

# The Europeanisation of Domestic Opportunities for Movements: The Influence of NATURA 2000 on Anti-incinerator Campaigns in France

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## Abstract

Europeanisation research into social movements has focused on the emergence of political opportunity structures at the supranational level. This paper examines how movement actors are exploiting shifts in domestic opportunity structures caused by EU policy. Empirical evidence is drawn from qualitative interview data and document analysis on high profile anti-incinerator campaigns in France. Surprisingly, European legislation on waste incineration has not significantly influenced domestic opportunities. It is, however, revealed that EU policy on biodiversity proved decisive for understanding shifts in opportunity structures, and ultimately their role in contributing to movement campaigns in France. Several important lessons are discussed for future Europeanisation research into social movements.

## Keywords

Europeanisation; Social movements; Political opportunity structures; French politics; Waste infrastructure; Biodiversity

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THE EUROPEAN UNION (EU) HAS MULTIPLIED BOTH RESTRICTIONS AND opportunities for various social movements. Research into the Europeanisation of social movements has concentrated too heavily on exploring how movements are (not) exploiting new political opportunity structures at the supranational (Brussels, Luxembourg or Strasbourg) or transnational (cross-border actions) level (Marks and McAdam 1996; Tarrow 1995, 2001). In support of Rootes, it is, however, underlined that social mobilisation “occurs *overwhelmingly* within nation-states” (2002: 418). By adopting new trends in Europeanisation research (Saurugger 2007; Vink and Graziano 2008), it is argued that we must equally seek to understand the influence of the EU on *shifting* political opportunities at the *domestic* level for social movements. This article reveals that opportunity structures intrinsically linked with the EU’s biodiversity program have proved crucial in anti-incinerator movement campaigns in France.

Researchers on Europeanisation criticise the basic top-down approach for inherently displaying problems of causality. Throughout a given period, it is relatively easy to expose a variety of changes in Member States. However, it is more difficult to deduce the most appropriate cause from a list of competing theories. Many authors have commented on this problem through underlining the wide variety of global and domestic institutions and actors

that influence Member State policy-making in addition to the EU (Bugdahn 2005; Olsen 2002). National politics and policies are expected to adapt, while Europeanisation is suggested to be the cause. The “only way” to circumnavigate this problem “has been to resort to thorough and detailed empirical research (...) focused on one or a limited number of Member States” (Jordan and Liefferink 2002: 3).

EU influence is, therefore, only one variable among several (resources, framing processes, social networks or alternative social psychological accounts) that could explain the activities of a movement’s campaign. The conceptual framework developed in this paper is restricted to literature on Political Opportunity Structures (POS) and Europeanisation. Political opportunities are essentially prompts that signal non-state actors toward possible venues for action. Collective action involves, therefore, rational actors who attempt to realise certain objectives within an ever-changing larger political apparatus (Kriesi 2004). Opportunities at an international or European level can be so distant to groups that they find them difficult to interpret and exploit (Warleigh 2001). The influence of EU politics, policies and institutions can also represent an intervening variable in shifting domestic political opportunity models. A conceptual framework is developed below for exploring EU influence on four intervening variables in the two case studies: splits among the political elites, allies in the political system, legal access, and political culture.

Supranational policies (and associated legislative bodies) have emerged in the areas of both waste and biodiversity from policy-making structures in the EU (Jordan and Liefferink 2004). It is revealed below that incineration plants have seriously conflicted with the management of nearby zones of special protection (ZSPs) established under strict criteria in the EU’s policy on biodiversity NATURA 2000 (N2000). An assessment of the extent to which the ‘steering committee’ of these sites played a role in two regional anti-incinerator campaigns in North-West and Central France is indicated below. In contrast, it is equally argued that legislation on waste incineration proved ineffective for both anti-incinerator campaigns. This article relies, first, upon data from interviews conducted with both state actors and activists throughout France (and Brussels). A second data collection method is in-depth document analysis from newspaper reports<sup>1</sup>, personal communiqués, letters and policy reports collected onsite from state institutions and civil society associations.

## Social movements and the French state

A social movement is defined as a “collective challenge by groups with purposes and solidarity in sustained and mainly contentious interaction with elites, opponents and authorities” (Tarrow 1995). Movements are essentially fluid, proactive and independent challenges to perceived social injustices. Social movements have been structured according to the traditions of individual nation-states (Dryzek *et al.* 2003). With regard to specific civil society relations, France is essentially classified as a *strong* and *passively exclusive* state. A *strong* state makes important political decisions without much recourse to various interests, with little regard to variation between policy areas. As a result, national policy styles continue to dominate the entire political system (in terms of institutions and processes) (Kriesi 1995: 164-176). As *passively exclusive*, movements are excluded from traditionally corporatist forms of national policy-making. Corporatism is defined as a policy process restricted to a normally tripartite *concertation* between the executive, business and labour federations. The exclusion is termed as passive because the state does nothing to undermine ‘outside’ movements, interests or associations (Dryzek *et al.* 2003: 1-20).

<sup>1</sup> Newspaper articles are often cited as a major resource for research on social movement mobilisation and environmental activism. This paper attempts to avoid ‘newspaper bias’ through multiplying the sources of the articles used (Fillieule and Ferrier 1999).

Social movements in France are often associated with direct action campaigns against nuclear power in the 1970s or more recently anti-globalization protests (Prendiville 1994). As is common throughout Europe, French social movements find their origins mainly (though not exclusively) in the New Social Movements (NSMs) of the 1970s. However, they have been largely forced into relations with state actors based on pre-emption, incorporation, contestation and direct action. In this way, state-group accounts have traditionally positioned French social movements in a largely subordinate role *vis-à-vis* governmental actors. As an idea that can be traced back as far as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, non-state pressure more broadly is historically considered as being illegitimate (Cohen-Tanugi 1991). However, the traditional *Jacobin* distaste for interest representation is only partly relevant for contemporary state-group relations.

There are three important reasons for this change. Firstly, a transformation has occurred mainly through the loosening of state control over civil society (linked to a broader process of decentralisation). Secondly, there has been a modernisation of public administration that has ensured freedoms of access to information (Cole 2005). Thirdly, the more recently multi-faceted influence of the EU has been accredited with this change (Smith 2006). Although French pressure group activity would appear to be weaker in France than in the North-European democracies, the traditional image of France as a state that pays no attention to associational life is becoming increasingly irrelevant to understanding the reality of French politics (Waters 2003).

