

On the history of the environmental movements since 1970

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The environmental movements are without doubt the most successful social movements since 1945 - and at the same time the most helpless. Despite many individual successes, global warming has not been stopped, the oceans are overfished, and despite Chernobyl and Fukushima, new nuclear power plants continue to be built.

There are environmental movements all over the world, and they vary widely in their individual problem sets. The slogan "Think Global, Act Local" expresses this fact. Environmental movements are fighting against nuclear power plants, against slash-and-burn agriculture in the rainforests, for access to land for farmers, for the rights of indigenous cultures, for access to clean water and against the poisoning of the environment by extremely harmful industrial production methods, against mega-dams, against the dumping of toxic and nuclear waste in the oceans, and much more.

A specific feature of the environmental movements in contrast to other social movements is the direct connection between factual knowledge and actionism. No other social movement is so strongly supported by an enlightened ethos. For this reason, scientists have a very special role here, just as engineering knowledge and craftsmanship have their own specific connection in the development of environmentally friendly techniques.

Fundamental to the awakening of a critical environmental consciousness in the Western world were repeated publications. There were three texts in particular that caused an international stir:

In 1962, the book "Silent Spring" by the American biologist Rachel Carson, was published, in which the destruction of bio-diversity through the extensive use of pesticides was highlighted. "Carson made clear in her book how the poison entered soil and water and the food chain, becoming a danger to humans as well. The title Silent Spring aimed at the idea of a spring without birds, and thus without song, because the worms that ate the birds carried the poison. The book was of literary as well as scientific quality. What was new was the consideration of nature as a total system rather than a focus on individual species or areas."(1)

In 1972, a second publication startled the Western world: the Club of Rome text "Limits to Growth," written by Donata and Dennis Meadows, used computer simulations to show that the continued growth of the world's population, industrialization, pollution, food production, and exploitation of raw materials at that time would lead to an absolute limit to growth over the course of a hundred years. In connection with the discussions surrounding the Meadows Report, the concept of exponential growth was also introduced into the environmental debate. As an example of how threatening the process of environmental

pollution was, the development of a species of water lily that grew every day by the size of its current population was used: a beautiful water lily pond, half covered with water lilies and with enough open water for the animals living in the water, could be completely overgrown the next day (2).

In 1987, the report of the UN Commission on Environment and Development, coordinated by the Norwegian Prime Minister, entitled "Our Common Future" ("Our Common Future") was published. This report defined the concept of sustainable development for the first time. The report significantly influenced the international debate on development and environmental policy. This ultimately led to the major UN Conference on the Environment in Rio de Janeiro in 1992(3).

The environmental movements first drew attention with actions in the USA. One of the first actions was the protest against an oil spill off the coast of Santa Barbara in California in 1969. In their actions, they drew on the experiences of the 1968 movement. The hippie movement with its rural communes and its excessive romanticism of nature can certainly be counted as a precursor of the environmental movement.

Also in 1969, the environmental association Friends of the Earth was founded, followed by Greenpeace in 1971.

In 1971 the environmental protection act was introduced, and the Environmental Protection Agency was founded in USA – much earlier than the awakening in Europe started.

But not only in the USA, also in Europe the environmental movements started with spectacular actions in the early seventies.

The beginning of the European environmental movements in France

The first major event was the dispute over the Larzac plateau in southern France, an uprising by shepherds against the expansion of a military training area.

In 1971, then French Defense Minister Michel Debré announced the government's decision to expand the military base on the Larzac plateau in southern France. Outraged farmers organize, and 103 families sign an oath never to sell their lands. The situation quickly came to a head, and everyday life in Larzac was soon dominated by the army and law enforcers. But in order to make their voices heard throughout the country, the inhabitants of the region gave free rein to their imagination. Wolfgang Hertle reports on this in his book "Larzac 1971-1981". The protest movement finds support throughout France and beyond. In the eleven years of resistance, the farmers repeatedly invent unusual non-violent forms of protest: For example, they organize a trek with their sheep to under the Eiffel Tower, engage in fasting actions, acquire restricted land that obstructs army maneuvers, build water pipes and a huge sheep pen called the "Cathedral of Resistance" - among other things with funds from a tax refusal campaign. François Mitterand, who wins the French presidential election in 1981, then very quickly shelves the project to expand the military training area.

In 1971, the association CSFR (Comité de Sauvegarde de Fessenheim et de la Plaine du Rhin) was founded on the French side of the Upper Rhine and called for a demonstration against the Fessenheim nuclear power plant on April 12, 1971. About 1300 people responded to this

call. This was the first demonstration against nuclear power in Europe. With promises of an economic upturn, the local authorities of *Électricité de France* to agree to the construction of the nuclear power plant with a total of six reactors. In 1972, another demonstration against the nuclear power plant took place, this time attended by over 10,000 people. Due to cross-border protests - Fessenheim is located in the triangle between France, Germany and Switzerland - four of the intended reactors were ultimately not built. Forty years later, in 2012, France's newly elected socialist president, François Hollande, promised to decommission France's oldest nuclear power plant in 2016. This was definitely realized in 2021.

