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Party Democracy and Party Representation: an Assessment of Post-Materialist Forecasts

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Abstract

One of the social and political changes that post-materialist theory anticipated was the need for the democratic deepening of political institutions in modern democracies. This change in political values would mean that, together with an expansion in post-materialist values, parties would be pushed towards an alternative view of politics which would mean greater assimilation of democratic procedures. This paper tests the validity of this explanation in four European party systems. Specifically, it aims to ascertain if most post-materialist parties (the Greens) display a significantly better position in their support for democracy and voter representation than other parties, as post-materialist theory leads us to believe. It also tests whether the explanation for higher levels of party representation is related to post-materialist party features. The findings of this research do not show enough evidence to validate the literature's theoretical expectations.

Key-words: Greens, New Left, post-materialism, democracy, representation.

Resumo

Entre outras mudanças sociais e políticas, a teoria pós-materialista antecipou a necessidade de aprofundamento democrático das instituições políticas nas democracias modernas. Esta mudança nos valores políticos significaria que os partidos, a par do crescimento dos valores pós-materialistas, seriam levados a adoptar uma perspectiva alternativa sobre a política que implicaria uma maior assimilação dos procedimentos democráticos. Este paper pretende testar a validade desta explicação em quatro sistemas partidários europeus. Visa, especificamente, confirmar se os partidos mais pós-materialistas (os Verdes) detêm uma posição significativamente melhor no que respeita ao apoio à democracia e à representação dos seus eleitores, por comparação aos outros partidos, como a teoria pós-materialista sugere. Pretende ainda verificar se a explicação de níveis mais elevados de representação partidária está relacionada com características partidárias pós-materialistas. Os resultados da pesquisa não fornecem evidência suficiente que permita validar estas expectativas teóricas.

Palavras-chave: partidos Verdes, nova-esquerda, pós-materialismo, democracia, representação.

Introduction¹

The change in political culture over recent decades has mainly been explained by *cultural modernization theory*, whose precursors and principle points of reference include Ronald Inglehart (see, e.g., 1998). For this author, a substantial change in the priority of political values is occurring in modern societies, with post-materialist values taking the place of traditional materialist values. In this process, the deepening of democratic values is one of the strongest axiological vectors: it points, among other considerations, to the defence of an improvement in the democratic functioning of political institutions, especially with respect to political representation. In particular, cultural modernization theory recognises greater acceptance of the values of democratic participation and representation in post-materialist parties in general and the Greens in particular (cf., e.g., Mikenberg and Inglehart 1989; Inglehart 1998).

The post-materialist explanation has been widely criticized, especially in view of the non-universal, non-structural and non-axiological nature of the change (see, e.g., Offe 1988: 213-5; Clarke *et al.* 1999). Criticism of the model, however, does not mean denial of the significant changes in attitudes, behaviour and political preferences in these societies. This theoretical framework forms the context for the goals of this research.

Specifically, we would like to explore the responses of parties that are defined as being closer to post-materialism, to stronger support for democratic norms and procedures (in all probability) and to more faithful ideological representation of their voters. Post-materialist parties are expected to position themselves more favourably with respect to democracy and the ideological representation of their voters than other parties. This is our main hypothesis.

Democracy can be briefly defined as the procedure of collective decision making in which citizens can exert control. Defining democracy is, however, neither so simple nor so consensual. The truth is that there are different models of democracy (see, e.g., Held 1996) and also different conceptions of representation (see, e.g., Thomassen and Schmitt 1999: 14, 19). Despite the relevance of this debate, for analytical simplification

¹ This article is a developed version of a paper presented at the Conference of the Belgian Association of Political Science (April 2008). The author wishes to thank the insightful comments and suggestions of José M. Leite Viegas, Stefaan Fiers and Jacques Daloz.

we have opted to follow a straightforward conception of democracy that emphasizes citizens' participation in the political decision-making process, where representation is measured by MP-voter congruence. The operationalization of the concepts will be presented below.

Though many authors have studied the validity of post-materialist explanations, supporting or criticizing the associated assumptions, conclusions or implications, almost no relevant research has been carried out on our thesis. The intention of this paper is to look into this under-explored field of research. First, we present a brief review of the literature on the subject and then our method, objectives and research data are presented.

Cultural Modernization and the Emergence of Post-Materialist Parties

Theories of cultural modernization show that, in modern democracies, new political parties generated around a multiplicity of social objectives have started to conquer the political arena, after entering the electoral field and even parliament. These parties respond to new, basically post-materialist, political issues to which traditional parties have difficulty in reacting (Minkenberg and Inglehart 1989; Kitschelt 1990; Dalton et al. 1990: 10-16; Müller-Rommel 2002). The ideological proximity of these parties is especially seen in the *new left wing* (Kitschelt 1989; Müller-Rommel 1989; Kitschelt and Hellemans 1990: 213; Doherty 2002: Chap. 3)². The post-materialist change in political culture suggests an emerging political scenario where post-materialist parties are presented as being the best qualified to provide an alternative way of “doing politics”. In this context, it is important to ask what characteristics make these parties apparently so different.

Essentially motivated by the ideal of a pluralist, participative, libertarian and even anti-capitalist democracy, post-materialist parties are concerned with ecological, feminist and peace matters, as well as collective political issues in general. Internally, they are expected to be less hierarchical and authoritarian organizations and more open to grass-roots participation than established parties. They are also regarded as mounting a more vigorous defence of democratic values and rules (cf., e.g., Minkenberg and

² New movements and political parties also appeared on the right (Offe 1988: 233; Minkenberg and Inglehart 1989).

Inglehart 1989; Kitschelt 1990: 185, 195; Dalton et al. 1990: 13-14; Doherty 2002: 72-73).

