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Without a Tinge of Red: The Fall and Rise of Estonian Greens[*]

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Abstract. We analyse the development of Green politics in Estonia from the Phosphate War of the late 1980s, through the virtual disappearance of the ecological dimension from the political scene, to the re-establishment of the Green Party in 2006. We put the ebb and flow of ecological politics into context and using macro- and micro-level data draw up a profile of the party's electoral base. It is easier to establish what the Green Party is not than to describe exactly what it is. It is clearly not similar to the Green parties of Western Europe. The contexts in which the parties have developed has influenced their nature. The Estonian Green party differentiates itself from its namesakes in the West with regard to its political goals, placement on the Left-Right continuum and the characteristics of its voters. We contend that rather than belonging to the realm of *post-modernism*, the Estonian Green Party may better be described as *ultra-modernist*.

In the 2007 Estonian parliamentary election a new Green Party succeeded in winning 7.1 percent of the votes and returned six members to the 101 strong *Riigikogu*. The party had been registered just three months earlier, but its history goes back to the late 1980s, when the Green Movement played an important role in Estonia re-gaining her independence. The "Phosphate War" (sometimes called "the Phosphate Spring") which the green movement "fought" against the Soviet authorities' plans for large-scale phosphate mining in North-Eastern Estonia has often been considered a crucial step on the path towards independence. The movement tested Gorbachev's commitment to *glasnost* and raised the bar of toleration under the regime. However the Green movement lost its momentum after Estonia became independent and its offshoots soon vanished from the political scene.

In this study we analyse the formative years of the new party with reference to its historical and ideological origins. Specifically, we seek to locate it within the broader picture of European green politics. The Green parties in Western Europe have usually been linked to the rise of post-material values pertaining to the "New Left". Based on the evidence available, we argue that the Estonian Green Party shares only a little more than the name and heightened sensitivity to environmental issues with its West European namesakes.

In the first section of the article we propose three models of new party emergence by contrasting the classical cleavage-based scenario with alternatives that are all relevant to the development of Estonian Greens. As mentioned above, the Green Party was not established all from scratch and the second part of the study will sketch the historical background of environmental politics in Estonia relevant for understanding the contemporary party. The penultimate section profiles the party's voters and their motivations using survey and ecological data. The concluding section discusses the findings and argues that the Estonian Green Party differentiates itself from its Western namesakes with regard to its political goals, placement on the Left-Right continuum and many characteristics of its voters. We contend that rather than belonging to the realm of *post-modernism*, the Estonian Green Party may better be described as being *ultra-modernist*.

1. Models of New Party Emergence

Even though conventional theory stresses the importance of societal or value change as the main determinant behind the rise of new political parties (e.g. Lipset & Rokkan 1967, Kitschelt 1988, Müller-Rommel 1989), they can emerge for a variety of reasons. Below, we present the traditional cleavage model together with two alternatives – the challenger and the entrepreneurial party. Even

though the models are theoretically distinct ideal types, they all help to understand the reasons behind the emergence of Estonian Greens.

The classical cleavage model. The classical cleavage approach to new parties focuses on changes in social structures or social values as the driving force behind new parties. The great ancestor of this approach is the seminal work by Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan (1967). They studied the evolution of West European party systems and linked the emergence of political parties to the surfacing of new political divisions or cleavages. Their study stopped short of looking at the Green parties, however. While Lipset and Rokkan looked at *structural* conflicts in a society, the rise of Green politics has attributed to a conflict between materialist and post-materialist *values* (Müller-Rommel 1989, Inglehart 1997, 1977).

Yet, no deterministic link is to be assumed between the prevalence of post-materialist values and success of Green parties. For example, despite high prevalence of post-materialist values, a significant Green party has never got off the ground in Denmark (von Beyme 1985: 133). Two main reasons can be blamed for such failures: existing parties can accommodate the new demands or the electoral system can be hostile to newcomers (Rohrschneider 1993, Hug 2001). Other restrictive institutions – such as stringent party registration requirements and party financing rules favouring incumbents – and lack of resources available for mobilising the electorate may also play a part (Lucardie 2000, Sikk, A. 2006). On the other hand, as will be shown later, the rise of post-material values is not a necessary condition for the spread of environmental concerns. Remarkably, very little post-materialism was involved in the rise of ecological movements in the Communist countries in late 1980s. Hence, the salience of environmental issues and post-materialist values need not go hand in hand.

Challenger parties. In terms of the typology proposed by Paul Lucardie (2000), the first model portrays a 'prophetic' party in that it articulates a new ideology. However, it is unreasonable to assume that *all* new parties reflect structural or value changes; in fact, a new party need not voice novel political demands at all. A 'challenger' or 'purifier' party (Rochon 1985, Lucardie 2000) comes to life as old parties representing an ideology or advocating a concern fail in some sense. Some parties may voice political demands that are not directly related to social divides. Such parties vary, ranging from anti-corruption parties that emerged in Estonia and Latvia in the early 2000s to various personalistic and populist parties seen in many countries (see Sikk, A. 2006). The failure of old parties to represent concerns or to deliver policies in a trustworthy way leads to political disenchantment. This in turn expands the pool of voters only waiting to be mobilised, increasing the

incentives for new political parties. Note that we make no normative judgements about the preferability of cleavage model over the challenger party model for the sake of democracy. Arguably, if corruption among the political elite becomes widespread, an anti-establishment party can be a genuinely progressive force (Sikk 2007). Then again, social divides can lead to a rise of parties with poor democratic credentials.

The Challenger Party model makes weak assumptions regarding party supporters – they want the newcomer to break the *status quo*. While some may sympathise with the concerns raised by the party, for others, the dislike for incumbents may be the real driving force. Protest votes are vital for programmatically vague parties but they may also be picked up by parties with clear programs. While most voters presumably choose parties according to programmatic affinity, secondary qualities of political parties – such as the likeability of their leaders or candidates – can be very important. Especially those who wish to punish incumbents may not pay much attention to minutiae of policy differences.

Entrepreneurial parties. All political parties have an agenda that goes beyond or even against their publicly stated aims. This also goes for highly programmatic parties that may choose to veil policy plans that can be costly in a catch-allist electoral environment. Conservatives, for instance, may hesitate talking about cuts in public services, socialists may refrain from mentioning tax increases, nationalists can tone down their rhetoric towards minorities and rural parties may conceal plans that can increase the cost of food. The Greens may try to avoid mentioning the full economic costs of ecologically sound policies. Some parties have more sinister covert aims – using the public office for private goods. This may take a range of forms. In the more benign cases, they try to satisfy party leaders' private needs or mere vanity. In more malign cases, a party may relinquish its representative functions, turn into something resembling an enterprise, merely producing returns to its founders, as has been argued about Silvio Berlusconi's *Forza Italia* (Hopkin & Paolucci 1999). Such *entrepreneurial* parties still need at least a rudimentary political profile for electoral and legitimising purposes and have to deliver some real policies when in power. Needless to say, there is a continuum between the improbable extremes of a fully sincere/impeccable and a totally hypocritical/sinister party. Yet, in the world of ideal types, we can still conceive of a party that has been set up by "entrepreneurs" with the sole aim to serve their private ends. A very similar "business firm" model of parties has been proposed by Hopkin & Paolucci (1999), but we would like to stress that the ultimate beneficiaries may be party donors rather than a party itself and yet the whole affair may be positive-sum game – for example, we could imagine a situation where government support for ecological industries benefits the corporate party donors yet at the same

time produces positive externalities for the society at large. Mediating factors like electoral institutions and resources influence the chances of entrepreneurial parties. They are perhaps even more important for here than in the first two models because such parties face higher costs of camouflaging their intentions and they may have to spend more for mobilisation purposes since they patently lack a natural constituency.