Another milestone was the actions against the construction of a bleaching plant in Marckolsheim, France: Marckolsheim is a small French village on the Upper Rhine, right on the Rhine, on the border with Germany. In Marckolsheim, an important chapter of environmental history was written in 1974. Trinationally and successfully, people from France, Germany and Switzerland occupied the site of a planned, extremely polluting bleaching plant. This conflict was at the beginning of many struggles for clean air and water, and heralded the end of the 'classical' environmental poisoning of the postwar period in Central Europe. From the important impulses of the books 'Silent Spring' by biologist Rachel Carson (1962) and the report of the Club of Rome 'The Limits to Growth' (1972), concrete action was taken, became, in the sense of the word, citizen initiative.

From the beginning, the protest movement in the Upper Rhine operated across borders with groups from Alsace, Switzerland and the Upper Rhine region. The Fessenheim nuclear power plant in Alsace and the Marckolsheim bleaching plant planned in Alsace, like the planned Kaiseraugst nuclear power plant near Basel, were at the center of the protest in all three countries.

The protests spread, surrounding communities held court cases against the construction of the plant, some of which ended negatively and some positively for the plant's operators. In 1982, when a final decision was made by the courts in favor of the construction of the nuclear power plant, 30,000 people gathered in Wyhl to protest against the nuclear power plant. Eventually, the responsible state government of Baden-Württemberg decided to shelve the construction of the plant.

Between the first demonstrations in Fessenheim (April 1971) and the construction site occupation in Wyhl (February 1975), the protest movement grew into a political force before which energy companies and the state government finally capitulated. The Kaiseraugst and Wyhl nuclear power plants were not built, and the one in Fessenheim is to be shut down by 2021. The 21 citizens' initiatives from Baden and Alsace, which joined forces in 1974, were working to convert the region into a solar region, and the former construction site in Wyhl is now a nature reserve.

Brokdorf on the Lower Elbe not far from Hamburg follows. In 1973, plans for the construction of this nuclear power plant became known, and in 1974 the operators applied for a building permit. The Lower Elbe Environmental Protection Citizens' Initiative immediately collects signatures against the construction. In 1976, the first occupation of the site takes place. In 1977, 50,000 people gather at the construction fence despite the ban on demonstrations. In 1981, 100,000 take part in a demonstration, despite a ban on

demonstrations - but this was subsequently overturned by the Constitutional Court in a landmark decision on the fundamental right of freedom of assembly. This demonstration was one of the largest anti-nuclear demonstrations in German history. Brokdorf thus became a symbol of the anti-nuclear movement.

The court decisions to stop the construction of planned nuclear power plants were mainly related to the unresolved question of what to do with the spent highly radioactive fuel rods. Therefore, it was of great urgency to find solutions. Thus, a site had to be found both for the final disposal of nuclear waste and for a reprocessing plant for spent fuel rods.

In 1977, the community of Gorleben in the Wendland/Lüchow-Dannenberg district was selected for this purpose. Here, both an interim storage facility and a reprocessing plant were to be built, and a final repository was to be constructed in the Gorleben salt dome. Here, too, the affected population began to angrily oppose the plans as soon as they became known. In order to prevent the purchase of the site to the operators, the citizens collected 800,000 DM within 7 days - but could not prevent the deal with the operators by their purchase offer. Protest actions took place from 1979 on. That year, 500 tractors marched to the state capital of Hanover, where a demonstration was held with over 100,000 participants. Because of the bitter protests, the state government decided to drop the reprocessing plant project, but the interim storage and repository projects continue with all their might. There are site occupations, which are cleared again, and huge demonstrations on site and at the seat of government in Hanover. In 1984, the first nuclear waste is stored in Gorleben. In 1985, it is decided to build a reprocessing plant in Wackersdorf in Bavaria. Protests against the interim storage facility in Gorleben and against the exploration of the Gorleben salt dome as a final storage site for nuclear waste continue.

In December 1985, construction work began in Wackersdorf, Bavaria, on a reprocessing facility for spent fuel rods from nuclear power plants. This is where the German nuclear industry began construction of its then prestige project, which was shelved forever a few years later. When the first trees fell at the planned site in the Taxölden forest on December 11, 1985, it was also the starting signal for the hot phase of anti-WAA actions.

