



The Green Breakthrough in Sweden

Martin Bennulf, University of Gothenburg

& Martin Bennulf, University of Gothenburg

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In Sweden, 1988 is often referred to as the year of the green breakthrough. The outcome of that year's parliamentary election is the main reason. In the election of 1988, an environmental party succeeded in getting representation in the Swedish Parliament with 5.6 percent of the vote. It was a double sensation; first because Sweden was suddenly endowed with one of the largest green parties in Europe, after previously having had one of the smallest; second because the Swedish party system – perhaps the most stable and 'frozen' in Europe – for the first time in 70 years received a new party in Parliament.

However the parliamentary debut of the Green Party is but one reason – albeit the most manifest – why it is feasible to talk of 1988 as a green breakthrough in Swedish politics. Another reason has to do with the agenda of Swedish political debate and the extent to which environmental issues came to dominate in the 1988 election campaign. Never before has a single issue dominated a Swedish election campaign like the green issue did in 1988. In the media, around a quarter of all election coverage was devoted to the single issue of environmental concerns (Asp 1990).

Among voters, the preponderance of green issues was even more evident. On an open-ended question in the 1988 Swedish Election Study almost half of the voting public (46 percent) singled out the environmental issue as one of the most important issues when it came to choosing a party. That is by far the highest figure ever registered using that specific interview question. In previous elections, green issues have not been non-existent on the voters

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agenda, but they have been much less prominent. For example, among Swedish voters in the elections of 1979 and 1982 only 6 and 7 percent respectively mentioned green problems as important for their voting choice. In the election of 1985 the comparable figure went up to 22 percent, indicating that in 1985 the green issue was already on its way up on the political agenda, but that it had not yet attained the level it reached in 1988 (Bennulf 1989).

Evidently the facts are there. The 1988 Swedish election had a distinct green coloring. Thus, the purpose of this article is not to take issue with all those people in politics, academia and journalism who have talked about the late 1980s as a green breakthrough in Swedish politics and have named the 1988 election 'the environmental election'. We tend to agree with them. As far as phrases go, we think it is quite appropriate to coin the term 'environmental election' for the 1988 election in Sweden (Esaiasson, 1990).

What we want to analyse is the depth and breadth of the green breakthrough in Sweden. Was it a superficial short-term phenomenon that will not be with us in the 1990s or was it the first sign of a more profound change in Swedish politics – the beginning of a Swedish version of New Politics?¹ Obviously, the question is too far-reaching to be addressed adequately in a short article. Therefore, to make it manageable, we have chosen to concentrate on two specific problems; one having to do with the Green Party, who voted for it and why; the second having to do with the alleged emergence of a new cross-cutting green dimension in Sweden.

Both questions are essential when it comes to assess the extent and permanence of the greening of Swedish politics. For example, if a large proportion of the green voters in 1988 came from the highly volatile group of young big city people, then it does not bode well for the future stability of the Green Party vote; especially if distrust in established politicians, not environmental concerns, was the main reason why many people voted green.

Whether or not a new ideological green dimension with constrained attitudes exists – not only among various elite groups but among the mass public – is also a question of obvious importance for the assessment of the new green phenomenon in Swedish politics. Without doubt, the emergence of a new attitude dimension cross-cutting the old left–right dimension, with highly interrelated opinions on different environmental issues – running, for example, from views emphasizing ecological concerns to views emphasizing economic growth – would increase the likelihood of a continuation of the green breakthrough in Sweden. A loosely structured growth–ecology dimension, perhaps interconnected with the left–right dimension, and thus not independent from old politics, would make it more difficult to sustain the green alternative in the 1990s. Thus, the focus of our interest is on the

green voter and the green dimension. We will start, however, by presenting *Miljöpartiet de gröna* – the Green Party of Sweden.

The Green Party

Miljöpartiet de gröna is not an entirely new actor on the Swedish political scene. It was already founded back in 1981. The immediate cause was the outcome of the referendum on nuclear power Sweden had in 1980.² A compromise alternative won the referendum and the alternative most negative to nuclear power lost, although it got almost 40 percent of the vote (Holmberg & Asp 1984). Naturally, the leaders of the anti-nuclear forces – ‘The People’s Campaign Against Nuclear Power’ – were disappointed at having lost the election. However, the feeling of disappointment was mixed with an optimistic feeling. After all, the anti-nuclear alternative received close to 40 percent of the vote in the referendum. Surely, some of the leaders of the People’s Campaign thought, with such a large base of potential supporters, the ground must be fertile for forming a political party. In the fall of 1981 they went ahead and established a new party.

As the name *Miljöpartiet* (the Environmental Party) indicates, the party they formed is not only an anti-nuclear party. It has a much broader scope, both when it comes to ideology and which issues the party is addressing. Ecological balance, local self-rule, decentralization, small-scale production, reduced or no economic growth and quality of life are some of the party’s most important ideological catchwords. In terms of concrete issues, *Miljöpartiet* is pushing for tougher measures on all kinds of environmental problems. That is the party’s profile and original *raison d’être* in Swedish politics. But the Green Party is also highly active in many non-environmental issues. For example, the greens are in favor of cutting down defense costs, against Sweden joining the EEC, against wage-earner funds, in favor of a more equal income distribution and against state-owned businesses. As the examples indicate, the party tends to straddle the left–right dimension with some positions to the left and some to the right.

