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Spanning the Globe: West-German Support for the Australian Anti-Nuclear Movement

Astrid Mignon Kirchhof*

Abstract: *»Um die ganze Welt: Unterstützung aus Westdeutschland für die australische Anti-Atomkraft-Bewegung«.* In the 1970s and 1980s, 70 per cent of uranium deposits extracted worldwide was situated on the land of indigenous populations whose cultures and physical well-being were threatened by the mining activities. Nevertheless, bowing to the need for supply security which had become its primary concern in the wake of the oil crisis, the German government declared nuclear energy to be safe and secure. Under the motto "Leave uranium in the ground", representatives of the West-German Green Party faction gave a voice to representatives of indigenous populations from various countries. In this article, I will discuss the hypothesis that, although international anti-nuclear and disarmament issues in the 1970s offered the basis for a global and transnational collective activist identity, this identity was more frequently negotiated in the respective national arenas. Rather than building on the involvement of movement activists, cross-border exchange was mostly established by, and often limited to, leading figures, prominent thinkers, institutions and alternative media. Besides these obstacles, a number of channels for transnational exchange, the transfer of information and ideas did in fact exist and the level of communication (albeit not so much cooperation) was significant, considering that the internet and other technical means were not yet available to bring the world more closely together.

Keywords: Anti-nuclear movement, transnationalism, Aborigines, experts and media, Australia, Germany, Society for Threatened Peoples.

1. Introduction

In the 1970s and 1980s, bowing to the need for supply security (Graf 2010, 4) which had become its primary concern in the wake of the oil crisis, the West German governments declared nuclear energy to be safe and secure. Ensuring access to crucial uranium deposits was thus an important political goal. To that end, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM), technically responsible for the market in fissile materials in its Western European member states, was engaged in negotiations with urani-

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um-producing countries, notably Australia.¹ German enterprises were involved in global uranium mining, predominantly covering their demand with supplies from Australian mines. With the Greens entering the Bundestag in 1983, a political party had arrived on the scene whose members took an entirely different view of this policy. They considered nuclear energy neither safe nor secure, and refuted the claim that atomic power was needed to keep the lights burning. Furthermore, they emphasized the collateral damage inherent in uranium mining that was suffered most notably by the indigenous populations in areas with rich uranium deposits. Within the Green Party, Petra Kelly was the most active person challenging the Federal Ministry of Economics on subjects such as the total volume of uranium supplies and the involvement of German companies. In subsequent years, various green and social-democratic members of parliament came to support her in this matter. Under the motto “Leave uranium in the ground”, representatives of the Green Party faction submitted a so-called major interpellation (*Große Anfrage*) to the German government, giving a voice to representatives of indigenous populations from Australia, Mali, Namibia, Niger, India, Canada and the USA. According to the submitted interpellation, 70 per cent of uranium deposits extracted worldwide was situated on the land of indigenous people whose cultures and physical well-being were threatened by the mining activities. The document also stated that the German government obtained 38 per cent of its uranium requirement, and thus the largest individual percentage, from supplies in Australia. The interpellation closed with the following words: “Uranium mining results in radioactive pollution, ecological destruction and genocide.” The German government was not impressed and replied tersely that strict regulations had been issued to protect both the environment and the rights of the indigenous populations and that uranium mines did not produce any hazardous nuclear waste.² However, the

¹ E.g. Relations entre EURATOM et l’Australie sur l’exportation des matières nucléaires, Historical Archives of the European Commission BAC 35/1980 39-42, (1977-1981), files Cabinet Brunner. I would like to thank Jan-Henrik Meyer for making this document available to me as well as his, Michael Schüring’s and Frank Zelko’s thoughtful remarks on this article. Research for this article was funded by Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG-Project: 5120 3400).

² Printed papers 11/5788, Deutscher Bundestag – 11th legislative period, Government’s reply to the major interpellation submitted by several members of the Bundestag, Archiv Grünes Gedächtnis, Petra Kelly Archiv (AGG, PKA) 491 (1); Federal Ministry of Economics’ reply to Petra Kelly’s enquiry of 27 March 1984, AGG, PKA 491 (1); Motion for a resolution regarding the major interpellation submitted by Bundestag members Lieselotte Wollny, Wolfgang Daniels, Hans-Joachim Brauer, Dora Flinner, Charlotte Garbe, Caritas Hensel, Wilhelm Knabe, Matthias Kreuzeder, Petra Kelly, Michael Weiss and the Green Party faction on 14 March 1990, AGG, PKA 491 (1); The Green Party in the German Parliament. Information material documenting German involvement in international uranium mining, 11 Jan. 1990, AGG, PKA 491 (1); Printed papers 11/6692, Deutscher Bundestag – 11th legislative period. Statement of reasons by Lieselotte Wollny, Wolfgang Daniels, Willi Hoss, Waltraud Schoppe, Antje Vollmer and the Green Party faction, AGG, PKA 491 (1).

Green Party was not the first to state an interest in the plight suffered by indigenous population as a consequence of uranium mining. Already at the beginning of the 1970s, the Society for Threatened Peoples alerted the public to this issue and disseminated information regarding the Aboriginal population in Australia. Rather than members of the anti-nuclear power movement, which had arisen from the ecological movement, it was thus a human rights organisation, whose agenda included the rights of indigenous people and by implication resistance to mining activities, that spoke out against uranium extraction in Australia.

