The Relationships between Green Parties and Environmental Groups in Belgium, Germany and the U.K.

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Theoretically speaking, there should be an alternative, but closely cooperative, relationship between European Green Parties (GP) and Environmental Groups (EG) on the way to strive for the same goal of seeking a Green society. In order to test this assumption, this article will investigate the development of GP’s relations with EG in three EU member states of Belgium, Germany and the U.K., to explore their similarities and differences as well as the causal factors of the relationship. In addition, it will also try to shed some light on their tendency of change, considering both the GP and EG’s undergoing comprehensive adjustment from political strategy to organization structure. Based on empirical evidence, it argues that 1) the overall relationship between the two green actors can be described as ‘friendly but not close’, 2) a relatively cooperative relationship between them is mounded, first and foremost, by its encountering political environment not the Green Movement itself. These findings can not only, at least to some extent, explain why Green politics in these countries have presented neither an ideal nor united story, but also facilitate us to predict the prospects of this multicolored picture in the near future.

INTRODUCTION

Constructing a close and highly cooperative relationship between Green Parties (GP) and Environmental Groups (EG) is undoubtedly necessary and, theoretically, possible. Let us, first of all, look at the ideological similarities. Although as Dobson pointed out (1990:100), not all the Environmentalists, like most of the Greens, believe that creating a new and different Green society is achievable, they hold the common starting-point that to build a sustainable society with a better life for mankind we must take the existing environmental problems seriously and deal with them, to a great extent, in unconventional ways. Many evidences of this similarity can also be found from their political slogans as well as policy propositions. (GI 1998b; FoEI, 1999) In order to reach this goal of social transformation, the crucial point for GP and EG is that they open their mind to learn any creative ideas from the other side and not let the divergence over political positions become the barrier between them.

Secondly, the strategical and tactical complementarities. According to the definition given by the German Greens (1993:13), GP and distinctive EG have equal political status on the way to realize the reconstruction of modern industrial society; the Greens, centering around the election and government participation at different levels, is to act as the speaker or ‘mouthpiece’ of the whole Green family and its green cause in the established political system, while the latter will play a more fundamental role in mobilizing the environmental awareness and interests of the public and promoting any green change in society. In Greens’ own word, the relationship between GP and EG should be like that of the arm and the whole body, bearing different function but being an entity. In the tactical sense, on the one hand, because of the relative weakness of the Greens’ actual strength compared with the established parties, it should not be an easy work for them to make some substantial change of government policy-making dominated by the traditional parties. Entering the national parliament or even the central government, as the experiences of the Italian, French Greens and lately the German Greens have showed, could not reverse this dominant situation. GP’s organizational reform and strategical adjustment for the full utilization of the opportunities in electoral and parliamentary arenas to advance the Green agenda, logically, adopting more and more the formal and legal approaches, should not mean that the strong support from EG has lost its political significance for the Greens. On the other hand, without the active government participation of the Greens, EG probably have to confront more difficulties to obtain their piece-meal environmental goal. Whether they like it or not, it is one of the daily tasks for EG to deal with the relation to the established political institutions and, on most occasions, a successful GP could be necessary and very helpful.

Thirdly, the organizational characteristic of GP as a movement-democratic party. The Greens promise to not only believe in but also practice their political credentials by creating a movement-party or anti-party party which is different from the established parties as well as building an alternative relationship between them and their roots of movements (Kelly, 1980:80; Poguntke, 1993), to avoid Michels’ ‘Iron Law’ of oligarchy for the new parties as the protesters of the traditional society. Therefore, keeping in touch with EG through alternative contacts such as the overlapping of membership, common protest
actions and cultural interaction, is one of their basic organizational principles as well as an important component of their ideology. Owing to this democratic structure of movement-organization, an easier and closer collaboration between GP and EG can be expected. Therefore, an ideal model of the relationship between GP and EG should assume as follows:

1) more extensive and organized EG sensitive to existing and arising ecological problems, and capable of realizing the expanding political mobilization.
2) a strong and unitary GP achieving successful political participation, especially entering the national parliament and government.
3) lastly but most importantly, based on a clear role division in political participation, GP and EG keep regular and organizational contacts and give their political support respectively when it is necessary.

To identify whether or not the European Greens could translate this ‘theoretical possibility’ into reality by founding a closely cooperative relationship between GP and EG, the following pages will choose three cases of European countries, Belgium, Germany and the U.K., in which the Greens are classified into different categories by the scale of electorally successful or less-successful (Müller-Rommel, 1998), to compare their similar or different relation-structure and the causal factors based on their experiences in nearly 20 years. By doing so, we attempt to arrive at some tentative conclusions to facilitate the understanding of the environmental politics in contemporary Europe. Let us start with the review of their history.

