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Stephen Milder, Greening Democracy: The Anti-Nuclear Movement and Political Environmentalism in West Germany and Beyond, 1968-1983 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017). ISBN: 9781316501061

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Introduction by Keith Makoto Woodhouse, Northwestern University

Environmental thinkers have long described the 1970s as a decade of limits, a characterization made especially resonant by the energy crises of that era. **Stephen Milder** sees the 1970s as a time of possibility, “when new options opened in political activism and democratic praxis.” (7) In *Greening Democracy: The Anti-Nuclear Movement and Political Environmentalism in West Germany and Beyond, 1968-1983*, Milder not only reconciles these views but also demonstrates how they are interwoven. In the 1970s the limits of oil hastened a pivot towards nuclear energy in Western Europe, and local concerns about the environmental and political consequences of nuclear plants led to grassroots protest, multigenerational political alliances, and a new conception of democratic political participation.

Focusing first on communities in the Upper Rhine valley that resisted nuclear power, *Greening Democracy* gradually broadens its scope to a region that straddled national borders and to national parliamentary politics and the emergence of the Green Party, never losing sight of the local activists who, according to Milder, remained the source of democratic potential in a growing antinuclear movement. Along the way, Milder challenges the notion that environmental activism was focused only on quality-of-life issues, and that environmental concerns were merely technocratic or hyperlocal and so disconnected from questions of democracy and governance. In fact, in *Greening Democracy* it was the fierce localism of antinuclear activists that lent their efforts national and transnational significance by underscoring the place of grassroots concerns and extra-parliamentary tactics in democratic processes.

Milder helps us understand the 1970s as a time of newly connected interests and allies, rather than as a period of frayed political ends. Environmental issues and especially antinuclear efforts provided an opportunity for democratic revitalization. Those opportunities remain, and Milder’s work suggests that in addressing our own environmental crises we might transform our politics as well.

Astrid Eckert begins the roundtable with a trenchant description of Milder’s overall goals; a discussion of his early focus on the Upper Rhine valley and especially a planned nuclear plant in the village of Wyl; and a close look at the process of “greening democracy” and how it fostered local solidarity and prefigured national party politics. As Eckert points out, Milder is interested in not only the narrative of antinuclear efforts but also the story of how transnational and intergenerational cooperation in the 1970s contributed to a flourishing of grassroots activism during a decade often framed in terms of political fragmentation. Milder’s narrative leaves Eckert with questions, though, including what finally sealed the fate of the Wyl plant, which was delayed by administrative as much as by direct actions and which made less and less economic sense as demand for electricity dropped. Eckert also asks whether there was significant grassroots support for the plant in and around Wyl, even amid what Milder depicts as overwhelming opposition. Finally, Eckert

asks how enduring the greening of democracy was, and whether we should look for it after the 1970s in new forms and new contexts.

Scott Moranda spells out the stakes of Milder's work, pointing to key scholarly questions about the state of democracy and social activism in postwar Germany and the place of environmentalism in late-twentieth century politics. Milder avoids easy answers to these questions, Moranda notes, arguing instead that the rise of environmentalism cannot be explained away as a pivot towards "postmaterial" politics, and that any democratic renewal enjoyed by Germans in the 1970s and after should not be credited only to parliamentary players like the Green Party. Milder reveals how new bedfellows and common causes structured a period which historians have too easily described as a time of fracture. Moranda wonders about the reach of the developments Milder delineates in terms of both time and space. First, he asks whether the democratic renewal of the 1970s persisted through later decades more often understood in terms of individualism and reaction. Second, he wonders if the democratic energy of German environmentalists in the 1970s penetrated what Michael Bess has called the "light green society" of late-twentieth century France.

Thomas Fleischman stresses how the subject of democracy is woven into the issues and developments that Milder examines, nuclear energy chief among them. Setting aside questions of reactor safety and radioactive waste—crucial as those questions are—nuclear technology necessitates decision-making that is highly centralized, technocratic, and inherently hostile to democracy. Nuclear power, Fleischman explains, also relies on the nation-state (an "atomic state"), a political structure "increasingly unequal to the threats of climate change and global capitalism." By focusing on the inherent politics of nuclear energy in addition to environmental concerns, Fleischman notes, Milder tells a rich and counterintuitive story in which the institutional success of the German Green Party was in many ways the defeat of a more ambitious, transnational, and grassroots antinuclear movement. The causes of this decline in local activism remain somewhat hazy, however, and Fleischman asks how exactly it happened, and in particular whether activists were eclipsed by national party politics or forced into retreat by the often violent response of state police forces. And like Eckert and Moranda, Fleischman wonders about the legacy of Milder's greening of democracy after the 1970s.

In his response Milder looks both backward and forward. He explains how he came to write a book about antinuclear activism and environmental politics, and he offers a complex and subtle sense of the legacy of the 1970s for environmentalism and democracy in Germany and Western Europe.

Many thanks to all of the roundtable participants for taking part.

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Comments by Astrid M. Eckert, Emory University

Some fifty years ago, Willy Brandt (SPD) assumed the chancellorship of the Federal Republic of Germany. “We want to dare more democracy,” he proclaimed in his first government declaration on Oct. 28, 1969.¹ Stephen Milder’s book *Greening Democracy: The Anti-Nuclear Movement and Political Environmentalism in West Germany and Beyond, 1968-1983* shows how anti-nuclear protesters in the Upper Rhine valley filled Brandt’s words with meaning, a meaning Brandt may not have had in mind when he gave his speech.

Greening Democracy seeks to establish the transnational origins of western European environmentalism that, according to Milder, owe little to watershed international events like the Club of Rome report *The Limits to Growth* (1972) or the UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm (1972). Instead, he forcefully argues for the centrality of grassroots activism by people focused on local concerns that were eventually compounded by the unresponsiveness of elected officials toward their constituents.

At the core of the book stands a case study of anti-nuclear activism in the Upper Rhine valley that establishes the analytical terms and main insights of the work. In the late 1960s, Swiss, French, and West German authorities developed plans to dot the banks of the Rhine River with a “pearl necklace” of nuclear reactors from Basel to Strasbourg. Indeed, since each state intended to draw on the Rhine for cooling water, the construction projects set off a veritable race to nuclearize the Upper Rhine since the river’s cooling capacity had natural limits (25-26). Starting in French Alsace, the various nuclear projects soon drew local opposition. To throw the dynamics of grassroots activism into relief, Milder zeroes in on a reactor planned in the German village of Wyhl, located in the wine-growing region of the Kaiserstuhl. Opposition to the project emerged from decidedly local concerns that did not conform with existing political alignments. Fishermen worried about their livelihoods, mariners fretted about riverine traffic, and vintners feared that the reactor’s cooling towers would change the microclimate in ways detrimental to their grapes. The local mobilization only increased when government officials and experts treated such concerns with condescension (41-42, 61). To be sure, opposition to the Wyhl reactor has long been central in the historiography of West Germany’s anti-nuclear movement, but Milder argues against a narrow vision of the Wyhl protests that focuses merely on the nine-month long occupation of the construction site in 1975. While it was arguably the telegenic clashes between local protesters and police at the occupiers’ encampment that raised Wyhl’s profile, Milder emphasizes the preceding years of grassroots activism, the cross-border contacts of the protesters, unusual alliances, and the protesters’ persistence, without which, he contends, the occupation of the construction site would remain inexplicable.

