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# Grassroots Transnationalism(s):

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## Franco–German Opposition to

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### Nuclear Energy in the 1970s

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#### Abstract

*During the 1970s opposition to nuclear energy was present in countries around the world and thus eminently ‘transnational’. But what did it mean to participate at the grassroots of such a transnational movement and (how) did cross-border connections change protest? This article answers these questions by differentiating three categories of transnational engagement that were accessible to grassroots activists. ‘Thinking transnationally’ involved extrapolating from, decontextualising and recontextualising limited information in order to rethink one’s own situation. ‘Acting transnationally’ entailed accessing transnational spaces; it therefore required more mobility, but could be useful as a means of challenging and deconstructing state power. Intermediaries at the grassroots engaged in ‘being transnational’, which affected their personal and political identities as well as life histories. These examples of transnational agency illustrate how grassroots activists, including some without vast wealth or institutional resources, participated in transnational processes in ways that enriched, but also complicated protest.*

During the 1970s opposition to civil nuclear energy became a mass movement in countries around the world, including Austria, Denmark, France, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States and West Germany, among others. Almost everywhere new nuclear facilities were proposed, protesters united against what they regarded as technocratic intrusions into local communities, harbingers of a security-obsessed ‘nuclear state’ and/or threats to the health of entire populations. As this range of motivations suggests, the interests of different constituencies (left and right, rural and urban, ‘militant’ and ‘non-violent’) did not always align completely, but they were remarkably similar across sites – especially in France and West Germany, where protests were closely interrelated. As with feminism, human rights and other ‘new social movements’ of the era, anti-nuclear activism linked disparate local struggles within global networks, enabling information, practices and even activists themselves to circulate widely across national

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*Contemporary European History*, 25, 1 (2016), pp. 117–142. © Cambridge University Press 2016  
doi:[10.1017/S0960777315000508](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777315000508)

borders.<sup>1</sup> Anti-nuclear protests developed in parallel to, and in tandem with, one another at sites around the world, forging a movement that was by most definitions eminently ‘transnational’. Yet, as Padraic Kenney reminds us, this term is often overused: ‘one should ask whether the concept of “transnational” actually adds something to the way we see events’.<sup>2</sup> What did it really mean for individuals to take part in a transnational movement at this time? How did grassroots activists participate in cross-border protest and (why) did transnational connections actually matter?

This article argues that transnational connections made a difference by changing the way grassroots protest functioned – though not always in the ways activists wanted or expected. Indeed, protesters usually ignored the complexity that transnational connections introduced, emphasising a limited, ‘arithmetic’ form of transnationalism in which foreign comrades were grouped by nationality and lined up to show the strength and diversity of protest. As with today’s ‘Twitter revolutions’ and ‘Facebook protests’, anti-nuclear activists (and the media) also frequently exaggerated the importance of relatively superficial cross-border ties. After all, for most people concerned with stopping ‘their’ local power station, international solidarity was distinctly secondary in importance. The challenge for the historian of protest is thus to examine seriously the transnational contacts and networks that grassroots activists developed while remaining sensitive to their great variations and often limited character.

This article applies insights from different approaches to transnational history in order to analyse cross-border ties within the anti-nuclear movement.<sup>3</sup> Many histories of the post-1945 period have examined protest from ‘1968’ to human rights, environmentalism and other ‘new social movements’ using the tools and sources

<sup>1</sup> The term ‘new social movements’ (NSMs) was widely used by social scientists until the late 1990s to describe protest that was supposedly concerned with post-materialist issues or identities rather than material, class-based interests. It has fallen into disuse as scholars have increasingly questioned the novelty of such movements and the assumptions about prior protest on which it depends. See Jan Willem Duyvendak, *The Power of Politics: New Social Movements in France* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1995); Ruud Koopmans, *Democracy from Below: New Social Movements and the Political System in West Germany* (Boulder: Westview, 1995); Hanspeter Kriesi, Ruud Koopmans, Jan Willem Duyvendak and Marco G. Giugni, *New Social Movements in Western Europe: A Comparative Analysis* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995); David Plotke, ‘What’s So New About New Social Movements?’, in Stanford M. Lyman, ed., *Social Movements: Critiques, Concepts, Case-Studies* (London: Macmillan, 1995), 113–36; Lorna Weir, ‘Limitations of New Social Movement Analysis’, *Studies in Political Economy*, 40 (1993), 73–99.

<sup>2</sup> Padraic Kenney, ‘Borders Breached: The Transnational in Eastern Europe since Solidarity’, *Journal of Modern European History*, 8, 2 (2010), 179–95, here 182.

<sup>3</sup> This is informed by the debate on entangled history, as elaborated in Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, ‘Penser l’histoire croisée : entre empirie et réflexivité’, *Annales*, 58, 1 (2003), 7–36. See also Jürgen Kocka, ‘Comparison and Beyond’, *History and Theory*, 42, 1 (2003), 39–44; Hartmut Kaelble, ‘Die Debatte über Vergleich und Transfer und was jetzt?’, *H-Soz-u-Kult*, 8.2.05 (2005); Simone Lässig, ‘Übersetzungen in der Geschichte – Geschichte als Übersetzung?’, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 38, 2 (2012), 189–216.

of intellectual, diplomatic and organisational history.<sup>4</sup> Such research has helpfully illustrated the extent and limits of transnational connections, shown how ideas change through transfer and argued consistently that non-state actors affected international relations. However, such studies give disproportionate attention to institutionalised forms of protest and prominent figures, a focus that becomes particularly problematic when magnified and narrowed through the lens of the media.<sup>5</sup> A smaller but significant portion of the literature on protest has examined transnational ties from the perspective of social history, highlighting transnational influences in everyday life, the cross-border agency of non-élite actors and the importance of global imaginings.<sup>6</sup> Like these studies, this article approaches the transnational dimensions of the anti-nuclear movement by closely examining relationships amongst its individual participants and local components. As such it draws on oral history interviews in addition to police reports, mainstream media and protest ephemera from regional and activist archives.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> On 1968, see Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Detente* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); Jeremy Varon, *Bringing the War Home: The Weather Underground, the Red Army Faction, and Revolutionary Violence in the Sixties and Seventies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Richard Wolin, *The Wind from the East: French Intellectuals, the Cultural Revolution, and the Legacy of the 1960s* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010). On human rights, see Jan Eckel, *Die Ambivalenz des Guten. Menschenrechte in der internationalen Politik seit den 1940ern* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014); Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2010). On environmentalism, see John McCormick, *The Global Environmental Movement*, 2nd edn (Chichester: Wiley, 1995); Frank Zelko, *Make it a Green Peace! The Rise of Countercultural Environmentalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>5</sup> Kristin Ross has argued that commemorations of 1968 in the French media led to the personalisation (around a handful of media-savvy protagonists) of a collective story. Analogously, one might argue that mass media have 'nationalised' for domestic consumption an otherwise markedly transnational narrative. Kristin Ross, *May 68 and its Afterlives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

<sup>6</sup> Belinda Davis, 'A Whole World Opening Up: Transcultural Contact, Difference, and the Politicization of 'New Left' Activists', in Belinda Davis, Wilfried Mausbach, Martin Klimke and Carla MacDougall, eds., *Changing the World, Changing Oneself* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 255–73; Robert Gildea, James Mark and Anette Warring, eds., *Europe's 1968: Voices of Revolt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Padraic Kenney, *A Carnival of Revolution: Central Europe 1989* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Holger Nehring, 'National Internationalists: British and West German Protests against Nuclear Weapons, the Politics of Transnational Communications and the Social History of the Cold War, 1957–1964', *Contemporary European History*, 14, 4 (2005), 559–82; Sean Scalmer, *Gandhi in the West: The Mahatma and the Rise of Radical Protest* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Quinn Slobodian, *Foreign Front: Third World Politics in Sixties West Germany* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012).

<sup>7</sup> This study draws on sixty-four individual and group interviews with (former) anti-nuclear activists born between 1929 and 1962. Interviews were conducted in French and German, averaged 90–120 minutes in length and followed a life history format. Activist archives and existing organisations helped establish contact with initial interviewees, who then suggested further interview partners. Most interviewees were grassroots activists (including local leaders, but seldom nationally known ones) engaged in one or more of approximately ten specific local struggles of (trans)national importance. Special attention was given to identifying activists with foreign contacts. On the utility of oral history for examining protest, see Robert Gildea and James Mark, 'Introduction: Voices of Europe's '68', *Cultural and Social History*, 8, 44 (2011), 441–48; more generally, see Alessandro Portelli, 'The Peculiarities of Oral History', *History Workshop Journal*, 12 (1981), 96–107.

This article is divided into three sections, each addressing different forms of transnational agency that were broadly accessible, but which required increasing levels of cross-border mobility. The first, ‘thinking transnationally’, examines how activists deployed information and ideas from abroad in order to change protest at home, often without themselves setting foot in a foreign country. A second section, ‘acting transnationally’, analyses how activists put transnational elements (such as foreign demonstrators and transnational spaces) to practical use, thereby changing the forms and meanings of protest. The final section, ‘being transnational’, explores the biographies of several transnational intermediaries and shows how exceptionally intense cross-border ties affected their identities. Taken together, these sections illustrate a range of possibilities for transnational engagement that were available to movement participants of all kinds, including those who protested casually, sporadically or outside of organised groups.

