Towards a 'Europe of Struggles'? Three Visions of Europe in the Early Anti-Nuclear Energy Movement, 1975-79

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Introduction

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 (Radkau 2011), 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 'Open Discussions on Nuclear Energy' in 1977–78 (Meyer 2013). In West Germany—often regarded as an environmental leader (Uekötter 2014)—well-known campaigners like Petra Kelly openly professed hopes that anti-nuclear protest would foster European internationalism (Milder 2010). 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 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 placed-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 Bürgerinitiativen 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 (Nelkin and Pollak 1981, pp. 126–9). 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 (Imig and Tarrow 2001). 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 (Monforte 2014).

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 ('Appel' 1979). 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, 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 20 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 re-assert themselves more visibly in the 1990s and 2000s within the Global Justice Movement (Rivat 2013, Gildea and Tompkins 2015).

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 (e.g. 'Grenznahe Atomanlagen' 1981). Indeed, the earliest protests against nuclear energy took place in the borderlands of the Upper Rhine Valley, where French Alsace and German Baden met 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 on 12 April to the gates of the future power plant. 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 (Kupper 2003). 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 (Ministère de l'Industrie et de la Recherche 1974).[1] The nuclear projects were central to development plans intended to turn the region into a 'showcase' industrial economy at the heart of Western Europe (Nössler and de Witt 1976, p. 257). However, protest throughout the region was

[1] The inclusion of these sites did not necessarily mean that each was planned, only that they were among the geographically suited choices. Activists nevertheless were concerned that the entire region might be given away to nuclear energy infrastructure.

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' (Zahra 2010), 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 (Milder 2017, pp. 32-3), 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 (Comité pour la Sauvegarde de Fessenheim et la plaine du Rhin 1971). 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 (Rettig 2007). For Esther and Jean-Jacques as Alsatians, 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 de Gaulle and Adenauer who shook hands, but the grassroots as well!' (Rettig 2010).

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 10 km 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, they 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 (Haug and Schirmer 2010). 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 turn, consciously constructing a legend (Kenney 2004, pp. 210-11) 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 (Kießling 2001). The 16th-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 (Engels 2006, p. 358). 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 (Büchele et al. 1982, Nössler and de Witt 1976): there are only 3 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).[2] Interestingly, the second book also makes frequent reference to 'Dreyeckland' (67 occurrences), a

[2] 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).

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 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 (initially 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' (Burkhart 1977). 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. 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 kejje mol d'Granze üewer e Hüffe un tanze drum erum*", that is, "We throw the border onto a pile and dance around it". ... In principle,

it was the overpowering [or] overcoming of the border and a bit of living [*gelebtes*] "Europe"' (Mayer 2010). 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 (Tompkins 2011). This nuclear facility, to be constructed by the transnational consortium NERSA (*Centrale Nucléaire Européenne à neutrons Rapides, Société Anonyme*),[3] 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' ('Pourquoi refuser' 1976).

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 (Saitcevsky 1979). 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 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' ('Sommer nach Malville' 1977) and described NERSA as part of the 'international nuclear mafia' ('Malville Erfahrungsbericht' 1977).

Figure 1: Financial relationships of NERSA (Saitcevsky 1979, p. 598)

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

In response to this corporate transnationalisation, activists proposed to Europeanise protest: as one German flyer put it, 'in order to put a stop to 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 ('Auf nach Malville' 1977). 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' (David 2010). 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 factions. For example, advocates of nonviolent direct action organised a 'serpent of struggles' (Cabut 1977) 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). 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' ('Internationaler Marsch' 1977). 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, *l'étincelle* (OCT 1977). 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!' (KB/OCT 'Nieder mit.../À bas...' 1977). An accompanying article described preparations for a

'Europe of Cops' (KB/OCT 'Europa der Bullen' 1977) and noted that TREVI[4] discussions were being prioritised over plans for direct elections to the European Parliament.

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'. Jannin claimed he would 'take the measures necessary' to protect the 'national [public] good' (*bien national*) that the reactor site represented (Antenne 2 'Interdiction' 1977).

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 Army Faction (RAF) 'terrorists' ('Malville' 1977, Antenne 2 'Creys-Malville' 1977). 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' (Hurst 1977). 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' (Rabatel 1977).

