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Nature, Knowledge, and Protest. A Review of Recent Publications on the History of Environmentalism

Melanie Arndt: *Tschernobylkinder. Die transnationale Geschichte einer nuklearen Katastrophe*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2020, 499 pp., ISBN: 978-3-525-35208-3.

Nils Güttler: *Alles über das Fliegen. Eine politische Wissensgeschichte des Frankfurter Flughafens*, Vienna: Turia & Kant, 2020, 123 pp., ISBN: 978-3-85132-981-0.

Katrin Jordan: *Ausgestrahlt. Die mediale Debatte um „Tschernobyl" in der Bundesrepublik und in Frankreich 1986/87*, Göttingen: Wallstein, 2018, 424 pp., ISBN: 978-3-8353-3304-8.

Stephen Milder: *Greening Democracy. The Anti-Nuclear Movement and Political Environmentalism in West Germany and Beyond, 1968–1983*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017, 280 pp., ISBN: 978-1-107-13510-9.

Christian Möller: *Umwelt und Herrschaft in der DDR. Politik, Protest und die Grenzen der Partizipation in der Diktatur*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2020, 396 pp., ISBN: 978-3-525-31096-0.

Martin Spenger: *Green Beat. Gary Snyder und die moderne amerikanische Umweltbewegung*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2020, 239 pp., ISBN: 978-3-525-31098-4.

In her overview of environmental history, published in 2015, Melanie Arndt identifies the history of environmental social movements as major issue. At the same time, she highlights the history of how knowledge and ignorance of the relation between nature, society and technology have been produced as one central category of environmental history.[1] From the perspective of social movement historiography, scientisation and professionalisation are well-recognised crucial trajectories in contemporary history.[2]

Taking these diagnoses as a starting point, this review further investigates how social movements contributed to construing knowledge about nature in the twentieth century and how the notion of 'social movement' itself contributed to this process. It discusses recent publications in environmental history, mostly stemming from Germanophone historiography, or dealing with German environmental history in a transnational perspective. The selected publications are certainly not exhaustive.[3] However, they can be considered representative for three trends in the history of environmentalism: a turn to the local and regional scale, a renewed interest in Central and Eastern European history, and the emergence of innovative methodological approaches. The article focuses on three levels, which can be identified as common issues in recent historiography on environmentalism: first, the relation between protest and knowledge, second the entanglement of social movements and social sciences, and third the ways in which social movements contributed to social and environmental change. Thus, two major tendencies of the past four years' publications on environmentalism are emphasised. On the one hand, historiography highlights that the 'scientisation' of ecological issues has neither been unidirectional nor exclusive. Instead, scientised knowledge has coexisted with other forms of knowledge, such as localised tacit knowledge or religious and 'alternative' knowledges. On the other hand, the notion of 'environmental social movements' or 'environmentalism' are questioned as such. By considering the role that social sciences played in these movements and in observing them, as well as by emphasising the local, regional, and transnational scale, the strict opposition between 'old' and 'new' social movements is undermined. New approaches such as media history or 'eco-biographies' foster this trend. In order to detail these points, I will first deal with the revaluation of the local and regional scale in the history of en-

1   Melanie Arndt: Environmental History, in: Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte. Begriffe, Methoden und Debatten der zeithistorischen Forschung, 23 August 2016, at: http://docupedia.de/zg/Arndt_environmental_history_v3_en_2016, DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.14765/zzf.dok.2.700.v3 (last accessed on 8 March 2021).

2   Jens Ivo Engels: Naturpolitik in der Bundesrepublik. Ideenwelt und politische Verhaltensstile in Naturschutz und Umweltbewegung, Paderborn et al. 2006, p. 421.

3   For other publications that could have been included in this review as well, see, e. g., Janine Gaumer: Wackersdorf. Atomkraft und Demokratie in der Bundesrepublik 1980–1989, Munich 2018; Hartmut Berghoff/Adam Rome (eds.): Green Capitalism? Business and the Environment in the Twentieth Century, Philadelphia 2017.

vironmentalism (Güttler and Milder). Then, I will turn to recent studies that reassess the environmental history of Central and Eastern Europe (Arndt and Möller). Finally, media history and biography will be discussed as innovating approaches (Spenger and Jordan).