As a result of their feeble ideological anchorage, fragile party leadership and incipient partisan loyalties, these new parties lack strategic negotiating capacities and political commitment, as well as a stable electorate. The latter represents one of their weakest points from the party competition viewpoint (Offe 1988: 179-80; Crook et al. 1992: 140). Moreover, these organizations practise deliberate strategies of rotational leadership and are subject to permanent supervision by their supporters (Kitschelt 1990). New post-materialist parties have won an increasing number of supporters, essentially among the young, the more educated and the middle class (Offe 1987: 77-80; Kitschelt 1989: 10, 86-90; 1990; Kitschelt and Hellemans 1990; Crook et al. 1992: 147).

Kitschelt generally labelled these parties as *left libertarian parties* – left because they are ideologically committed to the principle of social redistribution and libertarian because they reject the authority of bureaucracies, favouring participative democracy and the autonomy of groups and individuals (1990). The Greens and the European ecologists, in particular, have features that broadly identify them with this new vision of the left (Müller-Rommel 1989).

Method, Objectives and Data

The literature has generally taken the Greens as the type of party closest to the post-materialist prototype. This is why green parties are assumed here to converge better with the post-materialist type. The research considers green parties as central cases and compares them to the other political parties. Not all the relevant political parties can be considered in the analysis because, unfortunately, they do not all have complete information available.

The research considers four European party systems in which the Greens are recognised as playing a significant role, not only numerically but also in their relevance to national politics. The four cases selected are: Belgium, France, Germany, and Luxembourg. Constrictions resulting from the scarce comparative data available were a serious limitation to the number of variables used and the development of a broader comparative analysis.

Among European green parties, the German Greens are the most paradigmatic. Soon after emerging in the late 70s, they became significant in national politics and, despite certain setbacks, asserted themselves as one of the most prominent and successful European green parties. Die Grünen allied themselves with their Eastern counterpart, Bündnis 90 – Alliance 90, in 1993, forming the coalition Alliance 90 / The Greens. They produced a powerful party, forming a government coalition with the SPD between 1998 and 2005. The data supporting our analysis does not always provide separate information for these parties, which means we are sometimes only able to present figures for the Greens coalition. Two other examples of success among European Greens are the Belgian Ecolo and Agalev parties. Formed in the 70s, they are divided in line with the two language-based party systems, one French-speaking and the other Flemish-speaking. With non-political roots, the two parties have cooperated politically and increased their political power. Unlike the Belgians, the French Green parties, Les Verts and Génération Ecologie, compete rather than cooperate (except in occasional elections). Les Verts were founded in 1984, mainly as a response to the nuclear question, while the left-leaning Génération Ecologie was created in 1990 (disappearing in 1998), in great measure as a political strategy to reinforce support for the Socialist Party. The Luxembourg Greens are derived from a green party that was founded in 1983 but split in two in 1986, forming Glei and Gap. They officially re-merged in 1995. These are the Green parties to be studied.

The article has three main goals. The first is to characterise parties in order to understand how much they differ from each other in respect to certain post-materialist characteristics. Are green parties significantly different from others in their socio-demographic, political and democratic profiles? This involves the socio-demographic and political features of their MPs and voters, as well as their position on democracy. According to the theory, green MPs and voters show the socio-demographic, political and democratic profiles that are closest to post-materialist expectations and green parties have a more favourable position on party democracy than other parties.

The second goal is to assess how far parties differ from each other in their representation function. We are especially interested in estimating party levels of MP-voter congruence. Do post-materialist parties significantly differ from other parties when it comes to ideological congruence with voters? For this goal, green parties are expected to show higher levels of ideological congruence than others.

The option to study congruence is connected with the idea in cultural modernization theory that points out the increasing responsiveness of elites to the public. As the study of congruence based solely on mean positions has proved to be problematic³, we also intend to return to the well known but seldom used measure of congruence conceived by Achen – *centrism* (1978), which seems to be a much more consistent measure (Golder and Stramski 2007). We will come back to this discussion later on.

The third and final goal of the paper is to explain the different levels of ideological congruence among European parties. Post-materialist party features – being left-wing, belonging to a green or ecologist party family and being post-materialist – are expected to be significant in this explanation. These variables do not, however, exhaust all possible explanations of congruence. In addition to individual or party variables, electoral laws can also play an important role. This research focused on the variables listed above in order to achieve an understanding of their comparative importance.

European Representation Studies, *World Values Surveys*, and *Mapping Policy Preferences* are the main research sources. Hitherto, the first has been the main European comparative project on political representation. It is composed of four different studies, of which we have used the *European Study of Members of Parliament* (1996) (EMP), the *European Candidates Study* (1994) (ECS) and the *European Election Study* (1994) (EES). Of these, the first deals with MPs in national parliaments, the second with candidates for the European Parliament and the last with European citizens. As these studies are available online, we will give no further commentary (see, respectively, Studies ZA3079, ZA3077, ZA2865, at the Zentralarchiv für Empirische Sozialforschung). The second source, the *World Values Surveys* (WVS), is probably the largest and best-known project on comparative values (for specification, see Study ICPSR 3975). All these studies are based on representative samples, though the first two may raise questions, given the low response rates. This is not an unusual problem in MP studies (see, for example, one of the most important recent works on this subject: Schmitt and Thomassen 1999) but it has important implications for the interpretation of the data.

³ Essentially because MPs and voters see politics differently, which explains why the distribution of both types of players on the same scale are different (e.g. voters systematically show greater dispersion than MPs) (Achen 1978: 805-815; Belchior 2007: Chap. 4).