Forms of transnational thinking, acting and being can be traced as far back as the nation state itself (if not further). Indeed, scholarship on ‘national indifference’ has repeatedly shown ways in which individuals defied or actively resisted categorisation by states and nationalist movements in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>8</sup> After the Second World War, transnationalism took on different form and new significance as a result of the tensions between a rigid, international system of relatively homogenous nation states on the one hand and increasing opportunities to cross borders as a consequence of ‘globalisation’ on the other.<sup>9</sup> In the 1970s global integration processes began accelerating dramatically, making that decade in some sense ‘the beginnings of our modernity’, as Hartmut Kaelble has described it.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, contemporaries felt themselves to be entering *post*-modernity, or perhaps a post-Fordist, post-industrial world in which the pace and scale of change were suddenly increasing.<sup>11</sup> The growth of environmentalism was but one symptom of this, and its highly visible anti-nuclear wing benefitted from a peculiar constellation of developments.<sup>12</sup>

Nuclear energy itself was hardly new, but earlier protests against power stations had remained largely confined to affected communities defending their material

<sup>8</sup> See especially James E. Bjork, *Neither German nor Pole: Catholicism and National Indifference in a Central European Borderland* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2008); Pieter Judson, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); Tara Zahra, ‘Imagined Noncommunities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis’, *Slavic Review*, 69, 1 (2010), 93–119.

<sup>9</sup> On this period, see also Penny von Eschen, ‘Locating the Transnational in the Cold War’, in Robert H. Immerman and Petra Goedda, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 451–68.

<sup>10</sup> Andreas Wirsching, Göran Therborn, Geoff Eley, Hartmut Kaelble and Philippe Chassaigne, ‘Forum: The 1970s and 1980s as a Turning Point in European History?’, *Journal of Modern European History*, 9, 1 (2011), 8–26, here 20.

<sup>11</sup> See Matthew Connelly, ‘Future Shock’, in Niall Ferguson, Charles S. Maier, Erez Manela and Daniel J. Sargent, eds., *The Shock of the Global: The 1970s in Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2010), 337–50.

<sup>12</sup> Frank Uekötter, *Am Ende der Gewissheiten. Die ökologische Frage im 21. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2011), 80–111.

interests, only occasionally joined by pacifists or nature protectionists making more general arguments about the implications of nuclear technology.<sup>13</sup> In the 1970s, by contrast, the simultaneous construction of power stations at many different sites allowed informal networks to emerge that linked place-based solidarities into a broader popular movement.<sup>14</sup> Traditional actors and newly politicised groups jointly redefined nuclear energy as a symbol of the ills of contemporary society: farmers and environmentalists worried about uncontrollable industrialisation, pacifists and anarchists feared a militarised police state, housewives and feminists discussed consequences for health and childbearing, hippies and unorthodox communists opposed consumer capitalism at its bleeding edge.<sup>15</sup> In the atmosphere of that decade, transnational contact among all these groups became itself part of a political programme, as anti-nuclear and other so-called ‘new social movements’ questioned the boundaries between global and local, personal and political. Like the nationally indifferent populations of earlier periods, participants in these movements challenged national categories, moving between spaces and identities in order to preserve their autonomy from states and ‘politics’.

Within 1970s Western Europe, ties between grassroots anti-nuclear activists in France and West Germany were particularly strong, and, given the weight of past history, particularly striking. Protests against nuclear facilities along the Franco-German border were amongst the first to take place in Europe and served as a model for anti-nuclear activism around the world.<sup>16</sup> However, connections between anti-nuclear and other ‘new social movement’ activists in these two countries extended well beyond the border region, linking geographically dispersed protest sites (including Brokdorf, Gorleben and Kalkar in West Germany as well as La Hague, Malville and Plogoff in France). Activism enabled numerous ‘improbable encounters’, including domestic cross-class and *translocal* interactions that were as important

<sup>13</sup> On the history and range of actors involved in environmental and anti-nuclear protest in France and West Germany, see Michael Bess, *The Light-Green Society: Ecology and Technological Modernity in France, 1960–2000* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Jens Ivo Engels, *Naturpolitik in der Bundesrepublik: Ideenwelt und politische Verhaltensstile in Naturschutz und Umweltbewegung 1950–1980* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2006); Ute Hasenöhr, *Zivilgesellschaft und Protest: Eine Geschichte der Naturschutz- und Umweltbewegung in Bayern 1945–1980* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011); Gabrielle Hecht, *The Radiance of France: Nuclear Power and National Identity after World War II* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998); Silke Mende, ‘Nicht rechts, nicht links, sondern vorn’: *Eine Geschichte der Gründungsgrünen* (München: Oldenbourg, 2011). On right-wing environmentalism in Germany (not discussed in detail here), see also Jonathan Olsen, *Nature and Nationalism: Right-wing Ecology and the Politics of Identity in Contemporary Germany* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999); Joachim Radkau and Frank Uekötter, eds., *Naturschutz und Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2003).

<sup>14</sup> For a partial review of the social science literature on ‘place-making’, see Walter Nicholls, ‘Place, Networks, Space: Theorising the Geographies of Social Movements’, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 34, 1 (2009), 78–93. On ‘popular politics’, see Belinda Davis, ‘What’s Left? Popular Political Participation in Postwar Europe’, *American Historical Review*, 113, 2 (2008), 363–90.

<sup>15</sup> The motivations of – and tensions between – anti-nuclear protesters are discussed in further detail in Andrew Tompkins, *Better Active than Radioactive! Anti-Nuclear Protest in 1970s France and West Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016 forthcoming).

<sup>16</sup> See Dieter Rucht, *Von Wyhl nach Gorleben. Bürger gegen Atomprogramm und nukleare Entsorgung* (München: C.H. Beck, 1980).

and as complicated as transnational ones.<sup>17</sup> Despite this, transnational protest was significant because of the way it exploited differences between languages, national histories, protest traditions and legal jurisdictions.<sup>18</sup> Although French and German protesters occasionally presented themselves as part of a ‘European’ movement, their networks were neither fully contained within (Western) Europe, nor the beneficiaries of direct assistance from its official institutions.<sup>19</sup> Though chronologically and geographically specific, connections between French and West German activists in the 1970s illustrate some of the possibilities and pitfalls of transnational protest more generally.<sup>20</sup>

### Thinking Transnationally

The most accessible forms of transnational engagement involved drawing information and ideas from abroad, without necessarily requiring foreign travel or contacts. For many activists foreign countries were most important as ‘outside’ space, governed by rules and shaped by traditions which were unfamiliar – and which therefore did not place the same limits on their creativity. Thinking transnationally therefore involved extrapolating from, decontextualising and recontextualising limited information that could be used as a foil to rethink local anti-nuclear protest – and often to reconceive it in terms of a broader political issue.

<sup>17</sup> Xavier Vigna and Michelle Zancarini-Fournel, ‘Les rencontres improbables dans « les années 68 »’, *Vingtième siècle*, 101, 1 (2009), 163–77.

<sup>18</sup> Many of the processes described below were as much translocal as they were transnational, but gained greatly in symbolic significance when they crossed state boundaries. Transnational communication across dramatic cultural differences could also take place within a shared language, as it did for Gandhian pacifists in India and the United States. See Sean Chabot, ‘Framing, Transnational Diffusion, and African-American Intellectuals in the Land of Gandhi’, *International Review of Social History*, 49, Supplement (2004), 19–40, here 35.

<sup>19</sup> More often, European institutions were *targets* of protest, sometimes by nuclear opponents within their ranks, such as Petra Kelly. However, the ‘Europe from below’ to which many grassroots activists referred was defined in explicit opposition to such institutions, which funded nuclear projects and fostered police cooperation. French and German activists often referred to ‘Europe’ primarily in the narrower sense of post-war reconciliation. The early anti-nuclear movement’s transnationalism and (lack of) engagement with ‘Europe’ thus differed considerably from those of subsequent Green parties. See Stephen Milder, ‘Between Grassroots Activism and Transnational Aspirations: Anti-Nuclear Protest from the Rhine Valley to the Bundestag, 1974–1983’, *Historical Social Research*, 39, 1 (2014), 191–211; Jan-Henrik Meyer, “‘Where do we go from Wylh?’ Transnational Anti-Nuclear Protest targeting European and International Organizations in the 1970s’, *Historical Social Research*, 39, 1 (2014), 212–35. See also the denunciations of ‘the Europe of Schmidt and Giscard’ and calls to create, ‘after the Europe of parliamentarians, . . . the Europe of struggles and the Europe of peoples’ in *Arbeiterkampf/l’étincelle*, 29 April 1977 and ‘Larzac en RFA’ (folder), Joseph Pineau private archives, Millau.

<sup>20</sup> This is not to say that ‘European’ or ‘global’ anti-nuclear movements can be reduced to the experiences of activists in France and West Germany, where protest was in many ways more intense than elsewhere. However, I do argue that the insights gained from studying transnational relationships between activists in these two countries are more broadly applicable, even well beyond Western Europe. For a systematic sociological comparison of anti-nuclear movements in eighteen countries, see Felix Kolb, *Protest and Opportunities: The Political Outcomes of Social Movements* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2007), 193–237.

The information most widely circulated among anti-nuclear activists pertained to knowledge about – and arguments against – nuclear technology. Technical information of varying quality and quantity moved across borders through multiple channels, including within the scientific community, via mainstream media and directly between activists. Anti-nuclear brochures and books regularly referred to an ‘international’ stock of scientific knowledge (and ‘counter-expertise’) to support activists’ claims about the dangers of nuclear technology.<sup>21</sup> However, thinking transnationally involved much more than simply gathering information from different sources. Often it involved reading multiple sets of partial information in a complementary fashion in order to identify inconsistencies, discrepancies and gaps that could be used to one’s own argumentative advantage – or to pit opponents against one another. When a nuclear power station along the Franco-German border in Fessenheim began operations in 1977, French and West German activists both demanded detailed emergency plans from their respective governments. French authorities initially refused, citing military secrecy, but felt compelled to act when partial disclosures in Germany ‘accentuate[d] again the gap on the French side between the population and the authorities’.<sup>22</sup> The French government’s ensuing information campaign was roundly mocked by French activists, who went on hunger strike to demand further information. They were supported by comrades across the border, who purloined a more complete copy of West German plans, which they then published with extensive critical commentary and in French translation.<sup>23</sup> While these activists profited from Fessenheim’s borderland location, analogous processes occurred over greater distances, with opponents of similar nuclear facilities (e.g. waste treatment centres in La Hague and Gorleben<sup>24</sup>) picking and choosing from foreign sources to further their own arguments. If higher safety standards or more careful regulations existed abroad, it could be argued that local authorities were not doing enough. Likewise, security shortcomings anywhere in the world represented dangers that might be repeated at home. Thinking transnationally about nuclear technology involved creatively comparing distinct sources of information rather than merely accumulating them.

