

**Rethinking Green Parties:
The Emergence and Electoral Success of
Green Parties in Austria, Britain and the Netherlands**

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**Mark Williams
Faculty of Social Sciences
Department of Politics
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Abstract

The proliferation of green parties on the European political landscape in recent decades has prompted much debate concerning the explanation of their emergence and the factors considered to influence their varying levels of electoral success. This thesis critically examines a number of perspectives and concepts drawn from the sociological and political studies literatures which shed light on these two key issues. Through a comparison of green party politics in Austria, Britain and the Netherlands, the thesis challenges the assessment of those who maintain that the emergence and/or electoral success of green parties can be understood principally in terms of the theory of 'post-materialist' value change, or in terms of the shift to 'post-industrial' society. Drawing on contemporary studies of 'high-consequence' risks, it argues for an alternative approach to understanding the emergence of green parties which is rooted in processes of social and global environmental change that have taken place during the post-war period.

The question of green party electoral success is examined by means of the organisation of a variety of political and institutional factors into four overarching themes: political state-institutional structures, electoral dealignment and political competition, modes of interest representation, and internal dynamics. It is contended that attention to each of these can yield important insights into the conditions which have impacted on the electoral significance of green parties in Austria, Britain and the Netherlands. The final part of the thesis develops a new, ecologically informed approach to the emergence of green parties based primarily upon a reworking and synthesis of themes explored in previous chapters.

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This dissertation is my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration. I alone am responsible for its contents.

Glossary of Political Parties

	Domestic Language Name	English Name
ALÖ	Alternative Liste Österreichs	Alternative List of Austria
AOV	Algemeen Ouderen Verbond	Aged League
ARP	Anti-Revolutionaire Partij	Anti-Revolutionary Party
BIP	Bürgerinitiative Parlament	Citizens' Parliamentary Initiative
CD	Centrumdemocraten	Centre Democrats
CDA	Christian Democratisch Appèl	Christian Democratic Appeal
CHU	Christelijk Historische Unie	Christian Historical Union
CPN	Communistische Partij Nederland	Communist Party of the Netherlands
D66	Democraten 66	Democrats 66
DG	De Groenen	Greens
EFGP	n/a	European Federation of Green Parties
EVP	Evangelische Volkspartij	Evangelical People's Party
FPÖ	Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs	Freedom Party of Austria
G	Die Grünen	Greens
GGEP	n/a	Green Group in the European Parliament
GL	GroenLinks	Green Left
GPV	Gereformeerd Politiek Verbond	Reformed Political Union
KPÖ	Kommunistische Partei Österreichs	Communist Party of Austria
KVP	Katholieke Volkspartij	Catholic People's Party
LF	Liberales Forum	Liberal Forum
ÖVP	Österreichische Volkspartei	Austrian People's Party
PC	Plaid Cymru	Welsh Nationalist Party

PEP	Evangelische Progressieve Volkspartij	Progressive Evangelical Party
PPR	Politieke Partij Radicalen	Political Party of Radicals
PSP	Pacifistisch Socialistische Partij	Pacifist Socialist Party
PU55	Unie 55+	Political Union 55+
PvdA	Partij van der Arbeid	Labour Party
RPF	Reformatorische Politieke Federatie	Reformed Political Federation
SDP	n/a	Social Democratic Party
SGP	Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij	Reformed Political Party
SNP	n/a	Scottish National Party
SP	Socialistische Partij	Socialist Party
SPÖ	Sozialistische Partei Österreichs	Socialist Party of Austria
VGÖ	Vereinte Grüne Österreichs	United Greens of Austria
VVD	Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie	Liberal Party

Chapter 1

Approaching Green Parties

In recent decades green parties have flourished on the European political landscape.¹ The green party phenomenon has spread so fast that there is now no European country - West or East - which has not witnessed the establishment of such a party (Kortvellyessy 1996).² In its infancy, green party politics in Europe reflected a somewhat modest response to growing public concern about the 'ecological crisis' which had come to the fore in the early 1970s.³ Yet since these formative years, green parties have invested considerable energy to develop substantive political programmes which fundamentally challenge the established ideologies of parties and movements associated with the Left and Right. Most notably, green parties have called into question the wisdom of the untrammelled economic growth and anthropocentric politics which for decades formed the chief ingredients of social democratic and communist party politics, and which have, more recently, underpinned the neo-liberal outlook. The rise of the green party as a significant promotional vehicle of social and economic change has facilitated a process of rethinking among many on the radical Left, and, in some cases, this has prompted the development of new partnerships between reformed socialists, ex-communists and greens (Wainwright 1994).

The extent to which green parties have managed to capture the political attention and support of European electorates in recent decades can be quite

¹ For general discussions on the history of individual green parties, see Parkin (1989); Müller-Rommel (1989b); Richardson and Rootes (1995) and O'Neill (1997).

² While Britain was the first European country to witness the development of a green party - namely, PEOPLE in 1973 - New Zealand is credited as being the country to have produced the world's first national green party. This was the Values Party and was founded in 1972 (Parkin 1989).

³ In this thesis the terms 'ecological' and 'ecology' will be taken as broad equivalents to those of 'environmental' and 'environmentalism' (Vincent 1993). It should be noted that some commentators have, for philosophical and ideological reasons, chosen to attach quite different meanings to these terms (see, for example, Bookchin 1986; Dobson 1995).

readily observed. Green parties are now represented in 17 national parliaments across Europe (*The Guardian*, 15 March 1999).⁴ In addition, at the time of writing, green parties are represented in five national governments in the European Union (EU), namely, those of Italy (1996-), France (1997-), Germany (1998-), Finland (1999-) and Belgium (1999-) (*Green World*, Winter 1998/9: 4; European Federation of Green Parties 1999).⁵ The influence of green party politics has not solely been confined to the national level, however. As well as achieving representation at local and regional level in a host of European countries, green parties have, since 1989, formed a parliamentary group in the European Parliament - the Green Group in the European Parliament (GGEP). Since green parties have consistently placed a strong emphasis on cross-national issues, this has provided them with a particularly important platform from which to further advance their ecological and social agenda (GGEP 1994). In short, green parties have, in the space of a few decades, emerged as established actors on the European political scene. This has generated considerable interest among academics and the formulation of a range of research questions relating to aspects of the green party phenomenon.

The aim of this opening chapter is to clarify some key issues and concepts that will form foci for detailed discussion in this thesis. The first section develops a twofold argument by means of which green parties may be identified and distinguished from other types of political party present on the European political landscape. This is followed in the second section by an examination of the character of green parties. The account offered is very different from established 'left-libertarian' and 'new politics' analyses, and provides the underpinning for an understanding of green parties which prioritises the latter's ecological identity. The third section provides a review of the context and scope of green party

⁴ The first green elected to a national parliament in the world was Daniel Brélaz in Switzerland in 1979 (Parkin 1989: 204).

⁵ In addition, the Swedish Greens currently wield considerable political influence at the national level. The minority Social Democratic government (1998-) has been forced to co-operate with the Greens and the Left Party. Elsewhere in Europe, Greens are represented in the governing coalitions of Georgia, Slovakia and Poland (European Federation of Green Parties 1999).

research, and establishes two central research questions around which the content of this thesis will be structured. The fourth section clarifies the meaning of two key terms that are essential components of these research questions - those of 'party emergence' and 'success'. In the fifth section, issues relating to the selection of case studies are discussed. The final section provides details concerning the organisation of the thesis.

1. Delimiting the Phenomena

Before proceeding any further, criteria by means of which 'green parties' may be identified and distinguished from other types of political party need to be established. The term 'green' is problematic because it has been employed in a number of different ways by commentators. The scope of political thought and activity considered to fall within the boundaries of this term has ranged from modest demands for nature conservation to calls for fundamental social change and a profound rethinking of the relationship between humanity and nature (Vincent 1993). The flexibility of the term has meant that there are few political parties in Europe which have not been able to present themselves as advocating 'green' politics in one form or another (Rüdiger 1990b: 2). The following question therefore arises: are there sufficient grounds for arguing that green parties should be treated as a distinct category of party in their own right?

A two-stage argument can be developed in providing a positive response to this question. The first aspect of the argument relates to the 'self-identification' of green parties and states that a green party is one which, first and foremost, defines its identity in 'green' terms. That is to say its identity is primarily 'green', as opposed to, for example, 'social democratic', 'conservative' or 'liberal'. Thus, a political party which espouses 'green' rhetoric yet whose identity is recognisably and fundamentally shaped by an established political tradition does not constitute a green party. In contrast, a party which views itself

chiefly in 'green' - or ecological - terms can be said to have fulfilled the first part of the argument in question. Of course, such a party's political programme may incorporate aspects of other political traditions, but it is the 'green' identity which moulds these elements and not *vice versa*.

The second stage of the argument concerns what can be termed the 'family identification' of green parties. If a political party is indeed 'green', then it is reasonable to suppose that parties with a similar self-identity should view it in these terms. One significant development within the sphere of green party politics since the 1980s has been the enthusiastic coming together of like-minded parties, and the formation of international organisations with the aim of advancing the green cause at the European level.⁶ The European Coordination of Green Parties (ECGP) - founded in March 1984 - began as an organisation of nine parties and 'provided a single European home to green parties' (GGEP 1994: 186). During this period, much discussion surrounded the question of which political parties should be recognised as 'belonging' to the green party 'family' and hence admitted to the Coordination. This issue was effectively resolved in 1989 (*Green Times* 1989: 14; GGEP 1994).⁷ In 1993 a new, more 'efficiently' organised body was established, called the European Federation of Green Parties (EFGP). The EFGP defines green parties as those parties that meet with its requirements of having been 'established in a state or region of Europe ... subscribed to the Guiding Principles of the Federation ... accepted the Statutes of the Federation [and] accepted by the Federation as a Member according to the regulations for the application procedure elaborated by the Council' (EFGP 1993b). Other parties, organisations or movements in Europe - or elsewhere - that

⁶ Of course, green parties were not the first political parties to band together to form international networks of co-operation. For example, the communist and social democratic parties had long co-operated in organisational networks such as the Third International (1919) and Socialist International (1951) (Wilde 1994).

⁷ The main problem centred on whether to admit 'alternative left' parties as well as 'green' parties into the organisation. The Dutch parties in question - the CPN, PSP and PPR - had formed an electoral alliance for the 1984 European elections under the name Green Progressive Accord (*Groen Progressief Akkoord*). The debate was finally settled with the emergence of Green Left (*Groen Links*) in 1989 - an electoral body which, in 1990, became a fully-fledged green party to the extent that all parties at the ECGP agreed that it was 'green enough' (GGEP 1994: 186).

agree on the Federation's guiding principles can be granted 'observer' status (EFGP 1993b). At the time of writing, membership of the EFGP has been granted to 30 green parties in Western and Eastern Europe.⁸ Of course, members of this organisation may disagree over many matters, but sufficient common ground exists between the member parties to result in the mutual acknowledgement that they belong to the same family of political party in Europe. This common ground is embodied in such documents as the *Guiding Principles of the European Federation of Green Parties*, which sets out the parties' 'pan-European strategy of ecological and social reform' (EFGP 1993a: 2).

For the purposes of this study, then, the term green party is used to describe any political party which defines itself primarily as 'green' and which is also considered to belong to the green party family by the majority of other green parties. A political party which defines itself as 'green' but which is not internationally recognised as such by the EFGP thus does not fall within the boundaries of this definition of a green party. This is an important qualifier, and means, for instance, that certain parties of the far-right which have claimed to be green parties are not included within the context of this study, to the extent that they have not been accepted by the member parties of the EFGP.⁹ The definition offered here provides one means of delimiting the scope of green party politics in Europe.

2. The Character of Green Parties

The appearance of green parties on the political map of Western Europe prompted much academic discussion with respect to these parties' ideology, organisation and electoral support base.¹⁰ It has been claimed that green parties

⁸ See the EFGP website for further details on these parties.

[<http://www.europeangreens.org/>]

⁹ The far-right Ecological Democratic Party in Germany would be an example of such a party.

¹⁰ For example, see Pridham (1978); Papadakis (1983); Rothacher (1984); Spretnak and Capra (1985); Müller-Rommel (1985a, 1989b); Poguntke (1987, 1992, 1993a); Kvistad (1987);

are an example of a 'new type of party' which has come to prominence in European party systems in recent decades (Poguntke 1987). Within the academic community, it has become commonplace to reject the view that green parties possess a distinctive political identity of their own, and some have developed and subsumed them within much broader classifications such as those of 'left-libertarian' or 'new politics' parties (Kitschelt 1988a, 1989, 1990; Müller-Rommel 1990; Poguntke 1987, 1989, 1993a). Based upon a study of the Belgian and German cases, Kitschelt argues that green parties are primarily characterised by what he terms their 'left-libertarianism'.¹¹ He argues that these parties are:

'left'; they oppose the market place and insist on solidarity and equality. They are also 'libertarian' in that they reject centralized bureaucracies and call for individual autonomy, participation, and the self-governance of decentralized communities. (Kitschelt 1988a: 197)

Along with this ideological disposition, 'left-libertarian' parties share a common socio-economic electoral support base. Thus he states:

all of these parties overproportionately draw voters from the ranks of the younger, well-educated middle class; they are employed in human services (teaching, healthcare, social work), have left-of-centre political convictions, subscribe to 'postmaterialist' values, and sympathize with environmental, feminist, and peace movements. (Kitschelt 1988a: 198)

Of particular note here is that Kitschelt's classification seems to ignore completely the central place of the *ecological* issue, let alone themes such as peace or feminism, within the *programmatic* content of green parties (Rüdig 1990b). The fact that the terms 'green' or 'ecology' appear in the formal title of these political parties is implicitly dismissed by Kitschelt as irrelevant, given that

Kitschelt (1988b); Koeble (1989a); Hoffman-Martinott (1991); Finger and Hug (1992); Doherty (1992); Richardson and Rootes (1995); and O'Neill (1997).

¹¹ The category 'left-libertarian' party also includes 'New Left' parties. The 'New Left' parties to which Kitschelt refers emerged initially in such countries as Denmark (Socialist People's Party - founded 1959), the Netherlands (Pacifist Socialist Party - founded 1957) and Norway (Socialist People's Party - founded 1960). For a useful summary of the themes espoused by New Left groups during their formative period see Lucardie (1989).

it is perceived to be 'left-libertarianism' which separates them from more established forms of political party (Kitschelt 1988a: 197). The term 'left-libertarian', it can be argued, suffers from a lack of substantive inclusiveness and does not capture the ideological distinctiveness of green parties; namely, their ecological self-identity and understanding of events. Because Kitschelt treats green parties essentially as a reconstructed form of left-wing politics, his analysis disguises the extent to which many of these parties were 'started by people who felt the need for politics to be based on an entirely new set of values that could not be found in any existing political tradition' (Parkin 1989: 19). Even where green parties have directly sought to develop a synthesis of ecological and socialist ideas - in the Netherlands, for example - it has invariably been the 'green' prerequisite which has defined the limits of such parties' 'leftism' (Voerman 1995: 118).

This criticism aside, it can also be seen that the term 'left-libertarian' is fraught with tension and potential contradiction. The essence of the political theory of 'libertarianism' is a commitment to *laissez-faire* and a fundamental mistrust of state intervention (Barry 1986). Its 'negative' conception of individual freedom serves as a justification for a rejection of bureaucracy and the championing of appropriate interpretations of autonomy, participation and individual rights (Held 1987: 254-255). A problem with the term 'left-libertarian' is that 'leftist' opposition to the operation of free market forces sits uncomfortably with a political theory whose entire rationale flows from an optimistic faith in these very economic arrangements. Further tensions exist between 'leftist' and 'libertarian' conceptions of equality. Again, a traditional 'leftist' commitment to a more equal distribution of wealth evidently clashes with the limited, meritocratic character of a typically 'libertarian' interpretation of equality. The term 'left-libertarianism' thus contains certain internal contradictions which would further call into question the claim that it represents a coherent conceptual tool with which to illuminate the ideological complexion of green parties.

Other attempts to classify green parties include those of Poguntke (Poguntke 1987, 1989, 1993a) and Müller-Rommel (Müller-Rommel 1990). Both authors advocate usage of the term 'new politics' party and argue that the latter is successful in capturing the distinctive ideological, organisational and electoral profile of most green parties. Broadly speaking, 'new politics' parties are believed to display a 'new politics' ideology - which encompasses a commitment to individualism, equal rights, participatory democracy, ecology, unilateral disarmament, solidarity and leftism - and, like Kitschelt's 'left-libertarian' parties, participatory party organisation, an unconventional political style and a support base rooted in the young, 'well-educated', 'new middle class' and 'post-materialist' strata of society (Poguntke 1987: 78-79). One problem with this approach is that, like its 'left-libertarian' cousin, it does not acknowledge the extent to which some green parties have sought to transcend 'new politics' criteria such as 'leftism'.¹² And despite conceding that 'ecology' forms an element of the 'new politics', the inclusion of this theme does appear somewhat 'incidental' (Rüdiger 1990b: 15).

The problematic nature of these two attempts to illuminate the ideological character of green party politics therefore necessitates the pursuit of an alternative conceptualisation based more directly upon the ecological premise. Yet the idea that green party politics fundamentally reflect an ecological ideology has received remarkably scant attention within the literature. While books and articles have been written setting out different approaches to the study of ecological thought (Eckersley 1992; Goodin 1992; Vincent 1993; Hayward 1994; Dobson 1995), few authors have specifically examined how ecological ideas have informed green party politics. As Bennie *et al.* put it, 'there is a gap between political theory and philosophy on the one hand and the empirical study of green politics (be it green parties, ecological movements or environmental public opinion) on the other' (Bennie *et al.* 1994: 218). However, an examination of the

¹² For example, the Swiss Green Party has sought to uphold a 'deep green' philosophy as opposed to a more 'leftist' form of green politics (Church 1995: 149). Yet to the extent that the Swiss Greens define themselves in 'green' terms, and are viewed as such by other parties, they clearly constitute a green party.

available academic literature - the most comprehensive examples of which have focused on the German Greens - as well as the *Guiding Principles of the European Federation of Green Parties*, can facilitate a grasp of the elements of the political programme that has come to underpin European green party politics in recent decades.¹³

In 1980, the German Greens adopted the so-called 'four pillars' which would form the basis of their first national political programme: ecology, social responsibility, grass-roots democracy and non-violence. A consideration of each of these, supplemented by a discussion of the programme of the EFGP which represents a 'philosophical conjuncture' of Europe's green parties (Richardson 1995: 19), can provide a means of comprehending the thematic focus of green party politics as it has come to evolve in Europe.

From the outset, the German Greens displayed a profound commitment to ecology, reflecting a belief that an industrialism induced global ecological crisis was already a reality and worsening on a daily basis (Rothacher 1984; Spretnak and Capra 1985: 28). Ecological thinking formed a basic plank of the Greens' philosophy which stressed the importance of viewing human beings and their environment in terms of a symbiotic relationship (Ambos 1988). One of the mistakes over the past centuries has been for humans to view themselves as 'above' nature. Green parties have been critical of the strongly anthropocentric basis of much economic, social and political activity. In the German Greens' Federal Programme attention is focused on the importance of developing an 'ecological politics', one which 'presents an all-encompassing rejection of an economy of exploitation and plundering of natural resources and raw materials, as well as the destructive intervention into the cycles of nature's household' (cited in Spretnak and Capra 1985: 31). This ecological theme is one which has come to serve as a lynchpin for green parties across Europe and lies at the very core of the *Guiding Principles of the European Federation of Green Parties*. In the preamble to this document it is stated that:

¹³ The German case may be illuminating because it has become the paradigmatic case of green party politics in Europe (Richardson 1995).

[t]he so-called progress of the past centuries has brought us into a situation where the basis of life on Earth is seriously under threat. While technological development may delay the deterioration of the environment for a time, it cannot prevent the ecological and social collapse of civilization without a fundamental change in the ideology of unquestioned material growth which still prevails. As pioneers of the industrialization which lies at the heart of the present crisis, Europeans carry a major responsibility for the reversal of these destructive trends. (EFGP 1993a: 2).

Europe's green parties are thus united in their deep concern about the ecological crisis and in their belief that human activity, underpinned by a view of 'progress' based upon continued industrial growth, lies at the root cause of this crisis. There are, of course, differences among the member parties of the EFGP with respect to the strategies proposed in order to tackle this crisis. Just as the literature on green political thought has underlined the diversity of academic opinion formulated on this question¹⁴, so too has green party politics been characterised by the existence of a wide range of strategic approaches regarding the latter. Most commonly, these different approaches have been expressed in terms of dichotomies such as 'realists' versus 'fundamentalists'; 'electoralists' and 'anarchists'; or 'eco-socialists' and 'pure greens' (Doherty 1992; Rüdiger and Lowe 1986; O'Neill 1997). Thus while all green parties share a fundamental concern about the ecological crisis, there has been a considerable degree of flexibility and disagreement between and within such parties as to precisely how this crisis should be tackled.¹⁵ Yet it is the ecological premise which underpins the political programme of green parties. Without this ecological core a political party cannot in any real sense be considered 'green'.

The theme of social responsibility is one which has further moulded the outlook of Europe's green parties. Again, this was a principle to which the German Greens accorded priority. One of the main ways in which the party

¹⁴ See, for example, Vincent (1993); Eckersley (1992); Dobson (1995) and Goodin (1992).

¹⁵ For a discussion of the extent to which these issues have affected different green parties in Europe see O'Neill (1997).

interpreted the theme of social responsibility was in terms of 'social justice and an assurance that the poor and working class [would] not get hurt by programmes to restructure the economy and our consumer society ecologically' (Spretnak and Capra 1985: 33). In more concrete terms, green parties' commitment to greater social justice has involved advocacy of a more equitable distribution of power and resources, the meeting of basic human needs on the broadest scale possible, and ensuring that all citizens 'have full opportunities for personal and social development' (EFGP 1993a: 3). Green parties have also drawn attention to the extent to which social and ecological responsibility go hand in hand. They have criticised the dominant culture of unlimited production and consumption which has placed undue strain on the natural environment. For green parties, the preservation of the natural environment requires that humans exercise social responsibility by limiting their consumption and ensuring that citizens in the so-called 'developing' countries are given opportunities to share in the earth's resources (EFGP 1993a). The green perspective on issues of social responsibility is thus based upon the realisation that 'the social, economic, and ecological realms are inextricably linked' (Spretnak and Capra 1985: 116).

In their party programme of 1980, the German Greens declared that they had 'decided to create a new type of party structure founded on the inseparable concepts of grassroots democracy and decentralization' (cited in Spretnak and Capra 1985: 35). The model of a 'grass-roots' - or participatory - party organisation was considered to represent the antithesis of that of the established parties - a 'semi-institutionalized, non-professionally led, bottom-up organization' (Frankland 1995: 28-29). A study carried out during the 1980s revealed that the majority of Europe's green parties shared a commitment to the participatory model of party organisation. Reflecting their participatory orientation, the bulk of green parties were also found to exhibit a preference for unconventional forms of political action (Poguntke 1989). Yet, as more recent studies have shown, several of Europe's green parties have - during the 1990s - embarked upon processes of organisational change, shifting away from the

'grass-roots' model of party organisation and embracing more 'professional' party structures (Frankland 1993; Burchell and Williams 1996, 1997).¹⁶ The claim that a commitment to 'grass-roots' democracy remains a key pillar of European green party politics should therefore be approached with considerable caution. While there is some uncertainty as to the place of 'grass-roots' democracy in contemporary green party organisations, there can be little doubting that green parties attach importance to the theme of democratisation in a broader sense - in particular, to the need for 'greater democratic control and openness in institutions [and] to actively involve all sections of society in decision-making processes' (EFGP 1993a: 14). For the green parties of Europe, 'ecodevelopment' must be based upon democracy - defined as 'the right of all peoples to express themselves and to participate fully in decision-making, which [in turn] requires access to all relevant information and ... to education' (EFGP 1993a: 3).

A commitment to non-violence has formed a further component of green party ideology and was the fourth of the principles in the German Greens' Federal Programme (Richardson 1995; Doherty 1996). Broadly speaking, it refers to the 'cessation of both personal violence and "structural violence", that is, violence and oppression imposed by the state and by institutions' (Spretnak and Capra 1985: 40). Green parties wish to see an end to violence towards women, children and minority groups and to the use of force by the state as a means of resolving conflicts. They have spoken out against militarism and formulated policies geared towards the prevention of armed conflicts, the removal of the causes of war and the development of peaceful forms of conflict resolution (EFGP 1993a: 9). The green parties' commitment to non-violence can also be linked to their overarching concern about the environment. Green parties have been critical of violent acts carried out by humans upon the non-human natural world and called for a qualitatively different relationship with nature based upon

¹⁶ For example, the Swedish Greens - *Miljöpartiet* - embarked upon significant organisational change during 1991-2, as did the German Greens between 1991 and 1993 (Burchell and Williams 1997; Frankland 1995).

the principle of respect. For the late Petra Kelly, non-violence, interpreted in the broadest sense, was '*the* essential ingredient in an ecological society' (Spretnak and Capra 1985: 41; my emphasis). Yet the principle of non-violence has proved problematic for green parties. As Doherty has argued, while they have retained their moral commitment to non-violence their participation in government has sometimes led to a more pragmatic position with respect to the use of force by the police, for example.¹⁷ As green parties come to play an increasing role in government across Europe, it has been suggested that the result 'is more likely to be a reformist approach concentrating on reducing the use of force and curbing developments such as the militarisation of the police' (Doherty 1996: 44).

This interlinked set of principles provides one means of grasping the ideological character of European green party politics. However, a further interesting issue that warrants some discussion relates to green parties' relationship to the classic Left/Right split. It was mentioned above that many greens have made a conscious attempt to transcend this distinction. Yet green parties evidently have more in common with the politics of the Left than with the Right. While it is green parties' overarching ecological perspective which distinguishes them from the politics of the (radical) Left, there is clearly an affinity between these parties' emphasis on such themes as social justice, emancipation, non-violence and participation and a 'leftist' political outlook. In addition, green parties' critical stance towards the commercial sector (albeit principally on ecological grounds), their opposition to a society based mainly around monetary interests, and support for fundamental social change, have distinct parallels with the values of the Left. It is true that green parties have generally been *critical* of socialist projects as they have unfolded, on the grounds that they have been premised upon industrialism and economic growth. But a

¹⁷ However, as Doherty points out 'there have been incidents where green reluctance to use force has become an issue of conflict: conflicts with the SPD [Social Democratic Party] over the violent eviction of squatters led to the collapse of the Red-Green coalition in Berlin in 1989' (Doherty 1996: 43). Recently, the German Greens de facto leader and German foreign minister, Joschka Fischer, expressed strong support for NATO policy during the conflict in Kosovo, exposing splits within the party and, once again, underlining its problematic relationship with the principle of non-violence (*The Guardian*, 5 July 1999).

good deal of common ground exists between greens and socialists when it comes to the underlying principles of each tradition. It is perhaps for this reason that certain European green parties - e.g. the German, Italian and French Greens - have found it more productive to seek coalitions with parties of the Left rather than with those of the Right, and that many disillusioned socialists and former communist party activists have been attracted to green party politics.

The purpose of this section has been to demonstrate that an approach to understanding the ideological character of green parties can be developed which comes much closer to capturing their ecological identity than either the 'left-libertarian' or 'new politics' traditions. Such an approach recognises the green parties' overriding concern with the 'ecological crisis' and the importance of the principles of social responsibility, democracy and non-violence in the attempt to resolve this 'crisis'. The links between these concepts, along with the relationship between green parties and the politics of the Left, will be further examined at a later stage in this thesis.

3. Political Studies, the Environment and Green Parties: An Evolving Relationship

Over the past few decades environmental themes have emerged as significant foci for political researchers. Academics working within different sub-fields of the discipline of political studies have turned their attention to a host of issues concerning the phenomena of environmental politics including pollution control (Enloe 1975; Weale 1992; Jordan 1993), the making and shaping of environmental policy (Paehlke and Torgerson 1990; Lester 1995; Liefferink 1997), environmental attitudes (Rohrschneider 1988; McAllister 1994; Inglehart 1995), environmental interest groups and movements (Lowe and Goyder 1983; Dalton 1994), climate change (Rowlands 1995; O'Riordan and Jager 1996), green political thought (Goodin 1992; Eckersley 1992; Dobson and Lucardie

1993; Vincent 1993), nuclear energy (O’Riordan 1988), sustainable development (Fritsch 1995; Baker *et al.* 1997; Meadowcroft 1997; Young 1997), and the relationship between democracy and the management of environmental problems (Doherty and de Geus 1996; Lafferty and Meadowcroft 1996).

One aspect of environmental politics that has recently been subject to a flurry of research activity has been green parties. To some extent this can be interpreted within the context of the aforementioned growing interest among political researchers in environmental themes - an interest which took root from the early 1970s onwards (Meadowcroft *et al.* 1999). Yet there can also be little doubt that a major catalyst which sparked interest in green parties was the electoral success of the German Greens during the early 1980s (Frankland 1995: 23). Academic observers have since broadened their research focus by paying attention to party political developments in a host of additional European countries (Richardson and Rootes 1995; O’Neill 1997). One of the intriguing features of green party politics is that it has transcended the boundaries of political systems and cultures, and assumed a ubiquitous presence on the contemporary European political landscape (Müller-Rommel and Poguntke 1989: 11).

An indication of the extent to which the discipline of political studies has responded to the rise of green parties has been documented in a study of environmental coverage in 40 English language politics journals, 1960-95 (Meadowcroft *et al.* 1999). This study revealed that, by the end of the 1970s, only two articles explicitly dealing with green parties had been published within the periodical literature. Yet, reflecting their rise in Germany and elsewhere, the 1980s saw an explosion of academic interest in green parties and this trend has broadly continued throughout the 1990s (Meadowcroft *et al.* 1999).¹⁸ The expanding periodical literature has been complemented by the publication of numerous texts dealing explicitly with the phenomenon of green parties

¹⁸ During the 1980s a total of 22 articles was published on green parties. In the first half of the 1990s (1990-95) 30 articles on green parties were published within the periodical literature (Meadowcroft *et al.* 1999).

(Spretnak and Capra 1985; Hülsberg 1988; Kitschelt 1989; Müller-Rommel 1989b; Parkin 1989; Frankland and Schoonmaker 1992; Poguntke 1993a; Richardson and Rootes 1995; O'Neill 1997; Bomberg 1998). Green parties now constitute a significant sub-field of interest for academics working within the domains of European environmental and party politics.

Much early work on green parties was carried out explicitly with the aim of understanding the origins, ideology, organisational structure and electoral appeal of the German Greens (Papadakis 1983; Rothacher 1984; Kolinsky 1984; Müller-Rommel 1985c). These themes have since been examined in relation to a broader range of European green parties (Müller-Rommel 1989b; Richardson and Rootes 1995). Other issues which have provided research themes for observers of green parties include ideological conflict (Doherty 1992), green party strategy (Kitschelt 1988b), the classification of green parties (Kitschelt 1988a; Poguntke 1987), green party organisational adaptation and change (Frankland 1993; Poguntke 1993b), and the explanation of the emergence and varying electoral success of these parties (Müller-Rommel 1982, 1998; Chandler and Siaroff 1986; Rüdig 1986, 1990b; Rüdig and Lowe 1986; Poguntke 1987; Kitschelt 1988a, 1989, 1993; Alber 1989; Kreuzer 1990; Rootes 1992, 1995b; Kaelberer 1993; Franklin and Rüdig 1995).

Of the themes that have attracted the attention of green party researchers, it is clear that those of party emergence and electoral success have been given the most consistent and widespread consideration within the literature. The substantial focus on these two research questions reflects a long-established interest among political analysts in the development of party systems and political parties (Duverger 1954; LaPalombara and Weiner 1966; Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Sartori 1976; Bartolini and Mair 1984). An examination of the green party literature reveals that researchers have been inclined to draw upon three areas of social science writing in their engagement with the issues of party emergence and electoral success: (1) political studies based approaches, (2) sociological and social movement theory, and, to a lesser extent, (3)

internationally comparative literature in environmental politics. A prominent focus for reflection among some observers has involved the attempt to develop a framework which can account for the emergence and varying electoral success of green parties across a broad range of European countries (Rüdig 1986, 1990b; Kitschelt 1988a, 1989; Müller-Rommel 1998).

The classical literature on party systems and political parties has provided green party researchers with an array of concepts and 'facilitators' which may potentially shed light on the issues in question. From an established political studies perspective, the understanding of the emergence of political parties has been grounded in theories which emphasise the degree to which social cleavages - such as class, religion, ethnicity and centre/periphery relations - underpinned the development of stable party systems in Western democracies (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Zuckerman 1975). Since the 1960s, however, processes of electoral dealignment and realignment are considered to have undermined these patterns of party system stability (Dalton *et al.* 1984).

The idea that the emergence and electoral success of green parties might be related to the changing nature of established cleavages structures and the rise of new issue strains has proved particularly attractive to party specialists (Franklin and Rüdig 1995). Yet in seeking to obtain a grasp of the nature of these processes, commentators have tended to turn to sociological, cultural and, more specifically, 'new social movement' accounts of political change.¹⁹ These 'macro' accounts have provided potential means of explaining why recent decades have witnessed growing societal pressure to form green parties, as well as the processes of social and cultural transformation underpinning the electoral appeal of these parties (Kitschelt 1990).

By far the most frequently employed of these approaches has been Ronald Inglehart's theory of value change, according to which the emergence and electoral success of green parties is interpreted in terms of the rise of a new cleavage based around 'materialist' and 'post-materialist' values (Inglehart 1977,

¹⁹ For useful summaries of social movement approaches see Pakulski (1991) and Gladwin (1994).

1990b; Poguntke 1993a). Other commentators have interpreted the rise of green parties within the context of processes relating to the shift from industrial to 'post-industrial' society (Touraine 1971; Bell 1974) - for instance, a change in the class structure, the expansion of higher education, the rise of bureaucratic decision-making (Chandler and Siaroff 1986; Alber 1989; Papadakis 1989; Frankland and Schoonmaker 1992). Reflecting the growing importance of comparative research into the relationship between environmental issues and politics (Lowe and Rüdig 1986; Boehmer-Christiansen and Skea 1991; Carter and Turnock 1993; Dalton 1994; Doyle and McEachern 1998), a further perspective has focused more specifically on the links between environmental problems, the rise of an ecological 'cleavage', and the emergence and electoral success of green parties in different countries (Rüdig 1990b).

Yet despite the evolving relationship between political studies and environmental themes, ecologically informed approaches to understanding green parties have occupied a marginal position within the academic literature. Moreover, of the small number of studies which explicitly address the relationship between environmental problems and green parties, few, if any, have provided an in depth analysis of the conditions that gave rise to these problems in the first place. Of course, there is a burgeoning literature dealing with the deleterious effects of patterns of economic growth, industrialism and capitalism on the human and non-human environment.²⁰ But even these broader theoretical studies have omitted to explore the precise relationship between environmental, social and political change. While studies of green parties rooted in the 'post-materialist' and 'post-industrial' traditions have been given added weight by the rich theoretical literatures which form the backbone of these perspectives, the same cannot be said for research which places emphasis on the role of environmental problems in the development of green parties. In terms of understanding green parties, then, there is a clear gap within the literature. Given that green parties are - first and foremost - defined by their ecological identity, a

²⁰ For a review of these issues see Porritt (1984), Eckersley (1992), Pepper (1993), Martell (1994) and Dobson (1995).

proper account of their origins and electoral appeal must examine the specific environmental and social conditions that have given rise to ecological politics in contemporary European societies.

There is a further body of relevant literature which deals more explicitly with the impact of institutional structures, political competition and patterns of interest representation on the emergence and electoral success of green parties. The central claim here has been that the developmental patterns of these parties - that is, the timing of their formation and the levels of electoral support that they have been able to attract - have been shaped by what have been termed 'political and institutional facilitators' (Rüdiger 1986).²¹ These are themes which have long been the subject of discussion within more mainstream analyses of political parties (Duverger 1954; Rae 1971; Sartori 1976; Hauss and Rayside 1978). Factors cited as being of potential relevance to the development of green parties have included the type of electoral system, structures of government, electoral dealignment, the conditions of political competition, neo-corporatism, and the strategic orientation of social movements (Hauss and Rayside 1978; Müller-Rommel 1982, 1985b, 1985c, 1998; Rüdiger and Lowe 1986; Kitschelt 1988a, 1989; Kreuzer 1990; Rootes 1992, 1995b). But while commentators have paid considerable attention to the role of 'external' political and institutional factors on green parties, there has been a noticeable neglect of the potential impact of 'internal' dynamics - ideology, organisation, strategy, party leadership - upon green party development.²²

²¹ Some commentators have preferred to employ the term 'political opportunity structures' to describe the range of political system related factors affecting the rise of green parties (see, for example, Frankland 1995: 26-28 and Demertzis 1995: 202-204). Broadly speaking, the term refers to the extent to which state structures are 'open' or 'closed' to new issues and movements (Kitschelt 1986). However, a number of weaknesses are associated with the concept of 'political opportunity structure' which would cast doubt on its suitability as a framework within which to examine green parties. Most importantly, as Rootes suggests, 'it has too often been used to obscure the analytically important distinction between factors which are, on the one hand, genuinely structural in that they derive from more or less temporally durable and often formally institutionalized arrangements, and, on the other, conditions which are essentially contingent and usually more temporary' (Rootes 1995b: 250).

²² As was mentioned earlier, these themes have been the subject of detailed scrutiny by green party researchers. However, they have been largely examined within the context of discussions about the character of green party ideology and organisation, and the nature of internal strategic conflict within green parties, as opposed to the emergence and electoral success of these parties.

Existing studies have undoubtedly advanced academic understanding of the range of 'external' factors which can potentially impact upon the emergence and electoral success of green parties. Yet there are problems even with this literature. These problems stem from academics' hesitancy when it comes to the task of synthesising the multiplicity of political and institutional factors identified and/or to considering their relative impact on green party emergence and electoral success in different European countries. One of the clear problems with the literature as it stands, therefore, is its diffuseness. Even the few studies that have attempted to move towards a more integrated approach (Kitschelt 1988a; Taggart 1996; Müller-Rommel 1998) have been limited by their failure to consider the often different ways in which these factors have impacted on green parties. Because these commentators have usually chosen to focus upon a large number of cases, they have not been able to examine in detail the varying extent to which different political and institutional arrangements have impinged upon green parties, nor the often complex interrelationship between these factors.

The focus of this thesis is thus upon the two questions that have come to dominate the literature on European green parties: the explanation of the environmental, social and political context within which such parties emerged and the varying levels of electoral support attracted by them in different countries. The study challenges the existing literature on two main counts. First, with respect to the broad conditions which have shaped the context within which there has been public pressure to form and support green parties, primary emphasis is placed upon the rise and heightened perception of large-scale ecological risks and problems. Attention to these issues can contribute towards the development of a more theoretically sophisticated understanding of the ecological identity of green parties. These ideas challenge existing approaches which have interpreted the rise of green parties principally within the frameworks of 'post-materialist' value change and/or 'post-industrial' society. However, it is argued that aspects of these latter frameworks can be reworked and integrated into a perspective which stresses the centrality of the existence and perception of

ecological risks and problems. Second, in contrast to existing studies, an attempt is made to assess in detail the relative impact of, and interrelationship among, a wide range of 'external' and 'internal' political and institutional factors on the emergence and electoral success of green parties.

4. The Emergence and Electoral Success of Green Parties:

Terminological Clarifications

The principal concern in this section is to clarify the meaning of two terms that will be used on a regular basis within this study; namely, those of party 'emergence' and 'success'. On the issue of party emergence, it has been suggested by Rose and Mackie that:

The establishment of a party organization is a process; a particular date, such as the foundation meeting, is only one point in time in a process of previous political activity often extending for many years. (Rose and Mackie 1988: 535)

This 'dynamic' approach has long been employed by party specialists (Duverger 1954). The intention in this thesis is to develop a 'dynamic' approach to party emergence which encompasses yet transcends the somewhat limited influence of 'previous political activity' (whether in the form of social movements, citizen involvement in political parties or outside organisations) upon green party emergence. In doing this, the approach to green party emergence incorporates a range of additional themes, including long-term processes of social, political and environmental change, as well as consideration of the impact of a variety of political and institutional arrangements.

Thus far little has been said with respect to the 'success' or 'failure' of green parties. One of the notable features of green parties is that while they have been formed in all European countries (Kortvellyessy 1996: 22), their electoral fortunes have differed dramatically. Some green parties have attracted substantial

proportions of the vote - gaining parliamentary representation and ultimately coalition status in national governments - while others have consistently performed dismally at elections. Of course, assessing a party's 'success' or 'failure' solely on the basis of its electoral performance has its limitations. As Rose and Mackie point out, 'ideas of failure and success are relative; they only have meaning when judged by explicit criteria' (Rose and Mackie 1988: 534). At a minimal level, for example, success 'may only mean that a party persists, maintaining an organization to contest elections' (Rose and Mackie 1988: 533). A political party may also be considered to have 'succeeded' if it achieves its programmatic or organisational goals (Rose and Mackie 1988: 533-534). Despite there being several ways to define party 'success', this study will adopt one specific criterion - that of electoral success. There are two main reasons for this. First, measures of success such as 'durability' or 'survivability' are particularly difficult to apply to green parties since the vast majority have existed for a relatively short period of time. Passing judgement on the overall 'durability' or 'persistence' of a green party formed in, say, 1987 may seem somewhat premature (Harmel and Robertson 1985: 513). Second, adopting a definition of 'success' based upon achievement of party goals is problematic because the politics of green parties are characterised by the existence of a wide range of strategies, objectives and ideological tendencies. As well as inter-party differences of opinion on these questions, studies have drawn attention to intra-party tensions - exemplified in the so-called 'fundi-realo' debate (Doherty 1992) - considered to exist within a number of European green parties. In utilising the criterion of 'achievement of party goals' as a basis for assessing a political party's success or failure, a problem concerning the diversity of opinion that exists on the question of exactly what these goals should constitute is immediately encountered.²³ Of the attempts to define party 'success' the criterion of electoral performance is thus the least ambiguous. Because political parties are

²³ This problem is by no means confined to green parties. For a discussion of the extent to which conflict over party goals has affected British political parties in recent years see Peele (1997). For a discussion of internal conflict in European social democratic parties see Kitschelt (1994: chapter 5).

essentially instruments for winning and administering power, and consequently display a commitment to fighting elections and obtaining the support of the electorate, it can be argued that electoral performance is a relatively uncontroversial and legitimate measure of a party's 'success'.

Two further issues require clarification. First, it is necessary to say something about the electoral focus of this study. While recognising the importance attached to sub-national and European elections by European green parties and academic commentators (Carter 1994; Harrison 1995), this study is predominantly concerned with green party electoral performance at the national parliamentary level. One reason for this is that the parties which will be examined in this study all claim, first and foremost, to be *national* parties committed to competing on the national electoral stage. It is also the case that, among most academic commentators, national parliamentary elections are considered to be the most significant in terms of the implications that their outcomes have for the character of politics and policy-making in different countries. Examining green party electoral success at the national level is thus justified on the grounds of green parties' clear identification as national parties and the elevated importance of national elections in contemporary European politics.²⁴

Second, an acceptable means of assessing national green party electoral success needs to be established. Existing responses to this question have often been quite arbitrary. Party specialists have usually chosen to assess electoral 'success' in terms of 'winning' elections or, in the case of green and other small parties, according to the extent to which they have been able to surpass a particular electoral threshold in previous national elections (Mair 1991; Kitschelt 1988a; Müller-Rommel 1998). On this latter basis, commentators have distinguished between electorally 'significant' and 'insignificant' political parties. For the purposes of this study, electoral performance can be used as a

²⁴ In the British case, however, it will also be necessary to consider the Green Party's performance in the 1989 European elections. This is because the result (14.9 per cent of the vote) was so at odds with the party's previous electoral performances and hence demands some sort of explanation.

simple means of assessing a party's 'significance', although it should be added that the former may often provide an indication of a party's 'significance' in a broader sense, e.g. in terms of the likelihood that it will be represented in parliament, enter into coalitions with other parties, able to have an impact on policy-making, receive significant media exposure, and be perceived as a 'significant' political party within the minds of the electorate. According to Kitschelt, a green party may be considered 'significant' if it 'has received about 4 per cent or more of the vote in a national parliamentary or presidential election at least once in the 1980s. Alliances among [green] parties are permitted to count toward the 4 per cent threshold' (Kitschelt 1988a: 198). The approach to the question of electoral significance adopted in this thesis is in broad keeping with this criterion although, in view of the fact that two of the green parties to be examined were not formed until the late 1980s, the period of assessment is extended to cover the years 1980-98.

5. The Case Studies

In order to throw light on the conditions that have resulted in public pressure to form green parties, and the factors which have impinged upon the latter's electoral success, the trajectory of green parties will be compared in three countries. One of the advantages of taking such a small sample is that a detailed assessment of the impact of social, environmental, political and institutional factors on the emergence and electoral performance of green parties is made possible. While studies of green parties based upon a large number of case studies have undoubtedly provided valuable insight into the collection of factors which may impact upon the emergence and electoral success of green parties (Kitschelt 1988a, 1989; Taggart 1996; Müller-Rommel 1998), they have for the most part been insensitive to the details of particular countries, and have not been

suiting to an assessment of the interrelation between dynamics of social change and the political and institutional dimensions of political systems.

The choice of case studies also requires some explanation. The definition of a green party in terms of a party that defines itself as 'green' and which is a member of the European Federation of Green Parties (EFGP) meant that a total of 30 parties could theoretically stake a claim for inclusion. From this initial group it was decided to exclude those parties which had recently emerged in post-Communist states, i.e. the green parties of the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Russia, Slovakia and the Ukraine. While these countries would undoubtedly have made for an interesting comparative study, it was felt that the very different political, economic and social circumstances within which these parties emerged would make a coherent assessment of existing theories of green party development - which have primarily been formulated on the basis of events in Western Europe - impracticable. There were also the not inconsiderable problems of language, and the lack of adequate information sources on these parties.²⁵ Thus, it was decided to limit possible cases for inclusion to the countries of Western Europe.

Of the Western European green parties, those of Greece, Portugal and Spain were excluded because it was thought that their recent histories of political dictatorship - all three countries have undergone a transition to liberal democracy since the 1970s - would make an assessment of theoretical approaches to green party politics, which have been premised upon long-term processes of economic, social and cultural development in Western liberal democracies, problematic. The green parties of Cyprus, Denmark, Malta and Norway were also omitted, on the grounds that the parties were very small and insignificant, and because there was found to be a lack of comprehensive information about, and few information sources available on, the parties. This left the following possibilities: Austria,

²⁵ English language sources on green parties in the ex-Communist countries are very limited. Existing studies have focused on the Czech Greens (Jehlicka and Kostecky 1992, 1995) and the Hungarian Greens (Hajba 1994). More general studies can be found in Waller (1989) and Waller and Millard (1992).

Belgium²⁶, Britain²⁷, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands²⁸, Sweden and Switzerland.

The preoccupation of green party researchers with the situation in Germany led to a conscious decision not to include the German Greens in the study.²⁹ It was felt that focusing upon the German case would do little to further advance understanding of green parties on a broader European scale. Finland, Luxembourg and Switzerland initially seemed promising, but it was discovered that the unavailability of party documents and literature made these cases unviable. For reasons of practicality, it was thus decided to include a green party which would be easy to contact for information purposes, and upon which there was likely to be a wealth of English language secondary sources, i.e. either the British or Irish Greens. Of the two, the British Green Party seemed the more practical and obvious choice. The Green Party was considered particularly interesting on account of its continued electoral marginality, despite having the status of being the first of its kind in Europe. It was also felt that placing an electorally insignificant green party alongside more electorally successful examples would enable a more fruitful investigation of the political and institutional factors impacting upon their electoral performance.³⁰

The choice of the Austrian Greens (*Die Grünen*) as a case study partly reflected a response to the comparative lack of interest in 'green' political developments in this country. Considerably less has been written on green party

²⁶ Two green parties exist in Belgium: the French-speaking *Ecolo* and the Flemish *Agalev*.

²⁷ In 1989 Scottish Greens obtained independence from the British Green Party. At present, there are two green parties operating in Britain: the British Green Party (England and Wales) and the Scottish Green Party.

²⁸ There are two green parties in the Netherlands: Green Left (*GroenLinks*) and the Greens (*De Groenen*).

²⁹ An analysis of the periodical literature has revealed that of the 42 articles published on green parties between 1978 and 1995, 23 dealt with the situation in Germany (Meadowcroft *et al.* 1999). Numerous texts have also been written on the German Greens. See, for example, Hülsberg (1988), Frankland and Schoonmaker (1992), Poguntke (1993a) and Wiesenthal (1993).

³⁰ Information on the British Green Party was obtained from a wide variety of sources including books and articles, party manifestos and publications, attendance at Green Party conferences and interviews (telephone and face to face) with academics and party activists carried out in 1996 and 1997.

politics in Austria than in Italy, Belgium, Sweden or France.³¹ While relatively under-researched Austria was considered interesting because, despite having national 'green' parties present since 1982, it was not until 1986 that a significant green party - in the form of the Austrian Greens (*Die Grüne Alternative*) - appeared on the political landscape. Although the party has since managed to maintain parliamentary representation and secure a foothold in the Austrian party system, its electoral fortunes have fluctuated somewhat in recent national elections. It was thought that attention to the political and institutional circumstances under which the Austrian Greens have competed might yield further insights into the factors which have potentially influenced the electoral strength of green parties. One potentially interesting feature of the Austrian Greens is that the party has undertaken significant organisational reforms in recent years and this provides an opportunity to investigate the impact of changing internal dynamics - a hitherto neglected aspect of green party politics - on green party electoral performance.

Green parties in the Netherlands have also received only modest attention within the literature.³² Yet the Dutch case (*GroenLinks* - Green Left) is unusual among European green parties in that it developed out of four already existing 'New Left' political parties in 1989/90. The late arrival of a significant green

³¹ For example, arguably the most influential of comparative texts on Europe's green parties - namely, Richardson and Rootes (1995) - did not include the Austrian Greens as a case study. English language sources on the Austrian Greens are limited to a small number of unpublished conference papers (Frankland 1992, 1993; Lauber and Müller 1998), academic articles (Lauber 1995, 1997a) and book chapters (Dachs 1989; Haerpfer 1989; Frankland 1994). However, there is a wealth of more mainstream literature on developments in Austrian politics. See, for example, Sully (1990), Fitzmaurice (1991), Lauber (1996b). The analysis in this study has been further supplemented by consideration of some German language sources, party documents and publications translated into English, and information supplied by Gerhard Jordan (international secretary of the Austrian Greens), Sue Miles (British Green Party international secretary) and Hazel Dawe (British Green Party's observer of the Austrian Greens). Useful studies of the Belgian, Italian, Swedish and French Greens can be found in Kitschelt (1989), Rihoux (1995), Rhodes (1995), Gaiter (1991), Bennulf (1995), Prendeville (1994), Szarka (1994), and Cole and Doherty (1995).

³² The main studies of green parties in the Netherlands include Voerman (1992, 1995) and Lucardie *et al.* (1993, 1994). However, there is a considerable literature on the Dutch New Left, the Dutch Communist Party and the new social movements, all of which played an important role in the development of green party politics in the Netherlands. Further information for this study was obtained through English language party publications and interviews with Dutch academics and green party members carried out in 1996.

party in a country which has, since the 1960s, suffered from considerable environmental degradation and in which there have been high levels of environmental awareness and new social movement activism (van der Straaten 1992; O'Neill 1997) has presented something of a paradox for green party researchers. The absence of a significant green party in the Netherlands throughout the 1980s is even more perplexing, considering the country's extreme version of proportional representation - a system which is thought to facilitate the electoral success of small parties (Lucardie 1991). The interest factor in Dutch green party politics is heightened by the presence of a second green party - *De Groenen* (The Greens) - on the political landscape.³³ Yet, unlike Green Left, this party has been an electorally insignificant political actor. The existence of two green parties in one country - one significant, the other insignificant - thus presented an added opportunity to explore the political and institutional factors impacting upon the electoral significance of green parties.

One of the aims of this study was to examine the ways in which contrasting political and institutional arrangements might facilitate different patterns of green party emergence and levels of electoral success. In view of this, it was considered desirable that, as far as possible, there should be significant differences in terms of the features of the political systems within which the green parties have competed. Austria, Britain and the Netherlands clearly meet with these requirements. For instance, while Austria and the Netherlands conduct national elections under proportional representation, Britain does not. In addition, Austria has a federal system of government while Britain and the Netherlands are unitary states. And while Britain's political system has frequently been described as 'pluralist', the Dutch and Austrian have been defined in 'neo-corporatist' terms. The patterns of political competition also differ across the three case studies. For example, Britain's party system has had a clear 'two-party' quality to it whereas the party systems of both Austria and the Netherlands have - at least since the early 1980s - been characterised by increased competition and higher

³³ Both *De Groenen* and *Groen Links* are members of the European Federation of Green Parties.

levels of fragmentation.³⁴ The three countries display further important differences in terms of the internal dynamics of their respective green parties. The British Green Party has a long history of internal conflict over strategy and its ideology has been interpreted in 'dark' green terms (Bennie *et al.* 1994). In contrast, both the Austrian and Dutch parties have less turbulent histories and have embraced more moderate and less uncompromising ideological positions (Voerman 1995; Frankland 1994). It was felt that comparing the green parties along these differently constituted dimensions would enable the identification of certain elements and arrangements whose presence or absence have influenced their emergence and electoral performance.

6. The Organisation of the Thesis

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the range of social, environmental, political and institutional factors that have shaped the context within which political parties with an explicitly ecological identity emerged, and the arrangements which have impacted upon the comparative electoral significance of these parties. Approaches to examining these questions can be divided into two main types: first, broad, macro-theories of social and cultural change developed by individual theorists which have been employed to describe the context within which there evolved heightened societal pressure to form and vote for green parties, and, second, perspectives which draw upon established concepts and themes within the political studies literature in the attempt to illuminate the political and institutional factors underpinning the emergence and electoral significance of green parties.

The thesis is organised to allow as far as possible a critical assessment of these two dominant approaches to understanding the phenomenon of green

³⁴ While the Netherlands has a long history of multi-partyism, Austria has gone through various phases of party system. The period 1966-1983, for example, falls into the category of a 'two-party system'. Since 1983, however, Austria has had a 'multi-party' system characterised by 'moderate pluralism' (Müller 1996a, 1996b).

parties. Because social or cultural change based perspectives pertaining to green parties tend to be associated with one or two prominent theorists, it was considered appropriate to examine these in relation to the arguments elaborated within these theorists' most influential publications. A critical examination of these arguments will also enable an appreciation of the sometimes different views of theorists associated with a particular theoretical perspective. Attention to these subtle differences of emphasis within the literature could possibly be missed if a more broadly based, thematic approach to the literature was adopted.

Of the theoretical frameworks that have attracted the attention of green party commentators, it is Ronald Inglehart's theory of 'post-materialist' value change which has received the most overwhelming endorsement within the literature (Rüdig 1990b; Franklin and Rüdig 1995). Chapter 3 thus provides a detailed examination of the extent to which Inglehart's arguments can enhance understanding of the emergence and electoral significance of green parties. In chapter 4, the focus of attention shifts to two prominent theories of 'post-industrial' society which have received scrutiny within the green party literature - namely, those identified with Daniel Bell and Alain Touraine. Chapter 5 represents something of a departure from the previous two chapters in that it engages with the arguments of two sociologists which have been largely ignored by green party commentators, but which are fast becoming favoured theoretical frames of reference within the wider sub-discipline of environmental politics. The related arguments of Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens throw up the possibility that the emergence and electoral success of green parties may be linked to the existence of large-scale ecological risks and hazards arising from processes of social, scientific and technological change within the broad context of 'late modernity'.

While chapters 3, 4 and 5 are approached from the perspectives of individual theorists, chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9 are, in contrast, structured on a thematic basis. These chapters deal with concepts that have had more direct application in the political studies literature on social movements, electoral

studies and political parties than within the literature on social/cultural change. The political studies literature contains reference to a wide range of political and institutional factors which may impact upon the emergence and electoral success of green parties. Because of this diversity, and the association of concepts and arguments with a large number of academic authors, the thematic organisation of these chapters constitutes the most sensible means of accessing this literature. Chapter 6 considers the impact of political state-institutional structures on the emergence and electoral significance of green parties. In chapter 7, attention is turned to the role of electoral dealignment and patterns of political competition on the development of green parties. Chapter 8 considers the relationship between modes of interest representation - primarily neo-corporatism, pluralism and social movements - and green parties. While these three chapters assess the impact of 'external' political and institutional factors on the emergence and electoral success of green parties, chapter 9 considers the hitherto relatively unexplored influence of 'internal' party dynamics. The purpose of the final chapter - chapter 10 - is to demonstrate that a synthesis of social/cultural change and political studies based approaches is possible. Such a synthesis can facilitate an understanding of the social, cultural, environmental, institutional and political conditions underlying the emergence of green parties and the electoral significance of these parties. Before exploring these issues, however, the next chapter (chapter 2) provides necessary background information on the three green parties to be examined in this study.

Chapter 2

The Career of Green Parties in Austria, Britain and the Netherlands

Green parties in Austria, Britain and the Netherlands have contrasting and complex histories. The aim of this chapter is to provide a preliminary overview of the career of green parties in these countries. The chapter 'sets the scene' for more detailed discussion and critical assessment of the principal research themes, i.e. the factors affecting the emergence and varying electoral success of green parties, to be examined in subsequent chapters. It provides background information on such issues as the dates of party formation, the key actors involved in the development of the parties, the main periods of party change and conflict and, importantly, their electoral achievements to date. The discussion begins with an outline of green party politics as it has developed in Austria before moving on to consider the situation in Britain and the Netherlands.

1. Green Party Politics in Austria

The roots of green party politics in Austria can be traced back to the various citizen initiatives (*Bürgerinitiativen*) which sprung up in several cities during the early 1970s. The purpose of these groups was to organise local demonstrations and mount campaigns against urban projects considered to be damaging to the environment (Gottweis 1990: 51). Their first electoral breakthrough occurred in 1977 when a citizen list (*Bürgerliste*) in Salzburg won 6 per cent of the vote and two seats on the city council. This was followed in 1982 by greater success, as the same citizen list increased its representation to seven seats (17.7 per cent of the vote) and secured control of one municipal portfolio (Dachs 1989: 175). The

relative success of the Salzburg list gave a boost to the environmental movement in the rest of Austria and was followed by the founding of two rival national parties in 1982. The Alternative List of Austria (*Alternative Liste Österreich: ALÖ*) developed out of the Alternative List of Graz (*Alternative Liste Graz*), a political group formed in 1981 and, according to Frankland, was:

open to the left, borrowed much of its programme from the West German Greens', included a diversity of activists from environmental, feminist, peace and Third World movements and was organised according to the grass roots-democratic model. (Frankland 1994: 195)

The United Greens of Austria (*Vereinte Grüne Österreichs: VGÖ*) grew out of the anti-nuclear movement¹ and aimed to promote, more exclusively, the ecological cause. Unlike the ALÖ, the VGÖ was conservative in outlook and did not make 'plans for radically changing Austrian society, economy or the state' (Lauber 1995: 315). Its organisational structure was similar to that of the established parties - hierarchical and publicity orientated (Dachs 1989: 179). Both parties contested the 1983 parliamentary elections although neither managed to win a seat in the National Council (*Nationalrat*).² Between 1983 and 1986 the two parties continued to fight provincial elections separately with modest results (Sully 1990: 132).

