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The alternative public realm: the organization of the 1980s anti-nuclear press in West Germany and Britain

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The coincidence of political turmoil in the 1960s and 1970s in industrially advanced societies with the increasing availability of small-scale media technologies, led both to an explosion of alternative media projects (Downing, 1984; Kogawa, 1985; Lowe, 1983; Mattelart and Siegelau, 1983), and, more slowly, to attempts to reconceptualize the functions of these projects. Implicitly and often explicitly a major movement was under way to create models of media operation transcending the typical behaviour both of capitalist media conglomerates and of soviet-style 'transmission-belt' media. Debates about these new models focused on aesthetics (layout, language, 'non-political' themes), on internal organization (self-managed structures, finance), and on the interaction between media and oppositional political movements — all these dimensions being intimately inter-related in practice.

Debates on alternative media were especially lively in West Germany and Italy from the mid-1970s. In the former they quite often centred on the concept of an 'alternative public realm'. Here I propose first to present and comment on this concept, and then to review its utility in analysing one major example of alternative media, namely anti-nuclear movement media in West Germany, with some comparative observations on their British and other counterparts. By 'anti-nuclear' I mean the opposition both to

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nuclear energy and to nuclear war (the two spheres being intimately connected).

The concept 'alternative public realm'

In English these three words lie awkwardly next to each other, each more or less clear in itself, but somewhere between the flat and the obscure in collective signification. Let us begin by clarifying the term 'public realm', and subsequently review the sense of 'alternative'.

'Public realm', sometimes with 'public sphere' or 'public domain' as substitutes, has generally been the term used to translate the polysemic German word 'Öffentlichkeit', whose fundamental sense is 'open', 'public', 'common', as against 'private', 'secret', 'restricted'. It is a term which can be used to refer to public debate in or out of parliament, publicity, a public action, the processes of formation of public opinion. As Habermas notes at the outset of his study of changes in the structure of public exchange (1962: 11): 'The use of "öffentlich" and "Öffentlichkeit" discloses a multiplicity of competing senses. They arise from different historical phases, and in their fused application to the relations of industrially advanced welfare state bourgeois society, assume an opaque connotation.' In his study Habermas located the development of the concept in social and constitutional changes in England, France and Germany during the centuries of capitalist transformation, and in the arguments of political philosophers from Hobbes to de Tocqueville. He summarized the constitutional changes thus:

The basic laws guarantee: the *spheres* of public and private (the kernel of the latter being the sphere of intimate social relations); the *institutions* and *instruments* of the public on the one hand (press, parties) and the basis for private autonomy on the other (family and property); finally the *functions* of private people — political as citizens, economic as commodity-owners. (Habermas, 1962: 96, *emphases in original*)

These constitutional protections offered a measure of autonomy from interference by state or church with the emergent bourgeoisie, and thus created the conditions under which a public realm of debate could operate effectively, with direct implications for government decision making.

Habermas noted that both the constitutional and the philosophical formulations of this new public realm were derived in significant measure from its emergent forms of social organization. In England the typical early form of public realm was in the myriad coffee-houses and tea-houses of London from the end of the seventeenth century, with their innumerable pamphleteers and essayists (69–78). In France the Paris *salons* and clubs fulfilled a similar role, whereas in Germany the public sphere was typically actualized in readers' societies for the perusal and discussion of newspapers and periodicals (78–85).

In his use of the term 'public realm', therefore, Habermas specified the emergent organization of the conditions of democratic — not merely parliamentary — debate and the role of media within that context. He concluded however that the role of public debate in the formation of public opinion and policy was currently being eroded by the one-way vertical communication flows characterizing the atomized societies of the late twentieth century (Chs 22–25).

