

Social Movement Parties and the Constraining Effects of Democracies:
The Case of the German Greens

(unveröffentlichtes Manuskript von 1995/1996)

In the last 25 years, Germany was the scene of various social movements which played not only an important role in its national political culture and political life but were also the subject of international attention. The trajectory of the German Greens from an “anti-party-party” to a successful and established governmental party in some German *Länder* was for many observers an outstanding example for the rapid change of the character of social movements (see Kitschelt 1989).

In the history of the first decades of postwar Germany the evolution of the Greens is a surprising case. The party system, divided into a three-party cartel between the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU), Social Democrats (SPD) and Liberals (FDP), worked for nearly thirty years like a closed-shop-structure in which smaller parties could not emerge, due to the constitutionally mandated threshold of 5% of the ballot in order to take seats in *Länder* or national parliaments (compare Braunthal 1996). Furthermore, in terms of social movements, Germany was a kind of “no man’s land.” Except for more conventional campaigns against West-Germany’s rearmament in the 1950s, the political system was not really challenged by social movements. Trade unions, dominated by the SPD, were well integrated into the political system via a “neo-corporatist” social partnership that eliminated harsh social conflict between workers and companies.

In the late 1960s, however, the students’ movement, responding to Germany’s Nazi past and the German government’s support of the US in the Vietnam War, marked a turning point in West German social movement activity, and the established political system was rigorously contested by the emergence of new social movements (see Brand 1985; Roth/Rucht 1987). The green-ecological movement, riding the momentum of the students’ revolution, emerged in the

mid-1970s to fight the government's nuclear power program (see Peters 1979). The green movement gained more strength toward the end of the 1970s when it joined the broad peace movement against the US stationing of Pershing II missiles in Germany. It was in these grassroots groups of the ecological and peace movements that the Green Party emerged first as an idea and then as a concrete political organization.

After the success of green-alternative groups in elections on the community and *Länder* level between 1977 and 1980, representatives of these groups decided to found a national party (see Raschke 1993). In March, 1979, delegates from all parts of West-Germany gathered in Frankfurt and founded a forerunner organization of the Green Party in order to participate in the European elections of that year. The party gained 3.2% (about one million) of the German vote, and though the total did not surpass the 5% threshold for obtaining seats in the European Parliament, election law nonetheless stipulated that the Greens receive a refund for their election, worth 5 million German Marks.

The party's provisional leadership then moved to found the Green Party, and in January, 1990, the founding convention took place in Karlsruhe and united different currents and wings of the new social movements that had emerged in the 1970s. Between this date and 1983, the rank and file of the Greens grew to 30.000 members. The new party entered electoral politics, and despite gaining only 1.5% of the vote in the 1980 elections for the Bundestag (the national parliament), the party was successful in some *Länder* elections and began to enter *Länder* parliaments. The national elections of 1983, in which the Greens polled 5.6 %, marked a new period in the history of both the party and the West German political system. For the first time since the founding of the Federal Republic in 1949, a radical, opposition party surpassed the 5% threshold and entered the Bundestag. From 1983 on, the party faced growing dilemmas brought about by its anti-systemic roots, on the one hand, and its integration into democratic institutions, on the other.

In 1985, after elections in centrally located *Land*, Hesse, the provincial party organization decided to enter the government in a "red-green" coalition with the Social

Democrats, and Joschka Fischer, today chair of the Green Faction in the Bundestag, became the first Green Minister (see Johnsen 1985). This event, however, triggered a controversy over the character and goals of the party. Both the rank-and-file and representatives of the national party executive regarded the Hesse coalition as a betrayal of Green principles and the beginning of the party's integration into the established system. From this point on, party discourse was more and more dominated by a dispute between so-called Realos (realistic members) and Fundamentalists (dogmatic members) (see Murphy/Roth 1987, Doherty 1992).

In spite of the public divergence between segments of the party, the Greens continued to grow through electoral success. In 1984, they received 8.2 % of the votes in the European elections. In 1986, they received 7.1 % in the *Land* elections of Lower Saxony and 8.3 % in the national elections of 1987. Continued electoral success was briefly interrupted with the national elections of 1990, the first all-German elections after unification. The West German Greens failed to grasp the nature of the new situation in the country, and they opposed unification, with the result that they received only 4.8 % of the vote in the West and could not qualify for seating in the Bundestag. This result shocked the party, accustomed by then to a consistent pattern of electoral success. The years between 1990 and 1994, the year of the next national election, were a period of restructuring and realignment. After hostile and confrontational debate, the Fundamentalists left the party, and the Realo faction came to dominate further development. The Greens also united with the East Germans citizens' movements, the heroes of the 1989 revolution, in order to strengthen their weak basis in the East. Finally Joschka Fischer, the most prominent and popular figure in the Greens and, since 1990, the Minister for Environment in Hesse, decided to lead the election campaign to re-enter the Bundestag in the 1994 poll. In that election, the Greens returned to success, capturing 7.3 % of the vote and becoming the third largest faction of the parliament, displacing the FDP, which had held that position since 1949. Today, the Greens are involved in four red-green coalitions on the *Länder* level, including North Rhine-Westphalia, the largest and most important province of Germany.

