



Course of

SUPERVISOR

CANDIDATE

Academic Year

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Introduction

In the 1980s green parties were born in many Western European countries, over thirty years they moved from being loosely-defined movements to constitute established political parties. However it was not a uniform phenomenon across Europe, in fact certain countries now have strong and established ecologist political actors while others do not.

In this thesis I am going to study the political phenomenon of green voting both in a cross-national perspective and in an individual voter perspective. In particular I will try to understand the influence socio-economic drivers have on the strength of ecologist parties in European countries; I will also try to trace a socio-economic profile of green voters in nine Western European polities.

In Chapter 1 I will define the issue of green voting in Western Europe to understand its relevance; I will shortly review the theoretical interpretation of difference in the performance of greens across Europe; then I will provide for two paradigmatic case studies to verify whether there are proof green parties rely on socio-economic cleavages to win a stable electorate; finally I will provide for the two hypotheses that constitute the research question of this thesis.

In Chapter 2 I will review the literature concerning green parties and, more in general, the so-called post-materialist phenomenon of which the ecologist is considered being part; moreover I will introduce the issue of authoritarian right parties, interpreting it as a sort of backlash against the type of politics represented by parties such as the greens.

In Chapter 3 I analyze data in order to verify the validity of the two hypotheses, first by studying correlations between particular economic factors and aggregate performances of green parties; second by studying the distribution of green voters across specific socio-economic, cultural, and age categories in selected European polities.

With this thesis I hope to provide for a better understanding of green voting, in particular for what concerns the causes of differences in the performance of green parties across countries; moreover I try to study the impact of traditional economic determinants on the rise of two new political actors: green parties and populist right parties. In particular I suggest these parties do not constitute a totally new phenomenon but are, at least in part, the result of a re-structuring of traditional political divides that dominated Western liberal democracies in the 20th century.

Chapter 1. Ecology, Post-Materialism, and Cleavages

Introduction: the Green phenomenon

In the May 2019 European Parliament (EP) elections the European Green Party (EGP) obtained the best electoral result in its history gaining 74 seats and becoming the fourth largest group in the EP (European Parliament, 2019). Even considering the fact the Green-European Free Alliance Group was joined also by some regionalist parties such as the Catalan Republican Left (ERC), the performance of green parties across Europe was quite impressive. In certain countries gains by ecologist parties dramatically changed historically established patterns. For instance in Germany the Bündis '90-Die Grünen (German Greens) became the second largest party at the federal level with a score of 20.5% and overcoming the Social Democratic Party as the largest party of the left. In France Europe Ecologie Les Verts (EELV) polled at 13.5% and outscore both the Gaullist and the Socialist parties. In the United Kingdom, where the campaign was dominated by the Brexit issue, the Green Party (GP) won 11.8% of the vote, even outscoring the Conservative Party. Finally other green parties and lists gained relevant shares of the vote in other countries such as Belgium, Finland, Sweden, and the Netherlands. However in other major countries there was no significant ecologist party or movement representing a relevant political actor. In Italy for instance many green parties and associations banded together to form the list Europa Verde (EV) which however polled at 2.3% without securing any seat in the EP; in Spain some ecologists joined the Izquierda Unida coalition but no standalone green party or list polled above 1% (European Parliament, 2019). In Poland the Greens (Z) run in a broad coalition composed by mainstream center-left and center-right parties but even though the coalition performed well the Z did not manage to win any seat (Polish National Electoral Commission, 2019).

European elections take place during the same week in the whole Union; therefore the effect of particular events, such as nuclear accidents or wildfires, on the performance of the greens should be homogeneous across the continent. Moreover seats are assigned through proportional representation in every country thus the mechanical effect and the psychological effects of electoral system should be minimal in every country having more or less similar effects across Europe. Still major differences may be found in electoral results, especially for what concerns green parties. Actually they became major players in certain countries gaining more than 10% of the vote while in other countries they remained minor or fringe parties. It has to be said that European Elections may be considered a form of second-order elections given lower turnout and better results for small parties, often in a sanction vote perspective (Hix & Michael, 2007). However the EP elections were not the only success for ecologist parties in recent times.

Some green parties succeeded in obtaining major gains, for instance the Austrian Greens (Die Grünen) won 13.9% of the vote in 2019 legislative elections (Bundesministerium Inneres, 2019) and, after months of negotiations, they joined the Federal Government as a junior partner of the People's Party. The German Greens (Bündis '90-Die Grünen) are now stably polling as the second party at a federal level (POLITICO

Europe, 2020) and they represent the major opposition force at the federal level; in Belgium and Finland green parties are currently polling at record levels while in Ireland they managed to almost triple their score in the 2020 legislative election (POLITICO Europe, 2020). Outside the EU in Switzerland the Swiss Green Party (PES) became the fourth party in 2019 federal elections even though it was not able to break the “Magic Formula” that has been ruling the country for decades.

So even if speaking of a “green wave” may be an exaggeration it is undeniable that in many Western European democracies ecologist political parties have experienced in recent years a trend of strengthening or, at least, one of stabilization. On the other hand it has to be said that the performance of green parties is not consistent across Europe, in some countries such as Germany, Belgium, or Switzerland they represent a stable political force and they became a major actor in the political game; in other countries such as Poland and Spain they are virtually non-existent while in France and Czechia they experienced both impressive breakthroughs and important setbacks (Close & Delwit, 2016).

The research question that I will tackle in this thesis is which factors do determine these huge differences in electoral performances. They may be caused simply by a different sensitivity to environmental issues or by peculiar institutional settings. Maybe the origin of these differences has to be traced back to broader socio-political factors, they may be both major structural factors concerning the polities as such or they can be internal factors concerning the different voter constituencies inside each polity.

In chapter 1 will try to analyze the green phenomenon more in detail by looking first of all to the scope and magnitude of this political fact. Then I will present some of the classical explanations that are proposed by scholars to explain the rise of ecologist parties and lists across Europe. After that I will dig into two specific case studies in order to understand whether the explanations proposed in this chapter do have consistencies with existing research and literature and also to have a better picture of green parties in Western Europe. Finally I will reframe the question by proposing an alternative view of the phenomenon and in order to provide for clear and answerable research questions.

A green wave?

The first question that has to be asked when dealing with the issue of green parties in Europe is: is there such thing as a green wave? In order to answer this question we need first to define which parties may be considered as green parties. There are four different ways to classify party families: origins of parties and the sociology of their base, ideological positions and policy platforms, membership of transnational federations, or simply party name (Mair & Mudde, 1998). All the four different approaches are taken into consideration for the list of green parties presented by Van Haute (2016) and elaborated in a study by Close & Delwit (2016) for their table of electoral results of green parties in Europe. In Table 1 I show the electoral performance of green parties at EP elections since 1979. For those countries that were not EU members at the time of the election the cell is left blank; if a green party did not contest the election or if it was part of a coalition in which it was not the main party it is considered as polling at 0. The last line shows the average score obtained by green parties at EP elections. The average is also shown by the green line in Chart 1. It is

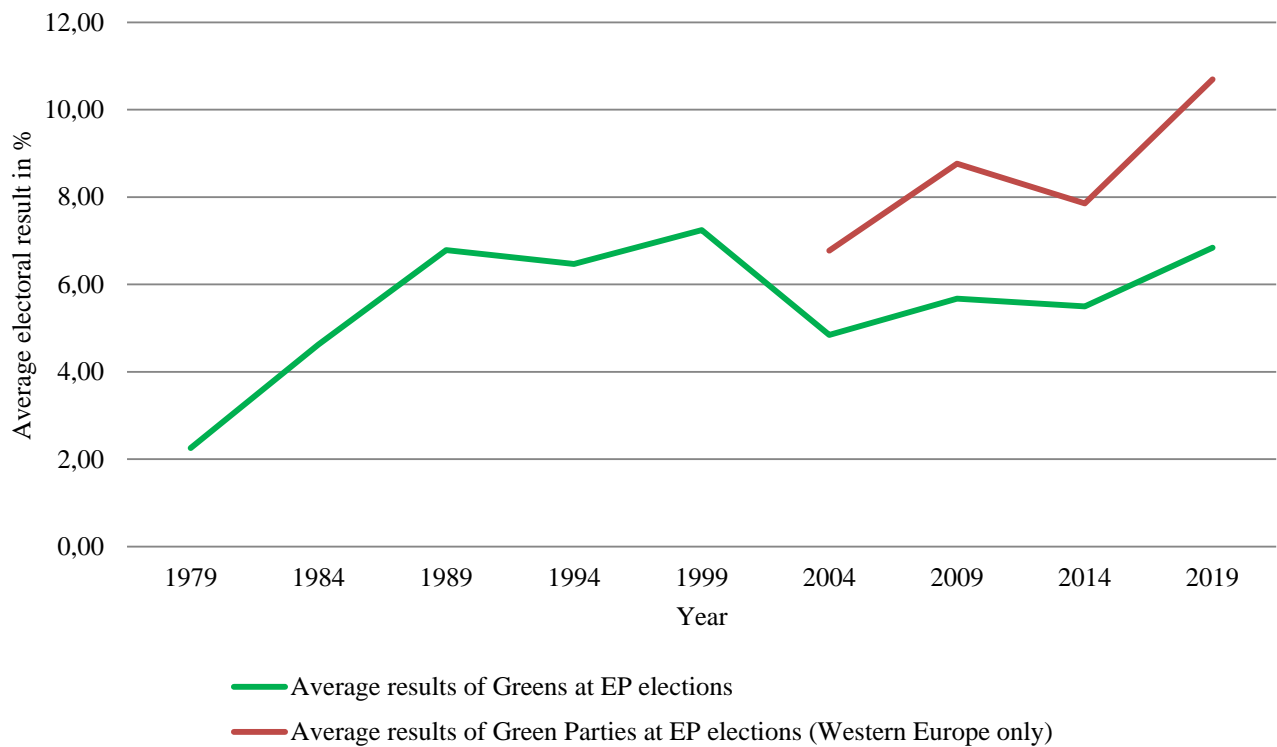
noticeable that, while the greens experienced a consistent rise between 1979 and 1999, their score fell in 2004. Even though the average performance of green parties across the EU rose since then it never achieved the 1999 record of 7.25%. However 2004 was the year of the Eastern enlargement of the EU; Eastern European countries green parties are known for being less successful than their western counterparts (Frankland, 2016). If we exclude the ten new member states that joined the EU in 2004, as well as Romania and Bulgaria that became member states in 2007, we may see that the trend is quite different. The red line in Chart 1 shows that European Greens in Western Europe are polling higher on average than ever before.

Table 1: Results of Green Parties in EP elections by country

	1979	1984	1989	1994	1999	2004	2009	2014	2019
Austria				6.8	9.3	12.9	9.7	14.5	14.1
Belgium	3.4	8.2	13.9	11.6	16.0	8.7	13.5	11.0	15.2
Bulgaria						0.5	0.0	0.9	0.31
Croatia								9.4	1.8
Cyprus						0.9	1.5	0.0	3.3
Czechia						3.2	2.1	3.8	0.0
Denmark	4.7	9.2	9.1	8.6	7.1	8.0	15.9	10.9	13.2
Estonia						2.7	2.7	0.3	1.8
Finland				7.6	13.4	10.4	12.4	9.3	16.0
France	4.4	3.4	10.6	2.9	9.7	7.7	17.3	8.9	13.5
Germany	3.2	8.1	8.4	10.1	6.4	11.9	12.1	10.7	20.5
Greece			0.0	0.0	0.0	0.7	3.5	0.9	0.9
Hungary						5.3	5.3	5.0	2.1
Ireland		0.5	3.7	7.9	6.7	4.3	1.9	4.9	11.4
Italy		0.0	3.8	3.2	1.7	2.5	0.0	0.9	2.3
Latvia						4.3	3.8	8.3	6.2
Lithuania						0.0	0.0	3.6	12.6
Luxembourg	0.0	6.1	10.5	10.9	10.7	15.0	16.8	15.0	18.9
Malta						9.3	2.3	2.9	0.7
Netherlands	0.0	5.6	7.0	6.1	11.8	7.4	9.1	7.2	10.9
Poland						0.3	0.0	0.3	0.0
Portugal			0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Romania						0.4	0.0	0.3	0.0
Slovakia						0.0	2.1	0.5	0.0
Slovenia						2.3	1.9	0.8	2.2
Spain			0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3
Sweden				18.2	9.5	6.0	11.0	15.3	11.5
United Kingdom	0.1	0.5	14.4	3.1	6.4	6.1	8.3	8.3	11.8
Average	2.3	4.6	6.8	6.5	7.2	4.8	5.7	5.5	6.8

Source: Close & Delwit, 2019 European Parliament Elections Results

Chart 1: Average results of Greens at EP elections



Therefore it may be argued that the greens really are experiencing a rise in Western European countries. However a first striking difference is the one between old EU members and new (post 2004) EU members; actually ecologist parties in Eastern Europe are by far less successful than their Western counterparts as it may be seen in Table 1. Moreover some important differences may be noticed among the West itself. In Southern European countries such as Greece and Spain green parties and lists are electorally irrelevant and are basically confined to the role of fringe or marginal parties; even in Italy where the *Federazione dei Verdi* (FdV) became represented in Parliament and gained “coalitional potential” in early 2000s, they did not succeed in stabilizing as a successful political force in 2010s (Biorcio, 2016). In Portugal the *Partido Ecologista-Os Verdes* (PEV) is permanently allied with the communists in the Unitarian Democratic Coalition (CDU) and never participated to an election as an independent list (Close & Delwit, 2016).

On the opposite in Central Europe and in Scandinavian Countries the greens succeeded in becoming a relevant political actor and in stabilizing their electoral score such as in Germany, Belgium, or Finland. In these three countries the greens even participated in government as junior parties in coalitions (Van Haute, 2016).

Besides different performances of green parties across regions, electoral results do underline another element: green parties in Western Europe experienced their most striking declines in term of votes between 2009 and 2014; it is to say after the sovereign debt crisis of 2011 that hit most Southern European countries but that impacted the whole European Union to a certain extent.

So how may we explain differences in electoral performance of green parties across Western Europe? Theories about the success of niche parties identify three crucial factors that determine success of such political actors: voter demand, institutional constraints, and political-opportunity structures provided for by the strategies of major parties (Grant & Tilley, 2018).

Therefore if we want to disentangle the issue of the different structuration of the green wave across countries we have to look at how these different factors combined in each European polity providing more or less opportunities for ecologist political actors. I will first shortly discuss institutional constraints and political-opportunity structure to move to voter demand which I will analyze more in depth.

Institutional limits: electoral rules and party system

Even though in this thesis I am going to focus almost exclusively on European Elections it has to be said that cross-national differences in green parties success has been attributed also to differences in electoral systems (Grant & Tilley, 2018). The effect of electoral systems on the success of political parties is one of the oldest objects of study in political science (Duverger, 1954); obviously the topic is vast but my focus is only on the effect electoral rules have on the success of green parties and on their access to the political arena as a relevant actor. Clearly, as ecologist parties appeared around 1980, they had to enter a political system that was already consolidated in almost every country. Majoritarian systems have a role in keeping two party systems as such and to limit, to a certain extent, the number of relevant parties depending on above plurality concentration; proportional systems may have a reductive effect if they have some degree of nonproportionality, otherwise they will have no effect on the number of parties (Sartori, 1994). Among the countries that were part of the European Union at the time of the last EP election only one has a purely majoritarian electoral system, the UK; while France uses a majoritarian two-round system (Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2020). In the UK the GP never performed above 3% of the vote and was never able to gain more than one seat at a general election but it performed much better at EP election, where a proportional system is applied (Bennie, 2016). In France the greens performed well in elections applying proportional systems, namely European and regional elections, while they fared less well in legislative and presidential elections under the two-round system (Villalba, 2016). These important cases seem to confirm the fact electoral systems do have an impact on the performance of green parties; earlier studies too have confirmed that majoritarian systems hinder the success of green parties (Müller-Rommel, 1998) and that district magnitude is negatively correlated to the performance of ecologist parties (Grant & Tilley, 2018). However the role of electoral framework should not be overestimated as it appears to have only a limited impact on the strength of green parties (Müller-Rommel, 1998; Grant & Tilley, 2018).

Another relevant institutional rule that may affect the performance of green parties is federalism. First the existence of sub-national office is an effective way for newer parties to get access to national politics as a relevant actor (Willey, 1998); second sub-national elections are subject to a second-order logic which usually implies lower turnout and better results for minor or niche parties (Farrer, 2015). Actually the first green parties that got access to the parliamentary arena were in Switzerland, Belgium, and Germany (Close & Delwit, 2016) all of which are federal states. Decentralization has been found to be a relevant determinant of green party voting (Grant & Tilley, 2018) but its role does not have to be exaggerated as we can find successful green parties in unitary states such as Finland and the Netherlands while ecologist parties have been marginal in highly regionalized states such as Spain.

Even though institutional rules and constraints are quite relevant in defining the success of green parties they do not provide for a clear and strong explanation for cross-national differences in their performances and do not tell why do certain people vote for them while others do not. The fact green parties did manage to stabilize despite major changes in the political structures that allowed for their development may be explained by different political factors; one of the most relevant ones is the ability to build specific coalitions which do share a particular set of attitudes and several social characteristics, this would mean an overcoming of the issue-based green voting and the development of a new, more stable, pattern of cleavage voting based on specific divisions in the society (Dolezal, 2010). This idea is consistent with the fact that green parties often did not work in a logic of office-seeking as mainstream political parties but rather with a goal of constituency representation, trying to bring inside the political arena instances and demands from certain social groups constituting their electoral base (Kitschelt, 1989). By the way we can observe that even when elections take place simultaneously and with similar electoral rules in different countries in EP elections, there are still major differences in the success of ecologist parties.

Political opportunity, the role of major party strategy

The role of mainstream parties in the success of new parties has been object of different studies; green parties have actually been considered as new challenger parties competing with older mainstream parties (Müller-Rommel, 1998). One of the most relevant aspects of competition between parties is the dare for the salience of issues and for their ownership; it has been argued that in Europe adversarial strategies by mainstream parties led to an increase in the share of votes of new parties while dismissive and accommodative strategies led to a decrease in the strength of such niche parties (Meguid, 2005). However further research based on electoral performance of green parties seem to have disconfirmed the hypothesis that mainstream party strategy plays a relevant role in the success of green parties (Grant & Tilley, 2018).

Voter demand: a new cleavage?

The most relevant political theory that provides for an explanation for the rise of environmentalist parties is the theory of post-materialism proposed by Ronald Inglehart in a milestone study in 1971 and later developed in *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western Publics*. The theory is grounded on the idea that changing socio-economic conditions change basic needs among the population; if such changes take place during the formative years of a person they may change in a durable way the hierarchy of goals this person perceives as desirable (Inglehart, 1971). The unprecedented economic growth experienced in Western countries after WWII altered the conditions in which younger generations of people were socialized; fewer people were raised under conditions of absolute deprivation and basic needs such as physical security were almost universally fulfilled in Western European and North American polities. Moreover the rise of the welfare state in the 1950s ensured the protection of basic labor rights and protected more and more people from various forms of economic deprivation (Inglehart, 1977). Furthermore another key factor is at play: the rise in the education level of populations; students having attained higher

education shifted their attention towards different values related to social and self-actualization needs and gradually became less attached to traditional priorities such as law and order and macroeconomic stability. These new “post-bourgeois” values are therefore influenced not only by the overall affluence of a society but also by the affluence of one’s parents and social circle (Inglehart, 1971).

Even though these changes in individual preferences started with massive and sustained economic growth in the 1950s their effect was not visible until late 1970s. Actually people do not tend to easily change their life goals and priorities which usually become more solid and consistent with ageing; therefore it took new cohorts of people, socialized under conditions of unprecedented wealth, to actually have a sizeable part of the population representing the new post-materialist values. According to Inglehart the crucial moment is the 1968 movement and its demands of radical change and social revolution. The new generation of Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964) became a relevant part of the population around the 1960s and participated to the student protest movement of 1968, with a massive mobilization in France and Italy; this deep involvement into social movements drove also a shift in partisan preferences realigning younger groups around political parties and movements demanding for radical change and focusing on new issues related with those post-materialist values surging among younger cohorts (Inglehart, 1977). Among these new political movements there were ecologist movements; some studies have identified green parties as bearers of a “New Politics” cleavage centered on individualism, self-expression values, and civic virtues (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). In fact most ecologist parties were born in the 1970s and started gaining momentum in early 1980s accessing parliamentary arenas in Switzerland, Belgium, and Germany (Close & Delwit, 2016). Another important corollary of the post-materialism theory is that the strength of value change heavily depends from two variables: generational replacement and economic security; slow generational replacement keeps the equilibrium in a society favorable to materialist values while erosion of economic security has an impact on individual preferences and may lead people to reassign importance to more materialist issues such as economic physiological security, as it happened in Italy in the late 1970s (Abramson & Inglehart, 1986). Different studies aimed at identifying determinants of green voting have confirmed the role of education and income (Schumacher, 2014); of age and socio-cultural variables (Dolezal, 2010); and of general macroeconomic conditions such as per capita GDP and unemployment (Grant & Tilley, 2018; Müller-Rommel, 1998). Such studies seem to support the post-materialist hypothesis laid down by Inglehart; better economic conditions, both collective and individual, higher education, and belonging to the new middle class do change value orientations of people making them more incline to share post-materialist views and, consequently, to vote for New Politics parties such as the greens.

However the relation between economic modernization and post-materialism has another implication. If more economic development shifts societies and individuals in them towards post-bourgeois values, the opposite should happen too. My hypothesis is that harsh recession periods, rising unemployment, and increasing inequalities do have an impact on value priorities and societal views. In this perspective cross-national differences in support for green parties should be influenced by economic factors such as GDP growth, unemployment rate, and per capita gross national income. Moreover, inside a single polity, support

for green parties should vary according to income levels, social class, and education with higher socio-economic status implying higher support for ecologist parties. Consequently among groups with lower SES, education and income levels support for materialist values should be higher and thus voting should be determined more by materialist concerns rather than by post-bourgeois values which implicate fewer votes for the greens.

