

# **Green Parties under Comparative Perspective**

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Working Paper n.99

Barcelona 1994

## 1. GREEN PARTIES' ORIGINS: FROM NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS TO PARTY FORMATION

Ever since the student movements of the 1960s disappeared, other social movements and citizens' initiative groups have emerged and have developed rapidly in most Western European countries. At the end of the 1960s new issues like air and water pollution, noise, harmful substances in foodstuffs and the preservation of scarce resources have entered political debate and have politicized opinion in Europe. From the early 1970s onwards, widespread awareness of environmental deterioration has been apparent and has become one of the central political issues in Western Europe. The famous 1972 Club of Rome Report, Limits of Growth, is symbolic for the larger and long-term problems associated with environmental destruction caused by governmental environmental policies, that have often succumbed to economic pressures.

In many European countries, the politization of the environmental issue led to the foundation of environmental groups at local and regional levels. Most of these groups emerged spontaneously and were motivated by and protested about single or limited issues, such as the provision of parks, urban renewal, new highways and the construction of nuclear power plants. These groups employed a variety of methods in seeking to influence and change policy decisions of the established parties. They utilised local and national laws on giving the public access to plans for urban renewal and constructions, and on compulsory hearings for those directly concerned. Other methods used were liaison and consultations with local councils, particularly on planning matters, and also direct action in influencing the public. In many countries, the success of the local environmental movements led to the establishment of national umbrella organizations in order to strengthen the political impact of the environmental movements nationally; for instance, the Federal Association of Environmental Citizen Initiatives-BBU in Germany (founded in 1972), the Amis de la Terre in France (1971), the Miljövarsgruppernas Riförbund-MIGRI in Sweden (1971), and the Vereiniging Milieudefensie-VMD in the Netherlands (1972).

In the mid 1970s, one particular issue became dominant in several European countries: nuclear energy. Heavily influenced by the oil crisis, most European governments decided to expand their nuclear energy programme. It was, however, precisely the nuclear power issue that demonstrated the need for organizing social movements at the national level, since energy problems could not be resolved politically at the local level. More and more local action groups in various countries formed nationally organized "antinuclear-power" organizations as, for instance, the Organization for Information on Nuclear Power-OOA in Denmark (founded in 1974), the Committee for the Co-ordination of Regional Antinuclear Power Initiatives-LEK in the Netherlands (1973), the Miljöverbund in Sweden (1976), the Initiative of Anti-Nuclear Power Plants-IÖAG in Austria (1976), and the Action against Nuclear

Power-AMA in Norway (1974).

In the late 1970s, another issue became prominent in several European nations: the NATO dual track policy on intermediate nuclear forces and the eventual stationing of Cruise missiles and the Pershing II in Western Europe. This political decision created much solidarity among these movements across national borders in Western Europe. Large demonstrations were held, occasional sit-ins, and the illegal occupation at sites of proposed stationing of missiles took place. Most of these activities were initiated by national organized peace movements.

At the same time as many political scientists have emphasized, most West European countries had built up a reserve of cultural support responsive to future issues concerning the quality and the extent of democracy. However, almost exactly around the late 1970s, most advanced industrialized European states underwent a crucial change. In many countries, the unemployment rate increased; more citizens' initiatives group were formed; protest actions against environmental destruction and nuclear power plants became a regular new element in the political behaviour of many Europeans, especially among the younger population; and there emerged a general and increased "fear" about the security provided by the nuclear deterrence of NATO. "New" social movements thus became active everywhere on the political scene. This development more or less indicated that the basic cultural characteristic had changed in many European countries: weaker class cleavage structures, and the rise of a new value orientation along with "participating citizens" were the political symptoms of the 1980s.

In the early 1980s, most citizens' initiative groups and "new" social movements have looked for closer contact to the Social Democrats or other established left-wing parties. They expected those parties to act as an effective force against a full commitment to economic growth, and as a consequence the destruction of the environmental and the stationing of nuclear power weapons. However, the negative experiences of the followers of these social movement with the bureaucratic organizational structures of most left-wing established parties and interest groups as well as the perceived lack of responsiveness of political institutions to come to grips with a fundamentally different policy approach, became the major reason for the foundation and the growth of Green parties in Western Europe.

