

NGOs Against Nuclear Power

1. Introduction

The birth of the nuclear movement can be set in the action of Bohlen and Stowe marriages, opposed to nuclear testing by the United States, in the National Wildlife Refuge Amchitka (Alaska); for it Committee founded the Do not Make A Wave, in September 15th, 1971 chartered an expedition by boat to the nuclear testing area named as Greenpeace I. That was the origin of the environmental organization Greenpeace. In April 12nd, 1971, a demonstration of several hundred people against the construction of the new nuclear power station at Fessenheim (Alsace) begins the French anti-nuclear movement.

440 nuclear power plants¹ are spread across our planet – most of them can be found in North America, Europa and in Asia. One might say that after the most fatal nuclear catastrophe of Chernobyl in 1986, national anti-nuclear power groups formed rapidly. Since for instance the nuclear rain also affected Germany and other neighbouring countries, similar concerns about nuclear power were raised in those countries. Nuclear power is advertised as clean since it emits a low amount of carbon dioxide, unlike coal powered plants. However, nuclear power plants are of high risk and small and big accidents happen every year². Those accidents not only contaminate soil, water, and air but can also cause health problems and premature deaths. Apart from accidents, the NPP and the final disposal sites for nuclear waste are potential targets for terrorist attacks³.

Nevertheless, those fatal accidents illustrate the danger of nuclear power plants clearly. For example after the Fukushima catastrophe in 2011, Germany took eight NPP of the line and the remaining nine should be of the line until 2022⁴. Still, the way to the nuclear phase-out worldwide is paved with problems and protests. The reason is “[...] an issue of power: of corporate and elite power and interests outweighing the power of ordinary citizens and communities”⁵. Environmental

¹ In the following text also referred to as “NPP“

² Jul/dapd (2011) <http://www.spiegel.de/wissenschaft/technik/unfaelle-in-atomkraftwerken-chronologie-des-schreckens-a-750519.html>

³ Time for Change <http://timeforchange.org/pros-and-cons-of-nuclear-power-and-sustainability>

⁴ Tagesschau.de (2015) “Neun Meiler am Netz, acht stillgelegt”
<https://www.tagesschau.de/multimedia/bilder/atomkraftwerke-101.html>

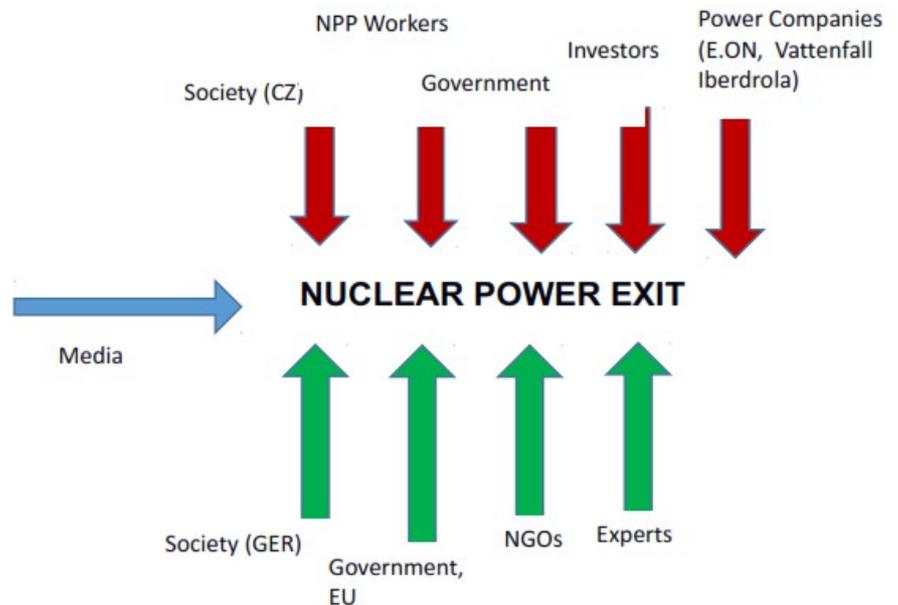
⁵ Friends of the Earth International “Good Energy, Bad Energy“ <http://www.foei.org/wp->

NGOs across the globe are essential players who educate, protest, and advocate for safer and cleaner energy with renewable energies.