¹ Axel Schildt, Wolfgang Schmidt, eds., “Wir wollen mehr Demokratie wagen.” *Antriebskräfte, Realität und Mythos eines Versprechens* (Willy-Brandt-Studien, vol. 6). Bonn: Dietz, 2019.

What, specifically, does Milder mean when he speaks of a “greening of democracy?” The book title refers as much to the intersection of environmental protest and democracy as it does to the transformative power of grassroots activism. The activism, Milder argues, generated “individual self-respect” and “collective self-confidence” among the protesters that gelled into “new democratic subjectivities” (242). It could unfold without designated leaders, as in the occupation of the reactor plot, when “without any command to do so, ‘protesters broke down the fence and surged onto the site’” (97). Milder’s book is thus a forceful reminder of the radical democratic potential that inhabited the anti-nuclear protests of the mid-1970s. Where other scholars see this movement flow into the Green Party and thus into parliamentary (opposition) politics, Milder is more likely to see the founding of the Greens as the moment when the grassroots momentum was stunted. It is, in fact, one of the book’s historiographic interventions to differentiate the history of the Green Party’s founding. Instead of taking the founding of the West German Greens in 1980 as the vanishing point and the various alternative lists and coalitions as mere precursors, Milder prefers to treat them as players in their own right. The various green lists did not necessarily seek parliamentary representation as a goal per se. Rather, their focus remained decisively local, and they considered electoral campaigning as a way to enhance their grassroots appeal (185-191).

Reading *Greening Democracy*, one cannot fail to notice how passionately Milder argues on behalf of the grassroots activists and their efforts to protect their region from nuclearization and other risk industries that sought out the banks of the Rhine as production sites. He refrains from charging the activists with NIMBY concerns, nor does he fault them for not wanting to build a national movement out of their regional one. In fact, I read his book as an effort to rescue the broad coalition of anti-nuclear protesters (a good number of whom were unlikely activists, to be sure) from the condescension of posterity and even of contemporaries like Jo Leinen, who saw little value in the localized protests if they could not be harnessed for national political goals (163). Throughout the book, Milder also guards against a dismissal of anti-nuclear protests and environmental concerns more generally as merely “post-material,” quality-of-life issues, a stance he sees reflected in the work of social scientists on new social movements (2, 53, 62). In this context, it would be instructive to learn more about Milder’s experiences in researching this book in order to understand how he came to unlock the perspectives of the activists. It takes a lot to enter the social fabric of a region, and my question is less about primary source work than about the development of a “feel” for this region that the book clearly displays.

Speaking of regions, Milder notes how anti-nuclear protest across the river knitted together a “transnational ‘Alemannic community’” (16) of Badensians and Alsatians who shared a regional dialect and, from the early 1970s forward, also a political concern about risk industries. Cooperation, however, did not come easy. Milder notes an emotional distance between the two sides that was generated by three wars and the memories that came with them (81). And yet, Badensians took their

cues not from activists in other parts of West Germany but from Alsatian protesters like the shepherds of the Larzac. They marched together against a lead plant at Marckolsheim, and unilaterally reopened border crossings to facilitate their cooperation (82). Here, I think the book would have benefited from some deeper engagement with scholarship on European regions and regional identity. What many of these “sub-national places” (Celia Applegate) share is their endurance across political caesuras. In Brendan Karch’s words, regions “form temporal bridges across great political ruptures. Regimes come and go ... but regions have often persisted as coherent categories of political, economic or cultural analysis. Regions can prove a powerful ordering force for group belonging a century after the collapse of regimes.”² Although the nuclear programs that citizens opposed were the outcome of national politics, the opposition against them took transnational forms, as Milder convincingly demonstrates. And the transnational framework within which this opposition formed seems to indicate that a sense of local belonging was at play—the “Alemannic community.” It may matter in this context that the border between Germany and France had famously moved back and forth between the two countries in 1871, 1918, 1940 and, for a last time, in 1945. With each border movement, either Germany or France stepped up efforts to nationalize the oscillating region. The result, at least in the case of Alsace, was a decisively regional identity that has gone beyond the standard tensions between center (Paris) and periphery that modern French history is known for. In fact, Alsace was conspicuously absent during the consolidation of the republic when peasants were allegedly turned into Frenchmen; it “skipped” a major time period of nation-building in France while defending its regional identity vis-à-vis Germany. As Alison Carrol has recently argued, transnationality was built into the very fabric of Alsatian daily life; it emerged from an engagement with the frequently shifting border.³ The particular experience of Alsace as a borderland is central for the Alsatians’ “conflicted relationship with the French government” (32) that Milder references, but also as the source of their pronounced regional identity and deep experience with transnationality—a transnationality that anti-nuclear activists did not need to invent, only to resume.

What did the grassroots activists have to show for their efforts? A lot, actually. The reactor at Wyhl was never built. The nuclear “pearl necklace” along the Rhine never came to be to the extent initially envisioned, despite the fact that the reactors in Fessenheim and Malville on the French side did come online. Yet Milder is not just interested in tangible outcomes. The intangibles are, in my reading, at least as

² Celia Applegate, “A Europe of Regions. Reflections on the Historiography of Sub-National Places in Modern Times,” *American Historical Review* (October 1999): 1157-1182; Brendan Karch, “Regionalism, Democracy, and National Self-Determination in Central Europe,” *Contemporary European History* 21:4 (2012): 635-651, here 636. Karch developed this argument for Central European regions, but Alsace, in my view, also displays these characteristics.

³ Alison Carrol, *The Return of Alsace to France, 1918-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); Alison Carrol, “Paths of Frenchness: National Indifference and the Return of Alsace to France, 1919-1939.” In *National Indifference and the History of Nationalism in Modern Europe*, ed. by Maarten Van Genderachter and Jon E. Fox, 127-144. New York: Routledge, 2019.

important to him: transboundary cooperation, new templates for protest like the occupation of the construction site, widespread and sustained mobilization across generational, social, and political lines, as well as a sense of political empowerment from the grassroots. What, however, ultimately prevented the Wyhl reactor? Given how central the anti-Wyhl protest is for Milder's book, it is unfortunate that the story does not quite conclude that narrative. As one of Milder's reviewers has pointed out, the reactor project was significantly delayed and altered by administrative court decisions. By the time the state government of Baden-Württemberg could have gone ahead with construction, the demand for electricity had fallen to the point that Wyhl no longer made economic sense for the utility company.⁴ That, at least, is the received wisdom. If Milder had intended to correct this narrative, he did not register his objections clearly enough.

Another empirical point left me wondering. Milder's focus on the rootedness and authenticity of local protest never explicitly explores to what degree there may have been groups of pro-nuclear (or at least indifferent) residents in the region. The mayor of Wyhl makes a brief appearance as someone who had actually pitched the village as a nuclear site in the name of economic development (72). Otherwise, the book implies a near total mobilization against the Wyhl reactor by citing a petition that gathered 90,000 signatures, the "equivalent to the entire population of rural Emmendingen county" (76). As Milder himself indicates in the corresponding footnote, however, many of these signatures came from the nearby city of Freiburg, raising the question of where local non-signers stood on the reactor issue. While this may come across as a quibble, the point is that the proponents of the nuclear project and their motivations never quite come into focus beyond the fact that they intended to build a nuclear reactor. The grassroots activism that Milder fleshes out with so much texture appears to be sparring with a somewhat amorphous opponent.