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, the newspaper articles, informal studies and scientific reports from France, the United States, Great Britain, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Canada, Sweden, and the Netherlands brought together in Esther Peter-Davis, Anniqve Albrecht and Françoise Bucher, *Fessenheim: vie ou mort de l’Alsace* (Saales: schmitt-lucos, 1971). On counter-expertise, see Sezin Topçu, ‘Nucléaire : de l’engagement « savant » aux contre-expertises associatives’, *Natures Sciences Sociétés*, 14, 3 (2006), 249–56.

<sup>22</sup> ‘Contre-campagne antinucléaire’, 1 Oct. 1976, 1391 W 18, Archives départementales (AD) du Haut-Rhin, Colmar.

<sup>23</sup> AG Katastrophenplan, *Fessenheim Katastrophenplan* (1977); écologie et survie, *Plan ORSEC allemand* (1977).

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, Bürgerinitiative Umweltschutz Lüchow-Dannenberg, ‘Kritischer Reisebericht . . . zu den Wiederaufarbeitungsanlagen Karlsruhe und Cap de la Hague’, 16–18 May 1977, SBe 730 (box 1), Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung, Hamburg.

Ideas about protest strategy also circulated transnationally.<sup>25</sup> The key strategy during this period was the site occupation, which had potential precedents in many countries but no single point of origin. However, like recent movements including ‘Occupy Wall Street’, occupations of nuclear facility construction sites in the years 1974–1977 were part of a wave of interrelated protests whose protagonists referred to one another and transformed their strategy into a distinctive, immediately recognisable marker of mutual affinity and shared struggle.<sup>26</sup> Of course not all participants consciously imported foreign experiences, but ‘active transnational’<sup>27</sup> participants helped move ideas from place to place, often innovating as they did so.

By far the best-known site occupation in Europe took place on 23 February 1975, when a crowd of 28,000 marched onto the construction site of a nuclear power station in Wyhl, on the German side of the border in the Upper Rhine Valley. Protesters hastily erected a wooden ‘friendship house’ to anchor their claim to the space, hosting information sessions and cultural events there in the months that followed. The phenomenal success of this protest owed much to experiences only ten kilometres away on the French side of the border in Marckolsheim, where members of the local community had occupied the site of a chemical plant since September 1974.<sup>28</sup> These activists had been encouraged by well-known protests on the Larzac plateau, in southern France, where farmers opposing the expansion of a military base had held mass rallies in 1973 and 1974 and had encouraged squatters to build illegally on government land. Opponents of the Marckolsheim lead processing plant invited speakers from the Larzac struggle, built the first ‘friendship house’ (which was then expressly copied in Wyhl) and trained participants in non-violent resistance tactics that they subsequently deployed across the border. Both on the Larzac and in Marckolsheim frustration with French centralism, reinforced by specific regional identities, helped push reluctant protesters to undertake illegal civil disobedience.<sup>29</sup> Thus, what might have seemed like a distinctly French protest nevertheless also served

<sup>25</sup> Sociologists usually explain this sort of transnational thinking in terms of ‘diffusion’, while historians prefer to speak of ‘transfer’ or ‘influence’. However, these terms poorly describe long-term, recurring, multi-directional exchanges among shifting sets of actors in disparate national spaces. I thus refer below instead to a ‘transnational learning process’. On diffusion within protest movements, see Chabot, ‘Transnational Diffusion’; Padraic Kenney, ‘Opposition Networks and Transnational Diffusion in the Revolutions of 1989’, in Gerd-Rainer Horn and Padraic Kenney, eds., *Transnational Moments of Change: Europe 1945, 1968, 1989* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 207–23; Doug McAdam and Dieter Rucht, ‘The Cross-National Diffusion of Movement Ideas’, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 528, July (1993), 56–74. On more long-term learning processes, see Scalmer, *Gandhi in the West*.

<sup>26</sup> The same was true of squatters’ movements. See Ingrid Müller-Münch, Wolfgang Proisinger, Sabine Rosenblatt and Linda Stübler, *Besetzung – weil das Wünschen nicht geholfen hat* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1981).

<sup>27</sup> Timothy Scott Brown, *West Germany and the Global Sixties: The Antiauthoritarian Revolt, 1962–1978* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

<sup>28</sup> See Bernd Nössler and Margret de Witt, eds., *Kein Kernkraftwerk in Wyhl und auch sonst nirgends: Betroffene Bürger berichten* (Freiburg: Inform-Verlag, 1976), 238–42.

<sup>29</sup> Regional identities contributed to the particular strength of anti-nuclear and environmental protest across France, most notably in Alsace, Brittany and Occitanie. They were also a factor in protest mobilisation in parts of West Germany, such as South Baden and Wendland.



as a ‘dress rehearsal’ for the occupation across the border in Wyhl, where it bore even greater fruit.<sup>30</sup>

This transnational circulation of the site occupation strategy was not confined to the border area. Wyhl established a ‘legend’ to which activists in France, West Germany and elsewhere referred as they occupied (or, more often, attempted to occupy) sites from Braud-et-Saint-Louis to Brokdorf, Cattenom and Kalkar, Gravelines and Grohnde and beyond.<sup>31</sup> In mid-1975 two non-violent activists from the United States came to study Wyhl as a model and brought ideas back to those organising against the Seabrook nuclear power station in New Hampshire in 1976–1977.<sup>32</sup> In April 1977, during an attempt to temporarily and symbolically take over the Seabrook construction site, 1,400 people were arrested, attracting national and international attention.<sup>33</sup> Seabrook protesters borrowed certain ideas from Wyhl but realised their site occupation differently. Instead of guiding one enormous crowd onto the site, they organised many small affinity groups that were capable of acting independently. When West Germans initiated another major site occupation on 3 May 1980 in Gorleben, some non-violent participants referred specifically to the Seabrook affinity group model.<sup>34</sup> At the same time, Gorleben squatters expanded the ‘friendship house’ idea into an ‘anti-nuclear village’, building huts, towers, communal kitchens, showers and toilet facilities. In this space close to the East German border, they mocked state power by declaring the independence of their ‘Free Republic of Wendland’, even issuing their own ‘passports’ and setting up a checkpoint at the perimeter.<sup>35</sup> Some of these strategic ‘improvements’ were partly inspired by tactics used elsewhere within the movement’s extended networks, such as the towers that Japanese farmers built in protest against Narita airport and the passports to the self-declared ‘Freetown’ of Christiania in Copenhagen. The Gorleben protest thus represented the (provisional<sup>36</sup>) culmination of a transnational learning process, in which German activists elaborated an increasingly sophisticated strategy in tandem with French and other foreign activists, combining elements of different (and often indeterminate) origin in creative ways. Constant reinterpretation and transnational discussion allowed activists to up the ante with each new protest.

Protest strategies changed as a result of transnational thinking, not only because activists consciously adapted foreign models to suit local needs, but also because

<sup>30</sup> Marie-Reine Haug and Raymond Schirmer, Interview, 17 Apr. 2010; ‘Le Larzac rencontre l’Alsace à Marckolsheim’, 1974, 24416, Archiv Soziale Bewegungen, Freiburg.

<sup>31</sup> On ‘legend’ in transnational protest, see Kenney, ‘Opposition Networks’, 210–11.

<sup>32</sup> Joanne Sheehan and Eric Bachman, ‘Seabrook – Wyhl – Marckolsheim: Transnational Links in a Chain of Campaigns’, War Resisters’ International, available at <http://www.wri-irg.org/node/5182> (last visited 20 February 2015). Within social movements, information usually flows through multiple channels, so these contacts are likely not the only relevant ones, and they may or may not have been the most important.

<sup>33</sup> Henry F. Bedford, *Seabrook Station: Citizen Politics and Nuclear Power* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1990), 77.

<sup>34</sup> *Gorleben-Handbuch für Trainings zur Besetzung der Bohrstelle 1004*, new edn (1980).

<sup>35</sup> See Günter Zint, ed., *Republik Freies Wendland. Eine Dokumentation* (1980).

<sup>36</sup> Protests against the expansion of Frankfurt airport (*Startbahn West*), for example, continued to develop these ideas.

they usually acted with limited understanding of them. In this pre-internet age, the greater the geographic, cultural and linguistic distance from a given protest, the fewer people had access to detailed information about it.<sup>37</sup> Interested factions each selectively transported their own interpretations of foreign protest to local audiences, decontextualising and recontextualising information to suit their needs. This was most apparent with regard to the competition between ‘militant’ and ‘non-violent’ protesters, whose debates (across national borders) divided the anti-nuclear movement for much of the late 1970s. For example, the occupation of Wyhl became a legend in France, West Germany and beyond, but its non-violent credentials were frequently embellished by pacifists who ignored the gentle force that had been employed.<sup>38</sup> Militant activists likewise took liberties with translated truths. After police and protesters clashed repeatedly in 1976–77 at the future site of the Brokdorf nuclear power plant in northern Germany, militant French activists glorified the struggle there with reports and photos attesting to the Germans’ heroic defiance of authority.<sup>39</sup> In 1980 the roles were reversed, as German radicals looked on in awe at the pitched battles against nuclear power in the French village of Plogoff. Demonstrators in this poor seaside town had never consciously adopted a ‘militant’ strategy, nor did they necessarily conceive of their own actions as ‘violent’.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, when Hamburg-based activists translated the brochure ‘*Plogoff-la-Révolte*’ (written by local journalists) into German, they gave it a new title referring to the ‘guerrilla tactics’ of Plogoff.<sup>41</sup> With less knowledge of the local terrain, foreign activists were free to imagine Wyhl, Brokdorf and Plogoff in terms of their own desires, and information carriers used their contact with ‘authentic’ foreign demonstrators to bolster their own claims.<sup>42</sup>

Transnational protest was also subject to less deliberate distortions introduced by miscommunication.<sup>43</sup> Distortions could pile up as information crossed borders, such as when German participants travelling to an ‘international’ demonstration in

<sup>37</sup> This arguably still holds true today, in spite of sometimes euphoric assessments of the internet’s role in the so-called ‘Arab spring’ of 2011.

