Consensual NIMBYs, Contentious NIABYs: Explaining Contrasting Forms of Farmers GMO Opposition in Austria and France

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Abstract

This article contrasts forms of farmers' resistance to genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in Austria and France. While Austrian farmers take a back seat in public opposition to GMOs, Austria's national GMO policy is designed to protect farmers, particularly organic farmers, by banning the unwanted technology. It thus mitigates both public controversy and the potential framing of the GMO issue which might go beyond a merely defensive 'not in my back yard' (NIMBY) rationale. French farmers' protest, by contrast, is highly argumentative and is very much shaped by farmers' protests. Its leading voice is the farmers' union *Confédération Paysanne* and its spokesman José Bové, who employ spectacular protest strategies involving the destruction of GMO fields and acts of civil disobedience and figure prominently in the anti-globalisation movement. In discussing the reasons for these differences, the analysis examines two approaches to political opportunity structures: a general and a dynamic, policy-specific approach.

Introduction

Farmers fighting genetically modified organisms (GMOs) are a specific group in the wide gamut of actors in the European anti-GMO movement but, in general, they are not the most influential among them. Yet their role as anti-GMO actors is worth empirical inspection. In a first approximation, one could regard rural opposition to GMOs as a defensive reaction to the downside of technological globalisation. Gains in efficiency through the global spread of agricultural technologies often threaten vulnerable groups who are unable to compete with big producers employing these technologies. To look into the ways in which small, resource-poor farmers oppose agro-biotechnology is therefore a way to explore modes of reaction to the transformations brought about by technological modernisation and globalisation by those who are negatively affected by these transformations.

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What shapes does this resistance take? And what factors shape resistance strategies? The following account sheds light on these questions by comparing two countries, Austria and France, where rural opposition to GMOs has had an important influence on national anti-GMO policies. These countries lend themselves to comparison as they converge in important respects but also differ greatly in others. Both countries have undergone heated public controversies over GMOs, and are marked by a hostile public opinion and, as a consequence, they pursue controversial anti-GMO policies in the EU. And in both countries certain groups of farmers play a crucial part in public discourse and biotechnology policy. Yet, it is in this respect these countries also differ. While Austria runs a consensual and state-supported 'not-in-my-back-yard' (NIMBY) policy designed to protect the interests of organic farmers by banning GMOs from national soil, in France a farmers' association, the *Confédération Paysanne*, (CP), became the driving force of opposition to biotechnology, employing a highly contentious protest strategy marked by civil disobedience and media-savvy activism while pursuing a global vision of an alternative agriculture, thus aiming for a 'not in anybody's back yard' (NIABY) world.[1]

By juxtaposing these two very different types of involvement by farmers in national GMO controversies and policies, respectively, this article both highlights the significance of national contexts in bringing about reactions to technological modernisation and globalisation and suggests an explanation for the variations observed in farmers' GMO protest:.The 'political opportunity structure' (POS) (Kriesi 2004, DellaPorta and Diani 2006, ch. 8) approach suggests that the structures of the surrounding political environment shape the claims, tactics and outcomes of social movements. The POS approach has to be employed with caution, however. The high currency it has gained in recent years has brought about a loss of clarity concerning both dependent and independent variables. (Meyer 2004) In order not to add to conceptual confusion we need to be specific as to the use we make of the POS concept and the particular aspects of movement behaviour and policy response we seek to explain.

The argument and empirical exposition proceed as follows. As the multilevel character of the European anti-GMO movement has a bearing on processes in national arenas, an introductory sketch of the European anti-GMO movement is first given. This is followed by the accounts of farmers' resistance in Austria and France. In the concluding section we draw an analytical comparison of the national cases and attempt to explain observed differences by falling back on the POS concept. Because of the problems outlined above this will require a brief review of the current debate on POS and a specification of the particular use we make of the concept.

Various empirical materials pertinent to the question outlined above enter the analysis, such as accounts of the engagement of movement actors, in particular farmers, in public arenas, and the accounts of national policy contexts drawing on policy documents and media materials. Furthermore, the analysis draws on a series of expert interviews that were undertaken in 2005 and 2006 in the course of research in Austria, France, Italy and Belgium. Where the analysis refers to the long-term evolution of the European biotechnology policy, it draws on a review of available literature on past public debates.

The European anti-GMO movement

The European anti-GMO movement started at the convergence of two critical events in 1996: the bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) crisis and the arrival of the first US imports of unlabelled, genetically modified (GM) corn and soybeans in European ports. The resulting anti-GMO movement spread unevenly across national publics. Initial controversies occurred in Austria, Greece and Ireland in 1996 and 1997. In 1999 public clashes followed in France, the UK, Belgium and Italy (Seifert 2006a, 2008). A growing number of national governments adopted GMO-aversive policies that collided with EU law to the extent that they undermined harmonisation goals.[2] The hardest blow to the EU's GMO approval system came in summer, 1999, when an alliance of five countries – France, Greece, Denmark, Italy and Luxembourg – declared it was blocking all further approvals until the completion of the then ongoing amendment of the EU regulatory framework.[3] The resulting predicament for the EU's biotechnology policy was aggravated by the need to comply with World Trade Organisation (WTO) law that rules out moratoria unsupported by scientific evidence. Even though, in August 2003, the USA, together with Canada and Argentina, took legal action against the political moratorium, the blockade lasted to May 2004, when the European Commission finally issued the first approval of a GM maize variety on the legal basis of the revised regulation.

The driving forces of this powerful movement, as we have seen, were recalcitrant member states which undermined the EU approval process and pushed the Commission to strengthen regulatory policies. But national governments do not act in a social vacuum. In fact, each of these countries had undergone intense public controversy. The movement driving these debates is complex and heterogeneous and entails groups as diverse as environmentalist non-governmental organisations (NGOs), consumer associations and anti-globalisation activists. These groups pursued various goals, employd a mix of tactics, and varied in geographical reach. While many are rooted in their local constituencies, transnational NGOs typically masterminded the campaigns. Movement actors also varied in weight. In spite of the primacy of mobilisation work on the (national) ground transnational NGOs figure most prominently, namely Greenpeace International and Friends of the Earth Europe (FoEE), whose 'activity overshadows that of any other group' (Ansell *et al.* 2006, p. 103).