In this article, I will discuss the hypothesis that, although international anti-nuclear and disarmament issues in the 1970s offered the basis for a global and transnational collective activist identity, this identity was more frequently negotiated in the respective national arenas. Rather than building on the involvement of movement activists, cross-border exchange was mostly established by, and often limited to, leading figures, prominent thinkers, institutions and alternative media. Thus, in line with what we spelled out in the introduction to this HSR Focus (Kirchhof and Meyer 2014), this article will shed light on the transnational effects of expert knowledge, mediated forms of communication and transnational cooperation and the origins of networks. Moreover, this article will also explore the basis of the new social movement, focusing on the activists and their motivation for launching joint transnational campaigns as well as the factors promoting and impeding cooperation among anti-nuclear activists and their (global) networks. The fact that the movements' activists were predominantly operating at the national level can be explained by a number of factors, some of which will be examined in the course of this article. Firstly, a joint communication basis had to be found for the agendas of the different movements and the agendas had to be made compatible. This turned out to be rather challenging as it was often difficult to establish links between the different national contexts. Holger Nehring, who studied "transnational communication" between British and West German anti-nuclear movements in the 1950s and 1960s, came to a similar conclusion. Nehring argues that the two movements were firmly embedded in their respective political systems, social and political environments and national political and protest traditions which would emphasize the continued importance of "decision space" and "identity space" in Britain and the Federal Republic (Nehring 2005, 560, 582). My example of Australia and Germany, two countries which are geographically far removed from each other, also demonstrates that cooperation between activists lacked suitable meeting places and effective communication channels, especially in the pre-internet era, with forbiddingly high travel costs making any interchange a difficult undertaking. It was only in the 1980s that such cooperative exchange was placed on a more permanent footing. By this time, the number of joint campaigns and links between individuals and institutions had increased and information was being exchanged on a more extensive level.

The so called ‘histoire croisée’ (Werner 2002), a multi-perspective historiography, has so far focused on European countries and North America, concentrating for instance on the United Kingdom, Germany and France (Cairney 2009; Espagne 2008), Europe as a political entity (Gehler and Kaiser 2001; Kaelble 2009) and on comparisons to the USA (Lingelbach 2002). Given that Australia has always been on the forefront of the environmental movement, it is surprising that researchers have paid little attention to transnational links between Europe and Australia. After all, the first green party, the “United Tasmania Group”, was founded in Australia in 1972 in the context of the campaign against dam construction in Tasmania’s Lake Pedder, long before any such movement arose in other countries. Two-way exchanges on environmental and political issues between Australia and Germany or other parts of the world (Kirchhof 2014, in print; McConville forthcoming spring 2016) also took place much earlier than the 1970s (Sauter forthcoming spring 2016).

2. Leading Figures, Institutions and Alternative Media. German Support for the Australian Movement(s) in the 1970s

The Australian uranium deposits that were discovered in the period before the 1970s constituted almost a quarter of the world’s known uranium reserves at the time. With uranium mines located primarily on Aboriginal reservations, the Aborigines began to protest against mining activities. In some cases, the invocation of Aboriginal land titles, which represented permanent rights to the traditional land, successfully put a stop to mining operations. Although the hard-won rights finally granted by the Australian government and the courts of law to the Aboriginal population may appear exemplary and progressive on the surface, in practice, they turned out to be rather limited and failed to either provide a permanent solution or address the issue of historical injustice (Linhart 2013). In Germany, protests against the civilian use of nuclear power first became an issue in national politics in connection with the site occupation and clashes at the Wyhl nuclear power plant on the French-German border (Hughes 2014; Milder 2014). These protests heralded the beginning of the anti-nuclear power movement, with citizen action groups springing up all over West Germany and an unprecedented number of citizens taking to the streets: While 25,000 protesters had turned out for the rallies at Wyhl, by the end of the decade, 100,000 people assembled in Hanover to protest against the Gorleben nuclear waste dump in 1979 (Rucht 1980). The anti-nuclear power movement in West Germany, however, did not take much of an interest in the provenance of the uranium used in German power plants and initially neglected to bring the

struggle of the Australian Aborigines and the anti-uranium movement into focus.

2.1 The “humanitarian and human rights imperative”³

In West Germany, it was the Society for Threatened Peoples (Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker, GfbV), a human rights organisation founded by Tilman Zülch and Klaus Guerke in 1970, that continuously reported on uranium mining in Australia. The society joined forces with organisations in the UK and the Netherlands and invited a delegation of three Aboriginal rights activists to Germany. Following the delegation’s visit, the Society for Threatened Peoples launched a protest campaign that severely criticised uranium mining in Australia and involved a petition to ‘Deutsche Uran GmbH’. Regional GfbV groups independently collected signatures against the activities of German uranium companies. The campaign was to raise public awareness and place sufficient pressure on corporations to delay any new investments.⁴ With the aim of reaching a larger audience and triggering a shift in awareness, the GfbV started publishing a magazine and using the mass media in the early stages of the campaign. In accordance with Joachim Raschke’s statement (1985, 343): “A movement that does not make the news is not happening”, from its earliest days, the GfbV’s ‘Pogrom’ magazine published regular reports on the Aborigines’ fight against uranium mining.⁵ Towards the end of the 1970s, other alternative and mainstream media eventually began to focus on the situation in Australia. Various press associations, West Germany’s public service television stations ARD and ZDF, four broadcasting stations and several daily newspapers, among them Frankfurter Rundschau with a four-column article on the title page, reported on a press conference in Bonn which had been jointly organised by the Society for Threatened Peoples and the Bundesverband Bürgerinitiativen Umweltschutz (the umbrella organisation of environmental action groups, BBU) “in support of Aboriginal Australians in their fight against uranium mining and land grabbing.” The organisations called on the government to get Frankfurt-based Uran GmbH and Uranerzbergbau GmbH in Bonn and Benheim to suspend their activities in Australia.⁶ In the same year, 1978, there was further collaboration with the BBU and alternative media were used when the GfbV’s ‘Pogrom’ magazine published a documentary entitled “Nach Völkermord: Landraub und Uranabbau. Die Schwarzaustralier (Aborigines) kämpfen