## **2. GREEN PARTIES' IDENTITY: DIFFERENCES TO ESTABLISHED PARTIES**

As has been pointed out above, most Green parties have similar back-grounds. They began as networks and alliances of citizen initiative movements at the local level, formed around social and environmental issues that have largely been neglected by the established parties in government and opposition. In addition

to that, Green parties differ from established parties with regard to three essential features (Müller-Rommel, 1990, p. 217f.):

*First*, most Green parties follow an ideology that consists of strong concerns for equal rights (especially for minorities), strong ecological and anti-nuclear power thinking, solidarity with the Third-World, demands for unilateral disarmament, and a general left-wing egalitarian disposition. Among others, most Green parties stand for peace through unilateral disarmament and a nuclear-free Europe; also protection of the natural environment through the introduction of transnational pollution controls, and more generally an effective environmental policy directed against an unquestioned commitment to economic growth. These parties advocate an alternative life-style through less emphasis on material goods, more individualism, self-realization, and self-determination. They display a more sympathetic orientation towards the Third World, a concern for the genuine sharing of wealth between rich and poor nations, and helping poorer countries to create their own self-sufficient economies free of financial domination by the industrialized nations. In sum, Green parties introduce a programmatic and ideological thinking which is less consistent with the traditional ideological framework of the Left/Right dimensions; they advocate a set of alternative values that differ significantly from those of the established larger parties. In addition, the issues emphasized by the Greens are widely perceived as challenging the conventional economic and security policies. Since sympathy with such policies is likely to rise with growing distance to the production process, the members of the new middle classes should be disposed to be more favourable to the demands of the Greens -regardless of their actual value orientation (Baker, Dalton, and Hildebrandt, 1981, p. 152ff.).

*Second*, all Green parties display a strong preference for participatory party organization. The organizational structure of most Green parties gives local party branches more autonomy in decision-making. It is designed to give the grassroots a maximum chance of interest articulation and, as such, an impact on policy formation within the party. This process of decentralization in decision-making is seen to be the essential precondition of meaningful participatory opportunity at all levels of the party organization, because it distributes power to more units and makes politics more transparent and hence intelligible.

*Third*, and most important, Green parties have a similar electorate with characteristics that differ significantly from those of the established parties. Several studies of the voters for Green parties in single countries show that Green parties voters are mainly younger, new middle class, urban, highly educated, with new value orientations, a general left-wing orientation, and occupy white-collar and government jobs where the traditional class conflict is virtually non-existent. Furthermore, comparative data on the electorate of Green parties indicate that most voters of the Greens display a "left-wing postmaterialist" profile. We refer to this group of voters as

the "New Left" (Müller-Rommel, 1989).

Inherently, the three typical characteristics of Green parties -as described above- involve many continuous variables. For example, the degree of participatory party organization varies somewhat between Green parties. Some parties have a more hierarchically organized party structure than others.

In addition, as regards strategy for implementing Green parties issues, the Greens may be classified by two different types.

On the one hand, there are the "pure Green reformist parties" that do not reject free economic enterprise. These parties prefer to select genuine ecologist issues that do not bring them strongly into policy conflict with the established parties over the social welfare state and foreign policy. In terms of alliance politics, the reformist Greens seek cooperation with Social Democratic parties, rather than with radical new left parties. Among these parties are the Greens in Belgium, Great Britain, Finland, Sweden, Ireland, Switzerland (GPS), and France.

On the other hand, there are also, "alternative Green radical parties" that seek fundamental changes in social and political institutions and stand for a new alternative, social-radical form of democratic paradigm. Most of these parties reject an alliance with Social Democrats. Rather, they seek cooperation with radical new left parties. Among them are the Green parties in Luxembourg, Austria, Italy, and Switzerland (GAS).

### **3. GREEN PARTIES DEVELOPMENT AND ELECTORAL STRENGTH: VARIATIONS IN WESTERN EUROPE**

Green parties exist in nearly all Western industrialized societies, although their activities and their electoral strength vary considerably between countries as well as between the local, regional, and national levels within any one country. (see for a detailed description and analysis of Green parties in Western Europe, Müller-Rommel 1989, 1993).

In Scandinavia we find Green parties -organized on the national level- in Finland, Sweden, and Denmark. In Norway small left-wing or liberal parties have taken over the issues of the environmentalists and peace movements followers on national level.

The history of the Greens in Finland began in 1979 with the unpopular decision of the government to drain a lake which was a nature protection area for birds. The Greens first nominated their own candidates for the 1979 parliamentary

elections, but gained only 0.1% of the national vote. From 1979 until 1983, the decentralized Green list -which has not been established as a Green party- increased its voter strength 1.5% of the vote and -because of the proportional electoral system- won two seats in the parliament. In the 1987 national election the Green list was able to increase its electoral success to 4% of the total vote and in the 1991 national election the Greens gained 6.8% (10 seats).

