The Wendland Movement: Anti-nuclear energy resistance in Gorleben

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Abstract

On the 22nd of February 1977 Gorleben, a small town in the Wendland area in north-west Germany, was announced as the site of extensive nuclear waste infrastructure. This sparked a wave of anti-nuclear energy protest spanning over four decades – The Wendland Movement. Based on oral history interviews with activists and extensive archival research at an activist-run archive, I conduct a narrative historical study of this movement that is grounded in the stories of activists. In this thesis, I make significant theoretical contributions to establishing the intersections of nuclearity and rurality in the context of emerging contentious politics.

I take a relational approach to the study of rural contentious politics and the contestation of nuclearity to explore the identities, infrastructures, spatial imaginaries, and trajectories that co-constitute political activity. By focusing on the diverse group of activists within this resistance, I also argue for the need to recognize the importance of established identities and networks in the process of political subjectification and that the process of politicization can be uneven. I also argue for the need to see the specific rural dimension of the processes of producing nuclearity. I demonstrate how the heterogenous infrastructures of nuclear production become key sites of resistance and how resistance works to visualize the processes of nuclearisation. Finally, in focusing explicitly on rurality, I work to place the rural with a study of the spaces of contentious politics.

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Authors declarations

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Statement of Originality to Accompany Thesis Submission

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Translations

German	English	Abbreviation
Altagsgeschichte	The history of the everyday	-
Atomregion	Nuclear region	-
Bäuerliche Notgemeinschaft	Farmers' cooperative aid association	BNG
Bezugsgruppen	A small peer, reference, or affinity group of activists	-
Bürgerinitiative	Citizens' initiative	BI
Castor Gruppen	Castor Groups	-
Demonstrationsverbot	Protest ban	-
Deutsche Gesellschaft zur Wiederaufbereitung von Kernbrennstoffen	German Association for Nuclear Fuel Reprocessing	DWK
Hüttendorf	Hut village	-
Landvolkkreisverband	Agricultural district association	-
Niedersächsischen Landesentwicklungsgesellschaft	Development agency in Lower-Saxony	NILEG
Nukleareserntsorgungszentrum	Nuclear waste storage facility	NEZ
Oberkreisdirektor	Admirative head	-
Ökologische Modellregion	Model region for ecological living	-
Passierscheine	Travel passes or permits	-
Planspiele	Plan games	-
Republik Freies Wendland	Free Republic of Wendland	FRW
Sozial Demokratische Partei	Social Democrats	SPD
Sprecherrat	General assembly	-
Streckenkonzept	Route concept	-
Verladekran	Loading crane	-

Wiederaufarbeitungsanlage	Nuclear waste reprocessing site	WAA
Wirtschaftswunder	Economic wonder	-

Chapter 1 Introducing the Wendland Movement

Figure 1 – "Be courageous! David defeated Goliath": A poster from the Wendland Movement (Gorleben Archiv, 1982)

Just like David and Goliath. On the one side, the multi-billion dollar nuclear energy industry. On the other, the resistance in Wendland. With their courage and creativity, their endurance and cunning, the resistance takes on the nuclear giants – with success. This thesis is about David, the Wendland Movement, an anti-nuclear energy movement that persisted for over four decades and played an instrumental part in shaping nuclear energy policy in Germany today.

Although this movement began in the late 1970s, the Wendland Movement has to be understood against the backdrop of broader nuclear energy developments. Nuclear energy, as a viable means of energy production, gained traction in the early 1950s. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s it was increasingly seen (and marketed) as a clean, sustainable energy alternative. Both in Germany and beyond, the number of nuclear reactors increased rapidly over the next 30 years. After the first commercial nuclear power plant went online in 1969 in West Germany a total of 36 nuclear reactors went into commercial operation in Germany. In 2022, around 440 nuclear power reactors are generating around 10% of the world's electricity (IEA, 2023; World Nuclear Association, 2022).

While nuclear energy developments are on the rise in some parts of the world[1], generally attitudes towards nuclear energy have shifted significantly since the 1980s, especially in Germany. A rising environmental movement, concerned with radioactive interventions in nature, and a burgeoning peace movement, resisting nuclear weapons, coincided with the nuclear reactor explosion at the Chernobyl power plant in 1986. In this conjuncture, nuclear energy was increasingly falling out of favour with the German public and no new reactors were built after the 1980s. The last three reactors in Germany were taken off the grid on April 15th, 2023. Electricity generation from nuclear energy reduced significantly during this time, from around 30% throughout the 1990s to only 12% in 2021 (Carbon Brief, 2016; Federal Statistical Office, 2022). It was not, however, until the nuclear accident at the Fukushima Daiichi power plant in 2011, that the German government agreed to close down all nuclear reactors by 2023 (BASE, 2022). The role that nuclear energy will play in Germany's future energy mix is, however, unclear. Russia's invasion of the Ukraine led to soaring energy prices and raised serious questions over the supply of Russian oil and gas to Germany. As a result, nuclear energy, as an alternative energy source, is being reconsidered by some (Herold et al., 2022). It is within this current geopolitical context that I look back at one of the most significant anti-nuclear energy movements in Germany.

A driving factor in the rising anti-nuclear energy sentiment were concerns over nuclear waste management. Radioactive waste needs to be carefully stored once removed from nuclear reactors. Low-level radioactive waste is stored in overground storage facilities, in near-surface disposal sites, for the entirety of their lifetime. High-level radioactive waste is also stored in overground sites to allow for a further decay of heat and radioactivity. Only after 30-50 years can this waste be safely handled further and stored in deep geological disposal sites. This means that even now that all nuclear reactors are closed down in Germany, nuclear waste management will be necessary for the next million years, as stipulated by law. While overground storage facilities are relatively common in nuclear producing countries such as France, the UK and the USA, geological deposits are either still under construction or selection processes for repository

[1] Nuclear generation increased significantly in Asia but is also on the rise in East Europe and Russia. Of the ten reactor constructions starts in 2021 (with a total designed net capacity of 8865 Mwe), six were in China (World Nuclear Association (2022).

sites are still underway (World Nuclear Association, 2021). In West Germany, a comprehensive nuclear waste strategy was developed in the 1970s which cumulated in plans for a *Nuklearesentsorgungszentrum* (nuclear waste storage facility; NEZ). Initial plans for the NEZ included an overground storage facility, a geological repository, as well as a reprocessing plant, where spent nuclear fuel can be 'recycled' and reused. The 20 km^2 large facility was meant to centralise all nuclear waste management in West Germany. Gorleben, a small town in the Wendland region, was designated the site for this NEZ in 1977.

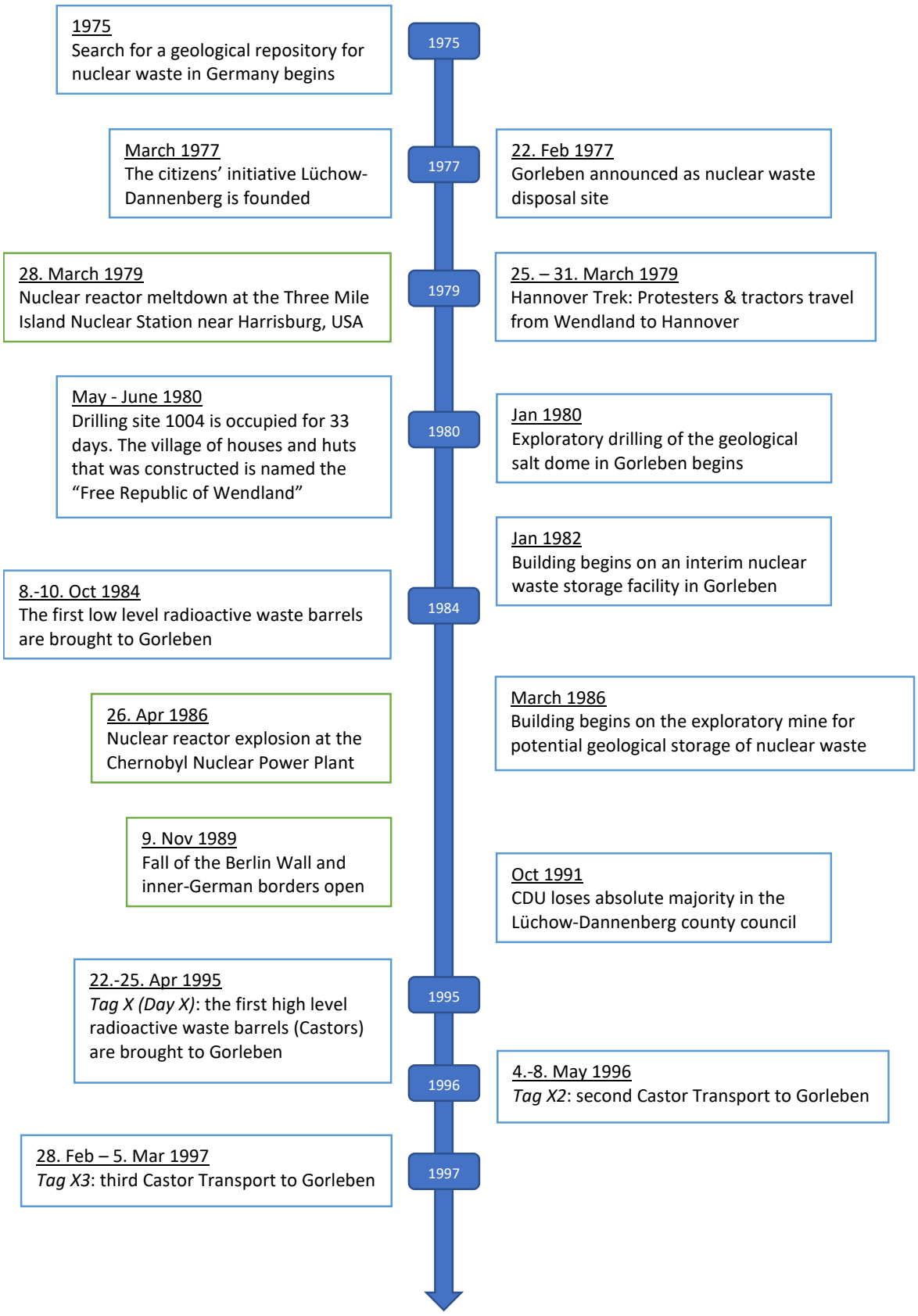
The plans for the NEZ sparked over four decades of protest in Wendland. I refer to this anti-nuclear energy movement as the Wendland Movement. It broadly encompasses the activism, protest, and political activity associated with nuclear energy that emanated from this region since the mid-1970s. It is the resistance against these nuclear energy developments in the region that are the subject of this thesis. What this resistance looked like, how it developed and evolved, its politics and motivations are central to this thesis. In unpacking the Wendland Movement, I bring together three core concepts that are key to understanding the resistance in this region: nuclearity, rurality, and infrastructure. In doing so, I argue for considering the specificities of the rural in resistance, while situating the movement within complex rural-urban dynamics. I explore how the nuclear is produced through spatial imaginaries of the rural and (everyday) infrastructures of the nuclear. At the same time, I argue that studying resistance is crucial in unpacking this process of nuclearization and articulating collectivity through practices and infrastructures of alterity.

In the first section of this introduction, I introduce the Wendland Movement and provide an overview of the movement. I then frame the conceptual approach of this thesis by focusing on the geographies of resistance and the role that nuclearity and rurality play in this resistance. In doing so, I outline how engaging with resistance unpacks processes of nuclearization and the many ways in which the rural is made nuclear. Finally, I also introduce oral histories and archival research as the methods chosen to piece together the story of the Wendland Movement, before providing some detail on the three phases of the movement that I focus on in this thesis. These three phases also map onto my three research questions that guide this thesis.

1.1 Setting the scene

On the 22nd of February 1977 the head of the Federal German state Lower-Saxony, Ernst Albrecht, announced that Gorleben, a small town on the edge of Lower-Saxony, would become the designated site for nuclear waste disposal in West Germany (Figure 2 and see Figure 4 for a map of the region). Gorleben had not initially been considered for the NEZ but was added to the list after local and regional politicians volunteered the region. Its low population density, the closeness to the inner-German border, the relative lack of infrastructure and employment opportunities, coupled with an overwhelmingly conservative population made the Lüchow-Dannenberg district politically convenient for this nuclear development. Although politicians and developers vehemently denied this at the time, archival material discovered and compiled by Greenpeace in 2013 show that there never was a scientific assessment, that confirmed Gorleben as the site most suited for nuclear end storage (Edler, 2013). These dubious circumstances under which this decision was made, and the uncertainties associated with nuclear waste disposal, fuelled over four decades of anti-nuclear energy protest in the region. The timeline (Figure 3) below provides an overview of some of the key events associated with the movement.

Figure 2 – Ernst Albrecht, the leader of the Federal German state Lower-Saxony, points to Gorleben in Lüchow-Dannenberg in 1977 (Gorleben Archiv, 2023a)


1975
Search for a geological repository for nuclear waste in Germany begins
1975
March 1977
The citizens' initiative Lüchow-Dannenberg is founded
1977
22. Feb 1977
Gorleben announced as nuclear waste disposal site
28. March 1979
Nuclear reactor meltdown at the Three Mile Island Nuclear Station near Harrisburg, USA
1979
25. – 31. March 1979
Hannover Trek: Protesters & tractors travel from Wendland to Hannover
May - June 1980
Drilling site 1004 is occupied for 33 days. The village of houses and huts that was constructed is named the "Free Republic of Wendland"
1980
Jan 1980
Exploratory drilling of the geological salt dome in Gorleben begins
Jan 1982
Building begins on an interim nuclear waste storage facility in Gorleben
8.-10. Oct 1984
The first low level radioactive waste barrels are brought to Gorleben
1984
26. Apr 1986
Nuclear reactor explosion at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant
March 1986
Building begins on the exploratory mine for potential geological storage of nuclear waste
9. Nov 1989
Fall of the Berlin Wall and inner-German borders open
Oct 1991
CDU loses absolute majority in the Lüchow-Dannenberg county council
22.-25. Apr 1995
Tag X (Day X): the first high level radioactive waste barrels (Castors) are brought to Gorleben
1995
1996
4.-8. May 1996
Tag X2: second Castor Transport to Gorleben
28. Feb – 5. Mar 1997
Tag X3: third Castor Transport to Gorleben
1997

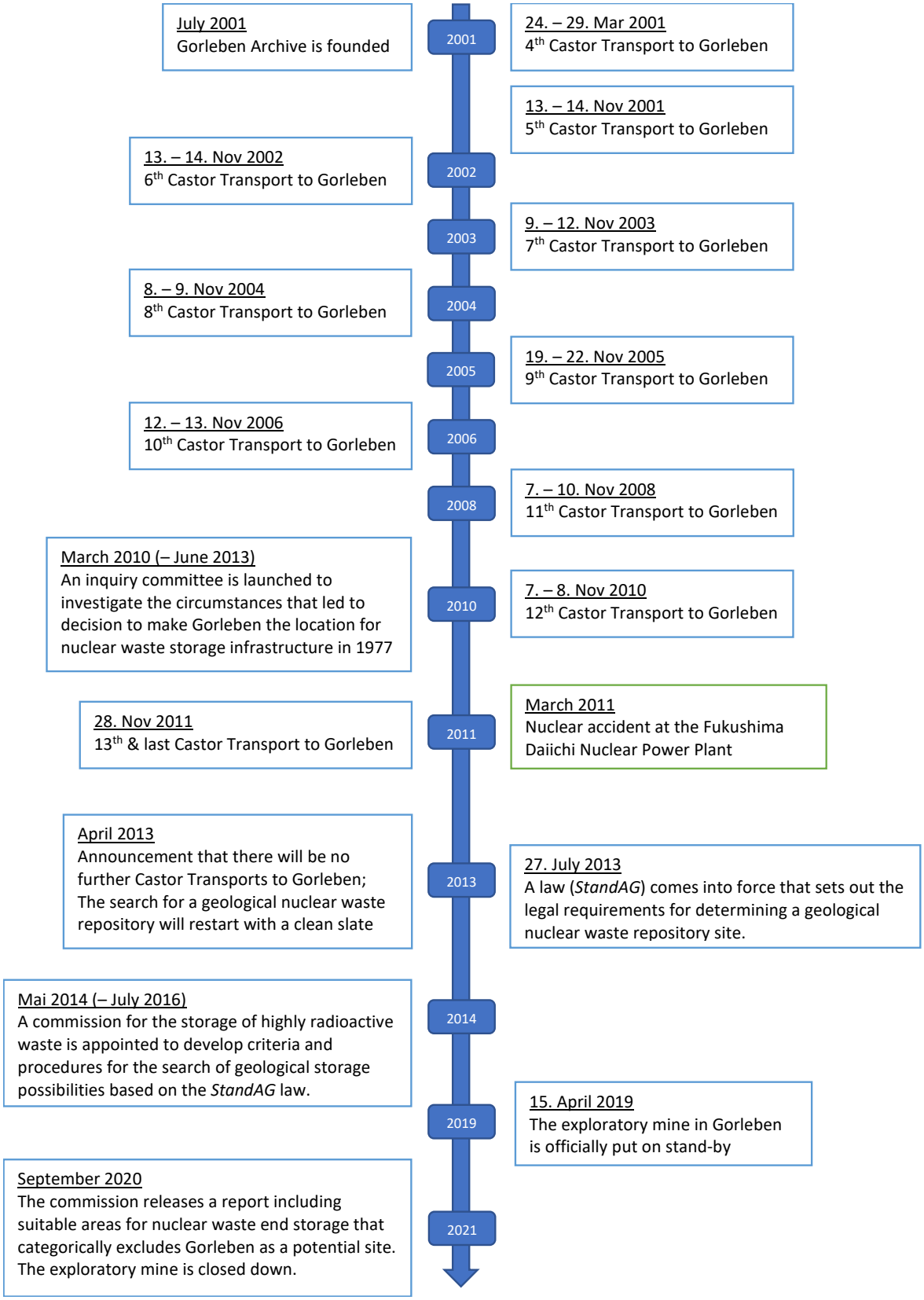


Figure 3 – Timeline of key events in the Wendland Movement (in blue) and relevant external events (in green) (own compilation)

Shortly after the announcement in 1977, the Lüchow-Dannenberg *Bürgerinitiative* (citizens' initiative; BI) was founded. This organisation would become one of the leading actors in the anti-nuclear energy movement in Wendland, organising protests, doing extensive media and outreach work, and representing the interests of the region against nuclear energy developments. Alongside the BI, farmers from the region formed a loose coalition, the *Bäuerliche Notgemeinschaft* (farmers' cooperative aid association; BNG), that in comparison to the BI, was less concerned with administrative work and formalities and instead focused on direct-action protests. Many other, smaller groups such as the Gorleben Women, an all-female discussion and direct-action group, the Initiative 60, a group of activists over 60, or the legal support group, grew and worked alongside one another throughout the years. In 1979, the BNG organised the first large protest against nuclear energy developments in Wendland: a seven-day trek from Gorleben to Hannover known as the Hannover Trek. With around 5,000 protestors on tractors, bikes, and in cars travelling to Hannover and cumulating in 100,000 activists at the protest in Hannover itself, it became the largest protest in West Germany at the time (Gorleben Archiv, 2019).

These early mobilisations against nuclear energy developments in Wendland were creative and loud and the anti-nuclear energy movement thus became increasingly visible across (West) Germany. As a result, activists from across the country and from within other social movements became interested and involved with the Wendland Movement too. This cumulated in the second large and visible protests in Wendland: a month-long occupation of a drilling site in the spring of 1980 organised predominantly by activist groups from outwith Wendland. Occupiers constructed a small village on the site known as the *Republik Freies Wendland* (Free Republic of Wendland; FRW). It was a highly visible event that mobilised activists from outwith Wendland in a significant way, coupled with unprecedented media attention.

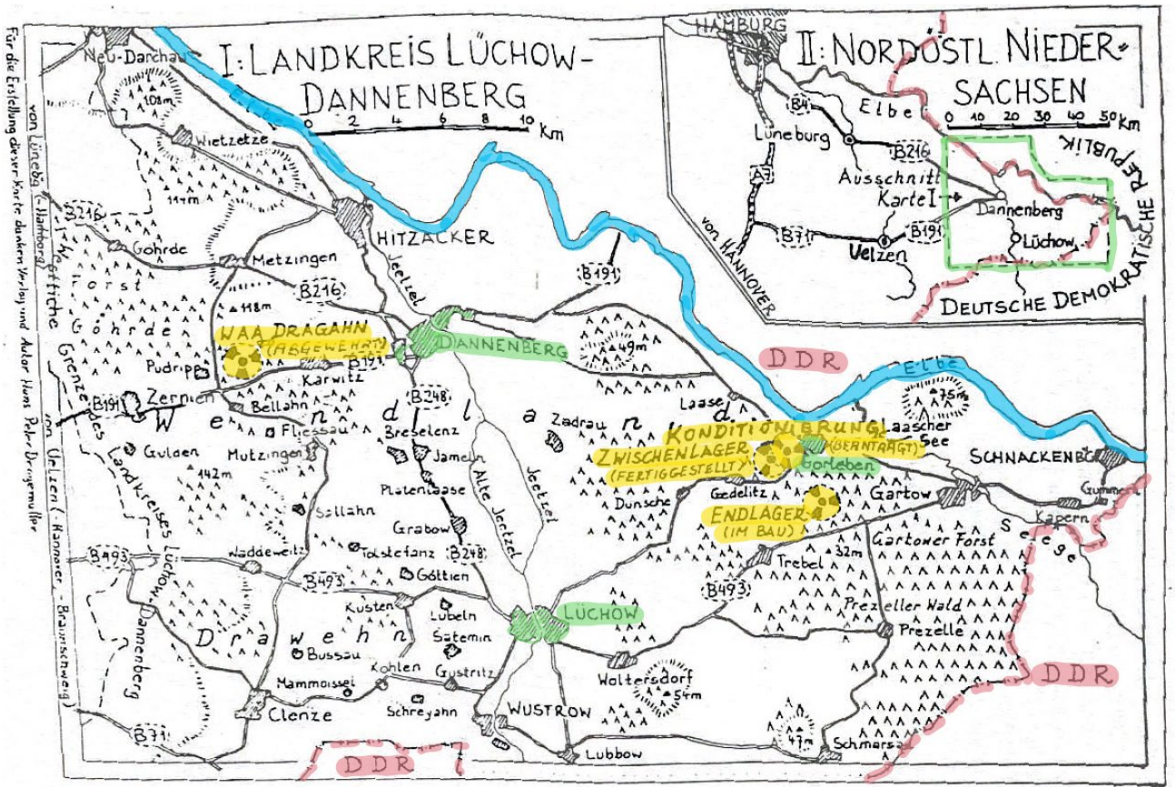
Despite protests, the 1980s were characterised by rapid infrastructural developments with both the interim nuclear waste storage site being built and significant construction beginning at the geological repository facility. These developments coincided with two key events: the nuclear reactor explosion at

the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant in 1986 and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Despite widespread anti-nuclear energy sentiment following the Chernobyl incident, what followed in Wendland was a continued and extended period of nuclearization. During the 1990s and up until 2011, a total of 13 highly radioactive nuclear waste transports, known as Castor Transports, took place. The Castor Transports usually took around 3-5 days to travel through the region and were accompanied by large-scale protests. A total of 113 waste barrels were brought to Gorleben and are currently being stored in the interim storage facility. It was not until 2011, that significant changes could be felt in Wendland.

Following the explosion at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant in 2011 Germany's nuclear energy policy shifted. Not only was nuclear energy no longer considered a future technology in Germany's energy mix, but significant strides were made in nuclear waste policy as well. In 2013 it was announced that no new nuclear waste transports would be travelling to Gorleben and that the geological waste repository was no longer considered the default option of waste storage. Instead, legal requirements were established to ensure a fair process in selecting a new site.[2] In the following years, a commission developed these criteria and procedures, and an interim report was published in 2020 that detailed possible sites for geological end-storage in Germany.[3] To much relief and some surprise: Gorleben was not included in the list of potential new sites and the exploratory mine was officially shut down.

[2] See here for more details on the development of these legal requirements and the status of the repository search: https://www.endlagersuche-infoplattform.de/webs/Endlagersuche/EN/home/home_node.html;jsessionid=BB1179BF8CE4C7F611F4E72313052191.1_cid339

[3] See here for an overview of the report's findings and the map of potential sites for the repository: https://www.bge.de/de/endlagersuche/zwischenbericht-teilgebiete/. An English-language version of the final report can be found here: https://www.bge.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Standortsuche/Wesentliche_Unterlagen/Zwischenbericht_Teilgebiete/Zwischenbericht_Teilgebiete_-_Englische_Fassung_barrierefrei.pdf



Note: The map in the top right corner shows the Lüchow-Dannenberg district in the county Lower-Saxony. The district is surrounded by the German Democratic Republic (East Germany; border in red). The two larger towns Dannenberg and Lüchow are highlighted in green, as well as the village Gorleben in the east. Highlighted in yellow are the nuclear industries, including a planned nuclear waste reprocessing plant in the west, and the interim and underground storage facilities around Gorleben. Colouring was added to the original map.

Figure 4 – Map of the Wendland region (Ehmke, 1987: 232)

1.2 Narrating the Wendland Movement

The Wendland Movement is long and multi-faceted. Every large protest event is a cumulation of those smaller actions leading up to it, every activist could tell their own story of those moments, every place has been the site of many different activities. I chose to focus on three specific periods towards the beginning of the movement to make sense of this vast and complex history. I begin by exploring the early years of the movement in the late 1970s. I focus on this period, because it was a formative time for the movement that developed very quickly in response to top-down decision-making processes. The first years provide insights into the pro-nuclear arguments that led up to Wendland being designated a nuclear site and how rural imaginaries were used to frame these pro-nuclear arguments. At the same time, during this period activists resisted pro-nuclear imaginaries of Wendland by formulating their own visions. In examining this early resistance, I argue that rural spatial imaginaries are intertwined with the political activation of activists from within Wendland.

I then turn towards the occupation of the drilling site in 1980: the Free Republic of Wendland. This was a unique protest event that drew a huge variety of activists from across Germany to Wendland. By taking a closer look at who became involved in the FRW, how it was planned, and lived, I draw out the trajectories of activists from outwith Wendland and connect these to existing activist networks identified during the early years. The village also becomes one of the key spaces in which activists materialised their alternative imaginaries for Wendland and infrastructures of alterity become increasingly important in the movement.

Finally, I explore the first three nuclear waste transports, known as Castor Transports, in the mid-1990s. These early Castor Transports were particularly formative for the region, that over time became increasingly well organised in their protest against the many Castor Transports. By focusing on the first three consecutive Castor Transports (1995-1997), I draw out how Wendland was being produced as a nuclear region. The transports of highly-radioactive nuclear waste to Wendland were the starkest example of the encroaching nuclearisation of Wendland. I argue that the transport of nuclear waste both produces new spaces of nuclear infrastructure, while also co-opting everyday spaces, such as train stations and villages, to make this production of the nuclear possible. I thus highlight how a multiplicity of spaces and infrastructures become coded by nuclearity. At the same time, these spaces also become spaces of resistance. These protests against the Castor Transports also offer the opportunity to think about the specificities of rural protest. I argue that direct-action against the Castor Transports is directly influenced and conditioned by the rural characteristics of the landscape.

Concepts from Rural, Nuclear, and Political Geographies clearly map across all three of these phases. Within each chapter that focuses on one of these phases, I draw on Massey's (1991; 2005) work to frame these periods and events as particular constellations of relations.

1.2.1 A relational approach

In taking a relation approach I understand relations as a mixture of more local and wider connections that produce a sense of "throwntogetherness" in place (Massey, 2005). It is precisely this throwing together, if you will, of different people, identities, politics, infrastructures, and so on that I am interested in when zooming in on these three periods of the Wendland Movement. It is an opportunity to contextualise and situate protests, and to unpack the multiple trajectories that come together and shape how Wendland is made nuclear, how the rural is understood and instrumentalised, and disparate activists and activists group come together in meaningful ways. In doing so, I take inspiration from a range of studies of political movements that have engaged with the long histories of a movement (Kelliher, 2018; Vasudevan, 2015). These in-depth studies of movements across space and time provide rich insights into the nuances of the work that goes into maintaining political engagement over a long period of time. I provide in this thesis a similarly deep, historical, and spatially nuanced study of the Wendland Movement.

In taking a relational approach I also draw out the trajectories of individual activists. This opens up opportunities to explore the multiple activist groups, identities, and politics that come together in Wendland. The movement is characterised by a unique spectrum of political identities and ideologies, ranging from conservative farmers to left-wing anarchist groups. I am interested in how a functioning and effective sense of collectivity was forged between these different groups and how they came together in Wendland under the banner of anti-nuclear energy activism. In doing so, I draw on work from and on Rancière (see also Dikeç, 2016; 1992, 2004) that engages with the formation of political identities or the process of "political subjectification" (Karaliotas, 2017; Velicu and Kaika, 2017). I argue that this process of politicisation is often uneven and ongoing, but nonetheless is key to understanding how collectivity was made possible in Wendland.

In this context, I also argue that the infrastructures of and in alternative spaces were important for this diverse group of activists to be able to formulate and enact this collectivity. Being able to not just articulate, but physically build their spaces in contrast to nuclear infrastructures was important for framing a

collective resistance. This was particularly important as the activist group became increasingly heterogeneous during the 1980s. (Collective) alternative imaginaries for the region were materialised through occupations during which activists constructed these alternative infrastructures. Hence, the Free Republic of Wendland, where many activists from outwith Wendland became involved in the movement, is a good starting point for looking at these links between collectivity and infrastructure. Here, I build on existing work that foregrounds the role of infrastructure in political movements (Karaliotas and Kapsali, 2021; Vasudevan, 2015) and argue that these infrastructures are spaces where diverse linkages between existing Wendland inhabitants and broader activist networks were merging.

1.2.2 Rural resistance and spatial imaginaries

As the region begins to emerge as a site of contentious politics, I argue that the production of nuclearity is deeply intertwined with notions of rurality. To unpack this, I draw on the concept of spatial imaginaries (Said, 2003). Spatial or geographical imaginations are a way of understanding how places are understood and how future visions for these places are formulated (Driver, 2005; Gregory, 1995, 2010; Harvey, 2010; Watkins, 2015). I argue that the struggle over what the rural is and should be, in other words the "politics of the rural" (Woods, 2003), is best understood through spatial imaginaries. Through the lens of spatial imaginaries, I demonstrate how rurality becomes a key front of contestation within the resistance against nuclear energy infrastructure. At the same time, the spatial imaginaries through which the region was imagined as nuclear were deeply rooted in understandings, perceptions, and visions of the rural. This opens up possibilities for exploring the intersections of rurality and nuclearity.

In this thesis I therefore position the resistance to nuclear power by the Wendland Movement as a *rural* protest movement. I build on existing literature on rural protests that often focus on agricultural issues or are related to infrastructural developments in rural areas (Della Bosca and Gillespie, 2018; Ransan-Cooper et al., 2018; Velicu, 2012), but rarely engage with rurality specifically. I argue that these movements need to be afforded the same spatial engagement and attention as progressive political movements in urban environments. I argue that the same attention that geographers pay to the role

of the city and the urban landscape in shaping political movements can be applied to rural social movements. A central aim of this thesis is to bring the politics of rurality into the study of the spaces of contentious politics, a field that is dominated by urbanity. On the one hand, I acknowledge the specifics of the rural landscape in social movements. That means studying the small-scale spaces of contentious politics, the streets, train stations, woods, and fields, that activists use to their advantage and applying some of the ways in which literature has been able to unpack the nuances of urban protests to rural spaces.

On the other hand, I argue that this movement is also always negotiating the interplay between the urban and the rural, the centre and the periphery, in its resistance. I argue for examining the multiple spatial interactions at play during resistance that can both acknowledge spatial specificity and make links beyond these. A relational approach to rurality frames the rural as a space that draws in multiple influences and exists in relation to the urban as well. Here, I build upon existing work on resistance against infrastructural developments, such as the writing on the ZAD and NoTAV resistance in France (Collectif Mauvaise troupe, 2018; Florez et al., 2022) and energy infrastructures (Franquesa, 2018), that highlight the interconnected nature of protest. I bring a more explicit engagement with rurality to studying protest and engage with the multiple spaces of resistance.

Thinking relationally about rurality also allows aspects of rural and nuclear geographies to come into dialogue with one another. By focusing on spatial imaginaries, I not only explore how the rural is understood and framed, but how imaginaries of rurality are deeply linked to the nuclearisation of spaces. I tease out how energy infrastructures work to reinforce urban metabolisms, which in turn produces an energy producing periphery (see Franquesa, 2018). Indeed, often work around nuclear geographies unpacks processes of peripheralisation whereby certain spaces are identified as peripheral and expendable (Blowers, 2017). The presence of energy, nuclearity, and/or waste infrastructures, however, continue to produce these spaces as peripheral as well. I argue that this process of peripheralisation, through the nuclearisation of a region, is deeply interwoven with imaginaries of the rural.

1.2.3 The production of nuclearity

Nuclear spaces are always peripheral in some way; most are also rural. In this thesis, I engage with the spaces of nuclear waste management, which often remain underexplored in Geography (Blowers, 2017). Previous research on the anti-nuclear energy movement around Gorleben often focused on comparative studies (Blowers, 2017; Tompkins, 2016) that lack detailed engagements with the multiple spaces and long history of the movement. I provide such a detailed study of the Wendland Movement by telling this story from the ground-up. That is to tell the story of how Wendland is produced as a nuclear region and rurality is understood through the heterogeneous resistance against top-down processes. Specifically, in this thesis I offer a different vantage point by looking at the sustained *opposition* to nuclear energy and waste management (see for example Miller, 2000).

To do so, I draw on work in nuclear geographies that investigate the *production* of nuclearity (Hecht, 2012; Kuchinskaya, 2013; Pitkanen and Farish, 2017). I acknowledge the multiple ways in which spaces are actively produced and re-produced as nuclear spaces. In this thesis I do this in two ways. On the one hand, I bring a new dimension into the exploration of the production of a nuclear region by investigating spatial imaginaries. By looking at pro-nuclear spatial imaginaries I explore who, what, and where is made or imagined as nuclear. These stand in contrast to the spatial imaginaries of activists who articulate alternative imaginaries of these regions as a quintessential part of their resistance.

On the other hand, I explore how spaces are produced as nuclear through the infrastructures of nuclearity. I argue that the nuclear is as much about radiation and the presence of nuclear materials as it is about associated infrastructures. This includes the physical transport of radioactive materials that make spaces nuclear, but also the infrastructures that make the enduring presence of nuclearity possible. I argue that it is not only those designated nuclear infrastructures that encompass nuclear geographies, but that everyday spaces also become sites of the production of the nuclear. It is an ongoing process that codes the landscape as nuclear. This, however, only becomes visible through the resistance against these processes within these spaces. I argue that both the

spatial imaginaries and the infrastructures intertwined in the production of nuclearity become central fronts of contestation in the resistance against nuclear energy. This contestation is key to unpacking the processes of producing nuclearity.

I therefore argue that the resistance against the production of nuclearity and pro-nuclear interpretations of rurality is what makes these issues visible. I demonstrate how in articulating an anti-nuclear stance, activists uncovered the political motivations and backwards visions of rurality behind the desire to (re)produce Wendland as nuclear and how direct-action protests both work to point-out the processes and prejudices in this production while simultaneously resisting these. It is not just the infrastructures that make energy or nuclearity visible, but the resistance against these processes does the vital work in visualising, situating, and problematising these processes in a meaningful way.

1.2.4 Oral histories and archival research

Finally, I referred to 'narrating' this movement and telling this story from the 'ground-up'. This "history from below" approach is part of the overarching relational approach I take in this thesis (Featherstone and Griffin, 2016). During the course of two fieldwork visits to Wendland in January/February 2021 and August/September 2021 I spoke to around 20 activists that were involved with the anti-nuclear energy movement. I took an oral history approach (Gibbs, 2016; Riley and Harvey, 2007b) and focused on how the history of the movement and region is remembered, understood, and re-told by those who lived, experienced, and shaped this movement. Through such an approach, I explore the longer trajectories of activists involved in the movement and provide depth to a heterogeneous movement. During my fieldwork visits I was based at the activist-run archive the Gorleben Archive in Lüchow and conducted extensive archival research around the three chosen phases of the movement. The archive was founded in the early 2000s by activists as a way of documenting their resistances both to preserve and communicate their history. I argue that the archive is both a political and a social space which shapes how archival research unfolds. In a complimentary approach, I argue for the combination of archival work and oral histories to tell a nuanced history of resistance that engages with the movement both as it was documented at the time and how it is remembered now.

1.3 Thesis aims

The overarching themes of rurality, nuclearity, and infrastructures map across three research questions and the empirical chapters. Overall, the aim of this thesis is to explore how the contestation of spaces of nuclearity intersects with a relational approach to rural politics. I address this in three core research questions:

1. What role do spatial imaginaries play in the production and resistance of nuclearity and the politics of the rural?
2. How does infrastructure facilitate the production of collectivity?
3. How do rurality and nuclearity become fronts of contestation through direct action protests?

The movement is deeply rooted in the processes of how nuclearity produced and resisted. I offer an in-depth exploration of how spaces are produced as nuclear. I introduce spatial imaginaries as a way of thinking about how spaces are imagined as nuclear and resisted. Through the Castor Transports I also demonstrate how materialising nuclearity means coding landscapes and infrastructures in nuclearity and that this is a key front of contestation. I highlight the role that infrastructures play and how imagining and materialising alterity are key functions of producing collectivity. In exploring how rurality and nuclearity are intertwined, I also critically unpack the rurality of this movement, by highlight the specificities of rurality in staging protest and articulating resistance. At the same time, I demonstrate how movements situate themselves within complex rural-urban interactions and think through spatial imaginaries and peripheralization to unpack this negotiation.

1.4 Concluding thoughts

In this first chapter I introduced the Wendland Movement and the three key phases of the movement that I focus on. The early years of the movement give important insights into how this movement began and how those living in Wendland at the time mobilised in the later 1970s. The Free Republic of Wendland then sees a new group of activists coming to Wendland, organising

large-scale protests, and the movement becomes increasingly heterogenous. By the mid-1990s the first nuclear waste barrels were being brought to Wendland in the Castor Transports and the production of the region as a nuclear one becomes increasingly pertinent. I introduced the relational approach I am taking in this thesis to think about these phases as distinct space-time bundles within which identities, politics, and materialities intersect (Massey, 2005).

The conceptual framework of this thesis maps across these three phases and chapters as well as the three research questions. I gave a sense of the ways in which nuclearity, rurality, and infrastructure intersect through resistance within this movement. Over the course of this thesis, I show how heterogenous activist groups work to produce spaces in which to articulate common goals and enact collectivity, which I refer to as infrastructures of alterity. I also demonstrate that the politics of the rural play a key role in how the Wendland Movement unfolds. I argue for the need to go beyond urban-centred studies of resistance and contentious politics and acknowledge the multiple spatialities intertwined in protest. I therefore take a relational approach to rural politics. At the same time, the movement is shaped by the contention over the nuclear. I argue that the resistance uncovers the many ways in which spaces in Wendland are produced as nuclear, extending this understanding beyond the infrastructures of nuclear waste management to many small, mundane, and everyday spaces that become coded by nuclearity.

In **Chapter 2** I move onto a literature review that covers relevant literature on the geographies of resistance, but also go into more depth on the geographies of nuclearity, rurality, and infrastructure to give a sense of how these concepts work together. I first introduce the relational approach in more detail, before discussing nuclearity as a concept in conjunction with arguments around peripheralisation. I also discuss resistance in the context of rurality.

I then outline the methods I used in more detail in **Chapter 3**. I introduce the Gorleben Archiv and the archival materials I worked with, as well as the interviews I conducted. I demonstrate why an oral history approach was particularly useful for my research, providing personal stories about the movement. I then consider the Gorleben Archive as a unique political space both in preserving knowledge and facilitating ongoing resistance and solidarity

building. I also reflect more broadly on the 'messiness' of fieldwork (Harrowell et al., 2018) and the difficulties of conducting research during an ongoing pandemic (Howlett, 2022; Rahman et al., 2021). Finally, I briefly comment on conducting and documenting research in two different languages, and the role of translation in this thesis.

Chapter 4 focuses on the early years of the movement in the late 1970s. I argue that spatial imaginaries are a powerful way of understanding how pro- and anti-nuclear actors framed their positions during this time and demonstrate how the process of nuclearisation is deeply interwoven with visions of rurality. I focus first on techno-scientific knowledges and imaginaries, before moving onto the rural dimensions of these spatial imaginaries. In doing so, I argue for the need to consider rurality in conjunction with the production of the nuclear.

The Free Republic of Wendland is the focal point of **Chapter 5**. I trace the trajectories of a heterogeneous set of actors that came together in the planning and execution of the FRW, introducing a new set of activists to the region. I argue that the infrastructures of alterity in the FRW are a key pillar in the solidifying the Wendland Movement as a national, lasting resistance. I focus both on the infrastructures of alterity and how collectivity is negotiated within and outwith the borders of the FRW. I also dedicate a section to the lasting alternative infrastructures, spaces, and identities that emerged after the occupation of the drilling site.

In **Chapter 6** I then turn towards the Castor Transports and related protests between 1995-1997. I outline how rurality plays a central role in how these protests unfolded and the multiple, simultaneous, and everyday spaces of nuclear infrastructure that code the landscape as part of the process of nuclearisation. I also delve into the policing strategies during the Castor Transport and argue that rurality plays an important role in understanding how protesting and police intervention transpired.

Finally, I conclude in **Chapter 7** by drawing together strands on rurality, nuclearity, and infrastructure to address the research questions outlined earlier. I also identify further research agendas and conclude with some reflections on the nuclear energy and policy landscape in Germany today.

Chapter 2 Nuclearity, rurality, and protest: an overview of the literature

In the Wendland Movement three key conceptual aspects intersect: nuclearity, rurality, and contentious politics. At its heart, the movement is a resistance against the establishment of nuclear energy infrastructure, but it is also strongly connected to debates around the rural and sees many different actors engage in this resistance. I begin by arguing for a relational approach to the study of the Wendland Movement. I draw on Doreen Massey's work and on those who have provided relational accounts of social movements, particularly in the context of the formation of solidarity (Featherstone, 2005, 2012; Kelliher, 2021). In doing so, I provide a radical reading of the Wendland Movement that accounts for "a conjunction of many histories and many spaces" (Massey, 1995: 191). This is reflected in the methods chosen in this thesis (oral history interviews and bottom-up archival research), but also in the relational approach. First, I focus on understanding the relationship between protest events and the everyday in resistance. I make a case for considering the multiple spatialities of resistance to bridge these gaps. I then turn towards how political identities are forged by thinking through the process of political subjectification. This involves the de-identification of existing and given identities (Karaliotas, 2017; Rancière, 1992, 2004; Velicu and Kaika, 2017). I then extrapolate these understandings to think about how resistance and *collective* identities are produced and staged. I argue that this is a dynamic and uneven process that activists continuously and actively choose to engage with to stage meaningful resistance. Finally, I also draw on those who have brought forward important arguments on the geographies of these processes (Arenas, 2014; Karaliotas, 2017; Kelliher, 2018). The processes of political identity formation, both on the individual and collective level, occur within and through the spaces of resistance. Forging spaces of encounter (Halvorsen, 2015b, 2017), the collective occupation of space, and the infrastructures which make solidarity building possible are at the centre of producing collectivity.

I then turn towards work on nuclear and rural geographies to frame the specificities of Wendland and the anti-nuclear energy movement. I draw out the importance of considering spaces of nuclear waste management, which have

been largely overlooked. I also emphasise the importance of engaging with resistance against the nuclear (see for example Miller, 2000). Specifically, I argue that resistance against the nuclear makes visible the fact that nuclear spaces are actively *produced* and maintained as nuclear through various processes (Alexis-Martin and Davies, 2017; Hecht, 2012). This lays the groundwork for unpacking of nuclear sites as chosen, understanding how they are made and maintained over time, and how this in turn produces nuclearized regions or nuclear landscapes, throughout this thesis. Central to this is understanding the multiple spaces within and through which the nuclear can become visible (Blowers, 2017; Franquesa, 2018). I argue for the need to go beyond the grand infrastructures of nuclearity, such as the nuclear reactor, and engage with the less obvious infrastructures and spaces, even the everyday, as spaces where nuclearisation takes place. This process of nuclearisation is also deeply interwoven with peripheralisation (Blowers, 2017). I unpack the tensions between defining peripheralisation as a pre-given characteristic of a region and uncovering peripheralisation as a politically motivated process of marginalising and 'othering'. Specifically, I draw on spatial imaginaries (Watkins, 2015) as a way to explore the production of nuclear spaces, as well as the emergence of resistance against this production. I argue that spatial imaginaries provide insights into how and why spaces are imagined as nuclear and how this leads to the infrastructural production of nuclear landscapes.

Another way of understanding or interpreting these peripheralisation processes, which is discussed less in Nuclear Geography, is through rurality. Through the spatial imaginaries lens I bring together the rural and nuclear. Imaginaries of ideal nuclear spaces are deeply interwoven with visions of the rural. A contention of the rural, in other words the "politics of the rural" (Woods, 2006), lie at the heart of the process of nuclearisation. An essential part of spatialising contentious politics in the Wendland Movements includes bringing the rural into this discussion. There are several examples of studies that engage with critical politics in rural spaces around specific movements or infrastructure developments in rural areas including extractivist projects, coal-mining landscapes, and (renewable) energy infrastructures (Della Bosca and Gillespie, 2018; Ransan-Cooper et al., 2018; Velicu, 2012; Woods, 2003). I argue that the rural can and should be understood and studied as a space of contentious politics

more thoroughly. The rural must not be reduced to conservative or parochial politics but offers insights into the processes of political subjectification and solidarity building. In doing so, I argue for a de-centring of the urban as the site for contentious politics and emphasise the importance of considering the rurality in these contexts as well.