The Greens' party development can be divided into four periods: (1) Foundation, 1978-80; (2) Establishment of the Party, 1980-83; (3) Institutionalization, 1983-90; and (4) Restructuring and Realignment, 1990-94. Each of these periods shows certain features concerning the program, rhetoric and organizational structure of the party. With each successive stage of development, the party moved more and more away from its anti-systemic, opposition roots and toward becoming an established party, successfully participating in democratic institutions and governments at different levels of the German system.

Stage 1: Foundation, 1978 - 1980

From the outset, the Greens brought together different groups and currents among (West) Germany's social movements of the 1970s-- alternative lifestyle activists, single-issue pressure groups, people who already had experiences in other parties or social organizations (e.g. left Social Democrats, communist groups, churches, universities etc.), conservatives with an open mind for ecological issues, and radical feminists (see Luedke/Dinne 1980). But in spite of the heterogeneity of approaches to politics, as well the divisive internal disputes over political concepts, style and organization, we can identify a number of dominant features of party discourse and rhetoric in the initial phase (see Kluge 1984). The founding of the party itself was an issue among activists. Many social movement members feared that establishing a party would be the first step toward accepting the rules of representative, liberal democracy, abandoning the anti-systemic approach of the movements. In their political view, parties and parliaments were repressive instruments of a bourgeois society.

In this situation, Petra Kelly, the most prominent member of the Greens and one of the three chair persons in the founding period, developed the ingenious label, "anti-party-party," in order to express that the Greens would not be a conventional party. Rather, the Greens would be "a party organization of a new type, with decentralized grassroots structures." (Die Grünen -

Das Bundesprogramm, 1980)¹ This label became a central element in the Greens' image during its first years. In general, the "anti-party-party" label gave expression to several principles shared by members of the Greens,

- The label claimed a status of exclusivity and created a feeling of like minded people who resist the political establishment (we are not the "bad guys" in the political establishment).
- It defined the Greens not as one opposition party among others but as oppositional to *all* parties ("We are the alternative to the established parties"²);
- It underlined the close connections between the party and the social movements to which the party was accountable.
- It referred to a status of permanent opposition never forgetting the party's roots.
- It emphasized a principal focus *against* things, an "anti-attitude," which can be found in the party's programmatic images.

Propaganda material from the Greens' first years reveals a plethora of "anti-" metaphors describing the party's positions: *anti-fascist*, *anti-imperialist*, *anti-capitalist*, *anti-centralist*, *anti-militarist*, *anti-establishment*, *anti-chauvinistic*, *anti-NATO*, etc. The party's anti-systemic approach appeared also in the Green vision of a "good society" in which the existing imperative of economic growth in capitalist society would be replaced by a new imperative: the "law of nature" (Die Grünen - Das Bundesprogramm 1980, p.1). In this vision, people would create small, decentralized communities based on direct instead of representative democracy, and this would lead in turn to a harmonious relationship between mankind and nature, between society and the individual, and between individuals themselves. At the same time the Greens rejected socialism as alternative to capitalism. In June, 1980, the party convention passed a resolution that stated,

¹ Green manifesto from 1980 (Die Grünen - Das Bundesprogramm 1983). The translation of this and all other quotes of the Green manifesto is my own.

² This is the first sentence in the Green manifesto from 1980 (see footnote 30).

The Greens agree neither with the economic and societal politics of capitalism, nor with that of real-existing socialism. You cannot expect from the Greens the politics of big banks and companies, but you also cannot expect the politics of the Politburos of so-called communist countries.³

Understanding the Greens' fundamental opposition all forms of established politics, right or left, puts some perspective on the party's radical worldview, which in instances approaches apocalyptic visions of social decay/redemption,

-- The Green Party defined the world in holistic, generalized terms. The Green program, for instance, offered a comprehensive analysis of the current situation of the world, pointing out that the global climatic catastrophe was close at hand. The picture was painted out in drastic and alarming images: The catastrophe will be comparable to a nuclear war; climatic zones will shift; droughts, tornadoes, hurricanes, and floods will increase; the polar ice caps will melt; and the ocean levels will rise. Against this background only one conclusion could be drawn: Only a *complete* change on *all* levels of politics will prevent us and the planet from being destroyed. Consequently it up to the Greens and the ecological movement to take serious action and rescue the world from extermination. As Petra Kelly later put it, "if we [the Greens] don't do the impossible, we shall be faced with the unthinkable" (Kelly 1992: p. 58).