What part did farmers play in the European anti-GMO movement? In most countries certain groups representing small farmers or specialised producers, are part of national anti-GMO advocacy coalitions. The anti-GMO commitment of these groups contrasts with the low profile kept by the mainstream farmer lobbies representing middle-sized and big farmers. This fits the expectation that small and disadvantaged farmers tend to fight GMOs, while most middle-range and well-to-do producers do not stand up against a technology that is potentially beneficial to them. Organic farmers are opposed to agro-biotechnology for specific reasons. In socioeconomic terms organic farmers are not necessarily disadvantaged but, since EU regulations on organic products rule out the use of GMOs, organic farmers are legally bound to ban genetic engineering from their production processes.[4] GMO cultivation by neighbouring farmers or the unnoticeable infiltration of conventional crop seed by GM seed could lead to the contamination, and thus the devaluation, of organic produce. For

organic farmers opposition to GMOs constitutes a response to a factual socioeconomic threat, that is, however, the effect of their special legal and symbolic status.

In general, however, farmers' organisations were not at the forefront of the anti-GMO movement as, in most EU countries, this position was taken by local chapters of transnational NGOs. The French controversy, which will be outlined in the second of the two following sections, thus, constitutes an exceptional case. The comparative approach and the subsequent analysis of national contexts might help to grasp the reasons for this exceptional development.

Austria

In the European anti-GMO movement Austria stands out. It is among the most vigorous opponents of biotechnology in the EU while, domestically, it takes pains to shield its own people from the introduction of GM crops. The origin of this stance goes back to the mid-1990s, when a first, illegally conducted, field trial caused intense anti-GMO mobilisation. This resulted in a popular initiative in April 1997 that brought a resounding victory to GMO opponents. This mobilisation had been supported by the powerful Austrian tabloid *Neue Kronen Zeitung* (NKZ), which has maintained its anti-GMO stance ever since. Public opinion, as evinced by countless opinion surveys, is staunchly anti-GMO to such a degree that nowadays virtually no public decision-maker dares to speak out in favour of this agricultural technology.

The diagram in Figure 1 is based on an online keyword search in the daily NKZ. The annual frequency of articles marked by the keyword '*Gentechnik'* (gene technology) reflects the intensity of the GMO debate, as the term is closely linked to the political GMO debate. Subselections by further keywords reflect the salience of particular anti-GMO actors: Greenpeace, Global 2000, 'Biobauern' (organic farmers) and Oberösterreich (Upper Austria). Figure 1 sketches the evolution of the Austrian public

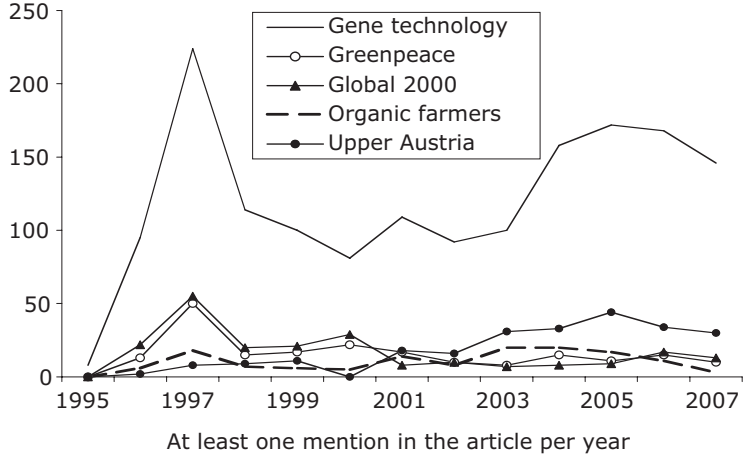

Figure 1: *The Austrian GMO controversy from 1995 to 2007*

debate over 13 years. Reflecting the initial public outrage and the popular initiative, reporting on this topic soared in 1996 and 1997. It then declined somewhat but has remained at high levels ever since, not displaying a relative low before 2000, which was soon followed by a new upswing in later years. Ups and downs in media intensity reflect stages in the policy process. 1996 and 1997 are the years of controversy, in the wake of which a virtual ban on agricultural GMOs, holding for any GMO released into the environment, even if it is intended for experimental purposes, became more or less official government policy.

The policy is a state-run NIMBY approach (Seifert 2008). Any government responsible for the first GMO release 'in our back yard' would suffer damaging losses in popular support. Therefore, everything is done to prevent the cultivation of GMOs on Austrian soil to 'protect' Austria from the alleged dangers of agro-biotechnology. Indeed, in spite of some attempts made by public research institutes, to date not even GMO releases for scientific purposes have been conducted.[5] As to growing GMO commercially, Austria seeks 'protection' through its safeguard bans. Additionally, in recent years Austria resorted to a further strategy to prevent GMO cultivation by taking advantage of the EU's crystallising coexistence policy and setting up legal regimes at the regional level which, in theory, are in line with the EU's liberal demands but in practice prohibit it (Seifert 2006b). In a 2002, the Austrian province of Upper Austria even issued a regional GMO ban unilaterally. This measure was rejected by the European Commission, whereupon the region appealed to the European Court of Justice. Although the measure was finally turned down, the initiative was widely applauded by the public and the NKZ, respectively (Figure 1).

The Austrian NIMBY policy is based on virtually unanimous political consensus. Both the government and the parliamentary opposition conspicuously concur in denouncing agro-biotechnology. In spite of some ignition of parliamentary disputes on the subject at times, there is, at best, a minor division on this matter between political parties. The same holds for the relationship of civic anti-GMO groups and the state. While, in the campaigning phase, the NGOs, most visibly Greenpeace and Global 2000, allied with the NKZ (Figure 1) in ostentatiously pressurising government to adopt an ever more restrictive GMO policy, today these NGOs have become important state partners in setting up European anti-GMO strategies. A former prominent Global 2000 activist has, for instance, embarked on a successful political career in the now ruling Social Democratic Party (SPÖ). Another pivotal activist from the same NGO works as independent consultant for state agencies by producing expert opinions that are critical of agro-biotechnology. His scientific expertise has played a key role in Upper Austria's legal defence of its total ban on GMOs (Seifert 2006b).

The part played by the farmers in Austria's highly integrated, consensual NIMBY policy is significant, although the farmers themselves keep a low profile in the public arena. Whereas the international environmental NGOs, Greenpeace and Global 2000,[6] were vocal in the campaigning phase, organic farmers never became main voices in the public and hardly ever staged a public protest (Figure 1). Nevertheless, the role of organic farming is the key to Austria's agro-biotechnology policy. As organic farmers are bound to refrain by law from agro-biotechnology, they are the main beneficiaries of a national policy that seeks to make the whole country a

GMO-free zone. The prominence of organic farming shows most clearly in the Austrian coexistence policy. Intended by the Commission to institute the orderly parallel development of GM and non-GM production, Austria has turned coexistence into an instrument to pre-empt GMO cultivation. With over 11 per cent of farmers embracing this production type, the density of organic farmers is very high. The separation distances between organic and GM farms set to prevent the intermingling of crops, therefore, enormously expand the area that is ineligible for GMO cultivation. Combined with overly bureaucratic hurdles and local, often state-sponsored 'GM free' campaigns, this makes for a sufficiently prohibitive environment for agro-biotechnology (interview, Seifert, 2006b).

