehren*. In 1984 the group criticised the Austrian

47 See report of Budapest Police Headquarters (BRFK), in Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára (ÁBTTL), Budapest, BRFK III/III-A do. TMB, 'László János' H-70490 I. p. 8.

48 See daily operational information reports (Napi operatív információs jelentés) in ÁBTTL 2.7.1. NOIJ-III/3-2/1/1985.I.14.

49 Ibid.

50 Vargha Interview, 2017.

51 N.N., MUK – mondja a Dunakör. In: Magyar Hírlap, vom 11.2.1991, n. p., In: OSA 205–4–140, Box 37, 'Egyesületek, D' Duna Kör 1987–1991', In OSA 205–4–140, Box 37. Original quote: 'Ezt követően rendőri biztosítás mellett a Dunakör tagjai és szimpatizánsai elsétáltak a Margitszigetre, ahol Günter Schobesberger osztrák környezetvédő buzdította a tüntetőket, hogy továbbra is harcoljanak környezetük védelméért.'

Wetlands of Protest

water plant and ran a petition with 353,000 signatures.⁵² The Austrian Student Union (ÖH) extensively mobilised students against Hainburg. Nevertheless, the campaign '*Rettet die Au*' (Save the wetland) was started in 1983 by the Austrian section of WWF, which later changed its name into World Wide Fund for Nature. Founded in 1967 the Austrian section of WWF was also one of the main NGOs that supported Hungarian environmentalists. In 1987 they financed a bilingual brochure that was presented simultaneously at two press conferences in Vienna and Budapest.⁵³ *Duna Kör*'s tendencies towards transnationalisation increased when it was revealed that Hungary had started to negotiate with Austria about financing the dam project in 1983. Austria agreed to finance the project in 1986.⁵⁴ In 1987 *Duna Kör* launched a petition, which they handed over to the Austrian '*Nationalrat*'. Günter Schobesberger said to Radio Free Europe:

Under Austrian law, any petition by private persons, organizations, or pressure groups, if endorsed by a member of parliament, will be submitted to the National Assembly, which then has to consider it. This applies to Hungarian citizens as well. So if private persons or environmentalist groups in Hungary object to Austria's financing of the Nagymaros project, they should lodge a protest with the Austrian parliament ... I guarantee you that we shall forward their petition through a friendly member of parliament to the parliament.⁵⁵

Duna Kör members used several occasions to network with environmentalists abroad. Although Hungarians enjoyed greater freedom to travel abroad compared with citizens of other communist countries, the authorities did not always allow them to leave the country. In 1985, when the famous conference on Global Warming took place in Villach (AT), the GNV opponent Judit Vásárhelyi was not granted permission to travel to Austria.⁵⁶ When *Duna Kör* received the 'Right Livelihood Award', known as the Swedish Alternative Nobel Prize, Vargha was allowed to go to Stockholm in order to receive the award in the name of the group. Afterwards they underwent several difficulties in getting paid the prize of 25,000 US Dollars. *Duna Kör* was awarded the Right Livelihood Award in 1985, but it took until 1987

52 Veichtblauer, ETA: Environmental History Timeline Austria.

53 Vargha Interview, 2017.

54 Austrian Federal Audit Office, 'Wahrnehmungsbericht des Rechnungshofes über die Österreichische Donaukraftwerke AG', series Burgenland 1995/1 (Z1 01000/371-Pr/6/95), (Vienna: Österreichische Staatsdruckerei, 1995).

55 Herbert Reed, 'Hungarian "Greens" petition Austrian parliament'.

56 Vargha Interview, 2017.

to find a way of receiving the prize. In the end twelve members altogether received the money in separate portions, paid in Hungarian currency. With this money they established a foundation, the *Dunáért Alapítvány* (Foundation for the Danube), printed further information material (especially the anthology *Duna. Egy antológia*, published in 1988) and financed an international conference, which took place from 2–6 September 1990.⁵⁷ ‘The foundation will assist private citizens or movements who wish to perform acts towards the preservation of ecology, environment or nature with particular regard to the Danube’, the activists wrote in a statement.⁵⁸ As we can see from the reports of the State Security in 1984 and 1985, the activists of *Duna Kör* were highly interested in getting in touch with the activists of Hainburg. Besides that, they also tried to get to know the Czech position on the water plant. One of the goals was to win over members of the Hungarian parliament, but also to approach the Czech government. In addition, the activists wanted to build up cooperation with environmentalists in Bratislava and Austria, an agent’s report says.⁵⁹ Not being forced into underground work, the Austrian environmentalists could much more easily establish their movement against the Danube dam. Whereas Hungarian environmentalists were trying to obtain the status of an NGO, the Austrians could build upon an existing network of groups, established NGOs as well as politicians and scientists. In 1971 the international environmentalist association Friends of the Earth (FoE), which was represented in seventy countries, was founded. In 1982 Global 2000 joined FoE as the Austrian member of the association.⁶⁰ Next to ÖH and WWF, Global 2000 played an essential role in the Hainburg movement. In the same year the *Vereinten Grünen Österreich* (VGÖ), who later changed their name to *Die Grünen* registered as Austria’s first Green party.⁶¹ With Greenpeace International having been founded in 1970, *Greenpeace Österreich* followed in 1983.⁶² As we can see from this development, Austrian environmentalists were already acting in an institutionalised and transnationally operating framework. Taking a comparative look at the means of campaigning, it seems that the Hungarian environmentalists were

57 Ibid.

58 György Krassó, Hungarian October Information Centre, Vol 74. London 1987. In OSA 205–4–140 Box 37.

59 Ibid.

60 Veichtlbauer, Environmental History Timeline Austria.

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid.

Wetlands of Protest

imitating the protest against Hainburg. Both movements considered media as their most important communication channels to mobilise and inform the public. Press conferences, advertisements and close contact with journalists were essential to their campaign work. The campaign was addressing not only the Hungarian public, but also that of Austria. In January 1986 *Duna Kör* members organised a common press conference together with Greens from Austria and Western Germany. As the location they chose the *Zöldfa étterem* (Green Tree) restaurant in Budapest. 'We tried to inform the public worldwide', Vargha says.⁶³ In February 1986 *Duna Kör* organised, together with Austrian environmentalists, what they called an educational tour in Budapest. At the last minute, police prevented them from meeting. Radio Free Europe reported that, before this 'Danube Walk' took place, 22 'prominent Austrian and Hungarian figures' had met on 18 January 1986. They issued a statement saying that they 'want to use all the democratic, peaceful, and constitutional possibilities to dissuade the governments from their intent and make them respect the true interests of all Danubian peoples'.⁶⁴ A few months later, on 16 April, they published a big advertisement in the Austrian newspaper *Die Presse* costing, according to Vargha, 'a lot of money'. The activists called on people to protest in Austria and express solidarity with Hungarian environmentalists. Among the signatories of the call were thirty prominent Hungarians including dissidents, artists and sportsmen. 'This advertisement was a striking illustration of the extraordinarily close cooperation that has developed between the Hungarian and Austrian opponents of the Nagymaros Dam', a Radio Free Europe reporter stated. According to the article, the costs of this advertisement were covered by donations collected by the Austrian 'Friends of the Danube'.⁶⁵ Speaking of transnational relations with Austrian environmentalists, Vargha today identifies several similarities. 'We had the same approach', he says. 'The critics were similar, also scientifically. We and they used all the options we had.' Although, the protest movement was criticising the socialist system, comparing the cases in Hungary and Austria convinced Vargha, that 'a change of system will not solve environmental issues'. 'We will only gain a democratic environment for debate.' He continues, 'Democracy does not mean that the interest of

63 Vargha Interview, 2017.

64 Reed, 'Hungarian "Greens" petition Austrian parliament', 1–4.

65 Ibid.

weak entities [rivers] will be represented.’⁶⁶ The development of a green transnational movement made international observers such as Radio Free Europe more enthusiastic. ‘Come what may, transborder cooperation between environmentalists and the personal contacts that have developed during the Nagymaros controversy remain; and there will almost certainly also be other issues, particularly in this post-Chernobyl age, to attract their attention’,⁶⁷ a background report said. Vargha explains the successful mobilisation against the dam in terms of its original non-political nature. Whereas the Green movements in western countries protested excessively against nuclear power, both Hungarian scientists and civil actors stayed calm. ‘Because this was the hottest issue (one of the hottest)’, Vargha says. ‘But the Danube issue was less political, much less political. It had no any direct connection with the military issues.’⁶⁸ Apparently, the collective memory of Soviet tanks in Budapest was playing an influential part in protest culture even three decades after 1956.



Seeking trajectories of transnationalism among Austrian and Hungarian environmentalists means not only a methodical challenge for historical research, but also a permanent perspective change. This study has tried to analyse cross-border activism between opponents of the GNV in Hungary and the activists of the Hainburg movement in Austria. By following the means of campaigning, personal networks and organisational boundaries, a short insight has been given into transnational activities, such as demonstrations, press conferences, scientific conferences and informal meetings. Based on State Security reports, previous research and interviews, the study could reconstruct an active network of environmentalists in the 1980s which had its foundation in previous scientific but not openly vocal critics. Knowledge transfer and common campaigning were the main aspects of the cross-border interaction, but financial aid from abroad also played an important role. At this point of research, it seems that the Hungarian side was mostly the ‘receiving’ part of this relation. Nevertheless, the activists in Hungary and Austria shared the idea of being Danubiens. As inhabitants of this common landscape along

66 Vargha Interview, 2017.

67 Reed, ‘Hungarian “Greens” petition Austrian parliament’.

68 Vargha Interview, 2017.

Wetlands of Protest

the Central European River they wanted to protect nature from the damages inflicted by mega dam projects. When Austria showed interest in financing the GNV the transnationalisation was further legitimised. In following the same goals and fostering a transnational understanding of nature protection and human responsibility, activists such as the members of *Duna Kör* tried to build up a common public space beyond the Iron Curtain. Contrary to intellectual and dissident dialogue via *Samizdat* and *Tamizdat*, the activists of *Duna Kör* opened the discourse for a broader public and addressed both local and foreign media. Their activities consisted of common demonstrations, bilingual publications and conferences. As Donatella Della Porta described it years later in the context of 'Europeanization from below', the transnational campaign against GNV enabled 'the construction of transnational identities through the recognition of similarities across countries'.⁶⁹ Furthermore the activists shaped the dissidents' intellectual ideas of cooperation and solidarity into a dynamic and active social movement beyond the Iron Curtain – a Central Europe from below. Whereas we could identify some similarities between the activists in the West and East, *Duna Kör* needed to overcome quite different barriers in terms of freedom of opinion, professionalisation and institutionalisation than Austrian environmentalists did. Comparing the different political systems – hence spaces of opportunity – as well as the experiences of repression that shaped the collective memory of dissidents and civil actors, the establishment of a transnational network seems even more surprising and worth investigating further. This paper gave insights into a complex but fruitful transnational interaction of environmentalists in Central Europe. Further research related to the abovementioned questions concerning actors, movements and their interactions is needed, though, in order to create a more comprehensive typology.

69 Della Porta and Caiani, *Social Movements and Europeanization*, p. 162.

CHAPTER 7.

TOWARDS A 'EUROPE OF STRUGGLES'? THREE VISIONS OF EUROPE IN THE EARLY ANTI-NUCLEAR ENERGY MOVEMENT 1975–79

Andrew Tompkins

The opposition to nuclear energy in the 1970s was a transnational phenomenon that connected activists from the United States and Japan to counterparts in the United Kingdom, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Italy, Spain, Austria, Switzerland, Sweden, Denmark and, perhaps most visibly, West Germany and France. The preponderance of European countries in these protest networks was no accident: while some have identified important 'American' roots in environmentalism globally,¹ it was within Western Europe that opposition to nuclear energy proved most widespread, contentious and durable.

At first glance, one might therefore plausibly assume that the movement had a consciously 'European' character. After all, Brussels-based institutions were early allies for some environmentalists, supporting the creation of the European Environmental Bureau and even a series of 'Open Discussions on Nuclear Energy' in 1977–78.² In West Germany – often regarded as an environmental leader³ – well-known campaigners like Petra Kelly openly professed hopes that anti-nuclear protest would foster European internationalism.⁴ And beginning with the first direct elections in 1979, the European Parliament would welcome a succession of anti-nuclear campaigners associated with local struggles in places like Flamanville (Didier Anger), Fessenheim (Solange Fernex) and Gorleben (Rebecca Harms). Yet, as this chapter will show on the basis of examples from France and West Germany, the grassroots of the broad and vigorous anti-nuclear movement of the years 1975–79 had a much more

1 J. Radkau, *Die Ära der Ökologie. Eine Weltgeschichte* (München: C.H. Beck, 2011).

2 J.-H. Meyer, 'Challenging the atomic community: The European Environmental Bureau and the Europeanization of anti-nuclear protest', in W. Kaiser and J.-H. Meyer (eds), *Societal Actors in European Integration* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 197–220.