In his conclusion, Milder credits the anti-nuclear protests for breathing life into democratic processes by making these processes more participatory from the bottom up and more inclusive across generational and social lines. Sustaining anti-nuclear protest over months and even years "expanded the meaning of democracy for many citizens" and provided them with a "new understanding of [their] own place in the democratic order" (246). For how long, though, did such an understanding last? Milder indicates that "assessing the significance of these new democratic subjectivities" (242) remains difficult and comes out negative if we look only at structures of governance. Still, he argues, these protests transformed *understandings* of democracy. Even in this narrower sense, however, I am left with the question of where we are to look for reverberations of the radical democratic experience that anti-nuclear protest provided. Since Milder sees the grassroots legacy only partially fulfilled (and perhaps not even honored) in the founding and

⁴ Frank Uekötter, *American Historical Review* 124:1 (Feb. 2019): 364-365. See also Jens Ivo Engels, *Naturpolitik in der Bundesrepublik. Ideenwelt und politische Verhaltensstile in Naturschutz und Umweltbewegung 1950-1980* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2006), 352.

parliamentary opposition of a national German Green party, neither party politics nor the national frame seem to be the place to look. It would, in fact, only be fitting if a study that emphasizes the local and regional roots of protest would return there to assess in which ways not only subjectivities but regional politics and civil society were transformed by the movement to avert Wyhl. As Dolores Augustine has recently pointed out, Wyhl opponents founded the Eco Institute in Freiburg (*Öko Institut*) to break the monopoly of government and industry on scientific expertise, thereby not only strengthening the case of the protesters against Wyhl but pluralizing the scientific discourse in siting decisions more generally.⁵ Does the rise of the “counter expert” fit the concept of a greening democracy? Similarly, what are we to make of the fact that Wyhl opponents deployed the law and relied on administrative courts to stall reactor construction work, as noted previously? Here, too, a change to the practice of democracy in West Germany seems to emerge, eventually culminating in the idea that environmental NGOs can sue on behalf of the public interest (*Verbandsklage*).⁶ Finally, what are the longer-term continuities of the transformed subjectivities that resulted from the grassroots experience in Baden? Did Wyhl create a regional protest culture that may have gone dormant but remained available to be tapped at a later date? I wonder in particular if lines of continuity point towards the adamant protest against the Stuttgart 21 railway station. Stuttgart 21 was “old school” in the worst sense of the term: plans for this infrastructural project were unveiled without prior civic participation and doggedly defended against objections. Protests culminated in violent clashes with police in late 2010, giving birth to the word of the year 2010: “enraged citizen,” or *Wutbürger*.⁷ The reference to Stuttgart 21 is not meant to challenge the timeframe of Milder’s study but to clarify its important contributions. After all, Jo Leinen already wondered, “Wyhl and then what...?”

⁵ Dolores L. Augustine, *Taking on Technocracy. Nuclear Power in Germany, 1945 to the Present* (New York: Berghahn, 2018), 82. See also the forthcoming dissertation of Daniel Eggstein (University of Konstanz) on the history of independent ecological research institutes.

⁶ The ability to take environmental concerns to court originated in the 1970s. See Deutscher Bundestag—Wissenschaftliche Dienste, “Die Verbandsklage im Naturschutz- und Umweltrecht. Historische Entwicklung, europarechtliche Vorgaben, Klageberechtigung” (November 2018) <https://www.bundestag.de/resource/blob/583690/fdd232be9af1080c21194c82c420a5e9/WD-7-208-18-pdf-data.pdf> (accessed Dec. 2019). On the legal action against Wyhl, see Engels, *Naturpolitik*, 352; on the suspicion of anti-nuclear activists against litigation on the basis of laws that favored the nuclear industry see Michael L. Hughes, “‘Rechtsstaat’ and ‘Recht’ in West Germany’s Nuclear Power Debate, 1975-1983,” *Law and History Review* 33:2 (May 2015): 411-434, here 418.

⁷ Political scientists puzzled over this leaderless *Wutbürger* revolution. An overview of explanations in Winfried Thaa, “Stuttgart 21—Krise oder Repolitisierung der repräsentativen Demokratie?,” *Politische Vierteljahrsschrift* 54:1 (2013): 1-20, here 1-2.

Comments by Scott Moranda, SUNY Cortland

In *Greening Democracy*, Stephen Milder writes about anti-nuclear activists and their contributions to the democratization of West Germany. In German studies, environmental activism has been at the center of a scholarly debate for over forty years. Beginning with sociologists and political scientists in the 1970s, two key questions have dominated this debate. Was the emergence of extra-parliamentary protest and the rise of the Green Party a “story of democratic renewal?” Or, did it mark the “dissembling of a workable parliamentary democracy in the name of individual interests?”¹

The latter position reflects the views of some scholars who emphasize the “postmateriality” of “new social movements” in the 1970s. These theories stress the apolitical nature of post-industrial politics that damaged the gains made through collective politics of the Social Democrats and other class-conscious parties. Part of the postmaterialist thesis also claims that the latter part of the twentieth century saw a fracturing of society into narrow interest groups. The suggestion, more often than not, has been that engagement with environmental or “quality of life” concerns signaled an end to “politics” and a descent into individualism.²

Alternatively, Greens themselves present the anti-nuclear protest movement and the new Green Party as that “story of democratic renewal.” As Milder explains, these narratives of democratization typically come in two variants. In one version of this narrative, the 68er generation “is portrayed as a singular force,” which injected a new democratic culture into European institutions.³ Often, this narrative is focused on the leading politicians within the Greens, such as Joschka Fischer. In other versions, extra-parliamentary activists make an appearance, but they largely play the role of anti-democratic disruptors that push political institutions to their breaking point, forcing political leaders to usher in new democratic reforms. In this Whiggish narrative, militant 68ers are brought into the “liberal democratic fold.”⁴ The postwar democratic order triumphs despite stumbling blocks and self-inflicted wounds.

This debate about democratization and environmental activists might seem familiar to scholars outside of German studies. Many societies have struggled to understand how environmentalism fits into traditional party structures and into the practice of

¹ Konrad H. Jarausch and Stephen Milder, “Renewing Democracy: The Rise of Green Politics in Germany,” *German Politics and Society* (Special Issue: Green Politics in Germany) 33:4 (Winter 2015), 20.

² Milder discusses the literature on postmateriality and new social movements in his article with Konrad Jarausch, but also in the text and footnotes for the introduction. Milder, *Greening Democracy*, 7, 14.

³ Milder, 244.

⁴ Milder, 11, 237.

democracy.⁵ Environmental concerns created unusual coalitions in many countries and often brought previously non-political individuals or groups into local and national political debates. Did these new movements widen democracy? Did activists simply fight until their narrow demands were satisfied? Did environmental politics become watered down into a moderate reformism palatable to the mainstream parties, or did environmental politics have the potential to disrupt politics as usual?

Milder clearly sides with those who would argue that green activists ushered in a “renewal of democracy,” but he simultaneously challenges simplistic narratives of Green democratization. One of the important contributions of this book, in fact, is that he complicates the Green Party’s origins story. To a large degree, he argues, the greening of democracy had little to do with the party leaders. For Milder, democratization happened at the grassroots level and not in the halls of the Bundestag. He shifts the spotlight from Joschka and parliamentarians to the individuals who occupied nuclear power plants and organized local resistance. In the everyday practice of resistance, protestors practiced self-governance. They began to question authority. They insisted that authority listen to and engage with local concerns. The “formation of democratic subjectivities” did not just happen in the voting booth. It happened at town hall meetings, at protest marches, and in negotiation with authorities.⁶ Even if they called themselves apolitical, citizens became politically and socially active in many small but significant ways. Democracy became a lived practice. Ironically, this had the effect of redefining the political to account for their concerns.