With regard to conceptualising a relevant theoretical model, this mixture of a traditionally exclusive and an increasingly open state has reinforced the 'exceptional' status of French state-group relations. The model of French 'exceptionalism' may be defined as the situation where the policy-making style in France is different from the equivalent style in any other country. As such, this model might equally be known as the model of French specificity, or the model of French distinctiveness (Elgie and Griggs 2000). Numerous authors (Bell 2001; Knapp and Wright 2006; Szarka 2002; Wilson 1987) have applied a variety of models to the French case: the domination-crisis model, the endemic and open conflict model, the Marxist approach, (neo/meso-) corporatism, (neo/meso-) pluralism, the protest model and policy networks. However, there is no predominant model of state-group relations.

Within this context of a France in transition, social movements have become increasingly innovative in their strategies against perceived injustice. They no longer focus uniquely on mass protests (Appleton 2000: 62). Festivals, petitions, civil disobedience, and other media-directed events are tools that are being increasingly employed on a national and local scale within the French context (Hayes 2002). They now bring together a large number of associations and individuals on an *ad hoc* basis, operating within a fragmented system of alliances without the domination of one single group (Waters 1998). The article reveals below how movement actors have exploited political opportunity structures created by EU legislation in biodiversity in anti-incinerator campaigns.

### **Social movements, europeanisation and shifting domestic opportunities**

Europeanisation is defined in this article as a top-down pressure originating from EU legislation upon national and local political opportunity structures that are seized upon by national actors (Börzel and Risse 2003). Often termed "Europeanisation as domestic adaptation", the research focus is centred on understanding how implementation processes influence domestic politics (Vink and Graziano 2008). From this perspective, it is argued that legislative pressure is one important variable for understanding the tactics employed by anti-incinerator campaigns in France (Hilson 2002). EU waste legislation has raised a cautious opposition to the activity of incineration as potentially harmful for environmental protection in

the Waste Incineration (WI) Directive 2000/76/EC and the Waste Framework (WF) Directive 2006/76/EC. As a result, Member States must adhere to more stringent operational conditions and technical requirements through setting emission limit values for waste incineration. European legislation in this area does *not*, however, translate into any suspension or moratorium on incineration as a practice. It is only concerned with imposing lower emission rates and technological advancement in this area (Burton 2006).

The European legislative program for biodiversity protection N2000 (a combination of the Habitats and Birds Directives) is, however, more influential in anti-incinerator campaigns in France. As demonstrated below, there are several instances where existing or proposed incineration plants are located near zones for special protection (ZSPs) under the EU N2000 program. Of course, these areas of natural beauty existed before the establishment of any European program. The unique aspect attributable to the EU N2000 program was the necessity to introduce new decision-making structures and processes at each ZSP. Article 6 (1) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC states that “(f)or special areas of conservation, Member States shall establish appropriate management plans specifically designed for the sites and appropriate statutory, administrative or contractual measures”. Moreover, it is revealed below how the European Court of Justice (ECJ) has shaped the French interpretation of these decision-making structures.

N2000 resulted in the establishment of regional level contracts alongside a powerful financial instrument called LIFE-Nature (McCauley 2008). New forms of local-level institutionalised interaction between local stakeholders (so-called ‘steering committees’ - *comités de pilotage*) are integral components in a contractually agreed set of objectives - *document d’objectifs* (‘Docob’) (Le Grand 2004). These steering committees became involved in disputes over planned waste incinerators near the relevant ZSP. Indeed, the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC in Article 6 (3) states that “any plan or project not directly connected with the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site”. Different ways in which steering committees at ZSPs in close proximity to proposed incineration plants have shifted opportunity structures for campaigns shall be explored.

The definition of a shift in POS is normally “any event or broad social process that serves to undermine the calculations and assumptions on which the political establishment is structured” (McAdam 1997: 176). There has nevertheless been little agreement on what causes (and even what constitutes) a shift in POS. For the purposes of this study, the EU is presented as a legislative pressure that has resulted in the emergence of a new opportunity structure in the form of steering committees attached to ZSPs (and to a lesser extent European legislation on waste incineration). Four intervening variables are selected in light of the relevant literature as measurements for how much the steering committees and waste legislation have shifted opportunities for anti-incinerator campaigns: splits among political elites (Fischer and Boehnke 2004), the number of allies in the political system (Giugni 2001; Tarrow 1998), variation in legal access (Hilson 2002) and political culture (Kriesi 2004). The chosen variables therefore allow for an examination of EU pressure on political opportunities for anti-incinerator campaigns in France.

### Anti-incinerator campaigns in France

There are currently 129 active waste incineration plants in France (more than in any other European country). Their location is notably concentrated in urban centres, especially in and around Paris, Bordeaux, Marseille, Lyon and Lille (accounting for 56 in total). The three most active localities (measured by emission levels) in France mirror urbanisation patterns as representing Paris, Seine-Saint-Denis and Rhône. However, the majority of active

incineration plants are located outside these urban areas (73 in total). Additionally, 68 of the 81 decommissioned incinerators are situated outside the urban centres of Paris, Bordeaux, Marseille, Lyon and Lille (MEDD 2008a: 4-9). All 12 incinerators currently under proposal are also found in small towns or rural areas (MEDD 2008b: 3). As a result, this paper concentrates on proposed waste incineration plants in rural or semi-rural France.

There is insufficient data to map all the anti-incinerator campaigns on a national scale. The research focus in this article is, therefore, centred on the most high-profile campaigns in terms of media coverage.<sup>2</sup> Since 2001, there have been eight high-profile campaigns spread throughout France (see table 1). Protesters succeeded in the South of France to prevent the establishment of an incinerator in the small Mediterranean town of Vias near Montpellier in 2005 (Martin and Olivier 29/10/2005). In the North-East, a local association called '*Vigilance Projet Incinérateur Gueugnon*', through their charismatic leader Alain Rault, was at the heart of local efforts to reject an incinerator at Gueugnon in 2003 (Jacques 13/05/2003). In the West, four proposed incineration plants (St. Capraise, Izon, Grosbreuil and Angers) were officially abandoned between February 2002 and December 2006 as a result of local campaigns from a range of both institutional and non-institutional actors (MEDD 2008a: 10).

