

THE SUCCESSES AND FAILURES OF GREEN PARTIES: THE JOINT EFFECTS OF ELECTORAL SYSTEMS CONSTRAINTS AND PARTY STRATEGIES IN FRANCE, ITALY, GREAT-BRITAIN AND GERMANY

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institutional factors and strategic choices can explain the failure of the Green Party, the weaknesses of Les Verts and i Verdi, as well as the emergence and the conversion of Die Grünen to classical political liberalism.

Abstract

The emergence of Green parties has long been explained by the development of post-materialist values in advanced democracies. This article takes a somewhat different perspective, by analysing the joint effects of electoral systems constraints and party internal and external strategies. The comparison between the French, the Italian, the British and the German cases reinforces the idea that post-materialist values might be considered as characteristics of the Green electorate more than independent variables of the emergence of Green parties. This paper shows that it is the joint effects of the characteristics of electoral systems and Green parties' overall strategies which can explain their successes and failures. The institutional features of a given system can multiply or reduce the possibilities of entry and of coalition building of a new party. In contrast, from a strategic point of view, the internal organisation of a given Green party and its position toward the questions of intra-party democracy, institutionalisation, and incorporation into the parliamentary game are determinant. Therefore, important

Introduction

The understanding of the root causes of the emergence of new parties in established democracies constitutes a core element in the comprehension of change in political competition structures. Indeed, the development of a new party implies a reorganisation of the electoral competition by limiting the votes of well-established parties. The emergence of a new party constitutes the result of a potential conflict within the political system between existing parties and the political group interested in constituting a new party. This paper seeks to investigate the following research question: *Which factors determine the emergence of Green parties in established political systems? Why do some Green parties succeed while others fail to gather stable electoral supports and restructure competition within their political systems?* For the ecologists, the choice to form a movement, and in some cases an autonomous political party has been motivated by ambitions to create a new relation between civil society and political parties through the installation of participatory democracy. The Green theory argues that an active involvement of citizens in political life

would balance the negative effects of “professionalization” in political life. In that respect, following the inspiration of the new social movements, the Greens all over Europe have tried to “do politics differently”.

Nevertheless, Green parties have presented different political strategies and multiple positions toward the crucial questions of institutionalisation, electoral competition and ideological renovation so as to become institutionalized political parties. This paper develops a systematic comparison of four Green parties, following the methodology of process tracing which consists in balancing the effects of different explanations by selecting relevant analytic factors, while methodically comparing their effects through an historically grounded analysis. In terms of case selection, four Green parties in different party systems have been chosen, Les Verts in France, i Verdi in Italy, the Green Party in Great Britain and Die Grünen in Germany. Seeking to identify the main factors which influence the successes and the failures of Green parties, this comparison will follow a “most different design”. Our main underlying concern is to explain why Green parties have witnessed almost similar developments, that is, a general difficulty to emerge as stable political actors and restructure political competition in political systems, which have nevertheless very different characteristics. In fact, the “most different” perspective to comparative politics seeks to elucidate the causes of convergent developments in spite of

diverging starting conditions.¹ In the “most different” system design, the aim is to think about similarities while controlling for differences.

Indeed, the French, Italian, British and German political systems are quite different in terms of electoral rules, access to state institutions or relations to party finance. Electoral constraints are arguably less important in Germany and Italy than in France, and even less in Great Britain. The comparison between the four Green parties is especially interesting as they have a number of common characteristics in relation with the social context that led to their emergence, in terms of electorate and of party ideology, but they also present different strategic trajectories. This paper is constructed in four sections as follows: the first section presents the theoretical framework and the main puzzle related to the emergence of Green parties in consolidated party systems. The three other sections always successively present the French, Italian, British and German cases before concluding with the main comparative findings. The sections deal with the constraints of electoral systems (section 2), the internal strategies of Green parties in terms of intra-party organisation, ideological and programmatic change (section 3), and with their external strategies in relation with social movements, the broader society and with other parties (section 4). The

¹ G. B. Peters, *Comparative Politics. Theory and Methods* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 28.

conclusion leads us to answer our initial research question in comparative analysis.

Theoretical Framework: The Emergence of Green Parties in Perspective

Explaining the Emergence of New Parties in Consolidated Party Systems

In terms of perspective, the emergence of new parties has been analysed in relation to a given national context or following a comparative approach.² This literature can also be classified following the type of emerging party considered, with research done on regionalist parties, on Christian-democratic, on right-wing parties, or on left-wing libertarian/ecologist parties.³ In terms of explanatory factors, even if the empirical operationalization of existing theories is sometimes partial,

the emergence of new parties has been explained following (1) social, (2) institutional or (3) strategic variables. (1) The social approach argues that the emergence of new parties is intrinsically linked with the socio-economic mutations of a given society and the consequent transformation of individual values.⁴ The development of new social values would favour the electoral success of new parties promoting the politicization of these new issues. (2) In opposition, the institutional approach emphasizes that the probability for the emergence of new parties depends on the characteristics of political institutions and the existence of a favourable structure of opportunities for new party entry. The decision to get involved within the electoral competition would be affected by the costs of entry, the perceived benefits of the access to public office and the probability of receiving electoral support.⁵ (3) Finally, the theory of strategic entry highlights that the emergence of new parties might be related to elitist decisions to contest the existing electoral scene.⁶ Following this paradigm inspired by rational-choice theory, political elites would enter within the process of electoral competition following three types of objectives: the desire to maximize their

² S. J. Rosenstone, L. B. Roy & E. H. Lazarus, *Third Parties in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); S. Hug, *Altering Party System: Strategic Behavior and the Emergence of New Political Parties in Western Democracies* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001).

³ On regionalist parties, see L. De Winter & H. Tursan, *Regionalist Parties in Western Europe* (London: Routledge, 1998); on Christian-democratic parties see S. N. Kalyvas, *The Rise of Christian Democracy in Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996); on right-wing parties, see R. Harmel & J. D. Sväsand "Formation and Success of New Parties", *International Political Science Review*, 6(4) 1996: 501-23, P. Ignazi, "The Silent Counter-Revolution: Hypotheses on the Emergence of Extreme Right-Wing Parties in Europe", *European Journal of Political Research*, 22(1) 1992: 3-34. Finally, on left-wing libertarian/ecologist parties, consult H. Kitschelt, *The Radical Right in Western Europe: A Comparative Analysis* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998).

⁴ R. Inglehart, *El cambio cultural en las sociedades industriales avanzadas* (Madrid: CIS, 1991), 11.

⁵ M. Tavits, "Party System Change: Testing a Model of New Party Entry", *Party Politics*, 12(1) 2006: 99-119.

⁶ G. Cox, *Making Votes Count: Strategic Coordination in the World's Electoral Systems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

control on political positions, the willingness to influence the definition of public policies and the objective to maximize their electoral results, either for becoming a coalition partner of the government, or to access a blackmail position within the redefined political system.⁷ Following this third stream of explanatory variables, the emergence of new parties would be related to the strategy of interested political entrepreneurs.