-- It emphasized that the green movement has the mission of saving the world. A mission of this kind does not allow any delay, any compromise or even the acceptance of differing approaches to solving problems. Radical action must be carried out immediately, and this action will break the accepted rules of political decision-making procedures. The "system" has to be challenged frontally by "movement" politics, and the usage of violence is sometimes unavoidable in behalf of a superior goal.

-- It framed a clear picture of a "friend-foe" dichotomy. For the Greens, the enemies are easy to identify: International corporations, the capitalist state, the corrupt party-system, supranational organizations such as NATO and the bureaucracy of the European Union.⁴

-- It employed catchy and emotionally-resonant images, symbols, legends and myths (compare Coleman/Coleman 1993). Roland Vogt, one of the first speakers of the Green

³ This and all following documents (including quotes from declarations of Green party conventions, speeches of party delegates and executive members, party campaign material) were provided by the Green Party Archive „Grünes Gedächtnis“ in Frankfurt (since 1999 in Berlin). I would like to thank in this context Dr. Christoph Becker-Schaum, the archive director, who helped me to scan the documents. The translation of the quotes from these documents is my own.

⁴ I found these phrases in Green campaign material from 1980.

Party, mentioned for example that "in the sunflower [the symbol of the German Greens] the characteristics of the 'movement' flow together. The sunflower symbolically connects the sun, which represents, among other things, regenerative energy, with the earth."⁵

-- It simplified matters by neglecting the complexity of a transnational world and the interdependence between economy, ecology and politics. There are only a few considerations in the first Green worldviews on how one factor is related to another-- how certain, for example, ecological restrictions affect the economy and employment, how grassroots democracy actually works in a society of millions different kinds of people, or how the distribution of certain goods and services will function in decentralized communities (see Goodin 1995).

-- It pursued an all-or-nothing approach that banned politics of compromise and reform. On the contrary, parliamentary compromises and political bargaining were considered betrayals of party ideals. Political change could be achieved only by extra-parliamentary action, not by institutionalized politics.

Beyond rhetoric, the organizational structure of the Green Party in the foundation period is characterized by fundamental differences from established parties. The main features were: anti-hierarchical, decentralized party structures highlighting the autonomy of local party organizations; non-paid jobs for party executives; a dislike to professionalism; integration of social movements into party structures; a 50 % quota for women on all levels of representation; extra rights for minorities; a rotation system for deputies whereby all Green legislators would turn over their seats to other party members after two years in office; and a fixed mandate and a income limit of income for legislators. With these features, the party sought to prevent itself from becoming integrated into the political system along the lines of other parties (Heinrich 1993, p. 488). Both party representatives and rank-and-file saw the Green Party as *complementary* to extra-parliamentary contestation and action rather than an attempt to change politics by way of representative, liberal democracy.

⁵ This is my own translation of Vogt (1988: 37).

Stage 2: Establishment, 1980-1983

At the founding of the party in January, 1980, it appeared the overall movements' anti-institutional beliefs and behavior would not change. Although creating a party did require working with the rules and laws governing for party establishment, the Greens continued to perceive themselves more as a movement than a party. Close connections to social movements and grassroots organizations maintained party members' focus on extra-parliamentary action. In this period, the main activity was fighting the government's nuclear power program and the stationing of Pershing II missiles in Germany by mobilizing members and supporters in the streets. The party's failure to receive the 5% vote required for legislative representation in the Bundestag in 1980 did not affect the party's ability to mobilize, together with the peace movement, hundred of thousands of people in the following years. The effect of such mobilizational success on the movement side helped the Greens to enter its first *Länder* parliaments in West-Germany: in March, 1980, with 5.3 % in Baden-Württemberg; in June, 1982, 7.7 % in Hamburg; and in September, 1982, 8.0 % in Hesse. Finally, in March, 1983, the party won 5.6 % of the vote in national elections for the Bundestag.

In this period, the party's agenda was still dominated by anti-institutional attitudes and a "revolutionary" rhetoric claiming that the Greens entered the political arena in order to overcome the "industrial civilization of Western and Eastern societies."⁶ But at the same time, the beginnings of the party's "parliamentarization" had certain effects on its internal discourse and relationship to social movements (see Ismayr 1985). One of the central programmatic issues of the Green Party was to call for an immediate halt to the government's nuclear power program. After being involved in legislative decision-making processes, however, Green deputies realized that, according to existing laws and regulations, an immediate halt to the nuclear power program would be impossible. It appeared it would take some years and a new parliamentary majority to change the law and establish a new energy policy. The presence of this issue as a central theme in party discourse led to strong reactions as party members debated the question. Grass-root

⁶ Phrase from a Declaration of the Party Convention 1982 in Hagen.

