

# An Econometric Study of the Determinants of Green Party Voting

## SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

Ingmar SCHUMACHER<sup>1</sup>

*IPAG Business School*

May 16, 2013

### **1 Background information on green party**

In this section I describe more fully why voting for green parties serves to reveal one's green preferences, and also why the focus on green party voting is a relevant one. Furthermore, I give an overview of the voting process in Germany, as well as a discussion of the green party in Germany, the Bündnis 90/Die Grünen.

#### **1.1 A closer look at green parties**

In the period after the Second World War a vast number of green movements sprung up that had mostly very local environmental problems on their agendas. However, they were seen as having too little impact on the political debate and, as a consequence, green parties formed in order to give these social movements a political voice. The rise of the green parties in the 1980s is thus really a phenomenon that one can, to a large extent, link to the increasing

destruction of the local and global environments, coupled with an increasing prosperity that allowed people to become financially independent enough to place more emphasis on ecological concerns. People furthermore noticed that their own impacts on the environment are nearly negligible and that own personal efforts lack a sufficiently strong peer effect on others. Hence, more and more green activists came to believe that solving environmental problems essentially requires supportive political action. As Barry [1] has aptly put it, “[t]o deal with environmental public bads and goods, the state is necessary to assure obedience to the laws that sustainability will require.” At the regional or national level, it is after all only the state that can raise taxes, provide financial incentives or introduce regulations such that environmental externalities get internalized by the markets. Hence, green parties formed in the hope that - at the regional, national or international level - the green political voice would obtain a political platform at the highest level of the government, such that green preferences are actually taken into account in the political decision-taking process.

It, thus, should not come as a surprise that green parties are the only political parties that have environmental sustainability as their core objective. This is clearly detailed out in the preamble of the Global Greens Charter that nearly all green parties around the world adopt:

We, as citizens of the planet and members of the Global Greens,

*United* in our awareness that we depend on the Earth’s vitality, diversity and beauty, and that it is our responsibility to pass them on, undiminished or even improved, to the next generation

*Recognising* that the dominant patterns of human production and consumption, based on the dogma of economic growth at any cost and the excessive and wasteful use of natural resources without considering Earth’s carrying capacity, are causing extreme deterioration in the environment and a massive extinction of species.

...

*Assert* the need for fundamental changes in people’s attitudes, values, and ways of producing and living

...

*Resolve* to promote a comprehensive concept of sustainability which

protects and restores the integrity of the Earth's ecosystems, with special concern for biodiversity and the natural processes that sustain life  
acknowledges the interrelatedness of all ecological, social and economic processes  
balances individual interests with the common good  
harmonises freedom with responsibility  
welcomes diversity within unity  
reconciles short term objectives with long term goals  
ensures that future generations have the same right as the present generation to natural and cultural benefits

...

*Commit* ourselves as Green parties and political movements from around the world to implement these interrelated principles and to create a global partnership in support of their fulfilment.

This political agenda clearly lays out the objectives of the green parties across the world. Though there are other parties that have, since then, integrated environmental concerns into their agendas, it is also well-known that they sub-due these environmental objectives to (in general) economic ones. Thus, one would expect that voting for green parties should reflect that environmental issues are top priority.

At the same time, it is also true that green parties, in addition to their primary objective of environmental sustainability, tend to have other secondary objectives, like women rights or social equality. As a consequence, voting for the green party could, in addition, be due to these alternative protest type criteria. Nevertheless, as Schreurs and Papadakis [5] note, "the agenda of green political groups and organizations includes much that is not specifically green, even though these preoccupations or values can be accommodated by what Goodin [3] refers to as a "green theory" or philosophy of value. Among these values are the focus on postmaterialism (see Inglehart [4]), the notion of nature as irreplaceable, the ideas of sustainability and sustainable development, the long-term consequences of our current actions, and the emancipation of oppressed groups (for instance, minorities, the poor, and women). Goodin describes these values as corollaries to a green theory value." Consequently, there is a tendency in the literature to view postmaterialistic values as highly

correlated with attitudes towards the environment. What I, therefore, assume, is that the clear objective of the green parties helps in attracting those voters that place priority on environmental problems. The potential measurement error of including those that vote the green party for other reasons but strictly environmental ones will be small, since these other reasons tend to strongly correlate with environmental attitudes.

## 1.2 Voting process in Germany

This section is intended for those readers that may wish for some background information on the voting process in Germany. Those readers familiar with the voting process in Germany may skip this section.

Political decisions in Germany are taken according to the so-called bicameral parliamentary system. This consists of the Lower House of the German Parliament (Bundestag), and the Federal Council or Upper House (Bundesrat). Elections for the Lower House are generally every four, while those for the Upper House are every four or five years.