It does seem that notwithstanding the persistence of the rhetoric of 'public opinion', the realm of public exchange has been experiencing an increasing shrinkage (Elliott, 1986; Garnham, 1986). We might compare R.P. Woolf's complementary metaphor in his essay 'Beyond Tolerance' (1969: 54) of the 'plateau' as the restricted forum within which perspectives must circulate in order to be taken seriously within contemporary public media debate, and extend it to suggest that the cliffs of the plateau have grown more sheer, the mists of secrecy more dense (Demac, 1984; Downing, 1986). *Nowhere has this trend been more evident than in military and nuclear matters* (Aubrey, 1982; Gowing, 1978; Hertsgaard, 1983; Hilgartner et al., 1982; Jungk, 1979; Kemp, 1985; Williams, 1980).

Within West Germany itself, however, the ferment and turbulence of the 1960s and 1970s, and the numerous political movements of those decades (Huber, 1980; Guggenberger, 1980), pushed the attention of many political activists towards what could be *achieved* by mass communication projects and alternative media. Such groups were intent on pushing beyond a reaction of passive dismay at the seemingly inexorable encroachment of the power structure into the processes of public opinion formation (in Habermas' formulation, the 'refeudalization' of society, later to be termed the 'colonization of the life-world').

Many texts on alternative media were highly practical and specific in nature, as a list of some of the titles indicates: *Pages from Below*, *Counterpress*, *Airwave Squatters*, *What You Always Really Wanted to Know about Free Radio but Never Dared to Ask*, *The Alternative Press: Controversies, Polemics, Documents*, *Alternative Public Realm: Free Spaces for Information and Communication*. Influential in a more theoretical direction were Brecht's (1983) fragmentary but insightful meditations on the democratic potential of radio, and Enzensberger's much-translated 1969 *Kursbuch* article, 'Constituents for a Theory of Media' (1974), which urged the Left's attention to the possibilities of radio, photocopiers and other electronic media.

An influential and more theoretical text, however, was a work written on the bourgeois and proletarian public realms, *Public Realm and Experience*, by Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge (1972). Some fundamental elements of their thesis were as follows. They sought to define a series of problems and possibilities for the working class and for dissident members of the intelligentsia allied with that class, in the effort to construct a future socialist society (16): 'to set out a framework for discussion which would open up the analytical concepts of political economy downwards into the real life experiences of human beings'. The text's fundamental problematic was that of classical Marxism: how does a class 'in' itself as an economic reality become a class acting consciously 'for' itself? The authors sought a partial answer in the development of a 'counter' public realm which would enable 'the commodity of labour-power to "speak" and to develop awareness', and thus to avoid being reduced simply to the status of object in the production process (111). They instanced trade unions as the most basic institution developed to meet this need. Their longer-term objective was the construction not simply of a counter-sphere, but of an autonomous proletarian public realm in which the dissonant experience and knowledge (*Erfahrung*) of the working class could be freely voiced, exchanged, debated, developed. In turn this new public realm could be expanded to a point at which it might supplant the processes and structures of the bourgeois public realm.

Underlying this discussion is their concept of working-class experience, hemmed in from self-expression. There is a presumption implicit in their analysis which would seem to have it that there is a kind of 'real' consciousness of this experience always

struggling to well up from the proletariat. It is as though the bourgeois public realm were a cork, holding in the contents of a bottle under pressure. Lukács' 'false consciousness' problematic (1971) is not explicitly cited, except in an appendix, but seems to be lurking in the crevices. There is little question that many realities of working-class life and aspirations are excluded from major media (Downing, 1980), but a major conceptual leap exists between this recognition and the assertion of the proletariat's pristine *Erfahrung*, a leap which is theological rather than analytical. My sceptical stance does not deny exploitation, repression, political exclusion of wage-labour, but it does insist that the diverse sources and strands in working-class political awareness and its formation must be given their proper weight in analysis — a complexity which other elements in Negt and Kluge's discussion quite often illuminate. But if this 'bottled-up' image significantly distorts the actual situation, then the radical societal transformation their argument envisages can hardly be engendered so directly as their text seems to assume, via the development of an alternative or proletarian public realm. The entire process may be much more drawn out and problematic.