2.1 A relational approach to contentious politics

Over 40 years of resistance in the region has seen periods of intense activism and periods that were quieter, developed political outshoots in various directions, allowed multiple different interest groups to emerge (and disappear), with countless protest actions in various forms throughout. My aim in this thesis is to give some insight into the long history of this movement. To explore the growth of, development of, and multiple directions within which the Wendland Movement has moved over time. To navigate this complexity, I take a relational approach. In doing so, I explore how Wendland came to be framed as a 'nuclear region' and a first spark of resistance emerged, while taking an in-depth look at some very specific direct-action protests such as the Free Republic of Wendland or the Castor Transports, that are exemplary of and a key part of the movement. In taking a relational approach, I focus on weaving together direct-protests and everyday interventions, the individual and collective identities and trajectories. I do so by considering how these elements come together in space within a given moment and over time.

I draw on Doreen Massey's work on place to frame this relational approach. In particular, I use her articulation of place as the product of multiple sets of relations that have come together in temporary constellations (Massey, 2005). What makes places unique and important is not a specificity derived from some long, internalised history, but the continuous (re)production of a "distinct mixture of wider and more local relations" (Massey, 1991: 24). Place not only produces intense relations that are then networked 'out', but the coming together of different trajectories and relations is implicated in the production of place. I therefore articulate the spaces of contentious politics in Wendland as moments in which different trajectories and relations come together. Within Nuclear Geographies, Bickerstaff (2012) has explored the relational geographies of siting conflicts in the context of UK radioactive waste management policy.

Bickerstaff draws on Massey's conceptualisation of places as "bundles of space-time trajectories" (Massey, 2005: 119) to trace a relational geography of waste politics. This work begins to draw in and acknowledge the multiple trajectories that come together to constitute nuclear resistance spaces. I take this one step further by focusing more broadly on the relational production of nuclear spaces, as well as highlighting the importance of a relational approach to the resistance against the nuclear.

2.1.1 Between events and the everyday

As I mentioned at the beginning this is a long and varied movement. On the one hand, I focus on specific events like the Free Republic of Wendland, while on the other hand, I look at the everyday lives of activists. I am concerned with the farmers in Wendland, but also the activists who came from outwith the region. These multiple trajectories, or relations, come together in Wendland. Within this relational approach, I weave together events and the everyday and multiple actors with different political motivations, within a single movement. This kind of thinking is implicit in many studies of social movements, particularly those that manage to provide rich, in-depth explorations of social movements (Brown and Yaffe, 2019; Featherstone, 2012; Kelliher, 2021) and builds upon calls to historicise the study of solidarities (Kelliher, 2018). I write here a history of the Wendland Movement that takes into account these aspects and the different facets of political resistance.

Several in-depth studies of social movements explore such longer histories and developments and are in turn able to identify multiple spaces of contentious politics. In *Metropolitan Preoccupations,* for example, Vasudevan (2015) begins by tracing a longer history of housing, precarity, and urbanisation in Berlin as a way of situating Berlin's squatting scene. By taking this historical approach and examining the broader histories of Berlin housing politics, Vasudevan can place his study of the squatting movement of the 1960s and 1970s "*within* a longer history of dispossession and resistance rather than as the culmination of it" (emphasis in original; ibid.: 30). Similarly, (Kelliher, 2018: 13) in his study of the cultures of solidarity during the Miners' Strike argues for the need for "historicised accounts of solidarity between places". There is merit, then, to looking more broadly at the Wendland Movement. Milder (2019) also works to

place the anti-reactor movement in Germany within broader trajectories, histories and contexts. He explores what is happening in other parts of Germany (and other political movements), but also looks beyond to France and Switzerland. Milder takes a relational approach to understand how the anti-nuclear energy movement in the Rhine valley is able to establish its grassroots character while linking its local environmentalist concerns were to far-reaching institutional politics. Tompkins' (2016) study of the anti-nuclear energy movement in France and West Germany during the 1970s also focuses on how grassroots anti-nuclear activists forge networks both within and beyond their national borders. In doing so, he situates the anti-nuclear protests within a wider nature of protests during the second half of the 20th century. This transnational movement both draws on existing traditions and was a "vehicle for much great aspirations" (ibid.: 30). In Wendland too, the movement is set within broader social, political, and cultural developments. Instead of exploring links between grassroots and institutional politics like Milder or on transnational networks like Tompkins, this thesis focuses on the relations that come together in the production of place and the trajectories of activists. I focus specifically on the individual trajectories of activists, that contain within them elements of such broader relations, as one way through which to understand how different trajectories come together in place.

In doing so, I look at both so-called 'protest events' and the everyday as spaces within which resistance unfolds. Indeed, social movements are often characterised by highly visible, generative 'events' – marches, direct action protests, the occupation of (public) places. Such events generate visceral responses that are seductive not only for participants but also for the study of social movements. Focusing solely on events, however, limits an understanding of the multiple ways in which social movements find expression and the spatialities through which they are constituted. More often than not, movements are not constituted by insular events; activism is sustained beyond singular moments, and engagement spills over into the everyday (Arampatzi, 2017). Exploring the complex and multiple arenas for social movements is a key way forward in thinking through both protest events and the everyday (Davies and Featherstone, 2013: 258). Remaining attentive to spatial nuance "opens up the political as a realm where the everyday is important" (ibid.: 258). A sustained

interrogation of the *multiple* spatialities of social movements introduces the everyday as a key dimension of contentious politics alongside protest events. The everyday also becomes a space within and through which politics become enacted. Brown and Yaffe (2019) in their work on the anti-apartheid Non-Stop Picket in London, for example, asked activists to look back on their time spent in front of the South African embassy. It was clear to many of them, that the acts of organising, mobilising, fundraising, witnessing, debating, and protesting were highly influential, especially for younger activists. These acts feed into and are influenced by spaces and temporalities of social movements beyond protest events. Thinking in terms of the trajectories of a movement allows these acts, and the multiple spaces within which these occur, to come to the fore alongside major protests. This echoes observations made in the NoTAV and zad movement, two resistance movements against infrastructural developments in Italy and France, where protest events, or as they call it "popular force" (Collectif Mauvaise troupe, 2018: 71), are too explosive to maintain a stable form. In turn, these moments of popular force or protest events eventually collapse, and everyday life falls back into place, but not without being transfigured in a significant way. Everyday life is transformed, while at the same time providing important groundwork for (personal) transformation. Focusing on this interplay between protest events and the everyday is key to understanding processes of political and personal transformation as well.

One way to understand everyday acts as part of protest and explore a transfiguration of individual and collective identity through protest is by thinking spatially about contentious politics. This can be seen in the work of a number of scholars that trace the trajectories of the Greek squares' movement. In following the political engagements around this movement they dip in and out of the movement and highlighting various spaces and moments (see for example Karaliotas, 2017; Prentoulis and Thomassen, 2013). Karaliotas (2017), for example, focuses explicitly on the squares as "an opening of spaces of political subjectification" that was nonetheless fraught with tension as multiple groups with contradictory discursive and performative repertoires co-existed on the square (see also Kaika and Karaliotas, 2016). Others build on this work and focus on how political activity dispersed and activist practices made their way into the everyday (Arampatzi, 2017). Arampatzi demonstrates how neighbourhoods and

communities become spaces of struggle that challenge and produce alternatives to austerity in Greece in light of the squares' movement. In doing so, she argues for "understanding social movements as 'process' grounded in the 'everyday' and 'quotidian'" (ibid.: 47). I follow this approach and think through the Wendland Movement as an ongoing process that unfolds in multiple spaces of contestation, including the everyday.

2.1.2 Identities and political subjectification

It is within these spaces that those living in Wendland and those coming from outwith the region, who held very different political ideologies, become collectively invested in the anti-nuclear energy movement and enacted a collective resistance. In thinking about how activists become politically active, I focus on what a collective political subjectification might look like. In a study of anti-mining struggles in Rosia Montana, Romania, Velicu and Kaika (2017) draw on the Ranciereian notion of political subjectification to explore how a relatively non-political community came to resist a mining development project in rural Romania. They define subjectification as "both de-identification with pre-existing or given political positions/identities and non-foundational re-identifications, staging/performing new socio/political identities/positions as alternative ways of living in common" (ibid.: 306). In practice, this means that activists refuse to engage with political processes through pre-defined, pre-conceived, and fixed identities and instead seek to redefine their positions and identities within their resistance.

As part of this process, individuals transgress certain moral, legal, and economic norms and step away from their 'place' in the social machinery (Collectif Mauvaise troupe, 2018: 78). In the anti-nuclear struggle in the Rhine valley, Milder (2019) traces very carefully this shift in political consciousness over time. He argues that "citizens developed environmental consciousness through activism, not a sudden silent shift in values" (ibid.: 22). I understand political subjectification therefore as a process that happens over time and through political engagement (see for example Dikeç, 2005, 2012, 2016; Karaliotas, 2017; Rancière, 1992, 2004, 2012). Activism and political engagement are the acts through which shifts in politics and identity happen. In unpacking this process of politicisation, I argue that it is important to trace these shifts *over*

time. A de- and re-identification with pre-existing identities requires ongoing work and hence a study of the Wendland Movement requires an attention to the longer histories of this movement. I also argue that new, politicised identities can still be deeply rooted in and connected to those pre-existing identities. These identities are often formative for how this process of politicisation unfolds. Moving beyond established identities takes time and is not always complete or fixed. Letting go of pre-given identities, such as 'farmer' or 'conservative', is not easy and activists also often work to re-assert these identities as part of their politicisation for various reasons. I argue for a nuanced reading of the process of politicisation as incomplete and ongoing.

In addition to exploring how individuals go through a process of politicisation and active engagement, I also think specifically about what this means for collective resistance. I focus on the notion of a situated solidarity, which involves a "shared commitment to interaction" (Rawls and David, 2005: 470) and a conscious engagement with and across difference. It emphasises the *activity* of solidarity, exploring the work social movements do in "labouring to articulate a collective subject" (Arenas, 2014: 434). Identity, politics, and collectivity are not prefigured but articulated together through processes of struggle (Arenas, 2014; Featherstone, 2005). The production of individual political identities is interwoven with the emerge of a collective. The Collectif Mauvaise troupe (2018) for example think very explicitly about the ways in which communities emerge in the Susa Valley during the NoTAV movement and in the occupation of the *boccage* in the zad near Nantes. The NoTAV is a movement against a high-speed train line in the Susa Valley in Italy at the border to France, while the zad occupation is resisting the highway construction part of large infrastructure plan to construct an airport in Nantes, France. They call this emergence of community "composition", arguing that "the act of holding diverse elements together … is more a question of tact than tactics, passion than sad necessities, and opening up the field that carving the terrain" (ibid.: 91). Daily encounters, co-existing, and sharing space require coordination across and a recognition of difference. This is key for the production of solidarity and collectivity. It is what they mean by "the making of a new political intelligence" (Collectif Mauvaise troupe, 2018), the subtitle of their book. It is a study of "the forms presences, and modes of action of the different sensibilities and politics lines of the

struggle learn to act together, and, in so doing, are themselves transformed. All this is a sketch in what we might call an art of composition" (ibid.: 7). This couples processes of politicisation (or transformation) with the process of producing collective resistance and emphasises the importance of the spaces within which these processes occur.

Understanding the work that goes into making solidarities means engaging with the multiple spaces within which struggles are made and how disparate political identities labour to make a collective. This includes accepting that there are different and uneven processes at work that not always result in an immediate or lasting collective. Collectivity is not fixed. It is in itself also relational, and a result of who comes together, where, and in what ways to produce a collective in that moment and space. Velicu and Kaika (2017) show that in resisting the local mining project, identities as activists took up as much time as identities as farmers, mothers, fathers and so on. They argue that this is what (Rancière, 1992, 2004) calls the "re-partitioning of the sensible" where individuals re-structure what they understand to be 'sensible' or normal to then imagine and repeatedly perform new habits that subvert existing ways of being. It was through their activism that the community in Rosia Montana managed to re-imagine different ways of being and living together in a difficult environment. I pick up on these imaginaries of alterity as an important element in enacting collectivity.

2.1.3 Resistance, occupation, and infrastructure

To understand how these processes of composition unfold I therefore turn towards "the sites in which solidarity is enacted" (Kelliher, 2018) and how activists root themselves in place. In particular, I explore how activists 'take' space and maintain occupations. This includes recognising the centrality of open, public spaces as spaces of contention, such as urban squares for example (Brown and Yaffe, 2019; Halvorsen, 2015a, 2015b; Karaliotas, 2017), but also considering lasting spaces of and for political change (Collectif Mauvaise troupe, 2018; Routledge, 1997) and what happens in these spaces in terms of the formation of collectivity.

How various groups negotiate their co-existence in protest space is also subject of Halverson's study of the Occupy London movement. Such occupations are ensembles of people, things, and the built environment, Halvorsen (2015a, 2015b, 2017) argues, where new social relations are produced, and power relations negotiated. Occupied spaces are precisely those "spaces of encounter", where the negotiation of the collective becomes possible. Central to Halvorsen's argument is the important role the built environment plays in facilitating encounters. Arenas (2014, 2015) also explores the Occupy movement in Oaxaca, Mexico and how a collective sociality is produced through protest practices in space. It is through the

> "situated, sustained, and shared labour of collectively taking over the streets in marches, securing spaces via encampments, and barricades, and making decisions through participatory assemblies that Oaxacans were engendered a generative and transformative sociality and were able to suture together their radical differences into a broader social movement" (Arenas, 2015: 1129).

The infrastructures and practices of occupation in encampments create spaces with distinct political possibilities. Where Arenas focuses on the intimacies of co-habitation in a tent-camp, Karaliotas and Kapsali (2021) explore the formation of a collective political subject by articulating more explicitly the role of infrastructure and the process of political subjectification. A housing squat in Greece for migrants and solidarity activists exemplifies how solidarities are forged through political infrastructures, such as the squat, and shapes the emergence of collective political subjects (ibid.: 400). It is through the making and maintaining of such spaces and infrastructures that communities are able to articulate their struggle and negotiate their collectivity. These processes are nonetheless fraught with tensions and just as they offer potentialities for politicisation and solidarity, they also have their limits. Through a thick description of housing squats in Berlin Vasudevan (2015) foregrounds such tensions by focusing on the emotional labour that goes into creating and maintaining such spaces and infrastructures. He also expands his reading of the squats, not just as the making of alternative urban spaces and infrastructures but as "makeshift urbanisms" (ibid.: 202) that work to articulate the city anew. In this sense, the city also becomes a "living archive of alternative knowledges, materials and resources" (ibid.). At the heart of all of these occupations,

encampments, and squats is the desire to articulate and enact alternatives to the status-quo. The entire Wendland region becomes a space where new and formative encounters are possible, where there is a willingness to engage with others in a meaningful way. In carrying through this sentiment of studying the *multiple* spaces of resistance, I think about direct-action protests as spaces of encounter, but also include those spaces where identities are negotiated and protests planned. I articulate both on encampments or the occupation of space in direct action and other spaces and infrastructures as spaces of encounter. It is in these *multiple* spaces that encounters across difference become possible. These are crucial for the production of the collective and in turn activists also actively produce spaces in which collectivity are made possible.

Conflicting visions and political ideologies come together in these spaces of resistance. These are spaces in and through which difference is managed rather than dissolved. The question of course is what do these encounters look like and how do they contribute to this articulation of collectivity. I return to thinking about the process of political subjectification and argue that in articulating and imagining alternatives, collective resistance becomes possible. It is important to acknowledge though that this is a process fraught with tensions, that it is uneven, and in need of constant negotiation.

2.2 Nuclearity and peripheralisation

As in Romania, where the community in Rosina was resisting the development of a coal mine, activists in Wendland were resisting the establishment of nuclear infrastructure. Nuclearity is therefore a central element of this movement. Before diving into writing on the nuclear, however, it is important to place the anti-nuclear movement in Germany within a longer history of German energy policy (Renn and Marshall, 2016). The post-World War II period was characterised by low interventionism in the energy market, meaning that nuclear energy quickly established itself as an important mode of energy production from the 1950s onwards in line with global developments in the energy sector. The oil crises in 1973/1974, however, lead to high energy prices, and in turn to a more comprehensive national energy policy to regulate these prices. This coincided with a rising environmental movement in the 1970s, the rise of the Greens as a significant political party, and scepticisms of nuclear

energy. It is within this broader context that the anti-nuclear energy movement in Wendland and elsewhere in Germany took hold. While the development of nuclear energy policy and the rise of an anti-nuclear energy movement, including mentions of Gorleben, have been explored to some extent (Blowers, 2017; Milder, 2019; Tompkins, 2016), I build on this work, by focusing more explicitly on nuclear geographies and how Wendland is produced as a nuclear region.

I begin by tracing nuclear (waste) geographies as spaces that are actively *produced* as such. I draw on work that nuclear spaces are made nuclear through the presence of radiation, but also culturally, socially, and politically (Alexis-Martin and Davies, 2017; Hecht, 2012). I emphasise the need to expand the work on spaces of nuclear waste management, as these often remain overlooked in work in Nuclear Geographies. In doing so, I frame the engagement with nuclear waste in Wendland around the notion of nuclear communities. Nuclear communities encompass those communities who are affected by and encounter nuclearity in their everyday lives (Blowers, 2017). Nuclearity does not only exist within specific infrastructures but is experienced and engaged with in the everyday. At the same time, I draw out these infrastructures of the nuclear. This spatialises and grounds nuclearity in specific sites and materialities. Where pro-nuclear actors focus on making the nuclear as invisible and non-threatening as possible, activists work to point out how the region is produced as nuclear by uncovering these infrastructures. In uncovering these processes of nuclearisation, I focus in particular on how spaces and communities are framed as peripheral to justify their nuclearisation (Blowers, 2017; Franquesa, 2018). I argue that this too is a process through which actors envision spaces in a way that justifies their intentions. I therefore introduce spatial imaginaries as way to understand and unpack these visions of Wendland that underly both the production of the region as nuclear and mobilise a resistance against this production through alternative imaginaries.

2.2.1 The production of Nuclear (Waste) Geographies

The study of nuclear geographies can be traced back to the 1950s and 60s, when nuclear energy was understood technologically, politically, and socially as a peaceful, efficient, and cheap source of energy that could be employed

anywhere (Hoffman, 1957). During the late Cold War, the subject of study shifted, and nuclear warfare also became a central concern for geographical scholarship (MacDonald, 2006; Openshaw and Steadman, 1982, 1983). Security, risk, and safety dominated the academic and public discussions around the nuclear. In terms of nuclear energy, this also included extensive literature on the security risks of nuclear power plants and the consequences of nuclear waste sites (Openshaw, 1986; Openshaw, 1989).

The most prominent nuclear spaces are of course those nuclear zones that are formed in the wake of nuclear disasters, as in Chernobyl and Fukushima, (Bickerstaff et al., 2008; Bickerstaff, 2012; Davies, 2013; Freudenburg and Davidson, 2007; Morris-Suzuki, 2014). These spaces are often discussed as spaces of risk and exclusion, making reference to the biopolitical nature of these spaces (Bauman, 2011; Davies, 2013; Davies and Polese, 2015; Davis and Hayes-Conroy, 2018; Lerner, 2012; Parkhill et al., 2010). There are however a number of other nuclear spaces or zones that have garnered attention from geographers. These include, for example, nuclear bunkers (Klinke, 2018) or the globalised yet geographically enclosed spaces of nuclear power production such as military and industrial zones of nuclear technology (Findlay, 2011; Hecht, 2012; Lucotte et al., 2006). With the exception of Bickerstaff's (2008; 2012) studies of nuclear waste disposal sites in England and some tangential work on Gorleben (Blowers, 2017), the geographies of nuclear waste, however, remain underexplored. Bringing the spatialities of nuclear waste management into the realm of Nuclear Geographies is one of my key aims in this thesis.

More recently, scholars focused on how nuclear technology exists within social, political, and spatial relations (Hecht, 2012). Indeed, Nader (1981: 104) already argued in the early 1980s that "the energy problem is not a technological problem. It is a social problem". Nuclear energy too is a social problem, but I argue that it is also a *spatial* problem. This means unpacking those spaces that are coded by nuclearity, nuclear spaces as it were, and exploring "how nuclear landscapes have been and continue to be reproduced" (Pitkanen and Farish, 2017: 864). Spaces of nuclear contamination, for example, are distinct geographies that, as Hecht (2012) argues, require work to be produced and labelled as such. The production of nuclearity and the spaces it inhabits is as

much about the presence of radiation as it is political and social. These spaces are “constructed socially and politically and are subjected to a diverse array of different influences, that extend far beyond the ontological presence of radiation” (Alexis-Martin and Davies, 2017: 4). Nuclear spaces are *processes* through and within which the nuclear environment is actively controlled, designed, and constructed (Kuchinskaya, 2013). Wendland too is a region that has been actively produced as a nuclear one. In this thesis, I focus on how this production takes place and link this process to the anti-nuclear energy movement.

2.2.2 Nuclear communities

Within nuclear spaces reside nuclear communities. Nuclear Geographies have followed the emergence of nuclear communities, a term that arose from disaster risk reduction literature after the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear accident (Lowrance, 1980; McKeown, 2003; Meyer, 1996). The term originally meant to differentiate between an ‘expert’ and ‘local’ community, which pre-determined where knowledge about the nuclear was produced and to whom and in what format this would then be communicated. These politics of knowledge production remain relevant. I argue that in Wendland pro-nuclear industries continued to rely on and carve out their status as an expert community to legitimise the nuclear. At the same time, I demonstrate that this knowledge production is also deeply rooted in the politics of pro-nuclearisation. In countering these processes, the anti-nuclear energy movement worked to engage with these expert knowledges and produce their own set of knowledges and narratives. This begins to challenge where ‘legitimate’ knowledge production happens, demonstrates how scientific or expert knowledges are not only used politically but are the product of political motivations, and how knowledge production becomes an arena for resistance.

In general, however, the understanding of nuclear communities has shifted and now encompasses any group that is associated with and affected by nuclearity. Equally broad and diverse is the literature that explores these varied communities (see for example Blowers, 2017; Butler et al., 2015; Litmanen et al., 2010; Parkhill et al., 2010; Venables et al., 2012; Whittaker, 2009). These studies consider primarily those communities that are affected by nuclear

weapons testing or live in/near sites of nuclear disaster. These nuclear communities are often driven by concerns over pollution and health due to radiation exposure. Sometimes they are able to take ownership of their marginalised situation (Stawkowski, 2016), sometimes they have difficulty in gaining recognition of their status (Sørensen, 2015; Trundle, 2013). Blowers (2017) explores nuclear communities and their relationship with the enduring geographies of nuclear waste. Indeed, very few nuclear communities experience nuclearity through nuclear disaster. Most will instead be affected by the anxieties of the irrevocable, everlasting, and yet mostly invisible presence of radiation in their everyday lives.

Nuclear communities in this instance are those communities in places where "their work and lives are focused on managing and cleaning up the legacy of nuclear power and reprocessing" (Blowers, 2017: 3). This encompasses those communities, where a larger proportion work in the nuclear sector and where there is a certain level of acceptance of nuclear infrastructure, such as Hanford[4] in Washington, USA or La Hague[5] in France (Blowers, 2017). Gorleben stands out, as a site where attitudes were overwhelmingly directed against the nuclear energy and waste management industry. In focusing on the community surrounding Gorleben, I explore precisely on this everyday-ness of nuclearity. This community works with nuclearity, has seen significant industrial developments and changes in the landscape due to nuclearity, and is confronted by the presence of nuclear radiation through the presence of nuclear waste in the region. This does not mean that all parts of everyday life are always experienced as nuclear or necessarily result in an active engagement with nuclearity. It does, however, broaden the spectrum of geographies of the nuclear to include less obvious spaces and interactions and understand these as infused with nuclearity. I focus here on those less obvious encounters with nuclearity because these are also the spaces in and through which resistance against the nuclear emerges. In doing so, I bring a sensibility for the multiple spaces of resistance discussed in Chapter 2.1 together with an understanding of how and where Wendland is produced as nuclear.

[4] A now decommissioned nuclear production complex.

[5] A large nuclear waste reprocessing site in northern France.

2.2.3 Infrastructures of nuclearity

One of the ways nuclear spaces are produced is through nuclear infrastructure. While nuclearity must necessarily be placed and storage facilities must be built somewhere, I argue that abstracting the nuclear is central to the work pro-nuclear actors do. This is not, however, unique to nuclear. I draw on Franquesa's (2018) ethnographic study of Southern Catalonia as an energy producing region that has seen the development of nuclear energy infrastructure, but also hydro-power dams and wind power infrastructures. In Franquesa's approach the production of energy is formulated as a process that operates "in an abstract space, made of magnitudes and flows, the strategic space of state and capital, connecting nature and power, overcoming all obstacle, insensitive to any particularisms" (ibid.: 7). This is what Franquesa calls an "ideology of energy", whereby conceiving and presenting energy as an abstract entity detached both from social relations and materiality renders energy invisible. This is particularly the case in places where energy is consumed more than it is produced. The seemingly limitless and endless flows of energy make rapid urbanisation possible and underpin modernisation discourses. The same principles apply to nuclearity. While it is true, that the nuclear must be fixed in space through infrastructures of waste management, for example, pro-nuclear actors benefit from the invisibility of nuclearity as a means of making the nuclear less threatening. The inevitability of nuclear infrastructures also drives the nuclear industry to make those spaces in which the nuclear is visible mundane and non-threatening. They work to integrate these infrastructures into the everyday fabric of a region to normalise nuclearity. This is why a central pillar of the resistance against nuclear energy is to make nuclearity visible.

At the same time, nuclearity or radiation must be understood as *both* unbounded and fixed. While radioactivity is "unbounded both in time and space", nuclear management is very much bounded and contained in space (Blowers, 2017: 242). The necessity of management binds nuclearity to specific sites and "once established, the geography of nuclear's legacy is tenacious, firmly fixed to those places" (ibid.: 229). This is an important observation because it locates nuclearity. It is particularly obvious in those big infrastructural interventions in the landscape, such as the interim storage facility or the geological repository site and these are important sites, where resistance takes places. At the same

time, I argue that the process of nuclearisation can be diffuse and produces less obvious or permanent spaces of nuclearity. I highlight these spaces and infrastructures, such as the expansion of railway infrastructure or cordoning off roads and villages to accommodate waste transport. These infrastructures and processes work to change and nuclearize the region. In turn, these spaces too become spaces of resistance as the movement against nuclear energy makes these less obvious infrastructures visible and thus highlight the entire process of nuclearizing space.

2.2.4 Visibility and peripheralisation

Energy is particularly visible in those spaces where energy is produced or disposed of, rather than in those metropolitan areas where the majority of energy is consumed (and those profiting from modernity reside). The production of energy is thus unevenly distributed in this period of "high-energy modernity" (Love and Isenhour, 2016) which saw an unprecedented global increase in energy use within the last two centuries. Transformations of the energy system in the 20th century meant that electricity production was increasingly concentrated in large power plants outside of the urban-industrial consumption centres (see Hughes, 1993). I argue that Wendland too is an energy periphery – a peripheral state that is constantly produced and reproduced ideologically and materially. Locating energy reveals how certain spaces are framed as peripheral, even expendable.

This echoes arguments made by Blowers (2017), who critically examines common characteristics linked to peripheralisation that both identify and construct spaces as suitable for nuclear infrastructure. Key to this dynamic is the notion that places are *constructed* as peripheral first to then justify infrastructural development. Places and their inhabitants are made "peripheral, exploitable, and expendable" in the construction and maintenance of the nuclear state (ibid.: 871). In extreme cases in US state departments, for example, sites of nuclear weapons factories were privately referred to as "national sacrifice zones" (Pitkanen and Farish, 2017: 870). It combines the "premise of cultural 'backwardness' with the vision of an 'empty nonplace' to justify these zones" (ibid.). I argue that this vision of a region can also be explored through a spatial imaginaries' perspective (see 2.2.5). Intrinsic to this process is that local

understandings and experiences are repeatedly “ignored or devalued, deemed irrational and inexpert, and supplanted by supposedly ‘rational’ discourses of techno-politics” to uphold the status-quo (ibid.: 873). This links the production of nuclearity back to the notion of nuclear communities. The process of designating spaces as nuclear is deeply intertwined with defining who produces legitimate knowledge and maintaining existing power dynamics that marginalise those affected by and living with nuclearity.

Indeed, the presence of these infrastructures is packaged and sold to these ‘othered’ communities that are often peripheralised, marginal, and rural. The peripheralisation or marginalisation discourses frame energy infrastructure as both necessary for modernity as a whole and as intrinsic to their own path towards modernity. This begins to unpack the peripheralisation that Blowers identifies further and explores what this means for how regions are ‘made useful’ through energy. Franquesa (2018: 15) demonstrates that as certain places and peoples are “constructed as waste – residual, barren, marginal, disordered – capital can justify the need to intervene and make them valuable, that is to say, value-producing”. Regions such as Southern Catalonia or Wendland are “assigned a new economic function as an energy-producing hub” (ibid.: 38). Their characteristics makes these sites attractive for infrastructural development. It is almost always also framed as a positive economic development for those regions ‘left behind’. In reality, however, regions like Southern Catalonia are “constantly renewed as an electricity-producing periphery”, as a place from which resources are extracted (ibid.: 13). Every new investment and development iterate these regions as “a periphery, a place from where resources, electricity and profits are extracted, leaving behind environmental risks and social conflicts” (ibid.: 14).

While this is in many ways also the story in Wendland, the particularities of nuclear energy mean that the extraction of resources falls mostly on the burden of other countries and regions as Hecht (2012) has highlighted in a study of uranium mining in Africa.[6] At the other end of the nuclear energy lifecycle, there is another periphery where the remnants of energy production are

[6] With the Wismut Mine, East Germany (German Democratic Republic, GDR) was the fourth largest uranium producing nation. See for example Schramm (2012).

dumped, and the region is overloaded with the waste not wanted elsewhere. These are the uneven geographies of waste, particularly with reference to nuclearity and toxicity, that distribute pollution and risk onto the marginal and peripheral (Davies, 2018, 2019). It is a "persistence of periphery" that works to produce the enduring geography of nuclear waste (Blowers, 2017). Indeed, Pitkanen and Farish (2017: 874) too pick up on this endurance of nuclearity: "the work in post-Cold War nuclear studies reveals troubling consistencies in the production, maintenance, and persistence of nuclear landscapes", and argue that recognising these consistencies is crucial to acknowledging "the resistance and agency of communities and organisations who draw attention to nuclear perils". Work such as the study of the former plutonium production facility Rocky Flats, near Denver, Colorado by Krupar (2011) or Miller's (2000) seminal study of anti-nuclear movements in the US are key examples of how geographers have increasingly engaged with precisely these nuclear energy resistances. In this thesis, I build on this existing work on the resistances against nuclear energy and highlighting how making the nuclear is deeply intertwined with the resistance against these processes.

At the same time, however, Pitkanen and Farish (2017: 873) argue that "wasteland is a category open to contestation". It is politically and strategically produced and thus can be identified as such and resisted. Indeed, a majority of the work that the Wendland Movement does is to identify the ways in which they are framed as peripheral. In turn, the movement is able to formulate a resistance against the processes. They do this by reclaiming all of those characteristics that underpin their peripheralisation (their rurality, lack of infrastructure, and so on) and reframing these to underpin their resistance. I demonstrate how resistance reclaims their peripheral identities and successfully mobilises these in their resistance. I argue that these competing visions of the region, how these are articulated and produced, and how they are mobilised by the movement can be best understood through the lens of spatial imaginaries.

2.2.5 Spatial imaginaries

To understand these visions that underly the production of nuclearity, I draw on the concept of spatial imaginaries. I follow Watkins (2015: 509) in using the term 'spatial imaginaries' who, in the broadest sense, defines these as "socially held

stories, ways of representing and talking about places and spaces". I argue that unpacking these stories about Wendland reveals how the region is produced as nuclear. It also reveals that normative visions of rurality underpin this process. At the same time, I argue that these spatial imaginaries become fronts of contestation. By formulating alternative imaginaries, activists are also able to formulate a collective resistance against nuclearisation. It enables them to draw on rurality as a strength in their alternative visions.

Central to conceptualisations of spatial imaginaries is an understanding of social imaginaries. That is, following Mills (1959), a 'sociological imagination' that enables an articulation of history and biography, and the relation of the two within society. Within a relational approach, this understanding also links those personal histories and trajectories to the broader movement. Taylor (2004: 23) in an interrogation of Western modernity, defines social imaginaries as

> "the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations."

This is also closely linked to how political identities are forged and collectivity is enacted. Breaking down normative motions and expectations of social interaction is part of the processes of forming political identities. De-identification requires a shift in their social imaginaries. Producing collectivity also requires breaking down their own expectations of who others are and ought to be. This echoes how Anderson (1991) argues that the production of the nation requires an imagined political community, a shared social imaginary. Collective imaginaries are central to producing collective action and space.

It is David Harvey in Social Justice and the City (1977) who writes a 'spatial consciousness' or 'geographical imagination' in a way that explicitly spatialises social imaginaries: "[a geographical imagination] enables the individual to recognize the role of space and place in his [sic] own biography, to relate to the spaces he sees around him [sic], and to recognize how transactions between individuals and between organizations are affected by the space that separates them". Equally, Said's (2003) Orientalism focuses on *geographical* imaginaries or, more specifically, the geopolitics of spatial imaginaries, in his commitment

to excavating the discursive and representational production of the 'Orient'. Since, there has been no shortage of work exploring the multiple facets of spatial imaginaries at various scales of geographical inquiry or through different ontological lenses (see Watkins, 2015 for an extensive review). Indeed, spatial imaginaries have come in multiple terminological forms, such as 'imaginary geographies' (Said, 2003), 'geographical imagination' (Harvey, 1977), 'imaginative geographies' (Driver, 2005; Gregory, 1995, 2010) or 'sociospatial imaginaries' (Leitner et al., 2007) and explore a wide range of geographical phenomena, such as 'globalisation' (Massey, 1999), 'scales' (Marston et al., 2005) or 'territory' (Ravindran, 2019), each with their own nuances and particularities.

In drawing out a more explicitly political articulation of spatial imaginaries, I base my understanding of spatial imaginaries on Davoudi et al. (2018: 101), who write:

> "Spatial imaginaries are deeply held, collective understandings of socio-spatial relations that are performed by, give sense to, make possible and change collective socio-spatial practices. They are produced through political struggles over the conceptions, perceptions and lived experiences of place. They are circulated and propagated through images, stories, texts, data, algorithms and performances. They are infused by relations of power in which contestation and resistance are ever-present."

Spatial imaginaries are collectively understood, produced, and enacted. That means, that spatial imaginaries are key for the production of a collective across difference. Movements must provide, however, spaces where activists can come together to "imaginatively connect and fuse different identities, to transform understandings of race, class and ecology, or offer an active interrogation and reconstitution of identities" (Featherstone, 1998: 23). What Featherstone highlights is that in interrogating collective imaginaries, activists also come to interrogate their own identities. I argue that exploring spatial imaginaries are therefore central to understanding the process of political subjectification both on an individual and collective level. What Davoudi's definition also brings to the fore is that spatial imaginaries are produced through political struggles. This further solidifies the fact that it is in the spaces of resistance that this configuration of (collective) identities takes place. Resistance allows spatial

imaginaries to be questioned and new imaginaries to emerge. Finally, it is important to acknowledge that spatial imaginaries are visualised and enacted. They are materialised in infrastructures, enacted in the everyday, and inform the decisions we make. They are present in the oral histories activists tell and circulated in the archival materials of the movement.

2.3 Resistance and rurality

In the discussions around peripheralisation, infrastructure, and identity I already began to introduce the rural as a central concern in the movement. In this final section, I therefore turn towards Rural Geographies. Rural Geography has broadly moved through three theoretical framings of rurality during the 1970s-1990s (Cloke, 2006): from a perspective that defines the rural through its functional characteristics, to a political-economic perspective that positions rurality as the product of border socio-political process, to a socially constructed perspective where "the importance of the 'rural' lies in the fascinating world of social, cultural and moral values that have become associated with rurality, rural spaces and rural life" (ibid.: 21). Woods' (2003, 2005, 2006, 2009) work on the rural since the late 1990s has unpacked and reconfigured the meaning of rurality, disrupting uni-dimensional understandings of rurality and insisting instead on the constructed and contested nature of the rural. He argues that there is a significant shift away from rural politics, that is the politics located in rural space and regarding 'rural issues', towards the politics of the rural, where rurality itself is up for debate (Woods, 2006). The politics of the rural, or in other words discourses about what rurality itself is, re-orientates the political arena of the rural. I argue that spatial imaginaries, as described above, are one way to understand these politics of the rural. More importantly, however, I link these discourses and imaginaries of rurality to contentious political action. Resistance is framed through the politics of the rural.

Wendland is undeniably understood as rural. Wendland fits into the classic construction of a rural region: there are two slightly larger towns, Lüchow and Dannenberg, with around 8 000 to 9 000 inhabitants and some essential infrastructures, and the region is characterised by agricultural land-use, small villages, and a low population density. This study of the Wendland Movement therefore necessitates an engagement with the rural. Specifically, I bring

discussions of rurality, nuclearity, infrastructures, and resistances into dialogue with one another. In the discussions around peripheralisation and spatial imaginaries the relationship between nuclearity and rurality is implicit. A key characteristic of rural landscapes is that they are imagined as peripheral. The spatial imaginaries of Wendland are deeply rooted in the various understandings of the rural landscape, the value of the rural, and visions for a rural region. Equally, these spatial imaginaries and the process surrounding peripheralisation and infrastructures are deeply intertwined with resistance in Wendland. I argue, therefore, that it is necessary to examine the relationship between nuclearity and rurality through the lens of resistance. At the same time, work on the geographies of contentious politics has a strong tendency to focus primarily on urban spaces and the city. Very rarely is the role of rural spaces considered in political movements, nor are movements that are rooted in rural places often discussed in this literature. I aim to dissect the relationship between the rural and contentious politics further and examine how rurality and urbanity can be thought of in conjunction within resistance studies. This also includes a focus on how rural protests are policed.

2.3.1 Rurality and contentious politics

Rural protests are often associated with agrarian professions and farmers' movements. Changes in agrarian policy, the globalisation of the food markets, and a shrinking agricultural sector are just a few of the reasons farmers are mobilised to political protest. Scholars have explored how farmers' protests are often articulated through institutional channels, such as farmers' unions (Brkić et al., 2004) or organisations such as the Countryside Alliance in the UK (Woods, 2005), how nonetheless inter-personal relationships are vital for a broad organising among farmers (Weerd and Klandermans, 1999), but also how historical and regional specificities have an impact on how agricultural protest unfold (Gorlach, 2000). In the context of the study of emancipatory rural politics Bernstein (2020: 1529) touches upon this "problematic relationship between the rural and the agrarian and the dangers of reducing the former to the latter". There are complexities, nuances, and multiplicities inherent in rural politics and identities that go beyond the agrarian. While farmers remain a large and important group that engage with politics in the rural, I shift the focus towards

understanding how rural identities, representations, and imaginaries more generally shape political engagement.

On the other hand, rural political engagements have never been solely agrarian in nature, but diverse and heterogenous. They often emerge in conflicts over land-use and infrastructural changes. This can refer both to land-dispossession disputes that are linked to infrastructural development and infrastructure projects on their own right (Bedi and Tillin, 2015; Borras Jr and Franco, 2012; Da Silva et al., 2020; Della Bosca and Gillespie, 2018; Levien, 2011; Ransan-Cooper et al., 2018; Velicu, 2012). These kinds of industry developments and associated infrastructures in rural regions are often framed as necessary and positive revitalisations to economically weak areas. Especially in the context of renewable energy transitions, rural areas come into focus as regions with the necessary space for new energy infrastructure (Lennon and Scott, 2017; Phadke, 2011; Rudolph and Kirkegaard, 2019; Woods, 2003). Rural regions are understood as sparsely populated and economically underdeveloped areas, making them targets for renewable energy facilities (Munday et al., 2011; Rudolph and Kirkegaard, 2019). The rural is thought of as and becomes a socio-economic resource for the energy transition (Naumann and Rudolph, 2020). While these recent studies tend to focus predominantly on renewable energies, I argue that there are clear parallels in the nuclear energy discourses from the 1950s-80s. The arguments around peripheralization brought forward by Blowers (2017) and Franquesa (2018) are deeply rooted in a politics of rurality. They are linked to a spatial imaginary of the rural that in turn become a site of contestation. Activists resist a normative, top-down framing of the rural and articulate counter-narratives. It is in within this nexus of spatial imaginaries that the relationship between nuclearity (who/what is made nuclear and by what means) coincides with a politics of the rural (what is/ought to be understood as rural).

At the same time, I argue that it is resistance against an encroaching nuclearity driven by a very specific spatial imaginary of the rural, that makes these process visible. Existing literature has begun to explore movements in rural areas in more detail. This includes, for example, protests against coal-mining projects (Della Bosca and Gillespie, 2018; Ransan-Cooper et al., 2018; Velicu, 2012), environmentally motivated protests linked to the anti-fracking movement

(Brock, 2020; Rice and Burke, 2018), but also or mobilisations against large-scale (renewable) energy projects such as wind farms (Woods, 2003). These kinds of interventions in the rural landscape provoke a response from local communities that include farmers' and agrarian protests, but certainly cannot be reduced to them. Concerns often centre around the impact developments have on the natural landscape, how costs and benefits are distributed, and how decision-making processes and community participation unfold (Naumann and Rudolph, 2020). I work through these kinds of specific apprehensions by expanding on Woods' (2003) work and arguing that resistance in these instances is fundamentally about how the rural is imagined and what alternative visions of (rural) futures are articulated through resistance.

The politics of the rural are negotiated by locals, activists, local politicians, on national political levels through resistance. Everyone has a stake and role in (re)producing the rural, in determining what is and what should be. Key to these debates is that "there is no single, objective entity called the 'rural' that reacts in a clear and uniform way to different external pressures" (Woods, 2006: 592), but that the rural is always multiple and always up for debate. Exploring resistance therefore must also consider the various activists and activist groups that are engaged with the politics of the rural. I argue that these politics of the rural both motivated political decisions that made Gorleben the site of choice for nuclear waste storage and unified politically disparate groups. Especially for the farming community, whose profession is deeply intertwined with a politics of the rural, processes of political subjectification coincide with notions of rurality.

Finally, I return to Davoudi's insights into the visualisation and enactment of spatial imaginaries. Discourses and social (re)presentations of the rural are political because they form not only imaginaries of rurality, but also "the everyday material conditions under which rurality and rural inhabitants come into discursive existence" (Nilsson and Lundgren, 2015: 86). The rural is not abstract or discursive. The spatial imaginaries of rurality and contestations over the rural are reflected in the landscape. At the same time, the rural landscape has a direct influence on how direct-action unfolds and how these spaces are policed. I argue that not only does the nuclearization of a region evoke direct-action i.e., where resistance takes place, but the specificities of the rural

landscape have a direct influence on how direct-action is planned and unfolds. In doing so, I draw from literature around urban protest movements that is attentive to the role infrastructures and landscapes in this way (see for example Vasudevan, 2015) and apply these insights to rural spaces. This begins to bridge a gap across the rural-urban dichotomy and brings the rural further into focus in the study of the spaces of contentious politics.

2.3.2 Intersections of rurality and urbanity

The lack of a cohesive or uniform 'rural' as Woods argued, means that what constitutes the rural cannot be defined in a straightforward way. What constitutes or defines rurality is open for negotiation. In this line of thinking I continue to follow Massey's relational approach to place. She argues that "boundaries are not necessary for the conceptualisation of a place" and instead, a place can be understood "through the particularity of [the] linkage to that 'outside' which is therefore itself part of what constitutes the place" (Massey, 1991: 29). Those connections 'beyond' place are an intrinsic part of place itself and hence place does not have any clear boundaries that delineate what is in- and outside of it. Rather than thinking of the rural as a bounded space that is connected to urban spaces, I understand the rural to be already constituted by what is 'outside' of it, including the urban.

Nonetheless, what makes up the rural and what rurality is, is a central part of the debate and the resistance. Woods lists a number of ways in which this easy distinction between the urban and the rural has been contested in recent literature, citing work on 'exurbia' and a 'ruralisation' of the city (Urbain, 2002), and in challenging such a dichotomy argues that the result is not a homogenous extended city, but "new hybrid sociospatial forms that blur the rural and the urban yet can exhibit a distinctive order and identity" (Woods, 2009: 853). It is not about drawing a boundary around the rural, but to draw out how debates around rurality lie at the heart of making and resisting the nuclear. This means going beyond a conceptualisation of the rural as a space that is apart from the urban. Instead, I focus on how the rural is socially constructed, understood by different people, and contested. The rural is contextual and conceptually fluid. In turn, the conflicts situated in rural areas cannot be reduced to 'rural protest'. The development of these infrastructural projects in

particular is always linked to the further reproduction of an urban metabolism. The struggles against transport structures in France are also struggles against "becoming a mere node in a global capitalist system" (Collectif Mauvaise troupe, 2018: xix). Local resistances against fracking are also resistances against corporate power and police-enforced state interests (Brock, 2020). Anti-nuclear energy movements in Wendland are also a resistance against the German state and global nuclear industries (Blowers, 2017; Milder, 2019). Here, I also draw from the work of the Collectif Mauvaise troupe (2018) that writes about two distinctive movements, the zad and the NoTAV, which show clear parallels to the Wendland Movement. These two rural movements are firmly anchored in particular regions or territories and held together over many years by people of different cultures and practices. In both instances, infrastructural developments are a part of a reordering process, whereby the rural becomes a function of urbanisation. This echoes arguments made by Franquesa (2018) that link the production of an energy producing periphery to the necessary invisibility of energy in modernity discourses (see Chapter 2.2.4).