In Sweden many Centre party voters were disillusioned by the party's policy decision in 1980 to support a referendum for the further building of nuclear power plants. In 1981 the Miljöpartiet was founded with the support of many former Centre party followers. According to a reliable Swedish public opinion poll, the Miljöpartiet would have gained around 4% of the national vote in November 1981. However, the electoral result in the 1982 general election was disappointing for the Miljöpartiet: they received only 1.6% of the vote and gained no seats in the national parliament. Since 1983, the Swedish environmentalists made efforts to establish closer ties to other Green parties in Europe. In autumn 1984, the party changed its name from Miljöpartiet to Green Party in order to be more attractive to new social movement followers at the 1985 national election. The electoral outcome was again very disappointing for the Greens. Because the Social Democrats adopted several environmental issues in their programme for the campaign, the Greens only gained 1.5% of the national vote. However, in the 1988 national elections the Greens won 5.5% of the vote and hold 20 seats in parliament. In 1991, the vote for the Green party in Sweden dropped down to 3.4%. Because of the three percent threshold hurdle, the Greens lost all seats in the national parliament.

In Denmark a Green party was set up in 1983, but did not receive support among the voters to appear on the ballot papers for the following national elections. In the local elections of 1985, the Green party won enough of the vote to elect several delegates to local councils. According to a national survey, 2.3% of the population was ready to vote for the Greens in December 1985. However, in the 1987 and 1988 national elections the Danish Greens received only 1.3% of the total vote. This result was due the fact that in Denmark two other small left-wing parties adopted major issues of the "new politics" in their party programmes. In addition, those parties (Socialist People's Party -SF- and the Venstre Socialist Party -VS) were in close alliance with the antinuclear power and the environmental movements.

Green parties have established in all the Benelux countries. Belgium is the first country in Western Europe where self-styled representatives of Green parties were elected to a national parliament (see the detailed study by Riheaux in this book). Although the two Green parties (AGALEV for the Flemish, and ECOLO for the Wallons) had already campaigned in the 1977 and 1978 elections, it was not until the 1981 general election that they could win 4.8% of the vote and receive four seats in the national parliament. In the 1984 European elections, the Greens in Belgium

archived another electoral breakthrough, winning two seats in the European Parliament. Ever since then, the two Green parties became an established element of the party system in Belgium. They received 6.2% (9 seats) in the 1985, 7.1% (9 seats) in the 1987, and 10% (17 seats) in the 1991 national election.

In Luxembourg an "alternative list" (AL) was founded in 1979 prior to the European and national elections. The political protest of the AL was not purely directed against the environmental policy of the established parties, but also against the political system as a whole. In both 1979 elections, the AL gained 1% of the vote. Encouraged by the electoral success of the Belgian Greens in 1981, the followers of new social movements in Luxembourg -after a series of intensive and conflictive debates- founded a new Green party in 1983 (The Green Alternative). In the 1984 European and national elections, the party won 6.1% and 5.2% of the vote winning two seats in the national parliament. Because of the "country-vote-proportional representation" for the European parliament, the Luxembourg Green party however has no seats in Strasbourg. In 1989 the Greens could increase its electoral results; they gained 8.4% (4 seats) in the national and 10.4% in the European election.

Compared to Belgium and Luxembourg, the story of the development of the Greens in the Netherlands is more complex. Until 1984, the political issues of the new social movements were largely represented by the Radical Party (PPR) and the Pacifist-Socialists (PSP). The Radical Party was formed in 1968 as a split from the Catholic People Party, while the Pacifist-Socialists had split from the Dutch Labour Party in 1957. Since there was fairly strong support for these parties among the followers of new social movements, no Green and alternative list or party were formed. However, because of the new Dutch electoral law for the European election in 1984 requiring that a party needs at least 4% of the total vote in order to get a seat in the European Parliament at Strasbourg, the Radicals initiated an alliance with those left-wing smaller parties which had not polled more than 2% in the national election. The idea was to reorganize left-wing radical politics in the Netherlands by founding a party alliance with the PPR, the PSP, and the Communists (CPN). After a series of critical debates about "Green credentials", these parties founded the Green Progressive Akkoord (GPA), taking the Green label because the party executives expected to attract additional voters by calling themselves the Greens. A public opinion survey in 1983 announced that 12.5% of the Dutch voters would support a Green party. However, the GPA polled only 5.7% at the 1984 European elections, while the PPR, PSP, and CPN together received 5.6% at the national elections in 1982. These results suggest that the GPA's campaigning strategy has not been as successful as desired in winning votes, although it has achieved the immediate aim of getting two candidates elected to the European Parliament, one coming from the PSP and the other from the PPR. In the 1986 national election a small group of "pure" ecologists nominated their own candidates on a list called "Green Federation". This group won 0.2% of the total vote, while the PPR received 1.3%, the PSP 1.2%,

and the Communists 0.6% of the vote. Together, these results total 3.3% of the national vote, indicating that the small "new politics" parties have lost significantly over the past three years. In 1989, the green-left parties scored a total of 4.1% (6 seats) and in 1994, they received 3.5% (5 seats) of the national vote.