Classifying the Estonian Green Party may look like an easy task. After all, the West European Green parties essentially developed following the cleavage model; that is, as a consequence of a value change among their respective populations. As shown below, that is only partly true of Estonian Greens. The party manifesto and its leaders emphasise the environmental issue that used to be largely overlooked in Estonian politics. The Greens also stress the need to engage citizens and NGOs more in policy making that could easily be associated to post-modern values. Their voters stand out as being younger, more educated and in some ways socially more active than the average voter. In that they appear similar to the "post-modernised" support base of the West European Greens. Yet, due to historical context, the Estonian Green party and its supporters are slightly right-leaning in stark contrast to its left-of-the-centre West European counterparts.

The Estonian Greens seem vaguely post-materialist at best. The party manifesto often appears socially conservative and "ultra-modernist" with its frequent references to technological innovation as a panacea for environmental degradation under an essentially capitalist economic system. There is not much in a way of value or social divide between the Greens and other main political parties. Remarkably, we did not even find clear evidence that environmental issues rank high among the supporters of the party. The party has certainly managed to mobilise genuine environmentalists and some post-modernist voters, but a large segment of its support base has been made up by voters with diverse backgrounds drawn to the party because of its general likeability or out of disillusionment with old political parties. There is also evidence of a symbiosis between political and business entrepreneurs as the Greens' election campaign was partly sponsored by people active in the renewable energy sector ("Vastused küsimustele").

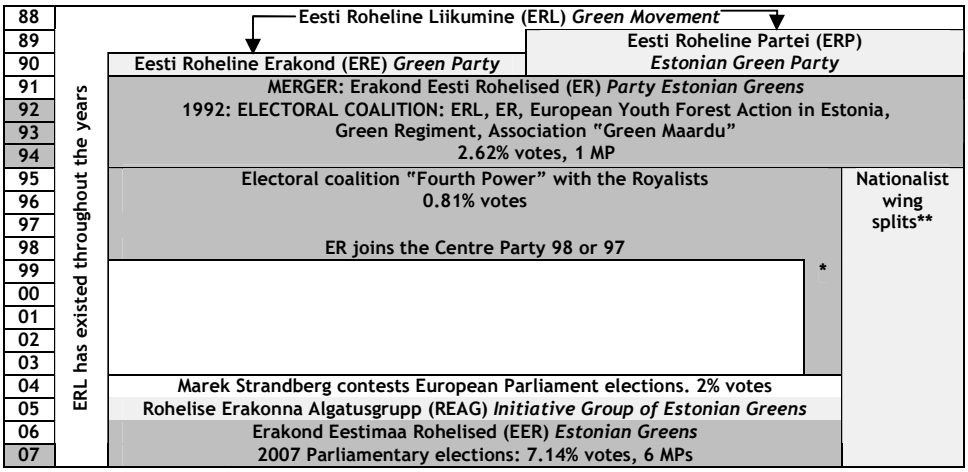
2. A Short History of the Estonian Greens

The fortunes of Estonian Greens fluctuated remarkably between 1987 and 2007. In this section, we give a brief historical overview of the developments with particular attention to aspects that have

relevance for understanding the success of the Green party in 2007.[1] Table 1 shows a timeline of the most important events. We divide the twenty year period into three phases:

1. 1987-1992: the rise of the ecological movement and its transformation into a Green Party in the first post-independence parliament.
2. 1992-2004: the decline of the Green Party into extinction.
3. 2004-2007: the re-birth of the Green Party and its return to the parliament.

Table 1 Development of Green political organisations in Estonia, 1988-2008



Notes: Shading in the leftmost column indicates years when Greens were represented in the parliament.
* In some respects, the Green Party continued to exist 1999–2006 even though it was not officially registered (see text).
** The nationalist wing did not support the electoral coalition with the Royalists and split from the ER (Alvela 2005).

2.1. Phase 1:1987-1992

The advent of Green politics in Estonia dates back to 1987 when the Soviet central government started preparations for large-scale phosphate mining in North-Eastern Estonia. The plans triggered a widespread reaction among the population.[2] While phosphate mining would have inflicted irreparable damage to the environment, ethnic identity concerns featured high on the agenda of the emerging green movement. The Soviet model of industrial development had paid only scant attention to the environment and had been based on the influx of labour from the rest of the Soviet Union, mostly Russia. Even though the immigration was not forced in a strict sense, the people were tempted to move to Estonia by benefits – such as adequate housing – that were often not available for the local population. The newly arrived had few incentives to learn the local language and, consequently, the status of the Estonian language declined while Russian was overtaking in the

[1] We do not intend to give a full account of pre-independence Green movement – its story has been well covered by Rein Taagepera (1993) and Matthew Auer (1998) among others. In Estonian, Juhan Aare (1999) presents a detailed insider's account of events from 1971 to 1989.
[2] In fact the first battles of the "Phosphate War" took place as early as 1971 among central authorities and some local leaders and Estonian scientists (Aare 1999)

public sphere. This created a logical connection between policies detrimental to the Estonian natural environment and that threatened the Estonians' national identity.

The Estonian Green Movement (*Eesti Roheline Liikumine*) was established in April 1988. Its main activities included campaigns to clean up clutter after the Soviet Army (e.g. removal of barbed wire from the North Estonian coast, Lahtvee 2008), peaceful demonstrations against the occupying forces and biking expeditions to areas affected by environmental degradation.[3] During its heyday, the Green Movement gained both national importance and international fame (Geyer 1988) as it passed a declaration on August 25, 1988 demanding Bruno Saul to step down from his post of the Chair of Estonian SSR's Council of Ministers within sixty days. Eventually, Saul did step down though it remains unclear to what extent it was related to the actions of the Green Movement (Toomla 1999: 222).

The birth of the Estonian Green Party was as complex as party development often got in Central and Eastern Europe during late communist and early post-communist years. The Green Movement initially sprouted two parties – *Eesti Roheline Partei* (ERP) was established in August 1989 and *Eesti Roheline Erakond* (ERE) in October 1990 – both translate as Estonian Green Party into English. Already in October 1989, ERP became a member of European Greens, but as it soon virtually ceased to exist, the two merged in December 1991 to form the "Estonian Greens" (*Erakond "Eesti Rohelised"*, Toomla 1999: 222-3).

In the 1992 Riigikogu elections, the electoral coalition of Estonian Green Movement, Estonian Green Party, European Youth Forest Action in Estonia, Green Regiment and Association "Green Maardu" was supported by 2.62 percent of voters. Despite the fact that the coalition did not cross the five percent electoral threshold receiving it received a single mandate in the parliament. This was due to the personal popularity of Rein Järlik, who received 9 percent of votes in his district that granted him a personal mandate. The electoral list was highly heterogeneous and many of the candidates later found themselves among candidates for a variety of parties. Their 1992 top candidate Jüri Liim has later contested national and local elections with the Royalists, the Forest Party, the coalition of the Right and Moderates, the Union of Tallinn City Dwellers, the People's Union, and the Pro Patria Union. He later became infamous for threatening to blow up the controversial Bronze Soldier in Tallinn.[4] Jüri Martin, who in 1995 succeeded Liim as the chair was the driving force behind the later merger of the bulk of the party with the Centre Party. Rein Järlik,

[3] These outings have continued to the present day: in 2007 the eighteenth expedition took place.
[4] The Bronze soldier made headlines in international press as it was relocated amidst rioting in April 2007.

the only Green MP elected in 1992, joined the Coalition Party before the end of his term. Later, he has been active as the president of the August 20 Club, the organisation of the members of Estonian Supreme Soviet that passed the Declaration of Independence in 1991 (Järlik 2004). Einar Laigna – a Catholic ordained priest and high-ranking military officer and purportedly a radical theologian (Kärmas 2001) – ran for the 2007 *Riigikogu* elections on the rural People's Union list. In 2003, their list also included Mart Helme, the sixth-ranking candidate of the Green party in 1992. From 1995 to 1999, Helme served as the Estonian ambassador to Russia, establishing himself later as a leading Eurosceptic. In 2004 he was expelled from the People's Union after a row with party leadership over the removal of a controversial war monument in Lihula. Valdur Lahtvee (no. 5 in 1992) and Maret Merisaar (no. 12) were both elected to the Riigikogu for the Green Party in 2007.