Nonetheless, I argue that it remains important to consider the particularities of the rural in protest politics. Whose vision of the rural dominates and who decides what the rural is and should be, echoes the sentiments of the "right to the city" debates of urban social movement studies (Lefebvre, 1996). The right to the city can be understood as an "exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanisation" and "the freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves" (Harvey, 2008: 23). These processes of collective power, the desire and ability to make and remake spaces, and fighting for the right to do so is not necessarily unique to the city. By focusing on spatial imaginaries and the politics of the rural, I argue that in resisting the nuclearization of Wendland activists claim a right to partake in the production of (rural) space. The key argument made by urban geographers for several years now, that urban spaces are a product of continuous conflict and struggle (see for example Merrifield, 2013), can and should also be applied to the geographies of social movements in rural spaces. Where Vasudevan (2015: 62), for example, focuses on "the city as a key laboratory of protest and revolt", the rural too can be explored explicitly as a site of resistance.

2.4 Concluding thoughts

In this literature review I have brought together three strands within Geography: Nuclear, Rural, and Political Geographies. I argue that the Wendland Movement offers a unique opportunity to think about collective resistance and political identities in conjunction with nuclearity and rurality. I began by outlining the relational approach I am taking to the study of contentious (rural) politics. In doing so, I bring together thinking about protest events as well as everyday spaces of political engagements, engage with the processes of political subjectification, and take seriously the role of infrastructures within these constellations.

I argue that within this thesis, I can provide insights into the nuances of political alliances and identities within and amongst activist groups. By focusing on individual biographies, new ways of thinking about collectivity and political subjectification become possible. Through a relational approach I examine how a multitude of activists and activist groups come together, how they form their (political) identities, and in turn how these actors function in relation to one another. Key to this approach is to situate these individual and collective identity formations in space. To chart these ongoing processes of making and unmaking of place and identity, I focus on teasing out the individual trajectories and life stories that come together at various stages and in various spaces of the movement. Thinking relationally brings together processes of politicisation on the individual level with the articulation of a collectivity. This happens within and through spaces where different trajectories coincide and are negotiated.

I also engaged with nuclearity as production of space and argued that spatial imaginaries of the rural are key to understanding this production. How and why spaces are produced as nuclear is at the heart of this engagement, and thus draws in spatial imaginaries around rurality. This is the first space of contestation that I focus on, specifically engaging with how the rural is imagined and envisioned i.e., the politics of the rural (Woods, 2003). I explore how spatial imaginaries relate to the process of political mobilisation, the role they play in the formation of activist groups (and solidarities within and between them), and how they work to open up the spaces for contentious politics. The struggle over nuclear energy infrastructure is a complex contestation over different rural

imaginaries that both question what rurality is and should be and (re)produces those imaginaries. Producing a collectivity amongst activists with very different political ideologies is, however, a dynamic and ongoing process. I therefore focus on how activists continuously negotiate their collective resistance within the spaces and infrastructures through which they stage their resistance. I draw on the notion of 'labouring' (Arenas, 2014) to produce collectivity and that producing spaces of encounter (Halvorsen, 2015a, 2015b) is key to understanding how collective engagement is forged and maintained. This collectivity is forged within the intersections of rurality and nuclearity. I argued here that these two concepts are closely related.

Finally, I focused on how resistance works to make the nuclear concrete. It no longer functions as an abstract form of radiation but becomes tangible in its infrastructures. This situates nuclearity in place, anchoring it to people, communities, identities, and landscape, and as something that cannot be removed from the everyday. Spatialising nuclearity in this way, I argue, is important to understanding how resistance against nuclearisation unfolds. It is in these multiple spaces of nuclearity that resistance emerges, both around large, visible infrastructures such as the interim storage facility as well as the less obvious spaces that aid the production of nuclearity. It is this sensibility for the nuclear as both abstract and physical, both extraordinary and everyday, that is central to my understanding of resistance against nuclearity in Wendland.

Chapter 3 Oral and archival histories: research methods in Wendland

Between February and September 2020, I spent several weeks at a time in Wendland working in the Gorleben Archive and speaking to activists involved in the Wendland Movement. During my first research visit in late January and early February I very distinctly remember sitting at the kitchen table, listening to the number of Covid cases (and deaths) abroad being reported on the radio. At the time, I had planned three further visits throughout the spring and into the early summer. By mid-March, however, as we were entering the first lockdown, it became clear that any further fieldwork would have to be put on hold indefinitely. The Gorleben Archive was closed to public and research visitors until the summer of 2020. At the same time, travel from Germany to the UK became increasingly difficult and as a result, I worked from Berlin, my hometown, for the remainder of my PhD period. During this time many researchers moved their interviews online (see for example Howlett, 2021), but as there was no way to conduct additional archival work online and since the archive provided the contacts for the interviews, this was not an option for my research. During a brief period of reduced case numbers and looser restrictions in August 2020, I was able to return to Wendland for another five weeks to complete the research I had originally planned. It is against this backdrop that I outline in this chapter the qualitative fieldwork I undertook for this thesis. This included both oral history interviews and archival research.

In this chapter I first introduce oral histories as one of the two key methods for my research. These are long interviews that focus on histories as told and remembered by those who experienced these histories. Oral histories bundle different spaces, materialities, and stories and I argue that oral histories are a chance to explore the Wendland Movement from the ground. I focus on the stories that participants tell about their own lives and about the movement as a ways of piecing together a long history with personal depth. During my research visits I conducted 20 oral history interviews with activists from various backgrounds covering the three main periods of the movement outlined previously, as well as the personal biographies of activists in the context to the Wendland Movement.

Ithis oral history approach was supplemented by archival research. Personal stories work alongside archival materials to construct the life worlds of those involved in the Wendland Movement. I worked with the activist-run archive Gorleben Archive and the materials that are produced, collected, and archived there by activists themselves. The Gorleben Archive was founded in 2001 by long-time activists seeking to preserve the numerous materials related to the Wendland Movement. It is a space that both chronicles their own history as a region and a movement and provides opportunities to learn about the resistance. I argue that the Gorleben Archive is a unique space and archive, where activists preserve but also produce and maintain their histories. For me the archive was not only a place to gather materials to piece together this story of Wendland, but also a social space. The archivist, volunteers, visitors, and fellow researchers told stories, contextualised materials, and provided contacts for interviews. All of which were of immeasurable value for this research. I consider the archive not only a material resource, but a unique community space in Wendland within and through which research was made possible. I also reflect on the use of field diaries as a way to record these experiences.

Finally, I also comment on the process of conducting this research in German, my mother-tongue, and the need to translate findings into English for this thesis. I argue that translation practices in conducting bilingual research need to be explicitly considered in research projects such as this, reflecting both on the role that I, the researcher and translator play in producing translation, and how to navigate the specificities of language and culture in translation.

3.1 Oral histories

In this thesis, I focus on what the involvement in the movement meant for people, how it was felt and experienced, how it is remembered and recounted, the impact it had on life and landscape. This thesis is hence committed to narrating the Wendland Movement through the stories of those who lived it. The focus moves away from an ‘objective’ history towards an understanding of life worlds and lived histories. I thus approach this study through the “verbal recollections of events from one’s lifetime” (Riley and Harvey, 2007a: 392). It is a narrative approach that foregrounds personal histories as told, understood, perceived, and edited by those recounting these histories. While my personal

preference for an oral history methodology is clearly linked to its ability to allow personal, emotive stories to be heard, people mis-remember, re-construct, romanticise their past lives and so cannot be relied upon to tell 'true stories'. Why certain narratives are held to be true is, however, the more pertinent questions (Portelli, 1991). Where narrators place themselves in relation to historical events reveals the role emotions play in historical geographies. Emery's (2018) work on belonging and memory in the north Nottinghamshire coalfields, for example, draws together work from archival research and psychosocial life history interviews to think about the emotional and affective dimensions of remembering. Levine Hampton (2022: 468) picks up this "re-placing" as a research agenda for oral history in/and geography, arguing that "oral history methodology is uniquely well placed to capture both the emotionality and spatiality of historical narratives".

Recording the Wendland Movement through oral histories also has a long tradition in the region. Various research projects[7] in Germany have spoken to activists over the years. The Gorleben Archive itself has also begun recording the history of the movement in this way as well. They published a series of oral histories around the Hannover Trek, for example (Gorleben Archiv, 2019), and recorded stories from activists for school groups visiting the archive. In this project I build on these existing traditions in Wendland to document the movement through oral histories. Recording these oral histories also becomes increasingly important as a key generation of activists is getting older, whose stories and knowledges are not recorded anywhere. Oral histories are therefore a political practice. They work towards understanding how individual and collective memories are forged (Selway, 2016) or to explore how activists construct narratives of their own resistances (Gibbs, 2016). I argue that the oral history approach is closely linked to the work that activist archives do in providing spaces for continued forging of a collectivity. The oral histories recorded for this thesis also work towards the aim of the Gorleben Archive, which is to record and preserve an activist history of the region.

[7] See for example https://www.zeitzeugen-portal.de/suche?q=gorleben and https://www.gorleben-archiv.de/ueber-uns/foerderungen/zeitzeugen-interviews/.

This allows oral histories to be linked to resistance in explicit and productive ways (Kelliher, 2018). But oral histories also do more than record otherwise hidden histories in an accessible way: “the subjectivity of memory provides clues not only about the meanings of historical experience but also the relationships between past and present, between memory and personal identity, and between individual and collective identity” (Perks and Thomson, 2016: 3). I employ the oral history approach to trace and reconstruct the personal and political trajectories of activists. They allow activists to reflect on their own trajectories in conjunction with the trajectories of the movement. Oral histories “reveal day-to-day practices, the importance of personal relationships, and the relevance of overlapping spaces and shared experiences” (Craggs, 2018: 55). As the region is transformed through nuclearisation and resistance, oral histories provide insights into how identity and collectively are forged within this nexus.

3.1.1 Placing oral histories

Oral histories are also uniquely suited to situating history (see for example Riley and Harvey, 2007b). Often “places serve as crucial material and symbolic sources for biographical development” and are thus both im- and explicit in all oral histories (Andrews et al., 2006: 154). Oral history narratives offer a space for “recollection about self, about relationships with others and a place, insights rarely provided in such depth by other methods” (ibid.: 170). I use an oral history approach to anchor the history of the Wendland Movement in the personal trajectories of activists *and* within the spaces. It provides an opportunity to tell stories from the bottom-up and the focus shifts towards to the small, personal stories that situate politics. I argue that oral histories provide one way to conduct a more grounded study of contentious politics. To further draw out these geographies of oral histories I coupled the oral histories interviews with a mapping exercise. This kind of place mapping is often used as a research method in research projects involving children or teenagers (Travlou et al., 2008) or relation to migration (Kapinga et al., 2022) and religious identity (Kapinga and van Hoven, 2021). The aim was to connect oral histories with the landscape and gain an understanding of the spatial knowledges and imaginaries that activists held. Indeed, this kind of mapping can draw out the “relationships between places, lived experience, and community” (Powell, 2010: 539).

I prepared a 'blank' map of the region that marked the river Elbe to the east of Wendland and pin-pointed the two largest towns in Wendland, Lüchow and Dannenberg, as well as Gorleben. I explained the idea behind the mapping exercise at the beginning of the interview and left the map open on the table while speaking to the participants. While some were hesitant to make any significant markings on the map, around a quarter of interviewees used the maps. They highlighted places that were important for their own biographies to help me understand the geographies of a region I was still getting to know and were able to place their stories and histories onto the map. These maps provide an additional layer of spatial knowledges to oral histories. The act of mapping highlights the "relationships between self and place and the ways in which self and place are mutually constitutive and relational" (ibid.: 553). Oral histories, I argue, are part of the broader relational approach. By talking about specific places, I draw out the personal trajectories of participants, how they engaged in place with others, and how these were interwoven with their resistance against the nuclear. It highlights how certain places shaped and are shaped by resistance and identity.

3.1.2 Interviews and participants

In total, I spoke to 20 activists from the Wendland Movement about their involvement with the movement and their personal trajectories related to the movement and the region. These oral history interviews were driven by a number of themes and prompts I prepared ahead of the interview and the same opening question for all interviewees. This kind of semi-structured approach meant that I was able to "guarantee the discussion of some pre-determined themes and also to encourage the emergence and discussion of new issues" (Andrews et al., 2006: 161). It allowed themes that are key to the research to be covered but still produced a natural, inviting, conversational flow, which left enough room to change, rearrange, and follow-up on questions and responses during the interview (Secor, 2010: 201). A semi-structured approach by design "allows respondents to raise issues that the interviewers may not have anticipated" (Valentine, 2005: 111), but also required extensive knowledge and preparation to identify areas for elaboration quickly and confidently redirect the interview when necessary (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015: 19). Through my previous research on the region and movement in 2017 I had some understanding of the

movement, but it was the daily work and conversations with those working at the Gorleben Archive, who themselves were often heavily Involved with the movement over many years, that helped piece together the details of the movement.

While I found that preparing a semi-structured approach was effective at the beginning of the research process, I did not want this to be remain overly structured as the project developed. With almost all participants I was able to strike up a more conversational tone, which allowed more open recounts of past and present activism to come to the fore during the interview process. As a result, interviews often lasted longer than the 30 minutes to an hour I planned. I spoke to interviewees between 50 minutes to 2 hours. I began interviews by asking participants about the first time Gorleben or the question of nuclear energy became relevant in their lives. For those who grew up in Wendland this often meant starting in their childhoods and working through how Wendland became nuclear. With others, conversations began in a completely different part of the country, often discussing environmentalist or leftist politics, and we slowly made our way to Wendland. Other than these individual trajectories directing activists towards the anti-nuclear energy movement, I also covered the three main periods and/or events covered in this thesis: the early years, the Free Republic of Wendland, and the Castor Transports of the 1990s. With most participants I focused primarily on only one of these areas with which they were most familiar. This meant that we were able to tell their stories in much more detail, while still oscillating between the small, situated stories of resistance and the big-picture reflections on the movement as a whole. These interviews were able to provide “thick, detailed, and multi-layered” data (Valentine, 2005: 111) and root this in time, place, and personal experiences.

The majority of participants were recruited through my contacts at the Gorleben Archive. I took care to speak to both activists from the region and those who came from outwith Wendland to trace multiple different trajectories. I met the majority of participants in Wendland although two interviews were conducted in Berlin. Several interviews were conducted at the Gorleben Archive, which meant that I could lay out archival material I had been working with. Especially during interviews related to the Free Republic of Wendland, looking at photographs

were effective prompts. Equally, those working at the archive often joined in on the conversation towards the end of the interview. This, again, prompted interviewees to remember something they had not thought of and often helped to provide more context to the stories. Many participants also invited me to their homes for the interviews. Travelling through Wendland, trying to find small villages made up of only four or five houses with no road signs, meant that the process of interviewing was also a way for me to get to know and experience the region. Interviewees dug up old photos or newspaper articles they had yet to donate to the Gorleben Archive, lent me books that had influenced their politics in the 1970s, and gave me very intimate insights into their lives in Wendland. This left me with a rich understanding of not only the Wendland Movement, but also a sensitivity for the personal stories I am recounting in this thesis.

This research was approved by the University of Glasgow ethics review process and all interviewees were provided with an information sheet about the research as well as a consent form prior to the interview (see Annex I-III). To provide the participants with anonymity, I use pseudonyms for each individual. Certain names from archival materials were also anonymised in this way. Some person-specific details are provided in Table 1 to contextualise their role within the Wendland Movement. Conversations were recorded using a designated recording device with expressed permission from the participants. I transcribed around half of the interviews myself. The rest were transcribed by a transcriber from Wendland, also with the expressed permission from participants, due to time constraints. At times, interviewees spoke in some detail about their involvement in protests which may have been illegal at the time. The comfort with which they spoke about such actions and the fact that the statute of limitations had passed, meant that I felt that these individuals were not concerned about any further legal action being taken against protests mentioned in this research.

Table 1 – Overview of interview participants

No.	Pseudonym	Role in the Wendland Movement
1	Alexander	Independent journalist who moved from West Berlin to Wendland in the early 70s.
2	Beate	Retired activist who moved to Wendland in the mid-90s to support the Wendland Movement and work as a freelance photographer, documenting the resistances; interviewed together with her husband Christoph.
3	Christoph	Retired activist who moved to Wendland in the mid-90s to support the Wendland Movement and work as a freelance photographer, documenting the resistances; interviewed together with his wife Beate.
4	Detlef	Retired teacher who moved to Wendland in the late 90s and was involved with the Castor resistances; volunteer as the Gorleben Archive; hosted me during my second fieldtrip.
5	Erika	Retired teacher from Wendland, who was working in Hamburg; co-founded the Emi-Group.
6	Franz	Activist from Hamburg who moved to Wendland in the late 1970s; worked for Die LINKE in the 2000s; founder of a community space for non-violent action.
7	Georg	Moved from Hamburg to Wendland in the early 2000s; works at the citizens' initiative Lüchow-Dannenberg.
8	Harry	Filmmaker from Hamburg who moved to Wendland in the late 1970s.

9	Ingo	Retired nurse and farmer who moved to Wendland in the late 1970s.
10	Josephine	From Wendland and co-founder of a Wendland film cooperative who chronicled the resistances.
11	Katharina	Retired EU parliamentarian from Wendland's neighbouring region; long-time member of the citizens' initiative.
12	Lothar	Farmer and landowner from Wendland; founding member of the farmers' cooperative aid association.
13	Michael	Organic farmer from Wendland who was involved with the farmers' cooperative aid association; interviewed together with his wife Natascha.
14	Natascha	Organic farmer who moved to Wendland after meeting her husband during the Free Republic of Wendland; involved with the farmers' cooperative aid association; interviewed together with her husband Mark.
15	Otto	Long-time PR representative of the citizens' initiative Lüchow-Dannenberg from Wendland; co-founder of the Emi-Group while living in Hamburg.
16	Paula	From Wendland and heavily involved in creative resistances; volunteers at the Gorleben Archive.
17	Rosa	Retired farmer from Wendland now living in Berlin.
18	Sandra	From Wendland and active in both the farmers' cooperative aid association and the citizens' initiative Lüchow-Dannenberg.

19	Thomas	Political activist in Berlin involved in the left-wing political movement who moved to Wendland in the late 1970s and founded a commune.
20	Volker	GP who moved to the region in the 1990s and was involved with the farmers' cooperative aid association.

3.2 The Gorleben Archive

> "The history of a movement needs a place, where it is kept alive — it contains a cornucopia of knowledge and experience, of courage, power and creativity" (Gorleben Archiv, 2023c).

The Gorleben Archive and its materials worked alongside the oral history interviews as a core research space and method in this thesis. The Gorleben Archive was established in 2001 by the activist Marianne Fritzen, and collects, archives, and documents materials about the Wendland Movement. This activist archive was founded with the aim to both preserve and highlight the rich history of the anti-nuclear energy movement. Materials that would have remained scattered in attics, knowledges about nuclearity built up over decades that would have remained undocumented, and stories that are quintessential to the history of the region would have remain untold, were it not for the work that the Gorleben Archive does to bring the history of the Wendland Movement together in one space. Archives like this allow members of the community to document and make accessible their history on their own terms. Activist and community-led archives, such as the Gorleben Archive, in particular are a vital component in the development of collective memory and the construction of local histories (Collins Shortall, 2016). They act as spaces of memory and identity construction that memorialise the records of a community. The Gorleben Archive is hence an important space for the resistance against the nuclear.

The Gorleben Archive is unique in many ways. You enter the archive through a quiet back alley off the main road in Lüchow. The entrance is embellished with photographs from the Free Republic of Wendland and the Castor Transport protests, there is a large yellow X cut-out outside the main door, and pamphlets

provide information about nuclear waste storage and the resistance. You enter into a large, open library with sofas and a small kitchen (Figure 5). Through the narrow corridor, hung with prints picturing protestors, is an office to the one side and to the other, another open-plan room with a large table. On the walls is a collection of art posters designed by activists advertising protests. Across the room was a small desk with a computer that I used during my research visits. Right behind me were three large shelves that were filled to the ceiling with materials that were yet to be archived. In the farthest corner of the archive was a small, temperature-controlled room with five large shelves. Here the 'actual' archive begins with around 700 boxes of material.

Figure 5 – Library and community room in the Gorleben Archive (Gorleben Archiv, 2023b)

There is clearly more to the archive, than the archival materials. It is deliberately designed in a way to allow open access to the history of the movement and make the process of archiving sociable as well. In that sense, I understand archives not as

> "self-contained repositories where one quietly gathers the 'facts' but rather as webs of connections and opportunities for dialogue (sometimes with living kin or colleagues)-- an amplified version of Doreen Massey's definition of places as 'articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings'" (Cameron, 2014: 100).

Relationships with the archivist and with the archival community shape experience in the archive (Mayrl and Wilson, 2020). Far from being a solitary practice, the archive is a rich, social world that in and of itself is a valuable resource. This includes both the relationships between the research and the archivist (scholar-archivist relationship) and with others working at the archive (the archival community). More so than those relationships, I argue that it is important to acknowledge the importance of having a space that makes these interactions possible in the first place. The Gorleben Archive functions as much as an archive, as a public and community space.

3.2.1 The political archive

The archive, especially activist archives such as the Gorleben Archive, is a space that is worth considering in its own right (see for example Ashmore et al., 2012 on the "archival turn"). The archive is not only a source, but also a subject in itself. It is a system of knowledge that requires engagement and interaction; it is a space that must be put to critical use (Scott, 2008). In this sense I, again, follow (Massey, 2005) in understanding the archive as constitutive of multiple space-time and political trajectories. I argue that the Gorleben Archive functions as a political space that takes on a significant role in the region and resistance against nuclear energy.

First, it is a site for collective remembering. Spaces like the Gorleben Archive are vital to social movements like the Wendland Movement because they are instrumental in "constructing local histories and social narratives" (Collins Shortall, 2016: 143). There is a sense of empowerment that archives provide for a community. They shape a "local historical narrative, collective identity, and social memory of a locality" (ibid.: 144). The community archive is a powerful site for collective memory. The Gorleben Archive is deeply committed to providing an open space and resource for locals and visitors to partake in the act of remerging. This can take various forms through research, a visit with family, or donating materials to the archive. As individuals donate materials to the archive, conversations ensue about past events, reminiscing about shared histories and remembering the long forgotten. The process of archiving such materials becomes a collective undertaking and is implicit in the production of collective memory just as much as the preservation of such materials.

Second, through fostering an open and collective archival practice and archival space, the Gorleben Archive also provides a space for the (re)production and assertion of a collective counternarrative. Instead of leaving the curation of history up to 'official' sources, the archive is committed to preserving alternative histories and artefacts. For example, activism within the Wendland Movement was often depicted in the media as violent and anarchic, marginalising these protests as absurd and ineffective. A strongly held position with the movement was, however, that of non-violent protest, which emerges in many memos, minutes, and flyers in the archive. The archive becomes a place of power for marginalised groups that can use their alternative histories as tools to challenge the mainstream depictions of a moment in history. This becomes part of the tradition of a "history from below" (Featherstone and Griffin, 2016), in German often referred to as *Altagsgeschichte* (the history of the everyday), that allows stories, voices, and histories to be heard and told that might otherwise not be (Lüdtke, 2010).

Finally, the archive also acts as a site for continued resistance. Both the curation of alternative histories and localizing collective memories have become part of the Wendland Movement. The archive can continue to act as a site of protest. Flinn and Stevens (2009: 8) argue that archives are "a resource for continuing and renewing the fight". The archive allows locals, visitors, researchers, and activists to engage with the movement in a new way. The Gorleben Archive becomes a powerful site for continued solidarities with and within the Wendland Movement. The archive can be used to "directly seek to shape contemporary understandings of the past for political purposes" (Kelliher, 2018: 8). Linking experiences, documents, and materials from the past with contemporary issues and experiences through archival work produces a "usable past" (Griffin, 2018). Through work with two archives in Glasgow, Griffin (2018) demonstrates the value of archival practice as a politics of usable past-making. In particular, in working with an activist-led voluntary archival project he finds that this work is considered as a form of activism by its members and is part of the construction of a counter-narrative history. It is part of the work to engage with "history from below" (Featherstone and Griffin, 2016). I argue that the activist archive is an important space for politics, resistance, and history to come together and function as a renewing force in contemporary contentious politics.

3.2.2 Archival practice

Neither the archive nor archival practice is passive, but distinctly political in its production of history and in the act of remembering. I argue that the process of archiving and conducting research in the archive is a way of piecing together histories with intent. In doing so, I recognise that working in an archive means always dealing with "partial and multiple accounts" (Ogborn, 2011: 91). Just as with oral histories, the histories contained within the archive are a reflection of what is deemed worth remembering and collecting. Archives are not containers of history, but provocations. As I work with the archive, archival resources and materials allow stories to emerge. In this sense, "the archive is not just a selection of items but takes further form as an emergent story through the practices of talking and sorting" (Ashmore et al., 2012: 87). The process of producing and maintaining the archive is a practice worth interrogating.

On the one hand, neither the archivists nor the researchers have any control over what is recorded in the first place. The archive is thus "the result of contingency, of the haphazard accumulation of 'stuff'" (Withers, 2002: 305). Indeed, there is often a randomness to how materials end up in an archive. Nonetheless, I argue that members of the community do make decisions about what to 'record', what to keep in their attic, and what to donate to the archive. Especially considering the explicit political motivation behind the Gorleben Archive, there is a clear intention behind what is recorded in the archive. I do not discount the fact that there was often some reason why people had recorded certain events and kept certain materials. These motivations are just as important and interesting as the content of the 'stuff' itself. The photographs that were taken, the local newspaper clippings that were kept, and the diaries that were written about the Wendland Movement were accumulated with intent and purpose. They evidence the experiences from activists in a counter narrative to those stories and images that dominated the national media. Producing, collecting, storing, and eventually archiving these materials were conscious political acts that underpin and strengthen their motivations.

On the other hand, the archive (or better, those working in it) make decisions about what to keep, prioritize, display, and discard. The archive is not a neutral space that simply houses historical artefacts. Archiving is knowledge production

in action (Ogborn, 2003; Scott, 2008). How items are categorized, what keywords enable a search for them, what is displayed, and what is kept boxed-up all play a role in the curation of history. Additionally, rows of overflowing shelves with unsorted materials in the archive are a visual reminder of the resources, time and effort that must go into the archival process and the difficulty of a small, independent archive to provide all that.

At the same time, the researcher also plays a role in mediating the histories emerging out of archival practices. We must also be reflective and reflexive of the researcher's engagement with these materials. Punzalan (2009: 214) calls this a "co-witnessing" of the past where we as researchers make archives "more meaningful by being aware that as we perform archival tasks, we participate in, and to some extent, mediate, the communal remembrance of the past". Working in the archive is a subjective process through which I too participate in the production of meaning. Research has agency and power, in the sense that the archive is a "conscious articulation of others' memories" and unlocking the archive is "always in formation, brought into being through our intervention" (Withers, 2002: 309). Both the archive and the researchers mediate the histories of the Wendland Movement.

3.2.3 Working at the Gorleben Archive

When I was working in the Gorleben Archive, my initial search was guided by the three main periods of the movement I am investigation: the early period (up to 1980), the Free Republic of Wendland, and the Castor Transports in 1995, 1996, and 1997. Since particularly the latter were key events in the movement, many of the relevant materials were already archived and searchable. There were fewer documents from before 1980s, which however made these easier to access and survey. I draw on a wide variety of different materials from the archive including photographs, newspaper clippings, published books, diary entries, and others. Many of the materials were sorted into collections based on the activists that had donated them. Other collections were organised around activist groups such as the citizens' initiative and the farmers' cooperative aid association. These were especially useful in piecing together the early years of the Wendland Movement, where these organisations were central in shaping the movement.

By far the largest collection in the archive was the photography collection. Several professional photographers lived in Wendland, documented the movement over the years, and donated their extensive collections to the archive. These, together with many other photographs from activists that were donated over the years, make for a comprehensive collection. Especially in studying the Castor Transports and the Free Republic of Wendland, photography made these histories come alive. Because most materials were donated by activists from the area, the photographs are very personal, allowing an intimate insight into the spatial imaginaries of activists. Analytically, photography is a powerful tool for our engagement around us and it is through photographs that "we see, we remember, we imagine, we 'picture place'" (Schwartz and Ryan, 2021: 1). Photographs therefore enable places to be captured as a "spatiotemporal event" (Massey, 2005:
130).

The catalogued materials were searchable using keywords, years, and where the materials came from. Some of the collections were also digitised and accessible through the software. The majority of materials, however, had to be sorted through and scanned manually. Where possible, I uploaded my scans into the archival software and to help expand the archives online collection. I often began using a keyword search, finding a box with meeting minutes or a pamphlet I was searching for, but then leafed through the rest of the materials in the box, coming across materials I would not have searched for otherwise. Many other materials were not yet catalogued nor captured in the archival software. It was only with the help of the archivist, Birgit, that I was able to make sense of these materials at all. During both of my stays we spoke at length about the themes, events, and people I was interested in researching. She highlighted materials in the un-catalogued shelves which could be useful for me and through her own lengthy involvement with the anti-nuclear energy movement, she helped contextualise materials and point me towards materials that I otherwise would not have considered. During my time I also got to know the volunteers that help out regularly at the archive, spoke to them at length about my research and about their involvement with the anti-nuclear energy movement, and about the archive and the materials in it. The kitchen and many social spaces in the archive meant that we spent a lot of time working alongside each other during

my time there. It reinforces my argument that the Gorleben Archive is a space for collective remembering and as an object of research rather than a reservoir. I argue that the archive should be understood as a space within and through which to encounter the region and its resistance against the nuclear.

During my first visit at the archive, I also got to know Detlef, a volunteer at the archive, who offered to host me during my second stay. It was through him and his wife, that I got to know the Wendland much more intimately. We spent time travelling along the Castor routes and saw the interim storage facilities, but also spent time at the local pubs and restaurants where activists used to meet up regularly to discuss upcoming protests. It is during these moments that I turned to my field diary (see Chapter 3.3), not only as a way of recording notes, but to actively document my experience. It was an additional resource for triangulating data from oral histories and archival materials.

Once I completed my fieldwork at the archive, I was confronted with a large variety of materials. It was not only about bringing together data from interviews and the archive but managing the vast range of materials that I gathered in the archive from photographs, newspaper articles, diary entries, published accounts of protests, and so on. I worked to triangulate these materials by focusing on the three periods I chose at the start of my research. I recorded all of the interviews and transcribed these to be able to feed these into the coding program nVivo together with the archival materials. This meant it was easier to look at different types of data in conjunction with one another. I used an open, thematic coding system, which included labelling concepts and developing categories within the transcripts. This strategy enabled me to "see which direction to take in theoretically sampling before becoming too selective and focused on a particular problem" (Holton, 2010: 24). I began with a loose set of coding categories to sort my materials into categories. As a tool, nVivo allowed me to retain important metadata for the individual documents, with which I could identify exactly where the materials came from and how to cite them correctly. I coded both entire documents and separate sections, which was helpful for working with larger documents from the archive that contained data related to multiple different aspects and retain non-textual information from such documents as well (e.g., comic strips or drawings). Finally, I was also able

to differentiate between cases and nodes, which meant that I could sort materials both into the three events or time-periods (early years, FRW, and Castor Transports) and simultaneously mark documents according to codes. In this coding, I focused on a thematic analysis of the materials, which meant that I worked intuitively through the data and relied on my past and recently gained experience with the movement, materials, and necessary context. This kind of systematic sorting is a subjective and reflexive process (Hannam, 2002) that required an interrogation of my own motivations and interests, which I turn to next.

3.3 Reflections on fieldwork

To keep track of all of these insights, I reflected on my own motivations and interest in my diary alongside my reflections on the region and my research more generally. On the one hand, the field diary can be a data collection tool in an ethnographic sense. Routledge's (2002) activist academic research is one example of using field diaries as a way of collecting data on embodied and performative fieldwork. The field diary becomes an outlet for the negotiation of third space "within and between academia and activism" (ibid.: 478). In the context of my research in Wendland, my involvement was not as intense or problematic at that undertaken by Routledge, but the field diary format was a productive way to openly and freely record both important details and personal experiences in the field and the messiness of field work. On the other hand, the diary serves as a space for personal reflection on the research process. Humble (2012) and Punch (2012) both explore their use of field diaries to engage with the messiness of research and integrate personal emotional reflections within the research process. This can counteract the very common process of 'smoothing out' these messy and emotional realities of research in the field. Here I follow recent engagement with failure in Geography more broadly (see for example a special issue by Davies et al., 2021). Despite the messy nature of research being widely discussed, this is rarely reflected in research outputs (Harrowell et al., 2018). This is, therefore, an attempt to reflect on those things that did not go quite as planned. I find that this is not in fact as much about failures, but about not 'smoothing' out the difficulties of field research. The archival work was as much systematic as haphazard, the interviews were planned but, to me, often also felt chaotic. The field diary was an important

tool for reflecting on and recording emotional tensions and moments throughout field work. It keeps record of the emotional 'mess' we encounter, (re)produce, and engage with throughout our field work and recording it in such a way means understanding emotional 'mess' as a valid source of data reproduction. For Punch (2012: 90), "field diaries are a useful way of documenting the unexpected and unanticipated, the difficult and awkward, the messy and complex". Conducting research during uncertain times in an ongoing pandemic was challenging and tiring. Uncertainties over when and how I would be able to finish my fieldwork, if at all, meant it was difficult to prepare or plan ahead. Equally, once in Wendland the pressure to complete as much of what I had originally planned was high, as I did not know whether I would be able to return and I had already lost 6 months of research time.

3.3.1 Me, myself, and research: on positionality

I was, however, not as worried as I could have been, because I already knew the region and the archive. In 2017 I had already spent several weeks working and conducting research at the archive for my undergraduate dissertation. This thesis was a chance to revisit themes and events in more depth and build upon existing connections to the archive and participants. The initial interest in the region and the anti-nuclear energy movement stemmed from my work in the environmental research sector in Germany. Before I began my degree, I spent a year working in Berlin at the Oeko-Institute. The history of the institute is deeply interwoven with anti-nuclear energy movement in Germany. It was founded in the 1970s with the explicit aim of providing environmental movements with a strong, scientific foundation for their arguments for an energy transition and against nuclear energy, for example. In their founding declaration they state that: "citizens' initiatives (...) will only succeed in enforcing their demands in planning and in court if they themselves provide the necessary scientific justification" (Oeko-Institut, 1977). This connection to the anti-nuclear energy movement and commitment to environmental research can still be felt at the institute today. In the archive I even found documents from the Oeko-Institute, both letters of solidarity and research papers on geological end storage. It was through my connection to the institute in 2013-2014 and through my continued work there during my time as a PhD candidate from 2018 onwards, that I brought an interest in the history of energy policy and politics to my PhD.

Nonetheless, I am still an outsider to the Wendland Movement. When working with the materials and stories of others, I am grateful for the kindness and openness with which people in Wendland shared their stories with me. To bridge this gap between my work and interpretation of their stories and the participants, I had planned and gotten funding to host a small event at the Gorleben Archive. This would have given me a chance to give participants some more information about how I was using their stories, what this thesis was aiming to do, and get input from participants themselves on how to frame the research questions in this thesis. Due to Covid this was, however, not possible and unfortunately the engagement opportunities beyond the one-on-one interviews were very limited. In an effort to maintain some connection to the participants and the archive, I will be providing the archive not only with a copy of this thesis, but also a translated summary that will be more accessible to the participants. Indeed, the language barrier between the output of this research project and where (and in what language) this research was conducted should not be discounted. This also applies to how I engage with working between languages throughout this thesis.

3.3.2 Bilingual research: reflections on translation

It is important to note that this research was conducted in German and all primary and secondary sources had to be translated. While my first language is German and there was no language barrier when conducting the research, I briefly explore the implications of translation in research. Within the last half century, English has come to dominate international communication, becoming the lingua franca of interaction (Short et al., 2001: 3). Consequently, English also becomes the language of the global Geography community and translation often becomes a necessity. Within geography, a handful of authors have written about the process of translation, in particular when moving between German and English (Helms et al., 2005; Müller, 2007; Smith, 1996). Others have also begun delving into the politics of language and the specifics of translating concepts by closely examining translations of ‘the rural’ (Gkartzios et al., 2020), ‘landscape’ (Olwig, 1996, 2002), or ‘space’ (Gould, 1981) in non-Anglophone contexts. Most concepts that I work with here, I have translated, as well as interview quotes and archival documents. I therefore want to unpack how to go about translations and when not translating can be useful.

Often there is an assumption that "meaning is a timeless and universal essence" that is easily transferred across signifiers, semantic contexts and cultural discourses (Venuti, 2018: 50). However, the idea that a 'perfect' translation exists — in the sense of meaning being directly translated — is a "metaphysical ideology" (Roth, 2013: n/a). The process of translation is "a creative process in its own right, producing something new and novel rather than rendering, more or less perfectly, the original source" (ibid.: n/a). If meaning is (re)produced through translation, then translation is more than the transcription of text from the source language into the target language. Knowledge is a social artefact mediated by language, meaning that language carries more than just linguistic markers (Filep, 2009: 60). In many ways, language is both cultural and social; cultural in that is a form of symbolic organisation of the world, and social in that is reflects and expresses group memberships and relations (Sherzer, 1987: 296). The relationship between language and culture is of particular concern because:

> "A language is a part of a culture and a culture is a part of a language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of their language or culture" (Brown, 2008: 165).

In the case of *Heimat* this is particularly relevant. It is a term that has long and complex history in Germany, linguistically, culturally, socially, and politically. It cannot be simply translated to 'home' without losing all of the context that is necessary to understand the role that *Heimat* plays in the spatial imaginaries of the rural. Indeed, the act of translation itself "reveals important mechanisms of the performance of culture" (Torop, 2002: 593). Culture is embedded in language, and hence requires a careful consideration of how to translate not only language but also culture. Often, however, the characteristics of the source material get lost in translation. Indeed, "language translation is not a simple linguistic exercise", but requires careful attention to cultural connotations (Shklarov, 2007: 531).

Nonetheless, translations tend to "reinforce the invisibility of the source language" and so translation is not only a methodological issue, but a political one too (Temple and Young, 2004: 166). It is "the status of a language in the world … what one must consider when teasing out the politics of translation", Spivak (2012: 191) argues. Translations also exist within a hierarchical structure

framed by a wider global, cultural world system (Heilbron, 1999). Macht (2018) goes as far as claiming that the translation of non-English texts and data into English produces a certain linguistic hierarchy where English subordinates the translated language. To counter this marginalisation of the non-English language, in this case Romanian, Macht (2018: n/a) included Romanian words in the translation to "re-orientate the reader's attention to there being a textual difference that needs to be actively considered". Many researchers opt for this approach and maintain words and phrases of the original language in the translation (Müller, 2007), prioritising conceptual equivalence over word equivalence to produce meaning-based translations that are closer and more truthful to the original (Esposito, 2001). Also called "pure-borrowing" (see Molina and Hurtado Albir, 2002), this technique is part of what is known as a 'foreignizing' approach in Translation Studies and re-visualises the translator to the reader and highlights the politics of translation. This is what I do, by deliberately not translating *Heimat* drawing attention to the bilingual nature of this PhD. In the many instances where I do translate German text, I have worked towards trusting my language skills in discerning which translation was more accurate and occasionally cross-referenced my translations with other native German speakers with a high English language proficiency.

Translations are as much destructive as they are constructive. Almost inevitably, something will get lost in translation as most of those who do transition (perhaps less so those who 'only' read translations) are acutely aware. Translation is not, however, shaped only by loss. As meaning, in all its fluidity and relationally, moves from one language to another, translation also has the power to (re)construct meaning. Translation is constructive in the sense that is forcibly deconstructs meaning in an effort to find an equivalent, even if that means acknowledging that there is in fact no equivalent. It constructs a stability of meaning that then allows words to travel across language boundaries before being immediately released back into a familiar instability. It is this deconstruction and stability that can open-up new ways of finding nuance in meaning, exploring and acknowledging difference and situating knowledge.

3.4 Concluding thoughts

In reflecting on the research I conducted for this thesis, I am most struck by how much I was able to do. Considering the difficulties and uncertainties that came with conducting fieldwork in 2020, it is remarkable that I spoke to over 20 participants and was able to spend extensive periods in the Gorleben Archive. I got to know the archive and those working in it extremely well, had intimate insights into the personal lives of participants, and was able to explore the region through them. The time I spent in the region was extremely valuable for my own understanding of the spatial relations that I am drawing out of the materials and interviews.

In doing so, I have opted for bringing together different types of materials, form the archive and the oral histories, that give some indication of the history of the movement. I argue that these are complimentary methods that when orientated towards engaging with a history from below (Featherstone and Griffin, 2016) can be used to tell a constructive history of resistance. The Gorleben Archive is unique in this constellation because it was founded with the explicit political purpose to preserve these histories from below. It is in and through this space that I construct new space-time trajectories of the Wendland Movement and produce those counter-histories and narratives intrinsic to engaging with history from the ground up.

In conducting oral histories, I was particularly interested in drawing out participants' trajectories and how their personal biographies intersected with those of others. It demonstrates how activists themselves understood and reflect on an emerging politicisation of themselves and how this led to productive negotiation of collectivity. I also argued that oral histories are uniquely suited to grounding stories in specific places and hence draw out these spatial relations. By combing oral histories with a mapping exercise, I channel these potentials or oral histories and further draw together the intersections of identity, collectivity, resistance, and place. In the following three chapters I bring together the oral histories and archival materials to piece together the three phases of the Wendland Movement I am concerned with, starting with the early years of the movement in the 1970s.

Chapter 4 The early years: spatial imaginaries of Wendland

In the 1950s and 1960s nuclear energy became an increasingly important source for energy production in West Germany (see Bodansky, 2005; Renn and Marshall, 2016). This included developments along multiple parts of the nuclear energy cycle, including building nuclear reactors, reprocessing sites, and waste storage facilities. Besides the nuclear waste storage facilities, there were also plans for nuclear power plants to be built in Wendland (interview, Katharina, 2020). These early plans would have bundled nuclear infrastructure within a single region in West Germany. Nuclear energy could be produced, nuclear waste recycled, then re-used, and finally stored both over- and underground within a few square kilometres. Even though plans for nuclear power plants were never realized, it is worth examining and contextualizing how and why Gorleben was chosen as the premier site for nuclear energy infrastructure. Particularly because a parliamentary investigation completed in 2013 showed that Gorleben was chosen primarily for political reasons that were later justified with scientific research. The geological storage site in Wendland was ultimately classified as unsuitable for nuclear waste storage in 2020 (Bundesgesellschaft für Endlagerung, 2020).

To understand these political motivations, I examine the role that spatial imaginaries play during this time. By spatial imaginaries I mean those visions, understandings, and future imaginaries that pro- and anti-nuclear activists hold of what Wendland is and what it should be. These visions, I argue, are key to understanding how Wendland was chosen in the first place. Throughout this chapter I focus on how pro-nuclear imaginaries became fronts of contestation for activists to articulate resistance against the nuclear. I argue that the spatial imaginaries of Wendland, held by pro-nuclear actors, were key in the decision-making process (and subsequent justifications of the decisions made) and worked to actively produce Wendland as a nuclear region. I begin by exploring the spatialised techno-scientific imaginaries and knowledges that were used to justify the decision to choose Wendland and then turn towards how rural imaginaries, particularly those surrounding economic development, played into that decision-making process.

I argue that these spatial imaginaries are deeply rooted in understandings of rurality. On the one hand, over what constitutes the rural, and on the other hand, in a discussion of what the rural should and could be. Normative, conservative rural imaginaries dominate pro-nuclear discourses. Wendland was perceived as an economically backward and underdeveloped region in need of rejuvenation, as a region that was politically conservative and therefore unlikely to resist the plans for nuclear development. Nuclear infrastructures were framed as an important economic opportunity for the region. On the other side, local activists draw on similar traditional notions of the rural to back their anti-nuclear stance. They evoke imaginaries of untouched nature, framing the lack of industry and infrastructural developments as a positive feature. It is this counter-development to urban centres or industrialised peripheries that they envision for Wendland's future. The contestation over nuclear energy is therefore equally a contestation over the role and future of the rural.

I also use this chapter as an opportunity to introduce two of the most important activist groups in the Wendland Movement: the citizens' initiative[8] Lüchow-Dannenberg (*Bürgerinitiative*; BI) and the farmers' cooperative aid associated (*Bäuerliche Notgemeinschaft*; BNG). The predominantly conservative citizens' initiative has its roots in the region and played an important part in articulating those rural spatial imaginaries in the early years of the Wendland Movement. The farming community is the second important activist group that grew from within the region. They built upon the agricultural traditions in Wendland to articulate their anti-nuclear stance and evoke protectionist, environmental imaginaries of Wendland. I focus in particular on the German term *Heimat*, which can be loosely translated to home or homeland, as a concept through which activists from Wendland frame their activism. It is a term that brings together notions of, identity, belonging, and rurality, but can often be conservative and exclusionary. Nonetheless, working through these spatial imaginaries of the rural *Heimat* is key to understanding how activists from Wendland became politically active. I explore the complex interplay between these political identities and transformations that allowed progressive political identities to emerge. I acknowledge how the conservative sentiments associated

[8] See for example Smith (1996) on citizens' initiatives in Germany.

with *Heimat* can seem disjointed from the progressive politics usually associated with social movements. Nonetheless, I argue that these are important to contextualise the political identities and developments of activists from the region and in tun, to understand the unique constellation of activists that came together in the Wendland Movement as a nuclear community.

4.1 Techno-scientific knowledges and imaginaries

In the early years, just as Gorleben was chosen as the site for nuclear infrastructural development, those living in Wendland were still coming to terms with being and becoming a nuclear community. This process was also intertwined with the production of expert knowledges about the nuclear. Pro-nuclear actors drew on geological and technological expertise to justify their choice, routinely emphasising the safety of nuclear infrastructure and the suitability of Gorleben's geology for a geological end storage facility. The knowledge and expertise that nuclear infrastructure developers, such as the German Association for Nuclear Fuel Reprocessing (*Deutsche Gesellschaft zur Wiederaufbereitung von Kernbrennstoffen*; DWK), brought to Wendland were meant to support the choice of Gorleben for the NEZ and reassure worried residents. Elite knowledges from elite nuclear communities in the traditional, techno-scientific sense, were being mobilised to enforce political decisions. In doing so, pro-nuclear political actors drew a clear distinction between who and from where legitimate knowledge is produced. It was, however, precisely these techno-scientific knowledges that became one of the central fronts of contestation for the Wendland Movement. Over the many decades of protest in Wendland, activists from various groups challenged the claims made about nuclear energy and waste storage, especially in terms of its necessity and safety. In collaboration with research institutes and universities, activist groups produced counter-knowledges and used these to mobilise a wide base of support.