There were several dead demonstrators and one dead official, hundreds of injured and thousands of criminal cases. Thousands of police - equipped with irritant gas and dozens of water cannons - and thousands of opponents of nuclear power confronted each other. The dispute over the reprocessing plant (WAA) in Wackersdorf in the Upper Palatinate reached a dimension unparalleled in the Federal Republic in the 1980s and led to civil war-like conditions. For the still young environmental movement, the community of 5000 souls became synonymous with the dangers of nuclear technology. When the term "WAAhsinn" was used, everyone up and down the country knew what was meant.

About two billion marks were spent senselessly, and the safety fence around the WAA site alone cost tens of millions. As compensation, Wackersdorf received a gigantic industrial area in which, in particular, automotive suppliers settled. More than 3000 jobs were created. "If it came down to it, the citizens would fight against such an inhumane plutonium factory today just as they did back then, believes ex-county councilor Schuierer looking back. Weinzierl, the president of nature conservation, also sees Wackersdorf as one of the environmental movement's greatest successes. Politicians have realized that they cannot govern past the people. In the end, however, economic reasons would have tipped the scales. The power companies would have realized that the WAA would not have been

profitable, Weinzierl says: "The business side can just calculate better than the political side."

Thus, the problem of reprocessing, interim storage as well as final disposal of nuclear waste remained unsolved. The Environmental Institute estimates for the Federal Republic of Germany that a good 14,300 tons or 28,100 cubic meters of radioactive heavy metal will accumulate in total, including the lifetime of the still active nuclear power plants and the research reactors.

The way out for reprocessing was to transport the spent fuel rods to the reprocessing plants at La Hague in France, Sellafield/Windscale in the UK and Mol in Belgium. After reprocessing, however, the waste had to be returned - to interim storage facilities. And this is where the next phase of protests began: the protests against the Castor transports.

In 1995, the first Castor transport to Gorleben took place. All Castor transports from La Hague to Gorleben took place under very large protests - including the last one so far, which took place in 2011. There are plans to authorize further transports from the Sellafield reprocessing plant - and the protests against them are not expected to diminish.

Transports of nuclear waste from reprocessing facilities involve waste from nuclear power plants that originated before 2005. Since 2005, transports of nuclear fuel from commercial use of electricity to reprocessing have been prohibited. This means that since 2005, active nuclear power plants have had to temporarily store spent fuel rods on their premises. The disposal of nuclear waste is therefore still completely unresolved.

For a long time, politicians did not want to admit that the use of nuclear power and environmental concerns are of great importance to the population in Germany. The fact that the Wyhl nuclear power plant was not feasible, that reprocessing in Gorleben and in Wackersdorf had to be dropped and that there was no solution for a final repository for nuclear waste - all this did not prevent politicians and the big energy companies from sticking to the use of nuclear power. But then, in addition to the dangers of millions of years of possible contamination from nuclear waste, the argument that the production facilities were absolutely safe against accidents suddenly began to falter. There are three decisive events that led to further delegitimization of the use of nuclear power:

In 1979, there was an accident with a partial core meltdown at the Three Mile Islands nuclear power plant near Harrisburg in the USA.

In 1986, there was a core meltdown in Unit 4 of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in Ukraine, followed by explosions - a super-gau. Clouds of radioactive fallout traveled across Europe to North Africa. After the initial attempt to conceal the accident, the Soviet leadership sent hundreds of thousands of young men - volunteers and army personnel - into the hell of Chernobyl to prevent further devastating explosions and to reduce radioactivity.

Hundreds of thousands of helpers (about 200,000 by the end of 1987), so-called liquidators, built a concrete shell around the exploded reactor after the disaster to prevent further leakage of radioactivity. Many of them died from radioactive contamination. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), there are believed to have been about 600,000 to 800,000 liquidators in the years that followed.

All three still-functioning units were restarted after the cleanup was completed. The second reactor unit was shut down in October 1991 after a fire in the turbine hall. Unit I followed in November 1996, and Unit III on December 15, 2000. The shutdown was carried out in particular due to pressure from the European Union, and Ukraine received corresponding compensation payments. How many deaths the Chernobyl disaster has claimed to date can only be estimated. The figures range from 10,000 to over 250,000 people. The consequences can still be seen and felt in many areas of Ukraine today - especially the rate of childhood cancer has increased dramatically since the 1986. To this day, a zone with a radius of 37 km around the nuclear power plant is a restricted area, and a project was being pursued building a second concrete shell - "sarcophagus" - around the ruins, which continue to emit massive amounts of radiation.

Finally, in 2011, a tsunami destroyed four reactor units at the Fukushima nuclear power plant in Japan. Here, too, core meltdowns occurred that have not yet been contained.