Post industrial Society, Post materialist Values and the Emergence of Green Parties

Since the 1970s, western European party systems have experienced processes of change and reconfiguration. For instance, the relative decline of the militant-party type, the weakening of partisan identification, the tendencies of a higher degree of electoral volatility, the progression of “emotional”, “affective” or “protest” voting and the increasing complexity of political competition resulting from the emergence of left-wing libertarian/ecologist or right-wing/authoritarian parties, have all contributed to party system change.⁸

However, these dynamics are not directly connected with a weakening of the traditional functions of parties to aggregate popular demands and make public decisions. Nevertheless, they support the analysis of a growing crisis of political representation. In this context, the emergence of Green parties within established political systems will be assessed. The classic hypothesis regarding this issue states that the structural socio-economic mutations experienced by Western European democracies since the 1960s have favoured the development of new post materialist values emphasizing political participation, power decentralization, individual self-realization, quality of life and environmental preoccupations.⁹ Theoretically, following this model, the progression of post materialist values would represent an independent variable of the emergence of Green parties. In fact, following Inglehart’s indicator, many Southern European countries like Portugal, Greece, Spain, and Italy can still be considered as “materialist” with a low degree of social identification for post materialist values.¹⁰ Green parties are also very

⁷ K. Storm & W. C. Müller, “Political Parties and Hard Choices”, in *Policy, Office or Voter*, ed K. Storm & W. C. Müller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 23-52.; G. Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems. A Framework for Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

⁸ P. Mair, “Political Parties, Popular Legitimacy and Public Privilege”, *West European Politics*, 18(1) 1995: 40-57; H. Schmitt & S. Holmberg “Political parties in Decline”, in *Citizens and the State*, ed H. D. Klingemann & D.

Fuchs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 95-132.

⁹ R. Inglehart, *El cambio cultural en las sociedades industriales avanzadas* (Madrid: CIS, 1991), 12.

¹⁰ The thesis of post materialism developed by Ronald Inglehart defends that the growth of financial incomes and the relative absence of war leads to a shift in citizens attitudes, which become less preoccupied with material welfare than by individual subjective welfare. The degree of post materialism is measured by the following question: “There is a lot of talk these days about what (OUR COUNTRY)'s goals should be for the

weak or even nonexistent within these countries, which would confirm *a priori* the theory linking the emergence of Green parties with post-materialist values and socio-economic changes. However, an important critique of this model argues that the socio-economic transformations which characterize the post-industrial society have facilitated the development of two, and not only one, set of new systems of values, post-materialism on the one hand and neo-conservatism on the other hand.¹¹ Furthermore, even if we admit to the development of post-materialist values, a direct link with the emergence of Green parties does not seem to exist.

Indeed, how can the theory explain that two countries like Germany and Great Britain present similar levels of social identification towards post-materialist values (43% PM-55% M and 44% PM-53% M respectively), yet the emergence of Green parties is not constant between the two countries?

next ten or fifteen years. On this card are listed some of the goals that different people say should be given top priority. Would you please say which one of them you, yourself, consider to be most important in the long run?": (1) Maintaining order in the country; (2) Giving people more say in important Government decisions; (3) Fighting rising prices ; (4) Protecting freedom of speech. Following Inglehart, people who choose the second and the fourth items are post materialists and those who choose the first and the third items are materialists. Those who choose an item of each composed a mix group. Cf. *L'Opinion Publique dans l'Union Européenne* (European Commission: Eurobarometer 64.2, 2002), available at http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/index_fr.htm (consulted 15/12/2006).

¹¹ P. Ignazi, *Op. Cit.*, 1992: 5.

Following Sartori's definition, Die Grünen can be considered as a significant party as it presents a "coalition potential", being involved in governmental decisions with the German SPD in 1998, for instance. Die Grünen has also "blackmail potential" within the German political system, because its positioning has forced other parties to realign themselves and ideologically renovate their programmes.¹² However, the British Greens have never obtained significant electoral support and failed to apply sufficient social pressure to modify established parties' tactics of competition and propose new themes to the political agenda. As a result, we will try to solve the puzzle of Green parties' emergence by looking at other explanatory variables than the degree of identification with post materialist values in four different cases. In contrast with the Great Britain and Germany, the Italian case is characterized by the emergence of a Green party even though there is a low degree of identification to post-materialist values in the population. (31% PM-67% M). The existence of post-materialist values themselves in a given country does not seem to be a necessary condition for the emergence of Green parties. Rather, we know from the literature that independently from the success or failure of their national Green parties, post-materialists voters are always over-represented in the electorate of Green parties. In other words, post-materialist values

¹² G. Sartori, *Op. Cit.*, 1976: 148-49.

characterize the electorate of Green parties, but there is no direct link between the degree of post-materialism of the broader electorate and the success or failure of a Green party.

Hence, from the three theories on the emergence of new parties and from the argumentation outlined above, we can deduce that the social variables are neither determinant in explaining the emergence nor success or failure of Green parties. Thus, the paper is built on two complementary hypotheses derived from the literature which defends that the emergence of new parties is linked to institutional and strategic variables and that the consolidation (success or failure) is linked with the joint effects of the two variables. It is true that institutional factors can include the constraints or opportunities of the electoral system, the degree of access to state institutions or to public funds. However, the access to state institutions or to public funds is only possible after a previous electoral support. It can help the consolidation of a Green party but cannot explain its emergence. In that sense, the first hypothesis defends that while other variables can also play a minor role, electoral rules and party strategies are the two determinant factors which can explain the emergence of Green parties. While electoral rules refer to the system of electoral representation, party strategies are twofold: on the one hand, parties have to position themselves internally regarding their own institutionalization, the degree of autonomy of their executive and the extent of intra-party democracy; on the

other hand, parties have to determine external strategies regarding party alliances, the ways they organize political competition and how they try to convince the broader electorate through their programmes and party discourses. The second hypothesis is related with party consolidation and states that it is the joint effects of electoral systems constraints and party strategies which can explain the successes or failures of Green parties. In the short term, a Green party can succeed with only one of the factors playing to its advantage. In other words, even without a coherent strategy, a party can emerge because of a very permissive electoral system. On the contrary, through a coherent strategy of alliance and electoral mobilisation a Green party can potentially obtain representation even if the electoral system is highly restrictive. However, in the long term, a given Green party will succeed to become a stable political competitor only if it is able to act strategically to benefit the joint effects of both factors. If the electoral system is highly restrictive, the party will not only have to be disciplined and coherent in its policy proposals, but it will also have to design a pertinent strategy for bypassing the effects of the electoral system. Yet, even though the electoral system is much more permissive, the party will only emerge and succeed in the long term with a coherent electoral strategy.

The Decisive Constraint of Electoral Systems

The structure of opportunity for new parties to restructure the lines of competition of a given party system is decisively constrained by existing electoral rules which can be permissive or restrictive factors. In France, the institutions of the Fifth Republic have been designed in order to assure the primacy of the executive. The French political regime is parliamentary but with important presidential tendencies. The power of the Parliament and of opposition parties is quite weak, while the electoral system is very cruel for small parties. In theory it seems quite open, but it is not in practice. The general elections are held with a two round uninominal majoritarian ballot. Small parties can obtain important electoral supports at the first ballot as voters can choose from a large number of parties.¹³ Yet, only the first two parties compete with one another on the second ballot. Thus, while it seems that electoral rules favour the development of a multiparty system, historically, voters have always elected one of the governmental party.¹⁴ The main paradox of the French system is that a small party can obtain a large number of votes at the first round of the

presidential elections without possible representation at the National Parliament.¹⁵ The French electoral system favours bipolarization, and consequently, Les Verts cannot have MPs as long as they do not forge an alliance. As the parliamentary elections have two rounds, for being elected, a potential MP needs to win a majority in a given constituency. A utility vote for the PS or the UMP usually happens, because voting for Les Verts would reduce the overall chances of the left to win parliamentary seats, as a MP can be automatically elected if he obtains more than 50% of the votes at the first round. Given that Les Verts face the concurrence of the PS on the left, it is almost impossible that the Greens can obtain more votes than the PS in the first ballot. The French electoral system reduces the opportunities of emergence of small parties unless they choose to become part of a coalition: “the French party system places a high value on parties able to construct alliances, but penalizes those that through choice or necessity remain without allies”.¹⁶

In contrast, in Italy, it could be said that electoral rules have been more

¹³ All the parties which have managed to obtain at least 500 signatures of mayors from French cities or villages can compete for national elections.