Nils Güttler's essay on the history of the Frankfurt Airport offers an insightful approach, starting from the local level, to how social movements, ecology, and knowledge have been interrelated in the twentieth century. His book being part of a larger project on the airport and its surroundings, Güttler argues methodologically rather than telling a chronological narrative. He suggests unveiling the down-to-earth entanglements of the airport by putting aside cultural criticisms, which exclusively focus on "globalisation", "acceleration", and "flows".[4] It is the local "'sloshing'" in the sterile metaphysics of this "non-lieu"[5] which intrigues Güttler: the cleaning and security staff, scientists observing the nature around the airport, counter-experts scrupulously drawing maps of the local lichen population or the production of jet fuel. The paradox Güttler deals with concerns the dialectic relation between a cause of protest (i.e., the airport) and the accumulation of knowledge. The airport, being one major source of pollution in the Rhein-Main area, was a main incentive for social movements, scientists, local citizens, and journalists to produce knowledge on the airport and its environs. They even followed different aims: hampering the construction of the famous Runway 18 West in the 1980s, optimising jet fuel infrastructure or saving the municipal forest for reasons of social hygiene. The airport, Güttler concludes, "has created the conditions of its criticisms during the course of its history"[6]. Thus, he draws on recent debates on social movement-based cultures of knowledge.[7] However, by putting the space of the airport centre stage, he emphasises the controversial character of knowledge: not only social movements made use of knowledge—the airport itself employed environmentalists in order to optimise its routines. Through this convincing perspective, Güttler mostly deals with natural sciences (in the widest sense). Other disciplines, which formed the web surrounding this and comparable places of contention, such as social sciences (e.g., through trade unions and studies on labour relations) and humanities (e.g., the famous 'lignite archaeology' in the Rhineland), remain in the background. The advantage of the local scale is that it affords an opportunity to overcome the underlying nature/culture-divide—regarding both, disciplines

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4   Nils Güttler: Alles über das Fliegen. Eine politische Wissensgeschichte des Frankfurter Flughafens, Vienna 2020, p. 32. All quotations from the German monographs are translated by the author.

5   Ibid., p. 33.

6   Ibid., p. 103.

7   See, e.g., Aziz Choudry: Social Movement Knowledge Production, in: Peter Pericles Trifonas (ed.): Handbook of Theory and Research in Cultural Studies and Education, Cham 2020, pp. 27–40.

and protest. Güttler sheds light on a number of disciplines, social movements, and political currents lurking in the swamps around the airport. At the same time, this enlightening perspective has its blind spots. At different points, Güttler claims to treat the airport as a "workplace"[8] in the tradition of "labour history"[9]. However, the "kiosk vendor"[10] Güttler wants to give a voice remains quiet compared to the snail researcher. Güttler even concludes baldly that before the First World War, "a lot of workers from the plants on the Main collected snails in their rare free time in order to learn more about their *Heimat*".[11] This sentence epitomises the risk of a history of knowledge: to privilege those considered knowledgeable and to again silence those who did not speak the sermons of the bourgeois self. Hence, Güttler presents a convincing approach, which explains the change induced by social movements through the political role, the circulation, contestation, and interpretation of different forms of knowledge. However, he implicitly adopts a slight academic bias: other types of knowledge or ignorance do not play a role in Güttler's story, yet.

Another way of fruitfully focusing on the regional and the local scale is offered by Stephen Milder's PhD-Thesis, published in 2017. Milder re-evaluates the anti-nuclear movements in West Germany and France and how they related to official politics and the democratic systems in both countries. He emphasises several points: first, he challenges the hypothesis of a post-material turn following a 'value change' around 1970. Environmental movements had not been "selfish and apolitical",[12] but devoted to issues of democracy and economic subsistence. Thereby, Western Societies did not atomise but increase their ability of inclusion and social cohesion. Second, he contests the narrative of an all-absorbing liberal democracy, which integrated the protest successfully via green parties. Instead, Milder argues that the "grassroots activists changed the course of democracy's development in Western Europe"[13]. Third, he undermines the alleged linear progression from grassroots-movements to national politics: founding parties and participating in national ballots were not necessary but highly conflicted. The grassroots movements had to abandon their local and transnational focus in order to fit into the patterns of a representative democracy. To emphasise his points, Milder takes six steps: using the example of protesting the nuclearisation of the Upper Rhine, he first shows that this transnational region disposed of a longer tradition of protest. Local people did not turn against invisible radiation but fought against a perceived threat to their viticulture-based livelihood. Second, by highlighting the region-

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8   Nils Güttler: Alles über das Fliegen, p. 39.