Returning to the big questions asked by theorists of the “new social movements,” Milder dismisses the notion of a society fracturing into apolitical interest groups. As he demonstrates, the anti-nuclear movement created new collectivities. The movement was multi-generational (not just made up of 68ers). New organizations brought together disparate groups with widely different economic and political backgrounds (vintners and students stood side by side as did communists and Christian Democrats). Activists did not cling necessarily to single-issue parties as expected in predictions of social fracturing. Instead, Milder shows that many local activists kept their distance from the national political party. They often voted for Greens, but democratic engagement went further than simply a vote for a national

⁵ I am thinking, in particular, of the literature on suburbanization and environmentalism in North America, or the literature on environmental policy in the Nixon years. On Nixon, see J. Brooks Flippen, *Nixon and the Environment* (University of New Mexico Press, 2000). On suburban movements, see Adam Rome, *The Bulldozer in the Countryside: Suburban Sprawl and the Rise of American Environmentalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) and Christopher C. Sellers, *Crabgrass Crucible: Suburban Nature and the Rise of Environmentalism in Twentieth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012). For a review that considers these works in terms of democratization, see Keith Mako Woodhouse, “Green Picket Fences: Environmentalism in the Suburbs,” *Reviews in American History* 41, no. 2 (2013): 343-349.

⁶ Milder, 244.

party. It involved engagement with their local communities in ways that furthered discussion between actors from different social and political backgrounds.

Discussions about activists and Greens from the 1970s often end up in a heated debate about “mainstreaming.” In Germany, many have noted that the Green Party has become a mainstream party that promotes incremental reforms rather than a radical transformation of society and politics. For critics, the story of the Green Party suggests the ills of a neoliberal or post-democratic order where parliamentary politics has become impotent, enthralled to private interests, and incapable of implementing the changes necessary to address crises of climate or inequality.⁷

Given his limited chronological framework for this work, Milder does not directly engage with this question. It seems likely that Milder would argue that everyday Germans, thanks to the anti-nuclear protests and other environmental initiatives, are more democratic than ever, in that they are more likely to mobilize to defend their personal or local interests from authorities. It would be great to hear more from Milder on the long-term legacies of the “greening of democracy.”

In particular, how might Milder connect the democratic subjectivities that he describes to populist demonstrations and protests in more recent years? It seems, in some ways, democratization has born strange fruits. NIMBYism, for example, reveals a citizenry engaged in the practice of democratic organization to defend their neighborhoods from massive infrastructure projects. Or, to defend their home town from political refugees. Citizens, more than ever, voice their concerns about a government insensitive to local needs. Expertise is lampooned as aloof and inhumane—out of touch with families and real lives. Yet, this very democratic engagement can marginalize underrepresented groups and seemingly undermine democracy in this sense. Home-owning middle class citizens, in the name of democracy, reject mass transit or affordable housing, leaving the voiceless to suffer from the growing inequities of modern cities. They might even use the environmental impact assessment process to delay projects that could better help society address climate change or housing inequalities. Have, indeed, selfish quality-of-life issues become dominant in politics to the point that collective action to solve problems of inequality becomes impossible? Are NIMBY action groups and, perhaps, Alternative for Germany two possible end-points in this story of “democratic renewal?” I am eager to hear more from Milder on the historical connections (or lack thereof) between 1970s citizen protest and current day NIMBYism and right-wing populism.

For some activists, the radical potential of the anti-nuclear protest movement had something to do with its transnational nature. *Greening Democracy*, therefore, also asks readers to consider the transnational aspects of environmental protest. Milder, in fact, achieves something still rare in scholarship about postwar Europe: he breaks out of the framework of the nation state to frame this story as one of transnational

⁷ Jarausch and Milder, 19.

engagement that did not end at the international border between Baden and Alsace. Since anti-nuclear protest along the Rhine River involved collaboration between French and German activists, Milder conducted research in archives in both France and Germany.

Milder finds, however, that Green politics only briefly pursued a transnational agenda. Some political leaders, such as Petra Kelly, very deliberately imagined a new European politics beyond the nation state. As Milder reveals, Kelly worked to build transnational political movements and invested immense time and energy into the European parliamentary elections of 1979. In the end, however, Green politics followed divergent paths in France and Germany. National boundaries still very much mattered to how these political movements evolved, and even when cross-border political campaigns took center stage, national differences persisted. In Germany, the campaign to elect candidates to the European Parliament in 1979 helped greens form a national party. The focus of German Greens, after the election, increasingly turned to national debates and issues. On the other hand, the European elections did not transform French green politics to a more national orientation. During the EP campaign itself, the French acted more regionally than the Germans. In other words, national distinctions in environmental activism and politics persisted despite cross-border collaboration. French activists continued to focus on regional and local initiatives and insist on their autonomy from national organizations while Germans used the elections as a practice run for national elections.

While Milder crossed borders to conduct his research, I wonder if he could have said more about democratization and reformism on the French side of the Rhine. While Milder's findings confirm some of Michael Bess's conclusions about regionalism in French green politics, does *Greening Democracy's* appreciation for the new "democratic subjectivities" born in anti-nuclear protest allow for a reconsideration of the "light green society" thesis introduced by Bess?⁸ Something vital, even transformative, was happening in the environmental movements of the 1970s, Milder argues. "Light green society" suggests more business as usual and a limited reformism. On the other side of the Rhine, how limited was the democratic renewal Milder is discussing here? Or, was France's "light green society" both more democratic and also limited and reformist at the same time? Did the democratization featured in this book have the potential for more radical reconsiderations of politics or was it always limited and "light?" Even though it focuses on West Germany slightly more than it focuses on France, how does the book contribute to the historiography of French environmentalism?

⁸ Michael Bess, *The Light Green Society: Ecology and Technological Modernity in France, 1960-2000* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003)

The Universal Environmental Republic

Nuclear power is back. Although the 2011 Fukushima disaster had supposedly rung the death knell of the industry, support has surged again.¹ In the years since, the planet has moved beyond the atmospheric CO₂ limit where people could have halted irreversible climate change. Now only mitigation, adaptation, and retreat remain as viable paths forward. As the climate crisis compounds and accelerates with every extra ton of carbon we emit, the need for more extreme solutions grows, creating an opening for nuclear power and its boosters. Among US liberal “centrists” like Steven Pinker² and rightwing authors like Andrew Sullivan,³ the argument goes something like this: “we” (and in this case, “we” is usually the irrational Left) need to get over our shortsighted opposition to nuclear energy if “we” (in this case broadened to include all of humanity) are going to deal with the existential crisis of a warming planet. Even Leftwing journalists like Eric Levitz have taken Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders to task for ceding the nuclear debate to the Right, arguing that nuclear power is the last “realist” option available to halting the worst effects of climate change.⁴ On a fundamental question, pro-nuclear boosters seem in agreement: can humanity truly afford to forsake this Promethean technology any longer in the face of an even greater existential threat?