<sup>38</sup> One non-violent activist in Wyhl conceded that ‘we might not have reoccupied the site if some among us hadn’t shown themselves to be aggressive, but I’m certain we could largely have avoided the violence that did occur’. ‘Wyhl – l’enjeu nucléaire’, *Ionix* 10, Mar. 1975, 28.

<sup>39</sup> ‘Brokdorf’, *Super-Pholix* 12, [June] 1977, 18; ‘Brokdorf: c’était pas mal hein!’, *Super-Pholix* 13, [July] 1977, 4.

<sup>40</sup> Jean Moalic, Interview, 29 Sept. 2010. See also Vincent Porhel, *Ouvriers bretons. Conflits d’usines, conflits identitaires en Bretagne dans les années 1968* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2008), 232–37; Gilles Simon, *Plogoff: l’apprentissage de la mobilisation sociale* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2010), 262–80; Renée Conan and Annie Laurent, *Femmes de Plogoff*, 2010 republished edn (Baye: La Digitale, 1981), 28–31.

<sup>41</sup> *Plogoff: Eine Einführung in die Guerillataktik des bretonischen Dorfes Plogoff im Widerstand gegen den Atomwahn* (Hamburg, 1981); Théo Le Diournon, André Cabon, Guy de Lignières, Jean-Charles Perazzi, Jean Thefaine and Daniel Yonnet, *Plogoff-la-Révolte* (Plonéor Lanvern: le signor, 1980).

<sup>42</sup> Robert Gildea and Andrew Tompkins, ‘The Transnational in the Local: The Larzac plateau as a site of transnational activism since 1970’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 50, 3 (2015), 581–606, here 596–98. See also Kenney, ‘Opposition Networks’, 210.

<sup>43</sup> If, as Luhmann argues, communication can be instructively regarded as ‘improbable’, this is all the more true for transnational communication. See Nehring, ‘National Internationalists’, 561.

Malville (France) in 1977 were told to meet in 'Polerien', a town they would have struggled to find on any map. They may yet have found their way to Poleyrieu, but the designated meeting point was actually twelve kilometres away in Morestel, where Swiss demonstrators were expected to smooth communication by translating.<sup>44</sup> For anti-nuclear protesters in the 1970s, language itself presented a frequent obstacle to effective transnational action. Even over very short distances, much was lost – and gained – in translation. The French and German editions of the Marckolsheim squatters' newspaper are rife with misunderstandings over whether, for example, the site occupation had depended on first raising consciousness about environmental problems (as the German version argued) or whether the occupation itself had created that consciousness (as in the French version).<sup>45</sup> In other cases, activists engaged in what might be termed 'value-added translation': one Alsatian regionalist remembers that 'we never "translated" our texts. . . . We always took advantage of the second language to say something else, so as not to waste space'.<sup>46</sup> Thinking transnationally seldom meant working with clearly communicated, comprehensive knowledge of foreign facts. More often, it was about taking additional, albeit distorted, information from abroad and acting on whatever one (mis-) understood to be useful from it.

Thinking transnationally based on limited information could nevertheless be an asset, especially when it allowed activists to identify and express solidarity with one another. It is often remarked that demonstrators in 1968 considered themselves to be part of a global movement in spite of very real differences between Paris and Prague, East and West Germany, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Northern Ireland, Poland and the United States (not to mention China, Cuba and Vietnam).<sup>47</sup> Nuclear energy opponents also saw themselves as engaged in a common struggle, though the contours of protest varied widely depending on, for example, the openness of political systems, receptiveness of political parties or degree of repression faced.<sup>48</sup> Identification was often expressed in declarations of solidarity, which, though overwhelmingly rhetorical, could reshape protest. In the wake of violently repressed demonstrations against Brokdorf nuclear power station in 1976, the local citizens' initiative produced a list of more than 110 working groups, thirty-eight political party associations and twenty-nine local trade union branches that had sent telegrams of solidarity,

<sup>44</sup> 'Wer Malville vergisst macht Mist!!' (unidentified clipping), 1977, Ordner 'AKW+Widerstand', 'Malville 77', Archiv Aktiv, Hamburg.

<sup>45</sup> 'Compte-rendu de la réunion du 27.10.74', *Le 'Que Voulons Nous!'* 1, 1974, 2–3; 'Bericht über die Versammlung am 27.10.1974', *Was Wir Wollen* 1, 1974, 2–3.

<sup>46</sup> Robert Joachim, Interview, 23 Apr. 2010.

<sup>47</sup> See for example Robert Gildea, James Mark and Niek Pas, 'European Radicals and the 'Third World': Imagined Solidarities and Radical Networks, 1958–1973', *Cultural and Social History*, 8, 4 (2011), 449–72; Carole Fink, Philipp Gassert and Detlef Junker, eds., 1968: *A World Transformed* (Washington, DC: German Historical Institute, 1998), 3, 14–15, 21–27; Barbara Ehrenreich and John Ehrenreich, *Long March, Short Spring: The Student Uprising at Home and Abroad* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1969).

<sup>48</sup> These are but a few of the factors traditionally identified by social scientists to explain differences in protest and its outcomes. See Herbert Kitschelt, 'Political Opportunity Structures and Political Protest: Anti-Nuclear Movements in Four Democracies', *British Journal of Political Science*, 16, 1 (1986), 57–85; Kolb, *Protest and Opportunities*.

including some from Denmark, France, Ireland, the Netherlands and Switzerland. This exhaustive list served to show opponents that a broader movement regarded Brokdorf as important, even if many of the offers of ‘personal, material and financial assistance’ that activists there received were probably never realised. At the same time, messages from abroad helped transform understandings so that activists in Brokdorf regarded their own struggle as ‘no longer just about the power station, [but] about nuclear politics in West Germany and abroad’.<sup>49</sup> For a movement that was so focused on local struggles at specific sites, giving and receiving solidarity across great distances constituted a means of changing ‘not in my backyard’ attitudes.

Thinking transnationally constitutes the most accessible form of cross-border protest. Thinking one’s way into this or that particular foreign context can allow activists – even those unable to travel abroad – to escape familiar limits.<sup>50</sup> At the level of thought, transnational protest works precisely *because* many details get lost in translation.<sup>51</sup> As activists selectively re-contextualise information, tap into and contribute to transnational learning processes and give and receive solidarity, they change how protest functions and what it means. Thinking beyond one’s own context could enable anti-nuclear protesters to act differently at home and, in some cases, to make protest action cross borders as well.

### Acting Transnationally

Protest practices changed significantly when they involved people and spaces outside one’s own national context – and therefore beyond the control of one’s state opponents.<sup>52</sup> ‘Acting transnationally’ could take different forms, but it was at its most effective when used to deconstruct power or to open a second front to challenge states ‘from outside’ in addition to ‘from below’. However, the misunderstandings endemic to transnational phenomena could be greatly magnified when action in an unfamiliar environment was at stake.

During the 1970s tens of thousands of anti-nuclear protesters acted transnationally by attending demonstrations in neighbouring countries. Translocal and transnational networks ensured that large numbers of warm bodies could be moved around in order to stand up, be counted and fill photographs at protests across Western Europe. In 1977 entire busloads of protesters came from Paris, Hamburg and Freiburg to Malville

<sup>49</sup> Bürgerinitiative Umweltschutz Unterelbe, *Brokdorf: Der Bauplatz muß wieder zur Wiese werden!* (Hamburg: Association, 1977), 135. This follows the pattern by which identification ‘precipitates locals to transform what had been a highly localised battle into one particular front in the general struggle.’ Nicholls, ‘Place, Networks, Space’, 87.

<sup>50</sup> Padraic Kenney, drawing on Vacláv Havel’s concept of ‘living in truth’, argues that Polish protesters took an important step towards overthrowing communism by imagining themselves ‘as if in Europe’. See Kenney, *Carnival of Revolution*, 93–94.

<sup>51</sup> Like liminality, transnational thinking ‘breaks, as it were, the cake of custom and enfranchises speculation’. Victor Turner, ‘Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites de Passage*’, in *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967), 93–111, here 106.

<sup>52</sup> In this sense, it differs considerably from translocal action within one country.

(20,000–60,000 total demonstrators), as well as from Malville, Amsterdam and West Berlin to Kalkar (up to 50,000 demonstrators), for ‘international’ demonstrations.<sup>53</sup> These were primarily performances of solidarity, the most immediate advantage of which was increasing protest turnout – and therefore visibility. They were also acts of ‘pilgrimage’, in which outsiders who sympathised with broader goals might visit and themselves experience the seemingly authentic places where people were ‘directly affected’.<sup>54</sup> Occasionally, disparate demonstrations were connected transnationally through an anti-nuclear version of ‘revolutionary tourism’.<sup>55</sup> In 1977 the editors of the French environmentalist newspaper *La Gueule Ouverte/Combat Non-Violent (GO/CNV)* promoted a summer-long programme of protests that moved from the Franco-German border in Alsace southward through towns linked to military facilities (Landau, Haguenau and Belfort), civil nuclear sites (Fessenheim, Chalon-sur-Saône, St-Maurice-l’Exil) and environmentally damaging projects (Marckolsheim, Naussac) before arriving at major demonstrations in Malville and on the Larzac (see Figure 1).