3 F. Uekötter, *The Greenest Nation? A New History of German Environmentalism* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014).

4 S. Milder, 'Thinking globally, acting (trans-)locally: Petra Kelly and the transnational roots of West German Green politics', *Central European History* 43 (2) (2010): 301–326.

Towards a 'Europe of Struggles'?

ambivalent or even antagonistic relationship with Europe and its institutions, with activists rarely even describing their movement as 'European'.

While this might seem surprising from today's perspective, it is less so when one considers the nature of the anti-nuclear movement – and of Europe – in the 1970s. The early anti-nuclear movement was anchored in place-based opposition to specific nuclear facilities, the latter usually planned with state backing. Protest crystallised within 'directly affected' local communities, which forged informal networks with nearby sympathisers and with distant initiatives at other nuclear sites – including abroad. These local struggles tapped into a large reservoir of protest potential that had spread throughout rural areas, university towns and major cities since the late 1960s, and which increasingly tended toward direct action forms of protest. They were also strengthened by nascent environmentalist organisations such as Les Amis de la Terre (ADLT) and umbrella groups like the Bundesverband Bürger-initiativen Umweltschutz (BBU). Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as these, though, were much weaker in the 1970s than today and served primarily to facilitate communication through informal networks rather than to centrally coordinate action via hierarchical structures.⁵ Though European and other international institutions can sometimes help transnational social movements to circumvent domestic political blockages, activists have often preferred to challenge Europe-wide policies within familiar, nation-state channels.⁶ Even for more recent movements that have 'Europeanised', Brussels has been far more receptive to the lobbying of professionalised NGOs than to contentious forms of protest by decentralised actors.⁷

The loosely structured nature of the early anti-nuclear movement's transnational networks is apparent in an appeal launched for an 'International day of action against nuclear energy' to take place over Pentecost 1979.⁸ Drafters of the appeal included not only ADLT, BBU and other national committees from Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Sweden, but also regional groups from the Basque country, Cataluña, Flanders and Schleswig-Holstein, as well as local groups from Belfort, Cattenom, Limoges,

5 D. Nelkin and M. Pollak, *The Atom Besieged: Extraparliamentary Dissent in France and Germany* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981), pp. 126–29.

6 D. Imig and S. Tarrow, *Contentious Europeans* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001).

7 P. Monforte, *Europeanizing Contention: The Protest against 'Fortress Europe' in France and Germany* (New York: Berghahn, 2014).

8 'Appel pour la journée internationale [sic] d'action contre l'énergie nucléaire' (Flyer, supplement to *alerte* no. 3), Feb./Mar. 1979, Lyon, La Gryffe, dossier 'Super-Pholix'.

Malville, Saarbrücken and Würzburg – some of them actually local chapters of ADLT or members of the BBU. Not only did representation thus overlap, but it could be difficult to distinguish between local, regional, national and international organisations, as in the case of the ‘Coordination Régionale-internationale contre la centrale nucléaire de Cattenom’. The joint appeal called for simultaneous demonstrations at a number of specific sites around Europe, but noted that these were ‘propositions to be confirmed, expanded, or restricted by the regional and national movements’. Tellingly, the appeal was framed firmly in ‘international’ rather than ‘European’ terms. Though twenty of the 28 signatories came from within the European Community and all but one from geographic Europe (a delegation from the Melbourne-based Movement against Uranium Mining), the text makes no mention whatsoever of ‘Europe’. When anti-nuclear protest boomed in the late 1970s, activists engaged in local struggles were happy to network across borders, but it is remarkable how seldom they referred to ‘Europe’ or its institutions in doing so. Their ‘international’ aspirations were often vague and rarely confined to the European subcontinent, much less to the European Community.

The rest of this article will examine three different understandings of ‘Europe’ articulated by nuclear energy opponents in the late 1970s. Europe was most frequently invoked within border regions, especially at protests in Alsace and Baden that attracted international attention around 1975. Activists there conceived of joint protest first as a counter-narrative of French-German reconciliation ‘from below’ (rather than among elites), and second as part of a trilateral ‘Dreyeckland’ that explicitly included non-EC member Switzerland. Another major site of cross-border anti-nuclear protest was in Creys-Malville (France), where a consortium of state-backed European energy companies known as NERSA collaborated to build a Fast Breeder Reactor (FBR). For many activists who participated in the ‘international’ demonstration held there in 1977, the Europe of NERSA was one of cross-border repression and technocratic collusion with big business. With the first direct elections to the European Parliament in 1979, different relationships to institutional Europe began to emerge, especially for those who went on to join Green parties. However, many grassroots activists continued to eschew institutions and to prefer informal politics: the ‘Europe of struggles’ to which activists from Gorleben (Germany) and the Larzac plateau (France) referred in a 1979 report was one manifestation of a persistent, extra-parliamentary form of environmentalism. In the long term, these movements would also serve as incubators for national and transnational solidarities that would

Towards a 'Europe of Struggles'?

re-assert themselves more visibly in the 1990s and 2000s within the Global Justice Movement.⁹

Three visions of Europe

Dreyeckland: Europe as post-war reconciliation

Within the anti-nuclear movement, 'European' ideas and narratives were usually most prominent near the continent's internal borders.¹⁰ Indeed, the earliest protests against nuclear energy took place in the borderlands of the Upper Rhine Valley, where French Alsace and German Baden meet at the Rhine River, which flows northward from Swiss Basel. As a border river, the Rhine could potentially provide cooling water for competing nuclear projects in all three neighbouring countries. France acted first, beginning construction on a nuclear power station in Fessenheim in 1971. This sparked the first significant protests against nuclear energy in Western Europe, drawing 1,000–1,500 participants for a non-violent, silent march to the gates of the future power plant on 12 April. The same year, the West German federal state of Baden-Württemberg and its energy company Badenwerk announced plans to build a reactor of their own on the Rhine at Breisach, which was later moved to Wyhl after 60,000 signed a petition opposing it. Another power station in Kaiseraugst, Switzerland, was also already planned.¹¹ Further power stations were expected to follow, with the French government alone naming potential sites up and down the river in Marckolsheim, Sundhouse, Gerstheim and Lauterbourg.¹² The nuclear projects were central to development plans intended to turn the region into

- 9 E. Rivat, 'The continuity of transnational protest: The anti-nuclear movement as a precursor to the global justice movement', in C.F. Fominaya and L. Cox (eds), *Understanding European Movements* (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 61–75; R. Gildea and A.S. Tompkins, 'The transnational in the local: The Larzac Plateau as a site of transnational activism since 1970', *Journal of Contemporary History* 50 (3) (2015): 581–605.
- 10 e.g. 'Internationale Zusammenarbeit gegen grenznahe Atomanlagen' (Flyer, 6 pp.), 1981, Berlin, PapierTiger, 'AKW - Westeuropa'.
- 11 P. Kupper, *Atomenergie und gespaltene Gesellschaft: Die Geschichte des gescheiterten Projektes Kernkraftwerk Kaiseraugst* (Zürich: Chronos, 2003).
- 12 Ministère de l'Industrie et de la Recherche, 'Localisation des centrales nucléaires' (Dossier, 40 pp.), November 1974, Paris, Bibliothèque de documentation internationale contemporaine, F Δ 1190. The inclusion of these sites did not necessarily mean that each was planned, only that they were among the options considered geographically suitable. Activists nevertheless were concerned that the entire region might be given away to nuclear energy infrastructure.

a 'showcase' industrial economy at the heart of Western Europe.¹³ However, protest throughout the region was to prove so intense that only the power station in Fessenheim was ever built. Opposition to environmental threats on different sides of this border proved mutually reinforcing and gave regional protests a transnational dimension.

The earliest protests took place in Alsace and were grounded in discourses of pacifism that resonated with certain conceptions of Europe as reconciliation between former enemies. However, in this classic region of 'national indifference',¹⁴ Alsatian activists emphasised locally specific forms of internationalism rather than European institutions. Esther Peter-Davis, one of the leaders of the 1971 Fessenheim march, was an Alsatian woman with international connections to the United States through her husband, Garry Davis, an American soldier who renounced his citizenship in 1948 and declared himself 'first citizen of the world'. Through her in-laws in New York,¹⁵ Esther met John Gofman, a biologist who supplied her and a circle of friends with reports about the dangers of nuclear energy, which they supplemented with further materials from French- and German-language publications to create a brochure about the issue that they distributed throughout Alsace.¹⁶ Jean-Jacques Rettig, who joined Esther at these early protests, was an Alsatian whose principled opposition to nuclear energy stemmed largely from a historically rooted opposition to militarism in a region swapped four times in 75 years between France and Germany. His family members had fought for different sides in different wars and his wife Inge was born German but later naturalised as a French citizen. All this led him to reject war and nationalism while simultaneously embracing regional identity.¹⁷ For Esther and Jean-Jacques as Alsations, opposition to nuclear energy was tied to a post-war peace project anchored in a regional vision of French-German reconciliation. Critically though, as Jean-Jacques puts it, this reconciliation was 'bottom-up' as well as 'top-down': 'It wasn't just

13 B. Nössler and M. de Witt (eds), *Kein Kernkraftwerk in Wyhl und auch sonst nirgends: Betroffene Bürger berichten* (Freiburg: Inform-Verlag, 1976), p. 257.

14 Tara Zahra, 'Imagined noncommunities: National indifference as a category of analysis', *Slavic Review* 69 (1) (2010): 93–119.

15 S. Milder, *Greening Democracy: The Anti-Nuclear Movement and Political Environmentalism in West Germany and beyond, 1968–1983* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 32–33.

16 Comité pour la Sauvegarde de Fessenheim et la plaine du Rhin, 'Fessenheim : vie ou mort de l'Alsace' (Brochure, 69 pp.), Feb. 1971, Saales, A. Tompkins private archives.

17 J.-J. Rettig, 'Eine persönliche Umweltgeschichte, Familiengeschichte und Regionalgeschichte im Elsass', 2007, [<http://www.bund-rvso.de/rettig-umweltgeschichte.html>] (accessed 10 Jan. 2020)].

Towards a 'Europe of Struggles'?

de Gaulle and Adenauer who shook hands, but the grassroots as well!'.¹⁸

By 1974, local environmentalist mobilisations began to bear fruit – not in Fessenheim itself, but in Marckolsheim, where a German company proposed building a chemical plant on the French side of the border (after having been refused the required permits at home). German activists were preparing in parallel for a fight over the nuclear power station in Wyhl, only ten kilometres from Marckolsheim but on the German side. Activists from Alsace and Baden thus decided to link the two struggles, with 21 groups issuing a joint declaration opposing both projects and threatening concerted action to oppose them. When construction equipment was brought to Marckolsheim in September 1974, activists quickly responded by occupying the construction site. They further anchored their protest in their opponents' space by building a 'friendship house' at which they held concerts and informational events, giving their illegal civil disobedience a festive character. After more than five months of site occupation, French authorities gave in to protesters' demands and withdrew authorisation for the chemical plant in late February 1975.

However, construction of the nuclear power station in Wyhl began almost simultaneously. Experiences in France provided a useful 'dress rehearsal' for the protests in West Germany that followed.¹⁹ Together, French and German activists occupied the Wyhl site on 18 February 1975. However, West German police were keen to prevent a repeat of the Marckolsheim protests and evicted the demonstrators only two days later. On 23 February, though, activists linked a mass rally attended by 28,000 people to a second, successful occupation attempt. Rotating in village-based teams, they kept the site occupied for almost nine months. Following the Marckolsheim model, they transformed the site by building another, even larger 'friendship house', in which they regularly hosted events to draw supportive crowds to the site. Authorities were forced to suspend construction temporarily over and over again until the project was ultimately abandoned.