³ Robert Jungk in an interview on the occasion of the Society for Threatened Peoples’ invitation of a delegation of Aboriginal human rights activists to Europe. 1979. *Pogrom* 10: 3.

⁴ Editor’s note. 1979. *Pogrom* 10 (68): 4.

⁵ See one of the early volumes reporting on Aborigines in Australia: Mc Gregor, Adrian. [n.y. 1973]. *Stämme reisen in die Vergangenheit. Pogrom* 7 (44/45), 29-32.

⁶ Greußing, Fritz. 1979. *Kampagne für die Schwarzaustralier. GfbV gemeinsam mit dem Bundesverband Bürgerinitiativen Umweltschutz. Pogrom* 10 (65).

ums Überleben” (After the genocide: land grabbing and uranium mining. Aborigines fighting for their lives).⁷

Petra Kelly was a driving force behind the above-mentioned collaboration that took place between the BBU (Engels 2006, 332f) and the GfbV at the end of the 1970s, thereby promoting co-operation between human rights and environmental movements. In the 1970s, Kelly, subsequent co-founder of the Green Party, was one of the few German activists who took an interest in the Australian anti-uranium movement and the Aboriginal’s fight for land rights. Therefore, she was one of the first to establish direct contact with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal activists. From 1974 onwards, she was also in contact with the lawyer Jo Leinen, who was a leading figure within the BBU. Kelly originally approached Leinen in connection with her search for suitable authors for “Forum E”, the magazine published by the Young European Federalists (JEF). She herself also published articles in the magazine, using it as a platform to air her various political concerns.⁸ Jo Leinen, who had already adopted a transnational outlook, was studying at the College of Europe in Bruges (Richter 2010, 72f) and subsequently became one of the few activists who, like Kelly herself, sought contact with the Australian anti-nuclear movement and was ideally suited to contribute to a European magazine.⁹ He travelled to Australia in the company of Freiburg-based film director Nina Gladitz who produced a documentary entitled “Das Uran gehört der Regenbogenschlange” (Uranium Belongs to the Rainbow Serpent), which was subsequently shown on ARD. The documentary describes the clashes between unionists and Aborigines fighting over Australia’s abundant uranium deposits.¹⁰

2.2 Petra Kelly: Leading Figure of the Early Movement

Petra Kelly played a crucial role as pioneering transnational networker. Her family background, education, language skills and fundamental political orientation, namely her conviction that national borders fail to solve global problems and should therefore be transcended, virtually predestined Kelly to take on a networking role. Born in Bavaria in 1947, Kelly lived in the USA for many years where she also underwent her political socialization. She became part of the anti-nuclear power movement after her sister Grace died of cancer in 1970, believing the death to have been caused by radiation therapy, a product of nuclear research. This traumatic experience inspired Kelly’s commitment to raising awareness of the dangers of ionizing radiation, taking political action

⁷ Aborigines gegen Uranabbau. 1979. *Pogrom* 10 (65) and email of the GfbV to the author 6.8.2013.

⁸ Kelly, Petra Karin. 1977. Lasst das Uran in der Erde. Die Anti-Uran-Bewegung in Australien, in: *Forum Europa. Zeitschrift für transnationale Politik* 7 (7/8).

⁹ See letter from Jo Leinen to Petra Kelly dated 8 June 1978, AGG, PKA 2249.

¹⁰ Aborigines gegen Uranabbau. 1979. *Pogrom* 10 (65): 4.

against the use of nuclear power and integrating her own political concerns into the reasoning and actions of the anti-nuclear power and early peace movements. At the beginning of the 1970s, Kelly returned to Europe and worked for the European Communities where she remained for the next ten years, starting off in an administrative post at the Economic and Social Committee. Through her partner Sicco Mansholt, the Commission President at the time, she came into contact with citizens' action committees and other groups within the anti-nuclear power movement. At the end of the 1970s, in parallel to her international activities, she launched her party career as leading candidate of the "Alternative Political Association (SPV) – The Greens" organization which had just been founded by various alternative lists, citizens' initiatives and other groups. One year later, together with August Haußleiter and Norbert Mann, she became a speaker of the Green Party's Executive Committee. Until her premature death in 1992, the "Joan of Arc of the nuclear age"¹¹ fought for her vision of a better world. Thus, Kelly was not focusing exclusively on nuclear policy, instead extending her activities into the fields of environmental protection, women's rights, pacifism, indigenous populations and childhood cancer. Her political pursuits focused on the global dimension, thus integrating her own political interests into new social movements and incorporating those local concerns into her politics with a transnational perspective (Richter 2010, 95f). Her prominent involvement in the JEF (Milder 2010; Meyer 2013) can be taken as further evidence of her international outlook at this early stage of her career (Camp cited in Mende, 270). In her chosen role as networker, Kelly began to forge ties between anti-nuclear power movements at the global level and became one of the first politicians in Germany to establish direct contact with activists worldwide.