**Table 1:** Anti-incinerator campaigns and N2000 sites

Town/City	Region	Date Proposed	Date Abandoned	<50km from a ZSP?
Angers	Pays de la Loire	2004	2009	No
Clermont-Ferrand	Auvergne	2001	On-going	Yes
Coulon	Poitou-Charentes	2003	2006	Yes
Grosbreuil	Pays de la Loire	2000	2006	No
Gueugnon	Bourgogne	2001	2003	No
Izon	Aquitaine	2001	2003	No
St. Capraise d'Eymet	Aquitaine	2002	2004	No
Vias	Languedoc Roussillon	2004	2005	No

Sources: MEDD (2008a; 2008b)

Here, the article focuses on two campaigns in Poitou-Charentes (North-West France) and Auvergne (central France). Interest was derived from the close proximity of planned incinerators to national ZSPs under the European N2000 project.<sup>3</sup> The other six anti-incinerator campaigns were not located close to any N2000 ZSPs (see table 1). The

<sup>2</sup> High-profile media campaigns are defined as instances of oppositional activity that were reported in national newspapers. Once identified, such activity was analysed in a variety of national, regional and local newspapers. This strategy developed as a result of the lack of quantitative data on anti-incinerator campaigns in France.

<sup>3</sup> I encourage future quantitative based research into how close N2000 ZSPs are located to existing or proposed incinerators.

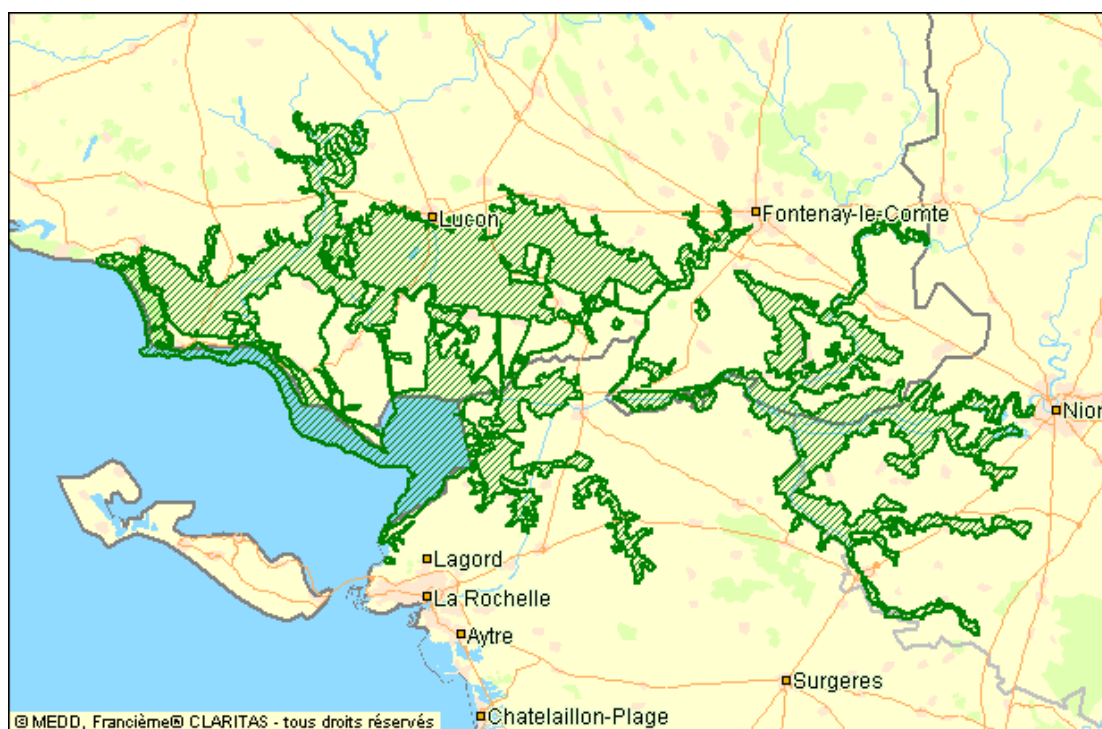


prominence of N2000 as a campaign issue is the primary reason for case selection. A major national park (the *Parc du Marais Poitevin*) would have been on the doorstep of an incinerator at Coulon (North-West France). At Clermont-Ferrand (central France), the proposed incinerator could threaten natural habitats found within three ZSPs. As a result, both campaigns offer significant potential for exploring European influence on social mobilisation. The campaign is briefly investigated below with reference to the participating actors, major debates and events.

### *Anti-incinerator campaigns in North-West France*

The small town of Coulon (the Capital of 'Green Venice'), with 2,174 inhabitants, West of Niort, became a regional hotbed for anti-incinerator protests between 2003 and 2006 (see map 1). The main institutional actor involved in promoting the idea of an incinerator at Coulon was called the *Communauté d'Agglomération de Niort* (CAN). CAN was first established in 1999 to represent the locality surrounding the main city of Niort. This publicly elected body is chiefly responsible for land and services (including waste) management in its represented localities (Moinet 2007: 3-5). In September 2003, it commissioned a report on the future of waste management in Niort and its surrounding areas. Accepting its proposals, the CAN announced in December 2004 its preference for incineration instead of landfills (with the precise location left undecided at this point) (Lyvinec 10/12/2004).

**Map 1:** N2000 and North-West France



Source: European Commission, N2000 sites in France.

A campaign to avoid the construction of an incinerator in the Niort area emerged in early 2005. Its participants included *Les Verts* (the Green Party) and the '*Deux-Sèvres Nature Environnement*' local environmental association (a constituent part of the national federation '*France Nature Environnement*'). Most notably, the leader of the campaign (Patrick Morin)

described himself as an “unaffiliated ordinary citizen” (Martin 22/01/2005). They gathered together a petition with initially 400 signatures against the proposed incinerator. By March 2005 this number rose to 8000. The main argument of the campaign focused on the need to advance recycling techniques in favour of a dangerous and expensive incinerator. As the location emerged, the most significant demonstration gathered together 1,500 activists in Coulon with placards carrying “Dioxin City” (Biard 31/01/2005). The newly formed anti-incinerator committee of Coulon<sup>4</sup> organised another protest with demonstrators draped in orange<sup>5</sup> two months later (Baroux 20/03/2005). As serious splits emerged between political actors (as explored later), the project to build an incinerator at Coulon was officially abandoned in January 2006.