The life histories of the 1992 candidates reveal the heterogeneity among the original Green activists. In this sense, the Green Party (as an outgrowth of the Green Movement) is similar to most other anti-Communist movements in Central and Eastern Europe. After their primary objectives had been achieved – in case of Estonian Greens the national independence, an end to environmentally damaging Soviet policies and the shutting down of many heavy polluters – the parties or movements did not simply call it a day, but split into fractions. Some of the Green activists remained active in the Green Movement and later formed the core of the reincarnated Green Party; some were absorbed by other parties. We contend that such party migration results from the fact that political entrepreneurs may find it difficult to leave the scene after the passing of their organization's *raison d'être*. Yet, after losing their original common denominator, they may have little in common. The Green activists followed very different paths – some joining the national-conservative parties such as Pro Patria or People's Union, and yet others the centre-left and minority-friendly Centre Party.

2.2. Phase 2: 1992-2004

As noted earlier, the only Estonian Green MP prior to the 2007 election left the party before the end of his parliamentary term. Meanwhile, the importance of the Estonian Greens in national politics had vanished and in 1995 they joined an electoral coalition with the Royalists who faced similar problems.[5] The coalition was supported by a meagre 0.81 percent of voters. Joining the Royalists alienated the nationalist wing led by Jüri Liim. Prior to the 1999 parliamentary elections the remainder of the party merged with the Centre Party, losing further members in the process. The

[5] Even though the stated aim of the Royalists was to create a constitutional monarchy and the party was known for its antics in the parliament, they were a protest party rather than a joke.

formal merger was made necessary as electoral coalitions were banned in 1998 and henceforth only registered political parties could put forward candidate lists.

In some ways, the rump Green Party continued to exist even as it failed to survive as a registered party after falling short of the 1,000 members required by Estonian Political Parties Act (Antsov et al. 1998). It continued to be a member of the European Greens, which they had joined already in October 1989 (Lahtvee 2008). The Green Movement was active throughout the two decades. Some Green politicians even saw advantages in operating an NGO as that allowed for more freedom of action – there was less need for compromises often required of political parties in the parliament (Maret Merisaar, cited in Rudi et al. 2000).

2.3. Phase 3: 2004-2007

Late 1990s and early 2000s saw significant changes in Estonian society, economy, politics and international situation. In economic and political terms, the country dramatically changed direction from East to West, joining the EU and NATO in 2004. Economically, Estonia established itself as one of the pioneers of market reforms among the post-communist countries. It witnessed impressive economic growth – between 1999[6] and 2007 Estonian GDP grew on average by eight percent annually (EBRD 2008). The booming economy produced a considerable new middle class who did not have to worry obsessively about earning their daily bread. Whereas the middle classes that formed the support base of the West European Green movements and parties were linked to the strong and bureaucratic welfare state, the new middle class in Estonia was born under robust free market capitalism.

For several reasons, the environment made a comeback in newspaper headlines and on the political agenda. 2006 saw three major ecological disasters hit the Gulf of Finland. In January, an oil spill from an unidentified vessel reached Nõva on Estonia's North-Western coast. Thousands of wintering seabirds were affected and volunteers turned up in great numbers to help clean up the seashore and birds with chances of survival. Barely two months later a cargo ship, Runner-4, carrying aluminium sank near the small Estonian island of Vaindloo. It was feared that large amount of heavy oil would leak into the sea (Soomere & Quak 2007). In the autumn, the infamous tanker, Probo Koala, that had left toxic waste in several West African countries before entered the North-Western Estonia port of Paldiski (*Africa Confidential* 20060. It led to Greenpeace actions and

[6] 1999 was the year when the Green Party disappeared, but also when the country recovered from the aftershocks of Asian and Russian economic crises.

press releases from the Green Party initiative group both hitting the headlines, once again bringing the environment to the top of the political agenda.

Global hikes in energy prices, fears about the stability of supplies and evidence that Russia was using oil and gas supplies as a political means to influence countries of the former Soviet Union[7] elevated energy to the status of a major political issue. Unsurprisingly, these developments have led many countries to discuss diversification of their energy supplies. In Estonia, the prospects of nuclear energy were vigorously debated. Domestic political turmoil erupted after the three Baltic Prime Ministers signed a declaration stating the aim of developing a jointly financed nuclear power plant in Lithunania after the closure of Ignalina in 2009 (*ENS News* 2006). The declaration received considerable attention in Estonian media and was controversial as there was no hint of such plans in the long-term electricity strategy which the parliament had approved only a few months earlier (Poom 2007). The plans triggered a strong reaction from the Green movement and stirred memories of the Chernobyl catastrophe (Sikk, R. 2006). In July 2007, when the Green Party was already in the parliament, it initiated an extraordinary sitting of the *Riigikogu* after Prime Minister Andrus Ansip had signed a new and more specific nuclear energy memorandum with his Baltic colleagues (*Postimees*, July 21, 2007). The future of oil shale mining also became an issue of political debate (Lahtvee 2008).[8] Another extensively discussed topic was the plan to build the Nordstream sub-surface gas pipeline directly from Russia to Germany that would cut off the Baltic states off from the Russian oil supply chains to Western Europe and create environmental hazards for the Baltic Sea. Here, security concerns overlapped with environmental concerns. That echoes the late 1980s in that the Eastern neighbour is seen a source of danger to both national sovereignty and the environment. Even if oil shale may be the optimal solution to the energy problems cost- and security-wise – and presumably popular among the population at large – it is the least appealing from an environmental point of view. However, the high ranking of these issues on the political agenda gave the Greens a distinct voice in some of the key political debates.

Hence, the conditions were ripe for the Green Party in terms of political salience of environmental issues and potential support base affluent enough to prioritise environment over each extra penny. Other conditions still created substantial hindrances. In order to be registered and contest

[7] Russia cut gas exports to Ukraine in the beginning of 2006. A few weeks later, explosions caused distruptions in gas supply to Georgia (Hauser & Kernic 2006: 155, 158).

[8] Estonia has met its electricity needs from oil shale based power plants in the North-East of the country. However, that comes at the cost of substantial CO_2 emissions and oil shale will lose its competitive edge once electricity markets are opened up according to the EU rules. For more, see a report by Estonian Foreign Policy Institute (2006: 11, 16).

parliamentary elections, a party needs at least 1,000 permanent members.[9] Besides the cost of mobilising members behind a would-be party, cost of campaigning has been high and increasing in Estonia – between 1995 and 2007 the total officially reported expenditures increased nearly tenfold from 1.2 to 10.7 Euros per each vote cast (Sikk, A. 2006: 102, Select Committee of Riigikogu …, n.d.). That clearly exceeds the impressive GDP growth figures reported above. For parliamentary parties, the increase has been partly compensated by substantial increases in direct public funding, but state financing for extra-parliamentary parties is small and only available to parties that won at least one percent of votes in the most recent *Riigikogu* election.

Therefore, it is not surprising that the re-birth of the Green Party took place in careful steps. The take-off point was the candidacy in 2004 European Parliament elections of Marek Strandberg who later became the main initiator of the new party. He saved the parliamentary parties of an unpleasant surprise by failing to get elected, but managed to win 2.3 percent of votes. His intentions to re-establish the Green Party were already publicly known and received an impetus from his decent electoral performance. At the very least he managed to get some free and positive publicity to his persona and his techno-Green (i.e. protecting environment by using new technology and supporting R&D) ideas.[10] The Green Party Initiative Group was established as an NGO in May 2005. The membership requirement was finally met in November 2006 and the party – now called the Party of Estonian Greens (*Erakond Eestimaa Rohelised*) – held its inaugural general assembly on November 25, 2006.

While some public opinion surveys before March 2007 election listed the Greens as the third most popular party in Estonia (Koch 2007), the eventual result was less sensational but still good for a party established barely three months earlier (see Table 2). Following the election the Greens were invited to coalition negotiations with the Reform Party, the Pro Patria & Res Publica Union and the Social Democrats and were dumped only halfway through the talks. However, the Greens were initially satisfied that many of their proposals that had made it to the government manifesto were not thrown out with the party (Lahtvee 2008).