¹⁴ Since 1958, only three parties have been able to win the Presidency, either with a majority, or with a governmental coalition: (1) the left-wing *Parti Socialiste* (PS), (2) the party of the center *Union pour la Démocratie Française* (UDF), now *Mouvement Démocrate* (Modem), (3) and the dominant right-wing party *Rassemblement pour la République* (RPR), now *Union pour la Majorité Présidentielle* (UMP).

¹⁵ For instance, in the recent elections held in June 2007, the UDF of François Bayrou obtained 18,57% of the votes at the first round of the presidential election. Thus, in theory, his party should be the third political force in France. However, as the party refused to enter in an alliance with the PS or with the UMP, at the parliamentary elections, only three of his candidates were elected.

¹⁶ A. Cole & B. Doherty “Pas comme les autres: the French Greens at the Crossroads”, in *The Green Challenge*, ed. D. Richardson & C. Rootes (Routledge: London, 1995), 54.

permissive for the emergence of I Verdi, especially since 1994. From 1945 to the beginning of the 1990s, the Italian party system was quite stable with a bipolar confrontation between the left and the right. The first Republic was characterized by majoritarian trends, but corruption scandals in the financing of political parties prompted a change of electoral system, which finally entered into force in 1994. Following the new ballot electoral rules of the second Republic, 75% of the seats of the parliamentary elections are now granted with the majoritarian system, while 25% of the seats are obtained through proportional representation in a list ballot in which parties have to win at least 4% of the votes for obtaining representation.¹⁷ While during the I Republic, the right-wing Christian Democratic Party was able to govern by itself and the Communist party lead the opposition, the introduction of the II Republic has coincided with a new necessity for governmental parties to find allies. In such a system, smaller parties could play a greater blackmail potential and could even become pivotal elements in some cases for transforming a minority coalition into a majoritarian one. The Italian party system has witnessed a high degree of political fragmentation since 1994. For instance, 32 parties were in Parliament after the 2006 elections. It is true that i Verdi have

benefited from the new electoral regulations and have been able to obtain an almost constant parliamentary representation and even some governmental offices. Yet, as paradoxical as it could be, I Verdi's electoral results have remained quite modest during the 1990s, with a support usually oscillating between 2 and 3%. In brief, in spite of a permissive institutional context, they have never been able to bypass the constraints of the electoral system.

While in the Italian case, a redefinition of electoral rules might have helped i Verdi, the British ballot electoral system might constitute one of the most constraining factors for The Greens. The use of the uninominal one-round majority ballot in general elections, known as the electoral system of the "first-past-the-post" favour the already well-established parties. The impossibility for a second decisive round between government parties and the very low probability of victory of an emerging party at the first round almost always leads to a "utility-vote" from the electorate, to the detriment of new parties. In addition, the ballot creates a high disproportion between the number of votes and the number of seats obtained, encouraging the over-representation of the most popular party.¹⁸ Thus, the "Westminster system", intrinsically related with the British two-party system is a reflection

¹⁷ P. Martin, "Les Principaux Modes de Scrutin en Europe", in *Le Mode de Scrutin fait-il l'élection ?* ed. P. Delwit & J. M. De Waele (Université Libre de Bruxelles: Bruxelles, 2000), 39-51.

¹⁸ I. Crewe "Parties and Electors", in *The Developing British Political System: The 1990s*, ed. I. Budge & D. McKay (London: Longman, 1993), 83-111.

of a conservative political culture, which favours bipolarisation, reinforces a dynamic of centripetal competition and sanctions extremism. Contrary to the Grüner, the political isolation created from an unfavourable ballot system may have contributed to the development of a peripheral culture within the British Greens and as a result, stimulated the triumph of the radical stream of the party.¹⁹

Finally, in Germany, important constitutional parameters constrain political parties, such as the federal structure of government and the autonomy of political parties from their extra-parliamentary organizations. These institutional factors have fostered the fragmentation of German political parties in federations of organisations within a system of multi-level governance constituted by the federal, the Länd and the local level. Consequently, the German federal system may have augmented the possibility for strategic entry of the German Greens into the political system, thereby creating a favourable political opportunity structure for emergence. Additionally, the proportional ballot with compensation used in Germany presents a dual advantage: it enables a representation of proximity of the electorate (each one having a MP in its circumscription), and at the same time, equally represents

political forces.²⁰ This system with a proportional finality gives two votes to the electorate and mixes a uninominal ballot (with one round for the designation of half of the MPs) with a list ballot in order to determine “the global proportion of seats that each party bypassing 5% - or obtaining more than three MPs at the uninominal ballot – has the right to”.²¹ The effects of majority created by the uninominal ballot are compensated by the election of half of the Bundestag MPs at the list ballot. The idea is to mix the supposed effects of the proportional and majority electoral system. Contrary to the British system, the personality of the leader and the proximity with the electorate might play a more important role at the local level. Finally, the electoral ballot favours the development of a multiparty system, and reinforces the potential for new parties, like the German Greens, to emerge on the political scene.

In the end, what can be said on the influence of electoral systems constraints on the emergence of Green parties? While the British system is majoritarian with a two-party system at the parliamentary level, the French case is also majoritarian but with multiparty tendencies, the German and the Italian cases are mixed systems, which ally majoritarian and proportional representation. From the comparison it can be said that a favourable electoral system is a necessary but not sufficient condition to explain the success of Green parties. In fact, the failure of the

¹⁹ M. Douglas & A. Wildasky, *Risk and Culture. An Essay on the Selection of Technological and Environmental Dangers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 208.

²⁰ P. Martin *Op. Cit.*, 2000: 41.

²¹ P. Martin *Op. Cit.*, 2000: 41.

British Green Party has a lot to do with the “first-past-the-post” which is decisively cruel for third parties. Yet, the constraints of the electoral system are not the only variables at play. For instance, two counterfactual arguments could be provided. First, if the Green party is a confederation of local associations, it could have concentrated its campaigns on strategic constituencies where its local support is high enough to bypass the effects of the electoral system as nationalist parties have done. Second, the Liberal-Independent is a relevant nation-wide third party in British politics that is always able to obtain parliamentary representation. Why are the Liberals able to obtain representation while the Greens are not? As we can see, in both cases, the constraints of the electoral system are important but do not tell us the whole story. This point is even more reinforced by the French and the Italian cases. In fact, while the French electoral system is rather restrictive, Les Verts have always been able to bypass its effects when they have designed a coherent strategy of alliances for doing so. On the contrary, in Italy, the Verdi have failed to broaden their electoral support even though a favourable electoral system has initially played in their favour. In opposition with the Italian Greens, Die Grünen have not only benefited from possibilities of access to representation, but they have also designed a coherent strategy to do so. The next sections will explore the two faces (internal and external) of the strategic aspect in more details.