9   Ibid., p. 41.

10   Ibid., p. 33.

11   Ibid., p. 77 (italics added).

12   Stephen Milder: Greening Democracy. The Anti-Nuclear Movement and Political Environmentalism in West Germany and Beyond, 1968–1983, Cambridge 2017, p. 3.

13   Ibid., p. 6.

al and transnational dimension of protest, he contradicts the diagnosis of "disaggregation"[14] of Western Societies after the 1970s: conjuring an Alemannic past allowed for building an "alternative authority" in the German, French, and Swiss borderland, opposing government decisions from Paris or Stuttgart and establishing "real transnational coordination"[15]. Turning to the 1975 occupation of the Whyl power plant construction site,[16] Milder draws on the advantages of his transregional approach: locally, this occupation was embedded in Alsace's protest traditions; nationally, it proved to be radically innovating; blurring the line between "daily life and protest"[17]. In the last three chapters, Milder argues that the failed attempts to reproduce events comparable to Whyl—for instance in Brokdorf—led to a quest for new forms of protest, which the movement found in regional elections. Milder attributes the initial successes of West German green lists to their ability to "avoid politics-as-usual"[18] and to evade categorisation as left or right. Finally, Milder interprets the foundation of the Green Party in 1980 and the failure of political environmentalism in France as a result of the European Elections in 1979. These elections forced grassroots movements to adopt the logics of representative democracy, symbolising a divide between political and grassroots environmentalism.

The inspiring regional approach in the first half of his book allows Milder to highlight the diverse forms of knowledge, circulating around contested nuclear power plant construction sites. Initial attempts to stir the local vintners to protest failed. The focus on radiation as "invisible, sinister killer"[19] proved to be a narrative too far away from everyday life. Thus, if scientised knowledge failed to instigate indignation, local, applied, and tacit knowledge was more important. When the discussion with the Stuttgart government turned to the impact of steam on viticulture, the situation derailed: the vintners "were extremely knowledgeable"[20] in this matter, appealing to their "practical wisdom"[21]. Thus, compared to Güttler, who slightly prioritises scientised knowledge production, Milder sensitises the reader to localised, easily missed forms of knowledge. This includes all kinds of knowledge of the local as well, as the case of construing a collective around the alleged Alemannic tradition and the transregional contacts between France, Switzerland, and Germany show.

14   Ibid., p. 52.
15   Ibid., p. 83 (both quotations).
16   Cf. by the same author: Stephen Milder: From Whyl to Wall Street. Occupation and the Many Meanings of "Single-Issue" Protest, in: Moving the Social 56 (2016), pp. 93–114.
17   Stephen Milder: Greening Democracy, p. 127.
18   Ibid., p. 197.
19   Ibid., p. 30.
20   Ibid., p. 41.
21   Ibid., p. 42.

The regional approach bears another advantage: starting from the regional level allows Milder to overcome the 'social movementisation' of post-1970 protest. Contesting the narrative of value change and the diagnosis of "social atomization"[22], he refuses to dissect the protest culture of the 1970s into single-issue oriented "social movements"[23]. The common trait was a movement from the 'grassroots', regardless of their political agenda (and it is unclear, if all occupiers in Whyl even had one). Milder shows how social scientists, such as the Berlin based political scientist Theodor Ebert, participated in the movements they described. The "unsolicited advice"[24] such actors offered to local insurgents, has to be considered as well by historians approaching these protests. By bringing research back to the local and the regional, Milder keeps an appropriate distance from these master narratives.

Hence, Milder argues that historical change, visible in the 1970s anti-nuclear protests, has been discovering "self-governance"[25] as a new style of politics. He focuses the inclusive dimension of this development, which brought together people of different social strata and regional origins. The Whyl occupation in particular is portrayed as aiming at "building community" and "promoting inclusion"[26]. The whole camp had been a "center of collaboration and exchange"[27]. However, as appealing as this might seem, it lacks a critical stance toward the exclusive dimension inherent to all visions of community. Then, the emphasis on the 'grassroots' initiative runs the risk of reproducing contemporary judgments on protests: a clear distinction between "often violent mass site occupation attempts and nonviolent grassroots protest"[28]. Characterising the first as superficial and attention grabbing and the second as "conviction"[29], comes close to distinguishing between legitimate and illegitimate protest, blurring the line between 'is' and 'ought to'.