The Greens in West Germany are composed of an agglomerate of several citizens' action groups which have been alienated by the bureaucratic organizational structures of the established parties and interest groups. (see the detailed study by Müller-Rommel in this book) It was not until March 1979 that the alternative political alliance (SPV) was first founded, primarily to contest the European elections of that year. Following their success in obtaining 3.2% of the vote, they made serious efforts to form a national party. After a series of lively conferences which demonstrated the differences among the various groupings, a party Die Grünen was founded in January 1980. Following several conferences, the national programme was adopted in March 1980. Participation in the 1980 Federal election resulted in a rather disappointing electoral outcome of 1.5% of the vote. In spite of this poor national performance in 1980, the Green and alternative lists won between 1970 and 1982 more electoral success at the state (Länder) level. In March 1983 the Greens could increase their supporters to win 5.6% of the national vote and 27 seats in the Bundestag. In the European election of 1984, the Greens gained an impressive 8.2% of the vote and received seven seats in the European Parliament. In the 1987 federal election, they received again 8.3% of the national vote. Because of this result, the German Greens hold 44 seats in the national parliament between 1987 and 1990. However, in the 1990 national election, which was the first election after the German unification, the Greens in East and West Germany nominated two separate lists with candidates for the national parliament. The West German Greens only gained 3.8% of the vote and the East German Bündnis '90 received 1.2%. Consequently, the West German Greens could not send any candidates to the national parliament, because of the 5% threshold hurdle in the German electoral law. In the Eastern part of Germany, however, the 5% threshold has been diminished for the 1990 national election in order to protect minorities. This is why Bündnis '90 could send 8 delegates to the German national parliament, although they scored only 1.2%. Meanwhile, Bündnis '90 and Die Grünen are united as one party and will run on one list for the 1994 national election.

The first "Ecology List" in Western Europe to be organized on the national level was formed in France prior to the 1974 presidential elections. For the first time in French politics, the ecologists nominated their own presidential candidate. Since then, the ecologists have taken policy stands which have been radically opposed to those of the larger established parties. In 1977, three ecological groups formed the Collectif Ecologie '78 for the purpose of campaigning for the parliamentary elections. The group favoured a decentralized approach and pronounced its distrust of traditional political structures. It was, however, not until January 1984 that the various

factions among the Ecologie and other new social movements founded the French Green party (Les Verts). Electorally, the ecologists have been rather unstable over the past ten years. In the 1974 presidential elections, the ecological candidates polled 1.3% of all votes and held sixth place in the field of twelve candidates. In the 1976 cantonal elections, some local ecological groups obtained relatively high electoral results, and encouraged other ecologists to nominate candidates for the local election in March 1977. The ecologists, however, have not received the expected high amount of total votes. In the 1978 general election, the ecologists nominated candidates in 201 out of 474 constituencies of metropolitan France. They received the highest vote in Paris and in areas where there was strong local opposition to nuclear power stations. For the 1979 European elections, the ecologists formed a list called Europe Ecologie and gained 4.4% of the vote. In the 1981 presidential elections, the ecologists' candidate obtained 3.5% of the poll, 3.1% of the total electorate, and ranked fifth among the ten presidential candidates. For the 1984 European elections, the French Green party and another moderate Green list (Entente Radicale Ecologiste-ERE) competed for voters. Because of the electoral split neither of the two Green organizations received the 5% of the vote necessary to send Green candidates to the European Parliament. This situation was completely different in 1989: The Greens gained 10.6% of the vote for the European election and have received for the first time in its party life nine seats in the European parliament.

The foundation of local Green lists in Italy dates back to 1980, when some small autonomous ecological groups nominated candidates for local elections in several Northern-Italian cities. The number of local Green lists increased to 16 in 1983, and for the local administrative elections in May 1985 about 150 Green lists competed with other parties for voters. On the whole, they won 2.1% of the total turnout in three districts where they nominated own candidates. This result showed that Green lists in Italy gained a total of 141 seats in the representative assemblies: 10 in the regional, 16 in the province, and 115 in city councils. In the June 1987 national election the Lista Verde, a joint group of all Green lists in Italy plied 2.5% and won 13 seats in the national parliament (Chamber of Deputies) and two seats in the upperhouse (Senate). Despite this, the Italian Greens have remained incohesive and have been called the "Green Archipelago". In the 1989 European elections, they gained 6.2% and 5 seats while in the 1992 national elections they only received 2.8% (16 seats) of the national vote.