[9] Regularly updated lists of party members are publicly available over internet (https://ar.eer.ee/erakonnad.py). In order to be secure against possible mass defections a "sustainable" number of party members is even higher.

[10] Ten years earlier he had been acquitted in a high profile court case related to the sale of roubles following the 1992 currency reform. The original scandal led to resignation of Prime Minister Mart Laar in 1994 (*Estonian Court Acquits...* 1996).

Table 2. Riigikogu and European Parliament election results

	2003 (RK)		2004 (EP)		2007 (RK)	
	V%	S%	V%	S%	V%	S%
Reform Party	17.7	18.8	12.2	16.6	27.8	30.8
Centre Party	25.4	27.7	17.5	16.6	26.1	28.7
Pro Patria & Res Publica Union	-	-	-	-	17.9	18.8
Moderates/Social Democrats	7	5.9	36.8	50.0	10.6	9.9
People's Union	13	12.9	8.0	0	7.1	5.9
Greens	-	-	2.3*	0	7.1	5.9
Res Publica	24.6	27.7	6.7	0	-	-
Pro Patria	7.3	6.9	10.5	16.6	-	-
Others	5.0	0	6.0	0	3.4	0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Vabariigi Valimiskomisjon (www.vvk.ee)
* Marek Strandberg as an independent candidate.

3. Profiling the Estonian Greens

In this section, we present a profile of Estonian Greens based on survey and ecological data. Shortly after the 2007 *Riigikogu* election the Department of Political Science, University of Tartu, conducted the Estonian national election survey (n=1,008). The number of Green Party supporters among the respondents was proportional to electoral results and even despite the relatively small number of Green voters (60) the data does provide some fairly robust information about the party's support base. In addition, we have analysed Green support using a database of municipal voting results and variables from regional statistics databases compiled by Daniel Bochsler and Allan Sikk.[11] Further, we have used the party's programmatic documents, articles and interview findings for help and guidance in interpreting statistical data.

This section is divided into two parts. First, we take a look at socio-demographic characteristics of Green voters together with vote changes between 2003 and 2007 parliamentary elections. Thereafter, we analyse political alignment and value structures of the Green voters. Our principal objective is to compare Estonian Greens to their West European counterparts and draw insights from data that will enable us to locate the Green Party between the models of new party emergence presented at the beginning of this study.

Evidence on whether the Estonian Greens share characteristics with West European ecological parties is mixed. On the one hand, they the Estonian Greens advocated more frequent use of direct democracy and empowerment of civil society organisations in decision making. Initially the party

[11] This strategy has been advocated for studying Greens and other small parties by Birch (2009).

also opted for a flat leadership structure with a number of spokespersons rather than a single leader.[12] On the other hand, the views of its leaders have been supportive of the essentials capitalist economic system – the introduction of environmental restrictions is seen as a modern equivalent of the ban on slavery that made capitalism more humane without ringing its death toll ("Vastused küsimustele" 2007). The Greens did not rule out coalitions with any Estonian parties (Lahtvee 2008), characterised themselves as "conservative Greens" ("Vastused küsimustele" 2007) and were initially happy with the prospect of joining a right-of-centre cabinet.[13] In this the Estonian party deviates from the general trend among West European Greens, who have clearly been aligned with the Left (Mair 2007: 215), but similar to the recently successful Czech Greens who align themselves rather with the Right (Smith 2006: 4).

The data from the Estonian election survey reveal that the Green Party received virtually no support among non-Estonians. This could partly be blamed on the fairly nationalist and anti-migration historical backdrop of ecological movement, even if the relationship between immigration and environmental degradation was manifestly spurious – both were the result of Soviet policies of colonisation. However, as it is difficult to find much that could annoy the Russian-speakers in the present-day party, it is equally likely that the lack of minority support results from a thin pocketbook that did not allow the party to run a bilingual campaign. Besides parallel campaign requirements, mobilising Russian voters was difficult as their support for the (predominantly ethnic Estonian) Centre Party had been rather stable over the last couple of elections.

Our data did not show any significant gender or personal income bias in the support for the Green Party – women were as likely to support the party as men and the average income of Green supporters approached the overall average. However, the support was slightly higher in urban areas, when controlling for the strong effect of ethnicity.[14] The support is rather flat over the age groups though the level of support declines among the elderly (see Figure 1). In contrast to the early days of Green parties in Western Europe, the support is only modestly higher than average among the younger cohorts. On the other hand, similarly to West European ecological parties, the supporters of the Green party are more educated than those of almost any other political party (see Figure 2) and the average level of education would be even more clearly above all other parties if we included current university students.

[12] In 2008, the statute of the party was changed to establish a single leader.
[13] Both the Reform Party and the Pro Patria and Res Publica Union are clearly on the right of centre. Even though the Social Democrats have moved left in recent years, it is still relatively rightist social democratic party by European standards.
[14] The share of non-Estonians among the population of five largest cities is considerably higher than among the population at large.

Figure 1 Support for political parties by age group (%), Riigikogu elections 2007

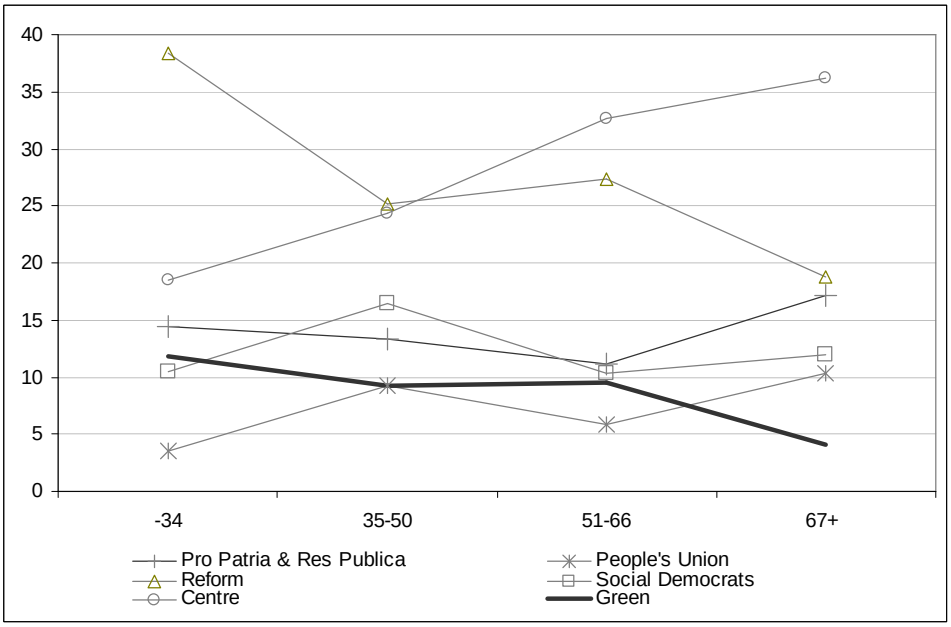


Figure 2 Level of education among supporters of political parties, *Riigikogu* elections 2007