If this was the case we would find a conflict between two different groups, namely materialists and post-materialists; as this conflict concerns different values and different cultural identities we would witness the existence of a new cleavage according to the definition given by Lipset and Rokkan (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967). In this case green parties, and Green, Alternative, Liberal (GAL) parties more in general; and Traditional, Authoritarian, Nationalist (TAN) parties would be the political entrepreneurs institutionalizing that new cleavage (de Wilde, et al., 2014).

However if this cleavage is grounded on socio-economic differences it could be interpreted as a new structuration of the class cleavage. In this case we would have the post-bourgeois new middle class supporting post-materialist political parties while working class voters should realign around the bearers of materialist values such as order and security (Inglehart, 1977).

In order to dig into this question I will first try to disentangle the issue of the electoral base of green parties by looking at two paradigmatic cases: Germany and Belgium.

Bündis 90-Die Grünen. The first mainstream green party?

The German Greens are often considered as the most successful ecologist party in Europe and one of the most successful in the world; not only they were able to pass the electoral threshold in many state parliaments and in the Bundestag but they even managed to take part to some state cabinets and, finally, to the Federal Government from 1998 to 2005. However the path of the German Greens is not a linear one (as shown in Chart 2), they actually suffered losses in 1990, 1998, and 2013; moreover they evolved from what they described as an “antiparty party” to a major political force participating stably to the German political life (Bukow, 2016). However it is nowadays clear that they have succeeded in positioning themselves on the new global realignment of political competition, differently to what Peter Mair predicted, arguing that green parties failed in evolving into major political actors (Mair, 1999). One of the aspects that drew the attention of scholars concerning German Greens was that not only they managed to stabilize as a political force (Close & Delwit, 2016), but they were also able to have successful electoral performances in campaigns that were centered around issues that are not traditionally associated with ecologist party, such as economic growth and unemployment in 2009 (Rüdiger, 2012).

In the section on institutional factors I discussed the hypothesis green parties were able to stabilize their electoral performances by going beyond issue based competition, relying on new cleavages to win a stable voter base, was this the case for German Greens? First of all we have to bear in mind that the situation changed with the unification of Germany in 1990, actually while there was a stable and organized Green Party in West Germany, in the East ecologists took part to a broader coalition of civic movements arising

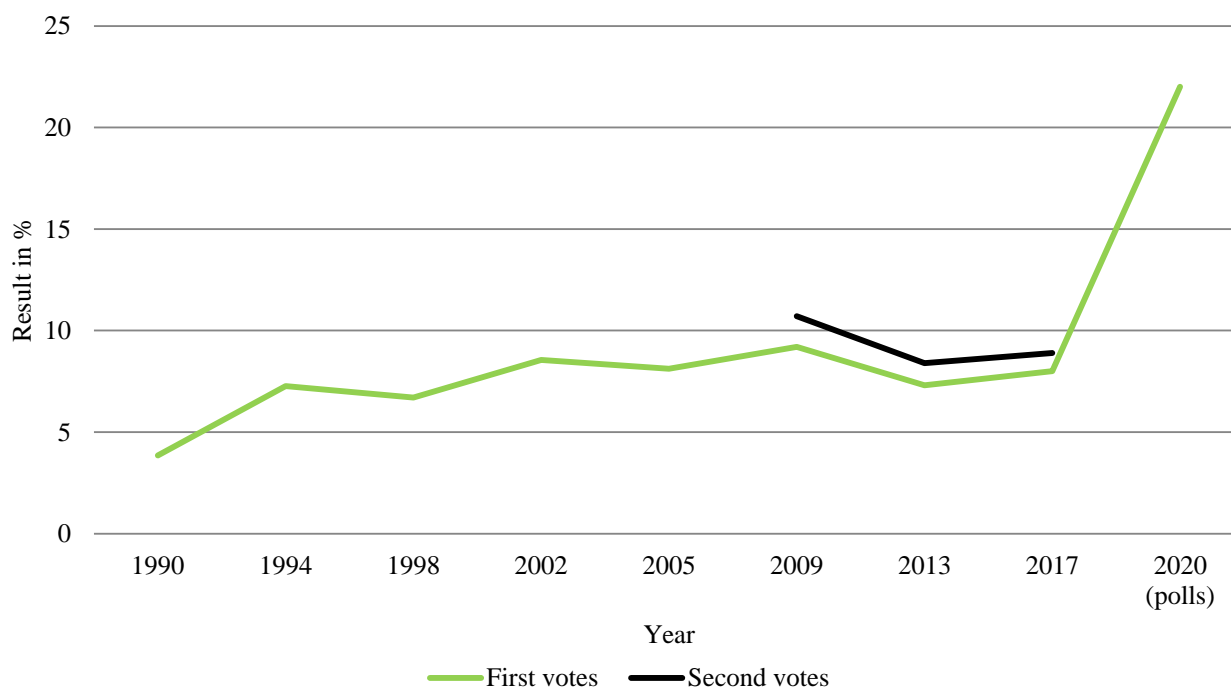
from the protest groups that challenged the communist regime in 1989, the *Bündis* '90; this difference would persist even after the merging of the two organizations leading to different structures and performances in the West and the East of the country (Bukow, 2016). In the early 1990s the German Greens actually started suffering some defeats both at the local and at the federal level; these defeats have been interpreted as the result of the inability of the party to mobilize voters in a perspective that was not one of protest or unconventional participation. Actually, being the greens still a New Politics movement, they relied on an electorate that could be mobilized only on a policy basis and not on a partisan basis (Poguntke, 1992). It was precisely after those defeats that the party changed its way of participating into politics; the pragmatic and moderate wing of the party (*realos*) gained prominence over the more idealist wing (*fundis*) leading to a professionalization of the party but also to cooperation with mainstream German parties, especially with the Social Democrats. After this turn the German Greens stabilized as a political party and emerged as a major political movement that even joined a coalition government at the federal level under the leadership of Joschka Fischer who became Minister of Foreign Affairs and Vice Chancellor of Germany turning into a key figure of federal politics (Bukow, 2016).

Even though the party suffered some losses in subsequent elections and had to leave the federal government after the victory of the Christian Democrats in 2008, it nevertheless managed to stabilize around 8% (see Chart 2) keeping a delegation at the federal parliament. Moreover the party kept a significant role at a state level where it joined various cabinets and even leads one of them in Baden-Württemberg since 2011.

However, after the greens went to government it was said the green project was exhausted, in the sense that the main social drivers that led to a rise of the German Greens –such as protest movements against nuclear power– had vanished; moreover it has been argued that, by joining the government, they had lost the party identity that was more suitable for opposition issue-based campaigning than for pragmatic government (Blühdorn, 2009). The fact that the greens did not disappear despite an exhaustion of the green project has been attributed to the fact they managed to represent a specific constituency of the German electorate. Actually by analyzing data from the Federal Returning Officer and from the German Longitudinal Electoral Survey (GLES), Rüdig (2012) concluded that the voters of the green parties belonged to specific groups of the population. At first voting for the greens was attributable to some generational effect with stronger support among the New Social Movement (NSM) generation (born between 1954 and 1964), a generation that can be associated with a protest form of political participation, especially with the anti-nuclear movement of late 1970s and early 1980s; support was also much stronger among the Reunification Generation (born between 1975 and 1994) while it was slightly less strong in the Generation Golf (1965-1974), considered as a generation that was more materialist in its values than the NSM. Finally support was significantly lower among the pre-war generation (born before 1945). Put into a longitudinal perspective data support the idea that a “greying” of the greens was taking place with strong support among some older generations, also considering the fact they tend to vote more than younger cohorts. The generation effect was not the only one that was found as relevant for defining the green electorate, more importantly it was found

that, while in the 1980s education was the strongest determinant of ecologist voting, in the 1990s it became linked with profession.

Chart 2: Results of German Greens at Bundestag elections



Source: European Election Database; Politico Poll of Polls

Those working in the public sector professions, in particular socio-cultural professionals, were twice much more likely to vote for the greens than the rest of the population. However it was also much less associated with trade union membership meaning that those professionals were predominantly representative of the new middle class. Finally an important role was found to be the environmental stance of the individual with strong support among anti-nuclear voters (Rüdiger, 2012).

These findings are consistent with the idea that green voters are to be found mainly in new middle class milieus, especially among urban, secular, and state employed professionals (Poguntke, 1987; Dolezal, 2010). Moreover they support the idea a shift towards post-materialist values takes places among people that were socialized in conditions of satisfaction of material needs. People that belong to middle class milieus, especially in urban areas, usually grew up in households that experienced quite high levels of economic well-being without having knowledge of major deprivation. Furthermore they usually had access to higher levels of education reinforcing their post-materialist convictions and allowing them to take part in social circles that shared similar socio-economic backgrounds and similar beliefs (Inglehart, 1977). Finally they became employed in new middle class professions which are associated with preferences for personal self-expression, freedom, and self-determination (Poguntke, 1987). These values are consistent with what was defined as New Politics that is to say a general support for left-wing egalitarian positions but less consistency with the traditional left-right dimensions and therefore less emphasis on class conflict and struggle and more importance given to self-expression and personal freedom (Müller-Rommel, 1998). This

positioning outside traditional left-right traditional schemes can be observed in the German case where the Greens re-positioned themselves on a more centrist perspective for what concerns economic issues (Blühdorn, 2009). Actually green parties tend to take similar stances to those of the new middle class; green parties do have more or less clear stances on old values (left-right and religious-secular divides), on new values (environment and liberty-authority cleavage), and on the integration-demarcation cleavage. They tend to be in favor of secular politics, of environmental stances and of personal liberty. Their stance towards integration-demarcation is sometimes more complicate to define because they tend to support decentralization and participatory democracy but they also have a cosmopolitan orientation that leads them to support organizations such as the EU. What is more difficult to define is the economic stance of such parties as they are more liberal than traditional left-wing but more progressive than any traditional liberal party; this is consistent with the hypothesis they represent a new middle class constituency made of managers, technical experts, and social-cultural specialists who have a different relationship to hierarchy in their workplace and a different logics of work that makes them more incline to support social economic measures even if they still support a form of liberal economy (Dolezal, 2010).

These findings seem to indicate there is a solid basis of green voting that is constituted by voters that do not just share environmentalist concerns but do also share values, views and socio-economic characteristic. It seems that they were able to go beyond a phase of fractionalized and unstable coalition of party wings that made it impossible for the greens to integrate their various constituencies and to gain a strong and stable electoral base (Kolinsky, 1989). However this refers to the particular German case where there was a quite low level of cleavage mobilization determining a strong competition from the two major political parties in the system, this forced the greens to become more responsive to demands that came from outside the protest movement in which they originated; so the German Greens were forced to accept pragmatism and finally led them to become a more moderate and mainstream party and a major player in German political life (Kitschelt, 1989).

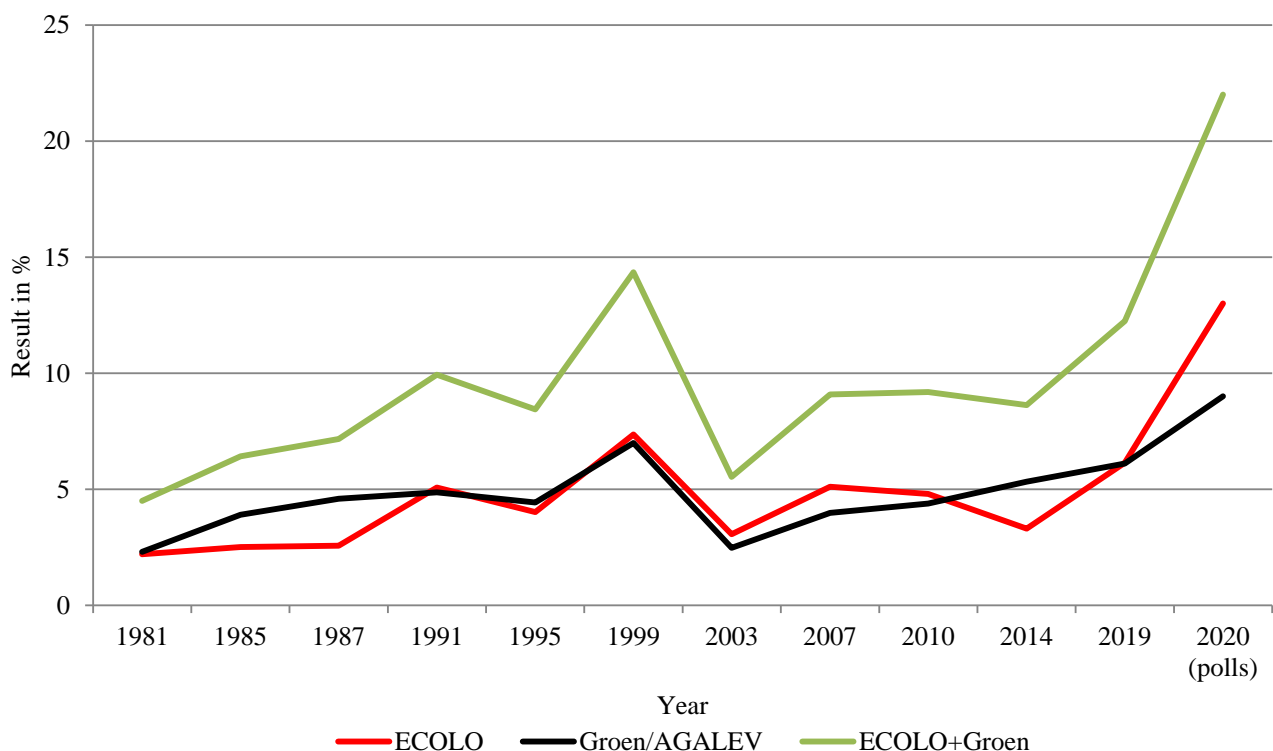
Ecolo and Groen: environmentalism in high cleavages societies

Before discussing the Belgian case it has to be said that political competition in Belgium is substantially different from that in other European polities; this fact was reflected in the formation of the two ecologist parties. Firstly they could not rely on a mass movement against nuclear plants, actually there was no environmentalist movement at all as the salience of those issues was downplayed by the predominance of communitarian and linguistic issues in the 1970s. Moreover the two green parties were unable to take advantage of the classical left-right cleavage by taking a clear stance on it: the consociative nature of Belgian politics implies a intertwine of different cleavages whose salience makes the nature of party positioning and of governing alliances an ever changing game (Delwit, 1999).

As almost all political parties in Belgium the ecologists are divided across cultural and linguistic lines: there is a green party for the French-speaking community, the “Écologistes confédérés pour l'organisation de luttes originales” (Ecolo), and an ecologist parties for the Dutch-speaking community, the Groen (until 2003

Agalev), in tables comparing European countries, results for Belgium are showed as the sum of the two parties. The two parties are considered as the two most successful green parties in Europe (Delwit, 1999), they were actually able to pass the threshold of declaration already in the 1970s and they passed the representation threshold as early as 1981 by gaining MPs in the Chamber of Representatives (Chart 3); by the early 1980s they already took part in some local governments and in 1999 they both entered the federal government (Wavreille & Pilet, 2016). Since then they suffered some defeats, the Flemish party was even forced to change its name due to some financial troubles, however both parties managed to survive and they made a comeback in the 2019 federal and regional elections. Ecolo secured 14.5% of the vote in Wallonia becoming the third party after the Socialists and the Liberals; in Flanders Groen won 10.1% winning more seats than the Socialists, in Brussels both parties won almost 20% of the vote in their respective linguistic group and the Groen succeeded in becoming the first Dutch-speaking party in Brussels region (Service publique fédéral Intérieur, 2019). In 2019 Ecolo joined the governments of Wallonia, of the French-speaking community, and of Brussels, in the latter jointly with Groen. Currently both parties are participating in the negotiations for the formation of the federal government. Moreover, as snap elections become more and more probable, both parties are surging in the polls with Ecolo polling at a record 13% and Groen at 9% at a national level which would mean a cumulative 22% for the two parties (POLITICO Europe, 2020), it would be the best result for the Belgian ecologists in their history (see Chart 3). The historical record of the two parties shows that, even though both experienced certain setbacks, they nevertheless managed to stabilize as political forces in the Belgian political landscape without dissolving as a single-issue party whose momentum was lost.

Chart 3: ECOLO and Groen at the Chamber of Representatives elections



Source: Service publique fédéral Intérieur-Direction des élections, Politico Poll of Polls

It may be denied that Ecolo and Groen succeeded in building a stable voting base due to their changing performance in elections; however it has to be underlined that the 1999 election took place in a unique situation. A major scandal concerning the judicial and police handling of a case of pedophilia and a series of financial scandals involving some of the mainstream parties led to a wave of discontent for the traditional governing elites, especially for the Christian Democrats. The greens, in both communities, were perceived as parties aligned with critical citizens and they had a clear reputation as bearers of political innovation. Moreover it was the first campaign in which the two parties decided to professionalize their communication leading to a campaign that resembled much more those of established parties. Finally it was the first year after a process of pacification of the internal wings of the party, especially for the Ecolo. All together these factors have had a significant role in leading to the extraordinary performance of both parties in 1999 (Hooghe & Rihoux, 2000). Furthermore the 2003 election may be considered as a form of deviating election for the greens; they actually came out four years of government as a junior party in a coalition, which is considered as a factor leading to worse performances for ecologist parties (Rüdiger, 2006). Moreover both parties were able to make some gains in the 2004 EP elections and to avoid disappearing from the political arena at a local and regional level; the Ecolo were even invited to take part to the Brussels government for the first time in their history (Delwit & Pilet, 2005). Thus it can be said that Belgian greens kept a stable electoral base, even though some contingent factors led to fluctuating results across time.

The fact the parties stabilized and managed to stay in the political arena even after some sounding defeats, suggests that both Ecolo and Groen managed to structure a stable tie with specific social groups supporting the two parties even in times of difficulty. A study conducted at the municipal level on the performance of ecologist parties at local elections in Belgium supports this hypothesis. It was found that green support was much stronger in municipalities with higher levels of income and with higher educational backgrounds; urban areas were the main strongholds for ecologist parties while in rural areas support was much weaker, moreover these effects were not found to disappear with the passing of time but rather the opposite. Actually it seemed that green voting was becoming a more and more a new middle class phenomenon, even though the generational impact was found as having a less relevant role over time (Hooghe, et al., 2010). These findings are consistent with previous studies that found that both Ecolo and Agalev had more difficulties in penetrating in older and catholic areas, together with old industrial base areas; suggesting that green voting was not just a phenomenon related to urban backgrounds but also to younger and post-industrial constituencies (Delwit & Pilet, 2005). It has been argued that Ecolo and Agalev took more fundamentalist stances than other green parties, most notably than their German counterpart. Actually the fact they had to compete in a scenario of high cross-cleavage competition, inside a very rigid political regime with a weak competitive position for ecologists, led to a more rigid ideological stance and to a weaker inclination for moderating the party platform (Kitschelt, 1989). However even the two Belgian ecologist parties actually became more compromising on various issues: they accepted to have more professionalized campaigns, they took part to government formation negotiations and even to regional and federal cabinets; furthermore both parties never had single-issue platforms and they dedicate more and more space in their platforms to

economic and social issues trying to expand their appeal to other constituencies than those that are more sensitive to environmental issues (Wavreille & Pilet, 2016). Given the fact that they acquired a stable constituency among those groups which are more sensitive to post-materialist values and that are more incline to support New Politics movements and parties it may be argued that, as their German counterpart, they constitute a new form of class voting, this time under the banners of post-materialism.

Finally we may say that, already in the 1970s, Belgium was one of the societies where post-materialist made the strongest breakthrough in national politics in the form of autonomist, regionalist, or secessionist parties such as the Vlaams Blok (Flemish nationalists) and the Fédéralistes Démocrates Francophones (Walloon autonomists) (Inglehart, 1977; Abramson & Inglehart, 1986). It may be argued that the strength of post-materialists in Belgium offered fertile soil for the rise of ecologist movements, this would explain why Agalev and Ecolo were the first green parties in the European Economic Community to gain parliamentary representation and among the first to take part in national governments. If this hypothesis is correct Belgium would be one of the first polities to have experienced a new form of political competition centered around post-materialist values with nationalists on one side and environmentalists on the other. This would confirm the hypothesis mentioned before that a new cleavage has been developing in Western Europe with the shift towards new values; it may be defined as the authoritarian-libertarian cleavage (Flanagan, 1987), the GAL-TAN cleavage (Hooghe, et al., 2002), or the libertarian-universalistic/traditionalist-communitarian cleavage (Bornschieer, 2010).

However it has to be verified if this cleavage emerged only in Belgium or if it was experienced, in different degrees, by other European societies.

Defining a new cleavage: post-materialism or re-materialization?

As we have seen in the two case studies of Germany and Belgium, in both countries the constituency that is represented by ecologist parties seem to share certain specific social characteristics: they are urban, educated, new middle class voters and they tend to be younger or, at least, not belonging to older cohorts of the population. Therefore we may say there is a structural division factor, meaning they do share specific socio-economic characteristics that define them. Moreover we can observe that in both countries this group of people is mobilized through certain political parties that do participate in the decision making process, these parties neither are single-issue parties nor are they social movements: as we have seen they are stable parties with coalitional potential and with a share of electoral strength. There is an organizational division factor meaning that these social groups are mobilized, at least electorally, and represented by a specific body in the political system. Finally it may be said that, even though the three green parties analyzed here have changed their platform, there is a certain set of values that are proposed by these political actors; there is environmentalism in particular but more in general these parties share a New Politics perspective centered on self-expression and self-determination. This means there is also a form of ideational division factor that distinguishes that social sector from others in terms of values and thus policy preferences.