The tensions over science and technology extend beyond the politics of knowledge production and are linked to a very specific set of spatial imaginaries. I draw on what Jasanoff and Kim (2009) term sociotechnical imaginaries to bring matters of knowledge and technology into the realm of spatial imaginaries. These sociotechnical imaginaries are "collectively held and performed visions of

desirable futures (or of resistance against the undesirable) … animated by shared understandings of forms of social life and social order attainable through, and supportive of, advances in science and technology" (ibid.: 123). Technology and science play a key role in the imaginaries of the future. In these imaginaries the factual converges with what are considered legitimate and normative ways of ordering society; they act as a continuous and collective negotiation of meaning both of the present and the future (Jasanoff, 2015). It is important, however, to bring a spatial dimension into these sociotechnical imaginaries. Where technology, science, and advancement are placed matters, especially in the context of energy production. As Franquesa (2018) has shown, while the benefits of high-energy modernity are placed predominantly in urban centres, the technologies necessary for this sociotechnical modernity are often situated in the peripheries. There is a clear differentiation between what kinds of benefits of advances in science and technology are experienced where.

While Jasanoff (2004) acknowledges that these sociotechnical imaginaries are co-produced, she and others focus on policy discourses, state administrations, and established institutions as the key actors in this production (Yang et al., 2018). Activist and oppositional groups in Wendland, however, were actively involved in the production and interpretation of techno-scientific knowledges, allowing the associated social and spatial imaginaries to become sites of resistance rather than simply functions of top-down policymaking. I draw on these sociotechnical imaginaries but think in more pluralistic ways about the spatialised techno-scientific imaginaries as a way of incorporating imaginaries of non-institutionalised actors. Where scientific discourses may serve to turn matters of concern into matter of fact that are harder to dispute, activist groups work to frame matters of fact back into matters of concern that they are then able to dispute (Bettini and Karaliotas, 2013).

Pro-nuclear actors, on the other hand, focused on two things. First, the nuclear industry focused on proving to the local community how beneficial the infrastructural developments would be for Wendland. The admirative head (*Oberkreisdirektor*) of the Lüchow-Dannenberg region and advocate for the nuclear industrial developments in the region, Klaus Poggendorf, published a book in 2008, reflecting on how the region changed over the years. He

summarizes the region's "problems" as follows: first, through the inner-German border the region became increasingly peripheral; second, the low population density meant that modern infrastructural development was expensive and had relied on state subsidies; third, structural changes leading to the decline in agricultural professions caused high unemployment and out migration which also meant there were fewer tax incomes for local governing bodies (Poggendorf, 2008: 28). This is a reflection of many pro-nuclear arguments that saw these industrial developments as "a way to overcome the structural weaknesses in the region" (ibid.: 115). Pro-nuclear actors championed that the nuclear industry had concrete plans to bring jobs to Wendland and for developing regional construction industries (ibid.: 116). They dismissed arguments that Wendland could become a model region for ecological living (*ökologische Modellregion*), that would preserve the natural landscape and push for organic agricultural practice, as unrealistic and incapable of actually alleviating the 'problems' identified. Second, pro-nuclear actors focus on dominating discourses of nuclear safety. They emphasised that radiation levels would not exceed prescribed limits, that aerosol filters prevented radioactive gases from entering the atmosphere, or that the geological salt deposits in Gorleben were well suited for the storage of nuclear waste (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Wiederaufarbeitung von Kernbrennstoffen mbH, n.d.a, n.d.b). An information centre was finally opened in 1979, but by then the public discourses around safety and risk had already created a blanket uncertainty about the nuclear infrastructural developments.

The techno-scientific knowledges produced by the nuclear industry were of particular concern for activists because they often felt that the production and dissemination of knowledges was politically tainted. Alfred, a farmer in the farmers' cooperative aid association, remarked in an open letter:

> "I realised that 'civil servant scientists' are a special kind of person. Since they are public servants in the field of geological end storage, they seem to think that the best way to serve the state is by ensuring that there will be an end storage facility soon. Since only Gorleben is being considered, they see it as their job to prove that the salt dome in Gorleben is especially well suited for geological storage" (Gorleben Archiv, 1996f).

In his statement, Alfred begins to identify how the production of scientific knowledge around the suitability of Gorleben as a site for nuclear waste storage

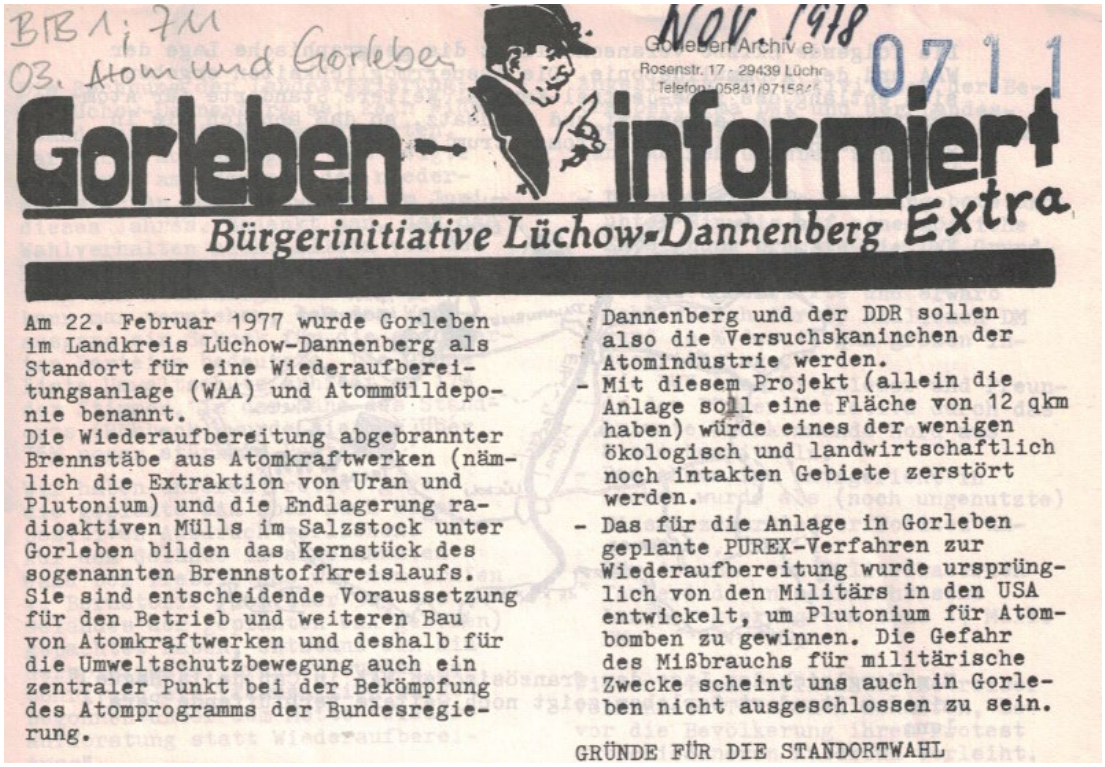
and the state apparatus were interlinked. It became apparent that pointing out these links was important for articulating and mobilising resistance. It also led activists acknowledging the importance of producing counter-knowledges. Making explicit the direct links between political decision-making and scientific knowledge production destabilised the way pro-nuclear actors sought to work with the local population to promote the nuclear. Indeed, science and technology, are never impartial instruments of policymaking, but materially, culturally, and politically produced and instrumentalised. Scientific knowledge is a "political practice that generates a particular form of understanding of effectiveness, objectivity, and trustworthiness" (Yang et al., 2018: 281). By treating techno-geological knowledges about Wendland as an explicitly political practice, activists were able to unpack how nuclearity is actively produced in the region and identify this knowledge production as a space of contention. Activists like Alfred identified very early on that the science justifying Gorleben as a suitable site for geological end storage was not objective or complete. At the same time, it was not until 2013 that an official investigation confirmed these suspicions and only in 2020 was the salt dome in Gorleben excluded for nuclear end-storage based on geological data.[9] Although the resistance did crucial work in identifying the politics of knowledge production around Gorleben and worked to counter these dominant knowledges, it was once again the elite spaces of knowledges production that were necessary to legitimise what those in the Wendland Movement had known for decades. It makes clear, that disrupting elite knowledge production and the spaces within which legitimisation happens is not easily done.

Nonetheless, groups and individuals in Wendland actively sought to gain and dissipate scientifically grounded knowledge as part of their activist engagement. This kind of knowledge was frequently summarised in flyers, debated within the pages of the local newspaper (Elbe-Jetzel-Zeitung), and written about in magazines. The Lüchow-Dannenberg citizens' initiative in particular focused their efforts on gathering, collating and disseminating information on nuclear

[9] The government designated a Gorleben Commission to look into these allegations and concluded in 2013, that Gorleben was not chosen as the site for the nuclear waste storage facility (NEZ) purely based on geological suitability of the site. The search for a nuclear waste repository site has since published a report that excludes Gorleben as a potential site (see: https://www.bge.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Standortsuche/Wesentliche_Unterlagen/Zwischenbericht_Teilgebiete/Zwischenbericht_Teilgebiete_-_Englische_Fassung_barrierefrei.pdf).

energy and nuclear waste storage to inform and mobilise. In the early 1970s they regularly published a magazine called *Gorleben Informiert* (Gorleben Informs) for precisely this purpose. Where pro-nuclear actors continuously argued that planned nuclear infrastructures are safe, the BI countered these claims, arguing that, for example:

> "Even during the standard operation of a WAA [*Wiederaufarbeitungsanlage*; nuclear waste reprocessing site] produces significantly more radioactivity than a nuclear plant … Nobody knows how safe the storage of nuclear waste in salt deposits over thousands of years is" (Bürgerinitiative Lüchow-Dannenberg, 1978).



BIB 1; 711
03. Atom und Gorleben

NOV. 1978

Gorleben Archiv e.
Rosenstr. 17 - 29439 Lüch
Telefon: 05841/9715

0711

Gorleben informiert

Bürgerinitiative Lüchow-Dannenberg Extra

Am 22. Februar 1977 wurde Gorleben im Landkreis Lüchow-Dannenberg als Standort für eine Wiederaufbereitungsanlage (WAA) und Atommülldeponie benannt.
Die Wiederaufbereitung abgebrannter Brennstäbe aus Atomkraftwerken (nämlich die Extraktion von Uran und Plutonium) und die Endlagerung radioaktiven Mülls im Salzstock unter Gorleben bilden das Kernstück des sogenannten Brennstoffkreislaufs. Sie sind entscheidende Voraussetzung für den Betrieb und weiteren Bau von Atomkraftwerken und deshalb für die Umweltschutzbewegung auch ein zentraler Punkt bei der Bekämpfung des Atomprogramms der Bundesregierung.

Dannenberg und der DDR sollen also die Versuchskaninchen der Atomindustrie werden.
- Mit diesem Projekt (allein die Anlage soll eine Fläche von 12 qkm haben) würde eines der wenigen ökologisch und landwirtschaftlich noch intakten Gebiete zerstört werden.
- Das für die Anlage in Gorleben geplante PUREX-Verfahren zur Wiederaufbereitung wurde ursprünglich von den Militärs in den USA entwickelt, um Plutonium für Atombomben zu gewinnen. Die Gefahr des Mißbrauchs für militärische Zwecke scheint uns auch in Gorleben nicht ausgeschlossen zu sein.

GRÜNDE FÜR DIE STANDORTWAHL

Figure 6 – Magazine "Gorleben informs: Extra" (Bürgerinitiative Lüchow-Dannenberg, 1978)

An open letter from the Social Democrats (*Sozial Demokratische Partei;* SPD) also goes into the details of geo-scientific knowledge drawing on arguments brought forward by parts of the scientific community such as:

> "1. The overlying rock above the salt dome is not as thick and dense as assumed; 2. Caustic solutions and gases have been found in the salt dome and it cannot be excluded with certainty that they are not a potential source of danger for the repository; 3. The end storage capacity of the salt dome is far smaller than initially assumed" (Gorleben Archiv, 1984).

Both of these excerpts demonstrate the depth of scientific knowledge that the BI and the SPD went into when questioning expert nuclear knowledge. There are also a variety of actors that become involved with unpacking the knowledges brought forward by the nuclear industry. The BI focused on making their concerns around nuclear energy and waste disposal known in the region by disseminating it in an accessible format through the magazine. It was a strategy to inform those living in Wendland. Engaging with these techno-scientific debates opened up a new world, as activists made an effort to engage with the nuclear energy debates to contest the techno-scientific arguments being brought to them. This in turn also lead to an expansion of the spaces through which they imagined their resistances. They fought for a legitimate space within which they were able to produce counter-knowledges as a nuclear community.

Political actors such as the SPD used much more specific, technoscientific knowledge utilizing the same language as pro-nuclear actors. This meant that they engaged more directly with those political actors and industry partners involved in pushing nuclear developments in Wendland. The SPD coupled these arguments to a request for further exploration of other geological end storage sites, specifically other types of geological storage options such as granite. They finish their letter with a warning, that focusing solely on Gorleben could result in a scenario where the salt dome is found to be unsuitable for end storage and that the search would have to start all over. Their contestation was based on ensuring due process, while resistance emanating directly from the region engaged with techno-scientific knowledges as a way of legitimising their opposition. They wanted to ensure that the BI was not only in ideological opposition to the nuclear but founded their contestations on the same knowledges that were considered ‘legitimate’ by those ‘legitimate’ actors.

This is also explicit in the BI’s extensive participation in more recent parliamentary and institutional forums set up to guide a new search for a suitable nuclear waste repository site in Germany (interview, Georg, 2020). The BI’s engagement within such institutionalised spaces was, however, a continuous source of conflict within the organisation. Members of the BI walked the line between legitimising their resistance, enacting change, and framing effective oppositional politics, and within institutionalised pollical spaces and direct-

action organising on the ground. Many criticised the BI's 'conservative' approach to political organising and participation in those institutionalised spaces. This echoes arguments that "one cannot 'do justice' to the oppressed by using the (practical/conceptual) tools that produced their oppression in the first place" (Velicu and Kaika, 2017: 307; see also Benford, 2005; Young, 2001). Arguably, entering into a dialogue within an established framework and within a pre-conceived identity does not allow for truly transformative politics (Rancière, 2004).

Nonetheless, the BI continuously sought to engage with such pre-established frameworks, primarily those within which techno-scientific knowledges were being produced. As the BI gained expertise and a reputation as a trustworthy source of techno-scientific knowledge, they seized this as an opportunity to work within institutionalised decision-making processes (interview, Franz, 2020). They did not however idealise those engagements, as Georg (interview, 2020), who has been working in the BI for over 10 years, points out. For example, it is not always clear whether the BI's voice will truly be heard or if they are invited into those spaces simply to claim a level of community engagement without any real influence (ibid.). During the early years of the movement and the BI, however, a focus on techno-scientific knowledges came down to inform those in Wendland, who for the large part had no previous experience with political organising or oppositional politics. Focusing on techno-scientific knowledges and imaginaries was an accessible way for many to find first entry points into anti-nuclear energy arguments and political mobilisations.

Techno-scientific imaginaries did not, however, remain confined to the spaces of 'legitimate' knowledge production. Contestations over knowledge production and the techno-scientific spatialised imaginaries of Wendland were also worked into direct-action spaces. While it was important for the BI to debate within established spaces of knowledge production, as a way of legitimising their concerns, the BI did not lose sight of its position outside of these spaces and found multiple ways of engaging with the 'science' behind nuclear energy. The BI found itself oscillating between institutionalised forms of resistance and its work as a key organising body for direct action protests in Wendland. This letter written by the BI was sent to members of parliament and various individuals

involved in advocating for nuclear waste infrastructure together with a packet of sand from Sellafield (formerly Windscale) (Figure 7). The letter reads:

> "Dear Recipient,
>
> RADIOACTIVITY from nuclear facilities cannot be seen, smelt, tasted of felt: still it is deadly.
>
> ---- Caution, this sand is radioactive ----
>
> This sand is from the beach in close proximity to the nuclear plants in Windscale, England. This beach should be closed to the public, because for all kids who are still allowed to play there, the active radiation dose lies far above 100 mrem per year.
>
> This sand contains radio nuclides, such as Eurupidum 154, that according to the operators should not be leaking from the plants.
>
> Just like for the British many years ago, we are being lied to about the safety and harmlessness of a German reprocessing plant in Dragahn[10]" (Bürgerinitiative Lüchow-Dannenberg, 1984).

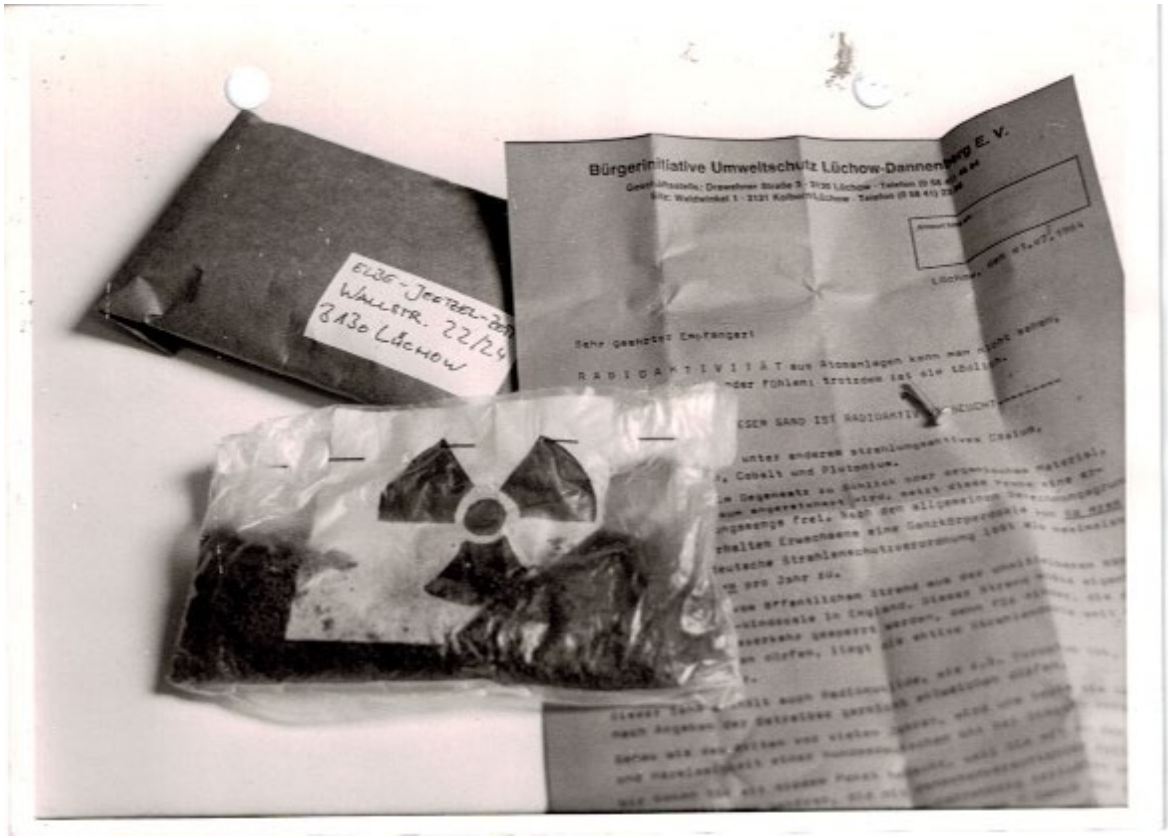


Figure 7 – 'Radioactive' letter sent by the citizens' initiative (Bürgerinitiative Lüchow-Dannenberg, 1984)

[10] After plans for a nuclear waste reprocessing site in Gorleben were scrapped, new plans were formulated to build the site 15 miles west of Gorleben near the village Dragahn.

As activists expanded their knowledge basis, they were also able to make connections to other sites of nuclear energy or waste infrastructure, such as Windscale, now known as Sellafield[11], in the UK. Debates around nuclear energy production span multiple spatialities within the cycle of energy production and that those cross-national borders. In doing so, activists in the Wendland Movement begin to understand and articulate the nuclearization of Wendland. The transnational materialities and the circulation of nuclearity across seemingly disparate sites become apparent in the engagement with radioactivity. Activists in Wendland saw their struggles against the developments in Gorleben to be intertwined with struggles elsewhere. This was especially clear in the engagement with developments in Sellafield and a close engagement with anti-nuclear energy movements in France (Birgit, field diary, 2020). By focusing on the multiple spaces of nuclear energy and waste disposal, activists were able to identify their struggle as conditioned by a wider set of relations that are already networked and connected to struggles elsewhere. In that sense, spatial imaginaries can be effective in manoeuvring and uncovering the varying and interconnected spaces of contentious politics surrounding the nuclear.

4.2 Rural imaginaries

Prophecies of little resistance in Wendland were soon proven wrong, as activists took to the streets. Indeed, proposed infrastructural developments in rural areas are often accompanied by some form of protest or resistance (Della Bosca and Gillespie, 2018; Ransan-Cooper et al., 2018; Rice and Burke, 2018; Velicu, 2012; Woods, 2003). Concerns from locals often centre around the impact developments have on the natural landscape, how costs and benefits are distributed, and how decision-making processes and community participation unfolds (Naumann and Rudolph, 2020). While these might be the specific apprehensions against such developments, I expand on Woods' (2003) work by arguing that resistances in these instances are more fundamentally about how ruralities are interpreted, how the rural is imagined and understood, and what competing visions of (rural) futures are articulated through resistance.

[11] Sellafield is a large nuclear site in Cumbria, England. The site is used for nuclear waste storage but was also a site for nuclear fuel reprocessing until 2022 and nuclear power generation until 2003.

4.2.1 Economic imaginaries

Although the geological suitability of the area surrounding Gorleben salt dome was a key argument for Gorleben as the site of an NEZ, I argue that there were also other spatial imaginaries at work that were equally instrumental in the decision-making process. Specifically, imaginaries of economic 'backwardness' that I argue stem from normative visions of the rural. These imaginaries, I argue, are interlinked with the peripheralisation of spaces and how spaces are produced as nuclear. This is often the case in (rural) areas experiencing energy infrastructure development in the context of the renewable energy transition.

Industrial interventions in rural regions are often framed as necessary and positive revitalisations of economically weak areas. This has also come into focus within studies of energy infrastructure developments in the context of renewable energy transitions in rural areas (Lennon and Scott, 2017; Phadke, 2011; Rudolph and Kirkegaard, 2019; Woods, 2003). These studies link spatial imaginaries of technological advancement with economic development specifically in rural areas. Naumann and Rudolph (2020) call for a further ruralising of energy research, as a way of introducing new spatial dimensions to energy transition research and gaining insights into rural change. Rural regions are characterised as sparsely populated and economically underdeveloped areas in turn becoming targets for renewable energy facilities (Munday et al., 2011; Rudolph and Kirkegaard, 2019). The rural is thought of as a socio-economic resource for the energy transition processes (Naumann and Rudolph, 2020). While recent studies on rural energy infrastructures tend to focus exclusively on renewable energies, the rural imaginaries of Wendland very clearly mirror those described here. The discussions around rural land use and energy infrastructure are not necessarily unique to renewables, nor are they necessarily 'new'. Similar energy discourses can be seen in nuclear energy disputes in Wendland that warrants not only a ruralising but also a historicization of energy research (see for example Paul, 2018) to better understand these connections between energy and the rural

The Lüchow-Dannenberg region was, like many rural parts of West Germany, structurally and economically weak. High unemployment and a lack of job opportunities meant that the district had not undergone any significant

structural changes since the end of the second World War. Even those living in Wendland were not unaware of the economic difficulties that the region faced. Lily, an older woman from the region who later became involved with the movement, wrote in her diary:

> "The *Wirtschaftswunder*[12] left us untouched. Despite all efforts it was not possible for any significant industrial plants to settle in the district and thus create permanent jobs. To this day, unemployment affects around 16% of the population" (Gorleben Archiv, 2004).

The NEZ was seen as an opportunity for Wendland to finally profit from infrastructural and industrial development in West Germany. In these articulations, Wendland goes through multiple iterations of rural imaginaries. Similar to the imaginaries articulated around many rural regions in the Global North (see for example Nilsson and Lundgren, 2015 on rural discourses in Sweden) Wendland is, on the one hand, understood as a region that has been neglected by central political powers and thus as somewhat a 'problematic' region. This is articulated both by pro-nuclear actors and locals. On the other hand, Wendland is imagined as a potential resource for development and as a region for potential growth. These discourses do not remain imagined but dictate what action is planned to either get these regions out of their role as problematic or victims and to mobilize the potentials and resources that they offer. At the same time, activists identify these kinds of rural imaginaries that frame Wendland as 'backwards' and underdeveloped. This allows them to critically unpack how and why a nuclearisation of the region is happening.

The pro-nuclear imaginary of (rural) Wendland was most pronounced in how developers advertised the NEZ and other nuclear infrastructures with a promise of jobs. They argued that the NEZ would bring 5,900 jobs to the region in the long term (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Wiederaufarbeitung von Kernbrennstoffen mbH, 1987: 44). Activist Katharina (interview, 2020), who grew up in the region, identifies this as part of a pattern:

[12] Literally 'economic wonder'. A specific phrase used to advertise economic up-turn in West Germany in the 1960s and 70s.

> "I think there is a pattern here, where the nuclear industries often go to places, even now, where they think that offering jobs and an income means that people believe in the development and are for it."

Katharina clearly links the economic realities and spatial imaginaries associated with (rural) places to the development imaginaries of nuclear industries. For a region that was mostly reliant upon the agricultural sector and where younger generations were leaving in search of job opportunities, the prospect of an industry that could offer stable job opportunities, was not unattractive. There are many instances, also within the nuclear industry, where these kinds of development and benefits are welcomed by communities.

While this was mostly rejected in Wendland, there was a clear geographical differentiation in how the development was perceived, especially in the early years. When I travelled through Wendland with Detlef and his wife, they pointed out that the closer you got to the facilities in Gorleben, the higher the acceptance for the developments got (field diary, 2020). Many living in the nearby towns Gorleben and Gartow owned land, which had been sold to developers for a much higher price than they ever could have hoped for in the region. Many of the staff working at the nuclear site lived in the town immediately surrounding the facility as well. Equally, the nuclear industry spent a significant amount of money on the public spaces in the town. I remember clearly noticing that the sidewalks were much newer and nicer than in any of the other towns we had driven through (field diary, 2020). Many of the houses were new or renovated as well. It seemed that everybody knew that there was more money in Gorleben than anywhere else in the region and that the nuclear industry was the reason for this. Katharina (interview, 2020) also told me that she still refuses to visit the public swimming pool and thermal baths in Gorleben, because they were sponsored by the nuclear industry.

The nuclear industry had a clear vision of what was lacking in Wendland and used financial capital to transform the region. This led to a marked and visible change in the infrastructural landscape. At the same time, this vision was part of a politicised effort to convince a community of the benefits of the nuclear. The more visible the financial investments were, the easier it was to do this. This demonstrates how important it is to think about spatial imaginaries in conjunction with infrastructures and highlights the transformative potential of

spatial imaginaries. I also argue that this example highlights the need for a spatial differentiated reflection on infrastructural developments. This is not only linked to proximity to developments, as if often argued in relation to wind-farm developments (Phadke, 2011; Woods, 2003), but also about the distribution of (financial) benefits of these developments.

The spatial imaginary of an economically weak region in need of rejuvenation that spurred on developers found most resonance and was shared by those who were mostly directly going to profit from that economic support. This is somewhat contrary to how industrial interventions in the natural environment or rural landscapes are usually interpreted by local populations. Often proximity dictates that communities living directly in those regions where developments take place are critical, while those companies driving forward industrial developments and living outside of the region immediately affected, tend to profit from and hence support those developments (see Calvário et al., 2017; Velicu and Kaika, 2017). There is a spatial nuance to how the nuclearisation of Wendland is perceived that goes beyond spatial proximity and instead focuses on who benefits in what way.

4.2.2 Pro-nuclear rural imaginaries

More broadly speaking, these kinds of economic pro-nuclear arguments are a reflection of the normative spatial imaginaries of rurality that pro-nuclear actors hold. They were making calculated guesses on what kind of arguments rural populations would and should respond to, what their priorities are, and how they react to infrastructural developments. The nuclearisation of Wendland includes both a construction of rurality as backwards and an instrumentalisation of a romantic notion of the rural to promote development. I argue that by examining the ways in which pro-nuclear actors justified their decisions and marketed nuclear developments a clear rural, spatial imaginary comes to the fore. It is along these imaginaries that activists in turn articulate their resistance.

In Wendland, the development of nuclear waste infrastructure was particularly driven forward by Kurt-Dieter Grill, the CDU member of the local government in Lower-Saxony. Through an inquiry into how Gorleben was initially chosen as the site for nuclear waste disposal, it became clear that Mr. Grill had advocated on

behalf of Gorleben and seen a chance for structural policy changes in the region. A witness testified that Mr. Grill had argued that:

> "Little resistance is to be expected in Wendland and that they would be happy to have the 'structural help', the employment that this would bring to the inner-German border area" (Fraktion DIE LINKE, 2012: 9).

These simplistic assumptions of the region and the patronising tone of such remarks make clear the kinds of normative imaginaries of the rural (as conservative, traditional, and backwards) those in power held. The rural is constructed as passive and quiescent. The rural is not just understood as a resource but as a space where a specific set of interests, identities, and (geo)politics come together to produce an idealised space for nuclear infrastructural development. These spatial imaginaries highlight that Wendland is not only inherently peripheral, due to its geography and socio-economic characteristics, but that in an effort to bring the nuclear into this region, Wendland is actively produced and framed as a rural periphery.

This kind of peripheralised, nuclearized rural imaginary can also be clearly seen in the brochures and leaflets developers produced to advertise their infrastructure and explain the technology and science behind it, as for example in a brochure from the DWK, advertising a nuclear waste reprocessing plant (Figure 8). Such a reprocessing plant breaks down spent nuclear fuel (nuclear waste) into plutonium and uranium, which can then be re-used in nuclear power plants. While this is often advertised as a form of sustainable recycling and can multiply the energy extracted from natural uranium, it is a very costly process that needs to be conducted in a highly controlled environment (BASE, 2021). It also produces nuclear waste, just in another form. Such a reprocessing site is, in essence, a chemical factory, but as is clear in the image below, in an effort to convince a concerned public of such a technology, other spatial imaginaries are mobilised. The wide, 'empty' countryside in the background and the greenery surrounding the facilities give a sense of an easy integration of the facility into the existing landscape. It is portrayed as a site that will not impose itself nor disturb the rural idyll. Documents from the NILEG (*Niedersächsische Landesentwicklungsgesellschaft*), the development agency in Lower-Saxony, (1981) also show plans to 'green' the nuclear sites as a "compensation for the

forest-covered area lost to construction" (NILEG, 1981: 7). It reveals how pro-nuclear actors like the DWK mobilises rural imaginaries to identify what they perceive to be the priorities of those living in Wendland, in this case an untouched natural landscape, and cater to these through their information campaigns.

Figure 8 – "A reprocessing site in Lower-Saxony" (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Wiederaufarbeitung von Kernbrennstoffen mbH, n.d.b)

These brochures also produce a certain imaginary of the industrial development itself. I argue that this is deeply rooted in the spatial imaginary of Wendland as rural. The image on the right is the front cover of the DWK's brochure for the reprocessing plan. It depicts a barn with exposed beams and light-red bricks. The building reflects the architecture of Wendland that can be seen in almost every corner of the region. It acknowledges the specific regional and rural identity of Wendland. The building on the cover is in fact the information centre of the DWK in Gorleben. It was built as a visitor centre, where the technicalities around the nuclear infrastructures were advertised and explained. As a symbolic pro-nuclear space, they settled in Gorleben itself in a building that is emblematic for the Wendland, its rurality, and its regional identity. This reflects the spatial imaginary that the DWK has of Wendland and how they might make use of this to engage, convince, and integrate into the local population. On the brochure, it poses an entirely non-threatening image as the cover, which bears no mention or resemblance to a nuclear waste reprocessing site.

4.2.3 The rural idyll and rural alternatives

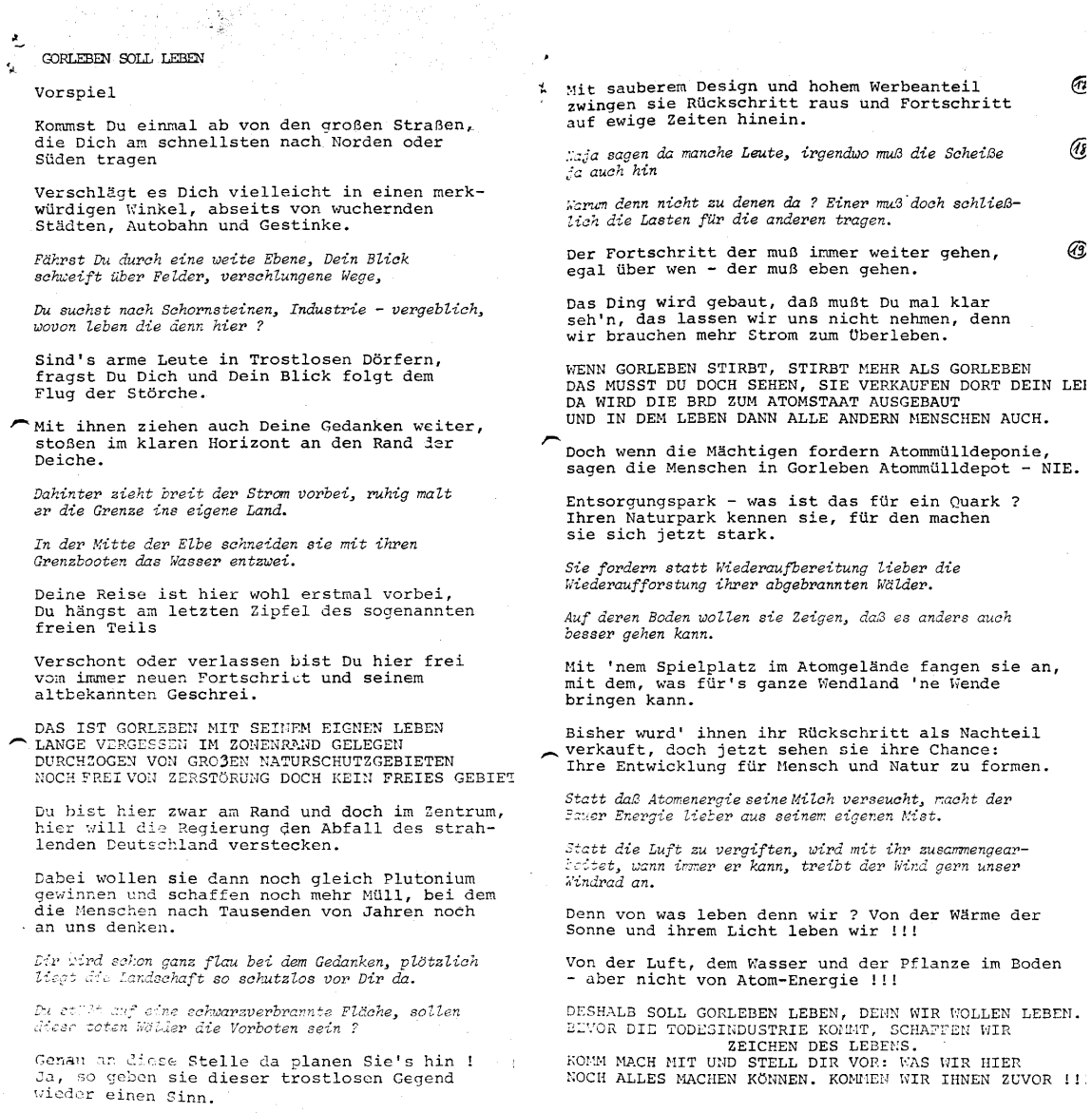
The kinds of rural imaginaries of economic underdevelopment that drove the pro-nuclear arguments became an important site of contestation, particularly for activists living in Wendland. Romanticised spatial imaginaries drawing on conservative notions of a rural idyll, of untouched nature, and an undisturbed social cohesion framed a lot of the opposition to the nuclear. Upholding, protecting and (re)producing this rural idyll, which frames the rural as a natural, simple and timeless space (Murdoch and Pratt, 1997; Short, 2006), was a central element in the framing of resistance as well. As many have pointed out, imaginaries of the rural idyll are often exclusive and exclusionary marginalising others (Bell, 2006; Cloke and Little, 1997; Philo, 1992), which in turn could have produced an exclusionary and reactionary movement in Wendland as well. This was, however, not the case and I argue that such idyllic rural imaginaries also worked to open up alternative and progressive imaginaries as well. Indeed, the urban anti-nuclear left often held imaginaries of the rural as unique, authentic, and in turn revolutionary (Tompkins, 2016).

Lily, who had acknowledged the economic difficulties that faced Wendland, reflected a lot on this intersection of nuclearity and rurality in her diary:

> "We were spared the environmental destruction associated with industrialization and the construction of highways that affected other places. This district is still one of the few regions in Germany that is in 'ecological equilibrium'. At the same time, the social fabric is still surprisingly intact. There are no 'super rich' and few really poor in the villages, so there is little envy between the residents and the solidarity between the people still makes life worth living here. This-- admittedly somewhat dubious-- idyll burst on 22. February 1977 with the announcement of Gorleben as a location for a nuclear waste disposal centre" (Gorleben Archiv, 2004).

For Lily, and many others living in Wendland, the lack of industry and infrastructure had spared the region from environmental destruction. Ecological stability and untouched nature are highlighted as defining features of Wendland that must be protected at all costs. Similar arguments were continuously made by the farming community as well, referring to Wendland as "ecologically intact" (Gorleben Archiv, 1995c). Lily also positions this ecological balance within the social structures of Wendland, as she sees them, where the lack of external influences also left the social make-up of the region relatively unchanged. It is within these kinds of articulations that the spatial imaginary of Wendland also becomes clearly intertwined with a social imaginary of desirable social orders and a sense of social cohesion, that is now threatened by nuclear intervention (Mills, 1959). At the same time, she acknowledges that this is a "somewhat dubious idyll". She is both nostalgic for the rural idyll and sceptical of her own framing of the region as idyllic.

Within this reflection of her own views of Wendland it becomes clear that rural imaginaries can also be a front along which alternatives are articulated. This can be seen in the slogan *Gorleben soll leben* (Gorleben should live). Often the slogan was used explicitly during protests, other times it creeps more subtly into activists' discourse. It encapsulates the rural imaginaries for alternative futures for Gorleben. The poem 'Gorleben soll leben' (Figure 9) is one of the clearest examples of what this phrase meant for activists.



GORLEBEN SOLL LEBEN

Vorspiel

Kommst Du einmal ab von den großen Straßen,
die Dich am schnellsten nach Norden oder
Süden tragen

Verschlägt es Dich vielleicht in einen merk-
würdigen Winkel, abseits von wuchernden
Städten, Autobahn und Gestinke.

Fährst Du durch eine weite Ebene, Dein Blick
schweift über Felder, verschlungene Wege,

Du suchst nach Schornsteinen, Industrie - vergeblich,
wovon leben die denn hier ?

Sind's arme Leute in Trostlosen Dörfern,
fragst Du Dich und Dein Blick folgt dem
Flug der Störche.

Mit ihnen ziehen auch Deine Gedanken weiter,
stoßen im klaren Horizont an den Rand der
Deiche.

Dahinter zieht breit der Strom vorbei, ruhig malt
er die Grenze ins eigene Land.

In der Mitte der Elbe schneiden sie mit ihren
Grenzbooten das Wasser entzwei.

Deine Reise ist hier wohl erstmal vorbei,
Du hängst am letzten Zipfel des sogenannten
freien Teils

Verschont oder verlassen bist Du hier frei
vom immer neuen Fortschritt und seinem
altbekannten Geschrei.

DAS IST GORLEBEN MIT SEINEM EIGNEN LEBEN
LANGE VERGESSEN IM ZONENRAND GELEGEN
DURCHZOGEN VON GROßEN NATURSCHUTZGEBIETEN
NOCH FREI VON ZERSTÖRUNG DOCH KEIN FREIES GEBIET

Du bist hier zwar am Rand und doch im Zentrum,
hier will die Regierung den Abfall des strah-
lenden Deutschland verstecken.

Dabei wollen sie dann noch gleich Plutonium
gewinnen und schaffen noch mehr Müll, bei dem
die Menschen nach Tausenden von Jahren noch
an uns denken.

Dir wird schon ganz flau bei dem Gedanken, plötzlich
liegt die Landschaft so schutzlos vor Dir da.

Du sollst auf eine schwarzverbrannte Fläche, sollen
diese toten Wälder die Vorboten sein ?

Genau an diese Stelle da planen Sie's hin !
Ja, so geben sie dieser trostlosen Gegend
wieder einen Sinn.

Mit sauberem Design und hohem Werbeanteil
zwingen sie Rückschritt raus und Fortschritt
auf ewige Zeiten hinein.

Maja sagen da manche Leute, irgendwo muß die Scheiße
ja auch hin

Warum denn nicht zu denen da ? Einer muß doch schließ-
lich die Lasten für die anderen tragen.

Der Fortschritt der muß immer weiter gehen,
egal über wen - der muß eben gehen.

Das Ding wird gebaut, daß mußt Du mal klar
seh'n, das lassen wir uns nicht nehmen, denn
wir brauchen mehr Strom zum Überleben.

WENN GORLEBEN STIRBT, STIRBT MEHR ALS GORLEBEN
DAS MUSST DU DOCH SEHEN, SIE VERKAUFEN DORT DEIN LEI
DA WIRD DIE BRD ZUM ATOMSTAAT AUSGEBAUT
UND IN DEM LEBEN DANN ALLE ANDERN MENSCHEN AUCH.

Doch wenn die Mächtigen fordern Atommülldeponie,
sagen die Menschen in Gorleben Atommülldepot - NIE.

Entsorgungspark - was ist das für ein Quark ?
Ihren Naturpark kennen sie, für den machen
sie sich jetzt stark.

Sie fordern statt Wiederaufbereitung lieber die
Wiederaufforstung ihrer abgebrannten Wälder.

Auf deren Boden wollen sie Zeigen, daß es anders auch
besser gehen kann.

Mit 'nem Spielplatz im Atomgelände fangen sie an,
mit dem, was für's ganze Wendland 'ne Wende
bringen kann.

Bisher wurd' ihnen ihr Rückschritt als Nachteil
verkauft, doch jetzt sehen sie ihre Chance:
Ihre Entwicklung für Mensch und Natur zu formen.

Statt daß Atomenergie seine Milch verseucht, macht der
Bauer Energie lieber aus seinem eigenen Mist.

Statt die Luft zu vergiften, wird mit ihr zusammengear-
beitet, wann immer er kann, treibt der Wind gern unser
Windrad an.

Denn von was leben denn wir ? Von der Wärme der
Sonne und ihrem Licht leben wir !!!

Von der Luft, dem Wasser und der Pflanze im Boden
- aber nicht von Atom-Energie !!!

DESHALB SOLL GORLEBEN LEBEN, DENN WIR WOLLEN LEBEN.
BEVOR DIE TODESINDUSTRIE KOMMT, SCHAFFEN WIR
ZEICHEN DES LEBENS.
KOMM MACH MIT UND STELL DIR VOR: WAS WIR HIER
NOCH ALLES MACHEN KÖNNEN. KOMMEN WIR IHNEN ZUVOR !!

Figure 9 – "Gorleben soll leben" poem (Gorleben Archiv, 1995b)

The poem begins by addressing the reader directly; how they have found themselves in this "strange corner" far off from the rest of the world. It highlights the natural landscape and the lack of industry; and how the reader might wonder what anybody lives off of in these "dreary villages". The poem describes the nuclear industries planned in the region; how they are meant to give this "dreary region a purpose" yet pose a threat to the "defenceless environment". The first half of the poem interweaves the spatial imaginaries of those living in Wendland and those of the pro-nuclear camp. It shows an acute awareness of how the region is perceived as backward and economically weak, while on the other hand, countering these imaginaries by putting the focus on the unique natural landscape of the region.

The later part of the poem focuses entirely on the alternative imaginaries and, the alternative futures and potentials, that could play out in Wendland. It mentions support for the nature reserve in the region and demands the re-forestation of the area that was burned down by wildfires where the NEZ is to be built. It frames its backwardness as an opportunity to foster a space that prioritises nature. There is even an explicit mention of pursuing the use of alternative energy sources, such as solar, wind or biogas. This is particularly interesting, because it stands in opposition to some of the discourses that highlight a fear of change or a longing for things used to be (see chapter 4.2.5 on *Heimat*). This articulation is much more forward looking and indicative of dynamic imaginaries of (rural) spatial transformation. The somewhat romanticised articulations of Nature and rurality do not necessarily result in a nostalgic longing for the past or an inability to imagine progressive alternatives. The poem ends with the following quote:

> "Hence, Gorleben should live, because we want to live.
> Before the deathly industry comes, we will create a sign of life.
> Join us and imagine: Everything
> We could do here. Let's get ahead of them!"

This particular poem gives insights into the kinds of concerns, imaginaries, and potentials that come together within the Wendland Movement. It centres an appreciation and the value of nature and the environment as it is, which is articulated in opposition to industry and urbanity. It ultimately functions as a way to mobilise through protection and preservation. This in turn also draws boundaries around what Wendland is, how it is defined and understood, and what is at stake. An articulation of the threat always functions as a mobilisation, but this is consciously coupled to an alternative vision for the region and what can be made possible instead.

4.2.4 Farmers and the rural resource

Rural imaginaries were not only driving the production of Wendland as nuclear but are also instrumental in how activists articulated their resistance. In this section I explore how the anti-nuclear energy movement framed their resistance and the role spatial imaginaries play in this. I argue that the processes of political subjectification were intertwined with rural identities and imaginaries.