In a TV documentary about Fukushima, Ranga Yogeshwar showed how attempts were made to cool the destroyed reactor blocks. For this purpose, 4500 liters per hour have to be pumped and the contaminated water is stored. The reactor site is "plastered" with water towers. As there is no more space for water towers, the responsible company decided to try to end the storage of contaminated water, clean it and pour it into the sea. There is still no proof how good the cleaning techniques are. In addition, reactor 2 still radiates so strongly that not even remote-controlled robotic vehicles can be used there. Japanese engineers will still have to struggle with the radioactive water. Gradually, the tanks could disappear. Then the hardest part begins for them. They have to get to the destroyed and melted fuel rods - and that will take decades.

Under the impression of the catastrophe in Chernobyl and the ongoing protests against nuclear power in Germany, the then red-green government decided in 2000 to phase out nuclear power as a risky form of energy. This also initiated the promotion of regenerative forms of energy and energy-saving measures. It is the internationally unique achievement of the German Greens to have initiated not only the phase-out of nuclear power, but also the switch to environmentally compatible forms of energy in a high-tech country. However, the so-called "nuclear consensus" was halfway reversed by the black-red government in 2010 by drastically extending the operating lives of nuclear power plants. Immediately after the super accident in Fukushima, however, the government - the chancellor is a trained physicist - took this back again and it was decided to permanently shut down eight nuclear power plants and to phase out the operation of the remaining nine nuclear power plants.

But: Germany wanted to bridge its energy-need by strong connections with Russia and Russian Gaz – and this came to sudden end with the War in Ukraine. Germany as a highly industrialised country needs incredible amounts of energy. To bridge the gap it is now re-activating coal- and petrol-energy-use – means new CO₂-production, and with it is not shutting down its last three nuclear power plants. That's the situation in winter 2022.

And the rest of the world?

A complete phase-out of nuclear power generation has so far been carried out by Italy. After Chernobyl, all four of Italy's nuclear power plants were shut down. In a new referendum in

mid-2011, 94.1% of those who voted rejected going back in, and the turnout was 57% of all eligible voters. Austria did not commission its completed Zwentendorf nuclear power plant. Overall, however, the experience of the catastrophic events at Chernobyl and Fukushima did not make much of an impression internationally:

30 countries of the world operate nuclear power plants, within the European Union these are Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Finland, France, Great Britain, Sweden, Spain, Slovenia, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Hungary and the Netherlands. In the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, there is no political decision to phase out nuclear power, but investors have recently withdrawn their plans to build new nuclear power plants for economic reasons.

The countries that have explicitly decided to phase out nuclear power after Fukushima (Germany, Switzerland, Spain) or want to remain nuclear-free (such as Italy or Ireland) are opposed by a group of countries that want to maintain or reintroduce nuclear power: Great Britain, France, Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Lithuania. Lithuania backed out of new-build plans after a majority of the population voted against the Visaginas NPP in a referendum on Oct. 14, 2012. The United Kingdom, France, Poland and the Czech Republic issued a joint request to the EU Commission to subsidize nuclear power as a low-emission technology in order to obtain financial support for the construction of nuclear power plants. In most non-European countries, the phase-out plans have so far met with little positive response.

International organizing - the example of Greenpeace.

Along with Friends of the Earth, World Wide Fund (WWF) and International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), it is mainly thanks to Greenpeace that environmental scandals have repeatedly come to public attention.

In 1971, a small group of activists protested in an old fishing boat off the Aleutian Islands against U.S. nuclear tests in Alaska. They named their boat "Greenpeace."

In documenting its beginnings, Greenpeace Today says, "It was Quakers, pacifists, environmentalists, journalists, hippies who founded Greenpeace. They infected thousands with their dreams. The beginning: a concert in the Pacific Coliseum in Vancouver, Canada, where Joni Mitchell and James Taylor, among others, performed. The artists waived their fees, thousands of people donated for the trip to Amchitka/Aleuten. The ship, the Phyllis Cormack, was able to sail. Greenpeace was born."

Greenpeace has developed its own distinctive signature. Profound knowledge and sometimes foolhardy courage are hallmarks of Greenpeace actions - but they are always non-violent. Greenpeace's actions and campaigns are always newsworthy, which means they are noticed internationally. Greenpeace has also remained independent of business and politics. This is something very special in the big international business of fighting for sovereignty of opinion on environmental issues. All other large environmental associations handle this quite differently.

The non-violent nature of Greenpeace's actions has not stopped its opponents from taking massive action against it. Most egregious is the 1985 raid on the Greenpeace ship "Rainbow-Warrior" in Auckland: French secret agents detonated two explosive charges on the Greenpeace ship lying in the harbor, killing a young photographer. It is only thanks to the very correct investigating authorities of New Zealand that it finally came out that the secret agents had acted on behalf of the French government. The Rainbow-Warrior had been on its

way to Moruroa Atoll to protest against France's atomic bomb tests. The Rainbow-Warrior was followed by new Greenpeace ships cruising the seas and carrying out actions. Greenpeacers rappel down huge factory chimneys and office towers to unfurl protest banners, they race their ocean-going inflatable boats into the shipping lanes of tankers trying to dump toxic waste at sea, they climb nuclear power plants, and they evacuate people from small Pacific islands contaminated by nuclear testing.

Starting in 1973, Greenpeace has led the fight against industrial whaling and the extinction of whales - with spectacular actions against whaling ships and with campaigns. The pictures of the slaughter of the whales went around the world. But children and young people who grew up in the 1980s will always remember the whale song that Greenpeace made famous.

In the course of its now more than forty-year history, Greenpeace has repeatedly contributed to successes of the environmental movements: in 1974, France ended nuclear testing in the South Pacific. In 1982, the International Whaling Commission (IWC) decided to ban commercial whaling - but the protests must continue to this day. Another historic success is the Antarctic Protection Agreement of 1991, which bans commercial resource extraction for at least 50 years, and which could serve as an example for a similar agreement to protect the Arctic, over whose mineral resources the battle of the giants has flared up. In 1995, Greenpeace's actions succeeded in ensuring that Shell's Brent Spa oil rig was not dumped in the Atlantic. In 2004, the campaign against dangerous chemicals in electronic devices began. In 2006, part of the Great Bear Rainforest in Canada, home to grizzly bears, is placed under protection.

Greenpeace uses the opportunities of the media society to draw attention to scandals and has a considerable influence on public opinion. In the process, massive environmental and human rights violations have been exposed time and again. Greenpeacers have been and continue to be environmental detectives who have been able to effect actual change in individual places.

However, over time, significant signs of fatigue have become apparent: Greenpeace has always refused to take public funding, but increasingly, in addition to the many small donors have been joined by substantial donations from major corporations. And Greenpeace has even faced accusations of "greenwashing" when, in a cooperation with the discounter Lidl, Greenpeace magazines were distributed in Lidl stores for a short time in 2006. Lidl had come under fire for its exploitative personnel policy and was obviously trying to create a better image for itself by cooperating with Greenpeace, i.e. to wash itself "green" rather than "pure". In the meantime, Greenpeace is increasingly taking positions of balancing economic and ecological interests that are very reminiscent of the New Green Deal propagated by the GREEN Party.

The European Union and the environmental movements

The EU's environmental legislation started long before there was a directly elected parliament and also some time before the European environmental movement made its presence felt: In 1974, the European Environmental Bureau was founded in Brussels - and

with the realization of the Single Act of 1986, crucial environmental legislation was repeatedly passed in Brussels.

In 1992, environmental policy was anchored as an independent European policy field in the Maastricht Treaty. And for the first time “sustainability” was named in the treaty.

Today, EU environmental legislation covers 17 different areas and environmental associations estimate that 80 to 90 percent of environmental legislation is made in Brussels.

And with the New Green Deal Ms. Von der Leyen presented in Dec. 2019 new initiatives where planned – but in it’s initial presentation the most important policy field where EU has the power wasn’t named: the agricultural policy, and in the decisions from 2021 only 25% of the EU programs where dedicated to a more ecological agriculture without extensive use of pesticides and mass factory farming.

The European Environmental Bureau will celebrate its 50th anniversary in December 2024. How was it that in 1974, when the environmental movements in Europe were just making their first spectacular appearances, such an office could be installed at the European level in Brussels, of all places, and with the support of the EC at the time? At that time, there was not even a directly elected European Parliament.

The 1970s are generally regarded as a first peak of concern for the environment and of civil society mobilization for this newly discovered problem area in Europe. However, the rapidly growing environmental movement was not the driving force behind the fundamental decision of the European Communities (EC), the forerunner of today's European Union, to address the policy field of the environment. Other actors and motivations were initially more important here. The governments of the member states and the Brussels-based EC Commission pushed for common environmental rules for more technical reasons. Uniform standards were to prevent different national environmental regulations from restricting trade in the common market. The formally powerless European Parliament (EP) had been an innovative issue-setter since 1970, pushing for EC action in this area with reports and resolutions, initially on water and air pollution. But the example set by other international organizations also played an important role. Under the impression of the 1972 Stockholm United Nations Conference on the Environment, which the EC states had prepared in a coordinated manner, the heads of state and government called for the introduction of an EC environmental policy at the 1972 Paris Summit. Until this was formally established as an EC policy area with the Single European Act of 1987, the first environmental action program adopted in 1973 remained the basis for EC environmental measures. However, the fact that the basic decision to introduce an EC environmental policy came from the member states and European institutions does not mean that civil society actors were left out of the practical design of the policy. On the contrary, some of the associations of the newly forming environmental movement quickly understood that important environmental decisions could be taken at the EC level. They organized themselves - with the benevolent support of the EC Commission - in the European Environmental Bureau (EEB) in Brussels as early as 1974."(10)

Jo Leinen , a veteran of the German and European environmental movement, was the first spokesman for the newly founded Federal Association of Citizens' Initiatives in 1972. Citizens' Initiatives for Environmental Protection (BBU). The association was primarily shaped

by the protest against nuclear power, and by the mid-1970s more than 600 initiatives already belonged to the BBU. Jo Leinen says about his unusually early European commitment that, as a Saarlander, he has European genes.