This local transnationalism formed the basis for a compelling narrative of French-German reconciliation 'from below', cast in specifically regional terms. Activists played up their already significant cross-border cooperation at every

18 Jean-Jacques Rettig, Interview with the author, Fréconrupt (19 Apr. 2010).

19 Marie-Reine Haug and Raymond Schirmer, Joint interview with the author, Rammersmatt (17 Apr. 2010).

turn, consciously constructing a 'legend'²⁰ that invoked past national conflict in order to emphasise present-day grassroots reconciliation. They also borrowed liberally from the distant past in search of transnational symbols, seizing notably on the Peasant's War (*Deutscher Bauernkrieg*) of 1525 as a symbol of regional resistance to outside intervention.²¹ The sixteenth-century hero Jos Fritz became the pseudonym of choice for anti-nuclear activists as well as the namesake for a left-wing bookshop in nearby Freiburg. Activists also pointed to Baden's role in the revolutions of 1848 as a supposed precedent for the transnational protests of the 1970s. They thus deployed 'invented traditions' that appealed both to left-leaning students and to more conservative locals who chose to understand resistance as part of their local heritage.²² Such actions framed cross-border protest in regional rather than national terms.

However, this transnational framing rarely made reference to Europe. Indeed, the word 'Europe' and variations upon it appear rarely in two full-length books published in 1976 and 1982 by the local anti-nuclear initiatives to promote and explain their protests to a broader audience: there are only three passing references to European institutions (alongside 21 further references to geographical Europe). The books refer far more frequently to the regions of Baden and Alsace (178 and 154 occurrences, respectively).²³ Interestingly, the second book also makes frequent reference to 'Dreyeckland' (67 occurrences), a term invented in 1977 to describe the region that was home to the protests against Fessenheim (France), Wyhl (Germany) and Kaiseraugst (Switzerland).

An inversion of the usual term *Dreiländereck* (meaning the 'corner' or meeting point of three countries), the literal meaning of *Dreyeckland* ('the country of three corners') reified the region's supposed state of liminality and asserted authenticity through the use of Old German spelling (*drey* instead

20 P. Kenney, 'Opposition networks and transnational diffusion in the revolutions of 1989', in G.-R. Horn and P. Kenney (eds), *Transnational Moments of Change: Europe 1945, 1968, 1989* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), pp. 207–223, here pp. 210–11.

21 R. Kießling, 'Der Bauernkrieg', in E. François and H. Schulze (eds), *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte*, vol. 2 (München: C.H. Beck, 2001), pp. 137–153.

22 J. I. Engels, *Naturpolitik in der Bundesrepublik: Ideenwelt und politische Verhaltensstile in Naturschutz und Umweltbewegung 1950–1980* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2006), p. 358.

23 Ch. Büchele, et al., *Wyhl – Der Widerstand geht weiter. Der Bürgerprotest gegen das Kernkraftwerk von 1976 bis zum Mannheimer Prozess* (Freiburg: Dreisam-Verlag, 1982); Nössler and de Witt, *Kein KKW in Wyhl*. These counts exclude 92 references to Badenwerk (the name of a regional electricity supplier) as well as 94 references to the Badisch-Elsässische Bürgerinitiativen (the name of the local protest coalition of 21 groups).

Towards a 'Europe of Struggles'?

of *drei*). As a label, 'Dreyeckland' was applied liberally to cultural production as well as to political activism: it was a song by the Alsatian singer François Brumbt, the title of an album of local protest music and the namesake of a radio station (successor to the ecological pirate station Radio Verte Fessenheim). Dreyeckland was no conventional nation-state, and its defenders embraced the purely imagined, aspirational character of their community. As an article in the Wyhl squatters' newspaper *Was Wir Wollen* explained it, "Dreyeckland" doesn't exist; it is only an illusion. One cannot regard these three neighbouring corners of three European nation-states as something united, as one country (Baden, Alsace, Northwest Switzerland). Dreyeckland is the idea of a political and cultural unit, perhaps also a social unit.' The deeper meaning of this regional project revolved primarily around a desire for grassroots reconciliation between French and German citizens, gesturing to a broader (but still local) internationalism through the inclusion of Switzerland. As *Was Wir Wollen* went on to explain, Dreyeckland's unfulfilled potential was largely the product of persistent German mistreatment of Alsatians, as evidenced by the casual arrogance, militarism and even Nazi sympathies of contemporary Badeners out at the pub in Alsace.²⁴ Dreyeckland thus sought to overcome legacies of war by drawing on shared local experiences of cross-border protest.

While the utopian space of 'Dreyeckland' had greater resonance for activists than 'Europe' in the 1970s, this regional story of post-war reconciliation under environmentalist auspices is in some ways compatible with popular narratives of European integration as a peace-building process. It is thus unsurprising that these protests have taken on more European meaning in collective memory as EU institutions have taken on greater importance in citizens' lives. Axel Mayer was a young anti-nuclear activist in the 1970s who subsequently became the regional manager of an environmentalist organisation in Freiburg. Reflecting in 2010 on the protests in and around the region, he argued that protesters had articulated 'one of the first European visions'. Well before the Schengen Agreement and the Maastricht Treaty formally abolished certain border controls within Europe, activists themselves had broken down borders and challenged old divisions:

35 years before was the end of the war and there was always this story of the French-German hereditary hatred ... There was this phrase [in regional dialect]: '*Mir kejeje mol d'Granze üewer e Hüffe un tanze drum erum*', that is, 'We throw the border onto

24 R. Burkhart, 'Dreyeckland - Wo liegt das? Was soll das? Wer will das?', *Was Wir Wollen* 15-16 (1 Dec. 1977): 2-4.

Andrew Tompkins

a pile and dance around it'. ... In principle, it was the overpowering [or] overcoming of the border and a bit of living [*gelebtes*] 'Europe'.²⁵

In this sense, environmental protesters now see themselves as having advanced a cause that Europe's institutions subsequently embraced.

NERSA: Institutional Europe as the enemy

The positive transnational dynamic of anti-nuclear protest in Dreyeckland also had more ambiguous consequences for subsequent protests elsewhere. The successful site occupation in Wyhl led the West German state to go out of its way to frustrate other anti-nuclear occupations, leading to violent escalations in Brokdorf (November 1976) and Grohnde (March 1977). French authorities followed suit at protests in their own country, leading to fatal violence at a 1977 protest against the 'Superphénix' Fast Breeder Reactor in Creys-Malville.²⁶ This nuclear facility, to be constructed by the transnational consortium NERSA (*Centrale Nucléaire Européenne à neutrons Rapides, Société Anonyme*),²⁷ came to epitomise the Europe that anti-nuclear activists opposed. Protesters expressed alarm that FBR technology would produce plutonium, 'the most toxic substance man has ever made', which could then be mixed with depleted uranium to produce MOX fuel for conventional nuclear reactors – or simply used to build atomic weapons. They thus opposed Superphénix as the 'cornerstone of European nuclear programmes'.²⁸

NERSA itself upheld the Malville project as a paragon of European cooperation. Superphénix would distribute power to neighbouring countries and serve as prototype for another power station ('SNR-2') along the Dutch-West German border, to be built by a parallel consortium called ESK.²⁹ Both consortia brought together the French power company EDF, its Italian counterpart ENEL and the West German regional operator RWE; additional partners from Belgium, the Netherlands and later Britain also participated

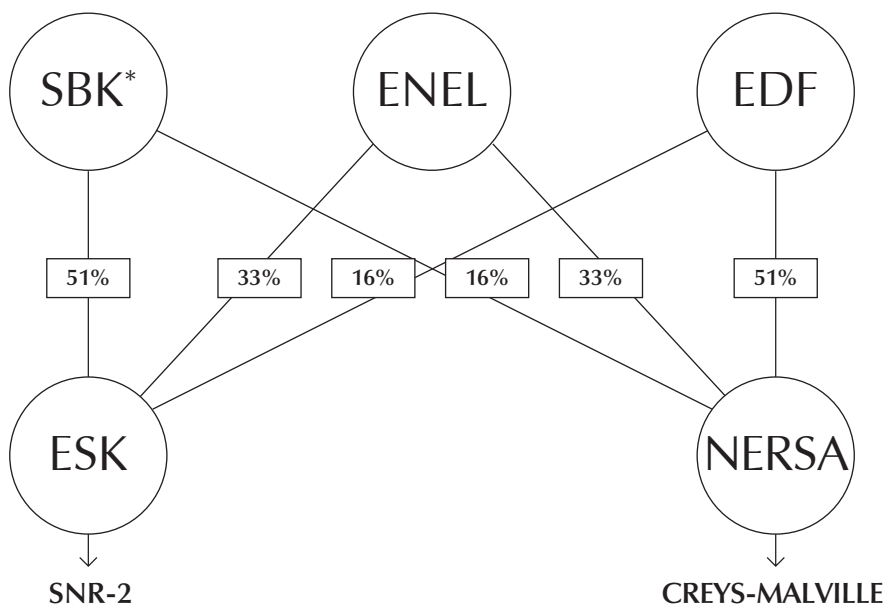
25 Axel Mayer, Interview with the author, Freiburg (12 Apr. 2010).

26 A. S. Tompkins, 'Transnationality as a liability? The anti-nuclear movement at Malville', *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* / *Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Filologie en Geschiedenis* 89 (3/4) (2011): 1365–1380.

27 A *centrale* is a power station. The clunky acronym is a reflection of the purpose-built nature of the consortium.

28 'Pourquoi refuser Malville ?' (Flyer, 2 pp.), 1976, Lyon, La Gryffe, dossier 'Chooz - Super Pholix - Malville - Nucléaire'.

29 B. Saitcevisky, 'Creys-Malville: les accords de coopération européenne entre producteurs d'électricité', *Revue générale nucléaire* 6 (Nov.-Dec. 1979): 597–98.

Towards a 'Europe of Struggles'?**Figure 1.**

The cooperation agreements among electricity producers for the development of Fast Breeder Reactors.³⁰

* The Schnell-Brüter-Kernkraftwerksgesellschaft mbH (SBK) consortium responsible for the Fast Breeder Reactor in Kalkar (near the German-Dutch border) was jointly owned by companies from West Germany (68.85%), the Netherlands and Belgium (14.75% each) and the United Kingdom (1.65%).

through a joint entity, SBK (see Figure 1.). NERSA received loans from the European Investment Bank and EURATOM – the latter controlled by the same Commission that since 1967 had been responsible for all of the ‘European Communities’, including the European Economic Community. Activists thus referred to Superphénix as a ‘European Community project’ and described NERSA as part of the ‘international nuclear mafia’.³¹

In response to this corporate transnationalisation, activists proposed to Europeanise protest: as one German flyer put it, ‘in order to put a stop to

30 Based on Saitcevsy, ‘Accords de coopération’, 598.

31 ‘Sommer 1977 nach Malville’ (Flyer, 2 pp.), 13 July 1977, Freiburg, Archiv der Sozialen Bewegungen in Baden (ASB), 00024359 (12.1.9.II Malville); ‘Malville. Erfahrungsbericht von 7 Hannoveranern’ (Brochure, 40 pp.), 1977, Stuttgart, Dokumentationsstelle für unkonventionelle Literatur, D 1450.

the activities of these firms who have long worked together at the European level, our French friends call upon all environmentally conscious people in Europe' to protest on 31 July 1977 in Malville.³² Starting in 1975, demonstrations in Malville had attracted some outside support, but primarily from French activists based in Lyon or Swiss ones from nearby Geneva. After an attention-grabbing, peaceful protest in 1976, organisers launched a broader appeal for the following year. Regional organiser Georges David thus explains that 'the enlargement to the European level only happened very late, actually. Only after 1976. At the European level, we only reached the Swiss. It was only afterward that the Italians and Germans joined us'.³³ For Malville protesters, as for their friends in Dreyeckland, Europe began with their near neighbours – even if they were outside the European Community – rather than in Brussels.

The 1977 mobilisation relied on pre-existing site-to-site links as well as networks associated with particular protest factions. For example, advocates of nonviolent direct action organised a 'serpent of struggles' winding down from the Franco-German border (where they visited friends in Wyhl) through a series of sites related to nuclear weapons (Belfort) and workers' struggles (the Lip watch factory in Besançon) before stopping in Malville on the way to another environmentalist demonstration (against a barrage in Naussac) and an anti-militarist rally (on the Larzac plateau).³⁴ The entire trip was preceded by an international march for non-violence, led by a coordinating committee that included Dutch, Italian, and German participants as well as 'two Alsatians' and 'one Lotharingian'.³⁵ In this way, non-violent protesters connected local and regional struggles from across France with activism in neighbouring countries.

The radical left also mobilised for Malville. Among the Trotskyist, Maoist and 'non-dogmatic' Marxist groups that proliferated during the 1970s, the Organisation Communiste des Travailleurs (OCT) and its West German sister organisation, the Kommunistischer Bund (KB), worked to bring as many people as possible to the anti-nuclear protest. In the run-up to 31 July, OCT published a dossier on nuclear energy in its weekly newspaper,

32 'Auf nach Malville' (Flyer, 4 pp.), 1977, Freiburg, ASB, 00024361 (12.1.9.II Malville).