While the major cause of Austria's NIMBY policy is the genetic technology's unpopularity with the Austrian public and its mouthpiece, the NKZ, the policy is also organised around the preferences of organic farmers. This approach is not self-evident, as the prioritisation of a minority is usually detrimental to the majority. In fact, the *Österreichische Bergbauernvereinigung* (Austrian Association of Mountain Farmers; ÖBV), representing farmers' interests, and the major farmers lobbies – the *Bauernbund* (the Farmers Union), the *Landwirtschaftskammer* (the Chamber of Agriculture), and the *Präsidentenkonferenz der Landwirtschaftskammer* (the Conference of the Presidents of the Chamber of Agriculture)[7] – for a time had to struggle to arrive at a workable position balancing the interests of organic and conventional farmers with their stake in preserving the option to resort to GMOs in the remote future. Meanwhile, however, even this claim has vanished and Austrian agriculture renounces agro-biotechnology in general.

Although the key role held by organic farming in Austria's NIMBY policy goes hand in hand with a very low level of argumentation, this is not to say that critical farmer groups had no impact on the Austrian anti-GMO movement. The ÖBV, for instance, was a member of the organising board of the anti-GMO public initiative. In fact, it was the ÖBV who put forward the idea of a plebiscite in 1995, months before its most visible protagonists took it up. At this time the suggestion was dropped by most of the other critical groups and the ÖBV lacked the public relations machinery required to run a campaign by itself. Only later, when the NKZ stepped in and created the opportunity for a successful mobilisation, did the other organisations jump on the bandwagon to employ their well-tried public relations strategies (interview with ÖBV on 18 May 2005).

This illustrates the role of small or organic farmers in the Austrian GMO controversy. Rather than staging media-savvy protests on their own, they acted through small, progressive NGOs or even single experts who, while taking the backseat in campaigning, identify critical junctures in the political process, set out strategies, invest policy with scientific expertise and draw on international networks. Thus, in contrast to the leading farmers' representatives, the ÖBV is internationalist in outlook and a member of progressive, international farmers' organisations such as the *Coordination Paysanne Europeenne* (CPE) and the international peasant organisation *Vía Campesina*. (In fact, the ÖBV was a founding member of the CPE in 1974 [interview]). This tiny Austrian NGO with 300 odd members holds a much broader perspective than the big institutional actors supporting the national NIMBY policy. Another long-standing, influential anti-GMO actor is an expert from a public think tank

dedicated to mountain and organic farmers, the *Bundesanstalt für Bergbauernfragen* (Federal Agency for Less Favoured and Mountainous Areas). This expert has figured as major critic of agro-biotechnology in pertinent policy debates since the early 1990s. Steadily building up critical expertise, in the late 1990s he laid the ground for Austria's later restrictive coexistence policy with a study on GM-free zones (Hoppichler 2000).[8]

In brief, the influence of farmers on the Austrian anti-GMO movement permeates the political scene discreetly though scientific expertise and a small but masterminding NGO. Their conceptual background work, along with their low profile in the media arena, and a receptive agricultural policy prioritising organic farming created a situation that both mitigates and obfuscates tensions in the field of agricultural policy. To this is added the unrivalled hegemony of the ÖVP, the *Bauernbund* and the *Landwirtschaftskammer* in this field.[9] In brief, the Austrian NIMBY policy is not the result of power struggles but a consequence both of biotechnology's extreme unpopularity and the fact that this policy goes well with the 'greening' of Austria's agricultural policy in the context of European integration.

France

Like Austria, France supported the European moratorium on GMO-approvals and defended national safeguard bans. And like in Austria, this recalcitrant position reflects hostile public opinion. The way, however, this opinion materialised in the course of a public controversy differs in the two countries: In France the controversy first climaxed in summer 1999 – two years later than in Austria; and – unlike Austria, where local chapters of international NGOs like Greenpeace and FoEE shaped the framing process – in France the farmers association CP and its spokesman José Bové took centre stage. Through these, the GMO discourse took on a dimension going far beyond the national backyard. Rather, GMOs became the symbols of a wider critique of modern state and global capitalism (Seifert 2008). To understand why critical French discourse took this NIABY-turn we will first give a sketch of the CP and José Bové and, subsequently, illustrate their role in the French anti-GMO movement.

The Confédération Paysanne (CP)

The CP was founded in 1987 as a fusion of two peripheral farmer associations on the radical left, both of which had emerged from the *Paysans-Travailleurs* founded by the charismatic peasant leader Bernard Lambert in 1972. Both groups were split-offs from the hegemonic, conservative *Fédération nationale des syndicats d'exploitants agricoles* (FNSEA), that internally muted criticism from the discontented farmers of western and southern France. The two groups thus merged to augment their capacity to challenge the dominant FNSEA that, in turn, marginalised the new contenders (Martin 2005).

The key episode in the emergence of the new left, later to converge into the CP, was the struggle for the Larzac, – a limestone plateau in the southern Massif Central where, in 1971, farmers had begun non-violent protests to block the expansion of a military base. The conflict lasted until 1981, when François Mitterrand dropped the

plan. This episode, with its enormous waves of solidarity among farmers rallying in the Larzac was the formative period of the CP, which developed a peculiar set of principles inspired by critical, anarchist and ecological thinking: a defence of small-scale, sustainable agriculture; a rejection of the predatory competition prevalent in the farming sector and a denunciation of the cultural homogenisation sweeping in with liberal globalisation. Unusually for an agricultural lobby, the CP entertains an internationalist vision advocating solidarity among farmers, workers and consumers and condemning the liberalisation of global agro-markets as well as EU and US agro-subsidisation. Correspondingly, the CP helped to built up an international network of NGOs committed to the same objectives. In Europe this was the CPE, and at global scale the smallholders' organisation *Vía Campesina*.

José Bové

José Bové is a founding member of the CP but he is by no means a typical farmer. Born in 1953 to parents who are both agricultural scientists, he spent most of his childhood in the USA and most of his teens in Paris, which was at the time vibrating with revolutionary ideas. There he developed pacifistic and anarchistic leanings that led him to refuse the draft and go underground in the countryside. His anti-militaristic commitment brought him and his wife Alice to the huge rallies of the Larzac, where the couple took possession of a deserted farm, initially to prevent the army from seizing the land, later to establish the profitable production of Roquefort cheese. José Bové never gave up his engagement in non-violent ecological, anti-nuclear and anti-colonial activism, but it was not before summer 1999 that he gained prominence as a key figure of the CP.