In the summer of 1977, Petra Kelly visited Australia for the first time. On this occasion, she gave speeches and met with activists. Various student organisations invited Kelly to speak on their premises. In her speeches, she connected her personal support for disarmament and peace issues with issues of concern to Australian activists, including uranium mining and the impact of nuclear power on countries outside the Australian continent, thereby construing nuclear power as a problem of transnational relevance that affected Australians, Germans and Europeans alike.¹² Around this time, Australia was experiencing a dramatic increase in the use of uranium, both in the civilian nuclear power

¹¹ Petra Kelly, in: Planet Wissen, Sendung: Die 80er Jahre – Popper, Punker, Pershings, 11.07.2008, <http://www.planetwissen.de/politik_geschichte/deutsche_politik/entstehung_der_gruenen/portraet_petra_kelly.jsp> (accessed October 2, 2013).

¹² Flyer, Nuclear Power: Today and Tomorrow. Petra Kelly speaks at a public meeting, AGG, PKA 4002 and two-sided flyer: Dr. Petra Kelly speaking on "The Uranium Industry", Wed., 3rd Aug. with announcement of the "Stop Uranium Mushrooming Rally" on 2 to 5 August 1977 on the reverse, AGG, PKA 4002.

industry and in nuclear power generation, which had led to a (second) boom¹³ in the uranium market compounded by the first oil shock in 1973. With oil prices rising dramatically, pressure to expand uranium mining operations in Australia increased. However, the initial impetus behind the Australian anti-nuclear power movement was not the threat that uranium mining was posing to the livelihood of the Aboriginal population but the debate surrounding French nuclear tests in the Pacific Ocean during 1972 and 1973. Two years later, once the public debate regarding the French tests had declined, the issue of uranium mining in Australia finally became the new focus of attention (Martin 1982; Falk 1982; Hutton 1999; Harris 2011). At its 1975 congress, the Australian Council of Trade Unions voted to ban all uranium mining except for biomedical use and the Australian Railways Union (ARU) imposed a ban on the transport of uranium ore (Adamson 1999, 11). The first significant demonstrations took place on Hiroshima Day, 6 and 7 August 1976, with 500 people demonstrating in Adelaide.

Uranium extraction finally became a major political issue when the Ranger Inquiry, or Fox Report, (O'Faircheallaigh 2002)¹⁴ triggered a public debate about the rights and wrongs of Australia's uranium mining and exporting activities (Bauer 1995, 173). In 1977, the year Petra Kelly was travelling in Australia, opposition in the country was growing rapidly, bringing together workers, trade unionists, traditional nature conservationists and activists of the anti-uranium movement in one single network. On Hiroshima Day in August 1977, 50,000 people took to the streets and the Movement against Uranium Mining (MAUM) organized 100 local groups in the state of Victoria alone. The trade unions played a prominent role in the protests. Ten major unions were represented at a national MAUM consultation, among them the Waterside Workers Federation whose declared opposition to handling uranium shipments also extended to current contracts. In a national ballot carried out at major ports, wharves voted 3,486 to 0 in favour of rejecting uranium shipments. Moreover, the Australian Railways Union (ARU), the Australian Conservation Fund, MAUM and Friends of the Earth held a press conference declaring that they intended to mount a joint campaign. The Metal Workers and Shipwrights Un-

¹³ The first boom took place in the 1950s when multinational mining companies set up mining operations after discovering rich deposits of natural resources on the north coast and in central Australia. Thus, the market was swamped with the raw materials needed by the nuclear weapons manufacturing industry. Demand and prices dropped and Australian mines successively closed down.

¹⁴ The Fox Report also known as the Ranger Uranium Environmental Inquiry (RUEI) laid the foundation for the current policy on uranium mining in Australia. In 1975 a commission was established to conduct an inquiry into the environmental aspects of a mining proposal by the then Australian Atomic Energy Commission (forerunner of the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organization) and Ranger Uranium Mines Pty Ltd. The Inquiry produced two reports, the first dated 28 October 1976 and the second dated 17 May 1977. The latter included a report under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* which dealt with a land claim in the Ranger area.