When it comes to the left–right dimension, the semi-official position among green leaders is that the dimension has been surpassed and is no longer relevant in Swedish politics. However, when pressed by reporters, Green Party representatives tend to acknowledge that the party is located in the middle or slightly to the left on the left–right dimension.³ In a study of Swedish Members of Parliament, including the newly elected green members, more members placed the Green Party to the left than to the right (Gilljam & Holmberg 1990).

Beside the environment and a rather broadly defined ecological ideology,

Table 1. Electoral Support for the Green Party in Sweden, 1982–88 (percent).

	1982	1985	1988
Vote share in parliamentary elections	1.6	1.5	5.5
Proportion of eligible voters with the Green Party as first preference ('best party')	2.6	1.8	5.3
Proportion of eligible voters with the Green Party as second preference ('second-best party')	2.7	4.5	10.8
Proportion of eligible voters with the Green Party as first or second preference	5.3	6.3	16.1

Note: The results on party preferences are based on data from the Swedish Election Studies 1982–88.

another prominent feature of the Green Party profile is opposition to the professionalization of politics. The Greens believe in amateur politicians who do not lose touch with everyday life. They try to practice what they preach through the principle of rotation and division of office holding; green office holders are supposed to have only one power position at a time and they are expected not to retain it for more than two electoral periods. When it comes to leadership, the Greens think that too much of modern politics is centered on party leaders. Hence, the Green Party has no party leader. Instead, it has two spokespersons – always one man and one woman – who have been rotated at more or less regular intervals.⁴

The first election after the Green Party was founded was a bitter disappointment for the party's leadership. Based on the result of the referendum and some very positive polls, they had expected to clear the 4 percent constitutional threshold for representation in the national Parliament. The outcome of the 1982 election proved them to have been much too optimistic. The Greens received only 1.6 percent of the vote and did not gain representation in the *Riksdag* (see Table 1).

Green hopes were dashed again in the election of 1985. This time the party captured only 1.5 percent of the vote. Despite the poor result, under the surface the Green Party was slowly gaining momentum. A larger proportion of voters had the Greens as their second best party in 1985 (4.5 percent) than in 1982 (2.7 percent). Thus, the electoral breakthrough for the Green Party in the election of 1988 was not a total surprise. The party received 5.5 percent of the vote and 20 seats in the Parliament. A closer look at the results show that the potential for an even larger green vote is there. On top of the 5.5 percent of the voters who supported the Greens in 1988, there was another 10.8 percent who had the Green Party as their second best party.⁵ Judging from the party preferences people hold, including second preferences, the prospects for the Green Party do not look bad for the 1990s.

The Green Voters

The socioeconomic make-up of the green voters looks like what one might expect for a new party in Sweden. The Green Party received its strongest support among voters that traditionally are the most volatile at elections – young voters, big-city people, professionals, and people with occupations in the public sector (mostly working with health care and in education). The party was least successful among the oldest voters and among farmers, industrial workers and people with a low education. Contrary to pre-election expectations, the Greens did not get particularly strong support from women, or from young first-time voters (see 2).

Two things are especially noteworthy in the results. First, the green following has a distinct middle-class or even upper middle-class flavor. This does not mean that green voters consist of a lot of yuppy-type persons; most yuppies do not work with health care in the public sector. In all likelihood true yuppies are few among green voters. A better catchword for the social composition of the green voters is probably what some sociologists have started to call the new middle class (public sector, white collar, well educated, city dwellers).⁶

Second, the Green Party cannot take its voters for granted. The green voters tend to belong to groups who have proved to have a high tendency to switch parties. Thus, the probability that the green vote support will be fairly unstable in forthcoming elections in the 1990s is rather high. Our belief in this prediction is strengthened further when we contemplate the fact that green voters have by far the lowest degree of party identification among Swedish voters. In the election of 1988, only 30 percent of the supporters of the Green Party had any form of identification (strong or weak) with their party. The comparable result was much higher for the other parties – for example, 69 percent and 58 percent, respectively, among Social Democratic and Conservative Party voters (Gilljam & Holmberg 1990).

Traditional socioeconomic background variables are essential when it comes to characterizing a party's voters, but they go only so far. Looking at lifestyles, together with what people do when they are not working, is a worthwhile complement; especially since people in all Western societies have more spare time than ever before. Perhaps in the near future, lifestyles and spare-time activities will be as important for political behavior as work-time experiences have been and still are in many party systems.

Table 3 shows that the relationship between different lifestyles or leisure activities and party preference is still rather weak in Sweden (maximum eta correlation about 0.25). However, concentrating on the green voters, some interesting patterns emerge. In the spare time, green voters tend to be somewhat more active than other people in most of the leisure activities

Table 2. Socioeconomic Characteristics of Green Party Voters in Sweden, 1988 (percent).

