

# **Green parties and the silent revolution**

## **Session 02**

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- ① Overview of the last session**
- ② The foundations of party-system stability**
- ③ The silent revolution**
- ④ The not so silent 'new social movements'**
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## **Overview of the last session**

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- ① European party systems are largely shaped by social forces occurring during the state-building process and at the moment of expansion of democratic rights
- 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 Despite of wars and revolutions amidst, party systems in the 1960s largely resemble those of the 1920s (i.e., the freezing hypothesis)

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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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- These **new middle-classes** would no longer pursue class-based goals of economic development
- Instead, they would shift their **political preferences** to '**life-style**' based (e.g., sexual freedom and diversity acceptance)
- This would have implications 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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- Inglehart argues that in the subsequent French elections (1971), the working class showed a net shift of support to the Gaullist while the modern middle class (socio-cultural professionals) showed a net shift to the left, specially among the youngest
- **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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- Their origin is often linked to the revolts of May 1968 in Paris and Berlin, the revolts of 1969 in Italy, and the anti-Vietnam war movements during the 60s in the US
- 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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- We can distinguish between two main types:
  - 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 thus connecting with a more specific constituency of new left-leaning voters

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- This raised the question of whether green parties could be characterised as political parties in the same way as traditional political parties were
- **But how successful they were?**

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- In countries with **majoritarian electoral rules** and **strong connection between the major left parties and the Unions** they proved unsuccessful (such as in France and Great Britain)
- 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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- “Maybe the values and policies carried by the “silent revolution” were already included in the programmes of the pre-existing parties — particularly by leftist parties, which would strongly undermine the need to vote for a new party like the Greens, and hence dampen their success” (Rémy's response paper)

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- In addition, Green parties in **federal states** would have been able to secure support by entering in lower-level parliaments and governments more easily
- Finally, conservative green parties were less successful than new left green parties. This is probably due to the **constraining effect of existing cleavages** that impeded single issues to mobilize voters beyond party lines

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- ⑤ Federal institutions
- ⑥ Most notably, the **constraining effect of existent cleavages**

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

<b>Country</b>	<b>Germany</b>	<b>France</b>
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!

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- In the end, the most recent analyses suggest that Green parties have become mainstream in most European party-systems, and that their support ranges from null up to a 9% of the vote share
- 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. Hint: think of hypothetical scenarios. Someone from each group should summarise the main points and then we will briefly debate.

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