Role in the French GMO debate

The actors involved in the French anti-GMO struggle kept a low profile in the initial phases. It was not until early 1997 that the CP adopted an outspoken anti-GMO stance (CP 1997). Greenpeace France, by contrast, had built up critical expertise on agro-biotechnology since the early 1990s to launch a first anti-GMO campaign in 1996.[10] But while Greenpeace France achieved only moderate press coverage, it was the opposing, contradictory government decisions that gradually raised public awareness in 1997.

In 1998 the CP embarked on a mobilisation strategy that it had successfully established in preceding protest struggles and that, in the long run, made it the opinion leader on GMOs. In January 1998 a group of CP activists entered a Novartis warehouse in Nérac to destroy a store of GM maize seed. When the three activists responsible – René Riesel, José Bové and Francis Roux – were convicted with a suspended sentence, the CP brought together a selection of biotechnology critics to turn the court hearing into a public trial against GMOs.[11] In summer 1999 the CP scored its next spectacular coup. On 2 June in the village of Gaudiès CP members and a group of South Indian peasant farmers touring Europe to protest against the G8 meeting first destroyed test fields planted with GM colza in a public research facility and later, again led by René Riesel and José Bové, destroyed transgenic rice plantlets

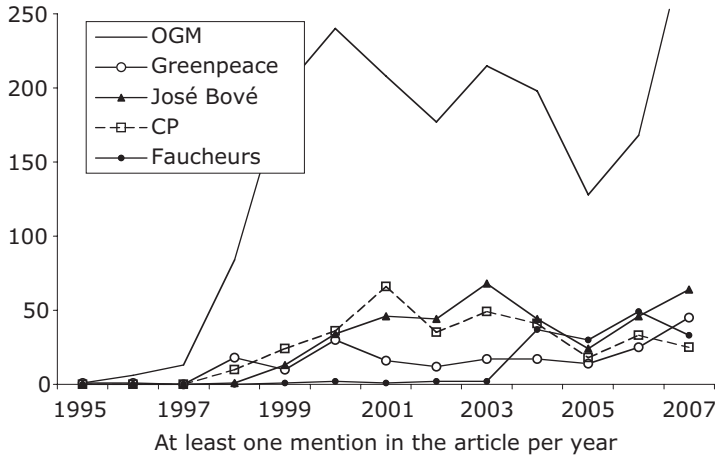

Figure 2: *The French GMO controversy from 1995 to 2007*

in a greenhouse. With this series of direct actions in the company of Indian activists, the CP extended its critique of GMOs beyond a purely ecological and national frame to denounce the complicity of corporate interest and public research at an internationalist scale. Thus did the NIABY critique of GMOs take shape.

The breakthrough came a month later in the wake of the 'Millau McDonald affair'. On 12 August 1999, José Bové and about a hundred CP activists dismantled a McDonald's store under construction in the town of Millau. What began as a routine protest against WTO-backed US punitive tariffs on French Roquefort cheese aroused the public ire when Bové was arrested and kept in custody for several weeks. Suddenly Bové was propelled into nationwide celebrity and turned out to be a charismatic communicator in staging the CP's radical critique of industrial agriculture, liberal globalisation and cultural homogenisation[12] (see Figure 2). However, it was not only in France that Bové was 'the right man at the right time'. He also established himself as the figurehead of the rising international anti-globalisation movement by staging his criticism amid the widely televised protest storm in Seattle (Heller 2002, pp. 29–33).[13] Bové's sudden prominence made him the leading GMO critic in France, which allowed him to establish a new framing. From having been seen merely as hazardous life forms, GMOs were transformed into symbols of global capitalism and cultural homogenisation forced upon citizens around the world just like McDonald's fast food (Heller 2002).

Figure 2 is based on an keyword search in the online archives of *Le Monde*. Frequency counts of articles using the keyword 'OGM' (*Organisme Génétiquement Modifié*) reflect the intensity of French GMO debates. Additional keywords mirror the prominence of various anti-GMO actors in this debate: Greenpeace France, José Bové, CP and, emerging in 2004, the *faucheurs volontaires*. The difference in timing between the French and the Austrian anti-GMO evolution is obvious. From 1997, issue salience builds up to climax in 2000, three years later than in Austria. In 1999 the

arrival of José Bové and the CP on the scene clearly outshone Greenpeace in the following years.

Bové never lost his popularity after the Millau breakthrough, and he even augmented it over the years to shape public debate on GMOs (Figure 2). The principal tactic employed to stay in public focus was destroying GMO fields, hitting test sites and commercial plantations alike.[14] What most strongly aroused debate was the series of spectacular court trials and, at times, prison sentences. Since only instigators were usually held accountable, José Bové frequently stood trial and was fined or given a prison sentence.[15] While Bové insisted on the political and symbolic character of the field destructions, the prosecution denounced them as malicious injury of property. Fervent debates turned on the disputed legitimacy of the jail sentences imposed on the syndicate leader and prompted waves of solidarity reaching out far beyond France's ecologist and radical left into the socialist and conservative camp and making it extremely difficult for the state to impose strict sanctions. A tacit game of provocative civil disobedience and mitigated juridical counteraction unfolded. On the one hand, Bové's perpetrations were too public to go unpunished, but on the other, the prosecution of a folk hero is likely to backfire on the authorities. Bové, in turn, exploited this ambiguity in a tactical game of provocation, applause, mitigated state repression and blame.

Over the years thousands of activists followed suit. At the meeting 'Larzac 2003' in August 2003 – a 30 year-jubilee of the protest in the 1970s that became a milestone of the French *altermondialisme* movement (Agrikiolansky *et al*. 2005) – Bové called on his followers to join the *faucheurs volontaires*, an activist network dedicated to ransacking GMO plots. Immediately, hundreds of sympathisers signed up and, by 2008, the *faucheurs* had grown to about 7,000 members.[16] Ensuing field destructions entailed a range of reactions. In rare cases they led to direct confrontation with the police, counterdemonstrations by farmers defending their right to grow GMOs and, in extreme cases, an encounter with a farmer armed with a gun and the suicide of a farmer. Most important, again, is the series of judicial proceedings prompted by the actions; since Larzac 2003, at least 17 field operations conducted by the *faucheurs* led to court trials, some of which received considerable media attention and provided a stage to spread the GMO adversaries' issue, framing and triggering general debates on GMOs, civil disobedience and the legitimacy of state repression (see Figure 2).