Socioeconomic group	Percent mp voters	Distribution of mp voters	Distribution of all voters	Difference col. 2-col. 3	Number of respondents
Gender					
Men	6	50	51	-1	1241
Women	6	50	49	+1	1176
Age					
18-21	4	3	5	-2	131
21-30	7	22	18	+4	429
31-40	10	32	19	+13	466
41-50	6	21	19	+2	462
51-60	6	15	15	0	349
61-70	2	6	15	-9	356
71-80	1	1	9	-8	224
Occupation					
Workers in manufacturing	3	6	15	-9	341
Workers in service sector	6	24	24	0	555
Lower white collar	5	9	10	-1	243
Middle white collar	7	26	21	+5	479
Professionals/managers	8	20	14	+6	322
Small entrepreneurs	6	7	7	0	176
Farmers	2	1	4	-3	82
Students	8	7	5	+2	122
Type of work					
Farming, fishing, forestry	3	3	5	-2	122
Manufacturing	4	19	28	-9	644
Trade, transport	5	24	27	-3	619
Health care, education	11	35	20	+15	467
Public and private administration	5	12	15	-3	346
Students	8	7	5	+2	122

Table 3. Lifestyles of Green Party Sympathizers in Sweden Compared to the Whole Population (percent and eta).

Lifestyle	Greens	All	Difference	Eta with party preference
Greens do more of:				
Playing musical instrument, acting	27	15	+12	0.20
Reading a book	72	61	+11	0.19
Outdoor life	83	72	+11	0.08
Drawing, painting, writing poetry or a diary	34	24	+10	0.15
Attending study circle or course	35	25	+10	0.13
Individual exercise or sports	71	62	+9	0.12
Watching a film at a cinema	36	27	+9	0.20
Museum, exhibition	26	17	+9	0.25
Discussing politics	61	53	+8	0.21
Environmental or peace demonstration*	13	5	+8	0.15
Greens do equal of:				
Visiting a restaurant at night	36	32	+4	0.22
Visiting a discotheque or dance hall	39	35	+4	0.15
Attending lecture or public debate	19	15	+4	0.15
Overtime work	52	49	+3	0.14
Doing something special for the family	72	69	+3	0.06
Praying	32	29	+3	0.28
Going to a theater, attending a concert	18	16	+2	0.23
Having a job on the side	17	16	+1	0.12
Team sport, group exercise	30	30	0	0.12
Inviting someone for dinner at home	68	69	-1	0.10
Gardening	66	67	-1	0.12
Buying/selling antiques, works of art*	10	11	-1	0.13
Attending a religious service or meeting	14	17	-3	0.34
Greens do less of:				
Do it yourself in the house	23	29	-6	0.08
Watching video	43	51	-8	0.19
Reading weekly magazines	66	74	-8	0.14
Buying/selling shares*	13	22	-9	0.18
Betting on horses, football pools	43	58	-15	0.23

Note: The data are from the 1988 SOM Study (mailed questionnaire completed in the fall of 1988 by 1641 persons from all over Sweden). For question wording, see Björkqvist (1989). Lifestyles are measured with a seven-point scale from 1 (no time in the last twelve months) to 7 (several times a week). Percentage shares given indicate that the activity has been pursued at least once every four months in the past year, except the activities indicated by an asterisk, which have just been pursued at least once in the past year.

we have measured. The difference between green sympathizers and others is especially pronounced in two types of activities. Compared to other people, green voters are more involved in cultural activities (playing musical instruments, reading books, going to museums), and less engaged in various folksy activities such as watching videos, reading weekly magazines, and gambling on horses or playing the pools. Another activity green

supporters are less involved in buying and selling shares on the stock market.

To capture the small but clearly visible differences in lifestyles between green and other voters, Inglehart's concepts of post-materialists and materialists seem appropriate. Without doubt, the spare-time activities of the green voters reflect more of a post-materialist value orientation than a materialist value orientation. The correlations are not impressive (around 0.10), but high scores for the cultural activities in Table 3 are associated with post-materialist attitudes among Swedish voters while high scores for the folksy activities are related to materialist views.⁷

Further evidence of the relevance of the post-materialism/materialism dimension in characterizing the green voters is given in Table 4. Based on Inglehart's four-item scale, the proportion of post-materialists, mixed types and materialists is given for voters for different Swedish parties in 1988.

The association between the post-materialism/materialism scale and party choice is a modest 0.15 (η^2); comparable correlations for various left-right scales are much higher, around 0.70. But Green Party voters, together with voters for the Communist Party, single themselves out rather clearly on the post-materialism/materialism dimension. They are the only two parties whose voters consist of more post-materialists than materialists. Among green voters in 1988, 33 percent were classified as post-materialists and 22 percent as materialists.

Socioeconomic variables, different lifestyles and different value orientations each contribute to the characterization of the green voters – albeit in a rather limited way. Relevant correlations and differences are fairly small. If we really want to find what distinguishes green voters from other

Table 4. Party Voted for in the 1988 Election and Inglehart Value Types in Sweden (percent).

Party choice	Post-materialists	Mixed	Materialists	Total	Difference Post-mat – mat
Communists (vpk)	37	42	21	100	+16
Social Democrats (s)	16	56	28	100	-12
Center Party (c)	13	54	33	100	-20
Liberals (fp)	18	60	22	100	-4
Conservatives (m)	11	68	21	100	-10
Christian Democrats (kds)	8	48	44	100	-36
Green Party (mp)	33	45	22	100	+11
Total	17	57	26	100	-9

Note: The analysis is based on data from the 1988 Election Study's pre-election survey. The number of respondents classified as post-materialists, materialists or mixed value types is 1048. The interview questions used are Inglehart's four-item battery: see Inglehart (1977: 27-39).

voters we have to look at issue positions and questions of distrust in government and politicians; issue positions are especially important since we know that policy opinions have become more strongly connected with party choice among Swedish voters in recent elections (Gilljam & Holmberg 1990).