33 Georges David, Interview with the author, Lhuis (27 Jan. 2010).

34 I. Cabut, 'Serpent des luttes, premier anneau: haguenau-la frontière allemande', *La Gueule Ouverte/Combat Non-violent* 167 (21 July 1977): 3–4.

35 'Internationaler gewaltloser Marsch für Entmilitarisierung' (Brochure, 9 pp.), 14–21 July 1977, Hamburg, Archiv Aktiv, 'Intler Gewaltloser Marsch 1976–1980'.

Towards a 'Europe of Struggles'?

l'étincelle.³⁶ KB organised buses from Hamburg and Frankfurt to take anti-nuclear protesters to Malville. For these groups, European institutions were an extension of national governments, not a potential ally against them. Indeed, a joint, bilingual Mayday issue of both party newspapers opened with a critical commentary on European integration entitled 'Down with the Europe of Schmidt and Giscard!'.³⁷ An accompanying article described preparations for a 'Europe of Cops' and noted that TREVI discussions were being prioritised over plans for direct elections to the European Parliament.³⁸

The Malville demonstration thus brought together a range of activists with different approaches not only to Europe, but also to protest strategy. Non-violent activists pushed for direct action that would 'go all the way' but 'without hitting cops', while radical groups pushed for either militant action by 'the masses' or individual 'self-defence' against police. The local Malville activists formally leading the demonstration sent mixed signals and were unable to give direction to the growing mass movement against nuclear energy. The result was a confused call for direct action that would be 'non-violent' but 'offensive' (as opposed to merely 'defensive'). René Jannin, the Prefect of Isère in charge of policing the demonstration, seized upon the phrase and declared, 'I am not offensive, I am defensive'.³⁹ Jannin claimed he would 'take the measures necessary' to protect the 'national [public] good' (*bien national*) that the reactor site represented.⁴⁰

As the demonstration approached, authorities and the media stirred up fears that West German demonstrators would cause trouble in Malville. The right-wing press referred to 'columns' of Germans marching from Munich, Frankfurt and Düsseldorf to Lyon, and the state-run television broadcaster insinuated links between ordinary anti-nuclear demonstrators and Red

36 OCT, 'Non au nucléaire', *l'étincelle*, 23 June 1977.

37 'Nieder mit dem Europa von Schmidt und Giscard! À bas l'Europe des Schmidt et des Giscard!', *Arbeiterkampf/l'étincelle* (29 Apr. 1977), p. 1.

38 KB/OCT, 'Das Europa der Bullen', *Arbeiterkampf/l'étincelle* (29 Apr. 1977), p. 3. 'Terrorisme, Radicalisme, Extrémisme et Violence Internationale' (TREVI) was the name and focus of a group that brought together Interior and Justice ministries from across Western Europe. It served as a forerunner to the Justice and Home Affairs pillar of the EU. See E. Oberloskamp, *Codename TREVI: Terrorismusbekämpfung und die Anfänge einer europäischen Innenpolitik in den 1970er Jahren* (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2017).

39. *Super-Pholix* 12 (1977): 6–11.

40 Antenne 2, 'Interdiction manifestation Creys-Malville' (News broadcast), 28 July 1977, Paris, Institut national de l'audiovisuel (INA).

Army Faction (RAF) ‘terrorists’.⁴¹ The night before the demonstration, the mayor of a local village paid a visit to a campsite where foreign demonstrators had gathered, commenting that he had ‘already been occupied by the Germans once’ and did not want to put up with it ‘a second time’ from their descendants; the following day, Jannin made a similar declaration to a press conference: ‘Morestel has been occupied by the Germans for a second time’.⁴² Such statements stopped short of open xenophobia, but only just: Jean Rabatel, deputy mayor of La Tour-du-Pin, assured the Minister of the Interior in a letter that Jannin had not once used the derogatory term *boche* to describe the Germans. By way of explanation, he added that Jannin did not ‘mistake these rowdies with the Federal Republic of West Germany [sic], with whom we maintain good relations for the construction of Europe’.⁴³

Indeed, French authorities were adamant that ‘Europe’ was on their side and not with the demonstrators, who had travelled from West Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and beyond to protest together against a reactor that they regarded as an international threat. The poorly coordinated demonstration ended in disaster, with one death and three serious injuries – all inflicted by the stun grenades and exploding tear gas grenades employed by police.⁴⁴ To deflect suspicion away from authorities, Interior Minister Christian Bonnet himself went on the nightly news to answer questions about the demonstration. Closely echoing Jannin’s previous statements, Bonnet began by saying that the Fast Breeder was *un capital national* designed to guarantee France’s energy independence, adding that ‘the European Communities have just declared themselves in favour of Fast Breeders’. News anchor Jean-Claude Bourret then asked Bonnet about the protesters, framing the question in a way that linked West Germans with violence.⁴⁵ Bonnet responded by stating that the violent demonstrators were ‘undeniably groups of anarchist persuasion who disregard borders and who have... “tried their hand” at this elsewhere, notably in West Germany,

41 ‘Malville’, *L’Aurore*, 31 July 1977; ‘Creys-Malville’ (News broadcast), 31 July 1977, Paris, INA.

42 ‘Une rumeur: “les allemands”’, *Libération*, 1 Aug. 1977.

43 Jean Rabatel, letter to Ministre de l’Intérieur, 1977, Grenoble, Archives départementales (AD) de l’Isère, 6857 W 36.

44 The 31-year-old physics teacher Vital Michalon was killed by the blast of a stun grenade near his chest. One German demonstrator, one French demonstrator and one French police officer had to have limbs amputated after stun grenades exploded near them.

45 ‘On a beaucoup parlé précisément de ces étrangers, notamment d’une forte participation allemande. Ceux qui ont attaqué les forces de l’ordre n’étaient qu’une infime minorité ... Est-ce que vous avez une idée précise de ce qu’ils représentent?’

Towards a 'Europe of Struggles'?

and who we are identifying through cooperation among members of the [European] Community'.⁴⁶ The French state clearly regarded Europe as an instrument to serve its interests.

If France was using European cooperation against demonstrators, it took its cue directly from NERSA. Months before the July 1977 demonstration, a consortium representative had reported back to the Prefect of Isère about his visit to West Germany, where he had studied protests against the nuclear power station construction sites in Brokdorf and Grohnde.⁴⁷ The report advised on everything from the proper placement of barbed wire to the undesirability of water cannon, but above all it encouraged police to use screening (*filtrage*) and barricading (*barrage*) procedures well beyond the site's perimeter as a means of controlling access to the demonstration route. French police did precisely that, blocking vehicles six kilometres out and stopping the march a kilometre from the site. The police report also credits NERSA with supplying a film about German protests, which was shown to all unit commanders prior to the Malville demonstration.⁴⁸ Perhaps even more than activists realised at the time, NERSA rather accurately embodied the technocratic collusion and repressive potential that the radical left criticised with regard to 'Europe'.

Activists' efforts to counter a perceived international threat with an international demonstration thus largely failed, with authorities digging up old French-German hostilities to pit populations against one another. Yet former regional organiser Georges David argues that this was only possible because activists themselves had failed to sufficiently emphasise the European nature of the issue. Following the examples of Marckolsheim and Wyhl, regional organisers pressed for local leadership, arguing that those most directly affected should ultimately decide on questions of strategy. However, locals in Malville had little experience of protest and were unprepared to lead supporters who greatly outnumbered them. David now argues that this strategic error might have been avoided if protesters had framed Superphénix as 'not only a local issue but a national and even international one'. Indeed, he argues that, while the demonstration itself may have been a failure, it did have some success in building international cooperation: 'We were

46 TF1, 'Journal de 20 h' (News broadcast), 31 July 1977, Paris, INA.

47 NERSA, 'Compte rendu' (Report sent to the Prefect of Isère), 26 May 1977, Grenoble, AD Isère, 6857 W 35.

48 Gilbert Roy, 'Rapport' (Summary police report, with appendices), 5 Aug. 1977, Grenoble, AD Isère, 6857 W 36.

not in a position to capitalise on all that energy, which was... important, if only at the level of Europe! When one thinks about it, in some way that “prepared” Europe, the solidarity that was unleashed with a process like Malville. The problem was that that solidarity was broken by a problem of organisation’.⁴⁹ Protests against Malville continued for two decades after the 1977 demonstration, though the organisers never again called for a mass demonstration. Instead, leadership was ultimately ceded to a coordinating committee, ‘Europeans against Superphénix’, which consisted of professionalised environmentalist NGOs of the kind that emerged in the 1980s.⁵⁰ This long-term cross-border collaboration ultimately managed to project a more ‘European’ frame of opposition than the one-off 1977 demonstration that had been so easily divided along national lines.

A ‘Europe of struggles’: Building alternatives to institutional Europe?

In September 1979, a delegation from the Larzac plateau embarked on a 1,500-kilometre journey to Gorleben in northern West Germany. The farmers of the Larzac had by that time been fighting against the expansion of a military base onto their land for nearly eight years, using creative, non-violent protests that attracted attention both nationally and internationally. In Gorleben, the struggle against a nuclear facility was much more recent: on 22 February 1977, the Minister President of Niedersachsen, Ernst Albrecht, announced plans to build an integrated nuclear waste disposal site in Gorleben, almost directly on the border with East Germany. Visiting from the Larzac, farmer Pierre-Yves de Boissieu and activist Joseph Pineau discovered many similarities between the two struggles: the methods of the West German government mirrored those of its French counterpart (‘disdain for the opinion of the populations concerned’, misinformation, recourse to force). So too did those of local activists (who used tractor processions, rallies, and resistance ‘on the ground’). Just as the existing military base meant the Larzac farmers had to contend with an invasive army presence, so too did Gorleben residents live in the midst of a heavy border police presence. A certain synergy between the two struggles seemed apparent. Reporting back to the Larzac after their visit, these delegates concluded with an appeal that alluded to the recent first elections to

49 Georges David, Interview.

50 Les européens contre Superphénix, ‘Superphénix : le dossier’ (Brochure), 1994, Lyon, CEDRATS, dossier ‘Super Pholix – Super phénix – Stop Malville’.

Towards a 'Europe of Struggles'?

the European Parliament: 'After the Europe of parliamentarians, it is time to make the Europe of struggles and the Europe of peoples'.⁵¹

This 'Europe of struggles' was a further call for extra-parliamentary protests to cultivate transnational connections around key struggles. The Larzac was the perfect centrepiece for a 'Europe' so conceived, having already established itself as a major hub of protest within France. In 1973 and 1974, the farmers hosted rallies on the plateau that drew crowds of more than 100,000. Locally, the Larzac networked with nearby non-violent activists (most famously the Gandhian disciple Lanza del Vasto) and with the Occitan regionalist movement. At the 1973 rally, the Larzac farmers also symbolically 'married' their struggle to that of the striking workers of the Lip watch factory in Besançon.⁵² Building on this success, the farmers launched a programme of 'Larzacs everywhere' in 1975, allying themselves with other local groups opposing the Fontevraud military base as well as nuclear power stations in Blayais, Malville and Plogoff. The farmers also attracted national attention with a dramatic, 700-kilometre tractor procession to Paris in 1973, which they repeated on foot in 1978. In the capital itself, they engaged in provocative acts of civil disobedience, bringing sheep to graze under the Eiffel Tower in 1972 and camping along the Seine in 1980. This kind of networking was a promising start for a 'Europe of struggles'.

The actions of the Larzac farmers were an inspiration abroad as well. Indeed, Gorleben activists bounded onto the national stage in West Germany with a Larzac-style tractor procession, which travelled from the affected district of Lüchow-Dannenberg to the regional capital of Hannover, arriving on 31 March 1979. The ultimate success of the march – with 100,000 people converging on Hannover from ten different directions (Figure 2.) – owed much to the coincidence of the Three Mile Island (TMI) nuclear accident in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania on 28 March 1979, just days before the march reached its conclusion. Yet the procession had also been choreographed precisely to build momentum over a period of more than two weeks. Under the circumstances, protesters newly activated by TMI thus had an immediate and visible outlet to express their concerns.

51 Pierre-Yves de Boissieu and Joseph Pineau, 'Durant l'été...', Oct. 1979, J. Pineau private archives, dossier 'Larzac en RFA'; Martin Wetter, 'Larzac-Rundbrief Nr. 1', 13 Dec. 1979, J. Pineau private archives, dossier 'Larzac en RFA'.