Milder has written an important book, pleading for a (trans-)regional perspective on environmental protests and showing to what extent the view from below contributes to reassessing linear narratives from emergence over protest towards institutionalisation. To put it in Milder's words: knowing nature does not correspond to "Whiggish narratives of West German democratization"[30].

The recent research on environmentalism engenders a reassessment of Central and Eastern Europe and the alleged ignorance of socialist dictatorships towards ecological

22   Ibid., p. 91.
23   Ibid., p. 53.
24   Ibid., p. 92.
25   Ibid., e. g., p. 14, p. 236.
26   Ibid., p. 122.
27   Ibid., p. 124.
28   Ibid., p. 160.
29   Ibid., p. 161.
30   Ibid., p. 237.

issues. Melanie Arndt's major study on the 'children of Chernobyl' is a meticulous analysis of the afterlife of the 1986 catastrophe. In her *Habilitation*, Arndt follows the transnational engagement in favour of the children that were considered affected by the nuclear fallout and contamination in the Soviet Union and, respectively, in Ukraine, Belarus, and the Russian Federation. Thus, besides the spatial entanglement, mostly with the United States, she focuses on the ways in which issues of environmental social movements, of humanitarian and civic engagement, of medical and sociological knowledge intermingled, culminating in the construction of the 'children of Chernobyl'. Arndt proceeds in four steps: starting by highlighting the immediate consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, she moves forward to analyse how the Soviet state dealt with the children: by sending them to camps and sanatoriums inside the Soviet Union or to other socialist states such as Cuba. However, as Arndt convincingly argues thirdly, the eroding Soviet Union did not dispose of sufficient capacities to take care of all children considered affected. Thus, the question of the children's well-being undermined the myth of Soviet childhood and thus the authority of the central state. The occurring gap was filled by a growing sector of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civic engagement for sending children abroad, turning them into a "global symbol"[31]—mostly for the global north. In the late 2000s, the renationalisation of children's aid stopped this transnational engagement, for example in Belarus. Lastly, Arndt sheds light on how the children themselves, their companions, and the guest and home families experienced, practiced, and perceived their time abroad. In this "panorama of the ending Cold War"[32] two arguments stand out in the context of this review: first, it appears highly artificial to distinguish social movements by their issues and motivations. Distinguishing neatly between humanitarian, environmental, civic, and religious engagement is impossible. It is rather interesting how these currents interacted. Second, the contemporary diagnosis of the deterritorialisation of risk, the famous *risk society*[33], has been accompanied by a deterritorialisation of solidarity—and by all unintended consequences and misunderstandings those processes engender.

Concerning the relation between knowledge and protest, Arndt points out that defining the consequences of Chernobyl was a question of negotiation. The emergence of a discourse on "radiophobia"[34] in the World Health Organisation and the diverging numbers of radiation deaths—the International Atomic Energy Agency estimated 4,050, Greenpeace 200,000 victims[35]—show that it was no question of ignorance but

31 Melanie Arndt: Tschernobylkinder. Die transnationale Geschichte einer nuklearen Katastrophe, Göttingen 2020, p. 199.
32 Ibid., p. 32.
33 Ulrich Beck: Risk Society. Towards a New Modernity (1986), London 1992.
34 Melanie Arndt: Tschernobylkinder, p. 129.
35 Ibid., pp. 133f.

a problem of abundant and conflicting knowledges. The resulting insecurity and the debates about statistics disguised the individuals suffering and living in the contaminated zones, as Arndt shows using the example of the employees of a paediatric clinic in Novozybkov, who complained about being treated as guinea pigs for scientific research in 1991. Likewise, introducing mass radiation screenings increased insecurity. Hence, the common presumption that children should be helped by evacuating them from contaminated areas formed one recurring theme in the unmanageable debates about the catastrophe—a presumption that even allowed for mobilisation and protest, beginning in 1989.

Arndt uses contemporary scientific results carefully and with an adequate distance, for example when she stresses, that the status of being a 'child of Chernobyl' was highly fluid, disputed, an affirmative self-description as well as an external attribution. Another example is mistrust against the state. The NGOs, which managed the children's trips abroad, were part of the flourishing civil society in Belarus and Ukraine after 1989/90. They used a fierce anti-state rhetoric, focussing on the initiative of the individual and 'self-help' as means of creating a future society, as Arndt closely examines through the analysis of one foundation's history. However, this mistrust was not 'neoliberal' as one might conclude, but rather part of the post-Soviet negotiation of statehood, welfare, and charity—that also led to disappointments about how the label 'child of Chernobyl' had to be orchestrated, for instance through "exhausting folk-dance tours"[36]. Unfortunately, Arndt does not maintain her critical distance throughout the entire book. When she states that research showed that the medical use of staying one month abroad was neglectable[37], it would have been highly desirable to learn how these findings were disputed and negotiated as well.