It is argued that the proximity of the ‘*Parc Marais Poitevin*’ as a ZSP influenced the success of the anti-incinerator campaign. As the biggest site in Western France, the scale of the park covers 68,023 hectares (ha) to the West of Niort. The small town of Coulon is effectively surrounded by parkland. The anti-incinerator campaign focused, therefore, on the potential threat of dangerous emissions for wildlife and disruption for local habitats found in the park (CIMES 21/02/2005). France communicated to the European Commission its willingness to include the ‘*Marais Poitevin*’ as a ZSP in 1996. A steering committee was eventually formed in 2001 in order to prepare for its status as a ZSP. Its official establishment coincided with the first CAN report into the possibility of an incinerator in Coulon. In 2003, the committee became one of the first fully operational in France with agreement upon its structure and primary objectives over the next six years (Docob) (DIREN 2003).

The following case study on *Clermont-Ferrand* offers a contrasting (in scale, duration and level of success) anti-incinerator campaign. It is also argued that the proximity of three ZSPs offered (ultimately unfulfilled) potential to influence the development of the campaign through shifting POSs.

### *Anti-incinerator campaigns in central France*

With over 140,000 inhabitants and representing the capital of the Auvergne region, Clermont-Ferrand sits on the plain of Limagne in the Massif Central (see map 2). The main actor involved in the promotion of an incinerator was a publicly elected body known as VALTOM (‘*Valorisation et Traitement des Ordures Ménagères*’). Representing 654,000 inhabitants, its membership includes 9 trade unions<sup>6</sup> and 24 delegates as political representatives<sup>7</sup> such as local mayors and civil servants. In late 2001 and 2002, VALTOM conducted research into constructing an incinerator in Clermont-Ferrand, Riom or Lezoux. During this time, local environmental groups (‘*Vélo Environnement Santé*’ and the ‘*Association des Riverains de Beaulieu*’) wrote a series of letters in protest to the local authority (Sigot 01/03/2002). In January 2003, VALTOM officially announced that an incinerator would be completed on the Clermont-Ferrand site within three years. An 800 strong demonstration at the city hall marked the founding of the main protest confederation,

<sup>4</sup> This committee included ‘*Deux-Sèvres Nature Environnement*’, the Green Party, Patrick Morin, as well as new participant ‘*Citoyens pour l’Information dans le Mellois sur l’Environnement et la Santé*’ (CIMES).

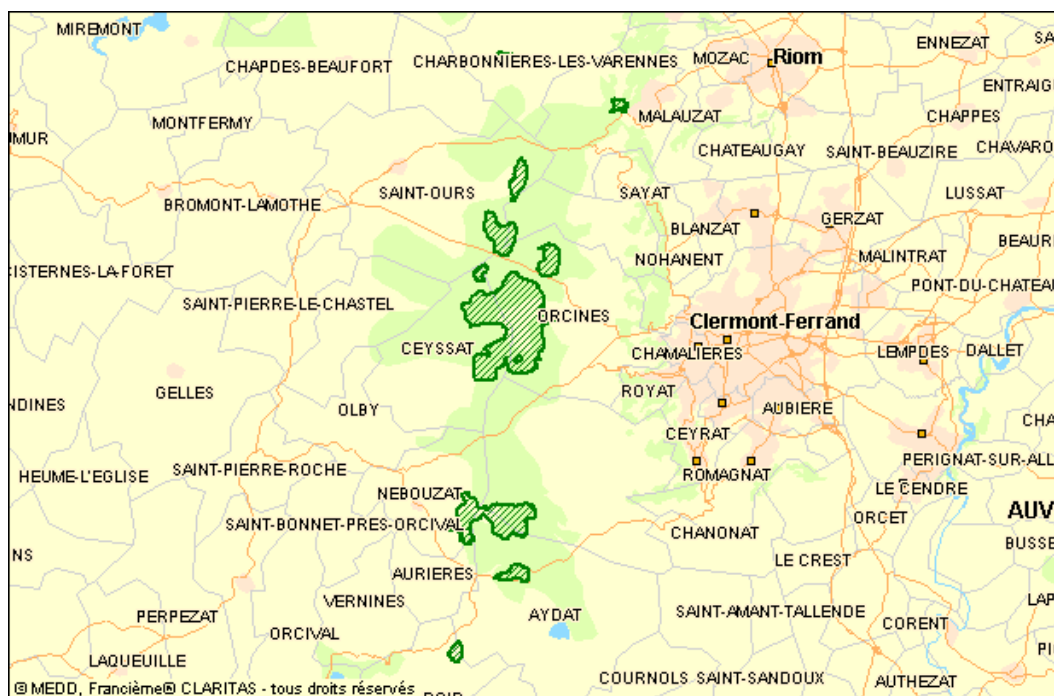
<sup>5</sup> The decision to wear orange was inspired by the pacifist march in the Ukraine in December 2004.

<sup>6</sup> Clermont Communauté, SICTOM des Combrailles, Syndicat du Bois de l’Aumône, SICTOM de la Haute Dordogne, SICTOM Pontaurum/Pontgibaud, SICTOM des Couzes, SICTOM Issoire/Brioude, SIVOM d’Ambert, SIVOM du canton de Châteldon.

<sup>7</sup> Didier Laville (Mayor of Aulnat), Hervé Pronounce (Mayor of Cendre), Louis Virgoulay, Alain Bardot, Danielle Auroi, Claire Lemperueur (Mayor of Montaigut-en-Combrailles), Brigitte Arnaud, Marie Gabrielle Gagnadre (Mayor of Lezoux), Michel Gadet, Roger Gardes, Jean Claude Jacob, Daniel Bellaigue (Mayor of St Julien Puy Laveze), Fernand Urlande, Daniel Labiaule (Mayor of Fernoel), Claude Vidal, André Gay (Mayor of Besse), François Marion (Mayor of St Donat), Gabriel Gay, Jean Paul Bacquet (Mayor of Coudes), Nicolas Di Giambattista (Mayor of Josat), Henri Rigal, Michel Dajoux, David Plaza, Tony Bernard (Mayor of Châteldon).

the '*Collectif Contre l'Implémentation à Proximité de l'Agglomération Clermontoise*' (CCIPAC).<sup>8</sup> Campaigners highlighted the hypocrisy in establishing an incinerator in a protected valley surrounded by sites of European heritage (see below) (Despos 12/03/2003).