In general, their discussion of the working class is an uneasy amalgam of classical Marxism, observations drawn from empirical sociology, and Frankfurt School Marxist-Freudian analysis of proletarian culture and modes of life. The intelligentsia is conceived as divided into pro-bourgeois and pro-proletarian ideological tendencies (Negt and Kluge, 1972: 150–62), in an equally schematic manner.

Nonetheless, despite these conceptual simplifications, their emphasis on the centrality of exchange and debate within the process of seeking alternatives to capitalism (and sovietism) is of permanent relevance. Both Gramsci and Foucault in their different ways, not to mention Althusser, tended to underscore the prior structuring of communicative exchange by the power structure, thus implicitly downplaying the possibility of autonomous communication — though Gramsci predictably saw workers' councils, and later the revolutionary party, as the basic instrument of an emerging counter-hegemony. Negt and Kluge, however, held a less party-centric definition of the institutions of an alternative public realm. Even though they included the revolutionary party as one such institution, they also vigorously attacked the sectarianism and other flaws in their view commonly character-

izing parties of the left (111–15, 293–4, 341–55), which they argued simply reproduced the features of the official public realm in a new guise.

The possibilities for societal change engendered by the exchange of debate in the capillaries of society are a facet of the processes of political communication neglected in much of the literature on hegemony, information, discourse and legitimation, which tends to convey a one-way, frozen pattern of communicative domination. The untidiness of the legitimation process, and especially the necessity to sustain hegemony through a reconstitutive process of debate and exchange are given much more weight within the problematic of the public realm/alternative public realm — and some would argue (Forester, 1985), within the problematic of Habermas' more recent work — than within these other conceptual frameworks. Negt and Kluge's argument ends up, however, rather awkwardly straddling a schematic Lukácsian false consciousness problematic, and a seemingly Gadamerian emphasis on the process of discovery through exchange.

Thus despite the vagueness of the term 'public realm' in English, its German source-word expresses not only a variety of ideas and processes, but particularly conveys the sense of activity, movement and exchange, meanings altogether missing from the usual connotations of 'public realm' or 'public sphere'. In English the term indicates a set of boundary-lines, a space; in German, the activities, the kinesis, within that space. The closest equivalent in English would be 'public forum' or 'public stage', but both of these connote a specific publication or occasion, not the sum of such opportunities.

Elsewhere (Downing, 1984) I have discussed both the purposes and conditions of successful operation of alternative media in creating an alternative public realm, though without employing that terminology. The examples varied by country, political system, purpose and organization. Nonetheless they had certain functions in common in most cases, notably the struggle to overcome political atomization in its numerous forms and to create an autonomous sphere in which experiences, critiques and alternatives could be freely developed. In turn, in a secular, sceptical eschatology, this sphere could be taken to prefigure an imaginable social democracy (if the term may be recuperated from its historical specificity). I would propose that Negt and Kluge's concept of a proletarian public realm should be reformulated

along these lines, based on the actual experiences of organizing such media on a self-managed, democratic basis — itself a major alternative to the media hierarchies of the official public realm. This reformulation especially emphasizes the plain truth that the various alternative movements of the latter part of the twentieth century know much more clearly what they do not want (nuclear holocaust, nuclear pollution, militaristic budgets, capitalism, sovietism) than what they propose to put in their place. Since these movements eschew ‘the transcendent correctness which Leninism implies’ (Rowbotham et al., 1979: 47) as a latter-day form of authoritarian religion, only the development of debate within an alternative public realm offers any realistic chance of visualizing or constructing credible alternatives. Nor is this an exercise in utopian speculation, as anti-nuclear movement media demonstrate. Alternatives to nuclear war or the generation of nuclear waste are hardly issues which can be deferred, or left to a small set of hyperthyroid activists — or fatalistically to the nuclear powers.