Finally, Arndt, through several examples in the last chapter, shows that the fact of being a 'child of Chernobyl' had a lasting impact on the children's lives. Some decided to emigrate to the United States, some continued living in Belarus, having learned to cope with the ongoing catastrophe. These learning processes were highly ambiguous, as Arndt emphasises with the example of former 'children of Chernobyl', who see nuclear energy as the sole way to achieve an independent energy policy in Belarus. Thus, sending children abroad fostered social change, but it was neither unidirectional, nor linear. The nationalisation of Chernobyl aid in Belarus in 2008 can also be read as the state's attempt to reconquer its legitimacy—however going hand in hand with closing the window of opportunity for transnational cooperation which civil society had faced in Eastern Europe in the 1990s. At the same time, the humanitarian mission for the children increased cultural exchange—but could also preserve Cold War categories.

36   Ibid., p. 347.
37   Ibid., p. 362.

Hence, Arndt's monograph can be considered a major contribution to different fields. For the history of environmental movements, it proves that a wider understanding of this object is necessary. It was not only a question of protest in front of nuclear power plants or of doing counter-cultural radiation measurements, but also included a priest from New York, campaigning for a children's home in Ukraine. Radiation crosses borders—nationally, but also ideologically and epistemically. The history of trans-movement mobilisations, Arndt's book underlines, is a promising field of research.

Emancipating the history of environmental protest from social sciences operating with the concept of 'new social movements' goes hand in hand with a new, intriguing view on the environmental history of the German Democratic Republic (GDR). In his published PhD-thesis, Christian Möller contests the "teleology"[38] which he perceives in older accounts of protest and environment in the GDR: the GDR had been an ecological 'failed state', a real environmental movement had not existed and the small initiatives under the "protective roof"[39] of the Protestant church had been oppressed systematically. Against this view—inspired by the new social movement-approach and erecting the environmental history of West Germany as the norm—Möller highlights the possibilities for participation in ecological issues: the "authoritarian corporatism"[40], building on Mary Fulbrook's concept of the GDR as a 'participatory dictatorship'. Thereby, Möller reassess the notion of protest in 'real existing socialism': historical research on equal terms should not only listen to and search for spectacular demonstrations familiar to a view from the West, but should also take the widespread practice of petitioning *(Eingaben)* in the GDR seriously. Analysing these petitions on environmental issues and focusing on actors from the water and public health administration allows Möller to tell a story, which goes far beyond simple narratives of decline. First initiatives for an environmental policy in the 1950s formulated high aims but fell short of realising them due to lacking resources, as Möller shows by means of the way in which the GDR reformed the procedure for approving new industrial sites. This was an "important turning point in environmental history"[41]. In the 1960s, environmental policy began to take off. Allying a socialist rhetoric with environmentalism, supported by a widespread euphoria for recycling economy and 'land improvement' *(Landeskultur)* as well as a flood of petitions, led to the law on *Landeskultur* (1970) and the establishment of the Ministry for Environmental Protection and Water Management (1972). Thereby, protecting the environment was incorporated into the planned economy, allowing—in theory—for an "equilibrium

38   Christian Möller: Umwelt und Herrschaft in der DDR. Politik, Protest und die Grenzen der Partizipation in der Diktatur, Göttingen 2020, p. 16.
39   Ibid., p. 256.
40   Ibid., p. 24.
41   Ibid., p. 78.

between economy and ecology"[42]. The state paralleled this top-down implementation by offering options for legal (and orchestrated) participation, for instance during the 'weeks for land improvement' *(Landeskulturwochen)*. Möller argues that, thereby, the *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* (SED, Socialist Unity Party of Germany) aroused grand expectations, which it was unable to meet afterwards. The SED could not get rid of the "spirits it summoned in 1970"[43]. He illustrates this process with examples from the 1980s, when the official environmental policy got lost in "patchwork solutions"[44] due to economic constraints and international pressure. By turning to the environmental movement in the 1980s, Möller makes two points: he first elucidates that petitions and state-official organisations such as the Association for Nature and Environment *(Gesellschaft für Natur und Umwelt)* offered—restricted—possibilities for participation. Second, he argues that even on the eve of the fall of the Berlin Wall, all environmental groups have been maintaining discussions with the government—they did not aim at "abolishing" but at "ecologically revivifying socialism"[45].