### Map 2: N2000 and central France



Source: European Commission, N2000 sites in France.

A public consultation took place three months later in the neighbouring small town of Lempdes. 96% voted in opposition in a city-wide referendum on the incinerator at Clermont-Ferrand (with a turnout of 41.2%) (CCIIPAC 19/06/2003). In 2004, a government-commissioned report provided a negative opinion on the intentions of VALTOM to establish the Clermont-Ferrand incinerator. It focused on the high level of concern held by local people regarding potential health threats (MEDD 2004).<sup>9</sup> However, a year later, the highest administrative court (*Conseil d'Etat*) reversed the finding of the 2004 report<sup>10</sup> (Conseil d'Etat 2006: 46). From this point, the anti-incinerator campaign was reformed under a protest confederation known as P.R.O.P.R.E<sup>11</sup> of public figures (mayors and civil servants) and the associations of CCIPAC. Between 1,500 and 2,500 demonstrators filled the streets of Clermont-Ferrand in March and November, while a further 30 campaigners emptied their bins in front of the city hall in August (Robert 13/03/2006). The result of these demonstrations was another public inquiry in late 2006 that resulted in the temporary

<sup>8</sup> ACIIPAC ('Association Contre l'Implantation de l'Incinérateur à Proximité de l'Agglomération Clermontoise'), ADEC ('Association de Défense de l'Environnement de Châteldon'), ADEL ('Association de Défense de l'Environnement de Lempdes'), 'Maison des Associations', ARMURE (Vertaizon), 'Bien être à Aulnat', 'Brigades Vertes', 'Comité d'Aménagement de Clermont-Est', FCPE Lempdes ('Fédération des Parents d'Elèves de Lempdes'), ARB ('Association des Riverains de Beaulieu'), Gerzat Environnement, VELOS ('Vélo Environnement Santé', LAVE ('Lempdes Association Vie Environnement').

<sup>9</sup> "Les motifs de rejet les plus nombreux se rapportent aux soucis de la population concernant la santé" (MEDD 2004: 22)

<sup>10</sup> The Court found that the NOVERGIE company had provided sufficient evidence against the potential harmful effects of an incinerator (Conseil d'Etat 2006: 46).

<sup>11</sup> It stands for the 'Collectif Pour Repenser l'Organisation et le Plan de Recyclage et d'Elimination des déchets'.



suspension of the project for three months in 2007. However, the proposed incinerator still remains as a viable option as talks continue (current data applicable until end of May 2008).

In contrast to the Coulon anti-incinerator campaign, it is argued that the three recently established ZSPs at Clermont-Ferrand applied comparatively *less* influence on the development of its anti-incinerator campaign. The proposed site would have been located deep within a valley, a designated ZSP itself. The valley protects a wide range of rare species and habitats over a relatively small area (231 ha) (European Commission 2006b). Immediately south of Clermont-Ferrand, the second ZPS is a much larger area (51,853 ha) with protected riverland, forest and associated habitats (European Commission 2006a). Both achieved full status under the European N2000 program in early 2006. The third ZPS represents the most famous (and controversial in anti-incinerator demonstrations) site, namely the *Chaine des Puys*. Directly West of the city (see shaded area on map 2) and the proposed incinerator (see black circle on map 2 below) lies the most expansive volcanic range in Europe, home to the *Puy de Dôme* volcano. It achieved full recognition under N2000 in 2005 (European Commission 2005a). However, the steering committees in all three cases are yet to become fully operational.

### The N2000 ‘steering committee’ as an opportunity structure

The steering committee emerged directly from EU legislation on biodiversity (Article 6 (1) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC as explored above). Rulings from the ECJ were integral to ensuring a comprehensive interpretation of a steering committee by French policy-makers. France was taken to the ECJ on three occasions for not implementing management structures in accordance with legislative requirements. The European Commission penalised the French Environment Ministry for not consulting local stakeholders in the “Poitevin Marsh” case (C-96/98). Again, the Court ruled in favour of the Commission that the French authorities had essentially misinterpreted the objectives of N2000 (C103/02). This ruling caused notable disruption, and general mistrust, in the government’s efforts to set up N2000 management systems and infrastructures (although C103/02 focused uniquely on inexact transposition rather than the government’s failure to consult stakeholders). In 2001, the Environment Ministry established ‘steering committees’ throughout France.

The maintenance of each N2000 site is now governed by one steering committee (*comité de pilotage*). This committee includes officials from sub-national authorities and relevant non-state actors. All committees include representatives from the DIREN, civil service, independent farmers, landowners, agricultural, environmental and other (particularly hunting and fishing) associations. The most senior government official from the regional or departmental level (*préfet*) is initially the key-actor within the structure of the steering committee. After the site is designated within the French N2000 inventory, this official appoints the relevant actors to the steering committee in consultation with local interests.

The official power of establishing the committee rests with the local state representative (*préfet*). In this way, the inclusion of non-state actors in the process still retains an element of state control. However, the committee members can elect one person (*opérateur*) as the chair of the committee who is not necessarily the *préfet*. The chair is equipped with a self-designated vice-chair (*chargé de mission coordinateur*). The purpose of the steering committee is to, first, organise the implementation of the aims and objectives of the N2000 site (*document d’objectifs* (‘Docob’)). The steering committee chair must achieve agreement from the members on the tasks to incorporate. The *préfet* sets out an initial draft of the aims and objectives. Moreover, the final draft of this document must be agreed upon by the *préfet*.

In terms of content, there are three elements located in every *document d'objectifs*. Firstly, the members are involved in analysing existing and new data on the current state of the particular N2000 site. Secondly, the committee agrees on priority areas (both from a geographical and environmental perspective) that require immediate attention. Thirdly, the committee imposes a financial penalty to be incurred by one or more member in the event of non-compliance. After the *préfet* validates the aims and objectives of the steering committee, the members engage a series of tools for their work: networks<sup>12</sup>, management strategies<sup>13</sup>, regulatory measures<sup>14</sup> and contractual agreements (as explored below). The committee produces an annual joint report on their activities to the Ministry (and a six-year report for the Commission).