52 Xavier Vigna, 'Lip et Larzac: conflits locaux et mobilisations nationales', in Artières and Zancarini-Fournel (ed.), 68: *Une histoire collective* (Paris: La Découverte, 2008) pp. 487–494; Donald Reid, *Opening the Gates: The Lip Affair, 1968–1981* (London: Verso, 2018).

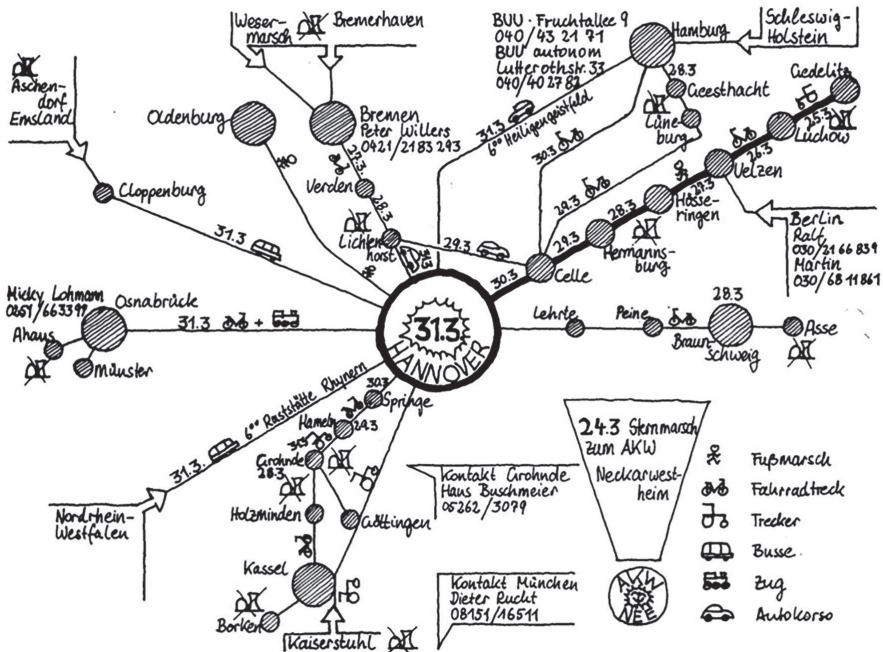


Figure 2.

Routes of Gorleben marches converging on Hannover on 31 March 1979. Bürgerinitiative Umweltschutz Unterelbe (Hamburg), 'Aufruf zur Demonstration zum Abschluß des Trecks der Gorlebeener Bauern am 31.3. in Hannover' (Flyer, 2 pp.), 1979, Berlin, APO-Archiv, p. 38.

Key Gorleben activists were very familiar with the Larzac struggle. The latter had been an explicit inspiration to Walter Mossmann, a protest singer who had been active in Wyhl before joining protests in Gorleben.⁵³ Wolfgang Hertle, a non-violent activist and editor of the monthly newspaper *Graswurzelrevolution* who later moved to Gorleben, had likewise been attuned to developments on the Larzac from an early stage, even writing his doctoral dissertation about the French farmers.⁵⁴ Other activists encountered

53 Freia Hoffmann and Walter Mossmann, 'Bürger werden initiativ 1 [Nordhorn/Larzac] und 2 [Wyhl/Wasserburg]' (Manuscripts for radio broadcast), 30 Sept. and 7 Oct. 1973, Amsterdam, Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis (IISG), Bro 1132-19; W. Mossmann, *Realistisch sein: Das unmögliche Verlangen. Wahrheitsgetreu gefälschte Erinnerungen* (Berlin: Freitag, 2009).

54 W. Hertle, *Larzac, 1971–1981. Der gewaltfreie Widerstand gegen die Erweiterung eines Truppenübungsplatzes in Süd-Frankreich* (Kassel: Weber Zucht & Co., 1982).

Towards a 'Europe of Struggles'?

the Larzac through ordinary tourism, as residents held 'open farm' events during vacation periods or organised summertime political events.⁵⁵ Ethical consumers might purchase Occitan wine from a politically conscious sales network that included more than eighty groups across West Germany.⁵⁶ One such group from Hamburg also sold Lip watches and published information about Lip, Larzac and the La Hague nuclear fuel reprocessing site in France as well as Solidarność in Poland.⁵⁷ The Hamburg group overlapped with a 'Larzac Circle of Friends', some of whom later published a book of interviews from the Larzac.⁵⁸

All these different groups promoted the Larzac in West Germany to audiences from their own factions of the anti-nuclear movement. In the summer of 1979, non-violent activists, politically engaged wine merchants and left-wing activists working in parallel helped organise around 100–150 Germans to join a group of over 1,000 volunteers who helped with renovation and construction projects on the Larzac under the direction of the farmers.⁵⁹ On the plateau, these Germans hosted informational events about Gorleben, which was then fast emerging as a hub of protest in their own country.⁶⁰ The Larzac newspaper *Gardarem lo Larzac* published several articles on Gorleben, and German groups reciprocated with articles on the Larzac, usually paired with those on Gorleben.⁶¹ The September 1979 Gorleben visit by Pierre-Yves de Boissieu and Joseph Pineau was a response to this and an attempt to consolidate the link between these two key struggles. The following year, a joint delegation from the Larzac and from Plogoff toured West Germany from 29 April to 7 May, visiting Gorleben just as activists there launched an occupation that turned the construction site into an 'anti-nuclear village'.⁶²

55 Hervé Ott, Interview with the author, St-Martin du Larzac (18 Sept. 2010).

56 *Das Fass ist voll: eine Region wehrt sich* (Neu-Isenburg: Verein zur Förderung der Deutsch-Ökzitanischen Freundschaft, 1978).

57 'Freundeskreis-Lip-Info/P(r)OVO-Info' (Newsletter), Oct. 1980, Amsterdam, IISG, ID ZK 47369. The name P(r)OVO (*Politische Ökonomie/Offensive Verkaufs-Organisation*) played on memories of the Dutch Provos, a group active in the late 1960s.

58 H. Burmeister and V. Tonnätt, *Zu kämpfen allein schon ist richtig: Larzac* (Frankfurt: Jugend & Politik, 1981).

59 'Plus de cent Allemands sur les chantiers', *Gardarem lo Larzac* 46 (Sept. 1979).

60 'Gorleben-Larzac même combat' (Flyer for event at l'Hôpital du Larzac, 1 p.), 10 Sept. 1979, Millau, Bibliothèque municipale, IZ 62.

61 'Larzac veut leben, Gorleben soll vivre', *Gardarem lo Larzac* 48 (Nov. 1979); 'Gorleben-Larzac Der gleiche Kampf!', *tageszeitung*, 26 Sept. 1979, 8.

62 C. Frey, 'Wachsam in Holzpalästen', *Die Zeit*, 30 May 1980, 54.

After their tour of West Germany, the Larzac farmers made an additional out-of-town trip on 20 May 1980 to Strasbourg. Invited by the Occitan *député du vin* Emmanuel Maffre-Baugé, they attempted (apparently without success) to get the European Parliament (EP) to discuss their case.⁶³ This represented a rare, direct encounter between these protest movements and European institutions, but it was not one that encouraged the former to abandon their extra-parliamentary approach. The Larzac farmers had brought with them the military service papers of 1,030 Frenchmen, which had been collected as part of a civil disobedience campaign against the military base. After unsuccessfully attempting to present the papers to EP president Simone Veil, the farmers reportedly deposited the entire collection between flowerpots in the corridor.⁶⁴ A year later, Veil's office was forced to defend itself from accusations of handing the papers to the French Ministry of Defence after several individuals were reportedly prosecuted for abandoning their military papers.⁶⁵ The attempt to appeal to European institutions for support against state opponents had thus largely failed, implying a continued need to build a 'Europe of struggles'.

When it was invoked in 1979, the idea of a 'Europe of struggles' was deployed primarily rhetorically: it was a convenient moniker for informal networks of protest that already existed and which might be strengthened. After Mitterrand's government cancelled the Larzac military base expansion (together with the Plogoff nuclear power station) in 1981, the farmers continued to cultivate ties of solidarity, but mostly outside of Europe.⁶⁶ Protest in Gorleben developed along its own trajectory thereafter and, while the Larzac continued to inspire individuals and organisations in West Germany, it lost its centrality to protest movements there. Yet the idea of a 'Europe of struggles' as an alternative to the formal institutional structures of the EU

63 The archival service of the European Parliament was unable to find any pertinent item on the EP's agenda proposed by Maffre-Baugé or anyone else. On Maffre-Baugé as a *député du vin*, see A. W. M. Smith, *Terror and Terroir: The Winegrowers of the Languedoc and Modern France* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016).

64 J.-C. Hano, 'Les paysans du Larzac veulent porter leur affaire devant le Parlement Européen', *Le Monde*, 22 May 1980.

65 Veil's office claimed to have returned the papers to the individuals concerned and to have 'intervened to prevent any legal action against these persons'. Jaak Vandemeulebroucke, Written question 52/81 to President of the European Parliament, 17 Sept. 1981, Luxembourg, EP Archives, PE1.QP//QB-052/81/0020; Simone Veil, Draft response to written question 52/81 to Vandemeulebroucke, 18 Dec. 1981, Luxembourg, EP Archives, PE1.QP//QB-052/81/0030.

66 Gildea and Tompkins, 'Transnational in the local', 599–602.

Towards a 'Europe of Struggles'?

resonates clearly with later claims that 'Another Europe is possible'. The latter slogan was principally associated with the European Social Forum (ESF), the continent's counterpart to the World Social Forum (WSF) and a key venue for activism within the Global Justice Movement (GJM) of the late 1990s and early 2000s.⁶⁷ Another key GJM slogan, 'the world is not a commodity', served as the rallying call for a major gathering of French and European activists on the Larzac in 2003 (the thirtieth anniversary of the first rally held there in 1973).

Indeed, the Larzac rose to prominence within the GJM movement in 1999 following the attention-getting 'dismantlement' of a McDonald's construction site near the plateau by veteran Larzac activist José Bové. The McDonald's protest was a key moment in battles over the World Trade Organisation's role as an enforcer of neoliberal norms.⁶⁸ Bové later travelled to the protests against the 1999 WTO meeting in Seattle and to the WSF in Porto Alegre, Brazil. After several years of continued extra-parliamentary protest, he ran successfully for a seat in the European Parliament in 2009. There, he sits in the same political grouping as Rebecca Harms, a leading activist from Gorleben who became an MEP in 2004. Not all activists associated with the Larzac and Gorleben today (much less those who participated in these struggles in the 1970s) agree with this embrace of formal politics at the European level. However, thirty years after a 'Europe of struggles' was first proclaimed, it seems to have become a more solid reality, even as it has made certain accommodations with the 'Europe of parliamentarians' to which it was initially opposed.



The shift of much environmental protest from the streets into the parliaments has been a slow process, and one that would have been largely inconceivable to many anti-nuclear activists in the late 1970s. As this chapter has shown, their own understandings of Europe were for the most part non-institutional or even openly hostile to European bodies. Just as significantly, many of their appeals to European institutions fell on deaf

67 D. Della Porta (ed.), *Another Europe: Conceptions and Practices of Democracy in the European Social Forums* (London: Routledge, 2009).

68 Specifically at issue were WTO rules permitting the US to slap high tariffs on Roquefort cheese (produced on the Larzac) in retaliation for the EU's refusal to import hormone-treated beef from the US.

ears, as an incident surrounding the aforementioned 'international day of action' in 1979 demonstrates. On the weekend of Pentecost, simultaneous demonstrations took place as planned around Europe, including one in which thousands of activists marched together across borders to protest the French power station in Cattenom (Lorraine). As at previous anti-nuclear protests in nearby Dreyeckland,⁶⁹ French border police singled out 'recognisable demonstration participants' for harassment, turning away those coming from Germany at checkpoints in Perl, Ittersdorf, Goldener Bremm, and along the Saarbrücken highway.⁷⁰ Following press coverage of these incidents, a concerned member of the Bundestag and of the (then-appointed) European Parliament, Hajo Hoffmann, attempted to hold French authorities to account. In both parliamentary bodies, he formally asked the German government, the European Commission, and the European Council whether they found it 'compatible with the spirit and letter of the European treaties' that activists had been blocked from entering France 'because they wanted to peacefully demonstrate against the planned nuclear power station in Cattenom and to draw attention to the transnational dangers'.⁷¹

The answers Hoffmann received illustrate why many anti-nuclear activists felt no great affinity to the institutions of Europe and, indeed, regarded them as extensions of the state. The European Commission responded that those blocked at the border were 'manifestly' not intending 'to exercise an economic activity ... in the sense of the treaty' and thus could not benefit from its provisions.⁷² The Commission's answer echoed almost verbatim the one previously given by the German government, suggesting coordination.⁷³

69 A.S. Tompkins, *Better Active Than Radioactive! Anti-Nuclear Protest in 1970s France and West Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 93–94.