The year 1986 marked something of a turning point in the history of green party politics in Austria. A 'green' candidate, in the form of peace activist and former Socialist Party (*Socialistische Partei Österreichs: SPÖ*) member Freda Meissner-Blau polled 5.5 per cent of the first round vote in the Presidential election which forced a second ballot between the SPÖ and the People's Party (*Österreichische Volkspartei: ÖVP*) candidates (Sully 1990: 133). This was hailed as a moderate 'success' by the wider green movement. Since 1985 Meissner-Blau had been active in a new organisation comprised of prominent

¹ The VGÖ was founded specifically by leading members of the 'Project Group No to Zwentendorf' (Dachs 1989: 178).

² The ALÖ polled 1.4 per cent of the vote, the VGÖ, 1.9 per cent (Dachs 1989: 182).

green activists committed to the achievement of national parliamentary representation: the Citizens' Parliamentary Initiative (*Bürgerinitiative Parlament: BIP*). Her relative success inspired members of the ALÖ and VGÖ to begin negotiations in order to 'produce the candidature of one single green party' which would compete at the next National Council elections, scheduled for Spring 1987 (Haerpfner 1989: 27). When these negotiations broke down, however, it was left to the BIP to unite the ALÖ and VGÖ around a common programme in time for the 'snap' election called for November 1986. The electoral alliance, *Die Grüne Alternative-Freda Meissner-Blau*, polled 4.8 per cent of the vote and gained eight seats (out of 183) in the National Council. This was the first time that a fourth party had sat in the National Council since 1959, the year in which the Communist Party (*Kommunistische Partei Österreichs: KPÖ*) lost all of its parliamentary seats (Sully 1990: 133). It was also the point at which, after several years of political frustration, a significant green party finally materialised on the Austrian political landscape.

During the months following the 1986 election, the then called Green Alternative (*Die Grüne Alternative*) embarked upon a process of organisational development.³ For the new party, one of the first tasks involved the founding of party groups and offices representing all nine provinces (*Länder*) and ethnic minority groups (representing a 'tenth province'). At its first national party congress in February 1987 an executive committee was elected and, in May, the party founded a Green Academy (*Grüne Bildungswerkstatt*) to promote research and publicity (*Die Grüne Alternative* n.d.). In terms of its organisational style, the Green Alternative was, from the outset, sensitive to the oligarchic tendencies of the major parties and sought to develop collective structures designed to 'prevent the development of a class of professional politicians' (Frankland 1994: 201-203).⁴ The Green Alternative's loose organisational structure was further

³ From the outset, however, problems surfaced concerning the place of the VGÖ in the new party organisation. While the vast majority of former VGÖ members remained in the new party, a minority from its right wing quickly decided to split away from Green Alternative and began putting up rival candidates in provincial and national elections (Lauber and Müller 1998).

⁴ For a more detailed analysis of the party's organisational structure see Frankland (1994).

reflected in its emphasis on 'activism' and a reluctance to keep centralised records on membership levels.⁵

At least until 1990, the Green Alternative encountered some difficulties in developing a coherent party programme. This was partly a consequence of the party's preoccupation with organisational and parliamentary matters but also a result of the existence of 'sectarian disputes and personal rivalries' which led to the resignation of three MPs, including Meissner-Blau, in late 1988 (Frankland 1994: 205; Sully 1990: 134). In July 1990, however, the federal congress endorsed three reform programmes which together formed 'the party's first fully fledged manifesto with over 70 pages of principles, diagnoses and remedies' (Frankland 1994: 206).⁶ In the National Council elections of 1990, Green Alternative increased its representation from eight to ten seats, although its share of the vote remained constant at 4.8 per cent (Meth-Cohn and Müller 1991).

As the new decade progressed, Green Alternative entered a period of 'stagnation'. The party's poor performances in several provincial elections in 1991 fuelled demands for a reforming of its 'amateurish' model of organisation. At its May 1992 Gmunden congress several important organisational changes were passed, which aimed to make the party more integrated and professional.⁷ A further important development occurred this year with the creation of a new post of federal speaker. This was largely a response to the problems encountered during the 1990 National Council election campaign in which the party's four 'top candidates' struggled to compete effectively with the single leaders of the established parties (Müller 1994b: 58).⁸ The organisational transformation also

⁵ A recent study claims that the party has approximately 2,000 members (Lauber and Müller 1998).

⁶ In terms of content, the manifesto placed primary emphasis on environmental protection: 'the goal of the Green-Alternatives is above all the maintenance of life ... in diversity, dignity and health ...'. It also called for fundamental democratic reforms including 'more direct democracy, less party dominance, a stronger parliament and more civic participation in schools and the workplace', although it did not use the term 'radical democracy'. The European Union (EU) was opposed both on environmental and democratic grounds, and the party called for the abolition of the Austrian army. Concerning social policy, the manifesto advocated 'a guaranteed minimum income, a shorter working week (with full pay), a comprehensive pension system, health care reform, fair treatment of homosexuals and other social minorities'. The Greens also favoured more equality for women, ethnic minorities, foreign workers and refugees, and an open asylum policy (Frankland 1994: 206).

⁷ For a detailed description of these reforms see Frankland (1994) and Lauber and Müller (1998).

⁸ The post of federal speaker was filled initially by Peter Pilz, a strong 'media aware' personality.

involved a change of name for the party in 1993, from Green Alternative to the Greens (*Die Grünen*) (Lauber and Müller 1998: 16).⁹

By the 1994 National Council elections the Greens had undergone considerable change. The party's election campaign, led by new federal speaker Madeleine Petrovic, proved a success as its share of the vote increased from 4.8 per cent to 7.3 per cent and its parliamentary representation from ten to 13 seats (Luther 1995). Yet one year after this triumph, a surprise National Council election proved disappointing for the Greens. The party's share of the vote slumped back to its previous level of 4.8 per cent resulting in the loss of four parliamentary seats (Lauber and Müller 1998: 17). Pressures for a change of 'leadership' began to grow and in March 1996 Christoph Chorherr - a keen advocate of further party reform - was narrowly elected to replace Petrovic as federal speaker. By October 1996, the Greens seemed to have recovered some lost ground as they secured 6.8 per cent of the vote and one seat at the European Parliament elections (Lauber 1997a: 186). Chorherr resigned in December 1997 following intra-party criticism and was soon replaced by Alexander Van der Bellen. Despite Chorherr's resignation, the essence of his reform package - designed to move the party further in the direction of professional, one-person leadership - was adopted at the time of Van der Bellen's election (Lauber and Müller 1998: 18). In 1999, the Greens improved on their European election result of 1996, gaining 9.3 per cent of the vote and two seats (*The Economist*, 19 June 1999). A summary of the national electoral performance of the Austrian Greens (G) vis-à-vis other political parties is provided in Table 2.1.

All the signs are that the Greens will continue to maintain their presence on the Austrian political map. Yet while it has achieved a modest degree of electoral success and influence, the party clearly has its sights set on government participation at the national and *Land* levels. The Greens have undoubtedly served as an effective vehicle for voicing protest against the ecological and other

⁹ From this point on, and for the sake of clarity, the term 'Greens' will be used to refer to the Austrian party either in the guise of *Die Grüne Alternative* or *Die Grünen*. Separate reference will be made to the Greens' organisational predecessors, the ALÖ and VGÖ.

Table 2.1 National Parliamentary Election Results in Austria, 1983-95 (% vote and seats (s))

Parties	1983		1986		1990		1994		1995	
	%	s	%	s	%	s	%	s	%	s
SPÖ	47.6	90	43.1	80	42.8	80	34.9	65	38.1	71
ÖVP	43.2	81	41.3	77	32.1	60	27.7	52	28.3	53
FPÖ	5.0	12	9.7	18	16.6	33	22.5	42	21.9	40
LF	-	-	-	-	-	-	6.0	11	5.5	10
G	-	-	4.8	8	4.8	10	7.3	13	4.8	9
ALÖ	1.4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
VGÖ	1.9	-	-	-	2.0	-	0.1	-	-	-
KPÖ	0.7	-	0.7	-	0.6	-	-	-	-	-

Sources: Luther (1987, 1995); Pulzer (1995); Sully (1996); Lauber and Müller (1998).

shortcomings of the Austrian political system and public policy, but they have repeatedly stated their desire to be taken seriously as a party willing and able to assume government responsibility. The most pressing concern for the Greens is to carry forward their recent European success into the national electoral arena and to strengthen their bargaining position in relation to the other parties. Subsequent chapters consider in greater detail issues pertaining to the development of green electoral politics in Austria.

2. Green Party Politics in Britain

Founded as PEOPLE in February 1973 the British Green Party is noted as the oldest of its kind in Europe. Subsequently renamed the Ecology Party in 1975, then the Green Party in 1985, much of the party's history has been characterised by electoral frustration, political marginality and considerable internal wrangling (Rüdig and Lowe 1986; Parkin 1989; Wall 1994; Rootes 1995a). Unlike the Austrian Greens, the British Green Party is electorally insignificant. It has failed to achieve a breakthrough at general elections and its best performances have been at the European level (in 1989 and 1999). This section provides a summary of the key episodes and events that have shaped the Green Party's history over the past 25 years.¹⁰

The origins of PEOPLE can be traced to a loose organisation calling itself the 'Thirteen Club'.¹¹ Formed in 1972, this group set out to discuss issues raised in such publications as the *Blueprint for Survival*, the *Limits to Growth Report* and the writings of Paul Erlich (Parkin 1989). A clear difference of opinion soon developed within the group between those 'who simply wanted to read and learn and others who felt more had to be done' (Parkin 1989: 218). Four individuals, in particular, took the view that a new political party would form the best response

¹⁰ For a detailed 'official' account of the history of the Green Party see Wall (1994). Other useful accounts can be found in Rüdig and Lowe (1986); Parkin (1989) and McCulloch (1991, 1993).

¹¹ The name was a direct reference to the number of attendees at the first meeting (Parkin 1989: 218).

to the impending 'ecological crisis'.¹² In February 1973 their proposal materialised with the founding of PEOPLE at a meeting that attracted over 50 people (Parkin 1989: 218). By May of that year PEOPLE had set up ten constituency groups (Wall 1994). The new party's electoral baptism took place at the February 1974 general election, its five candidates averaging 1.8 per cent of the vote (Carter 1992a: 446).

At its first national conference in June 1974 PEOPLE adopted *A Manifesto for Survival* and elected a National Executive Committee. However, ideological tension was evident during the former's ratification between those on the platform who seemed very right-wing on such matters as immigration, education and women's emancipation, and those coming from the Left, who sought to soften this perceived tendency.¹³ These internal tensions were the first manifestation of a phenomenon that would torment the party in years to come and left the party ill-prepared for the October 1974 general election. At this election, PEOPLE's average vote across four constituencies fell to 0.7 per cent (Carter 1992a: 446).

In 1975, the party adopted the *Manifesto for a Sustainable Society* as its key policy document and changed its name from PEOPLE to the Ecology Party in an attempt to attract heightened media interest (Wall 1994: 24). However, the same year saw the departure of a number of members on the Left of the party in response to a 'growing concern that the Party had too many authoritarian-minded elements', and the withdrawal of two of the party's founding members, Tony and Lesley Whittaker, from national activity (Rüdiger and Lowe 1986: 272). According to several commentators, these developments very nearly resulted in the party's extinction (Rüdiger and Lowe 1986: 272; Wall 1994).

¹² These were Tony and Lesley Whittaker, Michael Benfield and Freda Saunders (Parkin 1989).

¹³ Rüdiger and Lowe's analysis of this ideological tension suggests that the right wing of the party derived many of its policy proposals from the writings of Edward Goldsmith (Rüdiger and Lowe 1986: 271). In contrast, the Left's proposals were far less authoritarian, and involved a more gradualist approach to the ecological crisis, which would prevent further industrialisation and urbanisation, secure people's basic needs, break-up the multinationals and bring industry into co-ownership. In addition, the Left supported feminism and policies for the integration of ethnic minority groups and the maintenance of education (Rüdiger and Lowe 1986: 271).

The years 1977-80 saw the emergence of a new national leadership in the form of Jonathon Tyler, Jonathon Porritt and David Fleming. The aim of the new leadership was to make the Ecology Party more professional and electable via a remoulding of its ideology and organisation. An attempt was made to resolve the ideological conflict between figures such as Edward Goldsmith and the Left 'by formulating the party's philosophy not in terms of its relationship to capitalism or socialism, but rather in terms of new alternatives - principally decentralisation and an end to the pursuit of economic growth' (Byrne 1989: 102). The result of the reforms was the transformation of an organisation facing imminent collapse into a national political party (Wall 1994: 34). The 1979 general election saw the Ecology Party field 53 candidates, a number sufficient to allow it a five minute radio and television broadcast. While the party's support averaged only 1.5 per cent of the vote in the seats fought, the enhanced publicity received served to boost its membership levels from 550 recorded in 1978 to more than 5,000 in 1980 (Carter 1992a: 446; Callaghan 1990: 3; Wall 1994: 36).

One consequence of such increased membership was an influx of so-called 'decentralists' committed to 'alternative' lifestyles and direct action strategies into the party. Ideological tensions between the former and the 'electoralist' faction soon developed and much time at conferences was devoted to working out compromises between these two tendencies (Rüdiger and Lowe 1986: 275). Increased membership also led to problems of administration and finance. In particular, the party found it difficult to cope with the scale of public enquiries and its decision to stand three candidates in the 1979 European elections 'almost bankrupted the party' (Kemp and Wall 1990: 27).

By the end of 1982 Ecology Party membership had fallen to approximately 2,500 (Kemp and Wall 1990: 27). This problem was accompanied by a dismal showing in the 1983 general election - the party averaged 1.0 per cent of the vote in the 106 constituencies that it contested, a result lower than that of 1979 (Carter 1992a: 446). The 1984 European elections saw the Ecology Party improve its performance slightly, averaging 2.6 per cent in the 16 constituencies

it contested, and gaining a best ever individual result of 4.7 per cent (Rootes 1995a: 67). Shortly after these elections, Jonathon Porritt withdrew from national party activity to become director of Friends of the Earth (Parkin 1989: 226).

At its September 1985 Annual General Meeting (AGM) the Ecology Party changed its name to the Green Party, partly as a result of the success experienced by other European parties with 'green' in their title, but also in an attempt to counter the growing efforts of other political traditions to claim the 'green' highground (Kemp and Wall 1990: 29; Parkin 1989: 224-225). Despite this change, the Green Party again failed to perform well in the 1987 general election; it polled an average of 1.3 per cent of the vote in the 133 constituencies that it contested (Carter 1992a: 446). Parkin notes that only ten Green Party candidates succeeded in gaining more than 2 per cent of the vote (Parkin 1989: 225-226).

The period 1987-89 is considered to form the Green Party's most successful phase to date. During this period the party celebrated growing membership, heightened media attention and 'sound organisation' (Wall 1994: 64). At the 1989 European elections, the Green Party 'not only won almost 15 per cent of the national vote, but polled over 20 per cent in 17 divisions in England, came second ahead of Labour in six and ran third in all but two other divisions in England and Wales' (Rootes 1995a: 68). However, although the national figure of 14.9 per cent was the 'highest percentage of the national vote ever won by a Green party in any European state' (Rootes 1995a: 69), the mechanics of the British electoral system prevented the party from winning any seats in the European Parliament. The immediate aftermath of this election did, though, see a rapid rise in the party's membership, which peaked at 18,523 in July 1990 (Young 1993: 38). The Green Party's period in the spotlight was, however, short-lived. By the end of 1990, the party's opinion poll rating had dropped from its June 1989 figure of 10 per cent to a poor 2 per cent (Rootes 1995a: 74-75). Combined with this was a sharp decline in membership levels.¹⁴ To compound these problems the Green Party once again found itself facing serious financial

¹⁴ Green Party membership declined from 18,523 in July 1990 to 10,300 in 1991, and to 5,500 in early 1993 (Evans 1993: 328-329; Young 1993: 37).

difficulties (Wall 1994: 70). The Green 2000 initiative led by Sarah Parkin was an attempt to avert the party's slide into oblivion. The principal aim of Green 2000 was the achievement of government for the Green Party within the next ten to 20 years (Young 1993: 38). According to Evans, the initiative took the form of 'a stronger, simplified - and so, arguably, a more accountable and democratic - management and leadership structure, which would work in a spirit of co-operation with the media' (Evans 1993: 328).¹⁵ Despite the passing of the Green 2000 motion in 1991 by a four to one majority (Evans 1993: 328), its adoption was preceded by the resumption of the debate between centralists and decentralists, with the latter arguing that 'the proposed changes were going in the wrong direction: towards the hierarchy and centralisation characteristic of conventional parties' (Young 1993: 39). The internal wrangling continued throughout 1992, culminating in the resignation of Sarah Parkin and five other Executive members in the summer of that year, and formed the backdrop to the party's poor performance at the 1992 general election, in which it averaged only 1.3 per cent of the vote in the 253 constituencies that it contested (Carter 1992a: 446). Yet the 1992 election did provide the Green Party with its first, albeit short-lived, connection with parliamentary politics. Cynog Dafis, a Plaid Cymru candidate who formed a local tactical alliance with the Green Party for the 1992 election, was elected and effectively gave the Greens (half) an MP. However, tensions between local Greens soon led to the end of this experiment in political co-operation (O'Neill 1997: 305). In 1994 the party's decline from its 1989 'heyday' was further underlined by a poor showing in the European elections - 3.2 per cent of the vote (Carter 1994: 496).

Since the turbulent years of the early 1990s the Green Party has shifted towards a more 'decentralist' position, concentrating its minimal resources on cultivating support in local communities with limited success. For financial reasons, the Green Party decided to field a much reduced number of candidates - 95 - at the 1997 general election. The average share of the vote gained across the

¹⁵ In practice, the reforms would replace the party's 24 member Green Party Council with a streamlined nine-member Party executive including two Principal Speakers (Evans 1993).

constituencies was 1.4 per cent, a result that once again highlighted the marginal electoral position of the Greens in the British party system (Carter 1997b: 157). More recently, however, the Green Party has had some cause for modest celebration. At the 1999 European elections, conducted under a regional list system of proportional representation, the Green Party gained 6.3 per cent of the vote, securing it two seats in the European Parliament (*The Economist*, 19 June 1999). Yet prospects of a Green breakthrough at the national parliamentary level remain slim. Table 2.2 charts the rather depressing career of the British Green Party from its initial flirtation with electoral politics in 1974 to 1997.

Table 2.2 National Parliamentary Election Results in Britain, 1974-97 (% vote and seats (s))

Parties	1974 Feb		1974 Oct		1979		1983		1987		1992		1997	
	%	s	%	s	%	s	%	s	%	s	%	s	%	s
Lab	37.1	301	39.2	319	37.0	269	27.6	209	30.8	229	34.4	271	43.2	418
Con	37.8	297	35.8	277	43.9	339	42.4	397	42.3	376	41.9	336	30.7	165
Lib ^a	19.3	14	18.3	13	13.8	11	25.4	23	22.6	22	17.8	30	16.8	46
SNP/PC	2.6	9	3.5	14	2.0	4	1.5	4	1.7	6	2.3	7	2.5	10
Greens	1.8 ^b	-	0.7 ^c	-	1.5 ^d	-	1.0 ^e	-	1.3 ^f	-	1.3 ^g	-	1.4 ^h	-

Notes:

^a Liberals 1974-79; Liberal-SDP Alliance 1983-87; Liberal Democrats 1992-

^b Average vote across 5 constituencies.

^c Average vote across 4 constituencies.

^d Average vote across 53 constituencies.

^e Average vote across 106 constituencies.

^f Average vote across 133 constituencies.

^g Average vote across 253 constituencies.

^h Average vote across 95 constituencies.

Source: Butler and Kavanagh (1997); Carter (1992a, 1997b).

3. Green Party Politics in the Netherlands

The historical development of the Dutch Green Left (*GroenLinks*) is complex. First, the party itself is the outgrowth of four initially opposed small political parties: the Communist Party of the Netherlands (*Communistische Partij Nederland*: CPN), Pacifist Socialist Party (*Pacifistisch Socialistische Partij*: PSP), Political Party of Radicals (*Politieke Partij Radicalen*: PPR) and Evangelical People's Party (*Evangelische Volkspartij*: EVP). Second, these parties' eventual merger was the culmination of a rapprochement that had begun in the late 1970s and which intensified during the course of the 1980s (Voerman 1995: 112-118). As well as providing basic information relating to electoral performance this section serves as an introduction to the key actors involved in, and events leading up to, the formation of Green Left.

The CPN was founded in 1909 as the Social-Democratic Labour Party (*Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiderspartij*: SDAP). In 1918 the SDAP renamed itself CPN and, one year later, the latter joined the Comintern (Jacobs 1989; Voerman 1991: 461). The party's national electoral performance prior to World War II was modest¹⁶ although, owing to its prominent role in the Resistance, the CPN profited at the 1946 election gaining 10.6 per cent of the national vote and ten seats in the Second Chamber of parliament (Jacobs 1989). However, such progress was short-lived. The party's defence of Soviet foreign policy in a climate of heightened anti-Communism contributed to the whittling away of its 'war-profit' and, between 1948 and 1959, electoral support slumped from 7.7 per cent to 2.4 per cent of the national vote (Voerman 1991; van der Linden and Wormer 1988).

Following its break with Moscow in 1963 the CPN's electoral position gradually improved and, at the 1972 elections, the party gained 4.5 per cent of the vote (van der Linden and Wormer 1988). After heavy losses at the general election of 1977 the CPN entered a phase of 'de-Leninisation'. This process

¹⁶ The party's best pre-war electoral performance was the 3.4 per cent of the vote gained at the 1937 Dutch general elections (van der Linden and Wormer 1988: 81).

culminated in the adoption of a new party programme (1984), which abandoned 'the notion of the class struggle as the sole engine of history' and rejected 'democratic centralist' organisational tendencies in favour of a 'democratic, feminist party organization' (Voerman 1991: 115, 466).¹⁷

The PSP was founded in 1957 by a group of pacifists and leftist socialists.¹⁸ The impetus for the formation of the PSP stemmed from dissatisfaction with the anti-neutralist and anti-pacifist stance adopted by the Labour Party (*Partij van der Arbeid*: PvdA) and the CPN's resolute defence of Soviet foreign policy (Lucardie 1989: 7). In terms of its programme, the party emphasised three broad themes: disarmament, economic democracy and spiritual renewal (Lucardie 1980: 95). It expressed openly its opposition to both capitalism and Marxism-Leninism, although there was considerable disagreement with respect to how the party's socialism should be defined (Lucardie 1989: 7).

During the 1960s, party activists lent their support to extra-parliamentary protest against war, imperialism and the monarchy and, from the late 1960s onwards, against pollution and nuclear power (Lucardie 1989: 7-8; Voerman 1995). In 1980, the party adopted feminism as a source of inspiration although, as Lucardie *et al.* note, 'ecologism ... did not receive the same favour' (Lucardie *et al.* 1993: 43). Despite its avowed anti-statism and support for direct action the PSP did compete in Dutch parliamentary elections, although its best electoral performance was a very modest 3 per cent of the vote, gained in 1963 (Lucardie 1991: 117).¹⁹

The PPR was founded in 1968 by radical Christians who had become disillusioned with the existing Confessional parties.²⁰ Unlike the PSP, the PPR oriented itself more towards government and accorded a supplementary status to

¹⁷ For more detailed discussions of the history of the CPN see Fennema (1991), van der Linden and Wormer (1988) and Voerman (1991).

¹⁸ For a precise breakdown of the social and political composition of this party see Lucardie (1980: 94).

¹⁹ For a detailed history of the PSP see Lucardie (1980).

²⁰ The majority of founding members came from the Catholic People's Party (*Katholieke Volkspartij*: KVP), while a minority came from the predominantly Calvinist Anti-Revolutionary Party (*Anti-Revolutionaire Partij*: ARP) (Jacobs 1989).

grass-roots activism (Voerman 1995: 113). The party displayed a willingness to co-operate with other parties - in particular, the PvdA and Democrats 66 (*Democraten 66: D66*)²¹ - and, indeed, it participated in a national coalition government with them, along with the KVP and ARP, between 1973 and 1977 (Andeweg and Irwin 1993: 119). Despite gradually becoming more secular and 'New Left' in terms of its orientation, the PPR remained critical of socialist ideology and, particularly, neo-Marxism. Rather than being inspired by ideological principles the party focused instead on specific issues, chiefly those of peace, the environment, welfare and democratisation (Lucardie 1994: 5). Following its high point at the 1972 parliamentary elections (4.8 per cent of the vote), support for the PPR declined to a low of 1.3 per cent in 1986 (Lucardie 1991: 117).²²

Much less has been written about the fourth party involved in the formation of Green Left - the tiny EVP. Founded in 1981 by left-wing members of the Anti-Revolutionary Party who opposed the party's merger into the Christian Democratic Appeal (*Christen Democratisch Appèl: CDA*), and by members of the Progressive Evangelical Party (*Evangelische Progressieve Volkspartij: PEP*), the EVP won 0.7 per cent of the vote in the 1982 parliamentary election. In terms of its programme, the party opposed the proposed stationing of Cruise missiles on Dutch soil as well as civil nuclear energy. Other policies included the advocacy of a shortened working week and the introduction of maximum and minimum incomes (Jacobs 1989: 282).

The official founding of Green Left on 24 November 1990 was the culmination of a process of electoral co-operation between the CPN, PSP, PPR and EVP that had gradually intensified since the late 1970s. At the 1984 elections to the European Parliament, the CPN, PSP and PPR in collaboration with the

²¹ D66 was formed in 1966 by Amsterdam intellectuals who supported constitutional reforms that would result in a more 'democratic' political system in the Netherlands (Andeweg and Irwin 1993). For more information on D66 see Jacobs (1989: 269-272).

²² For a detailed history of the PPR see Lucardie (1980).

Green Party of the Netherlands (*Groene Partij Nederland*: GPN)²³ fought under the banner of the Green Progressive Accord (*Groen Progressief Akkoord*: GPA).²⁴ The alliance won 5.6 per cent of the vote and two seats. The issue of co-operation proved more problematic in 1986, however, as the PSP chose to reject proposals for an electoral alliance with the CPN and PPR at the forthcoming parliamentary elections. The disastrous electoral consequences experienced by the separate parties - particularly the CPN, PPR and EVP - at these elections fuelled demands for an end to small Left disunity and, in 1989, the CPN, PSP and PPR, along with various social movement activists, began negotiations for the founding of a 'strong, left-green formation' (Voerman 1995: 117). Once again, however, deadlock was the consequence. Yet the fall of the Lubbers cabinet, and a sooner than expected parliamentary election, provided the necessary catalyst for reaching a consensus between the parties in May 1989. At the European elections in June of that year the three parties competed together under the name Rainbow (*Regenboog*) and captured 7 per cent of the vote and two seats. In the September 1989 parliamentary election they, along with the EVP, joined forces as Green Left, obtaining 4.1 per cent of the vote and six seats (Voerman 1995: 117).

Following these elections, a series of organisational measures established closer links between the constituent parties.²⁵ The first Congress of Green Left, at

²³ The GPN was registered in 1982 by two prominent members of the PPR - Bas de Gaay Fortman and Wouter van Dieren (Parkin 1989: 180). However, the party existed 'mainly on paper'. Its objectives were twofold. First, 'to prevent possible abuse of the name "green" by extreme right-wing parties'. Second, 'to create a platform for parties left of Labour [PvdA]' (Lucardie, Voerman and van Schuur 1993: 45). In view of this second objective, the GPN became known as the Green Platform (*Groen Platform*) and it was the latter which successfully brought together the CPN, PSP and PPR into an alliance in time for the 1984 European elections (Lucardie *et al.* 1993: 45). The EVP did not participate in this alliance since it did not, at this stage, wish to be associated with the PSP or CPN (Parkin 1989: 181).

²⁴ The emergence of the GPA resulted in a split within the Green Platform instigated by regional green parties who feared that association with the Left parties would lead to a loss of their identity. A new party, the Greens (*De Groenen*), was founded in December 1983 by some of these opposing actors. It competed in the 1984 European elections as 'European Greens' although only managed to gain 1.3 per cent of the vote. After renaming themselves 'Federative Greens' in 1985, the party fought in the 1986 general elections but only managed 0.2 per cent of the vote. In 1988, the Federative Greens merged with Green Amsterdam, a local green party, to form *De Groenen* - the name adopted initially in 1983 (Parkin 1989). The party exists to this day and has been a minor political rival of Green Left.

²⁵ See Voerman (1995) for precise details of these measures.

which the new party was officially founded, took place in November 1990. This was followed by the dissolution of the remaining CPN, PSP, PPR and EVP structures in 1991 (Voerman 1995: 117). In terms of its organisational structure, Green Left chose to adopt a 'mass party' model, as opposed to a more decentralised pattern of the kind displayed by some other European green parties (Koole 1994: 282). But Green Left is small in comparison to more established political parties in the Netherlands; in 1992 its membership totalled approximately 15,000 (CDA - 120,000 members; PvdA - 79,000; VVD - 56,000) (Andeweg and Irwin 1993: 64). One problem which caused some initial tension within the new party concerned the potential conflict between the dual pursuit of 'red' and 'green' objectives. Yet Green Left appears to have resolved this issue and moved in a decidedly ecological direction. The party insists that ecological sustainability must determine the limits of economic development (Dickson 1992: 6; Voerman 1995: 118).

At the 1994 parliamentary elections Green Left performed disappointingly, its share of the vote falling to 3.5 per cent of the vote with the loss of one of its seats (Lucardie 1995). The European elections of that year also saw a poor performance by Green Left - the party could muster a mere 3.7 per cent of the vote and one seat (Carter 1994: 497). Yet more recently the party has achieved greater success. At the 1998 elections Green Left's share of the vote rose from 3.5 per cent to 7.3 per cent, securing it a 'best ever' 11 seats (out of 150) in the Second Chamber (Irwin 1999: 275). Green Left's (GL) national electoral career is highlighted in Table 2.3.

In its short history, Green Left has achieved moderate electoral success and managed to achieve some degree of influence at the national level, most notably in shaping political discussion within the field of eco-taxation.²⁶ It has sought to present itself as an effective opposition party in the Second Chamber and it has carried out this role most effectively under its current leader, Paul Rosenmöller (Wouters 1998). Yet Green Left's longer term aim is to supplant

²⁶ Interview with Green Left MP, Marijke Vos, 29 March 1996.

Table 2.3 National Parliamentary Election Results in the Netherlands, 1989-98 (% vote and seats (s))

Parties	1989		1994		1998	
	%	s	%	s	%	s
PvdA	31.9	49	24.0	37	29.0	45
VVD	14.6	22	19.9	31	24.7	38
CDA	35.3	54	22.2	34	18.4	29
D66	7.9	12	15.5	24	9.0	14
GL	4.1	6	3.5	5	7.3	11
SGP	1.9	3	1.7	2	1.8	3
GPV	1.2	2	1.3	2	1.2	2
RFP	1.0	1	1.8	3	2.0	3
SP	0.4	-	1.3	2	3.5	5
AOV/PU55	-	-	4.5	7	0.5	-
CD	0.9	1	2.5	3	0.6	-
DG	0.4	-	0.1	-	0.2	-

Sources: Irwin (1999); Wolintez (1995).

D66 as the coalition partner of the main political parties and to secure a place in the next Dutch government. The party's improved performance at the 1999 European elections - 11.9 per cent of the vote and four seats - suggests that the party is making steady progress towards the achievement of this goal.

4. Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to provide some background information on each of the three main green parties to be examined during this thesis. In considering the career of green parties in Austria, Britain and the Netherlands it is clear that there are differences with respect to the timing of the emergence of green parties and in relation to the range of political actors involved in the party formation process. The British Green Party was the first of its kind in Europe and formed much earlier than green parties in Austria and the Netherlands. Its formation was seemingly straightforward, involving a small number of activists committed to advancing the ecological cause through the medium of party politics. The uncomplicated character of the British case contrasts markedly with the complex patterns of social movement activism, party co-operation and eventual fusion of parties that formed the backdrop to the formation of the Austrian Greens and Dutch Green Left. The three green parties have also experienced varying electoral fortunes. While the British Green Party has remained insignificant in electoral and broader political terms, never having managed to surpass 1 to 2 per cent of the vote at general elections, green parties in Austria and the Netherlands have achieved greater electoral success. Each has surmounted the 4 per cent threshold of significance and gained representation in their respective national legislatures. With this has come modest political influence and a platform upon which to potentially build greater electoral success. The purpose of subsequent chapters is to assess the extent to which a number of perspectives and concepts drawn from the sociological and political

studies literature can cast light on the patterns of green party emergence in Austria, Britain and the Netherlands, and the factors which might impact upon green party electoral performance. The next chapter considers the most widely employed theoretical approach to understanding green parties: the theory of 'post-materialist' value change.

Chapter 3

Green Parties, 'New Politics' and 'Post-materialism'

The notion of 'post-materialist' value change as developed in the work of Ronald Inglehart (Inglehart 1971, 1977, 1990b) has exercised considerable influence, particularly within the fields of new social movement and green party research. For Inglehart and his many converts, the emergence and growing significance of green parties reflects a broad shift in the value priorities of Western citizens away from 'materialist' towards 'post-materialist' values (Hülsberg 1988: 108-118; Müller-Rommel 1989a; Poguntke 1987, 1993; Inglehart 1995). Green parties are considered to be symptomatic of a wider phenomenon instigated by such value change, termed the 'new politics' (Inglehart 1977; Hildebrandt and Dalton 1978; Inglehart 1990b). Inglehart goes so far as to argue that a new axis of political conflict, based on the polarisation between 'materialist' and 'post-materialist' values, is fast becoming important in advanced industrial societies. He contends that 'new politics' parties - a party family thought to include green parties - will assume increasing significance as traditional economic cleavages gradually give way to new, 'value-based' forms of political conflict (Inglehart 1987, 1995).

It is undeniable that most studies of green parties have drawn heavily on Inglehart's theoretical framework (Rüdiger 1990b; Franklin and Rüdiger 1995: 413). Commentators claiming that the rise of 'post-materialist' values is primarily responsible for the emergence of green parties, and an important factor in determining party choice among voters, have pointed to ample survey data which purport to show that green party members and supporters are more 'post-materialist' in outlook than those of established political parties (Rüdiger 1990b). Green party researchers' overwhelming reliance on the concepts of 'post-materialism' and 'new politics' has meant that Inglehart's framework has been

virtually exempt from serious criticism.¹ The apparent reluctance to reflect critically upon the adequacy of this framework means that its core concepts have come to be considered as incontrovertible within the minds of many green and European party specialists. It is therefore essential that students of politics embark upon a more detailed and balanced assessment of Inglehart's arguments, and attend to the coherence of his theoretical model and to the adequacy of the empirical claims concerning the emergence and electoral strength of green parties.

This chapter is therefore intended as a counterbalance to the numerous 'post-materialist' interpretations of green party politics. In particular, it is argued that political researchers' confidence in the capacity of the theory of 'post-materialist' value change to account for the emergence and varying electoral strength of green parties has been largely misplaced. A close examination of Inglehart's theory demonstrates that it provides an inadequate basis from which to begin to account for the emergence of parties with an ecological identity on the European political landscape in recent decades. Further, the proposed connection between levels of 'post-materialism' and the electoral strength of green parties is shown to be unfounded. The chapter is divided into four main sections. The first section outlines the core elements of Inglehart's theory of value change and deals with the proposed political consequences of the assumed process of intergenerational value shift. The second section considers the extent to which a shift towards 'post-materialist' values has actually taken place in Austria, Britain and the Netherlands since the early 1970s (the point at which survey data on the extent of 'post-materialism' was made available). In the third section, attention is focused on the impact of 'post-materialist' values on both the emergence and varying electoral fortunes of green parties in Austria, Britain and the Netherlands and upon the relationship between 'post-materialist' values and voting choice. Having highlighted several significant shortcomings, the

¹ In fact, social scientists have expressed some theoretical reservations with respect to the 'post-materialist' thesis (see, for example, Martell (1994)). However, with few exceptions, most notably Rüdiger (1990b), these have either been dismissed or ignored by the bulk of green party researchers.

discussion then proceeds to the fourth section, which opens out into a broader critique of Inglehart's model and attempts to pinpoint the reasons why the 'post-materialist' thesis comes up against empirical difficulties when employed in studies investigating the factors impacting on the emergence and electoral significance of green parties.

1. The Theory of 'Post-materialist' Value Change

The theory of 'post-materialist' value change, as originally developed by Inglehart², is based upon two key hypotheses. The first of these - the 'scarcity hypothesis' - is comprised of two broad assumptions. First, that people place the highest subjective value on those things that are relatively scarce - this is akin to the principle of diminishing marginal utility in economic theory. Second, and based on Abraham Maslow's theory of the need-hierarchy of human motivation, there is the idea that 'people act to fulfill a number of different needs, which are pursued in hierarchical order, according to their relative urgency for survival' (Inglehart 1977: 22). Highest in order of rank are basic physiological needs, closely followed by the need for physical safety: 'its priority is almost as high as that of the sustenance needs, but a hungry man will risk his life to get food' (Inglehart 1977: 22). For Inglehart, once these basic 'material' needs are satisfied, human values will shift to 'post-materialist' concerns. Individuals will begin to pursue needs for love, belongingness, esteem, self-actualisation, and intellectual and aesthetic satisfaction. These 'post-materialist' needs form the apex of human endeavour and are only pursued with the satisfaction of 'materialist' (economic and physical security-based) needs in the hierarchy (Inglehart 1977: 22-23).

The second key hypothesis that makes up the theory of 'post-materialist' value change is the 'socialisation hypothesis'. According to Inglehart, this states

² The thesis found its first articulation in Inglehart (1971). More comprehensive elaborations of the thesis can be found in Inglehart (1977) and Inglehart (1990b).

that 'to a large extent, one's basic values reflect the conditions that prevailed during one's pre-adult years' (Inglehart 1990a: 47). Inglehart grounds this argument in studies of human development which claim that 'the likelihood of basic personality change declines after one reaches adulthood' (Inglehart 1990a: 48). In terms of the predicted effects of these two central hypotheses, the 'scarcity hypothesis' suggests that prolonged periods of economic prosperity will lead to the spread of 'post-materialist' values in society as a whole, while economic uncertainty would have the reverse effect. It is the 'socialisation hypothesis', however, which qualifies the 'scarcity hypothesis'. Since early socialisation is considered to have a more lasting impact on an individual than does later socialisation, it predicts that 'post-materialist' values are likely to persist throughout a given individual's life (Inglehart 1987: 1296; Eckersley 1989: 215).

In terms of the value structures of Western populations the theory of 'post-materialism' outlined above implies that:

as a result of the historically unprecedented prosperity and the absence of war in Western countries that have prevailed since 1945, the post-war generations in these countries would place less emphasis on economic and physical security than older groups, who had experienced the hunger and devastation of World War II, the Great Depression, and perhaps even World War I. Conversely, the younger birth cohorts would give a higher priority to non-material needs such as a sense of community and the quality of the environment. (Inglehart 1990a: 48)

Ever since evidence of intergenerational value change began to be gathered on a cross-national basis in 1970³, there has been a continuous stream of studies and reports that appear to further corroborate this theme.⁴ Such research has been based upon public opinion surveys in which respondents are asked to select what they believe their country's two primary goals should be from four alternatives:

³ See Inglehart (1971) on the 1970 European Community surveys.

⁴ Examples include the World Values Surveys of 1981-83 and 1990-93, and the EuroBarometer surveys sponsored by the Commission of the European Communities (Abramson and Inglehart 1992; Inglehart 1995).

'maintaining order in the nation'; 'giving the people more say in important government decisions'; 'fighting rising prices'; 'protecting freedom of speech'. The following classificatory formula has generally been employed:

Respondents who select 'maintaining order' and 'fighting rising prices' are classified as Materialists, while those who choose 'giving the people more say' and 'freedom of speech' are classified as Postmaterialists. The four remaining combinations - all of which are made up of one Materialist and one Postmaterialist response - are classified as 'mixed'. (Abramson and Inglehart 1992: 185-186)

Broadly speaking, these studies suggest that there are marked differences between the values of older and younger generations. In particular, those age cohorts whose formative socialisation occurred during the post-war period of peace and prosperity display stronger levels of support for 'post-materialist' values than older generations. According to Inglehart, Western societies are undergoing a 'silent revolution' in which younger, 'post-materialist' generations are gradually replacing older, more 'materialist' ones (Inglehart 1977).

It is this 'silent revolution' that Inglehart believes is causing important political system change in advanced industrial societies. Essentially, this change amounts to a shift away from the 'old politics' and towards a 'post-materialist' 'new politics'. According to Hildebrandt and Dalton:

The traditional bourgeoisie/proletariat cleavage taps the essence of ... the 'Old Politics' - a conflict between the haves and the have-nots, and more broadly the problem of providing economic goods and security for all, during times of inflation, depression, unemployment and post-war reconstructions. (Hildebrandt and Dalton 1978: 71)

By contrast, the rise of the 'new politics' implies a decline in the salience of 'old politics' issues and a heightened relevance of so-called 'lifestyle' issues such as 'protection of the environment, the quality of life, the role of women, the redefinition of morality [and] drug usage' (Inglehart 1977: 13). A further consequence of this supposed upsurge in 'new politics' is considered to be a decline in support for established national institutions and governmental outputs.

According to Inglehart, this latter development occurs alongside a change in the prevailing styles of political participation, with an increased public willingness to engage in protest activity which challenges the dominant bureaucratic and oligarchical structures of existing mass political parties and organisations, and fulfils the 'post-materialist' need for a 'sense of belonging' (Inglehart 1977: 4-18, 290). Inglehart argues that events such as the May 1968 uprising in France, and the phenomenon of student protest in America and elsewhere in the late 1960s, should be viewed as the point at which the 'new politics' first began to attain significance in advanced industrial societies (Inglehart 1977: chapter 10). More broadly, Inglehart claims that value change has played a crucial role in the recent rise of other new social movements in these societies (Inglehart 1990a).

However, perhaps the most profound change within political systems identified by Inglehart concerns the proposed development of a significant value cleavage with clear relationships to voting choice and important implications for realignment (Flanagan 1987: 1317). Inglehart argues that whereas in the 'classic model of industrial society, political polarization was a direct reflection of social class conflict ... there is a growing tendency for politics to polarize along a new dimension that cuts across this conventional Left-Right axis' (Inglehart 1984: 25). For Inglehart, the rise in prominence of so-called 'new politics' issues such as the quality of the environment, unilateral disarmament, opposition to nuclear power, feminism and democratic participation confirms that a 'materialist/post-materialist' cleavage occupies a central position within contemporary politics and threatens to supersede 'conflict over ownership of the means of production and the distribution of income' (Inglehart 1984: 25-26). Moreover, on the basis of 95,000 interviews carried out in Britain, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Belgium, Inglehart concludes that 'since 1970 there has been a growing tendency for electoral behavior to polarize on the materialist-postmaterialist value cleavage' (Inglehart 1987: 1298-1299).

It is at this juncture that the phenomenon of green parties becomes relevant. In Inglehart's view, the kinds of themes advanced by green parties, such

as minimising economic growth and maximising the quality of life and the physical environment, are entirely consistent with a 'post-materialist' - or 'new politics' - outlook. Other themes often emphasised by green parties, such as democratic participation and a more informal approach to political activity, can also be interpreted within the broad context of 'post-materialist' value change. In a recent study, Inglehart refers to the impact of value change on the rise of green parties in West Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, Switzerland, Sweden, France and Britain, pointing out that in each case their support comes from a disproportionately 'post-materialist' constituency (Inglehart 1995: 68). For Inglehart, green parties are clearly 'post-materialist' parties. He also maintains that the rise of green parties in Europe has had the knock-on effect of forcing 'the established parties to adopt stronger environmental protection policies in order to compete for their voters' (Inglehart 1995: 68). That Inglehart's thesis appears to account for a broad range of 'new politics' issues advanced by green parties, and the albeit more limited 'greening' of mainstream party politics in many European countries, forms the basis of its strong appeal within the green party literature (Rüdig 1990b). In addition, the idea that Western societies have been experiencing a 'very fundamental and lasting' process of social change 'appears to suggest a good explanation for the persistence and continued success of green parties' (Rüdig 1990b: 12-13).

2. 'Post-materialist' Value Change in Three Countries

In assessing Inglehart's thesis, it is useful to begin by examining the extent to which levels of 'post-materialism' - as measured by Inglehart's four items - have increased in Austria, Britain and the Netherlands during the period 1970-90. Table 3.1 presents available survey data relating to the changing proportion of 'post-materialists' in these three countries.⁵ As can be seen, each country has

⁵ Unfortunately there are less data available on Austria than on the Netherlands and Britain. This is because Austria was not included in the Eurobarometer surveys between 1970 and 1990.

experienced an overall increase in the percentage of 'post-materialists' among its population since the early 1970s. By 1990, 20 per cent of the British adult population could be classified as 'post-materialist' (compared with 8 per cent in 1973). During the same period, the percentage of 'post-materialists' increased from 5 per cent to 25 per cent in Austria and from 13 to 27 per cent in the Netherlands.

A further noticeable feature of the content of Table 3.1 concerns the comparatively high proportion of 'post-materialists' in the Netherlands in 1970-71. As can be observed, 15 per cent of those surveyed at this point were classified as such. Indeed, there were more 'post-materialists' in the Netherlands at the beginning of the 1970s than in any other of the additional five Western European countries that Inglehart had studied at the time - West Germany, Britain, France, Belgium and Italy (Inglehart 1977). The rise of 'post-materialist' values in the Netherlands from the late 1960s onwards has been cited as a key contributing factor to the emergence of a new cultural setting during this period, characterised by a process of 'depillarisation', which refers to the breaking down of the rigid, 'pillarised' social order that had dominated Dutch society since 1945 and to which almost everyone had seemed to conform, and a rise in protest activity around themes of the 'environment, self-realization and women's liberation' (Voerman 1995: 110).⁶

Since this period of transformation, however, levels of 'post-materialism' in the Netherlands underwent certain periods of decline. The first period, as can be seen from Table 3.1, occurred in 1973. The second wave of decline was more significant, however. Between 1978 and 1980, levels of 'post-materialism' fell from 23 to 14 per cent. In light of such discrepancies Inglehart has more recently

However, there are some limited data available which enable at least some degree of evaluation and comparison. Figures for levels of 'post-materialism' in Austria in 1973 were included in the *Political Action* study (Inglehart 1979). A study by Plasser and Ulram presents data on levels of 'post-materialism' for the year 1984 (Plasser and Ulram 1985). Finally, Austria was included in the World Values Survey 1990-93 and figures for 1990 can be found in Inglehart *et al.* (1998). In each of these cases, 'post-materialism' was measured according to Inglehart's original four-item index as employed in the Eurobarometer surveys 1970-90.

⁶ For a detailed examination of 'depillarisation' in the Netherlands see Andeweg and Irwin (1993).

Table 3.1. Distribution of 'Post-materialist' Values in Austria, Britain and the Netherlands, 1970-90

Year of Survey	1970-71	1973	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
Austria	-	5%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	15%	-	-	-	-	-	25%
Britain	7%	8%	8%	5%	8%	11%	9%	8%	14%	12%	17%	14%	14%	17%	20%	21%	20%
Netherlands	15%	13%	14%	15%	23%	19%	14%	15%	19%	21%	19%	24%	23%	24%	25%	29%	27%

Note: British and Dutch data based on Abramson and Inglehart (1992). Austrian data based on Inglehart (1979); Plasser and Ulram (1985); Inglehart *et al.* (1998).

conceded that values may be subject to what he terms short-term 'period effects' (Inglehart 1990b: 77-81). He claims that the dips observed during the early to mid-1970s and early 1980s were 'attributable to the two recessions set off by the OPEC-engendered crises of 1974-75 and 1980-81' both of which caused high levels of inflation, a decline in real incomes, increasing unemployment and the halting of economic growth (Inglehart and Andeweg 1993: 347). For Inglehart, such 'period effects' can have a temporary negative impact on overall levels of 'post-materialism' (Inglehart 1979: 337; Inglehart and Andeweg 1993). In his view, such effects are 'consistent with the theory, which links Postmaterialist values with economic security' (Inglehart 1995: 63). What is problematic, however, is that this argument sits uneasily with Inglehart's original 'socialisation hypothesis' which, as was described earlier, predicts that 'post-materialist' values are likely to persist in periods of economic recession. This point will be developed as part of a broader critique of Inglehart's thesis later in the chapter.

A similar examination of the consistency of value change over the same time period in Austria is prevented by a lack of data for all but three years. Yet bearing in mind that data are available only for the years 1973, 1984 and 1990, it is apparent that, taken as a whole, the period does show a substantial increase in levels of 'post-materialism' in Austria - from 5 per cent in 1973, to 15 per cent in 1984, to 25 per cent in 1990 (Table 3.1). Sully has documented the extent to which the Kriesky era (1970-83) 'brought unprecedented affluence, modernisation of the infra-structure and the introduction of advanced social welfare schemes, more consumer durables and increased leisure time' (Sully 1990: 429). Prior to the early 1970s, both the Austrian economy and society were characterised by social and economic 'backwardness' (Gottweis 1990: 50; Preglau 1994: 37). From an Inglehartian perspective, it could be argued that it was the generation that underwent pre-adult socialisation in Austria during the modernising years of the early 1970s which proceeded to become the 'post-materialist' generation of the 1980s and 1990s. In other words, the increase in

levels of 'post-materialism' observable in Table 3.1 was a result of conditions of unprecedented affluence and 'material' security experienced by the relatively young from the early 1970s onwards. The late development of a sizeable 'post-materialist' stratum in Austrian society could potentially explain why Austria, as compared with countries such as the Netherlands or West Germany, lacked a broad student movement during the late 1960s, and why ecological conflicts exemplified by that witnessed over nuclear power only gained prominence in Austria from the late 1970s onwards (Gottweis 1990).

Parallel with Austria, lower levels of 'post-materialism' have been cited as the main reason why new social movements in Britain - for example, the student movement - were weak in comparison with those in other European countries during the late 1960s (Inglehart 1977: 262). Yet the British example clearly shows that the rise of new social movements need not be linked to 'post-materialism'. As early as 1958, i.e. well before the period when 'value change' was assumed to be reshaping British citizens' political priorities, New Left intellectuals had launched the 'prototype of a new social movement' - the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND). Between 1958 and 1963 the British peace movement was 'an impressive mobilisation', and employed a range of new tactics - including non-violent direct action, mass rallies and civil disobedience - which were to become synonymous with the so-called 'new politics' style (Rootes 1992: 177). The rise of the peace movement during this period was clearly more a reflection of public concern about threats to *material security* in a changed international political climate than it was of abstract 'post-materialism'. As Kenny comments, the peace movement of the late 1950s 'attracted many in a period of international tension and widespread fear about the capacities of nuclear weapons' (Kenny 1995: 186). The idea that much movement protest may have its basis in the rise of new problems in modern society which pose a threat to 'material' security is a point developed later in this chapter and, further, in chapter 5.

As in the Netherlands, there are also some erratic periods discernible with respect to levels of 'post-materialism' in Britain. For example, between 1973 and 1977 levels of 'post-materialism' dropped from 8 to 5 per cent (Table 3.1). Presumably, Inglehart would attribute this 'blip' to the major recession of the 1970s (Kavanagh 1990: 123-150); in other words 'period effects' came into play at this point. The same might be said of the period 1979-81, during which Britain experienced a massive recession (Kavanagh 1990: 209-242) and witnessed an overall decline in levels of 'post-materialism' (from 11 to 8 per cent). Again, however, the employment of this argument serves to highlight the weakness of Inglehart's original 'socialisation hypothesis'; a basic plank of his theory of value change. Since the mid-1980s, however, levels of 'post-materialism' in Britain have risen fairly steadily and, by 1990, 20 per cent of survey respondents were classed as 'post-materialist' in terms of their value orientation.

This initial examination of Inglehart's thesis demonstrates that while value change seems to have taken place since the early 1970s, the supposed value shift, at least in the cases of Britain and the Netherlands, has not followed a straightforwardly linear pattern. Unfortunately, data on levels of 'post-materialism' in Austria are limited to three years only and do not enable a firm conclusion with regard to the overall pattern of value change to be reached one way or the other. However, despite Inglehart's reference to 'period effects' as a means of explaining certain discrepancies, it has been argued that reliance on such a concept weakens a central component of the theory of value change; namely, the 'socialisation hypothesis', which claims that 'post-materialist' values should persist in times of economic decline.

Further problems concerning the claim that higher levels of 'post-materialism' are good predictors of the rise of new social movement protest in the three countries have also been identified. In particular, the fact that Britain saw the rise of new social movement type protest during the late 1950s - i.e. before the key value change periods of the late 1960s and 1970s - casts doubt upon the claim that Inglehart's thesis can necessarily account for cross-national

manifestations of new political activity. The next section expands upon this point by focusing more directly on the proposed relationship between 'post-materialist' value change and the emergence and varying electoral success of green parties.

3. 'Post-materialism' and Green Parties: Emergence and Significance

Advocates of the value change perspective have argued that green parties are a symptom of the rise of 'materialism/post-materialism' as a new source of political conflict in Western societies. According to this view, green parties are located near the 'post-materialist' end of the political spectrum and their ideology incorporates a broad range of 'new politics' issues. If such commentators are right, then, in terms of the three case studies, it seems reasonable to expect that the following developments should have taken place. First, given that the 'materialist/post-materialist' conflict line was considerably more developed in the early 1970s in the Netherlands than in either Austria or Britain, public pressure to form a green party during this period should have been greater in the former than in either of the latter countries. In addition, that 'post-materialism' in Austria became much more widespread during the period 1973-1984, and between 1984 and 1990, implies that these periods might have witnessed growing pressure to form a national green party in this country.

In fact, despite comparatively high levels of 'post-materialism' during the early 1970s, a green party was not formed in the Netherlands until December 1983 (*De Groenen*) (Parkin 1989). A *significant* green party, in the form of Green Left, was not officially founded until much later - November 1990 (Voerman 1995). Inglehart's response to this problem has been to argue that a climate of increasing 'post-materialism' provides a favourable context for the emergence of other 'new politics' parties in addition to 'ecology' parties (Inglehart 1987; Inglehart and Andeweg 1993). It is certainly the case that 'new politics' parties,

defined in this broader sense, did emerge in the Netherlands during the course of the late 1960s, the period during which 'post-materialist' value change is alleged to have established a hold on Dutch political culture.⁷ However, as was argued in chapter 1, a distinction should be made between green parties - which have an explicitly ecological identity - and 'new politics' parties for whom the ecological issue forms but one component of a much broader political programme. In chapter 5, it will be argued that green parties emerged against the backdrop of a new social climate characterised by the presence of large-scale ecological risks and problems. This interpretation is far removed from the 'post-materialist' perspective, which emphasises the essentially 'aesthetic' basis of green party politics.

The British case casts further doubt on the 'post-materialist' thesis since, in this context, a green party was formed in the early 1970s despite very low levels of 'post-materialism' among the population as compared to the Netherlands. Again, it will be argued that the emergence of PEOPLE - the forerunner of the Green Party - in 1973 had much less to do with 'post-materialist' values than with a sense of anxiety about the ecological crisis exemplified on this occasion by the 'limits to growth' debate that came to prominence in the early 1970s. Turning to Austria, it would at first glance seem that this example is entirely consistent with the claims of 'post-materialist' theory. As has been documented, the period 1973-90 witnessed a marked increase in the proportion of 'post-materialists' in Austria and, in addition, the emergence of green 'citizen lists' in the late 1970s, two national 'green' parties in 1982 (the ALÖ and VGÖ), and a significant green party in the form of the Greens (*Die Grünen*) in 1986/7. This could be viewed as evidence in support of the view that a 'materialist/post-materialist' value cleavage took shape in the Austrian party system during this period. But again, reliance on 'post-materialist' theory ignores the extent to which awareness of large-scale ecological risks and

⁷ For example, both D66 (formed 1966) and the PPR (formed 1968) gave expression to 'new' issues, such as democratisation, peace and the environment, which would, from Inglehart's perspective, be interpreted in 'post-materialist' terms.

degradation was crucial in defining the social setting within which green parties emerged in Austria. The problem of using 'post-materialism' as a predictor of the emergence of green parties has been further highlighted in a study carried out by Harmel and Robertson. Their study of new parties formed in 19 Western European and Anglo-American countries between 1960 and 1980 found that 'higher post-materialist societies seem no more likely to produce at least one new ecology party than societies with lower post-materialism' (Harmel and Robertson 1985: 516). Contrary to Inglehart's view, 'post-materialist' values do not seem to form a consistent predictor of the presence/absence of green parties in different countries.

Given these problems, it is perhaps unsurprising that studies have also failed to find any great difference between the levels of 'post-materialism' in countries with and without significant green parties (Kitschelt 1988a; Jahn 1986). While both Austria and the Netherlands have produced significant green parties, the case of Britain demonstrates clearly that rising levels of 'post-materialism' have not improved the electoral prospects of the Green Party. Here, the Green Party has consistently failed to attract more than the average 1.8 per cent of the vote secured by its five candidates in February 1974 (Rootes 1995a) despite increases in levels of 'post-materialism' from one general election year to the next. Contrary to Inglehart's predictions, the traditional parties have continued to maintain a firm grip on the party system throughout the alleged 'silent revolution' in Britain. There is little evidence to suggest that the British party system has been significantly affected by the rise of 'post-materialist' values.⁸ However, Inglehart recently claimed that, in the light of the unprecedented 14.9 per cent of the vote achieved by the British Green Party at the 1989 European elections, green parties 'are beginning to show significant levels of support in Great

⁸ Although it is possible that the centre parties in Britain - the Liberal Party, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and, more recently, the Liberal Democrats - may have benefited to some extent from the rise of 'post-materialist' values. In fact, it could be argued that the two items that Inglehart employs to 'tap' 'post-materialism', i.e. 'giving the people more say in important government decisions' and 'protecting freedom of speech' are essentially 'liberal' values, and that 'post-materialists' might be attracted to liberal parties which voice these sentiments (Rüdiger *et al.* 1995).

Britain' (Inglehart 1995: 68). But at subsequent general elections, Green Party support in Britain collapsed back to their previously poor levels.

That there are important problems in linking the electoral significance of green parties with the extent of value change can be further seen by the inconsistency of available survey data on the relationship between 'post-materialist' values and voting choice. Although data relating to Green Party voting patterns at British general elections are unavailable, a study of the 1989 European Election concludes that:

Post-materialist values are only very weakly correlated with green voting. There are lots of non-postmaterialists voting green, and lots of postmaterialists not voting green. (Rüdig *et al.* 1993: 33)

In terms of results the authors found that, of those who voted for the Green Party in 1989, only 32.1 per cent were classified as 'post-materialist' according to Inglehart's formula. Of the remaining green voters, 53.1 per cent were 'mixed', 14.8 per cent 'materialist' (Rüdig *et al.* 1993: 41). This means that 67.9 per cent of those who voted for the Green Party in 1989 were not pure 'post-materialist' in terms of their value orientation. This lends further support to the argument that 'post-materialism' was not the primary factor which underlay Green Party 'success' in 1989. Two alternative explanations for the 1989 result are advanced in the literature. For Rüdig *et al.*, Green Party voting in 1989 'was quite clearly a reflection of rising environmental concern' (Rüdig *et al.* 1993: 62). The theoretical grounding of this particular argument will be explored in more detail in chapter 5. For authors such as Rootes, however, the Greens' 'success' in 1989 can be linked to the 'extraordinary state of political competition' that prevailed at the time of the election (Rootes 1995a: 75). This possibility will be examined in more depth in chapter 7.

The evidence with respect to Austria is also somewhat problematic. A study by Müller and Ulram demonstrates that, on the whole, green party supporters in 1985 and 1993 were predominantly drawn from the younger sections of the population - principally the under 30 and 30-44 age groups

(Müller and Ulram 1995: 152).⁹ This finding would initially seem to be consistent with the argument considered above: that it is young adults who underwent pre-adult socialisation during the relative affluence of the Kriesky era (1970-83) that became 'post-materialist' green party voters during the 1980s and 1990s. However, considerable caution must be exercised before forming such a conclusion. A survey of 'green party' supporters in 1984 found that, of the sample, 43 per cent could be classified as 'post-materialist' according to Inglehart's criteria (Kreuzer 1990: 14).¹⁰ While a considerable portion of green voters in Austria may be 'post-materialists', it is likely that many do not fall into this category. A significant green party has emerged in Austria, but it is no means clear that 'post-materialist' values have been the principal force behind the green vote.