The three division factors mentioned above are the ones that are required to speak of a full-fledged political cleavage (Deegan-Krause, 2013); however here we are looking just at one side of the cleavage. If the materialism vs. post-materialism theory proposed by Inglehart provides a good model for explaining these phenomena there should be a more economically deprived constituency (mainly of poorer, rural, and less-educated voters) that rallies behind other parties that propose more materialist values and that are voted precisely for these values, this aspect will be discussed in Chapter 3 even though I will dedicate more attention to the post-materialist side of the story.

Given that post materialism is assumed to depend on the level of economic development, in countries that are more advanced economically there should be a larger group of people supporting post-materialist values and thus post-materialist parties.

H1: Support for ecologist parties is positively correlated with per capita GDP and GNI and it is negatively correlated with unemployment and inequality levels.

If the theory of post-materialism is correct we should have a phenomenon similar to the one taking place in France in the late 1960s and the early 1970s; social groups with a middle class, urban background and with college education should be more likely to support parties forwarding post-materialist values such as the ecologists (Inglehart, 1977). This means green voting should depend on socio-economic characteristics of the voter.

H2: Support for ecologist parties is higher among younger, higher income, more educated, new middle class individuals.

In the next chapters of this thesis I am going to try to understand if these hypotheses are plausible and if they are supported by previous research and by data, combining both micro level analyses of individual-voter behavior and macro level analyses on cross-national differences. First I will try to verify whether post-materialist parties are more relevant in countries that do have better economic conditions as the post-materialism theory suggests. Then I will dig into politics to verify if the Belgian and German cases are pure oddities or if in every country there is a similar composition of the green voter base. Finally some theoretical considerations on the post-materialist theory should be given; actually a confirmation of the aforementioned hypotheses would mean there is a sort of new materialist vs. post-materialist cleavage but the two sides of the cleavage would be divided by purely materialist factors (mainly economical). In this case we could try to rephrase the paradigm of post-materialism and see it as a restructuring or a new structuring of an older economic cleavage meaning that this new division emerging in some Western politics is a different form of class division indicating a shift towards a re-materialization of voting.

Chapter 2: Main theoretical frameworks

Introduction: the literature of post-materialism

Previous studies have emphasized the importance of environmental attitudes as a determinant of green voting (Rüdig, 2006; Dolezal, 2010; Close & Delwit, 2016; Grant & Tilley, 2018). The growth of ecologist parties in recent national and EP elections would thus be influenced by an increasing influence of ecologist values among Western European publics. This means there are three different aspects that must be analyzed in order to understand and disentangle the determinands of green voting. First there is the issue of the origins of ecology as a set of political beliefs, if not as an ideology. Here we need an understanding of the causes of the change that took place in some Western European polities in the 1970s leading to an increased relevance on environmental issues among certain groups in the society. Then further analysis is needed to understand why and how these values did spread among the electorates and why they became more relevant in some countries than in others. Finally we must look at most recent developments involving these new values, especially after the 2008 crisis and the rise of TAN parties in many Western countries.

In this chapter I will look at different theories that have been proposed to explain value change in Western political communities since WWII. In the first section of the chapter I will analyze the hierarchy of needs theory proposed by Abraham Maslow in the 1940s to explain the effect of increasing material well-being on individual needs and values. In the second section I will focus on the political consequences of value change as described by Ronald Inglehart in *The Silent Revolution* that I introduced in the previous chapter. In the third section I will discuss the Cultural Backlash theory formulated by Norris and Inglehart in their 2019 work on authoritarian populism; this theory provides for an analysis of more recent trends in values and attitudes and re-adapts the Silent Revolution hypothesis to modern political trends. Finally, in the last section I will analyze the globalization cleavage theory proposed by Kriesi et al. (2006) to understand how fringe parties were able to emerge in the 1990s and early 2000s as a consequence of a re-structuring of political cleavages according to the rise of globalization.

I will try to bring together these four perspectives in order to provide for stronger theoretical grounds to this research by illustrating and analyzing these three models and how do they motivate the rise of environmental parties and lists.

The hierarchy of needs: how do values change?

In a groundbreaking study published in 1943 the American behavioral scientist and psychologist Abraham Maslow proposed a novel theory to explain human motivation based on a form of hierarchy of needs. Maslow's idea was that human needs arrange themselves in hierarchies dictated by pre-potency; this means that in order to be compelled to achieve a certain need every human being needs first to satisfy other needs (Maslow, 1943a). In this perspective humans are seen as perpetually wanting animals that seeks to achieve a certain goal; therefore motivation is not driven by rationally-motivated desires but rather by unconscious

impulses and needs (Maslow, 1943b). According to this theory the most compelling needs are the ones related to homeostasis, it is to say to maintain a constant and normal blood stream; this has to do with the physical want for nourishment and shelter: without food, water, and protection from weather, survival becomes impossible and no other need can be satisfied, therefore other needs either remain dormant or are pushed backwards. On the other side Maslow argues when such physiological needs are chronically satisfied the trend changes and people take those needs for granted and look forward to satisfy other needs that become the main determinants of motivation. He identifies safety needs as the second most pre-potent set of needs after physiological ones, safety is identified as the need for physical security but also as freedom from fear, which explains the general preference for stable jobs and for a kind of undisrupted routine both in professional life as in family life (Maslow, 1943a). In modern Western societies the large majority of the population is free from these two levels of needs, especially the physiological one; this means they represent minor drives in the motivation of people and therefore should be less powerful in determining values among publics (Inglehart, 1971a). Therefore other needs should constitute drives for motivation in contemporary Western societies; these are the need for belonging and love, meaning hunger for familiarity, belonging and romantic relations. The next tier of motivational needs is represented by the need for self-esteem: an individual, who is satisfied in lower tiers, aims at having his or her own capabilities recognized by others; he or she will desire strength, confidence, and freedom. These needs are related to the want to feel adequate and useful to the world (Maslow, 1943a). However these needs are not the last level of the hierarchy: there is a higher level of needs which Maslow defines as self-actualization needs (Maslow, 1970).

Figure 1: Maslow's hierarchy of needs



Source: McLeod (2007)

The definition of this last set of needs is not as clear-cut as the others: it is defined as a tendency to actualize the potential the individual can express (Maslow, 1943a); it is also explained through a series of characteristics self-actualized individuals are assumed to possess such as spontaneity in thought and actions, creativity, concern about human welfare, and strong morality (McLeod, 2007). Self-actualization is not seen as a pre-determined state but more as a developing process based on the satisfaction of all basic needs and a

search for the fulfillment of higher needs as well (Heylighen, 1992). Therefore everyone achieves self-actualization in her own way, following a unique and peculiar path in which there are nonetheless some common features displayed by all those who seek this last set of needs; sharing, to a certain degree, similar characteristics and similar profiles (Maslow, 1970).

Maslow argued that in modern societies self-esteem and self-actualization needs become more and more relevant drives for individual behavior as most basic needs are satisfied by conditions of economic well-being, moreover he argued that those who were satisfied with a need in early phases of their lifetimes are the best equipped to tolerate the deprivation of that need in other stages of their lives (Maslow, 1943a). Evidence supports the idea material conditions experienced in the childhood do influence perceived needs during the whole lifetime (Inglehart, 1977) even though changes may occur in the adulthood too due to changing conditions in the society (Abramson & Inglehart, 1986). It has been observed that self-actualization depends also on socio-economic conditions experienced by people, especially in the earlier phases of their life, and that education is a powerful tool to increase self-actualization tendencies in individuals, even with similar socio-economic backgrounds and conditions (Heylighen, 1992).

But do changes in needs lead to changes in values? Research on money tendencies found that actually people that feel stronger pushes for self-actualization tend to give less importance to money in their lives; they are more concerned with fulfilling and achieving what they can be in potential from points of view other than the material and economic one (Oleson, 2003). Moreover, among the features indicated by Maslow as typical characteristics of self-actualized individuals, there are concerns for the welfare of humanity and democratic attitudes (McLeod, 2007). These two factors mean that people with drives for different needs will have different value priorities and different world views: self-actualized individuals and self-actualization seekers will have less materialist priorities and therefore they will concern less for a lack of physical welfare and for security. Actually in modern societies concerns for mere homeostatic needs are not evident and they remain more or less dormant; the drive for safety needs is still existing and may be seen in the desire for stable jobs and preference for undisrupted routines but they still remain latent (Maslow, 1943a). Some objected that the drive for more basic needs is never truly exhausted, that aiming at the fulfillment of different needs is always possible, and that prioritizing self-actualization over lower tiers may happen in some individuals (McLeod, 2007). However studies of Western societies, especially of the 1968 movement, support the idea that greater satisfaction in material needs leads to greater concerns for self-esteem and self-actualizing needs (Inglehart, 1971b). Therefore it can be said that Maslow's hierarchy of needs provides for a good theoretical base to understand and explain value change in modern societies, the next question to answer is how do these shifts in the hierarchy of needs influence political behavior and how do new political movements such as the greens relate to these changes.

The Silent Revolution: value change at play in the political arena

With two papers published in 1971 Ronal Inglehart proposed a political science application of the hierarchy of needs theory formulated by Maslow (Inglehart, 1971a; Inglehart, 1971b). The fulfillment of basic material

needs led to the pursuit of symbols of affluence which may be considered as a derivative of physiological and safety needs; but the fulfillment of this higher level of needs among some of the most better off groups in Western societies led many young middle class and upper-middle class individuals to seek goals other than those related to economic security (Inglehart, 1971a).

According to Inglehart there are six main factors that led to such a change in Western publics; first there is technological innovation that brought both the need and the possibility for mass education. But that also made possible the spread of mass media and thus of information which led to some shifts in the social environment of most societies (Inglehart, 1977).

The second factor is the change in occupational structures brought by the post-industrial society. This economic revolution actually created new occupational positions that did not exist before (Inglehart, 1977), moreover it expanded what is called the new middle class which has a radically different approach to work ethics and to hierarchical relationships thus having different values and different world views (Poguntke, 1987).

The third source of change was found to be economic growth: as levels of economic security were rising to unprecedented levels, hunger and poverty became a less and less experienced phenomenon in Western countries; therefore physical and safety needs became less and less perceived as a priority in Western European and North American polities as an overwhelming majority had a stable job, a salary, and a house; moreover the expansion of social security programmes in the 1950s decreased the level of absolute deprivation that was experienced among the worst off classes (Inglehart, 1977).

The fourth aspect that is taken into consideration is the expansion of higher education: it was found that college education favored a more liberal, less authoritarian, and less ethnocentric view of the world thus promoting certain kinds of values that were substantially different from those dominant among pre-war cohorts (Feldman & Newcomb, 1969; Inglehart, 1977).

The fifth source of value change in Western polities identified by Inglehart is the development of sources of mass communication, the role of such instruments in value change is not straightforward, Inglehart argues their news making methods lead them to transmit information contrasting with dominant values; mass media communicate, among other things, dissatisfaction and alternative lifestyles, these objects of communication will, among certain subpopulations, result in an acceptance of such alternative lifestyles. Therefore media act both as defenders of traditional values and as promoters of alternative values (Inglehart, 1977) their role is mixed and may have different effects on different cohorts and generations.

Finally there is the last element that led to a value shift and it is distinctive cohort experiences; this was particularly relevant in the 1960s as almost all young people were grown up in a world that was totally different from that of their parents and grandparents as they never experienced war, absolute poverty or deprivation but they grew in an affluent, communication-rich and education-rich society (Inglehart, 1977). These broad changes in societies had an impact on individuals too leading them to prioritize values peculiar to what Inglehart calls a post-materialist value type.

All these six phenomena happened after the end of WWII and affected both individuals and the society as a whole. In his 1971 study Inglehart (1971a) proposed a battery of four survey items among which respondents were asked to choose the two most important for them. These items were: “Maintaining order in the nation”, “Giving the people more say in important political decisions”, “Fighting rising prices”, and “Protecting freedom of speech” (Inglehart, 1971a). Clearly controlling inflation and maintaining order were associated with so-called “acquisitive” values: those values representing the need of physical and economical. While the two others were classified as representative of post-bourgeois values being associated with self-actualization and self-expression needs. Therefore it was possible to identify two “pure” value preference pairs, that is to say “Order & Prices” as the purely materialist value preference and “Free Speech & Participation” as the post-materialist value pair; in addition there were four mixed pairs representing mixed values. In the study Inglehart found that attitudes towards 1968 student demonstrations and toward European integration were more favorable among the post-bourgeois respondents than among the acquisitive ones; this pattern was consistent in all the six countries in the study (Netherlands, Belgium, Italy, Germany, France, and Great Britain). These findings supported the idea differences in value types result in differences in political preferences; moreover the orientation toward student demonstrations may be seen as representative of a more general orientation toward fast and dramatic social change (Inglehart, 1971a).

When considered by age cohort value preference got a much stronger meaning as in all countries the younger cohort, socialized after the war and during a period of strong economic growth, was much more post-bourgeois in its value type than older cohorts. Interestingly the sole country in which acquisitive values were still predominant in the youngest cohort was Britain, the country which had the highest portion of post-bourgeois in the two oldest cohorts; this supports the idea that relative economic well-being is a powerful factor in determining post-bourgeois values: while Britain was by far the wealthiest country in Europe by per capita GDP in the 1920s and 1930s it was only the ninth in the 1970s. Moreover Britain was the country that experienced the weakest economic growth among the six under study in the period 1953-1968.

These findings confirm the hypothesis that economic growth, technological innovation, and generational effects dramatically affect value types in the society as a whole: but what about the individual effect? Inglehart found that in all countries there were more post-bourgeois respondents in Upper-Middle and Upper Socio Economic Status (S.E.S.) subpopulations, both in the society as a whole and in single age cohort subpopulations. This finding supports once more the relevance of economic well-being in the formation of post-materialist values. Moreover similar results emerged when controlling value preferences for education: the university-educated were found to be more post-bourgeois than the primary and secondary educated in all the six countries (Inglehart, 1971a).

When these two value tendencies were applied to political party choices the implications were evident: post-bourgeois voters were more incline to vote for left-wing parties than acquisitive voters, even when controlling for parents’ political party (Inglehart, 1971a). The consequences of these trends on vote choice are dramatic; in this scenario people who are better off, especially middle-class and upper-class young university students who never experienced material or safety deprivation in their formative years, become

the most solid electoral base for left-wing, progressive, and change-oriented political parties whilst, on the other side, those who are less well off, in particular less educated blue-collar workers, will gradually shift toward materialist parties, especially center-right or right-wing conservative parties focusing on preservation of order and of acquired benefits (Inglehart, 1977). This specific voting pattern is best exemplified by the French case in the 1968 legislative election. Voters holding post-materialist views were favoring a society where self-expression and individual freedom are core values and they were even ready to sacrifice some material benefits for the sake of changing society; this view is much more in line with change-oriented parties, namely progressive ones. On the other side materialist voters were opposed to student demonstrations, social unrest, and other abrupt changes that could undermine economic security and stability; therefore they were more incline to support President De Gaulle, his law and order approach and his tough response to student demonstrations. This is a powerful explanation to the fact many middle-class and upper-middle class young voters supported the Parti Socialiste Unifié (PSU) while the Gaullist party made extraordinary gains among working-class constituencies (Inglehart, 1971b; 1977).

That meant leftist parties struggled to keep together two social groups that were becoming more incompatible over time: on one side there were traditional blue-collar voters that represented the core constituency of socialist and social democratic parties since their creation; these voters were poorer and less educated preferring economic safety, long-term stability, and law and order approaches over protest movements and demands for radical change. On the other hand there was the post-materialist constituency of young middle-class university-educated voters who asked for massive social reform and for a stronger commitment to ensuring self-expression and individual freedom (in fields other than the economic one); some parties such as the German Social Democrats were more able to keep together both parts of the society while others were less successful such as the French Socialists (Inglehart, 1971a).

However this divide became too important to be ignored. In certain countries some pre-industrial cleavages reemerged, linked to new post-materialist demands for greater freedom and self-expression. This is the case of Belgium: regionalist parties both in Flanders and Wallonia became one of the most important expressions of these new tendencies in Europe. Among their electorates post-materialist value type was much more frequent than the materialist one, moreover their voters were disproportionately more middle-class, university-educated, secular young people (Inglehart, 1977). This pattern was not limited to Flemish and Walloon nationalists, in France similar results were found for the PSU, in the Netherlands for the Radicals and for the left-liberal D66, in Italy similar tendencies were discovered for the electorate of the Proletarian Socialists. However another tendency emerged with the post-materialist wave of protest: a novel view of the relationship between man and nature (Inglehart, 1977); there was sometimes a form of anti-industrial mysticism related to the Holy Scriptures defining science as an evil to be combated by rejecting it and embracing Nature (Roszak, 1969). There were also more moderate thinkers that nevertheless criticized over-production and pollution and advanced proposals for new trends in production and consumption; arguing the Industrial Society was on the verge of collapse and that changes in lifestyle were impellent needs (Meadows, et al., 1972). These ideas were supported by many post-materialists as part of a radical change of society;

some prominent representatives of the student movement later joined ecologist parties such as the leader of the 1968 French May movement, Daniel Cohn Bendit, who later became president of the EGP group in the European Parliament (Greens/EFA, 2020). Finally it is precisely in the wake of the 1968 student movement that green and ecologist movements developed in the 1970s becoming one of the longest lasting political consequences of the wave of post-materialist protests that shook Europe in the late 1960s and the early 1970s.

Inglehart and Abramson also studied the development over time of electorates in the six countries (France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Britain). Findings were quite impressive: in all countries post-materialism seemed to decline around the late 1970s, in particular in 1977; moreover in all countries but in Belgium the percentage of post-materialists declined again around 1980 (in Belgium decline was consistent over time and reached a record low in 1983) (Abramson & Inglehart, 1986). These findings seem to imply that changes in value attitudes are more volatile than what was thought: the 1970s were years of economic crisis in most Western countries, in some cases, such as in Italy, inflation run out of control and, more in general, the period of sustained economic growth that followed WWII ended. If the hypothesis that economic downturns caused a setback in post-materialist orientations is consistent with the idea that economic and material conditions do have a strong influence on value orientations it also suggests that they are much less stable over time and that they are not so firmly grounded in people as a result of the conditions of socialization in their formative years. However it has to be said that, when taking into account generational replacement, the results show that younger cohorts still were much more post-materialists than pre-war generations (Abramson & Inglehart, 1986). Therefore, even though there was a clear effect of the economic crisis of the 1970s on general value orientations, the generational effect seemed to keep its relevance. Furthermore it is clear that the end of the student movement of 1968 led to a loss of momentum for post-materialist politics. Moreover it was found that, with the betterment of economic conditions in the early 1980s, post-materialism started faring better in comparison to materialism in most of the countries under study; it peaked in Germany and Britain in 1984, in the Netherlands in 1983, and it reached again the 1970s level in France and Italy. Only in Belgium did not a recover of its strength materialize, however it was the most post-materialist country in 1970 and its scores remained substantially high even in the early 1980s (Abramson & Inglehart, 1986).

To conclude we may say that the studies conducted by Inglehart in the 1970s and 1980s show that the unprecedented economic growth and well-being of the 1950s and 1960s had a massive impact on the generations that grew up in that period: actually it was true that they showed value patterns that were substantially different from those of their parents and their grandparents, it was true that they emphasized self-actualization and self-expression preferring the promotion of freedom of speech over the enforcement of social order and new forms of democratic expression over macroeconomic stability. The effects of this huge divide could be seen in the massive student demonstration of 1968 that sometimes emerged as a form of generational divides but that had hidden class cleavage grounds.

The next step will be to see which interpretations have been provided to understand changes taking place in the 1990s and 2000s, how do they fit in the model of the Silent Revolution and if the new value trends brought by this post-materialist revolution were short-lasting or if they were irreversible shifts among publics and electorates.

Cultural Backlash: post-materialism in the age of authoritarian populism

If we stick to the silent revolution theory we should find that high income societies are shifting towards a new intergenerational cleavage and that post-materialist values are now defended by a majority of the population, for sure by a majority among younger cohorts; on the contrary this should not be the case in lower-income societies. Actually survey data collected since 1970 confirm this tendency (Inglehart, 2018). This is part of a large cultural change that involves, among other things, attitudes towards civil rights, democracy and environmentalism. However in the last two decades we have seen some radical right-wing parties emerging in Western Europe, for instance the Front National (FN) in France, the League in Italy, the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) in Germany and, more recently, Vox in Spain. Such parties are defined by Norris and Inglehart as authoritarian populists and are seen as diametrically opposed to the libertarian pluralist parties such as the greens (Inglehart & Norris, 2019). These political parties oppose some core tenants of post-materialism emphasizing the importance of physical and material security over self-expression and individual freedom. In fact this is a phenomenon may be seen also in some of the richest societies in the world, not only France and Germany, but also in the Netherlands where the Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV) and the Forum voor Democratie (FvD) jointly account for 14.5% of votes (European Parliament, 2019) while in Sweden the Democrats (SD) are the third party in parliament.