organizations affiliated with the party and the rank-and-file criticized the position of those who brought up the issue. The anti-nuclear-power movement, one of the Greens' founding organizations, reacted with a public condemnation of the more moderate position of Green legislators. A declaration issued at a national conference of anti-nuclear movement in 1982 states,

With the growing influence of the Greens, they develop political positions which meet our resistance. We criticize tendencies in the Green Party to dilute our well-founded call for the immediate closure of all nuclear power plants. We don't accept so-called new schedules for the closure.⁷

Another disputed issue was the question of whether or not the party should accept the monopoly on the use of force by the state. Many members of the party had experienced state repression during the struggles of the anti-nuclear and peace movements, and they argued for a decentralized grassroots democracy without a central monopoly on the use of force. Parliamentary deputies, to the contrary, were obliged to accept the monopoly. Furthermore, many Green deputies voiced typical justifications for state police powers, convinced that without a state monopoly on use of force every social group could claim to use violence in order to pursue their "superior" goals. But among many members of the rank-and-file the refusal of the state monopoly on the use of force was a fundamental component of the Greens' identity. The same goes for the anti-nuclear movement, which emphasized in their above mentioned declaration,

The pressure of the established parties triggered a discussion in the Green Party to accept the monopoly on the use of force for this state. To give way to this pressure will lead to a split between the anti-nuclear power movement and the Green Party.

This dispute, as with many internal debates in the Greens, became a media event, and it was only the beginning of many testy issues that would confront the party in the years to come

⁷ Document from the Green Party Archive „Grünes Gedächtnis“.

(see Mettke 1982). The issue of whether or not to form parliamentary and governing coalitions with other parties faced Green Party legislators at all levels of government. As members of coalitions, Greens would be forced to accept responsibility (accountability) for government policies and politics, and given the party's extraordinarily hostile view of liberal democracy and the other German political parties, the issue quickly became divisive. Initially, the party's position was clear, as stated in a resolution of a 1982 party convention in the city of Hagen,

The Greens run for elections in order to promote their claims and goals and to challenge the established parties ... The Greens are generally not willing to share responsibility for a life-threatening politics, as it is carried out by the established parties of the Parliament.

But by the 1983 national election campaign, when the Greens' prospects to enter the Bundestag for the first time were quite good, some party members and *Länder* deputies brought the coalition issue up again and argued that a party running for office cannot for ever refuse to take responsibility for government actions. This evoked a sharp reaction by Rainer Trampert, who was elected one of the three spokes persons of the party in 1982. In his report to the party convention in November, 1983, he argued,

The Greens must represent more than parliamentary compromises. The Green Party, having one wing in the parliament, must stick to its goals of pursuing a politics that is fundamentally different from that of the bourgeois parties. It has to fight in the social movements for basic changes in this society ... This political practice must [at least] partially put the existing state into question. In coalitions, however, or as just a parliamentary party, we would only contribute to the stabilization of the system.

The conflict over the coalitions and responsibility question, which highlighted the tensions in the relationship between the party and social movements, became one the most controversial issues between so-called Fundamentalists and Realos in the next years.

Stage 3: Institutionalization, 1983-1989

In March, 1983, the Greens entered the Bundestag with 27 deputies (out of 498), and the process of establishing the party had come to a close successfully. But having parliamentary factions in some *Länder* parliaments, as it was before 1983, and having a faction in the national parliament turned out to be something altogether different. The Greens received much more attention by the mass media. Interest groups began to contact the parliamentary faction, and deputies became involved in parliamentary committees in which competence and knowledge instead of propaganda slogans were required. Finally, Green legislators in the Bundestag received millions of Marks to organize their parliamentary work, including the employment of experts in different fields of politics. This led to a shift in public attention, from the party leadership to the parliamentary leadership, and this changed the internal structure of the party. The party executive and members from the rank-and-file began to lament that the Bundestag members increasingly dominated the party's public image and decision-making processes. One report of a member of the party executive in November, 1983, states,

The fact that the [Bundestag] faction employs 160 fully paid experts and politicians, while the [party] executive works temporarily with 10 honorary politicians and some collaborators, produces a structural imbalance between party and faction that can only be addressed by stronger activities by grass-roots organizations of the party.

Another member of the executive added, "The danger arises that the party loses contact with the movements, becomes preoccupied with itself, and loses influence over the politics of the faction."

In order to even out this imbalance, the party executive decided to bring so-called "national working groups" into being. The purposes of these groups were defined in the following way,

The establishment of national working groups preserves the consistency of green politics on the community, *Länder*, and national level ... They are principally a necessary instrument for cooperation between [legislative] faction and party. Being confronted with the pressure of parliamentary work, the national working groups must create a political

atmosphere that results in a vital, grassroots-oriented cooperation and balance between faction, party and social movements.