In conclusion, it is appropriate to register the strange failure of analysts of the ‘alternative public realm’ to link the history of popular culture with this alternative domain. Popular culture is yet another polysemic, not to say often confused, concept, but it often denotes the production of alternative cultures from within the ranks of the general public (Burke, 1986; Eisenstein, 1986). The oppositional character of these alternatives, their level of development, the extent to which they have a symbiotic relationship with official, ruling class culture, their contemporary relation to ‘mass culture’, are all subjects for debate, but it can be recognized nonetheless that ‘popular culture’ broadly indicates the existence and productivity of an alternative public realm, stretching back many centuries, and characterizing class-divided societies. The public realm itself, as analysed by Habermas, began life as an alternative public realm. In focusing on anti-nuclear media, therefore, so far from merely squinting at a subculture, we are examining one major current instance of the dynamics of political and cultural change.

West German anti-nuclear media

West German anti-nuclear movements have had the most substantial impact, by several criteria, of any such European

movements in the 1970s and 1980s. The Dutch peace movement drew proportionately even more demonstrators, and the British unilateralist movement had a longer history of militant action, but in West Germany the enduring issue was nuclear power, which always survived the fluctuating activity of the peace movement, while being linked to it for the duration of the latter's active phase. In France, due to the extraordinary party consensus in favour of the *force de frappe* and nuclear power, anti-nuclear opposition was largely marginalized. In Italy, after a late start, political ecology and peace politics began to gather momentum from 1982, as witness large demonstrations and the appearance of important reviews such as *La nuova ecologia* and *Papir*. But the German case is particularly absorbing, presenting a scenario apparently analogous to the renowned vigour of the Social Democratic movement before 1914, but sharply contrasted both in focus and in its de-centred, anti-authoritarian organizational moulds. The emergence of the Green Party in 1979–80 on to the national stage stood as one major expression of the confluence of these varying trends.

A full analysis of the reasons for this phenomenon is impossible here, but nonetheless two elements in the situation deserve brief comment. One has already been noted, namely the focus on nuclear power. The contrast with Britain is instructive. There the number of reactors built has been small, and environmental issues have often been adopted — with what effectiveness is another question — by the Labour Party, which contrasts with the SPD's early dismissal of their import (Rüdig and Lowe, 1986). The fundamental issue in Britain has been nuclear war, with the Labour Party's adoption of unilateralism into its platform acting as a spur to mobilization (Taylor, 1983; George and Marcus, 1984). Nuclear power, however, is not an issue which admits of political management in the same way as nuclear war (via disarmament talks or other political events). The enduring problem of the disposal of nuclear waste is an especially potent index of the issue's 'longevity'.

Within West Germany this logic expressed itself with particular force. Commitment to the countryside is especially entrenched in German culture, and the two rural sites chosen for nuclear waste reprocessing — first Gorleben in the north, later Wackersdorf in the south — succeeded in attracting many previously apolitical or conservative citizens in those regions and elsewhere into direct opposition. These however were only two highly publicized cases.

Already across the country by 1979 there were thousands of local civic initiatives groups (Bürgerinitiativen) concerned with environmental matters, in numbers which nearly equalled the membership of the parliamentary parties, i.e. around two million people (Mewes, 1983: 53–4).

In symbiosis with these initiatives was a social phenomenon referred to in West Germany as 'the alternative scene', 'die alternative Szene'. Its contours were familiar enough everywhere: bookstores, bars, coffee-shops, restaurants, food-stores, clothing shops, creches, therapy and medicine groups, fitness groups, micro-theatres, video-stores, musical groups, repairers, restorers, newspapers, magazines, illegal radio stations, cable TV slots, computer networks, squatters' groups, communes urban and rural, sometimes for all comers, sometimes especially for women, an ethnic group, gay people.

Much of this culture was what would be described as professional or artisanal, roughly 'middle class' as opposed to the designation 'proletarian'. Yet its political ambivalence was no more pronounced than in the popular culture of any other period. It was a zone of multiple disagreements, not a little self-delusion and potential careerism, but also of alertness to a variety of issues not quite permitted on to the plateau (Woolf, 1969) of the official public realm. It was also a zone of interaction for a considerable variety of purposes. Its foibles were often satirized (Hübsch, 1980; Baier, 1985), not least its intermittent pretensions to be somehow 'proletarian'. In the 1980s, however, it was a way of life, partial for most, total for some.