At the beginning of 2002, there was virtually no trace of N2000 steering committees in France. By the end of 2006, French authorities had succeeded in officially establishing a steering committee in 1,029 sites (7.4% of the French territory). Moreover, 759 committees reported that a document of aims and objectives were, at least, in the process of elaboration. In addition, *préfets* in 270 sites claimed that their 'Docob' was operational. It is also evident from the data that steering committees in France displayed a strong preference for contractual agreements. Every site (including those where aims and objectives had not been agreed upon yet) had at least begun the process of applying for a N2000 contract (MEDD 2007).

### Assessing the influence of the N2000 steering committees

It is revealed below that the establishment of ZSP steering committees had a significant influence on opportunities for the Coulon campaigns, rather than for those at Clermont-Ferrand. In order to assess this influence, four intervening variables are examined: splits among political elites, allies in the political system, legal access and political culture.

#### 'Steering committees' and anti-incinerator campaigns

When the CAN report on an incinerator for Coulon was published in 2004, the '*Parc Marais Poitevin*' was already officially recognised as a ZSP under European law (European Commission 2005b). A fully operational steering committee included the regional authority of Poitou-Charentes, council representatives, environmental, forestry, agriculture and water ministerial agencies. In terms of non-state actors, there were representatives from environmental, hunting and agricultural associations as well as the scientific community. Crucially, a main objective in the agreed 'Docob' was to "evaluate the state of habitat conservation and identify human activities likely to help as well as hinder its longevity" (DIREN 2003: 3).<sup>15</sup> The committee used this objective to become involved in disputes over a proposed incinerator in its vicinity. It is revealed below that this steering committee played a significant role in shifting opportunities for the anti-incinerator campaign. In contrast to the case of Coulon, it is argued that the steering committees in all three ZSPs in the Clermont-Ferrand area were less involved in the anti-incinerator campaign due to their protracted establishment. All three committees had yet to agree upon a set of objectives (therefore not yet operational) as the sites were only recently established (in 2005 and 2006).

<sup>12</sup> Each member is allowed to use its already existing links/networks with local inhabitants.

<sup>13</sup> Each member is also permitted to employ any already existing management strategies in order to achieve the overall aims and objectives.

<sup>14</sup> The committee could agree with the explicit will of the *préfet* to impose regulatory tools to achieve its aims.

<sup>15</sup> "(E)valuer l'état de conservation des habitats et identifier les activités humaines susceptibles de garantir leur pérennité ou, à l'inverse, de leur porter atteinte" (DIREN 2003: 3).

*Splits in the political elite*

The eventual divergence of opinions expressed by political actors was integral to the demise of the Coulon incinerator project. This section concentrates uniquely on the influence of the steering committee on promoting splits among the political elite. Represented on the *Marais Poitevin* steering committee, the mayor of Bênet (Daniel David) responded to the decision to locate an incinerator in Coulon as a “choice that is contrary to the NATURA 2000 project and the preservation of the park *Marais Poitevin*”<sup>16</sup> (Martin 09/02/2005). His office underlines that its participation in the steering committee was influential in his hostile stance against the proposed incinerator (Interview 13/02/2006). In a high profile dispute, Daniel David publicly criticised the mayor of Aiffres (Alain Mathieu), who supported the incinerator at Coulon – “Alain Mathieu is contributing to the disfiguration of the *Marais Poitevin*”<sup>17</sup> (Riand 30/05/2005). As both mayors represented the same party (the Socialist Party), it is David’s involvement in the steering committee that appears to have been influential in his opposition to the incinerator.

Another split within the Socialist Party appeared when the newly created presidency of the *Marais Poitevin* park was awarded to Ségolène Royal in 2004, the future Socialist candidate for the Presidency of the French Republic. In a largely ceremonial position, she presided over the annual meeting of steering committee members. Refusing to criticise Alain Mathieu as the primary supporter of the incinerator,<sup>18</sup> she declared that “the incinerator plant was outside her area of competence” (Morel 11/01/2005: 6). On the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 2005, Royal met with the steering committee for the first time (Interview 30/08/2006). Later that month, she reversed her initial approach, stating that “I am surprised that such equipment will be installed in the parkland...it is difficult to ask farmers to adhere to the Natura 2000 framework and then see an incinerator come along”<sup>19</sup> (Girard 23/02/2005).

Alain Mathieu attempted, without success, to play down the growing splits within the Party claiming “this is not about opposition between personalities!”<sup>20</sup> (Lefèvre 28/02/2005: 5). However, the Socialist President of the Poitou-Charentes Region blasted Royal for bringing “a Parisian view of the *Marais*” (“*une vue parisienne du Marais*”), claiming it was outside her competence (Boyer 25/02/2006). There were splits among the political elite in the second case study on Clermont-Ferrand. Indeed, the founders of the protest confederation P.R.O.P.R.E in 2004 comprised the Mayors of Aulnat (Didier Laville), Cournon (Bertrand Pasciuto) and Lempdes (Jean-Pierre Georget) (Sauges 2006). The distinction lies in the contrasting roles played by the ZSP steering committee in each study. Similar to allies in the political system (below), there was no evidence for committee influence in this second case on Clermont-Ferrand (Interview 13/04/2006).

*Allies in the Political System*

In addition to gaining the support of political party members (such as Daniel David and Ségolène Royal), the *Marais Poitevin* steering committee provided more generally an

<sup>16</sup> “Ce choix va à l’encontre du projet NATURA 2000 et de la préservation du parc *Marais Poitevin*” (Martin 09/02/2005: 5).

<sup>17</sup> “Alain Mathieu contribue au défigurement du *Marais Poitevin*” (Riand 30/05/2005).

<sup>18</sup> Royal initially received criticism from associations and the media for not involving herself at an earlier stage as the president of the Poitou-Charentes Region (Biard 03/01/2005). A press communication from the association CIMES declared that Royal should be awarded a “golden star for deception” (une “*palme d’or de la déception*”) as they suspected her involvement in initially promoting the incinerator (CIMES 21/02/2005).