III. Internal Strategies of Party Organizations

Party Institutionalization and Intra-Party Organization

While electoral rules can play the role of important “exogenous” factors which constrain parties, the internal strategies of party organizations are central “endogenous” factors, both in terms of (1) party institutionalization and (2) party programmatic change. In France, the intra-party organization of Les Verts is quite different from that of traditional political parties. In the late 1970s, most of the sympathizers of the ecologist movement rejected the creation of a centralized and hierarchical party structure. The conflict over the opportunity to create a national political party was the main bone of contention between ecologists, and it has remained a central line of fracture for a long time. The party remains highly decentralized nowadays and the militants have large powers of control over the executives. Originally, the accumulation of mandates was prohibited. The strong opposition towards the institutionalization of a party autocracy has led to a preference for four spokespersons (two women and two men) rather than a single leader. Regional and local organizations have a large autonomy and play a pivotal role in the decision-making processes. Contrary to traditional parties in which the executive is generally chosen by a limited number of militants, all the militants of Les Verts are electing the members of the “National Inter-Regional Council”, the local party

representatives as well as the presidential candidate. Since the mid-1990s, the party has reformed its organizational structures. The general assembly is now two-tiered with a regionally based congress of representatives, as well as a national assembly. A more centralized college of executives has been introduced, the rotation of posts has been relaxed, while multiple office holding is now possible but with important restrictions.²² Thus, in opposition with its original democratic radicalism, the party structures of Les Verts are gradually becoming closer to that of traditional parties.

As for Les Verts, the organization of I Verdi has been a complex process, as some activists are openly left wing, while others have a more centrist attitude. In organizational terms, a major problem was constituted by the autonomy of the ecological associations at the local level and the concurrence that has risen between several of them. The introduction of the principle of “biodegradability” of the Green lists has created major difficulties for assuring a responsible leadership in the eyes of the public. Once elected, a list was impeded to be elected again. The rotation of its representatives following the alphabetical list was also instituted for promoting internal democracy. This deliberated organization had the objective to limit the personalization of power within the party and to impede

the emergence of an autocracy. With the politics of the “biodegradability” of their own lists, I Verdi wanted their party to reflect the image of the radical democratic politics they wanted to defend. Nonetheless, it has created exactly the reverse effects. In the absence of visible public leaders, citizens have not been able to understand what their programme was really. The credibility of the party for participating into government activities has been consequently questioned.

In terms of party institutionalisation, it could be said that the British Green Party has deliberately opted for a strategy of cultural revolution as an antecedent to an electoral revolution, by insisting on a necessary mutation of citizens’ political mentality and values, even if it should be associated with an impossibility to conquer political power in the short term. The Green Party has preserved statutes which permit the survival of a weakly structured and egalitarian movement reticent toward party institutionalisation. The resulting dynamic of the permanent opposition between the realists and the fundamentalists has led to the victory of the latter, which are sceptical toward party hierarchies and social change through parliamentary means. Consequently, intra-party decentralisation has been reinforced while the strategy of competition against other parties has become marginalised. Moreover, in order to avoid the control of political offices by an oligarchy of militants, the Green Party has institutionalised a system of rotation of the executive offices of the

²² B. Doherty & F. Faucher, “The Decline of Green Politics in France”, *Environmental Politics*, 5(1) 1996: 114.

party every three years, prohibiting in the same way the accumulation of mandates. This trend is comparable to the “biodegradability lists” of i Verdi and has created a regular shortage of experienced leaders. In terms of internal functions, the decision-making process is even more long and complicated now that the party tries to promote equal participation of all its members. The willingness to promote intra-party democracy and to control the leadership has led the Greens to be incapable of reacting to external constrain and to develop a clear political message.²³ The executive decisions of the party must always be accepted *a priori* and *a posteriori* by the militants, the absence of which led reformists Sara Parkin, Jonathan Porritt and Paul Ekins to leave the party in 1992.²⁴ In the end, the promotion of “collective leadership” and the rejection of all hierarchies might have diminished the possibility to transform the movement into a political instrument.

Finally, in comparison with the three other cases, Die Grünen have been much more effective in institutionalizing their party structures. They have progressively merged the numerous social movements of the late 1970s while marginalizing the radical militants to the benefit of the “realists”. It is true that the German system, for

instance its financial incentives, has played a permissive role in the progressive institutionalisation of the Greens.²⁵ Yet, in spite of initial divisions, Die Grünen have gradually reinforced the primacy of their electoral and office-seeking strategy at the local, regional or national level of the German federal system. Even if the strategy of power conquest requires a normalisation of party structures, the German Greens have tried to balance this effect by involving the social movements in their internal decision-making procedures. Trying to find an alternative to SPD’s trade unions traditional support and to the CDU/CSU support from business circles, the Greens have tried to attract all social movements, making them count within the internal structure of the party in an innovative manner. This social anchorage has certainly facilitated to

²³ R. S. Katz & P. Mair “The Evolution of Party Organization in Europe: The Three Faces of Party Organization”, in *Parties in an Age of Change, American Review of Politics*, ed. W. Crotty, 14(4), 1995 : 611.

²⁴ F. Faucher, *Les Habits Verts de la Politique* (Paris: Presses de Sciences-po, 1999), 218.

²⁵ In contrast to the British case, in Germany, the public funding of Bundestag parties has constantly progressed since the end of the Second World War. Public subventions already represented between 60 and 80% of the federal parties total incomes in the early 1990s. Since their first electoral victory in 1983 and their entry to the Bundestag, Die Grünen have benefited from this public financing, which has undeniably helped to consolidate the formation of the party. Contrary to the British Greens who exclusively depend on their membership fees, in 1993, only 10% of Die Grünen total budget came from its members. T. Poguntke & B. Bernhard, “Germany” in *Party Organizations: A Data Handbook on Party Organizations in Western Democracies, 1960-90*, ed. R. S. Katz & P. Mair (London: Sage, 1992), 317-88. See also T. Poguntke “Parties in a Legalistic Culture: The Case of Germany”, in *How Parties Organize. Change and Adaptation in Party Organizations in Western Democracies* ed. Katz, R. S. & Mair, P. (London: Sage, 1995), 185-216.

legitimize the party and encouraged its influence on the German political agenda.²⁶ In fact, Die Grünen have preserved a participatory approach and high levels of intra-party democracy, but the party has refrained from overcontrolling the executive and constraining the definition of policy positions. Arguably, in comparison with other Green parties in Western party systems, the internal structures of Die Grünen are more similar to those of traditional parties.

In the end, it can be said that the four Green parties have faced similar intra-organizational dilemmas. They have been divided between their initial ideal of creating new political organisations that are more decentralised and democratic on the one hand, and on the other, by the realistic requirements of political life which involves the politicising of social issues, making decisions quickly, and opposing government effectively. The comparison between i Verdi and the British Greens shows how the extensive control of the leaders by party members and the lack of autonomy of party executives has certainly reinforced intra-party democracy, but to the price of an externally coherent political strategy. Apart from the German case, which has almost become a traditional party in terms of internal organization, Green parties have been characterized by their internal divisions and factionalism, which has enabled them to provide a coherent message to the

electorate. Even in the case that they have bypassed their divisions, as for Les Verts, the party has paid the late emergence of an internal party discipline, as it is nowadays difficult for him to compensate the image forged in the 1990s of a minor party with unrealistic governmental ambitions.