It should be stressed that whatever its flaws, this development had moved the Left from what used to be its highly ratiocinative, university character. As Negt and Kluge had observed in the early 1970s:

It seems as though the left has a monopoly on rational discourse, the capacity for the concept, the analysis and the abstraction. The political right and its associated publications appear by contrast to have a monopoly on myths, dreams and images, i.e. to control the most important organisational means by which perspective, experience, desires, can satisfactorily reconcile themselves with each other. (Negt and Kluge, 1972: 293–4)

This tendentially middle-class public realm, then, has been the seedbed of many alternative media. A sociologically informed definition of this matrix is necessary in order to ground the concept

'alternative public realm' in West Germany, though that task cannot be pursued in any more detail here.

These then were the social and political sources of the ecology and peace movements, the latter mostly set into motion by the 1979 NATO decision to install Cruise and Pershing missiles. Both this history (Süss, 1986) and an attentive reading of opinion polls (Russett and DeLuca, 1983) combine to disprove the conservative contention that these political movements were pro-Moscow, or somehow controlled by Moscow (Vermaat, 1982).

West German anti-nuclear media: some case studies

These media fall into cross-cutting categories: a strictly anti-nuclear focus versus a general focus, and a party versus a movement basis. In terms of the media discussed here:

	<i>General</i>	<i>Anti-nuclear</i>
<i>Movement</i>	'Tageszeitung'	Atom
<i>Party</i>	The Greens' media	———

This subdivision is not watertight, however, as the Green Party exhibited many of the tendencies of a movement, and nuclear issues intertwine with such a wide range of others that the designation 'anti-nuclear' is in principle a very broad one.

The large numbers of all such media, mostly weeklies, monthlies and bi-monthlies, necessitates a selection. I have therefore taken key examples from each category, and will describe their character, their self-managed form of organization and their relationship to the anti-nuclear movement.

Die Tageszeitung (The Daily Newspaper) is a daily of the independent Marxist left which began publication in 1979 after three years of intensive debate among activists, mainly from Berlin and Frankfurt. Those involved were rooted in political currents of the 1960s and 1970s, including Marxists, feminists, ecologists, peace activists and others. They were agreed on three basic priorities: the urgent need for a paper which would not misrepresent the movements — compare the origins of *Libération* (Samuelson, 1978); that it should be national; and that it should represent the undogmatic left. By 1984 the paper was being printed in Berlin,

Frankfurt and Hanover, and had a second major editorial office in Hamburg, with small bureaus in Bochum, Bonn, Frankfurt, Cologne, Munich, Nuremberg and Stuttgart. In 1986 a Bremen edition was initiated. About a quarter of all sales were in Berlin, which despite the staff's efforts to ensure regional bases for the paper, tended to dominate editorially as well.

Energetic but sometimes inconclusive policy debates had frequently been a feature of the editorial collective, but during 1984–5 there came to be increasingly urgent debates inside the paper about its survival as a political voice. For a while the argument was that *die taz* (the paper's *Szene* name) should follow the example of *Libération* by making itself much less a paper of the left, and much more of a generalized young intellectuals' paper. This debate eventually subsided, but in September 1985, with its costs soaring and its financial survival under threat, the *taz* collective announced it had to raise subscriptions from 20,500 to 25,000 by the end of the year, or cease publication.

The response was remarkable: 29,000 subscriptions by the end of December 1985, and 32,000 by spring 1986. Interestingly, the response from journalists in major media was both helpful and energetic, with several articles in *Der Spiegel*, and visits from TV crews almost weekly. It seemed that those who worked full time in the official public realm were appreciative users of *die taz* as a welcome departure from the 'pack'. This was not an isolated instance: witness the similar sequence of events around Rome's *Il Manifesto* in 1983 (Downing, 1984: 246–8).