70 At Goldener Bremm checkpoint (where the French and German governments later signed an agreement to reduce border controls), activists blocked the border with a sit-in for approximately 30 minutes as the local TV news looked on. Some demonstrators then returned to the Perl checkpoint, reinforced by another 400 people who all marched on foot to Apach – the French town neighbouring Schengen – and from there to Luxembourg city, where 2,000–3,000 anti-nuclear activists protested in front of the French embassy. 'demonstration in thionville - abschlussbericht 21.30 [sic]' (police telex), 4 June 1979, Koblenz, Bundesarchiv (BArch), B 106/107375.

71 Hajo Hoffmann, Written question 232/79 to European Council, 5 June, Luxembourg, EP Archives, PE0.AP.QP.QE.1979//E-0232/79/0020; Written question 233/79 to European Commission, 5 June, Luxembourg, EP Archives, PE0.AP.QP.QE.1979//E-0233/79/0010; Deutscher Bundestag, Drucksache 8/2948, Bonn (8 June 1979).

72 Response to written question 233/79 to Hoffmann, 30 July 1979, Luxembourg, EP Archives, PE0.AP.QP.QE.1979//E-0233/79/0030.

73 The Commission's draft responses can also be found in West German Interior Ministry files in Koblenz, BArch, B 106/107375.

Towards a 'Europe of Struggles'?

In the Bundestag, Hoffmann told Staatsminister Klaus von Dohnanyi of citizens' frustration with such arguments, particularly given the 'more generous attitude' shown to 'football contacts' than to concerned citizens protesting nuclear risks that directly affected them.⁷⁴ For its part, the European Council simply did not deign to answer, stating that 'it does not fall within the competency of the Council to respond to [*se prononcer sur*] the question evoked by the Honourable Parliamentarian'.⁷⁵

Most environmentalists' perceptions of European institutions have become much more positive since the period discussed here. Indeed, the first direct elections to the European Parliament in 1979 – held less than a week after the aforementioned 'international day of action' – helped put the idea of Europe and the institutions that act in its name more firmly onto the radar of political activists and European citizens generally. The EP and other European institutions have also consistently demonstrated a willingness to listen to certain kinds of political activists, though these tend to be those with the resources to professionalise and the will to engage in lobbying activities. However, anti-nuclear activists in the late 1970s largely perceived European institutions for what they were at the time: at best, a well-meaning but remote entity with little power; at worst, an extension of national governments.

In contrast to other environmentalist movements, the opposition to nuclear energy was always more vociferous (and, in France and West Germany, much more violent). Anti-nuclear activists pursued many different strategies, but in the first decade of the movement's existence, extra-parliamentary activism predominated. Successive French and West German governments were unrelenting in their support of nuclear energy, and for much of the 1970s confrontational forms of protest (from non-violent civil disobedience to militant 'self-defence') were common. Anti-nuclear protest remained largely place-based, and its transnational character involved site-to-site links among local struggles rather than the centrally coordinated activities of professional non-governmental organisations. If environmental and anti-nuclear activists today find a more receptive audience in Brussels than they did in the 1970s, it is probably because both the institutions *and* the movements have changed.

French and West German anti-nuclear activists in the 1970s do not seem to have consciously worked toward building 'Europe'. However, they

74 Deutscher Bundestag, Plenarprotokoll 8/159, Bonn (13 June 1979).

75 Response to written question 232/79 to Hoffmann, 30 July 1979, Luxembourg, EP Archives, PE0.AP.QP.QE.1979/E-0232/79/0030.

remained locally rooted and (even prior to Schengen) mobile within the subcontinent's spaces, linking struggles far and wide in an attempt to build opposition to nuclear energy everywhere and to exert power over intransigent governments from within and from without. In their far-flung protest networks, in their joint marches and demonstrations and in their day-to-day interactions in border regions, they unconsciously built transnational relationships that have in the end contributed to a 'European consciousness'. Identification with other Europeans, if perhaps not with the institutions of the European Union, has thus been a positive but largely unintended consequence of anti-nuclear activism.

CHAPTER 8.

ENTERING THE EUROPEAN POLITICAL ARENA, ADAPTING TO EUROPE: GREENPEACE INTERNATIONAL 1987–1993.

*Liesbeth van de Grift, Hans Rodenburg and Guus
Wieman*

The European Union is facing a crisis of legitimacy. In recent years, Brussels has found it increasingly difficult to provide adequate solutions to major disasters, such as the financial, Eurozone and refugee crises, and, as a consequence, support for European integration is dwindling. The Brexit vote and the Dutch referendum rejecting an association treaty with Ukraine prove a widespread scepticism towards the Union. But there is one policy field in which Europeans accept Brussels as the primary actor: the area of environmental policy. Here, the legitimacy of the EU is all but undisputed.¹

Starting in the 1980s, environmental regulation has been one of the most important responsibilities within the European Union's purview.² Originally designed as part of the Common Market, environmental policy sought to diminish distortions of competition between member states. It grew quickly in significance, however, and evolved into a separate policy field with its own Directorate-General.³ This shift from the national to the supranational level has come to be known as the 'Europeanisation' of environmental policy. It is generally considered a reciprocal process, involving national organisations shifting their attentions towards Brussels in order to influence European policymaking, as well as European institutions opening to suggestions from national bodies, a move that in turn increases their legitimacy. Supranational institutions, in particular the European Commission, started encouraging environmental organisations' activity on the European stage in the late 1980s. In order to be effective on this level, most green groups associated

1 A. Lenschow and C. Sprungk, 'The myth of a green Europe', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 48 (1) (2010): 133–154, 133–35.

2 Ph. M. Hildebrand, 'The European Community's environmental policy, 1957 to 1992: From incidental measures to an international regime?', in A. Jordan (ed.), *Environmental Policy in the European Union: Actors, Institutions and Processes* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 19–41, 31–32.

3 Hildebrand, 'The European Community's environmental policy', 31–32.

themselves with European umbrella organisations, such as the European Environmental Bureau, or founded their own European policy units.⁴

From 1987 to 1993, between the implementation of the Single European Act and the scheduled completion of the Internal Market, most major environmental organisations began exploring the possibilities of lobbying in the EU and opened offices in Brussels to handle European institutions specifically.⁵ This contribution looks at one of these organisations, Greenpeace International, and examines how and why it stepped up its activities in the European political arena by setting up a special European Communities Unit (EC-Unit) at the end of the 1980s. What were the main considerations leading to the establishment of the EC-Unit? Which factors facilitated or hampered its performance? As this chapter will show, the move of Greenpeace to the supranational stage was anything but likely. For many within the organisation, the EC represented nothing more than a capitalist, technocratic organisation of states, the free trade agenda of which had resulted in extreme pollution and environmental degradation. This stance significantly constrained and complicated Greenpeace's transition to the European level between 1987 and 1993, as did the lack of a clear strategy to lobby European institutions as well as the group's organisational structure itself.

Our research is based on extensive work in the archives of Greenpeace International, housed at the International Institute of Social History (IISH) in Amsterdam. In addition, we conducted in-depth interviews with figures key to the establishment of Greenpeace's European strategy. This involved the establishment of a European office, the European Communities Unit (EC-Unit); one person with whom we spoke was directly responsible for the founding and coordination of this office.⁶ Our other interviewee was Steve Sawyer, executive director of Greenpeace International between 1988 and 1993. The first interview focused primarily on the internal dynamics of the Greenpeace EC-Unit and Greenpeace's general attitude towards both the EC-Unit and the European project more broadly; the second deepened our insight into Greenpeace International's organisational structure. Though

4 P. Bursens, 'Environmental interest representation in Belgium and the EU: Professionalisation and division of labour within a multi-level governance setting', *Environmental Politics* 6 (4) (1996): 51–75, 67.

5 T. Long and L. Lörinczi, 'NGOs as gatekeepers: A green vision', in R. Pedler (ed.), *The European Union* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 170–76.

6 For privacy reasons and in agreement with the person in question, we have left out the name of the founder and first coordinator of the EC-Unit.

Entering the European Political Arena, Adapting to Europe

these interviews were valuable, the archival research proved decisive in drawing our conclusions.

We begin with a brief outline of Greenpeace International and its history leading up to the late 1980s. We then demonstrate how Greenpeace attempted to influence European policy with the founding of a European Communities unit in particular, and explore the challenges that Greenpeace faced in the elaboration of a unified European strategy. For analytical purposes, we divide these challenges in two categories, though they are naturally interrelated. First, we address the difficulties that arose from the group's unique organisational structure. The second category deals with the tensions surrounding Greenpeace's ideology and identity, which were deemed incompatible with the EC's technocratic free-market orientation. Finally, we discuss how, in spite of these internal struggles, Greenpeace managed to find a place for itself within the common strategy of the environmental movement in Europe.

The profile of Greenpeace

A single, unified environmental movement does not exist: it is extremely diverse and comprises a wide variety of organisations. Within this diversity of NGOs, Greenpeace currently maintains a reputation as a professional protest organisation, combining professional resources and disruptive actions. However, it started out as a radical social movement and the transition has not been an easy one.⁷ Its history and ideological profile are key to understanding how the organisation has sought to position itself in relation to international political institutions like the European Community. The history of Greenpeace dates back to 1969, when a group of Canadian and American environmentalists launched a protest against nuclear testing in Alaska by the United States government.⁸ In the following years, this small band of activists succeeded in attracting supporters by way of their high-profile demonstrations. The Greenpeace Foundation was officially established in 1971, and the organisation grew rapidly, first with a number of offices in North America, and by the end of the 1970s in Europe as well.⁹ In 1979,

7 N. Carter, *The Politics of the Environment: Ideas, Activism, Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 147–154.

8 This history has been covered extensively in F. Zelko, *Make it a Green Peace: The Rise of Counter-cultural Environmentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

9 S. Erwood (ed.), *The Greenpeace Chronicles: 40 Years of Protecting the Planet* (Amsterdam: Greenpeace International, 2011), p. 21.

these offices were officially merged under the umbrella of the international 'Stichting Greenpeace Council'; from that moment on, all national offices' cross-border projects would fall under the name of Greenpeace International.

Though formally a single organisation, Greenpeace International was characterised by division. In the words of Executive Director Steve Sawyer, it was a 'mass of contradictions,' where rebellious youth met older, more jaded activists; the organisation was highly centralised but attached great value to autonomy. By all outside appearances Greenpeace was a united front battling against large political institutions. But internally it was often divided over the appropriate course of action.¹⁰ In spite of this, one central principle united everyone involved:

Greenpeace is committed to creating a green and peaceful Planet Earth, where a diversity of people and cultures live in harmony, sharing the following basic belief: That the primary value and organising principle that must lay at the base of every human endeavour must be the long term viability of the planetary ecosystem, along with the maintenance of the biological and genetic integrity of that eco-system. That the prime imperative for our long-term survival as a species on this planet must be the preservation of the global environment.¹¹

To achieve such ambitious goals, a fundamentally critical attitude was – and still is today – considered essential. Ideologically, Greenpeace opposes injustice wrought by the global economic order, such as the growing gap between rich and poor countries, and it views global economic institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) with much suspicion. The group's ultimate ambition is to establish an alternative system, structured by binding agreements on the use and conservation of scarce natural resources.¹²

Greenpeace's radical stance is reflected in its preferred activist repertoire. In general, it is willing to employ all necessary means, short of violence, to achieve its goals. Its most familiar trademark is the use of spectacular protests to generate public awareness. Activists in inflatable boats manoeuvring themselves between whalers and their prey, chaining themselves to gas pumps to prevent the extraction of fossil fuels and barring the doors behind which

10 S. Sawyer, *Saving the World the Greenpeace Way* (Amsterdam: Unpublished Source, 1991), p. 3.

11 Ibid., p. 4.

12 International Institute for Social History (IISH), Greenpeace International Archives (GPIA), Folder 454, General correspondence of the International (Campaign) Directors. With other related documents 1990, Steve Sawyer, Overview of the Global Environmental Situation and Greenpeace's Role 1990.