Ideological and Programmatic Change

Second, the internal strategies of Green parties could be understood in the light of ideological and programmatic change. On that point, the French ecologists were initially only focused on environmental concerns, mainly at the local level. The nuclear disaster of Chernobyl in 1986 helped them to bypass local issues to politicize global environmental debates. In the 1980s, Antoine Waechter directed the party and defended a distinctive “autonomous” ecological perspective. In a 1988 survey concerned with the attitudes of its militants, Prendiville showed that 47% of its party activists supported a focus on the “natural” environment, and only 25% of them favoured the prioritising of “social” concerns.²⁷ Nonetheless, following the relative success in the 1989 European elections and in response to the popular criticism that they were nothing more than a single-issue pressure group, Les Verts have formulated a more comprehensive political programme including anti-militarism, North-South relations or the insertion of migrants in

²⁶ H. Kitschelt, *The Logics of Party Formation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989).

²⁷ B. Prendiville, *Environmental Politics in France* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1994), 109.

French society.²⁸ This transition was even more evident in the party's 1997 election campaign, which claimed to focus "beyond environmental issues to a wider political revolution for a new mode of development". Les Verts asked for the "democratization of French institutions" through the introduction of proportional representation and a larger power for the Parliament. They have also introduced in the public debate the questions of a higher degree of decentralization in favour of the regions, of gender equality and of the reduction of the weekly working-time to 35 hours. Such ideas have been incorporated into the programme of the Socialist Party since 1998. Yet, it is far from clear that they have been successful in transmitting their ideological message, as even in the 2008 electoral campaign, French media tended to present them as primordially and sometimes exclusively concerned with environmental issues.

In Italy, when the political regime evolved towards the second Republic in 1994, the political power of *i Verdi* was rather weak. Environmental concerns were excluded from the political agenda to the benefit of more "material" issues as corruption, the development of immigration or the high level of unemployment. In order to bypass the effects of the electoral system, *i Verdi* have been co-founder of the alliance of center-left, the *Margherita*. This new role has obliged them to modify their

original project, abandoning the "biodegradability" of their own lists for privileging a more traditional political strategy.²⁹ They have chosen to personalize their political action which has undeniably contributed to the gradual "professionalization" of their party. While at the beginning of the 1990s, the Greens were criticized for their amateurism, the creation of a more hierarchical and responsible leadership has also helped them to strengthen their political programme beyond exclusive environmental concerns. They have introduced new issues such as the enlargement of civil rights, the fight against corruption, and racism. Nonetheless, even more than for Les Verts, it is a favourable relation with the broader society which *i Verdi* have been unable to create. While the Italian society is almost indifferent to environmental concerns, *i Verdi* are almost exclusively perceived through this lens. Little is known about their other proposals and consequently they can only gather a very weak level of popular support. In that sense, 75% of *I Verdi* voters have made this choice only occasionally and less than 25% have voted for them several times. The motivations of these loyal voters are quite homogeneous. The protection of the environment is always their first priority. On the contrary, the majority

²⁸ J. K. Proud, "Ecology Parties in France", in *French Political Parties*, ed. N. A. Addinall (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1995), 137.

²⁹ They also choose to nominate a well-known leader, a spokesperson which can be recognized by the electorate: Luigi Manconi, a journalist, and sociologist which was the partner of the TV journalist Bianca Berlinguer, herself daughter of Enrico Berlinguer, the general secretary of the Communist Italian Party from 1972 to 1984.

of occasional voters justify their choices not to always vote for *I Verdi* because of their attachment to another party (30%), the weak political power of the Greens (23%) or because of what they consider as the limits of a too restrictive political programme (12%).³⁰

The main problem of *i Verdi*, that is to say, the perception of it as a “single issue” political party, is even truer in the British case. Not only is the Green Party seen as exclusively concerned with ecological issues, but it is also presented by the British media as an unconventional party, closer to a radical NGO than to an office-seeking party. The Greens have to face a high degree of ostracism from public televisions and national newspapers so that even though they might want to broaden their policy programme, they have virtually no opportunities to let the public know it. Indirectly, their *de facto* occupation of the margins of the political system has reinforced their intransigent strategy and the relative absence of internal ideological change.³¹

In opposition with the British Greens, in Germany, it is the realists which have conquered the internal battles, leading the ecological movement to “renounce a part of its original radicalism in order to obtain concrete proofs of the ‘ecologisation’ of society”.³² The

emergence of the German Greens seems essentially related with the ideological evolution of the party from its 1980 *Bundesprogramm* to the programmatic renovation promoted by the *Grundsatz* of April 2002. Die Grünen have evolved from a radical eco-socialism towards a political position which could be assimilated to that of classical political liberalism. Die Grünen has become a classical third party trying to exercise its blackmail potential and searching to enter in governmental coalitions. From the “limits to growth” rhetoric and the willingness to incarnate the new social movements of the period in the late 1970s, the Greens have been progressively incorporated into the political game, entering the Bundestag in 1983 with 5,3% of the vote share and in 1987 with 8,3%.³³ The German Greens have successfully transformed ecology into a political concept and instrumental tool for politicizing new social issues and renewing the political agenda of established parties, trying to promote nowadays a radical democratic politics in favour of minorities, social justice and multiculturalism. Moving from an anti-establishment position toward an active role in the politization of the public agenda might have constituted a key factor in their successes, reinforcing a realignment of part of the SPD electorate to the benefit of the Greens. After its 7,3 % of the vote share in 1994, the Greens have become involved in a governmental coalition with the SPD in 1998,

³⁰ Survey realized by the Institute Directa, January 1994.

³¹ L. G. Bennie, M. N. Franklin & W. Rüdig “Green Dimensions: The Ideology of the British Greens”, in *Green Politics Three*, ed. W. Rüdig (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), 217-39.

³² F. Faucher, *Op. Cit.*, 1999: 218.

³³ E. Papadakis, *The Green Movement in West Germany* (London & Canberra: Croom Helm, 1984), 48.

renouncing progressively to its founding objective to foster the “politics from below” towards a motivation to “reinforce the constitutional liberalism”.³⁴ The German Greens have moved from the defence of collective rights to that of individual rights, “the democratisation of democracy, conceived previously in terms of politization of the social is now perceived in terms of institutional reform”.³⁵

In conclusion, it can be said that Green parties have presented three types of attitudes in relation with ideological and programmatic change. First, the British Greens are those which have been more confined has a “single issue” political groups. Yet, this position is a sign of their failure because they originally wanted to broaden their programme but have never been able to be seen beyond environmental concerns by the British public. It is even truer when we think that they have been confined to environmental issues while a majority of British NGOs and environmental groups do not support the Green Party. In general, they have remained at the margins of the British political sphere, in the incapability to bypass their radical outlook. Second, both I Verdi and Les Verts have shown a more

important willingness to broaden their political programmes, but the electorate has not perceived these transformations. In other words, while in theory they have tried to become parties with a broad political programme of “democratic radicalism”, in practise, voters are generally not aware of their positions over other issues than environment. More importantly, even if their positions are known, their expertises are only considered as credible for environmental issues. Finally, and in contrast with the three other cases, Die Grünen have not only broadend their policy programmes, but the German public has also perceived this mutation. Die Grünen have actively politicized new issues such as gender equality or minority rights within the German society, creating and defending a distinct political space for themselves within the German political spectrum.