Beyond challenging state authority, peasant opposition to GMOs, driven by the CP and José Bové, was marked by a deliberate policy of creating alliances. José Bové soon became the figurehead of the nascent *altermondialist* movement, which made him an appealing ally for political parties on the left and the extreme left, particularly the French Greens. Yet Bové stressed the CP's identity as movement actor and its distance from party politics that he found too constraining and too ready to make compromises.[17]

Overall, GMO criticism is not targeted at GMOs alone. For their challengers, their work with GMOs is merely a token of a more general social critique. By attacking GMOs, they also attack the socioeconomic order that goes along with the technology: cultural homogenisation, corporate power, neoliberal globalisation and the state's complicity in it. Linked to this broader ideological agenda is, atypically for a farmers' lobby, the CP's internationalist outlook: its advocacy of North–South solidarity, its

rejection of global market integration and its support of small farmers and peasants around the world.[18] Seen in this context, French GMO opposition is diametrically opposed to the Austrian NIMBY approach, which shuts out the unwanted intruder from the national backyard. Instead it envisions a NIABY world, banning GMOs – and the social ills that come with them – from anybody's precincts, particularly those in the developing world.

Discussion

This article started out on the assumption that vulnerable farmers have reasons to oppose agricultural biotechnology that is likely to exacerbate the competitive pressures that push them further to the margins. Although our national cases confirm the ensuing proposition that agricultural biotechnology will meet with farmers' resistance, the comparison stresses the crucial role of national contexts in the way in which resistance is played out. Apparently, forms of resistance by those who are affected by technological globalisation do not conform to a simple, universal stimulus–response model, but vary with the national context.

Political opportunity structures (POS)

How do we explain this variation? As pointed out, the POS approach considers characteristics of the political context to be the key for explaining why a given social movement adopts specific strategies, forges particular alliances and reverberates with public policy. However, explaining empirical findings by a concept as widely used and discussed as POS has a disadvantage, as its very popularity has generated a great number of interpretations of what POS actually are and how they impact on movements' strategies, composition and outcomes. This results in a lack of coherence, if not confusion, in research on POS. In a critical review of the concept David Meyer notes:

> The extent of variation in both concept and use is both understandable and extremely frustrating. It is understandable because different things are relevant to different movements, and to answering different questions. It is frustrating because analysts talk past each other in answering their own questions, missing opportunities to build larger understanding. Further, because significant contextual factors are likely to affect various outcomes differently, it is important to separate and specify the different dependent variables that political opportunities are supposed to explain. (Martin 2005, p. 135, see also Della Porta and Diani 2006, p. 17)

Taking these propositions seriously we therefore, first, clarify which aspects of the respective anti-GMO movements we are seeking to explain and, secondly, assess the merits of two notions of POS that are both grounded in the literature. This should allow us to improve our understanding of the observed differences while contributing to the ongoing conceptual debate on POS.

The explanandum is the observed differences in movement mobilisation. The rural GMO opposition in France is highly contentious, engaging in persistent vandalism and challenges to state authority. In Austria, oppositional farmers who are

organic farmers for the most part, display hardly any opposition. Rural activists in France are key actors in an international anti-globalisation network; but the Austrian movement, particularly in its rural manifestations, has became the protégée of a consensual, state-run policy of national seclusion. It is these diverging patterns of rural actors' behaviours we seek to explain. This implies that we restrict the range of possible dependent variables. We do not, for example, attempt to explain – at least not to start with – the French and Austrian anti-GMO movements in their entirety, nor governments' readiness to take up protest claims. We do, however, consider these aspects as contextual factors relating to our more specific question.

As explanatory candidates we examine two approaches to POS, both of which are grounded in theory: a general and a dynamic, policy-specific concept. These two approaches are not necessarily mutually exclusive: they might also be complementary. The general concept builds on the original studies that introduced POS (e.g. Kitschelt 1986). As explanatory variables it chiefly focuses on the openness and closure of political systems, theorising that the system's openness is a function of the chances of access it offers to challengers. While territorial decentralisation and functional dispersion of power increase these chances, strong executives and well-co-ordinated, professional administrations diminish them (DellaPorta and Diani 2006, pp. 202–206). Refinements of the concept added informal independent variables, such as prevailing strategies and configurations of power (Kriesi 1995; Kriesi *et al.* 1995). 'Prevailing strategies with respect to challengers are either exclusive (repressive, confrontative, polarising) or integrative (facilitative, co-operative, assimilative)' (Kriesi 1995, pp. 173–174). The configuration of power among political elites, such as political parties or major interest groups, refers to the distribution of power among elite subgroups and the relations between them (Kriesi 1995, pp. 179–192). Both prevailing strategies and configurations of power are deeply embedded in the political tradition, and thus constitute rather stable features of the political context.

The alternative to this general notion, a dynamic, policy-specific approach, regards POS as specific to certain policy fields and, as policies are frequently subject to change, rather volatile. It is mostly scholars who study the long-term development of movements such as public policy or shifting alignments, who focus on these aspects (Meyer 2004, pp. 134–135). Research in recent years also stresses the variation of POS specific to certain policy fields depending on the way that POS shape actors' collective identities (Berclaz and Guigni 2005), or pose a threat to vital state interests (Kriesi *et al.* 1995, ch. 4). What these approaches have in common is their critique of the general notion that POS affect all social movements in a similar fashion. Instead, they suggest that POS vary across issue fields and among types of collective actors.

General POS

Certain expectations follow from the general POS approach. Closed, exclusionary systems marked by centralised states, strong executives, integrated, effective bureaucracies, monolithic elites and prevailing strategies of exclusion that either inhibit protest movements or provoke these movements into adopting radical strategies. Open, facilitative systems, such as federal states with a marked division of power, weak executives and administrations and a weak propensity to turn to repression

provide movements with many points of access. Under the latter conditions movements will mobilise frequently, while radicalisation and confrontational strategies will be rare.

The classification of France according to this scheme is straightforward. Among western democracies, with its unitary state, technocratic administration, all-powerful executive, and elitist political culture France is the prototype of a closed, exclusionary system. Indeed, the expectation that French protest movements will be either quelled by repression or resort to confrontational repertoires of action has been confirmed in a number of cases (Kitschelt 1986, Jasper 1988, Kriesi *et al*. 1995). However, while, at first glance, the French anti-GMO movement seems to present yet another verification of this, contradictions emerge at closer inspection. Thus, the emergence of a radical protest movement is at odds with the fact that the French government was by no means unresponsive to critical claims. In fact, by ushering in a precautionary approach already in 1997 the French government even preceded public opposition. It was the inconsistent decision of the Juppé government to withhold the authorisation of a GM maize variety beforehand approved by EU procedures that first raised public awareness long before Jose Bové's coup in Millau. The ensuing Jospin government deepened this precautionary course by staging a '*conférence citoyenne*,' the first consensus conference on agro-biotechnology in summer 1998, granting it unusual public salience for the key role it ought to play in a general precautionary reorientation (Marris and Joly 1999). Finally, Green Party Minister of the Environment Dominque Voynet figured as staunch defender of the precautionary approach both at the national and the European level. We recall that it was a French-sponsored declaration that called for a moratorium on GMO approvals at the EU Council of Ministers in June 1999, one month before Bové's public breakthrough. Given the French government's precautionary and participatory turn (signalling a reconsideration of prevailing exclusionary strategies), and the presence of potential movement allies such as Voynet (a shift in alignments), the occurrence of a highly confrontational anti-GMO movement does not seem to be satisfactorily explained by a general POS approach. Nor does the fact that rural actors became leading activists in this movement.