Concerning the relation between knowledge and protest, Möller's impressive study allows two conclusions: first, the rise of an environmental policy was due to a network of experts, established around the Research Council *(Forschungsrat)*, in the 1960s—as in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). The enthusiasm for a rational political style opened a window of opportunity, into which concepts of a recycling economy fitted ideally. On this level, protecting the environment was being scientised. Second, the hypothesis of a scientisation of environmental protest and of an increasing weight of scientific data during the second half of the twentieth century does only apply to East Germany with restrictions. Of course, there are petitions that tried to convince government officials by technical and rational knowledge. Möller exemplifies this by discussing an engineer protesting the pollution caused by a chemical pulp mill. However, as numerous examples show, the socialist state primarily demanded an administrative and rhetorical knowledge in order to effectively use the tool of petitioning. This administrative knowledge circulated beneath the surface and beyond the state-driven public sphere. Thereby, Möller sheds light on the neglected and hardly accessible ephemeral sphere of public encounters, which is crucial to understanding environmental protest in the GDR.

Concerning the relation between social sciences and social movements, Möller's study adds to the conceptual and historiographical level. Earlier studies on environmental protest, driven by concepts of the West German new social movements, had overestimated the influence of the church, and had neglected the fact that the pop-

42   Ibid., p. 179.
43   Ibid., p. 187.
44   Ibid., p. 231.
45   Ibid., p. 345.

ulation of the GDR have been adapting the protection of the environment broadly. This consciousness did not take the form of an "alternative habitus"[46] as it commonly did in the FRG. Möller proves that environmental engagement through petitions mirrored local conflicts and a public concern for ecological issues. However, Möller uses different terms in order to analytically grasp these forms of *participation* (as in the title). He mostly employs the term *Teilhabe* (literally: taking part in) without further discussing this notion, e. g., its background in theology and rehabilitation science.

As Arndt, Möller offers a lucid interpretation of the role of the environment in state socialism. Both argue that state socialism did not fail because it suffered of severe ecological problems. There were debates and attempts to improve these conditions. Hence, it was the hiatus between high expectations and ecological ambitions on the one hand and moderate results as well as the bureaucratic reality on the other that undermined confidence in the socialist system. By considering the agency of people living in these systems, both refuse the interpretation that the West was 'really' able to cope with the ecological issue whereas the East used protective measures only as "alibi"[47]. Against the backdrop of the present-day Fridays for Future protests, Arndt's and Möller's monographs offer convincing interpretations beyond the historiographical Cold War divide.

Besides these publications dealing with the local and regional level and rediscovering Central and Eastern European environmental history, there are two monographs that productively apply new approaches to the history of environmentalism. With her published PhD-thesis, Katrin Jordan tackles the issue of how media, anti-nuclear protest, and experts' statements intermingled in the aftermath of the Chernobyl catastrophe. Focusing on France and Germany, she excellently questions the narrative of France as a nation of nuclear enthusiasm on the one hand and Germany as a nation of nature-lovers and sceptics toward modernisation and progress on the other. By bringing media into the equation, she argues that juxtaposing these two images falls short of considering how contemporaries interpreted the conflicts and debates following the catastrophe.

Jordan makes a pertinent and valuable contribution to the historiography of the scientisation of protest in the second half of the twentieth century. In both cases, scientisation and counter-expertise played a crucial role for the anti-nuclear movements. However, she states that first and foremost "mistrust against the state"[48], the "nucleocracy"[49], inspired criticism in France. A culture of counter-measurements of radiation, as it had existed in Germany since the 1970s, only arose after Chernobyl. On the oth-

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46   Ibid., p. 256.
47   Ibid., p. 17.
48   Katrin Jordan: Ausgestrahlt. Die mediale Debatte um „Tschernobyl" in der Bundesrepublik und in Frankreich 1986/87, Göttingen 2018, p. 176.
49   Ibid., p. 203.

er side of the Rhine, an established infrastructure of 'alternative' environment insti-tutes fuelled a fundamental opposition against the manner in which the German gov-ernment dealt with the fallout. However, since the genesis of a counter-expertise does not say anything about its validity, Jordan completes the perspective of a politicised science by emphasising the "mediatisation of science"[50]: in Germany, the counter-ex-pertise could draw on alternative journalists willing to integrate such approaches to nuclear energy into their program. In the French media, which was much closer to the central state, "self-censorship" and the "cultivation of arcane knowledge" prevailed.[51] Thus, the scientisation of environmental protest entirely depended on the possibilities of mediatising this counter-knowledge.