The third source, *Mapping Policy Preferences* (Budge *et al.* 2001) (MPP), provides a vast amount of information on political parties' manifestoes. The database is mainly derived from content analysis, though it also involves some electoral information. The data from this project is used to analyse European parties' positions, while the other projects are used to study MPs' and voters' positions.

The Socio-Demographic, Political and Democratic Profile of Parties

This first section is devoted to the characterisation of political parties. The variables used explore certain relevant socio-demographic and political features of MPs and their voters, as well as their positions on democracy. The parties' positioning on party democracy is also analysed (using party manifestoes as the data source).

The theory on post-materialist parties indicates that some of the most significant traits in their profile are: membership of left-wing party families, especially the ecologist family; an electoral performance marked by their recent appearance in political competition; and still incipient electoral representation. Table 1 provides a preliminary outline of the four party-systems in order to clearly identify and place the Greens. Only contemporary parties are considered (including some that have recently disappeared).

Table 1. Political parties' ideological and electoral characteristics

	Political parties	Political family	Left-right position (1)	First participation in national elections	Average % of votes 1974-98 (2)	Average no. of seats 1974-98 (2)
Belgium	Ecolo – Ecologists (Francophone)	Ecologist	L	1981	3,3	5
	Agalev – Flemish Greens (Flemish)	Ecologist	L	1981	4,0	5
	SP – Socialist Party (Flemish)	Social Democrat	LC	1978	13,1	27
	PS – Socialist Party (Francophone)	Social Democrat	LC	1978	13,4	33
	PRL – Liberal Reformist Party (Francophone)	Liberal	RC	Before 1974	7,9	18
	CVP – Christian Democrats Party (Flemish)	Christian Democrat	C	Before 1974	21,2	46
	PSC – Social Christian Party (Francophone)	Christian Democrat	RC	Before 1974	8,4	20
	FDF – Francophone Democratic Front (Francophone)	Special Interest	LC	Before 1974	2,7	6
	VU – Flemish Block (Flemish)	Special Interest	R	Before 1974	7,9	15
	VB – Flemish People's Party (Flemish)	Special Interest	ER	1978	3,4	5
France	Les Verts - The Greens	Ecologist	L	1986	3,8	4
	GE Génération Écologie - Ecologists	Ecologist	LC	1992	2,7	0
	PCF – French Communist Party	Communist	L	Before 1974	12,8	41
	PS – Socialist Party	Social Democrat	LC	Before 1974	28,4	188
	UDF – Union for French Democracy	Conservative	C	1978	18,2	127
	RPR – Rally for the Republic	Conservative	R	1978	18,6	193
	FN – National Front	Nationalist	ER	Before 1974	11,7	9
Germany	Die Grünen - The Greens (West Germany)	Ecologist	L	1983	6,9	35
	Bündnis 90 - The Greens (East Germany)	Ecologist	LC	1994	5,1	35
	PDS – Party of Democratic Socialism	Communist	EL	1990	4,0	28
	SPD – Social Democratic Party	Social Democrat	LC	Before 1974	38,8	229
	CDU/CSU – Christian Democratic Union / Christian Social Union (Bavaria)	Christian Democrat	RC	Before 1974	43,8	263
Luxembourg	GLEI – Green List, Ecological Initiative	Ecologist	L	1989	6,8	4
	GAP – Green Alternative Party	Ecologist	L	1989	4,0	2
	PCL KPL – Communist Party of Luxembourg	Communist	EL	Before 1974	5,6	3
	POSL LSAP – Luxembourg Socialist Workers' Party	Social Democrat	L	Before 1974	26,6	17
	PD DP – Democratic Party	Liberal	RC	Before 1974	20,4	13
	PCS CSV – Christian Social Peoples' Party	Christian Democrat	R	Before 1974	33,1	22
	ADR – Alternative Democratic Reform Party	Regional and Ethnic	R	1989	8,5	5

Notes: (1) The classification results of the average positioning of political parties in the left-right scale (1974-1998): EL - extreme left; L - left, LC - left centre, C - centre, RC - right centre, R - right, ER - extreme right. Since there is an acknowledged problem of validity in this variable (Budge et al. 2001: 47), other sources were used to confirm/adjust the positions (particularly experts and official party sites).

(2) Only the years in which parties ran in elections were considered in computing the average percentage of votes and number of seats.

Source: Mapping Policy Preferences, 2001.

Table 1 reiterates what the literature has been widely reporting. Green parties first participated in elections at the beginning of the 80s, their politics are left wing, they usually get average electoral results below two digits and, except for Germany, they hold a small number of seats in parliament.

Furthermore, empirical evidence suggests (Belchior 2007) that the prognoses for the impact of these parties on the ideological reorganization of party systems are not as promising as some authors have assumed (Müller-Rommel 1989; Crook et al. 1992: 160). In the party system of no other European country than Germany have these parties achieved a consistent and successful electoral performance that has allowed them steady parliamentary representation. Generally speaking, in these party systems the Greens represent a peripheral power that, due to their weak ideological anchorage and affiliation, stimulates alternative political strategies, among which the subject of this paper may be included.

Tables 2 and 3⁴ show a series of variables briefly describing MPs and voters in each political party. In the light of the above literature, green party MPs and voters are expected to show higher support for post-materialism, position themselves on the left, belong to younger cohorts and possess high levels of education. Moreover, voters are expected to show low levels of party attachment.