Austria's classification in relation to a general POS scheme is less clear-cut. Firstly, it combines elements of closure and exclusion with those of openness and integration in a peculiar manner. Secondly, the POS evolved significantly in the course of the past two decades. Marked elements of closure and exclusion are a relatively weak legislative, an unapproachable bureaucracy with two dominant parties – social democrats and conservatives – who typically govern consecutively or in grand coalition, and the prevailing strategies of the political elites. Coupled with a strong avoidance of open conflict, these are integrative as far as class interests are concerned, but exclusionary regarding claims beyond a neo-corporatist rationale. Yet, it is obvious that Austria offers a more open and integrative set of POS than France. As a federal state Austria provides a greater number of local access points, and proportional representation in elections ensures that, for the past 20 years, four parties were present in the national Parliament.[19] Among them are the Greens – the Green Alternative (*Die Grünen – Die Grüne Alternative*) who figure as allies of ecological movements and a number of liberal protest movements.

Furthermore, Austria's POS has developed significantly through past protest struggles, in particular during the anti-nuclear and environmental movements, which, in the late 1970s and 1980s scored two historic victories against government projects. In 1978, after a broad public mobilisation, a referendum resulted in the rejection of a nuclear power plant in Zwentendorf. In 1984 and 1985, mass demonstrations and a popular initiative forced government to surrender plans for a hydropower plant in Hainburg (Gottweis 1997). Two factors decisively contributed to these successes: direct democracy procedures and public opinion. Regarding the latter aspect it is important to stress that, in the Hainburg episode, the NKZ became a pivotal ally by establishing itself as 'the voice of the people'.

The influence the NKZ in Austria's political culture can hardly be overestimated. Observers agree that the tabloid constitutes the most significant constraint on government beyond parliamentary opposition. It is difficult and risky for any political actor to pursue a policy that the NKZ disapproves of. This pertains to the environmental arena in particular. Ever since Hainburg the NKZ has remained sympathetic to environmentalist demands. It is also worth noting that this support is not unconditional. The conservative, at times xenophobic NKZ is at odds with the progressive Greens and, thus tends to ignore them in environmental disputes and, instead, stages civil society groups as key actors. The expectation from this peculiar set of Austrian POS is that an eventual anti-GMO movement will ally with regional governments and the parliamentary Greens and, more importantly, will draw on the procedures of direct democracy and seek the support of the NKZ. The resulting popular movement will gain high public salience without having recourse to confrontational or radical strategies. As we have seen, this expectation has been met. The regional government of Upper Austria (albeit at a late stage) became an important movement ally, as did the Greens. The NKZ figured as the major campaigning tabloid in the Austrian GMO controversy, allied with Greenpeace and Global 2000 while ignoring the Greens, and the popular initiative in April 1997 brought the mobilisation to its climax.

Thus, the general POS model explains the key features of the anti-GMO movement's mobilisation in Austria. Our question, however, was more specific, focusing on the behaviour of rural actors who, as compared to those in France were quite inconspicuous. While we consider the movement in its entirety as the context of this more specific aspect, we turn to policy-specific factor theories for a more detailed explanation.

Dynamic, policy-specific factors

It has been argued that the privileged status of organic farming in Austria's agricultural policy explains the readiness of agro-political actors to adopt a NIMBY policy for the entire country. What, however, accounts for this privileging of organic farming? The answer is to be found in the 'greening' of Austria's agricultural policy at large, and the favourite status organic farming enjoys therein in particular. With the *Österreichisches Programm für umweltgerechte, extensiven und den natürlichen Lebensraum schützenden Landwirtschaft* (the Austrian national aid programme for the promotion of environmentally sound, extensive agriculture protective of the natural habitat; ÖPUL), in 2006, Austria spent €638 million on environmentally friendly measures, accounting for one-third of the entire agricultural budget. In the same year 126,600

enterprises, or 75 per cent of all holdings covering 88 per cent of the total agricultural area, participated in the programme, which clearly situates Austria among the forerunners in Europe in environmental policymaking. ÖPUL was established in 1995, since when subsidies for organic farming, which account for about 15 per cent of the ÖPUL's budget, became part of it (Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management [BMLFUW] 2007, p. 10). With 20,162 organic farms and a cultivated area of 361,817 ha, corresponding to 11.6 per cent of farms and 14.3 per cent of arable land, Austria is among the European champions in this respect, too (BMLFUW 2007, p. 57). Other forerunners are Italy, Switzerland and Denmark.

This large proportion of organic farming is mostly due to the heavy subsidisation of the sector as over 99 per cent of organic farms are being subsidised through ÖPUL. This policy developed over time. After slow beginnings in the late 1980s, incentive programmes for organic farming took off in the early 1990s, accompanied by a steep increase in the numbers of subsidised organic farms. In 1992 about 2,000 farms were practicing organic methods but by 1997 their number had increased to some 20,000. There are several reasons for this costly measure. By the mid 1980s, years before Austria became member of the EU, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry began to promote an 'ecologically and socially sound market policy' (*Ökosoziale Marktwirtschaft*) that aimed at combining sustainable with commercially competitive forms of production. Organic farming was found to be viable means to this end. Indeed, in 1994, Austrian retailing chains pioneered the marketing of organic products, thus establishing a regular demand for organic produce and confirming the viability of organic agriculture in a market economy[20] (Vogl and Hess 1999).

The key stimuli for the Austrian pro-organic policy, however, came from the European integration process. By the late 1980s Austria's political elites had agreed to lead the country into the EC. But Austrian agriculture, with its small-sized family farms, often located in disadvantaged Alpine regions, presented a hurdle. The reduction of food prices to EC levels and, in the longer run, to world market levels created the need to compensate farmers for their loss of income, and the influx of foreign agro-products into the domestic market propelled the need to create a distinctive Austrian product identity (Vogl and Hess 1999). In 1992 the milestone MacSharry reforms of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) introduced flanking measures such as agri-environment measures, which were yet to be defined by member states and thus gave aspirant member countries the opportunity to set up agro-environmental schemes following their own environmental, socioeconomic and integrationist priorities. While, in the early 1990s, not all member countries were equally prepared or willing to adopt agri-environment measures (not least because the measures needed to be nationally co-financed) those countries acceding to the EU in 1995 – Austria, Sweden and Finland – all prioritised environmental concerns and thus became early adopters (Sinabell and Hofreither 2003, p. 51). In Austria support of organic farming became the centrepiece of its agri-environmental package.