IV. External Strategies of Party Competition

Party Relations with Social Movements and Societal Change

In addition to the constraints of electoral systems and the centrality of internal organizational and ideological positions, Green parties' external strategies of party competition are determinant factors in the explanation of their successes or their failures. Two elements will be considered in this section, (1) Green parties' relations with social movements and societal change, (2) and Green parties' influences over party system change.

³⁴ *The Future is Green, Alliance 90/The Greens: Program and Principles* (Bündis 90/Die Grünen, 2002) available at www.gruene.de/grundsatzprogramm-english.pdf (consulted on 26/12/2006), 7.

³⁵ G. Talshir, “A threefold ideological analysis of Die Grünen: from ecologized socialism to political liberalism?”, *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 8(2), 2003: 157-184.

In the French case, environmental protection and new concerns linked with an increased urbanization were politicized in May 1968 and created a favourable social context for Les Verts. At that time, the vast majority of environmental campaigns were linked with local issues, such as the protection of a national park (*Parc national de la Vanoise*), against the construction of a nuclear reactor (*Fessenheim, Plogoff*), or for denouncing ecological disasters (*the Amoco Cadiz affair*). In the 1977 town council elections, some thirty Green councillors took up office.³⁶ Yet, contrary to the German case where the Green movement soon became predominant, the French ecologists had to share the political stage with other movements.³⁷ Thus, when René Dumont contested the 1974 presidential elections, only a small minority of militants supported him. In 1979, the *Mouvement d'Ecologie Politique* (MEP) tried to support the emergence of an ecological party that would focus on electoral politics. Nevertheless, the *Amis de la Terre* did not support the process, and a few months later, the *Confédération écologiste* (CE) was created to challenge the MEP's monopoly.³⁸ The two groups finally

merged into a united national party called *Les Verts-Confédération écologiste* in 1984. However, the process of unification of a national Green party was soon disrupted by competing personal strategies. At the 1984 European elections, Brice Lalonde presented a rival ecology list, *Entente Radical Ecologiste* (ERE), which contributed to split the green vote. During all the 1980s, and even in the beginning of the 1990s when he founded a new party called *Génération Ecologiste* (GE), Lalonde's personal ambitions divided the ecologists. While in the early 1980s conflicts aroused along the question of the *institutionalization of the party*, in the early 1990s, it was on the *position on the left-right dimension*. GE defended a centrist “*ni gauche-ni droite*” position, while *Les Verts* progressively positioned themselves on the left of the political spectrum. In the 1992 regional elections, *Les Verts* received 6.8 % and GE 7,1% which could have been a very good result for a unitary ecological list.³⁹ Not only have the French ecologists been unable to gather the support of social movements and of the broader civil society, but also they have required more than a decade to eliminate their internal divisions. When they finally overcame them in 1996, the French public had lost its initial support.

While in France, Green social movements emerged quite early, in the

³⁶ J. K. Proud, “Ecology Parties in France”, in *French Political Parties*, ed. N. A. Addinall (Cardiff: University of Wales Press 1995), 133.

³⁷ J. Burchell, *The Evolution of Green Politics. Development and Change within European Green Parties* (London: Earthscan, 2002), 60.

³⁸ The internal divisions within the ecologist movement were even deepened when the MEP changed of name to become *Les Verts – Parti écologiste* in 1982. Indeed, it failed to unite the ecology movement and only six months later, in

May 1983, the CE also changed its name to become *Les Verts – La Confédération écologiste*.

³⁹ A. Cole & B. Doherty, *Op. Cit.*, 1995: 54.

mid-1970s, but the institutionalization of a unified Green party took more than two decades, in Italy, ecological movements themselves emerged more recently, in the mid-1980s. In the 1985 elections, numerous Green lists were present in 12 Italian regions and obtained a total of 648 832 votes. Even though those lists were not yet unified, they managed to present several candidates under the same name, the “Green list”. In order to capitalize on those early successes, in November 1986 a national federal organization was constituted. In 1987, thirteen Green representatives entered the national assembly for the first time, and two senators were elected, while the party obtained 2,5% of the overall national vote. The same year, a referendum convoked by I Verdi and approved by a large majority of the population prompted the abandonment of the Italian nuclear programme, which has enhanced the public visibility of the party.⁴⁰ Yet, more than twenty years later, it can be said that this early success has unfortunately remained one of the only examples of I Verdi’s influence on policy-making. As in the French case, the institutionalization of the party has been complicated by internal divisions which emerged in the 1989 European elections, splitting the ecologist vote between the *Green list-European Greens* with 3,8% and the

Rainbow Greens, with 2,4%.⁴¹ The ecologist vote was even more divided at the 1990 regional elections between three concurrent lists: the *Green lists* obtained 2,3%, the *Rainbow Greens* 1,3% and the *United Greens* 1,2%. Even though the Italian Greens originally wanted to represent an alternative to the existing party system, they never managed to capitalize on the rejection of traditional parties, as they were themselves divided for the national leadership and have lately unified their party to form *I Verdi*. Consequently, as for the French Greens, the electorate of *I Verdi* is still fluent. All electoral deceptions have been followed by a loss of precious militants. Finally, one major factor that could explain the failure of I Verdi is that their values are quite distinct from that of the broader Italian society. The relation that Italians entertain with environment is ambivalent. In a 2005 Eurobarometer survey, the Italians have the highest score in Europe on those that associate environmental concerns with the problems of pollution in the town. Nonetheless, they have the lowest score when environment protection is associated with individual responsibility: 4%. Italy is the last but one country when it is a question of asking for more information on environmental issues. While *I Verdi* have only lately tried to promote a broader political programme, through this survey it can be understood how the

⁴⁰ R. Biorcio, “Les verts en Italie: Marginalité et Pouvoir”, in *Les partis Verts en Europe*, ed. P. Delwit & J. M. De Waele (Bruxelles: Complexe 1999), 184.

⁴¹ D. Boy & J. Chiche, “La Gauche radicale et les Verts” in *Le Vote européen 2004-2005*, P. Perrineau (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2005), 64.

Italian electorate has not been very convinced so far by their strategy.⁴²

The same pattern of marginal social support seems to apply to the British Greens. The Green Party is largely considered as a radical party with no real power not only to gain seats and offices but also to influence policy. What is a real sign of the failure of the Green Party is that it has not managed to become the political branch of the powerful British environmental movements. Britain is in fact the European country with the major number of environmental NGOs and with the major number of individuals affiliated to environmental groups. Organizations like Greenpeace or WWF are very powerful in Great Britain. Yet, NGOs or individual supporters of environmental groups do not see the Green Party as the representative of environmental concerns.⁴³ For the Green Party, political renewal has to become a reality not only in reforming political institutions in the long term, but also through the realization of direct

⁴² Italy has witnessed tremendous social mutations since the 1950s. From a relatively poor country, it has become a consumerist society, and this tendency has been reinforced by the “Berlusconi moments” in 2004 and again in 2008 which have glorified individual merits and the cult of money. In such a context, Italian society is not willing to accept the more altruistic values proposed by the Greens. Cf. Eurobarometer Survey, *Attitudes of the Europeans towards Environment Protection*, April 2005. http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_217_fr.pdf.