With the sudden onrush of funds, the paper took on more staff, expanded its format to twenty pages on weekdays and twenty-four on Saturdays, and began the Bremen edition. There were now four–five pages of national and six–seven pages of international news in each issue, an economics page and a cultural section. Yet no rigorous decisions concerning costs had been undertaken, and thus by 1987 the financial problem had essentially reproduced itself at a higher level of operation. The Bremen edition had lost a considerable amount of money, but was not the only financial haemorrhage. From March 1987, finances were stabilized through the offer of support loans at competitive interest rates and an advertising rate increase, based on a survey showing many readers to be quite affluent (more so than the *tazler*). The Bremen edition's subsidy was reduced and, not least, national daily sales rose to 60,000.

Throughout this period *die taz* offered a consistent independent forum on the left for the exchange of views on a complete political spectrum, including nuclear and peace issues. The attention given in reporting to these latter varied in quantity and quality. For example in 1984 the paper had regular coverage of peace movement issues, including almost daily reports from the European Nuclear Disarmament movement conference in Perugia, but not of ecological issues, a situation directly derived from the specialisms of its staff at the time. By 1986, however, it had an ecology specialist once more, a top-flight investigative journalist, who provided excellent coverage both of the impact of Chernobyl on West Germany — largely unavailable through major media — and of the construction of a major toxic waste dump in the DDR, close to Hamburg, which was actively contracting to waste producers all over Europe. By then, however, its staff lacked a peace/disarmament specialist, although the superpower politics dimension of this issue, and the Green Party, were regularly covered.

Die Tageszeitung, however, was the only national daily to provide regular and critical coverage on nuclear issues. That alone gave it a major place inside the alternative public realm.

The reference to frequent policy debates inside the collective leads to a brief consideration of the internal editorial structure of the newspaper. Ultimate authority lay in a committee named Friends of the Alternative Daily Newspaper. Admission to its ranks was qualified on the basis of a history of political activism and a two-thirds vote of those present at a meeting. This was the body with powers to hire and fire. After three or four absences in a row, membership would be cancelled, although with quarterly meetings, this sanction was hardly a stringent one. Within the paper itself there was a staff of about 130. All staff were paid at the same rate, although from time to time this too came up for active discussion. A strenuous effort was made to ensure an equal gender balance inside the paper, although this policy was the fruit of lengthy protests by women staffers in the early years of the paper. Debates were conducted on policy by all parties, including administrative, graphics and layout, advertising and other non-journalistic staff.

Day-to-day editorial decisions were made by a group of six called the 'Co-ordination'. Since this group was in Berlin, it gave the staff there much more practical influence over policy than in the regional offices. Beyond this group, there were two individuals

named as chief editors, but their tasks were purely to write systematic critiques of copy in the previous day's issue for discussion within the collective. Hiring and firing was not their direct responsibility, although in the former process their voice was an influential one.

The basic question of how effective such self-managed, discussion-based media can be is a large one. The experience of *die Tageszeitung* indicated that it can be fraught — indeed the term *Basisbürokratie* (grassroots bureaucracy) was coined in the West German alternative scene to denote the effective strangulation of action by interminable debate. Perhaps beyond inexperience and lack of funds, the insufficient ability to compromise, itself rooted in the utopian strain in socialist politics, tends to vitiate such projects. Rival utopias, rival mini-messiahs, supersensitivity to symbols, could all play their part in producing paralysis. Nonetheless, an eight-year history of a national daily newspaper, produced without political party funds or hierarchical authority, is its own demonstration of what is possible and effective in principle.

Atom, a bi-monthly magazine based in Göttingen, had had its genesis in the huge demonstrations against nuclear power plants in the winter of 1976–7. In its first year it printed between 2–3000 copies per issue, and by 1979 was bringing out 7500, with up to 10,000 for major events. In 1984 the numbers had fallen back to around 4000. By 1987 they had risen once more to 5–7000 copies an issue, with over 20,000 in the period after Chernobyl.