Compared with their counterparts in Austria and Britain, however, Dutch Green Left voters appear to be considerably more 'post-materialist'. In 1989, 84 per cent of such voters were classed as 'post-materialist' according to Inglehart's measure, compared with 36 per cent of the whole sample¹¹. Yet overall, it is not clear from the limited evidence presented on the three case studies that 'post-materialists' are necessarily attracted to green parties nor that rising levels of 'post-materialism' facilitate the emergence of significant green parties.

⁹ In 1985, 45 per cent of 'green' supporters were under the age of 30; 32 per cent were between 30 and 44. In 1993, the respective figures were 41 per cent and 39 per cent. Therefore, the vast majority (more than three quarters) of green supporters was under the age of 45. The only other Austrian party that comes remotely close to the Greens in terms of the age profile of its supporters is the Liberal Forum - 70 per cent of its supporters in 1993 were under the age of 45 (Müller and Ulram 1995).

¹⁰ The 1984 survey combined the results of the ALÖ and VGÖ in order to derive an average percentage. Data are not available on the value profiles of Austrian Green voters.

¹¹ Information supplied by Paul Lucardie, Documentation Centre for Dutch Political Parties, University of Groningen.

4. 'Post-materialist' Theory and Green Parties:

A Critical Assessment

So far aspects of 'post-materialist' theory have been employed in an attempt to establish the extent to which they can provide insight into the emergence and varying electoral success of green parties in three countries. The discussion above suggests that there are problems with the value change theory in terms of these issues. In this section a variety of additional difficulties and problems associated with Inglehart's 'post-materialist' theory will be highlighted. These have to do with the problematic nature of some of the key methodological and theoretical assumptions underpinning the theory of 'post-materialist' value change. The aims are essentially twofold. The first is to raise questions as to the coherence of certain key concepts in Inglehart's thesis which have been implicitly accepted by green party researchers working within the 'post-materialist' framework. This leads to the second aim: to argue that the empirical difficulties encountered in attempting to relate the emergence and varying electoral success of green parties to levels of 'post-materialism' are a reflection of the conceptual problems inherent within Inglehart's framework and a misunderstanding of the nature of green party politics.

It was previously argued that Inglehart's integration of the 'socialisation hypothesis' with the concept of 'period effects' contains a contradiction: the former assumes that values acquired in childhood will endure throughout an adult's life while the latter asserts that value priorities may fluctuate according to changing economic conditions. Besides undermining the strength of his original theory, the introduction of 'period effects' into the 'post-materialist' equation means that Inglehart's theory is very difficult to falsify, since declining levels of 'post-materialism' do not necessarily mean that long-term value change is not taking place (Lowe and Rüdiger 1986: 517). It has also been argued that Inglehart's combination of the 'scarcity hypothesis' - which assumes that 'people change their values according to the relative fulfilment of different needs' - with the

'socialisation hypothesis' - which implies value system stability once it has been acquired - represents a further contradiction at the heart of his thesis (Lowe and Rüdig 1986: 517). Most green party researchers have seemingly been unwilling to acknowledge these clear conceptual tensions within 'post-materialist' theory.

Further critics have challenged, more directly, Inglehart's reliance upon Maslow's hierarchy of human need. According to Maslow, the pursuit of needs follows a hierarchical pattern determined by the extent to which such needs are considered to be necessary for survival. Building upon this premise, Inglehart is able to argue that as people are freed of the urgency of their basic 'material' needs, so they are able to pursue 'higher-order' needs and thus develop 'post-materialist' value profiles. However, several authors have questioned the basic assumptions that lie at the heart of such a theory of human motivation. Martell, for instance, raises doubts as to whether the satisfaction of 'material' needs should *necessarily* lead to 'post-materialism'. In particular, he is critical of the 'post-materialist' thesis because it is 'based on a fixed idea of basic material needs and a hierarchy of "higher" needs which build on these' (Martell 1994: 125). Martell suggests that rather than leading to a shift towards the widespread pursuit of 'post-materialist' values, increased standards of living in Western societies appear to have led to an elevated conception of what actually count as basic 'material' needs. Thus he refers to 'the evidence of a growing range of consumer goods which are deemed to be 'standard' in developed industrial nations (colour TVs, videos, computers, microwaves etc.)' (Martell 1994: 125). This is an important point, because it calls into question the central idea that people will inevitably pursue 'higher-order' needs once certain basic safety and 'material' needs have been satisfied. It also offers a potential explanation for why many individuals who enjoyed 'material' comfort and security in their childhood 'tend strongly to support material values and oppose the goals of new social movements' and choose not to join or vote for green parties (Eckersley 1989: 218).

In light of such criticism, some theorists have argued that Inglehart's thesis would be more plausible if it took account of the extent to which 'new values' may be more the product of the higher education experience of his post-1945 cohort, rather than that of childhood socialisation. Lipset notes that 'both contemporary commentators and later historians have attributed a major role to the intellectuals in undermining the legitimacy of existing orders and in providing the vision of a new social system' (cited in Eckersley 1989: 218). For Eckersley, higher education:

not only increases an individual's ability to acquire information but also helps to cultivate the ability to think critically, question everyday assumptions, form an independent judgement and be less influenced by the judgement of others. (Eckersley 1989: 221)

While Eckersley does not deny that childhood socialisation may have some bearing on adult values, she implies that higher education has been an important factor in explaining the appeal of green party politics. This conclusion is consistent with Betz's study of the German Greens, which found that it is education, rather than class or income, which most strongly correlates with 'post-materialist' values (Betz 1990). The potential role that factors such as the expansion of higher education and other 'post-industrial' trends in the emergence of green party politics is explored in more detail in the next chapter.

A further line of criticism has been levelled against the items actually used to measure 'materialism' and 'post-materialism'. According to Inglehart, an affirmative response to the item 'maintaining order in the nation' is an indication that an individual gives priority to the 'materialist' goal of physical safety. But, as Flanagan suggests, there is no good reason why this should be the case since such an item could just as easily tap what he terms an 'authoritarian value orientation' (Inglehart 1987). There is, it seems, an element of ambiguity with respect to Inglehart's measure of certain value priorities. Such ambiguity also characterises one of the two items employed by Inglehart in an attempt to capture 'post-materialism', i.e. 'giving the people more say in important government

decisions'. As Marquand has pointed out, '[s]upport for a bigger say in political decisions or at the workplace is not necessarily evidence of such [‘post-materialist’] values’ (Marquand 1988: 201). He quite reasonably suggests that ‘one might want more say in order to pursue materialistic purposes more effectively’ (Marquand 1988: 201). In short, there are many general conceptual problems and unresolved tensions associated with the ‘post-materialist’ thesis. Taken together, these raise important questions concerning the overall coherence of Inglehart’s theory and thus its suitability as a framework with which to examine broad issues of political and social change.

When it comes more directly to the question of interpreting green parties within the framework of ‘post-materialist’ theory, more intractable problems surround its treatment of environmental attitudes. With respect to this issue, Inglehart’s indices for measuring ‘post-materialism’ simply do not capture what is unique about Europe’s green parties: their profound ecological concern and understanding of events. In the four-item index employed in the European Community surveys between 1970 and 1990, i.e. ‘maintaining order in the nation’; ‘giving the people more say in important government decisions’; ‘fighting rising prices’; ‘protecting freedom of speech’, no item comes remotely close to tapping the growth in environmental concern which has played a central role in the emergence and electoral appeal of green party politics. Even Inglehart’s attempt to construct a ‘more broadly based values indicator’ in the form of a twelve-item index provides at best an extremely limited and conservative measure of public attitudes towards the environment, namely, ‘trying to make our cities and countryside more beautiful’ (Inglehart 1977: 39-53; Abramson and Inglehart 1992).¹² It is even questionable whether expressing support for this statement should necessarily be viewed as an indication of genuine environmental concern. As Marquand has argued, far from supporting the claims of ‘post-materialist’ theory, ‘support for beautifying the countryside may have materialistic roots: [to the extent that] behind the environmental

¹² In the World Values Survey 1990 a 12-item version of the Materialist/Post-materialist values index was utilised. For precise details on this measure see Inglehart *et al.* (1998).

enthusiasms of the suburban amenity group may lurk a less Wordsworthian concern for property values' (Marquand 1988: 201).¹³ A clear problem has thus arisen in attempts to apply the 'post-materialist' framework to questions of the emergence and electoral success of green parties. Since conventional measures of 'post-materialism' do not in any way reflect the ecological profile of green parties, it is hardly surprising that political analysts have failed to find a link between the extent of 'post-materialism' in a society and the timing of the emergence of green parties, or indeed their comparative electoral strength. But what of the oft-cited relationship between 'post-materialist' values and green party voting? Does this not show that green parties are essentially 'post-materialist' parties? One possibility advanced by Franklin and Rüdig is that while green voting is primarily a reflection of ecological concern, this concern may 'link up with postmaterialist and New Left forces to different degrees in different countries' (Franklin and Rüdig 1995: 430). This would perhaps explain why Dutch Green Left voters are more 'post-materialist' - or more broadly 'new politics' orientated - than their British and Austrian counterparts.

According to Benton, much ecological concern is often deeply motivated by 'materialist' rather than 'post-materialist' concerns. In other words, his argument is in direct opposition to Inglehart's point of view. As he puts it:

much environmental concern is about the most basic conditions for survival itself. Concern about the poisoning of food and water supplies, about the quality of the air we breathe, about the danger of industrial accidents, about the unpredictable alteration of global climates and eco-systems - these could hardly be more 'materialist'. (Benton 1997: 42)

This insight has, it seems, been unjustifiably marginalised within the literature and should be accorded a more central position in contemporary accounts of

¹³ In addition, the statement 'trying to make our cities and countryside more beautiful' is extremely vague and open to interpretation. Thus, for one person, making 'the city' more beautiful might involve destroying an open space and replacing it with a new shopping centre - hardly an indication of a high level of environmental concern. The statement 'trying to make our countryside more beautiful' is also ambiguous. For example, destroying a species' natural habitat to make way for a rural tourist development - e.g. an artificial lake - could be construed in terms of 'beautifying' the countryside but, clearly, such an attitude would be opposed by many environmentalists.

green party politics. Inglehart's theory misleadingly implies that ecological concern is always remote, abstract and perceived purely in 'aesthetic' terms. In doing so, it ignores the reality that green parties first and foremost reflect heightened perception and concern about new ecological problems and large-scale environmental risks. The 'post-materialist' argument's emphasis on shifting value 'priorities' is, therefore, an inadequate starting point from which to investigate the origins and appeal of green party politics.

The arguments deployed so far suggest that 'post-materialist' theory does not go far enough in accounting for the social and cultural conditions that gave rise to green party politics. To the extent that such a theory is unsuited to the task of accounting for the ecological aspects of green party politics, it should come as no real surprise to find that there is no clear-cut relationship between levels of 'post-materialism' and the emergence and varying electoral strength of green parties in Austria, Britain and the Netherlands, nor between possession of 'post-materialist' values and electoral support for these parties. The point here is that, given green parties' fundamental concern with the ecological crisis, the abstract and aesthetically-based focus of 'post-materialist' theory simply does not accord with the origins of many European green parties in controversies surrounding large-scale ecological risks and problems (Parkin 1989; Rüdig 1990b).

5. Conclusion

Political researchers have often argued - or assumed - that the emergence and electoral success of Europe's green parties occurred against the backdrop of a shift towards 'post-materialist' values in advanced industrial societies. The purpose of this chapter has been to show that the widespread reliance on 'post-materialist' theory has been misguided. Increasing levels of 'post-materialism' have not proved to be good predictors either of the timing of the emergence of green parties, nor - as highlighted most graphically by the plight of the British

Green Party - of their comparative electoral strength. The principal explanation offered for why 'post-materialism' does not work with respect to these two issues is that it is premised on a non-ecological conception of green party politics. The indices used to measure 'post-materialist' values do not reflect green parties' ecological identity - i.e. their *fundamental* concern about the ecological crisis - and thus such values cannot reasonably be expected to be linked to the emergence and/or varying electoral fortunes of these parties. In addition, Inglehart's framework contains many conceptual shortcomings which place further question marks over its suitability as a basis from which to carry out research into political and social change.

Over the past few decades 'post-materialist' theory has been employed in a wide range of studies dealing with the rise of green parties and new social movements. But as Lowe and Rüdig point out, it was only in the late 1970s that Inglehart picked up on the idea that 'post-materialist' values might be linked to the rise of environmental protest in Western societies. Several years earlier, when Inglehart was first articulating his theory, there was no mention of the environmental movement as being 'an expression of post-materialist value change' (Lowe and Rüdig 1986: 515). It is possible that Inglehart's already well-known theory was one of the few approaches available to students of politics intent on understanding the rise of green parties across Europe from the late 1970s onwards, and that this to some extent accounted for its widespread appeal. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s political analysts have continued to adopt the 'post-materialist'/'new politics' framework, with comparatively few willing to work outside this paradigm. However, it should be stressed again that Inglehart's original theory was not formulated with environmental protest, let alone green party politics, in mind. This raises the question of whether his theoretical approach - which was initially used to explain the rise of radical student protest and the New Left in Europe during the late 1960s - could reasonably be expected to explain a phenomenon which has been more an outcome of the large-scale ecological risks and problems which have been attendant with processes of

scientific and technological change that have taken place during the post-war period. This argument is developed further in chapter 5.

While the 'post-materialist' framework does not offer a plausible account of the rise of green party politics, the final chapter considers the extent to which a key theme raised by the value change thesis - that of the relative economic affluence of the post-war period - might be salvaged and integrated into a more ecologically informed theory of the emergence of green parties. However, in the next chapter, attention will be focused on two theories of 'post-industrial' society and, in particular, on their contribution to an understanding of the emergence and varying electoral success of green parties.

Chapter 4

Green Parties and the Politics of 'Post-industrial' Society

This chapter considers the argument that elements of so-called 'post-industrial' society - such as rising levels of formal education and 'technocratic' decision-making - have played a role in shaping the context within which green parties emerged. The purpose is to show that while - like 'post-materialist' theory - theories of 'post-industrial' society cannot account for the origins of the ecological identity which all European green parties share, they are useful insofar as they highlight a number of structural and cultural changes in the fabric of society which have undoubtedly contributed to a new climate which has facilitated the emergence of these parties. Without these changes, it will be argued, there would have been markedly less scope for the emergence of green parties whose support is firmly rooted in the 'highly educated', 'new middle class', participation orientated and ecologically concerned, cohorts of society. The claim is that an understanding of the emergence of Europe's green parties developed around the central themes of ecological risk and degradation can be significantly enhanced through a consideration of a series of changes which have accompanied the shift from industrial to 'post-industrial' society.

1. Theories of 'Post-industrial' Society

There are several ways in which 'post-industrial' society has been defined within academic circles. For example, Marien points to a vision of 'post-industrial' society based upon a 'decentralised and ecologically conscious agrarian society ... following in the wake of a failed industrialism' (Marien 1977: 415-416). Early

references to this particular view of 'post-industrial' society can be found within the writings of the Guild socialist A.J. Penty. In 1917, he published *Old Worlds for New: A Study of the Post-Industrial State* in which industrial societies were denounced 'as alienating, ugly and undemocratic' (Schechter 1994: 150). Penty argued for a return to small-scale production and a more just society based upon equality, creativity and participation (Schechter 1994: 150-151). During the 1960s and 1970s, decentralist political thought found expression in such publications as *Resurgence*¹ and *A Blueprint for Survival* (1972) as well as through the writings of Theodore Roszak and Paul Goodman (Marien 1977). Richardson has drawn attention to the comparability of the decentralist view of 'post-industrial' society to the kind of society advocated by many greens; thus, 'it is that of the conserver society, with its decentralized economy in which manufacturing is no longer dominant' (Richardson 1995: 14).

To what extent should the decentralist vision of 'post-industrial' society form a conceptual focus of the present chapter? It has certainly been argued that publications which stressed the 'ecological goal' of the decentralisation of social and political life, such as The Ecologist's *A Blueprint for Survival* (1972), played a catalytic role in the emergence of the British Greens insofar as the new party based its political programme on the book's four principles for a 'stable society' (Parkin 1989: 218). In other words, the possibility that documents advancing decentralist visions of 'post-industrial' society may in some cases have influenced the formation of green parties cannot be discounted. However, it is also apparent that exclusive reliance on such a possibility cannot take students of politics very far towards developing an understanding of why such ideas might have gained widespread appeal in the first place - to the extent that many European green parties are sympathetic towards decentralisation as a goal of political and ecological reform (EFGP 1993a). Thus it may be more fruitful to

¹ *Resurgence* was founded in 1966. In 1969, *Resurgence* added a subtitle, 'Journal of the Fourth World'. This world was defined as 'the world of decentralized, small-scale forms of organization, structured organically rather than mechanically and directed towards the fulfilment of human values rather than materialist objectives' (cited in Marien 1977: 423).

utilise alternative theories in the effort to consider more satisfactorily the nature of the 'post-industrial' context within which green parties may have emerged.

The idea that we are *actually undergoing* a transition from industrial to 'post-industrial' society has been the focus of much discussion by social theorists situated both on the Right and Left of the political spectrum (Frankel 1987: 3-11). On the one hand, certain theorists associated with a conservative perspective - most notably Daniel Bell - have tended to view the emergent society in broadly 'affirmative' and 'non-critical' terms (Schroyer 1974: 163), arguing that developments such as the shift to a knowledge and information dependent 'service' economy, the rise of a new middle class of technocrats and managers, an expanding educational sector, and greater affluence and leisure time will eventually lead to the disappearance of the 'proletariat' and the central societal conflict between capital and labour (Bell 1974). On the other are left-wing theorists such as Alain Touraine, who comment on the degree to which the shift to a 'post-industrial' - or 'programmed' - society is associated with a supersession of the traditional conflict between labour and capital by new forms of conflict, based not upon the ownership and control of private property, but, rather, on access to information and its uses (Touraine 1971, 1981). For Touraine, it is the so-called 'new social movements' that perform the central task of leading opposition to the new 'enemy' in 'programmed' society - the controllers of information - and the search for alternative forms of social and cultural life (Touraine 1985, Touraine 1981). Touraine saw his task as one of pinpointing the new social movement 'which will come to dominate the whole stage in our programmed society, as we move more completely into the post-industrial era'; that is, the movement that will come to replace the working class movement of industrial society (Touraine 1983: 4-5). Thus a key point of difference between conservative and left-wing theories of 'post-industrial' society tends to consist in the relative importance that each attaches to the theme of social conflict.

This is not to suggest that Bell provides no treatment of potential sources of political change within the context of 'post-industrial' society. Thus, while not ascribing social conflict a pivotal position in his theory, Bell clearly foresaw the possibility of a 'participation revolution' occurring in 'post-industrial' society, in response to the heightened professionalisation of society and dominance of 'technocratic' decision-making (Bell 1974: 365-367). This theme was echoed by Samuel P. Huntington, who further argued that a 'revolution' of this sort might 'lead to new forms of political party organization, in which ideological and civic motivations play a key role' (Huntington 1974: 176). Since there are growing literatures which stress the importance of the participatory theme to green party ideology and organisation (Kitschelt 1988a, 1989; Poguntke 1987, 1993a; Müller-Rommel 1990), and the relationship between other 'post-industrial' trends such as expansion of the service and higher education sectors and the emergence of green parties (Chandler and Siaroff 1986; Taggart 1996; Frankland and Schoonmaker 1992), the third part of this chapter will be devoted to Bell's theoretical framework assessing, in particular, the degree to which it can facilitate an understanding of the emergence and varying electoral success of green parties.

The work of Touraine has also received some attention within the green party literature.² Of particular interest to commentators has been his claim that a wide range of contemporary struggles - including those waged by greens - are symptomatic of the broader resistance to 'technocratic' power which develops in 'programmed' society (Touraine 1981; Papadakis 1989). The next section considers the extent to which Touraine's social movement framework offers a plausible account of the emergence of green party politics. The investigation begins by outlining Touraine's social movement theory. From here, and based upon the core elements of the former, it proceeds to develop and then critically examine three hypotheses relating to the expected character of green party

² For an example of a study which uses Touraine's theoretical framework as a basis for analysing the German Greens, see Papadakis (1989). For a more critical treatment of Touraine's thesis as it applies to green parties, see Doherty (1994).

politics in Austria, Britain and the Netherlands. On the basis of several observed shortcomings, it is argued that Touraine's theoretical framework is largely unsuited to the development of an explanation of the emergence of green parties. However, it will be suggested that his framework offers limited insight into the nature of the social groups that might be more inclined to become involved in green party politics.

2. 'Post-industrialism' and the Politics of the Left: the Sociology of Alain Touraine

(a) Touraine's Social Movement Theory

The work of Alain Touraine forms a key part of what has become known as 'new social movement' theory (Jennet and Stewart 1989: 2; Scott 1990; Gladwin 1994). A central concern of new social movement theorists has been the identification of 'the conditions which have given rise to "new" forms of collective action; forms which seem to question prior assumptions within Marxism about the nature of the revolutionary subject' (Gladwin 1994: 61).³ In such works as *The Post-Industrial Society* (1974) and *The Voice and the Eye* (1981), Touraine sets forth his claim that the contours of a new society are developing around us, and that these form the context within which new social conflicts will emerge. In this part of the chapter, attention is focused firstly upon the character of what Touraine terms the 'post-industrial' 'programmed' society and on the nature of the 'new conflicts'. The question to which the subsequent discussion is directed concerns the extent to which the emergence of political parties with a distinctly ecological identity should be viewed as representative of a new - and central - social conflict peculiar to the 'programmed' society. These

³ As well as the work of Touraine see, for example, Habermas (1981), Offe (1985), Melucci (1989) and Laclau and Mouffe (1985) on this particular point.

preliminary remarks, however, go to the very heart of Touraine's general theoretical framework.

The roots of Touraine's 'action theory' can be partially traced to the events of May 1968 in Paris and to the subsequent emergence of a variety of single issue protest movements which sought to challenge the fabric of French politics and society (Hannigan 1985: 437). However, that Alain Touraine was also inspired by the writings of Marx is demonstrated by his claim that social movements should be analysed within the context of power relations and 'treated as an aspect or reflection of class struggle' (Pakulski 1991: 20). Having said this, it is important to stress the degree to which his theoretical framework departs from classical Marxism. Thus, with Marxism very much in mind, Touraine wishes:

to break down the teleological thinking which infects so much twentieth century sociology as a legacy from the nineteenth century. He rejects the view that society moves towards ends of which the members are unaware; he rejects the notion that a human lifetime is merely an incident in the march of history. (Sennett 1981: ix)

In contrast to structural Marxist accounts - which tend to reduce social action 'to structure or to relations of pure domination (Scott 1990: 61) - Touraine takes as his starting point the idea that:

human societies have the capacity not only to reproduce themselves or even adapt themselves through mechanisms of learning and political decision-making to a changing environment, but also - and especially - to develop their own orientations and to alter them: to generate their objectives and their normativity. (Touraine 1981: 59)

Human societies, therefore, have a 'reflexive' capacity; that is, a capacity to 'turn in on themselves, to work upon themselves' and to this extent they are 'self-produced' (Touraine 1981: 59). Accordingly, a central theme within Touraine's writings is that of the 'intentionality' of social action, whether individual or collective (Eyerman 1984: 78). As will be seen shortly, the presumed shift from

industrial to 'post-industrial' 'programmed' society is considered to be marked by an enhancement of this 'reflexive' - or 'self-productive' - capacity, with profound implications for both the nature and foci of social action.

It is at this point that Touraine's concept of 'historicity' becomes important. By 'historicity' Touraine refers to the orientating frameworks within which human society's capacity for 'self-production' takes place; that is, 'the set of cultural models a society uses to produce its norms in the domains of knowledge, production and ethics' (Touraine 1995: 368). Touraine's thesis is based upon the idea that conflict in society consists in the struggle to control the development of, and ultimately reformulate, that society's 'historicity' (Touraine 1981: 62). According to Touraine, such conflict is a basic feature of all social orders and essentially takes the form of a struggle between two classes.

A crucial feature of this state of affairs is that of social movements. For Touraine, social movements represent 'the organized collective behaviour of a class actor struggling against his class adversary for the social control of historicity in a concrete community' (Touraine 1981: 77). Touraine argues that a social movement has three essential components. First, a social movement must possess an identity (I). This means that it must define itself in terms of a 'committed population' in whose interest it fights. Second, the movement must identify its opponent (O). Third, it must recognise the 'stakes' over which both movement and opponent are in conflict. This is the principle of totality (T) and essentially amounts to the struggle for the control of 'historicity' itself (Touraine 1985: 760-761). Touraine claims that the extent to which a movement is able to assume a central position within a given 'societal type' depends upon whether it acts according to the I-O-T formula. Below, Touraine's notion of 'social movement' is examined in more detail by referring to their characteristic features within specific social systems.

Touraine identifies two social systems within which social movements play a key role: the industrial and the 'post-industrial' 'programmed' society. In industrial society, 'historicity' centres upon 'perspectives functional to the

organization of labour for the production of a steadily expanding quantum of goods and services' (Ross 1978: 184). In other words, the orientating framework - or cultural model - of such a society is primarily economic. It follows, therefore, that social conflict will centre upon economic issues; specifically, it takes the form of a struggle between management and workers concerning the social control of industry (Touraine 1985: 761). Touraine argues that the workers' movement of industrial society fulfils his three criteria for a social movement: first, the movement clearly possesses an identity (I), i.e. it fights with a particular group's 'interests' in mind; second, it provides a clear definition of its opponent (O), i.e. those who control economic institutions; third, the movement recognises the totality (T) or 'stakes' of its struggle, i.e. the control of 'historicity' itself (Touraine 1985: 760-761; Touraine 1981: 77).

Central to Touraine's thesis, however, is the claim that the hitherto dominant pattern of social conflict is in decline as a profound historical shift takes place from industrial to 'post-industrial' 'programmed' society. Important features of this transition period are changes in the relations of production as well as in the investment strategies of the managers of capital. According to Touraine, these developments have led to the fragmentation of the workers' movement, its adoption of defensive strategies and the gradual institutionalisation of industrial conflict (Eyerman 1984: 79). The main consequence of all this is that while the workers' movement has gained considerable political influence in most industrialised countries, it has lost 'its role as a central social movement' (Touraine 1981: 12).

Touraine argues that 1968 marked the beginnings of the 'crisis and decay of industrial society, its cultural field, its social actors and its forms of political action'; a crisis which 'reached its climax at the beginning of the 1980s' (Touraine 1995: 360). It is important to be clear about the meaning and significance of the 'post-industrial' or 'programmed' society that Touraine believes is gradually replacing industrial society. A central feature of the 'post-industrial' society is considered to be its heightened 'reflexive' capacity; that is,

its total capacity for 'self-production' (Cohen 1985: 701-702). The development and dominance of new and innovative 'knowledge' sectors of the economy such as 'research and development, information processing, biomedical science and techniques, and mass media' have resulted in the increased capacity of humans to transform their 'representation of human nature and of the external world' (Touraine 1985: 781). The 'programmed' element of the 'post-industrial' society, therefore, lies in the ability of 'managers' to manipulate public opinion, attitudes, modes of behaviour, personalities and culture by controlling the patterns of information and knowledge production, and thereby attempting to secure the predictable management of the social system (Touraine 1995: 244). For Touraine, then, power in 'programmed' society is located not so much within the economic sphere as 'at the level of cultural production itself' (Cohen 1985: 701-702).

As has been hinted, the shift from industrial to 'post-industrial' society is thought to have implications for the potential patterns of social conflict. In Touraine's view, the central conflict in 'post-industrial' society will be between the new dominant class - which he terms the 'technocracy' - and those social groups who resist and struggle against domination by 'the great management and data-processing apparatus' (Touraine 1981: 7). Touraine suggests that whereas in industrial society conflict occurs within the socio-economic sphere, conflict in 'programmed' society will extend to all realms of social and cultural life; in short, it will extend to those fields of social and cultural life in which individual and collective actors are subject to technocratic domination. The 'technocracy' can thus be defined as 'those who have power over the livelihood and lifestyle of social groups within and beyond the sphere of economic production' (Hall *et al.* 1990: 175).

This process clearly has implications for both the identity and kinds of movements that will develop. According to Touraine, the interests in whom 'post-industrial' social movements fight are not skilled 'workers' but rather 'citizens' or 'consumers' who are subject to technocratic control and who seek 'self-management'. As a consequence, conflicts have the potential to emerge in

many areas of social and cultural life, including those of education, the health sector, sexuality and energy production (Touraine 1981: 7; Touraine 1985: 778). Indeed, he points to a whole range of protest campaigns - centred on such issues as consumer rights, freedom of information, regional autonomy, nuclear power, the environment and the position of women in society - as examples of the kinds of conflicts that are thought to be part of the larger struggle against technocratic power (Touraine 1983: 175).

On the subject of which social groups will form the vanguard of the struggle against 'technocracy', Touraine writes:

The struggle is not led by marginal social elements who can only rise up for brief periods or support offensive action with their mass, but by central social elements who, in their opposition to those who hold power, use the instruments of production which their opponents claim to control. This used to be the role of the skilled workers; today, it is the role of those who possess scientific and technical competence. They are closely connected with the great organizations but their identity is not defined by the hierarchical authority in them. Often they even enjoy great independence from the organizations that utilize their services. They are agents of development, for their work is defined by creation, diffusion, or application of rational knowledge; they are not technocrats, because their function is defined as *service*, not as production. (Touraine 1971: 64)

Particular groups which are understood to fall into this broad category include professionals working in the fields of teaching and public health, students, research technicians and maintenance workers (Touraine 1971: 63-70). However, in his later study of the French anti-nuclear movement, Touraine also stressed the importance of dissident scientists within the establishment in providing both the knowledge and necessary competence to challenge 'technocracy' 'on the adversary's own ground' (Touraine 1983: 20-21).

In terms of the character of social movements, Touraine suggests that, unlike the workers' movement of industrial society, the aim of 'post-industrial' social movements is not to obtain control of state institutions but rather to defend and extend 'civil society against a potentially all consuming state' (Scott 1990: 66). 'Post-industrial' social movements, therefore, resist established power

systems, refuse to 'play by the rules' and concern themselves with the struggle for the democratisation of society and 'participatory forms of association' (Cohen 1985: 702). The heightened 'reflexive' capacity of actors in 'post-industrial' society means that social movements are increasingly able 'to develop along a logic which is relatively autonomous from the logic of social systems' (Eyerman 1984: 78), and to generate new meanings and produce new visions of how life could be in the future (Touraine 1983: 178).

Much of Touraine's work has centred upon the identification of 'that popular social movement which will come to dominate the whole stage in our programmed society' (Touraine 1983: 5). As was mentioned earlier, in order to achieve the status of a 'genuine' social movement, actors involved in a social struggle must fulfil three criteria: they must identify a social group in whose interests they act; they must clearly identify their opponent; and they must recognise the 'totality', or stakes, of the struggle in which they are engaged. In the 'programmed' society, then, a 'genuine' new social movement would act in the interests of citizens subject to technocratic control; its opponent would constitute the 'technocracy'; and it would recognise that society's cultural model - its 'historicity' - was at stake in the struggle. Touraine argued that, in 1968, the student struggle in France contained traces of a potential social movement but ultimately failed because it was 'unable to recognise its true meaning' (Touraine 1983: 180). The French anti-nuclear struggle of the 1970s, whose leaders (e.g. Brice Lalonde) had their roots in the May 1968 movement, experienced a similar fate in Touraine's view. In this case, despite employment of his controversial method of 'sociological intervention' - in which researchers attempt to stimulate the 'self-analysis' of activists and thereby bring the latter's struggle up to the level of a 'full' social movement - the anti-nuclear movement eventually collapsed as a result of its inability to 'turn the conflict against a precise adversary' and to raise its definition of the 'stakes' to the societal level (Touraine 1983: 183).

(b) Green Party Politics in the 'Programmed' Society

Touraine argues that a whole range of emergent struggles (ecological, anti-nuclear, feminist, human rights, etc.) are symptomatic of the 'central conflict' of 'programmed' society; namely, between the 'technocracy' and those who lack control over the decisions which shape their lives. In terms of the present discussion, it is significant that Touraine has cited the 'ecological' movement as embracing almost all of these struggles simultaneously (Touraine 1981: 24). From this perspective, then, the emergence of an 'ecological' political identity witnessed across Europe during the 1970s and 1980s was, first and foremost, a reflection of this 'post-industrial' social conflict. To the extent that green parties often display commitment to such principles as individualism, participatory democracy, anti-elitism, gender equality and minority rights, it could be argued that they are a 'new type of party' (Poguntke 1987) for the coming post-industrial 'programmed' age.

If green parties in Austria, Britain and the Netherlands are representative of a 'post-industrial' new social movement, then the following criteria would need to be fulfilled. First, an examination of the emergence of all three parties should reveal that 'technocracy' - i.e. those who have the power to make decisions which shape the livelihood and lifestyle of social groups - has formed the main theme which activists and supporters have identified as constituting the force to which they are opposed. Second, the green parties' battle for the control of 'historicity' should have been primarily fought within the sphere of civil society. In other words, the parties should not aim to achieve state integration or power but, rather, concentrate on the development and advancement of participatory forms of association, new lifestyles and cultural possibilities. Third, in line with Touraine's claim with respect to which social groups will lead the struggle against the 'technocracy', service sector professionals, students, research

technicians and maintenance workers would be expected to form the core of the green parties' membership base.⁴

At first sight, the notion that opposition to the 'technocracy' - as defined above - might have played a part in shaping the critical stance of those movements which proved catalytic in the emergence of the Austrian Greens appears promising. For example, many of those who participated in the anti-nuclear movement of the 1970s - and who were later involved in the formation of the VGÖ and ALÖ - developed a view of their struggle based upon the defence of 'the people', i.e. not one specific class, against the highly integrated system of elite co-operation between the two major political parties (SPÖ and ÖVP) and the social partners representing the interests of labour and capital, which had characterised the Austrian political system during the post-war period (Preglau 1994; Gottweis 1990). Criticism was directed against the dominant culture of decision-making which had tended to exclude citizen participation and foster passivity among the population (Preglau 1994: 45). Similarly, the 1984 struggle over the proposal to build a hydroelectric dam on the Danube at Hainburg, which resulted in mass civil disobedience, a government U-turn on the issue, and an impetus to green politics at the national level, could be viewed as an example of 'the people' doing something 'against those in power' (Parkin 1989: 32). The practice of attacking the elitist workings of the established political system was

⁴ There is a fourth possible hypothesis relating to Touraine's theory which could be applied to green parties - that the green parties should stress their self-identity in 'non-class' terms. In other words, they should see themselves as representing the interests of 'citizens', 'the people' or 'consumers'. An adequate 'testing' of this hypothesis would involve examining and comparing the 'class identity' of green party supporters and members. Unfortunately, comparable data that would enable a detailed assessment of this hypothesis are unavailable. However, in the case of the British Green Party, a survey of party members showed that whilst a significant proportion (39.5 per cent) viewed themselves in 'non-class' terms, a clear majority (60.5 per cent) identified with a particular social class (Rüdiger *et al.* 1991: 28). The historical origins of the Dutch Green Left suggest that a significant proportion of its members - particularly within the ex-Communist cohort - may still believe 'class' to be an important issue in Dutch society. In fact, Green Left's 'Leftism' has been characterised by a strong emphasis on the need to address economic and social inequalities in capitalist society (GroenLinks 1990c, 1993), and this means that caution should be exercised in interpreting its identity in 'non-class' terms.

also very much an activity which preoccupied the first Austrian Green MPs⁵ (Lauber 1995: 317).

But should such opposition be viewed as symptomatic of a fundamental struggle against 'technocracy' to which Touraine refers? It is surely stretching things to claim that the protests waged by Austrian citizens mentioned here were expressive of opposition to a 'technocratic' class which was engaged in an attempt to dominate all areas of the lives of certain social groups (as Touraine's theory implies). A more plausible account would emphasise the degree to which these protests were a focused response to the system of 'social partnership' (*Sozialpartnerschaft*) which had for decades allowed the large interest associations of business and labour to dominate the political decision-making process and to pursue economic development objectives that were ecologically risky and damaging. The Austrian system of social partnership has been characterised by the maintenance of a consensus on economic issues and the exclusion of ecological interests which challenge this consensus, but this does not imply that the former reflects a new and broad 'technocratic' class concerned with the large-scale manipulation of public opinion, attitudes, modes of behaviour and culture. Moreover, the Austrian social partnership has very much been rooted in the desire to resolve the core worker-management conflict of industrial society - it was not in any sense related to the dawning of the so-called 'post-industrial' 'programmed' age.

A further problem with the 'technocracy' argument is that the Austrian Greens have quite simply not defined their 'enemy' in these terms. The Greens have certainly been highly critical of 'industrialism' in the past - indeed, in the public eye they have often been portrayed in 'anti-industrialist' terms - but there is no evidence to suggest that they have conceptualised their 'opponents' in terms that would be consistent with the 'technocratic class' as defined by Touraine. It could be argued that the Greens have recently shifted away from an oppositional stance and embraced a more compromising strategy based on the development of

⁵ Eight Green MPs were elected to the National Council in 1986.

'initiatives in favour of the ecological modernisation of industrial society' (Lauber 1997a: 188). These considerations serve to further underline the irrelevance of Touraine's arguments to the case of green party politics in Austria.

During the late 1960s the Netherlands underwent fundamental change as a process of 'depillarisation' began to take place. This saw the weakening of the traditional 'pillarised' society in which all social organisations, including political parties, trade unions, employers' organisations, broadcasting companies, hospitals, schools, universities and newspapers were based on one of the major religions (Catholic, Protestant) or ideologies (socialism, liberalism) (Andeweg and Irwin 1993: 30). According to van der Heijden, this process was characterised by 'a widespread rejection of the rigid social order of the earlier years and of the lack of transparency and the depoliticised character of political decision-making' (van der Heijden 1994: 106). The process of depillarisation contributed to a climate characterised by greater 'openness' and made room for the emergence of new political parties advocating political reform (D66 and PPR), as well as a wide variety of protest groups concerned with environmental, peace and feminist issues (van der Heijden 1994: 106). These latter groups flourished during the 1970s and early 1980s, initially working alongside 'New Left' parties such as the PPR and PSP - but later, with the CPN - in extra-parliamentary protest activities (Voerman 1992, 1995). The development of common political positions on the part of the PSP, PPR and CPN with regard to peace, environmental, anti-nuclear and gender issues is generally considered to have been facilitated by these joint actions. During the course of the 1980s, movement activists began to apply pressure on the three parties to intensify their efforts at electoral co-operation. Such pressure was an important factor in the decision of the parties to take part in the 1989 Dutch national elections as Green Left.

To the extent that several of the parties and movements that eventually formed Green Left developed within a climate of 'depillarisation', in which the hitherto dominant and 'conformity demanding' power structures were

substantially weakened, it may seem reasonable to argue that the roots of the party's identity can be partially traced to demands by citizens to free themselves from a form of 'technocracy'. Yet this 'Tourainean type' interpretation comes up against a fundamental problem of 'timing'. The patterns of elite rule in the Netherlands - according to which the divisions which traditionally characterised Dutch society were offset by a 'politics of accommodation' based upon the construction and maintenance of a basic consensus - were quite simply not linked to the rise of a 'post-industrial', 'programmed' society. Indeed, the stable political system stemming from such elite behaviour had its origins in the 'Pacification of 1917', which established a system of 'consociational democracy' and in which the classes of *industrial society* and dominant religious groups would co-operate (Lijphart 1975). As in Austria, the idea that an emergent 'technocratic' class of the 'programmed' society formed the oppositional focus for the new protest groups and parties of the late 1960s receives little support. These protest groups developed within a climate characterised by the breaking down of 'old' identities and loyalties and not by citizen resistance to a 'new' dominant class intent on imposing its technocratic will on the lives of 'the people'.

Turning more directly to the case of green party politics in the Netherlands, there is no evidence to suggest that Green Left has based its critique of society around the theme of 'technocratic' power. An examination of party documents shows that while Green Left is critical of state centralisation and bureaucracy - a theme explored more fully later in this chapter - it also devotes much space to attacking the growth orientated and ecologically destructive effects of the 'capitalist market economy' (*GroenLinks* 1990c, *GroenLinks* 1993).

Interpreting the emergence of the British Green Party in terms of a response to the actions of a 'technocratic' class is also highly problematic. The founding members of PEOPLE were not primarily motivated by the struggle for freedom from the domination of a 'new class', but rather by a deep concern 'that the collapse of society was imminent unless swift action was taken' (Wall 1994:

16). As Parkin has argued, the emergence of the Green Party must be understood within the context of 'much debate over the incompatibility of increased consumption of resources and a rising population in the context of a finite planet' (Parkin 1989: 214). During the party's early years, debate centred not on the problem of 'technocratic power', but primarily took place between those on the Left, who identified capitalism as being the main source of ecological decline, and those on the Right, e.g. Edward Goldsmith, who were more inclined to blame industrialisation for the 'disintegration' of society (Rüdiger and Lowe 1986: 271; Byrne 1989: 101). Following the emergence of a new leadership in 1977 the party made efforts to transcend the Left-Right dispute and has since based its critique around the 'relentless pursuit of economic growth, accompanied by rising material expectations within an ever increasing world population' (Green Party 1995). The 'technocracy' - defined as those who have power over the lives of subordinate groups - has not, therefore, constituted the main 'opponent' for the Green Party either during its formative years, or its later periods of development. With respect to the first hypothesis, then, opposition to a 'technocratic' class does not seem to constitute the theme that has shaped the identity of green parties in Austria, Britain or the Netherlands.

As noted, a second hypothesis inferred from Touraine's theory concerns the location and aims of green party activity. If green parties are representative of a 'post-industrial' new social movement, as defined by Touraine, then they should define their aims principally in terms of the defence of culture and civil society, and refuse to pursue state power or integration into established structures of political decision-making. It is certainly the case the key green parties in this study have embraced a definition of politics which accords a central role to extra-parliamentary initiatives and movements within civil society in their struggle to achieve radical change.⁶ However, the crucial point here is that none of the green

⁶ Consider the following statements. In the case of the Dutch Green Left 'politics ... cannot and must not remain limited to state politics. The Green Left regards itself as a political movement which commands a wider terrain than merely that of parliamentary politics' (*GroenLinks* 1993: 14-15). The British Green Party stresses that its 'members organise and participate in political lobbying, demonstrations and non-violent direct actions. All these things show the relevance of

parties currently under discussion conforms mainly to this pattern. All three parties have, throughout their history, been committed to mounting some form of electoral challenge, and all have sought, with varying levels of success, to acquire some degree of political power whether at the local, national or European level. The fact that greens across Europe have collectively made the decision to engage in electoral politics, and to embrace this more direct method of achieving political influence, suggests that they do not solely define the site of their struggles in terms of civil society (Doherty 1994). To be sure, many green parties - including the Austrian and British Greens - have experienced sometimes bitter internal struggles concerning the issue of what the appropriate balance between pursuing a 'decentralist', extra-parliamentary strategy and one based upon parliamentary politics and power-sharing should be (Rüdiger and Lowe 1986; Lauber 1997a: 190; Lauber and Müller 1998; Doherty 1992). Yet it is important not to lose sight of the fact that such green parties are, by definition, political parties and are thus committed to mounting an *electoral* challenge to the traditional political parties; a strategy that Touraine would regard as 'deviant' in social movement terms. It is for this reason that the second hypothesis (which states that green parties resist the pursuit of state integration and formal political power) can be rejected.

It is further necessary to consider the extent to which the occupational profiles of green party activists meet with Touraine's predictions (hypothesis three). On this level, the evidence is more supportive. A 1990 study of Dutch Green Left delegates demonstrates that, of the respondents, 24 per cent worked in the service sector, 26 per cent in (semi-) public service, 11 per cent in teaching and 5 per cent were students. Skilled manual workers made up less than 10 per cent of the respondents (Voerman 1995: 120-121). Turning to Britain, a 1990 study of Green Party members indicates that 50 per cent - by far the largest

Green politics to everyday life and inspire people to get involved' (Green Party n.d.). The Austrian Greens also view themselves as 'the arm of the extra-parliamentary movements' (Frankland 1993: 6) and, in their 1987 party charter 'stated that they did not intend to be a party organization in the traditional sense but a broad democratic organization of those engaged in ecological, democratic, social, cultural, peace and women's issues' (Frankland 1994: 201).

proportion - were employed in a professional or technical occupation (e.g. doctor, teacher, social worker, accountant, computer programmer). Students made up a further 10 per cent of members. As in the Netherlands, skilled manual workers comprised a very small proportion of the Green membership (5.1 per cent). (Rüdig *et al.* 1991: 24-26). The support base of the Austrian Greens broadly follows the pattern described so far. Thus, in 1993, by far the largest occupational milieu from which the Greens drew support were 'white-collar' workers (66 per cent). This compares with a figure of 19 per cent for those employed in 'blue-collar' occupations (Müller and Ulram 1995: 152). Students have also proved to be a strong source of support for the Austrian Greens. Frankland has noted that in both the 1986 and 1990 parliamentary elections the Greens drew their highest support from this social group (23 per cent of Green voters in 1986 were students; 28 per cent were so in 1990) (Frankland 1994: 199). That green party members and supporters are drawn less from the ranks of 'skilled workers' and more from those of 'service' workers and students therefore seems clear. Thus, of the hypotheses formulated at the beginning of this section, only the third receives consistent support across the three case studies.

(c) Criticisms of Touraine's Theory

As well as the general lack of support for Touraine's thesis documented above, there are additional problems that would cast further doubt on its potential use as a theoretical framework with which to explain the emergence of green parties. One problem relates to Touraine's claim that, in any historical period, there is only one pair of social movements, which amount to 'unified actors playing out a role on the stage of history' (Melucci 1989: 202). This glosses over the fact that social movements in 'post-industrial' society are characterised by their differentiation in terms of aims and modes of activity (Melucci 1989: 202-203). It is for this reason that the validity of Touraine's methodology of 'sociological

intervention' can be questioned. The methodology involves a 'missionary-teacher' (Melucci 1989: 239) confronting activists with ideas relating to the 'highest meaning' of the particular struggle in which they are engaged, and thereby 'helping' them to achieve the status of a 'true' social movement. In the 'programmed' society this 'meaning' amounts to the struggle against the 'technocracy' for the control of 'historicity'. Touraine thus appears unwilling to acknowledge either the diversity of social movement conflict or the possibility that people might have different motivations for choosing to participate in various kinds of protest activity, e.g. basic concern about environmental problems. For these reasons, Touraine's methodology has been accused of displaying elements of 'authoritarianism' (Rüdig 1990a: 20), Leninism and, to the extent that there is only one 'true' hypothesis, i.e. Touraine's, of lacking rigour and proper empirical testing (Pakulski 1991: 24; Rüdig 1990a: 21).

And there are further problems. To begin with, despite his critique of teleological and deterministic thinking, Touraine's theory appears to display such overtones; this is particularly evident in considering the claim that 'there is only one true movement for any given era' (Scott 1990: 69). Touraine's central theme of the 'post-industrial' 'programmed' society can also be criticised. In particular, the lack of a detailed description of the precise contours of the 'programmed' society makes a judgement on the extent to which a society is undergoing a shift towards the latter extremely difficult to make. Thus, even before attempting to apply the conceptual framework of 'post-industrial' society to the case of green party politics, the former can be criticised on the grounds of its general haziness. This same criticism has been made of other Tourainean concepts, such as 'historicity', 'conflict' and 'movement' (Pakulski 1991: 24). In sum, the problematic nature of Touraine's thesis in terms of its exclusive concern with the 'significance' of opposition to technocratic power; its focus on the sphere of civil society to the neglect of political parties and the electoral sphere; and its questionable methodological and conceptual framework, means that it provides

an unsatisfactory framework within which to investigate the emergence of green parties in recent decades.

3. A Conservative Perspective on the 'Post-industrial' Society: the Sociology of Daniel Bell

(a) The Dimensions of Bell's 'Post-industrial' Society

An alternative approach to 'post-industrial' society can be found in the work of Daniel Bell (Bell 1974). The starting point of Bell's theory is a 'stages' model of development in which there are three successive phases of economic progress: pre-industrial, industrial and 'post-industrial'. According to Bell, the 'design' of the pre-industrial phase is a 'game against nature'; thus, 'its resources are drawn from extractive industries and it is subject to the laws of diminishing returns and low productivity' (Bell 1974: 116). Agriculture, mining, fishing and timber therefore form the main economic sectors within this societal stage. In contrast, the 'design' of industrial society is a "game against fabricated nature" which is centred on man-machine relationships and uses energy to transform the natural environment into a technical environment' (Bell 1974: 116). The dominant economic sectors in this phase are those of mechanical production and the manufacture of goods. Finally, Bell describes the 'design' of 'post-industrial' society as a "game between persons" in which an "intellectual technology", based on information, rises alongside of machine technology' (Bell 1974: 116). This type of society has an economic sector largely based upon services, defined as trade, mass media, finance, transport, health, recreation, research, education and government (Bell 1974: 15, 116).

Writing in the 1970s, Bell argued that the United States was the country that was witnessing the most marked shift towards the 'post-industrial' phase of development, but that this new social form would be a 'major feature of the

twenty-first century, in the social structures of the United States, Japan, the Soviet Union, and Western Europe' (Bell 1974: X). However, the main point here is that, at its most basic level, Bell's theory of historical progress describes shifts in the composition of the workforce with the majority moving from extractive industries to manufacturing production and then to the service sector. Generally speaking, then, a 'post-industrial' society can be described as one in which more than 50 per cent of the workforce is employed in the service sector (Bell 1974: 15). Using this criterion, political analysts have also distinguished between societies which are more or less 'post-industrial' (Kitschelt 1988a: 208; Taggart 1996: 55). That is to say that a state with, say, 75 per cent of its workforce employed in the service sector can be viewed as being more 'post-industrial' than one in which only 55 per cent is employed in this economic sector.

Turning to the OECD data in Table 4.1 it can be seen that Austria, Britain and the Netherlands have, since 1970, experienced a decline in the level of industrial employment alongside a steady increase in the size of the service sector. It is clear that the three countries in this study are, according to Bell's most basic criterion, 'post-industrial' societies. It is also the case that green parties in Austria, Britain and the Netherlands have emerged within this climate of increasing 'post-industrialisation'. The possible links between 'post-industrialisation' and the emergence of green parties will be explored at a later stage in this chapter. It can further be observed from Table 4.1 that there are differences concerning the point at which the 'post-industrial' threshold was surpassed, and in terms of the size of each country's respective service sector. What is particularly noticeable from Table 4.1 is that the Austrian economy entered the 'post-industrial' phase considerably later than either the Netherlands or Britain, and that it has consistently lagged behind the latter in terms of the size of its service sector. The potential consequences of these differences for the comparative electoral strength of green parties in Austria, Britain and the Netherlands will also be discussed in due course.

**Table 4.1 Occupational Composition of the Workforce in
Austria, Britain and the Netherlands, 1970-94**

Country	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1994	Change 1970-94
Austria							
Agriculture	18.3	12.5	10.5	9.0	7.9	7.2	-11.1
Industry	41.0	40.9	40.3	38.1	36.8	33.2	-7.8
Services	40.7	46.6	49.2	52.9	55.3	59.6	+18.9
Britain							
Agriculture	2.9	2.7	2.6	2.6	2.1	2.2 ⁷	-0.7
Industry	46.5	40.9	38.0	32.4	29.0	26.2 ⁸	-20.3
Services	50.6	56.4	59.4	65.0	68.9	71.6 ⁹	+21.0
Netherlands							
Agriculture	7.2	6.6	6.0	4.9	4.6	4.0	-3.2
Industry	41.0	34.8	31.8	28.1	26.3	23.0	-18.0
Services	51.8	58.6	62.2	67.0	69.1	73.0	+21.2

Source: OECD (1987, 1993, 1996).

Yet there is more to Bell's 'post-industrial' society than a simple shift away from goods production towards services. For Bell, 'post-industrial' society is characterised by a different 'axial principle', or driving force, to that of industrial society. Whereas the 'axial principle' of industrial societies is the pursuit of economic growth by means of the application of energy and machinery, the driving force of 'post-industrial' societies is considered to be the 'centrality ... and codification of theoretical knowledge' (Bell 1974: 117). It is the latter which forms the 'axis around which new technology, economic growth and the stratification of society' will be organised in the 'post-industrial' era (Bell 1974: 112). As will be shown, the centrality of theoretical knowledge has

⁷ Figure is for 1993.

⁸ Figure is for 1993.

⁹ Figure is for 1993.

important consequences for the emergent social structure of the 'post-industrial' phase, and forms the potential backdrop for changes in the political configuration of society.

The centrality of theoretical knowledge in 'post-industrial' society is thought to lead to a transformation in the kind of work that people do (Bell 1974: 134). Bell argues that the knowledge-driven development of new technologies, and the emergence of a more affluent population which increasingly defines its 'quality of life' in terms of access to services and amenities such as health, education, recreation and the arts, leads to a decline in the number of manual, manufacturing jobs and a shift to 'white-collar' occupations (Bell 1974: 17, 127). Of the latter, Bell argues that it is those in the 'professional' and 'technical' categories - such as teachers, engineers, engineering and science technicians and, most importantly, scientists - that will emerge 'as the predominant occupational group in the post-industrial society' (Bell 1974: 41). A consequence of increased reliance upon these 'knowledge elites' will be the 'democratisation' of higher education, as society struggles to gain 'adequate numbers of trained persons of professional and technical caliber' (Bell 1974: 232). The university therefore becomes the primary institution of 'post-industrial' society (Bell 1974: 44). In addition to these developments, Bell foresees a change in the nature of power in 'post-industrial' society. He argues that power in 'post-industrial' society is increasingly based on the control of technical skill (education being the mode of access to such power), and less upon the control of property or political office (Bell 1974: 358-359). The source of the power of what Bell terms the 'new intelligensia' lies not in their direct wielding of it, but in the extent to which they 'have now become essential to the formulation and analysis of decisions on which political judgements have to be made' (Bell 1974: 362).

Bell's theory has been subject to much criticism (Turner 1989). It has for instance been argued that his predictions that Western societies are becoming more 'affluent' have fallen wide of the mark. Contrary to Bell's claims concerning the rise of the 'affluent society', commentators have suggested that

recent decades have witnessed rather the emergence of a 'fragmented, divided society riven by social exclusion in which the affluence created is hived off and distributed within a small, compartmentalised élite' (Little 1997: 250). Though the size of the service sector has undoubtedly increased, this has not led to the large-scale creation of highly skilled jobs. As Ritzer has argued, 'in contrast to Bell's thesis, low-status blue collar and service occupations show no signs of disappearing' (Ritzer 1993: 153). Bell's optimism has been described as 'misguided' and disregarding of new divisions within the labour market in capitalist societies between core and peripheral workers, and non-workers. Critics on the Left have generally been dismissive of Bell's theory of 'post-industrial' society on the grounds that 'it does little to challenge the logic of capital accumulation or the fragmentation of the labour market' (Little 1997: 251).

Despite such criticism, it will be argued that certain themes emphasised by Bell - relating to the elitist character of decision-making in 'post-industrial' society, the changing class structure and the expansion of higher education - can throw light on the changing social context within which new political actors such as green parties have emerged. It will be maintained that these processes have contributed to a new social climate that has been more conducive to rising levels of ecological awareness and to demands for participatory forms of politics, both of which have helped to create a more favourable environment for the emergence of green parties.

(b) Politics in 'Post-industrial' Society

Before directly considering green parties, the impact of the previously mentioned changes on the general character of politics in 'post-industrial' society needs to be examined. As will be shown, political consequences concomitant with the shift to 'post-industrial' society have contributed to the emergence of a more

participatory form of politics associated with organisations such as green parties. Bell devotes relatively little space in *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* to the question of 'post-industrial' politics, but he does hint at some of the potential political problems that may prove central in 'post-industrial' society (Bell 1974: 341-367). A more detailed assessment of the politics of 'post-industrialism' has been undertaken by Samuel P. Huntington (Huntington 1974) and it is this, along with Bell's evaluation, which forms the main focus of this section. It is important to point out that both Bell and Huntington were writing 25 years ago, and thus it would be unreasonable to expect them to have foreseen the precise nature of the political problems - ecological and otherwise - that have confronted 'post-industrial' societies in later decades. Yet their work does succeed in drawing attention to a political theme that has becoming increasingly salient in recent years, namely, that of 'participation'.

According to Bell, one political consequence of the coming societal shift will be a 'participation revolution' which represents a 'reaction against the "professionalization" of society and the emergent technocratic decision-making of a post-industrial society' (Bell 1974: 365-366).¹⁰ Bell argues that the elevated position of 'knowledge elites' in processes of decision-making in 'post-industrial' society, and broader transformations in the social structure, mean that political conflict will occur less and less between bourgeoisie and proletariat, and more around 'the bureaucratic and authority relations between those who have powers of decision and those who have not, in all kinds of organizations, political, economic, and social' (Bell 1974: 119). Huntington further suggests that demands for such participation may to some extent be intensified by the 'growth in education' documented earlier, on the grounds that the latter leads to a

¹⁰ It is important to point out that Bell does not attach the same meaning to the term 'technocratic' as Alain Touraine. For Bell, the term 'technocratic' refers to the extent to which political decisions in 'post-industrial' society are increasingly made on the basis of the technical knowledge wielded by 'elite' groups, e.g. scientists, researchers (Bell 1974: 362). Essentially, Bell is referring to a particular 'style' of elitist decision-making. In contrast, Touraine defines the terms 'technocracy' and 'technocratic' in a more fundamental sense, i.e. in order to identify and describe the actions of a new 'dominant class' which seeks to control the lives of ordinary people (Touraine 1981).

‘sense of political efficacy’ and, therefore, ‘an increase in the knowledge of political and social problems and of the desire to do something about those problems’ (Huntington 1974: 177).¹¹ A further symptom of the ‘information society’ - namely, developments in media and communications - may also affect levels of political participation insofar as these developments have the potential to ‘multiply tremendously the impact of any one event throughout the society’ and to raise overall levels of political and social awareness (Huntington 1974: 165). These issues will be considered in more detail with respect to green party politics at a later point in the chapter.

There are, it seems, certain similarities between the general argument outlined here and the position of Alain Touraine discussed earlier. Like Touraine, Bell and Huntington focus on the shift away from conflict in the workplace, a weakening in the position of the industrial working class, and a growth in citizen protest against the ‘technocratic’ character of decision-making in ‘post-industrial’ society. However, there are also important differences. For example, whereas Touraine’s approach is based quite explicitly on the idea that, in ‘post-industrial’ society, there is only one ‘true’ social movement whose sole aim is to defend civil society against the ‘enemy’ of ‘the technocracy’, Bell and Huntington seem more open to the possibility that phenomena other than social movements might form the media through which citizen demands for participation will be channelled in ‘post-industrial’ society. According to Huntington, one possible form of ‘post-industrial’ participation may well be ‘job oriented ... in the bureaucracies where most of the post-industrial society’s white-collar workers are employed’ (Huntington 1974: 176). To this extent, Huntington argues that society may witness a ‘simple intensification of existing trends toward white-collar unionism’ (Huntington 1974: 176).