<sup>19</sup> “(J’)exprime mon étonnement d’installer ce type d’équipement sur le territoire du parc...(c)’est compliqué de demander des efforts aux agriculteurs dans le cadre de Natura 2000 et de voir arriver un incinérateur” (Girard 23/02/2005).

<sup>20</sup> “Il ne s’agit pas d’une opposition entre personnes!” (Lefèvre 28/02/2005: 5).

opportunity for anti-incinerator campaigners to discuss their views with state agencies and local authority representatives from Coulon and Niort. In particular, the '*Deux-Sèvres Nature Environnement*' environmental association was an integral player in both the campaign and steering committee. The committee convened four times every year in order to set and examine agreed objectives. A representative from '*Deux-Sèvres Nature Environnement*' underlined that a lobby group against the proposed incinerator presented their opposition to the regional authority (the *préfet*) in January 2005 (Interview 30/08/2006). Crucially, the head of the steering committee was a representative from the *préfet* Jean-Jacques Brot. The lobby included representatives from environmental, forestry, agriculture and water agencies, landowners, associations and independent scientists (from the '*Conseil de l'Ordre des Médecins*').

In practice, the steering committee became monopolised by the incinerator issue throughout 2005 (convening formally for an unusual six times). A group of scientists (12 involved in the steering committee) sent a letter of protest to Jean-Jacques Brot as head of the committee as well as CAN on the 27th January 2005 (CPAI 27/01/2005).<sup>21</sup> '*Deux-Sèvres Nature Environnement*' withdrew their involvement in the steering committee in protest between May 2005 and January 2006. The environmental association claimed to have informally met with committee members (including the office of the *préfet*) during this period (Interview 30/08/2006). The absence of any ZSP steering committees in Clermont-Ferrand severely hampered any potential 'European' influence from biodiversity policy on allies within the political system for the anti-incinerator campaign.

### Legal Access

The anti-incinerator campaign at Coulon did not pursue a legal case against CAN or any other state organ. The omission of any legal campaign emphasises the relative brevity of the anti-incinerator campaign, as well as an apparent collective disregard for European legislation on waste incineration. The Clermont-Ferrand campaign revealed furthermore that supporters of the incineration project were more likely to use European legislation in their favour. The 2005 response from the *Conseil d'Etat* underlines that the plans submitted by NOVERGIE clearly adhered to European legislation on plant specifications (Conseil d'Etat 2006: 49). The Regional Authority (*préfet*) of Auvergne and Puy-de-Dôme (Dominique Schmitt) also complained at a meeting of VALTOM that "this project is well within the norms set out by French and European legislation"<sup>22</sup> (Jolivet 09/05/2008). A representative from the European Commission emphasised that European legislation on incinerators only really applied to existing outdated waste incineration plants. New models would almost certainly comply with the specifications laid out in the WI Directive (Interview 23/08/2006).

### Political Culture

Following the discussion above on the 'excluding French state', it is argued that there is some evidence of European influence in biodiversity policy changing traditional modes of decision-making in the case of Coulon. In the relative void of public consultations on the proposed incinerator, the steering committee first acted as a venue for a partial institutionalisation (through N2000 contracts) of anti-incinerator interest representation (McCauley 2008). The contractual arrangement of the committee was a novel method to

<sup>21</sup> "We are particularly worried about the proposed development of an incineration plant (...) rejection of the waste incineration option is imperative" ("*Nous sommes particulièrement inquiets sur l'évolution du projet du site d'incinération (...) l'abandon du choix de l'incinération des ordures ménagères est impérative*" (CPAI 27/01/2005).

<sup>22</sup> "(C)e projet répond parfaitement aux normes française et européenne" (Jolivet 09/05/2008: 4).

include non-state actors in local decision-making (Truilhe-Marengo 2005).<sup>23</sup> For the anti-incinerator campaign, it acted as an informal body that could gauge the feeling of both state actors and campaign organisations. Secondly, the committee was an opportunity for campaigners to protest (through letters, discussions and withdrawal). In this way, the emergence of the opportunity structure in the form of a steering committee offered both a new inclusive consultative arrangement and reinforced possibilities for traditional protest activities.

The absence of any developed steering committees in Clermont-Ferrand revealed a marginalised influence from EU policy on biodiversity with regards to political culture. There were no institutional venues for any regular consultation between non-state and state actors. Moreover, regional authorities including VALTOM did not hold any public consultations. A representative from AII PAC commented that “they (sub-national authorities) do not ask us, they do not care” (Interview 13/04/2006). Movement actors, excluded from any form of decision-making, used traditional protest tactics (outlined above) against the state for almost ten years. This case study reveals how European policy on biodiversity was unable to shift local political culture for the anti-incinerator movement. In contrast to other studies (Hilson 2002), campaigners did not seek to exploit any potential opportunities provided by European legislation in waste (as explored above).

The two case studies have revealed the scope and limitation of European policy influence in biodiversity on anti-incinerator mobilisation. It is argued that EU legislation on biodiversity was able to impose a modest restructuring of political opportunities for campaigners in the only successful case study on Coulon to date. The classification of the *Marais Poitevin* park as a ZSP under the EU’s N2000 project resulted in a well-developed steering committee dedicated to its preservation. Firstly, the involvement of key political figures in the committee generated splits among party elites. Secondly, it became an opportunity for campaigners to gather allies within the political system in the form of sub-national councils, environmental, forestry, agriculture and water ministerial agencies. Thirdly, there was evidence from interview data to suggest that the inclusive form of consultation introduced by the steering committee diverged from traditional excluding modes of decision-making on waste incineration. In contrast, the under-development of ZSP steering committees in the second protracted case study in Clermont-Ferrand resulted in a largely absent EU presence in the form of N2000 steering committees.

### **Discussion: Europeanisation and national movements**

The issue of waste incineration offered new insight into how Europeanisation processes can influence social mobilisation in France. French policy on incineration has translated into the most expansive network of operational plants in Europe. As a result, anti-incinerator campaigns have emerged throughout France in opposition. The first case study revealed how anti-incinerator campaigners were able to exploit opportunities offered by N2000 steering committees. Nevertheless, the absence of such committees in operation in the second case study underlines that opportunity structures are not universally exploitable in anti-incinerator campaigns. This section underlines the contribution made by the case study material to relevant literature on the Europeanisation of domestic opportunity structures for social movements.