The party executive created these “national working groups” in order to prevent the legislative faction and its apparatus from becoming overly dominant in internal party discourse and programs. But political discourses in the party, at both the executive and rank-and-file levels, and the legislative faction began to drift apart. The more the parliamentary wing worked to establish itself and compete with other parties in the Bundestag, the more they became alienated from the part of the party that considered parliamentary work only an instrument of propaganda in a larger grassroots revolution that would bring fundamental changes to society. Disputes over concepts of politics and political action, especially the question of whether or not the Greens should join coalitions and take responsibility for government, became a central issue in party development (see Raschke 1993, p. 143 f).

The rotation system came into question as well. Under this system, in which elected legislators should leave office after two years (turning their seats over to other Greens), was a central element of the Greens’ distinctive identity relative to other parties. According to many Green deputies, the rotation system turned out to be counterproductive, because it prevented legislators from gaining competence and experience in parliamentary work (see Raschke 1993, p.609f).

The disputes between Fundamentalists and Realos escalated after the 1985 *Länder* elections, in which the party’s continued success at the ballot box was interrupted by a failure to pass the 5% hurdle in the *Länder* of North Rhine-Westphalia and Saarland. Each side blamed the other for defeat. The debate entered a new phase when the Greens in Hesse joined a “red-green” coalition with the *Länd* SPD in October, 1985, an event accompanied by heavy media attention. For the first time in the party’s history, a Green Minister for Environment was elected to a *Land* government (compare Fischer 1987). Against this background, the agenda of Green Party conventions in June and December, 1985, were preoccupied with discussions of both events, as well as other elements of party platform. Members of the executive, dominated by the

Fundamentalist wing, argued in favor of continuing the anti-systemic and anti-institutional approaches foundational to the party. They proposed a motion that stated,

To be a viable alternative to the other parties made the Greens strong. Together with the social movements, we are a serious challenge to the established political system ... We should continue to follow this route, and we have to maintain our anti-systemic approach ... We reject taking responsibility [for government policy] and joining coalitions. Green participation in governance would be interpreted as a kind of appeasement toward the state by an anti-systemic opposition [party].

On the opposite, one of the Realos, a minority in the executive, argued,

With reference to the environment and peace movements and to their voters, the Greens must use all opportunities and instruments of democratic society in order to organize the survival of mankind. If we continue to maintain the contradiction between the Green vision, on the one hand, and the rejection of taking responsibility [for politics] here and now, on the other hand, we will lose credibility more and more.

Some party members argued for a professionalization of party structures, which reflected the party's evolution a bureaucratic organization. One motion proposed at a party Convention in June, 1985, reads,

The most widely growing sectors of the party are the [legislative] factions on different levels. Rapid parliamentary success almost entirely absorbed the party's personnel resources, whereas party organization stagnated or even lost its power. Also, progress in programmatic development took place in parliamentary groups not in the party. If we don't manage to balance out the development of the party and its [legislative] factions, the factions will dominate party life more and more. For this reason we need a professionalization of party structures, including fully paid jobs for executive members and the employment of experts in the party's headquarters.⁸

This position, however, was rejected by a majority of the rank-and-file, which regarded the proposal as a betrayal of grassroots principles. In sum, Fundamentalists were supported by a majority of the rank-and-file at both party conventions in 1985, and they were able to force the

⁸ Both documents are from the Party Convention 1985 in the city of Hagen.

party to adopt positions opposing coalition strategies and the integration of the party into the structures of the existing parliamentary system (compare Offe 1986). Jutta Ditfurth, at this time one of the two spokes persons of the Greens, reflected the feelings of the rank-and-file when she said,

When the Greens accept the rules of governance, they will necessarily betray Green goals, and they will no longer be the Greens, namely: radical, non-assimilable, unpredictable, value creating, anti-institutional ... In this case we will split from social movements and weaken social opposition.

The fundamental opposition of the majority of the executive to the “parliamentarization” of the Greens could not prevent, however, the parliamentary wing from increasingly dominating the party’s public appearance, this owing to the fact that in representative democracies public attention is usually centered on decision-making processes in legislatures and government (see Raschke 1993, p. 629f). The Hesse decision to enter a “red-green” coalition was interpreted by the mass-media and by the public as a clear evidence of the Greens’ growing willingness to accept the rules of representative democracy (compare Johnsen 1988). Furthermore, the public increasingly appeared to accept the Greens as legitimate political actors.

These parliamentary factions were confronted with the complex decision-making structure of representative democracy, and they were forced to deal with the existence of different interests among groups in society. Green legislators began to develop more differentiated and plausible political concepts, particularly a *reform* concept for a restructuring of German industry according to ecological requirements (see Die Grünen 1986). Their rhetoric became more moderate, highlighting concrete steps of reform politics instead of pure propaganda. In this period, voters became the masters of the Green Party, and on different occasions the voters punished the party for clinging to revolutionary rhetoric and anti-institutional political attitudes in the party’s internal discourse. In *Länder* elections between 1985 and 1989, party organizations that followed a realistic route were much more successful than those keeping to a fundamentalist, opposition strategy.