THE EVOLUTION OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GP AND EG

Given the relatively brief history of GP, the formation of the relationship between them and EG was a process that GP gradually got independent political party status from the earlier-founded and more extensive new social movements, especially environmental movements, to broaden the whole Green family’s leverage on the political policy-making, which had been demonstrated to fail to give positive response to the endangering environmental problems (Müller-Rommel, 1989: 5-6). Then, they tried to establish a new structure of connection between them to enlarge their political influence and uphold their respective agenda. However, as we can see from the following description, the Green Movements in each country had their own story.

Germany

The German Greens is neither the earliest green party in Europe nor the first one obtaining the representation in the federal parliament or government, but it is widely recognized as the most successful one among its counterparts in Europe, even being called ‘Mother Party’ by the European Federation of Green Party (Frankland, 1995: 23; EFGP, 1996: 2). The most convincing explanation for this ‘German Green miracle’ maybe the so-called ‘Theory of Political Opportunity Structure’ principally coined by Kitschelt (1989: 35-40). This term has also been borrowed by so many writers to enrich and revise it into a general theory to explain the success or failure of all the Green parties that some researchers like Rootes argued that this word has lost its exact meaning and should be used cautiously (1995: 250).

With regard to the relationship of GP and EG, it appeared truly positive from the outset. When ‘the political opportunity structure’ for the Greens appeared at the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, most of the active Green movements at that time recognized the importance of launching a new political party at the same time and participated in the founding of the national green party. Of them, the most important are the ‘new left movement’ or ‘anti-repression movement’ which most of its members were successors of the former ‘student movement’, the ‘anti-nuclear movement’ and the ‘peace movement’ which were the main forms of environmental protest, the ‘women movement’ which has played a more and more important role since the middle of the 1980s and other alternative groups. (O’Neill, 1997: 53) In effect, to be green represented the expression of demanding an enlarged participation of society in politics, while GP became the collection and amalgamation of very different groups holding different assumptions and strategies. (Lippelt, 1992) In other words, from the beginning GP presented itself as the ‘oko-pax’ party though it was only a relative small component of the heterogeneous Green Movement in terms of membership or other scales. Following the Greens’ quickly-achieved success first at local level then in national elections in 1983 and repeated in 1987, GP had convinced most of EG that it was the qualified political representative of the Green cause in the established political systems, although it took a much long time for itself to resolve the inner divergence over how to advance the Green agenda in its field. (Frankland, 1989: 73-5; O’Neil, 1997: 67-80) Under this relation-structure, GP claims to be the parliamentary arm of assorted or even much
larger environmental and other new social movements by providing necessary informational, financial and political support, whilst all of EG still have their own independent status and some of them, earlier like BBU(Bundesverband Burgerinitiativen Umweltschutz) and later such as Greenpeace Deutschland and FoE Deutschland, maintained their distance from the Greens. (GI,1998b;FoEI,1996)At the same time, activists from these groups sharing the similar objectives have been given the right to speak at party meetings and as nonmembers have been nominated and elected as parliamentary candidates of the Greens; numerous policy study groups have been organized to provide inputs from movements activities and outside experts to parliamentary deputies for future programme developments.

The unexpected frustration in the first general election after Germany’s reunification and the following strategic adjustment and organizational reform made the German Greens become much smarter and stronger in actual political competition. Currently, following with the Greens’ victory of changing their political position from parliamentary opposition-party to governing coalition-party in the last general elections, a new type of relationship is forming under a fully new environment. It is too early to talk about the features of this new pattern of relation between GP and EG. (EFGP, 1998b) From a short-term view, we could reasonably expect to see some positive effects given that the Greens can meet such more demands of EG than before. As for its implication in a long time, positive or not, is still an open question.

United Kingdom

In comparison with the German case, the Greens in the U.K. is the typical example at the other end of the spectrum from electoral success to stagnation(Rootes,1995:66), though this is by no means to say that its unique contribution to the development of European green politics could be underestimated. GP of the U.K., launched in 1973, was the oldest green party in Europe by first formulating a new political philosophy—advocating decentralization of modern society and demanding an end to the pursuit of non-limited economic growth—as the basis for a new kind of party. It had become a recognizable national political party before changing its name from the ‘People’s Party’ to the ‘Ecology Party’ in 1975. But its renaming itself once again ‘Green party’ in 1985 demonstrated that not enough progress had been made and it still had not found its right position in the unfriendly British political systems, whilst many of its brother-parties in other European countries had entered national parliament. The first time of spring for the Greens also came at the beginning of the 1980s. The pay-off of nearly 10 years’ effort, especially the gamble participation of the 1979 general election by fielding 53 candidates to get the free television election broadcast according to the unfavorable British electoral law to small parties, the adoption of nuclear energy policy by the new Conservative government and its attitude supporting for the NATO’s ‘twin-track’ decision to update nuclear weapons in Western Europe and deciding to renovate Britain’s independent deterrent by acquiring the Trident system, the increasing signs that more and more voters were discontented with the two traditional parties and prepared to consider alternative electoral choice, last but more important, the surging of EG responding to these arising ecological and secure problems, all in all, a combination of all these issues could lead to a long-term pursued political breakthrough for the Greens and then form a healthy relationship between it and the more stronger EG.

Unlike what happened in Germany and other European countries, however, far more people turned to single-issue pressure groups as the mean of registering their concern or opposition. EG( such as FoE) not GP took the leading role in this Green protest movement, centering upon the expansion of the nuclear energy industry and nuclear weapons. Ever since its inception, GP had tried to persuade such groups to recognize it as their party representative albeit without success. As a result, what GP got was an increase of membership from 650 in 1979 to around 6000 by 1981, while during the same period the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament(CND) saw its membership explode from a few thousand to a peak of 100,000.(Byrne,1988) In Byrne’s perspective(1989:102–4), there are many reasons for this disappointing result especially for the Greens’ side. Firstly, too many GP’s members at this crucial point believed in and attempted to ‘live out’ their alternative ideology and advocated that GP should behave more like a new social movement rather than a traditional party by opposing the efforts of building an organized national party and uniting other movements.

Secondly, the signs of possible change in the political system did not eventually become the positive impetus for the Greens. The splitting of the Social Democratic Party(SDP) from the Labour Party and the formation of an alliance between SDP and the Liberal not only made GP lose its status as Britain’s newest party, but also presented itself, and not GP, as the only realistic alternative to the Established
parties for the moderate voters, whilst the electoral participation of other stronger environmental
groups such as CND attracted the voters holding more radical positions.

Thirdly, the existence of much more developed EG was demonstrated to be a depressing
not promoting factor, whether they joined the political game in the electoral and parliamentary fields or
not. At this primary stage, the essence of the relation-structure between GP and EG is anything but
cooperative. On some occasions (O’Neill, 1997:284), the Greens had to compete with EG in the same
fields, both in movement protest and electoral participation, by arguing that only what they were doing
to diminish the root causes of environmental problems could result in the real green change.
Unfortunately, the records of its participation in electoral and parliamentary politics had never
supported what it claimed. The other lost opportunity for the Green Movement in the U.K. was the
European election in 1989. In this time, the Greens made good use of ‘the green environment’ even
promoted by the Established parties and created a new record for the European Greens by obtaining a
spectacular voting share of 14.9 percent. During and after this election, the Greens’ position as
the political attendant of the Green movement in the traditional political games had arguably been
established. But the Greens did not benefit much from the remarkable electoral figure, due to the
British majority electoral system, it did not attain any seat to the European Parliament. The temporary
and maybe last chance for a unitary GP in the U.K. waned and the negative impact could be seen from
the dramatic decline of membership from a peak of 18 500 in 1989 to 4 500 in 1993 and the frustrating
results of following general elections in 1992 and 1997, 0.51 and 0.2 percent respectively as well as its
splitting up into 3 independent parts. (Rüdig et al., 1991; Young, 1993:29-42; EFGP, 1998a) Thus, on the
whole, the Green Movement in the U.K. is separate, although there are also some exceptional cases,
such as the collaborations between GP and FoE. (EFGP, 1998b) GP could not count on receiving a
powerful and stable political support from the much stronger EG, the memberships of Greenpeace and
Friends of the Earth are 281 and 125 thousands in 1989 (See O’Neill, 1997: 290), to become an
influential political force, like in other European countries. Similarly, EG had neither strong demand
nor much hope to get some concrete benefits from the Greens as other European Greens could lend.
Although we can argue that after the ‘Green Decade’ of the 1980s the role division of these two Green
actors has at last been achieved, GP centering around the electoral field while EG concentrating on
the issue-specific protests, but the relationship between them is still very low cooperative. After a long
time the Greens in the U.K. first in Europe proposed the political goal to restore mankind’s harmonious
relation with nature, it still looks like they have a long way to go to streamline the relationship inside of
this Green family.

Belgium

Green Movement in Belgium present another figure in the green picture, which differs from those of
both in Germany and the U.K.. Of all the properties, the most important is that GP, like the
conventional parties in this country, is divided into two parts according to the language division
and have their own history.
The Flemish AGALEV started from a new social movement group based on
traditional religious and moral principles such as solidarity, sobriety and silence, which had nothing to do with politics at first. Soon after its founding in 1970, some of its members felt the urge to implement the values which they believed in and began to take a series of actions starting from reviving a local primary school and then protesting mostly against the deterioration of the natural environment. Therefore, it gradually became a political group centering around environmental problems. Because of this change of the movement’s orientation, fearing that the original contemplative aspects of movement might be lost with the stressing of the action element, some of the members created a new group, still one part of the whole movement but separate from the action groups which evolved before the end of the 1970s into a political party. In 1979 it achieved the great breakthrough with 2.3 percent of votes in the first direct elections to the European Parliament. And two years later, by 4 percent of the Flemish votes, it became the first GP in Europe with their representative in the national parliament.
As for its sister-party in the south of the country, it is a longer and more complicated story. Unlike its Flemish counterpart, the Wallon Greens
were a rather heterogeneous conglomerate of distinct movements and ideological factions and walked a long and winding road before reaching the stage of becoming a real political party. Of them, the new social movement group ‘reflection and action’ which separated from a regionalist party, RW, in 1971 and the Belgian section of ‘Friends of the Earth’, founded in 1976, played a very important role in the creation of Wallonie-Ecologie as an environmental permanent organization in 1978. The 1979 European election gave the Wallon Greens the same opportunity as the Flemish Greens and they held it. Under the unitary name of ‘Europe-Ecologie’, they obtained 5.1 percent of the Wallon votes, the best result of all the European Greens, which became the immediate and forceful impetus for the establishment of a national Green party, Ecolo, in the next year. Similar to what happened to AGALEV, it also came into the national parliament with the voting share of 5.9 percent in Wallon and 2 seats in the 1981 general elections. So, for the Belgian Greens, there are at least two Green-relationship to deal with. One part is the relation with their brother party in the other part of the country, which saw very friendly and effective cooperation from the outset (O’Neill, 1997: 90,AGALEV and Ecolo, 1999), the other is that with their roots of movements. At the beginning, AGALEV was directly controlled by the Movement based on the idea that the invention of a political party to participate in elections from a social movement was temporary, and it had to ask the national congress for authorization to take any political actions. Following that AGALEV got the unexpected three seats in the 1981 national elections and had to organize itself for political action more effectively and professionally, it was the Movement who decided to found a new relationship between the two members of the green family. The decision of the Movement was a formal separation between the Movement and the Party, although the latter’s political reliance on the former, such as extensive exchanges of personnel and continuing dialogue, was acknowledged. In terms of Ecolo, the most difficult and time-consuming work for it was to streamline the relation with other Green political groups, because Ecolo was only one of them, though the biggest one. They had the similar idea agreeing the need for relatively strong and disciplined organizations but also fearing the potential danger of losing control to them. So, the autonomy and self-control of the local sections are the keywords of party organization structure, which make them maintain a loose but friendly connection with environmental and other new social movements. Bearing in mind these differences between AGALEV and Ecolo’s relations with their root of movements in the forming stage, the former is more similar to that in the U.K. while the latter is more close to that in Germany, broadly speaking, the relationship between GP and EG in Belgium is relatively close and constructive. The proportional electoral system, the fractionalization of the party system and the voters’ consciousness of party adherence, all of these contributed to the formation of this kind of relation-structure. The basic evidence supporting this assumption is that the Greens’ successful performances in almost all of the elections at different levels since 1981 and the stable increasing memberships of EG. On the other hand, the obvious characteristic of this relation-structure is a clear division of the whole Green Movement, due to the unbridgeable barrier of language and culture, which probably makes that, apart from some special occasions (O’Neill, 1997:114), the cooperation inside of the Greens be more urgent and important than dealing with the relation with their roots of movements. (AGALEV, 1999) On this basis, we can argue that the relationship between GP and EG in Belgium is also separate though following another line different from that in the U.K.. In sum, GP in all three countries underwent a process to develop an appropriate relationship with their grassroots. However, as the whole it is neither a united story nor an ideal scene. Based on our assumption
suggested at the beginning, they can be arguably categorized into three types: highly cooperative (Germany), moderately cooperative (Belgium) and low cooperative (U.K.).

Table 1: the three types of the relationships between GP and EG

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Belgium</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>the U.K.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GP</td>
<td>strong(separate)</td>
<td>very strong</td>
<td>weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EG</td>
<td>strong</td>
<td>very strong</td>
<td>strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td>moderately</td>
<td>highly</td>
<td>low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

EXPLAINING THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN GP AND EG

In this section we shall look into why the Green reality shows such different from our theoretical expectation and whether it is changeable if some of the variables change in the future. Our model consists of four dimensions that have possibly determined the formation and evolution of the relationship between GP and EG: organizational connection dimension, actual political influence dimension, political system dimension and political opportunity environment dimension. In tables 2—5 and table 6, we can see the respective and total results of the comparison under different dimensions. Most of the data which is used for this analysis has been published by the European Federation of Green Parties (EFGP), the Greenpeace International (GI) and the Friends of the Earth International (FoEI), and the correspondences with GP and EG. Given the main aim and method for this research, some specific and detailed information about the resource and complicated figure-calculating will be not reported.

Organizational Connection Dimension

In order to understand the development of the relations between GP and EG, as the first step, it is reasonable and should-be helpful to compare the contact channel and level of these two organizations, historically and currently. First, the origin of the Greens. GP began from a combination of various EG, in other words, more EG had joined the launching of GP, would probably have and keep some kind of organizational connection. Secondly, the national form of the Greens. Under the current structure of party politics, especially in Western Europe, there is no doubt that GP which successfully evolved into a real national or unitary political force and presented itself as the political representative for EG, would be not only one of the important signs of Green politics’ influences but also a promoting factor in developing the relation between GP and EG. Thirdly, the division of political roles. Obviously, one of the basic preconditions for establishing a good relation between GP and EG is that their functions to play are formally acknowledged by the other side. Finally, the current main channels of contact for them. To get a judgment as to what extent the ‘alternative contact’ between GP and their roots of movements is established or effective, we need to check whether they have formed a new pattern of organizational connection at the national level, or they are still maintaining the informal level contact.

Table 2: the comparison of organizational connections between GP and EG

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Belgium</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>the U.K.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Origin of Greens</td>
<td>+(Eco. Plural)-(Aga. Single)</td>
<td>+(plural)-(single)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Greens</td>
<td>-(separate)</td>
<td>+(Unitary)</td>
<td>+(unitary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Division</td>
<td>+(successful)</td>
<td>+(successful)</td>
<td>-(unsuccessful)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Contact</td>
<td>-(p/l)</td>
<td>-(p/l)</td>
<td>-(p/l)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the data shows, the most positive score should be awarded to the Green family in Germany. GP which started from assorted environmental movements succeed in evolving into a unitary national political party and was successfully acknowledged by EG as the unique representative in actual political system. On the contrary, the Green Movement in the U.K. stands on the other side of this continuum. GP became a unitary and national
political party earlier than any other counterparts in Europe, but it was unable to find its own position in the British political system. Accordingly, the role division between the two actors of the Green Movement is still not achieved, or achieved but unsuccessfully. The organizational division of the Belgian greens might have no heavy damage to build a harmonious relation between GP and EG in a much smaller part of this small country as well as between these two branches, AGALEV and Ecolo, but it has severely weakened their ability to compete with other conventional parties, or to take any bigger political responsibility, although they hold one of the highest figures of voting share in national elections in Europe. Another finding from the data is that all of them maintain the personal and local level contact as the main connection channel between GP and EG, some of EG are even reluctant to admit any official relation with GP than they have with other parties.(AGALEV, Bundnis 90/Die Grüne, Ecolo, Green Parties of England and Wales, Scottish Green Party,1999) How should we read this current situation of the organizational connection between GP and EG ? On the one hand, there has been a touchable distance between GP and EG after 20 years’ development respectively, both of them have formed their own organization network and political strategies and tactics(GI,1998b;FoEI, 1996); on the other hand, we can also argue that more time might be needed for them to find a right way to reorganize the organizational relation between a new type of movement-democratic party and the movements. Therefore, the relation-structure between GP and EG, like in Germany and Belgium, is very likely to move step by step towards a structure of ‘Party vs. Movement’ following GP’s increasingly losing their ideological and organizational color inherited from the movement, although there is no evidence that a similar relation-structure to that of the traditional left parties with their roots of movements is emerging or inevitable.

Actual Political Influence Dimension

Our purpose for this dimension, consisting of another four variables, is to identify whether and how the differences of both GP and EG's actual strength have affected the development of their relations. Firstly, GP’s electoral performances at both national and European level. To do so, the Greens’ average results from 1980 to 1998 are listed and they get their respective scores by comparing with the same indicator in Western Europe during this period(4.38 and 7.48 percent respectively). Second, GP’s political strategy. Based on their different influences in the structure of party competition, Greens are expected to take different political alliance strategies. In other words, there is unlikely a identical choice for the Greens when they face the three possible political partners: EG, sister GP or would-be coalition parties, especially when some of them have achievable opportunities to enhance their political imprint on policy-making through the competition of party politics. Thirdly, EG’s actual political strength. Throughout this discussion, we will take the case of the two most famous and international EG: GI and FoEI. Here the amount of their memberships in 1997 is utilized and the score is also given by measuring whether its participation rate reaches the average level in Western Europe(2205800 and 0.7 percent respectively).(GI, 1998a; FoEI, 1998 )

Table 3: the comparison of actual political influence of GP and EG

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Belgium</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>the U.K.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Elections</td>
<td>+(7.56/5)</td>
<td>+(5.75/5)</td>
<td>-(0.3/4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Elections</td>
<td>+(11.27/3)</td>
<td>+(9.2/3)</td>
<td>-(6.01/3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP’s Strategy</td>
<td>-(green party)</td>
<td>-(left party)</td>
<td>+(movement)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EG’s Participation</td>
<td>-(60600/0.6)</td>
<td>+(757500/0.9)</td>
<td>+(419000/0.7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen from table 3, the figure of the Green Movement in Germany is still most positive. It is coincident between the strong political support for GP from the public and the high participation rate in EG. Consequently, Greens has a much stronger power to compete with other political forces to
find a relatively influential position in the established political system, as a result, to meet the demands of EG better and maintain a good relationship between them. On the contrary, there is a strong disparity between the political support for GP and participation in EG in the U.K. Logically, providing the belief that the Greens under current environment could not make much substantial change both to the actual political system and government’s ecological policy, the radical peace movement and the long established and more conservative environmental groups are reluctant to get involved in GP, fearing that to do so would diminish their potential power as environmental lobbyists or reduce their leverage on the main political parties. Also, many of the environmental activists as the most possible Green supporters do not want to express a protest just to waste their votes but make a relatively realistic alternative by voting for, by and large, left parties. (See O’Neill, 1997:283)

Another noteworthy point is that there is a big gap between the electoral results of successful GP like German and Belgian Greens and the participation rate of EG in these countries. This fact can explain why GP in these countries take very different alliance strategies. The Greens in Germany and Belgium are prone to advance the political cooperation with would-be coalition-party, whilst their counterpart in the UK is plagued with even not convincing the most possible political supporters from EG. (Serge Deruette, 1996; O’Neill, 1997:297,305)

Political System Dimension

As demonstrated by many writers, the impacts of the political system on both GP and EG are obvious. (Müller-Rommel, 1998; Marks and Mcadam, 1996) Our intention here is to try to find out how a relatively inclusive or exclusive political systems in these countries have promoted or inhibited GP and EG from building a highly cooperative relation by comparing the next four variables: the electoral system, GP’s access to national parliament and federal government, and EG’s access to participation in policy-making.

Table 4: the comparison of the openness of political system to GP and EG

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Belgium</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>the U.K.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Electoral System</td>
<td>+(Pr.S.)</td>
<td>+(Pr.S.)</td>
<td>-(Pl.S.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP’s Access to Parliament</td>
<td>+(highly possible)</td>
<td>+(highly possible)</td>
<td>-(difficult)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP’s Access to Government</td>
<td>-(difficult)</td>
<td>+(highly possible)</td>
<td>-(very difficult)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EG’s access to Participation</td>
<td>-(indirect)</td>
<td>-(indirect)</td>
<td>+(direct)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Clearly, there is a high correlativity between the electoral system and GP’s political performances. The British majority electoral system should mostly be responsible for the Greens’ great difficulties to obtain the representation in the national parliament and government, while GP in Germany and Belgium benefit much from the proportional electoral system, together with other advantages, to have a very high possibility to do so, although the structure of party competition in Belgium makes them not a good position to join the coalition government like their counterpart in Germany.

However, as far as the theme of our discussion is concerned, we could not simply conceptualize an open or closed political system or induce that one of the main composing elements like electoral system determine the Green’s destiny as well as the relation-structure between GP and EG. For instance, the disparity of the openness of one political system to GP and EG plays its role from another direction. As Koopmans made clear (Koopmans, 1996), Great Britain has a more inclusive tradition and incorporates moderate representative of social movements like EG in the policy process, while there is little room for non-economic interests groups such as EG in Germany, due to a relatively exclusive tradition, to participate in the decision-making process directly.

Furthermore, on most occasions, these factors are interacting and bring about a twofold effect. The Greens in a federal political system excising
the proportional electoral system like in Germany and Belgium have much more possibility to achieve the representation at different levels of the actual political set-up, subsequently, the emerging political culture of ‘Party Politics’ in these countries gradually become another affecting factor to make EG accept the party line as an important approach of political participation. On the other side, the plural electoral system in the U.K. impel even many members of EG unwillingly to risk their votes by supporting GP but take other traditional parties like the Liberal or the left parties as the realistic choice (O’Neill, 1997:283). Meantime, the relative openness of political system to EG also promote many of the potential Green activists and supporters choose EG not GP as the basic mean to express their environmental awareness.

Political Opportunity Environment Dimension

How to define the characteristic of the political environment for European environmental politics in the 1990s as well as its effects on the Green Movement is a question by no means to have been resolved. O’Neill argued that ‘the present climate’ for Greens has dramatically changed because ecological issues have lost much of the prominence and electoral appeal they enjoyed in the altogether more prosperous and politically less complicated 1980s (1997:86), while Müller-Rommel drew the conclusion that most of GP in Western Europe actually have experienced another fruitful decade after having compared the Greens’ performances in the last 20 years (1998). In Frankland and Schoonmaker’s perspective, environmental and new social movements were in decline from the beginning of the 1990s (1992:216-7), but Schmitt-Beck denied this general judgment by arguing that what changed is the ‘mobilization patterns’ not a discernible decline tendency for new social movement itself (1992). Other writers like Koopmans proposed that it is the social movements not political parties which could be well adapted to the changing of the political environment (1996). Marks and Mcadam even found supporting evidence of an emerging ‘political opportunity structure’ for Green politics from the analysis of the institutional development of EU (1996).

To simplify our discussion, we first adopt the assumption that something absolutely new has happened in Europe in this decade and use the term ‘political opportunity environment’ referring to the combination of different political components, then, examine whether this conversion has affected the situation of GP and EG as well as their relations in the three countries. Four indicators, the change of GP’s average electoral results at national and European level from the 1980s to the 1990s, the change of GP’s political position in the 1990s, and the change of EG’s memberships from 1990 to 1997 (as mentioned above, the figure of GI and FoEI is used), are specified and they get their scores compared with the figure of that indicator in the previous decade.

Table 5: the comparison of the impact of political opportunity environment on GP and EG

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Belgium</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>the U.K.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GP’s National Elections</td>
<td>+ (5.93/9.2)</td>
<td>+ (5.13/6.37)</td>
<td>+ (0.23/0.36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP’s European Elections</td>
<td>+ (11.05/11.5)</td>
<td>+ (8.3/10.1)</td>
<td>- (7.76/3.22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP’s Position</td>
<td>- (no change)</td>
<td>+ (par./gov.)</td>
<td>- (no change)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EG’s Membership</td>
<td>+ (6500)</td>
<td>+ (122700)</td>
<td>- (67000)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Obviously, the data does not support the hypothesis that there is a ups and downs conversion of the political environment, or a totally unfavourable ‘political opportunity structure’ has come into being in this decade. Actually, both GP and EG in these countries, keeping the exception of the U.K. in mind, have done quite well. GP in Germany and Belgium have maintained their increase of electoral support started in the 1980s, the former even succeed in entering into its federal government in the last general election and changing from a parliamentary party to a government
party. The same conclusion can also be drawn from the other side. The memberships of EG like GI and FoEI have increased in Germany and Belgium compared with those in 1990. However, we could not deny any kind of change. The best example here is the Green Movement in the U.K. GP just enjoyed a very short time of spring for it and created the Green record with 14.5 percent votes in the 1989 European Elections and since then its influence like its figure of members sharply reduced, although many efforts have been taken to try to realize the organization reform and policy innovation. At the same time, the memberships of GI and FoEI have also discernibly declined. Apart from this, we can find more evidences by analyzing the GP and EG’s performances. First of all, how to understand the Greens’ remarkable electoral performance. The main reason, if not the only, the Greens like in Belgium and Germany could maintain their electoral success compared with the last decade, especially in national elections, is that both of them have been reforming their party organization and broadening their policy fields to compete effectively with other traditional parties. Even though, we can also see some imprints on Greens affected by the change of political environment. The cost for the German Greens to adapt to the new situation is four-year’s absent of Bundestag (national parliament) just after Germany’s reunification in 1990; the Belgian Greens also have to cope with a series of non-green topics which they are not familiar with and accept the first decline of electoral result in 1995 since they entered into national parliament 15 years ago.

With regard to the other part of the Green Family, EG in these countries also have to put more efforts to find enough and suitable chances to keep or expand their leverage on policy-making. Other than the basic reason of the declining of green issues’ political importance which means that the similar environmental problems currently contain different political significance and could not be expected to achieve as a high political mobilization as that of 10 years ago, most of EG such as GI and FoEI began to turn their emphasis to international level and take the more constructive means (Gi, 1998b; FoEI, 1996), namely, to convert ‘pattern of participation’ from the national and unconventional to the international and traditional approach. (Koopmans, 1996) This is probably the very reason why the memberships of many conservative EG, like in our case of GI and FoEI, have not declined very much but stabilized as the whole or some of them even increased in the 1990s.

Therefore, the convincing explanation about the current situation of the relationship between GP and EG in the three countries should only be found from its own encountering political environment and its change. Providing the unfavourable change of the political environment, if not a dramatic conversion, the theoretical consequence should be that it become more difficult for the Greens in the U.K. to achieve any political breakthrough, while the reorganized and reoriented Greens such as the German Greens could suffer much less from this by capitalizing their strong power of political competition accumulated in these years to wait for a new green era to come. However, owing to the recently strengthening federalization of political system in the U.K. and the introduction of proportional electoral system in the coming European elections, the British Greens maybe is facing another ‘political opportunity structure’.

From table 6, we can see the total result of comparing the possible affecting factors of the relationship between GP and EG under four dimensions. On many occasions, however, a positive score for one indicator does not necessarily mean that it promotes the formation and development of a highly cooperative relationship between them. Keeping this in mind, the last result looks fair.

Table 6: the results of comparison of influential factors under four dimension

| Variables | Belgium | Germany | the U.K. |
CONCLUSIONS

The process of the Green Movement in the three European countries of Belgium, Germany and the U.K., to achieve the division of political role and then to form a closely cooperative relationship between GP and its roots of movements, is a comprehensive effect, which is determined by many very different factors, though mainly in a political not an environmental sense. Consequently, they have presented very different pictures. The distinctive political environment and its change can, to a great extent, explain why the Green Movement in Belgium and Germany could successfully send a strong GP into the political arena, and furthermore, build a more constructive relationship between the two Green actors, whilst in the U.K. this process is proved to be difficult and unsuccessful.

In terms of the outlook of the relationship between GP and EG, the German green movement will probably continue to stand ahead of its counterparts. This means that, on the one hand, there are more impetus and opportunities for them to realize some successful collaborations and develop a more closely cooperative relationship by utilizing the traditional political approaches; on the other hand, their relation-structure could very possibly take more color of ‘Party vs. Movement’, with a strengthening position of the Greens. Kitschelt argued 10 years ago that the Greens’ efforts to avoid forming a traditional and subjective relation between GP and its movements had brought about some ‘unexpected results’ (1989: 245-6), we can argue a decade later that the ‘Greens’ aim to develop a new pattern of relationship between GP and EG, centering upon alternative and local contacts, has still not been achieved and is becoming more unachievable with their strategy of moving towards actively engaging in the conventional political games and gradually advancing their Green agenda.

Under the current political setting, it is most likely to be more difficult for the Greens in the U.K. to find its own position in the actual political system and take an appropriate strategy, accordingly, the low cooperative relationship among the members of this Green family is probably here to stay. However, considering the undergoing change of the political system, some parts of GP in this country might have opportunities to end the ‘exceptional position’ of the British Greens in the coming years (Rootes, 1992).

Therefore, in a predictable future, the leverage of European Green Politics on the policy-making as well as the new cleavage dimension in party politics represented by them, in light of these above findings, we should keep a modest and reasonable expectation. (Koopmans, 1996)

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