Jordan illustrates the advantage of treating social sciences as a source. She care-fully analyses how contemporary frames (such as the 'risk society') prefigured and influenced the structure of the public debate: a focus on internal risks in Germany, an emphasis on external threats and strategies of communication in France. In other cases, however, she concedes that neatly distinguishing between disciplines is not al-ways useful, for instance by confirming tendencies of Ronald Inglehart's 'value change' during the 1970s.[52]

Concerning social and environmental change, Jordan carefully embeds her account on Chernobyl in the *longue durée* of anti-nuclear protest and nuclear accidents. The "paternalistic communication style"[53] which the French nuclear administration chose after the Chernobyl incident was a reaction to the Harrisburg accident in 1979—an accident that French media and nuclear experts had interpreted as a symbol of the ca-pacity of 'the West' to control nuclear power. On the other side of the Rhine, German newspapers interpreted Harrisburg as an omen, confirmed by Chernobyl. Jordan's ap-proach, to tell her story as a story of shrinking and expanding opportunities for par-ticipation, public visibility, and political cultures, is convincing. Bringing the media into the mix does not only enrich Franco-German historiography but it admonish-es social movement historiography to consider media as a crucial player beyond the state-movement-opposition, as well.

Besides media history, Martin Spenger offers a genre of historical writing that re-mains rare in environmental history and the history of environmentalism: biography. He attempts to historicise the life of the American beat-eco-poet Gary Snyder, who was born in 1930. Stylistically, it is a captivating published PhD-thesis. Spenger widely uses first-person narrations—yet uncommon in German academia—and extensively quotes Snyder's poems. Thereby, he mirrors the main argument of his book: writing

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50   Ibid., p. 239.
51   Ibid., pp. 145f.
52   Ibid., pp. 314f.
53   Ibid., p. 228.

the history of environmental movements as a history of a progressive scientisation falls short of including those actors who considered ecology rather an "aesthetic and religious than […] as an exact science".[54] This point is convincing. However, Spenger runs the risk of overdosing the emphasis with his object of interest.

In the field of knowledge and protest, the biographical approach allows for a longitudinal perspective on the different fields and practices of knowledge, which intertwine over the course of the individual's life. Hence, the biography of Gary Snyder shows that there were no pre-scientific and a post-1970 scientised ecological protests. Snyder started his career in the so-called 'beat generation' by revivifying the tradition of "romanticising work in and for nature"[55]. His passion for the myths and—certainly invented—traditions of Native Americans was followed by a devotion to Buddhism in Japan. All 'traditional' practices, which occupied the West Coast alternative milieu during the 1960s and 1970s such as yoga, meditation, or new age, were fostered by Snyder. Even if Spenger emphasises that Snyder kept a distance from the most pronounced forms of 'alternative' knowledge, such as deep ecology and bioregionalism[56], the distinction remains blurred. Historiographically, distinguishing 'scientific' and 'alternative' ecological knowledge might not even be ideal. Of course, there was the rising "reign of crude empiricism of Becquerel, thyroid levels, and soil sampling".[57] However, the biography of Snyder shows first that distinguishing 'real' and 'alternative' science was a question of political conflict itself—they did not succeed each other, but rather coexisted. Second and on the level of personal networks, different and conflicting 'scientised' approaches inside environmental movements did not hinder intense cooperation. If 'ecology' was one of the most virulent empty signifiers of the second half of the twentieth century, then Gary Snyder was its personification.

Thus, Spenger's monograph can be conceived of as a plea for considering the ongoing aestheticisation of nature as one of the major developments in the second half of the twentieth century. By emphasising the political relevance of poetry and literature, Spenger undermines conventional interpretations of the rise of the new social movements as the end of utopianism after 1968 or the 'value change'. Literature and poetry did not only mirror new issues, they also created continuity and pushed mobilisation. Whereas historians have largely explored practices of reading theory or listening to music in the 1960s and 1970s, little is known about reading, discussing, and exchanging poetry. The aestheticisation of protest did not only concern its visuality but also its orality.