In order to explain these phenomena, which are by no way oddities, and to find an interpretation of these trends that is coherent with the Silent Revolution theory, Inglehart and Norris propose the Cultural Backlash theory. They argue post-materialism is actually a predominant tendency in Western polities; by taking into consideration fourteen high-income Western liberal democracies they observe that a large majority of the population now perceives abortion, homosexuality, and divorce as justifiable; and that almost two thirds of the population holds post-materialist values in the 12-item WVS battery. Moreover they found that a slight majority of the population trusts people from other nationalities, rejects authoritarian leaders, and sees environmental protection as more important than economic growth (Inglehart & Norris, 2019). The reasons for such a finding are basically four: the first and most relevant one was identified in generational replacement; actually European Values Study longitudinal data show that socially-liberal values are defended by a majority among Generation X (1965-1979) and especially Millennials (1980-1996) individuals; these two age cohorts constituted less than 40% of the European adult population in 2002 but they accounted for the 51% in 2014 (Inglehart & Norris, 2019). The second factor to which this growth can be attributed is education, we discussed in the previous section the role of higher education in reinforcing post-materialist beliefs in people, nowadays the percentage of college-educated is higher than ever before in all OECD countries and in the US those who received at least some college education are now a slight

majority of the population (Inglehart & Norris, 2019). The third factor that determined a growth of post-materialism is urbanization: since WWII more and more people live in major cities where ethnic and cultural diversity are omnipresent; this creates a sharp contrast between highly diverse and cosmopolitan urban areas and more homogeneous rural communities (Spencer, 2014). This pattern results in different sensitivities towards cultural and ethnic diversity and strengthens attitudes toward post-materialist or materialist value type among urban residents; according to Norris and Inglehart this can qualify as a reframing or reforming of a center-periphery cleavage in Western political competition and it may be seen in the sharp differences in the 2016 US presidential elections across different communities as well as by the important diversity in the Brexit referendum results (Inglehart & Norris, 2019). The last factor is ethnic diversity: since the 1990s European countries have experienced a steep rise of the number of immigrants, especially in Northern and Western European countries; therefore Millennials have been socialized in an atmosphere of growing ethnic diversity which made them more open to foreigners and to different cultural influences (Inglehart & Norris, 2019).

Norris and Inglehart argue that when younger generations, more open to self-expression and individual freedom, became a majority in the population two things happened; first older individuals holding more traditional values became inhibited in expressing their views because they felt their beliefs were becoming less and less tolerated (Inglehart & Norris, 2019). Actually there is evidence people tend to self-censorship when they feel their opinion is not majoritarian or politically incorrect (Bassili, 2003; Rios & Chen, 2014). This strengthened the perception more conservative attitudes were actually a minority among Western publics.

On the other side it generated a counter-reaction by older generations and more conservative voters; they felt they were becoming a minority but they still represent a huge portion of the population. Feeling “strangers in their own country” led them to react to challenges to conventional norms with stronger and stronger demands for personal security, social conformity, and protection of tradition; the fact of becoming a minority also in the elites reinforced resentment toward governing elites as well as against the media (Inglehart & Norris, 2019). Moreover the role of filter bubbles in the media, through political information such as Fox TV, and in the social networks must not be downplayed: social bubbles generated the belief these groups do actually represent a silent majority of the population against a liberal elite that constitutes a minority (Portelinha & Elchereth, 2016). These two factors produced a mobilization of materialist voters around political entrepreneurs calling for the defense of traditional, authoritarian, and nationalist values. Inglehart and Norris argue that the magnitude of this reaction was amplified by the fact it had a generational dimension: older voters were much more incline to support such movements than the younger ones. Furthermore, even though Interwar and Baby Boomer cohorts now represent a minority in the adult population they still constitute a majority of voters as they show higher voter turnout, possibly because they are often more attached to a duty-based idea of citizenship that considers voting as the most important political act. This means that, even though post-materialism is now majoritarian in the overall population, it

might be a minority among the voting population; this explains why, even in an era of unprecedented wealth we assist to a massive comeback of authoritarian nationalist movements (Inglehart & Norris, 2019).

However this is not the only mechanism at play in Western liberal democracies, period effects do have their importance too. Norris and Inglehart found that both authoritarian values (defined as an emphasis on social conformity and a rejection of outsiders) and populist values (defined as a mistrust of parties, politicians, and parliaments) are positively correlated with income insecurity in a pool of 32 liberal democracies under study. This reflects older economic grievance theories stating that authoritarian and extremist movements are more appealing for those who are less well off; however they found that economic insecurity, both at a macro level and an individual level, was strongly correlated and statistically significant for populist attitudes rather than for authoritarian (or materialist) values. Actually the generational effect remained the most powerful correlate for authoritarian values. Therefore, even though a period effect actually took place after the 2008 economic crisis, it could not permanently alter firmly established value patterns in the population and the tendency to shift to post-materialism still remains in younger generations.

To sum up the cultural backlash theory we may say that actually Western societies are more post-materialist than ever before, however there was a strong mobilization of materialist voters as a reaction to the growth of libertarian tendencies among the younger generations. On the other side both young and old people are losing their trust in institutions as an effect of the economic crisis. This implies that while older people will be more incline to support authoritarian-populists in elections, younger generations, trumped by the economic crisis, will more probably lean towards libertarian-populist parties such as the Italian Five Star Movement or the Spanish Podemos (Inglehart & Norris, 2019).

This could also help explaining recent phenomena such as the Fridays for Future movement or the Extinction Rebellion movement: they mobilized as bearers of a new environmental sensitivity (post-materialist or libertarian values) but at the same time they do express a profound distrust for decision-makers and for traditional channels of political expression.

The Globalization Cleavage theory

Another theoretical framework that has been proposed to understand the rise of new political actors, and that might prove useful in the discussion of the success of green parties, is the one centered around the polarizing effect of the globalization phenomenon although this framework of analysis proved particularly influential in the understanding of the rise of right-wing populist parties but it also provides for an explanation for the stabilization of New Left and green parties in Western Europe.

The steady process of integration of markets, political institutions, and cultures generated a twofold reaction in the political arena: on one side some political and economic actors supported globalization and pushed for a stronger and stronger worldwide integration (integrationists); on the other side other players rejected either the economic side of the process, either the cultural side, or both (demarcationists) determining the structuring of a new political conflict, especially in Western liberal democracies (Marchetti, 2016).

Research studied the re-alignment of Europeans' political attitudes in consequence to globalization; actually not only it was found that a cosmopolitan-communitarian juncture is emerging among Western European publics but also that it is influenced, among other things, by subjective economic deprivation and by the degree of globalization of the polity in which a citizen lives (Teney, et al., 2014). There is a division emerging since the 1990s characterized by attitudes towards economic globalization, cultural opening, and supranational integration that pits winners against losers of globalization. On one side there are those groups of professionals that benefit from the lifting of economic barriers as they work in sectors that require greater transnational movement to flourish; on the other side there are those who work in sectors that benefited from economic protectionism and that see their material conditions worsening as a result of delocalization and transnational competition (Kriesi, et al., 2006). Furthermore we must not downplay the importance of cultural identities that people perceive as defining themselves and their communities: there is an increasing conflict between a cosmopolitan identity (European or global) retained by some groups of the population and a communitarian identity (nationalist or localist) defended by other groups; these cultural identities are actually influenced by economic factors but they also work as reinforcing factors of the attitudes toward economic issues (Kohli, 2000).

This new juncture added itself to the traditional political fractures in European societies, mainly the socio-economic cleavage and the religious-cultural cleavage; however the two did not disappear with the emergence of this novel division between integration and demarcation which rather became embedded with pre-existing lines of political divisions creating new opportunities for political entrepreneurs willing to enter the political arena by profiting of the slowness of mainstream parties in adapting to the new division (Kriesi, et al., 2006). For instance new radical right parties emerged in many countries by taking a strong stance in favor of cultural demarcation but being much more integrationists on the economic side of globalization; this proved, at least in the 1990s, to be a winning formula allowing radical right parties to enter the political game with strong electoral performances (Kitschelt & McGann, 1995). These parties proved to be capable of representing constituencies losing from economic globalization by taking a harsh stance towards globalization, especially in the cultural domain but, more recently, in the economic one too.

On the other side some progressive political parties took a stronger demarcationist stance on the economic side of globalization in order to protect workers, their acquired rights, and also pollution standards; at the same time these political actors did not reject the cultural side of globalization but they rather embraced it, constituting a competitive alternative to mainstream parties (Kriesi, et al., 2006).

Earlier research suggests that mainstream political parties in Europe, both on the center-left and on the center-right, tended to converge towards a moderate pro-integration stance (Hix, 2003). This is clearly understandable for the liberal family which traditionally supported more open economies and more open societies; Christian democrats and Conservatives have been more moderate on integration, both economic and cultural, but nonetheless they have been supportive of these processes. Social democrats gradually reduced their opposition to economic integration in the 1990s because of the rise of Third Way politics that realigned traditional left-of-center political parties on more liberal economic policies, especially with regards

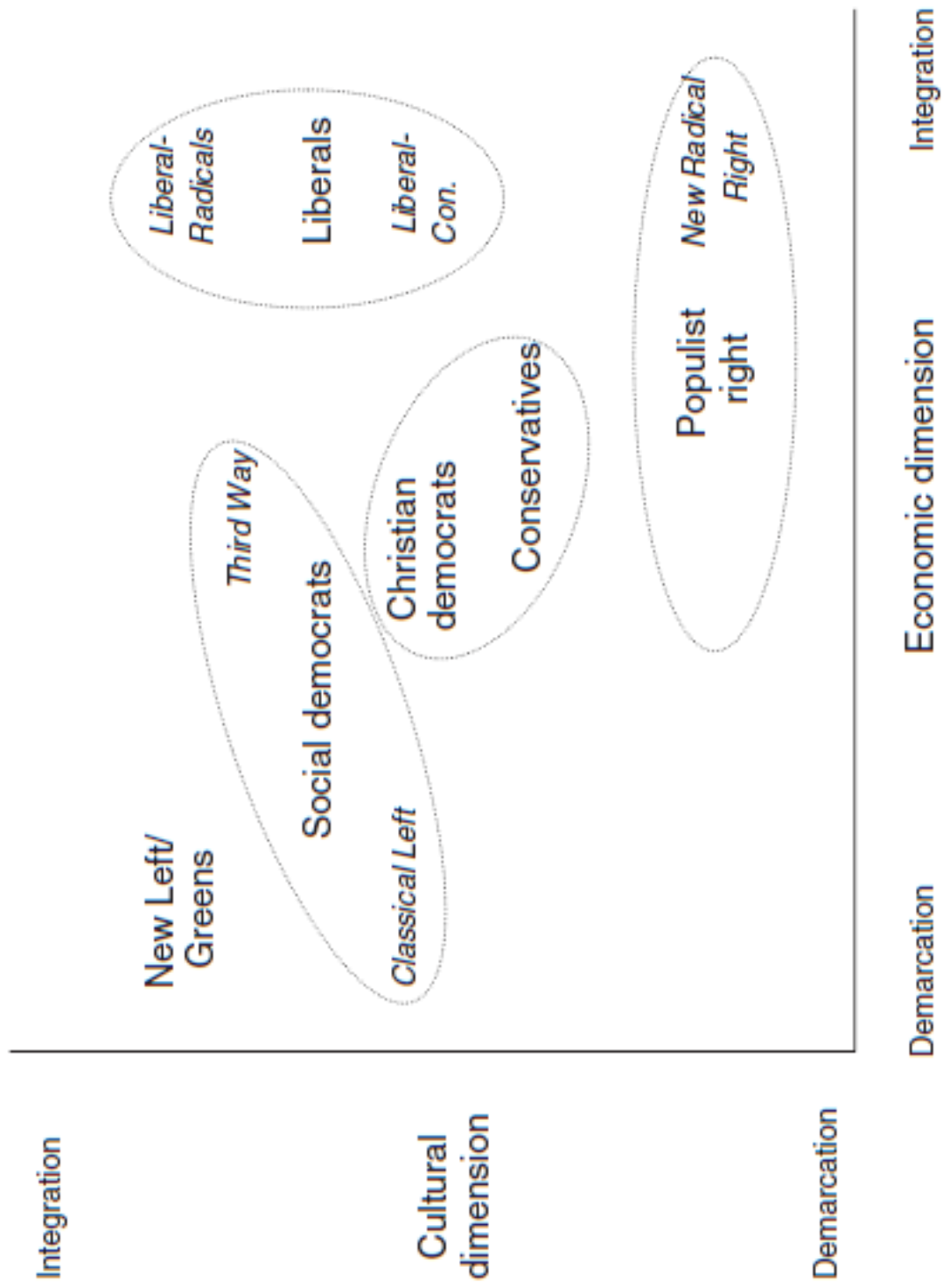
to free trade and international economic integration. This means that the three mainstream political party families took a more or less supportive stance towards globalization that is to say they took the winners' stance. But what about the losers?

Fringe political parties were presented an opportunity to make a breakthrough in the political system thanks to the positioning of major political actors. This has been said for what concerns right wing populist parties. However green parties may be taken into account within the same scheme as they did not take the same stances of mainstream political parties and they came to represent distinct stances towards globalization as they proved to be strongly integrationists on the cultural side but strongly demarcationists on the economic side (Dolezal, 2010).

Actually, in the study by Kriesi et al. (2006) it is evident that in all the five countries that had significant green parties, they stood on the demarcationist side of the economic divide. In all the elections included in the study, ecologists were found to be among the most economic demarcationist political forces, especially in France, the Netherlands and Germany; furthermore their positioning on these issues did not change much over time while others, such as the Social democrats, did move towards more integrationist positions. For what concerns the cultural side of globalization the record is less homogenous as some ecologist parties show to be much more culturally integrationists than others and they changed their positioning over time; furthermore support for environmental protection was found as a culturally integrationist political issue in France, Germany, and Britain but not in the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Austria. However green parties positioned among the culturally integrationists in all countries but Switzerland and the tendency was that of a move towards more culturally integrationist stances.

The mixed positioning of ecologists on globalization may seem confusing and can lead to the conclusion green parties cannot be defined either as parties standing with winners either with losers. However it has been argued that the debate on globalization re-centered around cultural issues rather than around economic ones; radical right parties often benefited from this re-centering by taking strong adversarial positions on cultural globalization and thus attracting losers from globalization (Gougou & Meyer, 2012); this is determined probably by the heterogeneity of the economic interests of the losers from globalization which makes easier to mobilize all of them around the defense of a national cultural identity rather than around a specific economic project (Kriesi, et al., 2006). Therefore, even though the greens usually oppose economic globalization, they are perceived as supporters of globalization because of the increasing saliency of cultural issues over economic ones. Evidence of this reasoning may be found in the studies on the composition of the green electorate I presented in the previous chapter: young, educated, new middle class, urban voters are among those who are provided with the best opportunities to win from globalization (Teney, et al., 2014). In this perspective green parties still benefited from the positioning of mainstream parties but not by representing the losers but rather by representing the groups which are more successful. This interpretation not only provides for a strong theoretical basis to determine the reason for the rise of a new cleavage but it also fits a post-materialist framework.

Figure 2: Party families' stances towards globalization



Source: Kriesi et al. (2006), pg. 925

Actually winners of globalization, both individuals and countries, saw a massive increase in relative material welfare and thus should have moved towards more post-materialist values such as environmentalism, individual self-expression, and freedom. On the other side losers from globalization suffered a decrease in relative terms even if they may have benefited from it in absolute terms; this led them to give some attention back to material goals, and to throw their support behind parties opposing globalization.

In this light, even though the vote may be on post-materialist cultural issues, it still is driven by much more materialist economic determinands representing a modern cleavage embedded into an old one.

Conclusion: combining different frameworks

In this chapter I have presented some of the most successful theories that provide for an explanation for the rise of parties defined as post-materialist, libertarian-pluralists, or cultural integrationists and economic demarcationists. These various labels may be used to indicate what was also defined as New Left or New Politics; however in these broad categories we may include environmentalist parties as well. Is it legitimate to group them into the picture? In a table classifying political parties in European democracies proposed by Norris and Inglehart (2019) there are 22 parties that can be defined as ecologist¹ of these all were classified as libertarian according to Inglehart and Norris' definition; moreover 19 were economically left-wing while three were found to be right-wing (the Luxemburgish Greens, the Latvian Green Party, and the Swiss Liberal Greens). However while 11 were classified as pluralist, 11 were classified as populist. This means we may generally describe green parties as extremely liberal on social attitudes, quite left-wing on economic issues and with a mixed record concerning populist orientations. Nonetheless these aspects are enough to group the greens in a category of progressive and profoundly socially-liberal movements that fits into the classification of New Politics (Poguntke, 1987).

Therefore it is possible to conclude that green parties fit well into the aforementioned theories: the Silent Revolution actually provides for a powerful explanation for the birth and rise of movements focused on protecting the environment and emphasizing the importance of goals other than the materialist ones. The Globalization Cleavage hypothesis provides for theoretical grounds to understand how these parties managed to enter political arenas dominated by mainstream parties by exploiting newer divisions caused by globalization. Finally the Cultural Backlash theory gives us important clues on why did certain post-materialist parties succeed in some countries while not in others, and why in certain groups why not in others; but it also explains why materialism seems to be so powerful even as we live in conditions of diffuse economic wealth.

However if we look at these three theoretical frameworks we can see the importance of authoritarian-populist or radical-right parties. Actually they appear to be another branch of the same tree: they do constitute a sort of counter-reaction of materialism to post-materialism or of losers of globalization to globalization itself. In fact by looking at these theoretical frameworks we may see that the phenomena that

¹ These 22 parties were chosen as they are either members of the EGP or they explicitly define themselves as "ecologists" or "greens" in the party name.

produced a favorable background for the rise of left-libertarian, post-materialist movements were capable of producing also its exact opposite: right-authoritarian, materialist parties; if this is true the fortunes of such parties should be determined by the same factors, though with inverse relationships.

In the next chapter I will analyze data in order to answer the research questions of this thesis while bearing in mind this important hypothesis stemming out from the literature review done in this chapter.

Chapter 3: Testing the hypotheses

Introduction: variables and datasets

In order to test the two hypotheses I made in the first chapter two separate analyses are needed. First it has to be verified whether different socio-economic conditions across the (then) 28 EU countries influence the success of green parties. I will use two general indicators of economic well-being: gross national income (GNI) per capita and unemployment rate; both are considered for the most recent quarter before the 2019 EP election. In order to assess income inequality I used the Gini coefficient, I will later discuss the implications of using this measurement and the criticalities it implies. These critical issues about the Gini index are the reason why I also include wealth inequality. Finally the size of the new middle class as percentage of the workforce is employed as an indicator of economic development and as a possible determinant of green voting by itself. All these data are drawn from the most complete database there is for EU statistics, it is to say the Eurostat database (Eurostat, 2020), except for the measurement for wealth inequality which was computed from data drawn from the 2019 Global Wealth Databook published by Credit Suisse (Credit Suisse, 2019). All electoral data are drawn from official results published on the European Parliament website (European Parliament, 2019) and integrated with official national electoral results whenever necessary. Second I will verify if green voting is higher among those groups which are more incline towards post-materialist value preferences. Therefore one key variable is income which has always been considered as a key determinant of post-materialism; taking into account one's personal income would be reductive as it would not consider the real level of affluence which is better measured by family income when we consider it as a source of a post-materialist inclination (Inglehart, 1971a; 1977). The second variable I will take into consideration is education, as I summarized in the previous chapter mass education has been considered as one of the most powerful drives of the change of values in Western societies and it still is one of the most relevant determinands in explaining some of the current value patterns (Inglehart, 1977; Inglehart & Norris, 2019). Moreover job type must get into the picture too; actually it has been said that middle class individuals working in services are more incline to support New Politics parties, especially ecologist parties (Müller-Rommel, 1998b; Dolezal, 2010). Finally age must be taken into account as it reflects generational differences in order to understand whether there is a generational cleavage not only in value orientation but also in voting patterns. As I mentioned in the first chapter European Parliament elections provide an ideal framework for making cross-national comparisons, especially for what concerns younger party families. Data are drawn from the European Elections Voter Study 2019 (Schmitt, et al., 2019) which provides for a broad dataset for all the 28 countries taking part to the election.

In order to classify the positioning of parties on the authoritarian-libertarian axis, on the populist-pluralist axis², and on the left-right axis, I used the classification table provided for in the technical appendix of

² Here I apply the definition given by Inglehart and Norris (2019) defining pluralism as the opposite attitude of populism. In this dimension populism is seen as an opposition to checks and balances, a distrust in democratic institutions, a fascination for anti-

Cultural Backlash (Inglehart & Norris, 2019), adjusted for parties which changed name or merged with others after the publication of the book³.

Determinants of cross-national differences in green voting

Besides of characteristics of the individual voters it is possible that some factors that affect the whole political community have an influence on the strength of post-materialist parties, and, in particular, of green parties. Actually it has been argued that green voting depends on the level of economic development of a country; mainly because in a highly developed society there is a higher level of existential security which reduces the level of absolute deprivation experienced by individuals, especially the young ones raised in post-scarcity (Grant & Tilley, 2018). There is another part of the story: in highly economically developed societies mass communication and tertiary education are more widespread and contribute to the strengthening of post-materialist values and to the spreading of alternative lifestyles (Inglehart, 1977). The factor of economic development influences the socio-economic structure which in turn creates opportunities for the rise of ecologist parties. In order to measure the level of economic development I use the level of GNI per capita in purchasing power parity (PPP) measuring how it correlates with the share of green vote. GNI is defined as the Gross Domestic Product plus the net transfers from abroad and measures the income of citizens of a given country (OECD, 2018); therefore GNI per capita is a reliable measure of the level of wealth citizens have in a political community, adjusting it by PPP allows us to assess the level of relative economic well-being that there is in a society. This does not take into account income and fortune inequalities, they will be considered further on in this section; for now I use this simple measure for economic well-being and correlate it with the share obtained by green parties in the 2019 EP elections.

Here the problem of classifying green parties arises again. To be coherent with data presented in the first chapter I kept the same list of parties proposed by Van Haute (2016), updating it for those parties which run under different labels in the 2019 EP election; it basically includes all those parties that are EGP members plus some members of the Greens-EFA EP group that label themselves as “green” even though this includes conservative ecologist parties that do not have much to do with post-materialism or anti-party lists which do not run on an primarily environmentalist platforms such as the Hungarian “Politics Can Be Different” (LMP).