Table 2. Socio-demographic and political characterization of party MPs – 1996

Countries	Political parties	Post-materialists (%)	Mean left-right self-placement (1-left – 10-right)	Mean age	MPs with high education (%)	N
Belgium	Ecolo	100	2.2	- 44	71.4	7
	Agalev	100	2.4	45-54	100	7
	SP	71.4	2.4	45-54	55.6	18
	PS	64.7	2.5	45-54	61.1	18
	PRL FDF	54.5	5.9	45-54	86.7	15
	PSC	70.0	5.0	45-54	60.0	10
	VU	83.3	4.6	45-54	100	7
	VB	50.0	9.2	45-54	50.0	4
France	Les Verts	-	-	-	-	-
	GE	-	-	-	-	-
	PCF	100	1.3	+ 55	0.0	6
	PS	90.0	3.0	45-54	78.6	14
	UDF	28.9	6.4	+ 55	56.5	46
	RPR	21.8	7.3	+ 55	58.1	74
Germany	Alliance 90	92.3	3.4	- 44	95.8	24
	PDS	50.0	1.5	45-54	76.9	13
	SPD	77.6	3.3	45-54	69.1	139
	CDU-CSU	10.9	6.1	45-54	64.4	104
Luxembourg	GLEI - GAP	50.0	5.5	- 44	0.0	2
	POSL LSAP	100	2.3	45-54	60.0	10
	PD DP	100	4.0	- 44	50.0	2
	PCS CSV	11.1	6.4	45-54	63.6	11
	ADR	0.0	3.7	45-54	33.3	3

Source: European Study of Members of Parliament, 1996.

⁴ The questions are:

Party identification: “To which party do you feel closest?” (v105 EES).

Post-materialist index: as suggested by its author (Inglehart 1998: Appendix 4) (y002 WVS, and v31a-31b EMP).

Left-right self-positioning (MPs and supporters): “In political matters people talk of “the left” and “the right”. How would you place your views on this scale?” (v114 EES, and v14_1 EMP).

Education: respondents that left full-time education aged 23 or over are considered to have a higher education (v345 EES). Only MPs with a university degree are considered this way (v38 EMP).

Party attachment: “Do you consider yourself to be close to any particular party? (if yes) Do you feel yourself merely a sympathiser to this party, fairly close to this party or to be very close?” (v103 EES).

Table 3. Socio-demographic and political characterization of party voters – 1994-2002

Countries	Political parties	Post-materialists (%)	Mean left-right self-placement (1-left – 10-right)	Mean age	Voters with high education (%)	Voters close to no party (%)	N
Belgium	Ecolo	38.0	4.4	35.4	20.0	10.0	30
	Agalev	33.7	4.2	33.0	2.8	2.9	36
	SP	21.2	3.9	42.4	2.3	19.5	43
	PS	24.4	3.4	44.4	9.6	4.8	105
	PRL	-	6.5	41.9	8.2	3.3	60
	PSC	32.4	6.4	43.9	14.6	0.0	41
	VU	31.3	5.5	46.5	0.0	10.0	10
	VB	2.1	7.1	40.0	11.8	11.8	34
France	Les Verts	28.6	3.8	36.7	8.0	15.4	26
	GE	27.6	4.7	26.9	0.0	33.3	11
	PCF	27.9	1.9	42.7	13.0	6.4	46
	PS	19.8	3.2	41.9	14.2	12.0	211
	UDF	13.0	7.0	44.3	11.8	14.9	68
	RPR	10.6	7.5	44.6	9.9	10.0	141
Germany	Alliance 90	34.2	3.4	32.6	11.8	19.2	51
	PDS	22.6	2.7	42.1	17.0	8.8	135
	SPD	20.8	4.2	44.6	13.4	12.3	157
	CDU-CSU	11.8	5.9	45.3	11.6	13.2	189
Luxembourg	GLEI - GAP	33.7	4.1	31.9	11.9	5.0	41
	POSL LSAP	15.5	4.5	42.7	3.7	5.0	81
	PD DP	17.4	5.7	38.3	25.6	15.4	39
	PCS CSV	12.3	6.8	42.1	9.2	5.1	119
	ADR	3.8	5.5	54.9	10.0	10.0	10

Sources: European Election Study, 1994; World Values Survey, 1999-2002.

The figures in Table 2 show that some of the expected features of post-materialist party elites can be seen in almost all the green parties considered (the French data is not available). In other words: green party MPs are likely to be more post-materialist than MPs from other parties, to position themselves on the left, to be younger, and to have higher levels of education (except for Glel-Gap – whose figures are based on an extremely narrow sample).

With respect to party voters, Table 3 also shows the features of the post-materialist public. Green party voters are more post-materialist, are systematically younger than voters for other parties, and are positioned on the left. Levels of education and party attachment do not reflect the same consistency. The percentage of voters with a higher education and no party attachment, which the theory suggests is probably higher than in other parties, is not usually so, though it is sometimes significant (e.g. the education result for *Ecolo* or the party attachment result for *Ecological Generation*).

In general, neither the MPs nor voters substantially validate our suppositions. From the indicators studied, therefore, the lack of significant consistency in the MPs'

and voters' post-materialist profiles only allows us to moderately confirm green parties as a different type of party.