Although (or perhaps because) most of this route was in France, activists ascribed special importance to its transnational elements. The opening salvo along the border was significant because the protesters regarded borders as ‘the symbol of nationalism, of wars, they want to ignore the borders’. They thus made a point of trying to cross the border without showing their passports.<sup>56</sup> Only a few dozen people travelled the entire route, but foreign protesters were the object of disproportionate attention – even as observers tended to reduce them to their nationality. As one commentator observed:

It’s one thing to demonstrate in your own area against ‘your’ power station and for ‘your bicycle routes’, it’s another thing to participate in a month-long march. . . . The number of marchers is less important than the symbol: to show that ecology is a totality. That you can’t fight against a dam in Naussac and forget the Pluton missiles in Belfort. . . . Better [still]: the participation of Germans and Italians will give an international dimension that the local revolts lack. . . . It’s Germany with

<sup>53</sup> As the numbers for Malville indicate, police and organiser estimates often differed greatly. Gilbert Roy, ‘Rapport’, 5 Aug. 1977, 6857 W 36, AD Isère, Grenoble; ‘60 000 sous la pluie’, *Super-Pholix* 14, Aug. 1977, 1; Kommunistischer Bund, *Kalkar am 24.9. (1977)*, 2.

<sup>54</sup> On ‘pilgrimage’, see Kenney, ‘Opposition Networks’, 211–14. The focus on being *concerné* or *betroffen* was central to the anti-nuclear movement’s pattern of organisation, which depended on place-based solidarities to anchor the broader cause and structure activists’ relationship to it in space. See Nicholls, ‘Place, Networks, Space’, 79–83. Protest actions by the later movement against nuclear weapons in the 1980s shared a similar goal but went largely in the opposite direction, trying to make the broad, abstract threat of nuclear war relevant within local spaces. See Susanne Schregel, *Der Atomkrieg vor der Wohnungstür: eine Politikgeschichte der neuen Friedensbewegung in der Bundesrepublik 1970–1985* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2011), 9–20.

<sup>55</sup> Gildea, Mark and Pas, ‘European Radicals’, 453–4. My use of this term is not pejorative, as Jobs argues it was to contemporaries in the late 1960s. See Richard I. Jobs, ‘Youth Movements: Travel, Protest, and Europe in 1968’, *American Historical Review*, 114, 2 (2009), 376–404, here 403. For a related example with more positive connotations, see ‘malville, naussac, larzac: le tourisme social marque des points’, *GO/CNV* 171, 18 Aug. 1977, 1.

<sup>56</sup> Activists claimed that, after trying several other methods, they managed to smuggle illegal conscientious objectors across the border by hiding them within a ‘carrousel’ of other participants walking back and forth (legally, with passports displayed) between the French and German checkpoints in order to confuse border guards. ‘Donnez-nous notre flicaille quotidienne’, *GO/CNV* 167, 21 July 1977, 2–3.

# un rescapé du serpent des luttés

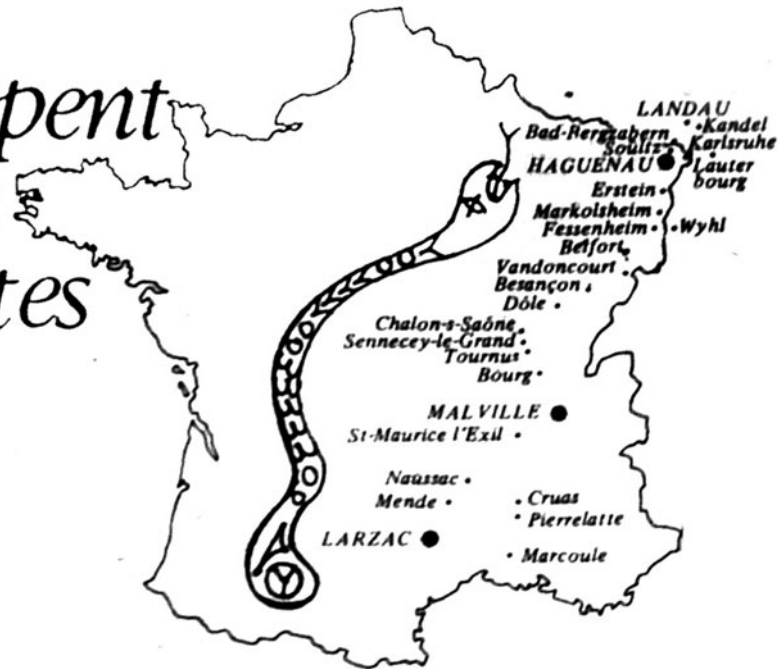


Figure 1: *The 1977 'Snake of struggles'*

GO/CNV referred in neutral terms to the 'snake of struggles' in its reporting on the first of these related demonstrations, but the phrase took on a new meaning after the demonstration in Malville on 31 July 1977 ended violently. The article accompanying this illustration from GO/CNV 171 from 18 Aug. 1977 gave one 'survivor's' account of the protests.

its neo-Nazi money that invests in the nuclear bomb in Brazil, it's EDF [*Électricité de France*] that sells nuclear weapons to [South] Africa and Iran. The enemies of humanity have the same face on five continents.<sup>57</sup>

Based on this understanding, the meaning of transnational protest was derived from the diversity of its participants, each of whom took responsibility for opposing a particular (national) fragment of the larger issue.

<sup>57</sup> 'Arthur' (pseud. Henri Montant), 'Haguenau-Larzac, via Malville: la racaille écologique est en marche', GO/CNV 160, 2 June 1977, 7.

Coding demonstrators by nationality in this manner was a way of showing how far support reached, but it also limited protest by marking certain participants as 'foreign'. This could play into the hands of opponents seeking to divide protesters. For example, prior to the demonstration on 31 July 1977 in Creys-Malville, French organisers celebrated the expected participation of thousands of demonstrators from West Germany, Switzerland, Italy and beyond as evidence of the protest's 'international' character. Meanwhile, French authorities likened the protest to a 'second German invasion' – in a region which had been terrorised by Klaus Barbie (the 'butcher of Lyon') during the Second World War.<sup>58</sup> French police singled out German protesters for harassment, even raiding the campsite where foreigners were staying just hours before the march. The protest organisers themselves inadvertently facilitated such discrimination by sending foreigners to a single camp in the hope that they might better 'self-organise' among their compatriots. Even after the demonstration, authorities targeted Germans, arresting them in disproportionate numbers.<sup>59</sup> For their part, the West German government and conservative press were happy to reinforce this nationally coded interpretation, publicly lamenting 'that West German violence was exported to France' in order to beat their domestic opponents with the same stick.<sup>60</sup> Thus although demonstrating abroad was one of the most accessible forms of acting transnationally, it was limited in what it could achieve, especially when its value was measured in terms of the number and nationalities of participants.

Because demonstrating abroad entails action in an unfamiliar environment, it can be far more adversely affected by misunderstandings than thinking transnationally. At the aforementioned demonstration in Malville, clashes of understanding contributed to real and dangerous physical clashes. In Malville, both the authorities and many anti-nuclear activists expected a showdown at the demonstration, but foreigners (and inexperienced protesters from elsewhere in France) did not always understand the gravity of the situation. To make matters worse, many West Germans pursued strategies that may have worked at home but proved disastrous in this foreign context: the 'defensive' helmets and gas masks West Germans wore were a rarity in France, where police perceived them as an 'offensive' threat justifying violent repression. Similarly, picking up smoking tear gas canisters to throw them away from the crowd might have worked in West Germany, but not with the exploding variety that French police used (which cost a man from Bremen his hand). More dangerous still were the dozens of stun grenades police launched into the crowd, which could be lethal at close range.<sup>61</sup> These weapons were ultimately responsible for the death of thirty-one-year-old physics teacher Vital Michalon as well as the maiming of three people

<sup>58</sup> René Jannin, prefect of Isère at the time, stated at a press conference the night before the demonstration that 'for the second time, Morestel is occupied by the Germans'. Quoted in *Le Monde*, 2 August 1977, 1.

<sup>59</sup> Eleven Germans, two Swiss and six French citizens were arrested. Of these, five Germans and one French citizen were ultimately sentenced to prison terms of three to six months.

<sup>60</sup> See *Aujourd'hui Malville, demain la France*, (Claix: La Pensée sauvage, 1978), 167; 'Die Eiferer', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 1 Aug. 1977.

<sup>61</sup> CRS (riot police) units reported that they used 295 GLI (exploding tear gas) and 885 CB (Chlorobenzalmalononitrile, also known as CS gas) grenades as well as 116 'grenades' (i.e. grenades

(hundreds of others suffered lighter wounds). Transnational misunderstandings related to the different ‘choreographies’<sup>62</sup> of protest in France and West Germany were not primarily responsible for the violence in Malville, but they greatly contributed to the reigning atmosphere of confusion that made it so difficult to contain.<sup>63</sup>

Acting transnationally could also take other forms and serve other purposes, such as giving activists an outside position from which to challenge opponents.<sup>64</sup> National borders mark the territorial limits of power, beyond which any particular state is (theoretically) powerless.<sup>65</sup> Protest action in border regions such as Alsace demonstrated this in a particularly dramatic way. There, environmental activists launched *Radio Verte Fessenheim* (RVF) in June 1977 as a trilingual pirate radio programme (in French, German and the local dialect). Mireille Caselli (a Frenchwoman who worked with RVF in Freiburg) remembers that the group learned to ‘play with the border’ by broadcasting illegally from one country into the other, ‘since the French police didn’t have the right to act here and vice versa. We really used the border, to shelter ourselves’.<sup>66</sup> This was, of course, only possible as long as cooperation ‘from below’ amongst activists outpaced cooperation ‘from above’ amongst authorities. In September 1977 RVF was forced to rethink its strategy after a French helicopter supported by German police came close to locating their sole transmitter during a broadcast. However, RVF continued operating by employing principles of ‘decentralised’ action, scattering short-range transmitters in homes throughout the region.<sup>67</sup> By shifting action from one side of the border to the other, activists could escape control from both.