Pro-nuclear boosters argue that the science is on their side. For people like Pinker, new technology will assuage our worst fears. We need to merely replace the old, unwieldy first and second generation power plants, the ones that had failed at Fukushima and Three Mile Island. And if accidents occur, boosters like Levitz argue, the health risks are overblown. Writing about the long-term fallout from Chernobyl, he argues that the general public was exposed to “only” 30 milliesieverts, the equivalent of CT-scan in the decades since. Of course, each of these points is easily contested. Kate Brown has shown that not only do we underestimate the number of people killed by the Chernobyl explosion, but we drastically underappreciate how dangerous, dirty, and pervasive the production of fissile material has been since the start of the Cold War. By focusing on the spectacular accidents, we miss the slow-moving disasters unleashed through plutonium production, uranium mining, and

¹ “Why Nuclear Power Must Be Part of the Energy Solution,” Yale E360, accessed December 19, 2019, <https://e360.yale.edu/features/why-nuclear-power-must-be-part-of-the-energy-solution-environmentalists-climate>.

² Joshua S. Goldstein, Staffan A. Qvist, and Steven Pinker, “Opinion | Nuclear Power Can Save the World,” *The New York Times*, April 6, 2019, sec. Opinion, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/06/opinion/sunday/climate-change-nuclear-power.html>.

³ Andrew Sullivan, “Andrew Sullivan: A Radically Moderate Answer to Climate Change,” *Intelligencer*, March 1, 2019, <http://nymag.com/intelligencer/2019/03/andrew-sullivan-a-radically-moderate-climate-solution.html>.

⁴ Eric Levitz, “On Climate, Sanders and Warren Must Go Nuclear,” *Intelligencer*, September 5, 2019, <http://nymag.com/intelligencer/2019/09/cnn-climate-town-hall-bernie-sanders-elizabeth-warren-nuclear-power.html>.

waste disposal in the United States and former Soviet Union.⁵ Furthermore, relying on technology to improve the safety of nuclear energy is likely impossible. As Craig Morris and Arne Jungjohan argue, since accidents are an inescapable part of testing any new energy system or scaling production, they are just as likely to occur during the development of new nuclear technology.⁶ Thus new nuclear technology poses existential political and environmental risks, making rapid progress likely impossible. Even when these objections are raised, the pro-nuclear camp waives them away with a cold-blooded logic. They argue that we must save “humanity” (plus or minus a few 100 million people) or invoke a “whataboutism” for the number of people killed by fossil fuels. It’s beyond reasonable to assume that if we measure our solutions in body counts and background radiation exposure, then a just energy transition will become impossible.

Nuclear boosters, however, have one example that’s harder to refute, that of the French story. Seemingly every one of these pieces invokes the case of the Fifth Republic, which, as the story goes, produced a 4.5% decline in carbon emissions in the 1980s after moving three-quarters of national electricity production into nuclear energy. Here was an industrial economy that had embraced the technology, reduced its carbon footprint, and avoided a single major nuclear accident. The French example is a compelling one, but an incomplete story. The risks of nuclear power, as Stephen Milder shows in *Greening Democracy*, go beyond public health, pollution, and accidents. As the 1970s anti-reactor movement argued, nuclear energy also poses an existential threat to the function of democracy and the rules of world order.

Greening Democracy is an astounding book. It takes the familiar narrative of the rise of modern environmentalism in Europe—of an inchoate and diffuse grass roots movement, given shape and legitimacy through a series of mass protests and direct actions, which culminated in the formation of the Greens in the 1980s—and turns it on its head. In Milder’s narrative, the Greens represent not the fulfillment of a long-held dream, but in fact a lost opportunity. By institutionalizing environmental politics within the structures of parliamentary liberal democracy, the Greens foreclosed on the truly far-reaching potential of modern environmentalism. This is not to say the Greens didn’t have their triumphs, but focusing on the Greens as the end result of anti-reactor politics misses a more important story. A careful and contingent reading of the movement—one that avoids the teleological rise of the Greens—shows a much more compelling and wide-open vision of politics: a radical, bottom-up direct democracy that blended grassroots activism, transnational cooperation, and extra-parliamentary politics.

⁵ Kate Brown, *Plutopia : Nuclear Families, Atomic Cities, and the Great Soviet and American Plutonium Disasters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁶ Craig Morris, *Energy Democracy : Germany’s Energiewende to Renewables*, 1st edition. (London, NY: Macmillan Publisher Limited, 2016), 314.

Why has Milder's narrative remained hidden for so long? Part of the answer lies in the striking potential and dangerous pitfalls of environmentalism—its ability to simultaneously transcend traditional political divisions and form new coalitions, while also creating dangerous bedfellows. This ability gives the mistaken impression of environmentalism as being apolitical, an outcome belied by the history of the movement. Take a look at any major environmental issue of the last half century—from the “population bomb” and preserving wilderness to endangered species and global warming—and find figures of the Left and Right thrilling to the cause. As Milder and others like Eli Rubin have pointed out, for every “Left” environmentalist, like New Left veterans Joschka Fischer and Daniel Cohn-Bendit, Right-leaning, or even explicit “eco-fascists” like CDU member Herbert Gruhl, found places in the movement. The fall of communism produced even stranger political journeys, as erstwhile Leftists, like former East German dissident Rudolf Bahro, would later call for a “Green Adolf” to lead an “eco-dictatorship” in unified Germany.⁷ In our current moment, when the vast consensus over global warming is ignored and denigrated by extremists, environmental issues are often treated as a question of belief—whether someone “believes in the science” or not. The consequence of this fact has drained the politics from environmentalism, making it easier to hide or occlude the very real political questions at the heart of climate change or nuclear power. Milder shows how anti-reactor protesters knew better. For them, the politics of reactor construction were just as dangerous as any release of radiation.

Greening Democracy captures what nuclear-boosters in the present get wrong—the fact that nuclear energy is antithetical to a functioning democracy. Whether it's the prohibitive costs, the dangers of nuclear proliferation, or the catastrophic risks of meltdown, nuclear energy cannot be managed democratically, but instead requires a strong, unaccountable state. In the best case scenario, an “atomic state,” as opponents like Robert Jungk named it in 1977, would fall under the control of a technocratic regime, managing its energy sources in much the same way Pinker or Sullivan imagine—“apolitically.” Yet, as we have seen, there is no such thing as environmentalism without politics. How to manage a reactor, determine the price of electricity, or deal with the waste a reactor produces, all require political decision making, the results of which will lead to inevitable harm for someone. Whether an eco-fascist or a technocratic regime, the “atomic state” cannot abide democratic input.

What's more, the nation-state appears increasingly unequal to the threats of climate change and global capitalism in the present. As recent works of political economy and intellectual history have shown, neoliberals have bent the form of the nation-state to increasingly prioritize the movement of capital and property across borders

⁷ Eli Rubin, “The Greens, the Left, and the GDR: A Critical Reassessment,” in *Ecologies of Socialisms: Germany, Nature, and the Left in History, Politics and Culture*, ed. Sabine Moedersheim, Scott Moranda, and Eli Rubin (Peter Lang AG International Academic Publishers, 2019), 183.

over the rights of people and the vibrancy of democratic rule.⁸ Over the last decade, this transformation has only accelerated. Contra macro-economic orthodoxy, the world economy does not revolve around nation states and their trade balances and deficits, but instead moves through a matrix of interlocking balance sheets of roughly a few thousand corporations and twenty to thirty banks and asset managers.⁹ In a world where nation states serve Capital over people, an unbound atomic state will likely only strengthen the hand of the ruling class, perhaps even ushering in an era of eco-fascism.