The results in Figure 1 demonstrate the importance of analyzing the connection between issue positions and party choice. Most of the correlations are quite high, much higher than when we analyzed socio-economic background, lifestyles and post-materialism/materialism value orientations.

Regarding the green voters, the results reveal a very clear and systematic pattern. On left–right issues, Green Party voters tended to have opinions to the middle or slightly to the left of the spectrum. In almost all cases, the average position of the green voters on left–right issues was between the average positions of the Communist and Social Democratic voters to the left and the average positions of Bourgeois voters to the right. In some cases, this result came about because green voters were split between left and right opinions. In most cases, however, Green Party voters tended to be located toward the middle of the various left–right issue scales.

The location of most green voters to the middle or middle-left portion of the left–right dimension could be corroborated by other types of data. For example, a substantial majority (76 percent) of Green Party voters who had a second party preference (which most of them had), named one of the centrally located parties on the left–right scale (s, c, fp or kds – see Table 4 for notation) as their second choice. The slight left tilt among green voters is also noticeable in their second party preferences. A majority of green voters with a second party preference named a socialist party (s or vpk) as their number two choice (58 percent).

On environmental issues the pattern was totally different. The green voters were no longer middle-of-the-roaders. Quite the contrary, they tended to have views toward one extreme. Most of them had clear-cut pro-green opinions. On average, on all the environmental issues that we asked about in 1988, the Green Party voters had the greenest opinions of all party groups in the electorate.

Hence, by combining left–right and environmental issue attitudes, green voters in Sweden could be distinguished rather easily. They tend to have opinions toward the centre on left–right problems and opinions way out on the green side on environmental issues.

Green attitudes, however, do not tell the whole story why the green voters supported *Miljöpartiet* in 1988. Distrust toward established parties and politicians played a role too. Green voters tended to be more distrusting of politicians than the average citizen. With the help of multivariate analyses it could be shown that political distrust had an independent effect on the