National borders define the limits of state power, but physically crossing them usually entails direct exposure to it. Alsatian environmentalists might have evaded the

*offensives*, or stun grenades). *Gendarmerie Mobile* units were also present, but their separate report does not include munitions statistics. Roger Roustang [Commandant CRS de Lyon], ‘Rapport technique de fin de service’, 1977, 19850718 art. 25, Archives nationales, Fontainebleau.

<sup>62</sup> Bernard Dréano, Interview, 20 Jan. 2010.

<sup>63</sup> See Andrew 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), 1365–80, here 1377–78.

<sup>64</sup> This is most often described in terms of a ‘boomerang effect’, whereby NGOs in more powerful countries help ‘less developed’ allies by lobbying their own governments to pressure the original offending state. (The assumed hierarchy is analogous to that between ‘sender’ and ‘receiver’ in some models of transfer history.) However, this model does not fit well for 1970s grassroots anti-nuclear activists, many of whom eschewed lobbying in favour of confrontational protest, and who, in France and West Germany, faced pro-nuclear states of similar stature that collaborated in developing nuclear technology. Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, ‘Transnational advocacy networks in international and regional politics’, *International Social Science Journal*, 51, 159 (1999), 89–101; Lässig, ‘Übersetzungen in der Geschichte’, 193; Sandra Tauer, *Störfall für die gute Nachbarschaft? Deutsche und Franzosen auf der Suche nach einer gemeinsamen Energiepolitik (1973–1980)* (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2012).

<sup>65</sup> James J. Sheehan, ‘The Problem of Sovereignty in European History’, *American Historical Review*, 111, 1 (2006), 1–15, here 3.

<sup>66</sup> Mireille Caselli, Interview, 12 Apr. 2010; Mireille Caselli, ‘Radio Grün Fessenheim’, in Christoph Büchele, Irmgard Schneider and Bernd Nössler, eds., *Wühl – Der Widerstand geht weiter* (Freiburg: Dreisam-Verlag, 1982), 53–6.

<sup>67</sup> Claude Collin, *Écoutez la vraie différence! Radio verte Fessenheim, radio S.O.S. emploi-Longuy et les autres* (Claix: La Pensée sauvage, 1979), 48–9.



French authorities by printing publications in Germany, but French customs agents nevertheless confiscated them when activists brought them across the Rhine.<sup>68</sup> Even along the highly permeable Franco-German border, activists were sometimes refused entry. Prior to the first anti-nuclear protest in Fessenheim (Alsace) in 1971, French border guards were advised to search the vehicles of German and Swiss activists for drugs, 'the verifications possibly lasting long enough to reach the scheduled end of the demonstration at 17:30'.<sup>69</sup> When West German anti-nuclear activists held a major demonstration in Kalkar in the midst of the so-called 'German Autumn' of 1977, protesters throughout the country were delayed by numerous police checkpoints. Hundreds of foreign protesters, however, remained blocked at the Swiss, French or Dutch borders and never made it into the country.<sup>70</sup> Even in permissive Western Europe, protesters could not take freedom of movement for granted.

This was, of course, all the more true for protest along the Cold War border that divided Western and Eastern Europe. Nevertheless, West German activists in Gorleben showed that they could 'play' even with this heavily militarised border. Until the demise of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), the nuclear waste site in Gorleben was located less than twenty kilometres from the East German border – on three sides.<sup>71</sup> Naturally, West German anti-nuclear activists could not travel freely across the border (to say nothing of their practically immobilised GDR counterparts). Nevertheless, protesters used transnational gestures to attract attention. The aforementioned 'passports' of the Free Republic of Wendland were one of the tamer examples.<sup>72</sup> On at least two occasions, activists 'occupied' the border itself, taking over small stretches of land within GDR territory but not yet behind border defences.<sup>73</sup> A group of about sixty activists (including children and seniors) did so for a single day in 1982 in order to demonstrate to a West German audience that they would have nowhere to flee in the event of a disaster.<sup>74</sup> A year later, another group of twenty-five to thirty activists set up tents and declared their own 'autonomous sector' about fifteen metres into GDR territory, where they remained for a week. Though they told GDR troops upon leaving that 'we wish you had understood our

<sup>68</sup> « Jean », *Elsass. Kolonie in Europa*, 2nd edn (Berlin: Wagenbach, 1976), 6–8.

<sup>69</sup> 'Manifestation à Fessenheim . . .', 7 Apr. 1971, 1391 W 17, Marche sur Fessenheim, AD Haut-Rhin, Colmar.

<sup>70</sup> Though no reliable numbers are available, several separate incidents involving French and Dutch activists are noted in 'Wir, das Volk . . .' *Eine Dokumentation* (Köln: Graphischer Betrieb Henke, 1977), 34–6; Kommunistischer Bund, *Kalkar am 24.9.*, 28–32.

<sup>71</sup> See the map in Rucht, *Von Wylh nach Gorleben*, 294.

<sup>72</sup> The 'passports' declared that bearers did not regard as theirs 'a state which does not guarantee the inviolability of its people in body, mind, and soul, which cannot retain the natural equilibrium between humans, plants, animals and minerals; which clings to the deadly misunderstanding that domestic and international security can be produced by weapons and uniforms . . .'. Quoted in Müller-Münch, Prosinger, Rosenblatt and Stibler, *Besetzung*, 162.

<sup>73</sup> See Wolfgang Hertle, 'Hart an der Grenze', in Andreas Buro, *Geschichten aus der Friedensbewegung* (Köln: hbo-druck, 2005), 93–5; 'Aktion an der Grenze beendet', *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 9 July 1983; Wolfgang Ehmke, *Zwischenschritte. Die Anti-Atomkraft-Bewegung zwischen Gorleben und Wackersdorf* (Köln: Kölner Volksblatt-Verlag, 1987), 100.

<sup>74</sup> 'Handlungen der "Demonstranten"', 27 Jan. 1982, no. 23–31, DVH 48/138758, BArch, Freiburg.



Aufgestelltes Transparent, Schrift zeigt zu der  
BRD - Seite

Aufschrift: OB OST OB WEST OB SÜD OB NORD  
ATOM - WAAN = MASSEN MORD

Kopie aus dem Bundesarchiv

Figure 2: 'Whether East, West, South or North, Nuclear Insanity = Mass Murder'  
The term 'Atom-WAAN' is a play on the word 'Wahn' (delusion, madness) and the abbreviation WAA (Wiederaufarbeitungsanlage, or nuclear fuel reprocessing station). 'Fotodokumentation', 2 July 1983, no. 63, DVH 48/139083, BArch, Freiburg.

demands and would take them up for your state', the prospects of this were unrealistic; in any case, their banners were turned to face West Germany (see Figure 2).<sup>75</sup> In this sense, these were acts of unilateral transnationalism that relied less on building transnational contact 'from below' than on antagonising state opponents by operating 'from outside'. By inserting themselves into the interstices of sovereignty, protesters could mock the very notion of state power.

While the potential to attack authorities 'from outside' was perhaps most dramatic in borderlands, creative transnational action did not have to take place in such regions.

<sup>75</sup> 'Beendigung der Besetzung . . .', (telex), 8 July 1983, no. 60, DVH 48/139083, BArch, Freiburg. When the Gorleben site was planned in 1977, the East German state publicly kept quiet so as not to jeopardise its own site for radioactive waste along the border in Morsleben (in spite of concern that 81 per cent of the population within 50 kilometres of Gorleben lived on GDR territory). 'Vorgehen gegenüber der BRD . . .', 16 Jan. 1978, no. 201-209, DY 30/3128, BArch, Berlin.

Indeed, following the collapse of the GDR, the cross-border protests with which Gorleben has been most closely associated usually took place nowhere near national borders. The so-called ‘Castor’ transports, which from 1995 to 2011 brought highly radioactive German nuclear waste back from the French reprocessing facility in La Hague for storage in Gorleben, were regular occasions for mass protests at sites across France and Germany. These occurred predominantly in towns and cities near the transports’ start and finish, with the primary aim of slowing shipments down as much as possible. The last such waste transport was met with small protests in France and much larger ones in Germany that resulted in record delays, making a train journey of 1200 kilometres take 126 hours.<sup>76</sup> By protesting in both countries, French and German anti-nuclear activists communicated the message that nuclear waste was universally unwanted: ‘not here, not anywhere’.<sup>77</sup>

Nor was this message confined to a European context. In 1977 Japanese activists invited European and American nuclear energy opponents to their conference in Izu-Nagaoka and covered most of the travel costs. Japan thus became a site for grassroots networking with (and amongst) Europeans, including for several local activists without vast financial resources, such as Didier Anger (a schoolteacher from near La Hague), Lore Haag (an electrician’s wife from near Wyhl) and Chantal François (a farmer’s wife from Malville). Didier in particular maintained close ties with his former hosts, inviting some of them to Cherbourg the following year.<sup>78</sup> In 1980 and 1981 he also coordinated protests with them against both the departure and arrival of Japanese nuclear waste in La Hague, much like the protests that later developed with Gorleben. Despite the greater distance involved, these protests got off to an earlier and, in Didier’s view, better start:

My contacts with Japan . . . went a bit faster than with Germany. . . . We were always opposed to the arrival [of nuclear waste] and not necessarily its return. . . . Sometimes that provoked some difficulties with our German friends. . . . Their demonstrations usually take place on the other side of the border, and we’re sometimes on the rails, but it’s more to attract attention than to block [the return of waste to Germany] really. We would have liked blockades that went in the opposite direction, like we had with Japan.<sup>79</sup>

In instances like these, acting transnationally depended less on moving large numbers of protesters from place to place or exploiting the border as an exceptional, transnational space and more on communicating a shared message that criticised opponents from both inside *and* outside a given national context.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>76</sup> ‘Castor so lang wie noch nie unterwegs’, *tageszeitung*, 28 Nov. 2011.