⁴³ W. Rüdiger, “Green Dimensions, The Ideology of the British Greens”, in *Green Politics Three*, ed. W. Rüdiger (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), 217-39.

and intra-party democracy in the short term.⁴⁴ In that sense, the centrifugal dynamic of competition of the Green Party has reduced the prospects for compromise and electoral coalitions with third parties. The Greens have not only been unable to represent environmental social movements, but their discourse has also been in cleavage with the broad values of the conservative British society, while in political terms, they have failed to transfer the ecological issue from the social to the political sphere.

Finally, out of the four cases, Die Grünen seem to be the only ones to know relative success, both in including environmental social movements within its party structures and in creating a new electoral niche within German society. At the beginning of the 1980s, the citizen movement in Eastern Germany had the objective to create a *Gegenöffentlichkeit*, a “counter-public sphere”, promoting democratic reform and the defence of human rights in the former GDR. This ideological platform constituted the basis for the future synthesis between citizen movement and party structure around the reunified Greens *Alliance 90/Die Grünen*. Since 1988, more than 325 groups such as the “Initiative for Peace and Human Rights” (IPHR) created by Wolfgang Templin in January 1986, the movement *Demokratie Jetzt*, “Democracy Now” (DN) created by

⁴⁴ P. M. Saward “Green Democracy?”, in *The Politics of Nature. Exploration in Green Political Theory*, ed. A. Dobson & P. Lucardie (London: Routledge, 1993), 24-46.

Reinhard Lampe and the *Neues Forum*, the “New Forum” (NF), were insisting on the necessity to mobilize citizens for political change after decades of apathy and mass demobilization. Hence, this highly politicized political context might have favoured the dynamics of new party institutionalisation in response to renewed societal demands. From the beginning, the citizen movements have tried to stimulate the creation of a public forum of deliberation, decentralised and promoting the *Basisdemokratie*, the democratisation of politics through the social basis.⁴⁵ Even if the strategy adopted was essentially extra-parliamentary, the citizen movements became progressively aware that party institutionalisation could permit them to play the role they wanted as a new intermediary between civil society and the state. Therefore, the initial electoral coalition Alliance 90 (IPHR, DN, NF) has also incorporated the social movements. In the aftermath of the 3rd October 1990 Unification Treaty, the process of coalition-building was fostered by the fusion of the Greens of the West and of the East in one single political party, *Alliance 90/Die Grünen* in May 1992. On that point, the strategy used differs radically from that of the British Greens. The Green critique of *Parteiendemokratie*, the “democracy of party” became suddenly obsolete with the institutionalisation, and only the ideal of participatory democracy

constituted the specific feature of the new party in relation with established ones. The same trajectory as the British Greens has also existed in Germany, as the NF movement led by Klaus Wolfram, Bärbel Bohlev and Ingrid Köppe has refused the incorporation in the parliamentary game and the creation of parliamentary coalitions, but in the German case, this strategy has been marginalised within the party.⁴⁶ The new party has adopted a more transversal or “catch-all” political position, less radical than the British Greens, which has been better accepted by German society.

To conclude, this brief assessment of the relations between Green parties, the social movements and the broader society can show four major points. First, when Green parties as in France and Italy have suffered from their internal divisions, they have not been able, or only lately, to unify a coherent Green party. This late unification of the diverse Green movements has engendered a constant loss of militants after each electoral defeat and a major difficulty for Green parties to be seen as a real alternative. Second, in the British case, the internal divisions of the party have not been the main factors in the explanation of its failure, given that internal opponents, mainly the realist fraction, have been expelled from the party. Yet, the major dilemma of the British Greens has been their inability to gather the support of environmental

⁴⁵ C. Olivo, *Creating a Democratic Civil Society in Eastern Germany. The Case of the Citizen Movements and Alliance 90* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 92.

⁴⁶ S. Markovits & P. S. Gorski, *The German Left: Red, Green and Beyond* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 257.

groups even though they are quite powerful in Great Britain and could have facilitated the success of the party. Third, all the three French, British and Italian parties have been penalised by their inability to broaden their social base. In fact, as could be highlighted in the Italian case, their positions have remained in cleavage with the broader society so that their electoral appeal has only attracted a minority of citizens. Last but not least, the German Greens, in contrast with the three other cases, have been much more successful, in bypassing their internal divisions, in benefiting from their links with social movements and in constantly mobilising a new segment of the electorate.

The Influence of Green Parties on Party System Change

To finish, looking at their overall influence on party system dynamics can better assess the successes and failures of the external strategies of Green parties. For Green parties to be successful, they need to defend and represent a stable electoral niche, which leads political competition to be organized in new terms. Thus, the emergence of Green parties cannot only redefine the format (the number of relevant political parties), but also the mechanic (the type of interaction between parties) of a given party system.⁴⁷ Originally, in France, Les Verts maintained a strong ideological opposition to an alliance with any other political party, which has strongly

limited their chances of becoming a coalition partner for government. While environmental groups were originally quite reluctant to the formation of a new party, their willingness to do so progressed alongside the failure of the Parti Socialiste (PS) to champion ecological issues when François Mitterrand reached the Presidency in 1981. Indeed, the PS opted to continue the national nuclear programme, which indirectly led the ecologists to organize themselves autonomously. Taking into account the important constraints of the electoral system, Les Verts can only obtain parliamentary representation through alliances. After the victory of the pragmatists within the party in 1993, Green executives have agreed to negotiate an electoral alliance with the PS. During the 1998 parliamentary elections, in some constituencies, Les Verts did not present candidates in order to support the victory of the PS, and in others, it is the PS that did not present candidates. In such constituencies, Les Verts have become the de facto representatives of the left. This system of alliances has proven beneficial for the Greens, for instance in 1996-97 when eight of their candidates were elected and Dominique Voynet was nominated environmental minister in the government of Lionel Jospin.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ G. Sartori, *Op. Cit.*, 1976: 43.

⁴⁸ A largely unexpected change occurred during 1996-97 as Voynet's left-leaning strategy culminated in an electoral agreement with the PS as a part of a broader left alliance. She argued that there was no other way for the party to move forward that by allying with the PS to obtain stronger parliamentary representation. Under the Red-Green accord, *Les Verts* and the PS agreed to a process of electoral cooperation in 100

Yet, the major problem is that the party suffers the consequences of its decades of internal divisions with generally low electoral results at the presidential elections. Consequently, far from being equal with the PS, they are not able to negotiate a large number of constituencies, but only a few.