54   Martin Spenger: Green Beat. Gary Snyder und die moderne amerikanische Umweltbewegung, Göttingen 2020, p. 133.
55   Ibid., p. 41.
56   Ibid., pp. 134–137.
57   Philipp Felsch: Der lange Sommer der Theorie. Geschichte einer Revolte, 1960–1990, Munich 2015, p. 154.

On the level of social movements and social change, the biographical approach promises insights into the ways in which social movements related to the individual, how they construed charisma, and how an 'ecological' self and self-display worked. However, on this point, Spenger succumbs to the "biographical illusion"[58] Snyder has told of his life. Spenger argues, for example, that the notions of "Nature, Wild and Wilderness" were structuring Snyder's "whole oeuvre"[59]. Spenger does not highlight to what extent these terms were fluid and changing over the course of Snyder's life, but defines them by Snyder's book *The Practice of the Wild*. Thus, instead of dissecting Snyder's biographical work, Spenger tends to reify an a-temporal conviction, guiding the ecological life. Despite this objection, Spenger's study can be read as a methodological case for more "eco-biographies"[60]. For a social movement that was mostly motivated by *abstracta* such as the 'whole earth'[61] and renounced charismatic leadership, the biographical approach is an effective method of bringing the individual to the fore. At least, Snyder's biography shows that ecological behaviour, which environmental movements aimed at introducing, led the activists to display an exemplary life. The parallel of the ecological and a monastic way of life in Snyder's case is emblematic of these constraints and self-commitments. Thus, Spenger's book invites the reader to rethink the relation between the individual and social movements beyond issues of policy.

In conclusion, there seems to be no doubt that partitioning social movements according to their respective motives and issues falls short of considering the historical complexity beneath the surface of protest events. Categorisations such as 'old' and 'new' social movements have been part of a specific culture of knowledge and self-image shaping the so-called 'new' social movements. They were 'new' in the sense that they produced a whole culture of knowledge—delimiting themselves from other social phenomena such as trade unions. This very apparatus finally yielded those 'old' social movements that allegedly did not care about ecology. Thus, further research must reflect on how these distinctions have been involved in contemporary conflicts. The studies reviewed in this article show that it is productive to not only look for "cross movement mobilization",[62] but also beyond these divides as such—one could speak of a 'trans-movement' perspective. Starting from a local and regional perspective—like Güttler and Milder—helps to shed the social movement-centrism that characterises older handbooks, resulting from the former predominance of social sciences in this

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58   Pierre Bourdieu: The Biographical Illusion (1986), in: Wilhelm Hemecker/Edward Saunders (eds.): Biography in Theory. Key Texts with Commentaries, Berlin et al. 2017, pp. 210–216.
59   Martin Spenger: Green Beat, p. 151.
60   Ibid., p. 13.
61   Ibid., p. 166 (Snyder used the term "panhumanism").
62   See Moving the Social 63 (2020): Cross Movement Mobilisation. Perspectives from the Global North and South.

field.[63] The case of the 'children of Chernobyl' shows that humanitarianism and environmentalism cannot be thought separately. Furthermore, focusing on the local and regional scale, along with their transnational and transregional entanglements, clarifies that even in the late twentieth century, different forms of knowledge coexisted and competed. The scientisation and professionalisation of environmental protection has been paralleled by an aestheticisation and mediatisation of environmentalism that has to be part of the historical account, as well. Even the claim to be 'scientific' has been challenged by newly emerging 'alternative' kinds of knowledge.

Lastly, even if this review is limited to selected studies, it is striking to what extent the history of nuclear energy remains a core occupation of the historiography of environmentalism. Other impulses for protest, such as lignite mining, spurring the interest of historiography only recently, await further research. One crucial, yet underexplored, development is the juridification of protest since the late nineteenth century, close but not congruent with its scientisation. The recent conflicts around lignite mining in Germany, as well as the Fridays for Future movement, again beg the question whether the history of environmentalism can really be told as a success story of increasing awareness, changing values, and institutionalisation. Apparently, there has been no happy ending, yet.

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63   See, e. g., Roland Roth/Dieter Rucht (eds.): Die sozialen Bewegungen in Deutschland seit 1945. Ein Handbuch, Frankfurt a. M. 2008.