In doing so, I turn towards an important activist group in Wendland: farmers and the farmers' co-operative aid association (*Bäuerliche Notgemeinschaft*; BNG); and explore various articulations of spatial imaginaries from within this group and how these come to frame the rural as a site of contestation.

Some organisations such as the *Landvolkkreisverband*, an agricultural district association, focused on not being too confrontational and argued that the agricultural structures in Wendland need to be preserved and strengthened in tandem with industrial developments such as the NEZ. But generally, the farming community understood industrial developments to be in competition with agricultural land use. While many imaginaries of the rural emphasise the need for infrastructural development and creating job opportunities, the farming community focused on presenting agriculture as a vital economic sector in need of further support rather than replacement. This was often accompanied by descriptions of the region as "ecologically intact" (Gorleben Archiv, 1995c), indicating that Wendland is somewhat untouched or undisturbed from human intervention. There is a distinction, then, between what kinds of spatial interventions were acceptable for this community. Agricultural land use (especially conventional farming practices that draw heavily on pesticides) is a type of intervention in the natural landscape, but because of the historical importance of farming as the many economic sector in Wendland, this has become normalised to the point where it is no longer perceived as a threat to nature or ecology. This somewhat romanticised and contradictory understanding of nature and the rural dominates how the threat of the NEZ are framed by the farming community.

The spatial imaginaries that dominate within the farming community are therefore closely tied to understandings of the rural as a resource. A nuclearisation of the region puts into question who has control over this resource. This echoes arguments made by Phadke (2011: 756) that oppositional politics in rural areas are "essentially battles over rural space; over who controls the productive and consumptive qualities of rural landscapes". In this case, a key actor in the Wendland Movement counters a framing of Wendland as economically backwards by focusing on functional land-use and economic arguments, as they construct a counter imaginary that builds on agricultural

traditions in the region. It also highlights how different the rural imaginaries of different actors were. Farmers closely related their opposition to the nuclear plans to their identity as an agricultural community and hence how rural space should be used. It stands in alongside but is unique to articulations surrounding the untouched nature narrative of 'Gorleben soll Leben'.

The threat of the nuclear for the farming community manifests itself most clearly in fears of Wendland being labelled a "cancerous region" (Gorleben Archiv, 1995c) and of radioactive contamination of agricultural produce (Gorleben Archiv, 1979c). Initial framings of opposition of the farming community were very much linked to the threat the nuclear posed to the livelihoods of those in the agricultural sector. In doing so, the BNG worked to make nuclearity and its threat visible. It grounded the effects of radiation in the fields in which they were growing agricultural produce. In the framing of a "cancerous" region it also drew out how the presence of the nuclear would affect the imaginary of the region and in turn their livelihoods as farmers.

I also draw out how the identities of farmers were deeply interwoven with the landscape. What was perceived as a threat to the region was also a threat to the self. The fears of nuclear infrastructure safety were extrapolated to emotional attachments to the region and not strictly tied only to concerns over agriculture and livelihoods. The nuclear was formulated as a threat to belonging and identity. While articulations of the rural as a resource should not be dismissed in this case, there are clearly other imaginaries of Wendland at work. The farmer Michael wrote in a letter that was published in an activist magazine that:

> "In the summer of 1978, the DWK announced a program that would destroy my existence. o… It became clear to me that there was not only the threat of the [nuclear waste reprocessing site], but that the region where I live and where I've been happy until now is being destroyed … I went to demonstrate to preserve what's here, and I will continue to go to events. I got together with other farmers that felt the same way that I did to better advocate for our interests" (Gorleben Archiv, 1979b).

On a similar note, Alfred wrote:

> "Because as critical farmers we informed ourselves, and hence know about the dangers of nuclear facilities for our farms and our descendants, it was already during early Gorleben times that we founded the Farmers' Cooperative Aid Association" (Gorleben Archiv, 1994).

Both Alfred and Michael articulate a collective shift in identities and politics in the farming community. Framing the nuclear as a threat to agricultural livelihoods meant that a large portion of the farming community could also articulate their resistance against these developments along these lines. An existing commonality helped to mobilise a broad community. At the same time, this was not a straightforward process. Ingo (interview, 2020) recalls that in the early years, when he was trying to mobilise farmers to resist the nuclear developments, he was met with a strong resistance. It took time for farmers, as a collective, to positions themselves against nuclear energy. Their commonalities did not mean that a political engagement was given. These engagements and the turn towards political activism represent, then, both an individual and a collective redefining of their positions and identities.

The quote from Alfred also highlights the importance of engaging with techno-scientific knowledges, putting concerns and uncertainties into context with imaginaries of potential nuclear futures and what those would entail for their professions, livelihoods and future generations. There is a direct correlation between how farmers articulated the risks of nuclear energy and understood the commonalities between them and the power of mobilising collectively as farmers. Crucially, Alfred defines himself and others as "critical farmers". He articulates an explicitly political identity that is deeply interwoven with his identity as a farmer. In this sense, it is a specific rural political identity. This follows arguments made by Velicu and Kaika (2017) around anti-mining struggles in Romania, where workers or farmers that radically re-divide their life experiences and disrupt their habitual life through activism no longer have fixed identities. This is key to the practice of radical politics. It draws on what Rancière (2012) calls the process of subjectification as both a "de-identification with pre-existing or given political positions/identities and non-foundational re-identifications, staging/performing new socio-political identities/positions as

alternative ways of living in common" (Velicu and Kaika, 2017: 306). At the same time, I argue that it remains important to understand where these 'new' political identities stem from. In both Alfred and Mark's case, their identities as farmers remain crucial to their articulation of politics and their forms of engagement. Their identities may no longer be fixed in the everyday routines as a farmer, but to what extent this is an entirely non-foundational re-identification remains unclear.

In many ways the values and politics of the farming community stay intact. The BNG was perceived as a primarily politically conservative group, for example. The organisation was also very careful about their association, especially in public, with left-wing or other political parties. Sandra (interview, 2020), for example, recalled how there were certain people in the movement who were very politically involved with the Greens tried to co-opt the resistance in the name of their institutionalised politics. In one particular incident, a relatively well-known political activist from the Greens drove to the interim storage facility during a protest by car, then jumped onto one of the tractors, to get a photo, was booed off by others, but the lasting image in the national news was of this particular individual on a tractor as the visual representation of the entire resistance. Sandra's annoyance about this instance, even now, demonstrates how important it was for the farmers to maintain the Wendland Movement's identity as a farmers' resistance that would and could not be co-opted by other political ideologies. At the same time, many conservative farmers opened up about their personal experiences with activists from the political left. Activist Lily wrote very fondly about the "hippies" from the city that would camp in her garden during the Castor protests and how they formed a lasting relationship, for example (Gorleben Archiv, 2004). There is a differentiated process, then, through which political subjectification takes place. The self-identification as a "critical farmer", I argue, is only one step in a radical re-identification. It is a process that activists engaged with throughout the many years of protest, continuously making and re-making their political identities with the nexus of nuclearisation and an increasingly diverse resistance. To further unpack this process of politicisation in conjunction with rural imaginaries and rural identities I focus on *Heimat*.

4.2.5 A (rural) *Heimat*

Note: "Angela Merkel, remember this: the Castor is not coming here. We farmers will not allow our *Heimat* to be destroyed."

Figure 10 – A notice from the BNG in the local newspaper (Gorleben Archiv, 1995d)

Heimat is a very specific German term that broadly refers to 'home' in the sense of a place rather than a dwelling (Boa and Palfreyman, 2000). As the newspaper advertisement above shows, *Heimat* was an important way of framing attachment to the region. It brings together personal identities in relation to specific places with particular framings of rurality. It was an important way for the farming community, but also other activists, particularly those who came from Wendland, to frame their resistance against the nuclear.

A brief look at common uses of *Heimat* in in the form of "Heimatstadt (hometown), Heimatland (native land), Heimaterde (native soil), Heimatliebe (patriotism), Heimatrecht (right of domicile), Heimatvertiebene (refugees driven out from a homeland), Heimatforschung (local history), Heimatkunde (local geography, history, and natural history)" (ibid.: x) makes it clear that *Heimat* is a complex word that no English equivalent can quite capture in the same way. Instead of using a translation, I am going to interrogate the term in its original form, so as not to lose its uniqueness and specificity.

In the 19th century the term begins to find space in the popular imagination. The *Heimatbewegung* or *Heimat* movement became prominent in the late 1800s during a time of significant change in the only recently unified Germany that underwent a rapid industrialisation, a significant population growth, and population shift from the rural to urban centres. The *Heimat* movement can be

seen as a response to this rapid modernisation that encompassed a large variety of activities and institutions, all "in part reactionary, in part practically reformist, in part idealistically utopian" (ibid.: 2). While at the turn of the century *Heimat* discourses reflected tensions between regional and national identities, throughout the 1920s and in the time of the Third Reich, *Heimat* was co-opted by the state and linked to nationhood. It became a social and political tool for an exclusionary nation building (ibid.: 5; Dogramaci, 2016). These nationalist framings and uses of the term clung onto *Heimat*. It hence remains a deeply contested idea that continues to evoke exclusionary notions of spatial belonging and identity.

After the end of the second World War, *Heimat* does not reappear until the 1950s primarily though *Heimatfilme* (*Heimat* films) and *Heimatromane* (*Heimat* fiction) that fed a desire for escapism, nostalgia, social cohesion and reconciliation (Boa and Palfreyman, 2000; Dogramaci, 2016). *Heimat* was stereotyped with German landscapes and trivial stories and propagated intact family structures in the rural, cheerful idyll, presented as a pleasant tourist destination where the city dweller is allowed to find happiness (Dogramaci, 2016: 11). There are clear links to the rural idyll discourses described earlier. It was decidedly a-political, even functioned to actively depoliticise, and set an anti-modernist tone. The final resurgence of *Heimat* relevant to the Wendland Movement comes in the 1970s and 1980s. Boa and Palfreyman (2000: 17) argue, that with a growing distance from the Nazi past, a re-evaluation of German identity was now possible. Changes in inner-German politics, through a normalisation of the relationship between the two Germanies, and a rise in environmentalism, ecological movements and green politics lent themselves to a re-evaluation of Heimat. This acts as a point of departure for an examination of what role Heimat plays in Wendland during this time.

How activism plays out in Wendland for these communities and how they go about producing their 'unique' protest culture is the direct result of their spatial imaginaries of *Heimat*. *Heimat* is not only a framework through which to understand identifications with place, but as Ratter and Gee (2012: 136) argue: "can also be regarded as practice, meaning a conscious or subconscious act of creating meaningful order out of the world around us". I argue that particularly

for the farming community and the BNG, spatial imaginaries of *Heimat* were instrumental for the way in which resistance was articulated. The farmer Alfred, for example wrote:

> "The Castor is going to destroy the two biggest treasures of our *Heimat*, a rural agriculture and an intact nature and environment" (Gorleben Archiv, 1996f).

In Alfred's terms, *Heimat* is not only intimately wound-up with nature and the environment, but also the agricultural community, which has defined the region as the primary source of employment and production for many years. It is through this articulation of *Heimat*, what it represents, that it becomes clear why farmers in particular were actively involved in the fight against nuclear energy. It represented a threat to their *Heimat*, their home, a space entangled with and defined by their agricultural profession.

While the kind of articulations Alfred offers of Heimat were very common and broadly representative of the farmers protests, there are also other sentiments within the community. Rosa (interview, 2020), for example, a farmer whose family had been living in Wendland for several generations, made it clear that

> "I've got nothing to do with blood and earth and *Heimat*. I don't have those feelings. I've never represented my *Heimat* or anything like that. I quickly realized that wasn't right. It was too glossy for me."

The term *Heimat* clearly carries a heavy load for Rosa that glosses over the complexities and tensions within it. In elaborating these sentiments, she drifts off and tells stories of her father's friend who had come to Lüchow-Dannenberg from the East shortly before the wall went up, about regional differences, others in the village who questioned their friendship with the "refugees", about the director of her school who was an "old Nazi", the version of history he had taught and how they sang "Die Gedanken sind frei" (Thoughts are free) at the inner-German border (interview, Rosa, 2020). The political appropriation of Heimat during the Third Reich and its nationalistic and exclusionary sentiments clung onto the term. Indeed, it still carries associations of purity, preservation, and ownership or the right over space. This is clearly reflected in the way Alfred, for example, speaks of *Heimat*. Although this was by no means a reflection of far-right politics. Indeed, Alfred was very critical and concerned

about the region's history as a Nazi stronghold, but it is these kinds of characterisations of Heimat, which could be exclusionary and backward, that Rosa (and others) rejected. *Heimat* has wound itself through many periods of Germany's political history and even in its multiple iterations often carries remnants of past politicisations with it. It is not surprising, then, that other groupings that cannot be broadly classified as conservative or traditional found other ways to articulate their spatial imaginaries.

Alfred, as most farmer's in Wendland, was however more concerned with taking action, rather than discussing at length the details of nuclear policy or planning events. One defining moment of the Castor Transports transpired in 1997, when Alfred joined protestors on the road in Jameln to shield them from the water cannons the police had brought to the scene. For Alfred, this resulted in an altercation with the police, who violently dragged him off his tractor. At a court hearing that would ultimately condemn police actions taken against Alfred, he gave a length testimony explaining why he felt compelled to fight against nuclear energy in Wendland. He said: "I am going to fight so that our beautiful, ecologically still intact *Heimat* won't turn into a hectic industrial landscape" (Gorleben Archiv, 1998)[13]. He was not ready to sit by while his *Heimat* was being "sacrificed to the nuclear monster" (ibid.). Positioning Wendland as ecologically intact echoes how activists like Lily perceived Wendland and how resistance against the nuclear was framed as the need to protect this ecology. At the same time, agricultural land-use is a type of intervention in nature. Especially conventional farming methods, as were the norm at the time, that used pesticides and herbicides could be damaging to the environment. Making to those links between nature or ecology and industrial interventions did, however, lead to a significant shift from conventional to organic farming in the region. Wendland now has one of the highest densities of organic farms in Germany.

Heimat is not only revealing in what defines it, but also in what it must be defended against. One of the key elements of *Heimat* discourse is that of oppositions. *Heimat* sets "country against city, province against metropolis, tradition against modernity, nature against artificiality, organic culture against

[13] Similarly, a statement posted in the local newspaper read "Before today, our Heimat was spared from destructive industries" (Gorleben Archiv, 1979c).

civilisation, fixed, familiar rooted identity against cosmopolitanism, hybridity, alien otherness or the faceless mass" (Boa and Palfreyman, 2000: 3). *Heimat* is in its essence exclusionary, defining what does and does not belong in its spaces. It is precisely these kinds of oppositions that Alfred draws upon in his articulations of *Heimat*. It stands in opposition to industry, to the nuclear, and in turn is inhabited by nature, rurality, agriculture, ecological balance, and safety. The threat of nuclear energy infrastructure acts as an antagonism along (or perhaps in opposition to) which Wendland, as *Heimat*, is articulated. Alfred's articulations of *Heimat* make it clear that farmers' contentions over rural land use i.e., agricultural vs. industrial, are actually much more complex disputes over rurality, belonging, and identity.

Heimat is a term that is characterised by protectionism and stability. Shafi (2012: 184) argues that Heimat functions as an "idealized, mythic, pre-modern space whose prime qualities are a perceived stability, an origin offering wholeness, Heimat is to operate outside historic change and to guard against loss". The desire for ecological preservation, and indeed the preservation of agricultural practices, steams or perhaps conditions the framing of their protest through *Heimat*. It offers a spatial imaginary that insulates ideals, perhaps even conservative ecological ideologies. It guards against change drawing on a rural idyll as something to be fixed in time and space. When I asked Paula (interview, 2020), who comes from Wendland, what *Heimat* means to her, she started talking about the first traffics lights that did not come until the 1980s and the machines and industry that always got to Wendland last. For her, *Heimat* was that everything was left in peace. This kind of preservationist framing of opposition is also conditioned by the modernist discourses around energy production. Framing spatial imaginaries in this way demonstrates how more traditional and politically conservative farming communities find their voice in environmental protest. It stands in contrast to the more open and radical political identities that farmers articulated at other points in the Wendland Movement. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge and recognise these kinds of politics because it gives a sense of the multiple identities and politics at work within specific communities and the movement itself.

4.3 Concluding thoughts

In this chapter I focused on the kind of spatial imaginaries at work in the production of Wendland as the nuclear. I also highlighted how early anti-nuclear energy resistance identified and responded to these pro-nuclear imaginaries of Wendland. In doing so, particularly activists and activist groups from within the region were able to construct a common resistance. Examining the techno-scientific knowledges was particularly important in this process because this was one of the key arguments the pro-nuclear lobby brought forward. It was hence also one of the first spaces through which the citizens' initiative framed their resistance. They challenged the authority of elite knowledge production and worked to situate knowledge production outwith these spaces. At the same time, this meant that there was a very pronounced desire to engage with those pre-given spaces of contention i.e., 'legitimate' knowledge production, as a way of mobilising their resistance against nuclearity. Only slowly were activists able to mobilise these knowledges in other spaces, such as through direct-action, to challenge established frameworks.

I then turned towards rural imaginaries of Wendland linking processes of nuclearisation to the rural. I identified how normative imaginaries of the rural as peripheral dominated pro-nuclear discourses and were directly influencing the drive to situate nuclearity in Wendland. This was, however, identified very early on by activists, especially those who had lived in Wendland for an extended period and had their own clear imaginaries of the region. It is important to note here, that these imaginaries of Wendland as backward and peripheral also shaped infrastructural interventions in the region as exemplified in the small-scale gentrification of Gorleben itself through investments from the nuclear industry. Equally, activists' continued rejection of these spaces tainted by nuclearity highlights how the nuclear leaves a lasting impression on the landscape.

During these early years of the movement, those activists who were living and Wendland and were thus directly confronted with an encroaching nuclearity began formulating their own spatial imaginary of Wendland. This focus on the value of nature and the rural as a space within which ecological ideals could be upheld. To a certain extent, framing their politics around these kinds of spatial

imaginaries was also drawing on normative visions of the rural and a rural idyll. Through the key mobilising frame “Gorleben soll leben”, activists were, however, able to relate the nuclearisation of Wendland to the industrialisation and modernity discourses and thus identify how these nuclear energy industries would work to further solidify their peripheralisation.

Finally, I focused specifically on the farming community in Wendland and how their resistance was framed around their agricultural visions of Wendland. I argued that their identities as farmers and their understanding of the rural as an agricultural resource were integral to how they began to articulate their political identities. At the same time, as spaces opened up to encounter other political ideologies and interests, these still relatively fixed political identities were slowly beginning to open-up. This reinforces the fact that political subjectification and the production of a collective is contingent on encounter, ongoing work and engagement, and that these remain dynamic and uneven process. Rather than resisting change entirely, activists in Wendland sought to articulate alternative imaginaries for Wendland, based on organic farming practices, alternative energy production, and alternative forms of ‘doing’ community, which I turn to in the following chapters. Nonetheless, dwelling on these spatial imaginaries here demonstrates the complex and contradictory ways in which actors come to enact progressive or contentious politics. I now move onto the Free Republic of Wendland and introduce a new set of activists from outwith the region. I focus on how this now diverse set of activists frame collectivity through infrastructure.

Chapter 5 The Free Republic of Wendland: infrastructures and collectivity

In order to ensure the safe long-term geological end storage of nuclear waste, underground salt deposits around Gorleben needed to be examined and several drilling sites were set up in the area to collect samples of the underly geological structure. These sites also quickly became targets for direct-action protests. After two short-lived occupations of drilling sites 1002 and 1003, activists managed to occupy the fourth drilling site, 1004, for 33 days in spring of 1980 which included the construction and occupation of several large wooden houses (see Figure 11). The occupation of this drilling site was known as the Free Republic of Wendland (FRW), sometimes also referred to as *Hüttendorf 1004* (Hut-Village 1004). On the 3rd of June 1980, the FRW was cleared, and the semi-permanent structures demolished by the national guard.

Figure 11 – The Free Republic of Wendland, 1980 (Gorleben Archiv, 1980o)

By 1980 plans for the nuclear waste repository centre had been solidified and at the same time the Wendland Movement was gaining traction. Locals became increasingly involved in anti-nuclear protests and the movement was also gaining national recognition. In this chapter I therefore begin by focusing on the many activists that came from outwith Wendland to join the anti-nuclear energy

movement in Wendland. I trace some of the biographies of these activists, that were often characterised by a long-term commitment to social justice and experience with political activism. These usually came with a very different set of politics that were far more progressive than the more conservative politics of those living in Wendland described in the previous chapter. I examine the tensions and differences that arise and think about how these were negotiated by an increasingly heterogeneous group of activists in Wendland. I frame this first part of this chapter in terms of trajectories, that is those paths, stories, and biographies that come together within certain moments and specific spaces.

In unpacking the Free Republic of Wendland I also focus on detailed studies of encampments and co-habitation through occupation. Arenas (2014) traces how differences and contradictory (political) constellations come together in encampments, arguing that the proximity of co-habitation makes a negotiation of these differences both necessary and possible in the first place. They are spaces of encounter (Halvorsen, 2015b). Encampments thus represent spaces within which collectivity becomes possible. Labouring together creates starting points for "solidarity in the face of difficult and contested political and personal differences" (ibid.: 442). Encampments in particular offer spaces for people to produce and negotiate a collective.

I then take an in-depth look at the life lived in the FRW and the constructions on the drilling site. I argue that the construction of the FRW functioned as a materialisation of alternative visions of and for Wendland. The occupation was a practice in articulating alterity and "world-making" (Vasudevan, 2015: 15). I also look at the spaces of everyday life in the FRW and how life was organised in this village, especially in terms of creating spaces for negotiating consensus. These were important for producing a sense of collectivity within the FRW. On the other hand, continued tensions between activists from within and outwith Wendland were tangible throughout the occupation. A police-heavy clearance of the site, however, drew together activists in Wendland and becomes one of the key reference points for the movement.

5.1 Making the Free Republic of Wendland: trajectories and planning

In exploring the early years of the movement, I focused in particular on activists and activist groups that were living in Wendland when the announcement for the NEZ was made. These were mostly people who had lived in Wendland for a long time and were confronted very directly with the changes facing the region. Their resistance was an immediate response to the encroaching nuclearisation of Wendland and often rooted in their existing imaginaries of rurality and *Heimat*. By the late 1970s the Wendland Movement was gaining traction and increasingly getting media attention across (West) Germany. Indeed, several activists from Wendland recalled that they felt this shift very distinctly. Suddenly they were no longer from a small, unknown district at the end of the world, but people throughout Germany knew the region Lüchow-Dannenberg and admired the resistance of Wendland against the nuclear (interview, Erika, 2020). As a result, activists from outwith Wendland became increasingly interested in the resistance and the region. On the one hand, activists that grew up in Wendland, but had left for work or education, returned to Wendland in the late 1970s (interview, Erika, 2020; interview, Otto, 2020).

On the other hand, there was also a distinct and growing group of activists that came from outwith Wendland that became involved with the struggle against nuclear-energy in the region. These activists often were politicised through political struggles elsewhere and hence had strong, pre-existing political experience such as the student movement in 1968 or the peace movements of the 1970s. Their involvement with the anti-nuclear often collided with changes in their personal lives or personal connections to Wendland that led them to move to Wendland. I argue that tracing these personal biographies provides important context for the Wendland Movement and in particular the way in which the planning of the FRW unfolded. This relatively new set of actors in Wendland brought new sensibilities and politics to the region. These individual trajectories are important for understanding how different groups with different political orientations came together in Wendland. The ways in which these identities and politics were negotiated during the planning of the FRW also echoes the development in the region more generally.

5.1.1 Trajectories: paths towards Wendland

I trace these trajectories and personal biographies as one way to understand the multiplicity of the movement and how alternatives against the nuclear were articulated. There was not only a depth of political history and experience that travelled to Wendland through these individual activists, but also a wealth of knowledge about and interest in nuclear energy that would enrich the growing Wendland Movement. Some even came with the explicit aim to diversify and add new political dimensions to the resistance. Many activists, however, also felt that Wendland offered opportunities for alternative forms of living and being to unfold. They bought old buildings and cheap land in Wendland for alternative housing projects, for example, which are very prevalent in the region even now.

Harry, for example, was studying film in Hamburg where he was involved in the 1968 student movement and in the 1970s was still part of several offshoot groups from this earlier period. Like many others, he had also encountered the environmental movement, which was gaining traction in the 1970s and within which discussion around nuclear energy featured prominently. Similarly, the journalist Alexander had experienced the student movement in West Berlin and was becoming increasingly interested in environmentalism and energy production through a newly formed resistance movement against the construction of a coal plant just south of Berlin. Both Harry (interview, 2020) and Alexander (interview, 2020) told me that after the student movements of the late 1960s there was a period of transition where the environmental movement, which had been gaining traction in its own right, became increasingly politicised. This included a rise of the term “political ecology” (*politische Ökologie*)[14], which put society at the heart of environmental concerns by asking what forms of being- and living-together are ecologically reasonable and justifiable. This then fed into a growing “alternative movement” that prioritised self-sufficiency, but also discussed renewable energy production or criticised traditional agricultural practices, for example (Enzensberger, 1973). There is a clear link then between a politicisation of environmentalism and visions for alternative lifestyles. This echoes how many activists from outwith

[14] Harry referred to Hans Magnus Enzensberger’s book “Zur Kritik der politischen Ökologie” (A critique of political ecology), for example and Alexander had translated a paper by the US-American Murray Bookchin “Ökologie versus Klimaschutz” (Ecology vs Climate Protection).

Wendland approached their activism in the region: through an articulation of alterity.

In doing so, this growing environmental movement also increasingly prioritised rural spaces and the potentials that the rural holds for actualising these principles of living-with nature. This shift towards regionalism meant that a region like Wendland was not seen as a far away place that was cut-off from the rest of the country, but as the ideal place to settle alternative infrastructures. Activists would use slogans like “long live the province” and “long live the rural” (interview, Katharina, 2020) putting rurality at the centre of their politics. The rural became an essential aspect around which the environmental movement was articulated. This development within the political or activist arena in the 1970s therefore also explains why those who had been politically active prior to the anti-nuclear energy movement in Wendland, like Harry and Alexander, were interested in Wendland as a region. At the same time, these were (at least in part) very simplistic imaginaries of the rural where “Nature and the countryside were a kind of marginal Other” (Tompkins, 2016: 118). I argue that those who actively decided to move to Wendland often also had quite traditional rural spatial imaginaries that informed their decision-making process. Pitkanen and Farish (2017) argued in the context of nuclearisation, that this was a process underpinned by a vision of an empty nonplace. To a certain extent this was also how activists thought about Wendland: as a space to be filled with these alternative infrastructures, and as a space to be infused with a new kind of politics. On the other hand, these radical politics and new visions were also a form of contesting a categorisation of Wendland as “wasteland” (ibid.: 873) and seeing new possibilities in the peripheral.

Where the nuclear industry saw the possibilities situating nuclear infrastructure in this peripheralisation of Wendland, others saw possibilities to relocate to a relatively cheap and ‘empty’ rural region. Almost everyone that came to Wendland did so through friends, family, or some other coincidental connection to the region. Harry (interview, 2020) had been in Brokdorf [15] and was active in

[15] In the 1970s construction on a nuclear energy reactor began near Brokdorf in north Germany. Resistance against the construction began in 1976 and quickly escalated. Violent clashes between protestors and the police were common and widely reported on by the media at the time.

the student movement, but it also just so happened, that a good friend of his was a musician in Wendland and that they found a cheap apartment to rent out during the holidays. Volker (interview, 2020), a GP, had an active interest in the anti-nuclear energy movement, but moved to Wendland only because his wife came from the region. Erika (interview, 2020), a teacher from Hamburg, returned to her *Heimat*, Wendland, through a cheap house she had bought with her friends long before the nuclear industry came to Gorleben. The house did not have any electricity or a telephone, it was simple and "idyllic" in the middle of the woods. Although she had been involved with the anti-nuclear energy movement before in Brokdorf, she realised how "theoretical" these protests were. When Gorleben came into play for the nuclear industry "it was like they were putting this huge nuclear complex right onto our front yard; it was something else entirely" (interview, Erika, 2020). The personal connection she had with the region made the threat of the nuclear industry much more tangible for her and evoked NIMBY-ist[16] reactions from her. Visions of the Wendland as the rural idyll were not only part of the pro-nuclear imaginaries of Wendland but apparent in these were protectionist discourses from activists that had come from outwith the region. There is a slightly contradicting intersection of progressive, critical political thinking through prior experience with political engagement and more traditional spatial imaginaries of the rural. These then overlap with how activists from Wendland framed their existence in the beginning and provided common ground. Equally, some of these 'new' activists had clear visions of a Wendland as a place that could be infused with a different set of politics. I highlight this, because the activists coming from outwith Wendland can in no way be described as a homogenous group with progressive politics. Instead, I argue that these individuals brought a whole variety of politics, identities, and imaginaries to Wendland that now had to be negotiated on the ground.

This politicisation of the environmental movements also meant that the political left more generally increasingly took on environmental concerns as part of their political repertoire. It is part of the reason that, for example, a radical, left

[16] The 'Not-In-My-Backyard' concept is often used to describe and explain resistance against unwanted developments. Equally, it is a contested concept that some argue can be better understood through place-attachment and place-protection. see for example Devine-Wright (2005, 2009, 2011). In German this is often referred to as the Sankt-Florian-Prinzip.

commune was founded in Meuchefitz, a small town in Wendland 30 km north of Gorleben. This was largely thanks to Thomas who had also been politically active in West Berlin and while searching for housing for a commune in Berlin came across Wendland. By 1978/9, after it was announced that a large nuclear waste facility would be built in Gorleben, it was becoming clear that those living in Wendland were going to strongly oppose this construction project. After a series of failed projects in West Berlin in the early 1970s it became clear to Thomas (interview, 2020) that: "we have to look where resistance is growing naturally, and we then have to try to give this resistance a political component". Thomas and others hence saw the resistance in Wendland as an opportunity to bring more explicit political and anti-capitalist dimensions to the region and the movement. It was an attempt to create a place that was explicit in its politics and its ambitions to sensitise communities in Wendland to these politics. Not all activists that came from leftist political traditions were so explicit in their ambitions to politicise the movement, but the influx of activists from larger cities who had come into contact with political organising prior to the Wendland Movement did bring a new political dimension to Wendland. In turn, Wendland increasingly became a place where oppositional ideas and ideologies met and had to be negotiated.

Alexander, however, was very sceptical about the left's "sudden interest" in environmentalism and ecology. He was hesitant about the motivations that someone like Thomas had: "For them it was an opportunity to formulate their opposition, their capitalist critiques. To me, it was dishonest" (interview, Alexander, 2020). Where Thomas saw a political potential in the Wendland Movement, others were very critical of this explicit attempt to politicise an environmental movement in this way. This scepticism was often linked to a personal disillusionment with the trajectories of leftist politics in the 1970s. Alexander's interest in the politics of ecology and Wendland was part of his own political re-orientation. The left-wing political movements of the 1960s had become increasingly militant, especially though outgrowths of the Red Army Fraction (RAF) in West Berlin, and Alexander was seeking new (and what he saw as more productive) forms of political engagement. Indeed, these sentiments echoed how many politically active individuals were feeling at the time. Volker (interview, 2020), the GP who later became an active member of the farmers'

cooperative aid association, had also been involved with the student movements in the late 1960s. He actively distanced himself from the militant outgrowths of the political left, moved to Wendland seeking other political influences and forms of engagement. These differences between activists from outwith Wendland show that this too is a group that brings diverse motivations and politics to the Wendland Movement.

At the same time, many activists that came to Wendland did so because of their engagement with anti-nuclear energy protests elsewhere. Activists such as Ingo (interview, 2020), a nurse, acknowledged that their initial contact point to the anti-nuclear energy movement was actually quite "apolitical". His motivation came from a love and appreciation for nature where nuclear energy was a threat to the environment, not making any direct links to the politics of nuclear energy. Whyl, at the German/French border near Strasburg, and Brokdorf, near Hamburg, two villages on opposite ends of West Germany where activists had tried to resist the construction of nuclear power plants in the 1960s and 70s. These movements were both characterised by a series of violent clashes between protestors and police. Volker (interview, 2020), the doctor, had been in Brokdorf, as well as the teacher, Erika (interview, 2020), who lived in Hamburg, and the filmmaker, Harry (interview, 2020), had documented the conflicts with the police in Brokdorf, for example. They brought with them a certain understanding of direct-action protest in relation to nuclear energy.

This was, however, an ongoing source of tension within the movement, especially in the early years. The more conservative activists from within Wendland had observed these protests and were adamant that their resistance would not result in violent clashes with the police. Agreeing on a non-violent approach in Wendland was one of the key points on which all activists had to agree for a collective resistance to work. Many also had experiences with nuclear energy resistance more generally: Ingo (interview, 2020), the nurse, had helped organise the struggle against a nuclear power plant near Kassel, his hometown, and Katharina (interview, 2020), a now retired EU-politician, had founded a citizens' initiative in Uelzen (in the adjacent county around 60 km from Gorleben) to oppose a nearby village, Lutterloh, being designated the site for the nuclear waste facility that would later be built in Gorleben. Together

with an influx of new people and new politics, there was also now a wealth of knowledge about nuclear energy and organising that the Wendland Movement could draw from.

5.1.2 Coinciding trajectories in Wendland

By 1980 many groups in Wendland had already begun to organise against the planned developments. The BI was formed, the farmers were becoming active, and the political tenor of the region was key to how the resistance was formulated for these organisations. Anchoring the resistance in the region was incredibly important, especially for the BI, who was only as influential as their support from their members. At this point in the movement, many of these were still rather conservative, not only politically but also culturally and socially. Activist Katharina (interview, 2020), who comes from Wendland, described them as "good citizens". She told me that "these weren't any leftist radicals or subversives, but teachers, wives of teachers, lawyers from Lüchow or Dannenberg, or farmers. These were conservative people" (interview, Katharina, 2020). While the Wendland Movement on the whole was very progressive and heterogeneous, the basis on which resistance was formed within the region in the earlier years of the movement was very much conservative. As Rice and Burke (2018) note, forging solidarities across difference within rural, conservative communities requires work and active engagement to produce an inclusive politics. Understanding the spaces within which those diverse groups were able to encounter each other and negotiate across their differences is key to understanding the Wendland Movement.

Indeed, the influx of ideas and practices that were very different from what they knew was often difficult to negotiate. One of the founding members of the farmers' cooperative aid association, Lothar (interview, 2020), whose family had been in Wendland for centuries, reflected on these quite significant changes in the region:

> "It was a little quiet here ... and then this fresh gust of wind swept through the region. It really forced us out of our normal routines and influenced us. But we were open, we hadn't opened up, but were open for everything, albeit after some reflection."

This was also the experience from most activists that came to Wendland. Harry (interview, 2020), the filmmaker, recalls that “this region was really dominated by very conservative people, but they were really quite tolerant, because they had these traditional values where you wouldn’t judge others and so they didn’t overreact to those hippies with the long hair who had this other lifestyle”. Lothar’s tentativeness about how to work across difference reflects, that solidarities are struggled over and continuously made and re-made. Identity, politics, and collectivity is articulated through the process of struggle (Arenas, 2014). While this confrontation of political stances was not always easy and negotiating consensus amongst these groups was uneven, there is a sense of mutual respect for these different points of view, an understanding that despite these differences their collective resistance can be meaningful, and in turn an overwhelming desire to work beyond such differences. By thinking through these individual trajectories of activists, I return to the articulation of place as the product of multiple sets of relations that have come together in temporary constellations (Massey, 2005). In a relational approach to place-based politics, places become key sites for the making and re-making of relational networks. Featherstone (2008: 4) argues that “rather than viewing struggles as formed in particular places, then networked, this allows more ongoing, contested, recursive and generative relationships to be posed between place-based political activity and networked relations”. Resistances are always already the product of different trajectories.

Nonetheless, this was a long process of negotiation and learning. How the BI would position itself politically was not insignificant, as they wanted to be representative of the political landscape in Wendland and the process of opening up to new influences brought into the region by other activists was slow. This collided with a scepticism of the confrontational nature of previous anti-nuclear energy protests, such as the ones in Whyl and Gorleben, and of the radical leftist politics from the larger cities. The same reservations that Harry, Alexander, and Volker had about the development of very militant left-wing activists were amplified in this conservative setting. Katharina (interview, 2020) pointed out that the late 1970s were not only a time characterised by the anti-nuclear movement in Wendland, but a “relentless dispute over terrorism in Germany,

Baader-Meinhof, the 2nd of June[17], even the cold war played into it". The broader, overarching discussions happening in Germany at the time around activism and politics also played out in Wendland through an unsuspecting coming together of various political trajectories. As these various actors begin to come together and gather in Wendland during the 1970s the processes of negotiating a collectivity and articulating an opposition to nuclear energy infrastructure in the region begins to unfold. What this process looked like and how these various groups and individuals found ways towards resistance is particularly clear in the planning and execution of the Free Republic of Wendland.

5.1.3 Negotiating consensus: planning the occupation

The Free Republic of Wendland (FRW) was organised by a whole host of groups involved in the anti-nuclear energy movement in Wendland and beyond. In this section, I explore how consensus was negotiated and enacted building up to the FRW. Focusing on the interactions between different groups in planning the FRW, provides an opportunity to think about the process of finding common ground. It draws attention to the sustained work of solidarity building and collective action within a broader movement. I draw on documentation from meetings between local activist groups, such as the BI (citizens' initiative), and external activist groups as they discuss the practicalities of occupying the drilling site. At the heart of these discussions, remains the activist group's commitment to grounding the struggle and connecting it to the existing networks and principles that have emerged within Wendland in the late 1970s. Considering the trajectories of these various activists from outwith and the conservative nature of some activists, it is already clear that past struggles around nuclear energy infrastructure in Whyl and Brokdorf, but also the development of militant leftist politics, were fraught with violence and influenced how locals viewed these confrontations. On the other hand, many activists from outwith Wendland had experiences with precisely these kinds of struggles and confrontations. This sets the scene for how the planning of the FRW unfolded.

[17] This refers to two of the most well-known extremist, left-wing terrorist groups active in West Germany, particularly West Berlin, in the 1970s and 80s.

Occupations at the two previous drilling sites, 1002 and 1003, were cleared by the police within a few hours and there was serious doubt about whether a sustained occupation of drilling site 1004 would be possible, especially if the occupation was widely advertised and public. Activist Franz (interview, 2020), who had been involved with anti-nuclear energy movements across Germany, recalled that the idea for the FRW came from outwith Wendland. "These two guys, together with these small groups[18] from the cities who were meeting up quite regularly planned this huge, non-violent project for an occupation". But the BI and the farmers were not convinced that an occupation of this scale would work: "the BI said this crazy and it's never going to work … and the farmers said this is ridiculous, we're not going to be a part of this" (interview, Franz, 2020). From the outset it was clear, that organising across activist groups would require work and compromise from all sides, particularly because the driving force for this occupation was coming from outwith Wendland, which had not happened at this scale before. In order to bridge these differences, activist groups met up in Wendland regularly becoming a place where "different political trajectories are brought together" in productive ways (Castree et al., 2008: 317).

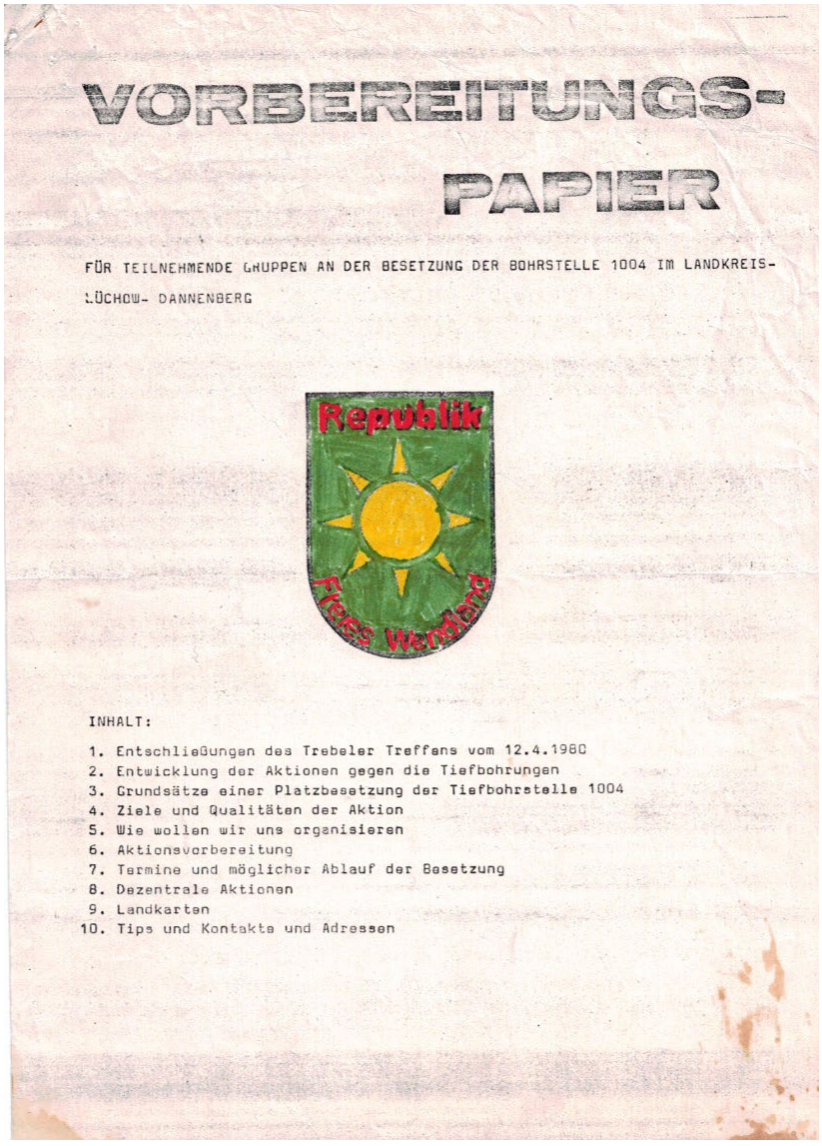
These discussions between the BI, farmers and external groups took place mostly in the Trebler Bauernstuben, a small, local pub in the village Trebel near Gorleben. These meetings were therefore referred to as the Trebler Meetings (*Trebler Treffen*) and the pub became known for the long and heated discussions that took place there (Gorleben Archiv, 1979a). The idea of one of the first meetings in early February in 1980 was to bring together non-local activist groups (*Bezugsgruppen*) with those from the region to discuss further actions against the ongoing experimental drilling of the salt dome. Before the occupation even began, spaces of encounter were already emerging in the form of the *Trebler Treffen*. I argue that spaces of organising, that work alongside direct action spaces, too are spaces that offer the opportunity to organise across difference. This was particularly clear during those meetings dedicated to the Free Republic of Wendland.

[18] These were known as *Bezugsgruppen* meaning a small peer, reference, or affinity group of activists.

Discussion during the first meeting was dominated by concerns from activist groups who were already active in Wendland. Previous experiences with the attempted occupations of drilling sites 1002 and 1003 had made it clear to them, that the police would prevent any meaningful occupation and certainly no occupation that would last longer than several hours. They were concerned about how activists from outwith Wendland would react to the police presence, fearing an overreaction from both sides. The participation of "outside" activists was seen as "an unpredictable risk" (Zint, 1980: 10). On the other hand, it was clear that without these other activists who could occupy this field for extended periods, especially during the week, that the FRW would not be possible. While there was a shared ecological and political common ground between the actors around the table, differences were highly contested. Existing activist networks that had grown out of Wendland in particular were protective of their 'insider' status in the region and sceptical of the sudden interest from outwith. Often encampments are framed as imagined communities of resistance that are formed around an issue-specific campaign and can hence unite diverse actors (Routledge, 1997). Focusing on these discussions leading up the FRW, however, demonstrate that actually a lot of work goes into making these imagined communities possible prior to occupation.

The second Trebler Meeting took place at the end of February 1980. Despite the preparations from various groups such as producing reports on other successful occupations, the meeting steered away from the concrete planning of the FRW and put the bigger questions at the heart of the meeting (Zint, 1980: 10). It was essentially a question over confrontations with police and a question of the how the power dynamics between different groups could and would play out in the FRW. Who had the final say, whose opinions were valued over others, and how would the occupation embed itself in the region? It was the BI who played an instrumental role in bringing together the protest imaginaries of those from the city, from the '68 student movement, the leftist street activists with those from the local activists. The BI continued to press the questions "what forms of protest are acceptable? What don't we want here?" (interview, Alexander, 2020) and were left to confront autonomous left-wing activists from Hamburg, some of whom were also close to the RAF, for whom it was all about the direct confrontation with the police.

Activists knew that these fights were “old and unproductive” (Zint, 1980: 10), but during the final Trebler Meeting at the end of March the same discussion unfolded once more. During this final meeting, however, activists managed to put the necessity of a successful occupation ahead of their differences. Some pulled out of the planning, others simply set their differences aside. The 200 people who had been present at the first meeting, had dwindled to 150 and by the second day of the Trebler Meeting in March only 40 people were left to finalise plans for the occupation. Following this final Trebler Meeting a twelve-page document (Figure 12) was made public in early April that outlined the decisions made during these meetings.