Finally, the privileging of organic farming became a key argument in the domestic public debate surrounding Austria's accession to the EU. As both the quality of food and the insecure fate of Austrian farmers were prominent issues in these debates, the promise to subsidise organic farming helped to gain public acceptance for the country's accession to the EU. With slogans like 'eco-land' or the 'Austrian delicatessen'

(*Feinkostladen Österreich*), the government effectively communicated its niche strategy to the public. In sum, the massive subsidisation of organic farming turned out to be the policy solution to a number of problems related to European integration: the need to fit into changing CAP regime, to invent a national product identity, to introduce an additional compensatory subsidy for producers in disadvantaged, mostly mountain regions[21] and to protect an important political clientele strategically, as well as to gain public acceptance for EU accession.

After accession, organic farming became the sacred cow of Austrian agricultural policy so that anything that might compromise the sector tends to provoke aversive reactions by policymakers. When, in the wake of the European anti-GMO movement in the late 1990s, 'GMO-contaminated' food became the bogey for European food markets, organic products guaranteed not to contain GMOs came to enjoy a competitive advantage over conventional products, which elevated the status of organic farming even more. From this it was a small step for Austrian agricultural policymakers to sponsor a GMO-free policy for the entire farming sector, arguing that all Austrian producers might benefit from its rigorous policy that gives Austrian products a competitive edge, irrespective of whether they were organic or conventional.[22]

France's agricultural policy has been inseparably interwoven with the CAP regime since its beginnings in the late 1950s. Indeed, France was the principal promoter of the CAP as a way of both gaining access to European markets and maintaining strong state intervention in agriculture, and in later years it remained a central power-wielder in its decisional apparatus, and was CAP's greatest beneficiary. Yet, France was slow in realising, and in fact sought to stem, the environmental turn of the CAP going on since the early 1990s. Following the radical modernisation of the country's agricultural sector in the 1980s, France ascended to the rank of the second largest exporter of agricultural commodities in the world. The powerful FNSEA, that entertains a corporatist relationship with the state, played an instrumental part in this process (Montpetit 2000, p. 580). When the CAP reform process towards a broader approach to environmental protection and rural development set in, this highly integrated policy network sought to 'fight off any policy for the agricultural sector, including an environmental policy, that does not 'fit' with the productivist goals that the FNSEA has traditionally pursued' (Montpetit 2000, p. 580). Thus, for a long time France was reluctant to adopt the multifunctional and ecological role models for agriculture that emerged in the CAP reform process.[23] While in Austria organic farming became the centrepiece of an ambitious and costly agro-environmental policy, in France alternative farming methods have remained nascent.

Only in recent years, prompted by the CAP reform and global liberalisation, but also by government changes, food and sanitary crises and changing societal demands, have notions of environmental protection and food safety gained wider currency in France's agricultural policy (Buller 2004; Montpetit 2000). Lately, this reform process came to a high point in the '*grenelle de l'environnement*' – a round table discussion on environmental reform which, from June to October 2007, gathered together 300 participants, representing all main sectors of society including environmental groups, to discuss policy responses to the major environmental challenges. Significantly, the recommendations assigned to organic farming a significant role in the nation's future environmental strategy. From constituting currently 2 per cent of the agricultural area

under cultivation, organic farming is scheduled to rise to 20 per cent by 2020.[24] Even so, this late onset of environmental reform testifies to the image of France as an 'environmental laggard'.

Linked to France's intrinsically productivist agricultural policy is a final factor that shapes patterns of GMO resistance – power struggles in agricultural politics. From its beginning in the late 1980s, the CP denounced the FNSEA for its rigid adherence to the dogmas of productivity and profitability and the predatory competition in the farming sector that such a policy gave rise to. While this 'productivist logic of concentration, intensification and innovation' (Buller 2004, p. 108) prevailed over the alternative agricultural trajectory of the family farm, the contenders of the FNSEA gradually gained ground. We suggest that the ascent of agro-biotechnology should be regarded as a controversial public issue in the context of the CP's political struggle against the long-dominant FNSEA.[25] The popularity required for this endeavour owes itself, at least in part, to José Bové and his spectacular handling of the GMO issue. Seen from this angle, the CP's anti-GMO crusade provided a formidable vehicle for the mobilisation of public compassion and political influence, respectively.[26]

In Austria, no such dynamic ever occurred. Today, agricultural politics is a closed field controlled by the ÖVP, the *Bauernbund* and the *Landwirtschaftskammer*, just as it has been for decades. As impulses by the environmental movement have been incorporated into agricultural policies, potential contenders have never made inroads into the circles of power. To be sure, such potential contenders exist. The tiny NGO ÖBV, for instance, shares much of the CP's radical political and internationalist posture. But, while it is active behind the scenes, the ÖBV stays at the fringes of agricultural politics, so that neither latent tensions nor the potential for a wider social critique going along with anti-GMO attitudes has ever materialised. The same holds for critical expertise and conceptual background work which is often commissioned by the state, and is smoothly absorbed into agricultural policy. At any rate, the general lack of manifest controversy is one reason why GMOs never became a divisive issue in agricultural politics.

Outlook

Complementing a general approach to POS, this analysis has found policy-specific contextual factors to be of particular importance in explaining divergent modes of rural GMO opposition in Austria and France, albeit in different ways and to different degrees. It might be a promising research question to go beyond the cases presented and ask whether agro-policies and the concomitant rural cleavages also emerge as explanatory variables in other European countries. In this respect, it should be kept in mind that these contextual factors are dynamic rather than stable, and are responsive to both societal and supranational and international stimuli structured by the evolving CAP, rather than resulting from domestic preferences alone.

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Notes

[1] The juxtaposition of NIMBY and NIABY is owed to Tait (1987). An examination of the global implications of NIMBY and NIABY types of anti-GMO movements for the search for alternative food technologies and bio-technologies can be found in Seifert (2008).

[2] In 1997 Austria and Luxemburg issued bans on GMOs that had previously been approved. Other member states followed suit and, although they were unable to convince the Commission's scientific committees of their scientific validity, maintained their bans. Between 1997 and 2000 illegal national safeguard bans were decreed on 13 occasions by Austria (3), France (2), Germany (1), Italy (4), Luxembourg (1), Greece (1) and the UK (1). The latter was the only country to later withdraw its ban.

[3] Later on, in 2000 and 2001, respectively, Austria and Belgium joined the blockade group.