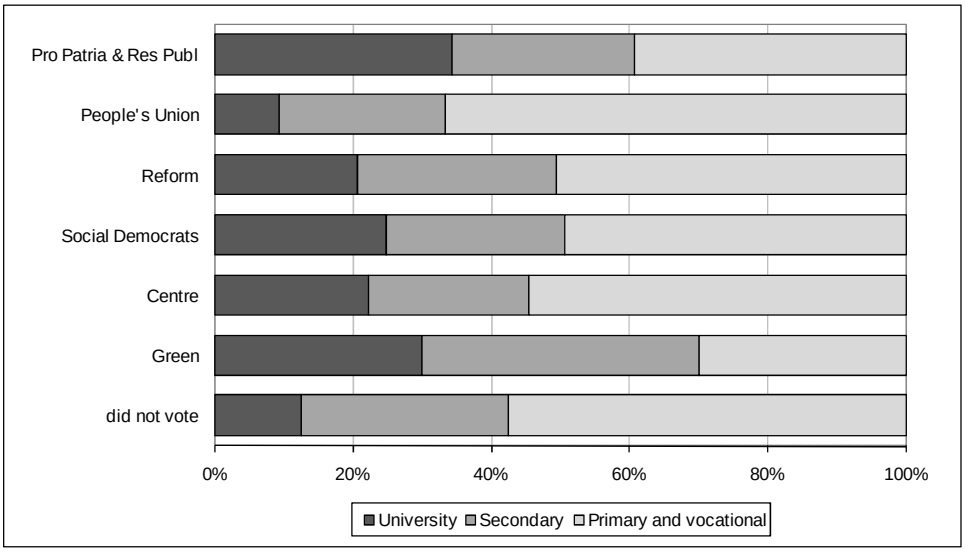
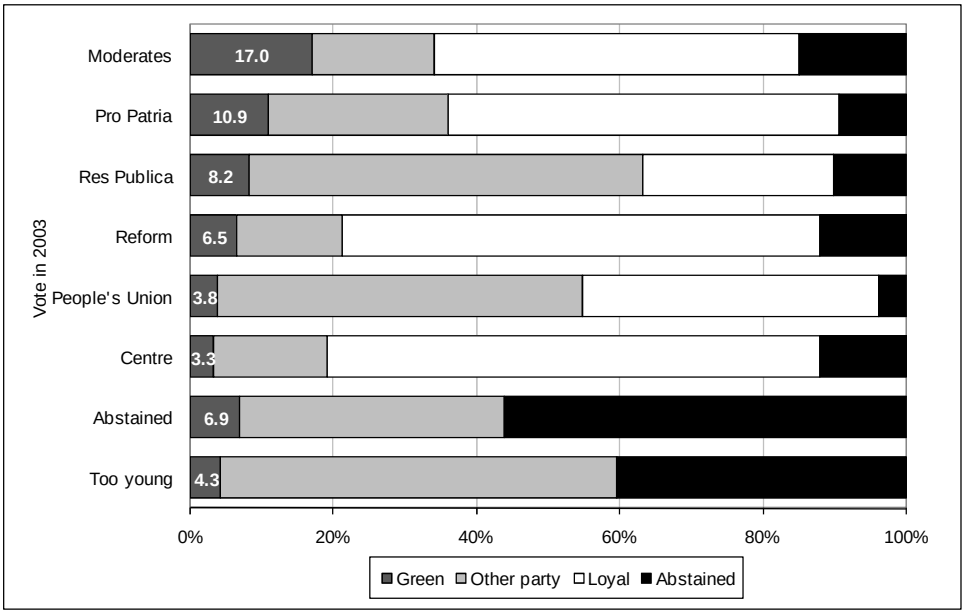


Figure 3 and Figure 4 show the sources of Green support in terms of their voters' previous preferences. The Moderates (now Social Democrats) had the highest defection rate to the Greens (17.0 percent) among all parties. Also, over five percent of those who supported Pro Patria, Res Publica, or Reform Party in 2003 opted for the Greens in 2007. When looking at it from the Green's point of view, their voters had a rather heterogeneous voting history and, noticeably, more than one in five had abstained in the previous parliamentary elections. Thus, while the Greens managed to mobilize *some* absentees, the bulk of its popularity came at the cost of other parties.

Figure 3 Vote switching from 2003 to 2007 *Riigikogu* elections.



Notes: Numbers in white show the proportion of party's voters defecting to the Greens. Before 2007 election, Pro Patria and and Res Publica merged (both marked as 'loyal' here) and Moderates were renamed Social Democratic Party.

Figure 4 2007 Green voters' preference in 2003 *Riigikogu* elections

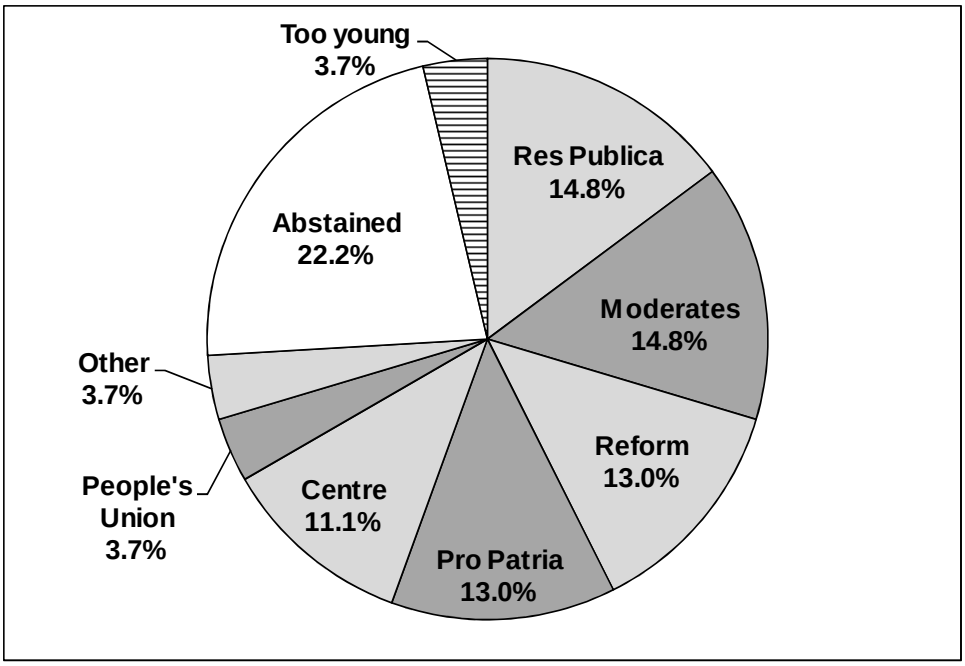


Table 3 OLS Regression Model of Green Party Support in Municipalities

	Mean	Median	Range	b	(SE)	T	p
Dependent variable:	6.86	7.03	0 to 20				
Green vote %							
Independent variables:							
Eastern Slav citizens %[1]	16.7	9.24	0.138 to 91.9	-0.0719	0.00712	-10.10	0.000
ln(income tax per capita 2006)	8.64	8.68	7.47 to 9.72	2.64	0.643	4.10	0.000
Dummy for Strandberg			(0 or 1)	0.898	0.489	1.84	0.067
Constant				-15.1	5.41	-2.79	0.006
R^2=0.547, N=234							

Source: Database of municipal election results compiled by Allan Sikk and Daniel Bochsler.
Note: Model weighted by the absolute number of participating voters in municipalities.
[1] Estimates based on 2000 census figures of Eastern Slavs and a constant citizenship rate of 50% among Eastern Slavs.

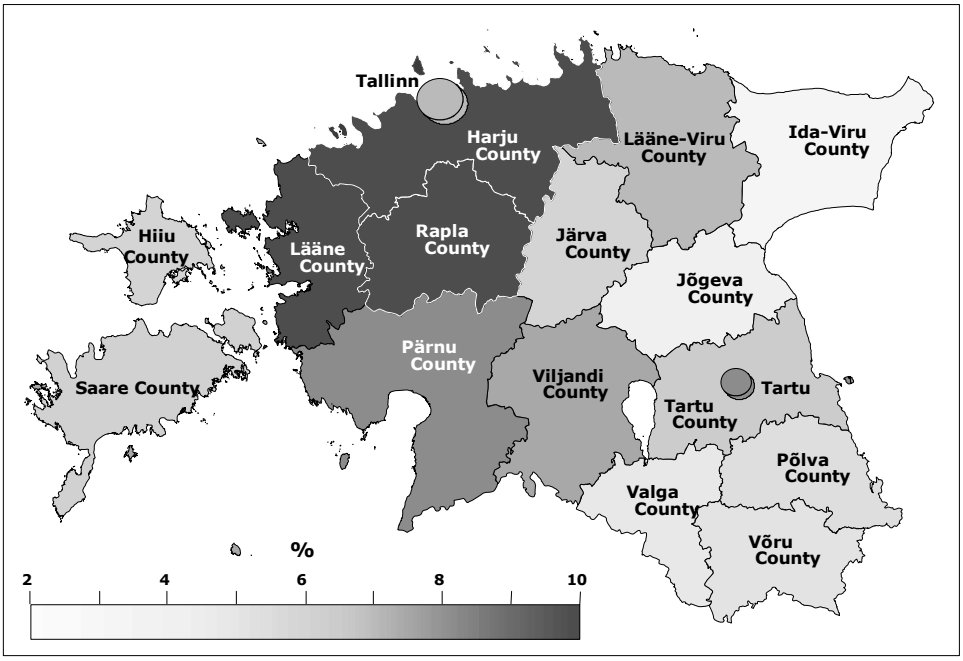
Table 3 shows an OLS regression model of Green Party support across Estonian municipalities based on 2007 electoral data, personal income tax per capita in 2006 and ethnic data from 2000 population census. Although the social structure of the municipalities may have changed since 2000 – especially as a result of the growth of commuter areas around Tallinn – many of the new arrivals are probably still registered as voters elsewhere.[15] As expected, we see a strong negative relationship between the percentage of Eastern Slavs among citizens and the Green vote indicating nearly universally ethnic Estonian support base. The party also tends to be more popular in more affluent municipalities – the model predicts a difference of 5.9 percentage points between the most and least affluent municipality *ceteris paribus*. The candidacy of Marek Strandberg – the party's main initiator – in Harju and Rapla County added slightly less than a percentage point to the Green vote.