VORBEREITUNGS-

PAPIER

FÜR TEILNEHMENDE GRUPPEN AN DER BESETZUNG DER BOHRSTELLE 1004 IM LANDKREIS-LÜCHOW- DANNENBERG

Republik Freies Wendland

INHALT:

1. Entschließungen des Trebeler Treffens vom 12.4.1980
2. Entwicklung der Aktionen gegen die Tiefbohrungen
3. Grundsätze einer Platzbesetzung der Tiefbohrstelle 1004
4. Ziele und Qualitäten der Aktion
5. Wie wollen wir uns organisieren
6. Aktionsvorbereitung
7. Termine und möglicher Ablauf der Besetzung
8. Dezentrale Aktionen
9. Landkarten
10. Tips und Kontakte und Adressen

Figure 12 – Document detailing the decisions made at the *Trebler Treffen* on 12.04.1980 (Gorleben Archiv, 1980r)

The document outlined the development of the anti-nuclear energy movement in Wendland so far, when the occupation would begin, how groups and individuals could organise themselves, and the ground rules that all occupants had to respect. The weekend of the 3rd and 4th of May were designated the first and central weekend on which the occupation would start. Uncertainty over whether such an occupation would even be possible or how long it would last was clear throughout the document. It also made contingency plans for instances where the construction of the drilling site would begin earlier than anticipated, for example. The document also reflected concerns over how the confrontation with the police would unfold. It included very clear statements against the use of violence against police officers during a clearance and emphasised the need for a collective effort, highlighting that "our strength lies in our collectivity" (Gorleben Archiv, 1980r). There is a recognition of the importance of working collectively. And indeed, it is this struggle over collectivity that lies at the heart of resistance (Arenas, 2014). The content of the paper essentially reflects the position held by activists from Wendland, in particular the BI, that "the occupation should be an expression of the resistance that comes from within the local population", but that nonetheless, "an occupation that doesn't harbour the support from the public is pointless for us" (Gorleben Archiv, 1980r).

On the one hand, there is an insistence on their relevance based on their embeddedness in the local, but on the other hand this reflects how through the process of organising the FRW the BI begins to reflect on their role in the movement. Unlike the previous protests, the FRW did not originate entirely from those activists from Wendland. The document expresses clear doubts over how much support occupiers could really expect from within the region: "Despite ensuring all necessary conditions, it is unclear how much support those who will travel to Wendland will get from the locals" (Gorleben Archiv, 1980r). This statement summarises the state of the discussions between these various groups. While there was a concerted effort to come together in the planning of the FRW and everyone was able to decide on common goals and ground rules, there was still a clear divide between activists who defined themselves as 'local' and those from outwith. Not all processes in this context were immediately transformative. Although this planning process laid the groundwork for "horizontal social relations", it did not guarantee them (Arenas, 2014: 440). It

required ongoing work to negotiate across difference in a productive manner. The FRW was supported by activists from the BI and the farmers' association, but essentially a project that was carried from those who came from outwith and had taken an active interest in Wendland.

5.2 Life in the Free Republic of Wendland

Several days before the planned occupation, a small group of activists, who did not support the structures put in place by the BI and other activist groups in those meetings described above, set up tents on the field. The BI in particular was concerned that this would trigger an early police intervention and that any further occupations of the drilling site would not be possible. They were worried that these "militant" occupiers would deter more "conservative" activists from joining the occupation in the first place (Zint, 1980: 11). They questioned whether a constructive day-to-day occupation would even be possible, if there were already militant outliers on the site. These turbulent discussions in the two weeks leading up to the 3rd of May, the official start of the FRW, almost led to the occupation being cancelled. Even on the day itself, it still was not clear how the occupation would unfold and how many would even show up. One activist recounted: "When we arrived in Trebel on Saturday morning it looked like there wouldn't be as many of us as we thought. But as we made our way down the sandy street to drilling site 1004 the train of people became bigger and bigger. With all their stuff, with wife and kids. We made our way to the windswept square in the woods destroyed by fire" (Gorleben Archiv, 1980h). Almost 7 000 people showed up on the first Sunday of the occupation and began immediately with the construction of the village.

Figure 13 – A caravan of people on their way to the drilling site 1004 in early May 1980 (Gorleben Archiv, 1980b)

Encampments are often an integral part of contentious political action. The Occupy Movement was organised around the occupation of public spaces (Arenas, 2014, 2015; Halvorsen, 2015a), the Squares' Movement across Europe was focused on the sustained occupation of public squares (Karaliotas, 2017), but also long-term encampments and occupations, such as the non-stop picket of the anti-apartheid movement in London or the camps of the zad and NoTAV movement are just a few examples. Occupations such as these are based on both the strategic and symbolic 'taking' of place. The Occupy Movement drew attention to financial centres in the city, the non-stop picket occupied space outside the South-African embassy, to draw attention to these spaces and infrastructures. Other times these occupations are more strategic, trying to disrupt everyday rhythms of society or in their efforts to prevent action from happening, as for example, the recent occupation of the Hambacher Forst in the German Rhineland, attempting to prevent further deforestation (Brock, 2020)[19] or the strategically occupied areas meant for infrastructural development in zad and NoTAV. Even more recently a group of activists occupied an empty village near Lützerath that was bought up by the RWE energy company to expand their

[19] See also: https://theecologist.org/2018/sep/21/police-brutality-corporate-power-and-state-violence-hambacher-forest-andrea-brock.

coal mining site.[20] The occupation of the drilling site in Wendland was preventing further exploratory drillings of the Gorleben salt dome, but the intense national media attention that the FRW drew, meant that it quickly turned into a much more symbolic act. In this section, I draw on this existing work around encampments to explore how the FRW was built and how everyday life unfolded in this space.

5.2.1 Infrastructures of alterity

Occupations such as the Free Republic of Wendland offer an opportunity to truly inhabit the struggle and to endure with it (Collectif Mauvaise troupe, 2018: 82). Quintessential to this are the infrastructures that make habitation and endurance possible. I focus explicitly on the infrastructures of the Free Republic of Wendland. I highlight how the space was constructed as a village and the importance of 'village characteristics' for collective resistance building. I then zoom out of the *Hüttendorf* itself and focus on how the infrastructures of the village were also an important material counter articulation to the infrastructures that had been established at the other drilling sites. In looking beyond the borders of the FRW, I also think about how the village defined itself in opposition to that which was outwith its borders.

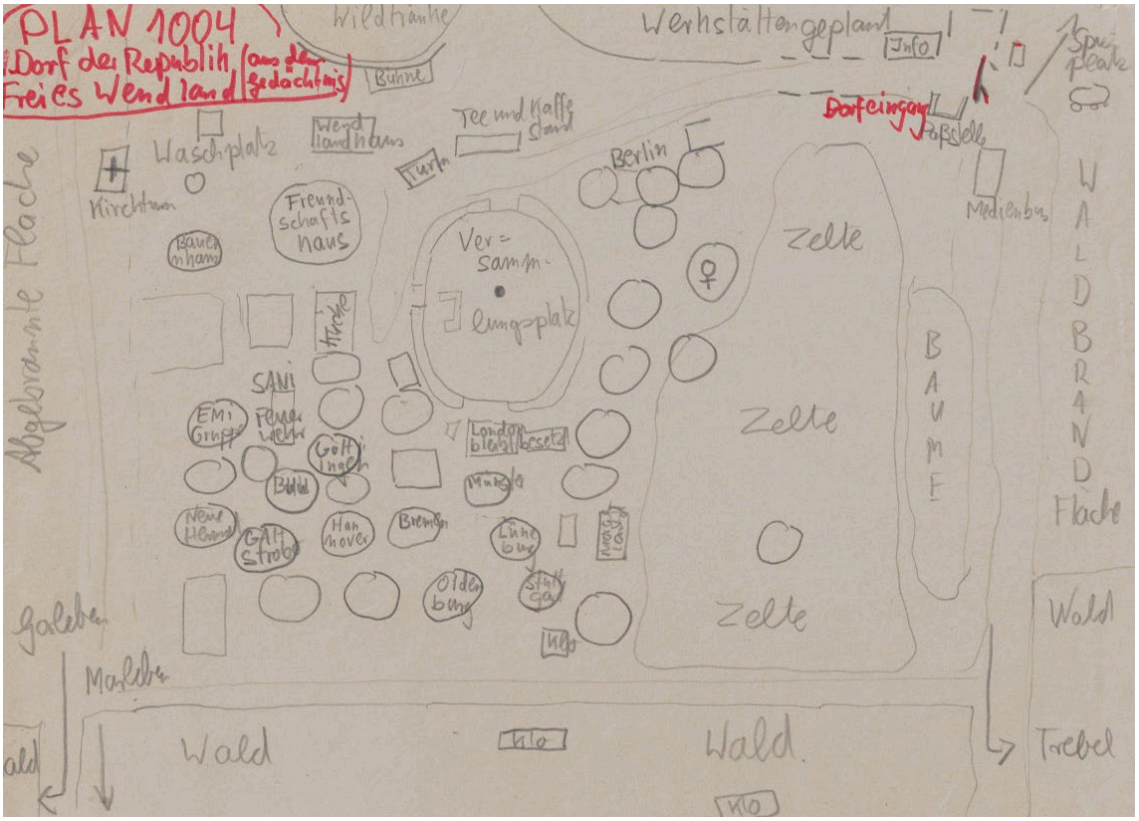
5.2.1.1 Building a village

The infrastructures and materialities of this occupation were actively constructed to resemble a village. Part of the planning process included working towards constructing a larger, central house, the Friendship House, ensuring that there was a central square in the village, and encouraging occupants to come together in smaller groups to build houses around these two central structures. While these were highly improvised structures, the Friendship House was somewhat of an exception. This particular house was meant to host the general assembly and was therefore the only house that was planned in advance of the occupation. The house was designed by a local architect and the construction, which was much more complex than some of the other houses, also took much

[20] The occupation persevered for almost two years, growing into a large protest village in summer 2022. The site was cleared in mid-January 2023. Many parallels can be drawn between this occupation, "Lützerath lebt' (Lütherzath lives), and the Free Republic of Wendland. See: https://luetzerathlebt.info/.

longer to build. Together with the central square it gave the occupation the traditional characteristics of a village. This village character was actively planned into the occupation of the drilling site. The Friendship house was a central meeting point within the FRW and directly next to a ‘central square’. These spaces were planned and made as places where democracy and communal life could be enacted. Where the inhabitants are the nervous system, the infrastructures are the skeleton that make collective resistance in cohabitation possible (Collectif Mauvaise troupe, 2018: 16).

The FRW grew into a small village at an astonishing pace. The village arose out of a mix of these planned infrastructures, but also improvisations and necessities. The map below was drawn by an activist from memory (Figure 14). It shows the central square and the small houses associated with specific groups from Berlin, Hannover, and other cities across Germany, as well as other important infrastructures such as the Info-Stand and Passport-Station at the entry of the village.



Note: The boundaries of the village are marked by the forest and surrounding area that was burnt down by a wildfire. The entrance to the village is marked in red at the top right. There is an Info-Stand, a passport station, and a Media-Stand right by the entrance. Right in the middle of the village is the village square. To its left is the large Friendship House. The smaller circles represent other houses, many marked with the *Bezugsgruppe* or city associated with that house. Other notable infrastructures include a kitchen, a washing station, a first aid hut, and a fire department.

Figure 14 – Map of the Free Republic of Wendland as drawn from memory by an activist (Gorleben Archiv, 1980l)

Within the village itself, unity was produced (at least in part) through practice and pragmatism rather than political rhetoric as movements struggled to articulate unity out of difference (Dzenovska and Arenas, 2012: 646). The occupation was organised around a communal lifestyle. Spaces necessary for the everyday developed quickly and were the responsibility of everyone in the village. This included, for example, building a kitchen where a group would cook warm meals for everyone at the FRW. Toilets were placed on the outskirts of the village, sinks and drinking water stations were located at in one central area in the village, one group also set-up an improvised hair salon, and there was a first-aid station in one of the houses. At the same time, some of these structures also reflected the desire to enact alternatives and the reflected the values of the FRW (Gorleben Archiv, 1980g; interview, Josephine, 2020). There was a compost station on the village grounds, for example, as well as recycling stations, so that the waste produced in the FRW could be disposed of properly and kept to a minimum. Besides these necessities there was also a stage, where theatre

groups and musicians could perform, and an information stand at the entrance of the village. Another central feature of the village was a church, where local pastors held sermons on Sundays. There is a strong sense, that the features of the villages in Wendland were being replicated in the FRW. Articulating and living a village was important both to situate this struggle within existing 'local' resistance structures and produce a sense of community in occupation, again drawing to some extent on the spatial imaginaries of rural Wendland in their occupation.

As everyone in the FRW took on rotating responsibilities to ensure the proper functioning of the village, these structures make possible the production of solidarities through common practice (Dzenovska and Arenas, 2012). Groups and individuals were encouraged to participate at various points, helping in the kitchen, patrolling for wildfires, manning the passport station, welcoming, and informing guests at the information point, or putting on performances on the improvised stage. It is in and through these everyday activities, both the meaningful chores that made the village work and the leisurely encounters, that activists made new connections. In short, the village occupation produced spaces of encounter (Halvorsen, 2015a). An activist who chronicled her stay in the FRW in her diary gives insights not only into the everyday politics of the FRW, but also the personal connections, friendships and relationships in the village: "I've fallen in love with K. from the Berlin House. He plays in the music group and is so cute! Yesterday, we helped out in the kitchen together and today we wanted to do the same, or maybe do the fire patrol in the woods" (Gorleben Archiv, 1980q). As much as the occupation was about the anti-nuclear movement and about the political demands set out by local and other activists, the FRW was also a space for new friendships and relationships, especially for young activists to experiment with and live away from the structures set in everyday life otherwise. Indeed, after the FRW many of these young activists stayed in Wendland and continued to struggle against the nuclear. Nonetheless, holding together these diverse groups within the "daily drama of unexpected encounters … of co-existing" (Collectif Mauvaise troupe, 2018, p. xxii) was the struggle of collectivity.

Figure 15 – Various parts of the village including the village kitchen, the church, with a pastor giving a Sunday blessing, a first-aid house, drinking-water facilities, and glass recycling station (Gierlowski, 1980; Gorleben Archiv, 1980e, 1980i, 1980j; Lojewski-Paschke, 1980c)

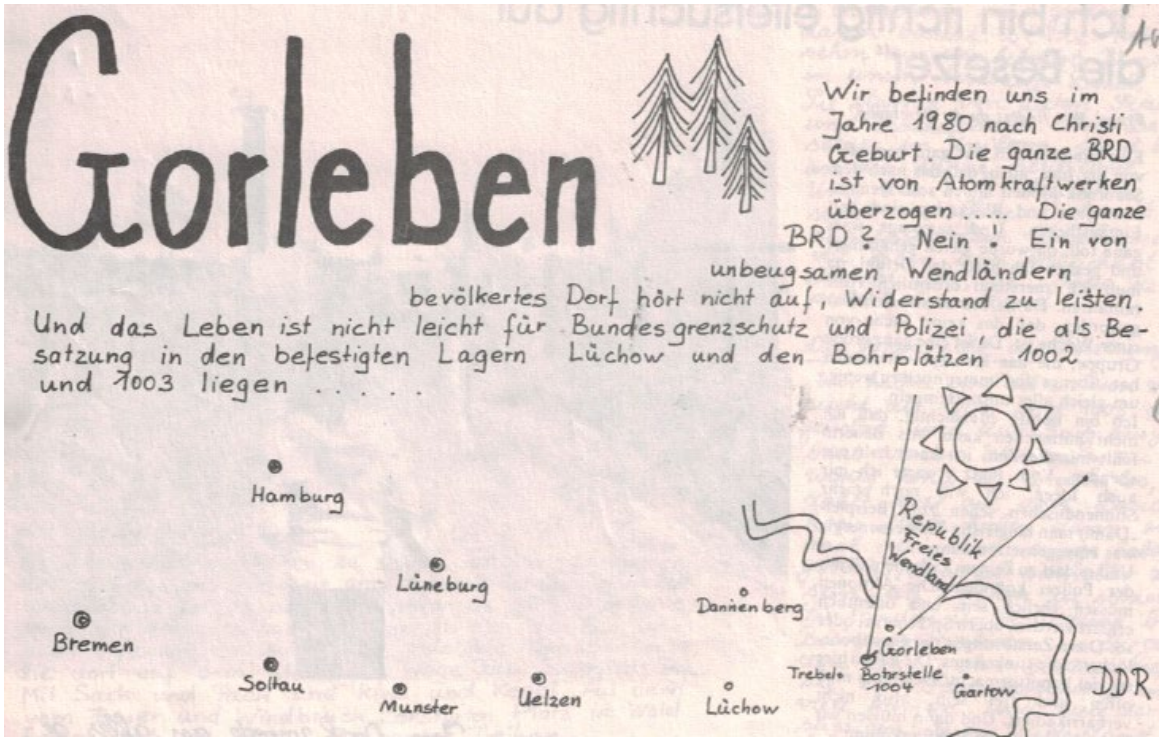
5.2.1.2 Opposing infrastructures

The act of building huts and homes, kitchens and living rooms, also positioned this occupation in opposition to the infrastructure of the other drilling sites. The drilling sites 1002 and 1003, that protestors had tried to occupy or had occupied for only a few hours before being cleared by the police, can be seen below (Figure 16). Even before the interim storage facility was built or the geological repository site constructed, smaller infrastructures of the nuclear industry could be found on these drilling sites. To protect their equipment from activists, the sites were surrounded by large walls and barbed wire. Pillars with lights and surveillance equipment stuck out at the corners of the enclosures. These too were the infrastructural reminders of the encroaching nuclearity of Wendland. They were part of the production of the nuclear in the "empty nonplace" of rural Wendland (Pitkanen and Farish, 2017). The Free Republic of Wendland existed in the tension between on the one hand making visible the people, ideas, visions, and politics that were already there, refuting its 'emptiness' so to speak, and on the other hand, being constructed out of nothing and filled primarily with the people, ideas, visions, and politics from outwith Wendland. Infrastructures are important for resistances, as spaces of encountering difference, but also as visible and tangible oppositions to the status-quo.

Figure 16 – The constructs at the other drilling sites near the Free Republic of Wendland (Lojewski-Paschke, 1980a, 1980b)

Building a village, something material and of permanence, was not only strategic and to ensure that a clearance of the occupation would not be as easy as the previous ones, but also symbolic. This infrastructure stood in direct opposition to the concrete and barbed wires, the extractivist nature of the constructions on the other two drilling sites. In a pamphlet about the Free Republic the front

page (Figure 17) shows a map of the Lüchow-Dannenberg region and places the FRW within the broader geographies. The image and text replicate the introduction to Asterix and Obelix painting a picture of an occupied West Germany and the single village resisting the all-encompassing nuclear energy industry around them. In another pamphlet they write: “they’re planning seven boreholes. Three of them are occupied. Two (1002 + 1003) look like fortified castles on occupied land. They’re rigid with concrete, steel and barbed wire. They’re occupiers armed to the teeth. And the third? An open village with creative wooden houses stands on it, full of life and joy. That is 1004, the Free Republic of Wendland” (Gorleben Archiv, 1980h). The Free Republic of Wendland was an opportunity to materialise alterity.



The text reads: “We mark the year 1980 after Christ. The whole FRG (Free Republic of Germany) is occupied by nuclear power plants … the whole GDR? No! One village of stubborn Wendlandians won’t stop resisting”.

Figure 17 – Pamphlet about the Free Republic of Wendland (Gorleben Archiv, 1980f)

It becomes clear that it was also important for activists to position themselves and the FRW more broadly. I argue that it was important for the FRW to define themselves in opposition what it had defined as the ‘nuclear state’ and draw very firm boundaries around what and who they represented. Part of articulating the FRW was defining itself, and to some extent the whole Wendland Movement, to the ‘outside’. Naming the occupation the ‘Free Republic of Wendland’ in

itself was part of this production of a space that stood in opposition to the state. It was a way of declaring an independence, resisting top-down planning and political processes not just in practice (as described above) but also in its very definition. One way in which this materialised was through the FRW passports. The passport station that gave out FRW passports mocked the traditional structures of the state. The teacher, Erika (interview, 2020), and a friend from the UK ended up leading the passport station, playing border officers. Newcomers could have a polaroid picture taken of them and get a Wendland Passport stamped and issued. Indeed, the idea behind these passports was to earn some money for the FRW. The passport station was nonetheless symbolic and marked the FRW as an "autonomous region" where things were different (interview, Erika, 2020). Just as in the zad and NoTAV movements, activists "little by little built the possibility of shared lives lived in a partially liberated zone" (Collectif Mauvaise troupe, 2018: 37). The exit sign of the FRW warned said "STOP FRG[21]" (Zint, 1980: 85), warning everyone that they were now entering the nuclearized state of West Germany (the Federal Republic of Germany).Informational pamphlets about the FRW positioned the FRW as an exceptional, autonomous anti-nuclear region in an otherwise nuclear West Germany (Gorleben Archiv, 1980f, 1980h). In the Pollock Free State, an occupation and resistance against a motorway development, they also issued passports and opted for a state or nation centric name. Routledge (1997: 367) notes that "it is ironic that a 'free space' should define itself as a 'state' and symbolically confer the inclusion of people by the issuing of passports". Indeed, it is somewhat ironic. At the same time, it was this autonomy and articulation against the state that also strengthened the construction of a collective identity within the borders of the FRW. The occupation of the drilling site was a reflection of the ongoing process within the broader Wendland Movement that was still struggling and working to define itself and produce a meaningful collective within these resistance spaces.

[21] The German Democratic Republic, also known as East Germany.

Figure 18 – Erika taking a polaroid for two protestors at the passport station in the Free Republic of Wendland (Gorleben Archiv, 1980k)

5.2.2 Forming collectivity …

Clearly, infrastructures allow people to come together, produce a collective space, and facilitate the production of collectivity. In the following sections, I unpack this further and focus on three ways in which this happened. First, I focus on consensus building and the general assembly as a space and practice for collectivity. This involved negotiating consensus regarding confrontations with the police, for example, but was also used to organise everyday life. Co-producing these structures and offering a platform for consensual politics was important for framing a collective struggle, even when these processes were long and hard. Second, the labouring involved in building the infrastructures that make these interactions possible, I argue, is also an important part of the formation of collectivity. I focus on the act of making infrastructure in the first place as a practice of collectivity. Finally, I explore how those who occupied the FRW more permanently interacted with others from the region. Where co-habitation was a key component to bridging difference, it is still important to recognise how the Free Republic of Wendland became a place where a more conservative group of activists from within Wendland could slowly become acquainted with these ‘other’ or ‘new’ points of view.

5.2.2.1 ... by labouring to build the village

By exploring the physicality and materiality of the Free Republic of Wendland, I focus on what was built, how it was built, and how these new infrastructures were used. Figure 19 and Figure 20 show the FRW being built and under construction. In doing so, I follow Arenas (2014: 438) in addressing "how the material practice of seizing and maintain a space helps construct the people". I argue that the collective labouring to produce a permanency in the camp infrastructure was also an important experience for the articulation of collectivity. In exploring the spatial dynamics of occupation in a tent city, Arenas (2014) argues that the practice of sweating together to produce this occupational living space was also a form of labouring to articulate a collective subject. The "sweaty and shared efforts" of remaking space and social relations (Dzenovska and Arenas, 2012: 659) transcends the divisive political imaginaries. This collective labouring was a "re-distribution of the sensible" (Rancière, 2004), a reframing of existing ways of being and key to production of a collective.

Figure 19 – Activists in the FRW carrying a large tree trunk together for the construction of village structures (Gorleben Archiv, 1980a)

The act of construction and materialisation of alterities was an important part of the philosophy of the Free Republic. The idea was not only to occupy this space, but also to make visible, tangible, and concrete the imagined alternatives. These were in part related to the anti-nuclear movement, but also involved articulating other counter-cultural and eco-political practices. The FRW "articulated a desire and intention to live differently from conventional culture" (Routledge, 1997: 372). I return to what these looked like when thinking about the lasting impressions the occupation left in Chapter 5.4 but focus here on the importance of actually constructing the infrastructures that make these alterities possible. There were a wide variety in architectural approaches, in the materials used for construction, and a strong desire to produce a sense of permanency through this construction. Pamphlets that outlined various building techniques and DIY tips and tricks for construction highlighted that "self-construction shows us how we can plan and how can put our ideas into practice" (Gorleben Archiv, 1980g). It is not only materialising itself, but the process and the act of building, of constructing that is important. Learning what works and what does not, how ideas can become material were a central element of the FRW. Common material practices can go beyond the "rhetorical construction of a common enemy" and allow activists to move from confrontation to cooperation (Dzenovska and Arenas, 2012: 652). It functioned as an experimental space where suddenly and in opposition to the 'outside world', everything was possible, and that those experiences could then make possible the materialising of alternative structure, alternative ways of living elsewhere too. This, again, links back to those articulations of spatial imaginaries I discussed in Chapter 4.2.3 on alternative rural imaginaries. The FRW offered a space where activists could not only articulate and formulate these alternative imaginaries but live them and prove that alternative forms of living are possible. Activists articulated a clear desire not just to live, but also to construct and build their infrastructures alternatively and outwith the constraints of the status quo. Labouring to create a sense of permanency fully aware that the police would come to destroy everything they had built sooner or later that was a powerful act, articulating hope and collectivity in the face of uncertainty.

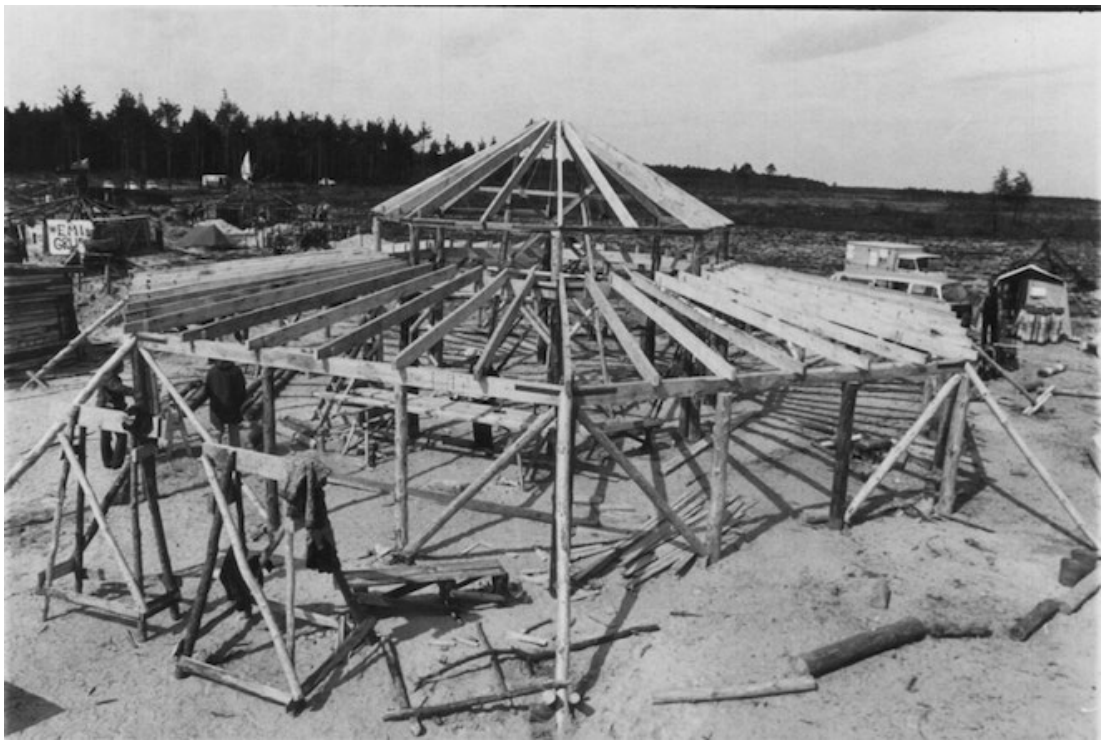


Figure 20 – The Friendship House under construction (Gorleben Archiv, 1980c)

5.2.2.2 … through in-situ consensus building

Once the FRW had taken on the character of a small village, construction of the essential structures was more or less completed, and the first occupiers had settled into routines, they produced guidance material for all those who came to visit the village or where planning to join the occupation. It encouraged newcomers to study the village plan and take a walk around the village to locate others who had come from the same region. The idea was that "you can work together here in the village and when you get home, you can continue your struggle together" (Gorleben Archiv, 1980n). The FRW was a project committed to displaying the broad support against nuclear energy across the country and actively sought to mobilise existing activist groups and form new ones as part of the occupation. Formulating clear structures for communication and cohabitation was therefore central to the planning for the FRW. Activists were encouraged to form or join smaller groups (*Bezugsgruppen*), which could send speakers to an assembly (*Sprecherrat*) where not only political demands, but also everyday practicalities of the FRW were discussed. The *Sprecherrat* can be seen in Figure 21. This form of organising, using smaller groups and a general assembly was modelled on resistance groups in the USA that mobilised against a nuclear power plant in Seabrook (Gorleben Archiv, 1980f). Negotiating and enacting consensus in this way contributed to the making of a collectivity

amongst disparate activists. This too, however, was an uneven process. The smaller groups were often organised around the cities activists came from (Berlin, Hamburg, Hannover and so on), but also included a women's house for example. The houses on the map (Figure 14) that corresponded to various cities in West Germany were the infrastructures associated with these *Bezugsgruppen*. This comes down to practicalities in organising and was meant to help activists stay in contact after the FRW, but inadvertently also encouraged activists to build on their existing identities and histories in constructing a structure for the village.

Figure 21 – The general assembly convening in the Friendship House (Gorleben Archiv, 1980d)

Putting these plans into action was, however, not always easy. "There were so many people who came, who had no idea about any of this plenum and consensus stuff or who didn't think it was any good", Franz (interview, 2020) recalled but that "organising this in advance and having a good basis meant that it more or less worked exactly how we wanted it to". Having clear guidelines for how consensus would be negotiated meant that most activists could find their place in these structures. Franz (interview, 2020) also had similar feelings about the general assembly:

> "And then new people are constantly showing up and we've had this discussion last week, but now someone new wants to go at it again. Patience is exhausting … you need a lot of patience, and you have to be ready to give-in and think; whatever happens, happens to everyone here. I mean there's a reason we all came together there, but still, it's difficult to get so many different personalities under one hat."

The constant flux of people coming and going from the village meant that it was difficult to progress discussion in the general assembly. Discussions, especially around the clearance and how activists wanted to encounter the police, became lengthy and repetitive. Additionally, one activist wrote in her diary: "For those, who are only here for a short while it's hard to get into the groove. Those of us who are here all the time have a lot of unspoken rules and rituals" (Gorleben Archiv, 1980q). Occupants of the FRW had become used to new and different rhythms of everyday life. When the activist's boyfriend shows up in the village, she's annoyed about his sudden interest in the occupation:

> "When I left for Gorleben, he made this sneery remarks about it and now suddenly he's here … And then he just goes straight into a discussion at the general assembly. I can't deal with this know-it-all attitude anymore! Why can't the newcomers just listen for a change" (Gorleben Archiv, 1980q).

There is on the one hand, an openness to the FRW where anyone and everyone can and is encouraged to join resistance. On the other hand, there were many rules, official and unspoken, about the social and material structures of the occupation that could make it difficult for newcomers to find their spaces in the FRW. In that sense a general assembly is also an act of putting something together. The process is contested, provisional, and unstable, but it vitally important shaping a politics that "harnesses collective thought and mobilises collective resources" (Arenas, 2014: 441).

5.2.2.3 … beyond co-habitation

Despite the negotiation of consensus being fraught with differences, tensions and uneven power relations, the FRW produced a strong sense of solidarity amongst occupiers, was a powerful symbol against nuclear energy that radiated across West Germany, and within which activists were able to articulate a sense of collectivity. The BI's desire to ground the protest in local action was not only present during the planning stages of the FRW. Here, I come back to thinking

relationally about the FRW as a place where multiple social relations come together. Despite involvement from many activists from within Wendland, some of whom moved to the village and others who were involved in construction or donated materials and food, there was still a clearly felt and articulated difference between 'locals' and everybody else. In reality, the FRW was a space for activists from outwith Wendland, that those who were living in Wendland would only visit sporadically or on the weekends. Especially the farming community, who's work does not allow for such sustained occupations, was not as present during the FRW as during previous protests in Wendland. Where on the one hand many close, personal and emotional connections blossomed between activists from outwith Wendland and locals, others felt the divide between themselves and locals very acutely or had little contact in the first place.

Pamphlets, given out at the information point at the entrance of the village, paste together stories, newspaper clips, photographs that tell the story of the FRW (Gorleben Archiv, 1980h, 1980n). It shows the ways in which the farming community, but also other activists from Wendland were involved with the everyday activities of the FRW. It emphasises how famers helped build a well to ensure that FRW had clean drinking water, they took care of the waste disposal, and that the food is supplied by the local population. While the farmers were generally sceptical of what was going on at 1004, they found ways to contribute to the everyday life in the village. Unable to leave their farming work they instead donated vegetables to the village kitchen collective. Beyond these practicalities of sustained occupation that made it difficult for some activists to active participate in the FRW, some also felt that they did not necessarily belong in the FRW. The farmer Lothar (interview, 2020), who had been in Wendland his whole life, recalls that

> "we just didn't have any space there. It was totally occupied by those from outside. It was really hard to get our foot on the ground. So we were only there on the side lines and of course with our work we couldn't just occupy somewhere for four weeks."

Even though the occupation actively worked to be inclusive and work across difference, divides between 'insiders' and 'outsiders', 'local' and those from outwith remained. It is important therefore not to romanticise the participatory

politics and built collectivity within the FRW. Sustained occupations are places where resistance is never complete, but always in some way intertwined with practices of domination, marginalisation, and segregation (Routledge, 1997). They are part of the process of articulating resistance across differences and require sustained work. While the those living in Wendland were integral to the functioning of the FRW and it was continuously emphasised how the occupation was supported by the local population and embedded within the local struggle, the FRW itself was dominated by activists from outwith Wendland.

This does not, however, just come from those actors within the Free Republic, but also reflects the mentality from many people in Wendland and how the FRW also changed their perspectives. The pamphlet quotes a "housewife from the local citizens' initiative", who recognises that "the resistance is carried by young people, who have long hair and dust all over them – but I have a lot of respect from them now" (Gorleben Archiv, 1980h). She also goes on to identify herself as one of them. The CDU launched an aggressive media campaign at the time, dismissing the occupiers as "Chaoten" (anarchists). When one politician visited the FRW and tried to blame the disruptions on these anarchists, the housewife proudly replied: "I am one of them!" (Gorleben Archiv, 1980h). While politics and the conservative media continuously framed the occupation as one of outsiders and anarchists that were as unwanted by locals as much as by the drilling companies, those 'locals' actively sought to identify and position themselves alongside these new group of activists. This was both as a reaction to this attempted fracturing of the opposition and occurred simply as those from within Wendland slowly became more open to other forms of being/living.

Nonetheless, there is a constant negotiation between these activist groups that also continues to produce these divides. Activists within the FRW continuously grounded the struggle in the existing resistances against nuclear energy in Wendland. In the informational pamphlets about the FRW the pages on why the drilling site is being occupied explain that: "the nature of Wendland is being destroyed here to make space for a huge industrial complex that the local population rejects, because it threatens *their lives and the lives of their children*" (Gorleben Archiv, 1980f). There is a complex back and forth happening in the public and internal discussions about who is protesting for whom, where

‘local’ and ‘external’ activists are still struggling to find and define their identities and are still taking their time to come to grips with the politics of the other.

5.3 The destruction of the village

It was clear to occupants from the beginning that a clearance of the village was inevitable. Experience at the previous drilling sites had shown, that it was only a matter of time until the police would intervene. In turn, everyday life in the FRW was not only joyful and carefree, as activists have described it, but filled with tension about how the clearing would go down. In the general assembly, everyday activities such as cooking and maintaining or building necessary infrastructures were discussed, but the clearance and how to react when the police arrived dominated. Documentation from the many plenaries that were held in the assembly show how long and in-depth these discussions around non-violence and the clearance were in the FRW (Zint, 1980). The way in which these discussions were held was a time-intensive process and could often become tedious: “you can see how these discussions went back and forth. The fact that everyone could somehow take part, this consensus thing, is an exhausting and time-intensive process” (interview, Franz, 2020). These were underscored by *Planspiele* (planning games) where activists would play-out how a clearance could go, how police officers would act, and how they could respond. This was an important part of life in the FRW, becoming almost an everyday routine for activists. Activist Thomas (interview, 2020), who came from the leftist groups in West Berlin, recalled that: “It was the question from day one: how are we going to deal with the clearance? And we did this for 30 days. I couldn’t stand it anymore”. The uncertainty around the clearance, how and when it would happen, created an uneasy atmosphere. How they wanted to position themselves in relation to the police was a constant point of discussion amongst activists and there were constantly rumours going around about how and when the police would show up. Another activist wrote in her diary:

> “I can’t hear that word ‘clearance’ anymore. The more stressed I am, the more panicky I feel about the clearance. I’ve retreated to a quiet part of the woods. Well, it’s more of a desert than woods. But I only hear the drums and the barking dogs from afar and finally I have a moment of piece” (Gorleben Archiv, 1980q).

To counter this constant state of uncertainty activists sought to produce safe spaces to discuss these anxieties and prepare for a range of potentialities. This preparation and anxiety stood in contrast to the otherwise open and carefree atmosphere that developed in the FRW.

After 33 days of occupation the police cleared the FRW with excess force, removing all activists from the drilling site and bulldozing the constructions they had built. The police had more or less announced when the clearance would be happening and so activists had a few days to prepare themselves. Staying non-violent in the face of the police presence persevered as the strategy that was observed by all protestors. Those who wanted to show more resistance, climbed onto one of the towers in the FRW or the Friendship House, making it at least more difficult for the police to move them. The majority of activists however, including many activists from Wendland who had come to the FRW for the clearance, gathered on the central square. The police arrived in large numbers, with cars and on horses, with bulldozers and in helicopters (Figure 22). Thomas (interview, 2020), who had experience with the police altercations before in protest situations, said that the whole situation reminded him of the film Apocalypse Now:

> "It was just like in the film when these helicopters came. Just this time not through the jungle but through the pine forests. They didn't even land, the police just jumped right out and all I could think was, this is war."

Franz (interview, 2020), who was one of the activists who was on the tower, described the situation in much the same way: "when I was up on that tower, I filmed what was happening. How these helicopters showed up and 30 police officers stormed out of each one … it whirled up all the sand and dust. That's war" (interview, Franz, 2020).

Figure 22 – An already partially destroyed village with the police, their helicopters and bulldozers in the background during the clearance (Römming, 1980)

The rest of the police officers surrounded the protestors on the central village square and began carrying them off the field one by one. Erika did not want to sit in the front row and so was able to watch how the police handled the protestors before it would be her turn. She remembers that the majority of those in the front row were older activists from Wendland:

> "It really stopped the police from becoming super aggressive right at the beginning. They didn't even know where to grab some of these people so that they wouldn't hurt them because they were so fragile. It calmed me down … I was very thankful for that because it took a lot of my fear" (interview, Erika, 2020).

Collectively occupying this space and confronting the police together produces what Dzenovska and Arenas (2012) call a barricade sociality, whereby "in a heightened moment of danger, situated practices of struggle produce an affective, shared, and visceral sense of togetherness" (Arenas, 2014: 444). The clearance of the protestors, however, remained largely peaceful with only a few bouts of violence against protestors. At the same time the bulldozers were at work destroying all of the houses and infrastructures that activists had spent a month building. "It took a lot of energy to build all this", Franz (interview, 2020)

tells me, “and then, while we were watching, they destroyed it all. It makes me angry”. Although this was the end of the FRW, protestors felt the strength of their collectivity during this clearance most viscerally, recounting how old and fragile protestors had symbolically sat themselves in the front room of the protest, for example, and experiencing that their negotiations around committing to non-violence were being carried by all protestors.

Figure 23 – The central village square during the clearance of the Free Republic of Wendland (Gorleben Archiv, 1980m)

5.4 Lasting alternatives: infrastructures and identities

Finally, I explore what alternatives emerged in the FRW and how these carried on beyond this occupation. Inhabitants of the FRW clearly articulated their occupation as the production of alternative ways of being and living together, as alternative ways of doing community, and saw the FRW as an opportunity to demonstrate that alternative forms of living were possible. This emphasised community organising, decentralised structures, favoured autonomy, but also stressed the importance of grassroots democratic practices. The FRW set impulses that echo many of the current environmentalist perspectives on sustainability and sufficiency. These lasting changes after the Free Republic of Wendland are important, because other than the short-term blockades that are “one-day-flies” this had a long-term character. A farmer from the region said

that this motivated her to bring by wood and other supplies to continue building. She was jealous that she could not take part, but she had hopes and expectations in the FRW as a space where alternatives are developed and practiced, for example by installing more solar-powered showers so that "there is something long-term we can position against nuclear energy" (Gorleben Archiv, 1980h).

In this section, I address the lasting changes that the FRW of Wendland brought. One local activist had brought in rudimentary solar panels to the FRW, meaning that activist could have warm showers during their stay. Another group mounted a simple windmill that powered a wildfire alarm. These early experiments with alternative energy sources carried through the region: one local activist established a business building and selling alternative energy systems and others developed new business models to build and have a stake in alternative wind energy. Many also stayed in Wendland and tried to apply the philosophies of alternative living, forming or joining communes in the region. One long-standing alternative space is the commune in Meuchefitz[22], which also has a small restaurant, where especially left-leaning activists carved out their space in Wendland. I highlight in particular how lasting effects and changes become clear through such a historical perspective.

5.4.1 Alternative energies and living projects

During the FRW several activists took first steps towards experimenting with solar and wind energy (Figure 24). Upon seeing the photographs of a solar powered shower, Erika (interview, 2020), the teacher, remembered that "these people here they built these solar stations and wind turbines as first experiments with alternative energies". The solar power shower in the village was a highlight that many activists remembered, not only because it was innovative, but because, as Erika (interview, 2020) told me, that "meant that we could have a warm shower!". These first experiments carried on after the clearance of the FRW: "the two main guys opened up a company and did all these little projects with solar power … He still has that shop where they used to experiment with solar electricity generation" (interview, Franz, 2020). Another activist who was

[22] See: https://meuchefitz.de/.

at the FRW built the first wind turbine near Trebel only a few years later (interview, Alexander, 2020). These examples show what how possibilities develop from within the FRW. The occupation was an important space for experimentation that offered an opportunity to both think and 'do' alterity (interview, Josephine, 2020). This extends beyond the FRW, but crucially it is an example of the viability of these kinds of alternatives.

Figure 24 – The installation of solar panels on the roof of one of the buildings on the Free Republic of Wendland (Gorleben Archiv, 1980p)

There were also attempts to extrapolate these visions beyond individualised projects to the entire region. A seminar group formed after the FRW that focused on developing concepts for regional electricity production and consumption. On a regional level, these ideas never came to fruition, but as a result of this seminar work, Franz attempted to make changes through the communal political arena. A citizens' energy operator was founded, and a motion put forward in the local to commit to a complete transition to renewable energies. Even the conservative CDU voted for the motion, because the project received a large sum of money from the EU to produce a feasibility study. Ultimately, the switch to renewable energy in the region was not taken forward by local politics. On the one hand, this demonstrates the limits to creating long-lasting changes, but on the other hand, how activists found many different avenues and actors to work solidify new infrastructures of alterity.

Additionally, these structures of alterity often stayed within Wendland establishing a much wider network of infrastructures and associated possibilities for enacting alternatives. The question of energy production was particularly relevant in Wendland, because a number of activists had purchased old farmhouses that were in need of renovation both prior to the FRW, but also afterwards. The fact that there were a number of relatively affordable houses meant that during the late 70s and through to the 90s there were a large number of housing projects in Wendland (interview, Erika, 2020). Franz (interview, 2020) told me that: “Back then we didn’t have any electricity here and from the beginning we had the ambition to realize our concept as well and then we had wind energy”. There was a clear desire to live the kinds of alternatives that were ideas and experiments in the FRW in the everyday.

One of the activists that had brought forward the idea of the FRW carried the principles of the makeshift village into other regions with more permanency. He founded the eco-village Sieben Linden in Lower-Saxony, where the conditions for building a village were administratively easier than in Wendland. It shows the direct influence the experimental village had in replicating not only “the spirit of renewable energies here in the region, but also in projects that are about living differently” (interview, Franz, 2020). This mentality of living differently, knowing that something different was possible, and turning this into reality, is a significant driver of change in Wendland.

5.4.2 Changes in Wendland

Following the occupation of the drilling site there was an increased interest in the anti-nuclear energy movement in the region and, as already mentioned, several people stayed in the region and brought new influences to Wendland and the movement. Quite a few people simply “got stranded” in Wendland for one reason or another (interview, Erika, 2020). Natascha (interview, 2020), for example, came to Wendland during the FRW. She was a radical student activist that came from Hamburg and lived in the FRW. During this time, she became increasingly involved with the local anti-nuclear energy movement and ended up marrying one of the famers Michael “and now she’s practically the leader of the farmers” (interview, Franz, 2020). Again, we see personal trajectories of individual people and activists colliding and changing the trajectories of the

Wendland Movement itself. This influx of individuals to Wendland also resulted in a much broader political spectrum being represented in Wendland: “The citizens’ initiative was in the centre. The Emigrant Group was more on the left and action orientated. There were some really conservative people as well … and the farmers stayed for themselves anyway” (interview, Katharina, 2020). The resulting political landscape was now much more diverse and there was a clear sense that these various groups were now going to continue working together or at least alongside each other as long as nuclear energy dominated the political discourse in Wendland.

The changes that protest actions like the FRW brought with them were, however, not easy for the local population. At the beginning, a lot of people who were from the region were still sceptical of politically motivated newcomers, especially those that were “somehow politically left or something like that; there wasn’t much understanding for that at the beginning” (interview, Franz, 2020). In Wendland there was a sudden shift in the local population or even activist groups like the BI. There was still scepticism towards these new political inputs and the longevity of their interest in Wendland, about “those who would make these impressive speeches, but were nowhere to be found when it came to actually organising protests” (interview, Franz, 2020). These kinds of reservations were often however slowly dismissed. Especially those who moved to Wendland were “integrated surprisingly well, they were measures by their actions, and that’s what was really exciting: how the critical and conservative blended” (Interview Franz, 2020). Having a common “enemy” in the nuclear meant that a lot of different people could fit “under one hat” and recognise that everyone could find their place here (interview, Paula, 2020). There was a clear understanding that solidarities were made on the ground, in action, and that there was work to be done across political divides.