Just one year after its founding, Jo Leinen joined the European Environmental Bureau in 1975 as a representative of the BBU. The European Environmental Bureau was and is institutionally supported by the EU Commission and is active as a kind of clearing house for environmental associations.

He says that the traditional nature conservation associations that were still dominant at the time, such as British Birdlife (now Birdlife International) and the German Bird Protection Association (now Naturschutzbund Deutschland), were not very enthusiastic that the new protest movement also wanted to work on the environmental office. The fact that the EC had become involved in environmental policy so early on at that time was due to the realization that environmental problems do not stop at borders. Forest dieback, acid rain and water pollution were well-known phenomena in the early 1970s - and the Rhine was the first river to receive a convention, followed by the Meuse and Moselle. Scandinavia, where laws for air and water were already part of good neighborly relations, had set an example here. The motivation for the initially six and later nine member states of the EC to enact environmental laws was also the creation of a level playing field - if anything, then everyone should participate. Jo Leinen has been a member of the European Parliament from 1999 to 2019 and has continued to advocate environmental policy here. He says that environmental policy was also very successful in the 1990s and largely until the economic crisis of 2008, the EP's Committee on the Environment and Consumer Affairs always worked very ambitiously and there were hardly any blockades - in the meantime, however, the European crisis has acted as a brake.

Apart from the BBU, however, the organizations of the environmental movement did not arrive on the Brussels stage until the mid-1980s. In their major study on the relationship between environmental movements and the European Community of 1992, Christian Hey and Uwe Brendle characterized four different forms of organization at the EC level at that time:

- 1) the European Environmental Bureau as an overarching structure with its own characteristics at the European level.
- 2) CEAT as coordinator of the European level of Friends of the Earth groupings
- 3) The two EC offices of the international organizations Greenpeace and WWF, which have hierarchical decision-making structures and a large capacity for international action
- 4) A variety of specialized networks and working groups such as the Climat-Network or the European Union for Coastal Conservation, Transport and Environment.

The example of CEAT showed some of the problems of organizing at the European level: the office was mainly active in project acquisition and coordination - but political work was not organized at the Brussels level, but remained with the issue-specific national action groups.

Until 1991, the Greenpeace office was subordinate to the organization's international campaigns and, at the European level, mainly supported actions against hazardous waste

transports. From 1991, it was then able to initiate actions at the European level independently.

The WWF office had a relatively large autonomy in carrying out actions and intensively pursued networking between national groups and the European level. This is noteworthy in that there was a great diversity in the national characteristics of the environmental movements: there were both very strong and weak movements and a great fixation on national policies, leading to different and sometimes conflicting expectations of the European level.

In the early 1990s, European actors in the environmental movements often knew the different national cultures well through their work in transnational projects and were thus able to mediate between them.

In the early nineties, the offices of environmental associations in Brussels began their collaboration as the Green Five. They met monthly to coordinate their work and to take joint initiatives towards the Brussels institutions. Today, they have grown into the Green Ten. The ten members represent a total of more than twenty million members.

The Green Ten monitors the development of EU environmental policy and coordinates statements and recommendations to the EU institutions that are relevant to all member organizations. Their lobbying work included, for example, the anchoring of environmental policy in all individual EU policies and the critical monitoring of the implementation of the Agenda for Sustainable Development Strategies. They also published, for example, a manifesto for the 2014 European elections with the ten most important environmental policy demands for the new legislative period.

How a minority can participate in shaping European policy with the help of social movements is, however, also demonstrated by another example: the 1985 elections, however, also saw the GREENS enter the European Parliament for the first time as a new political family linked to the environmental movements. Belgian, Dutch, German GREENS as well as Italian left-wing GREENS formed the Rainbow Group together with Euroskeptic and regionalist MEPs. From the beginning, organic farming and the criticism of genetic engineering were central policy areas for the GREENS in the European Parliament.

Annette Görlich and Margret Krannich, who together with their Dutch colleague Annemiek Onstenk organized the Women's Office of the Rainbow Group, were involved in taking the criticism into the halls of the Parliament as part of the incipient feminist critique of genetic engineering and the international network Finrage. They succeeded in having the parliament address the issue in two hearings. They say that at that time the women's movement had a knowledge advantage over politics. In a conference attended by 140 women from ten EC countries as well as from India, Australia and the USA, the key points of feminist criticism were formulated. Above all, they criticized a genetic ideology and reproductive technology, the use of dangerous drugs, as well as the expected concentration of power of large corporations and the erosion of genetic diversity. At the same time, organic farming and criticism of the use of genetic engineering in agriculture were put on the agenda by the green agricultural experts.