ion (AMWSU), the Australian Railway Union and the Transport Workers Union (ETU) refused to supply labour for the mining sites and stopped the manufacture and transport of equipment for the mines. The Electrical Trade Union announced that it was withdrawing services to members working at the state's Mary Kathleen uranium mine and called on them to leave the site (Adamson 1999, 12-3, 15-6, 20-4). In the 1970s, a tradition of environmental education, which could have explained why unions across the entire political spectrum were willing to take up the issue, did not exist within the Australian union movement. What convinced the unionists was the mass anti-uranium movement itself. The phenomenon of people joining forces to protest, irrespective of age, gender, educational background or occupation, has been described in literature as follows: "protests themselves became an important form of communication within the movement context" (Nehring, 562), implying that successful protest would engender further protest while unsuccessful protest would lead to marginalization. Reports and self-portrayals have consolidated the view of Australian unions at the vanguard of the anti-nuclear and anti-uranium debates (Tully 2004).¹⁵ Both the activities described above and the "green bans movement", which Petra Kelly also established contact with, have contributed to this interpretation: Years before the anti-atomic movement in Australia took off, the NSW branch of the Builders Labourers Federation (BLF), a trade union of communist-oriented construction workers under the leadership of Jack Munday, launched the so called "green bans movement" (Kirchhof 2013; Burgmann 2000),¹⁶ insisting that the environment was as much a workers' concern as wages and conditions. Munday asked: "What is the use of higher wages alone, if we have to live in cities devoid of parks, denuded of trees, in an atmosphere poisoned by pollution and vibrating with the noise of hundreds of thousands of units of private transport?" (Munday 1981, 148). Even though the movement certainly contributed to environmental conservation and the protection of heritage buildings, it may be assumed that the apparent capitalist interests involved in spending billions of dollars on undesirable development pro-

¹⁵ Kelly, Petra and John Baker. 1979. Australien – Der Kampf ums Uran. In *Der Atomkonflikt. Atomindustrie, Atompolitik und Anti-Atom-Bewegung im internationalen Vergleich*, ed. Lutz Mez, 12-28. Berlin: Olle und Wolter.

¹⁶ The background of the green-ban protests is the progressive destruction of Australia's major cities in the 1960s and early 1970s when vast amounts of money were poured into property development: giant glass and concrete buildings changed the face of cities and valuable old buildings were razed in the process. In 1971, a group of middle class women from the fashionable suburb of Hunter's Hill in Sydney, the capital of the Australian state of New South Wales (NSW), joined forces with the NSW branch of the Builders Labourers Federation (BLF) to save an area of natural bush land in Sydney from destruction. Green bans helped to protect historic nineteenth century buildings in The Rocks – an urban locality, tourist precinct and historic area of Sydney's city centre – from making way for office towers and prevented the Royal Botanical Garden – the most central of the three main botanical gardens in Sydney – from being turned into a car park for the Sydney Opera House, which opened in 1973.

jects and luxury housing developments also played a role in raising the ire of the communist unionists. Whether the Australian unionist's commitment to the environmental cause was indeed the result of a new and broader definition of the political interests of their constituency or just a strategic vehicle is a question that would require further research on this issue.

2.3 Support from the Alternative Media

The alternative media also stepped up their efforts to establish transnational networks and, at the same time, sought to establish themselves at the national level, notably in West Germany. The role of the media in activating people and bringing them together in the fight for a common goal (Rucht 1994, 337f), was crucial for the mobilisation of movements. Founded in 1978, the World Information Service on Energy (WISE), which acted as an exchange platform for anti-nuclear and alternative energy organisations operating at the global level, has played a leading role in this field. Funded by a small share of the proceeds made by the sale of the anti-nuclear sun logo (Nuclear Power – No thanks), which was copyrighted by the Danish anti-nuclear information service (OOA) (Meyer 2014), this transnational platform sought to raise grassroots democratic involvement in state politics and increase cooperation at the international level. It was the platforms' intention to "promote and facilitate direct contacts and information exchange within the movement, across all barriers".¹⁷ In 1978, the platform stated that "there is a lack of information in West-Germany concerning the development in other countries [...] (because) alternative news is largely ignored by the established media."¹⁸ The German 'Arbeitskreis politische Ökologie' (Political Ecology Research Group) and the 'Kommunistischer Bund' (Communist League) also acted as transnational mediators. Publishing information on the activities of international anti-nuclear movements in their journals, the 'Anti-AKW Telegramm' and the 'Arbeitskampf', they had, however, no particular focus on Australia.¹⁹

In contrast, the newly established alternative 'tageszeitung/taz', the mouthpiece of the ecological, peace and other alternative and new social movements, did take up the international uranium mining issue. The concept of a non-mainstream daily newspaper had already been discussed at a meeting of German alternative newspapers in 1977 and was put into practice in the form of the above mentioned 'tageszeitung/taz' in 1978. The aim was to create a comprehensive, nationwide networking platform for the undogmatic left that would communicate the general principles of the social movement (Mende 2011, 48ff). In 1980, a supplement to the daily 'tageszeitung', the 'taz-Journal', was

¹⁷ *Wise Bulletin*. 1978 (2).

¹⁸ *Wise Bulletin*. 1978 (3).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

launched. In the journal, the taz combined and published articles on a specific subject that had appeared in various ‘tageszeitung’ issues. The subject of the first journal happened to be ecology with a focus, among other issues, on global uranium mining. The network references and options, calls for support and international address information, as well as the provision of background information on the involvement of German companies in uranium mining operations in Australia, clearly demonstrate that the taz aimed at encouraging cooperation between international movements. Journalist Rita Thiele’s article “Völkermord durch Uranabbau” (Uranium mining leads to genocide), which appeared in the journal, presented several courses of action. The political Australian Aboriginal groups, for instance, called on the German public “to submit protest petitions to the Frankfurt-based Uran GmbH and the German government with the aim of building up pressure on German companies to suspend all uranium prospecting and mining activities on Aboriginal reservations”²⁰ (Sontheimer 1980, 121).