Entering the European Political Arena, Adapting to Europe

international deliberations on potentially harmful treaties are held; with such tactics Greenpeace aims to force others, within the environmental movement as well as within national and global institutions, to focus on the issues it deems important. Within the environmental movement, Greenpeace aims to lead by strengthening its connections with smaller grassroots groups, thus being prepared for battle when the much-anticipated 'environmental revolution takes off'.¹³ Political independence is also a central tenet within the organisation, meaning that no permanent commitments or alliances are to be made with political parties or institutions. This was motivated primarily by the fear of being co-opted by the establishment, like most 'green' parties which, according to Greenpeace, have become embedded in existing power structures, preventing them from ever realising fundamental change.¹⁴ As a precaution against 'selling out,' Greenpeace activists are prohibited from participating in political activities that could give the impression of partisan preference.¹⁵ Furthermore, Greenpeace refuses any form of financial support from governments and relies entirely on private donations.

In the early 1970s, Greenpeace's lack of formal organisational structure meant that anyone was able to establish a new regional or national office without central oversight. Though the Vancouver office, considered the birthplace of Greenpeace, is the group's oldest branch, it never operated as its headquarters. Moreover, in its nascent years no formal agreements dictated the use of the Greenpeace name and brand. According to Frank Zelko, 'so long as all new groups remained faithful to Greenpeace's brand or non-violent direct action, they could do their own thing'.¹⁶ This situation proved unmanageable, however, and in 1979, following a series of lawsuits, Greenpeace formalised its organisational structure and was renamed Stichting Greenpeace Council (SGC), which exists to this day. SGC comprises representatives of all national and regional offices and determines the budget, organisational strategy and appointment of members to the Board of Directors. Given the diverse composition of the Council, it should come as no surprise that finding consensus has often proved a difficult and laborious task.

13 IISH, GPIA, Folder 454, General correspondence of the International (Campaign) Directors. With other related documents 1990, Steve Sawyer, Overview of the Global Environmental Situation and Greenpeace's Role 1990.

14 Ibid.

15 IISH, GPIA, Folder 139, Minutes, agenda and working papers of the meetings of the Executive Committee September 1989, Minutes of the Executive committee, 29 Sept. 1989.

16 Zelko, *Make it a Green Peace*, p. 302.

Greenpeace has always defined itself as a 'campaign-led organisation'.¹⁷ This has meant that specific projects structure the organisation's hierarchy and institutional architecture. All other components of the organisation – from national offices to management bodies – have primarily served the interests of (international) campaigns, which are more or less autonomous, with little central governance from the international office. Despite a series of organisational reshuffles, campaigns and campaign directors have remained the backbone of the organisation, structuring all other activity. Consequently, international campaign directors have been among the most influential people within Greenpeace International.¹⁸ Other branches, such as the Treaties and Conventions project and the scientific and communications sections, have played a supporting role.

In the 1980s, three major developments forced Greenpeace to revamp its mode of operations, which would eventually lead to a more comprehensive reorganisation in the early 1990s. First, Greenpeace had grown exponentially over the course of the 1980s, both in terms of its manpower and its financial resources. The budget, which had hovered around a million dollars in the 1980s, would increase to roughly \$140 million by the mid-1990s; former Executive Director Sawyer noted an annual growth of about 35 per cent between 1980 and 1991.¹⁹ Second, Greenpeace had to reconsider its campaigns. The organisation had initially focused on whaling, nuclear testing, and the protection of vulnerable ecosystems, for example in Antarctica. Over the course of the 1980s, however, it became apparent that there were fewer and fewer 'small' victories to win and that 'bigger' and more systemic challenges would become the new priority for environmental activism; global climate change is the most obvious example. These broader crises would be approached as wars of attrition, for which Greenpeace would need to develop a highly coordinated long-term strategy. Finally, these two developments unfolded against the backdrop of a changing world system, which saw the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the rise of a new world order under the Washington Consensus and a deepening and expansion of European integration. These simultaneous processes forced Greenpeace International to reconsider the position it had staked out for itself in the international political arena.

17 IISH, GPIA, Folder 455, Correspondence of the international campaign directors, Memo from Steve Sawyer to all staff, 15 Sept. 1991.

18 IISH, GPIA, Folder 6383, Documents from the archive of Annelieke Zonne, documents concerning the Structure working group (1992), questionnaire.

19 Interview by the authors with Steve Sawyer, Executive Director of Greenpeace International between 1988–1993 (Amsterdam 27 June 2016).

The road to Brussels

The deepening of European integration has had a serious impact on the green movement. This began as early as the 1960s, as public and political awareness of environmental issues increased. The European Commission published its first environmental action plan in 1973, prompting a sharp rise in the number of environmental measures introduced on both the national and international levels. The signing of the Single European Act in 1986 signified another milestone, as this was the first time that environmental policy had been anchored in a European treaty. Meanwhile, environmental groups became increasingly interested in the possibilities offered to them by the European project. In 1974 they established the European Environmental Bureau (EEB), an umbrella organisation of environmental NGOs joining forces to influence policymaking at the European level. A number of Greenpeace's national offices became affiliated, while numerous other environmental organisations, such as the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and Friends of the Earth (FoE), set up European offices in Brussels and established their own presence there. Greenpeace also considered such a move: its leadership saw this opportunity as part of a much-needed push to establish a more coherent international political identity. In 1988, David McTaggart, one of the founders of Greenpeace International, 'got his education on the EEC', as he himself stated, and began exploring ways in which Greenpeace could influence European policymakers most effectively.²⁰ McTaggart was ambivalent, however, towards 'traditional' forms of political involvement: 'I ... do not want to participate in the funding of a programme that is "lobbying" in the usual environmentalist's mind. It's normally a complete waste of time.'²¹

A few months later, Greenpeace founded the European Communities Unit, or simply the 'EC-Unit', to develop a distinct style of applying political pressure, although at that time it was not yet clear what this would entail. Once the EC-Unit was in place, the national offices withdrew from the EEB at the turn of the 1990s.²²

20 ISH, GPIA, Folder 956 Documents concerning the European Communities Unit (EC Unit) 1988–1998, Letter from David McTaggart to the International Board of Directors, 2 Apr. 1988.

21 Ibid.

22 IISH, GPIA, Folder, 5331, Correspondence on EC-Unit 1990, Notes on the EC Trustees Meeting Amsterdam 11 Jan. 1990.

A campaign-led organisation: Gods in their own kingdom

The EC-Unit was something of an oddity in an organisation geared towards radical activism, and scepticism was strong amongst Greenpeace activists towards the EC itself; it took considerable time before the EC-Unit became a valued and respected office within Greenpeace International. Ultimately, a major reorganisation would be required to fully integrate the Unit – and with it, the organisation's European lobbying strategy – into the group's larger organisational structure.

The EC-Unit found a home initially in Greenpeace's Treaties and Conventions project, a section linked to the organisation's executive office founded the year prior and tasked with furnishing campaigns with information about international policy. Greenpeace considered such a branch necessary amid the growing complexity of international institutions and transnational environmental problems.²³ Being part of Treaties and Conventions meant that the EC-Unit did not function as an independent lobbying unit but rather as an outpost of the international campaigns within the EC. The proposal for the establishment of Treaties and Conventions reveals that campaign independence and autonomy remained paramount. This is also reflected in the personnel policies of the EC-Unit: five out of its seven staff members were in fact employed by individual campaigns, while only the coordinator and the office manager were hierarchically subordinate to Treaties and Conventions.²⁴

This structure became problematic for the coordinator, who was tasked with formulating a clear and unified lobbying strategy from the whims and demands of campaigners and campaign directors who saw themselves, in his words, as 'Gods in their own kingdom'.²⁵ This drastically undermined the coordinator's authority, perhaps most strikingly demonstrated when one campaigner appropriated the coordinator's office, claiming that her activities were more important than his to begin with.²⁶ Co-operation with the national branches was often difficult as well. To some extent this can be attributed to lack of interest and scepticism on the part of the activists themselves. In practice, national offices often embarked on activities directed at European

23 IISH, GPIA, Folder 2588, Correspondence on treaties and conventions, Roger Wilson. 1987–1988, Proposal for treaties and conventions, 1986.

24 IISH, GPIA, Folder 130, Minutes, agenda and working papers of the meetings of the Executive Committee December 1988, Minutes of the SCIPOL meeting, Nov. 1988, pp. 17–18.

25 Interview with the first coordinator of the EC-Unit.

26 Ibid.

Entering the European Political Arena, Adapting to Europe

institutions without first consulting the EC-Unit.²⁷ When EC-Unit staff attempted to organise a protest in Brussels together with the national offices in 1991, for instance, they were surprised to find that the Belgian national office had already planned a similar action two days prior.²⁸

Not only were the relationships between the EC-Unit and the campaigns and national offices problematic, the workplace environment within the Unit itself was also fraught. There was little collaboration among and consultation between staff members, resulting in sparse knowledge of what colleagues were doing. Rivalries formed. A letter by a former volunteer working at the office to the executive director of Greenpeace complained that the office environment had become unbearably hostile and dysfunctional.

Since the employees resist a sound structure of hierarchy, responsibility, objectivity and 'control' they condescend to scapegoat hunting and blackmailing, block improvement for the best of all and GP [*sic*] and become intolerant, inflexible and handicapped instead of adjusting to the growth of the business and its need ...²⁹

Thus, attempts by Greenpeace to forge a durable lobbying network in Brussels largely failed. It was not only the hostile work environment that was to blame: the lack of knowledge about European institutions on the part of Greenpeace campaigners and those staffed by the EC-Unit was also a serious weakness. Greenpeace International tried to preclude this pitfall by hiring experienced people with knowledge of European institutions from outside the organisation to lead the Unit. But Greenpeace campaigners did not always take these outsider professionals seriously. A unified lobbying effort was further hampered by the unwillingness of campaign directors to contribute to the creation of a streamlined Greenpeace programme, as this was seen as having the potential to compromise campaign autonomy. The first EC-Unit coordinator was, in hindsight, highly critical of these directors who, according to him, were unable to look beyond their own individual goals; any attempt to adjust Greenpeace activities to more closely align with the European agenda, even in order to enhance their impact, met with fierce

27 IISH, GPIA, Folder 940, Political Unit, Weekly updates and correspondence of the Political Division. Jan.–May 1992, Letter from Remi Parmentier to Rebecca Johnson, Ulrich Jurgens and Damon Moglen, 23 May 1992.

28 IISH, GPIA, Folder 958, Documents concerning the European Communities Unit (EC Unit) 1990–1992, Minutes of the internal meeting of the EC-Unit, 28 Mar. 1991.

29 IISH, GPIA, Folder 958, Documents concerning the European Communities Unit (EC Unit) 1990–1992, Letter by Inge Nalbach to the executive director's office, 22 Jan. 1990.

resistance.³⁰ Change threatened to fundamentally alter Greenpeace's brand of campaigning.³¹

Amid these challenges the organisation's leadership began to realise that Brussels was becoming the most important arena for European environmental policy, and that internal bickering was hampering the effective lobbying of European institutions. In 1990 the head of Treaties and Conventions, together with the executive director's office, decided to put the EC-Unit under strict supervision, with the aim of improving its working environment and increasing efficiency.³² Tensions within the Unit continued to rise, however, and the committee tasked with supervision and oversight eventually considered abolishing the Unit entirely.³³ At the end of 1990, the first coordinator resigned, stating: 'I have increasingly become aware that the conditions under which I could make a valuable contribution to Greenpeace's work are no longer there and are not likely to improve in the near future ...'³⁴

Identity and ideology: Activism, nationalism and euroscepticism

As has been made clear, the founding of a centralised European lobbying office did not sit well within the existing organisational structure of Greenpeace, which was primarily geared towards protecting the autonomy of campaigns and national offices. The new unit in Brussels was seen as an encroachment. But this was more than merely a problem of discretion and competencies. Identity issues lay at the core of this struggle: the Europeanisation of environmental policy forced Greenpeace to reconsider what it stood for.

Confrontational activism tactics were central to the Greenpeace identity, woven into the organisation's cultural fabric that was shaped by passionate activists with antagonistic attitudes. Rather than a formal hierarchy, merit and accomplishment determined the pecking order within the organisation;

30 Interview with the first coordinator.

31 Interview with Steve Sawyer.

32 IISH, GPIA, Folder 958, Documents concerning the European Communities Unit (EC Unit) 1990–1992, Memo from Roger Wilson to all European Trustees.

33 IISH, GPIA, Folder 957, Documents concerning the European Communities Unit (EC Unit) 1990–1992, Report on EC-Unit Visit 3 Aug. 1990.

34 IISH, GPIA, Folder 958, Documents concerning the European Communities Unit (EC Unit) 1990–1992, Letter of Resignation first coordinator, 11 Aug. 1990.