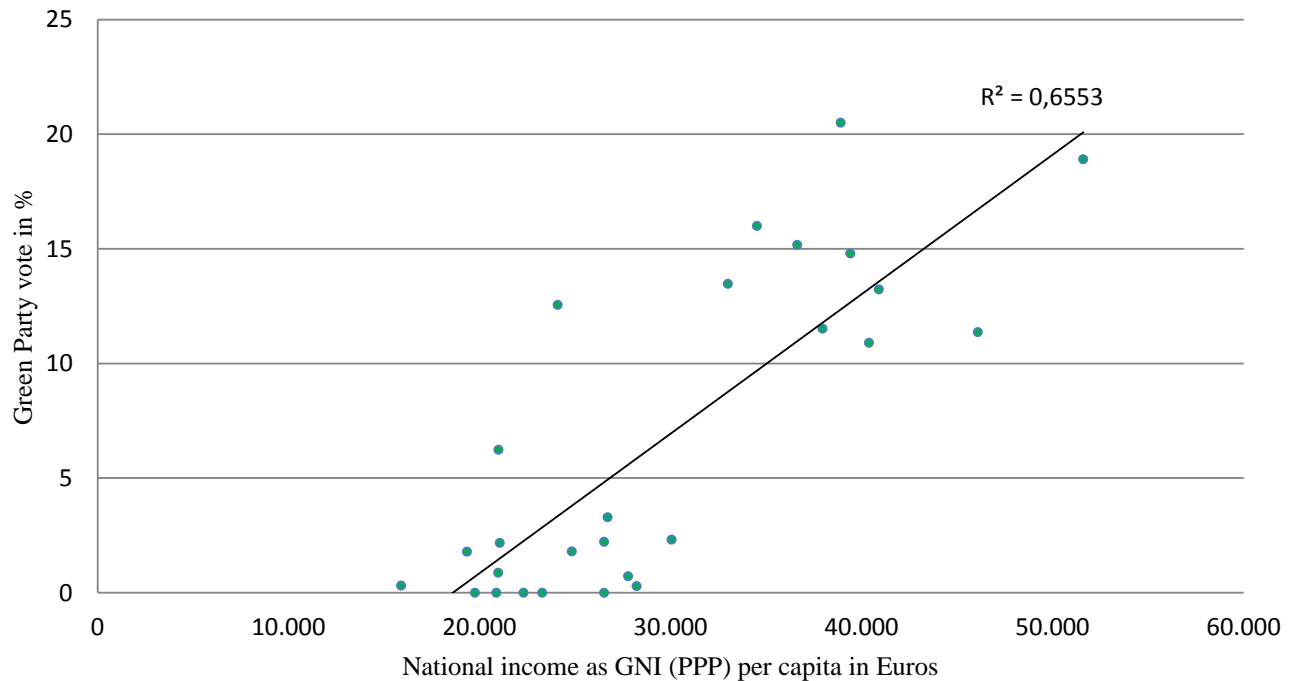
Chart 4 displays the correlation between GDP (PPP) per capita in 28 European countries for 2018 and the share of votes obtained by green parties during the 2019 EP election.

establishment rhetoric. Pluralism is here defined as an acceptance of plurality of opinions in a democratic framework with limits imposed to the tyranny of the majority.

³ There are two green lists that run in 2019 EP elections and were not included in the book: the Italian Europa Verde and the Spanish Coalición Verde. In the Italian case I could consider it as a left-libertarian pluralist party as its members came either from the Federazione dei Verdi, either from Possibile (both associated with left-libertarian politics); The Spanish list came from a small ecologist group which did not join Equo (the official EGP member for Spain, part of Unidas Podemos coalition). Moreover the green parties of Poland, Romania, Greece, Bulgaria, Slovenia, and Croatia were polling so low they were not included in the table provided by Inglehart and Norris, nevertheless I considered them left-libertarian as members of the EGP.

For what concerns the authoritarian populists only one party that is mentioned was not listed in *Cultural Backlash*: the French National Rally. I considered it as the National Front as it is the new brand of the same party.

Chart 4: National income and green vote



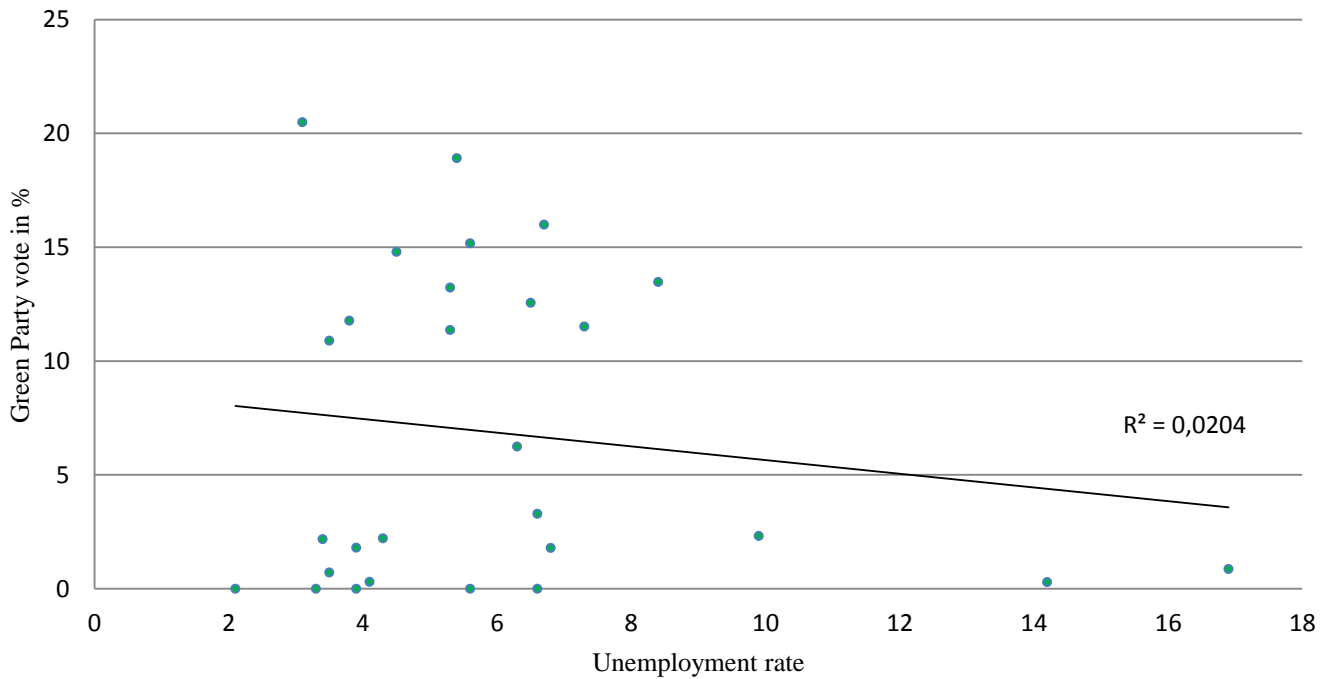
Sources: 2019 European Parliament Election Results, Eurostat Database

From the data analysis made in Chart 4 it appears there is a significant relationship between the level of economic wealth in a country and the level of support for ecologist political parties. This can be attributed the influence economic development and affluence of a society have on values, determining a shift to post-materialism.

The second factor taken into consideration is the unemployment rate, actually it is considered as a relevant indicator of the level of material well-being and of deprivation, at least in the short term. In fact economic crisis and rising unemployment usually refocus priorities on overall macroeconomic stability reducing interest in environmental policies and parties (Grant & Tilley, 2018). Previous research has shown that levels of unemployment are associated with larger skepticism towards climate change (Kahn & Kotchen, 2010) and that parties governing during economic downturns are punished more severely if they are associated with environmental policies (Abou-Chadi & Kayser, 2017).

Chart 5 shows the correlation between the level of unemployment in percentage in the second quarter of 2019 (the quarter in which the EP election took place) and the share of vote for ecologist parties. Actually from an observation of data it appears that there is no such thing as a materialist backlash due to higher unemployment rate. In fact, even though the correlation is negative as expected, it is not robust to establish a clear-cut relationship between the two variables. It has to be considered the fact that unemployment is much lower for developing Eastern European economies which are also the polities in which ecologist parties and lists have worse performances (Frankland, 2016) this has been attributed to the fact forty years of communist one-party regimes have significantly altered the cleavage structure providing for less opportunities for certain parties, such as the greens (Kitschelt, 1992). By making the same calculation for Western European countries we get to and an $R^2=0.31$; higher but still not proving the existence of a robust correlation.

Chart 5: Unemployment and green vote



Source: 2019 European Parliament Election results, Eurostat

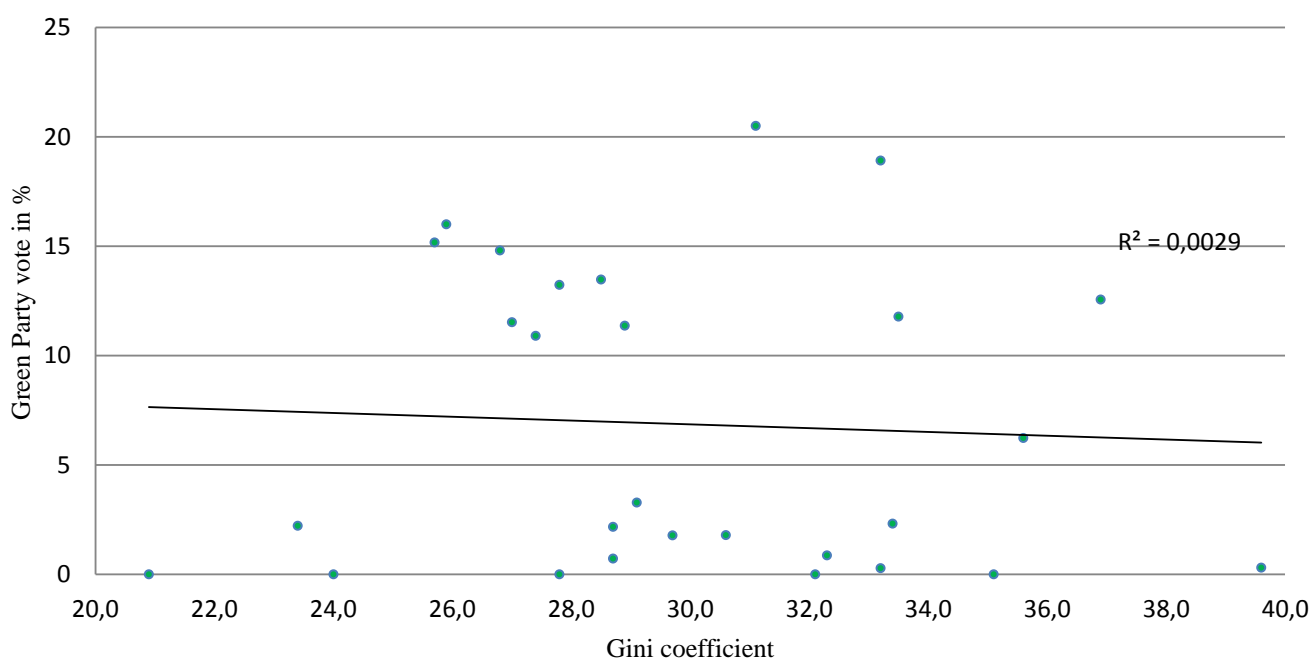
Therefore we may say that, even though unemployment affects negatively in some way the tendency to vote for green parties it is not a powerful determinant of cross-national differences.

We now move to the inequality factor, first it allows to correct in some way the fact the distribution of GNI is not uniform across different social classes and different people; second it gives us hints about the level of relative deprivation that can be felt in a society: high levels of inequality mean a huge number of people experiences a form of deprivation when compared with the richest strata of the population. Additionally inequality is related to economic growth as it is considered affecting negatively the GDP rate growth (Mo, 2000) or it is seen as the byproduct of slower economic growth (Piketty, 2013); whatever the direction of the causal link is, high levels of inequality, especially over sustained periods of time, usually indicate low levels of economic growth.

By virtue of these elements inequality is expected to be negatively correlated with post-materialism in general and with green vote in particular. Measuring inequality is not an easy task: data concerning wealth inequality rarely are available and reliable because of the difficulty of tracing back capital to its owners; however income inequality does not picture the whole story about inequalities (Piketty, 2013). Income inequality can be measured through the Gini coefficient, an index that shows the proportion of the cumulative earnings a part of the population receives compared with the size of this part in respect of the whole population; it stands between 0 (total equality) and 100 (one person earning all income) (OECD, 2018). Although not a perfect measurement it provides for an understanding of income inequality across different societies.

Chart 6 shows the Gini coefficient for all the (then) 28 EU member states in 2018 and the share of votes gained by green parties in the 2019 EP elections. The evidence showed by data strongly disconfirms the hypothesis there is a link of any kind between income inequality and green vote. Actually the slightly negative correlation is not strong enough to establish a powerful relationship. Even if we do the same analysis for Western European countries the $R^2=0.15$ leads us to reject the hypothesis income inequality is a determinant of ecologist voting. One alternative hypothesis could be that income inequality is not representative of unequal distribution of wealth in a country and that wealth inequality better represents uneven distribution of resources. In order to explore this possibility I computed a basic index of wealth inequality based on data from the Global Wealth Databook 2019 (Credit Suisse, 2019); it is the ratio between the percentage of the adult population that has a wealth of more than one million dollars and the percentage of the adult population that has a wealth of less than 10,000 dollars. This simple measurement is shown in relation with the share of green vote in 2019 EP elections in chart 7. Even though it shows a stronger correlation than the relation with the Gini index, it is still too low to qualify it as a determinant of strength of ecologist parties. This finding is not inconsistent with what was found in the previous section, when analyzing the profile of green voters across Europe, actually even if the poorest strata of the population were among the least incline to vote for ecologists, but that was true also for the richest people in the society.

Chart 6: Income inequality and Green vote



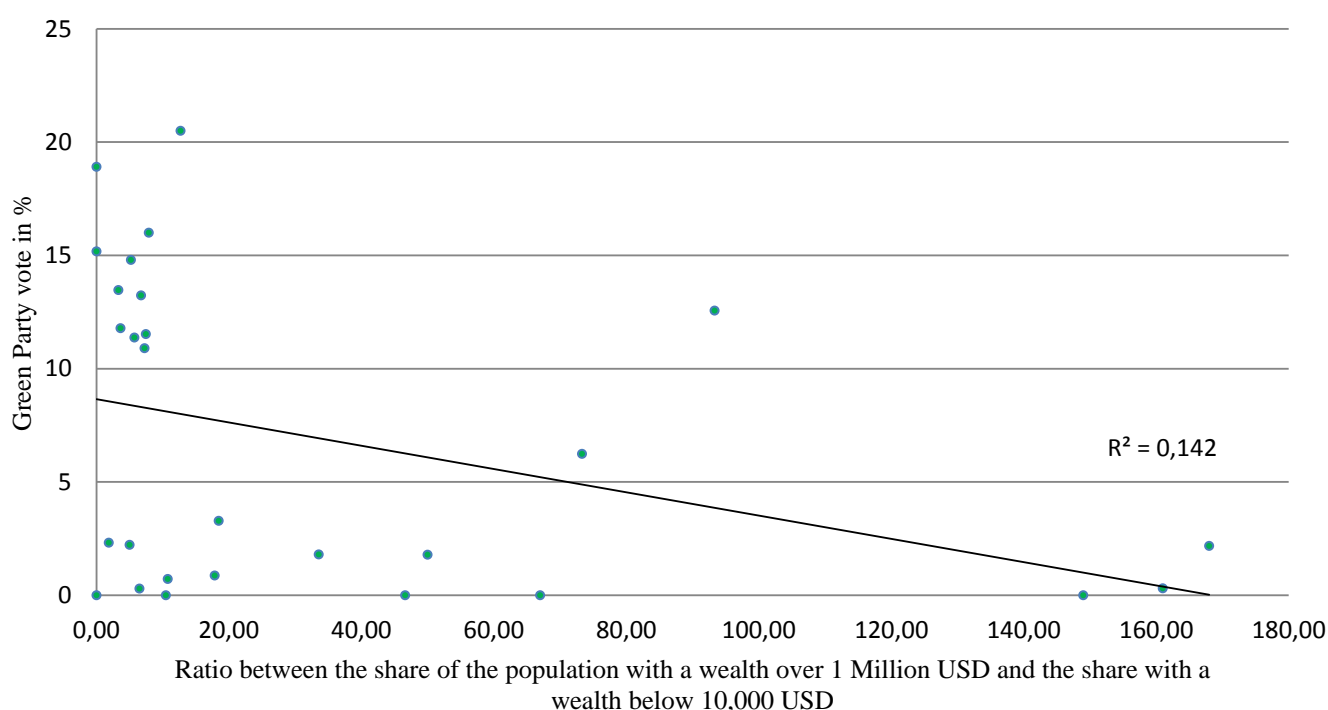
Source: 2019 European Parliament Election results, Eurostat

It is not the magnitude of inequalities that matters but rather the size of the middle class that constitutes the core constituency of ecologist parties and here we move to one additional determinant to be studied.

Previous literature identified the strongest base of green parties' support in the new middle class, first because they are the group that is more incline to open to post-bourgeois values because of its formative

experience (Inglehart, 1971b; 1977) but also because it bears significantly different value schemes (Poguntke, 1987) and because they constitute the ideal milieu for the flourishing of post-materialist beliefs and values (Dolezal, 2010). This sum up with the fact the new middle class is the bearer of New Politics ideas and approaches that are consistent with a green party approach to politics (Müller-Rommel & Poguntke, 1995). The assumption is that the fact of having a broad new middle class has a general effect on the whole of the society and not just on that specific group; they have a different logic of work which imply they are more libertarian on social issues even though they are somewhat left-wing or progressive on economic issues but less than traditional left-wing constituencies (Dolezal, 2010) and with this stances they influence the rest of society too: the larger is the new middle class the larger will be its impact on the rest of the population.

Chart 7: Wealth inequality and Green vote



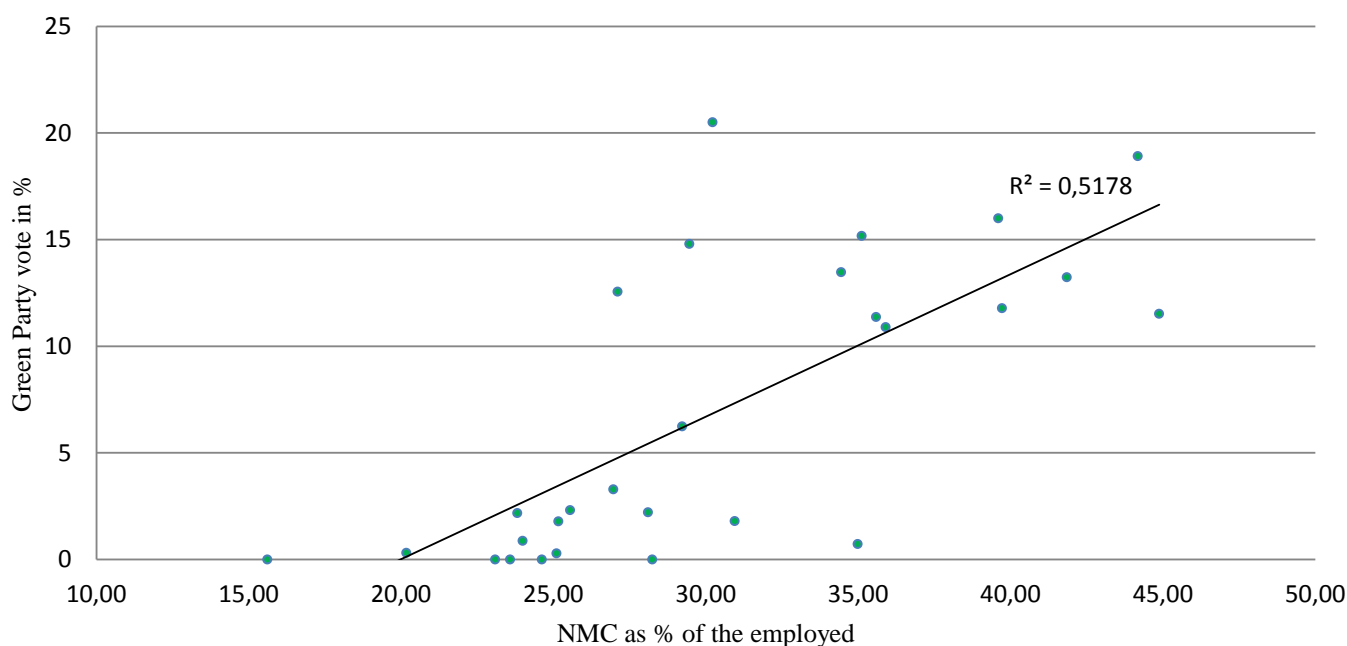
Source: 2019 European Parliament election results; Credit Suisse

The definition of new middle class is not a clear-cut one, Dolezal (2010) talks of managers, technical experts, and socio-cultural specialists working primarily in services. Drawing from the Eurostat Database (Eurostat, 2020) it is possible to identify eight economic activity types that correspond to new middle class occupation: “Information and communication”, “Finance and insurance activities”, “Professional, scientific, and technical activities”, “Administration and support service activities”, “Education”, “Human health and social work activities”, “Arts, entertainment, and recreation”, and “Activities from extraterritorial organizations and bodies”. Furthermore it is possible to select three different occupational categories across sectors that fit with a new middle class profile: “Managers”, “Professionals”, and “Technicians and associate professionals” thus excluding clerical support workers that do not actually fit the new middle class profile. In order to assess the importance of the new middle class I computed the proportion of it over the total

workforce. Chart 8 pictures the relationship between the size of the new middle class and the share of votes won by greens during the last EP elections. It shows that there is a robust positive correlation. To get back to the hypothesis around which this section was structured we get back to the formulation of H1 that was made in the first chapter:

H1: Support for ecologist parties is positively correlated with per capita GNI and it is negatively correlated with unemployment and inequality levels.