In addition, Huntington suggested that there may be a growth in ‘middle-class suburban political participation’ in the form of ‘civic and community

¹¹ Frank Parkin’s pioneering study of CND in the 1960s made a similar connection between education and political activism; thus he claimed that ‘higher education has something of a radicalizing effect on many of those who experience it’ (Parkin 1968: 171).

oriented organizations' (Huntington 1974: 176). For Huntington, these organisations will probably be 'issue organisations', often of an ephemeral character. However, there is also the possibility that heightened levels of political awareness and demands for participation will lead to 'new forms of political party organization, in which ideological and civic motivations play a key role' and, more generally, 'new types of political tactics, organization and style' (Huntington 1974: 176). Huntington does not specify what the precise organisational composition of these new phenomena will be, but, to the degree that green party organisations are considered by most commentators to provide new structures and opportunities for citizen participation, it seems plausible to suggest that they might, to a certain extent, be representative of public demands for greater political participation in 'post-industrial' society. While such a theory of 'post-industrial' politics cannot account for the origins of the core ecological dimension of green party politics, insofar as it highlights the elitist character of decision-making in 'post-industrial' society, it may help to account for why ecologically concerned citizens have frequently embraced the goal of enhanced participation as a step towards tackling the ecological crisis. To the extent that green parties seek democratic reform, and to develop more decentralised, participatory forms of politics, this could be interpreted in terms of an attempt to facilitate greater citizen involvement in and control over 'the complex interplay of social, ecological, economic, and political forces' (Spretnak and Capra 1985: 45). If the emergence of green party politics is indeed partially a response to elitist decision-making in 'post-industrial' society then it can be hypothesised that the three green parties in this study should have made 'participation' a key theme within their organisation and programme of political reform. This hypothesis is examined in the next section.

(c) The Participatory Dimension of Green Party Politics:
Evidence from Three Case Studies

The extent to which the Austrian Greens have advocated decentralised forms of organisation and engaged in new, more participatory styles of politics is difficult to assess. It is certainly the case that the three main organisational sources of the party displayed very different attitudes towards the issue of participatory democracy. In the case of the VGÖ, there was no attempt to incorporate the kinds of 'anti-hierarchy' measures considered to be symptomatic of a participatory party organisation (Poguntke 1987). On the contrary, the party's organisational structure was hierarchical and its decision-making style authoritarian (Frankland 1992: 12). Ideologically, the VGÖ expressed broad support for existing political and economic structures and hence did not call for the radical decentralisation of politics in Austria (Dachs 1989: 178-179). Similarly, the BIP - the organisation formed with the aim of achieving a green alliance for the 1986 national elections - largely consisted of an alliance of green party leaders from Vorarlberg, Salzburg, Graz and Vienna, who paid little attention to the views of 'grass-roots' activists with respect to the unification process (Haerpfer 1989: 27). The ALÖ, by contrast, conformed quite closely to the participatory model of party organisation, incorporating 'anti-elite' procedures (such as rotation) and emphasising collective leadership (Frankland 1994: 201). Further, in terms of its programmatic commitments, the ALÖ called for the widespread decentralisation of social and political life in order to ensure the maximisation of citizen participation in the shaping of decisions which affect people's lives (Dachs 1989: 180).

Second, following the election of eight Green MPs in November 1986, a parliamentary group (*Grüne Klub*) was formed. The next stage was the forging of a unified party organisation - the 'Green Alternative' - in February 1987 (Jacobs 1989: 496). Lauber and Müller have pointed out that the decisive push for the

formation of the new party was very much instigated from the 'top'. It could be argued that this to some extent goes against the participation hypothesis outlined above. The 'top-down' outlook of the new MPs was further reflected in their favouring a strong and centralised party created by and supportive of the parliamentary party. This view was in direct opposition to that of the 'grass-roots' activists, who advocated decentralised party structures and greater levels of participation. In view of these tensions, the parliamentary party chose to maintain a high degree of autonomy from the party organisation, an arrangement which stood until 1992. This of course meant that the party organisation was unable to exert control over its representatives, or even to issue instructions to them (Lauber and Müller 1998).

In terms of the *party organisation* that actually developed, however, it should be stressed that the Greens were widely regarded as having an organisational structure that was the 'antithesis' of the traditional Austrian political parties. Thus in their 1987 constitution the Greens claimed that they did not intend to be a traditional party organisation, but, rather, 'a co-ordinating group, reinforcing the work of citizens' initiatives and movements, with whose autonomy they [would] interfere to the minimum extent' (Jacobs 1989: 496). The Greens also developed an 'open' approach to participation, rejecting the idea that formal membership and payment of a fixed membership fee should be prerequisites for being active in the organisation. As Frankland has documented 'half of those who worked in the 1991 Viennese election campaign were *not* members' (Frankland 1994: 201). In addition, emphasis was placed upon such measures as collective federal and provincial leadership; the restriction of the simultaneous holding of certain party functions and elected offices; limiting the time that Green MPs could serve to two legislative periods; giving each party member the right to propose motions at the federal congress; and ensuring gender parity at all levels of the party (Frankland 1992; Müller 1996b; Lauber and Müller 1998). Frankland suggests that the 'organizational contrasts with the

major parties were sharp enough that one can conclude that they ... constituted an alternative model' (Frankland 1992: 15-16).¹²

The programmatic commitment of the Austrian Greens to greater democracy is shown by their 1990 manifesto commitment to 'more direct democracy, less party dominance, a stronger parliament and more civic participation in schools and the workplace' (Frankland 1994: 206). The Greens have clearly incorporated within their political programme demands for greater participation and democracy, and directed some of their criticism at the 'elitist' character of political decision-making in contemporary society. For many Austrian Greens, these structures constitute the institutional framework which has developed alongside and reinforced the logic of industrial growth largely responsible for ecological deterioration, and must be replaced by a system more open to the representation of citizen viewpoints advocating ecological and social reform.

Ideas of enhanced democracy and participation played an important role in several of the parties and movements involved in the formation of the Dutch Green Left, and have since featured as central themes within the party's political programme. Activists involved in various social movements pressed for the formation of a new political party that would allow for the expression and advancement of political interests which had hitherto received ineffective representation in the Dutch political system. Both the (electorally declining) Pacifist Socialist Party and Political Party of Radicals had long advocated decentralisation and greater participation as political goals and, while the

¹² However, more recent developments suggest that the Greens have undergone a certain degree of 'normalisation', particularly with respect to their 'participatory' model of party organisation (Müller 1996b: 81). By 1991, a feeling had emerged amongst leading parliamentary and extra-parliamentary Greens that certain elements of the 'grass-roots' organisational model were proving a liability within the context of party competition. Thus, at two party congresses in 1992, the Greens agreed to relax the rotation rule (allowing MPs to serve up to four legislative periods) and remove the incompatibility rule which had hitherto prevented the simultaneous holding of elected offices and party functions (Frankland 1994: 208-209). Further, in the run-up to the 1994 national elections, the Greens proposed a 'top candidate' - Madaleine Petrovic - to represent their national 'face' and, since then, the party has taken further steps towards 'professional, one-person leadership' (Lauber and Müller 1998: 18).

Communist Party had for much of its history adhered to 'democratic centralism', it had, by the mid-1980s, undergone a process of organisational reform which transformed the party into a more democratic and participatory organisation.

A glance at the Dutch Green Left's political programme reveals that enhancing opportunities for democratic participation constitutes an important ideological element of the party. Thus, as well as demanding that people be given 'some influence on the content of their work and on the circumstances and conditions under which they do the work', Green Left calls for the delegation of 'as many tasks and powers to local authorities as possible or ... to social institutions and organizations, wherever decentralization does not hamper the efficacy of these tasks' (*GroenLinks* 1993: 10). Yet at the level of party organisation, Green Left from the outset 'failed to include many of the elements of direct democracy ... which many Green parties in other countries had ... incorporated' (Koole 1994: 282). Indeed, the organisational composition of Green Left has been described as conforming to the 'mass party model', to the extent that it adopted a 'vertical' structure and has a single party leader whose influence within the party has become more decided in recent years (Koole 1994: 282; Voerman and Lucardie 1998). Involvement of the rank and file in important policy decisions has been limited; the latter have been taken by the party congress (comprising delegates from local party branches), to which individual Green Left members have not been entitled to attend (*GroenLinks* 1993). Other measures designed to minimise careerism and maximise participation, such as the frequent rotation of parliamentary seats, have not been taken on board wholeheartedly by Green Left. In 1996 the establishment of a new party council was accompanied by the formation of an additional body - the Green Left Forum - which enabled rank and file as well as non-party members to discuss political issues and make recommendations to the new council. However, given that it is ultimately left to the party council to decide whether the recommendation(s) should be accepted as official party policy, the extent to which this innovation empowers ordinary activists can be questioned (Voerman and Lucardie 1998).

Although Green Left has not been prepared to go as far as some green parties in terms of adopting a participatory model of party organisation, its ideological stance has undoubtedly been shaped by participatory themes and a critique of the over-centralisation of processes of political decision-making in Dutch society.

Of the three case studies it is the British Green Party which has embraced decentralist and participatory goals to the greatest extent. Ideologically, the Green Party is strongly committed to the idea of a 'decentralised society' based around the principle of direct democracy - hence, it demands that people 'be able to make decisions themselves, not just through representatives' (Green Party 1994: 14). Measures designed to enhance citizen participation in such a society would include a transition to smaller, more self-sufficient, communities; the devolvement of power from central government to local government; the introduction of a system of Citizens' Initiatives whereby voters would be able to initiate new laws and policies; proportional representation aimed at maximising the range of political opinion in elected bodies; use of local referenda and a system of industrial democracy (Green Party 1995). Thus, for the Green Party, an important objective is the devolution of power to the 'lowest appropriate level, thereby rendering participants in the economy at all levels less vulnerable to the damaging effects of economic decisions made elsewhere and over which they have no control' (Green Party 1995).

The Green Party's strong commitment to decentralisation and participation is reflected in the structure of its party organisation. Despite attempts to streamline the party's organisational structure, the British Greens have retained their commitment to decentralisation with local party organisations enjoying a considerable degree of autonomy from the national party organisation. Participation is seen to be an important theme within the organisation of the Green Party. For example, members are actively encouraged to take part in its policy community network, in which the party's ecological policies are developed (Green Party 1994). However, it should be noted that the Green 2000

reforms have, to some extent, reduced opportunities for the participation of rank and file members in processes of decision-making.¹³

All three green parties have attached some importance to the need for democratic reform and enhanced opportunities for citizen participation within a range of social, political and economic institutions. An important theme within the parties' critique of existing patterns of political decision-making is the idea that the 'closed' and far removed nature of these structures restricts citizens' capacity to control the forces which affect their quality of life, and thwarts initiatives which could play a positive role in the transition to an ecologically sustainable society. To the extent that 'post-industrial' societies are characterised by such structures, the emergence of green parties can be partly interpreted as symptomatic of the 'participation revolution' envisaged by Bell and Huntington.

(d) Higher Education and Green Party Politics

As was mentioned earlier, Huntington argues that, as well as a reaction against elitist decision-making, demands for greater participation in 'post-industrial' society are fuelled by the higher levels of education achieved by citizens within this context. This is because the higher education experience is believed to enhance political awareness among citizens and the desire to become directly involved in the political process. The periods during which green parties emerged in Austria, Britain and the Netherlands were also marked by an expansion of educational opportunities in these countries (Dachs 1989; Andeweg and Irwin 1993; Byrne 1997). It is likely that the expansion of higher education in recent decades has contributed to the new social climate within which many green parties emerged, insofar as it has facilitated a greater awareness and

¹³ For example, following Green 2000, the system whereby any member could vote at the party conference was replaced by a delegate system in which only representatives of local parties would be entitled to vote (Rüdiger 1998). For more details of Green 2000, see chapters 1 and 9.

understanding of large-scale ecological risks and problems, and involvement in political organisations which address these issues.

If a deeper understanding and awareness of ecological risks and problems, along with a heightened participatory disposition, are linked to the higher education experience then it would be reasonable to expect green parties - which, after all display these credentials - to draw their support disproportionately from the more 'highly educated' sectors of society. As can be seen from Table 4.2, green party supporters and members are 'well-educated' when compared with those of other political parties or the population at large. In the case of Austria, green supporters in 1985 and 1993 were both more likely to have passed the *Abitur* or *Matura*¹⁴ than supporters of other parties and to have obtained a university degree. In the Netherlands, Green Left votes at the 1989 national elections were disproportionately drawn from university or other graduates. In addition, Green Left delegates in 1990 had attained a very high level of formal education, with over 80 per cent having experienced some form of higher education (university or higher vocational). The British example shows a similar pattern, with a comparatively greater proportion of Green Party voters in 1989 having experienced further or higher education. As was the case with the Dutch Green Left, British Green Party members in 1990 seem very well educated with 66.9 per cent having studied or studying for a degree.

Despite the evidence presented here, there are a number of complex questions and issues that can be raised with respect to the proposed links between levels of formal education, ecological awareness and demands for political participation. For example, it is not immediately clear why experience of higher education should necessarily lead to a more sophisticated understanding of social and/or political problems and a heightened desire to participate in political activity. Clearly, there are those among the so-called 'well educated' who are politically apathetic and, conversely, those with lower academic qualifications

¹⁴ This is the certificate obtained from a 'upper-track' secondary school which enables access to university in Austria.

Table 4.2 Levels of Formal Education among Green Party Supporters and Members in Austria, Britain and the Netherlands

Country	Educational Characteristics
Austria	<p>(1) In 1985, 29 per cent of ALÖ/VGÖ supporters had passed the <i>Abitur</i> or <i>Matura</i> compared with 6 per cent of SPÖ supporters and 12 per cent of ÖVP supporters.</p> <p>In the same year, 10 per cent of ALÖ/VGÖ supporters had obtained a university degree compared with 1 per cent of SPÖ supporters and 4 per cent of ÖVP supporters.</p> <p>(2) In 1993, 36 per cent of Green supporters had passed the <i>Abitur</i> or <i>Matura</i> compared with 8 per cent of SPÖ supporters, 14 per cent of ÖVP supporters, 11 per cent of FPÖ supporters and 31 per cent of LF supporters.</p> <p>In the same year, 13 per cent of Green supporters had a university degree compared with 2 per cent of SPÖ supporters, 5 per cent of ÖVP supporters, 3 per cent of FPÖ supporters and 12 per cent of LF supporters.</p>
Britain	<p>(1) In 1989, 19.8 per cent of Green Party voters left full-time education between the ages of 18 and 20 compared with 11.4 per cent of the population; 23.5 per cent left aged 21 or above compared with 14 per cent of the population. Thus, 43.3 per cent of Green Party voters had experienced some form of further or higher education compared with 25.4 per cent of the population.</p> <p>(2) In 1990, 66.9 per cent of Green Party members had studied, or were studying, for a degree. In 1988, 7 per cent of the UK population had a degree.</p>
Netherlands	<p>(1) In 1989, 41 per cent of Green Left voters were graduates of either a university or other tertiary educational institution compared with 22 per cent of the whole sample.</p> <p>(2) In 1990, 81 per cent of Green Left congress delegates had experienced some form of higher education, a high proportion in comparison with other Dutch political parties.</p>

Sources: Austria: Müller and Ulram (1995); The Netherlands: (1) Information supplied by Paul Lucardie, Documentation Centre for Dutch Political Parties, University of Groningen; (2) Voerman (1995); Britain: (1) Rüdig *et al.* (1993), (2) Rüdig, *et al.* (1991).

who are highly committed to participating in political protest activity (Byrne 1997). It is also important to acknowledge the extent to which the expanding mass media has fostered public awareness of ecological issues and it is possible that this has given a broader impetus to green party politics and other forms of environmental protest in 'post-industrial' societies (Lowe and Morrison 1984).

Even if it is accepted that higher education increases the *likelihood* that a person will participate in and/or support a green party, this overlooks the possibility that it might be a particular kind of higher education that has a more positive effect upon the latter. Eckersley, for instance, has argued that it is graduates in the humanities and the liberal arts - collectively referred to as 'humanistic intellectuals' - as opposed to the 'technical intelligensia', who are more inclined to sympathise with green parties, by virtue of their educationally acquired 'enhanced capacity' to adopt a critical stance towards the existing order and to suggest alternative models of social and political organisation (Eckersley 1989).¹⁵ While further research is needed to satisfactorily evaluate this theory, there is some limited evidence which seems to lend it support, at least as far as green party members in Britain and the Netherlands are concerned. A study of British Green Party members in 1990 found that, of those who had studied or were studying for a degree, 60.1 per cent had chosen arts or social science subjects. Social scientists were well represented among Dutch Green Left congress delegates in 1990 - 42 per cent of the 'highly educated' had studied a social science subject (Voerman 1995: 120). Rising levels of education have probably contributed to the new social climate within which green parties emerged, but it is possible that it is a particular form of higher education - i.e. social science or arts-based - which is most linked to membership and/or support for these parties.

Aspects of 'post-industrial' theory - the changing class structure, elitist patterns of decision-making, increased educational opportunities, media

¹⁵ Lucardie employs the term 'logocrat' to describe the kind of well-educated person most likely to support a green party. 'Logocrats' are defined by their 'sociological humanism', a characteristic they have developed through studying social science or related disciplines (Lucardie 1989).

developments - can contribute to a more sophisticated understanding of the context within which green parties emerged. These processes have contributed to the development of a more ecologically aware citizenry less wedded to traditional class identities and more committed to enhancing political participation and democracy with a view to solving the ecological crisis. Theories of 'post-industrial' society are less useful when it comes to the question of the electoral significance of green parties. For example, despite having the lowest overall levels of 'post-industrialism' among the three countries (see Table 4.1 above), it is Austria which has produced the strongest green party in electoral terms, achieving an electoral 'low' of 4.8 per cent of the national vote (1986, 1990, 1995) and a 'high' of 7.3 per cent (1994). In Britain, the Green Party remains electorally insignificant despite levels of 'post-industrialism' on a par with those of the Netherlands (see Table 4.1 above), which has produced a significant green party.¹⁶ The principal contribution of sociological theories of 'post-industrialism' lies in the extent to which they can illuminate the nature of some of the broad social changes which have created a more favourable climate for the emergence of green parties.

4. Conclusion

This chapter has argued that attention to the 'post-industrial' society literature can yield important insights into the nature of the social context within which green parties emerged. The decline of traditional class loyalties and the rise of the 'post-industrial' economy have contributed to the creation of a changed political climate within which new political identities have been able to develop.

¹⁶ No study has yet explicitly focused on the relationship between levels of 'post-industrialism' and green parties. However, Kitschelt has investigated the impact of the size of the service sector and levels of higher education - the latter measured by the relative size of the student population - on the electoral significance of 'left-libertarian' parties in 18 countries. He could find no link between either of these variables and the electoral significance of 'left-libertarian' parties (Kitschelt 1988a: 206).

The socio-economic changes of recent decades have broken down established patterns of political allegiance and provided new organisations such as green parties with an opportunity to emerge on the political landscape. Green parties have clearly drawn their support from the ranks of service, often public sector, workers making up the so-called 'new middle class' of the 'post-industrial' society.

Yet 'post-industrial' society theory can also shed light on the character of green party politics. It has been argued that green parties' heightened concern with issues of participation - in terms of their party organisations and/or demands for democratic reform in a wider sense - in part arises as a response to the elitist character of decision-making in 'post-industrial' society. For green parties, resolving the ecological crisis requires a radical decentralisation of political power and the maximisation of citizen involvement in decision-making processes which impact upon the human and non-human environments. The problem with much political decision-making in 'post-industrial' society is that it has tended to take place within elite circles, whose associates are committed to the continuation of the patterns of economic development which have precipitated the ecological crisis. Green parties wish to break down these structures by increasing democratic opportunities and through the provision of more open decision-making forums within which the ecological case can be properly debated and heard.

The participatory demands voiced by green parties have to some extent been intensified by higher levels of ecological awareness brought about by the expansion of higher education and developments in communications in 'post-industrial' society. The relationship between attainment of higher than average levels of education and green party support has been shown to hold with reference to the three green parties in this study and in a host of other European countries (O'Neill 1997: 5). Yet it is possible that it is a particular form of higher education - social science or arts based - which most facilitates the development

of a more critical and systemic analysis of the causes and potential consequences of the ecological crisis.

These insights have been more an outcome of a consideration of Bell's 'post-industrial' framework than of Touraine's, however. In this chapter, Touraine's theory has been subjected to a good deal of criticism and it is clear that his overall framework is unsuited to the case of green parties. Contrary to expectations, the green parties in this study have not conformed to Touraine's definition of a social movement insofar as they have not sought to define their identity in terms of defending the 'people' against a 'technocratic' class, nor have they rejected electoral politics as a strategy for achieving change.

Of the two theories examined, then, it is Bell's which can be most usefully applied to the case of green party politics. Yet it is clear that Bell's formulation of the 'post-industrial' society thesis cannot reasonably be expected to throw light on the question of why there has been pressure to form political parties with an explicitly ecological identity in recent decades. The discussion needs to be broadened out further to encompass a consideration of the relationship between social, political and ecological change. This is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 5

Green Parties, 'Reflexive Modernity' and the Politics of 'Risk Society'

To argue that the rise of green parties is linked to the existence and heightened perception of new, global environmental problems is to advocate something of a 'common-sense' interpretation of the phenomenon in question. It is therefore surprising that so few academics should have chosen to pursue this possible connection in any great depth. The previous two chapters have shown that most commentators have preferred to rely on theories of 'post-materialism' or 'post-industrialism' in describing the conditions within which green parties emerged and developed electorally.¹ In this chapter, however, it will be argued that a more satisfactory understanding of the *ecological* identity of green parties can be obtained by considering certain sociological perspectives which explore the relationship between environmental, social and political change. In particular, it will be maintained that the rise and heightened perception of 'high-consequence' risks and problems emanating from processes of social, scientific and technological development have played a significant role in the emergence and electoral appeal of green parties in Austria, Britain and the Netherlands. In pursuing this line of argument the concepts of 'risk society' and 'reflexive modernisation' as initially developed by Ulrich Beck but, more recently, within the work of Anthony Giddens will be utilised (Beck 1992a; Giddens 1990a, 1991, 1994a). Before turning to these authors' specific arguments, however, it is important to say something about the general scope of their work.

It has often been observed that the work of Anthony Giddens has two main theoretical foci. On the one hand, and particularly within his earlier

¹ An exception to this dominant trend can be found in Rüdiger (1990b).

publications (Giddens 1976, 1979, 1984), there is a distinct concern with the resolution of certain problems of a general theoretical nature (Held and Thompson 1989: 1-2). Here the central aim has been to undertake a detailed critique of the major traditions of classical and contemporary social theory, and to seek to 'move beyond the apparent opposition between perspectives which emphasize structure and perspectives which emphasize action' (Held and Thompson 1989: 3-4). His 'theory of structuration' - which points to the internal relatedness of structure and agency in social practices - forms the centrepiece of this theoretical project and is generally considered to form an important theoretical development within social theory and social science (Hay 1995).²

On the other hand, much of Giddens' more recent work has concentrated upon the analysis of developmental trends and institutional features associated with modern industrial societies (Held and Thompson 1989: 2). A particular concern has been to examine the characteristics, consequences and changes associated with the development of 'modernity' (Giddens 1990a, 1991, 1994a, 1998a). In terms of the present chapter, attention will focus on Giddens' explanation of the emergence of social - and particularly environmental - movements. This will involve a consideration of his institutional account of modernity, attention to the character and perception of 'high-consequence' risks, as well as the rise of a so-called 'life politics' considered to have arisen within the context of 'reflexive' or 'late' modernity.

While the ideas of Giddens and Beck have developed along remarkably similar lines in recent years, it is Beck with whom the term 'risk society' has become synonymous, his *Risikogesellschaft* being published originally in German in 1986. The theory of 'risk society' essentially amounts to a radical critique of what Beck sees to be the social consequences of environmental change. Like Giddens, Beck argues that Western societies are entering a new phase of modernity - 'reflexive modernity' - 'characterised by the pervasiveness of risk: of

² An excellent outline of the 'theory of structuration', as developed within Giddens' writings, can be found in Thompson (1989).

uncertainties, insecurities and hazards' (Jacobs 1997: 6-7). Of the risks that are thought to pervade this new phase, ecological hazards are considered to be of particular importance. This is because, for Beck, they bring with them the possibility 'of the self-destruction of all life on this earth' (Beck 1995: 67). Given the considerable overlap between the two authors, this chapter begins by outlining Beck's perspective before proceeding to compare and contrast it with the arguments of Giddens. After applying elements of Beck and Giddens' theses to the case of green party politics in Austria, Britain and the Netherlands in the third part of the chapter, it will be argued in the fourth part that the 'risk society' framework provides considerable insight into the context within which green parties emerged, but that it also possesses certain shortcomings that require redress. The conclusion offers an assessment of the contribution of the 'risk society' perspective to an overall theory of the emergence and electoral success of green parties.

1. Ulrich Beck on 'Reflexive Modernisation' and the 'Risk Society'

A suitable point from which to begin an exploration of Beck's work on 'risk society' is his theory of social change. In Beck's view, historical development can be understood in terms of a linear sequence of three stages: pre-modernity, followed by 'simple' modernity, then 'reflexive' modernity.³ For Beck, the phase of simple modernisation begins in the nineteenth century and takes the form of

³ As was explained in chapter 4, Daniel Bell's approach to historical development also encompasses three stages: pre-industrial, industrial and 'post-industrial'. A key difference between Bell and Beck lies in the emphasis placed upon the role of science and technology in the process of historical development. For Beck, principal importance is attached to the impact of developments in science and technology upon the creation of large-scale environmental risks. For Bell, the role of science and technology is more explicitly linked to changes in the nature of work in 'post-industrial' society. Beck's idea of human societies becoming more 'reflexive' also has parallels with the work of Alain Touraine. Yet while for Touraine 'reflexivity' is constituted in the enhanced capacity of humans to 'programme' social reality, for Beck the reflexive aspect of 'modernity' is employed mainly within the context of his discussion of the character of 'risk society'. This point is developed in due course.

the 'project of industrial society' (Beck 1992a: 10).⁴ Beck argues that in this simple or 'classical' phase there evolves a social consensus on the necessity of progress as defined in terms of scientific and technological development. The social legitimation of science and technology is thought to derive from the widespread belief that these processes will ultimately alleviate material needs and bring about material prosperity (Beck 1997: 28; Mol and Spaargaren 1992: 441).

Beck's crucial point, however, is that society is currently undergoing a transition from simple to 'reflexive' modernity. According to Beck, 'reflexive modernisation' essentially describes 'a radicalization of modernity, which breaks up the premises and contours of industrial society and opens paths to another modernity' (Beck 1994: 3). Two processes of change are considered to be of particular importance in marking the shift towards 'reflexive' modernity. First, societies have recently undergone processes of individualisation in the spheres of 'work, family life and self-identity' (Beck 1998: 10). This reflexive aspect of modernity relates to the observation that people are increasingly being 'set free from the social forms of industrial society' and, consequently, having to make more decisions and choices with respect to their lives (Beck 1992a: 87). As Beck puts it, '[i]ndividualization ... means that each person's biography is removed from given determinations and placed in his or her own hands, open and dependent on decisions' (Beck 1992a: 135).

The second important change can be defined as the 'ascendance of the risk-society' (Mol and Spaargaren 1992: 440). Put simply, the 'risk society' is a society in which it becomes increasingly apparent that the very motors of the modernisation process itself - science and technology - have unleashed 'hazards and potential threats ... to an extent previously unknown' (Beck 1992a: 19). In Beck's view, the 'latent self-endangerment' produced by these processes eventually begins 'to dominate public, political and private debates and conflicts'

⁴ Of course, there is considerable disagreement within the literature with respect to the origins and definition of 'modernity'. See Hall *et al.* (1990) on this issue.

(Beck 1997: 27). The 'reflexivity' of modernity is, in this sense, constituted in the widespread concern with its unintended 'consequences, risks and foundations' (Beck 1998: 20). It is this aspect of Beck's theory of 'reflexive modernisation' that forms the main focus of this section, since it the one which deals most directly with the causes and perception of 'high-consequence' risks.⁵

One issue that requires immediate clarification concerns the sense in which Beck uses the term 'risk' within his work. It is important to point out that Beck's definition of risk refers to a 'systematic way of dealing with hazards and insecurities induced and introduced by modernization itself' (Beck 1992a: 21). Beck's theory of 'risk society', therefore, relates almost solely to so-called 'risks of modernisation' (Beck 1992a: 21). Used in this sense, argues Beck, risk can be distinguished from pre-industrial hazards - such as plagues, famines and natural disasters - which were seen as "strokes of fate" raining down on mankind from "outside" and attributable to an "other" - gods, demons or Nature' (Beck 1992b: 98). The discussion below seeks to explore the ways in which Beck employs this notion of risk in order to develop his arguments on the character of classical industrial society and then (industrial) 'risk society'.

According to Beck, one outcome of the development of classical industrial societies was the establishment of 'institutions and rules for coping with unforeseen, unintended consequences and the risks they produce' (Beck 1998: 15). For Beck, the 'calculus of risk' became the principal means through which classical industrial societies were able to 'control' localised risks and dangers (Beck 1992b: 100). In short, it represented an effective means of dealing with the uncertainties brought about by the advent of simple modernity. With regard to this matter, Beck has claimed that:

⁵ However, it should be noted that Beck's theory of the 'risk society' has a further dimension connected to the processes of individualisation referred to earlier in this section. Thus processes of individualisation in the sphere of work are considered to have led to the sense of economic insecurity experienced in unemployment, threat of redundancy, loss of rights, etc. For a fuller discussion of these connections see Beck (1992a) and Blowers (1997: 857-858).

The welfare state can be seen as a collective and institutional response to the nature of localized risks and dangers, based on the principles of rule-governed attribution of fault and blame, legally implemented compensation, actuarial insurance principles and collectively shared responsibility. The classic example of this would be the creation of compensation and insurance schemes for accident and injury at work and unemployment. (Beck 1998: 15-16)

In contrast to this scenario, Beck claims that the very foundations of the established risk logic are now being 'subverted' as society enters a second stage of risk: 'manufactured uncertainty'. This new climate of uncertainty, claims Beck, is a basic feature of 'risk societies' and is related to certain scientific and technological developments including nuclear power, the rise of the chemical industry, biotechnology and human genetics. Beck argues that the risks and threats produced by these developments are qualitatively different from those of classical industrial society for the following reasons (Beck 1992b: 101; Beck 1998: 12).

First, many contemporary risks and threats, e.g. radioactivity, trace toxins, are imperceptible to the senses. Thus '[m]ore and more, the center comes to be occupied by threats that are neither visible nor tangible to the lay public, threats that will not even take their toll in the life-span of the affected individuals' (Beck 1992a: 162). Second, these risks derive from the 'inexorable motion of autonomous modernisation processes that are blind to their consequences and deaf to their hazards' (Beck 1997: 28). Beck even goes so far as to argue that the hazards of 'risk society' are 'nobody's responsibility' (Beck 1998: 15). The main cause of this state of affairs, claims Beck, is the breaking down of existing methods of assigning responsibility. He argues that traditional state bureaucracies amount to a form of 'organised irresponsibility' to the extent that they consistently fail to keep pace with technological developments, leaving industry 'with the role of primary decision-maker without responsibility for risks to the public' (Beck 1998: 15). This leads to a third point: that scientists have become 'lay people in their own fields' who cannot generally foresee what the consequences of their technological experiments might be (Beck 1997: 24). He

suggests that in some areas of research the 'old logic' in which theories were first tested in laboratories has been abandoned as society itself becomes the scientists' laboratory, i.e. the site upon which theories and assumptions with respect to nuclear reactor safety, genetic engineering, etc. are tested (Beck 1997: 24).⁶ Fourth, current risks are global in terms of their threat; as Beck puts it, they cannot be limited to specific localities or groups and 'endanger all forms of life on this planet' (Beck 1992a: 13, 22). Fifth, they are considered irreversible and cannot be compensated for or insured against (Beck 1992a: 22).

Beck has devoted much space to the discussion of nuclear risk - a case which appears to match perfectly the characteristics of contemporary risks outlined above. However, Beck is also interested in the social, cultural and political explosiveness of hazard (Beck 1998: 19). A major reference point here for Beck has undoubtedly been the nuclear accident at Chernobyl in 1986. In particular, Beck argues that shortly after the nuclear accident a 'transformation of consciousness' amounting to an 'anthropological shock' occurred. He claims that an important consequence of Chernobyl was a kind of 'mass awakening' among Western publics as to the potential destructiveness of relatively recent technological developments such as nuclear power. As well as this, Chernobyl had the effect of exposing Western populations to the scientific uncertainty that surrounds much technological development and to the 'generalized lack of knowledge in the face of the danger and the extent to which we are at its mercy' (Beck 1987: 156).

Indeed, it is precisely this heightened risk perception that is believed to have contributed to the 'demystification' of science in 'risk society'. In the 'risk

⁶ Against Beck, however, it can be argued that human society has long formed a 'laboratory' for the testing of innovations in science and technology. One could point to the example of the steam engine, which was first 'tested' on a wide scale across industrialising societies during the nineteenth century. The safety of steam travel could only truly be established by its widespread and long-term utilisation within the 'laboratory' of society. Further, the Industrial Revolution initiated in the eighteenth century was made possible by a variety of technological changes - including the invention of new machinery - the safety of which could only be established by long term use by factory workers. In other words, contrary to Beck's viewpoint, it is likely that there have always been risks to society as a result of the introduction of new technologies.

society', states Beck, the critique of science and technology become widespread as a result of the failure of scientific rationality in the light of growing threats and risks (Beck 1992a: 59). Science, therefore, becomes less a source of 'security' and more a source of 'reflexive insecurity' (Beck 1997: 23). Commentating on the problematic position of science, Beck states that:

the sciences are entirely incapable of reacting adequately to civilizational risks, since they are prominently involved in the origin and growth of those very risks ... the sciences become the legitimating patrons of a global industrial pollution and contamination of air, water, foodstuffs, etc., as well as the related generalized sickness and death of plants, animals and people. (Beck 1992a: 59)

In his analysis of the political significance of science's 'demystification' in the 'risk society', Beck refers to several likely developments. In terms of the present discussion of green parties, however, two seem potentially relevant. The first is that society gradually undergoes a change in terms of the kinds of problems and conflicts that lie at the heart of its politics. In short, Beck argues that traditional conflicts over the distribution of wealth become less important as society becomes increasingly preoccupied with the distribution of 'techno-scientifically produced risks' (Beck 1992a: 19). The second development relates to the emergence of various forms of 'sub-politics' reflecting a change in the political culture of contemporary society. 'Sub-politics', for Beck, represents the call by various social groups for heightened levels of democratic participation in decision-making processes concerning the direction and large-scale consequences of social and technological change, and their attempt to shape society from the grass roots (Beck 1994: 23). To the extent that new social movements and citizens' initiatives are concerned with such issues, they can be viewed as important centres of 'sub-politics' (Beck 1992a: 223).⁷

⁷ There are clear parallels here between Beck's characterisation of decision-making in the 'risk society', and Daniel Bell's elitist description of this process in 'post-industrial' society outlined in the previous chapter. The key difference is that while Bell defines such decision-making processes

Of the new social movements, Beck attaches particular significance to the environmental movement. This is because, in calling attention to and protesting against manufactured risks and hazards, it is the one which most directly questions science and technology; that is, 'the conditions and prerequisites of industrialization itself' (Beck 1992a: 162). But Beck also stresses the extent to which environmental activists are, at the same time, 'credulous' of science. Thus:

A solid background of faith in science is part of the paradoxical basic equipment of the critique of modernization. Thus, risk consciousness is neither a traditional nor a lay person's consciousness, but is essentially determined by and oriented to science. (Beck 1992a: 72)

What this means, essentially, is that risk consciousness (and potentially environmental activism) is largely a function of scientific knowledge. As Beck puts it, '[c]hemical formulas and reactions, invisible pollutant levels, biological cycles and chain reactions have to rule seeing and thinking if one wishes to go to the barricades against risk' (Beck 1992a: 72). In light of this, he suggests that members of groups that tend to be most concerned about contemporary risks are often 'better educated' and hence more able to 'actively inform themselves' (Beck 1992a: 53).

The facilitatory role of higher education in the emergence of green parties was a theme explored in the previous chapter. Other groups that are considered more likely to develop a sense of 'risk consciousness' and perhaps take part in environmental activism include the more affluent, 'new middle class' on account of their being under less pressure to 'make a living' than the unemployed or less well-paid workers (Beck 1992a: 53). Indeed, it was precisely these social groups that Beck argues lay behind the rapid growth of the green movement in Germany in the 1970s (Mol and Spaargaren 1993: 444). As was demonstrated in the previous chapter, members of the 'new middle class' do make up a considerable

in very broad terms, Beck emphasises the extent to which such patterns are intimately bound up with the production of large-scale ecological risks.

proportion of green party members and supporters in Austria, Britain and the Netherlands. It has, however, been argued that of the 'new middle class' it is those working in 'human services' - teaching, healthcare, social work, etc. - who are more likely to be supportive of environmental movements (Eckersley 1989). For Eckersley, this is because such individuals are considered less likely to have a personal stake in the production process than those working in the industrial and/or scientific sectors (Eckersley 1989). The limited evidence available suggests that the membership of the Dutch Green Left and British Green Party does encompass a significant number of individuals drawn from these occupational groups.⁸ However, further research is necessary in order to establish the strength of the proposed link between individuals working in human services and membership and/or electoral support for green parties.

In addition to these factors, however, Beck points out that 'personal experience' - for example, proximity to toxic waste spillages, proposed nuclear power plant sites, etc. and media reporting on these kinds of issues - can also lead to heightened public awareness of ecological risks. In terms of green parties, therefore, it might be that a significant section of their membership/support base can be explained in terms of these latter factors. If this was the case, it could possibly explain why green parties frequently attract pockets of electoral support from within those social groups which do not fall into the 'highly educated' and/or 'new middle class' categories.

In summary, Beck's work raises some interesting lines of inquiry with respect to green parties. In general terms, it suggests that they may represent a symptom of the heightened reflexivity of modernity; that is, of a society that has become increasingly preoccupied with the risks and hazards associated with the very motors of modernity itself: science and technology. More specifically, Beck's thesis raises interesting questions concerning their emergence and the factors which may underlie their electoral appeal. In particular, it raises the

⁸ See chapter 4 of this thesis for the green party membership data. A precise breakdown of the occupational background of Austrian Green members is unavailable.

possibility that the heightened public perception of ecological risks and hazards which has developed during recent decades may have been a principal factor which led to the emergence of green parties and which, further, constitutes a key reason for casting a vote for a green party. These questions are examined at a later point in the chapter. The section below introduces the arguments of Giddens, comparing and contrasting them with those of Beck where appropriate.

2. Anthony Giddens on Modernity, Globalisation and Risk

(a) The Institutional Dimensions of Modernity

In the introduction to *The Consequences of Modernity*, Giddens provides a working definition of 'modernity', equating it in very general terms with 'modes of social life or organisation which emerged in Europe from about the seventeenth century onwards and which subsequently became more or less worldwide in their influence' (Giddens 1990a: 1).⁹ Giddens' task then becomes one of developing 'an institutional analysis of modernity with cultural and epistemological overtones' (Giddens 1990a: 1). This begins with a discussion of the attempts made by classical social theorists to identify the 'single overriding dynamic of transformation' which shaped the 'core institutional nexus' of modern society (Giddens 1990a: 11, 55). For Marx, it was capitalism that formed the principal 'transformative force shaping the modern world' (Giddens 1990a: 11). Other prominent theorists, notably Durkheim and Raymond Aron, claimed that industrialism, not capitalism, gave modern societies their characteristic shape. For these authors, capitalism was viewed as a 'temporary phase in the longer development of industrial societies or a specific variant of a causally prior industrialism' (Goldblatt 1996: 17). This was in direct contrast to the Marxist

⁹ The contrast with Beck's account of modernity - which roots the latter in the 19th Century - is evident here.

viewpoint, which saw industrialism in terms of 'the outcome of a developing capitalist society that both temporarily predates it' and which was therefore a condition of the former's emergence (Goldblatt 1996: 17).

Giddens is critical of the 'reductionist' tendencies of these accounts of modernity and proposes that the latter should be viewed in multi-dimensional terms on the level of institutions. Unlike Beck - for whom simple modernity is equated with the rise of industrial society (Beck 1992a: 10) - Giddens claims that the former is characterised by the complex interaction of four institutional dimensions which, for analytical purposes, can and should be separated. Giddens argues that these dimensions have, through the course of the twentieth century, become 'world-historical in their impact' (Giddens 1991: 15). As will be seen, this view of modernity leads to a different analysis to that of Beck on the scope of risk in contemporary society and, potentially, to the kinds of political conflicts that characterise the latter.

The first institutional dimension - capitalism - is defined as 'capital accumulation in the context of competitive labour and product markets' (Giddens 1990a: 59). The second is industrialism, which implies the application of inanimate sources of material power in production processes: it is, states Giddens, associated with the 'transformation of nature' and the development of the 'created environment' (Giddens 1990a: 55-59). The third aspect - surveillance - is taken to mean the 'control of information' and the 'supervision of the activities of subject populations in the political sphere' by states and other organisations (Giddens 1990a: 58-59). The fourth institutional dimension of modernity is identified as military power, defined as state 'control of the means of violence in the context of the industrialisation of war' (Giddens 1990a: 59). Giddens argues that these four aspects of modernity cannot be reduced to one another and that, when combined, provide a framework for understanding some of the key tensions that exist in modern societies (Held 1992: 33).

An important part of this aspect of Giddens' work concerns the connections he draws between these institutional dimensions and the kinds of

social movements that tend to develop in conditions of modernity. Thus, for Giddens, labour movements, whether of a reformist or revolutionary character, developed in response to the spread of capitalist enterprise. Environmental movements, in turn, can be linked to the rise of industrialism 'which has not only helped bring about environmental degradation, but has dominated human relations with nature in the modern period' (Giddens 1990b: 57). Such movements can be distinguished from civil and human rights movements, whose origins can be traced to the surveillance operations of the modern state. Peace movements, by contrast, are considered as both a product of and force against the expansion of military power (Giddens 1990a: 158-163).¹⁰ The possibility that green party politics might represent a kind of 'crystallisation' of these social movement concerns is an issue that will require some discussion later in this chapter. However, it is also important to provide a more detailed account of Giddens' explanation for the rise of contemporary environmental movements, one that shifts from a simple concern with the alienating effects of industrial society, to a consideration of the facilitative role of two important features of 'late' modernity: the existence of 'high-consequence' risks and 'life politics'.

(b) Environmental Movements, 'High-Consequence' Risks and 'Life Politics'
in Conditions of 'Late' Modernity

Giddens developed his initial ideas on environmental movements in works such as *The Nation State and Violence* (1985). In this work, the author offered an explanation for the rise of 'green' movements - from the nineteenth century onwards - which stressed the degree to which the latter represented a response to 'the cultural alienation and spiritual vacuum that the contemporary urban

10 A conspicuous omission within this framework, and one which is acknowledged by Giddens himself, is that of the feminist movement (Giddens 1990a: 161). Giddens has since developed a theory of 'life politics', a category in which he places feminism, which will be discussed in due course.

landscape generates' (Goldblatt 1996: 68). On this reading, such movements aim to reshape the created environment and seek to restore the sense of 'ontological security' experienced among people in pre-modern times. A major problem with this interpretation, however, is that it tends to overstate 'the contrast between the cultural experience of individuals and their perception of the environment in the premodern and modern worlds' (Goldblatt 1996: 69). In particular, it fails to explain why the character of 'ontological security' should necessarily be more fragile in modern times than in pre-modern ones. As Saunders asks:

Is nature - the nature of failed crops, fatal diseases and untamed wilderness ... not at least as threatening and disturbing of ontological security as any created environment? ... Does it really make sense to see people in their caves or mudhuts or primitive shacks as enjoying a "symbiotic" relationship with nature, when half the time they were threatened with extinction? Is not the likelihood of imminent demise likely to raise in particularly acute form the issue of one's ontological security? (Saunders 1989: 225)

In a reply to his critics, Giddens accepts that his argument has certain weaknesses, and he is particularly sensitive to the possibility that it might be seen as supportive of a rather conservative romanticism which compares the 'harmonious' life of pre-modern times with one of alienation and meaninglessness in the modern era (Giddens 1989: 278). Thus, Giddens has since revised his views on the origins of environmental movements and it is to this reworked explanation that the discussion now turns.

In *The Consequences of Modernity*, Giddens, in line with the previously discussed reasoning of Beck, develops the thesis that the 'late' modern era - a period which is considered to have taken hold at some point during the past 40 to 50 years - brings with it a new 'risk profile'. Giddens argues that human life has always been a dangerous and risky affair. In pre-modern times, the risk environment 'was dominated by the hazards of the physical world' (Giddens 1990a: 106). As well as having extremely high rates of infant mortality, chronic illness, infectious disease and human violence '[a]ll types of pre-modern social

order were affected, often in drastic ways, by the vagaries of climate and had little protection against natural disasters such as floods, storms, excessive rainfall, or drought' (Giddens 1990a: 106). In conditions of 'late' modernity, however, 'the dangers we face no longer derive primarily from the world of nature' (Giddens 1990a: 110). Like Beck, Giddens stresses the extent to which the transformation of the relation between humans and the physical environment through the progress of industry, science and technology has led to the 'socialisation' of nature and the creation of new risk environments (Giddens 1990a: 127).

However, Giddens' account of the unique risk profile of 'late' modernity is further extended to encompass a consideration of the latter's inherently globalising character; a process that Giddens links to higher levels of 'time-space distancing' in the modern era (Giddens 1990a: 64). 'Time-space distancing' has been facilitated and accelerated by the development of 'disembedding mechanisms', such as symbolic tokens (money) and expert systems, which lift social relations out from localised contexts and rearticulate them across time and space (Giddens 1991: 18). According to Giddens, it is accelerating 'globalisation'¹¹ which is primarily responsible for changing the intensity, the type and the range of 'manufactured' risks that humans now face in the contemporary world. For Giddens, it is one particular variety - 'high-consequence' risks - that is considered to occupy a central position in the risk profile of the 'late' modern era. Giddens' reasoning here broadly follows that of Beck as discussed earlier. Thus, 'high-consequence' risks reflect, first and foremost, the 'globalisation of risk in the sense of intensity' (Giddens 1990a: 124). By this, Giddens is referring to the fact that risks such as the possibility of nuclear war or ecological disaster 'provide an unnerving horizon of dangers for everyone' and, ultimately, 'threaten the survival of humanity' (Giddens 1990a:

¹¹ Giddens defines 'globalisation' as 'the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa' (Giddens 1990a: 64).

124-125). Such risks are also surrounded by high levels of uncertainty. Since they refer to 'situations which are always liable to involve factors that have not been encountered before' (Giddens 1994a: 221), assessing the precise dangers involved tends to prove elusive for individuals as well as large organisations including states. Giddens claims that they form a key part of the 'runaway, juggernaut character of modernity, and [that] no specific individuals or groups are responsible for them or can be constrained to "set things right"' (Giddens 1990a: 131). Like Beck, Giddens argues that it is accurate to claim that a new society is currently in the process of formation: the 'risk society' (Giddens 1998a: 25).

The theme of 'high-consequence' risks recurs time and again in Giddens' latest work (Giddens 1991, 1994a, 1998a). One interesting difference between Beck and Giddens is that the latter has adopted a definition of contemporary risks that moves beyond the former's almost exclusive concern with the ecological hazards associated with modern science and technology. In *Beyond Left and Right*, Giddens draws connections between four types of 'high-consequence' risk and the global institutional dimensions of modernity outlined earlier in this chapter. Thus, the 'progression' of industrialism is thought to have led to the emergence of 'high-consequence' risks of an ecological variety. Such risks include global warming, ozone layer depletion, destruction of the rainforests, nuclear disasters, desertification and the 'poisoning of waters to a degree likely to inhibit the processes of regeneration they contain' (Giddens 1994a: 98). The second category of 'high-consequence' risk involves the development of poverty on a global scale and relates broadly to the spread of capitalist markets within the modern world; that is, to the extent that the latter 'often have a polarizing effect on the distributions of wealth and income' (Giddens 1994a: 98).¹² Military power, in turn, forms a further context for 'high-consequence' risks. These risks relate to the threat to humanity caused by the widespread existence of weapons of

¹² Insofar as global poverty is a reality (WCED 1987), it is certainly questionable whether Giddens is correct to argue that it should be solely understood in 'risk' terms.

mass destruction together with problems of violence on other levels, e.g. male violence against women. Finally, and related to the surveillance capabilities of states and other organisations in late modernity, are potentially huge problems relating to the issue of democracy, in particular, the 'large-scale repression of democratic rights' (Giddens 1994a: 98).

As well as defining the nature and scope of 'high-consequence' risks, a further component of Giddens' work relates to the latter's perception by lay actors. In particular, Giddens claims that individual risk perceptions have been transformed as a result of the intensified social reflexivity of modernity. One reason for this is that, in conditions of modernity, the practice of 'sealing over the uncertainties entailed in risky endeavours' through religion or magic is replaced by heightened levels of self-questioning and an awareness of risk as risk. The reflexivity of modernity also provides the key to understanding the 'well-distributed awareness of risk' among human beings of the present age. Here, Giddens is referring to the fact that, in the 'late' modern era, people are likely to have greater access to information relating to modern risk environments. This, in turn, has led to an awareness of the limitations of expert systems of knowledge and public relations problems 'by those who seek lay trust in expert systems' (Giddens 1990a: 130).

But what, exactly, does all this mean in terms of the explanation of the rise of environmental movements? For Giddens, importance is now attached to the character and perception of ecological problems in conditions of 'late' modernity. Rather than representing a reaction to the alienating character of the 'created' environment, environmental movements now reflect 'the heightened awareness of high-consequence risks which industrial development, whether organised under the auspices of capitalism or not, brings in its train' (Giddens 1990a: 161). This would imply that growing public perception of ecological risks, such as global warming or nuclear disaster, are the main factors which explain the rise of such movements. Environmental movements might be viewed as an

example of an adaptive reaction to the risk profile of 'late' modernity defined as 'radical engagement'. By this, Giddens means:

an attitude of practical contestation towards perceived sources of danger. Those taking a stance of radical engagement hold that, although we are beset by major problems, we can and should mobilise either to reduce their impact or to transcend them. (Giddens 1990a: 137)

Apart from Giddens' analysis of the existence and perception of 'high-consequence' risks, there is a further dimension to Giddens' account of environmental movements. Thus, in *Modernity and Self-Identity* and *Beyond Left and Right*, Giddens argues that environmental politics are also a symptom of the increasing centrality of a broader 'life politics' agenda in 'late' modernity. 'Life politics' can be contrasted with the main theme that has, since the early development of the modern era, shaped the political agenda of the Left (and thus, in counterreaction, the Right); namely, that of 'emancipation'. For Giddens, 'emancipatory politics' has centred on reducing or eliminating 'exploitation, inequality and oppression', and has made 'primary the imperatives of justice, equality and participation' (Giddens 1991: 211-212). In all its forms, states Giddens, the aim of emancipatory politics has been 'either to release underprivileged groups from their unhappy condition, or to eliminate the relative differences between them' (Giddens 1991: 211). It can thus be characterised as a politics of 'life chances' and has been central to the enhancement of 'autonomy of action' (Giddens 1991: 90).

While Giddens affirms the continuing significance of emancipatory politics 'to any radical political programme', he claims that issues of 'life politics' are assuming heightened prominence in the contemporary world (Giddens 1994b: 90). 'Life politics', states Giddens, 'is not a politics of life-chances [but] is linked to wider questions of identity and life-style choice' (Giddens 1994b: 30). Its origins are thought to lie in the transformation of tradition and nature, and the process of rapid globalisation which are characteristic of the 'late' modern age. For Giddens, the disputes and struggles

connected with 'life politics' are concerned with the question of how humans should live in a world in which the 'certainties' of nature and tradition have been eclipsed by transformations in global society and the rise of a 'post-traditional' order. It is what Giddens calls the politics of a 'reflexively mobilised order' (Giddens 1991: 214). He offers the following definition:

life politics concerns political issues which flow from processes of self-actualisation in post-traditional contexts, where globalising influences intrude deeply into the reflexive project of the self, and conversely where processes of self-realisation influence global strategies. (Giddens 1991: 214)

Given all this, Giddens argues that to the extent that environmental movements raise questions of the link between contemporary modes of life in the industrialised world and ecological degradation, and propose the adoption of new lifestyle patterns in order to reverse such degradation, they can be positioned within the broad context of 'life politics'. Thus, according to Giddens, an adequate account of environmental movements must take account of the heightened capacity that humans have developed in 'post-traditional' contexts to reflect upon questions of lifestyle, as well as the existence and heightened awareness of 'high-consequence' risks examined earlier in this section. However, it is important to note that the concept of 'life politics' is not limited solely to the case of environmental movements. Indeed, Giddens argues that other movements - most notably the feminist movement - can be considered as displaying elements of 'life politics', to the extent that they call into question dominant identities and lifestyle patterns, e.g. relating to women, and raise issues of how 'we should live in a world where what used to be fixed by either nature or tradition is now subject to human decisions' (Giddens 1994a: 91).

It is clear that other thinkers have taken a different stance on the nature and significance of environmental movements. From the standpoint of many green theorists and activists, and in direct contrast to Giddens' position, green politics are *fundamentally* to do with issues of emancipation, and thus cannot be

seen as 'lifestyle' questions. Eco-socialist thinkers, for example, have argued that green politics are part of the larger struggle against capitalism. It is the latter which is viewed as being responsible for social injustice and ecological degradation (Gorz 1983; Weston 1986; Pepper 1993; Red-Green Study Group 1995). From this perspective, green politics must be viewed as an *emancipatory* project; a project which defines the 'environment' in the broadest terms possible, and one which concerns itself with the emancipation of the human and non-human natural world from the oppressive and exploitative system of capitalism. The interpretation of green politics as an emancipatory discourse is not solely restricted to abstract, eco-socialist analyses, however. In more 'concrete' terms, Europe's green parties could possibly be understood in terms of political vehicles through which emancipation from the exploitative politics associated with the anthropocentric outlook of established political ideologies - that is 'the politics of alienation and destruction, of both people and planet' - might be achieved (Richardson 1995: 11). The point here is that Giddens has perhaps overplayed the 'life politics' dimension of contemporary environmental protest, and underplayed the extent to which much protest activity is motivated by issues of emancipation in a broad sense. These issues are taken up further with respect to green parties at a later point in the chapter.

3. Green Parties and The Politics of 'Risk Society'

Thinkers like Beck and Giddens have contributed significantly to an ecologically-guided discussion about the dynamics of social change and the kinds of politics that might emerge in response to the rise of 'risk society' (Franklin 1998). In returning to the three case studies, this part of the chapter assesses how far Beck and Giddens' arguments can be used to illuminate the conditions under which green parties emerged. First, the extent to which an awareness of 'high-consequence' risks has been catalytic in the emergence of green parties in

Austria, Britain and the Netherlands is examined. Here, the term 'high consequence' risks is taken as a broad category encompassing ecological risks, but also those risks considered to emanate from Giddens' institutional dimensions of capitalism, militarism and surveillance. The second section examines the usefulness of the categories of 'life politics' and 'sub-politics' in capturing certain aspects of green party politics. Attention to these questions is then followed by a more general critical consideration of the 'risk society' thesis.

(a) The Role of Risk Perception in the Emergence of Three Green Parties

One controversy that has been cited as having played an important role in the emergence of green party politics in Austria is that of nuclear power. The central claim by academic commentators has been that it was anti-nuclear activists from both the conservative and left wings of the movement who played a significant part in the formation of the VGÖ and ALÖ in 1982 (Dachs 1989; Preglau 1994: 63-65). The view linking the intensity of the nuclear power issue to the early development of the Austrian Greens is one that is also stressed by the party itself (*Die Grüne Alternative* n.d.; Parkin 1989: 31). The question that needs to be examined is whether the emergence of conflicts concerning issues such as nuclear power in Austria, and the subsequent emergence of green parties, can be interpreted within the broad theoretical framework of 'risk society' as formulated by Beck and Giddens. However, before directly addressing this question, it is necessary to provide some historical background information about the nuclear power controversy itself.

The Austrian nuclear power controversy had its origins in the policies of 'forced modernisation' established by the ÖVP government of 1966-70 and continued by the SPÖ government from 1970 onwards. At the heart of the modernisation drive was an industry, political party, interest group and state-backed nuclear energy programme that would, in theory, see the construction of

three nuclear power plants by 1990. Nuclear energy was an attractive option to government and industry at the time because it seemed to offer a 'solution' to certain problems highlighted during the energy crisis of 1973-74; namely, those of the finiteness of conventional fossil fuels and the dependency of Austria on other nations for its oil and gas supplies. In an attempt to try and persuade a sceptical population of the wisdom of nuclear power at a time when the first nuclear plant at Zwentendorf was nearing completion, the SPÖ government instigated an Atomic Energy Information Campaign in 1976 (Preglau 1994: 50). This campaign elicited a response in the form of a nationwide coalition of anti-nuclear activists - the Initiative of Austrian Nuclear Power Plant Opponents (*Initiative österreichischer Kernkraftsgegner* - IoAG) - during the same year (Preglau 1994: 50). During the course of 1976-77, the anti-nuclear movement campaigned against Zwentendorf through a 'strategic initiative' which effectively involved using the 'official' information campaign to expose what it saw to be the uncertainties and dangers associated with nuclear power (Preglau 1994: 51). As well as an anti-nuclear movement which could claim to have approximately 500,000 supporters, the government was soon faced with additional problems arising from its failure to secure the parliamentary support of the ÖVP on the question of the future of Zwentendorf and to prevent the rise of oppositional voices within its own ranks (Gottweis 1990: 52; Pelinka 1983: 256). The resultant deadlock led to the government calling a referendum on the question of whether a law authorising parliament to commission the nuclear plant at Zwentendorf should be passed. On November 5, 1978, 50.5 per cent of those who voted said 'no' to Zwentendorf, 49.5 per cent 'yes' - a narrow defeat for the government and its social partners. (Pelinka 1983: 255). This led to the passing of the Nuclear Energy Prohibition Act (1978) which states that '[p]lants, in which electric energy is to be produced by atomic fission for the purposes of electric power supply, are not to be constructed in Austria. In so far as such plants already exist, they are not to be put into operation' (cited in Preglau 1994: 59). The successful

campaign against Zwentendorf undoubtedly gave a boost to the green movement and facilitated the emergence of green parties in Austria.

In referring to the arguments of Beck and Giddens, a number of key points concerning the Austrian case can be made. First, opposition to nuclear power - the technological centrepiece of Austria's modernisation drive - was motivated to a considerable extent by a widespread awareness of and unwillingness to accept the risks associated with this technology (Preglau 1994: 52). Second, regarding Beck's claim that 'well-educated' citizens are most likely to be concerned about ecological risks, it is worth noting that the trend against nuclear energy at the Zwentendorf referendum was significantly correlated to higher education (Pelinka 1983: 256). Third, the nuclear power controversy in Austria displays certain features of the reflexive social order that Beck and Giddens argue is developing in Western and industrialised countries. For example, during the government's Atomic Energy Information Campaign of 1976-77, disagreements among 'experts' fuelled public scepticism towards nuclear power and the modernisation project in general (Preglau 1994: 52). It can also be argued that heightened social reflexivity in Austria was a function of processes of individualisation and 'post-industrialisation' (chapter 4) which gradually unfolded during the 1970s. In particular, the expansion of higher education, altered work patterns, and the undermining of traditional values and class as a basis for political action, resulted in the rise of a significant portion of the population that was less willing to accept the decisions of traditional political elites and more willing to consider alternative lifestyles and modes of political representation and participation (Gottweis 1990).

These connections can be explored further in considering the nature of the environmental movement that emerged in Austria during the 1980s. The success of this movement undoubtedly gave added momentum to Austrian green politics and facilitated moves towards the establishment of a united green party. Indeed many prominent movement activists - including ex-SPÖ members Freda

Meissner-Blau and Günther Nanning - would later play a crucial role in the founding of the Austrian Greens.