This is not to say, however, that over the years there was simply a smooth transition or homogenous change within the region. On the one hand, there a clear politicisation took place in the region. People who had considered themselves to be apolitical took an interest in the situation and were open to new political influences and voices. On the other hand, Tom, the activist from West Berlin, makes it very clear that this did not necessarily result in a

fundamental shift in political convictions. The solidarity that he experienced with those living in Wendland was significant, but still "entrenched in conservative, regionalist, nationalist tendencies" (interview, Thomas, 2020). He also found that showing solidarity within a village or the region, especially against nuclear energy, was more important than politics, and that even those conservative NPD[23] voters would fight alongside him, a left-wing activist, against the developments in Gorleben. At the same time, there was a growing sense of pride that those living in Wendland felt for all of those alternative projects, communes and alternative farming communities, that were popping-up around Wendland. Looking back on these many years of protest in Wendland, it seems that there is an "invisible blanket of incredible political potential" across Wendland which is the result of this long-term engagement with the nuclear and through the ongoing negotiation of these multiple political viewpoints (interview, Thomas, 2020). It is important, however, not to romanticise this political potential and recognise that "while at the end there was a certain homogeneity around the anti-nuclear protest, you can't just apply this to every other political arena" (interview, Thomas, 2020). Many of the farmers were much more political and open – many slowly converted to organic agricultural practices – but communes like the one in Meuchefitz still had to carve out their space in the community, and political ideologies often remained relatively unchanged. But the experiences of the FRW and other protests produced a certain level of understanding, a respect for different opinions and forms of organising, and a common ground for further negotiation across difference.

5.5 Concluding thoughts

In this chapter I explored the ways in which activists came together and negotiated the occupation of the drilling site. I demonstrated how consensus was both negotiated and enacted prior to and during the occupation. These were processes fraught with tension, yet successful in producing spaces where these uneven and complex discussions could unfold. I traced the trajectories that led to this occupation and the particular constellation of activists that occupied the FRW. The personal biographies of activists were a central part of this, but I also

[23] National-sozialistische Partei Deutschland (NPD): the Nationalist Social Party of Germany that is under investigation by the Federal Constitutional Court for their extreme right-wing politics.

look at the practicalities of organising that lead up to the occupation of the drilling site. The discussions surrounding the occupation gave insights into how different activist groups negotiated their collective resistance. Here I thought specifically about the clash of political convictions and strategies of external activists and activist groups such as the farmers or the BI. It illuminated a complex and often uneven process that nonetheless resulted in a fairly cohesive and functioning resistance.

I also focused on how the construction of the FRW was central in allowing collectivity to emerge and how the everyday life in the village helped to establish common ground amongst activists. In doing so, I thought about two distinct elements of the occupation: infrastructure and collectivity. On the one hand, I argue for the important role that infrastructures play in the FRW. I focused on how occupants actively sought to reproduce the open characteristics of a village, by creating central structures like a village square and a common house and encouraging groups to build 'homes' in this village. These characteristics opened-up spaces for meeting, labouring together, making music together and so on. This is important because infrastructures affect, not just reflect, the production of revolutionary consciousness (Dzenovska and Arenas, 2012). Actively producing spaces where connections can happen was key to the production of collectivity in Wendland. I then zoomed out of the FRW to argue that the infrastructures and self-representation of the FRW was also a direct response to developments in the nuclear landscape more broadly. The character and the architectures of their village were a direct response and in opposition to the infrastructures of nuclearity on the other drilling sites. Equally, the FRW sought to define itself as an autonomous region through various mockings of state producing processes, such as the issuing of passports.

I also demonstrated how cohabitation and labouring in the FRW are processes that contribute to the construction of solidarity and collectivity. Organising everyday life in the FRW and practicing participatory politics in the assembly was key for different activists to come together. These were also difficult processes that required patience and were not always productive in a practical sense. However, in these spaces divisions and differences had to necessarily be addressed. Beyond these discursive formats I also drew attention to the physical

act of constructing the FRW. Just as the work to produce tent cities in Mexico and the US (Arenas, 2014) and the sweat and effort that went into building barricades (Dzenovska and Arenas, 2012) was remaking the city and social relations, the labouring to build a village was conductive of producing a collectivity within the FRW. Due to the tensions that had already built up between activist groups that defined themselves as 'local' and those that came from outwith Wendland, it was also important to think about how collectivity was forged beyond co-habitation through the FRW. In a sense, the village became a "temporary public space" (Routledge, 1997: 373) where environmental and counter-cultural views could be expressed, and new forms of resistance experimented with. Even though many activists from Wendland did not live or actively participate in the everyday life in the FRW, the characteristics of the village meant that they found entry points into and connections to people, ideas, and politics they had not previously engaged with. Even though some apprehensions remained and there was some desire on both sides to reproduce local/non-local divides, while the FRW remained an important space for new encounters.

Finally, I took a look beyond the clearance of the Free Republic of Wendland. In the years after the occupation many activists stayed or came back to the region, often with the explicit goal to establish alternative lifestyles. Many also carried on the principles of alterity that emerged during the occupation into other areas, such as alternative energy production. I argue that the Hüttendorf was a particularly important protest for activists from outwith the region to establish long-term changes. Beyond these infrastructural changes, the influx of 'new' activists and political ideologies produced a new sense of heterogeneity within the Wendland Movement. This did not result in a sudden, radical shift in the political orientation of the movement, but it did produce new opportunities for understanding and encountering difference. It required an openness and negotiation of this heterogeneity in the years that followed. It is the next set of large protest around the Castor Transports in the mid-1990s that I turn to next.

Chapter 6 The Castor Transports: nuclearity and rurality in resistance

By 1983 the interim nuclear waste storage facility had been built and by 1984 the first low-grade nuclear waste barrels were being transport to and stored in Gorleben. It was not until 1995 however, that the first highly radioactive waste containers, known as Castors, were being transported to Gorleben and large-scale protests erupted in Wendland. In this chapter, I focus on these highly radioactive waste transports known as Castor Transports. Thirteen Castor Transports took place over the years between 1995 and 2011 and I focus primarily on the first three in 1995, 1996, and 1997. The Castors came to Germany from La Hague, France, Sellafield, and from within Germany, for example, and the transport routes of the first two Castors are shown in Figure 25. Once the Castors arrived in Wendland, Figure 26 shows the route the Castor Transport would take by train to the station in Dannenberg before continuing along either a northern or southern route to Gorleben on a truck.

In this chapter, I continue exploring the spaces of contentious politics emerging in the anti-nuclear energy movement in Wendland. I have already shown that spatial imaginaries of the rural are central to how pro-nuclear actors and anti-nuclear activists come into contention with one another. Similarly, I think through direct-action protests in terms of rurality to draw out the particularities of protest and policing in Wendland (see also Tompkins, 2016). I bring rurality further into the context of political geography and the study of the spaces of contentious or radical politics. This means expanding on work that has already been done on political contestation in rural areas (Della Bosca and Gillespie, 2018; Ransan-Cooper et al., 2018; Rice and Burke, 2018), the politics of the rural (Woods, 2003, 2006), and policing both in the rural and in the context of direct-action protests (Brock, 2020; Yarwood, 2001).

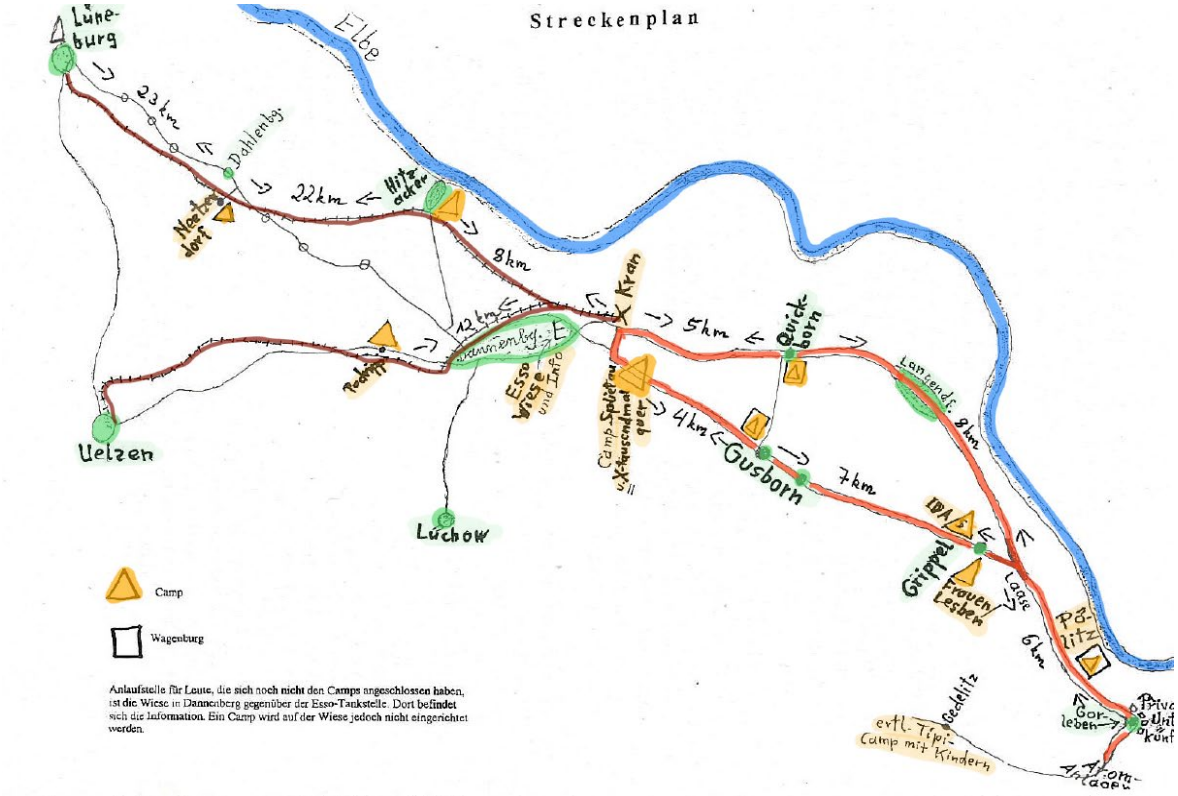
More often than not, nuclear infrastructure is built in remote, rural areas and marks a significant intervention in the rural landscape otherwise lacking large infrastructural developments. It is these infrastructural developments, be they nuclear, related to renewable energy, coal mining, fracking, or other industries, that are often the source of protest in rural areas. These kinds of protests are therefore as much about rurality, as they are struggles over control and identity

(Reed, 2004). In this case, I also argue that the particularities of the nuclear, as intertwined with the environmental, the chemical, and the historically catastrophic, need to be woven into a study of direct-action protest in Wendland. The nuclear codes a whole range of spaces, beyond the nuclear energy sites themselves, and transforms the (rural) landscape. More specifically, the Castor Transports, the transport of highly radioactive nuclear waste to Wendland, is to be understood as the process of making Wendland nuclear. In turn, I focus on how the Castors make the process of nuclearization visible. In doing so, I also use this chapter as an opportunity to fold understandings of rurality into articulations and manifestations of the nuclear.

I then explore the interplay between the police and protestors as they travel through various spaces and in tandem producing moments in which certain (everyday) spaces become coded with meaning, power, and nuclearity. At the same time, I bring attention to how protest is staged and how this might be distinctly rural. In particular, I examine the use of tractors in direct-action protest and how this in turn also dictated how these protests were policed. I put the rural landscape, policing, and direct-action protest into context with one another and explore how each of these elements shapes and is shaped by the other.

Note: The first Castor Transport is marked in red, the second in orange. The green routes are other potential transport routes Castor Transports could take.

Figure 25 – Overview of the transport routes from the 1995 and 1996 Castor Transports (Schmidt, 1996)



Note: The Castor Transport travels by train through Lüneburg (top left corner) or Uelzen (on the far left) to the loading crane near Dannenberg. The main towns in Wendland are marked in green. The red line depicts the two possible transport routes of the Castor: the northern route via Quickborn or the southern route via Gusborn. The triangles in this map signal protest camps that were set up along these routes during the Castor Transport in 1997. Colouring was added to the original map.

Figure 26 – Route plan of the Castor Transport in 1997 (Komitee für Grundrechte und Demokratie, 1997: 35)

6.1 Tracing the Castor: making nuclearity

By taking a closer look at the Castor Transports and the resistances that came with it, I explore in depth how nuclearity is made and contested in space. The Castor barrels are a form of dry cast storage that stores spent fuel that has already cooled down in a pool on-site in a cask surrounded by inert gas. As nuclear waste can then be moved off-site, this opens up space in the pool for newly removed spent fuel to be cooled. This means that nuclear waste management enrols spaces outwith the initial energy producing infrastructure and additional storage sites are needed. This often means that nuclear energy production and nuclear waste storage are spatially removed from each other and thus multiple spaces of nuclearity are produced that perform different functions. These casks are transported primarily by freight train but as the storage facilities are often in geographically remote regions, as in Gorleben, a transfer onto a lorry is often required. It is these multiple spaces and infrastructures of transport that become sites of contestation.

First, I explore the multiple spaces necessary for and involved in the making of a nuclear Wendland. I then explore the disruptions of the transport, and finally, the ways in which the nuclear is rendered visible through the Castor Transports. I focus on the multiple spaces within and through the nuclear is made in Wendland, focusing specifically on everyday spaces and mundane infrastructures. I examine how the Castor itself and its transport make nuclearity visible and the production of Wendland as a nuclear region visible. I explore the ways in which protestors sought to disrupt the flow of waste and how the spaces of transport became central to the Wendland Movement. This also means acknowledging the impact that geography and the built environment have on how protest unfolds, how spaces constrain and facilitate mobilisation.

At the same time, as train tracks and stations, as well as the roads along which the Castor Transport travelled become key sites of contestation, this resistance also works to make visible that which had no business being seen (Rancière, 2004). The making of nuclearity does not happen in a vacuum. It is marked by a constant struggle of making and unmaking Wendland as nuclear. Not only the transport of nuclear waste, but the resistance against this nuclearisation works to make the nuclear and its geographies visible. In that sense, the struggle over the Castor Transports also works to care out “spaces for contesting the very definition of what is at stake” (Bettini and Karaliotas, 2013: 333).

6.1.1 Spaces of nuclearity

Following the Castor Transports provides an opportunity to think about the multiple spatialities of the nuclear. As the Castor travel across Europe, through Germany and Wendland it becomes clear that nuclearity cannot be contained to a single zone or community. Of course, it is important to pay particular attention to those spaces where nuclearity is felt most immanently, as much of the work on nuclear geographies does (see Alexis-Martin and Davies, 2017), but in taking a relational approach I also place this in a broader set of nuclear geographies. Over the years, Castor Transports arrived from both within Germany and from La Hague, France. The transport for nuclear waste connected these otherwise disparate sites, linking spaces of energy production to waste storage. The transports were under observation from the moment they left the nuclear reactors where the casks were filled. Transports that were travelling

within Germany, such as the first Castors that contained waste from the nuclear reactor in Philipsburg near Karlsruhe, were relatively easy to monitor. The Committee for Rights and Democracy (1995: 72), which documented the Castor Transports, also reported on the protests taking place in Philipsburg. They write, that around 40% of residents in the Philipsburg area were employed at the nuclear energy plant and the majority of protesters were pupils and students that were far outnumbered by the police. This was in stark contrast to the broad resistance against nuclear energy deeply rooted in Wendland itself. The making of regions as nuclear is not always primarily associated with risk, but also with positive developments such as employment and infrastructural development. As Blowers (2017) has already noted in his case-study based overview of a nuclear energy community, Gorleben is the exception rather than the rule in this case.

This active and visible linking of the multiple spaces of nuclear energy production also offers opportunities to frame resistance in Wendland more broadly. As I demonstrated in Chapter 4 some of the more immediate resistance against the NEZ was reactionary and protectionist. At the same time, as activists' engagement deepened and new influences from outwith Wendland brought new impulses to the movement, resistance became increasingly orientated towards understanding the complex relations on nuclearity. This was reflected to some extent in the Free Republic of Wendland (see Chapter 5) and carried into the Castor Transport protests. In fact, for many the Castor Transports were an explicit reason to (re)orientate their focus and energy to Wendland. Franz, for example, an activist from Wendland, had left Germany for several years to work with NGOs in West Africa. As the situation back home became increasingly heightened, he made a conscious decision to return to Wendland:

> "You can tackle problems where they become visible, but it's better to get to the root. But the origin of the problem also lies in the first world [sic] and with [German] energy policy. So, for me, Gorleben was the place to be" (interview, Franz, 2020).

Originally, Franz felt that there were places outwith Wendland and Germany where his engagement and political work was more useful. He recognised that tackling nuclear waste storage in Germany, while a very visible entry point for resisting nuclear energy for him, was far removed from the origins of nuclear

energy production or the root of the problem so to speak. However, in reflecting on his engagement elsewhere, Franz also realised that the resistance in Wendland could be strategically and symbolically important. Staging protest in Gorleben worked to prevent a nuclearization of Wendland, but also the movement increasingly sought to highlight and resist the interconnected structures of nuclear energy production more broadly.

Indeed, many felt that the Castor Transports marked a turning point. The arrival of the Castors in Wendland was a significant step in making the threat of nuclearity real in Gorleben. Although the interim storage facility had already been built and the geological end-storage site was in progress, there was no nuclear material in Wendland until 1984, when the first low-level radioactive waste barrels were brought to Gorleben. These transports were also accompanied by protest action, but it was not until high-level radioactive waste would be brought to Wendland (and staying) that the region would truly become nuclear. A long-time activist told me:

> "I could feel it in my gut. When the first Castor rolls into Gorleben, that will be the real start of Gorleben. And we will have lost the fight" (interview, Otto, 2020).

This strong reaction to the transport of nuclear materials to Wendland demonstrates quite clearly why it is important to understand that nuclearity is firmly fixed in place (Blowers, 2017). The relevant infrastructure for storing nuclear waste, such as the interim storage facility and the geological repository, goes some way in marking a space as nuclear. It is what makes the presence of the nuclear possible in the first place. Once radioactive material has permeated these infrastructures, the nuclearity of Wendland is inevitable and irrevocable. There are multiple layers to the production of nuclearity. It is on the one hand conditioned by infrastructure, just as with nuclear reactors or nuclear test sites, but unlike these other spaces, waste storage sites are marked not by the production of nuclearity, but the active transport of radioactive material to Wendland, making it nuclear. Therefore, the Castor Transports mark a turning point for the Movement and are crucial to the production of Wendland as nuclear.

Of course, the Castor Transports were going to be strongly contested, not only discursively, but through direct action. In doing so, the resistance drew out these multiple spaces that were engaged in the making of the nuclear along the Castor routes and further draw out the nuclear's everyday exceptionalism. Several activists told me that they never believed they could prevent the Castors from being stored in Gorleben when the transports came along. Instead, their resistance was about making these uneven processes visible:

> "The protests draw attention to the risks associated with the production of nuclear energy, the transportation and storage of nuclear waste. All transports pose a risk. Every accident can contaminate a region and its population. There are very few cities and municipalities along the different transport routes have a concept on how to deal with accidents ... There is an everyday hazard posed by the radiating waste." (Komitee für Grundrechte und Demokratie, 1996: 14).

Resisting the Castor needs to be understood therefore to be as much about disrupting the making of nuclearity in Wendland, as it was about asserting the exceptionalism of nuclear waste. While the nuclear is often understood and framed as exceptional, as technopolitically 'other', this exceptionalism is "made, unmade, and remade" (Hecht, 2012: 6). There is a politics to who, what, and where is designated nuclear. Indeed, as I demonstrated in Chapter 4, the nuclear energy industry puts a remarkable amount of effort into asserting the banality of the nuclear. Direct action during the Castor Transports was a way of bringing attention back to the exceptionalism of nuclearity. In that sense, this resistance worked to make visible "that which a social order wishes to render invisible" (Chambers, 2011: 305). Making this nuclearity visible through resistance was also a key part in politicising and branching out the concern of the nuclear beyond Wendland. The above quote demonstrates that the nuclear is not localised in one place just because the storage infrastructure is in Wendland. The making of Wendland as nuclear through the transportation of nuclear waste affected multiple cities, towns, and communities. Particularly, because they were not designated nuclear and the exceptionality of nuclear waste was denied outright, they were at increased risk. Equally, activists worked to highlight that this exceptionalism works itself into the everyday fabric of the region. There is an everydayness, a constant confrontation with the radioactivity of nuclearity and it is what makes this community nuclear.

6.1.2 Disrupting flows of transport

The resistance against the Castor Transports was centred around the Castor routes, more precisely around blocking the transport route wherever and with whatever means possible. I understand these direct-action protests as a resistance against the otherwise uninterrupted flow of waste from core to periphery and a resistance against the top-down, police enforced making of Wendland as nuclear through a dismantling of key infrastructures. I draw from work around urban protests that is very explicit in thinking spatially about protest and taking into account the role of the built environment to demonstrate how everyday spaces become enrolled in the production of nuclearity and resistance.

The exact routes the Castors would travel were often unknown. It was not until the train was spotted somewhere in Germany along one of the possible routes by those who were connected to the anti-nuclear energy movement and relayed this information to organisations such as the citizens' initiative that there would be any clarity (Birgit, field diary, 2020). This once again demonstrates how multiple regions were drawn into the resistances in Wendland through the Castor Transports. This kind of mobilisation of unofficial knowledges was particularly important in the 1990s, where instant communication was not as easy as in the late 2000s or 2010s during some of the later Castor Transports. Once in Wendland, the first point of contact was always the train station in Dannenberg, the largest town in the north of the district. As the Castor train passed through the station, usually reserved for the daily commute, children travelling to school, or the weekend trip, this familiar, everyday space became a contested space, disrupted by the nuclear.

Figure 27 – Dannenberg station before the arrival of the Castor Transport (Gorleben Archiv, 1997a)

The photograph in Figure 27 shows the scene moments before one of the Castor Transports would roll through the Dannenberg train station (Komitee für Grundrechte und Demokratie, 1997: 38). The disruption of the everyday is further underlined by the heavy police presence on the platforms. Central infrastructures like the Dannenberg station, as well the roads running through the region, are important for ensuring connections to schools, supermarkets, and essential services. Cordoning these spaces off for the waste transport and disrupting everyday flows is therefore also a total disruption of the everyday. Activists who worked in schools, like Detlef, or who had children in school, for example, told me the schools were almost entirely empty during the days of the Castor Transport because nobody could travel in the region (interview, Detlef, 2020a). Equally, travelling to work was near impossible, because almost all of the key roads going through Wendland would be blocked at some point either by the Castor or by activists or both. Beate and Christoph (interview, 2020) tell me that it was always busy around Dannenberg, to the point where driving around the town was near impossible. The Castor Transport in itself necessitates a shutting down of transport spaces, which is then exacerbated by protest action. In the same way to movements seek to occupy symbolic spaces in the city, be it in front of the South African embassy (Brown and Yaffe, 2019), spaces of

commerce (Halvorsen, 2015a, 2015b, 2017) or public squares (Karaliotas, 2017), the spaces of transport became the sites of contestation in Wendland.

Disrupting everyday transport spaces is a relatively common tactic for protestors. In recent protest in Germany (and elsewhere), this is often related to climate activisms seeking to lobby against car-based transport systems and infrastructures[24]. These are then placed strategically at points where they cause the most interruption, at key highways or intersections. For the case of the Castor Transports, I argue that there is some need to consider the rurality of transport infrastructures when considering what it means for transport infrastructures (roads and train stations/tracks) to be disrupted. The villages along the Castor routes are essentially cut-off from their usual transport routes. The two larger villages, Lüchow and Dannenberg, are also somewhat cut-off becuase the main road connecting them is disrupted by sit-ins and so on. Unlike in larger urban areas, there are often no alternative transport routes. The already meagre public transport system, that is essential for school children for example, is basically non-existent during the Castor Transports. There are two things, then, that I draw from thinking specifically about rurality in the context of infrastructure. First, it is that the ways in which the urban environment has gained attention in how it facilitates or directs protest action, the specificities of rural infrastructure too must be considered in the study of protest. Second, this demonstrates how when transport spaces/flows are disrupted in rural areas very quickly an entire region is involved and affected by protest or the issue. I highlight that a spatial or infrastructural perspective in protest is not as much a specificity of urbanity as it shows the importance of considering the built environment or landscape wherever this may be and how ever it may look.

The disruption of the Castor Transport took on a variety of forms ranging from spontaneous sitting blockades to using materials from the surrounding area to block roads. During the first Castor Transport in 1995, the activist Volker (interview, 2020) recalls that:

[24] See for example the activist organization “Letzte Generation” (The Last Generation): https://letztegeneration.de/

> "It was all pretty chaotic. We didn't have any big sit-ins yet or any way of organising ourselves. We were just spontaneous, throwing sticks on the street. Another activist dumped a big load of manure on the street in Gusborn. It was all very chaotic."

Albeit chaotic, resistance against the first Castor Transport still reflected the tone of the Castor resistances that followed. The disruption of the transport routes was characterised by the use of materials that the rural landscape had to offer. Blocking the road with tree trunks or hay barrels was common, as well as the farming community using their tractors to block roads or kettle police cars was very common (interview, Michael and Natascha, 2020; interview, Sandra, 2020). While these were often actions planed by activists from Wendland that had some prior knowledge about where materials could be sourced from, other times more spontaneous actions from activists from outwith Wendland were not looked at favourably. The speaker of the farmers' association, Sandra (interview, 2020), for example, explained that young activists from the city would set hay barrels on fire to block the roads. "What were they thinking! Not like I might need those later!", she said to me sarcastically.

This is just one example of what was subject of discussions within and between various activist groups about what kind of interventions in the material and built landscape were appropriate. Where the citizens' initiative was very adamant about remaining non-violent and focused on organising rallies, the farmers' association was more interested in covert direct-action planning (interview, Michael and Natascha, 2020), and activists with experiences of protest elsewhere that had only recently moved to Wendland were much more open to direct confrontations with the police. Additionally, there were always thousands of activists who travelled to Wendland during the Castor Transport who were not involved with any of the more localised organisation and coordination. During the 1996 Castor Transport activists that were not associated with the registered and spontaneous actions from the Wendland Movement undertook various 'attacks' including: "throwing down electricity pylons, dummy bombs on railroad tracks, severing signal tags, and setting fire to a signal telephone and a switch box" (Komitee für Grundrechte und Demokratie, 1996: 27). These kinds of actions were strongly condemned and discouraged by all of the key groups operating from within Wendland (Birgit, field diary, 2020).

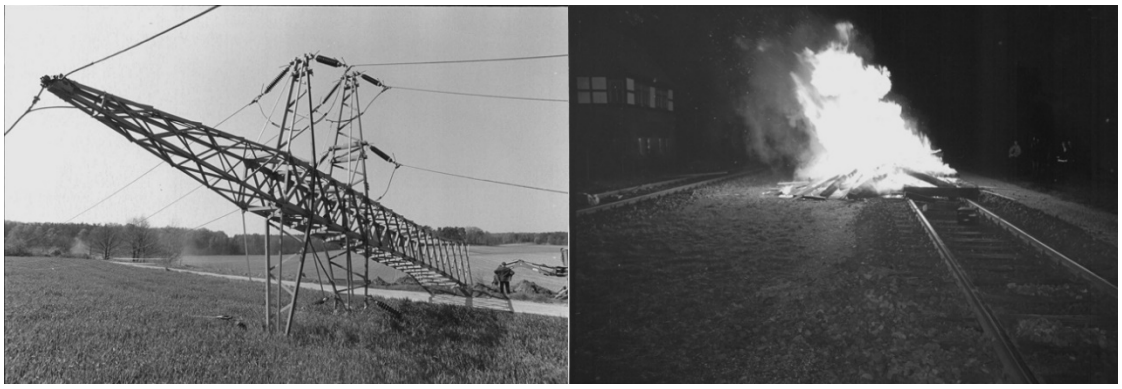


Figure 28 – Examples of street and rail blockades along the transport routes (Gorleben Archiv, 1996c, 1996d)

Disrupting the spaces of transport was as much about occupying those spaces, as it was about dismantling them altogether. In one year, before the Castor Transport had even made it to Wendland, activists had created large concrete blocks on the train tracks, which effectively cemented themselves onto the train tracks. Large parts of the tracks had to be taken out and renewed, meaning that the Castor stood at the tracks for over 20 hours before it could continue. Similarly, groups of activists in Wendland would 'gravel', meaning they would remove as much gravel from the train tracks as possible, making the tracks unusable (Birgit, field diary, 2020). During a tractor blockade near Splietau "farmers drove [to Splietau], wedged their tractors together, and then someone started digging a hole under the street. So that was it, there was nothing more to be done" (interview, Detlef, 2020a). In the instance described by Detlef, activists took advantage of the blocked off roads by digging a hole underneath the road, making sure that the southern route was impassable for the Castor Transport. This example demonstrates that there are different ways in which protestors mobilised the built environment and used it to their advantage. If those few roads there were built in Wendland were being used for the transport of nuclear waste and in turn also being made entirely inaccessible to everyone else, then these should not be available for nuclear transport either.

Figure 29 – Protestors and police around the hole dug underneath a street (Gorleben Archiv, 1997c)

6.1.3 Making the nuclear visible

As Franquesa (2018) has argued, the invisibility of energy and energy production is an essential part of a technocentric modernity discourse. This is both the result of and reinforces locating energy production in the periphery. In these peripheries, on the other hand, the infrastructures necessary for energy production make these processes visible and tangible for those living with these industries. In relation to nuclear energy and Wendland, places like the interim storage facility or the geological repository come to mind as the most obvious and visible infrastructures (Figure 30). These large facilities are almost impossible to miss when travelling in Wendland and were understood as significant interventions in the landscape when they were built. In focusing on the Castor Transports, however, I argue that nuclearity becomes visible in more unsuspecting ways and places as well and that these too leave lasting impressions on the region. The transport of nuclear waste across borders and between multiple sites make visible what infrastructures are necessary for nuclear energy production, from interim and geological storage sites to train tracks and country roads.

Figure 30 – The geological storage site in Gorleben under construction (Gorleben Archiv, 1997b)

Looking at the Castor itself in Figure 31, it is clear that there is a certain banality to the transport. There is nothing visibly nuclear or radioactive about it. This thus echoes how the nuclear industry worked to disengage their infrastructures from nuclearity. It is entirely at odds with how nuclearity and radiation is otherwise understood (as threatening and in some way exceptional), but strategi. Beyond the grand infrastructures of nuclear reactors or even storge sites, the transport is the quintessential element in the making of nuclearity. The Castor Transport both symbolised and by actually bringing nuclear material to Gorleben made the nuclear threat real. The activist Volker (interview, 2020), the GP that became involved with the BNG, was particularly adamant in what the Castor meant to him:

> "To see that thing, to see how hot it was, how it was steaming or just realising what a destructive power it has … It was personal … These Castors were our enemy; you could see them … You could reduce everything to the Castor. It brought everything together. It was something concrete to organise against".

Volker was not a farmer but was drawn to the direct-action protest approach by the farmers' association. He was not particularly interested in the technical and political debates happening in Wendland and so the Castor Transports were transformative for his engagement with the movement. They were tangible and visible and resistance against these transports hence was too. The Castors were both real and symbolic, the result of a cumulating dread over the nuclearisation of Wendland, and thus represented everything the resistance was trying to fight against. It brought fears and anxieties around radioactivity much closer to those living in Wendland. Constructing the Castor as an "enemy" was the product of a long build-up and enabled a very broad range of actors to resist this common enemy. This visible feature of the nuclear was vitally important for mobilising a broad range of people against this process. The visibility of the nuclear, nuclear waste, and the actuality of this being present in Wendland made it clear that Wendland was now irrevocably nuclear. On a final note, unlike with nuclear reactors or nuclear testing stations, the storage of nuclear waste is a gradual production of nuclearity, where nuclearity builds up over time with every additional Castor barrel.

Figure 31 – Castor Transport 1995 (Gorleben Archiv, 1995a)

It is the knowledge about nuclear waste and radioactivity that locals had, knowing that the radioactive waste would not leave Wendland, but also the accompanying police that is central to making the truck exceptional. The way

the transport is enforced is therefore central to how nuclearity is made. Once the Castor casks are loaded onto the truck, it takes off accompanied by police trucks and officers along the streets of Wendland. The Castor truck was surrounded by up to 100 police vehicles, was often fronted by several water cannons that were used to remove protestors from the transport route. The convoy could be up to 1 km long (Komitee für Grundrechte und Demokratie, 1996: 66). I already touched upon how the transport itself was disrupted and that this was important symbolically in resisting the production of the nuclear. The full extent of police intervention and struggle over the 'nuclear state' and 'nuclear region' are exemplified in the Castor Transports (see Chapter 6.2.3). The motivations for protest surrounding Castor Transports complex and multiple; but part of this was an act of making injustice visible and pointing towards the very obvious ways in which a nuclear state operates and enforces its logic.

Figure 32 – Castor Transport 1996 (Gorleben Archiv, 1996b)

The Castor barrels and the transport of these are very clearly coded as nuclear. Other spaces or infrastructure, however, are not. When (Hecht, 2012: 13) asks "what makes things 'nuclear' and how do we know", I see an opportunity to turn the mundane infrastructures of nuclearity in Wendland. The Castor Transport makes one important stop in Wendland, when the radioactive waste barrels are moved from the train onto a truck. The Castor train rolls on to a specially

constructed loading crane a few meters further inward from the Dannenberg station. Here the Castors, stored in a plain-looking crate, are transferred from the train onto a truck that will carry the Castors along the final stretch through Wendland to the interim storage facility in Gorleben. During my time in Wendland, Detlef and his wife took me to this loading crane:

> "Standing at the crane now, over 25 years later, the construct is surrounded by a high fence, hidden underneath a plastic cover, and a video camera is recording me as I step towards the locked gate to get a better look, although Detlef tells me that it is probably not recording anymore. If you didn't know that this was here, you probably wouldn't find or notice it. The crane isn't visible from the main road, the narrow street leading past it is quiet and empty" (field diary, 2020).

It is hard to imagine that during the many Castor Transports this quiet street and the adjacent corn field were flooded with protestors. It represents the small and mundane infrastructures necessary for making nuclearity. These infrastructures too are part of the production of the nuclear landscape (Pitkanen and Farish, 2017). During the Castor Transports this was a key infrastructure in enabling the movement of nuclear waste but was also symbolic of the remoteness of Gorleben. The Castors could not reach the interim storage site by train because the region, as many rural areas, was not sufficiently connected to transport infrastructures. While the peripherality and rurality of Wendland made it ideal for nuclear waste storage it clearly also posed its own challenges for the transport of nuclear waste. The infrastructural landscape was altered to make the transport possible; a necessary disruption that serves no function for those living in the area but exists only to enable nuclear waste storage. And finally, a now unused, yet ever present, mark on the landscape that serves as a reminder of how Wendland was made nuclear. It is an example of how although infrastructural investment in energy producing peripheries, or in this case waste storage peripheries, are often framed as positive developments for the region, these investments and new infrastructure only ever work to reiterate these regions as peripheral places from which resources are extracted (Franquesa, 2018: 13).

The loading crane is unassuming now, but during the Castor Transports it was a site characterised by heightened tension, direct protest, and the convergence of multiple actors (Komitee für Grundrechte und Demokratie, 1997: 48–55). It is no wonder then, that protestors were particularly keen to occupy this space, the street, the field, the tracks leading up to the crane or the fence surrounding it, while the police was invested in protecting that key infrastructure. Detlef tells me that being visible in this particular space was also a very important because journalists, who were covering the protests, were based around the loading crane. There was a press tent set-up by the train tracks and at a nearby petrol station journalists would gather to warm up and grab a half-way decent cup of coffee, Detlef tells me (field diary, 2020). In equal measure, the police presence around the loading crane was particularly strong. The added element of an observant press at the loading crane gives both the site and the act of un- and reloading the Castor a further sense of importance. The dynamic between protestors and the police was characterised by neither party wanting to escalate the situation and be perceived as violent by the media nor relinquishing their occupied spaces garnering headlines of defeat. In contrast, everything that was outside of the immediate vicinity of the central infrastructures and the transport routes was completely quiet.

This concern around visibility carries through the Castor Transport protests, as activists continuously sought to disrupt the transport while at the same time occupying space in ways that would make their concerns visible. Rancière (1999: 99) argued that political activity is that which “makes visible what had no business being seen, and makes heard a discourse where once there was only place for noise”. By organising large scale protest around the loading crane protestors drew attention to these less obvious ways in which the region was coded by the nuclear through infrastructure and strategically placing themselves at a critical conjuncture between media and police making space for discourse. The infrastructural developments of the nuclear industry are not confined to the storage sites in Gorleben. The material interventions necessary for the transport of nuclear waste are equally small and diffuse, carrying their presence into the present. A site like the loading crane was a new source of tension, both in its function, the loading of Castor casks from train to truck, but also as a symbolic site of the production of nuclearity.

Figure 33 – The loading crane under protection from the police, during the loading of a Castor from train to truck, and now (Gorleben Archiv, 1995e; Noka, 2020; Poggendorf, 2008: 169)

Although I have focused here on some very specific places along the Castor Transport route, the protests covered larger areas of the region. In the mapping exercise I conducted during the interviews with Detlef and Beate and Christoph the importance of the Castor Transports for their understanding of Wendland was crucial (see Chapter 3.1.2). For all three, their involvement in the Wendland Movement began in the mid-90s when they moved to Wendland and was closely tied to the Castor Transports that began around the same time.

Beate and Christoph in particular drew attention to the spaces associated with the transports such as the loading crane (*Verladekran*) and the field next to the Esso petrol station (Esso-*Wiese*), the central organisational spaces. On the field just next to the petrol station in Dannenberg the BI and others had organised information stands that would direct protestors in the right direction, but also set up toilets and an open kitchen. The small villages along both the north and south route were also of particular importance to them as spaces that became familiar and known through protest such as Splitau, Gusborn, Quickborn, and Grippel. Beate and Christophs' engagement with the Castor Transports came primarily in the form of activist-photographers, following the Castor closely and documenting protest activities, blockades, and confrontations with the police. Through this work they formed an intimate relationship with the particularities and details of the many places along the transport route. Beate and Christoph (interview, 2020) told me that when they drive through Wendland nowadays they cannot help but to connect those everyday spaces they see from the car with events that happened during the Castor Transports. There is an ongoing resonance of these spaces of resistance. Even now, these places that were so strongly affected by the Castor Transports are understood in relation to their histories and as places of resistance.

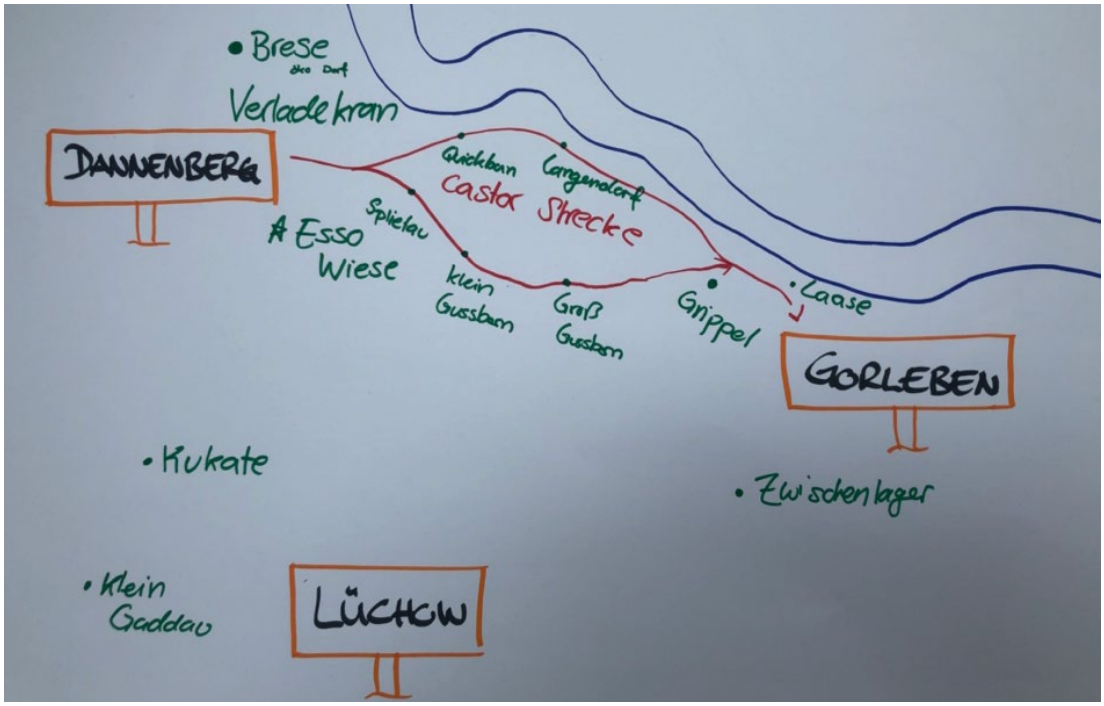


Figure 34 – Mapping exercise showing the north and south Castor routes (Beate and Christoph, 2020)

Detlef on the other hand was focused much more on specific places within Wendland that were also not necessarily on the Castor route. This is because he organised his protest via a local group in the village he lived, Breselenz. These kinds of village-based groups, called Castor Groups (*Castor Gruppen*) were very common during the Castor transports, particularly after 1995, when the protests were quite chaotic. In an effort to organise themselves more effectively a 'Route Concept' (*Streckenkonzept*) was developed, where activist groups were encouraged to spread out across the transport route, and Castor Groups were used as a means of bundling the efforts of activists. For Detlef then, who was very active in his local Castor Group, this spatialised awareness of the Castor transport was centred around his organisational hub, Breselenz, and specific actions organised via that group. For example, during the 1996 Castor Transport the group organised a camp near Grippel. They also focused their actions on the neighbouring town Neu Tramm, where police officers were stationed during the time of the transport. His spatial understanding of Wendland is intimately wound up with his Castor protests which in turn are mediated by his forms of engagement. The differences between Beate and Christoph and Detlef show that how they choose to engage with the resistance plays a role for their understandings of Wendland even now. The process of making nuclearity clearly leaves lasting imprints on the region. Beate, Christoph and Detlef's

understanding of the region are equally coded by the resistance against the Castor as the making of nuclearity itself. The consequences of the Castor Transports are not only the lasting infrastructures, both exceptional and mundane, or the very real presence of nuclear radiation, but also the redefinition of Wendland as a region and the village, towns, and roads otherwise untouched by the nuclear.

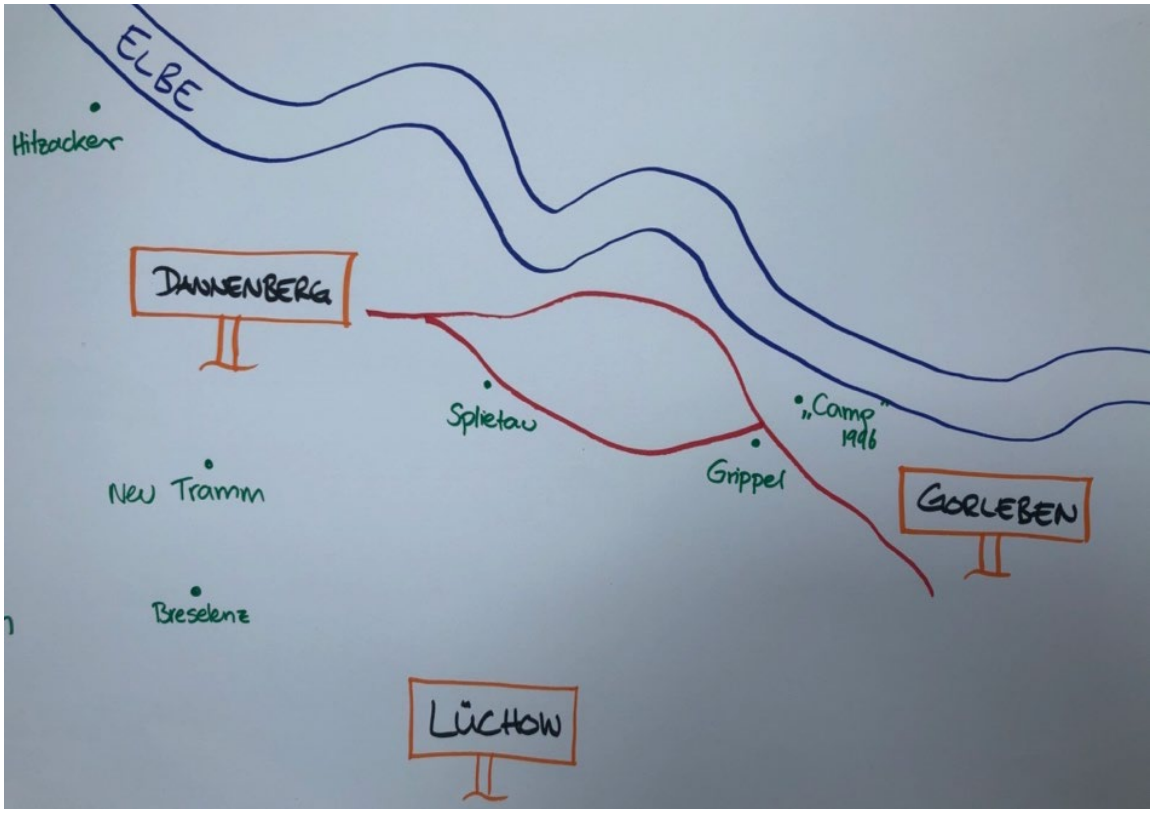


Figure 35 – Mapping exercise showing the Castor routes (Detlef, 2020b)

6.2 Relational dynamics of policing and resistance

Foregrounding the processes by which nuclearity is made also means understanding what actors are involved in the making of nuclearity. This undoubtedly involves a whole string of local, national, and international actors that drive forward nuclear energy production, but that are also responsible for the designation of Wendland as nuclear. I traced how these processes unfolded by thinking through the various spatial imaginaries at play. Responsible for enforcing the production of the nuclear, in this case through the transportation of nuclear waste to Gorleben, are police forces acting as an extension of the state. I understand policing to be a reflection of state power and in turn, resistance against the state involves a confrontation with the police.