Grafik 1: Important Stakeholders in the Movement Against Nuclear Power

1. Greenpeace

The anti-nuclear movement is the organizational response that brings together people, organizations, and political parties that express an anti-nuclear and environmental commitment. The movement tries to raise awareness to the danger of the use, development,



and expansion is a response both civil and military nuclear technology. Greenpeace has always fought and will continue to fight vigorously against nuclear power because “it is an unacceptable risk to the environment and to humanity. The only solution is to halt the expansion of all nuclear power, and for the shutdown of existing plants.”

Greenpeace is funded entirely by contributions from its members and does not accept donations from governments, political parties or businesses. The actions taken by Greenpeace at several nuclear power plants have never endangered those plants, but they have shown they are not well protected. It has been also known that an aging NPP as Spain presents additional risks that are unnecessary and that viable alternatives exist. Therefore, Greenpeace believes, it is an ethical obligation to close the NPPs for eliminating these hazards. Their typical approach to this topic, is through direct actions and demonstrations which should raise public awareness through powerful pictures and so called mind-bombs.

What Greenpeace proposes:

To improve security: 1. Transparency and independence of the nuclear regulators to make decisions away from economic and political pressures that help ensure the safety. 2. Public participation helps

improving transparency and requires operators to maintain high safety incentive. 3. Change civil responsibility so that there is no limit damage and extend this to the entire nuclear industry, not only to operators. Higher costs in responsibility implies increasing investment in security.

To close the NPP: Adopt a 100% renewable energy model, efficient, technically possible, economically viable, and sustainable.

2. Friends of the Earth International (FoEI)

FoEI is an environmental NGO with a network of national organizations in over 70 countries that has campaigned against nuclear power since it was founded in 1969 and they still, amongst other issues, pursue this goal. Their methods include awareness building, direct action and education for sustainable development. Since FoEI is comprised out of many national organizations, their campaigning against nuclear power plants takes places on a local, national, and international level. Further, they cooperate closely because of their ties and their organisations in 76 countries which gives them powerful synergies on an international level. Here, and on the level of lobbying they will take a direct part at the COP21 in Paris: “Friends of the Earth International, several Friends of the Earth member groups, and Real World Radio will take part in the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Paris, France in December⁶.”

On a national level their work is more independent and drifts from the international campaign against nuclear power. An example for this would be FoE America, their “[...] nuclear campaign works to reduce risks for people and the environment by supporting efforts to close existing nuclear reactors and fighting proposals to design and build new reactors that use federal funds to underwrite such initiatives” and their campaign against the Diablo Canyon power plant on the shore of California. Back then when Diablo Canyon was build the understanding of earthquakes was not at a level as it nowadays. “Diablo Canyon is surrounded by faults capable of creating ground motion beyond that for which the reactors and their components were tested and licensed⁷. Apart from the usual risks that a NPP poses, here is an additional seismic risk present. Last year in August, FoE publicized a document by the former senior inspector at Diablo Canyon, Dr. Michael Peck:

“This document reveals that three of the nearby faults (Shoreline, Los Osos and San Luis Bay) are capable of generating earthquakes stronger than the reactors were designed to withstand. Dr. Peck’s dissent argues that Diablo Canyon is operating outside the

⁶ Friends of the Earth International <http://www.foei.org/what-we-do/paris>

⁷ Friends of the Earth <http://www.foe.org/projects/climate-and-energy/nuclear-reactors>

conditions of its license and should be shut down until PG&E can prove that the reactors can withstand potential earthquakes on these faults”⁸.