The forerunner of the present ecology party in Great Britain was formed in 1973 under the name People's Party. In 1975 the party changed its name to Ecology Party (and later to the Green party). In contrast to most other Green parties in Europe the People's Party and the later Ecology Party were not as strongly supported by the British environmental and peace movement, perhaps because they directed their political activities as interest groups rather than seeking parliamentary representatives through political parties. The Ecology Party exists to a greater or

lesser extent throughout the country and is a unified organization, although for electoral purposes the expressions "Scottish Ecology Party", "Ecology Party of Wales", and "North Ireland Ecology Party" have been used in some areas. In fact, the Greens were the fastest growing party in Great Britain until the formation of the Social Democratic Party in 1981. The Ecologists were for instance quite successful in the 1976 and 1977 local elections. In the 1979 general elections the Green party nominated 53 candidates and gained 1.6% of the vote where it contested seats. In the June 1979 direct elections to the European Parliament, the Greens nominated three candidates, who gained 3.7% of the vote in their constituencies. The general elections of 1983 and the European elections of 1984 brought low electoral support which was likely consequence of the British majority electoral system, where smaller parties stand hardly any chance of winning seats in the national parliament and it even discourages sympathetic voters who often feel that a vote for the Ecology Party is a wasted vote in Britain. In the 1989 European election, the British Greens gained -to the surprise of most political observers- 10.4% of the vote but no seat. This support was interpreted as an "unnatural" protest vote.

The Green party in Ireland was founded under the name "Green Alliance" in 1981. The party is essentially a network of small, independent groups, either local and functioning in a particular geographical area, or of specialists dealing with a particular issue or aspect of Green Alliance policy. The local and specialist groups are completely autonomous, and therefore free to adopt the organizational structure they choose. The Irish Greens fielded seven candidates in the 1982 general elections and received only a small number of first preference votes. For the 1984 European election, the Green Alliance nominated only one candidate in the constituency of Dublin where the party gained 1.9% of the vote. In the 1987 national election they could slightly increase voting support on national level to 0.4% of the total vote. Since 1989, the Greens have one candidate in the national parliament.

In Austria, two Green parties were founded in 1982: the Alternative List (ALÖ) and the Green Union (VGÖ). Both parties drew their support mainly from the followers of smaller citizens' movements and political groups formed around social and environmental issues. The growth of those groups has been encouraged by the success of the national referendum against nuclear power plants in 1978. The ALÖ and VGÖ differ with regard to their ideological stands. While the VGÖ is more a right-wing party which even nominated "fascist" candidates on their list for the 1983 general elections, the ALÖ programme and strategy is similar to the German Green party. The ALÖ has established its strength at the local level and has used the network among the grassroots to gradually extend its electoral support in district elections. Both parties polled well enough to send Green party members to the respective parliaments. In the 1983 general elections the Austrian Greens were not very successful mainly because of conflicts within and among the two parties. The VGÖ and ALÖ nominated separate lists and gained 1.9% and 1.4% respectively, of

the total vote. With a united Green list and an electoral result of 3.3% (VGÖ/ALÖ), the Green parties would have been able to send seven delegates to the national parliament in 1983. For the 1986 national elections both Green parties formed an alliance and received 4.8% of the vote and 8 seats in the national parliament. In the 1990 national elections, the Greens could stabilize its electoral support: they gained 5.4% and send 9 candidates to the national parliament.

In Switzerland, the first regional Green party was founded in Zürich in 1978. The party participated in the 1979 general elections with its own candidates list, and gained one seat in the national parliament because of the proportional electoral law. In the following years several Green parties were formed in different areas throughout Switzerland. At the same time, alternative left-wing social movements developed in larger cities. In May 1983, most of the decentralized Green parties founded the "Federation of Green Parties in Switzerland" (GPS) on the national level. One month later, some left-wing followers of the alternative groups established the "Green Alternative List in Switzerland" (GAS). Both groups nominated their own candidates for the 1983 general election. The GAS won 3.5% and the GPS 2.9% of the national vote. In the 1987 national election the GPS could increase its voting support to 4.8%, while the GAS polled again 3.5%. In the 1991 national elections, both parties received 7.7% and gained 15 seats in the national parliament.