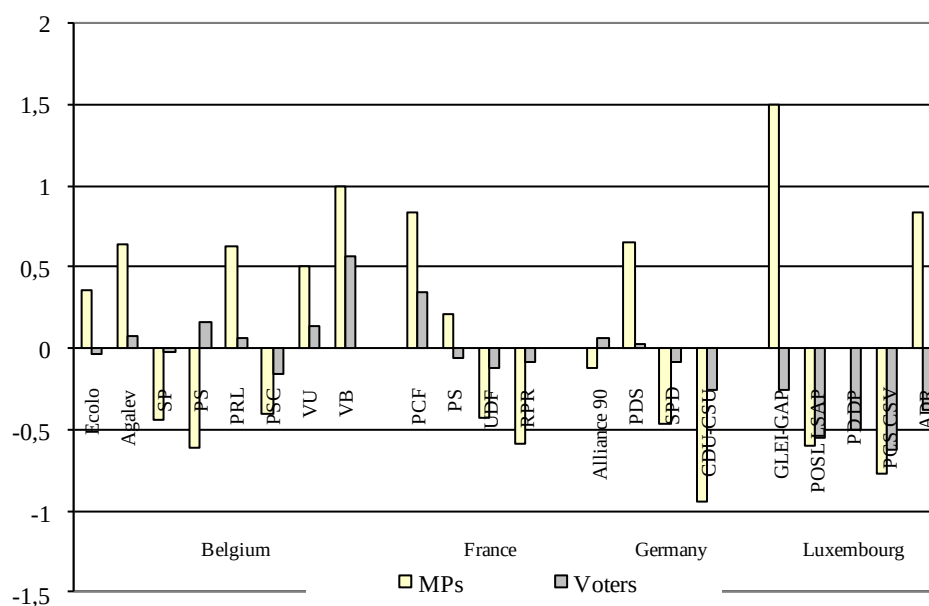
Other studies have already noted this mixed view of the Greens. Rootes found only a modest correlation between post-materialism and support for green parties, explaining it with the diversity of those parties' social bases (1995: 234). Other authors admit the existence of polychromatic features in ecological concerns, i.e. not only green, but also brown and white, which affect the profile of supporters and their positions on the left or right (Pakulski and Tranter 2004: 224-230). Therefore, since the variables in Tables 2 and 3 are theoretically correlated with post-materialist preferences, the possibility of no clear correlation between post-materialism and support for the Greens corroborates our findings, i.e. green MPs' and voters' profiles do not particularly correspond to post-materialist expectations. In the same way, exploring how European Greens react to *new politics*, Poguntke concluded that the Greens show characteristics that can be explained by the emergence of post-materialism but he did not regard these parties as being of a new type (1989: 184-191).

A final aspect of the characterization of MPs and voters is their position on democracy. As mentioned before, post-materialist parties are supposed to be particularly supportive of democracy and critical of the traditional performance of democratic institutions. Unfortunately, no straightforward measure of support for democracy is available simultaneously for MPs and voters. The most acceptable variable available is "satisfaction with the way democracy works" in each of the countries studied. Of course this variable cannot be regarded as a valid measure of attitudes towards democracy. Accordingly, this variable has been considered solely as an assessment of democratic performance. As the Greens wish to strengthen the democratic functioning of political institutions, they should be among those who disagree most with the way democracy works.

Figure 1 represents the mean position on the way democracy is perceived to work in the country, for MPs and voters within each political party⁵. It shows the variations in means from the median of the scale (2.5).

⁵ The question is: "How satisfied are you, on the whole, with the way democracy works in (country)?" (Scale: 1 – very satisfied; 2 – fairly satisfied; 3 – not very satisfied; 4 – not at all satisfied) (v18 EMP, v144 EES). For political party identification: "Which party did you vote for at the last «General Election»?" (v91_bel, v91_fra, v91_wge, v91_ege, v91_lux – EES).

Figure 1. Satisfaction with the way democracy works in the country (mean distance from the median point of the scale: MPs versus voters)



Sources: European Study of Members of Parliament, 1996; European Election Study, 1994.

Though not of exceptional importance, it is clear that, among those most dissatisfied with the way democracy works in the country, we find some of the Greens considered in our sample (the French data is not available). This is particularly evident for *Glei-Gap* and, to a lesser extent, *Agalev* and *Ecolo*. It is important to note that this is only valid for MPs.

The relationship is statistically significant in all countries, not only for MPs (Cramer's V in Belgium=0.42, Germany=0.44 and Luxembourg=0.69 – all with $p>0.001$) but also for voters, though considerably weaker (Cramer's V in Belgium=0.16, Germany=0.14 and Luxembourg=0.17 – all with $p>0.001$). These findings suggest that there are notable differences between parties with respect to satisfaction with the performance of national democracies. It is more acute when it comes to MPs' positions. While we find that green MPs (Belgium and Luxembourg) are among the most dissatisfied, the scenario is not the same when it comes to voters, who are closer to the median of the scale in all parties. This difference can be partially explained by the fact that elites tend to be more extreme than supporters in structuring political issues (Dalton 1985: 275; Converse and Pierce 1986: 128). In fact, significant differences between elected representatives and their electorates can be expected, at least because the former

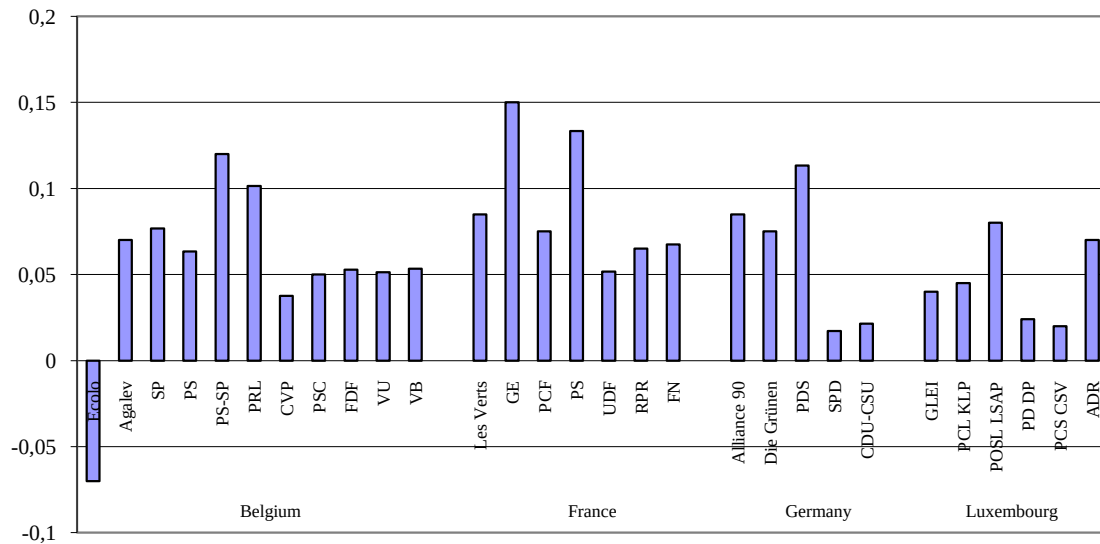
are politically more sophisticated than the latter and see politics from a different point of view.