Chart 8: Size of the new middle class and Green vote



Source: 2019 European Parliament election results, Eurostat

In this section I showed that support for ecologist parties actually is positively correlated with per capita GNI and negatively correlated with unemployment rate and level of inequality, both in terms of income inequality and of wealth inequality. However the only strong correlation was found for GNI, with the addition of the size of new middle class as an indicator of economic development which also shows a statistically significant and positive correlation.

To conclude this analysis we may say that cross-national differences in the electoral success of green parties depend on the level of economic development and of wealth a country has reached notwithstanding the importance of inequalities and of setbacks in the job market. This reinforces a silent revolution interpretation of the story as most economically advanced countries are those where post-materialist green parties have more electoral success.

The composition of the green electorate

In order to study the composition of the green electorate I selected a pool of countries which share some characteristics: they all have green parties that reached at least 10% of the vote in the last EP elections; in fact in other countries the number of green voters included in the survey is too small to constitute a reliable sample. All these countries they have green parties which ran as a standalone list in these elections, these parties were not born from the merging of some different left-libertarian movements (such as the Dutch GroenLinks) but rather proposed themselves as ecologist parties since their beginning, finally they all have progressive green parties and not conservative ones. In order to list a party as a green party I considered whether they have EGP membership or not⁴. Therefore we are left with seven countries and two regions (Austria, Belgium (Flanders), Belgium (Wallonia), Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, and Sweden). In Belgium there are the French-speaking ECOLO and the Dutch-speaking Groen, as Belgian respondents are classified according to region it was possible to split the two electorates for two different analyses.

Age

The first variable under study is age; as Inglehart underlined in his works, belonging to different age cohorts lead to different experiences of welfare and to different formative experiences which in turn lead to different attitudes and values (Inglehart, 1971a; 1971b; 1977; 2018). The EES divides the sample in five age cohorts: 18-24, 25-39, 40-54, 55-64, and 65+. If we consider the years of birth we can say they fit well in the main generational cohorts defined by Inglehart and Norris in *Cultural Backlash*: the 25-39 cohort reflects the Millennial cohort while the 40-54 cohort fits in the Generation X cohort; it is more tricky for the 55-64 which actually is a part of the Baby Boomer generation which is also present in the 65+ cohort together with the whole Interwar generation. However it still constitutes a good representation of different generations which had different experiences with affluence during their socialization and that should have different attitudes towards post-materialist values such as political ecology. The 18-24 cohort fits into the Generation Z definition which was not present in *Cultural Backlash* but that already constitutes a part of the voting population and which, according to the Silent Revolution theory, should be the most post-materialist group in the society.

Chart 9 shows the level of support of green parties in terms of the percentage of the valid vote across the five different age cohorts for the nine selected green parties. I chose to show only the valid vote because of the different inclination to participate in elections across age cohorts, in fact younger age cohorts are more post-materialist than older ones but they are less likely to show at polling stations (Inglehart & Norris, 2019), this means that by showing absolute vote it would have been more difficult to show different levels of support for green parties (but also for other parties) across age cohorts.

⁴ I excluded the United Kingdom and the Green Party of England and Wales from the analysis because of the singularity of the 2019 EP election in the UK which was centered on the Brexit issue which has changed the patterns of partisan competition and thus the constituencies represented by different political parties

Chart 9: Support for green parties in 2019 EP elections across age cohorts in selected countries



Source: Schmitt et al. (2019)

I applied the same reasoning for the other determinants analyzed further in this section. What emerges from this analysis is that, generally, support for green parties is higher among younger generations but still some different patterns emerge from these data. In seven countries the 18-24 cohort is the “greener” one, with substantially high levels of green voting in the remaining two countries. These data appear to be consistent with a Silent revolution hypothesis. However it should be noticed that the 25-34 cohort appears to be less incline to support green parties than the 18-24: in five countries it shows remarkably lower levels of support for ecologist party and only in France and Flanders the green electorate is larger in this age cohort than in the younger one. It may be argued that those born between 1980 and 1994 started entering the job market around 2000 but that many of them, especially the university-educated, had to access the job market later, after the 2008 economic crisis.

Education

The second variable that I consider here is education. Inglehart defines education as the second most powerful source of value change after age of birth (Inglehart, 1977); higher education is associated more liberal and more post-materialist attitudes in people. Moreover it reduces authoritarian values and populist attitudes (Inglehart & Norris, 2019). More educated people are considered to constitute a stronger electoral base for New Left and New Politics political parties (Müller-Rommel, 1998b) and previous research discovered a positive influence of education levels on green voting (Hooghe, et al., 2010; Rüdig, 2012). Furthermore the education effect is correlated with the generational one as younger cohorts tend to be more educated than the older ones (Inglehart & Norris, 2019); in tables 2 and 3 I show support for greens across different levels of education in two age cohorts (25-39 and 65+) to identify eventual spurious effects. Education effect is correlated also with socio-economic status as people that were born in families with an higher S.E.S. tend to have access to university education more frequently than those who were born in low S.E.S. households (Inglehart, 1977). The EES divides its samples in four categories for what concerns education: low for those who gave up education at 15 years or before, medium for those who studied until 16 to 19 years, high for those who continued to study after 20 years and finally still studying for those who are still attending schools or universities.

Table 2: Support for green parties across education level in the 25-39 age cohort in selected countries

		Low	Medium	High	Still studying
Austria	Die Grunen	0,00	7,78	20,00	24,14
Belgium (Flanders)	Groen	50,00	10,34	22,81	0,00
Belgium (Wallonia)	ECOLO		0,00	23,81	0,00
Finland	VIHR	25,00	10,53	17,14	27,27
France	EELV	0,00	33,33	17,65	25,00
Germany	Die Grunen	0,00	15,09	24,00	14,29
Ireland	Green	0,00	6,06	12,75	0,00
Luxembourg	Greng	0,00	27,27	23,53	33,33
Sweden	Grona	0,00	12,90	11,63	23,53

Categories with n<10
Categories with n<5

Table 3: Support for green parties across education level in the 65+ age cohort in selected countries

		Low	Medium	High
Austria	Die Grunen	0,00	6,82	15,28
Belgium (Flanders)	Groen	6,67	1,92	5,88
Belgium (Wallonia)	ECOLO	0,00	27,27	18,75
Finland	VIHR	20,00	12,50	12,20
France	EELV	0,00	6,02	8,89
Germany	Die Grunen	17,39	10,26	23,16
Ireland	Green	12,50	14,08	27,45
Luxembourg	Greng	20,00	14,71	14,71
Sweden	Grona	8,33	8,82	4,08

Categories with n<10

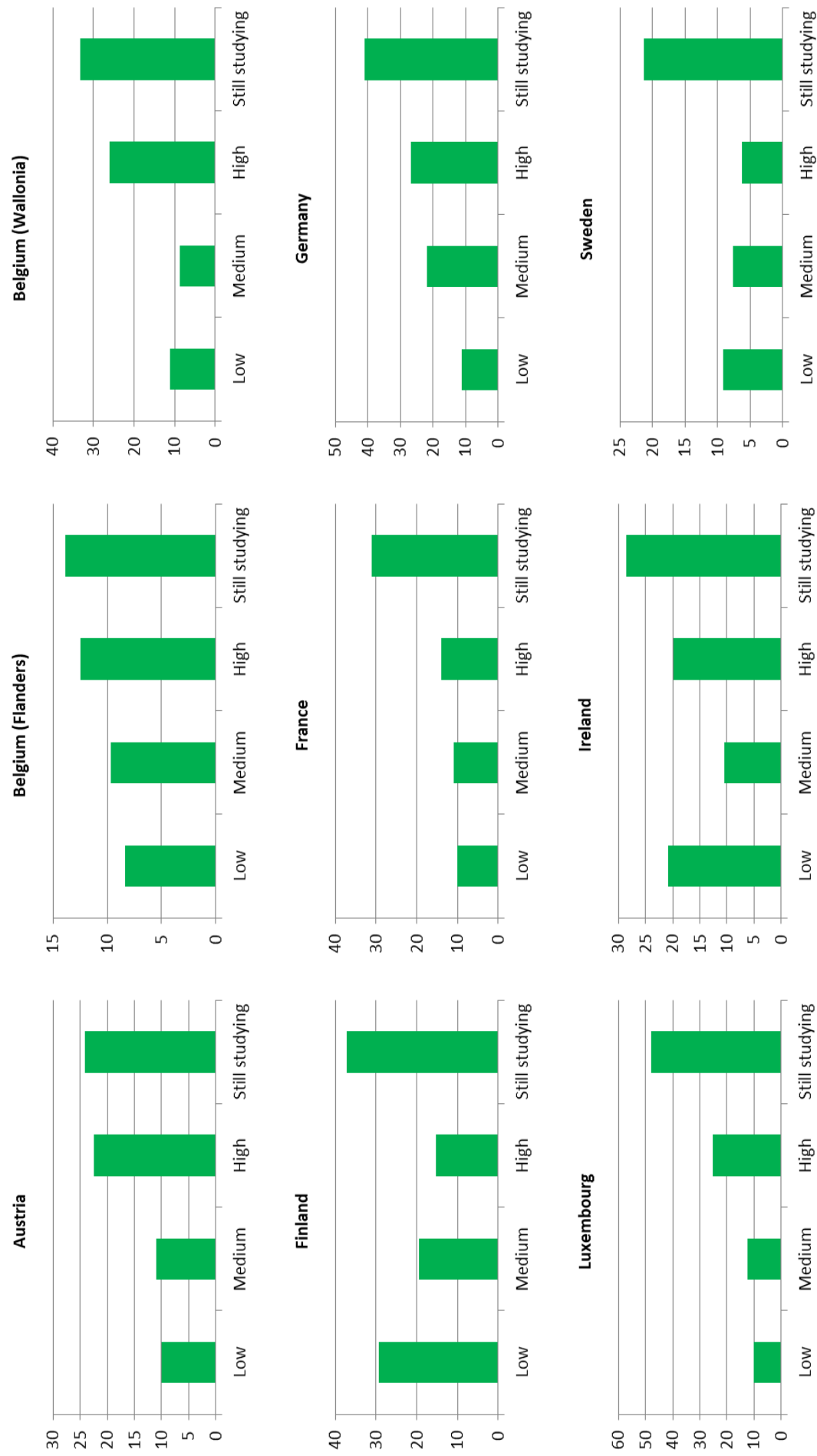
This measurement is not ideal as it does not tell us about the type and quality of education as it does not distinguish high-schools from vocational schools and does not indicate whether one has completed college degrees or not. However it still provides for a good picture of the level of education a person received in its life. Another consideration should be made about the “still studying” category as it actually sums up different effects: on one sides it is composed by a population that is 18 or older (as it votes) but is still studying and therefore belong at least to the “medium” category, if not to the “high” one; furthermore it sums up a generational effect as almost all those who are still studying are younger than 30.

Chart 10 shows the level of green party support across the four education categories for the nine selected green parties. The level of support is defined as before in terms of percentage of valid votes as stated by EES 2019 respondents. If we look at the green vote across different levels of education we may see that in all the eight countries ecologist parties are significantly stronger among students who are currently still in education. This confirms the fact that the intersection of an educational effect and a generational effect takes place, joint with some influence from the socio-economic profile of university students who are currently attending universities. Therefore is not surprising to see that students represent the “greener” constituency in these electorates. However it has to be said that in absolute terms they do not represent the most important constituency in many cases as they tend to have substantially higher levels of abstention and blank voting when compared with the other three groups.

In six of the nine countries in the study a pattern emerges: more educated people tend to be somewhat more inclined to vote for green parties. Even though the trend is not so strong in some cases it seems to be consistent in these six cases. In Ireland the trend is mixed but the low education group appears to be more incline to vote for the Green Party than the two other groups; perhaps the reason for this oddity may be explained by the fact that the proportion of people that voted for parties other than the six major parties is

definitely smaller among the low education subpopulation. Actually it seems that low educated Irish voters tended to show more loyalty to major parties, included the GP, as the share for minor parties is about half the one obtained in the remaining subpopulations. In fact out of the six major Irish parties six got their best result in the low education subpopulation. However the findings for Sweden and Finland appear to be more challenging: in both countries the pattern appears to be reversed, it is to say more educated voters tend to vote less for the green party than less educated voters. Even though the pattern is similar the explanations that can be provided are different. In Finland, where the reversed pattern appears to be quite strong, the three leftist parties (Social Democrats, Radical left, and Green League) as well as the centrist Swedish People's Party got their best score in the low education population and their success decreases as education increases. When we look at income it is possible to see that the Green League and the Radical left are stronger among the lower income groups while the Social democrats are stronger in the medium-low and medium income groups. For the right-wing parties (even for the sovereigntist True Finns party) the trend is reversed both for education and for income. Therefore it appears that in Finland the traditional economic cleavage is alive and well and being the Green League is associated with left-wing economic policies (Bolin, 2016) it polls well in traditional left-wing constituencies. This provides for a possible interpretation of the reason for the Finnish pattern. In Sweden it does not appear to be so; actually both the right-wing Swedish Democrats and the center-right Christian Democrats fare better among the low-education subpopulation while the Moderates enjoy a substantially stable support in the three groups. Furthermore the Swedish Democrats are particularly strong among low income Swedish voters, more than any other party. A possible answer to the Swedish pattern may be found in the results of the two other leftist parties, the Social Democrats and the Left Party. They enjoy more support in medium and high education groups. The Green Party (MP) is stronger among lower educated left-wing voters; it has to be noticed that MP can be considered as a Euro-sceptic party, differently from many of its counterparts in the EU (Bolin, 2016). This can provide for some explanations for the Swedish case which together with Finland represents a significant exception to the more general trend. As the cases of Ireland, Sweden and Finland were analyzed more in depth and possible explanations for their trends were proposed we may say that the hypothesis on the influence of education on green voting holds. There is a general trend that may be observed in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, and even Ireland (as we explained the reason for the diverging outcomes) that shows that ecologist parties enjoy greater support among more educated voters and much higher support among high school or university students. The confirmation of this hypothesis, joint with previous findings concerning age cohorts supports the idea a Silent Revolution in value tendencies produced strong support for environmentalism and for ecologist parties in particular. However so far we ignored the economic side of the story which I will take into account in the next two sub-sections.

Chart 10: Support for green parties in 2019 EP elections across education levels in selected countries



Source: Schmitt et al. (2019)

Income

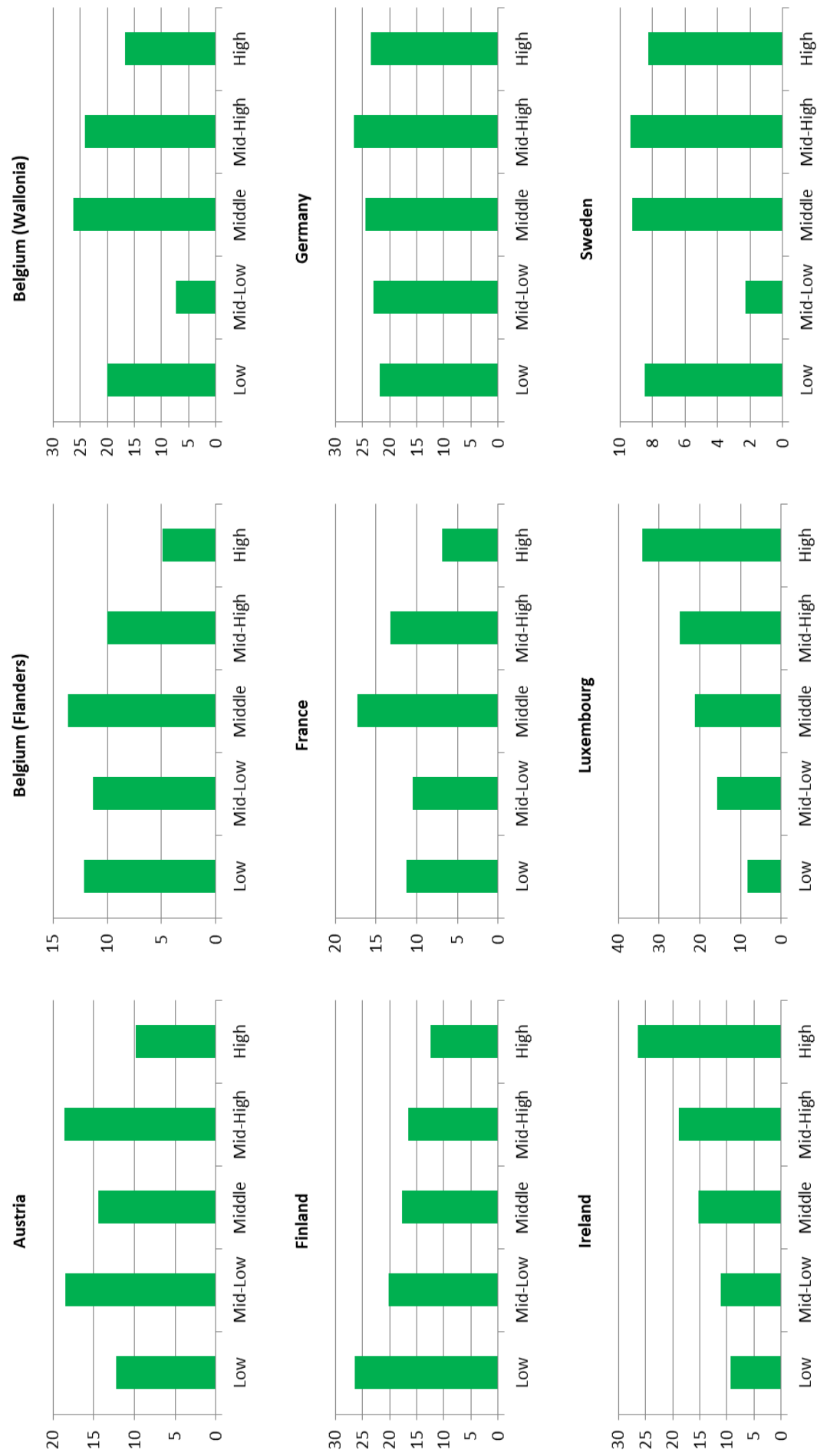
For income the EES reports a self-reported value asking respondents to rank the economic situation of their family from 1 (poor family) to 7 (rich family). The fact of using family income is useful to include people who are not in the job market and do not earn any income such as students. Furthermore according to Inglehart family income is more relevant than individual income in determining post-materialist attitudes as it reflects the deprivation a person experiences in its life while the personal income of each person may not be the best measurement to understand this (Inglehart, 1977). Finally the fact the income level is self-reported in a scale allows us to take into account subjective poverty as it measures how do people perceive themselves in regards to the rest of the population and whether they feel they are poor or not, it has to be borne in mind that subjective deprivation was found to be particularly significant in determining anti-globalization attitudes (Teney, et al., 2014).

The two poorest categories (1 and 2) usually have relatively few respondents so I regrouped them into one single category defined as “low income”, the same thing was done for the two wealthiest groups of respondents (6 and 7) which I regrouped into a “high income” category. For the middle one (4), which was found to be the largest in most cases I adopted the “medium income” label. For the other two middle categories of respondents (3 and 5) I chose to adopt two different labels, respectively “middle-low” and “middle-high” income, this not only because they usually include a significant portion of respondents but also because they represent two distinct categories: one feeling somewhat below the average and the other feeling it is somewhat above it.

Chart 11 shows the level of support for green parties as the percentage of the valid vote in the nine selected cases by family income group. Diversity in patterns emerges: in two cases (Ireland and Luxembourg) green voting appears to be basically a phenomenon involving wealthier people as voting tends to increase with family income. In Austria, Flanders, France, and Wallonia green voting is higher around the middle of the scale with lower support among high income respondents. In Germany and Sweden green parties appear to be more transversal across income groups with slightly higher levels among middle-high income respondents.

Finally Finland shows a strong pattern of support among lower income groups. For what concerns Finland we may apply the same considerations that were made for education, by bearing in mind the left-right unidimensionality that characterized Scandinavian politics for a long time and that still is very relevant in Finland (Bolin, 2016). For what concerns Luxembourg it has to be said that Greens stand economically on the right, or better to say in the center as their left-right index score is 51 on 100 (Inglehart & Norris, 2019), this may provide a possible explanation why support for this party is particularly skewed towards richest voters. Finally for what concerns Ireland we may say that the GP is a libertarian-populist party (while its counterparts are usually libertarian-pluralist) but much less left-wing than the two other libertarian-populists: Sinn Fein (SF) and People before Profit (PBPA).

Chart 11: Support for green parties in 2019 EP elections across income levels in selected countries



Source: Schmitt et al. (2019)

Both SF and PBPA enjoy significantly higher support among lower income voters than the GP, probably because their more leftist economic platform is more appealing to poorer voters while the GP more moderate economic platform happens to be more appealing to wealthier voters.

However if we may say that patterns are mixed in the nine countries we can say that while support among lower income groups is usually weak and that among high income respondents shows different trends across countries, ecologist parties always enjoy a fairly high support among middle and middle-high income respondents. In fact in six countries it is in one of these two groups that we find the highest level of support while in the three remaining cases they stand on the average. Therefore, even though education and age show much more consistent patterns than income it may be said that green voting is more of an upper-class or upper-middle phenomenon and for sure it is not one involving poorest European voters.

Working sector

Another structural factor that is often considered as a relevant determinant of green voting is the professional background; voters from the new middle class are considered as those who are more incline to vote for such parties; in particular managers, technical experts, and socio-cultural specialists (Dolezal, 2010). The EES provides for a question on the economic sector in which the respondent works. I regrouped public and private industry under a single “industry” label whilst private and public services remain two different categories, this because in most countries the number of respondents employed in public industry is not large enough to constitute a reliable sample. Those who work in other sectors are listed as “other” albeit many of them actually are unemployed or retired. Finally those who never were in the job market, mostly students and people working in household, were listed as “not in the job market”. Agriculture workers constitute a peculiar category as they live in rural areas which usually are more conservative (Inglehart & Norris, 2019); however it has to be said that the number of agriculture workers in samples was always quite small, in three cases (Flanders, Luxembourg, and Wallonia) it included less than ten people so I decided to exclude them as they could not provide for solid findings. However it has to be considered that agriculture workers always represented less than 5% of the sample and usually included around 20 people; moreover we can say support for green parties among people employed in agriculture is generally low, even if the samples usually comprised a handful of agriculture workers.