Inspired by the successes of the anti-nuclear movement a few years earlier, the environmental movement clashed with the state and its partners over the decision to build a hydro-electric power plant near Hainburg, Lower Austria in 1984. In particular, environmentalists protested against the devastation of unique wetland areas that the building of the dam would cause (Lauber 1997a: 202). As has been noted, both Beck and Giddens have claimed that ecological protest may be understood in terms of a response by citizens to the 'high-consequence' risks characteristic of the 'risk society'. Yet a closer look at the Hainburg movement reveals that such protest *did not* arise in response to the perception that the project would give rise to the 'risk' of future environmental damage (as was the case with the anti-nuclear movement) but, rather, 'from the certainty of future environmental damage' (Goldblatt 1996: 71). Both Beck and Giddens can thus be criticised for tending to overlook the extent to which the impetus for much ecological protest, and indeed green electoral politics, has come from widespread public concern about the *certainty* of future environmental damage, as well as *actual* environmental problems (Goldblatt 1996: 71; Affigne 1990).

The centrality of environmental issues in terms of shaping the identity of the Austrian Greens has consistently been reflected in the party's election manifestos (Frankland 1992; Lauber 1997a). Environmental concern has also been a key motive for casting a vote for the Austrian Greens. At the 1994 national elections, 77 per cent of those who voted Green identified the environment as being their principal motivation for supporting the party (Luther 1995: 136). In 1995 environmental protection was ranked even higher by Green voters, with 82 per cent claiming that 'the environment' was the main reason for casting a vote for the Greens (Dawe 1996).

Returning to the additional 'high-consequence' risks identified by Giddens, an examination of party documents and existing studies shows that

concerns about global poverty (capitalism), violence (militarism) and democracy (surveillance) have fundamentally informed and shaped the Austrian Greens' political programme (*Die Grünen* 1995f; Frankland 1994: 205-206). The issue of militarism played a particularly important role in the emergence of the Greens and continues to form an important point of criticism within the party. Despite being a neutral country lacking nuclear weapons, Austria produced a significant peace movement in the early 1980s whose energies were principally directed towards the 'militaristic' actions of foreign governments (Gottweis 1990). Many of its activists played a key role in the development of the Austrian Greens (Parkin 1989). Alongside a rigorous defence of Austrian neutrality, the Greens' concern with military related hazards and risks has led to an advocacy of 'the dissolution of NATO and WEU, international negotiations for the destruction and banning of all biological and nuclear arms, visible steps towards disarmament and the restriction of arms exports' (*Die Grünen* 1995f: 4). That the Greens have shown concern about a range of 'high-consequence' risks is hardly surprising in view of the origins of their activists in the environmental, peace and other radical movements (*Die Grüne Alternative* n.d.).

Assessing the impact of risk perception on the development of the Dutch Green Left is complicated by the involvement of four already existing parties in the party development process. However, one interesting issue that can be investigated here concerns the degree to which the ideological rapprochement of the CPN, PSP and PPR was facilitated by a mutual perception of the risks associated with nuclear power, the arms race and other ecological issues which came to prominence during the course of the 1970s and 1980s. It was the period 1969-73 which marked the starting point of a rapid growth in public awareness of ecological issues in the Netherlands. This was in part the consequence of the expansion of higher education and growing media coverage of ecological issues, but it was also a response to the publication of international literature such as the *Limits to Growth* report (1972), which added a global and 'survivalist' dimension to the so-called 'new environmentalism'. Alongside this growing awareness of

the nature and causes of ecological problems was the formation of a variety of environmental action groups, each offering different analyses and solutions to the problem of ecological degradation (Jamison *et al.* 1990: 135, 143). In general, however, large-scale technology was viewed 'as having a negative influence on the environment' (Jamison *et al.* 1990: 143). To the extent that these groups were critical of the ecological effects of scientific and technological activities, it is possible to view them in terms of a 'new politics' generated by the increased levels of social reflexivity characteristic of 'late' modernity (Beck 1992a; Giddens 1990a).

In terms of cross-party co-operation and activism, however, two issues would prove to be particularly important. First, within the context of heightened levels of environmental activism during the 1970s, the PSP, PPR, and somewhat later the CPN, participated together in several large demonstrations against the government's plans to extend the Dutch nuclear power programme (Voerman 1995: 114; Jamison *et al.* 1990: 157). Second, during the early 1980s, the peace movement proved to be a focal point for the three small parties and together they took part in mass demonstrations against the stationing of cruise missiles in the Netherlands (Voerman 1995: 114). What all this suggests is that the widespread perception of certain 'high-consequence' risks - that is, those associated with nuclear power and militarism - and the desire to do something about those risks appear to have facilitated co-operation between the PSP, PPR and CPN and led to calls for the formation of a broader 'green left' organisation. The involvement of such movement activists in Green Left is supported by the results of a survey of party members carried out in 1992, which show that 43 per cent had been or were currently active in the peace movement whereas the corresponding figure for the environmental movement was 30 per cent.¹³ Significantly, these figures were

¹³ It might be argued that this lower figure for environmental movement involvement as compared to the peace movement goes against the main thrust of this thesis - that it is ecological concern which has formed the primary motive for engaging in green party politics. However, in the final chapter, it will be argued that much public concern about nuclear weapons and militarism has been motivated by ecological concern, as well as by a more traditional pacifist morality. In terms of

higher than those relating to involvement in the women's movement (14 per cent), the student movement (17 per cent), trade unions (21 per cent), the church (23 per cent) and 'work councils' (17 per cent) (Lucardie *et al.* 1993: 50).

A sceptical outlook towards technological and industrial evolution - the dominance of 'simple' modernisation (Beck 1992a; Giddens 1994a) - to some extent informs Green Left's political programme. Thus the party's call for a 'sustainable economy' is based upon the premise that the present system 'is threatening the earth and human existence' (*GroenLinks* 1990c: 6). Production processes involving the burning of fossil fuels, along with nuclear power and the widespread pollution caused by both the chemical industry and increased use of pesticides, are discussed in terms of the threats they pose to both human beings and the non-human natural world. There is an awareness of the global nature of environmental problems and of the responsibilities that the 'developed' countries have towards those of the 'developing' world regarding their resolution (*GroenLinks* 1990c: 18-24). Finally, as was the case with the Austrian Greens, there are other important areas of Green Left's political programme that might be interpreted as reflecting the range of 'high-consequence' risks which, according to Giddens, are a feature of the late modern world. Global poverty and inequality (linked to capitalism), for example, are regarded as requiring urgent responses in view of their rising levels and the 'threat to peace and security' that this poses (*GroenLinks* 1990c: 14). In terms of militarism, Green Left considers armament to be 'the greatest threat to peace' and advocates a policy of 'total worldwide disarmament ... for peace and security in the long term' (*GroenLinks* 1990c: 16).

As in the Netherlands, Britain experienced a growing public interest in ecological matters during the late 1960s and early 1970s (Robinson 1992: 9). Indeed, the unprecedented rise in the number of environmental interest groups during this period occurred alongside the publication of several economic and scientific reports, most notably the *Limits to Growth* report and *A Blueprint for*

green parties, it will be maintained that peace movement aims are entirely consistent with the ecological perspective developed by these parties.

Survival, documenting the deleterious effects of the dominant patterns of industrial and technological development on human society and the earth itself (Lowe and Goyder 1983; Richardson 1995: 5).¹⁴ It was within this context that PEOPLE was formed. As Rüdig has argued, 'the founders of PEOPLE were motivated by a strong sense of imminent collapse if fundamental change did not happen in a short time' (Rüdig 1986: 453). The theme of 'survival' formed the centrepiece of PEOPLE's first party programme; indeed the new party adopted the four principles deemed essential by the writers of *Blueprint* for ensuring 'a stable society - one that to all intents and purposes can be sustained indefinitely while giving optimum satisfaction to its members' (cited in Parkin 1989: 218).¹⁵ The main point here, then, is that a critique of 'simple' modernisation which came to light in the early 1970s - possibly a feature of an emergent 'reflexive' social order - seems to have provided the main catalyst for the emergence of the British Greens. An important element of this critique was the growing perception of the global ecological risks thought to result from continued industrial development.

The theme of risk continues to occupy an important position within the policy base of the Green Party - *Manifesto for a Sustainable Society* (1995) - which raises concerns as to the potential risks and hazards associated with nuclear energy, genetic engineering, climate change and a range of other scientific and technology-related processes. Other categories of 'high-consequence' risk highlighted by Giddens receive attention within this document; thus, concern is expressed with respect to the potential and actual hazards - social and ecological - associated with global militarisation. Attention is also drawn to the links between the existing global economic order, ecological problems and

¹⁴ Most notably, the Club of Rome's *Limits to Growth* (1972) raised the question of the unsustainability of Western lifestyles within a finite planet, while, in the same year, the Ecologist magazine published its *Blueprint for Survival* predicting the breakdown of society should present patterns of consumption and resource depletion persist (Richardson 1995: 5).

¹⁵ The four principles were: (1) minimum disruption of ecological processes; (2) maximum conservation of materials and energy; (3) a population in which recruitment equals loss; (4) a social system in which individuals can enjoy, rather than feel restricted by, the first three conditions (Parkin 1989: 218).

poverty, as well as to the need for the radical democratisation of society (Green Party 1995).

Interestingly, however, and quite unlike the situation in Austria and the Netherlands, conflict surrounding the issue of nuclear power appears to have had little direct impact on the emergence and/or subsequent development of the British Greens (Rudig 1994: 70). Compared to the Austrian and Dutch cases, the British anti-nuclear movement of the 1970s and 1980s was rather weak - a quality attributed to the tendency of the British government to utilise the public inquiry as a means of de-intensifying or defusing protest activity (Parkin 1989: 215; Rüdig 1994: 71). Throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s, the use of this mechanism served to provide a framework and focus for anti-nuclear protest and, arguably, obviated the need for more radical forms of political action.¹⁶ It has been claimed that the British anti-nuclear movement was further weakened by the government's tendency to reverse controversial policy decisions - on nuclear waste disposal programmes, for example (Rudig 1994: 71). Of equal importance in explaining the relative weakness of the anti-nuclear movement in Britain was 'the absence of a large-scale nuclear expansion programme in the 1970s' (Rudig 1994: 70). Compared with countries such as Austria and the Netherlands, Britain did not respond to the 1973 oil crisis by embarking upon a 'crash nuclear programme'. On this point, Rudig and Lowe state:

With stagnating demand, looming overcapacities, uncertainty over reactor choice and the prospect of large oil and gas resources in the North Sea in addition to substantial coal reserves, there was simply not the same pressure for rapid expansion of nuclear energy. (Rudig and Lowe 1986: 273)

The rapid growth of the peace movement in the early 1980s - undoubtedly a symptom of the growing perception of the considerable risks associated with an

¹⁶ For example, the Windscale public inquiry of 1977 signalled the start of a public debate concerning nuclear energy in Britain. Another notable investigation was the Sizewell inquiry, which began in 1982 and finished in 1985. See Rudig (1994) for more information on these and other public inquiries.

escalation of the arms race during this period - also failed to yield developmental benefits for the Green Party. The failure of the Greens to capitalise on the revival of the peace movement has been explained with reference to the latter's 'near institutionalization ... by CND and the Labour Party' (Rootes 1995a: 84). Unlike the situation in other countries, the British Green Party did not become the main vehicle for the peace movement. The relationship between the lack of strong support from social movements - most notably, those concerned with ecological and other 'high-consequence' risks - and the electoral insignificance of the Green Party will be further explored in chapter 8.

The purpose of this section has been to show that public scepticism about the wisdom of the modernisation project, and heightened perception of the large-scale risks and ecological problems associated with scientific and technological developments, have played a central role in shaping the patterns of green party emergence in Austria, Britain and the Netherlands. Yet the nature and intensity of these issues has clearly varied from one context to the next. In Austria, the key impetus to new party emergence came in the form of risk and ecologically orientated social movements. In the Netherlands, the development of common ground on peace and nuclear issues between the Green Left parties and pressure exerted from within various social movements proved to be catalysts in the decision to form a new political party that would accord a central priority to ecological, peace and other risk-related issues. In Britain, however, the impetus for party emergence came not from social movements but within the context of much public debate about the 'limits to growth' which came to the fore during the early 1970s. Green parties are clearly a symptom of the 'radical engagement' (Giddens 1990a) which characterises the late modern era. The presence and heightened perception of global risks and ecological problems have helped to carve out the political 'space' within which green parties have been able to emerge.

(b) 'Life Politics', 'Sub-Politics' and Green Parties

Other aspects of the discussion in this chapter have concerned Giddens' notion of 'life politics' and Beck's concept of 'sub-politics'. As was mentioned earlier, Giddens has argued that the recognition that lifestyle changes are required to resolve ecological issues and minimise risks is an important element of contemporary environmental politics and movements. 'Life politics' are considered to be a symptom of what Giddens has termed a 'reflexively mobilised order'. The concept of 'life politics' refers to the extent to which citizens are increasingly reflexively concerned with how they should live within a context characterised by the existence of global ecological risks and hazards.

It is often claimed that green party politics are underpinned by a different philosophical outlook to that of the established political parties (Spretnak and Capra 1985; Richardson 1995). While the latter have tended to view nature in purely instrumental terms, and pursue the goal of unrestrained economic growth, it is suggested that green parties have advanced a new set of philosophical values based upon the prioritisation of the needs of the planet in personal life and politics (Parkin 1989: 18). From this philosophical basis has flowed the idea that lifestyle changes are a necessary part of the broader attempt to resolve the perceived ecological crisis. It could be argued that Giddens' notion of 'life politics' goes some way towards capturing this dimension of green party politics. To the extent that green parties question dominant lifestyle patterns and call for a different, less exploitative, relationship between humanity and nature they may be expressive of the 'life politics' which Giddens suggests become increasingly important in the late modern era.

The central philosophical question raised by 'life politics' - that is: 'how should humans live in an age characterised by global risks and hazards?' - is certainly one to which green parties have responded. The Austrian Greens have, for example, drawn attention to the links between dominant lifestyle patterns and global ecological decline. They call for a radical restructuring of the economy

along ecological lines, through tougher state regulations and economic incentives designed to encourage more 'ecologically sound' lifestyle patterns within business, government and the wider community (*Die Grünen* 1995a, 1995b). 'Life politics' are also reflected in the philosophy of the Dutch Green Left, to the extent that the party calls for citizens to adopt a 'different attitude towards nature and the environment' (*GroenLinks* 1993: 3). For the Green Left, it is the 'production and consumption culture' which lies at the root of ecological problems, and humans 'need to move away from lifestyles premised upon a narrow definition of 'progress' linked to materialism and economic growth (*GroenLinks* 1990b: 23). The connection between existing lifestyle patterns and global ecological degradation is one that is also made by the British Green Party. In line with the previous two parties, the British Greens 'challenge the view ... that [humans] must tread the path of ever increasing production and consumption to improve [their] lot' (Green Party 1992: 4). The party's political programme is moulded by its advocacy of an alternative lifestyle based upon the themes of co-operation and 'reverence and respect for the complex web of life of which [humans] are part' (Green Party 1995).

For Giddens, feminism can be considered as a further prominent example of 'life politics' in conditions of late modernity to the extent that it has prioritised questions of 'self-identity' by seeking to challenge established definitions of women's identities based upon notions of domesticity (Giddens 1991: 216). Feminist principles have been embraced by the green parties in this study and form a key element of the guiding principles of the European Federation of Green Parties, to which these parties are signatories (*Die Grünen* 1995e; Green Party 1995; *GroenLinks* 1993; EFGP 1993a). Giddens' broad definition of 'life politics' also stretches to the emergence of other disputes and struggles which concern issues relating to the 'remoralising of social life' (Giddens 1991: 224). The rise of lesbian and gay politics, for example, could be viewed in these terms. That the green parties oppose discrimination on the grounds of sexual preference, ethnicity, disability, etc., and promote diversity in terms of self-identity and

lifestyle, suggests that a broad swath of 'life politics' issues may have influenced their social and political outlook.

It has already been observed that Giddens may have overplayed the significance of 'life politics' and neglected the degree to which environmental protest has been shaped by an emancipatory discourse. While 'life politics' issues may have exerted some influence on green parties, it is also the case that their political profile has been fundamentally informed by a commitment to the need for *emancipation* from an economic system which, on their reading, has been largely responsible for ecological degradation and widespread human unfulfilment, and from a political system which has minimised opportunities for citizen participation, and marginalised a range of minority groups, e.g. the disabled, the poor, ethnic minorities (*GroenLinks* 1993; Frankland 1992; Green Party 1995; EFGP 1993a). Contrary to what Giddens says about the declining importance of the theme of 'emancipation' for 'late' modern politics, an examination of the case of green parties shows clearly that emancipatory issues have formed, and will continue to form, a fundamental part of these new forms of political activity which have attained prominence on the European political landscape.

Green parties may to some extent display elements of what Beck has termed 'sub-politics' in the age of 'reflexive modernisation'. As was discussed earlier, Beck proposes that various forms of 'sub-politics' emerge in response to the 'demystification' of science, and a growing realisation that heightened opportunities for democratic participation are necessary in order that citizens can attempt to exert a greater influence on the 'dynamics' of social change. In the previous chapter, it was observed that participation and democracy were key themes of green party politics in Austria, Britain and the Netherlands. Such demands were facilitated by the higher education experience, wider media coverage of ecological issues, and the extent to which decision-making structures in 'post-industrial' society had obstructed the effective articulation of ecological concerns. However, what tends to give the 'risk society' perspective added

credibility is the way in which it connects the rise of these demands to a wider set of issues concerning the relationship between the unaccountable character of much scientific and technological decision-making in contemporary society and the 'risky' situation in which humanity now finds itself. It suggests that the participatory demands of green parties are not just a response to what Bell might term 'elitist decision-making', but also to the ways in which a general lack of democratic accountability has *contributed* to the emergence and perpetuation of large-scale hazards, risks and manufactured uncertainties. This 'democratic deficit' is in part linked to globalising processes which, Giddens argues, 'have transferred powers away from nations and into depoliticized global space' (Giddens 1998b: 141).

4. 'Risk Society': An Assessment

While the arguments of Beck and Giddens appear to offer important insights into the changed environmental and social context within which green parties emerged, there remain a number of critical questions that can be asked of the 'risk society' perspective. These potentially have implications for the overall status of the theory of 'risk society' in terms of developing a framework within which to interpret the emergence of green parties. One area of criticism has focused upon Giddens' theory of globalisation. The notion of 'risk society' is rooted in what Giddens terms 'accelerating globalisation'. Yet Giddens' concept of globalisation is characterised by a general vagueness - it has been defined as 'the intensification of worldwide social relations' (Giddens 1990a: 64), and, most recently, in terms of a 'complex range of processes, driven by a mixture of political and economic influences' (Giddens 1998b: 33). Commentators such as Yearley have argued that the 'flexibility' - as he kindly puts it - of Giddens' concept of globalisation 'turns it, in practice, into a descriptive, nominalistic approach to global-level phenomena' (Yearley 1995: 16). Questions have also

been directed at Giddens' claim that globalisation is a *consequence* of modernity. It is suggested that there are 'independent dynamics of global culture' which are not necessarily connected with the modernisation process (Yearley 1995: 16). In short, Giddens can be criticised for failing to provide an adequate elaboration of the concept which underpins his theory of 'high-consequence' risks - that of 'globalisation'.

A further contentious issue concerns the extent to which it is accurate to describe contemporary societies as 'risk societies'. One way in which this issue can be approached involves a consideration of the degree to which ecological risks and hazards have become more prominent in Western societies in recent decades, and an assessment of the position and perception of risk issues in contemporary politics and society. There is now a considerable literature which broadly affirms the claim that ecological risks and hazards have increased both quantitatively and qualitatively during the course of the latter part of this century. As well as there being evidence to suggest that the number of ecologically damaging incidents has risen (Garner 1996), it is also widely recognised that ecological problems are now global in terms of their scope, scale and threat. Responses to these trends in the form of documents such as the *Limits to Growth Report* (1972), the *Global 2000 Report to the President of the United States* (1980), the *State of the World Reports* (from 1984 onwards), the *Brundtland Report* (1987) and *Agenda 21* (1992) have played an important part in informing international decision-makers and contributed to a broader public awareness of ecological issues. Certainly, it seems plausible to argue that the ecological risks and hazards with which the contemporary world appears increasingly aware are greater than those of earlier decades. As Goldblatt comments:

the ozone holes are bigger; the apparent trends of climate change are more ominous; more land is under threat from infrastructures and industrial development or desertification; there are innumerable more nuclear installations dotted across the earth; the state of the world's oceans is declining. (Goldblatt 1996: 175)

To the extent that green parties emerged across Europe during a period which saw notions of a global ecological crisis receive increasing attention among Western populations, and that their development was linked to rising concern about aspects of this crisis, it seems that there may be something in the argument that they represent a new politics of 'risk society'.

Other authors are more sceptical with regard to Beck's more specific claim that conflicts over the distribution of wealth are becoming less important as society becomes increasingly concerned about the distribution of large-scale hazards and risks (Beck 1992a: 19). Traditional issues of economic inequality, welfare and security continue to dominate the content of the political agenda in Western countries. Goldblatt points out that, contrary to the 'risk society' thesis, major political parties 'of all complexions' in the West:

continue to make their core appeals to the electorate in terms of economic growth, increasing prosperity, more jobs, etc. Government popularity still appears to be closely correlated to economic performance, economic expectations and the economic plausibility of the opposition. Taxation rates and take-home incomes continue to be one of the central issues of public policy. (Goldblatt 1996: 177)

There can be little doubting the assertion that new conflicts concerning the distribution of ecological risks and hazards have become more prominent in recent decades. But the claim that the existence of such conflicts heralds the transition to a 'risk society' characterised by a break with traditional distributive politics can be questioned on the grounds that the latter continue to dominate affairs in Western countries.

A further set of problems has more specifically to do with the characterisation and place of the theme of 'risk' in Beck and Giddens' work. It can be argued that both writers have adopted a very individuated conception of risk, and, consequently, overlooked the extent to which people have been motivated to engage in environmental protest activity out of concern about the 'risks' posed to society as a whole, to the non-human natural world, and to future generations. The 'risk society' perspective would be enhanced by a more

comprehensive assessment of the parameters of risk; in particular, by a consideration of the degree to which concern about risks is triggered by concern with respect to 'others' as well as to the immediate individual. To the extent that green parties have expressed concern about risks, it is clear that their understanding of the significance of these risks is guided by a sense of their 'collective' potential implications.

More generally, there is a tendency within the writings of Beck and Giddens to exaggerate the role that risk has actually played in shaping the context within which green parties emerged. As the previous section of this chapter showed, awareness of risks has not been the sole factor which has motivated citizens to engage in environmental protest activity, or to form or support green parties. There is firm evidence to suggest that pressure to form green parties has in part arisen from the desire to tackle *actual* environmental problems, or from an awareness of the *certainty* of future ecological damage. As well as a response to the existence of 'high-consequence' risks, the rise of green parties must be understood as a mobilisation against the indifference of government organisations towards a new generation of global environmental problems which have impacted on human and non-human life, and which have particularly come to light since the 1980s.

A brief consideration of green parties' policy documents lends support to this argument. As well as voicing concern about the risks associated with nuclear power, global warming, etc., green parties devote much time and energy to tackling actual instances of environmental pollution and attacking specific government policies which would add to existing global ecological pressures. For instance, an account of the Dutch Green Left's activities at the local level identifies the degree to which its council members have felt it important to respond to actual ecological problems, including air and water pollution, energy over-consumption and traffic congestion (*GroenLinks* 1990d). In Britain, the Green Party opposed the previous (Conservative) government's roads programme not just on the grounds that it contributed to ecological risks such as global

warming, but also because, if built, these roads would generate new pollution, destroy wildlife habitat and waste valuable resources (Green Party 1997: 7). In Austria, an important focus for the Greens' thinking has been the development of policies aimed at alleviating, among other things, energy and traffic problems, waste problems and water pollution (*Die Grünen* 1995a, 1995b). Beck and Giddens' view of the likely cause of environmental politics, i.e. rising levels of ecological risk perception, appears oversimplistic and needs to be supplemented by consideration of the factors mentioned above.

One question that could be raised here concerns the relationship between actual environmental problems and ecological risks. Clearly, some *problems* classed as 'environmental' - e.g. atmospheric pollution, or toxic waste dumping - can also carry associated 'risks'. Thus while dumping toxic waste at sea or on an urban site may cause significant *damage* to the local or global environment, there could be added health 'risks' posed to communities living in close proximity to the waste site. Similarly, landfill sites may be a 'blot on the landscape' but also carry significant risks arising from the generation of methane gas. The construction of a hydroelectric power station may cause untold damage to a river forest and also increase the 'risk' that a rare insect species, whose natural habitat is the forest, will become extinct. The point is that ecological risks and environmental problems are often inextricably linked. Yet neither Beck nor Giddens has drawn attention to this important issue. The perception of ecological risks, the existence of *actual* environmental problems and the *certainty* of future environmental damage have been important factors in the emergence of many green parties, but it should be noted that they are often characterised by complex interactions with each other.

Several authors have been critical about the theory of 'risk society' because it tends to ignore the relationship between capitalism and the production of and exposure to ecological risks and hazards. This view has been most recently elaborated by Ted Benton (Benton 1997). According to Benton, many ecological risks and hazards are not so much outcomes of scientific and technological

advances as of capitalist economic trends. He refers to the case of the BSE crisis, claiming that 'the hazard was not generated by a technological advance, but rather by changes in animal feed regimes. These were adopted by the agricultural industry in pursuit of lower costs - and therefore higher profit' (Benton 1997: 39-40). Even in the cases where technological innovation is more directly bound up with the production of ecological hazards, e.g. nuclear power or biotechnology, Benton claims that Beck and Giddens' accounts fail to see the interconnections between the latter, economic interests and power relations. For Benton, science and technology are not autonomous processes but rather have been subordinated 'in key sectors to the competitive priorities of private capital' (Benton 1997: 41).

Beck's analysis has been further criticised for its failure to address the potential link between capitalism, inequality and exposure to ecological risks and hazards. As was mentioned earlier, Beck suggests that the shift to the 'risk society' is marked by a break with the politics of economic distribution as society becomes increasingly preoccupied with the distribution of 'techno-scientifically produced risks' (Beck 1992a: 19). Yet several commentators have pointed out that those who are most directly exposed to ecological risks and hazards are often the poorest in society, suggesting that the politics of economic distribution are very much linked to the politics of risk (Benton 1997; *The Independent on Sunday*, 9 March 1999). According to Benton, all of this has implications for the way in which the emergence of green parties should be interpreted. He suggests, in contrast to Beck and Giddens, that 'they cannot be confined ... to the role of resisters to new industrial technologies, in abstraction from the capitalist relations under which those technologies are developed and implemented' (Benton 1997: 44). They are not, as Giddens has claimed, 'beyond left and right' (Giddens 1994a). To the extent that they arise within this context, argues Benton, such organisations should seek to establish dialogue and unite with labour and other movements opposed to capitalism (Benton 1997: 44-45; Red-Green Study Group 1995).

However, care must be taken in pursuing this line of argument. As Benton admits, [e]ven where radical greens ... perceive “greed” and “profit” as the enemies of the environment, they by no means necessarily share other elements of a socialist understanding of capitalism, and generally do not see transition to a socialist society as an obvious solution’ (Benton 1997: 45). With respect to green parties, the European Federation of Green Parties’ *Guiding Principles* contains no reference to either ‘capitalism’ or ‘socialism’. Green parties have tended to be critical of ‘industrialism’ and ‘unlimited economic growth’, but they have not explicitly defined themselves in ‘anti-capitalist’ terms. However, while Benton’s understanding of green politics has been moulded by his own perspective - which does not seem to correspond with the political programmes of Europe’s green parties - his point that Beck fails to address the connections between issues of economic distribution and exposure to ecological risks and hazards is probably accurate.¹⁷

5. Conclusion

This chapter has argued in favour of an understanding of the emergence of green parties which emphasises the importance of the existence and heightened public perception of global risks associated, in particular, with nuclear power, militarism, and the broader ecological crisis. Global industrialism, and developments in science and technology associated with the ‘modernisation’ process, have combined to produce a new order of environmental risks which pose a fundamental threat to the survival of humanity, broader ecosystems and to the earth itself. The past few decades have also witnessed an increase in levels of public awareness of these risks, and it is within this context that the emergence and electoral appeal of green parties must, in part, be understood. Green parties

¹⁷ The relationship between poverty and environmental issues is pursued further in relation to green parties in the final chapter of this thesis.

have undoubtedly been formed in response to the need for new political vehicles through which citizens' concerns about the large-scale risks posed to humans and the non-human natural world can be effectively articulated. It would, however, be mistaken to argue, in the vein of Beck and Giddens, that contemporary society should be defined as a 'risk society'. While risk issues have emerged as significant foci for political conflict in recent decades, it is undeniable that traditional distributive politics continue to dominate the political agenda in Western countries.

Besides the theme of risk, it was argued that the emergence of green parties could be linked to the growth in public concern about *actual* environmental problems and the *certainty* of future environmental damage. A weakness of the 'risk society' perspective is that it does not allow for the role of these issues in stimulating ecological protest. An adequate understanding of the emergence of green parties must be supplemented by a consideration of the influence that the rise of a new, global generation of ecological problems that cannot easily be resolved has had on the fashioning of a public consciousness that is more attuned to green party politics. Chapter 4 showed that the development of this ecological consciousness has been further facilitated by processes of social change - e.g. higher education, developments in communications - linked to the shift to 'post-industrial' society.

Of the additional themes considered in this chapter, Beck and Giddens' notions of 'life-' and 'sub-' politics appear to cast some light on the character of green party politics. Clearly green parties have called for a serious rethinking of dominant lifestyle patterns and made demands for greater democratic participation so that the perpetuators of ecologically damaging politics might be more effectively challenged. Yet it is also true that the politics of green parties have been informed by a strong emancipatory current. In broad terms, green parties wish to see an end to the exploitation of both person and planet. The ideological content of green party politics is not simply a reflection of the increased salience of 'life politics' issues in contemporary society. It can also be

seen as a representation of a new, emancipatory form of politics which has emerged in an era characterised by the prevalence of global ecological risks and problems.

In the final chapter of this thesis, an attempt will be made to develop an ecologically informed understanding of the social and environmental conditions that facilitated the emergence of green parties based upon a synthesis of the themes discussed in the present chapter and in chapter 4. An attempt will also be made to work the theme of 'economic affluence' (discussed within the context of 'post-materialist' theory in chapter 3), as well as some additional concepts which fall outside the scope of the main chapters, into this framework.

Thus far the discussion has centred on the extent to which three macro-theories can throw light on the processes of social and environmental change which have formed the context within which green parties have emerged. Yet there are a number of concepts that have been developed within the discipline of political studies which may enable a refinement of the understanding of the emergence of green parties advanced so far, and provide insight into the question that sociological and value-based theories have proved incapable of explaining: the varying electoral success of green parties. These issues are discussed in the following four chapters.

Chapter 6

Political State-institutional Structures and Green Parties

In this chapter, and the three following it, arguments derived from the political studies literature which have been deployed in the attempt to account for the emergence and varying electoral significance of green parties will be critically examined. The previous three chapters have explored the broad social and environmental context of the emergence of green parties. But as yet little has been said about the political and institutional conditions which may impinge on party emergence and/or on the electoral significance of green parties. The following four chapters are structured around four thematic categories which, taken together, provide a framework for thinking about these questions. The categories developed - namely, political state-institutional structures (chapter 6); electoral dealignment and the nature of political competition (chapter 7); modes of interest representation (chapter 8); and internal party dynamics (chapter 9) - are an attempt to synthesise the diverse range of political and institutional structures and arrangements that have been cited as potentially impacting upon the emergence and/or electoral 'success' or 'failure' of green parties, as well as upon new parties generally (Haus and Rayside 1978; Müller-Rommel 1982; Rüdig 1986; Kitschelt 1988a, 1989, 1990; Rootes 1995b).

The present chapter is divided into two main sections. The first outlines the definition and scope of the category 'political state-institutional structure'; the second section considers in turn the three key dimensions identified in the first section in terms of their impact on the emergence and electoral significance of green parties in Austria, Britain and the Netherlands. The central argument in this chapter is that while certain political state-institutional structures - e.g. the electoral law - can potentially affect the timing of green party formation, the real

influence of such structures lies in the extent to which electoral systems, party financing arrangements, and government centralisation/decentralisation can significantly affect the electoral prospects of green parties. As will be demonstrated, political state-institutional structures can increase or decrease the likelihood that a green party will attain electorally significant status within a particular political system.

1. Defining Political State-institutional Structures

In general terms, political state-institutional structures consist in ‘the rules of the political game, as defined in the constitutions, conventions or institutions of a particular polity’ (Doyle and McEachern 1998: 124). There are several such structures that might affect the propensity of green parties to form, and the extent to which they will develop as electorally significant political actors. The first relates to the type of electoral system. The most important distinction here is between plurality systems ‘usually with single-member districts, according to which a party or candidate securing a [relative or simple] majority of the votes “takes all”’; and proportional electoral systems ‘by which a party’s share of parliamentary mandates is proportional to its share of the popular vote’ (Müller-Rommel 1982: 72). The work of Duverger (1954) is of direct relevance here. Duverger distinguishes between the mechanical and psychological consequences of electoral systems. The mechanical effect of electoral systems relates primarily to the fact that ‘because it is more difficult for smaller parties to win seats under non-PR systems, the *mechanics* of these systems are bound to result in fewer parties in parliament’ (Farrell 1997: 149). Electoral systems also have a psychological dimension insofar as their likely political consequences may influence the decision of elites to either form or not to form new political parties. Thus, in plurality systems, it is argued that elites may refrain from forming new parties on the grounds that they know it will be more difficult for their party to

win seats. In addition, plurality systems may have a psychological effect in the sense that 'voters are aware of the fact that a vote for a smaller party is a wasted vote and therefore they are less inclined to bother voting for them' (Farrell 1997: 149).

In light of the above, it might be expected that systems of proportional representation (PR) would be more likely to facilitate the emergence of electorally significant green parties. In terms of their mechanical effect, proportional electoral systems in Austria and the Netherlands may have facilitated the greater electoral success of green parties to the extent that their functioning has made gaining parliamentary representation an 'easier' task than in Britain. Turning to psychological aspects, it might be anticipated that systems of PR should lead to higher levels of electoral support for green parties as voters are aware that, under such conditions, their votes 'count'. That both Austria and the Netherlands have forms of PR thus may go some way towards explaining why significant green parties have emerged in these countries and not in Britain.

A second related factor that may have an impact on the electoral strength of green parties concerns party financing arrangements. As Rüdig has pointed out, the extent to which new parties are able to mount effective electoral challenges often depends upon the availability of certain key resources; most importantly, that of money. Usually relying primarily upon members' contributions, newly formed parties will tend to find themselves in a disadvantageous position vis-à-vis established parties with which major financial interests are invariably linked (Rüdig 1986: 143). In the case of green parties, it may be the case that electoral significance or insignificance will to some degree have been affected by regulations relating to the payment and returning of deposits by prospective parliamentary candidates, the availability of state funding for political parties in the form of help with campaign expenditures or subsidies supporting party research, etc., and rules governing access to the mass media, particularly radio and television, during election campaigns.

Third, the structure of government - that is, its degree of centralisation or decentralisation - may affect a green party's chances of attaining electoral significance (Hauss and Rayside 1978). In broad terms, a distinction can be made between unitary and federal structures of government. Green parties operating within federal systems, such as Austria, may enjoy certain advantages over those competing in unitary systems insofar as they are able to pursue political credibility and attract media attention through participation in state elections and governments. Since state governments often wield considerable political power, and thus have a higher profile than local authorities in unitary systems such as Britain and the Netherlands, they could possibly provide a green party with an ideal opportunity to establish a platform from which to launch itself at the national level. For example, referring to the German example, Frankland has argued that '[b]y clearing electoral hurdles in a number of *Länder* during the early 1980s, the Greens gained national media attention and built up financial resources, parliamentary skills and political credibility' (Frankland 1995: 27). To the extent that the Austrian Greens have been able to make electoral progress at the *Länd* level, this could have raised their profile and facilitated electoral success at the national level.

There is one additional theme connected to political state-institutional structures which has been discussed in relation to new political parties. According to Hauss and Rayside, a country's electoral focus - that is, whether its key electoral unit is the parliamentary seat or the single office of the presidency - may have a bearing on the electoral 'success or failure' of new political parties (Hauss and Rayside 1978). The general argument runs as follows:

When the key electoral unit is the parliamentary seat, there seems to be little discouragement of new parties. If, on the other hand, attention is focused on the single office of the presidency, its zero-sum nature encourages the bipolarization of the party system and makes it hard for weak parties (which most new parties, at least initially, are) to compete effectively. (Hauss and Rayside 1978: 37)

The fact that each of the three countries in this study has a parliamentary system of government, however, means that there is no real basis for comparing the relative impact of parliamentary and presidential systems on the electoral significance of green parties. For this reason, the present chapter will not enter too far into this debate. However, while having a parliamentary system of government, it should be noted that the Austrian political system does display some presidential features. The federal president is directly elected for a six year period and formal powers include the appointment and dismissal of cabinet members, and the right to dissolve parliament. In practice, the federal president has played a very limited role in Austrian politics and has on no occasion made use of his strongest constitutional powers (Müller 1994a: 24). Concerning the emergence of the Austrian Greens, one interesting development that should be mentioned here concerns the extent to which this albeit partial presidential focus did play some role in their emergence, particularly in the early stages. The moderately successful campaigning and performance of a 'green' candidate (Freda-Meissner Blau) in the 1986 Austrian presidential elections (5.5 per cent of the vote) gave a boost to the green movement and encouraged Meissner Blau and her 'loose association', the BIP, to bring together the ALÖ and VGÖ into an electoral alliance. At least one commentator therefore considers Meissner-Blau's candidacy in these presidential elections to be a 'major development in the history of the greens' (Sully 1990: 133). Besides this observation, however, there is unfortunately very little that can be said with respect to the relative impact of parliamentary and presidential systems on the emergence and electoral success of green parties.

2. The Impact of Political State-institutional Structures

(a) The Electoral System

As was mentioned earlier, commentators such as Duverger have claimed that electoral systems can have important political consequences (Duverger 1954). Yet the notion that the type of electoral system might have an impact on the emergence and/or electoral significance of green parties is a position to which some more recent commentators have expressed scepticism. In his study of 'left-libertarian' parties, for example, Herbert Kitschelt contends that while 'none of the five countries with plurality voting systems (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States) has a relevant left-libertarian party ... [a]ll of [these] cases are heavily "overdetermined" by one or several of the structural and institutional variables (affluence, the welfare state, labor corporatism, and left party governments)' (Kitschelt 1988a: 224). Kitschelt points to the existence of successful third-party challenges from non-'left-libertarian' parties in these countries as further evidence to support his claim that the electoral system need not necessarily impede the rise of new parties. For Kitschelt, therefore, whether a country produces an electorally significant 'left-libertarian' party is not so much dependent upon electoral laws as other social and institutional circumstances (Kitschelt 1988a: 224). This conclusion is broadly in line with that reached by Hauss and Rayside in their study of the development of new political parties (Hauss and Rayside 1978). In light of this controversy, the following section considers in more depth the influence of the electoral system on the emergence and electoral significance of green parties in Austria, Britain and the Netherlands.

Regarding the British Green Party, there is little evidence to suggest that the potential disadvantages invariably encountered by new parties competing under the 'first-past-the-post' (FPTP) electoral system were significant

considerations for its founders in 1973. If, as has been claimed, the initial goal of the party was to gain 'a majority of Westminster seats or strongly [influence] a governing party' (Wall 1994: 16), then this does suggest a large amount of naivety on the part of the party founders. In fact, the only electoral system related factor that did contribute to the Whittackers' decision to form PEOPLE was the relative lack of formal legal regulation of parties in Britain. According to Wall:

[F]inding to their surprise that there were no legal requirements necessary to establish a Party, they simply placed an advertisement in the Coventry Evening Telegraph on January 31st 1973 proclaiming the existence of PEOPLE and asking for members willing to stand as candidates. (Wall 1994: 16)

However, while the disadvantages posed to small parties by the British electoral system were clearly not considered serious enough to prevent the *formation* of PEOPLE, it is possible that these issues may have limited the extent to which the new party was able to attract potential recruits. As Wall has argued, substantial sections of the environmental movement were against the formation of an 'ecology' party, and early attempts by PEOPLE to strengthen the nascent party by attracting their support proved fruitless (Wall 1994: 19-20). It is likely that the prospects of limited electoral success under the present electoral law was one of the factors contributing to the environmental movement's lack of interest in PEOPLE.¹

Although the British electoral system clearly did not have psychological consequences strong enough to prevent the founding of a green party, it is clear that - contrary to the claims of Kitschelt - the former has been an important factor in the continued electoral insignificance of the Green Party. Under the FPTP electoral system, the country is divided up into 659 constituencies, each electing one MP. In order for a candidate to win a seat s/he needs 'more votes than any of

¹ The relationship between the environmental movement and the British Green Party is explored in brief at a later point in this chapter and further in chapter 8 of this thesis.

the other candidates, but not necessarily an overall majority of all the votes cast in the constituency' (Farrell 1997: 12). The mechanics of the FPTP electoral system make it extremely difficult for new and small parties without a geographically concentrated support base to achieve parliamentary representation. It is likely that this knowledge has fuelled a general perception that a vote for the Green Party is a 'wasted one' and hampered its performance at national elections. According to Sara Parkin, a poll carried out in the run-up to the 1987 general election showed that 13 per cent of the British electorate would have voted for the Greens if they considered that their candidates had a chance of winning a seat (cited in Rootes 1992: 182). The 'wasted vote' hypothesis receives some support considering that the highest share of the vote that a Green candidate received in the election was 3 per cent (Rootes 1992: 182). At the 1989 European elections, the Greens Party's overall share of the vote surpassed the results of the 1987 poll, yet even with 14.9 per cent of the vote the party failed to win one seat (Carter 1997a: 197-198). At subsequent general and European elections the Green Party's overall share of the vote slumped back to its previous negligible levels.²

According to Rootes, the FPTP electoral system has contributed to the development of an extremely competitive party system in which 'there is room for no more than one new contender at a time' (Rootes 1992: 182). With the dominance of the Labour and Conservative parties, and the emergence and development of the Liberal Democrats as the 'third party' in British politics, the Green Party has found itself with little prospect of achieving electoral advancement - '[t]he ecology of the party system [has prevented] an ecology party from getting off the ground' (Rootes 1992: 182).

Rootes (1995a) and Rüdig and Lowe (1986) focus on a further way in which the FPTP system may have contributed to the electoral insignificance of

² Most recently, however, the Green Party's electoral fortunes have taken something of an upturn. At the June 1999 European elections the party gained 6.3 per cent of the vote and two MEPs (*The Economist*, 19 June 1999). Its improved performance can to some extent be explained by the new regional list system employed in these elections. It is likely that the Greens profited from the removal of the 'wasted vote' phenomenon which affected their vote at previous elections.

the British Green Party. For these authors, the marginal position of the Green Party under the current electoral system has meant that it has been unable to attract the membership or even votes of the wider environmental movement. Again, this may have been symptomatic of the psychological aspect of electoral systems discussed earlier. Conscious of the lack of opportunities presented by the adoption of an electoral strategy, the modern British environmental movement has tended to maintain its distance from the more radical Green Party, choosing instead to build upon the political influence that it has acquired within the established political system, and to focus on tactics such as pressure group lobbying. As Carter puts it '[t]he environmental lobby sees little to gain from working with a Green Party with no MPs' (Carter 1997a: 198). Other new social movements, such as the peace movement, have in the past similarly chosen not to work with the electorally weak Green Party, instead viewing the Labour Party as a more worthwhile target for advancing their causes. Their lack of support may have reinforced the public view of the Green Party as a 'narrow, single issue party', further dampening its electoral appeal (Carter 1997a: 198). More recently, the Green Party has been more openly supportive of extra-parliamentary protest activities, such as those staged by the anti-roads movement, and perhaps this reflects a growing realisation that, without electoral reform, there is little prospect of it advancing its politics directly through the Westminster Parliament (Carter 1997a: 200).

At first sight, green parties in the Netherlands would appear to enjoy a considerable advantage over their British counterpart insofar as the Dutch employ an extreme form of PR for national elections based upon the list system. Under this system, the country is treated as a single 150-member district so that '[t]he proportional distribution of seats is as close as possible to the proportion of votes that the parties have achieved' (Andeweg and Irwin 1993: 89). In addition, the Dutch electoral system does not establish a 'special electoral threshold that a party must cross in order to achieve representation in Parliament' (Andeweg and

Irwin 1993: 87). Commenting on this aspect of the Dutch system, Andeweg and Irwin state that:

The only threshold is the electoral quotient formed by dividing the number of votes cast at an election by the number of seats in Parliament ... This amounts to only 0.667 percent of the vote ... Each multiple of the electoral quotient entitles a party to an additional seat ... The seats that remain after parties have been allotted their multiples of the electoral quotient are the so-called "remainder seats". These seats are then distributed among the parties that have exceeded the electoral quotient, according to the method of largest average (the so-called d'Hondt method). (Andeweg and Irwin 1993: 87)³

However, despite the existence of 'one of the most proportional [electoral] systems in the world' (Andeweg and Irwin 1993: 89) certain green parties, and the political parties which later merged to form Green Left (PSP, PPR, CPN), have sometimes struggled electorally. Thus, commenting on the case of the small *De Groenen* party established in 1983, Lucardie notes that:

it suffered failure after failure. In 1984 it failed to win a seat in the European Parliament, which requires 4 per cent of the popular vote. The Greens received 1.3 per cent. In 1986, 1989 and 1994 the party failed to win any seats in the Lower Chamber of Parliament. At the general elections of 1994, the Greens obtained hardly more votes than the Party for Environment and Law ... a conservative green group of only 35 members founded in 1993. (Lucardie 1997: 187)

At the 1998 Dutch parliamentary elections *De Groenen* once again performed poorly, attracting only 0.2 per cent of the vote and gaining no seats.⁴ The degree to which opportunities for the electoral development of *De Groenen* have been affected by the patterns of political competition will be addressed more fully in chapter 7.

Turning to the case of Green Left, it is clear that electoral co-operation of the Communists (CPN), Pacifist Socialists (PSP) and Radicals (PPR) during the 1980s was, in part, triggered by the latter's failure to perform well in certain

³ For further details on the Dutch electoral system, see Andeweg and Irwin (1993: Ch. 4).

⁴ Information supplied by Richard Wouters (Green Left European Affairs Adviser), May 1998.

national parliamentary elections. At the 1977 elections, the CPN was 'shaken to its core' by the loss of five of its seven seats. It quickly embarked upon a 'process of ideological and organizational renewal' and soon became 'acceptable as a partner to the Pacifists and Radicals' (Voerman 1995: 114). Further electoral disasters occurred in 1986, with the CPN losing all of its seats, the PSP two of its three, leaving the PPR clinging to its two. In view of these developments 'it was not surprising that the parties reached an understanding for the national elections of 1989' (Voerman 1995: 117). Paradoxically it seems that even extreme forms of PR provide no necessary guarantees of small party electoral success, and that the emergence of Green Left was to some extent facilitated by the mutually held feeling that, in continuing to operate independently of each other, the declining small New Left parties would soon face the prospect of electoral extinction.

Since its formation Green Left has benefited from the Dutch electoral system and consistently managed to clear the very low electoral threshold required for parliamentary representation which it imposes. It is an electorally significant green party, having surpassed the 4 per cent threshold for inclusion on two occasions in the past decade (1989 and 1998). The party's continued representation in parliament has enabled it to exert at least some limited pressure on the governing parties and occasionally to contribute to the shaping of the political agenda, as in the case of its 'green tax' on fuel proposals (Lucardie 1997: 188-189). The relative ease with which new parties with modest electoral support bases - such as Green Left - have been able to surpass the threshold of electoral significance in the Netherlands has partly reflected that country's electoral system. Unlike in Britain, where voters have been reluctant - under the current electoral law - to cast a 'wasted' vote for the Green Party, voters sympathetic to green party politics in the Netherlands have been more willing to cast a vote for Green Left, on the grounds that the party stands a good chance of gaining parliamentary representation and wielding some measure of political influence.

A list-type system of PR is also employed in Austria, although the electoral law has been subject to some modification in recent years. Between 1971 and 1992, the country was divided into nine electoral districts, corresponding to the *Länder*. Under this system the number of seats (183 in total) allocated to each electoral district was determined by the latter's population. The distribution of seats among political parties competing in National Council elections took place in two rounds. In the first round of seat distribution each party gained 'as many seats as the amount of times it [could] obtain the number of votes required for a seat in each electoral district', i.e. the electoral quotient (Müller 1994a: 25). The second round involved aggregating the electoral districts of the first round into two units and distributing the remaining votes (according to the d'Hondt method) to those parties which obtained at least one seat in the first round (a *Grundmandat*) (Müller 1994a: 25). Research suggests that this second stage of vote distribution has been a highly significant factor in the election of Green parliamentary candidates (Lauber and Müller 1998: 12).⁵

It could be argued that, until 1992, the absence of a fixed threshold of parliamentary representation also provided something of an electoral advantage for green parties in Austria compared with those competing in, for instance, Germany or Sweden. Yet despite this claim (Haerpfer 1989: 28), it was not until the 1986 elections - when members of the ALÖ and VGÖ joined hands in an electoral alliance (*Die Grüne Alternative - Freda Meissner-Blau*) - that a green party achieved electoral significance winning 4.8 per cent of the vote and eight parliamentary seats (Haerpfer 1989: 27-28). In the previous national elections in 1983 the ALÖ and VGÖ competed as separate parties, and neither gained sufficient votes to fulfil the 'significance' criterion nor to qualify for parliamentary seats (Frankland 1992: 6). Haerpfer points out that had the parties agreed on a 'common candidature' they would have together gained 'more than five seats' (Haerpfer 1989: 24). The degree to which the Austrian Greens have

⁵ According to Lauber and Müller '[i]n the four parliamentary elections so far, almost half of the Green MPs owed their election to this mode of calculation in which the "leftover" votes from the first phase are allocated' (Lauber and Müller 1998: 12).

been able to achieve electoral significance and national parliamentary representation has to an extent reflected their ability to form a united electoral front. This is a theme pursued further in the next chapter.

In 1992, however, the SPÖ and ÖVP coalition government introduced a new, three-stage electoral system. The first stage distributes seats at the regional district level (of which there are 43); the second stage distributes seats at the *Land* level; the third stage distributes seats at the national level. In order for a party to participate in the second and third stages it must either have won at least one seat at the regional district level or have obtained at least 4 per cent of the national vote. This new system was first used in the 1994 national elections and has presented something of a new challenge for the Austrian Greens. For example, at the 1995 election the Greens came quite close to the new 4 per cent threshold (4.8 per cent). The decline in the Greens' share of the vote between 1994 (7.3 per cent) and 1995 has in part been explained by many of their 1994 voters switching tactically to the SPÖ in an attempt to prevent the possibility of a coalition between Jörg Haider's far-right FPÖ and the ÖVP (Sully 1996: 639; Dawe 1996: 6). This suggests that the Green vote in Austria may be somewhat volatile. Further, the presence of the 4 per cent threshold means that, in the future, the Austrian Greens may be faced with the prospect of losing their parliamentary representation should the formation of a similar coalition government seem a distinct possibility. However, this must be balanced against the reality that with regional electoral districts comprising an average of 20 seats, successfully clearing the alternative barrier (one regional seat) for gaining some national representation should not be too difficult a task for a political party such as the Greens (Farrell 1997: 70).

(b) Party Financing Arrangements

One potentially important issue for consideration here is the financial threshold of deposits. The requirement that parliamentary candidates pay a deposit amounting to £500 for general elections and £750 in European elections in Britain has presented the Green Party with a further barrier to overcome in its attempt to attain electoral significance.⁶ The requirement that, in order for the deposit to be returned, a candidate must have received at least 5 per cent of the constituency vote has proved a particularly difficult one for the Green Party to fulfil since, as has been argued, potential voters have, in the past, been less inclined to vote for them on the grounds that they feel they do not have a realistic chance of winning a seat. On the few occasions where the Green Party has chosen to field a large number of candidates, e.g. in 1992, the total loss of deposits financially crippled the party, leading to a decline in party activity and membership levels, and the resurfacing of factional disputes between 'electoralists' and 'decentralists' concerning the wisdom of a national election strategy. This debate continued into 1996 during which the Autumn Conference debated a motion proposing that the party should withdraw from the 1997 general election. It was eventually decided that the party should 'field a significant number of candidates and qualify for a TV and radio broadcast' (*The Green Activist*, Winter 1997). In the event, however, every one of the 95 who stood as a Green candidate at this election lost his/her deposit (Carter 1997b: 157). However, while the introduction of some form of public funding of campaigns or party activity would possibly ease the financial pressures imposed upon the Greens, and perhaps enable the party to achieve a more prominent national profile, the aforementioned obstacles presented by the FPTP electoral system would still prove extremely difficult for the party to surmount.

⁶ The financial deposit payable by candidates competing in British general elections rose from £150 to £500 in 1987 (Webb 1994: 840).

In the Netherlands, Green Left has benefited from more generous party financing arrangements than those found in Britain. For instance, deposit requirements are less demanding with each party, to compete in a national election, depositing 25,000 guilders (approximately £7,000) however many districts (19 in total) it chooses to contest. In addition, the deposit is returned 'if the party receives 75 per cent of the national electoral quotient, which amounts to roughly 0.5 per cent of the total vote' (Andeweg and Irwin 1993: 86). This is clearly less demanding than the 5 per cent of the constituency vote required for a refund under the British system. In addition, political parties represented in the Dutch parliament - in 1998 there were nine (Irwin 1999: 275) - benefit through the receipt of modest financial assistance from the government in the form of help towards the cost of television and radio broadcasts, and subsidies for their research, education, training and youth work. The precise amount given to each party is determined by its size in Parliament (Andeweg and Irwin 1993: 67). Thus even a party with a relatively small number of MPs, such as Green Left, obtains funds that it can use in ways which promote its activities and which might potentially broaden its electoral appeal.

The availability of state subsidies for political parties has been a particularly important factor in the development of the Austrian Greens' organisation and the maintenance of their electoral position since the 1986 National Council elections. Müller describes the workings of the Austrian system in the following terms:

Since 1975, all parties that poll more than one per cent of the vote have been entitled to receive state party finance in election years while the parties represented in the *Nationalrat* are entitled to receive these funds permanently. Parties with at least five MPs receive a fixed amount of money, the remaining funds are distributed according to the parties' share of the vote. Public party finance increased considerably in real terms since the 1970s. It is currently the single most important source of income for all parties and by far the dominant one for the FPÖ, the Greens and the Liberal Forum. (Müller 1996b: 66-67)

As well as subsidies at the national level, Austrian political parties benefit from the allocation of public funds at the *Land* and local levels.⁷ As the above quotation indicates, state finance has been the most important source of income for the Austrian Greens. Unlike other Austrian political parties, formal membership and the payment of a fixed membership fee have never been viewed as prerequisites for engaging in party activities and campaigns (Müller 1994b: 58). Public financing is therefore the key factor which ‘makes up for thin membership contributions’ (Frankland 1993: 9). Such financing has been instrumental in enabling the Austrian Greens to develop a common party organisation, its parliamentary Fraktion and political education institution (Sully 1990: 133). It has also enabled the Greens to mount effective electoral challenges and, since parties must raise a non-refundable ‘deposit’ of Ös 54,000 (approximately £2,500) in order to put up a nation-wide candidacy at general elections, it is difficult to see how they could comfortably accomplish the former in the absence of state party finance (Müller 1996b: 68).

(c) Government Centralisation/Decentralisation

Does the existence of a federal system of government in Austria provide certain advantages for the Greens as compared with green parties competing in unitary political systems such as Britain and the Netherlands? According to King, ‘[p]olitically and financially power in the British polity [has resided] at the centre and not outside Whitehall’ (King 1993: 216). The sovereignty of parliament, and the lack of constitutional status of local government, means that the latter is without many of the powers granted to it in other European states. Since 1979, the position of local government in Britain has been further marginalised, with the establishment of alternative local agencies to deliver services that were previously the responsibility of local authorities (King 1993: 194). The peripheral

⁷ Müller notes that ‘subsidies at the *Land* level are of greater importance than at the national level, and between 1979 and 1990 were almost three times as big’ (Müller 1994b: 55).

status of local government in Britain has meant that even when the Green Party has managed to make some limited progress at the local level by winning council seats at the county, district or parish levels (Harrison 1995: 301-302), it has received minimal publicity. This has further marginalised the Green Party and provided little in the way of a platform from which to pursue electoral success at the national level.⁸

As in Britain, the Dutch political system is characterised by a high degree of centralisation. Consequently, the local government system in the Netherlands does not have a great deal of autonomy. The system is one based on 'provinces and municipalities, with lower tiers being subject to the control of higher tiers and the national government' (Gallagher *et al.* 1995: 148). According to Andeweg and Irwin, local government is thus a relatively 'depoliticised' affair with governing coalitions consisting of almost all parties and, for the most part, involves the implementation of central guidelines. It is for this reason that in the Netherlands local government is often referred to in terms of 'local administration' (Andeweg and Irwin 1993: 163). In view of this, there are fewer opportunities for new parties such as Green Left to gain the media publicity and political experience that might flow from participation in more high profile state elections and governments in federal systems. However, compared with the British Green Party, the Dutch Green Left has achieved a greater level of electoral success at the local level, particularly in urban areas such as Amsterdam, Groningen and Nijmegen, allowing it some influence on the shaping of local environmental policy (Harrison 1995: 299; *GroenLinks* 1990d).

In contrast to both Britain and the Netherlands, Austria is a federal system with its two main layers of government being at the central state (*Bund*) and provincial (*Land*) levels. Federalism 'implies an entrenchment of some level of regional government in the national decision-making process, with worthwhile powers that are protected by the constitution' (Gallagher *et al.* 1995: 135-136).

⁸ The creation of a directly elected Scottish Parliament with tax-raising powers and a less powerful Welsh Assembly may provide new platforms and opportunities for the advancement of green party politics in Britain. At the recent (6 May 1999) Scottish Parliament elections, the Scottish Green Party gained one seat (out of 129) (*The Guardian*, 8 May 1999).

According to Müller, the nine *Länder* have 'considerable legislative competencies of their own' and 'are entrusted with a substantial body of indirect federal administration' (Müller 1994a: 24). Since the classic phase of 'consociationalism' in Austria (1945-66) there has been greater importance attached to the territorial dimension of Austrian politics. In particular, elections to the provincial parliaments (*Landtage*) have assumed national importance with the consequence that *Land* party organisations and their leaders exercise considerable political power (Müller 1994a: 24; Luther 1995: 123). Because it is federal in structure, the Austrian political system has presented undoubted opportunities for the electoral development of green party politics. For example, the relative success of the VGÖ/ALÖ electoral alliance at the 1984 *Land* elections in Vorarlberg (13 per cent of the vote and four seats) gave an important boost to the view that a single, united green party could succeed in Austrian politics (Haerpfer 1989: 26). In addition, the considerable legislative power of *Land* government has provided the Greens with a potentially important platform on which to build their political reputation in Austria. For some time, the Austrian Greens have set their sights on governing Vienna in coalition with the SPÖ, yet these hopes were dashed in 1996 as a result of massive losses by the latter (Lauber 1997a: 186). As well as Vienna, the Greens' best results in the 1990s have come in the urban centres of the more rural provinces of Tyrol, Vorarlberg and Salzburg (Lauber 1995: 316). As well as representation in the National Council, therefore, the Greens have been able to advance Green ideas in several *Landtage*. In some cases, e.g. in Tyrol, Green ministers have joined *Land* governments and, in others, e.g. Salzburg, the Greens have achieved coalition governing status (Lauber 1995: 319). Federalism has presented the Austrian Greens with certain advantages and has, in all likelihood, facilitated the party's national electoral success.

3. Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to examine three political state-institutional structures in terms of the degree to which they have had a bearing on the emergence and electoral significance of green parties in Austria, Britain and the Netherlands. In contrast to the conclusions of Kitschelt (1988a), it has been argued that electoral systems have played an important role in accounting for the presence or absence of electorally significant green parties. Most importantly, the preceding discussion has shown that the mechanics of the British electoral system have meant that the Green Party has had little prospect of gaining any form of national representation. For much of its history, the Green Party has achieved negligible levels of electoral support, partially reflecting the reality that many potential voters consider a vote for the party to be a 'wasted' one. Any serious account of the continuing electoral marginality of the British Greens must take into consideration the impact of the British electoral law. It is interesting, however, that the inhospitable nature of the FPTP system did not act as a brake on the formation of a green party in the first place. To this extent, the present study confirms the views of Harmel and Robertson, who argue that while the type of electoral system does not necessarily hamper the emergence of new parties, it can play an important role in a party's chances of electoral 'success' (Harmel and Robertson 1985).

In contrast to the British Greens, green parties in Austria and the Netherlands have competed under conditions of PR. That both the Austrian Greens and Dutch Green Left have attained electoral significance to some extent reflects the greater degree to which ecologically concerned citizens have been willing to cast a green vote, in view of the better prospects of achieving representation under their respective countries' systems of PR. Yet it has also been maintained that PR is not necessarily a sufficient condition for green party electoral success. As the Dutch situation shows, support levels for the 'pure

green' *De Groenen* have been negligible despite an electoral system based on an extreme form of PR. The existence of a direct electoral competitor in the form of Green Left has effectively 'cancelled out' any advantage that the party might otherwise have gained under the current electoral law. Further, in Austria, a significant green party failed to materialise until 1986 despite the existence of a PR-based electoral system. This again reflected the patterns of political competition - that is to say, competition between two separate 'green' parties (VGÖ and ALÖ) - in the party system prior to this point in time. With the development of a unified party organisation, the Austrian Greens have attained electoral significance and parliamentary representation under conditions of PR. The extent to which patterns of political competition have impacted on the electoral significance of green parties is explored in greater depth in the next chapter.

It is also important to stress the degree to which party financing arrangements have influenced the electoral prospects of green parties. In Britain, levels of electoral participation by the Green Party have been restricted by the substantial deposit requirement and the absence of state funding for political parties. In contrast, the Austrian Greens have benefited from generous levels of state funding which have enabled them to develop their party organisation and mount effective election campaigns. The Dutch Green Left has also received some state funding, and this has undoubtedly aided the party in its campaigning and other work.

The Austrian Greens have been able to make considerable electoral headway at the *Land* level. Austria's federal system of government has provided opportunities for the Greens to build up their electoral support base insofar as elections at the provincial level tend to be high profile and attract considerable media attention. Moreover, participation, or power-sharing, at this level has undoubtedly given the Greens a chance to prove their political competence, and to enhance their reputation and appeal across the nation as a whole. In summary, examining green parties within the context of their respective political state-

institutional structures appears to provide important insights into the factors impinging upon their national electoral performance. However, as will be argued in the next chapter, a consideration of patterns of electoral dealignment and the nature of political competition in each country can provide further insight into the political context of the emergence and varying electoral success of green parties.

Chapter 7

Green Parties, Electoral Dealignment and the Nature of Political Competition

The relationship between social cleavages, the structures of political competition, and electoral stability and change has for several decades formed an important research theme for analysts of politics.¹ It was during the late 1960s that Lipset and Rokkan advanced their 'freezing' hypothesis, which stated that Western European party systems had taken shape with the coming of universal mass suffrage in the 1920s and had remained 'frozen' over the past 50 years (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). For the majority of political commentators until at least the mid-1970s, social cleavages - principally those of class and religion - were considered to be the most important determinants of voting behaviour. Yet this relatively 'stable' model of voting patterns has more recently been challenged by those who argue that Western European party systems are undergoing a process of electoral dealignment. A number of recent studies have pointed to trends such as declining levels of social-based voting, lower levels of party identification, increased electoral volatility and the fragmentation of party systems as evidence in support of the view that European electorates are being fundamentally transformed (Gallagher *et al.* 1995).

While there is a wealth of literature dealing with the impact of these processes on established political parties, very little has been written on the degree to which they might have influenced both the emergence and electoral significance of green parties. Hence an aim of the present chapter is to address precisely these issues. The first part of the chapter provides a discussion of the

¹ The classic statement on this relationship can be found in Lipset and Rokkan (1967). For more recent surveys of the literature see Zuckerman (1975); Dalton *et al.* (1984); Mair (1996) and Dalton (1996).

key issues that have featured within the literature on electoral dealignment. This is followed in the second part by an assessment of these issues in terms of how they have affected political activity - including green party politics - in Austria, Britain and the Netherlands. As will be seen, however, a considerable degree of ambiguity surrounds the extent to which it is possible to unravel the patterns of cause and effect arising from these processes. Caution must be exercised when exploring the connection between increased electoral volatility and green party support, for example, since it is possible that such volatility may have been the effect, rather than the cause, of green voting. The problem of 'cause-effect' is one which emerges across the various aspects of electoral dealignment examined in this chapter and, therefore, the complexity of arguments linking dealignment to the emergence and electoral significance of green parties should constantly be borne in mind.

The third part of the chapter marks a shift in emphasis and considers the structures of political competition in Austria, Britain and the Netherlands. Several authors have argued that the emergence and electoral success of green parties may, to some extent, have been facilitated by the unresponsiveness of existing parties to 'new' issues - most notably 'the environment' - and broader patterns of political competition (Rootes 1995b: 241-247; Doyle and McEachern 1998: 126-128). Within a climate characterised by increased electoral dealignment and volatility, it is possible that the degree to which the emergence and electoral success of green parties have been facilitated by these processes has depended upon the responsiveness of existing parties to heightened ecological concerns, and hence the availability of political 'space' within the party system for a green electoral challenge. This is one particular line of argument that will be pursued in this part of the chapter. In addition, it is possible that the electoral significance of green parties may to some extent reflect the political saliency of environmental issues; that is, whether or not 'the environment' has emerged as a key issue of electoral competition within the minds of voters and political parties in specific countries. Employing the terminology of Anthony Downs, levels of

electoral support achieved by green parties may in part reflect the dynamics of the 'issue-attention cycle' (Downs 1972). The overall argument of this chapter is that attention to issues of electoral dealignment, and the nature of political competition, can provide added insight into the range of political factors which have impinged upon the emergence and electoral significance of green parties.

1. Electoral Dealignment in Western Party Systems

The idea that party competition and voting decisions might be structured around the social divisions existing within a polity is one that has occupied a central position within traditional electoral research. It is a line of argument most notably and extensively pursued within the work of Lipset and Rokkan (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). Writing in the 1960s, Lipset and Rokkan sought to establish the historical linkages between social cleavages and party systems. It is important at this stage to be clear about the sense in which Lipset and Rokkan used the term 'cleavage'. For these authors, a cleavage had three central components. The first is that it consisted in a social division between people based upon certain key characteristics such as occupation, status, religion or ethnicity. Second, the formation of a cleavage necessitated the existence of a sense of 'collective identity' among the groups involved in the social division - for example, as workers or employers - which forms a basis for their action. Third, a cleavage is expressed in organisational terms and '[t]his is typically achieved as a result of the activities of a trade union, a church, a political party, or some other organisation that gives formal institutional expression to the interests on one side of the division' (Gallagher *et al.* 1995: 210-211).

Central to Lipset and Rokkan's argument was the idea that the origins of the social cleavages which determined contemporary political alignments could be traced back to two successive revolutions in the modernisation of Western Europe: the National Revolution and the Industrial Revolution. Flanagan and Dalton explain their significance in the following terms:

In the course of the National Revolution, a number of *segmental cleavages*, revolving around religious, ethnic and regional divisions, emerged as modernising states struggled for national integration and the centralisation of political authority. In many respects, differences in culture and values lay at the base of these conflicts, although they certainly had important ramifications for the distribution of wealth and economic power. By contrast, the later Industrial Revolution was primarily associated with *economic cleavages* between industrial sectors (primary and secondary industry) and between social classes (the middle and working classes). (Flanagan and Dalton 1984: 9)

Lipset and Rokkan's key point was that the divisions caused by these revolutions formed a basis from which political conflict, and thereby a framework for party competition, initially arose. For Lipset and Rokkan, Western European political parties essentially reflected established group cleavages within society and, to the extent that the latter remained significant, they could be expected to persist. An important theme within Lipset and Rokkan's work related to the degree to which Western European party systems 'had crystallised with the advent of universal mass suffrage and had remained essentially frozen over the previous 50 years' - the so-called 'freezing hypothesis' (Flanagan and Dalton 1984: 7).

The conclusions of Lipset and Rokkan generated a wealth of literature that seemed to confirm the significance of the relationship between social cleavages - particularly class and religious differences - and voting. For example, studies of modern party systems by Lipset, Rose and Lijphart stressed the importance of the class cleavage as a dimension of ideological cleavage in most democracies (Lipset 1963; Rose 1974; Lijphart 1981). In addition, early empirical research affirmed the centrality of religion as an influence on mass voting behaviour; hence Rose and Urwin's (1969) claim that 'religious divisions, not class, are the main social bases of parties in the Western world today' (cited in Dalton 1996: 326). This picture of stability was seemingly completed with the development of the partisan learning model, which predicted that the durable structure of party systems would lead to the spread of long-standing party attachments among the electorate with the effect of reinforcing that system stability (Converse 1969). Until at least the mid-1970s the

'party identification' paradigm was dominant within the sub-discipline of electoral studies, and this implied that social alignments and partisanship formed the principal explanations of voting behaviour.

However, several problems with the 'stable' model of European party politics became apparent during the course of the 1970s. According to two political analysts, the 'pattern of frozen alignments and strong partisan attachments [gave] way to one of decomposition and partisan decline' (Flanagan and Dalton 1984: 7). As was discussed in chapter 4, some argued that changes in the social structure - in particular, the shift from industrial to 'post-industrial' employment patterns (Bell 1974; Huntington 1974) - were leading to altered cleavage structures and a shift away from politics and political conflict based upon the central theme of class. Numerous studies attest to the general erosion in class voting differences across a wide range of advanced industrial democracies (Dalton 1996: 322-325). Others, as outlined in chapter 3, claimed that a general process of value change was taking place and claimed that this was further promoting the dealignment of mass politics (Inglehart 1971, 1977). The emergence of a new order of global ecological risks and problems that could not be easily resolved within the traditional framework of 'class' politics caused a further weakening of established party loyalties and fuelled demands for new vehicles of political representation.

Along with an erosion in the impact of traditional social cleavages on voting choice, the argument that Western political systems were undergoing a process of dealignment rested upon the observation of three further and, to some extent, related trends. First, several studies pointed to declining levels of party identification, that is 'the psychological attachment which is alleged to tie voters to parties' (Gallagher *et al.* 1995: 230). A second symptom of dealignment was considered to involve the trend towards the increasing fragmentation of party systems and, in particular, the rise of new parties. The main point here was that the weakening of party ties based upon traditional cleavages would provide a more favourable environment for the emergence of political parties that would seek to advance new political programmes (Dalton 1996: 332). The third trend cited in support of the dealignment thesis

concerned increased 'electoral volatility'. This latter concept has been defined by Pedersen as the number of voters changing their choice of party between elections (Pedersen 1979).

Returning to the case studies it seems reasonable to propose that processes of electoral dealignment may have had some influence upon the emergence and electoral success of green parties. It may, for instance, be the case that the development of green parties in part reflects the degree to which there has been a decline in social cleavage voting, and levels of party identification more generally, in each country. The implication here is that green parties may perform less well electorally in those countries where voters already have strong and long-standing ties to one of the established parties (Hauss and Rayside 1978: 49). Of related interest here is the question of electoral volatility. As a further symptom of dealignment, increasing electoral volatility may have benefited green parties insofar as votes are less 'structured' around established party loyalties with the consequence that more votes are 'up for grabs' from election to election (Andeweg and Irwin 1993: 99). The interest here will be on the extent to which green parties have been able to appeal to former supporters of established or other parties from one election to another. Finally, a process of party system fragmentation, brought about by a weakening of links between voters and established political parties, may have created a more favourable climate for the emergence of green parties as voters seek new political platforms from which to advance ecological and other connected issues. These possibilities are explored in relation to the three case studies below.

2. Party Identification, Electoral Volatility and Party System Fragmentation in Three Countries

(a) Austria

For much of the post-war period Austria's party system was characterised by high levels of stability and reflected the social cleavages whose origins lay at least as far back as the late nineteenth century. The Austrian party system has traditionally been dominated by three political subcultures, or *Lager* (camps): Socialist, Catholic-conservative and the German-national-liberal *Lager*. According to Müller '[t]he traditional cleavages between the three *Lager* were socio-economic and religious. While the socio-economic cleavage divided the Socialist *Lager* from the other two, the religious cleavage separated the Catholic-conservatives and the other two *Lager*' (Müller 1996b: 60). Each of these political subcultures became allied to one of Austria's major political parties. In the post-war period, the socialist *Lager* was expressed principally through the Socialist Party (SPÖ), the Catholic-conservative *Lager* through the People's Party (ÖVP) and the German-national-liberal *Lager* through the Freedom Party (FPÖ) (Müller 1996b: 60-62). One commentator expresses the significance of the *Lager* parties in the following terms:

[they] involved life-long loyalty of supporters and even inter-generational party loyalty. Ideology and subcultural ties ensured the cohesion and maintenance of the *Lager*. The subcultural ties were provided by the homogeneous social composition of each *Lager* and by the vast network of *Lager* organizations which made it possible to spend one's life within the boundaries of one particular *Lager* from the cradle to the grave. (Müller 1996b: 71)

The effect of all this was a highly stable party system in which the social structures of the two main parties - the SPÖ and ÖVP - were predominantly based upon membership of a particular class. As Müller and Ulram put it:

the major Austrian parties in the inter-war and immediate post-war periods had a clear class basis. The SPÖ represented first and foremost manual workers and low-ranking white-collar employees, which the party referred to as its 'core groups' until the mid-1960s. The ÖVP, calling itself a *Volkspartei* (a party of all people), aimed at a wider appeal but had its strongholds in two occupational groups, the farmers and the self-employed, which were still numerous in the immediate post-war period. (Müller and Ulram 1995: 147)

Studies show that levels of party identification in Austria were at their strongest during the 1950s and 1960s. Throughout these decades almost three quarters of the electorate identified with a political party (Plasser and Ulram 1985: 6). Yet successive surveys have shown that there has been a progressive decline in levels of party identification in Austria since this period. During the 1970s and 1980s, between 60 and 65 per cent of the electorate identified with a political party and, in 1994, only 44 per cent did so (Plasser and Ulram 1985: 6; Müller 1996b: 72). One explanation for this decline stresses the extent to which changes in the social structure - most notably, the shift from an industrial to 'post-industrial' economy (chapter 4) - have gradually eroded the social bases of the two main *Lager* parties. In particular, a decline in the proportion of the workforce employed in 'blue-collar' occupations, a shrinking of the agricultural and self-employed sectors, and the expansion of a service sector employing white-collar workers (now the strongest occupational group) with fewer traditional party loyalties, have resulted in political parties 'no longer [having] the clear class profile which was a prominent feature of *Lager* parties' (Müller 1996b: 71). Further, increased social reflexivity and public concern about global ecological risks and problems (chapter 5) have fostered the emergence of a new critical consciousness among new middle class groups in recent decades. Declining party attachments from the late 1970s onwards also reflected 'sharp reductions in public confidence in system output' (Luther 1987: 380), as the stability of the social-democratic hegemony of the 1970s gave way to a climate of economic insecurity and rising unemployment (Gerlich *et al.* 1988). Austrian citizens became increasingly

critical of what they saw to be the self-seeking, inept and corrupt behaviour of mainstream party politicians (Luther 1987). Together, these developments contribute towards an explanation of the declining levels of party identification witnessed in Austria over the past few decades. Another marked trend within the context of Austrian electoral behaviour has been a sharp increase in levels of electoral volatility. The period 1953-83 was characterised by electoral stability in Austria with an average Pedersen index of aggregate electoral volatility of 2.9 per cent. However, according to election surveys, aggregate volatility has increased steadily since this period - from 6.4 per cent in 1986, to 9.3 per cent in 1990 and to its all time high (14.2 per cent) in 1994 (Müller 1996b: 72-75). Thus, as well as declining levels of class-based voting and party identification, studies of Austrian electoral behaviour suggest that voters have been more willing to consider switching from one party to another between elections (Müller 1996b).

These tendencies may have had important implications for the development of green party politics in Austria. It might be that the emergence and eventual electoral success of green parties in Austria during the 1980s were in part facilitated by a changing class structure, a decline in traditional class voting and the weakening of links between voters and parties as outlined above. As was described in chapter 4, the Austrian Greens have certainly been over-represented in their support base by 'post-industrial' white-collar workers employed in the service sector, which suggests that they do not have a traditional 'class' identity.

Evidence with respect to electoral volatility at first sight appears to offer some confirmation of this argument. Kitschelt, for example, argues that at the 1983 elections many of the SPÖ's losses were the result of voters switching to one of the, then, two green parties (ALÖ and VGÖ). Further, in 1986, more than 1 per cent of the SPÖ's total loss of 4.8 per cent was accounted for by former SPÖ voters moving to the Greens (Kitschelt 1994: 177). Another source claims that, at the 1990 parliamentary elections, only 36 per cent of Green voters had supported the party in 1986. The Greens were able to draw upon first-time voters

(22 per cent) but also former SPÖ voters (15 per cent) and ÖVP voters (12 per cent) (Frankland 1994: 200). Yet the point raised earlier in this chapter should also be borne in mind - i.e. that while increased electoral volatility may be a process lying behind green party support, there is the possibility that such volatility might to some extent be the effect, rather than the cause, of green voting.

Even if the Austrian Greens have benefited from electoral dealignment in the party system, this by no means implies that they will continue to make electoral advances as long as any such trend continues. As Haerpfer has pointed out, one cost of the Greens appealing to a more fickle segment of the Austrian electorate is that they become 'prey to an unstable and volatile group of supporters' (Haerpfer 1989: 29). The effects of this were seen at the 1995 parliamentary elections, in which the Greens lost 90,000 votes to the Right (ÖVP and the Liberal Forum) and 33,000 votes to the SPÖ (Fitzmaurice 1996: 294). The implications of this issue in terms of the future prospects of green parties is pursued in the final chapter.

Public opinion on the need to expand the party spectrum in Austria would seem to lend some further support to the dealignment thesis. In 1976, only 10 per cent of the electorate were in favour of increased party choice in Austria; by 1984, this figure had increased to 39 per cent (Dachs 1989: 186). The arrival of the Greens in 1986 as the first new party in parliament since the departure of the Communists (KPÖ) in 1959 (Luther 1989: 13) could perhaps be viewed as a manifestation of heightened public demands for greater diversity within the Austrian party system. However, it should be stressed that the Greens have not been the sole beneficiaries of any electoral dealignment that has occurred in Austria. As Lauber has argued, both the Liberal Forum and the populist FPÖ have benefited from the decline of the two main parties as well as the Greens (Lauber 1997a: 187).

(b) The Netherlands

Until the 1960s party choice in the Netherlands was broadly structured by the religious and class cleavages characteristic of the system of 'pillarisation'. The four pillars of Dutch political culture - Protestant, Catholic, socialist, liberal - had given rise to a party system distinguished by a high degree of stability in which the vast majority of votes were 'structured' along these lines. Irwin and van Holsteyn describe the 'structured system' in the following terms:

Church-going Catholics voted almost exclusively for the Catholic People's Party (KVP), as did such adherents of the *Gereformeerde* (reformed) faith for the Anti-Revolutionary Party (ARP). Support for the Christian Historical Union (CHU) consisted heavily of more devout members of the Dutch Reformed Church. Those who were not strong in their religious beliefs or had none, split along class lines, with workers supporting the social-democratic party (after World War II the PvdA) and the middle class tending to support the liberal parties, most recently (since 1948) the VVD. (Irwin and van Holsteyn 1997: 94)

However, recent studies suggest that the importance of this system has been declining for some time. Thus, whereas in 1956 the proportion of party choices determined by religion or class amounted to 72 per cent, this percentage had declined to 60 per cent in 1968, 52 per cent in 1977, 42 per cent in 1989 and 36 per cent in 1994 (Irwin and van Holsteyn 1997: 95). One of the main explanations for the decline of the structured model concerns the erosion of the strongly 'pillarised' subcultures on which the traditional cleavage structure in the Netherlands rested.² During the 1960s, Dutch society underwent processes of secularisation and individualisation with the consequence that religion subsequently 'lost much of its predictive power with regard to voting behaviour' (Andeweg and Irwin 1993: 44). In addition to this, the 'post-industrialisation' of

² Once again, issues of cause and effect come into play here. These arise because of the possibility that depillarisation may have been, in part, an effect of the decline of the structured model of voting as opposed to the cause. However, while this possibility exists, studies of Dutch politics have consistently emphasised the causal link between the process of depillarisation and the decline of the structured voting model (Andeweg and Irwin 1993).

the Dutch economy - most notably indicated by the decline of the traditional working class and the rise of a new middle class - has weakened ties between voters and parties, making class a much less effective predictor of partisan choice. As well as class and religious-based dealignment, studies suggest that levels of party identification have declined in recent decades (Dalton 1998: 210). Within this context commentators on Dutch politics have observed a significant increase in electoral volatility. While during the 1950s it was estimated that between 10-15 per cent of voters switched from one party to another between two elections, recent studies have suggested that as many as one third of all voters may now change their choice of party between elections (Andeweg and Irwin 1993: 99).

To what extent has electoral dealignment in the Netherlands aided the emergence and electoral success of green parties? On a general level, it can be observed that the decline of the structured model of voting during the 1960s and 1970s did coincide with the rise of new parties - such as D66 and PPR - stressing 'new' issues, and appears to have prompted an increase in the number of parties contesting national elections in the Netherlands. For example, whereas the 1950s saw between ten and 13 political parties competing in national elections, 20 or more parties have submitted lists in all such elections since 1967 (Andeweg and Irwin 1993: 72). There is some evidence to suggest that the genesis of Green Left was indirectly facilitated by electoral dealignment. The formation and development of the PPR, a left-wing offshoot of the Catholic People's Party which merged into Green Left in 1990, took place within a climate of secularisation within Dutch society (Lucardie 1980: 169). According to Lucardie, the PPR '[g]radually ... shed its Christian legacy and began to identify with the New Left' (Lucardie 1989: 9). Thus, it is possible that this transformation - from Confessional to New Left party - meant that the party became a more obvious collaborator with other New Left parties such as the PSP and (later) the CPN, smoothing the path towards the formation of Green Left.

In addition, the transformation of the CPN from a Marxist-Leninist party, primarily representing industrial workers, to one advancing new social movement concerns, to some extent reflected changes in the structure of the Dutch economy and a process of class dealignment in the Netherlands. On the one hand a shrinking of the industrial sector in which the party had strongholds, and the changing composition of the working class, resulted in a decline in its traditional support base (van der Linden and Wormer 1988: 79, 84). On the other, the composition of the party's membership underwent something of a transformation during the 1970s, with industrial workers gradually fading into the background as members of the ascendant 'new middle class', advocating peace, environmental and feminist issues, assumed a dominant position within the party organisation (Voerman 1991: 467-470). From this perspective the ideological renewal of the CPN, and its eventual merger into Green Left, was to some extent facilitated by a weakening of established political alignments and the influx of young, 'new middle class' radicals into the party.

Regarding the issue of greater electoral volatility, available evidence suggests that, like the Austrian Greens, electoral support for Green Left has fluctuated quite considerably in the few national elections in which it has competed. At the 1994 elections, for example, and despite record levels of volatility (22.5 per cent), Green Left failed to benefit from the decline of the Labour Party (PvdA) and, in fact, lost one of its six seats (Wolinetz 1995: 188). According to Wolinetz, the PvdA's losses could in part be explained by previous supporters switching to D66, to VVD and the parties for the aged and not to Green Left (Wolinetz 1995: 191-192). However, at the 1998 elections Green Left more than doubled its share of the vote and seats in parliament, an outcome possibly related to previous D66 voters swapping to the party. If this was indeed the case, then this might suggest that Green Left also has a somewhat unstable electoral base and that, as a consequence, its prospects for electoral stability and/or advancement are somewhat uncertain. That the Green Left electorate appears relatively young - more than half of the party's voters were under 35 in

1989 - may also mean that it is more vulnerable to fluctuations in party choice at elections, on the grounds that younger people may be more flexible in their voting patterns (Haus and Rayside 1978).³

(c) Britain

Britain has been regarded as possessing one of the simplest cleavage structures in Western Europe, being based mainly upon class, but with a small centre-periphery cleavage reflecting the multinational character of the British state (Gallagher *et al.* 1992: 216). As a result, and certainly until the late 1960s, voting choice has predominantly been associated with social class. Sanders sums up this dominant pattern as follows:

The interests of middle-class voters were most obviously represented by a Conservative Party that sought to promote private enterprise and to keep taxation low - and they duly showed a greater than average tendency to vote Tory. The interests of working-class voters, on the other hand, were most obviously served by the Labour Party's emphasis on redistributive policies and by its connections with the trade unions - and their political loyalties were accordingly tied primarily to Labour. In the 1964 and 1966 elections, roughly two-thirds of electors voted for their 'natural' class party, so that the class influence was by no means universally decisive, but its influence was none the less impressive. (Sanders 1997: 53)

However, successive academic surveys carried out by the British Election Study have drawn attention to a 'progressive, if uneven, reduction in the extent of "absolute" class-based voting between 1964 and the late 1980s' (Sanders 1997: 54). As in Austria and the Netherlands, this can to some extent be explained by Britain's shift from an industrial to 'post-industrial' economy. This has resulted in an expansion of the service sector, a decline in industrial manufacturing and marked changes in the class structure. Class voting indices developed to examine the strength of the class-party relationship would also indicate that there has been

³ Information supplied by Paul Lucardie (letter dated 8 June 1995).

a tendency for class dealignment in Britain since the 1960s (Sanders 1997: 54-55). However, it should be noted that there is still considerable debate as to whether there has been a marked decline in the significance of the class cleavage, with some political analysts contending that social class continues to occupy a central position within the context of British electoral behaviour (Webb 1994: 838, Sanders 1997: 56).

Along with class dealignment, some academics have observed changes in the strength of partisan attachments in Britain during the same period. For example, commenting on British Election Study data between 1964 and 1987, Heath *et al.* concluded that 'there are fewer electors nowadays than there used to be who identify with any of the political parties and, even more strikingly, fewer with a very strong identification' (Heath *et al.* 1991: 11). Reflecting such patterns of class and partisan dealignment, voters in Britain are considered to have become more volatile over the past 30 years (Webb 1994: 838-839; Sanders 1997: 73).

Within this context it might be anticipated that a party such as the Greens would have benefited in electoral terms, as voters with weaker class and partisan ties become more inclined to switch party allegiances from one election to the next. At the 1989 European elections, in which the Green Party gained an impressive 14.9 per cent of the vote⁴, poll data suggests that the Greens did indeed gain substantial votes from previous Conservative, Alliance and to a lesser extent Labour voters (Rootes 1995a: 73). In addition, Green voting at this election was strongly related to youth (Rüdig *et al.* 1996: 12-13). But as Rootes has shown, this unprecedented result 'was only possible because of the extraordinary conditions of electoral competition which obtained in that election for the European Parliament' (Rootes 1995a: 86). According to this interpretation, it was a combination of the unpopularity of the then Conservative government, the weakness of the newly formed Liberal Democrats and the deradicalisation of the Labour Party on such issues as nuclear energy which

⁴ As was pointed out in chapter 2, the 1989 European election result was so extraordinary for the Green Party that to exclude it from the discussion would seem ill-judged.

provided the Green Party with an opportunity to 'pick up' the protest vote (Rootes 1995a). It is highly likely that the Greens' 'success' in 1989 was less the result of long-term class and/or partisan electoral dealignment than a unique set of electoral circumstances unlikely to be repeated. Additional factors which probably contributed to the party's electoral performance include the 'second-order' status of European elections - which often provide occasions for widespread protest voting - and heightened public concern about ecological risks and problems that had come to light during the 1980s (Rüdig *et al.* 1993). Indeed, an examination of the electoral performance of the Green Party under 'normal' conditions of political competition in general elections reveals that it has remained negligible, consistently failing to surpass the 1 to 2 per cent mark. This is in spite of a progressive decline in class-based voting and the strength of partisan identification in Britain during the period within which the Green Party has competed in general elections.

The failure of the Green Party to benefit at general elections from electoral dealignment can primarily be linked to the political consequences of the FPTP electoral system outlined in chapter 6. Many potential Green Party voters probably tend not to vote Green because the mechanics of the system mean that their vote will invariably be a 'wasted' one. The prospects of green parties in Austria and the Netherlands benefiting electorally from a more dealigned electorate may thus be greater than in Britain since the former have proportional electoral systems in which all votes 'count'.

3. Green Parties, the Nature of Political Competition and the 'Environment'

A further focus for enquiry that may be of relevance when attempting to uncover the conditions which potentially impact upon the emergence and electoral

significance of green parties concerns the behaviour of existing political parties.

According to Hauss and Rayside:

new parties develop only when there is something wrong, that is, when a substantial number of people are concerned about a serious issue. New parties develop only when existing parties will not or cannot appeal to these discontented voters (Hauss and Rayside 1978: 46).

As was argued in chapter 5, the existence and perception of global ecological risks and problems played an important part in the emergence of green party politics in Austria, Britain and the Netherlands. Thus far, however, the possibility that the emergence of green parties may also have reflected a general lack of responsiveness by established parties to the rise of ecological issues and concerns has not been considered in any great depth. In addition, it may be the case that certain green parties have been able to benefit further from the process of electoral dealignment described above only to the extent that the more established parties have not managed to respond adequately to ecological issues and thus to 'compete' effectively with green parties for the 'green' vote. Where existing parties have made serious attempts to respond to and accommodate ecological issues and concerns, this may have reduced green parties' chances of being the sole recipients of the environmentally-motivated vote (Rootes 1995b: 242). However, these outcomes may depend upon the degree to which ecological issues have continued to occupy a prominent place on the political agendas of the three countries. Where 'the environment' has become less salient and is less an 'issue' of electoral competition, the degree of responsiveness of existing parties to the former may have little impact on a green party's electoral prospects. These issues are explored below.

(a) Austria

In Austria, the failure of the SPÖ to respond adequately to the demands of environmental challengers undoubtedly facilitated the emergence of green party politics. As was argued in chapter 5, the intense protest triggered by the SPÖ government's nuclear energy policy was a key catalyst for the formation of two national parties emphasising environmental themes - the ALÖ and VGÖ - in 1982. It was also noted that the SPÖ and labour unions' support for the building of a hydro-electric plant at Hainburg (the site of a unique wildlife habitat) in 1984 gave a considerable boost to the environmental movement in Austria. The actions of the SPÖ, and the party's failure to respond to rising ecological concern, were key factors in enabling nascent 'green' political organisations to access 'space' within the previously 'closed' party system.

In response to the growing salience of ecological issues, however, the main political parties underwent something of a 'greening' process - a development which 'peaked' in the late 1980s and which may have been a factor in the stagnation of the Green vote at the 1990 elections. For example, in 1989 the SPÖ introduced a new political programme - *Social Democracy 2000* - which stressed 'green' themes in calling for an 'ecological market society' (Kitschelt 1994: 177). The ÖVP, in coalition with the SPÖ, developed a similar programme based upon the concept of the 'eco-social market economy', and called for the introduction of market-based environmental policy instruments, an energy tax on fossil fuels and the creation of a national park on the Danube. Even Jörg Haider's far-right FPÖ incorporated a limited 'green' agenda into its political programme in response to the growing significance of the green vote. In 1993, the liberal wing of the FPÖ broke away and formed the Liberal Forum, a party which has proved relatively more open to ecological issues than the established parties (Müller 1996b: 62; Lauber 1997a: 318; Lauber 1997b: 90-91). All political parties in Austria are currently committed to 'sustainable development' although, of course, there are considerable differences concerning their respective

understandings of this concept (Lauber 1997b: 90). In examining the case of the Austrian Greens it should therefore be acknowledged that increased competition for the 'green' vote may have had a negative impact on the party's electoral performance in recent years. While the Austrian Greens have surpassed the 4 per cent threshold of electoral significance at successive national elections since 1986 - reaching a high of 7.3 per cent in 1994 - the extent to which they have been able to make substantial electoral advances may to some degree have been thwarted by the mild 'greening' of other parties.

As well as the aforementioned political parties, the Austrian Greens have, in the past, faced competition from the VGÖ, a political party which defines itself as 'green' but which is not a member of the European Federation of Green Parties. At the 1990 elections, for example, the failure of the Greens to build upon their 4.8 per cent share of the vote gained in 1986 might further be explained by the presence of the VGÖ, which gained 2 per cent of the vote (Frankland 1994: 197). As was mentioned above, the Greens gained 7.3 per cent of the vote in 1994 and this increase may, in part, have reflected the fact that the VGÖ had all but disappeared from the political landscape by this point (Lauber 1997a: 185). However, as will be demonstrated in chapter 9, the improved performance of the Greens at this election has also been attributed to the effectiveness of their campaign, and, in particular, of their *de facto* leader, Madeleine Petrovic, during the run-up to the election.

The recent electoral decline of the Greens may in part be related to the shifting position of the environment on the party political agenda in Austria, particularly during election campaigns. In 1995, the parliamentary election campaign was structured around budgetary issues and the Left-Right cleavage, which left little room for the Greens to mount a strong electoral challenge based around distinctive ecological issues (Sully 1996: 639). Yet public opinion surveys in Austria indicate that concern about the environment in Austria continues to rise, despite the emphasis on more 'traditional' issues of public policy by government, business and industry (Lauber 1997a). This suggests that the Greens

- along with parties such as the LF - may stand to benefit electorally should ecologically-conscious citizens consider the established political parties and organisations to be ignoring their concerns in the future.

(b) The Netherlands

The timing of the emergence of green parties in the Netherlands - as well as their electoral performance - also reflects the behaviour of other political parties. The failure of a significant green party to emerge prior to Green Left in 1989 can in large part be explained by the existence of several New Left parties which had long emphasised environmental themes. The PSP, for instance, had been active against pollution and nuclear power since the late 1960s (Lucardie *et al.* 1993). Similarly, the PPR had, since its formation in 1968 'faced up to the increasing impairment of the environment' (Voerman 1995: 116).⁵ The CPN, by contrast, remained a Marxist-Leninist party until the late 1970s. Yet from this period onwards the party opened itself to new social movement concerns, facilitating the rapprochement of Radicals, Pacifists and Communists (Voerman 1995: 112). As a consequence of intense electoral competition, the 'pure' green party founded in 1983 (*De Groenen*) consistently failed to make any significant electoral impact, and its poor performance at elections has continued in the light of Green Left's presence on the political landscape since 1989 (Voerman 1995: 111).

The relatively delayed formation of a significant green party in the Netherlands was also a partial consequence of the positive response of the more mainstream Dutch parties to the rise of the environment as a political issue since the 1970s. The publication of the *Limits to Growth* report in 1972, and the United Nations (Stockholm) Conference on environmental pollution held during the same year, served as catalysts for the 'greening' of parties of the Left, including

⁵ The PPR participated in the Coordination of European and Radical Parties after the 1979 European elections along with green parties from West Germany, Belgium, France and Britain (Parkin 1989: 257).

PvdA and D66, and, somewhat later, the parties of the Right. The PvdA's adoption of an anti-nuclear stance from the late 1970s onwards led to improved contacts between the party and environmentalists, and this to some extent diminished the need for a newly formed green party (Jamison *et al.* 1990). In sum, the existence of New Left parties increasingly committed to environmental issues, along with a 'greening' of the mainstream parties, meant that, for much of the 1980s, there was insufficient 'space' for a significant green party on the Dutch political landscape.

It seems likely that the Dutch Green Left's electoral progress since 1989 has been adversely affected by two political competition related issues. First, the establishment of an integrated system of environmental policy planning in recent years (exemplified by the government's adoption of a National Environmental Policy Plan in 1989), along with the setting up of voluntary agreements with polluters, and the growing tendency of environmentalists to seek involvement in the policy-making process (Lieverink 1997), may have served to weaken the oppositional electoral potential of Green Left. The emergence of the Netherlands as one Europe's most environmentally progressive states may to some extent explain why Green Left's electoral progress has been somewhat unremarkable since its formation. Second, the degree to which Green Left has been able to market itself as the Dutch 'party of the environment' has been further limited by the behaviour of a comparatively successful centre to centre-left party - D66 - which appeals particularly to left-wing liberal voters. This well-established, 'anti-establishment' party has consistently given ecological issues a high priority (Jacobs 1989: 271). It is possible that some of Green Left's losses at the 1994 Dutch elections were the result of voters switching to the relatively 'greenish' D66 party, which doubled its share of the vote and seats in parliament. However, it is also likely that Green Left lost some votes in 1994 simply because, compared with 1989, ecological problems were not considered to be key election issues by voters, and did not assume a prominent position in the election campaign

(Lucardie 1995: 122). This was perhaps a reflection of the increasing 'internalisation' of environmental issues by the Dutch state mentioned above.

At the most recent national elections (1998), however, Green Left appears to have made gains at the expense of the ruling coalition's most junior partner, D66. According to one Green Left politician, the party's success in these elections was more a consequence of voters warming to its detailed plans concerning salient social issues such as unemployment, persistent poverty and healthcare provision (Wouters 1998). It is thus probably accurate to state that Green Left's appeal stretches beyond the ecologically motivated section of the Dutch electorate to encompass those with a more general 'leftist' or 'New Left' social outlook. This is reflected in Green Left's attempts to develop policies that will appeal to both greens and socialists: for example, the party's current proposals for tackling unemployment would involve 'shortening the working week and using taxes on pollution and profits to finance more public-sector jobs' (*The Economist*, 9 May 1998: 111).

(c) Britain

Until the mid 1980s 'the environment' hardly featured upon the mainstream political landscape of British politics. Yet it should be noted that the 1970s did see the development of fringe involvement with ecological politics in each of the main parties⁶. Of the three 'ginger groups' which developed, it was the Liberal Ecology Group which had the most impact within its party - indeed, at the 1979 Liberal Party Assembly a motion to the effect that 'sustained economic growth, as conventionally measured, is neither feasible nor desirable' was approved (cited in Robinson 1992). According to one group of commentators, the Liberal Party 'had a major wing whose main policy positions were very close to the

⁶ For example, the Socialist Environment and Resources Association (SERA) was formed within the Labour Party in 1973. The year 1977 saw the formation of the Liberal Ecology Group within the Liberal Party and the Conservative Ecology Group within the Conservative Party (Robinson 1992).

Greens' (Rüdig *et al.* 1993: 22). It was hardly surprising, then, that at the 1979 general election it was the Liberal Party which, of the three main parties, devoted the most attention to ecological issues. It is possible that the presence of the relatively 'green' Liberals - whose leader David Steel 'unblushingly' adopted the Green Party's slogan 'The Real Alternative' for the 1979 general election - had a negative effect on the extent of the Green Party vote at this election (Parkin 1989: 221). But the Liberal Party's radicalism was soon submerged by the centrist alliance forged in 1981 with the newly formed Social Democratic Party (SDP) (Robinson 1992).

According to Rootes, throughout much of the 1980s the Labour Party remained largely 'locked into an ideology of human progress through material productivity and did not accord environmental issues high priority' (Rootes 1995a: 84). Yet there were exceptions to this pattern, particularly when it came to the large-scale 'risks' associated with nuclear weapons and nuclear energy. During the early 1980s the Labour Party became the main party political vehicle for the peace movement, committing itself to a policy of unilateral nuclear disarmament. And following the Chernobyl disaster of 1986, the Labour Party embraced a non-nuclear energy policy that would involve 'the eventual closure of all nuclear power stations' (Rüdig *et al.* 1993: 22). As will be argued in more depth in the next chapter, the openness of the Labour Party to the British peace movement during this period was a contributing factor to the continued electoral marginality of the Green Party. The orientation of the resurgent peace movement towards the Labour Party meant that the Green Party was deprived of the support of an important social movement which had, in other European countries, given a boost to the development of significant green parties (Parkin 1989; O'Neill 1997).

After 1987, however, the key aim of the Labour leadership was to transform the party into one which would attract the 'middle-of-the-road' voter and, consequently, many of its more radical policy positions - including the non-nuclear energy policy - were dispensed with (Rüdig *et al.* 1993: 22). Yet towards

the end of the 1980s public awareness of and concern about ecological issues grew, prompting an attempt by the major parties to obtain a 'greener' profile (Robinson 1992). Most analyses of the 'greening' of British politics attach considerable significance to Mrs Thatcher's so-called 'first speech' on the environment given to the Royal Society in September 1988. In this speech, the Prime Minister outlined the nature of environmental problems, gave support to the concept of 'sustainable development' and talked about need for the environment to be nurtured and safeguarded (Robinson 1992). Gallup opinion poll data shows that there was a sharp rise in public environmental concern (which peaked in 1989) following Thatcher's speech (Rüdig *et al.* 1993: 16).

Following the Green Party's electoral 'success' at the 1989 European elections, the three main parties published documents on the subject of the environment: the Conservative government produced a white paper - *This Common Inheritance*; Labour published a weighty document called *An Earthly Chance* while the Liberal Democrats issued a report entitled *What Price our Planet?* It could be argued that the electoral decline of the Green Party post-1989, demonstrated by its very poor performance at the 1992 and 1997 general elections, was in part the result of the major parties having successfully embraced environmental issues, thereby 'smothering' the Green vote. Others have more convincingly suggested that of considerably greater importance in explaining the fading of the Greens was 'the declining salience of environmental issues and the change of the political agenda back to traditional economic issues with the coming of the recession' (Rüdig *et al.* 1993: 62). Indeed, opinion poll data show that while in July 1989, 35 per cent of the public considered the environment to be one of the two most important political issues, this figure had fallen to 6 per cent by the beginning of 1991 (Carter 1997a: 200). However, the changing balance of political competition also offers a strong explanation of the party's rapid decline (Rootes 1995a; Carter 1997a). As was mentioned earlier in this chapter, the Green Party in 1989 was presented with an opportunity to pick up the 'protest vote' on account of the heightened salience of ecological issues. But

crucially this opportunity was *temporary*, and arose because of the weakened competitive position of the main political parties. With the restoration of 'normal' patterns of party competition, the vast majority of 1989 Green voters returned to 'their various folds in 1992, leaving the Greens to fall back on the tiny percentage of the electorate they have been able to attract at all other times' (Byrne 1997: 152).

Should ecological issues once again rise to the top of the British political agenda the electoral prospects of the Green Party may thus to some extent depend on the contemporary state of party competition. Yet it should be remembered that the Green Party's 'success' in 1989 was achieved in a relatively 'low status' European election, and that the support levels achieved would probably not be repeated within the context of 'more important' - within the minds of most voters - general elections. As was argued in the last chapter, the psychological and mechanical consequences of the British electoral system further reduce the chances of the Greens surpassing the threshold of electoral significance in the foreseeable future.

4. Conclusion

The three countries in this study have experienced declining levels of traditional cleavage voting and party identification in recent decades, as well as increased electoral volatility. Yet it is clear that these trends have impacted upon the development of green party politics to varying degrees, as well as in different ways. In Austria, the Greens have benefited from the weakening of voter attachments to established parties in recent decades, and this is shown by the number of voters switching from these parties to the Greens at certain National Council elections. However, it was also noted that increased electoral volatility has *not always* benefited the Greens, making the party's electoral prospects somewhat uncertain. In the Netherlands, the emergence of Green Left has been facilitated by electoral

dealignment insofar as the ideological renewal of two parties involved in the merger reflected patterns of secularisation and 'post-industrialism' in Dutch society. As in Austria, however, greater electoral volatility has had uncertain outcomes in terms of the electoral performance of Green Left. In Britain, electoral volatility seems to have contributed to the Green Party's electoral 'success' of 1989 - that is, to the extent that a high proportion of Green voters had voted for another party at the previous general election. However, the fact that the British Greens have consistently failed to benefit from increased dealignment in general elections suggests that the 1989 result was more a consequence of temporary conditions of political competition, and the saliency of ecological issues, than long-term processes of electoral change. The re-establishment of 'normal' conditions of political competition, i.e. the dominance of Labour, the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives, in combination with the inhospitable nature of the current electoral system, have meant that the Green Party has failed to benefit from any dealignment in the British political system.

A further aim of this chapter was to explore the argument linking the emergence and electoral significance of green parties to the responsiveness of existing parties to heightened public concern about the environment. In Austria, the lack of responsiveness of the SPÖ to prominent ecological issues was clearly an important factor in creating the conditions for the emergence of green party politics. Yet during the late 1980s and early 1990s, the electoral progress of the Greens was perhaps impeded by the limited 'greening' of the established parties in Austria and the emergence of the Liberal Forum, a party which placed considerable emphasis on environmental issues. The established parties undoubtedly responded to what they perceived to be the growing significance of 'the environment' as an issue of political competition. However, by 1995 the environment had ceased to be a central electoral issue for voters and established parties, and this probably contributed to the Greens' electoral decline of that year.

Turning to the Netherlands, the development of an electorally significant green party prior to the emergence of Green Left in 1989 was prevented by the presence of several New Left parties for whom 'the environment' had been a key

electoral campaigning issue. The emergence of Green Left has served to further marginalise the small, 'pure' green party, *De Groenen*. Yet Green Left's electoral development has been somewhat constrained by advances in environmental policy and political competition for the 'green' vote from D66, a party which has sought to respond to growing environmental concern in recent years. Green Left's improved performance at the 1998 elections suggests that the party may be successfully appealing to voters on the basis of its broader agenda for social as well as ecological reform.

The electoral performance of the British Green Party in general elections has been consistently poor. The Green Party's most respectable showing came in the European elections of 1989. The most convincing explanation for this result must take account of the rising levels of ecological concern apparent in Britain during the late 1980s, the perceived lack of responsiveness of existing parties to such mounting concern and the unique conditions of political competition that prevailed during the election campaign. The decline of the Green Party post-1989 was less the result of the main parties responding to public concern about ecological issues than a declining public interest in the latter, and the return to 'normal' conditions of political competition in Britain.

What emerges from this chapter's discussion are the clear connections between several of the themes explored in previous chapters and those examined here. The process of electoral dealignment - demonstrated in general terms by the declining attachment of voters to established political parties - has clear links to the changing class structure symptomatic of the shift to 'post-industrial' society (chapter 4). The rise of a society characterised by the heightened perception of global ecological risks and problems (chapter 5) has clearly contributed to the emergence of green parties, although whether these parties have been able to make significant electoral advances has to some extent depended upon the responsiveness of established and other parties to ecological problems, and on the electoral salience of ecological issues. Combined with a consideration of the impact of political state-institutional structures on the emergence and electoral significance of green parties

(chapter 6), a clearer picture of the nature of the political and institutional dimensions most likely to impact upon green parties is beginning to emerge. In the next chapter, the focus shifts to a further set of issues which have been cited as potentially impacting upon the emergence and electoral significance of green parties: these concern the specific modes of interest representation prevalent within particular polities.

Chapter 8

Modes of Interest Representation and Green Parties: The Role of Neo-Corporatism, Pluralism and Social Movements

This chapter focuses attention on the proposed connections between 'modes of interest representation' - defined here as the patterns of representation of social and economic group interests in the formal decision-making and wider political process - and the emergence and electoral significance of green parties. One of the major themes within the social movement literature in recent years has been the relationship between neo-corporatism, pluralism and the nature and extent of political protest (Offe 1981; Scott 1990; Wilson 1990; Nollert 1995; Wallace and Jenkins 1995). Theorists have argued that neo-corporatist forms of elite negotiation, in particular, may have facilitated the development of new social movements in certain Western European countries. For Claus Offe, this is because such arrangements largely represent the interests of capital and labour, and are inclined to ignore and oppose the concerns of citizens on a range of new political and social issues. Citizens are thus compelled to develop alternative vehicles of interest representation and to engage in unconventional forms of social protest activity in the struggle for political access and influence (Offe 1981). Herbert Kitschelt has recently applied this line of argument to the case of green parties, arguing that the extent to which they will attain electoral significance is linked to the presence or absence of 'centralized, corporatist patterns of labor union organization' (Kitschelt 1993: 98). By contrast, countries with more pluralist patterns of interest intermediation tend to provide a less favourable political environment for the emergence of significant green parties, since they are characterised by a more open political process which theoretically

allows for more effective representation and participation of new groups in decision-making (Kitschelt 1990: 184).

The first part of the chapter deals with arguments linking neo-corporatism/pluralism to the emergence of significant green parties before proceeding to apply them to green party politics in Austria, the Netherlands and Britain. It is argued that political analysts such as Kitschelt have tended to overgeneralise with respect to the character and impact of neo-corporatist decision-making structures. In particular, it is maintained that while neo-corporatist structures can have a positive impact upon the electoral performance of green parties, this depends on whether those structures have been 'open' or 'closed' to the articulation of ecological demands. Further doubt is cast on the claim that pluralist patterns of interest intermediation have necessarily been more open to ecological interests. Overall, it is argued that future assessments of the impact of patterns of interest intermediation on the electoral strength of green parties must be more sensitive to the different degrees of accessibility accorded to new political interests in both neo-corporatist and pluralist polities.

In the second part of the chapter attention is turned to further modes of interest representation which have been cited as potentially facilitating the emergence and electoral success of green parties. This discussion concerns, more directly, the role of social movements. There are at least two ways in which the emergence and electoral significance of green parties may be related to social movement activity. First, the emergence of green parties may have been a 'logical' outgrowth of social movement activism in Austria, the Netherlands and Britain. According to Kitschelt '[f]ounding new parties ... constitutes a second step [after social movements] in placing [new] demands on a country's political agenda' (Kitschelt 1990: 184). Kitschelt argues that social movement activity has often been followed by the emergence of demands to form green parties because participants have soon become aware of the limits of movement protest and wish to confront 'political elites in the arena of electoral competition' (Kitschelt 1989: 26). Kitschelt's approach is partly rooted in resource mobilisation theory (RMT),

an approach influenced by rational choice theory, which stresses the largely instrumental and self-interested basis of the social movement-green party transition process. It will be argued that attention to aspects of RMT, in some cases, can add to an explanation of the emergence of green parties which stresses the interaction between social movements, political state-institutional structures, patterns of electoral change and political competition, and, potentially, modes of interest representation such as neo-corporatism.

Second, the electoral significance of green parties may be related to the degree to which they have been able to establish strong links with social - particularly environmental - movements and an electoral support base rooted in the latter. It will be shown that, indeed, the electoral success of green parties in Austria and the Netherlands has, to some extent, been a consequence of the strong links which these parties have managed to establish with environmental movements. The British Green Party, by contrast, has been weakened by its failure to attract the support of the wider environmental movement.

1. Neo-Corporatism, Pluralism and Political Protest

‘Neo-corporatism’ is a concept that has been subject to much critical discussion within comparative research in recent decades (Williamson 1989). However, scholars have yet to reach an overall consensus on the question of precisely how the term should be defined.¹ Of the various attempts to define neo-corporatism it is Schmitter’s that has proved to be most dominant, and it is therefore the one which will be adopted within the context of the present discussion. According to Schmitter:

Corporatism can be defined as a system of interest representation in which the constituent units are organized into a limited number of singular, compulsory, noncompetitive, hierarchically ordered and

¹ See Williamson (1989) for a comprehensive discussion of the various conceptual understandings of neo-corporatism.

functionally differentiated categories, recognised or licensed (if not created) by the state and granted a deliberate representational monopoly within their respective categories in exchange for observing certain controls on their selection of leaders and articulation of demands and supports. (Schmitter 1974: 93-94)

Neo-corporatist politics can be contrasted with pluralist ones in which an unspecified number of 'multiple, overlapping, spontaneously formed, voluntaristically supported, easily abandoned, and politically autonomous associations' seek to influence the political decision-making process (Schmitter 1981: 293). The essential point about neo-corporatism is that it refers to a specific 'mode of arranging the political process' (Schmitter 1981: 295), which usually takes the form of large and powerful interest groups - representing interests of employers and workers - having privileged access to government and playing a key role in both the formulation and implementation of major political decisions. Unlike the pluralist model, which stresses the 'largely informal and *ad hoc* pattern of interaction' between government and interest groups, neo-corporatist arrangements are characterised by the existence of 'well structured and institutionalized' relationships within the formal political arena, and the exclusion of 'outside' interests or rival groups from this representative framework (Wilson 1990: 69).

Advocates of the neo-corporatist policy-making style have tended to argue that by 'restricting involvement to official groups committed to accommodation [it] channels participation into acceptable forms' (Wilson 1990: 70). It therefore acts as a 'restraint on uncontrolled participation' (Wilson 1990: 70). A further advantage identified by some commentators is that to the extent that it fosters a culture of 'discipline' by encouraging individual group members to accept the 'general interest' negotiated by group leaders, neo-corporatism represents 'the ideal solution to the central problem of modern capitalism: the maintenance of order' (Crouch, cited in Wilson 1990: 70). In short, neo-corporatism has been viewed in terms of a means of reducing the traditional conflict between labour

and capital through the formal organisation and representation of these interests within a policy framework characterised by accommodation and negotiation.

According to some critics, however, neo-corporatist decision-making has also had the effect of stimulating the development of oppositional political forces - principally those of new social movements and green parties - in certain countries. They have pointed to the rigidity of neo-corporatist arrangements and the extent to which this has fostered a lack of responsiveness on the part of established actors to the rise of new issues such as 'the environment'. It is argued that those concerned with such issues commonly find little response from neo-corporatist bodies whose interests lie in maintaining a 'cosy consensus' on issues, and in preserving a policy system characterised by a stable agenda, set rules and the stifling of debate (Scott 1990: 144). The result is that concerned citizens have little option but to form new groups with the aim of advancing the neglected issue(s). Certain commentators have suggested that the 'closed' character of neo-corporatist patterns of decision-making tends to promote the adoption of unconventional political tactics by excluded groups. Because they are unable to access established channels for interest representation 'outside groups resort to ... demonstrations, boycotts, political strikes, sit-ins, and even violence to draw the attention of the public or the policy-makers to their concerns' (Wilson 1990: 71). The tendency for neo-corporatist structures to 'ignore' movement concerns is therefore considered to stimulate the development of an 'anti-systemic' disposition among new political groups (Wilson 1990: 72).

The proliferation of green parties concerned about ecological and other 'new' issues, and critical of the existing political order, has led some observers to pursue the neo-corporatist question in further detail. According to Kitschelt, neo-corporatism has been an important factor in the rise of the green phenomenon in Western party systems (Kitschelt 1993). In a similar vein to the position outlined above, Kitschelt claims that neo-corporatist patterns of interest intermediation have constrained consideration of so-called 'left-libertarian' demands in two main ways. As he comments:

In terms of policy-making procedures, new, less well-organized interests are rarely recognized by the dominant corporatist interest associations and parties. And in terms of policy outcomes, business and labor build compromises around economic and social policies diametrically opposed to left-libertarian demands: the imperatives of industrial growth and bureaucratic regulation. When a coalition of producer interests dominates policy-making, left-libertarians resort to new and disruptive vehicles of interest representation. (Kitschelt 1989: 20)

For Kitschelt such 'vehicles of interest representation' would include green - or other 'left-libertarian' - parties. During the 1970s, the close association between governing social democratic parties and neo-corporatist arrangements in countries such as Austria, Belgium and Germany meant that the traditional Left was unavailable for the representation of 'new' interests and this ultimately fuelled demands for the formation of green parties (Kitschelt 1989: 22; Kitschelt 1993: 99). Clearly, there are possible links between neo-corporatism and the existence and creation of the ecological risks and problems outlined in chapter 5 of this thesis. As Scott succinctly puts it:

Corporatism is premised on sustained economic growth, and high levels of employment. Therefore, corporatist 'solutions' to differences of class interest, even or especially where they are successful, displace social and economic 'crises' on to environmental pressures. (Scott 1990: 146)

In terms of accounting for the significance of green parties, it might reasonably be argued that to the extent that neo-corporatism has provided few opportunities for consideration of ecological demands on account of it being grounded on such 'an ideology of growth' (Scott 1990: 147), these parties might attract higher levels of electoral support than those competing in countries with more 'open' structures of political decision-making. While 'post-industrial' societies tend to be characterised by elitist decision-making and demands for participation (chapter 4), these features may be more pronounced in those polities with neo-corporatist arrangements. This may lead to a greater number of ecologically concerned citizens being attracted to political organisations such as green parties,

that is, organisations which seek to expose the dysfunctional effects of these structures.

Employing Schmitter's measure of neo-corporatism² Kitschelt presents evidence that indeed suggests a 'very high association' between levels of neo-corporatism and the electoral strength of green parties. Electorally significant green parties are therefore more likely to develop in those countries with medium to high levels of neo-corporatism. For Kitschelt, the importance of neo-corporatism for the development of green parties is also demonstrated by the 'high negative correlation' between levels of strike activity - an 'indirect measure of economic interest intermediation' (Kitschelt 1988a: 213) - and the existence of significant green parties. In addition, Kitschelt points out that those countries without significant green parties tend to 'share relatively pluralist patterns of interest intermediation and have been dominated by non-socialist political forces' (Kitschelt 1990: 184). In the next section these arguments are explored in more detail through a discussion of the degree to which patterns of interest intermediation have impacted on the electoral significance of green parties in Austria, the Netherlands and Britain.

2. Neo-Corporatism, Pluralism and Green Parties

(a) Austria

Austria has been defined as a political system characterised by very high levels of neo-corporatist policy-making (Gallagher *et al.* 1995: 365; Wilson 1990: 73). It has been noted that 'Austria is widely regarded as the "paradigm case" of corporatism' (Lijphart and Crepaz 1991: 241). The Austrian form of neo-

² Neo-corporatism is measured on the basis of 'two core structural characteristics of the trade union movement': (1) the degree of organisational centralisation and (2) the extent to which a single national association enjoys a representational monopoly. Schmitter presumed that trade union centralisation and monopolisation would result in other interests being organised correspondingly (Schmitter 1981: 293).

corporatism which developed during the post-war period, called *Sozialpartnerschaft* (social partnership), established a distinct model of interest representation and intermediation based upon close co-operation between trade unions, business associations and government. The most important institutions within the Austrian model of neo-corporatism are the statutory 'chambers' whose role is to formally represent the interests of labour, commerce and agriculture, and all working citizens in Austria must belong to one of these chambers (Gerlich 1987: 88). Besides these, there exist a number of voluntary interest groups - most notably, the Trade Union Federation (ÖGB) and the Federation of Austrian Industrialists (VÖI) - which are represented within the Austrian system. These interest groups have traditionally been closely linked with one of the two major political parties (ÖVP and SPÖ), and this is demonstrated by the extensive institutional connections that have been established between these organisations (Tálos 1996: 108). The Austrian model is therefore one which is characterised by high levels of concentration and integration (Pelinka 1987: 63-64). To the extent that the system of economic planning established by the social partners in Austria delivered steady growth and comparatively low levels of inflation and unemployment during the post-war decades, commentators have judged it to be an 'outstanding success' (Gallagher *et al.* 1995: 366). The climate of consensus that pervaded Austrian politics during this period delivered stability within the political system and across society as a whole.