Yarwood and others (Brogden and Nijhar, 2005; Fyfe, 1991; Mawby, 2002) have reflected extensively on the geographies of policing, where policing is understood as a reflection of state power: “the spatial organization of the police reflects the political geographies of different states and their role also reflects, and helps to define, the public’s relationship with the state” (Yarwood, 2007: 448). Policing is an extension of state interests in producing the nuclear. The majority of work on protest and police force focuses on how those clashes unfold in urban spaces and only rarely discuss rural protest spaces. Yarwood (2007; see also Mawby and Yarwood, 2016) in particular has been instrumental in driving rural policing forward as an area of geographical inquiry. In the rural context, the study of policing focuses not only on the role of the police, but also on the policing of everyday activities and how those spill-over into community policing. This is also often set in a wider context of what constitutes an ideal countryside i.e., a crime-free space. Both criminality and rurality are socially defined and contested (Cloke, 1993) and policing functions as an act of preserving and upholding idealised constructions of rurality (Yarwood and Gardner, 2000). I do not focus in detail on policing strategies (see Brock, 2020), but rather on how spaces of contentious politics emerge and are contested through the relational interplay between police forces and direct action in rural spaces. As I continue to follow the Castor, I draw out how the transport was policed by looking at how protest and police interactions are conditioned by the rural and connect processes of policing to a formulation of the ‘nuclear state’.

6.2.1 The protest ban

Although these were not the first protests in Wendland, the police anticipated that the Castor Transports would spark extensive protests considering the history of protest activity in the region. In an effort to dampen the actions taken by protestors the state mandated a protest ban (*Demonstrationsverbot*) for several days. Assembly was banned for 50 m around all train tracks from Uelzen and Lüneburg towards Dannenberg, along all streets in Wendland that could be used by the Castor Transport, as well as 500 m surrounding the crane in Dannenberg and the interim storage facility (Komitee für Grundrechte und Demokratie, 1995: 8). In short, “the ban on assembly applied to all spaces where protest would have been most effective” (ibid.). The same protest ban was in place during the 1996 and 1997 Castor Transport.

The protest ban was part of the reason that the Committee for Civil Rights and Democracy was so active in documenting the protests in 1995, 1996, and 1997. First, the blanket ban on protests meant that activists very quickly found themselves in spaces that fell under the ban (as these spaces were often not clearly demarcated) and faced police violence and legal ramifications. Second, the confrontations between police and protestors were often excessive and violent and the observations from 'neutral' bystanders were important for later court hearings. Instrumentalising the legal system in this way meant that the state could criminalise protest actions. It operates as a de facto "criminalisation of dissent" (Brock et al., 2018). In turn, these kinds of legal interventions in public spaces and protest action demonstrate how the state serves a key function in making exploitative infrastructural projects possible (ibid.). The legal framework in this instance does not serve or protect protestors from excessive police violence, for example, but instead "overwhelmingly reflects corporate and elite interests and serves to demonise and repress those who challenge them" (Anderson, 2013: 234). Protest bans are a policing technique used to control public spaces that should usually be accessible to everyone. Although the extent to which public spaces are truly public has been questioned and often exclusionary public spaces are produced through legal frameworks (Blomley, 1994, 2011; Mitchell, 1997, 2014).

Occupying public spaces is often one of the key concerns of urban protest movements. Too often these spaces are shut down as political arenas and heavily policed. Through occupation public spaces of the city are reclaimed as public spaces and as spaces of democracy (Arenas, 2014). Reclaiming public urban space was central to the Arab Spring, to the Indignados movement in southern Europe, and particularly the Occupy movements (Vasudevan, 2015). Resistance takes advantage of the symbolic and strategic nature of public spaces (Herbert, 2007). These studies focus overwhelmingly on the urban landscape as the premier site of this contestation between police and protestors over public space. The protest ban in Wendland, however, opens up possibilities to think more broadly about the contestation over public space. The town squares and Lüchow and Dannenberg were important places where assemblies took place, but the foreclosure of large areas of the Wendland region along the Castor route goes far beyond the contested public square. How are less engineered, less

'built' landscapes policed? Just as protestors worked to occupy and disrupt the transport along its entire route through Wendland, the police sought to control and contain these same spaces. But how this was done, or at least attempted, is requires special attention because of the rural nature of this protest.

Because it was unclear which route would be used by the transport, the protest ban applied to both the northern and southern route and was enforced to produce an effective border along the southern route. Beate and Christoph (interview, 2020) recalled that: "You couldn't get to any of these places. Only those who lived there could get through". This was further affirmed by the *Passierscheine* (passes or permits) that were issued to those who were required to travel unimpeded throughout the region for work. It was a way of making the everyday both extraordinary and inaccessible. The villages along the Castor routes did not only come up and close with the Castor, but the entire region above the southern route was cordoned off by the police enforcing the protest ban. In effect, the protest ban was not just a means to undermine protest activities, but disallowed access to certain parts of the region entirely. Christoph (interview, 2020) told me:

> "People from the city can't really imagine that. If one road is closed, you just take the next. But here, those villages along the northern route were completely closed off for days."

In a region where transport infrastructures are vitally important, as is the case in many rural areas, creating impassable borders quickly becomes a very effective tool to block flows of people. The freedom of movement had effectively come to a halt in the days of the Castor Transport. Open, public spaces were policed entirely and made inaccessible not only to protestors, but the entire region. Through the protest ban, there was a legal framework in place that authorized the policing of transport spaces, delegitimised the protestors concerns, and undermined the right to assembly.

6.2.2 Policing the rural

By following the Castor from its arrival in Wendland along one of the two routes through to the interim storage facility I also give a sense of the rural nature of these protests. Often literature on the spatialities of direct-action protests

explores urban spaces; central squares (Karaliotas, 2017), busy main roads, symbolic buildings (Brown and Yaffe, 2019; Halvorsen, 2015b, 2017), city neighbourhoods (Arenas, 2014, 2015) and tenement buildings (Karaliotas and Kapsali, 2021; Vasudevan, 2015). The way in which contentious politics unfold are characterised by the built environment and this in turn influences how policing and urban planning strategies unfold (Sewell, 2001; Tilly, 2000; Zajko and Béland, 2008). In this instance however, it is the distinctive features of the rural landscape, large wheat and corn fields, narrow roads, small villages, hidden paths through the woods unknown to outsiders, that play a central part in how direct-action protests unfolded. Where other work on rural protest or resistance movements have focused largely on how groups are mobilised (Rice and Burke, 2018), what kind of politics are at play in rural communities (Ransan-Cooper et al., 2018), or how they contest rurality discursively (Woods, 2003), I focus on engaging much more closely with the landscapes of the rural (see also Tompkins, 2016). Although, as Tompkins (2016) identifies, many of the urban protest strategies those activists from outwith Wendland were familiar with would not work in a rural setting, I argue that throughout the Wendland Movement activists were able to effectively utilise the rural landscape to their advantage. While the Castor Transport and the police stayed on paved, public roads, and was reliant on rough maps during a time before GPS, protestors used their knowledge of the region to move beyond these spaces.

As important as the sites along the route were, police presence along the main street leading through Gorleben and the junction leading to the interim storage facility was particularly strong. There was an unofficial forest path running parallel to the paved street which protestors used to reach the interim nuclear storage facility (Komitee für Grundrechte und Demokratie, 1995: 62). While there was a clear encroachment on public spaces locals were easily able to use their knowledge of the surrounding landscape to circumvent the restrictions put into place by the police. Beate and Christoph (interview, 2020) recalled that they only ever drove along hidden paths:

> “The police didn’t know these of course. The streets were so heavily policed, and we just drove right beside them through the woods. It was so easy at the beginning when the police just had these old, inaccurate maps.”

The rural characteristics of the landscape, the woods, and the unofficial paths that you could only know if you were routinely taking advantage of these alternative transport routes, were important for the way in which resistance against the Castor Transport unfolded. Where the police were focused on controlling 'official' transport spaces and infrastructures, activists simply avoided these spaces altogether and made use of the more 'informal' transport passages in the region. There was a disconnect between the spaces that the police were able to police and contain and where activists would circumvent police blockades. Sandra (interview, 2020), an activist involved with the BNG explained that

> "we had the home advantage. We had our own radio frequency, and we tapped the police radio too. And then we could hear things from them like "where are you?" "we don't know where we are!" "Just describe what you can see" "There are just a bunch of trees…". They were totally helpless."

Especially the farmers made a point of using this helplessness to their advantage. "If they were following us on our tractors", Sandra (interview, 2020) tells me "we would drive through the forest, along some really nice paths, where we knew there would be a big muddy, hole somewhere along the way. And they just followed us. And next thing they knew, they were stuck". On the one hand, the making of the nuclear touched engulfed all kinds of everyday spaces, while on the other hand the police were not able to control those spaces beyond the 'official' infrastructures they knew.

Local knowledge of the unmonitored and unmapped spaces of Wendland gave protestors a somewhat level playing field. The making of nuclearity requires a level of control over the spaces within which it is made, and it is those spaces the police was unable to control through which protestors were able to contest the making of nuclearity and assert a level of autonomy. The interaction between police and protestors is characterised by disruption of public spatial order being met by strategic principles of ordering by the police (Neal et al., 2019). In the same way that containing protest through strategies such as kettling seeks to main and protect 'productive' urban circulations and flows, the police attempt to control the spaces protestors have access too through policing and strategies such as the protest ban. Unlike in urban centres, however, the

surrounding landscape, the lack of the built environment, offers little tactical support to enclose spaces, as is clear in the two examples above.

These kinds of cat and mouse games stood in contrast to the more direct confrontations that protestors had with the police. One particularity was that with the sheer mass of police officers deployed in Wendland during the Castor Transports, the majority of the police units came from outwith Wendland. This was of course the only reason that activists familiar with the region were able to take advantage of the landscape in a way that the police were not, but protestors were also quickly able to differentiate between police units. Several activists told me that you only had to look at the number plates, which indicate in which city or commune a vehicle is registered in Germany, and you could know what kind of police interactions to expect (interview, Beate and Christoph, 2020; interview, Lothar, 2020; interview, Sandra, 2020). The units coming from Berlin and Braunschweig were known and observed to be the most violent, for example. This indicates that while the presence and function of the police is to be understood as an enforcement of nuclearity, the police are by no means a homogenous unit, but made of a variety of individuals and groupings subject to a chain of command, that operated in distinctive ways. The organisational levels of the police units even made use of these differentiated approaches.[25] For example, it was almost always the case that a police unit would spend several hours with protestors who were occupying a street, have conversations, sometimes even get some food from the protestors who had organised themselves better than police had. But when an occupation was cleared, a new police troop was called in. An active decoupling of personal interactions built up over a several hours with the act of dismantling those protests.

Finally, I focus briefly on tractors were also a powerful symbol of the localized farmer's resistance and used during the Castor Transport demonstrations to block streets along the Castor routes and how they were policed. Anywhere between 15 to 25 tractors would stand together on the street onto which protestors would climb or stand in front of to make the clearance more difficult. The use of tractors to block roads was effective not just in blocking the Castor, but also by incapacitating the police and "completely shutting down the whole

[25] See Blomley (1994) on difficult policing dynamics, for example.

police infrastructure" (interview, Beate and Christoph, 2020). Disrupting the Castor Transport was as much about preventing the truck from driving through the region, as it was about disrupting the police structures. I consider both "the spaces in which public protests takes place" and how "such space is utilised, controlled and contested between protestors and the police" (Zajko and Béland, 2008). The use of tractors was particularly common to block roads and posed a significant problem for the police. Several activists told me that especially during the early years the police was terrified of how the tractors were being used (field diary, 2020). The tractors then became the site of contestation between activists and protestors. Tractors were an imposing presence on the street and an effective tool to block-off the Castor routes and shield protestors. As a consequence, the police began developing strategies to deal with the tractors, which included dismantling and destroying tractor tires, for example (Komitee für Grundrechte und Demokratie, 1997: 83–84). Often the police would deflate the tires to prevent them from being redeployed on the street. During the 1995 Castor Transport the police destroyed several tractors that were stood on a field next to the road. Valves were removed from tires, tires were slashed, and fuel filters torn out, leaving diesel flowing onto the field. In a similar incidence in Splietau, farmer Ingo (interview, 2020) told me that

> "sometimes things just got out of hand. We had a good blockade on the southern route and so they had to go up north. Everything was already over when a special tactical team showed up with helicopters and just destroyed our tires. We even got compensation in court because of what they did."

Farmers were putting their livelihoods on the line every time they brought their tractors to a protest, but the deliberate destruction of property by the police meant that farmers were unable to continue their day-to-day work and had several hundred Deutsch Mark worth of damages. Through the BNG the money needed for the essential repairs were brought in through donations.

Figure 36 – Damage done to tractors by the police during the Castor Transport 1996 (Gorleben Archiv, 1996a)

6.2.3 The Nuclear State

The making of Wendland as nuclear and the role the police played in this process was not just about the specifics of the Castor confrontations, but also a broader set of spatialised principles of control. In an activist newsletter, Gorleben Nachritendienst, they ask in 1983: “Is the Lüchow-Dannenberg region turning into an *Atomregion* (nuclear region)”? (Gorleben Archiv, 1983). What they are referring to are the multiple nuclear infrastructure developments that, in the mid-1980s, were planned in the region, including the interim nuclear waste storage facility, a nuclear reprocessing site, and old plans for nuclear power

plants in the Langendorf. The feeling among activists was that there was a plan to bundle nuclear infrastructure in the region (Gorleben Archiv, 1983). These developments would have, and to a certain extent did, fundamentally change the Wendland and gave the region a clearly defined purpose and function. With every new piece of infrastructure, the region was further designated and reinforced in its position as an energy-producing periphery (Franquesa, 2018). What was seen by politicians and developers as a strategic development, to group nuclear energy production, interim waste storage, WAA, and geological waste storage geographically, was framed by activists as an invasion of the region by singular force: the nuclear. Many activists began referring to Wendland as an "*Atomklo*" (Gorleben Archiv, 1983), a nuclear toilet, because of the influx of nuclear waste. It is not just a question of infrastructural development alone, but the production of a region that is dominated and characterised by the nuclear. It represents a contestation of what this place stands for (in Massey's terms) i.e., a politics of place. It echoes the arguments I made in Chapter 4 on what spatial imaginaries are held of Wendland.

This understanding is often extended to an articulation of the "*Atomstaat"*, the nuclear state (Gorleben Archiv, 1996e). Indeed, the terminology of the nuclear state was common during the Cold War and especially in the 1980s. These articulations were used more specifically in relation to concerns around nuclear war, nuclear weapons, and disarmament, rather than nuclear energy, but many of the sentiments of a politically produced nuclear state resonate in this case too. The nuclear state implies a specific set of controlling and policing principles that produce and maintain the nuclear. How these were understood can be seen in Figure 37, a comic depicting how the police was surveilling everyday activities.

Figure 37 – "Nuclear state, no thank you! Gorleben should live" cartoon. A figure screaming "He's lying" to police offers claiming that activists are engaging in violent protest (Gorleben Archiv, 1978)

Both overt and covert surveillance techniques were used by the police throughout the many years of the Wendland Movement, as well as other forms of producing and maintaining 'social order'. Surveillance was both as a means of collecting evidence and as a tool of disciplinary power. Katharina, an activist that had been with the movement since the beginning and had joined the political party The Greens representing them, both nationally and in the EU, knew that throughout the four decades of the movement, almost all of her activities were being monitored and documented. She told me that in the early years you could hear the clicking through the phone when the police were tapping her phone conversations. All of her suspicions of covert surveillance from the state were confirmed when she joined parliament and was allowed access to her, by then very large and heavy, file (interview, Katharina, 2020).

It was not uncommon, up until the early 2000s, that activists were also persecuted in their workplace or knew that their workplace was being watched and investigated by the police. This then also makes clear that the struggle

surrounding nuclear energy takes hold in a variety of spaces, including everyday spaces such as the workplace. Detlef (interview, 2020a), the high school teacher in Dannenberg, for example, recalled that:

> "The school administration was pressured by the district government, from above, and should report everyone who is not [at school during the Castors]. But the school director never reported anything."

There was pressure from several state institutions to report teachers (and students) who were not present at school during the Castor Transports, but the sympathies for movement were high and hence the power exercised by the state within such institutions not very effective. There was, then, some push back against these indirect policing tactics also from within these structures themselves. There was however some notable tension for teachers, who are employees of the state, and who's participation in the protest was considered potentially damaging to their job security. This was also the reason that up until the early 2000s teachers were not allowed to park on school property if they had a "Nuclear Energy – No Thank You!" sticker on their car (interview, Detlef, 2020a); a feature you can still find on almost every car in Wendland. Another activist, Ian, who was working as a nurse and carer during the 80s and 90s explained to me that it was difficult for him to maintain a job. He was vocal about his views against nuclear energy, distributed flyers to his neighbours, and regularly wrote about his views in the local newspaper. When trying to return to the hospital after a period of working as a farmer, he was unable to get a job, because, as he describes it, the hospital was still "dark black", meaning politically conservative (interview, Ingo, 2020). The nuclear state extends its reach beyond direct-action protests and the multiple forms and spaces of policing become clear. Everyday spaces become sites of contestation and the impact of making Wendland nuclear can be felt in the everyday.

6.3 Concluding thoughts

It is through the Castor Transports, the movement of nuclear materials to Wendland, that I unpack how the region is made nuclear. This cannot, however, be separated from the resistance this production was met with. The Castor Transports quickly became *the* protest event in Wendland, recurring almost every year in the 2000s, drawing in thousands of protestors from across

Germany, underpinned by a year of planning, and putting everyday life to a standstill for three to four days while the Castor Transport travels through Wendland. The protests against the Castor Transport cannot be decoupled from how the transportation of nuclear material produces nuclear spaces. Therefore, I simultaneously traced the direct-action protests that accompanied the Castor Transports as I follow the Castor Transport through the region. Whilst doing so, it also becomes clear that the rural is not only instrumental in the early stages of the nuclearization of Wendland. The rural landscape is deeply intertwined with the production of nuclearity and how protests unfold during the Castor Transports. In this chapter I brought together discussions around nuclearity, rurality, and protest.

While I focused primarily on the transports themselves, I also acknowledged the multiple spaces across and within which the nuclear industry functions. It means acknowledging the mundane infrastructures of nuclearity that emerge in Wendland to make these transports possible. These stand alongside those everyday spaces - the train stations, roads, and villages - that turn into spaces of nuclearity, into spaces of resistance and confrontation, through the passage of nuclear materials through them. I foregrounded the other ways in which the landscape becomes coded with the nuclear. I argued for need to understand the nuclear beyond the extraordinary or perhaps the ways in which ordinary spaces become extraordinary, even if just momentarily, through the nuclear.

The Castor Transports make nuclearity visible. The otherwise immaterial radioactivity becomes a material in the form of the Castor barrels. It allowed activists to see what it was they were resisting, hence making the protest around the Castor Transport so important for the movement as a whole. At the same time, the Castor Transports coded large swaths of the landscape with the nuclear. Nuclearity becomes visible not just in those spaces designated for the nuclear, but in everyday spaces too. It leaves a lasting impression on the landscape, on the region, beyond the nuclear infrastructures of nuclear waste storage.

It is never just nuclearity, however, that codes these spaces. The Castor Transports were met by strong resistance along the entirety of the route, disrupting the flow of transport. Ordinary spaces become sites of contestation.

By exploring how Wendland is made nuclear alongside the resistance against this nuclearization, I offered a nuanced reading of the spaces of contestation in the Wendland Movement. How the rural influences the staging of direct-action, the policing of protest, and the interactions between how protestors and the police is at the heart of this chapter. The specifics of the rural landscape dictate the forms of protesting and policing. The police issued a protest ban, attempting to coordain-off and partition spaces around the transport route in an effort to control protests. Activists drew on their local knowledges of the area to circumvent police blockades that were often ineffective in containing the vast, open spaces that characterise the rural. The policing of protests is not only evident in the uniformed police offers on the ground. Other forms of surveillance and control were carried out throughout the Wendland Movement, particularly during the 1990s and in the lead-up to the Castor protests. Activists understand and articulate these as outgrowths of a 'nuclear state' that seeks to impose their vision of nuclearity on Wendland. Resistance against nuclearity therefore finds multiple fronts along which to contest the nuclear.

Chapter 7 Conclusions: resistance, nuclearity, and rurality

Although there has been a very recent resurgence of pro-nuclear energy voices, Germany has phased-out its nuclear energy production. This is in no small part due to the long-standing and persistent resistance and activist work in places like Wendland. They played a key role in the commitment made in 2011 to phase-out nuclear energy[26] and in reigniting the search for nuclear end storage sites in Germany in 2020. Nonetheless, Russia's invasion of the Ukraine and the associated rise in energy prices in 2022 re-opened discussions about the role that nuclear energy should play in the German energy mix. With the support of the German chancellor, Olaf Scholz, and a majority vote in the parliament a final amendment was made to the *Atomgesetzt* (Nuclear Energy Act) in December 2022. The remaining three nuclear energy reactors, that were meant to be decommissioned at the end of 2022, remained on the grid until April 2023. In 2022 they produced around 33 TWh of electricity; only 6,7% of total energy production in Germany (Frauenhofer ISE, 2023). Regardless of whether keeping these reactors online actually provided any meaningful contribution to energy security or price stabilisations, it is clear that in times of crisis we hold onto the promise of the nuclear.

These developments during my time working on this thesis have shown once again how important it is to continue to engage with (historic) anti-nuclear energy resistance. In this thesis, I wrote a political and spatial history of the Wendland region and the associated anti-nuclear energy struggle. The Wendland Movement spanned several decades, grew, and evolved over time through various phases and forms of engagement. I focused on three distinct moments within the first 20 years of the movement: the early years in the late 1970s, the Free Republic of Wendland in 1980, and the first three Castor Transports in the mid-1990s. In doing so, I explored how resistance works to bring together various aspects of nuclearity and rurality as fronts of contestation. Beyond the conceptual contributions to the fields of political, nuclear, and rural geography,

[26] Following the nuclear accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant in 2011 there was a significant shift in the German nuclear energy policy. It included a legally binding date (31.12.2022) for the end of national nuclear energy production (known as *Atomaustieg*).

I have drawn attention to the uneven politics and geographies of producing and managing (nuclear) energy, highlighting the long history of struggles against the nuclear and their continued relevance today. In this conclusion I return to my three research questions and sketch the contributions I have made in this thesis. I also highlight avenues for further engagement both in terms of the Wendland Movement and with regard to Nuclear, Rural, and Political Geography more generally.

7.1 Resistance, nuclearity, and rurality: a relational approach

In thesis I took a relational approach to the study of the anti-nuclear energy movement in Wendland. I drew on Massey's (2005) work on the relationality of place and understanding places as intersections of wider and more local connections. In doing so, I make a key contribution in this thesis by **situating the anti-nuclear energy protests in Wendland in a broader framework of nuclear energy politic**s. This, for example, meant that I engaged with more local activist groups and those groups from outwith Wendland. Through individual stories of activists, I worked to trace connections between Wendland and the broader nuclear energy context in Germany. I also applied a relational approach to unpack how Gorleben was chosen in the first place and the role that spatial imaginaries play in this process. These spatial imaginaries are closely linked to the longer histories of the region and energy policy more generally, related to local conservative politics and the imaginaries of socio-technical advancement. With this thesis I have therefore also further **positioned the anti-nuclear energy movement in Wendland within an English-language space**.

With a relational approach I also took into account the many histories and many spaces of Wendland and the resistance (Massey, 1995). This influenced the methodological approach I took to uncover these multiple histories. On the one hand, I focused on the personal stories and histories of individual activists through oral history interviews. I spoke to a range of people from different backgrounds to capture the multiple histories of the Wendland and the movement. Additionally, I conducted extensive archival research at the activist archive, the Gorleben Archive. This unique archive offered the opportunity to study the Wendland Movement from the ground up. I was able to take into

account the materials and stories from the different activist groups themselves. I therefore also worked to **further situate archival practices and spaces as political, activist practices and spaces**.

Conceptually, I thought about energy related protests through rurality and nuclearity. One of the key contributions I make in this thesis is to put **Rural, Nuclear, and Political Geographies into relation with one another**. I argued for understanding the politics of the rural via spatial imaginaries. Spatial imaginaries provide insights into how rural spaces are imagined and then as a consequence produced as nuclear. Ultimately, rural landscapes are produced as nuclear landscapes. Where there are clear links between nuclearity and the process of peripheralization (Blowers, 2017), I demonstrated that this is also deeply interwoven with imaginaries of rurality. **I argued that it is important to see the specific rural dimension of the processes of producing nuclearity.** A politics of the rural is at the heart of nuclear discourses.

Indeed, the production of nuclearity is a central element in this thesis. I argued and demonstrated how Wendland was produced as a nuclear space. It was first imagined as nuclear, heavily influenced by specific understandings of rurality, and then produced as a nuclear space. I argued that through infrastructures in particular, Wendland was transformed into a space of nuclearity. I focused on not only the obvious infrastructures but also on how smaller, less assuming spaces were produced and everyday spaces were co-opted in the name of nuclearity. **In this thesis I demonstrated how infrastructures of energy production were often counted to infrastructure in resistance.** These processes of producing nuclearity were made visible through resistance. Throughout the Wendland Movement activists sought to point out the infrastructures in their landscape, the ways in which pro-nuclear actors visualized and imagined Wendland as nuclear, and how this led to Gorleben being designated the site for the NEZ. Resistance worked to visualize nuclear energy production in Wendland.

I also framed the Wendland Movement as a rural protest movement. I was explicit in foregrounding this rurality and what it meant for the movement. I took seriously the unique political dynamics and protectionist discourses, for example, as the politics of the rural. Although Woods (2003) argued for the

importance of examining a politics of the rural, this is rarely done in the context of progressive and/or contentious politics. More often than not, urban spaces are explored as sites for progressive direct-action and resistance movements (see for example Merrifield, 2013; Swyngedouw, 2021). **In this thesis, I have worked de-centered the urban just a little as *the* site for solidarity building and the emergence of contentious politics.** Protest and direct action in the Wendland Movement unfolded within a rural landscape. Protest was dictated by the specificities of the rural spaces and played an important role in the formation of political identities for many protestors. This does not mean that I reduced these protests to 'rural protests' or these activists to their 'rural identities'. Instead, I recognize the tensions within these protests and the role that rurality plays in this. I contend that contentious politics simply *also* have a place in rural spaces. In moving away from urban-rural dichotomies, I thought more broadly about how space, identity, and resistance interact.

What emerges out of this resistance and a central element of the Wendland Movement is the formulation of alternatives; alternative imaginaries and alternative infrastructures. The FRW is the clearest example of this leading to long-term changes within the region, but alternative imaginaries of the rural were also important for framing the resistance. Again, I argued that spatial imaginaries play a central role here. Particularly during the early years, groups of people who had not been politically active in this way before became heavily involved in the anti-nuclear energy movement as they sought to formulate alternative imaginaries and visions of and for Wendland. This then also worked to mobilize and politicize new activists. This process of political subjectification required to some extent a de-identification with previous identities (Rancière, 2004; Velicu and Kaika, 2017), but I argued that these pre-given identities of farmer or anarchist, for example, are still crucial for the process of becoming politically engaged and that these may not always be necessarily progressive**. I argued for the need to recognize the importance of established identities and networks in the process of political subjectification and that the process of politicization can be uneven.** It was very much through collective identities, such as the farmers or the more conservative community from Wendland in the BI, that a mobilization of previously 'non-political' actors occurred. At the same time, new and unlikely collectivities emerged as was the case during the

preparations of the FRW and during the protests surrounding the Castor Transports. These were dynamic and of course fraught with tensions, but ultimately forged a strong collective resistance against nuclear energy.

Throughout this thesis, then, I have focused on the intersections of resistance, rurality, and nuclearity. Within the three phases of the movement that I considered, I then focused on one distinct aspect to demonstrate how these intersect in different ways. These broadly map onto the research questions I formulated in Chapter 1.3 and related to the role that spatial imaginaries play (in the early years), on collectivity and alterity (in the Free Republic of Wendland), and direct action protest (during the Castor Transports).

7.1.1 Spatial imaginaries

In Chapter 4 I focus on the early years of the Wendland Resistance in the mid- to late 1970s and argued that spatial imaginaries play an important role in the production and resistance of nuclearity and the politics of the rural (research question 1). During this time, Gorleben was announced as a potential site for extensive nuclear waste infrastructure and resistance against these developments began to take shape. I introduced spatial Imaginaries as a way to unpack how Wendland was designated as a nuclear space in the first place. At the same time, alternative imaginaries of what Wendland was and should be were central to the emergence of early anti-nuclear energy resistance in the region. In doing so, I drew heavily on the idea that the nuclear and nuclear spaces are actively produced (Alexis-Martin and Davies, 2017; Hecht, 2012). Examining the spatial imaginaries of pro-nuclear actors allowed me to explore this process. Equally, activists were able to identify this process of nuclearisation and their resistance was in turn framed around uncovering and contesting this production. This is the case throughout the Wendland Movement of course. In the early years, however, the anti-nuclear energy movement was framed heavily around contesting the spatial imaginaries that pro-nuclear actors articulated of Wendland.

First, I focused on techno-scientific imaginaries in the context of nuclear energy. Science and technology often mediate desirable visions of the future (Jasanoff and Kim, 2009) and in Wendland the desirability of nuclear energy was up for

debate. The discourse surrounding the nuclear is heavily dominated by questions of risk and safety (Blowers, 2017) and during the early years, a lot of effort was put into disseminating expert knowledge by pro-nuclear actors to convince those living in Wendland of the safety of nuclear infrastructures. This included positioning certain knowledge as expert knowledge and hence authoritative. Activists actively sought to produce counter knowledges and alternative socio-technical imaginaries. Second, I demonstrated how imaginaries of a nuclear Wendland were deeply embedded in rural imaginaries. Expert, pro-nuclear knowledges were positioned within imaginaries of the rural idyll and heavily influenced by assumptions about what the rural is and should – a politics of the rural (Woods, 2003, 2006). Contestations of nuclear energy infrastructural development engaged with this politics of the rural, engaging both protectionist discourses of rurality and more progressive imaginaries of rurality to frame their resistance. Within this chapter I demonstrated and argued for the clear intersections between spatial imaginaries, the production of nuclearity, and imaginaries of the rural.

7.1.2 Collectivity and infrastructure

In Chapter 5 I focused on the Free Republic of Wendland as one example in the Wendland Movement where alterity is imagined, materialised, and enacted. I argue that infrastructures play a key role in facilitating the production of collectivity (research question 2). I highlight the role that infrastructures play and how imagining and materialising alterity are key functions of producing collectivity. In the chapter I explore three key aspects. First, I engaged with the trajectories of activists coming to Wendland during this period of the movement. The backgrounds and experiences of activists coming from outwith Wendland were important because the FRW marked one of the first large protest events that was organised primarily by activist groups from outwith the region. The trajectories of the activists are key for understanding for these ‘new’ activist fit into the existing activist networks. I explored the planning of the FRW as a space of encounter (Halvorsen, 2015b) and a site of negotiation between different political identities.

Second, I focused on the infrastructures of alterity. Encampments are spaces where different activists come together and where cohabitation produces a

distinctive form of participatory politics (Collectif Mauvaise troupe, 2018; Routledge, 1997). I explored the different types of infrastructures in the village as spaces for democratic engagement, building solidarity across difference, and producing collectivity. I framed the FRW as a reaction to and formulation against pro-nuclear sentiments that were prevailing outwith its boundaries.

Finally, I examined the formations of collectivity within and through the FRW. The negotiation of everyday life in the village and political engagement is central to bridging divides, even if this was an uneven and incomplete process. I focused on the acts of building, labouring, and sweating together as shared experiences that were key to collective identity formation. Again, I looked beyond co-habitation and understand the FRW as a spaces of encounter, where more local actors were able to engage with other forms of resistance and other political identities. Ultimately, I argue that infrastructures are key sites and built through practices that facilitate the struggle for collective resistance.

7.1.3 Direct action protest

In Chapter 6 I engaged with the first three Castor Transports in the mid-1990s and how rurality and nuclearity become fronts of contestation through direct-action protest (research question 3). The transport of highly radioactive waste to Gorleben was met by a strong resistance and the protests surrounding these, and all subsequent Castor Transports, were defining elements of the Wendland Movement. Through these protests I returned to the question of how Wendland was produced as nuclear. Where in Chapter 4 I focused on the discursive and imaginative production of nuclearity in Wendland, here I looked more closely at the role of infrastructure and the materiality of the nuclear. I also returned to the intersections of nuclearity and rurality. I unpacked how the Wendland Movement can be understood as a rural social movement and highlighted the specificities of the rural in staging and policing protest.

I explored how nuclearity is made through the transport of nuclear waste and the spaces it co-opts for the making of nuclearity. I also focused on how these spaces becomes sites of contention and protestors seek to disrupt the production of nuclearity. I then examined policing as an act of enforcing nuclearity and as a process that is shaped by the rural landscape. The introduction of a protest-ban,

for example, worked both to police everyday spaces of transport and code these spaces as nuclear, while the specificities of the rural landscape dictated how policing strategies were able to unfold during the Castor protests.

Working through spatial imaginaries already highlighted some of the ways in which Wendland was produced as a nuclear zone/space. Despite significant resistance, Wendland became a site for nuclear energy waste storage in Germany. I explored the transport of nuclear waste as part of the process and the 'work' that goes into producing Wendland as nuclear. I engaged with the various means with which nuclearity is made, exploring less extraordinary processes and infrastructures of nuclearity, and the tensions that arise in the production of nuclearity. The Castor Transports make visible not just the nuclear but also the process of spatialising and grounding nuclearity (Hecht, 2012). Key to these observations is that the act of resisting the transports and the actions that were staged in these spaces of nuclear production worked to highlight the process of nuclearisation.

7.2 Relevance for further research agendas

The contributions I make in this thesis also have relevance for further research agendas in Geography. Within Nuclear, Rural, and Political Geography the insights from this thesis can drive further inquiry into a relational approach to rural politics and the contestation of nuclearity. In looking forward, I identify four possibilities for taking this research into the Wendland Movement further.

First, I argued for taking a relational approach to rural politics. I argued and demonstrated in the example of Wendland that the rural is a constellation of relations. Taking a relation approach is a way of thinking through the specificity of the rural without drawing boundaries around rural places that delineate what is and is not constitutive of this place (Massey, 2005). The rural is a place that is equally specific and exist in relation to urban spaces. Key to the relational approach is that this does not necessitate a clear distinction between the rural and the urban. Instead, it allows us to think of rural spaces as their own unique constellation. This enrols an understanding of rural politics, which Woods (2005, p.20) argues "cannot be defined as politics that occur within rural space, but that a politics of the rural transcends rural and urban space enrolling actors in

diverse locations and at a range of scales" (Woods, 2005, p. 20). There is a clear tendency for a relational approach to rural spaces in the politics of the rural. This opens up rural spaces as spaces where contentious or radical political engagement is possible. I argue that the rural and the politics of the rural are central to our understandings of the spatialities of contentious politics and provide insights beyond those afforded by the urban. A research agenda along these lines requires a renewed attention to rural spaces and politics that is open in its exploration of contentious politics.

Second, I argued for the need to think further about the contestation of spaces of nuclearity. In this thesis, I have linked the production of nuclear spaces to the resistance against this production. By focusing on the spaces of contentious politics, a spatialised approach to the production of nuclearity also become clear further unpacking the production of nuclear spaces (Hecht, 2012). Resistance is an act of grounding and visualising this process of nuclearisation. It brings to the fore the multiple spaces of contestation within multiple stages of this process and positions contestation as an intersection of identities and trajectories within a nuclear community. Focusing on this brings together thinking about nuclear infrastructures, nuclear communities, and everyday nuclear spaces. At the heart of this contestation of nuclearisation is the drive for a right to participate in the production of space; a right to the rural in the same way there is right to the city (Lefebvre, 1991). Once again, the political, the rural, and the nuclear collide, which warrant further engagement.

Third, we must therefore explore further the intersections of nuclearity and rurality. I argued that rural imaginaries drive the production of nuclear spaces. The politics of the rural is hence also part of the politics of the nuclear and vice versa. Debates around peripheralisation in Nuclear Geographies benefit from an explicit engagement with the politics of the rural. There is a need to continue to be neither reductionist about readings of rural spaces, to not fall into assumptions of a homogenous rural politics, nor assume that the production of nuclear spaces is easy, straightforward, uncalculated, or uncontested. There is a potential to be explicit about how rurality is debated amongst many actors in many different ways and what this means for the production of nuclearity. A renewed engagement with the politics of the rural opens up possibilities to

engage more broadly with a heterogenous set of actors, identities, politics, and imaginaries that are at play. The production of nuclearity is similarity heterogenous and must be further understood and explored as a process that enrols many actors, spaces, and infrastructures and is a process that takes place over time within (rural) spaces.

Finally, throughout this thesis there have been various points where parallels between nuclear energy and renewable energies come to the fore. Indeed, many of the rural protest against infrastructural development I refer to throughout are studies of resistances against renewable energy developments (Woods, Phadke; see also …). Both require some sort of transformation of landscape or space and in our endeavour to carbon neutrality, infrastructural developments will be necessary. The approaches taken here to understanding rural spaces and politics can be useful in the sphere of renewables as well. While there may be slightly different set of politics at play, engaging with the role of energy in the politics of the rural and in resistance movements will be key for a successful transformation of the energy sector.

7.3 Final thoughts

The legacy of the nuclear remains with us. Whether it be through the continued production of nuclear energy or the questions of nuclear waste management, society will have to engage with nuclearity for years to come. In Germany, the end of a nuclear energy producing era was curtailed by external geopolitical developments. Equally, the debates surrounding nuclear end storage remain. The latest report from the Federal Company for Radioactive Waste Disposal (2020) excluded Gorleben definitively and the existing end storage facility was closed down permanently. But nuclear waste will have to be stored somewhere. How these decisions will be made, how the public can engage with this process, and the lasting effects nuclear waste end storage will have on communities remain unclear.

In this thesis I sketched the lasting effects that nuclearity has on a region like Wendland. It is a landscape marked by the infrastructures of nuclearity. It is a quintessential part of the identities, memories, and politics of those who live, lived, and interacted with nuclearity in the region. At the same time, it is

through this collective resistance that new possibilities for engagement, for collective resistances, creative undertakings, and lasting changes were possible in Wendland. I conclude this thesis with the current Gorleben Archive sticker[27]. In the middle is the Wendland Sun that was also used for the sticker for the Free Republic of Wendland. The text reads: "I write history"[28]. The Gorleben Archive prides itself in documenting how and where nuclear policy failed to ensure that the mistakes of the past are not repeated. In this thesis I have done my part in contributing to writing this history of Wendland.

[27] See: https://www.gorleben-archiv.de/ueber-uns/.

[28] This is a nod to the popular, resistance-inspired song written by the local rock group Madsen "Du schreibst Geschichte": https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RaRVWLIK0J0.

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Annex I: ethics approval

Institute of Neuroscience and Psychology
School of Psychology

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31 January 2023

Ethical approval for:

Application Number:	xxxxxxxx
Project Title:	The Wendland Movement: Narrating The Antinuclear Energy Movement
Lead Researcher:	Dr David Featherstone

This is to confirm that the College of Science and Engineering Ethics Committee has reviewed the above application and **approved** it. Please download the approval letter from the Research Ethics System for your records.

Also please download and read the Collated Comments associated your application. This document contains all the reviews of your application and can be found below your approval letter on the Research Ethics System. These reviews may contain useful suggestions and observations about your research protocol for strengthening it. Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Lawrence W. Barsalou
Ethics Officer
College of Science and Engineering
University of Glasgow

Annex II: information sheet

University of Glasgow

Die Wendland Bewegung –
Eine Studie zum Anti-AKW Aktivismus

Informationsblatt

Mein Name ist Viktoria Noka und ich bin Promotionsstudentin an der Universität von Glasgow. Meine Promotion behandelt die Anti-Atomkraftbewegung in Wendland ab den 70er Jahren. Ins besondere beschäftige ich mich mit der Altagsgeschichte der Anti-AKW Bewegung. Mein Interesse liegt in den persönlichen und emotionalen Aspekten des Aktivismus.

Ich lade Sie hiermit ein, an diesem Projekt teilzunehmen!

Wie kann ich teilnehmen?
Sie können auf verschiedenste Weise an diesem Projekt teilnehmen:

- Interview
- Spaziergangs-Interview
- Gruppen-Interview

Ein **Interview** wird ungefähr eine halbe Stunde dauern. Das Interview wird an einem Ort Ihrer Wahl stattfinden, z.B. in einem Café, in Ihrem Büro oder bei Ihnen zu Hause. Es gibt auch die Wahl das Interview während eines Spaziergangs machen. Dabei können Orte und Landschaften, die in der AKW Bewegung bedeutend waren zum Vorschein kommen und das Gespräch leiten. In einem Gespräch vor dem **Spaziergangs-Interview** wird die Route und das Interview besprochen, danach wird das Interview 30-45 Minuten dauern.

Die Interviews werden mit Ihrer Zustimmung mit einem Tonbandgerät aufgenommen. Das Spaziergangs-Interview kann mit Ihrer Zustimmung auch auf Video aufgenommen. Dabei können Ihr Gesicht und Ihre Stimme digital verändert werden um ihre Anonymität zu waren.

Es gibt auch die Möglichkeit an einer Fokusgruppe teilzunehmen. Dies ist ein **Gruppen-Interview**, wobei Sie mit weitern Teilnehmern gemeinsam Fragen beantworten und diskutieren werden. Ein Gruppen-Interview wird voraussichtlich zwischen 45-60 Minuten dauern. Dieses Interview wird nur mit der Zustimmung aller Beteiligten mit einem Tonbandgerät aufgenommen.

Sie können an einem oder mehreren der obengenannten Interviewformaten teilnehmen. In allen Formaten werde ich Ihnen Fragen zu Ihrem persönlichen Engagement im Rahmen der Anti-AKW Bewegung stellen. Das könnte sich auf bestimmte Ereignisse und Aktionen beziehen, an denen Sie teilgenommen haben, ggf. mit welchen Organisationen Sie in Kontakt waren, aber auch Ihren Motivationen und Ansichtsweisen im allgemeineren.

Während eines Gesprächs kann es durchaus sein, dass wir Themen ansprechen, die auf **illegale Aktivitäten** im Zuge der Protestbewegung hinweisen. Bitte seinen Sie sich bewusst, dass diese Informationen gegebenenfalls schriftlich oder auf Ton aufgenommen werden. Sie müssen während der Interviews keine Informationen preisgeben, die rechtliche Auswirkungen für Sie haben könnten, und Sie können jederzeit Ihre Aussagen während und nach dem Interview zurückziehen.

Muss Ich teilnehmen?
Es ist allein Ihre Entscheidung, ob Sie an diesem Projekt teilnehmen wollen oder nicht. Bevor Sie eine Entscheidung treffen, bitte stellen Sie mir jegliche Fragen, die Sie zu dem Projekt haben und vergewissern Sie sich, dass Sie alle Informationen haben, um eine Entscheidung zu treffen. Wenn Sie an dem Projekt teilnehmen wollen, werden Sie eine Einverständniserklärung unterschreiben müssen. **Sie können jederzeit Ihr Einverständnis entziehen, Ihre schon preisgebenden Informationen zurückziehen und das Projekt verlassen, ohne einen Grund zu nennen.**

Was passiert mit meinen Daten?
Ihr Informationen werden als höchstvertraulich behandelt. Während des Projektes wird Ihnen ein Deckname zugeteilt, um Ihre Anonymität zu waren. Ihre Daten werden auf einen passwortgesichert gespeichert und nur Ich oder (im Notfall) meine Betreuer werden auf diese Daten Zugriff haben. Alle Informationen werden auf einem gesichertem Computerlaufwerk der Universität von Glasgow gespeichert, welches den relevanten Datenschutzgesetzen (in Deutschland und in Großbritannien) entspricht.

Diese Studie wird als Teil meiner Promotion an der „School of Geographical and Earth Sciences" an der Universität von Glasgow abgegeben. Die Arbeit wird von meinen Betreuern, einem internen und externem Prüfer gelesen werden. Sie können auf Anfrage nach Fertigstellung der Arbeit eine Kopie der Promotion erhalten.

Haben Sie noch Fragen?
Wenn Sie noch Fragen haben, können Sie mich gerne unter folgender Emailadresse kontaktieren: **v.noka.1@research.gla.ac.uk**. Alternativ können Sie sich auch an meine Betreuer wenden, Dr. Featherstone and Dr. Karaliotas, oder an den Beauftragten des Ethikkomitees, Prof. Dr. Parr.

Wenn Sie an dieser Studie teilnehmen wollen, müssen Sie eine Einverständniserklärung unterschreiben (anbei). Dieses Projekt wurden von dem Ethikkomittee an der Universität von Glasgow geprüft und genehmigt.

Weitere Kontakte:
Dr. David Featherstone - david.featherstone@glasgow.ac.uk
Dr. Lazaros Karaliotas - lazaros.karaliotas@glasgow.ac.uk
Prof. Dr. Hester Paar - hester.parr@glasgow.ac.uk

Annex III: consent form

Die Wendland Bewegung –
Eine Studie zum Anti-AKW Aktivismus

Einverständniserklärung

Dies ist eine Einverständniserklärung zu einem **Interview** mit mir, Viktoria Noka, zu dem Projekt, dass in dem beiliegenden Informationsblatt dargestellt wird.

Alle Information und Daten unterliegen Ihrer Zustimmung.

Bitte angeben

(_____) Ich habe das Informationsblatt gelesen und verstanden
(_____) Ich möchte an diesem Projekt teilnehmen
(_____) Ich habe verstanden, dass meine Daten sicher aufbewahrt werden
(_____) Ich habe verstanden, dass ich mein Einverständnis zurückziehen kann
(_____) Ich habe verstanden, dass meine Daten anonymisiert werden

(_____) Ich stimme einer Audio-Tonaufnahme zu

Name:

Unterschrift:

Datum:

Kontaktinformation:

Researcher Name (Print):

Researcher Signature:

Date: