EUROPEAN GREEN PARTY MEMBERS
ANALYSING POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR

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Outline
During the last 20 years, green parties have become a familiar feature in West European party politics. Greens are present in most national parliaments; in recent years, green parties have entered national government in five countries (Italy, Finland, France, Germany, Belgium). Starting out as radical parties challenging key elements of the political and economic system, the Greens in many countries have now become a part of the political establishment.

The presence of green parties at different stages of party development provides a particularly exciting opportunity for the comparative analysis of these developments. How do green parties change in this process? Can we observe a process of ‘normalisation’ in which challenging parties adapt to the ‘rules of the game’ as they enter the mainstream of party politics? Are these changes really the result of integration into the political process or do they reflect a more general change in the political environment where green parties across Europe have to adapt to a new political agenda in which their original concerns do not quite have the political salience that once propelled them to prominence?

While the comparative study of green politics is relatively rich in qualitative case study material, green political analysis has to move on to firmer empirical grounds to set the foundation for a more rigorous approach. Apart from comparative electoral studies and the systematic qualitative comparison of features such as the organisational development of parties, one of the key opportunities is the study of green party members.

Green parties have generally not been blessed with huge party memberships. To the contrary, compared with their competitors, green sympathisers appear to have been particularly reluctant to join a political party. At the same time, green ideals of ‘grassroots democracy’ put ordinary members, at least formally, into an unusually strong position within these parties. But whatever the reality of green grassroots democracy, the small number of members means that members have been particularly crucial for greens as electoral campaigners and as a recruitment base for political offices. In some parties, particularly the smaller ones, members have also been crucial for the finances of the parties, with recruitment and retention of new members being of crucial importance for their survival. The study of green party members thus provides an ideal opportunity to understand the changes in green party development, informing our general understanding of party political change.

Amongst the key questions to be asked are the following: Who are the Greens in terms of their occupational background and lifestyle? How attached are members to their party? What determines how active they are in the party and how likely they are to remain members? What are the members’ views on the internal structure of the party and possible plans for organisational reform? What values and policy attitudes do green party members have? What are the views of members on the future strategy and development of green parties?
Furthermore, how do green parties at different political development stages compare in terms of the attitudinal and behavioural orientation of their members? How has the experience of entering parliament and government at various levels changed the nature of the Greens? The changes of Greens in power only can be properly assessed if they are compared with green parties at different stages of a party’s ‘lifespan’ (cf. Pedersen 1982). The variety of experiences of green parties, ranging from being a key political force in, say, Germany, to relative marginality in countries such as the UK, makes a cross-national analysis of green party members particularly fruitful in terms of assessing the role of different stage of party ‘lifespan’ on membership attributes.

Relation to existing research
The study of party members has been one of the key growth areas of political behaviour research, particularly in the UK. The studies of British Labour and Conservative party members conducted by Patrick Seyd and Paul Whiteley have played a pioneering role in this field (Seyd and Whiteley 1992; Whiteley et al. 1994), and their research agenda has inspired many other researchers around Europe. Seyd and Whiteley were also instrumental in launching a comparative project of party membership surveys in the 1990s which has contributed to major party membership surveys in Canada, the US, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands and Germany whose results mostly still remain to be published.

Green parties have, however, not been part of any of these surveys, with the single exception of Germany. A number of national surveys of green party members have been carried out in the 1980s and 1990s in individual countries (e.g. Italy: Biorcio and Lodi 1988, Belgium: Kitschelt and Helleman 1990; UK: Rüdig et al. 1991, Netherlands: Lucardie et al. 1995, 1999, France: Boy et al. 2000) but not as a part of a genuinely comparative research design. Differences in scope and question wordings thus made cross-national comparison difficult.

The empirical basis of the comparative study of green party members is now radically changed by a series of surveys carried out in 2002 which follow a common framework. New data on national green party members in many countries of Western Europe will thus become available, with researchers paying particular attention to improve the potential for comparative analysis. The main purpose of the workshop will be to advance the comparative analysis of green party members on the basis of this new data.