The ongoing institutionalization of the party in this period, along with the disciplinary effects of voters on party discourse and rhetoric, led to the emergence of new party currents and a differentiation of existing party wings in order to overcome the polarizing debate between Realos and Fundamentalists (see Fücks 1988). At a party convention in September, 1986, some months before the 1987 national elections, the Fundamentalist wing suffered defeat. A majority of delegates voted for the motion of a moderate group of representatives, who were located between Fundamentalists and Realos. In this motion, the party no longer excluded the prospect of a “red-green” coalition with the Social Democrats after the national elections was no longer excluded. Actually the Greens gained 8.3 % of the vote in the 1987 national elections, but they could not build a “red-green” coalition because the SPD lost too many votes.

The following years were characterized by fights about the general orientation of the party. A minority of newly elected Green members of parliament and the majority of the executive continued to attack the “parliamentarization” of the party and coalition politics with SPD. In December, 1988, a coalition of left-of-center delegates and moderate Realos brought down the Fundamentalist-dominated executive and opened the way for the establishment of a new, more moderate executive. Jutta Ditfurth, spokesperson of the Fundamentalists, commented on her withdrawal,

The Greens are becoming more and more an appendage of general societal development, without opposing this development by resistance, analysis and a distinct profile ... Instead of carrying out a mere politics of repair of the system, we need the concrete utopia of an alternative society in order to have a clear goal for our battle.

Comrades-in-arms of Ditfurth, who were also expelled from the executive, published a report at the party convention in March, 1989, in which they accused the majority of betraying the social movements. They argued,

The Greens have turned away from the social movements ... They still claim to be the representatives of social movements, but in fact the mainstream of the party is established and integrated into the system ... Instead of remaining an anti-party and movement-party, they help stabilize the existing economic system. Instead of provoking

the parliament and putting pressure on the established parties, they are more and more governed by the rules and structures of parliamentary democracy.

But the majority of the party, including the left-of-center wing, was no longer willing to support the disastrous anti-parliamentary politics of the Fundamentalists. After receiving 12 % of the vote in the January, 1989, *Länder* election of Berlin, the left-of-center-dominated party organization in Berlin decided to form an alliance with the SPD. At this point it looked as if the quarrel between Realos and Fundamentalists had come to an end. The Fundamentalists were out of office, and the majority of the party no longer opposed the rules of parliamentary democracy. By the end of the 1980s, the Greens had appeared irreversibly to establish themselves as a new electoral force that would use the instruments of representative democracy for the purpose of ecological goals.

Stage 4: Restructuring and Realignment, 1990-94, and Beyond

Social scientists have examined the West German polity for the way it has exemplified the development of post-industrial, post-national and postmaterialist values, including a high sensitivity for ecological matters (see Brand 1985, Inglehart 1977, 1985, and Kitschelt 1988). Although the Greens fostered connections to peace and environmental groups in East Germany, most party members never questioned that Germany should be, given its past, a divided nation. But 1989 changed everything. The fall of the Communist state in East Germany, brought about in remarkably peaceful revolution, suddenly placed the issue of national unification on the agenda. Still, a majority inside the party, representing the opinion of many left intellectuals and social movement activists, opposed unification, arguing that this would lead to a militaristic, authoritarian Greater Germany in Europe. The still existing Fundamentalist wing and the left current in the party became radicalized in this situation, bringing back to the fore the old revolutionary rhetoric. The Realo faction was divided into opponents and supporters of unification. A member of the Realo faction in the executive put it this way, "The party runs the

risk of returning to its past: to revitalize a pure, fundamentalist rhetorical opposition to the new German Republic.”

Against this background, it was no surprise that the central party slogan for the early national elections of 1990 was: “Everybody talks about German unification, we talk about the weather” (change of the climate, warming up of the atmosphere etc.). It turned out, however, that also a majority of past Green voters regarded unification as a unique historical opportunity to unite the nation and bring the people of East and West together in the democratic structure of the West-German Constitution. The West German Greens decided to remain separate from the East German Greens for the December, 1990, elections. The result was shocking defeat for the West German Greens: They missed the 5% threshold by 0.2 % and could not seat members in the Bundestag, whereas the East German Greens received 6 % in their districts and entered the national parliament via a special clause which was issued by the German Supreme Court before the election.⁹

This painful defeat led to a reflection on the party's future shape and was the starting point for a process fundamental restructuring and realignment within the party. First, the party clarified its position on unification, accepting the German majority's desire to live in a unified nation-state. Second, the party fused with their East German Green counterparts. After this programmatic shift, members of the left-radical wing exited the party. Third, party structures were adapted to the requirements of a more professional administration. In spite of the bitter resistance of the Fundamentalist wing, represented by the former executive member Jutta Ditfurth, a majority of delegates abandoned the rotation system at the party convention in April,