Figure 5 shows the geographic distribution of Green Party support. The pattern of support corresponds well with our analysis of survey and ecological data. Ida-Virumaa and Tallinn where the proportion of Russian-speakers is higher, has lower support for the party – in case of Tallinn, compared to surrounding areas. Also, in most rural counties with high numbers of people employed in agriculture, the support is lagging behind average. Three counties in Northern and North-Western Estonia have support levels clearly above average. That can be explained by a mixture of candidacy and structural effects. On the one hand, the commuter areas on the outskirts of Tallinn are home to many who enjoy clearly above-survival living standards. On the other hand, Harju and Rapla County formed the electoral constituency where both Strandberg and Valdur Lahtvee (the leader of the parliamentary group) contested the election. The high level of support enjoyed in Lääne County

[15] The electoral rolls in Estonia are based on constantly updated data from population registers. Changing a registration after moving from one municipality to another is not strictly compulsory and is often not done out of neglect or because of benefits that go with it (i.e. childcare and schools).

is evidently an effect of popularity of Aleksei Lotman, a locally well-known biologist who worked for years in one of the main Estonian natural reserves there.

Figure 5 Geographic distribution of Green Party support.

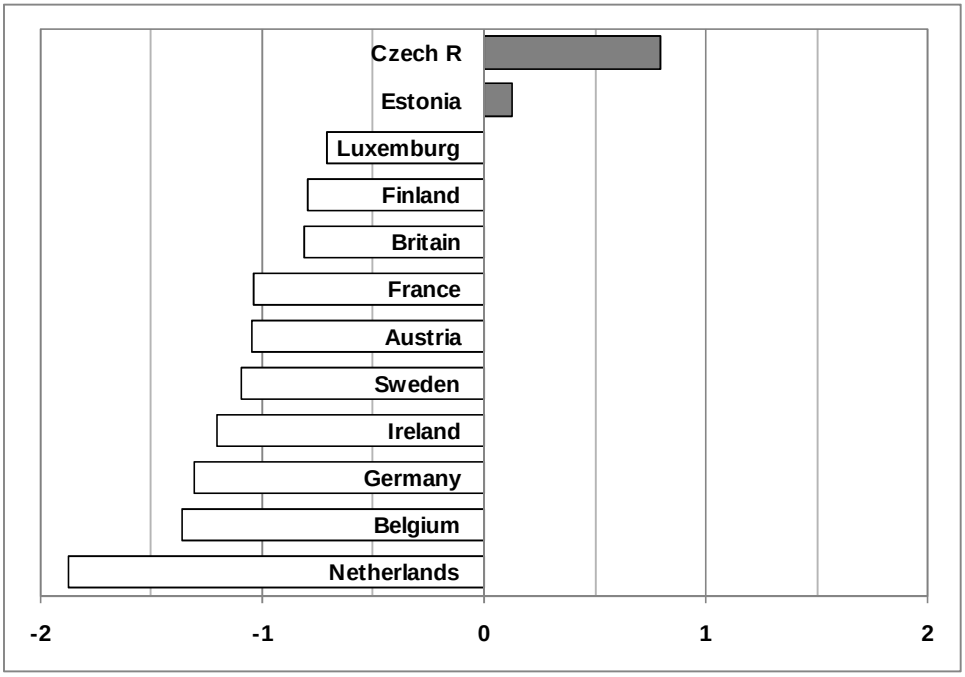


Source: Vabariigi Valimiskomisjon (www.vvk.ee)

Above we attempted to discern the structural characteristics of Green voters. However, it is human beings, not social structures that vote and in order to get a better understanding of the Green Party we need to look into the interests, motivations and values of its supporters. Figure 6 shows the self-placement of Green voters on the Left-Right scale in twelve European countries with strongest Green parties. The scale is relative as it reflects the distance between the average Green voter and the average voter in each country. The Estonian and Czech Green voters stand out by being considerably less left-leaning than their Western European counterparts. Although there is substantial variance around the means in each country, Green voters in Western Europe tend to place themselves to the left of the national average, whereas the average Estonian Green voter was closer to the centre of Estonian politics. If anything, the Estonian Green voters appear on the right of the average Estonian voter. The difference from the centre is, however, not statistically significant at the 95% level (p=0.33), largely due to the spread of Green voters on the scale (see below).[16]

[16] The same applies for the Czech Republic (p=.12)

Figure 6 Self-placement of Green Party supporters against national average (10-point scale)

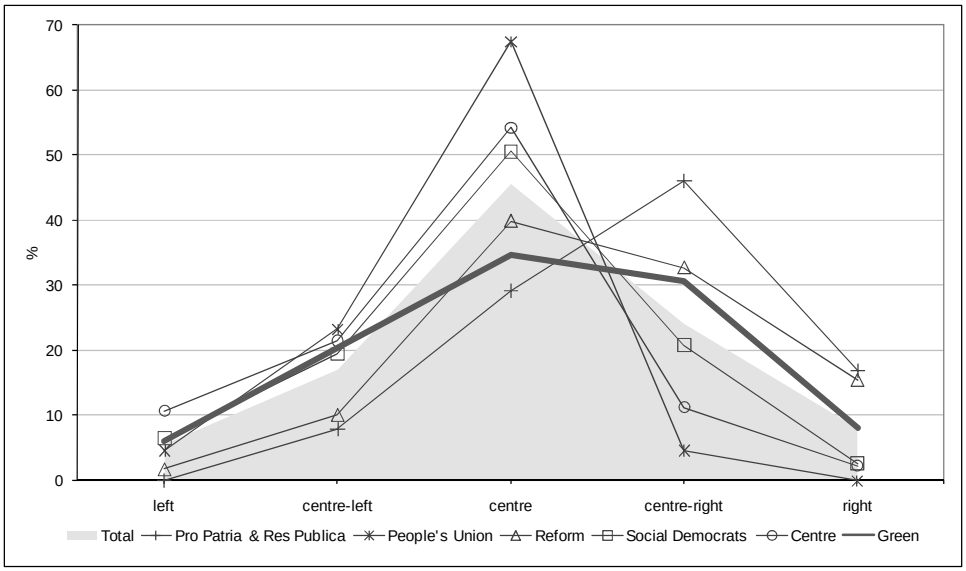


Source: European Election Study 2004, Green Party supporters in European Elections.
Estonian election study 2007, Green Party supporters in national elections.