The workshop will aim to make a key contribution to the research agenda of comparative green parties. A number of ground-breaking comparative studies of the emergence and early development of green parties were published in the late 1980s, followed by a series of books in the 1990s providing comprehensive accounts of the wide variety of international green politics experiences. Most of these works contained essentially descriptive case study material (e.g. Parkin 1989; Müller-Rommel 1989; Richardson and Rootes 1995; Vialatte 1996; O'Neill 1997). What is required is to put the comparative study of green parties on a more rigorous methodological and empirical footing. Herbert Kitschelt’s work of the late 1980s still provides inspiration in this regard (Kitschelt 1989a,b, 1990; Kitschelt and Helleman 1990). The comparison of green party development at aggregate level has seen some major advances since, in particular through Müller-Rommel (1993, 1997) and Rihoux (2001). Faucher (1999), using a quasi-anthropological approach, has demonstrated the value of qualitative comparative research on green parties. The comparison of cross-sectional data has essentially been limited to studies of green voting behaviour (Franklin and Rüdig 1992; 1995). With the systematic comparison of data on members, a new opportunity arises for a rigorous comparison of the social structure, values, and behaviour of adherents of green politics across Western Europe.
The workshop will, however, also seek to make a contribution to the comparative study of party political behaviour in more general terms. The comparative study of party members could provide a unique opportunity to test hypotheses derived from some classical texts on the political sociology of political parties. Apart from providing another opportunity to test rational choice theories of party membership and activism that featured prominently in previous work on party members (cf. Seyd and Whiteley 1992; Whiteley et al. 1994), other important areas include theories of party development and strategy (e.g. Strøm 1990, Harmel and Janda 1994; Müller and Strøm 1999), political attitudes (May 1973; Kitschelt 1989b), and party organisation and internal party democracy (Michels 1970, Panebianco 1988; Kitschelt 1990). Other ground-breaking comparative research on the role and development of party members has focused at a more aggregate level (Katz and Mair 1992, 1994; Scarrow 1996). One of the key challenges provided by the comparative study of individual party members consists of the combination of aggregate and cross-sectional data. The data available for green parties will allow this type of analysis for the first time, and thus promises to be of broader interest beyond the green politics community.

Participants
The core of workshop participants will come from researchers around Europe who have been engaged in conducting green national membership studies in their countries. Representatives of the following research teams will be invited to present papers on national green party membership surveys at the workshop:

AUSTRIA: Wolfgang C. Müller and Peter Stefou, University of Vienna
BELGIUM: Jo Buelens, Free University Brussels; and Benoît Rihoux, Université Catholique de Louvain
ENGLAND & WALES: Wolfgang Rüdig, University of Strathclyde
FINLAND: Jukka Paastela, University of Tampere
FRANCE: Daniel Boy, CEVIPOF, Paris
GERMANY: Rüdiger Schmitt-Beck, ZUMA, Mannheim
GREECE: Iosif Botetzagias, Keele University (UK)
IRELAND: Michael Marsh and John Garry, Trinity College Dublin
ITALY: Roberto Biorcio, Bicocca University, Milan
THE NETHERLANDS: Paul Lucardie and Wijbrandt van Schuur, University of Groningen
NORWAY: Gunnar Grendstad, University of Bergen
SCOTLAND: Lynn Bennie, University of Aberdeen
SWEDEN: Anders Widfeldt, University of Aberdeen (UK)

Beyond the discussion of purely national studies, there will also be room to discuss first attempts to use membership data for cross-national comparative purposes. The workshop director will present a paper outlining a theoretical framework for the comparative analysis of green party members. In addition, more specialised comparative papers on particular aspects of party membership will be welcome, in particular on membership attachment and retention, socialisation, activism, actual and perceived internal power structures, and political attitudes and values, are invited.

The workshop is open to paper proposals from other researchers that either have been engaged in the empirical study of green party members or want to contribute on methodological and theoretical aspects of the comparative study of green party members.
Representatives of two major party membership projects in Norway (Knut Haider, University of Oslo) and Denmark (Lars Bille, University of Copenhagen) will be invited to present results of studies of 'left-libertarian' parties in their countries: how similar are members of these parties to green party members elsewhere? There are also a range of other green party surveys that have recently been conducted; papers reporting results of these studies could make an important contribution. Examples include surveys of green conference delegates: Brian Kessel conducted a survey of regional green conference delegates in different German states (Kessel 1998). Other examples include surveys of regional party members in Eastern Germany (cf. Patzelt and Algasinger 1996; Schmitt 2000; Boll and Holtmann 2001). In addition, there are also several post-graduate projects that address comparative aspects of green party membership. Potential contributors in this category are Tomas Nilsson (University of Aberdeen, comparison of Scottish and Swedish Greens) and John Karamichas (University of Kent at Canterbury, comparison of Greek and Spanish green parties).

Types of paper
Papers are expected to focus on the following aspects of the workshop:
   a) analyses of national green party membership data;
   b) comparative, cross-national analyses of specific aspects of party membership based on green party membership data;
   c) analyses of surveys of special sub-groups of green party members, such as conference delegates or party members in a particular region or locality; and
   d) empirically useful theoretical contributions to the comparative study of green party members.
All papers in categories a) – c) should be theoretically informed and have a strong empirical element, reporting results of original research.

Funding
This workshop proposal has the support of the Standing Group on Green Politics of the ECPR. The proceedings of the workshop may be of particular interest to green party politics foundations, such as the Heinrich Böll Foundation (Berlin, Germany) or the Green Academic Network (Netherlands). I will endeavour to identify appropriate research councils and other funding bodies that may be approached for financial support.

Biographical Note
Wolfgang Rüdig is Reader in Government at the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, Scotland. He has been engaged in comparative research on environmental policy and green politics for twenty years. His main publications are Anti-nuclear Movements (1990), Green Politics I-III (1990-1995), Green Party Members (1991) and Environmental Policy (1999). Rüdig’s main current research interests are the comparative analysis of the experience of green parties in government and the development of green party membership and activism in Britain.

References