⁹ After the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) from East Germany and the Greens successfully instituted proceedings at the German Supreme Court for a separation of the election districts in East and West in order to give small parties from the East fair chances to gain seats in the Bundestag, the election law has to be changed for this unique situation. All parties which obtained either in the West or in the East provinces more than 5 % of the votes were elected in the Bundestag. The PDS polled over 16% in the East German provinces and took seats in parliament, even though the smaller Eastern proportion of the national population meant that its national percentage was only 4.4%. In the Greens' case, the Eastern Greens got 6 % in their provinces, the West Greens 4,8 % in their provinces. But because of the West German Greens resistance against unification they refused to fuse with their East German counterparts before the election and failed to enter the Bundestag again. For this reason the Greens were represented in the Bundestag only by 8 East German Greens (respectively members of citizens' movements) between 1990 and 1994.

1991, voted for a professionalization of the executive, and established a new committee giving representatives of party organizations at the *Länder* level more influence. Jutta Ditfurth argued,

The Greens have to decide on a principal question: either they become a bourgeois-dogmatic cadre organization, with a Politburo, Central Committee and secretary-general, or they return to their old virtues, namely grass-root-democracy and close partnership with social movements.

A member of the national executive, representing the majority of delegates, justified the decision by arguing:

We have to separate between decision-making committees, on the one hand, and professional working and executing committees, on the other hand. The motto, "all members make everything, and everybody controls everybody," no longer works.

Fourth, at the same party convention the delegates passed a declaration stipulating the parameters of the party's further development. This declaration was foundational to the political realignment of the party, and it exemplifies how the party interpreted recent developments as a healthy process of reflection on its own history, experiences, faults and deficiencies:

To take it positively, our former-voters expect that the party has begun a fundamental political restructuring, which will help to empower the party again ... Germany still needs a party of ecology, peace and human rights ... We will not accept that the political culture of the united Germany will revert back to the stupidity of a three-party-cartel [between the CDU/CSU, SPD and FDP]. We will continue to act as a creative opposition capable of a two-way-communication. In the case that elections empower us to build red-green coalitions, we will use these coalitions in order to pursue an ecological politics ... The self-perception of the Greens is that of an ecological reform party ... We are part of this society, and reforms are our strategy to improve the conditions and quality of life, according to our ecological principles. We believe that a strategy of radical reforms which presuppose the changeability of society is the only way to change the complex structures of our society ... We will no longer pursue a strategy that insists only on extreme demands. We will no longer confound leading goals and visions with revolutionary phrases ... We reject violence as an instrument of politics. We accept that democratic societies delegate the monopoly on the use of force to the state, but we want to temper and control this monopoly. The old Green slogan that parliamentary politics has to be supported by extra-parliamentary action needs to be modified: parliamentary

reform politics needs the support of many people in neighborhoods, schools, companies, universities, the newspapers, etc. Without the broad support of a social reform movement in different sectors of society, the efforts of the Greens in parliaments and governments remains mediocre (Die Grünen 1991, p. 1-4).

The content of this declaration marked a fundamental change within the party. For the first time, the Greens publicly declared that they perceive themselves as *part* of the system and *not* as an anti-systemic force (compare Zeuner 1991). They abandoned the anti-institutional attitudes and revolutionary rhetoric that had dominated the political beginnings of the party. They accepted the basic rules of parliamentary democracy, including the willingness to take responsibility for governance and to join coalitions. This development can be traced through a long process of experience, learning, and self-instruction in which the Greens figured out how to live with the ambiguities, contradictions and opportunities of a democratic system (see Kleinert 1991, Raschke 1991). Participation in the political setting of representative, parliamentary democracy forced the Greens to overcome pure rhetoric and anti-institutional orientations. The response of voters, the public and the media (see Knoche 1992) to Fundamentalist politics forced the party to give up its anti-systemic approach and to alter its programmatic goals. In this process, the party necessarily lost supporters and members from different currents, but at the same the Greens gained wider social influence. In the realignment and restructuring period, the party grew stronger than ever before, with the exception of the new eastern *Länder*, where the Greens' base remains weak. Between 1991 and 1994, the party was very successful in many *Länder* elections. In 1994, the Greens re-entered the Bundestag with 7.3 % of the votes. Joschka Fischer, the chair of the Green faction in the Parliament, is regarded as the most prominent representative among all opposition parties now; he is favorably pictured in much media reportage and is now one of the most popular politicians in Germany. Current polls indicate that a "red-green" coalition is possible in the next national elections of September, 1998. Considering the self-destructive disputes between Realos and Fundamentalists, which dominated the party discourse all through the 1980s, and the defeat in the national election of 1990, the trajectory of the Greens in recent years is remarkable. But this development was in no

way an automatic process; without the disciplining effects of voters and democratic institutions, along with the ability of party leaders and the rank-and-file alike to reflect on and alter erroneous practices, the fate of the Greens could be similar to the fate of many anti-systemic opposition parties-- a silent disappearance from the political stage.