Entering the European Political Arena, Adapting to Europe

Executive Director Sawyer, reflecting on the group's early days, recalled that founding members often found themselves in competition with one another. Sawyer's description of his own attitude is illustrative: when someone criticised his strategy, he would retort: 'You think it's a waste of time? Okay, just crawl back into whatever hole you came from, until you can put something on the table that you have achieved.'³⁵ In short, visible results, primarily in terms of successful campaigns, were key to gaining legitimacy. This meritocratic culture proved difficult for the EC-Unit, as it could not easily demonstrate tangible results. The primary activities of the Unit, after all, were distributing information and establishing a lobbying network. Concrete outcomes were achieved, such as its successful campaign against the use of drift nets (1989–1991),³⁶ the ban on the import of seal fur and new restrictions on the export of hazardous waste (1991).³⁷ But because these successes were parts of broader campaigns and because the role of the EC-Unit was not always clearly defined, the Unit often did not receive credit where it was due. This, combined with the relatively high overhead costs of maintaining the Unit, raised additional doubts about its viability.³⁸

The position of the EC-Unit on the supranational level equally hampered its status within the organisation, given that Greenpeace is essentially made up of self-governing national offices. This too was more than a simple struggle over discretion: the debate within the organisation over the degree of centralisation needed for successful operations has raged since day one. Among Greenpeace International's leadership, advocates of a more decentralised organisation were viewed with suspicion. In the 1980s and 1990s, key figures often warned about growing nationalism within the environmental movement, with some even arguing that divisions between national offices was one of the biggest threats the organisation faced.³⁹ If national interests were to get the upper hand, international goals and campaigns

35 Interview with Steve Sawyer.

36 Interview with the first coordinator.

37 Ch. Hey and U. Brendle, *Environmental Organizations and the EC: Action Options of Environmental Organizations for Improving Environmental Consciousness and Environmental Policy in the European Community* (Freiburg: EURES, 1992), p. 10; interview with the first coordinator of the EC-Unit.

38 IISH, GPIA, Folder 5332, EC Unit Correspondence 1992, Memo by Roger Wilson to the EC-Unit concerning a skills sharing workshop; Interview with Steve Sawyer.

39 IISH, GPIA, Folder 454, General correspondence of the International (Campaign) Directors. With other related documents 1990, Steve Sawyer, Overview of the Global Environmental situation and Greenpeace's Role 1990; Folder 6383, Structure Working Group, Documents concerning the Structure Working Group (SWG) 1992, Comments on the questionnaire on structure by Roger Wilson, 1992.

would suffer. Leaders were convinced that an international approach and a strong, centralised Greenpeace International were needed to promote the environmental cause.⁴⁰ In 1988, the founder of Greenpeace International, David McTaggart, and Executive Director Steve Sawyer noted in a joint interview that Greenpeace had always had to navigate carefully: 'The eternal struggle is to overcome the inbred provincialism and nationalism and keep Greenpeace focused internationally.'⁴¹

Against this backdrop the EC-Unit worked to involve the national branches as much as possible. This proved difficult, however, as these offices were used to founding and coordinating their own national campaigns. Moreover, national offices had differing views as to which campaigns should be prioritised. Suggestions by the EC-Unit to better coordinate the efforts of the national offices towards Brussels, for example through regular meetings with those offices whose countries were in line for the EC presidency, found little support.⁴² This was illustrative of a fundamental clash within Greenpeace, between the desire to remain a grassroots organisation concerned with local issues and the necessity to centralise in order to have a real impact.

A final ideological predicament for the EC-Unit was the broad resentment within Greenpeace towards the very nature of the European project. While it appears that Greenpeace leadership recognised the importance of European integration for environmental policymaking, many campaigners and supporters were suspicious of what they saw as an attempt to forge a capitalist super-state.⁴³ Recall these activists' dislike of institutions such as the IMF and GATT; after all, Greenpeace seeks to fundamentally alter the capitalist world order. Moreover, the prospect of the common market failed to enthuse environmental activists, many of whom feared that it was simply a ploy to create bigger markets for industry, which would not bode well for the environment.⁴⁴

The opacity of the decision-making process in Europe further aggravated

40 Ibid.

41 IISH, GPIA, Folder 296, Correspondence of the Board 1988, Article 'Daredevils of the Environment'.

42 IISH, GPIA, Folder 957, Documents concerning the European Communities Unit (EC Unit), Minutes, 7 May 1990; Folder 5351, Documents concerning the EC project. 1991, Memo by Roger Wilson to numerous people at toxics and the EC-Unit.

43 IISH, GPIA, Folder 958, Documents concerning the European Communities Unit (EC Unit), 1990–1992, Letter to Kenneth Collins, 22 May 1991.

44 Ibid.

Entering the European Political Arena, Adapting to Europe

suspensions towards the EC. The first coordinator's successor, who had himself been a member of the European Parliament, suspected that European law-making was deliberately designed to be complicated and vague so that people would stay blind to its undemocratic nature.⁴⁵ Furthermore, EC-Unit staff lacked a detailed understanding of the institutional architecture of the EC and struggled to identify which institutions were most important in influencing policy. Between 1988 and 1990, for instance, Greenpeace campaigners spent the majority of their time trying to influence agenda-setting through MEPs, failing to recognise that the European Parliament had far fewer competencies than its national counterparts in this regard.⁴⁶ This ignorance must be understood, of course, in the context of a European Community that was still very much in full flux. Campaigners often complained: 'We simply have no idea how important developments in the community are going to impact upon our campaigns.'⁴⁷

The outsider within Europe

Contrary to the scepticism of many activists within Greenpeace, environmental policy did develop in the 1990s into an important European policy domain. Since the late 1980s, the European Commission and its Directorate-General for Environment (DG XI) had stimulated cooperation with environmental organisations. DG XI actively encouraged environmental NGOs, for example, to establish themselves at the European level and granted financial support to these groups in return for their expertise; as a small organisation when it was established, the Directorate-General was in some ways forced to rely on the input provided by NGOs.⁴⁸ Its support for non-governmental groups had a reciprocal effect: the involvement of NGOs in the activities of DG XI amplified support among activists for European environmental policy-making, thereby legitimising its existence.⁴⁹ In the other direction, this arrangement provided environmental organisations with direct access to the Directorate-General,

45 Ibid.

46 IISH, GPIA, Folder 5351, Toxics: Documents concerning the EC project. 1991, Comments to Memo on the Development of the EC-Unit, 14 July 1991; Folder 5328, Minutes of the EC-Unit internal meeting 1990–1992, EC Toxics Strategy meeting Draft minutes, 17 Jan. 1992.

47 IISH, GPIA, Folder 5339, Contacts with the EC-Unit in Brussels, Correspondence concerning policy. 1988–1989, Letter by Andy Stirling to Ernst Klatte, 9 June 1989.

48 S. Mazey and J. Richardson, 'Environmental groups and the European Community: Challenges and opportunities', in Jordan (ed.), *Environmental Policy*, pp. 106–121, 114–15.

49 Ibid.

which enabled them to exert influence on environmental policy from within.

European-level developments led Greenpeace to reconsider its strategies. The organisation traditionally employed what is known as 'outside-lobbying': through confrontational protest tactics, it sought to pressure political organisations into changing their policies. In other words, Greenpeace tried to impose its own agenda on national policymakers instead of integrating itself into an already existing agenda, as is the case with 'inside lobbying'. But within the European Community, in part due to the lack of an integrated public sphere, the exercise of public pressure proved much less effective, as European politicians and policymakers were considerably less accountable than their national counterparts. This is primarily due to the fact that European Parliament elections are often dominated by national rather than European issues; it is often suggested that 'outside' strategies are in general less effective in Europe than they are at home in individual Member States.⁵⁰

Greenpeace's stance on governments of any kind, be they national or supranational, has always been highly critical. In the course of its history, the organisation has invested much time and energy in guarding its independence from political institutions, with activists' use of partisan political channels as detestable as the use of violence.⁵¹ Greenpeace maintained this position vis-à-vis the European Commission. It refused financial support from DG XI, even though this meant the end of direct access to the Directorate-General, unlike the WWF and FoE. The ideological independence so typical of Greenpeace was complimented by its so-called 'issue-based approach', in which specific projects determined the agenda of the organisation rather than a long-term strategy. As could be expected, this did not work well in Brussels, and the first EC-Unit coordinator pushed a connection to the European policy agenda as an absolute necessity. Additionally, it proved difficult to establish a productive dialogue with politicians and policymakers while at the same time planning and executing confrontational campaigns.

50 S. Princen, 'Agenda-setting in the European Union: A theoretical exploration and agenda for research', *Journal of European Public Policy* 14 (1) (2007): 21–38, 31–32; J.-H. Meyer, 'Getting started: Agenda-setting in European Environmental policy in the 1970s', in J. Laursen (ed.), *The Institutions and Dynamics of the European Community, 1973–83* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2014), pp. 221–42. It is important to observe that none of the environmental NGOs active in Europe resorts exclusively to inside or outside lobbying: see J. P. Richards and S. Heard, 'European Environmental NGOs: Issues, resources and strategies in marine campaigns', *Environmental Politics* 14 (1) (2005): 23–41, 32.

51 IISH, GPIA, Folder 454, General correspondence of the International (Campaign) Directors. With other related documents 1990, Steve Sawyer, Overview of the Global Environmental situation and Greenpeace's Role 1989.

Entering the European Political Arena, Adapting to Europe

Starting in 1991, Greenpeace International underwent significant organisational changes that had major implications for the EC-Unit. Following its explosive growth in the 1980s, Greenpeace saw a levelling-out and then decline in its revenue at the end of the decade, as expenses kept rising. This necessitated a re-evaluation of the organisation's budget. There were also operational considerations behind the restructure, which should be contextualised within a broader professionalisation of the environmental movement at this time. Greenpeace's executive director felt that, in order to run the organisation more smoothly, decision-making had to be streamlined in such a way as to relieve him of his heavy workload. For the EC-Unit, this seems to have had a positive effect, as the reorganisation led to a more clear-cut position within the organisation as a whole. From 1992, the coordinator supervised all staff of the Unit directly where before they had officially been part of the campaigns.⁵²

These organisational changes likely enhanced the effectiveness of the EC-Unit and Greenpeace within the EC. While Greenpeace has remained true to its identity as an activist organisation, it has managed to integrate its focus on specific environmental issues within a European strategy. Today, Greenpeace holds a unique position as a more activist organisation within the wider European environmental movement.⁵³ The group's financial and political independence allows it to take extreme positions and organise disruptive actions against European policies. By occupying the extreme flank of the green movement, it creates additional space for other environmental organisations to focus on cooperation and negotiation with European institutions. Other environmental groups recognise Greenpeace's role in creating public awareness. They even consider it necessary for strengthening their own bargaining position.⁵⁴ For the environmental movement as a whole, the diversity of organisations and strategies has turned out to be a major strength; Greenpeace has managed to find a position that enables it to contribute to shared environmentalist goals without having to sacrifice its identity.⁵⁵

52 IISH, GPIA, Folder 958, Documents concerning the European Communities Unit (EC Unit) 1990–1992, Mail from Roger Wilson to EC Unit staff, 8 Nov. 1991.

53 Richards and Heard, 'European Environmental NGOs', pp. 33–34.

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid., pp. 34–35.



Entering the European arena and becoming an effective player proved a difficult process for Greenpeace. As for most environmental organisations, the shift of environmental policymaking from the national to the European level forced Greenpeace to retool. It tried to adapt to the European policy process without jeopardising its own values and identity. For an NGO like Greenpeace, which combines fierce political independence with a confrontational activist approach, situating itself within the broader European environmental movement proved quite a challenge. Although the decision to become active in Brussels was motivated by the desire within the leadership of the organisation to exert real influence on the international level, there were no clear-cut, pre-established strategies for the creation of a European office. The transition was a gradual and difficult learning process without precedent, of which the outcome was unclear in advance.

This case study suggests that the manner in which and extent to which environmental organisations adapt to the European political arena upon entering it are highly dependent on their organisational culture, identity and internal dynamics. With Greenpeace being organised along thematic (campaigns) and national lines and geared towards visible results, the EC-Unit experienced major difficulties fitting in. Only five years after the establishment of the EC-Unit would it obtain a more autonomous position within the organisation as the result of a general reorganisation of Greenpeace. Moreover, critical attitudes within the organisation towards the European Community, its capitalist outlook and opaque decision-making structures hampered the effective coordination of strategies and actions within Greenpeace. The result was a process of trial and error, which reflected the uneasy shift of Greenpeace from an outsider to an insider role in the European political arena.