What is to be done? One clear route is democratization of energy production. In *Energy Democracy*, Craig Morris and Arne Jungjohan use the example of energy policy in the wake of Germany's reunification to outline a new set of principles and rights for citizens. In an energy democracy, they write, "you have the right to make your own energy. You have the right to do so profitably. The role of corporations can be smaller. Communities can be stronger. And a country can rally around a common goal."¹⁰ This sounds good but it's not quite enough, as "country" is the wrong framework. Democracy needs something greater. Fortunately, Milder's history shows that we've already seen a model before.

The anti-reactor protestors were explicitly transnational. Cross-border collaboration between French and German protestors was normalized over the course of the 1970s. As their movement grew, it attracted people from across Europe, including Italy, Switzerland, Belgium, and the Netherlands. And when protestors occupied reactor sites, they constructed ad-hoc community spaces for their motley supporters that they called "Foreigner Camps" and "Friendship Houses." For reactor protesters, the French and German nations had betrayed their citizens, with police, soldiers, and unaccountable technocratic administrators. But transnational cooperation during protests, as Milder points out, was only one half of this formula. The other half looked to building an enduring political praxis, based upon an affiliation of environmentalist groups, each organizing their home community's political order around local environmental issues. The new direct democracy of environmentalism would transcend the limits of the nation state.

I couldn't help but hear the echoes of earlier European history in the anti-reactor movement, particularly the example of the Paris Commune. As Kristin Ross shows, the Communards also opposed the nation, rallying to the flag of the Universal Republic, which repudiated the centralized nation state as the primary framework for politics. One of the first acts of the Communards was to welcome all the foreigners in Paris into their ranks, and then call for the dismemberment of the French imperial bureaucracy. As Commune leader Elisée Reclus declared, "It is not enough to emancipate each nation from under the thumb of the king. It must be

⁸ Quinn Slobodian, *Globalists: The End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism* (Harvard University Press, 2018).

⁹ Adam Tooze, *Crashed: How a Decade of Financial Crises Changed the World* (Penguin, 2018).

¹⁰ Morris, *Energy Democracy*, 14.

liberated from the supremacy of other nations, its boundaries must be abolished, those limits and frontiers that make enemies out of sympathetic peoples.”¹¹ One hundred years later, anti-reactor leaders Petra Kelly and Roland Vogt described their new trans-border, grassroots politics in a similar way. Environmental democracy would create “a new sense of belonging as a path breaking force for a nonviolent European community, a Europe from below.”¹²

Milder’s history does raise questions. As much as I thrilled to this new political vision, I was unclear why it proved so ephemeral. Had it succumbed the pressure of state violence? Can we blame the ascendancy of the Greens? And if it did not last, where did it go and how can it be revived again? It is of course ironic that one of the founding issues of the environmental movement, the existential threat of nuclear energy, is now being championed as a solution to another existential threat, global warming. And yet it’s an irony that makes this history desperately relevant. As the question of global warming passes into conventional wisdom, “we” will need models going forward for combating ill-conceived solutions and nefarious plans to alter the planet’s structure further. It is not a question of technology and know-how. It is also one of politics, community, and belonging. From the 1870s to the 1970s, we have come full circle again. Now we must decide how to move forward.

¹¹ Kristin Ross, *Communal Luxury: The Political Imaginary of the Paris Commune* (Verso Books, 2015), 22.

¹² Stephen Milder, *Greening Democracy: The Anti-Nuclear Movement and Political Environmentalism in West Germany and Beyond, 1968–1983* (Cambridge University Press, 2017), 200.

Response by Stephen Milder, University of Groningen

I want to begin by thanking Keith Woodhouse for organizing this roundtable, and Astrid Eckert, Thomas Fleischman, and Scott Moranda for reading and reviewing *Greening Democracy*. It has been a real privilege to read such rich and thoughtful responses to the book. Each reviewer raises compelling questions that entangle the history of the anti-nuclear movement in debates about democracy and public participation, as well as environmentalism, energy politics, and even climate change. I am grateful for the opportunity to respond to these reviews and to join the lively conversation that they have opened up.

While each reviewer has looked at the book through a different lens, all three have demonstrated an interest in the longer trajectories of the story presented in the book. Astrid Eckert wants to know what has become of the new democratic subjectivities that I posit were a seminal element of the greening of democracy. Scott Moranda asks whether there are links between the “NIMBY action groups” of the 1970s and the right-wing party Alternative for Germany (AfD). Thomas Fleischman wonders where the sort of direct democratic, transnational environmentalism that Petra Kelly described in her writings and that I argue took shape amidst 1970s anti-nuclear protest, has gone and why it seems to have been so short-lived. I have decided to focus my response on this line of questioning, because these questions relate to my motivations for writing *Greening Democracy*, and also because doing so offers a chance to say some more about what I have taken away from the project.

To be honest, I didn’t set out to write a history of the anti-nuclear movement, let alone a transnational study of grassroots protest in Alsace and Baden. I was initially interested in the reasons that suddenly in 1983—for the first time in three decades—a new political party, the Green Party, entered the German Bundestag. I wanted to know about the Green Party’s roots, and to learn how and why it came to be. I had taken a course on the European Left with Andy Markovits, and read his field-shaping study of the Greens’ emergence, *The German Left: Red, Green, and Beyond*. The anti-nuclear movement, and the “broadly understood notion of ecology” that developed within it, was amongst the Greens’ key predecessors for Markovits, since it served as “a hub around which diffuse interests ... could coalesce.”¹ So, my own interest in the anti-nuclear movement grew out of questions about how protesting nuclear energy could bring people together and give shape to a new political party. I was interested, in short, in the sorts of questions about the movement’s longer trajectory and wider ramifications raised by the reviews in this roundtable; I planned to write a sort of pre-history of the German Green Party in order to link grassroots activism with high politics. When I began my research, I slowly came to realize how much I would need to know about the movement itself

¹ Andrei Markovits and Philip Gorski, *The German Left: Red, Green, and Beyond* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) 106.

in order to begin thinking about its political ramifications and its place in the big picture.

My dissertation, upon which the book is based, was for all intents and purposes a micro-history of anti-reactor protests in the Upper Rhine valley during the early 1970s. Especially on account of the guidance of Lawrence Goodwyn, I became deeply interested in the movement itself, and particularly in the ways that people came into the movement—a process that Goodwyn calls recruiting. In his history of the late 19th century populist movement in the United States, Goodwyn reminds us that “times have been ‘hard’ for most humans throughout human history and for most of that period people have not been in rebellion.”² Thinking along these lines, I began my research with the assumption that social movements only exist if people work hard to organize them. I wanted to find out what caused individual people concerned about nuclear reactor construction to put down their work, disrupt their family plans, and become active in a collective political project.

This approach, to respond to one of Eckert’s points, is what guided me as I tried to “unlock the perspectives of the activists” and to “enter the social fabric” of their region. I asked the reactor opponents I interviewed what had caused them to get involved in the movement, and I also looked for clues about how activists were recruited to the movement in meeting minutes, memoirs, published interviews, and alternative press reports. I found a variety of seemingly unlikely motivations, from longstanding village rivalries, to memories of wartime destruction and evacuation, to the concerns that proud vintners and farmers raised about the well-being of their crops—and thus the future of their livelihoods. The debate about the potential for catastrophic nuclear accidents and the ongoing health risks posed by nuclear energy production, the contemporary contours of which Fleischman so eloquently describes in his review, were rarely mentioned as motivations to join the movement, though they gained importance as the movement developed. It is true, as Eckert and Moranda both note, that my look at the region does not do justice to the motivations and experiences of active proponents of nuclear energy, who were certainly present—though in much smaller numbers than active opponents. I do still think it is possible to write the history of a movement without dwelling too long on the views of its antagonists. Nonetheless, doing more to include proponents of nuclear energy would have both provided a fuller picture of the nuclear debate at the grassroots level, and also opened up insights into whether advocates of nuclear energy, too, changed their relationship to democracy during the seventies and eighties. So, this point is well taken and suggests an area ripe for future research.