In Italy, after a withdrawal of popular support to the Berlusconi government in 1996, I Verdi entered in the center-left coalition, obtaining 14 representatives at the Parliament as well as 14 senators. Even if their representation is still minimal, they have been able to exercise certain blackmail potential within the governmental coalition. After the re-election of Romano Prodi in 2006, three Green representatives were still present in the government: Pecoraro Scanio in the ministry of environment, Paolo Cento is secretary of state for the economy and Stefano Bocco is secretary of state for

constituencies. *Les Verts* agreed to support Socialist candidates in 70 of these constituencies while in exchange, the PS made a promise not to stand candidates in the remaining 30 constituencies where *Les Verts* had strong levels of support. President Chirac's decision to call parliamentary elections a year early resulted in a surprised victory for the left. While *Les Verts* still only gained an average of 5.12% of the votes in the first round, the alliance ensured a renewed public visibility which enhanced their blackmail potential. In 2002, Noël Mamère obtained 5,25% of the vote at the presidential election, but in the last 2007 elections, the result of the Green party was again depressive. Dominique Voynet obtained only 1,57% of the votes, probably paying the price of a "utility vote" for Ségolène Royal, the candidate of the PS against the announced victory of the right-wing Nicolas Sarkozy. More than ever, *Les Verts* are entering a renewed phase of crisis.

agricultural politics. Yet, they completely disappeared from the political landscape and lost any parliamentary representation in the recent elections of April 2008. I Verdi have been rather unsuccessful in their strategy of revitalization of the Italian political scene through the promotion of new political practices. Indeed, a survey from January 2007 emphasizes that contrary to their original objective, their level of trust within Italian society is rather weak. Only 34% of the people questioned declared to trust *I Verdi*. All the leading parties have a higher level of trusts: the National Alliance (46%), Forza Italia (44%), the Left Democrats (42%) and the previous Margherita coalition (39%). In the end, i Verdi have been rather unable to redefine the political landscape.

This failure to influence party system change is even truer for the Green Party, which has played virtually no role in the last decade over British political life. While the Scottish and the Welsh nationalist parties have been able to create a regional electoral niche and influence the devolution of power in British politics, no such effects can be found for the Greens. The fact that the conventional relations between the British political institutions and the Green Party are not in favour of the latter has reinforced the party strategy of external lobbying. Trying to mobilize the public through extra-parliamentary demonstrations and unconventional political means is the only way for the Greens to compensate the "institutional sclerosis" of the system, and be able to

signal its political existence.⁴⁹ Thus, it enhances the strategy of party conflict and the vicious circle of “political marginalisation – political radicalisation”.⁵⁰ Thus, the debate for the Greens has been structured on the question of the strategic option of institutionalisation more than on the political positioning in relation to other political parties. Nevertheless, the rupture chosen in searching electoral coalitions to incarnate the confluence of social movements (which itself has not been successful) seems diametrically opposed with that of the German Greens, and does not appear to bring real success. In fact, the transition of the Greens toward unconventional forms of political participation shows its impotency in front of a multitude of factors, thereby reducing the probability of its emergence. The decision to focus on an extra-parliamentary strategy is the direct result of the breakdown of its parliamentary strategy. Indeed, even if the Greens have focused on the elections and have tried to obtain seats since the beginning, their repeated electoral failures and the militants’ sentiment of impotency have favoured the emergence of radical members

⁴⁹ E. Grossman & S. Saurugger, *Les groupes d'intérêt. Action collective et stratégies de représentation* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2006), 87.

⁵⁰ W. Coxall, *Pressure Groups in British Politics* (Harlow: Longman, 2001), 20; S. Tarrow, “States and opportunities: the political structuring of social movements”, in *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures and Framing*, ed. D. McAdam, J. McCarthy & M. Zald (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 41-62.

within the party at the beginning of the 1990s. Then, the new political line of the party has become that of a politization of non-electoral activities, an enlargement of its political strategy to direct non-violent actions and the construction of networks of citizens and associations.

In contrast, it can be said that Die Grünen have relatively restructured the German party system. Even if the German political system tends to favour established parties, it does not prevent minor parties from accessing public responsibilities and offices at the local or Länd level, facilitating the institutionalisation of new parties. For instance, the German Greens first entered the government of different Länders during the 1980s before becoming a real national party.⁵¹ In addition, the fact that the achievement of an absolute majority at the federal level was only once possible since the Second World War (in part because the post-Nazi political system aimed to reduce the possibility of tyranny by a majority), has consequently fostered the process of coalition-building, and therefore extended the blackmail potential of minor parties. Thus, Die Grünen became a governmental party in the aftermath of the 1998 general elections, creating a coalition with the SPD while the Greens obtained only 6,7% of the vote share. Recently, the new Linkspartei has emerged at the left of the SPD and has directly paralleled the Greens. Yet, Die Grünen has

⁵¹ T. Poguntke & B. Bernhard, *Op. Cit.*, 1992: 317-88.

remained a stable coalition partner for the SPD at all levels of the German political system, and even recently, they have entered into coalitions with the Christian Democrats. This new trend shows that much more than the other Green parties in Western Europe, Die Grünen have restructured the German party system, acquiring a pivotal role for themselves.

From the above comparison, four elements can be outlined on the influence of Green parties on party system change. First, when Green parties have completely excluded electoral alliances as in Britain, they have remained marginal to the party system and their influence on its restructuring has been virtually nonexistent. Second, when Green parties have organised electoral alliances, whether in a majoritarian system as in France, in a semi-proportional as in Italy, or in a mixed system as in Germany, they have always benefited from them. From the French case, it could even be said that the predominance of a conjunction more than a consistent strategy of alliances has penalised the potential success of the party. Third, in Germany, Italy or France, alliances have opened the doors of government office to Green parties when they have jointly won national elections with social democratic parties. However, as could highlight the German case, Green parties have only been able to restructure the existing cleavages and the structures of national competition when they have been able to secure an electoral niche for themselves.

Conclusion

To conclude, we can come back to our initial research questions: *Why do some Green parties succeed while other fail to gather stable electoral supports and restructure competition within their political systems?*, *Which factors determine the emergence of Green parties in established political systems?* In this paper, we have developed two complementary hypotheses. First, that electoral rules and party strategies are the two determinant factors, which can explain the emergence of Green parties, and second, that it is the joint effects of the two factors that explains the successes of Green parties in the long term. Following the lights shed by the comparative perspective, we find some important evidence for validating our two initial hypotheses that the emergence of Green parties is fundamentally related with institutional and strategic factors. The post-materialist factor, once conceived as a decisive variable, might constitute a sociological characteristic of the Green electorate more than an explanatory variable of Green parties' successes. It is clear that the British electoral system has drastically restrained the possibilities of emergence of the Greens, while the German system has encouraged the development of a multi-party system and the equitable representation of political forces. Yet, even though the electoral system is also highly restrictive in France, Les Verts have been able to obtain electoral victories and even enter in governmental-coalitions when they have succeeded in being coherently

organised. As we have seen, the constraints of electoral systems can be decisive but can also tell us just a part of the story. Indeed, the Italian case provides a counterfactual comparison, as even though the electoral system is permissive, it does not necessarily lead Green parties to success. In that sense, party strategies play an internal role to surrender internal divisions, to select leaders, to design a coherent policy programme and to react to the socio-political context. Strategies are also crucial determinants of party institutionalisation, of its position towards alliances with mainstream parties and of its ability to appeal to the broader electorate. In the end, while in the late 1970s, a great deal of expectations emerged in relation to Green parties' capacity to restructure established party systems and to provide an electoral alternative. Thirty years later, it might be said that Green parties have certainly been able to appeal to the European electorate, but they have failed to broaden their support and to design coherent strategies over time. The only really successful case, the German one, depicts quite well how the thesis of the complementarity between a permissive structure of opportunity and a coherent party strategy can lead to important successes.

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