Görlich and Krannich say this was a good example of how movements from different directions could work together. Hannes Lorenzen, then as now a Green agricultural expert in the European Parliament, also emphasizes the importance of this cooperation bringing together the individual policy fields: the bringing together of agriculture, food production, public health, genetic engineering and gender is a major reason for the long-term success of the containment of genetic engineering and the implementation of organic farming in the EU. In 1985, he said, there was no discussion of organic farming at all - but today no one dares to negate it.

Organic farming activists, together with farmers from smaller farms, organized a certain farmer opposition, which was directed against the massive subsidization of large farms. In contrast, EU agricultural policy should focus on the quality of production, processing and on structural policies for rural areas.

Smaller EU community initiatives were then able to initiate concrete projects. The local and European levels have worked very well together in this context. According to Hannes Lorenzen, agricultural production, trader systems, consumer education, criticism of genetic engineering and political initiatives have led to the fact that the European communitarization of the agricultural sector - for a long time a gigantic subsidy market with absurd consequences - can be seen as positive with the aim of creating a "European Food Policy".

The success of the environmental movements and the peasant opposition in European politics is undoubtedly based on very specific conditions:

1. the communitarization of European agricultural policy meant, among other things, that criticism here had a genuinely European target. Even today, the Brussels administrations tremble when European farmers dump manure in front of their offices with their giant tractors or aim at the European Parliament with milk canons.
- 2 With the introduction of the common large internal market from 1985 and the associated deregulation push of national laws, the environmental movements understood that they had to be players on the European level.
3. in contrast to the large "old" social movement of labor, the environmental movements as "new" are relatively hybrid and very strongly action-oriented.
4. environmental movements form across the social structure of society, and their value context is enlightened. In particular, they embrace the middle classes that are responsible for shaping social opinion - and European policymakers are also impressed by this.

However, there is one area where the environmental movements have not achieved anything at all at the European level and have not organized any major actions: This is the area of nuclear policy. The Euratom Treaty on the "peaceful" use of nuclear energy is the only European treaty that has never been amended. This is somewhat surprising given the very strong opposition to nuclear power plants in individual EU countries.

And since 2014, a new social movement has been active in Europe: the movement against a trade agreement with the U.S., in which the EU's environmental and consumer regulations could be softened.

The Role of UN in Environmental Policy

That environmental pollution is not only a regional or sectoral problem, but that it affects the endangerment of the human species on the blue planet as a whole and therefore requires a global policy, is immediately obvious. The United Nations has addressed this requirement from the beginning. Thus, the first United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE) in Stockholm in 1972 is considered the beginning of international environmental policy. This conference was attended by 1200 representatives from 113 countries. In its Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, the destructive potency of the modern mode of production was recognized internationally for the first time:

"Man has constantly to sum up experience and go on discovering, inventing, creating and advancing. In our time, man's capability to transform his surroundings, if used wisely, can bring to all peoples the benefits of development and the opportunity to enhance the quality of life. Wrongly or heedlessly applied, the same power can do incalculable harm to human beings and the human environment. We see around us growing evidence of man-made harm in many regions of the earth: dangerous levels of pollution in water, air, earth and living beings; major and undesirable disturbances to the ecological balance of the biosphere; destruction and depletion of irreplaceable resources; and gross deficiencies, harmful to the physical, mental and social health of man, in the man-made environment, particularly in the living and working environment." (4)

In addition to the basic formulation of 26 principles, the declaration of the Stockholm Conference includes an action plan with a total of 109 recommendations. Among other things, the action plan launches a Global Environment Monitoring System (GEMS), better known as Earthwatch. Significant international environmental agreements were also subsequently concluded.

In addition, after the Stockholm Conference, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was created. UNEP is intended to act as an advocate and facilitator for the careful management of the environment and for sustainable development. The organization is headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya.

In 1983, the United Nations established the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) as an independent commission of experts with a secretariat in Geneva. Its mandate was to prepare a perspective report on long-term sustainable, environmentally sound development on a global scale up to the year 2000 and beyond. The expert commission was composed of 19 experts from 18 countries.

Gro Harlem Brundtland, former Minister of the Environment and then Prime Minister of Norway (Director General of the World Health Organization from 1998), was elected Chairperson.