Chart 12 shows support for green parties in terms of share of valid votes across the five different working sectors defined in EES and regrouped as mentioned before. We may observe that in all cases but the two exceptions of Sweden and Ireland there are quite high levels of support for green parties among those who are not in the job market, this is predominantly due to the fact this category includes students which have shown to be the “greenest” subpopulation. Among industry workers findings are quite mixed as service workers do not show significantly lower level of green voting as expected; however in no case are they the most green-voting group and only in Luxembourg they show levels of ecologist voting higher than both categories. For what concerns workers in services, which are considered as the most important constituency for New Politics parties (Poguntke, 1987), findings are quite different from one country to another. Actually

among private services employed voters green parties perform quite well; in Wallonia, France, Germany, Ireland, and Sweden they enjoy high levels of support among voters employed in private services, if compared with other job types, while in Austria, Flanders, and Luxembourg they show a level of support which is lower but still on the average. Only Finland proves to be a true exception, as it was for education and income.

For what concerns voters working in public services issues appear to be more complex as in Austria, Wallonia, and Sweden they result being among the least ecologist voters, whilst in Flanders, Finland, and Ireland they are much “greener” than others; in France, Germany, and Luxembourg they are in the average. There may be different reasons for this pattern, for instance the fact that Austria, Wallonia, and Sweden all have traditionally strong social democratic parties that are associated with strong protections for public service workers while they are much weaker in Flanders, Ireland, and France or they stand more on the economic right such as in Luxembourg. However what we can conclude from the analysis from the job type that green voters overall are more likely to be outside the job market or employed in private services rather than employed in industry or agriculture.

Conclusions

To sum up it is necessary to take into consideration the hypothesis that was laid down in the first chapter of this thesis trying to answer to it on the grounds of the analysis made in this section, considering the general trends that were found in the countries under study.

H2: Support for ecologist parties is higher among younger, higher income, more educated, new middle class individuals

Support for ecologist parties results to be higher among more educated individuals, usually younger and employed in private services; however, for what concerns income, support for ecologist parties is not higher among voters coming from higher income families but rather among those living in medium or medium-high income households. This aspect has to be combined with considerations on green support across different job type subpopulations: it supports the idea people belonging to the new middle class are more likely to vote for ecologist parties. It is noteworthy to say that, even though data on education, family income, and job type partially support H2, age remains the strongest explicatory factor of green voting and supports the thesis of the existence of a process of generational change in value orientations with younger voters substantially more likely to vote for ecologist parties than older voters.

Chart 12: Support for green parties in 2019 EP elections across job types in selected countries



Source: Schmitt et al. (2019)

The other side: authoritarian populist parties

In the previous chapter I discussed the hypothesis that the reverse side of the rise of post-materialism can be represented by the rise of materialist authoritarian populist parties. This proposition is in line with the theoretical model Norris and Inglehart (2019) describe as cultural backlash; in this view the rise of new political parties and leaders is a response to the advance of post-materialism in Western societies over the last decades. Standing by this interpretation would imply that those social groups where we do find more support for green parties should be the ones that are least supportive of authoritarian-populist parties and vice versa. Actually as ecologist parties are the representatives of a post-materialist form of politics in the form of social libertarianism and economic progressivism they represent the antithesis of authoritarian populist political parties (Inglehart & Norris, 2019). Such parties, which sometimes are described as populist right (Kriesi, et al., 2006), usually take a mixed stance on economic issues meaning they combine leftist positions on welfare and more right-wing positions on taxation and business regulations. They usually have clearer views on what concerns cultural issues which are seen as more relevant by their voters (Gougou & Meyer, 2012). It is therefore better focusing on their attitudes towards cultural issues and their standing on the populist-pluralist competition axis. These new parties stand on the authoritarian side of the cultural cleavage and on the populist side of the party competition dimension (Inglehart & Norris, 2019). Many of these parties are right-wing on economic issues but others actually show a more left-wing approach, therefore I will not refer to them as right-wing populist but rather as authoritarian populists.

In seven of the nine countries and regions studied earlier in this chapter there is a relevant authoritarian populist party that is included in the EES study with its own party code: the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ-Austria), Flemish Interest (VB-Flanders), the True Finns Party (PS-Finland), the National Rally (RN-France), Alternative for Germany (AfD-Germany), the Alternative Democratic Reform Party (ADR-Luxembourg), and the Swedish Democrats (SD-Sweden). I analyzed support for these seven parties according to different levels that were considered for ecologist parties in the previous section.

Chart 13 shows the different levels of support for right wing populist parties across different age cohorts with the same method that was used for green parties in chart 7; with the exceptions of Flanders and Finland the youngest cohorts which were the most supportive of green parties show the lowest levels of support for authoritarian populists. Moreover in Flanders the 18-24 cohort still is the second least supportive of authoritarian populist parties. However, in most cases, such parties do not find the highest levels of support among the oldest that are the least green. Actually they usually enjoy the highest levels of support among the 40-54 or the 55-64 age cohorts.

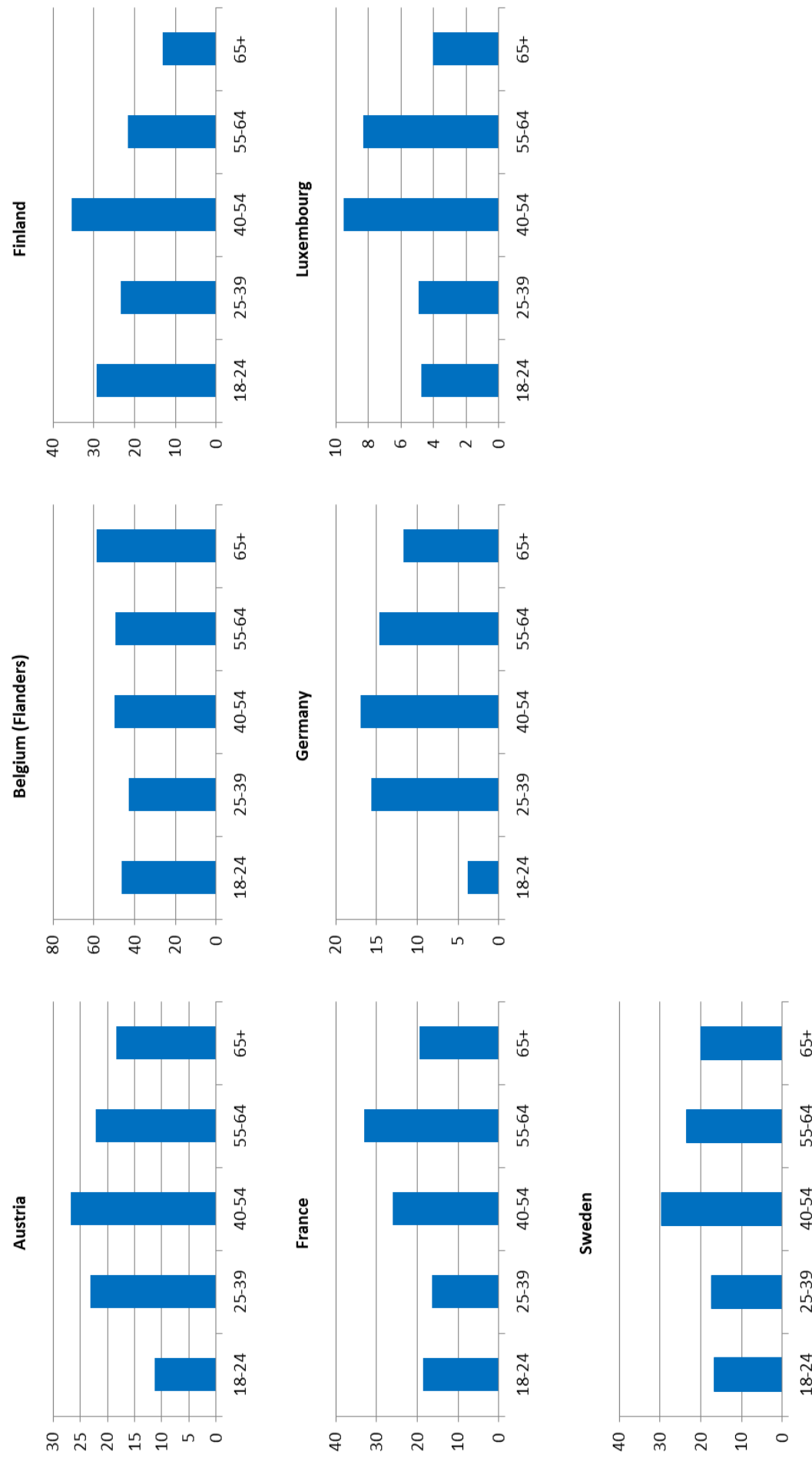
Chart 14 displays the levels of support for authoritarian populist parties as percentage of the valid vote in the seven selected countries across different job sectors; as expected they enjoy quite significant support among agricultural and industrial workers and quite low support among those who are not in the job market (mostly students). Their record for public and private services is mixed as it was for the greens; however they are

always stronger among workers employed in public services than among those in private services, basically the opposite that the pattern that was discovered for the greens.

For what concerns education (Chart 16) again a pattern reversed to that of the greens was found with authoritarian-populist parties enjoying higher support among those with low or medium education and very low support among the students. Finally there is family income (Chart 16), in this case the trend was consistently different from that of ecologist parties even though it was not reversed: while green parties enjoyed more support among middle and middle-high income voters, authoritarian populist parties were found to be stronger among low and middle-low income voters and much weaker among people living in higher income households, with the sole exception of Finland. Authoritarian populist parties on average poll higher than ecologist parties and lists, therefore we have to bear in mind that in most subpopulation they perform better than the greens; however we can trace a profile of the authoritarian populist voter compared with the green voter profile I traced earlier in this chapter. In general we can say that authoritarian populist voters come from less educated and older, albeit not the oldest, constituencies; this is consistent with a silent revolution interpretation of the phenomenon and is in line with the findings of Inglehart and Norris on what concerns the rise of authoritarian populists. Furthermore we can say that authoritarian populist platforms and candidates are most successful among poorer voters who are more likely to be employed in the agriculture. This finding is consistent with the model proposed by Kriesi et al. (2006) suggesting that what they label radical right parties are stronger among categories that are most disadvantaged by economic globalization; this has been associated with the “roll back the State” implications of contemporary economic globalization which impact public service workers more than others. Even though radical right parties usually take harsher stances towards cultural rather than economic globalization.

If we combine the voter profile that was found for authoritarian populist parties with the voter profile that was found for ecologist parties we can jump to a conclusion on the relationship between the greens and the authoritarian populists: they basically represent two distinct constituencies that have significantly different characteristics. The greens represent mostly the young, educated, middle class voters while the authoritarian populists are stronger among middle-aged, less educated, lower income voters. In this sense they are not only the bearers of radically different values but they do represent different socio-economic groups and interests. For what concerns cross-national differences in the electoral strength of authoritarian populist parties we do not get to similar conclusions, by correlating the share obtained by the parties that Norris and Inglehart classify as authoritarian populist with the five variables employed above (GNI in PPP per capita, unemployment rate, income inequality, wealth inequality, size of the new middle class) no robust correlation. Actually cross-national differences in the electoral success of such parties are less significant differences: while many European countries lack a relevant green party, there are really few polities lacking an authoritarian populist or right populist party; actually Ireland and Portugal are the two sole exceptions. Moreover authoritarian populist parties show major differences among themselves, first on the economic stances forwarded by them but also on the attitudes towards the EU and Russia, for instance.

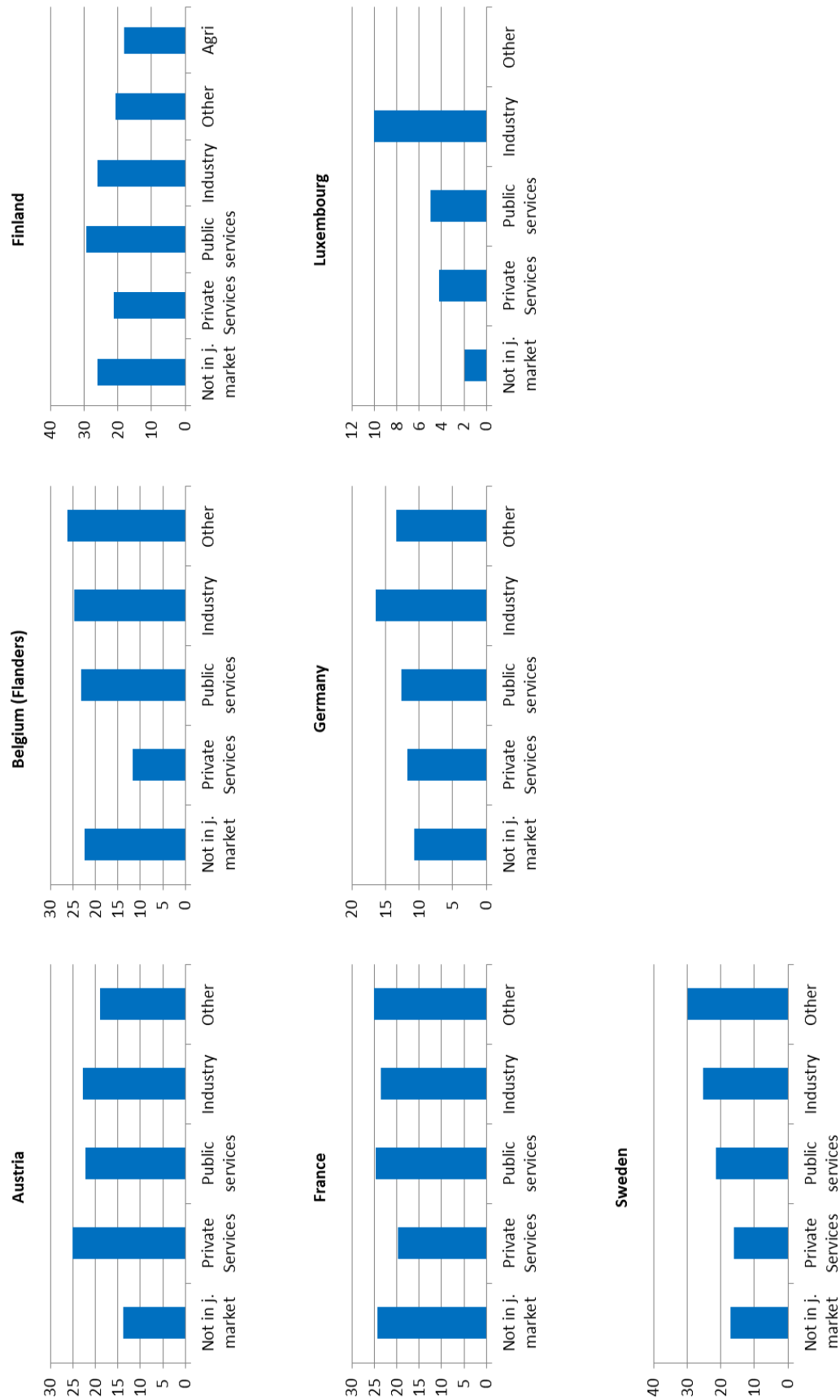
Chart 13: Support for authoritarian populist parties in 2019 EP elections across age cohorts in selected countries



Source: Schmitt et al. (2019)

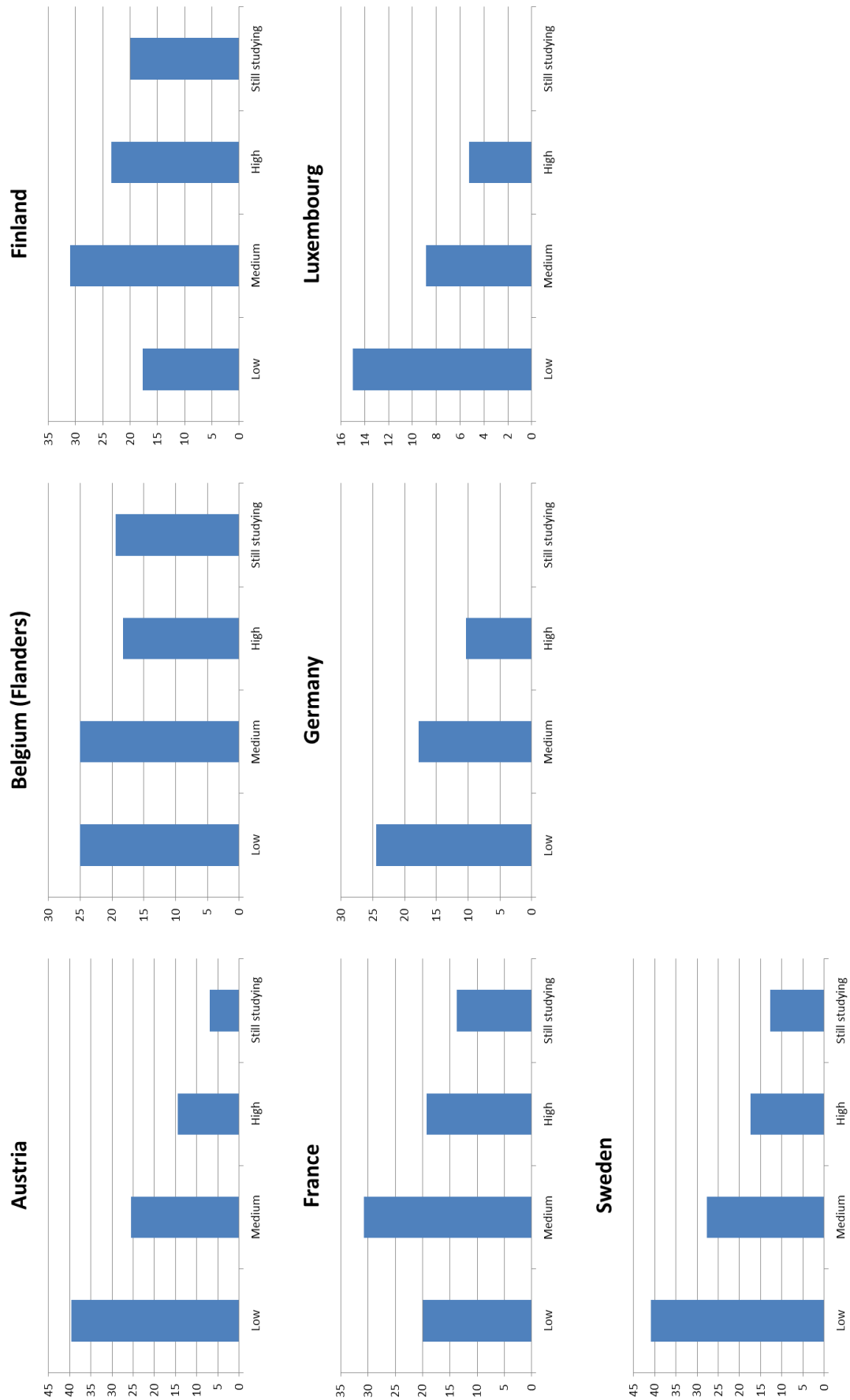
Therefore they may show similar levels of support in countries with different social economic structures and different political conflict structures because the parties themselves are different in their stances and platform.

Chart 14: Support for authoritarian populist parties in 2019 EP elections across job types in selected countries



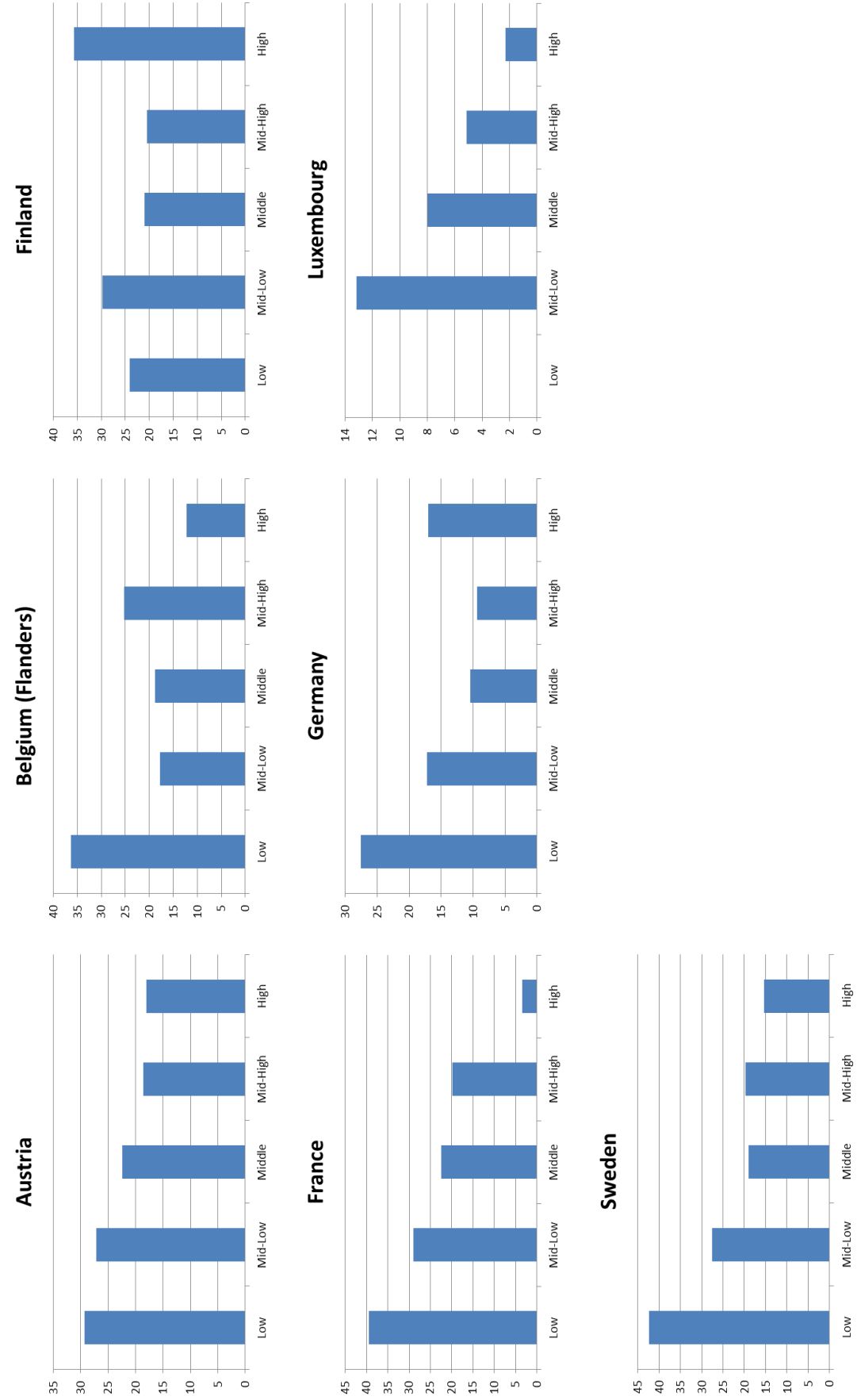
Source: Schmitt et al. (2019)

Chart 15: Support for authoritarian populist parties in 2019 EP elections across education levels in selected countries



Source: Schmitt et al. (2019)

Chart 16: Support for authoritarian populist parties in 2019 EP elections across income levels in selected countries



Source: Schmitt et al. (2019)

Conclusion: greens and authoritarian populists, an old cleavage or a new one?