In 1979, the book “Der Atomkrieg” (Nuclear war) was published by Lutz Mez, a German political scientist and subsequent co-founder of the environmental Policy Research Unit (FFU) at Freie Universität Berlin. The volume consisted of 18 articles dedicated to movements in different countries, including socialist states. The concept for the book first emerged at the beginning of the 1970s during the Wyhl protests when members of a protest research project expressed the wish to provide information regarding movements in neighbouring countries. Based on country reports, Mez’ publication explained the socio-economic framework conditions that gave rise to the nuclear industry, nuclear policies and the anti-nuclear movement. The article on Australia was written by the Australian unionist John Baker and Petra Kelly, who was considered the number-one expert on Australia in Germany.²¹

3. Finding New Cooperation Partners and Stabilising Existing Contacts

Following NATO’s double-track decision in 1979, the peace movement, which established itself in Germany in parallel to the anti-nuclear power movement,

²⁰ Sontheimer, Michael and Ute Scheub, eds. 1980. *taz-Journal no.1. Ökologie*. Berlin: Verlag die Tageszeitung: 121.

²¹ Kelly, Petra and John Baker. 1979. Australien – Der Kampf ums Uran. In *Der Atomkonflikt. Atomindustrie, Atompolitik und Anti-Atom-Bewegung im internationalen Vergleich*, ed. Lutz Mez, 12-28. Berlin: Olle und Wolter. John Baker: *1908-†2001, Trade Union Official and from 1962 onwards involved with the Federal Council for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advancement –FCAATSI; see catalogue of the national library of Australia <<http://catalogue.nla.gov.au/Record/2439040>> (accessed August 6, 2013).

focussed predominantly on nuclear weapons (Becker-Schaum et al. 2012). The majority of those who opposed the use of nuclear power for civilian purposes were also against its military use (nuclear weapons). Nevertheless, the two movements remained largely aloof and were based on different organisational cores. The resistance against the military use of nuclear power was therefore predominantly rooted in the peace movement as opposed to the anti-nuclear movement (Rucht 2008). The double-track decision included two clauses. It was the second one which was considered particularly problematic by the peace movement: The first clause offered a mutual limitation of Soviet and US medium-range nuclear missiles to the Warsaw Pact. The second one stated if the Warsaw Pact was not willing to agree, the US were going to deploy new nuclear-capable missiles (Pershing II, intermediate-range missiles) and cruise missiles in Europe. A total of 500,000 people joined the Easter marches in 1983 and the German peace movement became the “biggest extra-parliamentary protest movement in the history of the Federal Republic of Germany” (Mende 2011, 340). Towards the end of the 1970s, the movement’s focus changed and public concern regarding nuclear warfare gradually took precedence over the nuclear energy issue. The subsequent shift in public attention led to a (relative) decline of the anti-nuclear movement in the 1980s, although protests against nuclear power plants, nuclear reprocessing plants (such as the envisaged Wackersdorf plant in Bavaria) and the Gorleben nuclear waste storage site did not subside. In the case of Wackersdorf, the protests even had a political outcome (Buro 2008; Siegler 1989). The Chernobyl disaster in April 1986 revitalised the protests and gave the German anti-nuclear power movement a new lease of life (Kirchhof 2013). Its survival was ultimately ensured by the fact that pollution, excessive growth and technology-related risks remained contentious issues in Germany (Uekötter 2011; 91-136).

In Australia, the re-emergence of the Cold War had also extended the anti-nuclear agenda to include nuclear weapons and the country experienced a phenomenal rise in nuclear disarmament activism. Professional anti-nuclear organisations sprang up and hundreds of small, local anti-nuclear groups were established. The new key issues included the suspension of all uranium mining and export activities, the abolishment of nuclear weapons, the removal of foreign military bases from Australian soil and the conversion of the Pacific into a nuclear-free zone (McLeod 1995; Martin 2007; Wittner 2009; Harris 2011).²² On Hiroshima Day 1983, 26,000 demonstrators called for an end to uranium mining, the removal of US bases and the diversion of military spending to jobs programmes. On Palm Sunday of the following year, 150,000 protestors took to the streets in Sydney, 100,000 in Melbourne, 25,000 in Perth, 10,000 in Brisbane

²² Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker/BUND, ed. 1988. *Australien. Naturerbe und Aborigines im Würgegriff des Uranabbaus*, n.p. See also, Martin, Brian. 1982. The Australian anti-uranium movement. *Alternatives: Perspectives on Society and Environment* 10 (4): 26-35.

and Adelaide and 5,000 in Canberra and Hobart (Adamson 1999; 26-9). In May and June 1984, Kelly – who had been active in both the anti-nuclear and the peace movement – made her second visit to Australia, this time accompanied by her new partner Gert Bastian. On the occasion of their visit, Kelly and Bastian met with representatives of various Aboriginal groups, took part in demonstrations, visited US military facilities and were introduced to unionists as well as representatives of the peace and women's movements.²³

