

Green parties and the silent revolution

Session 02

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- ② Differences in these factors and in institutions (i.e., the rules of the game) explain an important part of the variation in party systems across European countries
- ③ In spite of wars and revolutions in between, party systems in the 1960s largely resemble those of the 1920s (i.e., the freezing hypothesis)

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- Attitudes towards the system

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- Identity (rooted group and party identification)
- Attitudes towards the system
- Habits (path dependency)
- All these factors can be used to map the political opportunity structure of a given political context, remember the four thresholds of Lipset and Rokkan! (1967)

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 - thus generating the potential for political change

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- Instead, they would shift their **political preferences** to '**life-style**' based (e.g., sexual freedom and diversity acceptance)
- This would have implication for cleavage politics: a shift on the petit bourgeoisie to the left (search for political change) and a shift from the working class to the right (search for economic security)

The silent revolution

"(...) despite the fact that middle-class status has generally tended to be associated with a preference for relatively conservative political parties, the newly emerging type of value priorities seems likely to be linked with support for radical social change. Under given conditions, we believe, **this can lead to massive shifts to the political parties of the Left on the part of younger middle-class groups. Conversely, working-class respondents would be relatively likely to have underlying value preferences which make them potential recruits for conservative parties**" ([Inglehart, 1971, p. 992](#))

The silent revolution

- The foundations of the salient revolution thesis are found in the revolts of May 1968



Figure 1: Image from the French revolts of May 1968 (Copyright: Bruno Barbey/Magnum Photos)

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- **But is this all it takes for party-system change?**

The not so silent ‘new social movements’

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- ‘New Social Movements’ (NSM) is a term coined to refer a series of **bottom-up** political movements born in the early 70s in Western countries that, contrary to the prior class-based social movements, focused in **post-materialistic issues**, such as the defence of women’s and gay’s rights, global peace and the environment, and had **new middle classes at their core constituency**

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- The use of the term ‘new’ in NSM came as a formulation from Marxist theorist that were unable to explain why a bunch of middle class students had become the vanguard of protest instead of the working class

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- **What kind of reaction can we expect from existent parties to the emergence of NSM?**

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 - ③ The NSM did not only had substantive demands, but also organizational demands (they believed on horizontal decision-making and the disarmed of hierarchical structures, such as thos of traditional parties)

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- However, **left-oriented parties were more likely to sympathize with the NSM demands**, probably because of their foundational concern with inequality above economic progress

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 - ① **Conservative green parties:** they incorporated the defense of the environment as their main issue with the goal of being as much transversal as possible
 - ② **New left parties:** they incorporated not only the defense of the environment but also other issues, such as the defense of minorities and horizontal forms of decision-making, on their agenda such connecting with a more specific constituency of new left-leaning voters

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- **But how successful were them?**

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- Apart from electoral rules and the role of Unions, it has been argued that green parties were less likely to succeed in **polarised party systems** because small leftist parties would have been able to incorporate NSM demands (i.e., Italy or Spain)

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- And that Green parties in **federal states** have been able to secure support by entering in second-level parliaments and governments more easily than at the national level
- Finally, conservative green parties have been less successful than new left green parties. This is probably due to the **constraining effect of existing cleavages** to incorporate single issues

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- ③ The segmentation of the left
- ④ The presence of old left parties in government
- ⑤ Federal institutions
- ⑥ Most notably, the **constraining effect of existent cleavages**

The impact of green parties across Europe

Table 1: Early success of Green Parties in Germany and France

Country	Germany	France
Electoral rules	Majoritarian	Proportional
Union's control over the left	Medium	Strong
Segmentation of the Left	No	Yes
Left in Government	No	No
Federal institutions	Yes	No
Type of Green challenger	Conservative	New Left
Average Green vote 78-91	5.1%	1.2%

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- Any other example of **niche parties**?
- Examples: elderly parties, animal rights parties, latino parties, etc.

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- We will discuss these topics further tomorrow!

Current trends on the Green wave

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- This means that they can be key for the formation of government and have real influence on the policy-making process
- However, they are far from dominate the dynamics of political competition

Current trends on the Green wave: let's debate!

- ***Final activity!*** Let's divide the class in two groups. You have 5 minutes to discuss potential explanations against or in favour of the future upsurge of Green parties, that is, why should we expect them to become more successful in the near future or not. Someone from each group should summarise the main points and then we will briefly debate.

References

References I

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