Several studies have investigated the degree to which neo-corporatism in Austria has been a factor in the emergence of new social movements and/or green parties (Dachs 1989; Gottweis 1990; Kreuzer 1990). Of the policy spheres that are subject to neo-corporatist patterns of decision-making, it is energy which has proved to be the most prominent site of political conflict. The conflict between new groups and the social partners (led by the SPÖ) over the use of nuclear energy was an important catalyst in the emergence of 'green' parties (ALÖ and VGÖ) in Austria. In addition, the conflict over the proposed construction of a hydroelectric power plant at Hainburg effectively amounted to a challenge by

movement activists against powerful economic lobbies which had the backing of the social partners (led by the SPÖ/FPÖ coalition). The victory achieved by the green movement boosted support levels and gave an added impetus to the development of green party politics in Austria. All this suggests that, as well as a consideration of ecological conflicts, an examination of the emergence of the Greens requires attention to the neo-corporatist nature of decision-making within Austria's political system. Because the stability characteristic of neo-corporatism in Austria was premised upon sustained economic growth and high levels of employment, the political system has traditionally been 'closed' to new issues such as 'the environment', and this has facilitated the development of new forms of interest representation critical of the social partnership and supportive of greater participation, and unconventional methods of political protest.

Survey data relating to green voting motives show that, along with environmental protection, protest against the major parties and discontent with existing patterns of political decision-making in Austria have consistently featured within the collection of reasons cited for casting a green vote (Plasser and Ulram 1985; Dachs 1989; Frankland 1994). But while, on the face of this evidence, it seems that hostility to neo-corporatist decision-making was a factor in the emergence of an electorally significant green party in Austria, recent studies have questioned the proposed association between strength of neo-corporatism and support levels for new social movements and/or green parties (Wilson 1990). To what extent does the Dutch case shed further light on the neo-corporatism/green party issue?

(b) The Netherlands

The Dutch political system has also been defined in 'neo-corporatist' terms by political analysts. Andeweg and Irwin have described the Dutch system of neo-corporatism as comprising a strong and well-integrated system of interest groups;

the existence of venues for consultation and bargaining between government and interest groups; and a commitment to the rules of bargaining and compromise on the part of involved parties (Andeweg and Irwin 1993: 164). As in Austria, the dominant function of neo-corporatism in the Netherlands is considered to be policy formation and implementation, and actors operating within this context take the form of interest associations (representing employers and workers) as well as state agencies. Because only officially recognised associations have access to state agencies the Dutch system has been characterised as 'relatively closed'. The strongly institutionalised and stable character of neo-corporatist arrangements means that 'many issues just do not reach the general public' and that '[i]ssues get depoliticized' (van Waarden 1992: 139-140).

The degree to which neo-corporatist patterns of decision-making have contributed to the emergence of a significant green party in the Netherlands is, however, difficult to establish. While, as has been noted, some political issues have undoubtedly been excluded from consideration in the policy-making process, it should be pointed out that scholars have stressed the high level of success, in terms of policy influence, that the Dutch environmental movement has achieved at local as well as central government levels since the late 1960s (van der Heijden 1994: 107). As van der Heijden comments:

in the 1970s the moderate faction of the Dutch environmental movement had become part of the so-called "iron ring": the grouping of pressure groups, advisory boards and consultative bodies around the government. Ever since the foundation of the Ministry of Public Health and the Environment in 1972 this ring has largely influenced environmental policy-making ... The "iron ring" reflects the history of pillarised Holland in which the government is used to concerted action with all kinds of societal organisations. (van der Heijden 1994: 108)

The involvement of environmental organisations in government policy-making has increased further since the 1980s with a growing number of previously radical environmental groups choosing a more 'pragmatic' approach and becoming more institutionalised into the neo-corporatist framework (Jamison *et*

al. 1990: 167; Liefferink 1997: 224). More recent developments - for example, the growing popularity of environmental covenants - suggest that the sphere of environmental policy is becoming further integrated into the neo-corporatist, consensual policy style in the Netherlands (Liefferink 1997: 224).

It would thus appear inaccurate to argue that Dutch neo-corporatism has been completely closed to the demands and interests of the environmental movement - a situation that Kitschelt suggests would tend to favour the emergence of a significant green party. One of the issues perhaps overlooked by Kitschelt is the extent to which there might be differences in the relative 'openness' of different neo-corporatist systems. Schmitter has gone so far as to argue that neo-corporatist forms of interest intermediation may actually coexist with pluralist forms of policy-making (Schmitter 1982: 263). Commenting on the nuclear energy debate in the Netherlands in the 1970s Nelkin and Pollak stated that:

The Netherlands ... [is] accustomed to accommodating the demands of multiple interest ... Criticism and the expression of diverse opinion are encouraged. Activists who are openly opposed to government policies are brought directly into advisory groups so that adversary politics are played out within the system. Conflict is expected and accepted as a political reality. (Nelkin and Pollak 1977: 354-355)

As far as the Dutch example is concerned, there has, it seems, been an attempt to fuse traditional neo-corporatism with a more pluralist style of politics. This raises the important question of whether Kitschelt is correct in viewing all neo-corporatist arrangements as 'closed' to new demands, and as facilitating the rise of significant green parties.

One of the main questions that arises from this discussion relates to whether the incorporation of ecological concerns into public policy-making since the 1970s - in contrast to the mid-1980s in the Austrian case (Lauber 1997b: 86) - might possibly contribute to an explanation of why a significant green party failed to materialise in the Netherlands prior to Green Left (which was essentially

the outcome of a merger of already existing New Left parties) in 1989/90. Van der Straaten veers towards this conclusion when he states that '[g]reen parties are in a difficult position in the Netherlands with its culture of consultation and collectivism' (van der Straaten 1992: 68). Within this climate, it would be difficult to interpret the emergence of Green Left in terms of a response to the perceived 'rigidity' of neo-corporatist patterns of interest intermediation.

(c) Britain

In contrast to Austria and the Netherlands, Britain is often cited as a classic example of the pluralist mode of decision-making. Indeed, a recent academic study rates the British political system as being the least neo-corporatist of European countries (Lijphart and Crepaz 1991: 239). The claim that Britain is not a neo-corporatist system is based upon two observations: '[T]he first is the general lack of integration of both unions and management into the policy-making process. The second is the apparent preference of both sides for confrontational methods of settling their disputes' (Gallagher *et al.* 1995: 370). With the exception of a brief period during the 1970s in which the emergence of a 'Social Contract' between the then Labour government, the Trades Union Congress (TUC) and Confederation of British Industry (CBI) suggested a possible move towards a more neo-corporatist model, policy-making in Britain has been described as conforming to 'the model of a pluralist system based on a political market in which self-generating interest groups compete freely with one another to influence the flow of public policy' (Gallagher *et al.* 1995: 370). In terms of the representation of ecological interests, the British system has been noted for its 'permeability' - that is, its capacity for accommodating these concerns - and it has been suggested that this has had the effect of absorbing 'a lot of the environmentalist energy which in other, less open systems might have found an outlet in radical politics' (Rootes 1992: 183). It has been argued that the

levels of access granted to environmental groups in Britain have meant that the environmental movement has been largely indifferent towards the Green Party, precisely because it views conventional pressure group lobbying to be a far more effective means of seeking to advance its cause. On this reading, many environmental groups have been reluctant to associate themselves with the Green Party for fear of 'alienating [themselves] from centres of influence [and] supporters or potential supporters who vote for other parties' (Garner 1996: 138). From this perspective, then, the electoral marginality of the British Green Party can partly be explained by the political system's traditional openness to ecological interests, thus tempering the feeling among a large section of the environmental movement and ecologically concerned citizens that a green political party is either desirable or necessary.

However, critics have argued that despite its supposed 'inclusiveness', the British system has remained at least as - if not more - committed to the pursuit of economic growth and 'at least equally insensitive to its possible secondary dysfunctions' as some neo-corporatist ones (Scott 1990: 147). The dubbing of Britain as the 'dirty man of Europe' during the 1980s reflected a long history of government indifference towards environmental issues. During the Thatcher years, British governments were highly criticised for their refusal to reduce sulphur emissions and their advocacy of a 'dispersal and absorption' pollution control philosophy (Robinson 1992). In addition, access to official policy-making forums by established environmental groups in Britain has been limited. Even when environmental groups have been accorded access, the 'representatives of producer interests - farmers, industrialists, trade unions - [have] exerted powerful external and internal pressure on both (Labour and Conservative) parties not to accede to the demands of the environmental lobby' (Carter 1997a: 194). The recent emergence of new, radical environmental groups willing to engage in direct action protests can be viewed as a response to the limited success achieved through traditional lobbying-based strategies (Carter 1997a: 201-202). Again, then, doubt can be cast upon Kitschelt's general claim that pluralist polities have

necessarily been consistently more accommodating towards ecological issues and interests than neo-corporatist ones such as those found in the Netherlands.³

3. Social Movements, Resource Mobilisation Theory and Green Parties

The relationship between social movements and the emergence of green parties is a further theme that has been a focus for academic discussion in recent decades (Müller-Rommel 1985c, 1990; Richardson and Rootes 1995). A common claim is that green parties are the 'parliamentary arm' of the new social movements; that is, they are parties which first and foremost represent the demands of these movements (Müller-Rommel 1990: 211). An important issue has concerned the conditions under which social movement activists may decide to form a green party. One theoretical approach which may be of use in addressing this question is that of resource mobilisation theory (RMT). A crucial feature of RMT is that '[t]he actor is credited with the capacity for rational calculation, and collective action is itself bound by the rules and limitations of rational action' (Scott 1990: 115). For resource mobilisation theorists, a key issue which all social movements must confront is that of choosing the most appropriate organisational form for advancing their aims (Rüdiger 1990a: 39). For authors such as Oberschall, the integration of social movements into more institutionalised forms of political action such as political parties can be viewed as a 'natural progression'. Such an interpretation is clearly opposed to one rooted in the Tourainean tradition which would view such developments as a retreat into 'lower forms of social struggle'

³ The case of the United States (US) provides added weight to this argument. The USA has often been defined as a 'pluralist' polity (Smith 1995), and rankings of countries by degree of neo-corporatism have consistently placed this country in the 'weak to no corporatism' category (Wilson 1990). Despite the country's supposed pluralist credentials, US governments have consistently disregarded environmental interests. During the 1980s, Ronald Reagan campaigned to weaken environmental regulation as part of an agenda aimed at advancing free market, pro-business reform. Since the Reagan years, US presidents Bush and Clinton have resisted international environmental measures, e.g. concerning climate change, on the grounds that they would undermine the US economy's global competitiveness (Doyle and McEachern 1998: 33).

(Scott 1990: 115). In terms of green parties, then, some analysts of politics have chosen to adopt aspects of RMT and developed approaches which emphasise the importance of '[t]he actors' skills, resources, and capacities for rational calculation' in the party formation process (Kitschelt 1989: 14). Stressing the 'rationality' of strategic activity, Kitschelt has argued that individuals will be more likely to form green parties in circumstances where the effective representation of new demands through this institutional channel is made realisable through the existence of favourable 'political opportunities' for party development. For Kitschelt, this is 'when the *unresponsiveness* of existing political institutions coincides with favorable *political opportunities* to displace existing parties' (Kitschelt 1988a: 209). The impact of political state-institutional structures, patterns of electoral change/political competition, and neo-corporatist/pluralist political arrangements on the emergence and electoral significance of green parties has been explored at earlier points in this thesis. Below, an attempt is made to consider the extent to which these dimensions have facilitated a transition from 'informal' social movement type organisations to more institutionalised political phenomena such as green parties. In addition, the degree to which green parties, once established, have been able to forge and/or maintain links with social movements and thereby potentially boost their electoral support base is examined.

(a) Austria

The involvement of new social movements in the genesis of the Austrian Greens has been documented in earlier chapters as well as in several other academic studies (Dachs 1989; Haerpfner 1989; Frankland 1994; Lauber and Müller 1998). A large portion of those active in the ALÖ during the early 1980s had previously been involved in the anti-nuclear, environmental, peace, feminist, and 'third world' movements, and the party viewed itself primarily as an instrument of

these movements. Similarly, the VGO drew upon the new social movements, although its activists were mainly derived from the anti-nuclear movement. The BIP, the organisation which played an important role in bringing these parties together in time for the 1986 elections, included well-known veterans of movement campaigns against the Zwentendorf nuclear power plant and the hydroelectric plant at Hainburg, as well as the peace movement of the early 1980s. Reflecting the centrality of new social movements within the party, the newly formed Austrian Greens' party charter (*Satzung*) of 1987 clearly stated that the intention was not to adopt the organisational patterns of traditional parties but to build 'a broad democratic organisation of those engaged in ecological, democratic, social, cultural, peace and women's issues' (Frankland 1994: 201). The importance of the role of new social movements in the emergence of green parties in Austria therefore cannot be doubted.

An interpretation of the Austrian Greens guided by RMT would emphasise the degree to which the timing of their emergence reflected a 'rational calculation' on the part of social movement activists that such actions were considered to be the most effective course of action open to them at that particular time. It has previously been argued that the political system and existing parties were seen to be failing to respond adequately to the demands of environmental activists prior to the emergence of the Greens in Austria (chapter 5). In addition, it could be argued that the success of recent movement campaigns (e.g. at Zwentendorf and Hainburg), and the opportunities presented by political state-institutional structures such as a proportional electoral system, meant that the chances of green party electoral success were quite high. Embarking upon an *unified* electoral strategy could therefore potentially offer the prospect of receiving substantial levels of public support and a realistic chance of gaining representation in parliament, thereby securing a more 'permanent' and direct means of influencing the political decision-making process than had hitherto been the case. Securing green representation would also bring with it financial rewards in terms of

state subsidies (chapter 6), enabling the further development of the party organisation.

There are some difficulties in this characterisation of the Austrian Greens, not least the 'rationality' premise which underpins the RMT approach. One such problem is that RMT takes it for granted that social movement activists will always behave in a 'rational' manner - it assumes that their actions are guided by 'rationality' in the instrumental sense. But as Ward argues, '[d]ecisions are often made more on the grounds of consistency with past actions, reductions of strains within the individual's belief system (cognitive dissonance), or normative orientation, than through a calculation of the most efficient means to given ends' (Ward 1995: 89). Furthermore, RMT presents a very narrow image of social movements and, it should be added, green parties in terms of their goals. In presuming that these organisations are formed according to pragmatic political considerations it fails to recognise that political activity can have an 'expressive, as well as an instrumental, function for the actor' (Scott 1990: 121). While RMT may potentially provide important insights into the conditions under which green parties emerge, researchers must remain alert to its limitations - that is to say, open to the possibility that party emergence and/or engagement in party activity may reflect less instrumentally motivated patterns of behaviour.

It is important to point out that the Austrian Greens have, since their formation, continued to receive support from the new social movements. This has for some time provided an important support base for the Greens and contributed to the maintenance of the party's status as a significant actor within the political system. Yet the fact that these movements have experienced some decline in recent years may have limited the Greens' electoral appeal and, should this trend continue, the party may find it difficult to sustain and further develop its electoral support base in the future (Lauber 1997a: 190).

(b) The Netherlands

Social movements have also played an important role in the emergence of the Dutch Green Left. Political activists - particularly from the environmental and peace movements, but also from the feminist and labour movements - made plain their support for a strong, 'red-green' formation prior to the national elections of 1989. In addition, the eventual merger of the four small left-wing parties in 1990 was undoubtedly made easier by the fact that many party activists had previously worked together in these movements. The significance of social movements in the development of Green Left is underlined by the results of a survey carried out at the last conventions of the PSP, PPR, EVP and CPN in 1991: of the respondents, 55 per cent were active in a social movement (environmental, peace, feminist, labour). However, as Voerman points out, social movement activism tended to reflect the respective main ideological concerns of the small Left parties. Thus, Communists were more likely than other party members to be active in the labour movement (32 per cent); on the other hand, members of the PSP, PPR and EVP were far more likely to be involved in the environmental and, to a lesser extent, the peace movement than Communists. Interestingly, a considerably smaller proportion of respondents was active in the feminist movement and this can possibly be explained by the under-representation of women in the Green Left parties. Of the four parties, however, Communists were most involved in the feminist movement and this may have reflected 'the important contribution of feminists to the renewal of the party in the 1980s' (Lucardie *et al.* 1994: 104-105). The lasting influence of social movements on Green Left is demonstrated, for example, by the close relations between the party and the environmental movement, particularly the Dutch Friends of the Earth (*Milieudefensie*) (Lucardie 1997: 187-188).⁴

⁴ As Lucardie points out 'Bram van Ojik, the present chairman of *Milieudefensie*, was Member of Parliament for the Green Left in 1994; the first president of the party, Marijke Vos, worked on the staff of the Dutch Friends of the Earth' (Lucardie 1997: 188).

While data relating to the specific social movement backgrounds of Green Left voters are unavailable, there is limited evidence to suggest that the latter may be more inclined to support and engage in ‘unconventional’ political protest activity than other Dutch voters. The Dutch 1989 Election Study revealed that Green Left voters were more likely to lend their support to petitions and participate in action groups than the average voter (55 per cent compared with 24 per cent) and demonstrations (75 per cent compared with 24 per cent of average voters).⁵ It therefore seems likely that Green Left’s support base is more firmly rooted in the social movement/protest orientated cohort of society than the other Dutch parties.

Scholars in the RMT stream would presumably argue that the Dutch Green Left’s emergence was the outcome of a conscious, ‘rational’ calculation on the part of the declining small New Left parties and social movement activists (who had tended to be supportive of the former) that the most effective means of advancing their aims was through a new party organisation which might derive greater electoral support from a broader cross-section of social movement sympathisers. Thus the decision to incorporate already existing parties and previously unaffiliated social movement activists into a united organisation may have been taken on the understanding that such action, at the time, represented the most effective means of halting the further decline of the involved parties, and of ensuring that ecological and other social movement interests would continue to have a voice in parliament. The ‘rationality’ of forming a unified party had added appeal during the late 1980s in light of the heightened interest in environmental issues and intense political competition for the ‘green’ vote, themes explored in the previous chapter.

⁵ Information supplied by Paul Lucardie, Documentation Centre for Dutch Political Parties (29 September 1995).

(c) Britain

In contrast to both Austria and the Netherlands, the formation of the forerunner to the British Green Party - PEOPLE - was not the outcome of pressure applied by social movements. Rather, the main catalysts for the formation of the party were publications dealing with the ecological crisis such as *Blueprint for Survival*, the *Limits to Growth* report and the writings of Paul Erlich. These had a profound impact on the founder members of PEOPLE and strongly influenced their decision to form the new party in 1973. Efforts made to bring together members of the environmental movement following the founding of PEOPLE met with little success, and the vast majority of environmental activists and thinkers 'were hostile to the formation of an ecology party' (Wall 1994: 18). For example, a conference planned by PEOPLE aimed at uniting Britain's major environmental groups ultimately failed to materialise as a result of lack of interest on the part of the latter. Some writers have argued that the failure of the broader environmental movement to support the British Green Party has partially reflected the albeit limited extent to which the former has, in the past, been able to exert influence on the decision-making process through mechanisms such as the public enquiry and other forms of public consultation (Rüdiger and Lowe 1986). Yet the mechanics of the British electoral system have also contributed to the failure of the Green Party to attract the support of certain social movements, which in some cases, e.g. CND during the early 1980s, have found it more worthwhile to seek to advance their aims within well-established party organisations such as the Labour Party. Forging links with a Green Party which had little prospect of achieving electoral success was simply not considered to be a 'rational' act by a considerable proportion of new social movement activists.

Although social movements did not play a direct role in the emergence of the British Green Party, the period 1979-80 did represent something of a transformation in terms of the membership, and, ultimately, the ideology of the party with the influx of young radicals from the peace, animal rights and feminist

movements. In contrast to the then Ecology Party leaders, these members were strongly committed to a more decentralist (as opposed to an electoralist) approach which emphasised the importance of 'empowerment politics, community action, NVDA [non-violent direct action] and coalition building to create a Green movement outside of Westminster' (Wall 1994: 40). As will be examined in chapter 9, this influx gave rise to internal tensions which were to plague the party for almost a decade. Since the Green 2000 debacle, however, the Green Party has endorsed a strategy of coalition building, working more closely with direct action protest groups and focusing more on politics at the grass-roots level (Morrissey 1996). While social movement activists have played some role in the development of the Green Party, particularly since the early 1980s, its consistent failure to attract the support of the more mainstream environmental movement has been a further obstacle to the party gaining an enhanced public profile and achieving greater electoral success.

A further consideration derives from the premises of RMT. In view of the considerable impediments to new party success imposed by the British electoral system, the following question arises: has participation in green party politics in Britain primarily been motivated by a 'rational' calculation of the 'costs' and 'benefits' of engaging in electoral politics by party founders and social movement activists? The first point that can be made here is that the party founders did seriously believe that engaging in party political activity would form the most 'rational' response to what they perceived to be the growing ecological crisis. Their aims were clear: to gain a majority of Westminster seats or to exert strong influence on a governing party (Wall 1994: 16). Yet the nature of the FPTP electoral system meant that these aims were essentially unrealistic, and it could be argued that the formation of PEOPLE amounted to a fundamental miscalculation on the part of the founders. While there may be some degree of accuracy in this statement, it would be wrong to conclude that a (naive) electoral optimism necessarily formed the key motive for those who subsequently joined or became actively involved in the Green Party. A recent membership survey

clearly shows that the majority of members do not view political success, in the traditional electoral sense, to be that important a party goal. Rather, members appear to have joined the British Greens on grounds of a personal commitment to the principles of green politics (Rüdig *et al.* 1991: 59). The persistence of the Green Party over the past two and a half decades, in a decidedly hostile political environment, highlights the extent to which party activity can reflect a different structure of citizen preferences to that employed in Kitschelt's RMT-based approach to understanding green party development.

4. Conclusion

It has been shown that Kitschelt's argument linking neo-corporatism to the presence of significant green parties requires some refinement. In Austria, responses to the rigidity of neo-corporatist structures were important factors in the emergence of green party politics, and it is true that these structures have continued to form a key point of criticism for many ecologically concerned Green voters. Yet the Dutch case shows that neo-corporatist structures of elite negotiation need not exclude environmental interests from the decision-making process. In contrast to Kitschelt's reasoning, it seems likely that Dutch neo-corporatism has to some extent impeded the greater electoral success of green parties on account of its relative openness towards ecological concerns. Thus, rather than there being a clear-cut link between neo-corporatism and the emergence of significant green parties, it is perhaps more accurate to say that neo-corporatism may benefit these parties in electoral terms, but that this depends largely on the degree to which it has been able to extend its inclusiveness to groups representing interests other than those of capital and labour. The case of Britain further clouds the issue in question, showing clearly that even relatively pluralist patterns of intermediation have provided only limited representation of ecological interests. Citizen awareness of this fact has in

recent years prompted the rise of new forms of ecological protest based upon a direct action strategy. The continued marginality of the Green Party in a political system which penalises small parties has meant that ecologically concerned citizens have sought to move beyond an electorally based political strategy. Clearly future studies of the impact of 'neo-corporatism/pluralism' on green party development need to be more sensitive to national differences in terms of the relative openness of these patterns of interest intermediation.

In the second part of the chapter, and drawing upon aspects of RMT, the impact of social movements on the emergence and electoral significance of green parties was examined. It was argued that the backing of social movements has played an important part in the electoral significance of green parties in Austria and the Netherlands. In addition, insofar as RMT argues that the building of new vehicles of interest representation is often the outcome of a process of calculation on the part of 'rational' activists, it can perhaps throw some limited light on the circumstances under which the emergence of green parties took place in these countries. In Austria, a political system characterised by 'closed' neo-corporatist patterns of decision-making and favourable political state-institutional structures, combined with the success of recent environmental campaigns, meant that the formation of a unified green party was an attractive and viable option for environmental and other new social movement activists. The 'rationality' of the two separate 'green' parties (VGÖ and ALÖ), along with movement activists, building an electoral alliance in time for the 1986 elections was further reinforced by the realisation that electoral disunity would possibly result in both parties failing to secure parliamentary representation, as had been the outcome in 1983.

In the Netherlands, the decision taken by the small New Left parties to intensify electoral co-operation and ultimately to form a new party was in part motivated by calls from social movement activists to build a more effective vehicle through which their interests could be advanced, but also by the prospect of maintaining representation in parliament. The British case presents something

of a contrast, however, and highlights the limitations of approaching the emergence of green parties from a 'resource mobilisation' perspective. While it could be argued that the decision to form PEOPLE was made on the basis of a rational (mis)calculation of the advantages of pursuing a party based strategy, the fact that the Green Party has persisted despite a lack of widespread support from social movements, and an electoral system disadvantageous to small parties, shows the extent to which a different, more philosophical set of preferences has underpinned green party politics in Britain. Suitably conceptualised, modes of interest representation can be understood to represent an important focus for research into the dynamics of European green party emergence and electoral success.

Chapter 9

Internal Dynamics in Green Parties

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the relationship between the electoral significance of green parties and what will be termed 'internal party dynamics'. The previous three chapters have focused attention on potential *external* influences upon green parties; namely, those relating to political state-institutional structures, electoral dealignment and political competition, and modes of interest representation. In this chapter, it is argued that *internal* dynamics - which would include such issues as party ideology, strategy, organisation and leadership - constitutes a further important dimension whose consideration can contribute towards the development of a more comprehensive understanding of why certain green parties have attained electoral significance while others, e.g. the British Greens, have not.

It is unfortunate that so little has hitherto been said on this subject. While much has been written on the nature of green ideology (Bennie *et al.* 1994; Eckersley 1992; Goodin 1992; Vincent 1993; Dobson 1995); the character of internal green party debates concerning strategy and structure (Kitschelt 1989; Doherty 1992); and green party organisational change (Frankland 1993), there have been remarkably few attempts to assess the extent to which such issues have impinged upon the electoral significance of these parties. This chapter therefore represents a first attempt to address some of these questions.

The potential influence of internal issues on the electoral significance of green parties is not immediately obvious. However, a brief introduction to some key areas of party research should help to clarify why they are worthy of further enquiry. One area of green party research has focused upon the eco-philosophical and political orientations of green parties towards the 'ecological issue'. At a philosophical level, some commentators have stressed the 'non-anthropocentric'

basis of green parties. Richardson, for instance, suggests that green parties have embraced a 'biocentric' philosophy equating 'the needs of the planet with the needs of the person, the rights of the person with the rights of the planet' (Richardson 1995: 11; see also Spretnak and Capra 1985). Politically, distinctions have been made between 'pure green' and 'eco-socialist' green parties, and the extent to which these tendencies can co-exist within single party organisations (O'Neill 1997). The first part of this chapter explores, in general terms, the ways in which orientations towards political ecology might hinder or facilitate the electoral success of green parties.

Further foci for green party research have concerned party organisation and strategy. Such issues, for example, have been central to Kitschelt's work on so-called 'left-libertarian' parties in Belgium and Germany (Kitschelt 1988b, 1989). Briefly put, Kitschelt argues that these parties generally face a choice between pursuing a logic of constituency representation on the one hand - in which party structure is decentralised, horizontal and based upon an aversion to the professionalisation of political leaders - and a logic of electoral, or party, competition on the other - according to which such parties adopt structures similar to those of 'conventional' parties and strive for vote maximisation (Kitschelt 1989). Kitschelt's analysis suggests that - according to the mix of activist types within the party - a 'left-libertarian' party will pursue a strategy that will either maximise vote-getting, or one that will cater 'to ideological sensibilities by preserving a fluid, informal, participatory dynamic' (Kitschelt 1989: 281). Attention to the components of each of these strategies - to the extent that they have become manifest in the three green parties - may therefore provide further important insights into the internal factors which impact upon green parties' comparative electoral strength.

A closely related set of issues concerns the degree to which internal tensions and conflict have characterised individual green parties over these questions of organisation and strategy. Green party analysts have employed labels such as 'realos' and 'fundis', 'pragmatists' and 'anti-partyists', and 'electoralists'

and 'decentralists' in the attempt to clarify the nature of these tensions and conflicts.¹ At the risk of over-simplifying a quite complex and ambiguous area of debate, 'realos', 'pragmatists' or 'electoralists' have been more sympathetic to the idea of adopting a traditional hierarchical organisation with a party leader, fighting elections, building coalitions with other parties, and presenting a 'respectable' and 'professional' image to the public in an attempt to win votes. 'Fundis', 'anti-partyists' or 'decentralists', however, have tended to advocate the creation of a more decentralised party organisation, extra-parliamentary action and to be suspicious of coalitions with other political parties (Rüdig and Lowe 1986; Doherty 1992). Internal conflicts over these latter issues have been a feature of much of the British Green Party's history and, as will be argued later, the considerable energy and time consumed by these matters has, in the past, done little to enhance the public image and hence electoral potential of the party. As well as the British case, however, these issues will be examined as they have affected the electoral prospects of green parties in Austria and the Netherlands.

One issue which, certainly in Britain, has been particularly prominent in debates about green party organisation and strategy is that of party leadership. It is also noteworthy that the idea that political leadership can play a significant role in modern electoral competition is one that has received increasing attention in recent decades (McAllister 1996). While not claiming that the issue of party leadership has become decisive in explaining voting behaviour, studies suggest that 'leaders are one of the factors ... that need to be taken into account' (McAllister 1996: 298). One study of new political parties points out that such parties, in particular, 'need effective leadership' (Hauss and Rayside 1978: 51). It is suggested that 'highly visible and charismatic leaders' can provide a new party with a focus for its appeal and attract media attention for the party, thus possibly making it easier for voters to 'learn about and support a new party' (Hauss and Rayside 1978: 51). Conversely, lack of coherent leadership may result either in

¹ It should be noted that these labels are by no means exhaustive. As Bennie *et al.* have pointed out, most commentators have adopted a 'two-dimensional' approach to green party ideology and strategy. However, it should be stressed that others have developed more complex, multi-dimensional approaches to these issues (Bennie *et al.* 1994: 220).

the absence of new parties or 'factionalism' and, ultimately, schisms, which may lead directly 'to the loss of voters and members' (Haus and Rayside 1978: 51-52). In terms of seeking to identify the internal dynamics which may impact upon green party significance, then, it is suggested that leadership questions and, in particular, the issue of whether such parties have either resisted or embraced an electoral strategy based around the 'appeal' of a single leader, should form a further topic of investigation. The present chapter is divided into two main parts. The first part considers the potential impact of green party ideology - in particular, orientation towards political ecology - upon the electoral significance of green parties. This is followed in part two by a detailed assessment of issues of strategy, organisation and party leadership as they have affected the electoral success of green parties.

1. Internal Green Party Dynamics I: Ideological Orientation Towards Political Ecology

A persistent theme in analyses of green parties is that they challenge the existing way of doing things (Richardson 1995). It has been argued in this thesis that a defining feature of green parties is their embrace of a political perspective which places ecological issues at the centre of political concern. Despite this common emphasis, it is clear that green parties have adopted a diversity of approaches to the 'ideology of ecology' (Vincent 1993). One possible means of grasping this diversity is to draw upon existing classifications of ecological thought. In general terms, commentators have attempted to typologise the 'ecology movement' on the basis of philosophical and political tendencies. On the philosophical level, Andrew Vincent has distinguished between a 'light anthropocentrist wing, where the main body of arguments stress (in varying degrees) that human beings are the sole criterion of both what is valuable and what can value' and 'the ecocentric wing [where if] there is a primary locus of value it is not the human individual or

biosphere but the ecosphere as a whole' (Vincent 1993: 254-257). Vincent argues that between these two extremes lies a broad intermediate category which in turn can be further subdivided into the 'moral extensionist' and 'reluctant holism' tendencies. For Vincent 'the former leans uncertainly towards moderate or weak anthropocentrism whereas the latter leans very reluctantly toward moderate ecocentrism and holism' (Vincent 1993: 258).

To some extent the philosophical positions referred to here can be seen to underpin political tendencies within the ecology movement. For example, 'ecocentric' arguments have been employed in parts of North America, Scandinavia and Australia in campaigns for wilderness preservation (Doyle and McEachern 1998: 39). For authors such as Dobson, it is this 'ecocentric' tendency which is considered to be one of the core ingredients which separates 'dark-green' politics from 'light-green' politics (Dobson 1995: 72). 'Light anthropocentrist' arguments are commonly found within the 'light-green' or 'reformist' wing of the ecology movement and they are associated with 'some of the most traditional environmental groups ... conservation and resource groups ... preservation, single issue and recreation groups' (Vincent 1993: 263). Other political tendencies - for instance, 'eco-socialism' - are more difficult to classify in terms of Vincent's philosophical typology. For Vincent, 'eco-socialism' falls somewhere in between the 'dark-green' and 'light-green' tendencies (Vincent 1993: 264). But most commentators have argued that 'eco-socialism' veers more towards anthropocentrism - defined in the 'weak' sense - as opposed to the ecocentrism characteristic of 'dark-green' politics (Eckersley 1992; Pepper 1993).

The significance of all this becomes clearer in turning to the green parties in this study. While there is undoubtedly a diversity of ecological views present within the British Green Party - including that of eco-socialism - it has been demonstrated that the vast majority of members support an 'ecocentric' position when it comes to the value of nature (Bennie *et al.* 1994: 235). The Green Party is widely noted for its 'ideological purity' and scholars have noted the extent to

which the party's political programme has been 'strongly influenced by holistic "dark green" politics' (Rootes 1995a: 85). In contrast to the British Greens, the Dutch Green Left displays a political outlook more sympathetic to 'eco-socialism' than to the 'dark green' position, and this is perhaps unsurprising given its origins in parties of the New Left (Dickson 1992; Lucardie *et al.* 1993; Lucardie 1997). According to Voerman, '[c]onsidering its origins and composition, [Green Left's] development in a biocentric direction is hardly to be expected, since this would jeopardize its unity and hence its existence' (Voerman 1995: 125). The small Dutch green party - *De Groenen* - by contrast, seems more akin to the British Green Party, to the extent that it has adopted a 'holistic', 'dark-green' approach to ecological politics (Voerman 1995). Although there are difficulties in classifying the Austrian Greens precisely in terms of the 'dark-green'/'eco-socialist' dichotomy - they are considered by Frankland to lie somewhere between these two extremes (Frankland 1994: 213) - it is clear that the party has managed to 'touch base with conventional leftist and eco-socialist thinking' (O'Neill 1997: 142). This in all likelihood reflects the dominance of the 'leftist' ALÖ - as opposed to the 'pure green' VGÖ - in the party formation process (O'Neill 1997).

More germane to the concerns of this thesis, however, is whether the 'dark green' influenced ideology of the British Green Party has to some extent contributed to its continued electoral marginality. It could be argued that one of the factors which distinguishes the Dutch Green Left from the British Green Party, and which possibly contributes to an explanation of the electoral significance of the former and insignificance of the latter, concerns the Dutch party's capacity to appeal to a larger electoral constituency on account of its leftist origins and 'eco-socialist' tendencies. What is being suggested here is that as well as capturing some support from purely ecologically concerned voters, Green Left's electoral appeal may be sufficiently wide so as to appeal to a much broader array of citizens who are sympathetic to a more 'anthropocentric eco-socialism' or 'New Leftist' political perspective (Lucardie *et al.* 1994). The

electoral significance of the Austrian Greens may, again, partially be a reflection of the party's less than 'dark-green' approach to green politics. That the party exhibits leftist tendencies could account for its appeal among disenchanting socialist (SPÖ) voters (Frankland 1994: 211). As one author has noted, the Austrian Greens have also been able to draw upon the support of former People's Party (Conservative) (ÖVP) voters and this probably reflects the fact that the party has exhibited 'rightist' tendencies on some policy issues (Frankland 1994: 211). In contrast, that the majority of British Green Party members have defined 'themselves in purely ecological terms and therefore as beyond left and right' (Doherty 1992: 105) has probably had the effect of narrowing the party's electoral support base and limited the party's prospects of attaining some modicum of significance within the British party system. The recent *Green Left Convergence* initiative launched by the *Red-Green Network*, *The Way Ahead* (the 'radical' tendency within the Green Party), *Green Socialist Network*, *Socialist Movement* and *Red-Green Study Group* may be viewed as an attempt to build a broader electoral coalition of those sympathetic to a more distinctly and openly socialist informed Green politics, although differences of opinion exist as to whether the Green Party should dilute its 'dark-green' position and orientate itself more directly towards the politics of the Left (Norris 1995, Frankel 1996).

Clearly ideological orientation towards political ecology is not the only issue which can potentially affect levels of green party electoral success. The varying electoral performance of green parties has also been linked to a number of *policy* issues. For example, a recent study suggests that electoral successes for the Swedish Greens in 1994 and 1995 were linked to the degree to which the party was able to tap into the considerable swell of anti-EU sentiment among the Swedish electorate (Burchell 1996). The opposite has been the case in Austria. Here, the Greens were forced to reverse their oppositional stance on the question of EU membership as two thirds of the electorate voted in favour of Austrian entry in the 1994 referendum. The Greens evidently feared that their negative stance was 'out of touch' with the majority of Austrian citizens, and that to

continue with such a policy would damage the party's long-term electoral prospects (Burchell and Williams 1996). In Germany, the Greens' negative standpoint on reunification was undoubtedly a factor in the party's debacle at the first all-German elections in 1990 (O'Neill 1997). Ideological orientation towards political ecology can have an important impact on a green party's chances of electoral success, but it is important to recognise that a party's electoral performance can also be a reflection of its positioning with respect to salient policy issues.

2. Internal Dynamics in Green Parties II: Strategy, Organisation and Party Leadership

Attention to issues concerning party organisation and strategy may cast further light on the internal factors potentially impinging upon the electoral significance of green parties. Several authors have contended that a feature which distinguishes green parties from 'conventional' political parties is an 'alternative' model of party organisation inspired by an ideological commitment to participatory democracy, or *Basisdemokratie* (grass-roots democracy) (Poguntke 1987, 1989; Müller-Rommel 1990; Kitschelt 1993). According to Poguntke:

The essence of it is direct participation in decision-making on specific issues as opposed to the usual choice between political programmes which are then specified and realized by professional politicians. It means that the lower units of any societal organization ought to have extensive decision-making powers, which implies decentralized structures. Ideally, the lowest unit has most resources and competencies, and the higher-level bodies only take over tasks which the basic unit is structurally incapable of mastering. (Poguntke 1989: 10)

As was documented in chapter 4, however, the Dutch Green Left has, from the outset, chosen not to develop in this organisational direction, and even the Austrian Greens have undergone recent organisational adaptation in an attempt to

become a more effective electoral competitor (Frankland 1993). Organisational restructuring aimed at increasing party efficiency has taken place within other European green parties, including those of Sweden and Germany (Frankland 1995; Burchell and Williams 1996). Employing Kitschelt's terminology, it is clear that as certain green parties have increasingly come to emphasise the importance of 'effective' or 'pragmatic' electoral candidates, visible leadership and strategies of alliance building, they are displaying signs of becoming more orientated towards a 'logic of electoral competition' (Kitschelt 1989). According to Kitschelt, the degree to which green parties follow a logic of electoral competition depends upon the relative strength and patterns of coalition of three groups of activists within any given party: 'ideologues' (committed to a logic of constituency representation); 'lobbyists' (who 'choose between the logics of constituency representation and party competition depending on the opportunities and constraints their pursuit of special interests encounters in a given situation') (Kitschelt 1989: 50-51); and 'pragmatists' (the group most inclined to press for a logic of electoral competition) (Kitschelt 1989: 49-51). As Kitschelt explains:

If ideologues and lobbyists coalesce, the party will emphasise its unique left-libertarian organizational form and engage in a logic of constituency mobilization. If pragmatists and ideologues or pragmatists and lobbyists join forces, the party will more likely move to a logic of party competition. The concern with votes and incremental policy reform is greater in the latter coalitions than in that of ideologues and lobbyists. (Kitschelt 1988b: 131-132)

The scope of the discussion needs to be narrowed, however. What is particularly interesting in terms of this study is whether the existence of structurally motivated tensions between different internal party factions and/or the pursuit of different organisational and strategic 'logics' by green parties might affect their effectiveness as electorally competitive organisations. In the case of the British Green Party, tensions between 'electoralists' and 'decentralists' since the early 1980s may have seriously weakened the party's electoral prospects. For example, Parkin points to the extent to which the 'Maingreen' episode of 1986, in which

tensions between these two factions came to a head, resulted in a 'siege' mentality which 'carried over into a badly planned and lacklustre [1987] election campaign' (Parkin 1989: 228). This theme is explored in more detail later in the chapter.

One of the issues that has frequently occupied a central position within green party debates about organisation and strategy relates to party leadership. As Rüdig has suggested, this issue has been 'one of the most bitter sources of internal conflict in green parties, namely that about its internal organisation and the avoidance of any "leaders"' (Rüdig 1986: 157). According to Hauss and Rayside, a feature of most 'electorally successful' new parties is 'effective leadership'. It is important to point out that exactly what is meant by 'effective leadership' is open to considerable debate. As Elgie comments, there is no one type or form of political leadership. Leadership can take a variety of forms based on charisma, heroism, innovation, collectivity and a wide range of other qualities (Elgie 1995: 4).² In their study of new parties, however, Hauss and Rayside argue that two factors relating to leadership are particularly important to the formers' electoral success. The first of these relates to 'charisma' and the consequent 'popularity' that this is presumed to bring; the second concerns the presence or absence of a 'unified, coherent leadership' (Hauss and Rayside 1978: 52). With respect to the first point:

'[t]hose that have had highly visible and charismatic leaders have used that popularity to build at least their initial support ... [L]eaders [with these qualities] provide new parties with a focus for their appeal. A new party often finds it hard to gain exposure, particularly through the mass media, exposure which can be more easily obtained if it has a "newsworthy" leader ... More importantly, voters probably find it easier to learn about and support a new party if they can identify its cause with a popular and respected leader. (Hauss and Rayside 1978: 51)

Related to this aspect of Hauss and Rayside's work is a growing body of literature which suggests that the modernisation of political communications has

² For a fuller discussion of the nature of political leadership, see Elgie (1995: 2-5).

resulted in an increasing personalisation, or even 'presidentialisation', of politics (McAllister 1996: 281). These studies add weight to the idea that, in recent decades, political leaders have become increasingly important within the sphere of electoral politics in democratic political systems. The extent of the so-called rise of 'candidate-centred politics' (Wattenberg 1991) can be seen by the switching of leader images for party symbols at election campaigns; the readiness to associate governments with the leader rather than the party; and the widespread media interest in the personalities and private lives of political leaders. A series of studies in the USA, Britain and elsewhere has shown that public perception of leaders is now an important factor in determining voting behaviour (McAllister 1996: 286-297).

The second theme highlighted by Hauss and Rayside - that of leadership coherence and unity - overlaps to a considerable degree with the issues of internal conflict discussed earlier. According to Hauss and Rayside, the lack of coherent leadership may lead to '[f]actionalism, and ultimately schisms [leading] directly ... to the loss of voters and members' (Hauss and Rayside 1978: 52). In addition 'a squabbling leadership can also present a poor image for a party and thus eat away at its support' (Hauss and Rayside 1978: 52). In terms of green parties, ideological commitments to the principles of participation, rotation of offices, and collective leadership as opposed to the more centralised structures (including the office of leadership) of established parties may, in some cases, have contributed to the emergence of a climate of conflict, discontinuity and disunity within such parties, with the negative public image and electoral ineffectiveness that this creates.

What then might all this mean with regard to the case studies? First of all it suggests that internal party conflict over the question of leadership - and, in particular, party resistance to the idea of a single leader who could prove to be an effective and respected ambassador for the party in the media and the public eye - may have had an adverse effect on the electoral success of green parties. Second, if leadership is becoming an increasingly important factor within the minds of the

voting public then it might be anticipated that those green parties which have adapted to this by adopting a more 'professionalised', 'candidate-centred' style of political campaigning will have made electoral gains as a consequence. Third, and more generally, the answers to these questions may have broader implications concerning the range of additional factors that should be taken into account when examining the electoral significance of green parties, and the potential interrelation between these internal dynamics, and the additional political and institutional themes explored elsewhere in this thesis. Below, issues of strategy, organisation and leadership are discussed in terms of how they have impacted upon the case studies.

(a) Austria

Studies have shown that tensions over questions of strategy and party organisation have been features of the internal politics of green parties in Austria (Frankland 1994: 205; Lauber 1997a: 190). Yet prior to the emergence of the Austrian Greens in 1986/7, it was mainly inter- (as opposed to intra-) party tensions between the ALÖ and VGÖ which, according to one author, 'discouraged many activists and disappointed many voters sympathetic to the green cause' (Lauber 1995: 315). During this period, the two separate 'green' parties spent a considerable amount of time quarrelling with each other, and this division and confusion was to some extent reinforced by the established parties, some of whom went so far as to 'fund and otherwise support straw green parties, and sometimes the VGÖ, in some elections' (Lauber 1995: 315).

The arrival of the Austrian Greens in parliament in 1986 resulted in the granting of state financial support to the new party. Yet such funding was to prove to be the source of internal tensions as a minority of right-wing VGÖ activists attempted to preserve what they perceived to be their party's autonomy (arguing that the new party organisation was merely an 'alliance' and not a

separate political party), and demanded a third of the new party's budget. The resultant split led to the right wing of the VGÖ running candidates against the Austrian Greens in local elections, and to the expulsion of MP and VGÖ president Josef Buchner in December 1987. Further problems occurred towards the end of 1988 with the resignation of three leading 'moderate' Austrian Green MPs - Freda Meissner-Blau, Herbert Fux and Walter Geyer. These served to add further fuel to the media image of the Greens as a party continually engaged in sectarian disputes and personal disagreements, and both the SPÖ and ÖVP attempted to make political capital out of such events (Sully 1990: 133-134; *Die Grüne Alternative* n.d.).

During their brief history, the Austrian Greens have experienced their own version of the so-called 'fundi-realo' conflict.³ Essentially this has taken the form of a debate within the party between those content to pursue a 'logic of constituency representation', emphasising extra-parliamentary activity and decentralisation (the 'grass roots' or *Basis*), and those - termed leaders or *Promis* - geared towards a 'logic of electoral competition', aiming for a more centralised and professional party organisation concerned with vote maximisation (Kitschelt 1989; Frankland 1994). Yet these tensions never reached the intensity of those experienced by the German Greens during the late 1980s (Frankland 1994). One of the most notable phases in the internal development of the Austrian Greens occurred in 1992 with prominent activists from both wings of the party agreeing that reform was necessary. A consensus had developed within the party that the 'grass-roots' organisational model was inefficient and preventing its further electoral success at both the *Land* and national level. Consequently, extensive organisational changes to the party were adopted at two party conferences in May and October 1992, and these were intended to achieve a greater degree of professionalism and electoral efficacy (Frankland 1994; Lauber and Müller 1998).

³ However, Frankland has questioned the applicability of these labels to the Austrian Greens not least because the question of coalition participation - a key aspect of the 'fundi-realo' debate - has remained hypothetical in view of the opposition of the majority of SPÖ members to the idea of a red-green coalition (Frankland 1994: 204).

The Greens' strategic shift towards a 'logic of electoral competition' was most evident during the run up to the 1994 national elections. According to Luther, the Greens recruited professional media consultants and ran a highly candidate centred, professional and effective campaign (Luther 1995: 132). It is here that the potentially important question of party leadership referred to earlier becomes relevant. It is probably accurate to argue that the emergence (in terms of the achievement of an electoral alliance) and initial electoral success of the Austrian Greens in 1986 was partly aided by the charismatic leadership of Freda Meissner-Blau - a high profile personality who had performed well in the presidential elections of that year. As Frankland puts it, 'without the "situational" charisma of Freda Meissner-Blau, the Green Alternatives might not have emerged' (Frankland 1993: 9). If leadership was probably important in 1986, however, it was undoubtedly so in 1994. Studies of the 1994 Austrian election have shown that a key factor in the Greens' success in that election (the party increased its share to 7.3 per cent and 13 seats) was the leadership style and performance of the green candidate Madeleine Petrovic (Luther 1995; Lauber 1995; Pulzer 1995). In television debates Petrovic 'turned out to be extremely effective ... and more than held her own against supposed heavyweights such as Vranitky and Haider' (Luther 1995: 132). For Sully, '[s]he symbolised the new respectable, professional Green image. Gone were the bearded vegetarians in sandals and in came designer business costumes for the fashion conscious' (Sully 1994: 220). Exit polls confirm that the personality of Petrovic was an important motive for casting a Green vote at the 1994 election; thus, 49 per cent of Green voters stated that this had been a factor - second only to concern about 'the environment' - in their final voting choice (Luther 1995: 136).

Further confirmation that leadership can impact upon the electoral success of green parties can be seen in the results of the December 1995 Austrian parliamentary elections. In contrast to her dynamic performance of 1994, Petrovic's performance in 1995 was described as 'stilted and lifeless in many of the debates' (Sully 1996: 639) and 'rather poor' (Lauber 1997a: 186). This may

have had some affect on the Green vote although the fact that the election campaign was geared towards budgetary issues prevented the party from selling its distinctive ecological agenda to voters. Following Petrovic's resignation as de facto party leader in March 1996, the Greens elected a new speaker in the form of Christoph Chorgherr - a candidate noted for his 'dynamism' and 'pragmatism' - although he faced stiff competition from 'a candidate closer to the grass roots' (Lauber and Müller 1998: 17). However, Chorgherr resigned at the end of 1997 as a result of intra-party criticism and was replaced by another so-called 'pragmatist' Alexander Van der Bellen (Lauber and Müller 1998: 18).

(b) The Netherlands

The Dutch Green Left is unusual among European green parties in that it was formed through the unification of four small political parties. Despite the fact that these parties had undergone something of a rapprochement prior to Green Left's formation, it seems plausible that internal tensions on matters of ideology and organisation between the former parties may have existed within the new party from the outset. One of the issues that initially caused some friction within the new party concerned the relative weight to be accorded to the 'red' and 'green' elements in the manifesto. As Voerman points out '[f]rom the beginning, Green Left has struggled with its ideology ... Radicals have put forward ecological elements, while the Communists (and Pacifist-Socialists) have brought in their socialist heritage (Voerman 1995: 118). At the party's second annual congress in December 1991 this ambiguity was seemingly resolved when a majority voted in favour of the view that ecological sustainability should limit the scope of economic development, but also that 'people on lower incomes should be financially compensated in the event of their economic position deteriorating in consequence' (Voerman 1995: 118). The party has since become more ecological in orientation; for example, in 1993 its parliamentary group chose to

give precedence to the environment over socio-economic issues such as income and employment (Voerman 1995: 118). The organisation of the socialist wing of the party into the 'Left Forum' seemed to hint at the emergence of internal factionalism, although this group was dissolved in 1994 as a result of too few active members. A survey carried out at party congress in 1995 showed that the majority of respondents felt that the former parties (CPN, PSP, PPR and EVP) - termed 'blood groups' or '*bloedgroepen*' - were able to exert 'adequate' levels of influence within the Green Left organisation (Voerman and Lucardie 1998). It seems that the somewhat disparate ideological heritage of Green Left has not resulted in the existence of internal tensions of the kind that may have damaged the electoral prospects of other European green parties.

It must be added that the Dutch Green Left appears to have been remarkably free of internal conflict over the question of party organisation and strategy. Thus there is little evidence of crippling conflicts between 'fundis' and 'realos' or 'decentralists' and 'electoralists'. Unlike other green parties, the Dutch Green Left from the outset chose to adopt an organisational structure based upon the 'mass party model' (chapter 4). It is certainly the case that since 1990 changes have taken place within the organisation, but these have intended to further professionalise the party (Voerman and Lucardie 1998). The strategy pursued by Green Left would appear to be based upon a 'logic of party competition' (Kitschelt 1989). The party has shown a willingness to form coalitions with other parties at the local level (*GroenLinks* 1990d) and has set its sights on national government participation, aiming to build on its electoral success of 1998 and ultimately take the place of D66 as the most electorally significant and influential 'alternative' party in the Netherlands.

The dominance of a similar logic within the party can be discerned over the issue of leadership. In a political climate in which the quality of party leaders is increasingly becoming an important consideration within the minds of Dutch voters (Andeweg and Irwin 1993: 106), Green Left has, from the outset, recognised the role of personalities in bringing political messages to the public,

and has, for most of its history, had one political leader (*Interview*, Anne de Boer, 3 March 1996; Voerman and Lucardie 1998). Following the resignation of its leader Ria Beckers in 1993, however, Green Left experienced a period of uncertainty as candidates from different 'blood groups' began competing for the leadership. According to one study the leadership contest, noted for its 'fierceness', was covered extensively within the media, and its negative portrayal was later considered to have partly contributed to the party's poor performance at the 1994 elections (Voerman and Lucardie 1998). In addition, the dual leadership that emerged out of this 'battle' - Ina Brouwer and Mohammed Rabbae - was not noted for its dynamism or charismatic qualities (Lucardie 1995: 121-122). By the 1998 elections a new single leadership had emerged in the form of Paul Rosenmöller, a former radical dockers' leader from Rotterdam and Green Left MP since 1989. His leading position on the party's list of candidates for the 1998 parliamentary elections was unopposed. While, given the current lack of exit poll data on these elections, it is difficult to assess with any accuracy the contribution made by Rosenmöller's leadership to the improved performance of Green Left in 1998, a party member's report on the elections suggests that Rosenmöller's 'credibility and eloquence' made an important contribution to the party's electoral gains.⁴ A recent academic report on the Dutch elections of 1998 suggests that Rosenmöller had performed effectively for Green Left 'both in Parliament and electorally' (Irwin 1999: 272). As has been the case with the Austrian Greens, then, it seems likely that quality of party leadership has been a factor in the varying electoral performance of the Dutch Green Left.

(c) Britain

Of the three main parties in this study it is the British Green Party that has experienced the most intense internal conflict over questions of strategy,

⁴ This report was based on the views of Richard Wouters, Green Left's European affairs adviser.

organisation and leadership. These tensions came to the fore during the 1980s with the influx of young people and radicals committed to a 'decentralist' approach to green politics (Wall 1994: 40). Opposed to the philosophy of the then Ecology Party leaders - which stressed the importance of developing a party with a more moderate 'environmentalist' agenda and a conventional organisational structure capable of fighting effective election campaigns (Rüdig and Lowe 1986: 275) - the so-called 'decentralists' clashed with the 'electoralists' over questions of party strategy, organisation and leadership. According to Rüdig and Lowe:

Much of the work of national conferences consisted in working out compromises between these two different aims: for example, attempts to institute a Party leader and centralize Party organization were successfully resisted, as were demands for a dissolution of the national Party organization and an exclusive emphasis on community-level politics. The fundamental split remained, with the "electoralists" predominant in the national organization and the so-called "anarchists" dominating a number of the Party's relatively autonomous branches. (Rüdig and Lowe 1986: 275).

However, it was during the mid-1980s that this split first prompted the manifestation of a real crisis for the Green Party. At the 1986 conference, two of the party's leading 'electoralists' - Jonathan Tyler and Paul Ekins - put forward several constitutional amendments which, if implemented, would in their view improve party structures and enable the more efficient co-ordination of party activities. When these were rejected by conference, Tyler and Ekins responded by discussing the formation of a covert faction, or 'parallel organisation', called Maingreen which would campaign for the electoralists' perspective and put forward a slate for election to the party council (Parkin 1989: 227). Tyler suggested that the Green Party could progress by developing a strategy according to which organisation, image and leadership were the operative themes. Arguing that these were the 'substance and backbone' of 'real-world politics', Tyler argued that 'our reward for continuing to pretend they are not will be eternal marginality' (cited in Robinson 1992: 213). Yet when news of the Maingreen

initiative reached the party council, the move was condemned and led to the eventual resignation of Tyler and Ekins, and the exit of other leading electoralists (Parkin 1989: 228). The bitterness resulting from this episode was carried over into a badly organised general election campaign in 1987. But such events were also to leave wounds in the form of an escalation of the tensions between 'electoralists' and a strengthened 'decentralist' faction, and these became increasingly 'confrontational' between 1988 and 1992, frustrating progress towards more 'efficient' and 'empowering' party structures (Wall 1994: 60).

Soon after the impressive 1989 European election performance, several prominent 'electoralists' within the Green Party formed a group - Green 2000 - with the aims of streamlining the party organisation and securing 'a mandate for green politics by the year 2010' (*Green Activist*, October 1991: 1). Supporters of the Green 2000 motion which, despite considerable opposition from decentralists, was adopted in 1991 claimed that a reassessment of the party's position was required; in particular, they argued for the 'need for a formal, open, and accountable leadership' (*Green Activist*, October 1991: 1). With the reforms in place, the party decided to contest more seats at the forthcoming general election than it had ever done, fielding 256 candidates (Rootes 1995a: 75). Despite optimism among supporters of Green 2000, the Green Party's electoral performance in 1992 was a huge disappointment; it attracted no more support than in previous general elections and the financial cost of campaigning almost crippled the party. The failure of Green 2000 prompted further criticism of the party's electoral strategy and resulted in the resignation of key figures such as Sarah Parkin and a dramatic fall in membership levels (*Green Activist*, August 1992). The post-Parkin era has been characterised by a relative lack of internal strife and it would seem that the Green Party has gone some way towards resolving its internal problems, focusing on grass-roots politics and a more limited national electoral campaign (*Green World*, Winter 1998/9: 31).

This brief survey of the British Green Party shows the extent to which its history has been dominated by intense internal debates and infighting over

organisational and strategic issues. The issue of leadership has frequently occupied a central position in internal debates over Green Party organisation and strategy. The division of opinion is reflected in a study of Green Party members, which showed that 50 per cent agreed that the party should elect one party leader; 31.4 per cent were against this measure; 18.6 per cent were undecided (Rüdiger *et al.* 1991: 78). The desire that the party should, in effect, be moving away from a collective leadership model towards one based upon a single national speaker was a central theme of the Maingreen and Green 2000 initiatives discussed above. Yet the 'decentralist' element within the Green Party has consistently rejected such moves, arguing that such an idea of 'leadership' is inconsistent with a vision of green politics which stresses ideas of self-reliance, community, democracy and non-exploitation. In terms of achieving greater public visibility, and perhaps attracting higher levels of electoral support, a problem for the Green Party has been that its most 'pragmatic', 'media friendly' personalities - notably Sarah Parkin and Jonathon Porritt - have left the party following controversies over party strategy.⁵ Another media figure who joined the Greens in 1987 - the TV sports presenter David Icke - espoused unusual spiritual views and his presence did little to enhance the party's reputation (Wall 1994: 64). More recently, the Green Party's 'three year rule' with respect to holding the post of Principal Speaker has meant that certain key figures who had begun to make a positive impression in the media - notably David Taylor - have been obliged to stand down (*Green World*, Winter 1998/9: 31).

While internal problems of strategy, organisation and leadership have undoubtedly done little to improve the Green Party's image and performance in general elections, these issues must be set against the broader range of political state-institutional structures and other arrangements working against the party's

⁵ Porritt was suspended from the party in 1994 for recommending (on grounds of electoral pragmatism) that a fellow member support a Plaid Cymru candidate rather than the Green Party candidate in the forthcoming European elections. Porritt argued for this strategy because he believed that the Plaid Cymru candidate 'was both green and could well get elected, whereas the Green Party's candidate was truly, madly, deeply green, but unlikely to save his deposit' (*The Guardian*, 24 August 1994).

electoral progress explored in previous chapters. It could be argued that to the extent that the Green Party has had to operate within such a hostile political environment, there has been little incentive for it to dilute its 'dark-green', decentralist ideology and become a more 'mainstream' party. Many within the party would seem to bear a similarity to the category of activist that Kitschelt terms 'ideologues'. For Kitschelt, these actors 'constrain a party's flexibility in the choice of goals and strategy ... oppose alliances with other parties and make it difficult to diversify a party's appeal to new electoral constituencies' (Kitschelt 1989: 50). A Green Party strategic shift in favour of a 'logic of party competition' (which would involve a shift in balance towards the demands of 'pragmatists') seems a distant prospect in the current political and institutional context of British politics.

3. Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to explore the extent to which the 'internal dynamics' of green parties - essentially issues of ideology, strategy, organisation and leadership - have impacted upon their electoral significance. On the question of ideology, it was argued that the fact that the British Green Party has chosen to adopt a more radical ecological political perspective than its Dutch and Austrian counterparts may have had the effect of limiting its electoral appeal, particularly among those sympathetic to a more 'ecosocialist' or 'New Left' perspective. The lack of opportunities provided for small parties operating within the current political and institutional context of British politics has provided little incentive for the Green Party to move towards a less radical ideological position. Because of the existence of greater opportunities for electoral success, as well as historical factors, both the Austrian Greens and Dutch Green Left have managed to extend their electoral appeal well beyond the narrow constituency of 'dark-green' ecologists.

In terms of strategy, organisation and leadership it was claimed that the different ways in which green parties have tackled these issues can potentially have an effect on levels of electoral support attracted by these parties. While the Austrian Greens have experienced some internal conflict over these issues, the party has, since the early 1990s, implemented structural reforms which have made it a more professional, electorally competitive organisation. The professionalisation of the Greens' leadership was widely considered to have been a factor in their electoral success of 1994. In addition, their electoral decline in 1995 may partially be attributed to the poor performance of their de facto leader - Petrovic - during the election campaign. The Dutch Green Left has, from the outset, been content to adopt a more conventional organisational structure with a single party leader and has pursued a 'logic of electoral competition' (Kitschelt 1989). However, the varying quality of its party leadership may go some way towards accounting for its electoral decline in 1994 and gains in 1998. Of the three parties, however, it is the British Green Party that has experienced the most intense internal strife over questions of organisation, strategy and leadership. The internal battle between 'electoralists' and 'decentralists' has plagued the party since the early 1980s, presenting an image of disunity and disorder, and preventing the development of a more effective and coherent electoral strategy that might appeal to a larger number of ecologically concerned voters. While such strife has undoubtedly weakened the Green Party, its impact must be set against the considerable array of additional political and institutional factors explored in previous chapters.

Chapter 10

Rethinking Green Parties

The emergence and varying electoral success of green parties in Europe has generated a diversity of sociological, cultural change and political studies based approaches each claiming to provide insight into the factors impinging upon these two issues. With respect to the conditions considered to have created fertile ground for the emergence of green parties, most commentators have tended to concentrate on the extent to which a 'silent revolution' has prompted a pervasive shift in political priorities among Western citizens towards 'post-materialist' issues. One of the purposes of this study has been to demonstrate that green party researchers' overwhelming trust in Inglehart's 'post-materialist' thesis has been seriously misplaced. Reservations can also be voiced with regard to 'post-industrial' interpretations of green parties. This thesis has shown clearly that neither of these influential theoretical frameworks can provide a convincing account of the changing social conditions which have been central in facilitating the emergence of parties with an explicitly ecological identity on the European political landscape.

The approach argued for in this thesis situates the rise of green parties principally against the backdrop of the historical development and existence of global ecological risks and problems that have come to the fore during the past half century. Modernisation in its most recent guise - exemplified by the globalisation of production forces stemming from developments in technology and science - has brought with it a new order of global manufactured risks and ecological problems, which has in turn contributed to the rise of ecological critiques of the ways in which 'growth orientated' political projects have unfolded. The Enlightenment idea that human progress arises from advances in scientific and technological knowledge, and continued economic development,

has in recent decades become the focus for increased public criticism. This criticism reflects a growing concern about the global and more localised ecological damage arising from continued industrialisation and the considerable risks - to humans and the natural environment - associated with modern technologies such as nuclear power and the phenomenon of global climate change. Against the claims of existing green party scholars, it has been argued that attention to these issues can provide a more powerful account of the changed social climate which has increased public pressure to create green parties in Europe during the latter part of the twentieth century. Yet the patterns of green party development have also been shaped by a range of political and institutional factors. Elsewhere in the thesis, a variety of concepts derived from the political studies literature was organised into four overarching themes to facilitate an assessment of their impact on the emergence and electoral success of green parties. It was demonstrated that a consideration of these four themes can potentially yield important insights into the political and institutional environment within which green parties emerged, and the circumstances which have facilitated or impeded their electoral success.

Building on the insights of previous chapters, this final chapter develops an integrated framework by means of which students of politics might in future approach the questions of green party emergence and electoral success. In the first part of the chapter, an alternative approach to understanding the context within green parties emerged is elaborated. This involves attention to the heightened impact of scientific, technological and industrial activity on the environment, together with a reworking and repositioning of themes - for example, economic affluence - introduced in previous chapters. Based upon a re-conceptualisation of Inglehart's 'scarcity' hypothesis - i.e. the idea that people place a high value on those things which are in short supply - the section also seeks to account for the often strong moral content of green party politics. The second part inserts a new concept into the discussion - the 'contagion factor' - and considers the extent to which it may facilitate an understanding of the recent

rapid spread of the green party as an organisational form in Europe. In part three, it is suggested that an ecologically informed understanding of green parties can cast new light on the meaning and significance of the four principles which form the ideological underpinnings of their political programme: ecology, social responsibility, enhanced democracy and non-violence. In short, it argues for a rethinking of the ideological character of green party politics. The fourth part of the chapter discusses the political and institutional context of green party development, focusing principally on the question of electoral significance. It is argued that attention to the interconnections between four overarching themes can enhance understanding of the factors impinging upon the electoral success of green parties. The fifth part develops and applies a simple model to a further 13 green parties, which incorporates these four themes and assesses the degree to which the model can 'predict' the presence or absence of significant green parties across sixteen European countries. In light of the arguments developed in this thesis, the final section examines the long-term prospects for green party politics in Europe.

1. Towards an Ecologically Informed Understanding of Green Parties

The idea that green parties should be subsumed under the generic labels of 'left-libertarian' or 'new' politics parties has been a frequent argument made by party specialists (Poguntke 1987, 1993a; Kitschelt 1988a; Müller-Rommel 1990). In disputing this claim, this thesis calls for a serious rethinking of the question of green party identity based upon the irreducible centrality of ecological thinking to these parties. In what follows, an attempt is made to rework some of the themes explored in previous chapters and to develop a new ecologically informed approach to understanding the economic, social and political climate within which green parties emerged.

Much has been said with respect to the role of 'post-materialist' value change as a contextual factor in the emergence of green parties. This perspective was found to be inadequate principally on the grounds of its failure to capture the ecological dimension of green party politics. Yet the link between economic affluence and green parties need not be interpreted in 'post-materialist' terms; it can and should be interpreted in a way that renders it consistent with the ecological approach to green parties argued for in this thesis. It must be recognised that the economic affluence of the post-war period was made possible by the very scientific and technological developments which ultimately contributed to the global ecological crisis. For example, while bringing benefits in terms of raised productivity, the spread of modern agricultural techniques has carried significant environmental costs in the form of soil erosion, habitat degradation, deforestation and risks to human health posed by the use of pesticides (Brenton 1994). The development of new capitalist production methods and energy technologies, upon which humans became increasingly dependent in the decades following World War II, has been a major contributor to environmental problems such as acid rain, oil spills and climate change. In addition, economic and technological 'progress' designed to satisfy rising consumption demands and to enable continued economic growth - e.g. the nuclear power industry - has brought with it global ecological dangers. One further noteworthy point concerns the link between enhanced levels of economic prosperity witnessed in Western nations during the post-war period, the age of mass consumerism and ecological problems. The rise of the 'post-industrial' society - made possible by changes in technology, and exemplified by the more widespread availability and use of consumer goods and services - has exacerbated pressures on the global environment. Rising affluence appears to have bred rampant consumerism rather than an 'aesthetic' appreciation of the environment as outlined in the 'post-materialist' thesis. The emergence of green parties should be situated within the context of the economic affluence of the post-war period, but only in the sense that the global ecological risks and

problems with which these parties have been concerned are rooted in the scientific and technological developments which facilitated this prosperity, and the increasingly 'post-industrial', consumerist culture which arose out of this new economic climate.

It is one thing to describe the economic and social conditions underlying global environmental degradation, but quite another to account for the *politicisation* of ecological issues and increased *societal pressure* to form green parties. With respect to accounting for the politicisation of 'the environment', one plausible explanation can be developed through the reworking of a concept originally employed within the 'post-materialist' thesis; that is, the notion that humans tend to value things which are in relatively short supply. The widespread satisfaction of basic 'material' needs, made possible through the science and technology driven economic growth of the post-war period, has been accompanied by the generation of new global ecological risks and problems. Drawing upon the concept of 'scarcity', an argument can be made which connects humans' greater political concern about 'the environment' to the growing scarcity of 'goods' such as environmental quality. Or putting this another way, economic affluence in Western Europe has bred scarcity of a new kind: scarcity which is not defined by a shortage of basic 'material' goods, but, rather, in terms of the declining environmental quality and growing ecological uncertainty which the 'progress' of the post-war period has brought with it. The intensity and impact of human economic activity on the natural environment has reduced the biosphere's capacity to absorb environmental 'bads' such as pollution, and this has to some extent *diminished*, rather than enhanced, humans' 'material' quality of life. As a result the environment has, in recent decades, become an issue with clear political overtones.

Yet it is important to recognise that there are a number of other reasons why humans have become increasingly inclined to view the environment as an issue requiring political attention, and, ultimately, to seek new political vehicles for articulating and advancing their concerns. Crucially, humans have become

more aware of the nature, causes and potential consequences (in human and non-human welfare terms) of new and global ecological problems in recent decades. It is also true that certain social groups have become more disposed towards environmental politics as an activity than others. A combination of several themes, many of which have been explored at length in previous chapters, can facilitate an understanding of why these developments have taken place.

First, it is important to acknowledge the degree to which recent scientific discoveries and developments in communications have played a part in increasing awareness of global environmental problems such as acid rain, ozone depletion and climate change. It is true that an appreciation of the nature and potential severity of environmental problems cannot be grasped 'without some knowledge of natural science' (Glasbergen 1996: 177). The degree to which the mass media have raised public awareness of large-scale risks and environmental problems through the communication of scientific concerns should also be recognised (Thompson and Rayner 1998: 148). Media coverage of a series of high profile catastrophes involving technologies such as nuclear power, and the release of toxic chemicals into the local environments of usually poorer communities, have intensified public concern about environmental issues and given an added credibility to environmental arguments.¹ Such widespread coverage has been made possible by developments in telecommunications, a symptom of the 'post-industrial' age. These processes, combined with the lack of urgency with which established political actors on the Left and Right have responded to ecological issues, and the wide availability of environmental literature and critical reports, have clearly been factors in hardening public attitudes towards science, technology and industrial development. In turn they

¹ Environmental accidents which have received extensive media coverage in recent decades include 'the dioxin leak at Seveso in Italy in 1976, the Amoco Cadiz oil spill in 1978, the Three Mile Island nuclear accident in 1979, the catastrophic leak of methyl isocyanate in Bhopal in India in 1984, the Chernobyl nuclear explosion followed by the Basle fire and pesticide leakage into the Rhine in 1986, and the environmental depredations of Saddam Hussein during the Gulf War of 1991' (Brenton 1994: 55-56).

have served to further *politicise* the environment, providing a more favourable climate for the emergence of green parties.

Second, awareness of and concern about environmental issues appears to be particularly acute among young and 'well-educated' citizens. It is possible that certain forms of higher education have fostered a heightened sense of political efficacy and a greater willingness to engage in new forms of party political activity aimed at resolving the ecological crisis. Several studies suggest that, of the 'highly educated' cohort, it has been graduates in the liberal arts and humanities who have been more inclined to criticise established ideas of technological progress, and to embrace alternative political viewpoints which have provided ideological frames of reference for Europe's green parties (chapter 4). These groups have questioned established views of 'progress' and been instrumental in the development of a new, emancipatory form of politics which accords a central position to the needs of the human and non-human environment. They have also tended to display more sympathy towards alternative political perspectives which challenge dominant cultural ideas about what constitutes 'the norm' in terms of gender, sexuality, and other issues of self-identity.

Third, linked to developments in technology and the expansion of higher education have been changes in the class structure, which have decreased the salience of the traditional capitalist/worker conflict and provided further scope for the emergence of new political organisations which challenge the comfortable assumptions of the 'growth orientated' economics and politics of modern society. Certain groups within the 'new middle class' - chiefly young, 'well educated' professionals working in human services, as opposed to more technologically and business orientated contexts - have been more open to new political perspectives and have constituted the core occupational group within the support base of green parties (Frankland and Schoonmaker 1992). The fact that these groups have less of a personal stake in the production processes of the technological, scientific and industrial sectors has meant that they have been more disposed to a new

ecological politics which challenges these very arrangements (Eckersley 1989). That many of these citizens work in highly bureaucratic and hierarchical organisations has probably further increased the appeal of green party politics, which incorporates commitments to enhancing levels of democracy, decentralisation and participation in society.

But have not moral/ethical arguments, in addition to an awareness of the nature, causes and (actual and potential) consequences of global environmental problems, played an important part in precipitating the emergence of green parties? Since the 1960s there has been an abundance of texts published dealing explicitly with the question of the extension of the moral community; that is, the degree to which the non-human natural world should become morally considerable (Singer 1975; Midgley 1983; Regan 1988; Eckersley 1992; Goodin 1992; Benton 1993). As Dobson states, [m]uch ink has been spilt over issues such as the rights of animals, plants and wildernesses, and the duties that we as human beings might have towards them' (Dobson 1995: 48). It has been customary for greens to criticise the strong anthropocentrism which has traditionally underpinned human attitudes towards the natural world, and to call for a broadening of the moral community on the grounds that non-human animals, species or ecosystems possess 'intrinsic' value (Eckersley 1992). In other words, the possibility that the emergence of green parties has to some extent been facilitated by a growing sense that humans have been fundamentally *wrong* in their treatment of the non-human natural world should be acknowledged. While concerns as to the morality of human actions towards the natural world long predate the emergence of green parties (Singer 1975: 7), there may be an important link between (1) the recent emergence and heightened awareness of a new order of global ecological risks and problems, (2) humans placing a greater 'value' on those aspects of the natural world which are subsequently threatened, (3) the development of an ecological 'consciousness' connecting 'the individual to the larger world' (Bunyard and Morgan-Grenville 1987: 282), and, (4) the

strong moral arguments for environmental protection developed within much recent green discourse and politics.

2. Green Parties and the 'Contagion Factor'

The issues discussed above have clearly been important in increasing societal and political pressure to form green parties. But they cannot entirely account for the ubiquitous presence and appeal of the green party as a vehicle for bearing the torch of political ecology in Europe. It is argued here that what can be termed the 'contagion factor' can yield further insight into the rise of the green party as a distinctive form of organisation on the contemporary European political landscape. The 'contagion factor' can be defined as the degree to which ideas have spread from one country to the next either through the formal exchange of information among politically like-minded people, or the development of an awareness of international developments via various media including television, radio, newspapers and, more recently, the Internet. The rate with which green party politics has been able to spread is to some extent connected to the 'post-industrial' communications revolution referred to earlier in this section.

The electoral successes of the West German Greens during the 1980s in a large and important European country clearly led to their forming a 'model' for nascent green movements elsewhere. One of the predecessors of the Austrian Greens, the ALÖ, established contacts with the West German Greens in the early 1980s and their political programme was based upon the guiding principles of the latter's first programme: ecology, social responsibility, grass-roots democracy and non-violence (letter from Gerhard Jordan, 30 July 96; Rothacher 1984; Dachs 1989). Further, the organisational development of the Austrian Greens several years later was clearly "inspired" by the structures and rules of the West German Greens' (Frankland 1994: 203). In the Netherlands the (positive and negative) experiences of the German Greens have provided the relatively

youthful Dutch Green Left with a basis from which to develop a clearer understanding of the relative merits of different political strategies and policy options and, indeed, international representatives of Green Left have been regular attenders at conferences of the German Greens (Wainwright 1994: 204; interview with Marijke Vos, 29/3/96). Even in Britain, the electoral weakness of the Green Party has not prevented it from influencing the development of green parties elsewhere in Europe, particularly within the field of green economics. It has been suggested that the relative lack of distraction by 'the trappings of power' has meant that the British Greens have been able to devote much more attention to the development of policies and these have proved attractive to emergent green parties and movements in other countries (*Green World*, Winter 1998/9).

The spread of green party politics across Europe and beyond has also been facilitated by the formation of international organisations such as the European Federation of Green Parties (EFGP), which aim to exchange information, support each others campaigns, engage in joint actions, develop common policies and hold regular conferences and seminars. The EFGP supports green organisations from other continents and encourages their attendance at its congresses, which act as meeting places for the discussion and development of green ideas. The European model of a network of green parties committed to co-operation has inspired the formation of similar organisations in other continents such as Africa in which the *Co-ordination des Partis Verts d'Afrique* encompasses green parties from nine countries (*Green World*, Summer 1996). The 'contagion factor' casts new light on the green party phenomenon in drawing attention to the degree to which political ideas have spread across the globe. To this extent, parallels can be drawn with the propagation of other political ideas which have successfully spanned countries and continents in the past - for instance, on the part of socialist movements and think tanks of the New Right (Schechter 1994; interview with Andrew Gamble, *Red Pepper*, November 1995). In the case of green politics, however, the global nature of the ecological crisis has been an important factor in facilitating the wider development and

communication of green ideas, and the awareness that green parties have managed to establish new political programmes and achieve electoral success has had something of a catalytic influence on the patterns of party emergence in various countries.

3. Green Parties and the Ecological Imperative

An examination of green parties as they have evolved in Austria, Britain, the Netherlands and elsewhere lends considerable support to the ecologically informed approach to understanding these parties developed in this thesis. Public concern about the ecological risks arising from developments in science, technology and the drive for economic growth has clearly played a catalytic role in the emergence of the green parties examined in this study. For example, PEOPLE - the first incarnation of the British Green Party - was formed within a climate characterised by increased public anxiety about the 'limits to growth' and global 'ecological crisis' which had come to the attention of journalists, academics and policy-makers in the early 1970s. In Austria, concern about the safety of nuclear power, crystallised initially in the form of a powerful anti-nuclear movement, provided the foundation stone for the emergence of green party politics. In the Netherlands, concern about nuclear power provided common ground between 'risk movements' and 'New Left' party activists, which ultimately smoothed the path towards the formation of Green Left.

Indeed, it is precisely this climate of ecological concern voiced by 'risk movements' that has proved to be crucial in the emergence of green parties in a host of other European countries. In Belgium, Germany, Italy, France and Sweden the nuclear energy issue was an important catalyst in preparing the ground for the emergence of green parties (Parkin 1989; Rüdig 1990b). Intense opposition to nuclear power - the latter being the technology which has most symbolised the climate of manufactured uncertainty which characterises

contemporary society - was arguably the most important 'risk' factor promoting the rise of green parties in Europe during the 1970s and 1980s. Yet the eruption of other large-scale ecological risks arising from global climate change, ozone depletion, genetic manipulation, chemical usage, etc. on the political scene, and their communication to the wider public in recent decades, has undoubtedly contributed to this new climate of uncertainty; one which has facilitated the emergence of green parties. It is also likely that higher levels of risk awareness brought about by more immediate ecological problems have, in certain contexts, impacted temporarily upon the levels of electoral support attracted by green parties, and there is no reason to suppose that this should not prove to be the case should similar events occur in the future. In Sweden, for example, concern about the ecological and health effects of the Chernobyl disaster of 1986 - in which radioactive clouds spread across large areas of Sweden - contributed to heightened public awareness of the risks associated with its 12 operating nuclear power stations and lay behind the Greens' national electoral breakthrough of 1988 (Affigne 1990). Similarly, the Irish Greens have reaped modest electoral benefits - mainly at the European and local level - on account of public concern about the expansion of the Sellafield nuclear plant in England (Holmes and Kenny 1994).

However, it would be a misunderstanding to suppose that it is purely responses to large-scale technological and ecological risks which have generated a climate conducive to the emergence of green parties. The analysis carried out in this thesis has clearly demonstrated that an understanding of the emergence of green parties must incorporate consideration of the role of *actual* ecological problems and the *certainty* of future ecological damage in this process. In the case of the Austrian Greens, the impetus to form a united party was boosted by the successful campaign to halt construction of a hydroelectric dam - a development that *would* have caused irreversible ecological damage to the surrounding landscape. In Finland, public protest against the draining of a unique bird lake constituted the 'starting point' for green party politics (Parkin 1989:

81). Looking beyond Europe towards North America and Australasia, 'green' electoral politics have been motivated by attempts to defend wilderness areas from proponents of large-scale developments (Hay and Hayward 1988). While the emergence of numerous green parties can be understood within a new climate of concern about global ecological risks, their appearance on the political landscape has often been the direct result of attempts on the part of citizens to resolve more localised, ecological problems and to prevent what they perceive to be the ecologically damaging outcomes attendant with the advancement of global industrialism.

Ecological issues, either in the form of risks, or the actuality/certainty of environmental damage, have clearly played a key role in shaping the character of European green party politics. Yet it was argued in chapter 1 that green parties are further defined by their commitment to the principles of social responsibility, enhanced democracy and non-violence. How should these further commitments be explained? The argument here is that there are clear links between each of these three principles and green parties' profound and overarching concern about the ecological crisis. It is not claimed that green parties' adherence to these themes is solely ecologically motivated. Their commitment to ideas of social justice, for example, may reflect a broader moral concern about inequality, discrimination, and human rights. But it cannot be denied that the ecological imperative is a theme which binds these principles together.

With respect to the theme of social responsibility, green parties have called for a rethinking of the consumerism of contemporary society and the movement towards an ecologically sustainable society in which the needs of all humans - including future generations - should be met. Issues of global poverty and social injustice have formed significant foci for green parties, and while this has sometimes reflected a more general 'leftist' ideological disposition, it must be recognised that these problems are considered by such parties to be among the key causes of global ecological degradation.² Green parties have drawn attention

² Of course, the links between global poverty, social injustice and ecological degradation have been mapped out elsewhere; most notably in the Bruntland Report, *Our Common Future* (1987). But it

to the important connections between poverty, population growth and pressures on land and water resources (resulting in deforestation and the destruction of agricultural land). They have also highlighted the complex interplay between the exploitation of the South by the 'rich' capitalist North and ecological degradation, and pointed to the destruction of the homes of indigenous peoples and life-sustaining environments in the 'developing' countries by multi/transnational companies keen to profit from the often less stringent environmental regulations of these nations (GGEP 1991). A further issue here concerns the degree to which the burden of debt on the poor countries has encouraged the continuation of ecologically damaging practices in their struggle to meet repayments. Green parties stress the importance of addressing inequality between North and South and this internationalism can also be linked to their overarching concern with global ecological risks associated with processes such as climate change (EFGP 1993a). To a considerable degree, then, green party concern with issues of poverty and social injustice can be interpreted with respect to the latter's ecological impact in the broadest sense - on the quality of human life, the rights of future generations, and the natural world in all its diversity.

Demands for enhanced democracy, decentralisation and participation have also been central to the political programmes of Europe's green parties. To some extent this reflects societal concern about technological developments in the field of surveillance which have enabled modern states to 'keep a tab' on the activities of citizens, posing a threat to human rights and civil liberties. Yet green parties' greater concern with these themes must also be set against the background of their ecological demands. For green parties, solving the ecological crisis and ensuring long-term sustainability requires a radical restructuring of political institutions along participatory lines. The involvement of local communities and a broader range of citizens in political decision-making is considered to be of paramount importance in the pursuit of these objectives.

is important to point out that many radical greens have directed criticism towards this report and the conceptualisation of 'sustainable development' which it advances (Doyle and McEachern 1998).

Green parties point out that the prospects of achieving ecological sustainability rest upon democratic requirements and the maximisation of participation. As Kemp and Wall have put it:

[g]reen politics cannot be imposed; on the contrary it demands active support and participation. We all need to take action if the ecological crisis is to be overcome ... Green parties the world over believe that peace between humanity and nature, and between different human beings, can only be achieved by giving everyone a political say. (Kemp and Wall 1990: 186).

With regard to the principle of non-violence it is clear that there are important, though hitherto underemphasised, connections to be made with the ecological issue. Green parties have taken a strong stand against militarism and promoted non-violent means of conflict resolution. Two of the most important issues that sparked protest across Western Europe, and which undoubtedly contributed to the development of a social climate within which many green parties emerged, were the escalation of the arms race and the decision to deploy Cruise missiles in Europe at the end of the 1970s. Green parties have expressed deep concerns about the risks posed to humanity and wider nature by nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction and the resource exploitation and wastefulness associated with global arms spending (GGEP 1994). In this respect, green party concerns about militarism have moved beyond the pacifist sentiments associated with much left-wing and anarchist writing³. To the extent that green parties stress the links between militarism, global risks and ecological issues, they have evidently added a new twist to traditional pacifist arguments.

Again, case study material lends support to these arguments. Despite being a neutral country lacking nuclear weapons, Austria produced a significant peace movement in the early 1980s whose energies were principally directed towards the 'militaristic' actions of foreign governments (Gottweis 1990). Many of its activists - including Freda Meissner-Blau - played an important role in the

³ For a review of pacifist arguments as they have been expressed within movements of the Left see Carter (1992); and Schecter (1994).

emergence of the Austrian Greens. In the Netherlands, the political parties involved in the formation of Green Left - most notably, the New Left PSP and PPR - had long advocated disarmament and been involved in the Dutch peace movement. The merger of the PSP and PPR with the EVP and ideologically rejuvenated Communists into Green Left was facilitated by sympathy towards pacifist ideas and a common concern about the ecological risks associated with the arms race and global militarism. Anti-militarism also occupies a central place within the political programme of the British Green Party, but links between the latter and the peace movement, particularly its largest organisation (CND), have historically been weak. Yet the role of peace movements - situated within a global climate of militarism - has been acknowledged in accounts of the emergence of green parties in a variety of additional European countries including Germany and France (Parkin 1989).

Considerable overlap exists between green party politics and what might be described as the politics of the Left. In chapter 1 it was demonstrated that many greens share with socialists a concern about, for example, social justice, emancipation and participation, and, like socialists, demand fundamental social change. Yet the discussion above shows that green parties' reading of these issues has to a considerable extent been shaped by an *ecologically informed* perspective. The decline of socialism in recent years and the rise of free market philosophies have provided green parties with an opportunity to appeal to citizens concerned about ecological problems and broader issues which have traditionally been the preserve of the Left. It could be argued that green party politics represents a new form of emancipatory politics; a politics which incorporates many of the themes which have traditionally concerned socialists but which offers a fresh and distinct programme of ecological and social reform aimed at resolving the problems confronting modern societies.

4. The Political and Institutional Dimensions of Green Party Emergence and Electoral Success

So far the discussion in this chapter has almost exclusively centred on the description of the economic, social and environmental context within which green parties emerged and the essentially ecologically motivated character of their political demands. Yet the timing of the emergence of green parties has also been affected by certain political and institutional factors. Electoral dealignment, arising partly from the processes of 'post-industrialisation' referred to in chapter 4, has clearly been a factor in creating a more favourable political climate for the emergence of green parties in certain European countries, including Austria and the Netherlands. In addition, it has been shown that the nature of political competition - in particular, the extent to which existing parties have been able to respond to the ecological challenge - can potentially affect the timing of green party formation. It also seems likely that 'closed' patterns of neo-corporatist decision-making, impenetrable to ecological demands, may have facilitated the emergence of green parties in certain European countries, e.g. Austria.

Yet while such issues have played some role in creating the conditions for the emergence of green parties, the principal contribution of political and institutional factors lies in the extent to which they have shaped the conditions under which *significant* green parties - i.e. those attracting at least 4 per cent of the national vote - have been most likely to emerge. The discussion below seeks to extend the evaluation carried out in previous chapters by bringing into sharper focus the interrelation between the four thematic categories - political state-institutional structures, electoral dealignment and the nature of political competition, modes of interest representation and internal party dynamics - and, where appropriate, between the latter and processes of social change. The intention is to develop a more complex, multi-dimensional view of the conditions

and contexts which can affect the electoral significance of green parties than has been characteristic of the arguments developed in this thesis so far.

Despite emerging and existing within a social climate characterised by the growing salience of global ecological issues the British Green Party has spent all of its 25 year history in the political wilderness. It has continually failed to attract a significant share of the vote at general elections. How should its insignificance be explained? In this case the starting point must involve consideration of the range of effects of the electoral law upon electoral and broader political behaviour in Britain. For reasons that were explored in chapter 6 the first-past-the-post system has both mechanical and psychological effects. The mechanical factor consists in the 'under-representation' of small parties; the psychological factor refers to the extent to which people are less likely to consider voting for a small party on account of their perception that such an action would amount to a 'wasted' vote. One implication of this is that the Green Party has been unable to benefit from an increasingly dealigned electorate; one symptom of the move towards 'post-industrialism', and a phenomenon that has undoubtedly contributed to the electoral strength of green parties in other European countries such as Belgium, Finland and Sweden (O'Neill 1997). While there is evidence to suggest that British voters have become more volatile and less inclined to vote on the basis of class or partisan identification in recent years (Sanders 1997), the Green Party has been unable to profit electorally from these trends.⁴ The claim here is that the mechanical and psychological effects of British electoral system must form a major part of an explanation of why this has been the case.⁵

⁴ A possible exception to this occurred at the 1989 European elections. Although, as was argued in chapter 6, the Green Party's success of 1989 was probably more a temporary reflection of the state of political competition and the salience of environmental issues at the time than it was of an increasingly dealigned British electorate.

⁵ At the 1999 European elections the British Green Party received 6.3 per cent of the vote and two MEPs. This was a considerable improvement on its 1994 performance (3.2 per cent and no seats) (*The Economist*, 19 June 1999: 42). It is likely that the new voting system of PR employed at the 1999 elections encouraged many people to vote Green on account of their vote not being 'wasted' under the new system. Of course, it is possible that such a result would not be repeated at a general election conducted under a similar system of PR. European elections are often perceived as 'second order' elections within the minds of the British electorate. Yet the European election result has undoubtedly provided the Green Party with a new platform from which it can seek to obtain added electoral credibility and political visibility, and potentially to be considered as a serious

Of course, it is not solely in relation to the theme of electoral dealignment that the insignificance of the British Green Party can be interpreted. The Green Party has also failed to attract the support of the broader environmental and peace movements. One reason for this links back to the workings of the British electoral system. The point here is summed up neatly by Rootes who suggests that because the British system discriminates against new parties it 'also discourages the translation of movements into parties' (Rootes 1992: 181). Environmental and other risk movements, e.g. the anti-nuclear movement, have been consistently reluctant to lend their support to the Green Party - either in terms of supporting ideas based around the development of a unified electoral strategy encompassing the Green Party and other movements, or in terms of actually casting votes for Green candidates (Rootes 1992: 181). The nature of the British electoral system has meant that social movements have sought, and sometimes obtained, influence within other political parties - for example, CND in the Labour Party - and for the most part ignored the Green Party. But there is an additional point that needs to be made here. This reluctance to lend support to the Green Party has been further reinforced by the limited access that the environmental movement has secured in the past to decision-makers, and an unwillingness to risk jeopardising this access through the adoption of an overtly party political stance. Evidence which suggests that the British political system may be weakening further in terms of the extent to which it accommodates ecological demands offers little in the form of encouragement for the Green Party (Carter 1997a). The recent rise of direct action environmental protest in Britain shows the degree to which an electoral strategy has been perceived to be a largely ineffective means of pursuing political influence by large numbers of young people.

Internal party dynamics can also shed light on the continued electoral marginality of the Green Party. Again, however, the extent to which these must

political force. It is possible that, should the Green Party achieve a raised profile on account of its recent electoral 'success', this could lead to more positive electoral outcomes should future general elections in Britain be conducted under PR.

be placed within the context of the inhospitability of the British electoral system needs to be emphasised. The Green Party is noted for its uncompromising ecological ideology (Bennie *et al.* 1994). One of the main reasons why the party has been unwilling to embrace a less radical approach to green politics is quite simply because there has been no electoral incentive for it to do so. The party has been reluctant to adopt a full-blown 'logic of electoral competition' (Kitschelt 1989) since the current electoral law offers little prospect of electoral success. It has also been demonstrated that the financial deposit requirement at general elections has restricted the Green Party's levels of electoral participation. This has served to further reinforce its marginality and acted as an additional disincentive for it to embark upon a more moderate electoral strategy. There have, of course, been those within the Green Party who have argued vociferously for ideological, strategic and organisational change. There have even been initiatives by party members - such as Maingreen and Green 2000 - which explicitly set out to transform the party into a more 'electable' political force. But these have met with considerable resistance from grass-roots activists committed to the 'decentralist' model of green politics and the consequent internal party strife can only have served to further damage the Greens' electoral prospects. Further, the issue of leadership has proved to be a particularly contentious one with the party consistently resisting the replacement of its 'collective' model with that of a single national leader. The point is that much of the internal conflict - which to some extent stems from a sense of frustration felt at the persistently 'outsider' status of the Green Party in British politics - has served to further marginalise the party by presenting an image of incompetence and disunity to the wider public. The electoral insignificance of the British Green Party can thus be explained with reference to the four political/institutional themes considered in this thesis. Yet it must be acknowledged that there are important interconnections between these various dimensions, and that these flow, to a considerable degree, from the most significant impediment to Green Party electoral success: the electoral system.

Whereas the electoral system has been an obstacle to 'green' electoral success in Britain, green parties in Austria and the Netherlands have to some extent been advantaged by the systems of proportional representation (PR) which these countries employ. Having said this it is important to point out that PR, in itself, does not necessarily guarantee electoral success. This is demonstrated by the fact that in both Austria and the Netherlands 'green' parties have emerged which have been electorally unsuccessful. And it should be noted that a host of other European countries has failed to produce significant green parties despite using PR electoral systems, e.g. Italy, Spain, Greece, Ireland, Norway and Denmark. It is here that attention to the patterns of political competition can yield important insights into the reasons for the electoral significance/insignificance of green parties competing within certain PR-based electoral systems.

In Austria, the failure of the ALÖ and VGÖ to emerge as electorally significant actors at the 1983 parliamentary elections can largely be explained by the fact that these parties were direct electoral competitors. It was this situation which effectively resulted in a split within the 'green' vote thus weakening both parties. With the development of a unified electoral strategy in time for the 1986 national elections, however, the Austrian Greens benefited from less intensive patterns of political competition and successfully surpassed the criterion of electoral significance. A similar situation prevailed in the Netherlands prior to the formation of Green Left. Here, the small green party - *De Groenen* - faced stiff electoral competition for the 'green' vote from more well-established radical parties such as PPR, PSP and, to some extent, D66. Yet even the then separate Green Left parties experienced electoral difficulties during the 1980s, and it was only with the decision to 'pool' their resources by developing a new, unified party organisation that a significant green party emerged on the Dutch political landscape. Faced with intense competition from this new party, the 'dark green' *De Groenen* have had their electoral prospects further diminished. While the emergence of significant green parties in Austria and the Netherlands has been

facilitated by a marked de-intensification of party political competition, both the Austrian Greens and Green Left currently face electoral competition from parties which, to some extent, have managed to appeal to environmentally concerned citizens⁶, and it is likely that this has acted as a partial brake on the further electoral progress of the green parties.

The founding of unified, national green party organisations in Austria and the Netherlands has created a more favourable climate within which such parties have been able to achieve electoral success for other, though related, reasons. Unlike in Britain, where electoral dealignment has failed to yield electoral benefits for the Green Party, the greater prospects of the Austrian Greens and the Dutch Green Left achieving representation under PR has created a situation in which an increasingly dealigned electorate has been more inclined to consider voting green. But, of course, one of the consequences of electoral dealignment has been increased electoral volatility, and it is the volatility of the green vote which may have important implications for the future electoral prospects of green parties in Europe. This point is pursued in more depth at a later stage in the chapter.

Another point to consider is the extent to which the emergence of significant green parties in Austria and the Netherlands has been facilitated by the involvement of environmental and other social movements in the party formation process and the cultivation of support bases rooted within these sectors of political activity. It is clear that one of the most important reasons for such social movement backing in these countries relates to the greater prospects of green party electoral success which prevail under their respective systems of PR. The British Green Party, by contrast, has failed to attract the support of the wider environmental movement and, as has been argued, this difference has to some extent reflected its awareness of the futility of lending support to a party with few political prospects and the risk of jeopardising the political influence already obtained within the context of the political system. With respect to Austria, neo-

⁶ In the Netherlands, Green Left face competition from D66; in Austria, the Liberal Forum.

corporatist arrangements have further contributed to the orientation of social movements towards the Greens as more traditional means of pursuing political influence have been denied on account of the 'closed' character of these arrangements. Yet there is little evidence to suggest that neo-corporatist arrangements have had the same impact in the Netherlands and it has been suggested that a distinction perhaps needs to be made between 'closed' and 'open' forms of neo-corporatism.

Of the additional themes examined in this thesis, federalism has offered definite advantages for the Austrian Greens. In contrast to the unitary structure of the British and Dutch political systems, federalism in Austria has presented the Greens with opportunities to build up support bases at the *Land* level, to gain valuable experience of working in powerful regional legislative and administrative bodies, and to attract a greater degree of national media attention. The federal structures of the Austrian state have thus provided the Greens with a 'launch pad' from which they have been able to pursue greater electoral success. A recent study demonstrates that, of Europe's green parties, it is those operating in federal systems - Belgium, Austria, Switzerland and Germany - that have indeed enjoyed a greater degree of electoral success than those competing in unitary states (Müller-Rommel 1998). However, it should be pointed out that electorally significant green parties have emerged in non-federalist states, e.g. Finland, Sweden, Luxembourg, France, the Netherlands. It therefore seems that while federalism is not a reliable predictor of the presence or absence of significant green parties, it may help to explain why significant green parties have generally performed better in federal states as opposed to unitary ones. It is also necessary to mention the extent to which the Austrian Greens and Dutch Green Left have benefited from less restrictive and more generous party financing arrangements than those in Britain. These have undoubtedly enabled the allocation of more resources to campaigning and other profile raising activities which may have boosted electoral support levels.

As in Britain, the variety of themes highlighted here to some extent influenced the internal party dynamics of the Austrian Greens and Dutch Green Left. Both parties have adopted a less 'ecocentric', more 'ecosocialist' form of green politics and expressed a greater tendency towards compromise. While historical factors must be considered in accounting for the more 'leftist' orientation of these parties, it is also important to recognise that the political and institutional arrangements referred to above have created a climate within which the development of a more 'pragmatic' form of green party politics has been the more prudent - in electoral terms - course of action to follow. As well as such orientations towards political ecology, both the Austrian Greens and Dutch Green Left have pursued a 'logic of electoral competition' and, of course, this again reflects the fact that these parties compete in a political environment more conducive to the electoral success of new parties than has been the case in Britain. It is for this reason that both the Austrian and Dutch parties have been more willing to 'play the electoral game' and to embrace more conventional patterns of party leadership and organisation. In addition, while internal conflicts over ideology and strategy have been occasional features of the Austrian Greens - and to a lesser degree the Dutch Green Left - these have not been as prolonged or intense as have been the case within the British Green Party. One possible reason for this is that, given the potentially serious electoral implications of persistent internal factionalism, the Austrian and Dutch parties have been under more pressure to resolve or at least placate these differences in the interests of political expediency. With poor electoral prospects, the British Greens have had less of a 'concrete' incentive to settle their internal differences on issues of ideology, organisation and leadership.

This section has pointed to some important interconnections between the political and institutional themes examined at length in this thesis. It is clear that the electoral significance or insignificance of green parties reflects an array of factors, but these are intimately interwoven and should not be viewed in isolation from each other.

5. Extending the Argument to Further West European Green Parties

In seeking to identify the factors which may account for the presence or absence of electorally significant green parties, a framework based upon the complex interaction of four overarching themes developed from the political studies literature has been elaborated. Drawing principally upon the Austrian, Dutch and British cases an attempt has been made to demonstrate the degree to which political and institutional aspects of each 'dimension' have impacted upon the electoral significance of green parties within these contexts. One way of further exploring the potential usefulness of the framework outlined above would involve its application to a larger number of case studies. The aim of this section is to take a very modest first step in this direction by attempting to develop a simple model - based upon aspects of the four overarching themes - which might predict the comparative electoral strength of green parties in Western Europe.

Table 10.1 therefore places Austria, the Netherlands and Britain alongside 13 additional Western European countries.⁷ Of course, further and more detailed research will be needed on each country in order to confirm or challenge the classifications and conclusions of this provisional enquiry. The framework set out below is intended to illustrate one of the possible ways in which the themes developed in this thesis might be applied in future comparative green party research.

⁷ Green parties included in this analysis are all members of the European Federation of Green Parties and are as follows: Belgium (Agalev/Ecolo); Germany (Die Grünen); Austria (Die Grünen); Luxembourg (Déi Gréng Alternative); Finland (Vihreä Liitto); Sweden (Miljöpartiet de Gröna); Italy (Federazione dei Verdi); France (Entente Ecologiste - an electoral pact between Les Verts and Génération Ecologie); Switzerland (Federation der Grünen Parteien der Schweiz); Netherlands (GroenLinks); Ireland (Comhaontás Glas); Norway (Miljøpartiet de Grønne); Denmark (De Grønne); Spain (Los Verdes); Greece (Federation d'Organisations Ecologistes-Alternatives); Britain (The Green Party). Portugal is not included in the following analysis. This is because while a Green Party does exist in Portugal (Os Verdes), the situation is complicated by the fact that the party has competed in national elections as part of the United Democratic Coalition (CDU) - an alliance which has included the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) and dissidents from the Portuguese Democratic Movement (MDP) (O'Neill 1997). As such, it would be inaccurate to classify this quite disparate array of political parties as constituting a 'green' party or alliance.

The electoral success of green parties in the 16 countries is measured in terms of the highest percentage of the vote that a single green party or green electoral alliance has gained in a national election during the period 1980-98. Ten variables have been selected for inclusion in the table on the basis of their importance to the previous assessment of the Austrian, Dutch and British cases. Individual variables are coded so that *one* indicates presence of the property deemed to be conducive to green party electoral success (e.g. proportional representation (PR), strong links to the broader environmental movement, etc.) and *zero* the absence of it. Of course, some components of the four main themes examined may be subject to change over time - for example, the extent to which there is direct electoral competition for the 'green' vote can alter from one election to the next, reflecting the changing nature of political competition. Similarly, political state-institutional structures may change from one election to the next - a good example being the electoral law - as may internal dynamics such as the ideological orientation of a green party. In view of this, scores of *one* or *zero* for most variables are awarded on the basis of an assessment of the situation, e.g. the presence or absence of 'professional party leadership', at the time of the national elections indicated in Table 10.1 with respect to each green party. Several of the variables, however, cover a broader time period, and, where possible, this is the period 1980-98 as a whole. Such variables include electoral volatility, neo-corporatism, links to the environmental movement, and strategic conflict. Individual variable scores are then summed for each country in order to give a total out of ten. These scores can then be examined in terms of how well they correlate with the presence or absence of a significant green party (Y=Yes; N=No). A significant green party or electoral alliance is defined as one which has obtained at least 4 per cent of the vote at a national parliamentary election at least once during the 1980-98 period.

Table 10.1 Factors Potentially Influencing the Electoral Significance of West European Green Parties (1980-98)

Themes	Political State-Institutional Structures			Electoral Change/Political Competition		Modes of Interest Representation		Internal Dynamics			Outcomes			
	Country	PR	Direct Subsidies to Parties	Federal System	Increase in Mean Aggregate Electoral Volatility during 1980s	Absence of Direct Electoral Competition for Green Vote	'Closed' Neo-Corporatist Structures	Strong Links to Broader Environment Movement	'Light Green/Eco socialist' Ideology	Absence of Prolonged Intense Strategic Conflict	'Professional' Party Leadership	Score (/10)	Best Vote in National Election 1980-98 (%)	Year
Belgium	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9	10.0	1991	Y
Germany	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	9	8.3	1987	Y
Austria	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	9	7.3	1994	Y
Luxembourg	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	8	10.2	1994	Y
Finland	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	8	6.8	1991	Y
Sweden	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	8	5.5	1988	Y
Italy	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	6	2.8	1992	N
France	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	5	7.6	1993	Y
Switzerland	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	5	7.5	1995	Y
Netherlands	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	5	7.3	1998	Y
Ireland	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	4	2.8	1997	N
Norway	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	4	0.4	1991	N
Denmark	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	3	1.3	1988	N
Spain	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1.0	1986	N
Greece	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0.8	1990	N
Britain	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1.4	1987	N

Sources: political state-institutional structures (Gallagher *et al.* 1995; Leduc *et al.* 1996); electoral change/party system (Lane and Ersson 1991; Gallagher *et al.* 1995; Richardson and Rootes 1995; O'Neill 1997); modes of interest representation (Kitschelt 1988, 1994; Parkin 1989; Müller-Rommel 1989b; Gallagher *et al.* 1995; Richardson and Rootes 1995; O'Neill 1997); internal dynamics (Parkin 1989; Richardson and Rootes 1995; O'Neill 1997); green party election results (Müller-Rommel 1998; Irwin 1999; Keesings Archives; *The Independent*, 31 October 1998).

Inspecting Table 10.1 shows that, overall, there is a close match between the presence of significant green parties and a positive score on at least five of the specified variables. A total of nine countries can be considered as cases with significant green parties. It is notable that each of these countries also possesses at least five out of ten of the variables identified in the table. Six countries with significant green parties score positively on eight or nine of the variables according to the assessment criteria. In contrast, countries without significant green parties (seven in total) tend to receive a score towards the lower end of the scale - thus, six of the seven countries in this category receive a total score of between one and four. In terms of the three case studies, the model correctly predicts the absence of a significant green party in Britain, and the presence of such parties in Austria and the Netherlands. Only one country - Italy - does not fit into the classificatory framework outlined.⁸

Clearly there are several weaknesses associated with the simple model elaborated in Table 10.1. First, there are problems concerning the dichotomisation of several of the independent variables employed in the model. For example, placing a *zero* in the 'closed neo-corporatist structures' column effectively implies that the state in question has displayed a greater 'openness' to the representation of ecological interests, and that this has acted as a brake on the development of a significant green party. Yet as the British case shows, the absence of 'closed' neo-corporatist structures does not necessarily result in a political system that is more 'open' to ecological concerns. A more sophisticated analysis would therefore pay greater attention to the different degrees of openness displayed by 'neo-corporatist' and 'pluralist' systems, and possibly

⁸ The poor electoral performance of the Italian Greens at recent national elections may to some reflect the marginalisation of ecological issues on account of the corruption scandals which have rocked the country since the 1980s. According to Rhodes, the issues raised by these scandals were so large that they 'outstripped the capacity of the Greens to respond to them' (Rhodes 1995: 184). Since 1994 the electoral prospects of the Italian Greens have further declined as a series of institutional changes - including the introduction of a first-past-the-post electoral system and the withdrawal of state funding for political parties following a referendum in 1993 - have been implemented (*The Guardian*, 16/1/99). Consequently, national elections since 1994 have forced smaller parties, such as the Greens into electoral coalitions. Since 1994 the Greens have participated in an progressive electoral alliance (Progressive Front) orchestrated by the former Communist Party: the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS) (O'Neill 1997).

establish terminological categories more sensitive to these differences. Other problems arise in the classification of green parties in terms of their orientation towards political ecology. Inevitably, there is a degree of subjectivity, and perhaps oversimplification, involved in defining green parties in 'light green/dark green' or 'eco-socialist/ecocentric' terms. In short, more detailed attention to the operationalisation and measurement of several of the variables in Table 10.1 would undoubtedly improve the model.

A second limitation of the model is that it does not, in its present form, take account of the relative importance of different factors on the electoral success of green parties, or, indeed, the contrasting extent to which these may have impacted on the electoral performance of green parties in separate countries. It may be, for instance, that certain factors have had more impact on party performance than others and thus need to be weighted, i.e. to count as double. Only by undertaking a more detailed examination and comparison of each case could a satisfactory decision on the precise weighting of factors be made.

Third, the model does not allow for temporary factors which may have contributed to the varying levels of electoral support attracted by green parties. For example, one of the factors that undoubtedly contributed to the electoral success of the Swedish Greens in 1988 was the Chernobyl nuclear disaster of 1986, which saw the contamination of large areas of Sweden (Affigne 1990). A host of additional issues may have an effect upon the electoral performance of green parties from one election to the next, e.g. political scandals, crises, but it would be difficult to incorporate factors such as these into a model of the kind outlined in this section. Despite these obvious limitations, however, the model does give an indication of ten themes which can potentially influence the electoral significance of green parties in Europe, and, to this extent, it might serve as a starting point for future researchers of green parties.

6. Conclusion: Whither Green Parties?

In this thesis it has been argued that existing arguments which claim to account for the emergence of green parties are weakened by their failure to acknowledge the centrality of ecological thinking to green party politics. Theoretical attempts to account for the emergence of green parties have tended to situate the latter within the broad context of 'post-materialist' value change and/or 'post-industrial' society, without exploring the important links between the large-scale ecological degradation and risks induced by scientific and technological change on the one hand, and political change on the other. Each of the three green parties examined in this thesis emerged primarily within a climate of public concern about ecological degradation and global risk awareness, and the same can be said for a host of other green parties in Europe. This thesis is primarily designed as a contribution to the development of an alternative, more ecologically informed understanding of green parties.

Although the thesis defends an approach which emphasises the role of ecological issues in the emergence of green parties, concepts derived from the 'post-materialist' and 'post-industrial' society perspectives can be reworked and integrated into the new framework. Economic affluence, it has been argued, has been important in creating the social conditions for the emergence of green parties but not in the 'post-materialist' sense. The drive for greater economic prosperity during the post-war period, assisted by developments in science and technology, has contributed to a new generation of global ecological risks and problems which pose a fundamental threat to the survival of ecosystems. The shift towards the 'post-industrial' society, a change made possible by greater material affluence and which has seen the increased consumption of resources in the drive to satisfy heightened public demand for goods and services, has placed further pressures on the global environment. In short, a new climate of environmental 'scarcity' characterises modern society. To some extent humans' growing concern about the environment stems from their placing a higher value

on scarce environmental 'goods' than has hitherto been the case, and, in consequence, the environment has increasingly become an issue of moral and political considerability.

Additional themes emphasised by theorists of 'post-industrial' society - such as developments in telecommunications, the expansion of higher education and changes in the class structure - cast further light on the changing social context within which political parties with an ecological identity have emerged. Yet the idea of green party politics has proved to be contagious, and it is the 'contagion factor' which to some extent accounts for the spread of these parties across Western Europe, into the ex-Communist countries of Eastern Europe, and beyond.

In seeking to understand the context in which significant green parties emerge, it was argued that the perception of ecological catastrophe can have an important, though usually temporary, impact with regard to this issue. Yet attention was mainly centred on the interaction of four key dimensions: political state-institutional structures, electoral dealignment and political competition, modes of interest representation and internal party dynamics. It was shown that by focusing on these themes and, in particular, how they relate to each other, a more sophisticated understanding of the political and institutional arrangements which prompt the emergence of electorally significant, as opposed to insignificant, green parties can be grasped. An account of processes of social, economic and environmental change during the post-war period, combined with a consideration of the contagious aspect of green party politics, can throw light on the new climate within which political parties with ecological identities have emerged, but it is only by considering the political and institutional context that an understanding of the varying electoral fortunes of these parties can be gained.

Given all this, what does the future hold for green parties in Europe? Are green parties 'here to stay', or merely an aberration destined to become less significant and potentially redundant as established actors increasingly come to accommodate ecological concerns? The social and ecological changes that have

characterised the post-war period have presented a new challenge to established political traditions of the Left and Right. Green parties have clearly emerged as a response to the new ecological challenges which confront the global political order. In most European countries they have appealed to 'highly educated', 'new middle class' and more 'ecologically conscious' citizens. For these citizens, green parties have provided a vehicle for the articulation of a new and radical politics which questions the legitimacy of the 'modernisation' project traditionally embraced by social democrats, communists and neo-liberals alike. It is clear that ecological challenges cannot be solved 'overnight'. The complexity and high degree of public uncertainty which surround contemporary environmental problems such as global warming mean that, inevitably, there will continue to be intense political debate concerning how seriously governments should take ecological problems, and how best they might transform the state, economy and society in order to tackle them. Within this climate of disagreement and dispute - destined to extend well into the next century - there will clearly be room for dissenting voices and opportunities for political organisations to 'push' the ecological agenda; to pressurise governments into providing more radical responses to the ecological questions confronting modern society. And it is within this context that Europe's green parties could come to play an increasingly important role.

Yet the move towards greater electoral pragmatism on the part of several European green parties may mean that green party politics in the twenty-first century is set to take on a decidedly different character to that of the past two decades. Green party politics may well be entering a less oppositional, more consensus based, phase of development. Since the 1980s the concept of 'ecological modernisation' has emerged as a significant locus for debate among sociologists, environmentalists and within certain European governments. For some writers, 'ecological modernisation' refers to the process whereby ecological concerns gradually become institutionalised 'within the media and its publics, within different levels of the government administration and within business

circles' (Spaargaren 1997: 2). It implies 'a partnership in which governments, businesses, moderate environmentalists, and scientists cooperate in the restructuring of the capitalist political economy along more environmental defensible lines' (Dryzek 1997: 145).⁹ If green parties continue along the path of moderation and pragmatism, it is possible that they could play a direct role in the process by which modern societies attempt to come to terms with the ecological challenge. In other words, green parties may become important 'social carriers of ecological restructuring' (Mol 1996: 313). That green parties are currently participating in several national governments in Europe suggests that they may already have become important agents in the process by which capitalist economies are beginning to be reformed along more ecologically conscious lines.

If this is indeed the direction in which green parties are moving then two basic problems have yet to be confronted. First, a key challenge facing green parties concerns the resolution of the fundamental contradiction that exists between their traditional opposition to the forces of ecologically damaging economic growth, and their increasing tendency to participate in the very political and economic structures responsible for driving this process forward. If green parties are to prosper within a climate of 'ecological modernisation', then they must seek new ways of reconciling environmental protection with continued demands for economic development and international competitiveness, and of disengaging economic growth from its wider environmental and social impacts. The extent to which some, particularly Northern European, governments have been willing to embrace environmental tax reform - in which the burden of taxation is shifted onto environmental 'bads' such as pollution and waste - and other 'market-based' environmental policy mechanisms, suggests that opportunities may exist for green parties to play an important part in the development of more ecologically sensitive economic policy initiatives in the future. Yet the dilemma for green parties is that, in advocating a more moderate

⁹ The concept of ecological modernisation has been defined in a number of different ways. For an outline of competing interpretations of ecological modernisation see Christoff (1996), and Mol (1996).

and piecemeal approach to solving the ecological crisis, they may risk alienating many of their core supporters, for whom ecological sustainability requires a more fundamental shift away from the culture of economic growth, industrialisation, and consumption which continues to define modern capitalist societies. At the time of writing, the resurgence of potentially damaging internal factionalism within the German Greens over the extent to which they should be prepared to compromise over environmental policy issues threatens the party's first full term in office (*The Guardian*, 5/7/99). There is the possibility that the ideological conflict which stained the reputation of several European green parties during the 1980s and 1990s may become a more intractable problem in the coming years, as green parties seek to balance their political role as actors involved in shaping the increasingly high profile discourses of ecological modernisation and 'sustainable development' with the demands of some of their more radical, and uncompromising, 'grass-roots' activists.

The second problem for green parties is to develop new proposals for broader social reforms, e.g. within the spheres of business and work, which more directly link up with the processes of 'ecological modernisation' and 'sustainable development'. Of course, some green parties - e.g. the Austrian Greens - have begun to respond to this challenge by developing detailed investment programmes aimed at maximising environmental protection and job creation (*Die Grünen* 1995a, 1995b). But green parties also need to develop coherent responses to other key challenges which will increasingly occupy European governments in the next century. Welfare reform is clearly one such issue. Green parties' concern with ecological themes, and issues of social justice, means that they could potentially be well-placed to participate in and shape debates about the future of the welfare state, and, in particular, to push for reforms which are in keeping with the goal of creating a sustainable society. A further important - and related - theme concerns the future place of 'work' in society. Heightened insecurity in the workplace and unemployment are issues which will continue to affect society in the twenty-first century and, again, green parties should be

developing strategies designed to address these concerns - strategies which might involve radically redefining the place of work in society and/or the expansion of environmental protection orientated employment sectors. These are the directions in which Europe's green parties should be moving if they wish to maximise their electoral appeal, be taken seriously among established government and economic actors, and, ultimately, to give added momentum to contemporary efforts to resolve the ecological crisis.

These issues will clearly be important for Europe's green parties in the next century. But this thesis has also shown that the degree to which green parties will continually be able to attract significant levels of electoral support, and to potentially play an *important* role in shaping the ecological and social agenda of modern European capitalist states, will depend upon political and institutional factors. Paradoxically, the future of green parties depends not so much upon the social, economic and environmental forces which gave rise to their emergence, as on more overtly political and institutional ones. In Britain, the prospects of the Green Party attaining greater influence at the national level clearly rest upon there being a change in the current electoral system employed at general elections. The introduction of PR at general elections could possibly see the Green Party shifting more distinctly and successfully in the direction of a 'logic of electoral competition', thereby improving its appeal among a large number of environmental movement sympathisers and disillusioned socialists, and its prospects of securing a foothold in the British political system. Yet despite Tony Blair's commitment to holding a referendum on this issue, it is uncertain whether the electorate would accept any proposal for electoral reform (Dunleavy 1997: 151). In large part, the chances of a future national electoral breakthrough by the Green Party rest upon the twin hope of Blair keeping his commitment to hold a referendum on the issue, and the British electorate being sufficiently persuaded of the need for electoral reform.

In Austria and the Netherlands, more propitious political state-institutional structures mean that green parties should be able to sustain the

significant levels of electoral support that they have achieved in recent years, and to seek opportunities to influence, and perhaps participate in, government at the national level. Yet, in both cases, it is clear that party support levels have been subject to some fluctuation and this has to some extent reflected the volatile nature of electorates in these countries, and more intense political competition for the 'green' vote. However, in the Netherlands, recent election results suggest that Green Left is successfully coping in the competitive environment of Dutch politics and establishing itself as the principal vehicle for green electoral politics. The party's improved electoral position owes much to its strong leadership, professional organisation and 'leftist' orientation; clearly a lesson for other, less successful European green parties. In Austria, the Greens have increasingly recognised the importance of political moderation and organisational discipline, and the need for pragmatism has become more acute in light of competition from the 'greenish' Liberal Forum. It is also worth pointing out that both countries have witnessed a decline in levels of social movement activity in recent years, and this suggests that in order to build on their electoral success, the green parties must continue to make efforts to appeal to a broader electoral constituency than has hitherto been the case.

For those green parties intent on pursuing the 'pure green' ideological agenda, the future thus looks bleak in electoral terms. Such parties simply cannot expect to become significant forces in the context of modern electoral competition, governed as it is by the 'personalisation' of campaign politics, sound party organisation and policies designed to maximise votes. In some cases - e.g. the Dutch *De Groenen* - the 'pure green' experiment has been eclipsed by successful attempts to forge a more pragmatic form of green party politics. But for other green parties which have chosen the more radical option, the future is clearly one of continued electoral marginality. Those parties which refuse to engage in the politics of pragmatism should think seriously as to whether their own politics offer a serious platform for advancing the ecological cause. In short, such green parties face a stark choice: to transform themselves into professional

party organisations displaying effective leadership and an ideological pragmatism open to the Left, or to remain on the very periphery of the European political landscape.

The aim of this thesis has been to rethink and rework established accounts of green parties and to develop an alternative framework which recognises the extent to which they have emerged against the backdrop of important ecological, economic and social changes that have occurred during the post-war period. It has also sought to unravel and synthesise a variety of political and institutional factors which potentially impact upon the emergence and electoral success of these parties. It is only by considering the complex interplay between processes of broad social change on the one hand, and political and institutional factors on the other, that students of politics can begin to understand the nature of the challenge which green parties pose to established political parties and traditions, and the different circumstances which have been crucial in shaping their electoral fortunes.

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