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

[4] 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.

injuries—all inflicted by the stun grenades and exploding tear gas grenades employed by police.[5] 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'. New anchor Jean-Claude Bourret then asked Bonnet about the protesters, framing the question in a way that linked West Germans with violence.[6] 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, and who we are identifying through cooperation among members of the [European] Community' (TF1 1977). 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 (NERSA 1977). 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 6 km out and stopping the march 1 km from the site. The police report (Roy 1977) also credits NERSA with supplying a film about German protests, which was shown to all unit commanders prior to the Malville demonstration. 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

[5] The thirty-one-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.

[6] *« 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 ? »*

local leadership, arguing that those most directly affected should ultimately decide the strategy. However, locals in Malville had little experience of protest and were unprepared to lead supporters who greatly outnumbered them. David now argues 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 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' (David 2010). 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 (Les européens contre Superphénix 1994). 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 1500-km 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 Ministerpräsident 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 the European Parliament: 'After the Europe of parliamentarians, it

is time to make the Europe of struggles and the Europe of peoples' (de Boissieu and Pineau 1979, Wetter 1979).

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 each. 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 'married' their struggle to that of the striking workers of the Lip watch factory in Besançon (Vigna 2008, Reid 2018). Building on this success, the farmers launched a programme of 'Larzacs everywhere' in 1975, allying themselves with other local groups opposing Fontevraud military base as well as nuclear power stations in Blayais, Malville and Plogoff. The farmers also attracted national attention with a dramatic, 700-km 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 (see 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.

Figure 2: Routes of Gorleben marches converging on Hannover on 31 March 1979 ('Aufruf zur Demonstration' 1979).

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 (Hoffmann and Mossmann 1973, Mossmann 2009). 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 (Hertle 1982). Other activists encountered the Larzac through ordinary tourism, as residents held 'open farm' events during

vacation periods or organised summertime political events (Ott 2010). Ethical consumers might purchase Occitan wine from a politically conscious sales network that included more than 80 groups across West Germany (*Das Fass ist voll* 1978). One such 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 ('Freundeskreis-Info' 1980).[7] The Hamburg group overlapped with a 'Larzac Circle of Friends', whose members helped organise the September 1979 Larzac visit to Gorleben and who later published a book of interviews from the Larzac (Burmeister and Tonnätt 1981).

All of 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 ('Plus de 100 Allemands' 1979). On the plateau, these Germans hosted informational events about Gorleben, which was then fast emerging as a hub of protest in their own country ('Même combat' 1979). 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 ('Larzac veut leben' 1979, 'Der gleiche Kampf!' 1979). 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' (Frey 1980).

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* Maffre-Baugé (Smith 2016), they attempted (apparently without success)[8] to get the European Parliament (EP) to discuss their case. 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 left the entire collection among the flowers in the corridor (Hano 1980). A year later, Veil's office was forced to defend itself from accusations of handing the papers to the French

[7] The name P(r)OVO (*Politische Ökonomie/Offensive Verkaufs-Organisation*) played on memories of the Dutch Provos, a group active in the late 1960s.
[8] 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.

Ministry of Defence after several individuals were reportedly prosecuted for abandoning their military papers (Vandemeulebroucke 1981, Veil 1981).[9] 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 briefly 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 (Gildea and Tompkins 2015, pp. 599–602). 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 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 Form (WSF) and a key venue for activism within the Global Justice Movement (GJM) of the late 1990s and early 2000s (Della Porta 2009). 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 30th 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.[10] 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, 30 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.

[9] 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'.
[10] 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.

Conclusion

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 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 (Tompkins 2016, pp. 93-4), 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 ('Demonstration in Thionville' 1979).[11] 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' (Hoffmann 232/79, 233/79, Drucksache des Deutschen Bundestages 1979).

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 (1979) 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. The Commission's answer echoed almost verbatim the one previously given by the German government, suggesting prior coordination.[12] 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 (Plenarprotokoll des Deutschen Bundestages 1979, pp. 12678-9). For its part, the European Council (1979) simply deigned not to answer, stating that 'it

[11] 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.

[12] The Commission's draft responses can also be found in West German Interior Ministry files in Koblenz, Bundesarchiv, B 106/107375.

does not fall within the competency of the Council to respond to [*se prononcer sur*] the question evoked by the Honourable Parliamentarian'.

Most environmentalists' perceptions of European institutions have improved greatly 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 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 largely unintended consequence of anti-nuclear activism.

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