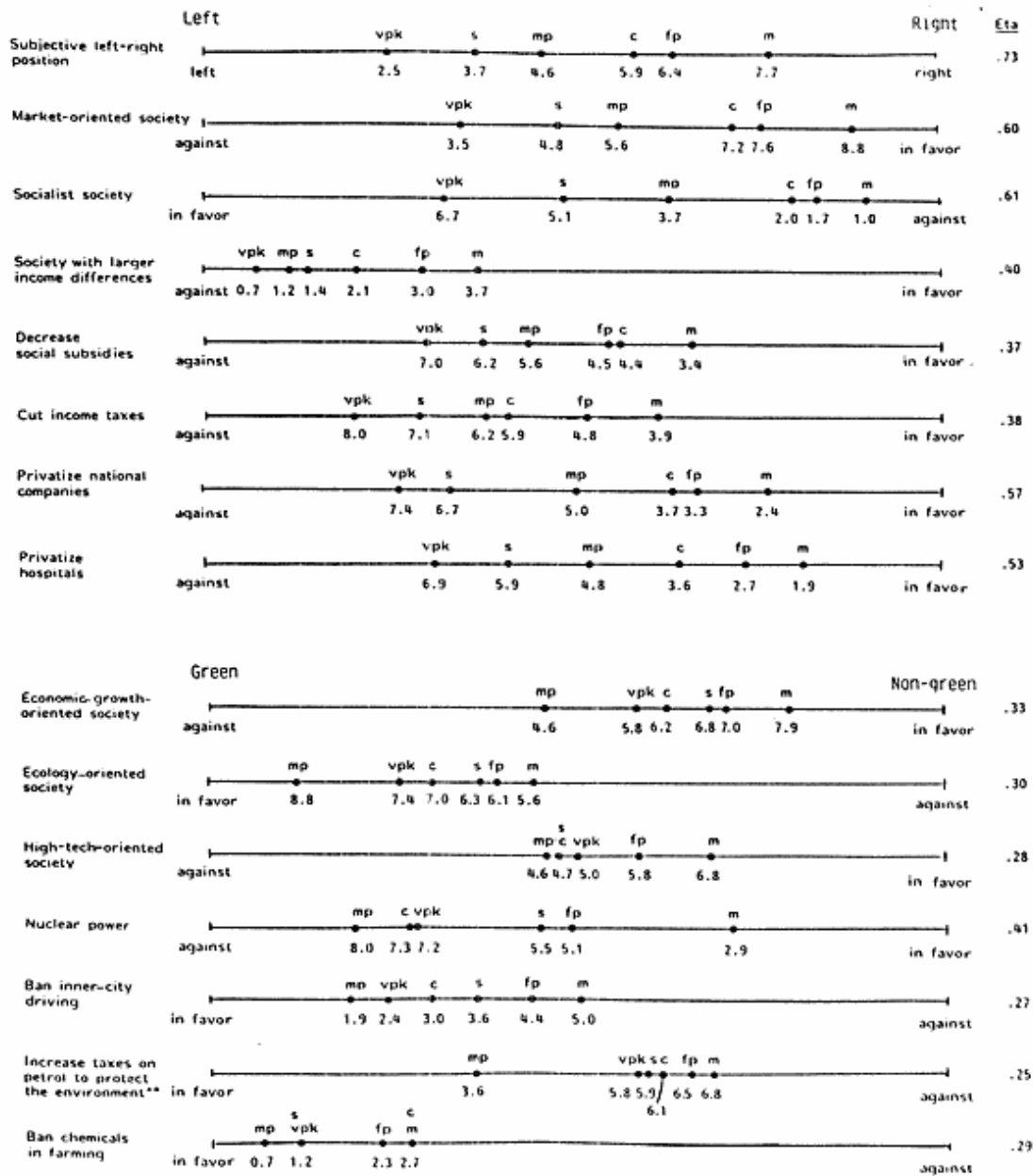


Fig. 1. Left-right and Green Issue Positions among Voters for Different Swedish Parties in the Election of 1988 (means and eta).

Note: All issues are measured on an 11-point scale based on data from the 1988 Election Study (N = 2500). One issue marked with ** is from the 1988 SOM Study (N = 1600). The end points of the scales have been changed to match the left-right and the green-non-green pattern. For the wording of the questions see Gilljam et al. (1990) and Björkqvist (1989).

green vote separate from environmental attitudes. The effect was fairly modest, however, compared to the effect of the green opinions (Bennulf 1990).

The importance of this result is twofold. First, it shows that the green vote of 1988 contained a measure of protest. It was not just a green vote. It was also a protest vote. Second, the protest component was clearly the junior partner. The support for the Green Party was motivated more by environmental concerns than by distrust in established politicians. The vital implication of this is that *Miljöpartiet* has a green mandate. To label it just a protest party is clearly wrong.

The Green Dimension

On left–right issues, attitudes of Swedish voters are highly constrained. Opinions on different issues dealing with questions about government influence over private business, income distribution and social justice tend to be correlated with each other in ways one would expect on logical or ideological grounds (Granberg & Holmberg 1988). Even Converse, who originated the idea of constrained attitudes as a test for the existence of ideological dimensions, would have to admit that the level of inter-item correlations is sufficiently high among Swedish voters to make it reasonable to talk about the presence of an ideological left–right dimension (Converse 1964).

The results in Figure 2 demonstrate that the constraint level on left–right issues has been fairly stable across years with mean inter-item correlations of about 0.50 for all eligible voters and about 0.70 for highly educated persons. If we shift the focus toward political elites the constraint increases further. In a study of members of the Swedish Parliament, the left–right correlation comparable to the one shown in Table 2 was 0.85.⁸

On environmental issues, the results are quite different. Inter-item correlations are much lower, and they have not been stable over time. Contrary to what one would expect, inter-item correlations on green issues have decreased, not increased, during the 1980s. The decreased constraint is especially noticeable among people with higher education. In 1988, the mean inter-item correlation among five green issues was a meagre 0.20 among all eligible voters and only 0.36 among highly educated and politically interested people.⁹

Green issues are poorly constrained even among Members of Parliament. The two green items in Figure 2 which showed correlations of about 0.10 among all citizens and about 0.30 among people with college degrees were only correlated at the 0.37 level among members of the Swedish *Riksdag*.

The results are pretty unequivocal. If one talks about a green alternative dimension in Sweden, it is an elite phenomenon. Until now, constrained green attitudes only exist among educated people highly involved in politics. The green breakthrough in Sweden has not yet created a coherent green dimension in the mass public.

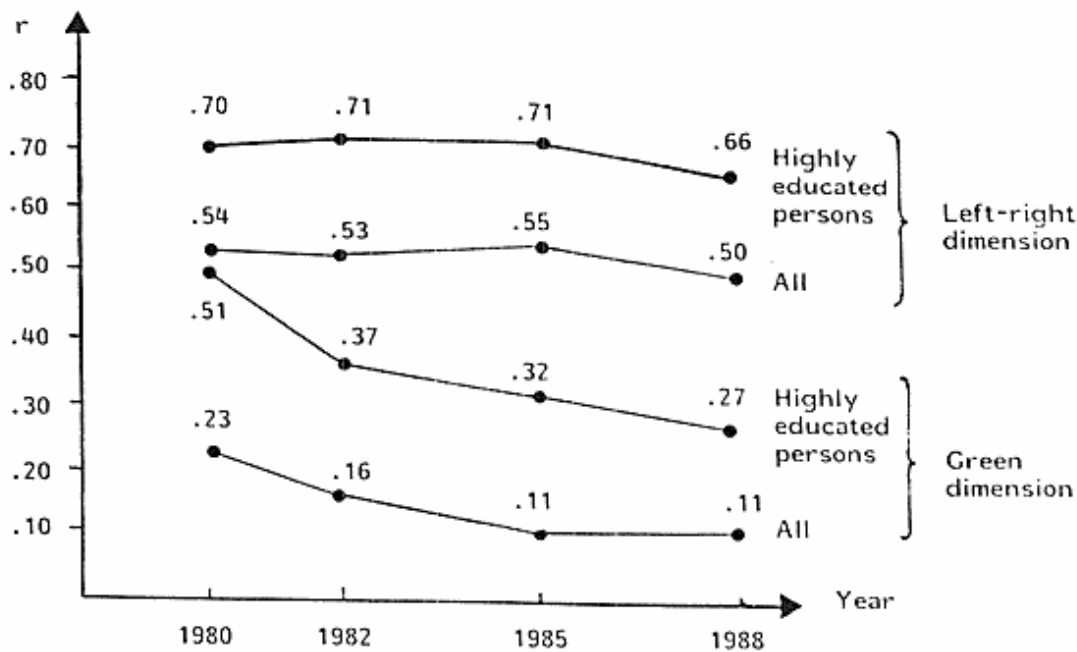


Fig. 2. Constraint on Green and Left-Right issues among Eligible Swedish Voters, 1980-88, (Pearson's r)