[4] EU regulations to ensure the authenticity of organic farming methods were introduced in the early 1990s with the 'EU Eco-regulation' (EEC 2092/91) and have since evolved into a comprehensive framework.

[5] Some concealed ambivalence remains towards the official stance of entirely barring GMO-releases. For example, in a few cases the Austrian Government still supports research projects dealing with biotechnologically engineered plants.

[6] Not only is Greenpeace Austria a local chapter of an international NGO, Global 2000 also works under the umbrella organisation of Friends of the Earth – the second mastermind of the European anti-GMO mobilisation.

[7] Membership in the major agricultural lobby, the *Bauernbund*, necessarily implies political membership with the ÖVP.

[8] The same study later on even became Austria's major defence of its safeguard measures in the WTO dispute.

[9] Tensions nevertheless exist. The tiny ÖBV, for example, keeps challenging the dominant agricultural policy. Although it 'greened' in recent years agricultural policy preserves the vested rights of big farmers, bars egalitarian or redistributive initiatives, and has not fully renounced its productivist bias.

[10] In Greenpeace, the French expert Arnaud Apoteker was among the first to recognise the relevance of agro-food biotechnology to the environmental NGOs' agenda and to advocate a pan-European approach. His first attempts to organise a common strategy, however, failed in 1994. Success came only in the following year, as it became clear that, in 1996, the first, massive wave of GM products was to enter the European market, and a decision to prepare a European campaign was taken (Interview, Greenpeace, 6 July 2005, Zurich).

[11] In fact, the first destruction of a GMO field took place even earlier, in June 1997, without, however, receiving the same extent of media attention given to later events. It thus passed unnoticed by the larger public (*Le Monde* 2004)

[12] Although the 'Bové effect' established the previously little known CP as a recognised political force, Bové's steep rise to media celebrity did not meet with unanimous appreciation. Rene Riesel, for example, who had organised the first strike against GMOs conjointly with Bové, broke up with him and the CP as he refused to countenance, among other things, Bové's clever exploitation of the media circus, whose star entertainer he suddenly had become.

[13] In the following years, Bové made appearances in most WTO meetings and World Social Forums held in places like Doha, Porto Alegre and Hong Kong.

[14] The latter are justified as symbolic attacks on the intermingling of research and corporate interest in the life sciences. As commercial GMO cultivation did not resume before 2005, only recently have commercial GMO plantation became targets for activists.

[15] From 1998 to early 2007, in a series of legal trials followed by objections and their rebuttal, Bové was found guilty of maliciously injuring property in at least five instances.

[16] In the summer of 2003, the *faucheurs* 'mowed' 22 out of 55 GMO test sites. In the subsequent year, they destroyed 27 out of 48 and by the end of July 2006, the Minister of Agriculture revealed they had destroyed 40 per cent of authorised field trials.

[17] The CP nevertheless created alliances with political parties where opportune. The most successful was the alliance backing the campaign of the referendum on the EU Constitution in spring 2005, which united the radical left and parts of the Green Party and the Socialists. The fact that Bové emerged from the campaign even more popular than before finally made him give up his resistance against the suggestion that he should run for the presidency in 2007, with the well-known, disappointing results. Rigid party politics fragmented the radical left and Bové succeeded to attract only a small fraction of its potential voters. Later that year, Bové turned back to anti-GMO activism, with a spectacular hunger strike in early 2008, crowned by the government's decision to impose a moratorium on commercial GMO cultivation.

[18] The three key points of the CP's programme defying neoliberal globalisation are global visions: food sovereignty (the right of peoples and countries to freely produce their food and protect their agriculture from world market competition); food safety (the right to guard against food risks for human health) and the conservation of biological diversity.

[19] An election threshold of 4 per cent of votes for winning a seat in Parliament limits proportional representation.

[20] In fact, however, organic farming still largely depends on state subsidies. While public subsidies for the conventional farmer average 24 per cent of a farmer's total revenue, for the average organic farmer they account for 33 per cent. In addition to specific subsidies conditional on employing certain ecological methods, organic farmers often benefit from further environmental subsidies and special aids for disadvantaged regions as a major share of such farms are located in the wide, mountainous parts of Austria (BMLFUW 2007, p. 8).

[21] A total of 90 per cent of organic farms are situated in disadvantaged regions, and 80 per cent are located in mountain regions (Groier and Gleirscher 2005, p. 46).

[22] By late 2001, Austria exhibited the lowest ceiling for GM contamination of seed crops in Europe and accordingly established a rigorous system to control this contamination. Austrian production of seed maize has boomed in recent years as international demand for certified GM-free maize rises (interview with the Austrian Ministry Agriculture and Environment 26 April 2005, in Vienna).

[23] Accordingly, France's share of agri-environment measures in rural development expenditure is 30 per cent, which is well below the European average (CEC 2005, p. 5).

[24] It is also telling that the use of GMOs in French agriculture has remained highly contested. In January 2008, after the newly established 'High Authority on GMOs' expressed 'serious doubts' on the safety of the Monsanto GM maize 'MON 810', the government took the decision to issue the safeguard ban on the product. As 'MON 810' is the only variety authorised in the country so far, the measure is equivalent to a moratorium on GMOs.

[25] Thus, rising from virtual obscurity in the early 1990s, in the elections to the Agricultural Chambers of 2001, the CP attained 28 per cent of votes (rising from 20 per cent in 1995) while the FNSEA fell to an all-time low. Yet, in the 2007 election to the Agricultural Chamber, the CP lost its earlier advantage and the FNSEA recovered. The winner this time was the right-wing populist *Coordination Rurale* with an increase of 6.5 per cent. While this outcome confirms the view that agricultural politics is becoming more volatile as the hegemonic position of the FNSEA is more uncertain although it is still intact, the increased electoral dynamism, nourished by the protest attitudes of a malcontent peasantry, appears generalised, rather than benefiting the CP alone. The position of the latter is in fact still far more uncertain than that of the still dominant FNSEA.

[26] Regarding the radicalism and the confrontational style of the French movement we admit that, in addition to the aforementioned factors, we have to take political cultures into account. Thus, the *Jacquerie* – the violent peasant revolt involving road blocks, disposal of waste in

public, demolition of offices, and even physical attacks – is a well-known feature of the protest repertoire of French farmers, which not only holds for the CP but for French farmer associations in general. To some extent, therefore, the field destructions of the *faucheurs* fits into a general pattern of symbolically (and sometimes literally) violent conflict. In Austria, by contrast, such drastic forms of protest among farmers are hardly ever practised. Another French peculiarity is the legacy of the 1968 Paris spring, followed by the Larzac mobilisation in the 1970s, and later, by the ecologist movement as well as, in a sense, even the *altermondialist* renaissance of the late 1990s.

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