Among the green parties in Figure 1, only the MPs from the German Green Party are not significantly dissatisfied with the way democracy works in the country. Most of the established and more central parties seem to be more satisfied with the national democratic performance. As they are closely involved in the functioning of democracy, because they are actually or potentially power-sharing parties, they seem to be more accustomed to and pleased with the way democracy functions. Since the German Greens have participated in coalition government it is possible that, precisely for that reason, they may not have preserved all the original positions of the Green parties and may have allowed some contamination of their founding tenets. Various authors have already expressed this notion about the Greens' participation in government (Ware 1986: 122-5; Müller-Rommel 2002; Poguntke 2002; Ball 2005: 5). Ecolo, Agalev and Les Verts have also participated in coalition governments but for a shorter period of time and with fewer representatives. Only the Luxembourg Greens have no government experience – and their MPs are consistently the most discontent with the national democracy.

The first goal of this paper is also to analyse the political parties' positions on party democracy. As an underlying post-materialist explanation, the idea of party democracy embraces party support for democratic values and procedures and especially includes the stimulation of grass-roots participation in party decisions, concomitant with a weak emphasis on party hierarchy and the centralization of power inside the organization (Kitschelt 1989: 67-68). Based on party manifestoes, our operationalization of *party democracy* intends to measure how close or how far parties position themselves to or from this ideal. Limited by the available data, the indicators underlying the additive index of *party democracy* are: a favourable position on individual liberties and civil rights, a favourable position on democracy as a regime and citizens' involvement in the political decision process, and an unfavourable position on political authority and strong governments. Post-materialist parties are expected to show higher levels of support for *party democracy*.

Figure 2 shows the parties' distance from the median point of the *party democracy* index. The scale of the index varies between 0 for «minimum democracy» and 1 for «maximum democracy». The median point of this scale is therefore 0.5.

Figure 2. Political parties' distance from the median point of the *party democracy* index



Source: Based on Mapping Policy Preferences, 2001.

Though the Greens' fundamental emphasis on democracy, as exemplified in the German Greens' manifesto expression: "Democracy is the basis, mode and expression of our political behaviour" (Alliance 90/The Greens 2002: 7), they do not seem to exhibit more appreciable values for *party democracy* when compared to other parties. Figure 2 suggests that there is not enough evidence to corroborate the supposition that green parties are more favourable to *party democracy*. Confirming this, *Ecolo* registers the worst result of all parties. According to our sample, the explanation for stronger *party democracy* does not seem to reside in the emerging new left parties in particular, given that they are not significantly different from the others in this respect.

Political Parties' Levels of Congruence

The second goal of this paper is to assess ideological representation using measures of congruence. A political party is considered congruent with the ideology of its voters if the distances between the party representatives' and voters' positions are zero. It diminishes as representatives' and voters' positions move further apart.

Congruence is estimated on the basis of two measurements – centrism⁶ and the differences in MP-voter mean positions. High centrism values and mean differences indicate a mismatch between the voters and the party elite; low values indicate the reverse.

Although the Greens are sometimes seen as being neither left nor right, as we have seen above, the truth is that the left-right dimension is a general and symbolic scale of reference on which most people can place themselves (see, e.g., Klingemann 1995: 192). Thus, as there are not many relevant variables available to analyse MP-voter congruence, left-right self-placement is assumed to be a valid option to measure congruence.

However, the use of this variable raises certain comparability problems that must be addressed. These problems are specifically related to different perceptions on the left-right scale between MPs and voters and between countries. As Golder and Stramski said, “By normalizing congruence relative to the dispersion of citizen preferences, relative citizen congruence avoids the use of an abstract left-right scale and provides a metric free concept of congruence” (2007: 11). The authors note the importance and exceptional nature of Achen’s proposal on the conceptualization of congruence in relation to the dispersion of citizen preferences. That is why *centrism* is considered the most appropriate measure for overcoming potential comparability problems.

Table 4 shows MPs’ and voters’ mean self-positioning on the left-right scale, the differences in means and, finally, the centrism⁷. According to the predictions of *cultural*

⁶ *Centrism* measures how representatives actually represent the political preferences of their mean or median voters. *Centrism* is measured by the difference between the *proximity* and the variance with regard to the position of the electorate (Achen 1978: 483-488). Thus,

$$\hat{Y}_j^2 = (a_{ij} - \bar{a}_j)^2 / (n_j - 1)$$

measures the variance for the electorate, where $\bar{a}_j$ is the median position of the voters; and

$$\hat{C}_j = \hat{S}_j - \hat{Y}_j^2$$

is the measure of the *centrism* in party *j*. In this, *proximity* relates to the similarity of the party's position to that of its voters. That is:

$$\hat{S}_j = (a_{ij} - r_j)^2 / n_j$$

a_{ij} being the position of voter *ai* in party *j*, r_j the mean position of the elite in that party, and n_j the size of the sample.