Note: The data are from the 1980 Referendum Study and from the 1982, 1985 and 1988 Election Studies. Both dimensions have each been measured with two identically worded questions across years. The green issues have to do with two questions pertaining to 'an economic-growth-oriented society' and 'an ecologically oriented society'. The left-right issues dealt with 'a market-oriented society' and 'a socialist society'. Analyses including more issues give roughly the same results. The number of respondents was about 2500 in all studies.

Striking evidence of the elite character of the green dimension is how differently party preferences are structured among green voters and green Members of Parliament. Green voters and parliamentary members of the Green Party were asked to place all Swedish parties on a scale from +5 (strongly like) to -5 (strongly dislike). The results are shown in Figure 3. Among green Members of Parliament, the degree of liking or disliking of the various parties was neatly ordered according to how the parties are usually ordered on the green dimension in Sweden. Clearly, the degree of affection that the green Members of Parliament exhibit toward the different parties has been structured by the green dimension. Notice, for example, that the Communist Party (which has a distinctly green profile in Sweden), on the average, is the second best liked party among green Members of Parliament.

Green Party voters felt very differently about the parties. Their orderings seem to have been more influenced by the old left-right dimension than by the new green dimension. Telling evidence of that is that the Social Democratic and the Liberal Parties were more highly appreciated among

Table 5. Degree of Constraint on Green Issues Among Swedish Voters in the 1988 Election (Pearson's r).

Group	Correlation between two green issues	Average correlation between five green issues	Number of respondents
All voters	0.11	0.20	2528
Age			
18-30	0.14	0.20	639
31-40	0.25	0.27	471
41-50	0.04	0.20	450
51-60	0.10	0.22	323
61-80	0.06	0.15	549
Gender			
men	0.12	0.18	1304
women	0.08	0.18	1097
Highly educated persons	0.27	0.32	744
Persons who read a lot about politics	0.21	0.22	359
Highly educated persons who read a lot about politics	0.34	0.36	128

Note: The data are from the 1988 Election Study. The two green issues refer to two interview questions about 'an economic-growth-oriented society' and 'an ecologically oriented society'. The five green issues include 'the two green issues' and three other questions about 'a high-tech-oriented society', 'the use of nuclear power' and 'whether to ban inner-city driving'.

green voters than the Communist Party. If party affections had been influenced primarily by the environmental policies of the parties, the order should have been reversed, with more appreciation for the Communist Party than for the Liberal and Social Democratic parties.

All the evidence points in the same direction. A coherent green dimension structuring attitudes on many different kinds of environmental issues

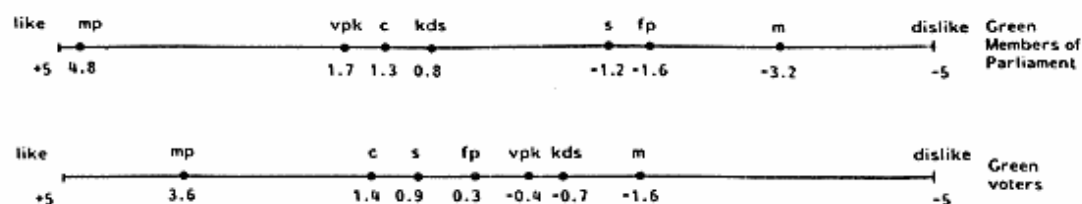


Fig. 3. Ratings of the Swedish Parties, on a Like-Dislike Scale among Green Members of Parliament and Green Voters (means).

Note: The analysis is based on data from the 1988 Election Study and on data from the 1988 *Riksdag* Study.

does not exist in the Swedish mass public. At most we can talk of an embryo, and in that case a weak one. The situation is different among various elite groups. For example, there is little doubt that an alternative green dimension forming issue attitudes toward environmental problems does exist among Swedish politicians.

One problem, though, is the degree to which the new green dimension is functionally independent of the old left–right dimension. As a case in point, among Swedish Members of Parliament, attitudes on environmental issues tend to be rather strongly correlated with attitudes on left–right issues. Left and green opinions tend to go together. In the Swedish *Riksdag* Study of 1988, the correlation between how members placed themselves on a left–right scale and a green scale was 0.44 (Pearson's r).

Thus, a model treating the new green dimension as truly independent of the left–right dimension is an oversimplification in the Swedish case. To use geometrical language, the green dimension is cross-cutting the left–right dimension obliquely rather than orthogonally. The angle should not be 90 degrees, as it would if the two dimensions were really independent of each other.