This cross-national overview has shown that Green parties exist in nearly all Western European party systems. Between 1978 and 1994 they have participated in nearly two hundred local and regional elections as well as in 81 national elections in 15 countries. Currently, Green parties are represented in 10 national parliaments (Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg, Finland, Italy, Ireland, Austria, Switzerland, Greece and the Netherlands). In five countries the Greens are not represented in national parliaments (France, Sweden, Spain, Great Britain, and Denmark). In all countries, Green parties participated in two and more national elections. Generally, however, the level of electoral support and parliamentary representation of Green parties is relatively small. They can nearly be classified as small parties which have specific roles and functions in European party systems: In several cases they hold "blackmail potential" and act as "mobilizers of social and political conflicts" (Müller-Rommel/Pridham 1990) (Table 1).

### **Table1**

## **4. GREEN PARTIES' ELECTORAL SUCCESS: A TYPOLOGY**

There are several approaches measuring party success. Impact on governmental policy could be considered as one crucial criterion. Alternatively, party can be successful in affecting political issues and the tone of political life without

necessarily increasing its electoral support. In the traditional literature, the political success of parties is commonly defined in numerical terms, i.e. by voter turnout and/or legislative seats. We have limited our analysis to this definition assuming that those parties which gain enough vote to be represented in national parliament have some political influence on the national level of a political system.

A serious problem in applying a numerical definition is that of determining cut-off points for electoral success. Knowing that such an exercise is always essentially arbitrary, this analysis is based upon criteria which are (hopefully) both reasonable and plausible.

*First*, all Green parties which are organized on national level of the political system are included in the sample. In addition all Green parties have contested at least two national elections in the past seven years.

*Second*, the average party vote was computed for the period of sixteen years. Parties which have polled (on average) four percent or more of the national vote were qualified as successful. A green party is unsuccessful if it falls below the four percent threshold (Kitschelt 1989: 19). Table 2 shows that Green parties in seven countries are labeled as successful: in Belgium, Germany, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Switzerland, France, and Austria.

### **Table2**

*Third*, political success is defined by Green parties' concentration in a national parliament measured by the proportion of "Green" seats in relation to the total seats in national parliament. A Green party is defined successful if its degree of concentration in national government is above three percent. Given this definition, Green parties in seven countries can be labeled as successful: in Belgium, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Austria, Netherlands, and Finland.

In a further step, an index of electoral success is created which consists of the Green parties' concentration in national parliament 1994 and their average electoral results between 1978 and 1994. The index has produced three patterns of electoral success:

**-highly successful** Green parties with more than three percent parliamentary concentration and an average electoral result of more than four percent (Belgium, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Austria),

**-medium successful** Green parties with either more than three percent parliamentary concentration or an average electoral result of more than four percent (Germany, Netherlands, France, Finland),

**-unsuccessful** Green parties with less than three percent parliamentary

concentration and less than four percent average electoral result (Italy, Sweden, Great Britain, Ireland, Denmark, Spain, Greece).

## **5. GREEN PARTIES' POLITICAL RELEVANCE: A NEW CONFLICT DIMENSION IN EUROPEAN PARTY SYSTEMS**

It has been shown that the electoral success of Green parties varies considerably across Western Europe. There are, of course, several explanations for this development. Generally, it seems obvious that certain features of national political systems provide likely explanatory variables. In Western Europe, we find, for instance, growing and continuing disaffection of the voters with many established parties; declining system performance in the context of the economic recession with possible profound effects on party systems; evidence of party systems fragmentation and electoral volatility in several countries; and the emergence of new political issues opening the way for some restructuring of the political systems (see Müller-Rommel/Poguntke 1994). Altogether, these features present a significantly different situation compared with the postwar period and one of sufficient duration in which Green parties might have unprecedented opportunities.

Comparative work on European party systems has debated -though other inconclusively- the "unfreezing" of long-standing cleavages. Support for the established parties is characterized by specific historically-rooted social milieu, whereby the structure of social conflict within a nation produces long-term and relatively stable political cleavages within the party system. Furthermore, the determinants of electoral choice could be tracked back to basic social allegiances such as class, religion or region traits. The end-result was largely a Left-Right pattern of partisan alignment.

Yet the emergence of new value orientations in Western Europe together with the foundation of Green parties has produced a new dimension of conflict. This is because Green parties direct their protest which is based on new values against left and right targets alike. As such, the Greens challenge the stability of the established political constellation by adding a "new" conflict dimension to the traditional left-right party system cleavage structure without breaking down the primary cleavage structures.