Conclusions

The Greens offer us several interesting points of departure for understanding the nature, limitations and potential of democracies to incorporate contentious movements into the established political arena. As the historical outline above demonstrates, the Greens were confronted with challenging problems at each stage of their development. The major issues were: (a) stance toward representative, liberal democracy as a way to press and resolve political issues; (b) stance toward left and right in contemporary political system; (c) how to integrate grassroots, decentralized or "open" organization structures into, first, electoral organization and, second, governance; (d) stance toward alliances or coalitions with other parties; and (e) relationships of elected officials, party organizations and grassroots movements. Each of these issues tended to be resolved, in the long run, in one direction: despite internal rifts over these questions, the general tendency was toward *moderation* of radical discourses and toward *more integration* in the political system rather than less.

In developmental terms, the Greens dealt with these issues in a series of critical junctures that, taken together, are a path-dependent trajectory that is rendered in Figure 2. The alternatives for party development at each stage are based on the study of the Greens, but as a speculative outline it provides some general applications. The "Y" (yes) option at each stage implies a *progressive* commitment to the rules and practices of democracy that, over the long haul, results in Stage 4 acceptance of representative democracy and rejection of the Stage 1 stance that democratic institutions and elections are simply convenient opportunities to advance the party's message. To move from social movement to party formation, activists need not

normatively value democracy as the best (or at least most viable) political alternative; they need only accept that democracy provides a useful opportunity structure for political expression. At this stage, the social movement-party may encompass a great variety of competing attitudes toward democracy, as was the case in the Greens during their early years.

The move from Stage 2 to Stage 3 polarizes the movement-party. Electoral competition raises the stakes for “purists” (Fundamentalists in the Greens) and “moderates” (Realos). Electoral success will bring certain factions of the party greater resources and public visibility, enabling that faction to exert greater influence in party structures. This is what happened with the legislative delegations of the Greens. In the Greens, electoral success progressively empowered the “Realos” vis-à-vis the Fundamentalists.

Through Stages 3 and 4, movement-parties increasingly make political alliances and accept the notion that their party might govern in coalition. A Greens-SPD coalition appears much likely against this background.

“N” (no) choices at each stage do not always lead to the same results, but they do in each case limit the party’s ability to actually serve the movements it claims to represent. In the case of a “N”-option at the first stage, for example, movements would not have gained important and highly visible linkages to politics and policy through the success of the Greens. Taking, however, the “Y”-option enabled ecological activists to raise their issues in front of the national government, armed not with banners (or stones) but with the advice of professional staff, and present a motion on the floor of the parliament. In terms of the movements’ ability to “frame” (Snow et al. 1986, Tarrow 1992) its position for both internal and public consumption, the floor of the national legislature opened up a whole new and more powerful opportunity structure.

Finally, the graphic in Figure 2 offers us a model for the development of an alternative kind of political party: the social movement-party that manages successfully to become incorporated into the political system. Tarrow (1994) notes that social movements are *contentious*. That is to say, social movements emerge to contest policies and mobilize the discontent or grievances or marginalized groups. But social movements, over the long haul,

must come to terms with their relationship to the political system, especially as they begin to accumulate some success. The more legitimate the demands of the environmental movement become, whether represented by the Sierra Club or Greenpeace, the more these actors will in turn influence policy, become lobbyists, or form interest groups.

The present state of many social movements in a variety of countries indicates that contention is only part, albeit a great part, of the social movement story. In order to see their demands debated and possibly implemented in policy, movements must be prepared to take advantage of the political opportunities presented them; the main finding of this study is that a decision simply to take advantage of opportunities has many consequences, some intended, some not. What perhaps Green leaders and militants didn't foresee was the path-dependent nature of their decision-making. Entering the game and achieving even small successes nonetheless serves to raise the costs (or at least the opportunity costs) of exit. At each stage, the "N"-option becomes more difficult to choose.

What is most interesting, particularly from the point of view of social movement theory, is that the Greens have moderated their rhetoric and discourse, but in the end they have still maintained their oppositional and, at times radical natures. They can lay claim to both contention and governing, and at present it seems reasonable to assert that the success of the Greens demonstrates that ruling vs. resistance is not quite the hard dilemma it might appear. What this case indicates is the way in which democracies provide manifold opportunities to both rule and contest, such that even highly contentious movements can be brought into the system, as long as movement-party activists are willing to commit to the electoral-representative process and the principle that they must govern for all of society, rather than only their supporters.

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