When, despite this knowledge, we present a two-dimensional party model for Sweden, with the left–right and green dimensions as perpendicular axes, it is a simplification. The angle should be less than 90 degrees. How much less we do not know. It depends, among other things, on how the green dimension is defined and measured. For our simplified model, presented in Figure 4, we have used data from the *Riksdag* Study of 1988.

The members were asked to indicate how they perceived the locations of the Swedish parties on two scales – a left–right scale and a green scale. The results have high face validity and give a good picture of the new two-dimensional structure of party conflicts in Sweden. The orderings of the parties on the two dimensions are one with which most knowledgeable people on Swedish politics would agree.

Taking the results at face value, the Swedish party system is no longer a two-tiered system with a Socialist bloc (vpk and s) pitted against a Bourgeois bloc (c, fp and m). Instead, a possible three-bloc system emerges with the Communist Party, the Social Democrats and the Greens in a red–green group, the Center Party and the Christian Democrats in a blue–green group, and the Liberals and the Conservatives in a blue–less-green group. Developments in the 1990s will tell whether this three-bloc model is useful or not.

A Permanent Breakthrough?

Already in 1972, in the early days of the debate about environmental

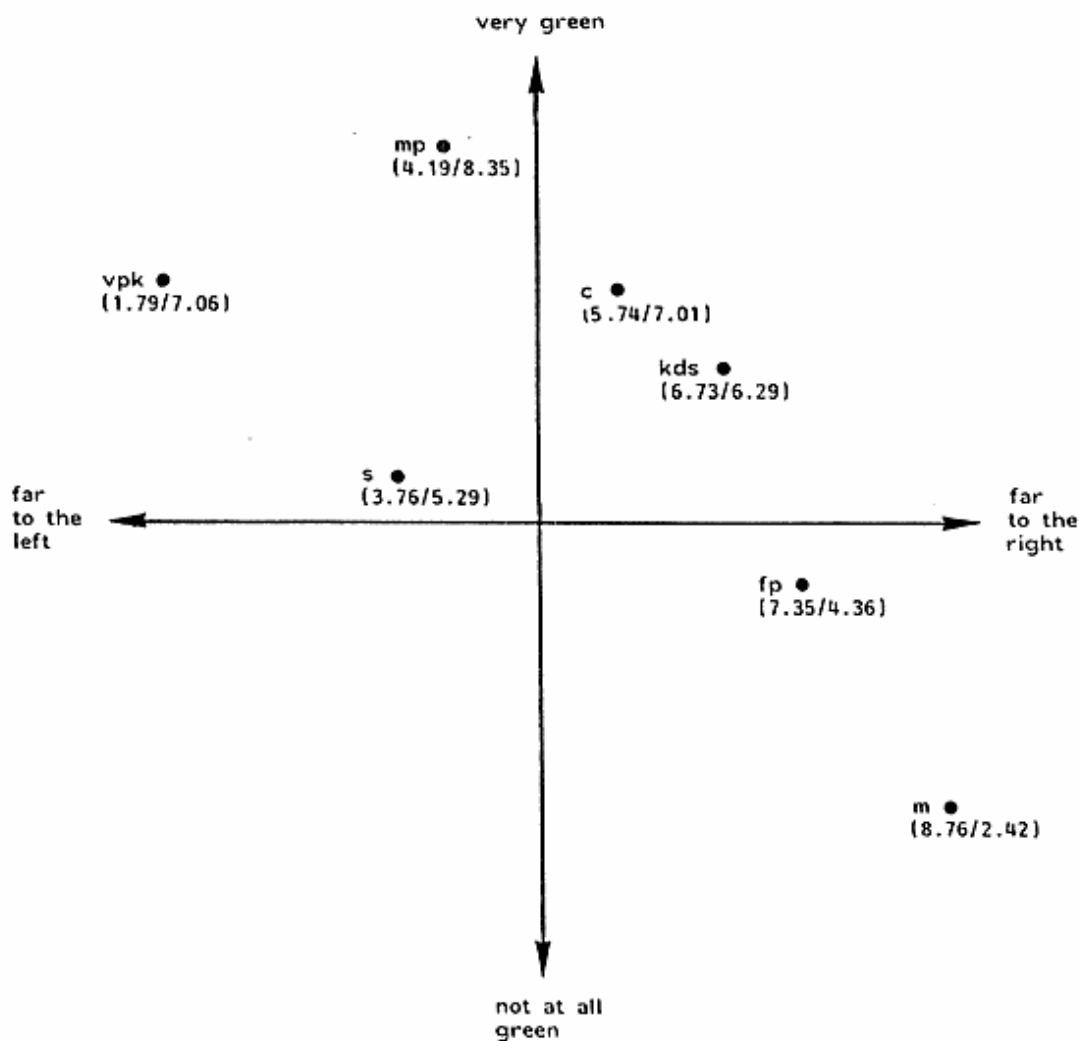


Fig. 4. Party Placements on a Left-Right Scale and a Green Scale in 1988 by Swedish Members of Parliament (means).

Note: The data are from the 1988 *Riskdag* Study. The left-right scale varies between 0 (far to the left) and 10 (far to the right). The green scale varies between 0 (not at all in the green direction) and 10 (very far in the green direction). The values given in parenthesis are means on the left-right scale and on the green scale, respectively. On average, more than 90 percent of the members placed all the parties on both scales.

problems, Anthony Downs wrote 'Up and down with ecology – the issue-attention cycle', in which he predicted both the rise and fall of the green issues. Downs's idea was that a process of satiation influences the attention-cycle of all political issues, no matter what they are about. Bluntly put, his thesis was that what goes up must come down.