Ronald Inglehart (1977) argues that the traditional Left-Right dimension no longer adequately describes modern patterns of political conflict, because new political issues can no longer be regarded as expressions of Left-Right conflicts alone. The need to combat environmental pollution and to develop a peace policy is not, at least overtly, questioned by either conservative or left-wing parties.

Inglehart shows that the "valence issues" of the new politics are better placed on an establishment/anti-establishment scale than on a Left-Right one. Some sections of the population sympathize with the peace movement, squatters and social fringe groups. Others favour the police, the administrative bureaucracy; that is, the established institutions of the state defending the existing social order. In this context Inglehart holds that this new political dimension is partly an expression of the emergence of a sizeable and active minority giving priority to post-material values.

In examining the electoral behaviour of this post-materialist minority, Inglehart found that these individuals heavily preferred left-wing parties. Initially this finding appears to confirm the thesis that voters are still in the habit of attaching their political ideas and demands to certain parties via terms like "Left" and "Right". In a comparative study, however, Inglehart and Klingemann (1976) showed that the designation "Left" and "Right" have largely become stereotypes for specifying political parties, and that the decision to vote for one of these parties is still closely connected with a party identification shaped by class and religion. According to Inglehart, it is precisely this inertia of established party loyalties and group formations which prevents the post-materialist value structure from taking full effect on electoral choice.

Following the logic of this argument, the new dimension of conflict should become more pronounced when Green parties with new politics issues enter the competition for votes. Some studies on the Greens in single European countries have shown that Green party voters are both highly interested and very active in politics. They view governmental policy more critically than the average voter and they are mostly without historically formed party identifications to one of the established parties. The new dimension of conflict within European party systems should, therefore, intensify when Green parties increase their electoral success.

## **6. GREEN PARTIES' PERSPECTIVE: THE POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR OF ESTABLISHED PARTIES**

It has already been argued that Green parties in Europe mobilize many followers of new political movements by making it possible for them to find rational expression for their views at the ballot box. Green parties thus serve as a political vehicle for those movement supporters whose grievances have been ignored by the larger established parties. Green parties also give assurance to their voters that they are doing something on a parliamentary level about the causes of their discontent. By making themselves the spokesperson of the discontented, Green parties, however, additionally promote the process of change of party loyalties for older generations and prepare the way for increasing volatility within the party system.

On the other hand, Green parties also affect political issues and the tone of

political life by bringing controversial matters into the public debate. If the issues prove popular, they may well be adopted by one or more of the larger established parties, as larger parties in Europe currently seek to adopt some environmental issues first raised by Green parties. This leads to changes in the programmes of major European parties.

It seems to be evident that Green parties compete in the first glance with larger socialist parties. Both party types are committed to changing the political system. However, while socialist parties seek system change through reform policies addressing the traditional conflict between capital and labour, the Green parties ask for a fundamental rethinking of the economic growth theory.

This process particularly affects the larger socialist parties. In most European countries, the Socialist's rank-and-file members as well as party elites split into two groups: those with a traditional left-wing outlook who are concerned with the security of the working class and economic stability (the Old Left), and those with a new politics orientation who rather emphasize the quality of life, the nature of economy, and the extent of democracy (New Left). The "New Left" in socialist parties stands in competition with Green parties regarding the "new politics voter", while the "Old Left" is still fighting along the old cleavage dimensions. The socialist parties are, therefore, trapped between two cultures, although only a minority of the electorate is on the new politics side. The majority in most Western European democracies stand in the center of the political spectrum. Whatever the socialist parties might be able to gain from the new left, they risk losing from among the old left voters. Consequently, the only viable strategy for the Socialists is to attempt some reconciliation of old politics (in order to integrate the majority of the Socialist's voters) and a moderate version of new politics (in order to attract Green parties voters). A radical realization of "new politics issues" is beyond the reach of the socialist parties.

In functioning as promoters of new politics issues, however, Green parties offer radical answers to radical questions concerning ecological problems, military concerns, and the questions of democratic and civil rights. The success of Green parties is nourished by radical issue positions that larger socialist and conservative parties are not able to take fully into consideration. It thus seems theoretically cogent and empirically substantiated to predict that Green parties are here to stay as long as the political issues of new political movement followers remain on the political agenda and are not adopted by any established party.