Until autumn 1984 it had been called *Atom Express*, but the new title marked its merger with another magazine entitled *atommüllzeitung* (Nuclear Waste Newspaper), itself originally named *Gorleben Aktuell* (Dateline Gorleben). This latter had begun as a bulletin of the opposition to siting a nuclear waste reprocessing plant in Gorleben in the north-east, near the DDR. Its readership was much more likely to be rural and apolitical than that of *Atom Express*, which was largely based among the left in large northern cities. The merger combined these readerships and thereby provided a forum within which they could exchange views, offering considerable scope for the reinforcement of the anti-nuclear movement.

Atom was, self-evidently, a movement forum, albeit with a strictly anti-nuclear focus. Nuclear energy questions in West Germany were not its sole fare, however. Various issues carried articles on the peace movement during its most active phase, and

on nuclear links between South Africa and the West, and between the Philippines under Marcos and the West. Its other contents were mostly a mixture of updates on nuclear news and movement activities, straightforwardly worded technical information on nuclear issues, and opinion exchange among activists. Hotly debated in this last section of the magazine during 1984–5, for instance, was the legitimacy of sabotage against physical installations as a tactic of anti-nuclear resistance.

The organization of *Atom* was much simpler than that of *die taz*. Based throughout its history in Göttingen, it was the most public project of the Göttingen Working Group Against Nuclear Energy, a leading university-based collective. (With the merger with *atommüllzeitung*, this base was extended.) The Working Group provided the magazine with many intellectual resources, although the publication's finances were self-sustaining from subscriptions and sales. The magazine's contents were also drawn from sources outside the working group. About a third were unsolicited, about another third were specifically commissioned, and the remainder was divided equally between strategy discussions and movement news and exchanges. *Atom* had excellent links with politically committed scientists and engineers around the country, and was able to call on them both to supply articles and to check out the material that sometimes arrived anonymously revealing some aspect of the nuclear industry. The checking process was to ensure that the revelation was not in actuality disinformation.

The staff consisted of about ten people, varying a little from year to year, with a couple more having a less direct involvement. Only one of these received a small stipend in order to co-ordinate production and distribution. The others were employed already. The editorial role of the working group was small. It was informed about upcoming publication plans, but had no veto power over material. The collective was fairly evenly balanced between men and women, and worked by consensus wherever possible, resorting to majority votes only on peripheral problems.

One important aspect of the history of the magazine, which acts as a salutary reminder that the concepts of 'public realm' and 'alternative public realm' may rapidly leave the conceptual level and become the subjects of power and control, was its harassment by the state. (It was not alone in this, as witness the constant banning of the Munich magazine *RadiAktiv* during 1986 and 1987 by the Bavarian *Land* government.) Two instances will suffice to

make the point. One was the infiltration of the magazine by two undercover agents, whose identity was only uncovered after a year when their fictitious original addresses were noted. The second was a dawn police raid in March 1983, with about twelve policemen for each *Atom* member. They were initially charged under Article 129A of the Criminal Code, which deals with the very serious charge of 'advertising and support for a terrorist association'. (The ground cited was their publication of a letter from a group in which it announced that it had tried, and failed, to blow up a pylon.) After a major solidarity campaign in Western Europe, the charges were altered and fines of a thousand marks each were levied — far short of the heavy penalties provided for in Article 129A.

Reasoning, exchange, communication: these activities of the alternative public realm are not immune from the exercise of power on behalf of the official public realm. Casually as some observers may dismiss alternative media, their operation in many countries has nonetheless been of close concern to the power structure. The stronger the alternative sphere, the more this concern is likely to grow.

The Greens' media

This final section, dealing as it does with a multiplicity of publications, will be concerned mainly to convey the variety and scope involved. Fundamental to the Greens' origins and philosophy (Mewes, 1983) is their de-centred organization. Thus although the parliamentary Greens issued a weekly bulletin, *Die Grünen*, which reported on their activity in the federal parliament, and the Bonn office published a monthly magazine (*Grüner Basis-Dienst*/Green Grassroots Service), the core of the Greens' communicative work was local. Their pattern integrated well with the strongly regional character of German society. A list of some of their main monthly publications demonstrates this (see Table 1).