<sup>77</sup> This was a slogan of both the French and West German movements: ‘*ni ici, ni ailleurs*’ and ‘*nicht hier und auch nicht anderswo!*’

<sup>78</sup> In May 1978 Didier invited artists Iri and Toshi Maruki to display their paintings about Hiroshima in Cherbourg and speak to local anti-nuclear groups.

<sup>79</sup> Didier Anger, Interview, 22 Sept. 2010.

<sup>80</sup> On multi-sited protest by sailors in the eighteenth century, see David Featherstone, ‘Towards the Relational Construction of Militant Particularisms: Or Why the Geographies of Past Struggles Matter for Resistance to Neoliberal Globalisation’, *Antipode*, 37, 2 (2005), 250–71, here 255.

Like thinking transnationally, acting transnationally during this period changed protest in significant ways. If the former involved using the world abroad as a resource for local creativity, the latter took advantage of the symbolism afforded by integrating cross-border elements into protest. However, acting transnationally involved confronting complex foreign realities, not merely working with projections and the imagination. This could greatly diminish the dividends, especially when activists overemphasised national identities. Celebrating diversity at ‘international’ demonstrations could easily be inverted into the kind of divide-and-conquer tactics the French authorities used in Malville. Not everyone was able to cross borders for protest, but not everyone had to. Grasping or even merely reaching for the outside was often enough to permit protesters to elaborate their critique beyond the control of state opponents. For a small number of activists, thinking and acting transnationally also became a way of life.

### Being Transnational

Activists whose commitments encompassed ‘being transnational’ represented a minority within the anti-nuclear movement of the 1970s (as they almost certainly still do in protest movements today). In many histories of protest, transnational figures are typically conceived as leading ‘ambassadors’ of national movements: Rudi Dutschke’s visits to the United States and France, Daniel Cohn-Bendit’s travels between Paris and Frankfurt and Petra Kelly’s connections in Brussels, the USA and Australia are thus commonly taken as confirmations of these leaders’ incontestably transnational engagement and identities.<sup>81</sup> Away from the media spotlight, however, the most transnationally implicated activists were often not well-known leaders able to project domestic fame onto an international stage, but rather people working behind the scenes, at the intersections – or even margins – of multiple cultures.<sup>82</sup> Intermediaries such as these were vital to the anti-nuclear movement’s ability to function across borders, and worked to draw optimum advantage from transnational protest while minimising the confusion and misunderstandings intrinsic to it. Accordingly, these individuals experienced the positive as well as negative aspects of border-crossing much more acutely than the movement as a whole. The biographies of several grassroots activists reveal how cross-border protest fit into the identities and life histories of those with particularly strong, long-term transnational commitments.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>81</sup> See, for example, Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey, ‘Der Transfer zwischen den Studentenbewegungen von 1968 und die Entstehung einer transnationalen Gegenöffentlichkeit’, in Hartmut Kaelble, Martin Kirsch and Alexander Schmidt-Gernig, eds., *Transnationale Öffentlichkeiten im 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2002), 303–25, here 313–15; Daniel Cohn-Bendit, *Le grand bazar* (Paris: P. Belfond, 1975), 51–62; Stephen Milder, ‘Thinking Globally, Acting (Trans-)Locally: Petra Kelly and the Transnational Roots of West German Green Politics’, *Contemporary European History*, 43(2010), 301–26; Astrid Mignon Kirchof, ‘Spanning the Globe: West-German Support for the Australian Anti-Nuclear Movement’, *Historical Social Research*, 39, 1 (2014), 254–73.

<sup>82</sup> See Kenney, *Carnival of Revolution*, 109.

<sup>83</sup> On the potential of transnational connections to ‘unsettle’ identities, see Featherstone, ‘Relational Construction of Militant Particularisms’, 267–8.

Activists with pre-existing ‘transnational’ identities were natural intermediaries among grassroots activists. In the Franco–German context, this applied most obviously to Alsatians, some of whom looked back on a long tradition of ‘national indifference’ and opposition to French and German claims on their region.<sup>84</sup> Indeed, regionalism experienced a revival throughout France during the 1970s, often mutually reinforcing environmentalist struggles.<sup>85</sup> Jean-Jacques Rettig (b. 1939) is one Alsatian who embraced a transnational identity that he also put to use for anti-nuclear protest. As he explains it, the history of his region and of his family (including generations of men conscripted into opposing armies) propelled him to internationalism, pacifism, opposition to nuclear weapons and, ultimately, to an environmentalist defence of his home against nuclear energy.<sup>86</sup> During the 1970s Jean-Jacques was an anchor of protest on both sides of the Rhine, helping to organise site occupations in Marckolsheim (France) and Wyhl (Germany). He consistently opposed nuclear energy in both countries, participating in one of the first protests against France’s facility in Fessenheim, but not shying away from confronting German officials on their own territory. Speaking at a local hearing in Baden, he elicited thunderous applause from German anti-nuclear protesters after introducing himself as ‘the only Alsatian to speak so far’, drawing on his identity to link post-war reconciliation at the grassroots with shared opposition to nuclear energy.<sup>87</sup> For Jean-Jacques, environmental activism flowed directly from his existing transnational identity and profited from it.<sup>88</sup>

Not everyone found transnational identities so easy to embrace. Like Jean-Jacques, Ginette Hess Skandrani (b. 1938) is an anti-nuclear activist from Alsace, with family on both the French and German sides of the border. Although she is proud of her Alsatian roots, she often felt excluded in her native Haut-Rhin (one of France’s most conservative *départements*) – especially after marrying a Tunisian immigrant during the Algerian War in 1957. Attracted to both French and German culture, she says she felt the need to choose between them in her youth, and opted for France. During the 1970s, however, anti-nuclear activism allowed her to find greater acceptance in Alsace and to rediscover Germany: having travelled to protests across the country, she says ‘I know the geography of Germany by its nuclear power stations’. According to Ginette, living in a border region was ‘a tremendous [*sacré*] advantage’ for protesters, not least because they could create international incidents merely by blocking traffic over the Rhine. She notes that ‘with the Germans and the Swiss, and the fact that we worked across borders and mastered French, German and Alsatian, we managed to play all of them – to make fun of power in fact’. However, even in the anti-nuclear movement, she felt misunderstood by both French and German activists, who accused her of being a German ‘collaborator’ or trampled on Alsatian historical

<sup>84</sup> See Tara Zahra, ‘The “Minority Problem” and National Classification in the French and Czechoslovak Borderlands’, *Contemporary European History*, 17, 2 (2008), 137–65.

<sup>85</sup> « Jean », *Elsass*, 95.

<sup>86</sup> Jean-Jacques Rettig, ‘Elsass: Umweltgeschichte, Familiengeschichte und Regionalgeschichte’, available at <http://www.bund-rvso.de/rettig-umweltgeschichte.html> (last visited 2 May 2015).

<sup>87</sup> *s’ Wéschenäscht. Die Chronik von Wyhl (1972–1982)*, film, 111 mins (1982).

<sup>88</sup> Jean-Jacques Rettig, Interview, 19 Apr. 2010.

sensitivities, respectively. She eventually decided to leave Alsace in 1983 and move to Paris, where she continues to be involved in environmentalist and anti-imperialist activism.<sup>89</sup> Ginette used her Alsatian background creatively in anti-nuclear protest, but ultimately felt more at home in activism than in Alsace.

Transnational identities were, of course, not exclusive to borderland residents such as Ginette and Jean-Jacques. Bernadette Ridard (b. 1947 in Issoudun, central France) is transnational almost by default, having grown up in a military family: by the age of thirty, she had lived in Paris, Grenoble, France's African colonies, the French-occupied zone of Germany, Canada, Malaysia and Britain, among others. Bernadette recalls that 'when you move all the time, you don't really belong to anything'. Activism ultimately provided an anchor in her peripatetic lifestyle: after working with the Peace Pledge Union and Greenpeace in London, she moved to Brussels with War Resisters' International before arriving in Hamburg in 1976, just as the first anti-nuclear protests took place in nearby Brokdorf. As she puts it, activism enabled her to 'meet lots of people very quickly' and to integrate herself in each new environment. In Hamburg, where she continues to live today, she used her language skills and connections with the French anti-militarist journal *Combat Non-Violent* while working with the anarcho-pacifist German journal *Graswurzelrevolution*, and drew on knowledge of Chiswick women's shelter while working with the city's first *Frauenhaus*. Her opposition to nuclear power was thus linked across issues and borders, as part of a broader 'framework . . . of calling into question society' that also encompassed peace, feminism and other so-called 'new social movements' of the era.<sup>90</sup> Protest on all these interrelated issues was something that helped Bernadette find a way to belong in spite of her fragmented, transnational identity.

For other kinds of protesters, it was more typical for activism to come first and for transnational connections to follow. This was most apparent for 'professional' activists in organised groups who worked with international contacts, including conventional parties, trade unions and NGOs, as well as the radical left cadre groups of the period.<sup>91</sup> However, it was also true for others who rejected hierarchy and cultivated less formal ties across borders. Wolfgang Hertle (b. 1946) first became politicised by conscientious objection in the 1960s but was dissatisfied with the protest traditions he found in post-war West Germany: 'we knew very little about what was there before us in Germany, and the little that we knew didn't seem very attractive. We therefore looked more abroad'.<sup>92</sup> Wolfgang founded the journal *Graswurzelrevolution* in order to share information about direct action protests around the world with German-speaking activists. As a student of French and Political Science based in Hamburg, Wolfgang reported extensively on protests against the Larzac military camp, which

<sup>89</sup> Ginette Skandrani, Interview, 11 Jan. 2010.

<sup>90</sup> Bernadette Ridard, Interview, 25 Aug. 2010.

<sup>91</sup> Among those interviewed for this project, Günter Hopfenmüller of the *Kommunistischer Bund* and Bernard Dréano of the *Organisation communiste des travailleurs* had extensive transnational contacts through 'Third World' solidarity work that sometimes overlapped with their anti-nuclear activities.