⁷ Similarly to other research, MPs also include parliamentary candidates (Schmitt and Thomassen 1999: 17-9).

modernization theory the Greens should register higher levels of congruence, i.e. lower differences in means and lower centrism values.

Table 4. MPs' and voters' mean left-right self-positioning and centrism – 1994 (1)

Countries	Party	MPs (a)	Voters (b)	Difference (a) – (b)	Centrism (2)
Belgium	ECOLO	1.86	4.81	-2.95	8.62
	AGALEV	2.50	4.36	-1.86	3.44
	SP	1.78	4.28	-2.5	6.22
	PS	1.00	3.63	-2.63	6.35
	PRL-FDF	6.10	6.73	-0.63	0.32
	CVP	5.50	5.98	-0.48	0.22
	PSC	4.67	6.21	-1.54	2.31
	VU	4.73	5.69	-0.96	0.77
	VB	9.30	6.93	2.37	4.49
France	Les Verts	2.42	4.19	-1.77	10.74
	GE	4.68	4.68	0	0.79
	UDF-RPR	7.00	6.74	0.26	-0.07
	FN	8.80	7.61	1.19	2.52
Germany	Die Grünen	3.00	3.99	-0.99	0.96
	PDS	1.14	2.93	-1.79	2.21
	SPD	2.82	4.37	-1.55	1.93
	CDU-CSU	6.21	6.52	-0.31	-0.95
Luxembourg	GLEI-GAP	3.38	4.42	-1.04	0.75
	POSL LSAP	1.63	4.58	-2.95	6.19
	PD DP	5.14	5.61	-0.47	-0.17
	PCS CSV	5.25	6.39	-1.14	1.14
	ADR	5.00	5.95	-0.95	0.74

Notes: (1) The variables are those used before. (2) The lower the values of centrism, the higher the congruence.
Sources: European Election Study, 1994 and European Candidates Study, 1994.

Two important conclusions can be drawn from Table 4. First, the negative sign for almost all the differences in means shows that, as others have widely demonstrated, party elite positions are persistently to the left of their supporters (see, e.g., Dalton 1985: 275; Converse and Pierce 1986: 128; Thomassen and Schmitt 1999: 199-200). This happens in most parties, the Greens included.

Second, green parties are not among the most congruent parties and, within their party systems, do not reveal results that suggest they favour the ideological representation of their electorates. The differences in means are around or greater than one, and their centrism is far from zero. Only the German Greens and Gap-Glei show centrism values of less than one – which indicates moderate MP-voter congruence.

Curiously, among the least congruent parties of all four party systems we find two green parties: Les Verts and Ecolo.

This is why Kitschelt noted flaws in the materialization of the Greens' principle of representation (1989: 189, 192-193, 276). Research on representation in Europe reiterates these findings. It seems that green parties do not display higher levels of ideological congruence than other parties (Belchior 2007: Chap. 4). Therefore, from the perspective of ideological congruence, as our sample shows, Inglehart's conjectures do not seem to be validated. If we also consider that ideological congruence is usually stronger than congruence produced by other issues (see, e.g., Dalton 1985: 283), green parties do not appear to uphold the principle of higher standards in the political representation of their supporters. Weak party affiliation and feeble loyalties, combined with diffuse ideological anchorage, help to explain these results.

Explanations of Levels of Congruence

The third and last goal of the paper is to understand the importance of party characteristics in explaining ideological congruence. Many variables play an important role in the explanation of party congruence, at party level for example – party type and size, experience of government or the level of centralization – or at an institutional level – the electoral system, the number of parties, or the size of the constituencies⁸. Although recognizing the importance of these independent variables, the purpose here is specifically to assess the comparative importance of a set of variables directly related to the explanations of *cultural modernization theory*.

As seen above, theoretical expectations point to a relatively high significance for variables related to post-materialism, i.e. it is expected that left wing positioning, membership of the ecologist party family and a favourable position on post-materialism will help to explain higher MP-voter congruence. Considering this, Table 5 shows the constraints exerted by ideology, political party and post-materialism on ideological congruence, measured by *centrism*. The sample is now composed of the political parties of the EU15 countries.

⁸ On this subject see, e.g., Dalton 1985: 285-292; Wessel 1999; Belchior 2007: Chap. 5.

Table 5. Correlations between parties' characteristics and ideological congruence in Europe(Pearson's *r*)

Indicator		Centrism
Left-right self-positioning	MPs	-0.44***
	Voters	-0.21
Party family (1)	-	0.24*
Materialism - post-materialism	MPs	0.13
	Voters	0.05

Notes: (1) Party family is measured at a dichotomic level: belonging or not to a left wing party family. The variable is based in the EES typology of party families (v30), and considers Social Democrats, Greens, Left Unity and Rainbow in one indicator; and the remaining families in another. The other variables are those used before.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$. $N = 69$.

Sources: European Election Study, 1994; European Candidates Study, 1994; and Mapping Policy Preferences, 2001.

The constraint exerted by MPs' ideology is clearly the strongest. It works, however, in inverse proportion to expectations: the further they are to the left, the lower the level of representation (considering that higher congruence values mean lower levels of representation). This means that right-wing MPs are more likely to reflect their supporter's ideological positions than their peers to the left. This finding raises serious doubts about the (new) left's supposed ability to represent electors more effectively.

Furthermore, while party family appears to have some importance in the explanation of congruence, the post-materialist dimension seems irrelevant at the European level, for MPs and voters alike. So it is tempting to say that green parties are not among the most ideologically congruent party families. Previous analyses also suggest that these differences in party families are not especially favourable to the Greens (Belchior 2007: Chap. 5). Although it has been shown that the Greens represent post-materialists better, this does not appear to be significantly related to their performing better on ideological congruence.

