

- Theme: 4. Power, politics, institutions and the reality of achieving change
- Subtheme: 4.4. Interrelations between societal, cultural, and economic and political values

Shift towards environment: determinants of political platforms greening-up since 1970

Short abstract:

Why do parties offer environmental policies in their political programs? While there are numerous papers that examine the determinants of citizens' pro-environmental behaviour, we know little about the extent to which political parties adjust their platform towards environmentalism. We argue that political parties listen to voters by emphasizing environmental policy issues in their election manifestos. We investigate this process through the Manifesto Project Dataset (CMP) on the period 1970-2012 for 20 European countries. Following the literature on public concern towards environment, we examine economical, environmental and political determinants. Our findings provide evidence of the prevalence of affluence conditions and political determinants in explaining platforms' adjustment towards environment over time.

Long abstract :

In his 1972 article, « Up and down with ecology: The issue attention cycle », Anthony Downs states that once the growth phase will be completed; ecology will suffer “the gradual loss of public attention characteristic of the later stage of attention cycle” (1972:50). However, environmental awareness has continually grown and taken an international dimension. This widespread committed involvement finds for a large part its roots in scientists' recommendations, through books, articles, and thereafter new media (Glaeser, 2013). Since *Limits to Growth* (Meadow et al., 1972), many international summits, institutions, and action plans have ensued. At the same time, politicians have begun to adjust their platforms with environment issues (Tognacci et al., 1972).

A considerable number of papers have focused on the evolution over time and the determinants of citizens' pro-environmental behaviour (see Torgler and Garcías-Valiñas,

2007; Aklin et al., 2013 for details). However to our knowledge no study has investigated the political parties' platforms' shift towards environmentalism. This paper fills this gap in the literature by providing an empirical investigation of parties' political platforms greening-up in 20 democratic European countries over the time period 1970-2009.

There are number of reasons why content analysis of political programs, or manifestos, is particularly interesting. First, they are a vehicle to inform voters about party policy preferences (Budge and Laver, 1993) i.e. the general ideological position of parties. Because they are sets of proposals in order to answer to society's issues and concerns, they are also information shortcuts (Franzmann and Kaiser, 2006). Second, they demonstrate the capability of political parties to sort citizen's demand, by selecting, and aggregating them into coherent policy packages (Klingemann et al., 1994). Third, Manifestos serve election propaganda. They are an instrument to communicate with voters (Ray, 2007). Fourth, they are, or at least should be, commitments for parliamentarians once they are elected (Klingemann and al., 1994).

This paper measures the saliency of environment-related topics in political parties' manifestos through data drawn from the *Comparative Manifesto Database* (CMD) (Volgens and al., 2013) which record the percentage of sentences devoted to environment-related topics in the electoral programs released by major parties of European countries over more than 30 year, from 1970s until recent days.). The CMD is a well established data source built by a group of researcher at the Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (WZB) and it has been extensively employed by empirical studies over recent years (Cole, 2005; Netjes and Binnema, 2007; Spoon and Klüver, 2014). This measure provides evidence on how politicians balance ecology against others social and economic issues in their programs.

By reviewing the literature on the main determinants of public support for environmental quality, we investigate three types of determinants which should explain the greening up of political platform : economic (Inglehart, 1977, 1990; Diekmann and Franzen, 1999; Franzen, 2003; Franzen and Meyer, 2010; Conroy and Emerson, 2014), environmental (Dunlap, Gallup, and Gallup 1993; Dunlap and Mertig, 1995; Dunlap and Mertig, 1997; Dunlap and York, 2008; Knight and Messer 2012), and political (Tognacci et al., 1972; Canstantini and Hanf, 1972; Dunlap, 1975; Liere and Dunlap, 1980; McCright et al., 2014; Garmann, 2014).

We propose OLS, Fractional Logit and Zero-inflated beta regressions in order to investigate how socio-economic, environmental and political determinants influenced this saliency. Our results show that political parties' environmentalism is strongly correlated with economic

variables; it reveals a positive correlation with countries' economic wealth (according to the prosperity and post-materialism hypothesis), and a negative correlation with inequality in wealth distribution which presumably intensifies social conflict and impede the discussion of environment-related topics. Finally, it shows a negative correlation also with countries' trade openness. Instead, objective ecological degradation as well as variables that should reflect subjective feelings of this degradation does not seem to be clearly correlated with parties' supply of environmentalism. Finally, we find that parties' ideological orientation is a significant driver of environmentalism with left-wing parties who are significantly more environmental-friendly than right wing.

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