To sum up the findings of this chapter we can say that green voting is a phenomenon that is determined by two strands of factors: first there are socio-cultural determinants then there are individual level determinants that increase the probability a person is going to vote for an ecologist party. Consistently with a silent revolution interpretation, younger and more educated voters represent the most solid electoral base for greens across Europe; the explanation for this fact has to be found basically in generational value-change as well as in the fact that higher education generally promotes post-materialist attitudes (Inglehart, 1971a; 1977). The other side of the story is that older and less educated voter appear to be more attached to materialist values as suggested by the evidence that shows they are going to support other types of political parties, after 1968 they were found to move towards traditional conservative parties (Inglehart, 1977); however they recently shifted towards authoritarian populist parties (Inglehart & Norris, 2019), especially among the middle-aged less educated voters. As generational replacement advances it is probable that this phenomenon will become even more important: as older cohorts, which were found to be more supportive of traditional center-left or center-right politics, disappear both libertarian progressive parties (such as the greens) and authoritarian populists will likely rise in the polls. In this scenario the existing generational and cultural divide will be strengthened and will rise as one of the more prominent divisions in Western European politics opposing young educated voters to older and less educated ones. Electorally this is going to reinforce current trends with socially libertarian and economically progressive parties constituting the pole alternative to socially authoritarian and culturally conservative parties.

However this chapter highlighted also the existence of certain differences in the socio-economic profile of green voters; actually ecologists enjoy higher levels of support among middle class voters, especially among those who are employed in private services or that are still studying. This is consistent with those studies that identified green voting as a predominantly middle class or new middle class phenomenon (Poguntke, 1987; Dolezal, 2010; Hooghe, et al., 2010; Rüdig, 2012); moreover this finding supports the hypothesis that those groups are the less disadvantaged, if not favored, by economic globalization. In fact young, educated, new middle class individuals are precisely those who are more advantaged by economic globalization (Teney, et al., 2014). On the other side authoritarian populist parties have the stronger support base among lower and lower-middle class voters, especially among those working in the agriculture and in industry but also among the employed in public services who, in some countries, abandoned social democrats.

This is likely to result in a new socio-economic cleavage in which the new middle class is represented by greens or by similar libertarian progressive parties while the traditional working class is much more likely to vote for authoritarian populists; this would be a form of economic cleavage but it would be structured in a different way from the traditional capital-labor cleavage: it is no longer an opposition between employed and employers as in the original form of the cleavage (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967) but it is a cleavage dividing people employed in substantially different economic sectors, with different macroeconomic priorities, and with radically different logics of work. However this newly structured cleavage may have an unseen

consequence: promoting policies to fight against climate change will become particularly difficult among less educated and working class voters as it will be perceived as an issue owned by parties they do not support and that are actually opposed to their values in the new line of political competition based on this cleavage. An anticipation of this trend can be seen in the 2016 US presidential election where Donald Trump, holding a climate change denial position, was particularly successful in that constituency (Inglehart & Norris, 2019).

Finally there are findings related to economic development as ecologists are electorally more successful in wealthier and more economically developed countries; this is related to the fact that in wealthier countries there are generally lower levels of material deprivation, even among the poorest categories. Thus they are more incline to hold post-materialist views. However this is also due to other facts: more modern economies have larger new middle classes as a greater share of the economy is represented by private services; and more advanced economies usually have a larger share of university-educated citizens. Again this may have collateral effects, especially in the European Union; in fact as the most economically developed member states will assist to a rise of green parties, they will push for a more effective climate action by the EU. On the contrary the less developed economies in the Union will not see pressures for stronger climate action as long as green parties remain fringe or minor parties; so their efforts at the EU level will not be for accelerating the implementation of a green agenda but rather for slowing it to not prejudice economic growth. An anticipation of this phenomenon can be seen from the fact Eastern member states such as Poland, Czech Republic, and Hungary pushed for a delay of the carbon neutrality goal set by the Union's institutions (Keating, 2014). Summing with already existing divisions in the EU this may prove to be an additional challenge for the Union and its goal setting capabilities.

Conclusion

In this thesis I studied the hypothesis green voting is determined also by social and economic factors and not just by an increased sensitivity to environmental issues. Findings, both at the aggregated and at the individual levels, are consistent with the idea that there is a socio-economic dimension of green voting which should not be ignored. However further research is needed, more complex multivariate regression analysis should be deployed to understand the influence of macroeconomic factors on cross-national differences in the performances of ecologist parties; longitudinal voter studies and comparison of cross-sectional surveys could provide clearer understanding of the green vote phenomenon and could help defining a more precise profile of green voters. Moreover, as this thesis is focused on EU member states, research on green voting should be conducted also in other democracies, both Western and non-Western so to have a better understanding of green parties and to observe if these parties are peculiar to Europe or not.

From the analysis provided in this thesis it is possible to conclude green voting is positively correlated with economic development and general wealth in a society, this is in line with the theoretical model that sees ecologist movements (and green parties) as one of the byproducts of a broader post-materialist phenomenon taking place in the most developed and wealthiest countries in the World. From an analysis of voting survey data it emerges that green voting takes place on one side of the generational and cultural divides with younger and more educated voters being more incline to support green politics. Finally an economic dimension is found with poorer voters less likely to vote for the greens that enjoy greater support among wealthier individuals, especially those employed in private services. Despite these findings generational and cultural determinants appear to be more relevant than the economic ones, consistently with a silent revolution interpretation of green voting.

This thesis also provides for cues about the future of green parties in Europe; actually as there are economic downturns in many EU countries it is possible that greens will end up weakened in the most affected polities. During the writing of this thesis the World was hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, some argue this crisis will have a dramatic and unprecedented economic impact affecting the whole global economy (Fernandes, 2020); in this case it is likely the massive economic downturn will weaken the greens in most European countries. On the other side some studies underlined the correlation between air pollution and the spread of the coronavirus (Conticini, et al., 2020), in this case it is possible that this crisis will focus the attention on pollution and will strengthen the relevance of the greens as debate becomes centered on issues that are associated with environmental politics. In any case time has proved green parties are not an ephemeral political actor but, as this thesis confirms, ecologist parties were able to find their own constituencies and will likely remain a relevant political actor, especially in those countries where they are a consolidated player in the political arena.

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Riassunto

L'ascesa dei partiti verdi rappresenta uno dei fenomeni politici sui quali si è soffermata l'attenzione della stampa e dei commentatori negli ultimi anni. La crescente importanza dell'ambientalismo politico è sottolineata anche dal fatto che in diversi paesi europei i partiti verdi sono stati in grado di liberarsi dell'immagine di partito di nicchia per diventare attori rilevanti nello scenario politico, sia a livello locale che a livello nazionale; uno degli esempi più noti di questo nuovo ruolo dei verdi è dato dal caso emblematico della Germania. Tuttavia, osservando i risultati elettorali dei partiti ambientalisti in Europa, è possibile notare come non vi sia alcuna omogeneità nei risultati ottenuti da queste formazioni politiche: se da un lato i verdi dei paesi dell'Europa Centrale (come Germania, Belgio, Austria) e Settentrionale (ad esempio Finlandia e Svezia) sono divenuti attori di primo piano del processo politico, la stessa cosa non è accaduta in altre aree del continente. Ad esempio si può notare come le forze ambientaliste nell'Europa Meridionale siano elettoralmente assai poco rilevanti, come in Italia e Grecia, o inserite in coalizioni permanenti con altri partiti più forti (è il caso del Portogallo e, in parte, della Spagna); inoltre, osservando la situazione nell'Europa Orientale, si può notare come questi partiti siano sostanzialmente inesistenti, con l'eccezione della Lituania dove però si inseriscono su un'impostazione conservatrice derivante dal ruralismo nordico. Insomma, si notano differenze non irrilevanti fra i diversi paesi Europei, differenze che sono spesso ascritte alle diversità fra i sistemi politici e alla differente risposta dei partiti tradizionali alle istanze ambientaliste.

Osservando la media dei risultati ottenuti dai partiti verdi alle elezioni per il Parlamento Europeo, non sembra esservi una massiccia crescita della loro forza dopo il 2004, anzi si registra un lieve declino nel finire degli anni 2000. Inoltre le elezioni europee, avvenendo simultaneamente in tutta l'Unione e con un sistema proporzionale in tutta Europa, dovrebbero risentire meno delle distorsioni dovute ai sistemi elettorali e ai cosiddetti *period effect* e produrre risultati meno divergenti rispetto a quelli delle elezioni nazionali, non sembra però essere il caso dal momento che le profonde divergenze nei risultati dei verdi permangono anche alle elezioni europee. Se si considerano solo i paesi dell'Europa Occidentale (quelli che facevano parte dell'UE già prima dell'allargamento del 2004) si può notare che in realtà l'ambientalismo politico ha conosciuto uno slancio di rilievo negli ultimi anni; in effetti alle elezioni europee del 2019 i verdi (qui considerati come i partiti nazionali membri del Partito Verde Europeo) hanno per la prima volta superato la soglia del 10% dei voti come risultato medio nell'Europa Occidentale. Un risultato non trascurabile dal punto di vista politico perchè pone i verdi come quarta famiglia politica dopo le tre tradizionali (popolari, socialdemocratici e liberali).

La domanda che sorge da questi fatti è: se un'onda verde è in corso perchè sembra verificarsi solamente in alcuni paesi? La risposta è stata spesso data nell'ottica delle differenze del sistema politico e delle strategie dei partiti maggiori, tuttavia ricerche precedenti hanno dimostrato che il ruolo delle strategie politiche degli altri partiti è marginale mentre il fatto che le differenze permangano alle elezioni europee sembra suggerire che vi sia qualcosa di più profondo rispetto ai vincoli istituzionali che determina il successo (o l'insuccesso)

delle formazioni ecologiste. Per dare una risposta a questo interrogativo è dunque fondamentale soffermarsi sulla questione della domanda, dunque sull'elettorato dei partiti verdi, per comprendere se vi sia un ruolo giocato dalla struttura delle società e dei conflitti politici nei diversi risultati degli ecologisti.

Guardando a due casi paradigmatici, quelli di Germania e Belgio, si possono notare tendenze simili che accomunano le due situazioni sottolineando le peculiarità dell'elettorato verde. Infatti in entrambi i paesi, che pure conoscono sistemi partitici e istituzionali piuttosto differenti, gli elettori dei partiti ambientalisti sono concentrati in alcuni gruppi socio-economici; l'archetipo dell'elettore di questi partiti è un cittadino giovane, istruito, di classe media o medio-alta e residente in aree urbane. Questo profilo è coerente con la teoria della "rivoluzione silenziosa" proposta da Ronald Inglehart negli anni '70. In questa interpretazione i giovani, avendo vissuto condizioni di deprivazione economica e materiale inferiore a quella conosciuta dalle generazioni precedenti, sono meno inclini a porre l'accento sulle problematiche di tipo economico e materiale mentre sono più inclini a domandare maggiore preoccupazione per tematiche dette post-materialiste o post-borghesi come la libertà di parola, la qualità della vita nelle città o, appunto, l'ambientalismo.

Partendo da questa interpretazione è possibile formulare due ipotesi: la prima è che il livello di sviluppo economico, di benessere e di disuguaglianza, contribuiscano al successo dei verdi; nel senso che i paesi che conoscono il maggiore sviluppo e benessere, sono quelli nei quali c'è maggiore sostegno per l'ambientalismo e per i partiti verdi. La seconda è che, all'interno delle singole comunità politiche, vi sia un maggiore sostegno ai partiti verdi fra quei gruppi che sono meno esposti alla deprivazione materiale ovvero, giovani, istruiti e più benestanti.

Per comprendere il modo nel quale la teoria della "rivoluzione silenziosa" sia utile per spiegare l'ascesa dei partiti verdi, e per comprendere le ragioni delle differenze nei loro risultati elettorali, è necessario soffermarsi sulla letteratura precedente che funge da base all'idea che il benessere economico abbia causato un cambiamento nei valori delle società occidentali. L'idea di base è quella della "gerarchia dei bisogni" formulata negli anni '40 dallo psicologo americano Abraham Maslow; secondo Maslow l'uomo è guidato da una serie di bisogni che possono essere raggruppati in categorie e che possono a loro volta essere ordinate in una scala gerarchica: per prima cosa l'uomo tende a soddisfare bisogni legati alla sopravvivenza diretta, alla necessità di mantenere il flusso sanguigno costante, dunque ricerca cibo, acqua e protezione dalle intemperie; una volta che questi bisogni fisiologici sono soddisfatti, ricerca i cosiddetti "bisogni di sicurezza" ovvero la ricerca di sicurezza personale, di stabilità e di libertà dalla paura. Nelle società occidentali del secondo dopoguerra questi bisogni sono ampiamente soddisfatti per la quasi totalità della popolazione, entrano dunque in scena i livelli successivi: i bisogni affettivi, legati alla costruzione di affetti stabili, i bisogni di autostima, vale a dire il riconoscimento del proprio valore da parte dei pari, infine l'attualizzazione personale, ovvero la ricerca della soddisfazione della propria creatività, dei propri talenti e della propria spiritualità. Inglehart ha ipotizzato che, a seguito della fine della Seconda Guerra Mondiale, l'attenzione per i livelli inferiori della gerarchia si sia ridotta notevolmente, soprattutto fra le generazioni più giovani, quelle

socializzate dopo la fine del conflitto, che non avevano mai conosciuto nè la privazione assoluta (sete, fame, vita all'addiaccio) nè la privazione relativa (come la mancanza dei cosiddetti "simboli di benessere" come l'automobile o il televisore). Queste nuove generazioni, meno preoccupate per i bisogni materiali, hanno dunque ricentrato la propria attenzione su temi quali la libertà di espressione, la partecipazione politica o l'ambientalismo, l'esplosione delle nuove tendenze politiche si ha con il movimento del '68 che porta alla luce l'esistenza del nuovo fenomeno politico legato al post-materialismo e ai nuovi valori. Non è infatti un caso che i più attivi partecipanti alla contestazione siano proprio coloro che meno hanno risentito della privazione relativa negli anni della loro formazione: giovani, studenti, di classe media o medio-alta. Tuttavia, se da un lato i giovani si avvicinano alle idee di cambiamento sociale radicale (e di conseguenza ai partiti della sinistra), dall'altro le fasce sociali meno abbienti, meno istruite e più anziane, si allontanano dall'idea di un cambiamento radicale della società, preferendo proteggere il benessere acquisito negli anni '50 e '60 e schierandosi con i partiti conservatori che intendono difendere i benefici acquisiti.

Nonostante il fatto che il livello di benessere economico in Occidente sia andato crescendo non si è registrata, oltre un certo punto, un'ascesa delle formazioni politiche portatrici di valori post-materialisti ma, anzi, a partire dalla fine degli anni 2010 si è vista in molti paesi l'ascesa di forze politiche decisamente più orientate su valori tradizionali e legate a principi materialisti, anche in quelle società che sono considerate più ricche e più eque (come ad esempio Svezia e Danimarca). Secondo Ronald Inglehart e Pippa Norris questa ascesa deriva dal desiderio dell'elettorato materialista di rispondere all'ascesa del post-materialismo nelle società Occidentali; la tesi, esposta nel loro libro del 2019 "*Cultural Backlash*", è che, trovandosi ad essere una minoranza, benchè cospicua, della popolazione, gli elettori materialisti si siano mobilitati maggiormente negli ultimi anni, in primo luogo perchè essendo tendenzialmente più anziani, sono più inclini a partecipare alla vita politica in modo tradizionale, vale a dire tramite il voto (mentre i giovani sono più orientati verso forme differenti di partecipazione politica). In secondo luogo gli elettori materialisti si sono sentiti minacciati dal cambiamento delle tendenze sociali e della scala di valori nelle società Occidentali. Questo li ha portati a riunirsi a sostegno di nuovi imprenditori politici che sono stati in grado di riconoscere e attivare questa frattura politica, Norris e Inglehart definiscono questa tendenza politica come populismo autoritario, in antitesi col pluralismo libertario rappresentato dalle forze più marcatamente post-materialiste. Questo implica che i fattori che determinano il sostegno per i partiti verdi dovrebbero essere anche quelli che determinano il supporto dei partiti populistici autoritari, seppure in senso inverso.

A questo si lega anche l'approccio nei confronti della globalizzazione, sia economica che culturale; infatti, se le maggiori famiglie politiche tradizionali si sono schierate, con posizioni più o meno differenti, a favore della globalizzazione, i partiti di nicchia, come la destra radicale o, appunto, i verdi, hanno utilizzato il nuovo conflitto politico in merito alla globalizzazione per entrare nell'arena politica, rappresentando chi era stato danneggiato dalla globalizzazione. Mentre la destra radicale ha assunto un'attitudine di forte critica nei confronti della globalizzazione culturale, i verdi si sono tendenzialmente schierati a favore di quella culturale e contro a quella economica; alcuni studi hanno tuttavia suggerito che la globalizzazione culturale abbia

assunto una rilevanza maggiore nel dibattito politico facendo identificare destra radicale ed ecologisti come agli antipodi in materia di globalizzazione.

Analizzando i risultati ottenuti dai partiti ambientalisti nel corso delle ultime elezioni europee e mettendoli in relazione con diversi indicatori economici (Reddito nazionale lordo pro capite, tasso di disoccupazione, indice di Gini, livello di diseguaglianza patrimoniale e dimensione della nuova classe media) è possibile verificare se effettivamente vi sia una correlazione tra il livello di benessere e sviluppo economico e la forza dei partiti verdi. In effetti appaiono correlazioni positive e robuste per quel che concerne il reddito nazionale lordo e la dimensione della nuova classe media supportando dunque l'ipotesi che il livello di sviluppo economico abbia un impatto positivo sui risultati ottenuti dagli ecologisti alle elezioni; tuttavia lo stesso non si può dire nè del tasso di disoccupazione nè del livello di diseguaglianze, infatti, benchè il segno delle correlazioni sia coerente con le previsioni, non appaiono abbastanza robuste per corroborare l'ipotesi che un maggiore livello di disoccupazione e di diseguaglianze implicino una minore forza dei partiti verdi.

Analizzando invece i dati relativi ai singoli elettori, derivati dai questionari post-elettorali, è possibile verificare quanto effettivamente certi fattori socio-economici e culturali contraddistinguano gli elettori dei partiti verdi, esaminando i dati relativi a nove paesi e regioni risulta che il sostegno per i partiti ecologisti è generalmente più alto nelle coorti più giovani e più istruite, confermando la teoria della “rivoluzione silenziosa”. Inoltre risulta che i verdi sono più deboli nelle classi sociali più basse e fra i lavoratori impiegati in certi settori (specialmente industria e agricoltura), al contrario il supporto è più alto nelle classi media, medio-alta o alta e fra coloro che lavorano nei servizi privati o che non sono mai entrati nel mercato del lavoro (studenti e casalinghi). Dall'altro lato, esaminando gli stessi fattori per i partiti populistici autoritari in sette paesi, emerge che queste formazioni sono più forti nelle coorti di mezza età e meno istruite, inoltre risultano tendenzialmente più di successo, con alcune eccezioni, nelle classi bassa e medio-bassa, con sostegno maggiore fra i lavoratori impiegati nell'industria e nell'agricoltura ma, in alcuni paesi, anche fra quelli impiegati nei servizi pubblici.

Se è vero che questi dati evidenziano l'esistenza di una frattura generazionale, è altresì vero che sottolineano la multidimensionalità della divisione che è anche dovuta a determinanti culturali ed economici; questo, oltre a farci notare che questo fenomeno assume le caratteristiche di un *cleavage* politico che contrappone pluralisti libertari e populistici autoritari, inducono a vedere questo fenomeno non solo come conseguenza di una “rivoluzione silenziosa” e generazionale ma anche come una ristrutturazione delle tradizionali divisioni economiche e sociali nel quadro della struttura socio-economica del XXI secolo. Infine ci invita a pensare alla possibilità di attuare un'agenda ambientalista in comunità politiche nelle quali questa è percepita come agenda di una parte dell'elettorato in antitesi con un'altra consistente porzione dell'elettorato.