3.1 Bridging Political Differences

Even though the use of nuclear power for civilian and military purposes prompted massive protests both in Germany and in Australia, the differences between the two countries' nuclear policies and the protest movements they triggered were considerable. Firstly, in contrast to Germany, though mining and exporting uranium, Australia never built any nuclear power stations, a factor that played a significant role in shaping the arguments of the respective movements. Secondly, the Australian anti-uranium and disarmament movement had been linked to the Aborigines' struggle against uranium mining from an early stage, resulting in a powerful civil rights and land rights movement in Australia. Aside from land rights and mining issues, urban poverty, drug-related problems as well as racial and ethnic discrimination were further critical concerns notably regarding the Aboriginal population in Australia. Given the large number of new social movements, it was sometimes difficult to find and especially uphold a common denominator that allowed the movements to take effective action. Even though they were all rooted in the alternative spectrum, each movement had a different focus and their disparity discouraged attempts at coalition-forming. This difficulty was often compounded at the international level. The Italian historian Renato Moro put it as follows: "An exponent of the British CND declared: Nobody who thinks 'Ban the Bomb' is enough, but no two people seem to agree on anything more" (Moro 2011, 143).

A further glance at the Society for Threatened Peoples illustrates the above-mentioned political and practical alignment problems: It was not before the late 1980s that the GfbV planned to establish closer links between the Australian civil and land rights movement and the German environmental and anti-nuclear movement by initiating a joint campaign with the Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz Deutschland e.V. (League for Environment and Nature Protection, BUND). The dual aim of the campaign was to raise awareness for the crucial role played by international cooperation and to highlight the difficulties arising from the plethora of issues pursued by different movements. In the context of their joint campaign, the two organisations emphasised the benefits of linking

²³ Petra Kelly, brief report on her journey to Australia and New Zealand, 13 May to 6 June 1984, AGG, PKA 480.

agendas: “Ultimately, the fight of the indigenous people against the destruction of their land [...] also helps us in Germany, and our struggle against nuclear energy on German soil also benefits the indigenous nations.” However, the campaign also revealed how far removed the plight of the Australian Aborigines was to German activists. Even well-informed members of the peace and anti-nuclear power movements apparently rarely wondered where the uranium for bombs and nuclear power stations was coming from. Nor did they appear to have given much thought to the fact that the nuclear weapon test sites in Nevada/USA, Maralinga/Australia and Polynesia were having a tragic impact upon entire populations.²⁴ The example of the Society for Threatened Peoples clearly illustrates the problems associated with the establishment of transnational cooperation and the challenges involved in linking up national discourses at the international level (Joppke 1991). Although a number of the issues pursued by the Society for Threatened Peoples overlapped with concerns relevant to German anti-nuclear power and peace activists, the society never really became part of the peace and disarmament movement. This was due to its policy of sanctioning military intervention in special situations – a fact that attracted severe criticism from the radically pacifist protest groups of the peace movement.²⁵ The Society perceived and continues to perceive itself primarily as a human rights organisation. Although some German activist groups also pursued human rights-related issues, such as class, race and gender, their main focus was always on nuclear power, disarmament and peace. Concern for the plight of the Australian Aboriginal population arose predominantly in connection with uranium mining and the global nuclear threat.

3.2 Bridging Geographical Distance

Although the maintenance of contacts and the exchange of information stabilised to some degree from the mid-1980s onwards, the motto of the decade continued to be “more cooperation”. Aside from Petra Kelly, Undine-Uta Bloch von Bottnitz was another activist who wanted to bring individuals from Australia and West Germany together and thus “forge a movement” (Gebauer 2001). In contrast to Kelly, Bottnitz was already 41 when she turned to political activism and joined the protest against the planned nuclear storage plant in Gorleben in 1977. Similar to numerous other ‘green’ activists, the qualified interior designer gradually evolved into a member of the Green Party, which she co-founded, through her involvement in the anti-nuclear movement, in her case the ‘Bäuerliche Notgemeinschaft’ (Farmers’ emergency association). The

²⁴ Hochbruck, Wolfgang. 1988. “Das Uran muß in der Erde bleiben” I. Kampagne der GfbV und des Bund Umwelt und Naturschutz Deutschland. *Pogrom* 19 (146): 56-8.

²⁵ Cf. Fischer, Ralf. Deutsche Opfer. Die Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker setzt auf völkische Ideologie. *Sozialistische Positionen. Beiträge zu Politik, Kultur und Gesellschaft* 1/2004. <<http://www.sopos.org/aufsaeetze/4010525731242/1.phtml>> (accessed January 19, 2014).

group was founded at the end of the 1970s in the region Lüchow-Dannenberg in Lower Saxony to protest against the nuclear waste disposal site Gorleben. For 25 years, she participated in sit-ins and demonstrations and called for civil disobedience against the state, an activity that earned her several court fines. Towards the end of her life, which was cut short by cancer at age 64, Bottnitz, just like Kelly, was somewhat disillusioned by her own party. Shortly before her death, she commented: "Once we finally lose the [citizens' groups and environmental action groups, A.M.K], we have given away a lot" (Gebauer, 2001). Bottnitz was a Green Party member of the European Parliament (MEP) and travelled to Australia as head of a delegation focussing on relations between Germany and Australia/New Zealand.²⁶ Here, Bloch von Bottnitz was introduced to David Turbayne, research coordinator for Jo Vallentine, the Western Australian Senator for Nuclear Disarmament and 1984 co-founder of the Nuclear Disarmament Party. The latter brought together people from numerous different backgrounds who opposed the Hawke government's plan to export uranium and actively participate in US nuclear war preparations (Adamson 1999, 37-9). Turbayne frequently emphasised and discussed the importance of personal contacts, which seemed necessary to help overcome the distance.²⁷