Four years later (1987), the Commission published its report on the future, also known as the Brundtland Report (Our Common Future). This had a major influence on the international debate on development and environmental policy and introduced the concept of sustainability into the debate. It was discussed at two international conferences (in

London in 1987 and Milan in 1988) and was the basis for the 1992 environmental conference in Rio de Janeiro.

The Commission was officially disbanded on Dec. 31, 1987, and continued as the Centre for Our Common Future in Geneva in April 1988 and reactivated in the context of the 1992 Rio Conference.

The 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro (also known as the World Summit) was another milestone in the international environmental debate 20 years after the Stockholm Conference. Like the Stockholm Conference, the Rio Conference was prepared over several years with its own secretariat and through reports from over 120 countries and UN expert groups. A specific feature of the Rio Conference is the extensive participation of non-governmental organizations. A total of 2400 representatives of NGOs attended the conference and 17,000 people participated in the NGO Forum that was held at the same time. The results of the conference were laid down in Agenda 21 and in individual conventions.

Rio 1992 was followed by other world conferences until 2012, but as early as 1997, the UN noted in a session of the General Assembly that while Agenda 21 had brought many individual advances, very few concrete commitments had been made by member states.

In this respect, the Kyoto Protocol to the Rio United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change should be seen as a major step toward a globally binding environmental policy. This is the first time that binding limits have been set for greenhouse gas emissions in industrialized countries. The Protocol entered into force in 2005 and by 2011 had been ratified by 191 countries and the EU (the U.S. is not included). Under the protocol, developed countries committed to reducing their greenhouse gas emissions by 5.2 percent by 2012 (based on 1990 levels).

A new period was then to begin in 2013. However, all efforts and further major conferences have so far remained inconclusive. Finally, the countries agreed to extend the original Kyoto Protocol until 2020 at the most. The main disputes were over the scope and distribution of future greenhouse gas reductions and the amount of financial transfers. A new agreement seemed a long way off. But then everything changed. Despite all the prophecies of doom, the COP21 world climate conference in Paris in December 2015 was able to finally reach an agreement to at least halt humanity's ultimate self-destruction on our planet. It was like a small miracle:

The Paris Agreement is the first binding climate agreement under international law that contains obligations for all 195 states. In it, the global community commits on the one hand to a package for serious climate protection and the end of coal, oil and gas by mid-century and for the end of all greenhouse gases by 2060-80; on the other hand, it has agreed on a solidarity package for those who are particularly affected by the consequences of the climate change that is already taking place. In both areas, much remains to be done on the targets and implementation, but at the same time it can be stated:

One month after the terrorist attacks made Paris a symbol of hate and destruction, the city is now a symbol of cooperation and transformation. In a time of global crises, the UN system has shown in a stellar moment what it is capable of achieving: In a multilateral framework, it

can succeed in organizing better global cooperation. And global cooperation is the only way to prevent massive new crises caused by climate change in the coming decades.

The agreement adopted at the COP 21 climate summit on Dec. 12, 2015, is in many respects much more ambitious than most observers had expected. The willingness of numerous important states to reach an agreement - but especially the governments of the USA and China - has cleared the way for this. The unexpected ambition can only be explained by pressure from small and vulnerable states, which have a voice in the UN process but not in any other forum. An alliance of ambition initiated by the Marshall Islands played an important role in its success. Major industrialized countries - the EU, Norway, Switzerland, the U.S., then Australia and Canada - as well as emerging economies (Mexico, Brazil) joined in. Germany played a constructive role in bringing about the alliance. ...

The outcome of Paris, however, is not solely the achievement of the governments involved. In recent years, an increasingly well-positioned international climate movement has emerged. In Paris, it became more apparent than at previous summits how different roles within civil society can interlock:

In Paris, it became more apparent than at previous summits how different roles within civil society can intertwine: The experts from the think tanks who develop new ideas for the architecture of international climate policy; the representatives of the NGOs who, as "lobbyists" for the public good of climate, follow the negotiations in the conference center and struggle for the best formulations in discussions with delegates; and the activists who take the protest against the injustice of climate change to the streets. The climate movement has succeeded in putting the demands of people from around the world forcefully on the agenda: A clean energy future with a phase-out of coal, oil and gas and 100 percent renewables by 2050; a limit on global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius; and equitable support for the poorest and most vulnerable who are feeling the effects of climate change most acutely.

Since the agreement of Paris all participating countries tried to implement the 1,5 % warming limit into their policies – but nearly nobody reached this goal. The CO₂-pollution is still growing and 2022 the provision for the warming up of the planet is about 2 – 3 %. Scientists speak about the “self burning” of humanity. At the latest COP 27 in Sharm-al-Sheikh in November 2022 no agreement concerning the reduction of CO₂-producing energy-sources could be reached. Humanity is waiting for the next COPs. What is underway (with great difficulties) is a general agreement on a funds for the most vulnerable country on “losses and damages”.

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