West European Greens have generally been considered to be "New-Left" or "left-libertarian" parties or ones that do not fit the classical Left-Right scale well (Kitschelt 1988; Kaelberer 1993).[17] Indeed, asking people to report their position of the Left-Right scale if they might not feel at home there could lead to biased conclusions. Yet it does seem meaningful to describe the West European Green voters as Left-leaning in the traditional sense (Birch 2009, Knutsen 1998, Müller-Rommel 1985). Although the relative positions of their voters on the Left-Right scales vary, the frequency distributions of their supporters clearly peak at the left of national averages. Placing "the average" Estonian Green voter on the Left-Right scale is controversial because the deviation among the respondents is very high. Figure 7 shows that even though the distribution of Green voters on the ideological scale peaks slightly right of the centre, considerable proportion of its voters places themselves to the left of the middle position. This indicates that the classical Left-Right scale fails to define the Estonian Green Party, as has also been noted by members of the party (e.g., Tammert 2007; Lahtvee 2008); alternatively, the Green party has a fairly heterogeneous support base.

[17] There are minor exceptions of environmental parties that are not clearly on the left – e.g. the environmental niche in Sweden has been occupied by the Centre Party (Rohrschneider 1993),

Figure 7 Self-placement of Estonian parties' voters on Left-Right scale (frequency distributions on a five-point scale)



Source: 2007 Estonian Election Survey
Note: The original ten-point scale – transformed to a five-point scale for smoothing.

According to the first model of new party emergence that was outlined earlier, the political system reflects the conflict lines that exist in a given society and the development of new parties would normally be a result of changes in the underlying social cleavage structure. During normal times, the cleavage structures remain intact and so does the party system. In rare circumstances new cleavages emerge which can lead to the development of new parties if the existing parties fail to incorporate the new lines of conflict. The emergence of Green parties in Western Europe has often been explained along these lines. Echoing Inglehart's postmodernisation thesis (1997) the proponents of the cleavage hypothesis explain the emergence of Green parties by the development of a new post-materialist cleavage (e.g., Kitschelt 1988). While people earlier used to prioritise subsistence and material welfare, younger generations became increasingly concerned about non-materialist issues such self-realisation, political participation, human rights, gender issues and global problems. The development of post-materialist values was especially notable among the young and the educated urban middle classes (e.g., Frankland 1995: 317). If the emergence of the Estonian Green Party is to be related to postmodernisation, we should expect its voters to be policy oriented in their reasons for voting, to express concerns for non-material values and be more interested and active in politics.

Alternatively, the emergence of the Green Party can be explained by a combination of a protest vote and political entrepreneurs searching for an opportunity to enter the political scene. There is some evidence of business interests behind the Green Party. Wind turbine energy businesses were major

donors of the party before 2007 *Riigikogu* elections (Ilisson 2007).[18] In this view the new party does not result from new conflict lines but rather from a reaction against the *status quo*. Political stagnation, scandals, corruption and nepotism may prompt voters to look for new parties – not necessarily because they want the policies to change but because of dissatisfaction with the incumbents. New parties may win support by offering new faces without radically changing the policy paradigms. If this were the case, the value orientation of Green voters should not differentiate from those of the supporters of other parties; nor do they have to be politically or socially more active than the average voter.

The party manifesto of the Green Party and public statements by its leaders send out mixed messages about the issue of post-materialism beyond the concern for environment. On the one hand, promotion of democracy features fairly prominently in the Green manifesto. The need increase the involvement of citizens and civil society organisation in the policy making is stressed ("Programmi põhiseisukohad", 2007, §6, §7). On the other hand, the Green's positions on alcohol, tobacco, soft drugs and gay rights were markedly conservative. It favours banning of alcohol and tobacco advertising, substantial increasing of excise taxes ("Rohelise Erakonna …", §7.2), keeping the ban on soft drugs like cannabis ("Vastused küsimustele") and is opposed to gay marriage and adoption rights:

> "Homosexual relationships will not be regulated by the state. It is a private matter and such relationship will not be considered a marriage and consequenctly no rights for adoption will be granted to such co-habiting people." ("Rohelise Erakonna …", §1.3)

We do not have time-series data on the development of post-materialism in Estonia. As we saw in the previous section, the Green voters tend to be ethnic Estonians, somewhat more educated and more urban than the average voter. Age is only weakly related to the propensity to vote Green. Some of these socio-economic characteristics may be interpreted as evidence in support of the post-modernist cleavage model, others contradict the general expectations. Higher level of education and urbanisation fits Inglehart's account of post-materialist individuals, whereas the absence of age effect runs counter to it.

Data from the 2007 Estonian Election Survey allow us to look at motivations driving the Green voters. Below we will analyse data on reasons for voting in the 2007 Riigikogu election, level of

[18] Nevertheless, the electoral campaign of the Green Party paled against the ones of other parties entering the parliament (*Kokkuvõte*… n.d.).

interest in politics, salience of different policy issues and engagement in various kinds of social and political activities.

Table 4 Self-reported reasons for voting in 2007 election

	Green	Other parliamentary parties
Wanted to support a particular party	30.5	10.2
Feel a part of my state	16.9	17.4
Want to participate in the selection of leaders	15.3	28.5
Voting is a citizen's obligation	11.9	12.1
A way to express my attitude	10.2	2.6
By voting, I can influence social processes	6.8	5.7
I have always voted	1.7	5.0
Wanted to support a particular candidate	0.0	11.9
Other reason	6.8	6.5

Source: 2007 Estonian Election Survey

Table 4 reports the main reasons for voting among the supporters of the Greens and other main parties. The battery of items included in the survey seemed to be sufficiently broad as reasons not originally listed were mentioned only by 0.7 percent of the respondents. The wish to participate in the selection of the political leadership was the most frequently reported reason among supporters of other parties (28.5 percent of all respondents). The Green voters stand out here as only 15.3 percent reported that as the main reason, whereas the purpose of supporting a particular party was mentioned by nearly a third – three times more often than on average. Particular candidates and the tradition of voting were less important for the Green supporters than for those of other parties. None of the Greens included in the sample claimed that they had voted to support any particular candidate.[19]

When asked specifically about whether their vote was cast primarily for a particular candidate or a particular party or equally for a candidate and a party, 62 percent of the Green voters mentioned *mainly party* as their main motivation. No other party came close to these figures – among other parties, the 40 percent reported by the Reform Party supporters was the highest. Interestingly, a similar phenomenon occurred with Res Publica, the newcomer party of 2003 election. The voters supporting Res Publica – which won more than a quarter of votes – were also less prone to report a

[19] Elsewhere in the article we have discussed the impact of particular candidates on Green Party support. That does not contradict our findings here. On the one hand, a substantial number of Green voters still gave some importance to particular candidates. On the other hand, Estonian ballot structure makes voting for a party without prominent candidates in the district tricky. Even though the candidates are organised by party lists, the voters can only cast their vote for a particular candidate. Hence, if a voter does not recognise any of the candidates, the incentive for voting for the party may decrease.

candidate as the decisive factor. However, Res Publica supporters were more concerned about selecting leaders, voting more out of habit and less focussed on expressing their attitudes.

The Green voters stand out as being more concerned about expressing their attitudes through casting a ballot than is the average Estonian voter. This could be seen as willingness to take actively part in shaping Estonian political developments. One interpretation of that is that Green voters are more concerned with policies offered by the party than with who represents the party in the parliament.

Table 5 reports the respondents' opinions about important objectives of the Estonian society. Each respondent could choose the three most important ones from a list of thirteen items. Unfortunately the 2007 Estonian Election Survey did not include items directly taping "greenness." However, only very few respondents picked "something else", indicating that the set list should cover the spectrum of important objectives rather well. Overall, the respondents mentioned 'economic security,' 'job security and fair pay' and 'efficient and good health care' as the most important objectives. At least the first two of these items would normally be considered to reflect "materialist" values. Green voters likewise mentioned 'economic security' and 'job security and fair pay' as the two most salient topics, though with somewhat lower frequencies. After these, three concerns were equally important for more than a quarter: 'preservation of national identity and culture,' 'independence and security' and 'efficient and good health care.' However, the latter was mentioned much less frequently by Greens than most other parties' voters. Only the supporters of the Pro Patria and Res Publica Union expressed less concern for the health care system.