The Lower House is the main organ that decides about legislation, the national budget plan, chooses the chancellor, and, for example, decides on the use of the army. The 598 members of the Lower House are voted directly through a mix between proportional representation and majority voting. Every voter has two votes. With the first vote one chooses a candidate that then would directly enter the Lower House if he or she receives the majority of the votes in the voter's administrative district. There are 299 of those administrative districts in Germany, and every one of these districts is supposed to hold approximately the same number of voters. Each administrative district sends the candidate who received most votes to the Lower House. With their second vote, voters do not vote directly for their preferred candidate, but they vote for their preferred party. Votes are then aggregated nationally and all parties that nationally received more than five percent of all votes may enter pre-selected candidates into the Lower House in proportion

to their share of national votes. In case there are more direct candidates of a party for the Lower House than that party's share of national votes would allow for, then these direct candidates are nevertheless admitted to the Lower House via so-called excess mandates (Überhangsmandat). Hence, under special cases the Lower Houses may have more than 598 members.<sup>1</sup>

The Upper House is the constitutional body that has a veto right for most decisions taken in the Lower House. It consists of members of the government of the sixteen federal states in Germany, where each state holds a certain number of votes that increases with its population, albeit at a decreasing rate. Every federal state has its own voting mechanism, which is either proportional representation, or majority voting, or a mix between the two.

### 1.3 The green party in Germany

The green party in Germany was essentially founded in 1993 when the German Green Party merged with the Bündnis 90. Since then it is known as Bündnis 90/Die Grünen. We shall simply call it the green party here. The core beliefs of the green party are well-summarized in the preamble to its fundamental program (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen [2], p. 10, own translation): “We combine ecology, autonomy, enlarged justice and living democracy. With the same emphasis we engage ourselves for non-violence and human rights.” The belief of the green party is that the approach of sustainable development in the ecological field can be used for and applied to other political agendas, too.

One of the main objectives of the green party is to stop the use of atomic power in Germany. The party has always been associated with this as one of its core principles. The belief is that “[t]he atomic energy is not a solution for the energy problem, but it creates only unpredictable new problems.” (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen [2], p.30) Consequently, one would expect that the number of atomic power plants, the government's plans for energy

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<sup>1</sup>For example, in the 2005 election there were 16 excess mandates.

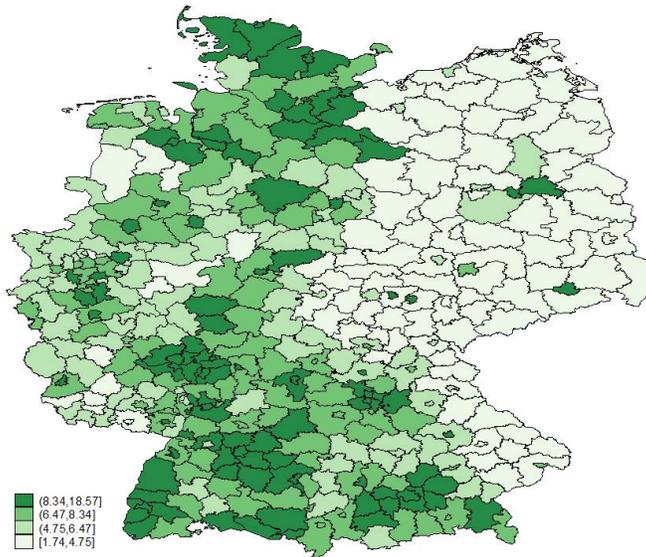


Figure 1: Green voting 2009

production, or the proximity to atomic plants may be criteria to vote for the green party. This point will be further investigated in section ???. The emphasis that the green party places on stopping nuclear energy can be understood when one looks at its success to implement its agenda while in power. In the 1998 federal election the green party received 6.7% of all votes for the Lower House and together with the stronger Social Democratic Party (SPD) it, for the first time, formed the government. In 2000, the red-green coalition decided, based on the lobbying of the green party, to phase out atomic power in Germany by 2020. It continued to form the government with the SPD in 2002, and subsequently imposed pressures that helped to shut down two nuclear power plants, one in 2003, the other in 2005. Since the 2005 election, the green party has played the role of an opposition party, since it was unable to enter a governmental coalition.

An example for the voting outcome of the second vote for the green party for the Lower House at the county level for 2009 is given in Figure 1. This consists of votes from 295 counties (Landkreise) and 107 urban districts (kreisfreie Städte) that are not associated

with a county.<sup>2</sup> One can see that green voting tends to cluster in western Germany, while the counties in the former region of East Germany have relatively fewer votes directed towards the green party.

## References

- [1] J. Barry. Green political theory and the state. *Contemporary Political Studies*, 1994.
- [2] Bündnix 90/Die Grünen. Die Zukunft ist grün. Grundsatzprogramm von BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN, April 2002, <http://www.gruene-partei.de>.
- [3] R. Goodin. *Green Political Theory*. Wiley, 1992.
- [4] R. Inglehart. *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society*. Princeton University Press, 1990.
- [5] M. Schreurs and E. Papadakis. *The A to Z of the Green Movement*. Scarecrow Press, 2009.

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<sup>2</sup>The 299 administrative units consist of 295 counties and 107 urban districts. Some administrative units consist of several counties or urban districts depending to population size.