3. Czech Republic and its nuclear-focused NGOs

Nowadays, we have in the Czech Republic two nuclear power plants (6 reactors together); older one, running from 1985, Dukovany, and Temelin which has been producing energy since 2000. Those two Czech power plants generate around 29TWh of electric energy annually. This stands for 36% of all energy produced in Czech Republic.⁹ According to the operator of both the plants, the largest Czech energy company ČEZ, around 60% of Czech inhabitants are those who said yes, or more likely yes, to nuclear energy. This makes Czech people the biggest supporters of nuclear energy in the EU.¹⁰

When it comes to environmental non-governmental organizations operating in Czech Republic, all of them say no to nuclear energy. For example Hnutí Duha and the Czech branch of Greenpeace are both pushing up renewable energy systems over nuclear energy. They both joined together in the past for direct actions: trying to block the erection of new reactors.¹¹ Both also use strong argumentation against nuclear power in their own research work.

The strongest voice against nuclear energy in Czech Republic is the organization „Jihočeské matky“ (Mothers from the south of Bohemia). This organization was founded in 1992, while before it was only an informal group of people from south of Bohemia where the Temelin power plant is located. An impulse to form this group was the Chernobyl disaster in 1986. In the young times of the organization, in 1992, their work was mainly organizing and calling for demonstrations. Firstly, it were gathering-demonstrations and mementos for Chernobyl disaster. Secondly, big demonstrations against the construction of the Temelin power plant. During this era of fresh democracy, a lot of people were persuaded by them and thought that it is possible to shut down the Temelin construction. After 1993, when it was decided that Temelin will go online, many anti-nuclear voices were shut down and also Jihočeské matky begun more focusing on the educational work. Since then the organization has been presenting anti-nuclear scientific researches and tries to bring up this education to the people through seminars, workshops, etc.¹²

⁸ Ebd.

⁹ „Jaderná energetika“, Energostat, <http://energostat.cz/jaderna-energetika.html>

¹⁰ „Postoj veřejnosti k jaderné energetice“, ČEZ (2014) <http://www.cez.cz/cs/vyroba-elektriny/zvazovana-dostavba-elektrarny-temelin/postoj-ceske-verejnosti-k-jaderne-energetice.html>

¹¹ „Hnutí DUHA a Greenpeace budou blokovat Temelín“, Deník Referendum (2011)

<http://denikreferendum.cz/clanek/9854-hnuti-duha-a-greenpeace-budou-blokovat-temelin>

¹² „Jihočeské Matky – O nás“, Jihočeské Matky, <http://www.jihoceskematky.cz/cz/o-nas>

Conclusion

In our research we did not come across many niches that each mentioned above NGO is taking. There are many similarities in their approaches as they are advertised on their web pages. However, we believe that in the public's eyes, each NGO takes different stance. For example, Friends of the Earth is in generally known for their educational work and is not known for provocative direct actions, unlike Greenpeace. We did not find any information if the work of NGOs in this matter is interfering with other NGOs work. Because of the lack of information on this matter it can be assumed that this is not the case.

Resources:

ČEZ (2014) "Postoj veřejnosti k jaderné energetice", <http://www.cez.cz/cs/vyroba-elektriny/zvazovana-dostavba-elektrarny-temelin/postoj-ceske-verejnosti-k-jaderne-energetice.html>

Energostat "Jaderná energetika", <http://energostat.cz/jaderna-energetika.html>

Friends of the Earth International "Good Energy, Bad Energy" <http://www.foei.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Good-Energy-Bad-Energy-Summary.pdf>

Friends of the Earth International <http://www.foei.org/what-we-do/paris>

Friends of the Earth <http://www.foe.org/projects/climate-and-energy/nuclear-reactors>

Greenpeace, "What we do. Nuclear, Campaigns"

<http://www.greenpeace.org/international/en/campaigns/nuclear/>

Jihočeské Matky "Jihočeské Matky – O nás" <http://www.jihoceskematky.cz/cz/o-nas>

Jul/dapd (2011) <http://www.spiegel.de/wissenschaft/technik/unfaelle-in-atomkraftwerken-chronologie-des-schreckens-a-750519.html>

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