The writer has been unable to ascertain circulation figures for these publications, but their relative size probably gives an indication of the size of the *Land* Green party organization in question, and so also some sense of how widely they might be thought to circulate. As with *die Tageszeitung*, Berlin clearly dominated, followed in this instance by Hesse and Nordrheinwest-

TABLE 1
Some regional monthly publications of the Green Party 1981-5

Title	City	Year started	Size (approx. pp.)
<i>GAL-rundbrief</i> (The Greens/Alternative List roundletter)	Berlin	1981	96
<i>Krokodil</i>	Bremen	1983	8
<i>Grüne Illustrierte Niedersachsen</i> (Lower Saxony Green Illustrated)	Hanover	1983	32
<i>Grünes Info</i>	Bielefeld (Nordrhein-Westfalen)	1981	52
<i>Grüne Rheinland-Pfälzer</i>	Ludwigshafen (Rheinland Pfalz)	1983	24
<i>Grüne Hessenzeitung</i> (Green Hesse Newspaper)	Frankfurt	1981	76
<i>Grüne Blätter</i> (Green Pages/Leaves)	Stuttgart	1981	28
<i>Grüne Zeiten</i> (Green Times)	München	1981	36

falen. Some of these, like *Krokodil*, were in a very simple newspaper format, but most were more substantial magazines. By 1984 all were being printed on recycled paper.

Thematically all were fairly similar, dealing (beyond predictable issues of peace, nuclear energy, movement/party activity) with labour and unemployment, welfare, women's issues, local and regional elections, racism, international issues, welfare, media and animal protection, among other topics. The treatment was varied, taking the form of interviews, autobiographical statements, analytical articles and thinkpieces, usually with a good sprinkling of photographs and cartoons through the text. The language in most cases was straightforward, if not always striking. Each was edited by a collective, though the details of its organization in each case were not known to the writer. Contributors were drawn from the collective but also from many activists and readers, not necessarily members of the Green Party.

Collectively these constituted a major volume of communicative activity. They were joined, moreover, by still other monthly publications close to or actually part of the Green movement, such

as *Stachel* (Thorn) in Berlin, *Kommune* in Frankfurt, *Konkret* in Hamburg and *Alternative Kommunalpolitik* in Bielefeld. With the exception of *Stachel*, the other three were heirs to the newspapers of three Maoist sects of the 1970s, which had formally or effectively moved into the area of Green politics in the early 1980s. Their pages were structured as a forum, not in the newspaper mode of the Marxist–Leninist sect. Their contents, although focusing heavily on nuclear issues, probably also touched on a wider range of political topics than the general run of Green publications. The difference seemed one of emphasis, rather than of substance.

Conclusions

It is evident that anti-nuclear movement media constituted a more vigorous alternative public realm in West Germany than other large Western European nations. (This article has, too, only focused on print media — there were important examples of film and radio anti-nuclear media as well.) In Britain, where there were but two national magazines (*Sanity* and the *END Journal*), and these centred almost exclusively on peace and disarmament topics — though a shift was becoming discernible by the end of 1986 in this respect — there was nothing comparable. This is not a judgement on the short-term political impact of the movements or their media in these countries. It could be seriously argued, however, that *over the longer term* an oppositional political culture was in the process of being much better nourished in West Germany than in Britain, and that this nourishment was not just a function of more widely circulating counter-information, but equally or even more so because of the experience of exchange inside a flourishing alternative public realm.

The utility of this concept, as was emphasized earlier, lies in its focus upon debate and exchange as the warp and weft of political change. Despite the rather arid flavour of the term as translated into English, it is to be hoped that this instance of popular oppositional culture, based on life-and-death nuclear issues, will serve to underscore the value of the term within debates on media and their cultural and political potential. Conceptualizing media simply as dominating agents of a kind of internal colonialism represents a crucial failure of perspective.

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