Table 5 Important objectives in Estonian society

	Green	Other parliamentary parties
Economic security for oneself and relatives	48.3	53.1
Job security and fair pay	35.0	45.4
Efficient and good health care	26.7	35.8
Preservation of national identity and culture	26.7	23.7
Independence and security	26.7	21.7
Democratic rights and freedoms, participation in decision making	25.0	11.6
Good education and retraining opportunities	23.3	29.1
National security; law and order	20.0	28.2
Opportunities for self-fulfilment and career	20.0	10.7
Limiting inequality of wealth	16.7	17.2
Strengthening of social solidarity	13.3	6.5
Integration of Estonia into the international community	8.3	5.3
Gender equality	1.7	2.5

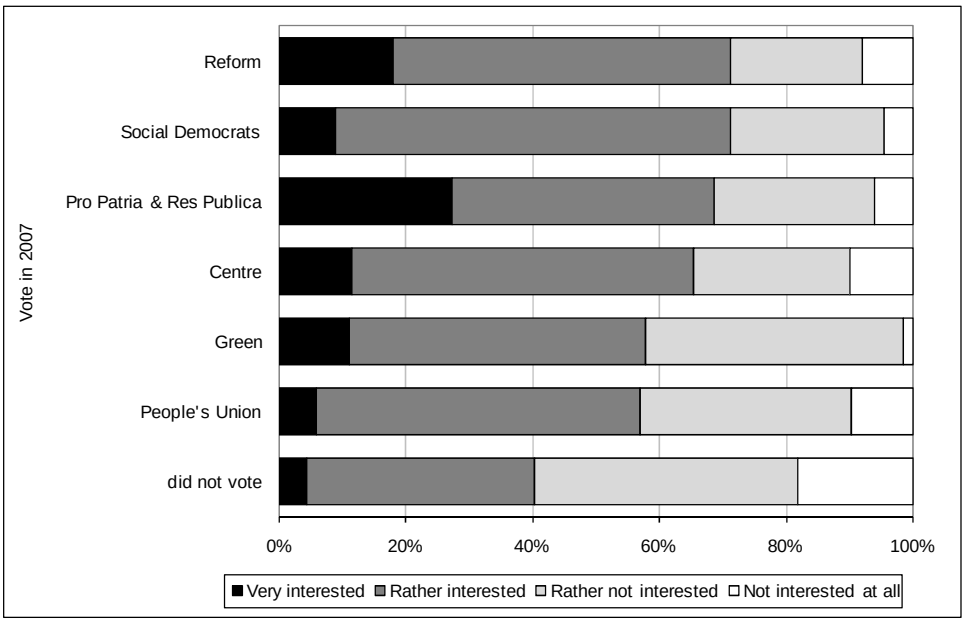
Source: 2007 Estonian Election Survey
Note: Each respondent could choose three answers from a set list.

The importance of topics such as ‘preservation of national identity and culture’ and ‘independence and security’ among the Green voters may come as a surprise. These are usually considered to be conservative values that run largely counter to the globalist and pacifist focus of most West European Green parties. However, taking the historical origins of Estonian Greens discussed earlier into account, the patriotic sentiments of its supporters are explicable. As Frankland (1995: 317) contends: “in Western Europe, Greens coalesce in opposition to capitalist systems, while Greens in Eastern Europe emerged as opposition forces to communist systems”. The Estonian Greens are also different from most of their West European counterparts by being in favour of the country’s NATO membership (“Programmi põhiseisukohad”, §43).

At the same time, the Green voters attach more importance to questions such as ‘democratic rights and freedoms, participation in decision making’ (mentioned by 25 percent), ‘opportunities for self-fulfilment and career’ (20 percent), ‘strengthening of social solidarity’ (13.3 percent) and ‘integration of Estonia into the international community’ (8.3 percent). These objectives can well be classified as post-materialist. It is, however, noteworthy that the Green voters do not consider gender equality to be an important issue. In fact, as another question in the survey indicated, more than 60 percent of its supporters disagreed with the statement that ‘it would be beneficial to have an equal number of men and women in politics’ – the highest proportion recorded among parliamentary parties. This rather striking result calls for further investigation.

We would normally expect post-materialist voters to be politically more active than voters with predominantly materialist views. Grass-root activities and NGO membership have generally been considered important for post-materialists. If the Green voters are to be post-materialists, they ought to be both interested and active in politics. However, Figure 8 clearly shows that they do not stand out among the supporters of main parties and rather report below-average levels political interest.

Figure 8 Self-reported interest in politics among party voters.



Source: 2007 Estonian Election Survey

Although in its program the Green Party propagates extending the role of civil society in the political process, on most accounts their voters are politically not more active than other voters. In some respects, they are less enthusiastic – e.g. less prone to take part in solving local problems. There is, however, one area of activity where the Green voters visibly stand apart from the rest – they score significantly higher when asked whether they had purchased or boycotted goods or services for a cause during the last year. Even though these activities were exercised by less than half of the Green voters, there seems to be a group of "conscientious consumers" among them.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

It seems easier to establish what the Estonian Green Party is *not* than to determine what it *is*. This is partly a result of the newness of the party as a parliamentary actor.[20] We may be trying too hard to find evidence of post-materialism for the sheer reason that it was behind the advent of West European Green parties. Likening one to the other seems rather inappropriate. Even if environment is the main concern for the parties and they may belong to the same European federation, they appear to be so different deep down that placing them within the same party family is problematic. The common denominator of names disguises the fundamentally different logic underlying the development of the parties. While the West European Greens have generally been highly critical

[20] We have a reason to be optimistic about chances of studying further development of the Green Party, as it has retained or even increased their support in public opinion polls after elections, reaching popularity of 12 percent in early 2008 (EMOR 2008).

towards capitalism, for example advocating a radical redistribution of the world's wealth, the Estonian Green Party accepts capitalism and free enterprise and tends to focus on problems at the national rather than global level.

Overall, the Green Party has features from *all* models of new party emergence outlined in the beginning of this study. Even though the environment was low on political agenda during the 2004 European Parliament Elections when Marek Strandberg first voiced his intentions of re-establishing the Green Party, later developments – natural disasters and concerns over energy security – contributed to the growing importance of ecological concerns. Hence, the salience of the issue has increased but it is difficult to see how an issue can convert into a real social cleavage if not accompanied by deep change in social structures or value orientations. The profile we could present of Green Party supporters does not show broad streaks of conventional post-materialism, but we should not assume a strict relationship between environmental concerns and post-material orientations. The weak presence of minority, gender and international development concerns in the manifesto of the Green Party and from the agenda of its voters is explicable when we take into account historical factors.

Different historical origins can easily explain why the Estonian Greens – in contrast to left-leaning West European Green parties – are right of the political centre. The socialist experience in Estonia was coupled with practices highly detrimental to the environment. The transition to market economy, on the other hand, has brought along significant environmental improvements. The Soviet era was a period of mass industrial and agricultural production and army bases that paid scant attention to the well-being of the environment. In many places it left a long-lasting legacy and even though the memories of Soviet era are perhaps slowly starting to wane – especially among the younger generations – destroyed environment constitutes a lasting reminder of the adverse relationship between socialism and ecology. Interestingly, the transition to capitalism saw a weakening of the pressures on the environment. Heavy industries were either dismantled or subjected to new and much stricter pollution standards. There was also a general slump in agriculture accompanied by movement towards smaller-scale production and a decline in the use of mineral fertilizers. In many ways, the culprits for destruction of natural habitats have been very different in Estonia compared to Western Europe. Only more recently have the objectives of economic efficiency and protection of environment started to clash more visibly. There is some evidence that an element of global or cross-border awareness has started to take off, indicated by the higher than average willingness of Green voters to purchase or boycott goods for a cause.

However, both the party program and the statements of its leaders make it evident that that when it comes to furthering the ecological cause, the party prefers technological innovation over the post-materialist idea of constraining economic growth. In other words, rather than fighting the *modern* disease with *post-modernism*, the Estonian Greens try to take a less confrontational stance and believe that *ultra-modernism* offers a positive-sum solution that makes both the consumers and the environment better off.

5. Acknowledgements

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