We now turn to the individual differences between our four European party systems, specifically from the viewpoint of party voters (Table 6).

Table 6. Relationship between voters' characteristics and ideological congruence
(Pearsons' *r* and Cramer's *V*)

	Belgium	France	Germany	Luxembourg
Left-right self-positioning	-0.11***	0.27***	-0.33***	0.39***
Political party	0.22***	0.34***	0.30***	0.23***
Party family	0.29***	0.39***	0.38***	0.40*
Materialism - post-materialism	0.05*	-0.04	0.05**	-0.07
N	3726	3785	7691	1866

Notes: All the variables are those used before.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

Sources: European Election Study, 1994; European Candidates Study, 1994.

The results corroborate the weak importance of support for post-materialism in the improvement of voter representation by the party. It also shows the relative and capricious importance of the traditional ideological dimension. Of the four countries, in only two do the relationships proceed in the expected direction: representation is higher in parties of the ideological left.

Political party and party family show statistical significance in all countries, slightly more so in the latter variable, indicating that there are important differences in ideological congruence at both levels. In spite of these significant differences, the post-materialist dimension does not seem to be a variable that is relevant enough to explain them. Left-right self-positioning appears to have a relevant role in explaining ideological congruence, but it is not clear whether left or right voters are better represented (as was also found in other European party systems: Belchior 2007: Chap. 5.1.).

These results reiterate others that have not only shown that the Greens are beyond left-right positioning, but that post-materialism is not a factor explaining the vote in these parties (Franklin and Rüdig 1995: 430-433). These findings suggest that, more than the variables under consideration, the reasons for higher levels of congruence lie in the nature and idiosyncrasy of each political party. In his study on party representation, Dalton also noted that similar party characteristics can lead to conflicting results, suggesting that, in general, party characteristics do not seem to be

particularly important in the explanation of representation (1985: 288-292). This supports previous findings.

Concluding Remarks

Cultural modernization theory supposed that post-materialist parties were an alternative and more participative and democratic kind of party. Our findings suggest that, while this may be true for some green parties, it is not, however, the general picture for the European Greens (and variables) studied. Accordingly, this paper's main conclusion points to a rejection of Inglehart's expectations of a scenario where green parties stand apart from the others, emerging as those most in line with post-materialist expectations. To support this statement we now look at the three goals of the research.

In our pursuit of the first goal we noticed that, generally speaking, while it is possible to recognize a reasonable match in the so-called post-materialist MP and voter profiles in most green parties studied, there is not enough evidence to set them apart from other parties. Additionally, some green MPs are highly critical of democratic performance, but, when it comes to support for party democracy, green parties do not perform differently from any others. In short, green parties, even those showing some important post-materialist traits, do not seem to carry within them, as a consequence of their founding ideals, a greater commitment to one of their main principles – the deepening of party democracy – if, at least, we consider their manifestoes as a data source.

Certain possible explanations may justify these findings. First, there may simply be a deficiency in the index, affecting the validity of the results. This relationship should therefore be re-examined using other data sources and variables. Second, the basic data comes from the content analysis of party manifestoes: there may therefore be certain discrepancies between parties' programmes and actions. This could explain why, of all the parties, *Génération Écologie* supports party democracy most, when we know that this party is not only different from typical Green parties, but also seems to have a weak form of internal party democracy (Cole and Doherty 1995: 58-59). The third and last explanation relates to the mere acceptance of the fact that support for party democracy is not so extensive among the green parties studied as the literature might suggest. Other studies have come to this conclusion (Ball 2005). However, more research on this subject is needed in order to confirm the explanation.

Our estimate of the degree of representation measured by MP-voter congruence in connection with the second goal showed that, in line with the findings on party democracy, Greens do not demonstrate higher levels of congruence than other parties. There seems to be a gap between idealistic beliefs and pragmatic politics. As Doherty says, “Grass-roots democracy is undoubtedly not the same in practice as originally intended” (2002: 116). In addition to imprecise ideological party anchorage, the unsteady attachment of supporters helps to explain the loose ties to ideological parties’ positions and, consequently, the weak congruence.

Finally, in relation to the third and last goal, regarding the reasons for the variance in parties’ ideological congruence, we did not find enough evidence to confirm the importance of post-materialist traits to a party’s better performance on congruence. Contrary to Inglehart’s explanation, it is not MPs’ or voters’ post-materialist positioning that explains higher levels of congruence, but the MPs’ ideology itself. It is essentially the location to the right that leads to higher levels of congruence. The explanations of this result need deeper analysis to be discussed properly.

Green parties apparently form a mixed party type with multiple nuances that may even be conservative in nature, which therefore goes against the commitment to post-materialism. Although the time that they emerged and their core issues are more or less the same, Greens do not form a homogeneous cluster. They can have quite dissimilar origins, their experience of the electorate and parliament can diverge greatly, and their party-elite profiles and party strategies are also heterogeneous. In addition, these parties’ voters are not only motivated by environmental issues but also by political discontent (Rootes 1995: 235-236). The ideological character of the parties can also be very different. For example: the German Greens have chosen more socialist traditions, the French *Génération Écologie* support nuclear power, the Portuguese Greens are attached to the Communist Party, and so on. Consequently, the term *green* covers a plethora of different party characteristics and political programmes and it is very difficult to consider these parties as a coherent group of a certain type. So, beyond discussion of the findings, it is also necessary to reflect on the assumptions. The core assumption that “ecology and democracy are inexorably linked” (Alliance 90/The Greens 2002: 20) has to be validated in order for us to understand what we can reasonably expect from the Greens.

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