Even if I sometimes got lost in the weeds of the Upper Rhine valley, my analysis of grassroots protests opened up new perspectives on the movement’s longer trajectories and their place in the bigger picture. I realized the extent to which the activists who built the anti-nuclear movement drew on ideas and influences from

² Lawrence Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment: A Short History of the Agrarian Revolt in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), x.

abroad—and how they often crossed borders themselves. Still, I struggled with how to tell their movement’s transnational story. I wanted, on the one hand, to explain how local people built a movement from the bottom up, something which required looking beyond borders. On the other hand, I wanted to get at the movement’s long-term consequences. Despite Rhine valley activists’ disregard for national boundaries, and despite Petra Kelly’s attempts to build a Europe of the regions, I found that the anti-nuclear movement’s most significant consequences were delimited by national boundaries. Nuclear energy programs remained, for the most part, the domain of national governments. But perhaps more importantly, the movement’s societal resonance occurred within national boxes: it garnered broader interest when it appeared in the national press, and it shifted cultures of participation (or the lack thereof) that existed in national contexts. Doing more to incorporate the literature on European regions, as Eckert suggests with particular emphasis on Alsace, would have helped me to bridge the gap between a grassroots movement and its national contexts. Investigating the movement’s transnational nature more thoroughly, as Andrew Tompkins does in his own monograph on the Franco-German anti-nuclear movement, as well as his important conceptual article on the “Grassroots Transnationalism(s)” of the 1970s, would have been another means of decentering the national.³ Though I drew on both of these approaches to some extent, I focused on trying to understand and explain how activists who considered themselves so distant from national politics nonetheless affected national politics. Especially in West Germany, I think, this national impact was profound.

Taking the movement’s transnational context into account helped me to see that parliament was not the only place to look for its impact, even in national politics. Though I remain convinced by Markovits’s assertion that the anti-nuclear movement helped lay the groundwork for the Greens’ emergence, I saw individuals’ changed understanding of democracy as the movement’s most significant outcome—even at the national level. Organizing a new political party was but one way of acting on this changed understanding.

In fact, anti-nuclear activists did not see their work as an effort to break down barriers to formal political participation, or to build a rival to established parties. They were focused instead on questions that they considered apolitical. But the “local people” who opposed nuclear energy soon linked their personal concerns with big questions about what it meant to live in a democratically governed state, and why they seemed to have so little control over decisions that affected them.⁴ In so doing, they lived John Dewey’s famous critique of the old maxim that “the only

³ Andrew Tompkins, *Better Active than Radioactive! Anti-Nuclear Protest in 1970s France and West Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); and Andrew Tompkins, “Grassroots Transnationalism(s): Franco-German Opposition to Nuclear Energy in the 1970s,” *Contemporary European History*, vol. 25, no. 1 (February 2016): 117-142.

⁴ I take the concept of “local people” from John Dittmer’s study of the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi. Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995).

cure for the ills of democracy is more democracy”—they found that improving their democracy would require more than perfecting its “machinery,” but rather “returning to the idea itself.”⁵

Still, Eckert was “left with the question where we are to look for the reverberations of the radical democratic experience that anti-nuclear protest provided.” This is a poignant question. Beyond presenting a handful of thumbnail biographies as examples, I struggled in the book to illustrate the nature and scope of these “reverberations,” which were personally rooted but which affected the wider society.

I do think that telling the stories of people who “had never been to a protest” before taking part in an unprecedented act of civil disobedience, who ran for local office on account of their experiences in the anti-nuclear movement, or who remained active in advocacy and community organizing long after the 1970s, provides the most significant evidence of the transformative nature of these experiences and thus suggests profound reverberations. In fact, I think that more research on individual life stories would be the foremost basis for a fuller response to Eckert’s important question.⁶

But there are other ways to measure these sorts of changes, too—ways that upon reflection, I ought to have included in the book. For one thing, the radical democratic experiences of the 1970s affected how government officials went about their business, making an emphasis on public dialogue and citizen input *de rigueur*. Citizens’ expectations that their views be taken seriously in public consultations has itself become a source of grievances, as is evidenced by the debate over the Stuttgart 21 railway project, mentioned by Eckert in her review.⁷ Established political parties also changed the way they went about their business amidst the nuclear debate. Witnessing citizens’ involvement in anti-nuclear activism and many other sorts of grassroots citizens’ initiatives, the Christian Democratic Union launched a concerted local recruiting effort that brought in 70,000 new members each year during the

⁵ John Dewey, *The Public and its Problems* (New York: Holt, 1927), 144.

⁶ Geoff Eley emphasizes the importance of looking for political changes within individual biographies linked together by a “structure of feeling”—and thus beyond “the collective resources or organized sinews of any party-based subculture” in a forthcoming essay on social movements after ‘68. Eley, “Leaving the borderlands...but for where? 1968 and the New Registers of Political Feeling” forthcoming in Friederike Brühofener, Belinda Davis, and Stephen Milder, eds., *Social Movements after ‘68: West Germany and Beyond* (under review). Andrew Tompkins provides just such a look at anti-nuclear activists’ biographies in the final chapter of *Better Active than Radioactive!* Belinda Davis also does so for 1970s activists more generally in her forthcoming monograph *The Internal Life of Politics: Extraparliamentary Opposition in West Germany, 1962-1983*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming). Konrad Jarausch has even told the history of twentieth century Germany from the perspective of collective biography in his recent *Broken Lives: How Ordinary Germans Experienced the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).

⁷ See, for example: Josef Schunder, “Mit einem Überfall beginnt Stuttgart 21,” *Stuttgarter Nachrichten* 21 November 2011; Monika Böhm, “Bürgerbeteiligung nach Stuttgart 21: Änderungsbedarf und -perspektiven” *Natur und Recht* vol. 33, no. 9 (September 2011): 614-619.

mid-1970s. As a result, it became a “mass-membership party” that was more open—ostensibly at least—to grassroots concerns.⁸

This shift to a form of parliamentary democracy that was more capable of responding to popular concerns brings to mind Moranda’s question about links between anti-nuclear protest and contemporary “right wing populism.” There is no doubt that nativist PEGIDA rallies and the right-wing AfD draw in some way on the legacy of 1970s activism, and on the freedom to engage in politics that 1970s activists demanded—and then created for themselves. Indeed, though conservative and right-wing activism remains comparatively under-researched, scholars have shown how right-wing movements borrow ideas and tactics from other bottom-up movements.⁹ Still, I hardly think it would be right to consider the AfD an “end-point” in Germany’s story of democratic renewal. Competing interests could be promoted even within the staid democracy of the fifties and sixties; an even wider range of interests can be promoted in a livelier, more participatory system. Importantly, however, it is precisely the sorts of broad solidarities that brought together “critical architects, doctors, pedagogues, journalists, frustrated orchestral musicians, [and] ruminant police officers” in anti-nuclear protests that seem to offer the best chance at combatting the exclusive social vision promoted by the likes of the AfD.¹⁰