**Table1**

TABLE 1 Electoral Results of Green Parties/Lists in National Elections in Western Europe*																	
	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
<b>Belgium</b>	0.8(0)	-	-	4.5(4)	-	-	-	6.2(9)	-	7.1(9)	-	-	-	10.0(17)	-	-	-
<b>Belgium (E)</b>	-	3.4(0)	-	-	-	-	8.2(2)	-	-	-	-	11.5(2)	-	-	-	-	11.3(29)
<b>Germany</b>	-	-	1.5(0)	-	-	5.6(27)	-	-	-	8.3(44)	-	-	3.8(0)	1.2(8)	-	-	-
<b>Germany (E)</b>	-	3.2(0)	-	-	-	8.2(7)	-	-	-	-	-	8.4(8)	-	-	-	-	10.1(12)
<b>Denmark</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.2(0)	1.3(0)	-	NK/NS	-	-	-	-
<b>France</b>	2.1(0)	-	-	1.1(0)	-	-	-	-	1.2(0)	-	0.4(0)	-	-	-	-	-	7.6(0)
<b>France (E)</b>	-	4.4(0)	-	-	-	-	3.4(0)	3.3(0)	-	-	-	10.6(9)	-	-	-	-	3.0(0)
<b>Finland</b>	-	0.1(0)	-	-	-	1.5(2)	-	-	-	4.0(4)	-	-	-	6.8(10)	-	-	-
<b>Great Britain</b>	-	0.1(0)	-	-	-	0.2(0)	-	-	-	1.3(0)	-	-	-	-	0.5(0)	-	-
<b>Great Britain (E)</b>	-	0.1(0)	-	-	-	-	0.5(0)	-	-	-	-	14.9(0)	-	-	-	-	3.1(0)
<b>Greece</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.6(1)	-	0.8(1)	-	NK/S	-
<b>Ireland</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.4(0)	-	1.5(1)	-	-	1.4(1)	-	-
<b>Ireland (E)</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.1(0)	-	-	-	-	3.7(0)	-	-	-	-	7.9(2)
<b>Italy</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.5(13)	-	-	-	-	2.8(16)	-	-
<b>Italy (E)</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6.2(5)	-	-	-	-	3.2(3)
<b>Luxembourg</b>	-	1.0(0)	-	-	-	-	5.2(2)	-	-	-	-	8.4(4)	-	-	-	-	NK/S
<b>Luxembourg (E)</b>	-	1.0(0)	-	-	-	-	6.1(0)	-	-	-	-	10.4(0)	-	-	-	-	10.9(1)
<b>Netherlands</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4.1(6)	-	-	-	3.5(5)
<b>Netherlands</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	5.6(2)	-	-	-	-	7.0(2)	-	-	-	-	3.7(1)
<b>Austria</b>	-	-	-	-	-	3.2	-	-	4.8(8)	-	-	-	4.5(9)	-	-	-	-
<b>Spain</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.0(0)	-	-	1.4(0)	-	-	-	-	NK/S
<b>Sweden</b>	-	-	-	-	1.6(0)	-	-	1.5(0)	-	-	5.5(20)	-	-	3.4(0)	-	-	-
<b>Switzerland</b>	-	0.8(1)	-	-	-	6.4(6)	-	-	-	7.3(11)	-	-	-	7.7(15)	-	-	-

\* percent of total vote and number of seats in national and European parliament. NK= electoral results not known; NS= no seats in national parliament; S= seats in national parliament  
(E) Results in European Elections. Results of AGALEV and ECOLO together, 3.4=les Verts; 3.3= Entete Radical Ecologiste, Green Progressive Accord (GPA), Results of VGR and ALO together, Germany 1990: 3.8= Grüne-West, 1.2=Bündnis '90 Esat, Results GPS and DACH

**Table2**

<b>Table 2. Electoral Success of Green Parties in Western Europe (1978-1994)</b>					
<b>Countries</b>	<b>Participation in national elections (N)</b>	<b>Mean electoral results (in percent)</b>	<b>Seats in national parliaments 1994 total (N)</b>	<b>Seats of Green party representatives in national parliament 1994 total (N)</b>	<b>Degree of Green Party concentration in national parliament 1994 (in percent)</b>
<b>high success</b>					
<b>Belgium</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7.00</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>8.01</b>
<b>Luxembourg</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6.37</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>4(estimated)</b>	<b>6.25</b>
<b>Switzerland</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5.55</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>7.50</b>
<b>Austria</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4.16</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>4.91</b>
<b>medium success</b>					
<b>Germany</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6.28</b>	<b>662</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1.21</b>
<b>Netherlands</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4.78</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>3.33</b>
<b>France</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>4.23</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Finland</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.10</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5.00</b>
<b>low success</b>					
<b>Italy</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.67</b>	<b>630</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>2.53</b>
<b>Sweden</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2.86</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Great Britain</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2.58</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Ireland</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2.50</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0.60</b>
<b>Denmark</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1.25</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Spain</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1.20</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Greece</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0.70</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0.33</b>

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