Downs was right about ecology going up. So far he has not been right about ecology coming down. Green issues are still high on citizens' agendas in most countries of the democratic world (Björklund & Hellevik 1988;

Goul Andersen 1988; Hofrichter & Reif 1990). Of course, if we wait long enough, Downs will probably be proven right. Eventually ecology will come down from its present high level on the attention-cycle. However, in all likelihood, environmental problems will be with us for the foreseeable future, meaning that ecology is not an issue that will disappear. It might go down but not away on the agenda. Thus, most likely, ecology will continue as a politicized issue in most countries. The environment, like taxes and defense costs, will become an ingrained fixture of politics. Viewed this way the green breakthrough of the 1980s will be permanent.

From the standpoint of environmental concerns, this is good news. Ecological issues will be part of politics in the future. Looking at it from a Green Party standpoint, however, it is not certain that a permanent green breakthrough will ensure the long-term survival of green parties. When environmental issues become permanent ingredients of politics, chances increase that the old established parties move in, adjust their policies and capitalize on the subject. It might seem paradoxical, but if the Greens are too successful in promoting and politicizing the environmental questions they may find themselves out-competed on their own ground by the other parties. Increased attention on environmental issues means higher electoral stakes for everybody, forcing all parties who want to stay alive to stake out their own green claim.

Regarding Sweden, not surprisingly, the demise or survival of the Green Party is a matter of much speculation. The big question is whether the first new party in the *Riksdag* in 70 years will already be out, rejected in the next election in 1991, or whether it will manage to stay on in Parliament. Like most political scientists, we are very poor at making predictions; therefore we will refrain from guessing what will happen in 1991. Judging from our results, however, it looks like a tough race.

By 1991 the Green Party will have had its newcomer's honeymoon with the public and it is not likely that this election, as the 1988 election did, will turn almost exclusively on environmental issues. Almost certainly, some of the perennial left-right issues of Swedish politics (economy, taxes, income distribution) will come back to center-stage in 1991, giving the Greens a hard time since, so far, most voters appreciate the party's environmental policies but know little of or dislike the party's economic policies (this includes the Green Party's own voters).

The problem is compounded by the fact that many of the green voters belong to groups known to be among the most volatile in the Swedish electorate. Furthermore, our results from 1988 showed that few of them had developed any sense of party identification with the Green Party. Consequently, party loyalty will not be an asset for the Green Party in 1991.

Another difficulty confronting the Greens is that they have to face and

deal with a lot of different issue publics on environmental matters. A coherent green dimension structuring ordinary people's opinions on environmental issues has not yet developed in Sweden. The alternative green dimension is to a very large extent still an elite phenomenon in Swedish politics.

In conclusion, green issues have had what is likely to be a permanent breakthrough in Swedish politics; the green dimension has only had a breakthrough on the elite level; the Green Party had a breakthrough in the election of 1988. Now it is facing difficult odds defending that breakthrough in 1991.

NOTES

1. For the debate about post-materialism/materialism and New Politics see, Lafferty 1976; Inglehart 1977, 1989, 1990; Marsh 1977; Lijphart 1981; Flanagan 1982; Knutsen 1985; Eijk & Niemöller 1987; Jenssen & Listhaug 1988; Reimer 1989.
2. On the founding of the Green Party in Sweden, see, Weinberg 1982; Carlström & Lundström 1988; Vedung 1989; see also Gahrton 1980, 1988.
3. Green voters, placing themselves on a left-right scale, on the average locate their position slightly to the left. In 1988, that tendency was more pronounced than before – see Holmberg 1989.
4. Obviously, the Swedish Greens resemble *Die Grünen* in Germany. However, *Die Grünen* is probably somewhat more radical, both on left-right issues and on environmental problems. About *Die Grünen* and other green parties, see Müller-Rommel 1985, 1989.
5. For a comparable analysis, discussing potential support for green and other types of parties in Europe, see Inglehart & Rabier, 1986.
6. On the meaning of the New Middle Class, see Baker et al. 1981; Dalton et al. 1984; Goul Andersen 1984.
7. The analysis is based on data from a survey with Swedish citizens in the fall of 1988 (SOM '88). In the SOM studies, Inglehart's twelve-item post-materialism/materialism scale is used. Like everywhere else, the post-materialism/materialism scale is not a uni-dimensional phenomenon among Swedish voters: see Reimer 1988, 1989; see also Inglehart 1989.
8. The result is based on data from the *Riksdag* Study of 1985, which included all members of the Swedish Parliament (response rate 97 percent); see Holmberg & Esaiasson 1988. A follow-up study was done in 1988, this time with a response rate of 96 percent. The analyses in Figure 3 and Figure 4 are based on data from the 1988 *Riksdag* Study.
9. A possible explanation for the declining correlations is that problems associated with economic growth, including environmental problems, were discussed more at the time of the referendum on nuclear power than in the late 1980s. In the election of 1988, the focus was on environmental issues but it was less ideological than in 1980. In 1988, the debate was more centered on concrete green issues like dead seals, pollution in the cities and dying forests.

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