The Australian movement was well aware of the fact that, although there was communication between politicians, leading figures and organisations, there was no active cooperation among the members of the different movements. One of the main reasons was the physical distance between countries and continents, especially Australia and Europe. While organising a blockade of the uranium mine in Roxby Downs in the Australian outback, an Australian Friends of the Earth action group decided to use a range of different media and organisational resources to invite as many protesters as possible, not only from Australia but also from Europe. At some point, they must have lost confidence in their chances of success and playing on the physical remoteness of Australia as well as their place protest in the outback: "We realize the difficulties most people have in getting out to Australia, we have difficulties getting to Roxby which is in the middle of no-where."²⁸ On various occasions, the Australian movement, which was suffering from a sense of isolation, appealed to the German anti-nuclear power and peace movement: "Remember us. We're in this together".²⁹ The recurrent argument of feeling of isolation was so strong that the Campaign against Nuclear Energy, "CANE", started to distribute interna-

²⁶ Greens dark on yellowcake. *The Canberra Times*, November 20, 1985, AGG, PKA 2142.

²⁷ Letter from David Turbayne, Research Coordinator for Jo Vallentine, Western Australian Senator for Nuclear Disarmament, to Petra Kelly dated November 21, 1985, AGG, PKA 2142.

²⁸ Letter by the Melbourne Roxby Action Group of the Friends of the Earth distributed via the World Information Service on Energy (WISE) on July 6, 1984, AGG, PKA 491 (1).

²⁹ "Vergeßt uns nicht – wir arbeiten zusammen". Die Anti-Uran-Bewegung in Australien. Petra Kelly im Gespräch mit Ros Livingston. *Umweltmagazin* (1979): 29-32, AGG, PKA 4002.

tional information in Australia in order to strengthen the links of solidarity between Australia and the rest of the world.

In the 1970s and 1980s, communication and cooperation between activists crucially depended on personal contacts and international travel. The internet, which was to drastically increase opportunities for cooperation in the subsequent decade, was not yet available to the public.³⁰ Therefore, Australian and West Germans activists renewed their attempts at improving transnational cooperation across the globe, e.g. Bob Brown, the leader of the Australian Greens, wrote to Petra Kelly and Gert Bastian in 1986: “We do need to move about much more.”³¹ This underlines the importance of initiators such as Petra Kelly or Undine-Uta Bloch von Blotnitz who took on the role of distributors and provided activists, organizations and politicians in various countries with information on successful campaign methods and strategies (Milder 2010a).³²

4. Conclusion

The multifarious problems described above illustrate the role that geographical distance and the bridging of distance may have played in the field of international cooperation. Personal contacts and international travel were crucial for any collaboration at the global level. The cost of such travel was prohibitive enough to exclude many activists from international involvement and transnational cooperation. Moreover, the identification and preservation of a shared communication basis among the large number of multifaceted groups within the new alternative social movements posed an enormous challenge already at the national level. Finding such a shared basis for communicating the agendas of these movements, be it uranium mining, disarmament, peace, women or civil rights, and making them compatible was a crucial task as the lack of such a common basis discouraged the formation of coalitions, a problem that was compounded at the international level. Even though the anti-nuclear movements in Germany and Australia fundamentally shared many views on the nuclear issue, the relevance of the respective national discourses became all the more apparent as activists found it hard to communicate and make compatible those national contexts and agendas that structured their approach to the problem. For instance, German environmental, anti-nuclear and peace movements did not usually include traditional human rights and related poverty, drug and

³⁰ *Wise Bulletin*. 1979 (4).

³¹ Letter by Bob Brown, party leader of the Australian Green Party, to Petra Kelly and Gert Bastian, May 20, 1986, AGG, PKA 2142.

³² See, for example, Petra Kelly's letter to the executive board of the Bundesverband Bürgerinitiative Umweltschutz, Greenpeace and others, August 27, 1984, AGG, PKA 2142.

racial issues in their agendas unless these issues had a link to either nuclear policies, uranium mining or the nuclear threat.

Despite structural obstacles, such as geographical distance, language problems, structural differences with a view to organization and the perception and definition of the nuclear issue, divergent goals and perhaps also a widespread but unacknowledged NIMBY³³ attitude, the new social movements had a substantial impact at the international level: In western nations, at least, transnational solidarity created a sense of identity and pushed topics on the agenda which motivated people and affected their collective consciousness, values, rules and regulations. This, in turn, led to greater awareness of gender relation issues, friend-enemy perceptions and the concept of legitimate citizenship (Moro 2011, 146f). Moreover, a number of channels for transnational exchange, the transfer of information and ideas did in fact exist and the level of communication (albeit not so much cooperation) was significant. Given the lack of technological options, activists resorted to verbal shows of solidarity in addition to actual transnational communication: “We’re all in it together” underlines the relevance of the rhetoric of internationalism demonstrated by the various movements that cooperated at the transnational level.

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³³ NIMBY stands for “Not In My Back Yard” and is a deprecatory reference to opposition by residents who believe that certain institutions, such as homeless shelters, power plants or prisons, are necessary in society but should not be situated close to their home.

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