Fleischman’s concluding discussion of the Paris Commune, with its references to the problems of the present, suggests two other useful approaches to thinking about and mapping the reverberations of 1970s radical democratic experiences. Fleischman connects the transnational environmental politics that Petra Kelly articulated amidst her observations of grassroots anti-nuclear protest with the universalist outlook of the Communards, who “also opposed the nation state as the primary framework for politics.” The European framework, which anti-nuclear activists deployed as an “ideal intermediary space, one in which they could position themselves above the nation state while still remaining (literally and figuratively) close to home” continues to hold promise for those seeking to re-imagine politics.¹¹ Even as Brussels stumbles from crisis to crisis, an interesting cross-section of society, from British remainers to the DieM25 movement, pin their hopes for a brighter future or for political transformation on “Europe.” Realizing this imagined

⁸ Frank Bösch, “Die Krise als Chance: Die Neuformierung der Christdemokraten in den siebziger Jahren,” in Konrad Jarausch, ed. *Das Ende der Zuversicht? Die siebziger Jahre als Geschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht), 300. See also: Bösch, *Macht und Macht Verlust. Die Geschichte der CDU* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 2002), 32-3. I expand on the ways I think anti-nuclear protest affected the CDU in “From the Margins to the Core: How Women-led Anti-Nuclear Protests influenced Parliamentary Politics and Christian Democracy in 1970s West Germany” forthcoming in Di Maio and Novelli, eds., *Christian Democratic Women* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, November 2020).

⁹ See, for example, Martin Geyer, “Elsiabeth Noelle-Neumann’s ‘Spiral of Silence,’ the Silent Majority and the Conservative Moment of the 1970s,” in Anna von der Goltz and Britta Waldschmidt-Nelson, eds., *Inventing the Silent Majority in Western Europe and the United States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017): 251-274

¹⁰ Walter Mossmann, *Realistisch sein: das unmögliche verlangen. Wahrheitsreue gefälschte Erinnerungen* (Berlin: Edition der Freitag, 2009), 203

¹¹ Tompkins, *Better Active than Radioactive!*, 110.

Europe beyond the local level will certainly limit the importance of nation states and thus amount to a transformation of politics as we know it. In so doing, it has the potential to combat the brand of nativism embraced by PEGIDA and the AfD as well.

But there is also a more fundamental way in which I think the connection to the Paris Commune, and especially Kristin Ross's treatment of it, can help us think about the reverberations of 1970s radical democratic experiences. The Commune, for Ross, is an event which can be seen "as belonging to the past—and, at the same time, as the figuration of a possible future."¹² I will be the first to admit that the Wyhl occupation and the other anti-nuclear protests that stand at the center of my book, do not have anything close to the global resonance of the Paris Commune.¹³ But I do think that 1970s anti-nuclear protests became a shining example that another sort of politics was possible in the here and now. The painstaking work of organizing such a movement, and the jubilation of witnessing their collective power, certainly increased protagonists' feelings of "individual self-respect" and "collective self-confidence."¹⁴ Just watching such a movement unfold changed contemporaries' conceptions of the possible. In 1970s West Germany (to a much greater extent than in France), non-violent civil disobedience was all the more difficult to organize because it was considered outside the bounds of acceptable practice in a parliamentary democracy. It is important to remember, after all, that the mobilizations of the 1970s came a mere thirty years after the Nazi dictatorship, and in a moment when democracy had become more closely linked with growth, peace, and stability than with self-expression and the public airing of grievances.¹⁵

So, to answer Fleischman's question about where the direct democratic, transnational environmentalism of the 1970s has gone, I would say that while the lived practices that animated political environmentalism in the 1970s proved very difficult to sustain, the ideas that underpinned them retain their power, and can be re-deployed. In the fall of 2018, a veteran of protests against the nuclear

¹² Quoted in John Merrick, "Kristin Ross: The Contemporary relevance of the Paris Commune" *Verso Blog* 14 May 2015 (<https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/1991-kristin-ross-the-contemporary-relevance-of-the-paris-commune>); the contemporary relevance of the Commune has been widely discussed in the wake of several recent historical monographs. See, for example, Adam Gopnik's review of John Merriman's *Massacre*. Gopnik, "The Fires of Paris: Why do people still fight about the Paris Commune?" *The New Yorker* 15 December 2014 (<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/12/22/fires-paris>)

¹³ Though the Wyhl occupation does have a clear resonance in German memory. The entry on "Wyhl" in the *Encyclopedia of German Memory Sites* describes this status: "No protest movement in the history of the 'old' Federal Republic was so influential throughout society, so formative, or so important for consciousness building as the movement against the civil or 'peaceful' use of nuclear energy... At the beginning of the mass protests against the use of nuclear energy was the Wyhl movement." Bernd-A. Rusinek, "Wyhl," in *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte II* Etienne François and Hagen Schulze, eds. (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2001), 652.

¹⁴ Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment*, xix.

¹⁵ See, for example: Claudia Gatzka, *Die Demokratie der Wähler. Stadtgesellschaft und politische Kommunikation in Italien und der Bundesrepublik, 1944-1979* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 2019); and Martin Conway, "The Rise and Fall of Western Europe's Democratic Age, 1945-1973," *Contemporary European History* vol. 13, no. 1 (Feb 2004): 67-88.

reprocessing plant proposed for the Bavarian village of Wackersdorf explained to me how mass protests against a new police law had reinvigorated the “Wackersdorf feeling.” Two Munich journalists used the same metaphor, reporting that the Wackersdorf feeling had returned because the protests pitted the governing Christian Social Union against tens of thousands of mobilized citizens. One’s attitude towards the police law—like one’s attitude towards nuclear energy—had become “a question that reached deep into daily life.”¹⁶ That the anti-nuclear protests of the 1970s and 1980s have become a way of thinking about protest in contemporary Germany evidences the enduring power of the ideas that underpinned them as well as the historical significance of the events themselves.

In my view, this historical significance lies in the ways that anti-nuclear protest helped to make the strict boundaries between parliamentary democracy and popular politics—boundaries that Germans perceived to divide the real work of government from everything else—more porous. I do not intend to suggest here that there was not any crossover before anti-nuclear activists came on the scene, or that two previously separate realms suddenly merged together in 1975. Nor do I think that the most radical variants of 1970s environmentalism remain widespread today. In this sense, Moranda’s invocation of Michael Bess’s “light green society” thesis is apt. Like Bess, I think that while there have been moments with transformative potential in the contemporary history of environmental politics—of which the anti-nuclear movement of the 1970s was certainly one—environmentalism has hardly achieved a radical transformation of politics and society to date.¹⁷ Perhaps a more transformative environmental politics is being assembled again today, as new activists draw our attention to the dire consequences of climate change and build movements intended to fundamentally change society in order to address those urgent problems. In that case, the models and ideas provided by 1970s activists may serve as useful examples of what is to be done.

¹⁶ Lisa Schnell and Wolfgang Wittl, “In Bayern wächst das Wackersdorf Gefühl,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (12 May 2018).

¹⁷ For Bess, French “green activists and theorists of the 1970s...were true revolutionaries” advocating “a total metamorphosis of industrial civilization.” The light green society came about because these revolutionaries’ “hopes were frustrated by the staying-power of mass consumerism.” Michael Bess, *The Light Green Society: Ecology and Technological Modernity in France, 1960-2000* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 156.

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(<https://global.oup.com/academic/product/west-germany-and-the-iron-curtain-9780190690052?q=astrid%20eckert&lang=en&cc=us>)

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