The discussion on French state-group relations (above) reminds us that lessons from the case study material is of course largely restricted to the national context of France. The belief that associational life in France is weaker than in other Northern EU countries is not

<sup>23</sup> The novelty of contractual arrangements alongside a committee structure to the French system of local governance was underlined by the French Environment Ministry during an interview (20/08/2006).



supported in this article. It is evident from the case studies that social actors are continually seeking to exploit new opportunities. This article underlines that such actors are, by no means, *policy bound*. In other words, social movement actors involved in waste management issues can exploit opportunities in biodiversity policy. Moreover, the influence of N2000 in waste opportunity structures emphasises that such actors are equally not entirely dependent on the nation state to create opportunity structures within their immediate environment (i.e. locally or nationally).

Too much attention in social movement research on Europeanisation has, therefore, been paid to the creation of Euro-groups (Tarrow 1995) and/or the movement of domestic groups to Brussels (Marks and McAdams 1996; Tarrow 1995, 2001). From their perspective, the EU has multiplied both restrictions and opportunities for various movements through the construction of supranational institutions. Rootes (2002, 2004) argues, however, that there is relatively little empirical evidence for a relocation of environmental movement activity to Brussels. In response, this paper introduced a Europeanisation framework based on exploring EU influence on domestic opportunity structures for anti-incinerator campaigns in France. Not only is there pressure from the domestic level to change decisions at the European level, this paper supports della Porta (2004) in that pressure can also be applied on the domestic level from the EU (so-called 'crossed influence').

We must not limit our understanding of the Europeanisation of social movements to supranational opportunity structures. This article reinforces the point that Europeanisation is, in fact, a two-way process. It is a matter of reciprocity between two moving features (the EU and Member States). The EU influences groups as part of a wider series of changes at the national level. Europeanisation has transformed the relations between state and group at the EU, national and regional levels because it modifies national opportunities and threats to each actor. As a result, this process encourages a change in the objectives, resources and behaviour of environmental interest groups. The ability of groups to maximise these supranational structures is, therefore, shaped by the opportunity structures that are available at the national level.

We should, in fact, view Europeanisation as both "pressure" (as explained above) and "usage" (Jacquot and Woll 2003). By introducing the sociological perspective of 'usage' we provide further understanding of Europeanisation. As demonstrated in the Coulon case, the term 'usage' underlines that national movement actors actively transform opportunities or constraints presented by the introduction of the EU and integration process into concrete political action. This term refers, secondly, to the habitual nature that such a process takes after a period of time (such as the N2000 policy cycle). From this standpoint, European integration can only happen if an actor seizes these national / EU opportunities or constraints.

A major methodological issue that arises in this article is the ability to prove causality. Domestic political opportunity structures are expected to adapt or emerge, while EU legislation is suggested to be (one of) the cause(s). To minimise ambiguity, a "thorough and detailed empirical research on one member state" as advised by Jordan and Liefferink (2004: 5) has been undertaken. Moreover, it is argued that the researcher ought to identify specific opportunity structures (such as the steering committee) that are closely related to European legislation. Lastly, the researcher should select contrasting cases where European influence, however defined, is both present and absent (Vink and Graziano 2008). The emergence of one particular opportunity structure has been singled out – the 'steering committee' associated with ZSPs – established under EU biodiversity legislation. While this committee structure proved decisive in the first case study, no such influence was present in the second example.

Two conclusions arise from the case study material with reference to institutionalist accounts of Europeanisation. A pattern of path dependency, from a historical institutionalist perspective, is modestly questioned in this article. The successful operationalisation of the N2000 steering committee in the first case study challenged the excluding decision-making process in waste incineration. Following on from this, the development of European-level policies changed core domestic institutions of governance and politics (Olsen 2002). In particular, it offers insight into how domestic opportunity structures for movements can change at the sub-national level due to EU policy (Hayes 2002). However, the second case study supports Börzel and Risse (2003) in so far as shifts in opportunity structures must be sought for Europeanisation to take place. From this rational institutionalist perspective, Europeanisation is only observable in the first case study on anti-incineration movements in North-West France.

It is indeed not suggested in this article that there is an unequivocal link between European influence, however defined, and a 'successful' anti-incinerator campaign. The development of European legislation in waste (or biodiversity) did not offer either campaign increased legal access or 'legal opportunity', to use Hilson's terminology (2002). Firstly, it is conceded that opportunities must be sought. In this way, future research in this area should combine other analytical tools such as resource mobilisation, social networks, framing or alternative social psychological frameworks. Secondly, future research into examples where 'European' influence has contributed to a failed campaign would build on our understanding of the interplay between the EU and movements. Nevertheless, it is evident that the success experienced in Coulon was in part due to EU biodiversity policy by creating local steering committees that consequently shifted domestic opportunities for anti-incinerator campaigners.

## Conclusion

To conclude, there is a need for more qualitative and quantitative research into mapping campaigns against incineration plants in France and how campaigns relate to each other within the framework of a national movement. In contrast to Saurugger (2007), it is argued that the study of the Europeanisation and domestic social movements (and other forms of interest representation) should not be restricted to '*rejectionist*' responses to the European integration process. This article has offered detailed empirical case studies into how europeanisation processes can shift domestic opportunity structures for anti-incinerator campaigns. While European legislation in waste proved ineffective for campaigners, the Habitats and Birds Directives managed to shift domestic opportunities in one case study. In this way, it is argued that EU influence represents an important variable for understanding the development of social mobilisation. While the relocation of movements and activists to Brussels may be in question, EU institutions, policies and politics continue to influence the domestic operating environment of such actors.

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### *Selected interviews*

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- Interview with unnamed representative, *Deux-Sèvres Nature Environnement*, policy officer on waste management issues (30/08/2006a in La Roche-sur-Yon).
- Interview with unnamed representative, *Association Contre l'Implantation de l'Incinérateur à Proximité de l'Agglomération Clermontoise*, policy officer on waste and transport infrastructure (13/04/2006 in Lyon).
- Interview with anonymous representative, *European Commission*, member of DG Environment, Directorate B (23/08/2006 in Brussels).

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