<sup>92</sup> Wolfgang Hertle, Interview, 22 July 2010.

also became the subject of his doctoral thesis.<sup>93</sup> When plans for a nuclear waste site in Gorleben were announced in 1979, Wolfgang intensified cooperation with a friend on the Larzac plateau, Hervé Ott. Because Hervé, a French protestant, had studied theology in Germany, he was able to welcome German-speaking guests on the Larzac, which developed into an international hub of activism. Hervé set up a centre, *le Cun du Larzac*, to channel these connections toward non-violence, inviting French and foreign activists to meetings, workshops and extended stays for direct action training.<sup>94</sup> Wolfgang then created the *Kurve Wustrow*, which he hoped would likewise function as a ‘training centre . . . in a conflict that is on the one hand centrally important for society and which on the other hand will also continue for a long time. . . . That was inspired by the Larzac and I thought, yes, that would fit well [in Gorleben]’.<sup>95</sup> Over the course of many years, Wolfgang and Hervé regularly publicised news about both struggles, invited one another to speak to local audiences and arranged joint ‘Franco-German encounters’.<sup>96</sup> Wolfgang has remained mostly in Germany, but his political convictions pushed him to look abroad and to become a transnational intermediary.

Some intermediaries consciously chose to think, act and ultimately move across borders, but not necessarily out of a desire to strengthen activism. This was the case for both Conny Baade and Mireille Caselli, although they moved in opposite directions. Conny (b. 1948) grew up in post-war West Germany but always felt alienated from the country due to its recent history. Like Wolfgang and other West Germans, she looked for alternative perspectives elsewhere.<sup>97</sup> When, as a student at the University of Freiburg, the opportunity arose to study abroad for a year in southern France, Conny happily accepted: hadn’t France had the Popular Front while Germany descended into Nazism? Conny now rejects this view as naïve, but at that time France seemed like a foil to Germany, and subsequent anti-nuclear activism strengthened the impression. After returning to Freiburg in the mid-1970s, Conny joined the anti-nuclear protests in Wyhl, where she applied her prior experience abroad by translating between French and German. Working closely with French activists, she says, ‘led me to be more starry-eyed towards France. . . . They didn’t have any prohibitions within themselves and weren’t always driven by this feeling of guilt. And that was very attractive.’ By the end of the decade, Conny found life in West Germany ‘cramped’ between the ‘decidedly reactionary’ politics of the rural area where she taught school and the ‘stupid, dogmatic’ attitudes of friends in Freiburg’s left-alternative scene: ‘and afterward, that was for me something that had to do with Germany, and I didn’t know all that much else. I only knew France, where

<sup>93</sup> Wolfgang Hertle, *Larzac, 1971–1981. Der gewaltfreie Widerstand gegen die Erweiterung eines Truppenübungsplatzes in Süd-Frankreich* (Kassel-Bettenhausen: Weber Zucht & Co., 1982).

<sup>94</sup> Hervé Ott, Interview, 18 Sept. 2010.

<sup>95</sup> Hertle, Interview.

<sup>96</sup> See ‘Le Cun du Larzac’ (box), Archiv Aktiv, Hamburg.

<sup>97</sup> On transcultural contact in post-war West Germany, see especially Davis, ‘A Whole World Opening Up’.

I had also lived for a while.<sup>98</sup> In some senses, France may have been as valuable for being non-German as it was for being specifically 'French'.<sup>99</sup> In 1981 Conny moved to southern France permanently. For her, being transnational was about embracing life abroad in response to the alienation she felt at home.

If Conny felt pushed away from Germany, Mireille was drawn toward it. Born in 1948 in Joigny (some 450 kilometres from the German border), she decided at the age of twelve that she wanted to live in Germany. She learned German in school from native speakers on teaching exchanges and ultimately went a similar route herself, finding a permanent university job teaching French in Freiburg. However, she soon abandoned this successful, bourgeois life in order to join Freiburg's left-alternative scene, which flourished as protest took off in Wyhl: 'the movement, what was happening politically, was very important because I was living a life that didn't correspond to my ideas or needs. . . . And all of a sudden, I needed to explode all that.' She quit her job and moved into a rural commune, earning enough from unemployment benefits 'to allow, in the groups I was in, several people to live in the manner that we lived'. She soon put the language skills that she had learned through state-sanctioned cooperation to use for protest against the state,<sup>100</sup> translating regularly for RVF and at the 1977 demonstration in Malville. When interviewed in her native language, she frequently switched to German; discussing past involvement in mixed French and German protest groups, she was hesitant to count herself amongst the 'French' participants.<sup>101</sup> Within and outside of activism, Mireille has embraced a 'Franco-German' identity, but one that is skewed towards the German side.

As the stories here indicate, grassroots intermediaries came in many different forms, and transnational activism intersected with their personal and political identities in contradictory ways. Sometimes, protest capitalised on existing transnational identities in a relatively unproblematic manner, as in the case of Jean-Jacques. However, for others, like Ginette and Bernadette, such identities created difficulties that activism partially helped address. Protest itself could also be the crucible that forged transnational identities. Wolfgang, for example, looked beyond West Germany in search of political alternatives. So too did Conny, albeit for less explicitly activist reasons: like Mireille, she found life abroad more attractive, and cross-border political engagement reinforced personal migration choices. Each of these stories represents an exceptional outcome, but one which emerged from common forms of thinking and acting transnationally.

<sup>98</sup> Conny Baade, Interview, 19 Sept. 2010.

<sup>99</sup> Something analogous can be seen in some East Germans' memories of Poland as a 'window to the West' or as a place representative of the wider world. See Daniel Logemann, *Das polnische Fenster: Deutsch-polnische Kontakte im staatssozialistischen Alltag Leipzigs 1972–1989* (München: Oldenbourg, 2012), 25–30.

<sup>100</sup> In a similar manner, West German opponents of the Vietnam War had established ties with American activists through official student exchanges. See Martin Klimke, *The Other Alliance: Student Protest in West Germany and the United States in the Global Sixties* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

<sup>101</sup> Caselli, Interview.



## Conclusion

Transnational engagement – from the border-crossing of businessmen and musicians to the activities of criminals and drug smugglers – was open to individuals in post-1945 Western Europe on many different levels. For grassroots anti-nuclear activists in the 1970s that engagement frequently took the forms of transnational thinking, acting and being discussed above. The first of these entailed not only the ‘transfer’ of intellectual resources, but also an active process of de- and recontextualisation which supplied creative ferment to activism. ‘Thinking transnationally’ involved interacting less with foreign realities than with one’s imagining of them, and was thus accessible to anyone but subject to misunderstandings. Indeed, it derived much of its potential precisely from activists’ unfamiliarity with foreign contexts. ‘Acting transnationally’ was an option for those who could travel abroad and therefore directly access foreign spaces. Most often, that meant participating in demonstrations, which led to transnational encounters that were frequent and intense, if also short-lived. However, it might also mean playing with – or even exploiting – borders in order to mock (and escape from) state opponents, or simply demonstrating at home in tandem with friends far away. ‘Being transnational’ affected the identities of those who served as cross-border intermediaries, for better and for worse. Very few of the hundreds of thousands who participated in anti-nuclear protest understood themselves in terms of the kinds of hybridised, post-national identities now associated with globalisation. Nevertheless, activists in the 1970s often behaved with indifference toward national categories, alternately ignoring and exploiting the boundaries of the nation state as they saw fit. Even if they did not live in an era of de-territorialised and virtual protest, they were pioneers in creatively using the neither-here-nor-there indeterminacy of cross-border processes to think beyond, act in defiance of, and become something more than what any particular national context would permit.

Particularly when it comes to movements such as environmentalism, which flourished in an era of accelerating globalisation, many historians are quick to turn to the usual suspects – NGOs, supranational institutions, intellectual guides and mobile leaders – for answers about transnational protest. Indeed, some conclude quite logically that in the pre-internet era only people with exceptional financial resources, language skills and mobility were even capable of participating meaningfully in cross-border protest.<sup>102</sup> However, differentiating amongst forms of transnational engagement helps us see just how much was possible for grassroots activists at the time – as well as how complex transnational communication remains today. Cross-border cooperation among anti-nuclear activists in the 1970s depended as much on grassroots intermediaries at the local level as it did on the semi-professional leaders of well-known (inter-) national organisations like the *Bundesverband Bürgerinitiativen*

<sup>102</sup> Astrid Mignon Kirchhof and Jan-Henrik Meyer, ‘Global Protest against Nuclear Power. Transfer and Transnational Exchange in the 1970s and 1980s’, *Historical Social Research*, 39, 1 (2014), 165–90. The same authors very rightly point out that more attention needs to be paid to the ‘scope and relevance of transnational exchange’ rather than merely to identifying and ‘emphasising the existence of transnational connections’.

*Umweltschutz* and Friends of the Earth. At multiple levels, 'active transnationals' helped bridge national contexts, but this does not imply that other activists had narrow horizons or were merely passive recipients of impulses emanating from abroad or above. Farmers, schoolteachers, housewives, hippies and others all engaged in transnational protest according to the opportunities presented to them – or seized by them.

That is not to say that transnational protest was universally positive, nor that it always functioned as intended. Transnational communication is plagued by misunderstandings, but it was usually less important for activists to understand protest in foreign countries than to reinterpret it creatively for themselves. However, when protesters lacking sufficient information acted in one space on the basis of assumptions derived from another, contextual mismatches could be problematic. Like other transnational phenomena, cross-border protest is rife with contradictions and unintended consequences. Transnational coalitions celebrated diversity, but they could amount to less than the sum of their parts when activists reduced foreign allies to their nationalities. Activists themselves may have aspired to ignore borders, but they also exploited them in ways which reified them and which could accentuate perceived national differences. Protesters were perhaps ultimately most effective when they focused less on overcoming differences than on undermining and deconstructing power.