

Master's Thesis

**To Emphasise or not to Emphasise? Green Parties' Performance and its Effect on
Mainstream Parties' Environmental Agenda**

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Abstract

While most of scholars agree that parties compete by emphasising particular issues and responding to the issues owned and used by their opponents in different ways and based on various factors, there is no compromise on the relationship between niche parties' electoral success and the strategy applied by established parties, particularly in the case of Green parties and environmental issues. This thesis addresses the existing puzzle by examining to what extent and under which circumstances green parties' performance affects environmental issues' saliency on mainstream left-wing parties' agenda. The study is centred around conducting the quantitative analysis of panel data that is based on the Manifesto Project and the ParlGov datasets and includes elections in 23 European Union member states covering the time period of 1980-2018. The findings demonstrate that Green parties' performance measured by share of seats which these parties acquire during elections has a negative effect on established parties' emphasis on environmental issues in the elections which follow. Moreover, different effects for old and new member states are observed. Thus, the results of this research contribute to the previous literature on party competition and issue competition as well as existing debates on relationship between niche parties' electoral performance and mainstream parties' policy agenda.

Keywords: party competition, issue competition, Green parties, mainstream parties

Introduction

The issue competition theory implies that, apart from emphasising their own issues, parties tend to respond to the issues owned by their opponents and often change their policy agenda in order to secure votes of electorate (Green-Pedersen & Mortensen, 2010). The existing literature has focused on various possible factors that can affect the parties' shifts in their emphasis on different issues, from shifts in voters' preferences and electoral setting to parties' internal organisation and their previous electoral results (for example, see Carter, 2006; Somer-Topcu, 2009; Adams, 2012; Schumacher, de Vries & Vis, 2013; Spoon & Klüver, 2014).

Their findings were also confirmed by studies on competition between niche and mainstream parties (Meguid, 2008). Since niche parties are mostly characterised as issue entrepreneurs and focus on a single issue or on a range of similar issues, it is mainstream parties that react to change in the party-system agenda caused by niche parties and shift their positions, while their reactions range from ignoring the issues owned by niche parties to raising these issues' saliency by taking either a position similar to the one of a niche party, or the opposite one (Meguid, 2008).

However, when it comes to particular factors that affect the response of established parties towards niche issues, there are some controversies in the literature that still remain unsolved. Thus, while findings by Spoon, Hobolt and De Vries (2014) demonstrate that non-Green parties emphasise environmental issues, when the issue owner, namely, Greens, poses an electoral threat by gaining more votes in the previous elections and when there is a favourable electoral context, the results of Abou-Chadi's (2014) study regarding the impact of niche parties' success on established parties' agendas are reverse. The author claims that mainstream parties deemphasise environmental issues as a reaction to electoral success of Green parties. Even though there is a slight moderating effect of parties' ideology, all

mainstream families act in line with the study's results, while, according to the study by Spoon et al. (2014) study, left-wing parties on average incorporate green issues in their programmes more than their right-wing opponents.

This means that additional research on relationship between Green parties' success and mainstream parties' incorporation of environmental issues in their policy agenda is required, especially now when green issues are becoming more and more salient within society and Green parties become more electorally successful. It is also worth noting that while green issues attracting more attention on party-system agenda and appearance of Green parties in national elections and governments are quite recent phenomena, this allows us to study the relationship of interest from its emergence to the current state. Moreover, analysing the relationship between Greens' electoral results and established parties' response in form of changes in their policy programmes sheds more light on the mechanism of parties' interaction and electoral processes in general. Therefore, this thesis contributes to the party competition theory and, particularly, the issue competition literature by dealing with this controversy and addressing the following research question: To what extent and under which circumstances does green parties' performance affect green issues' saliency on mainstream left-wing parties' agenda?

Based on the literature, we suggest that there is an effect of performance of Green parties on the way mainstream left-wing parties emphasise green issues. This assumption goes in line with the previous findings by both Spoon et al. (2014) and Abou-Chadi (2014). However, in order to avoid bias we do not make any assumptions regarding the sign of this effect and leave this aspect to be demonstrated by the results of the analysis. Moreover, we assume that certain factors such as the state of economy and whether a country is an older or a newer EU member states might affect the relationship of interest.

When it comes to data, it is worth mentioning that while previous research covered all mainstream parties, this thesis focuses on left and centre-left established parties. Previous

findings demonstrate that these parties are posed major threat by Greens, while during elections Green parties mainly benefit from voters of left mainstream parties (Carter, 2006; Rüdig, 2012). Therefore, including only left and centre-left parties in the analysis may lead to less ambiguous findings and exclude possible misleading effect of mainstream right parties. This thesis is based on the data from two main sources – Manifesto Project and ParlGov datasets – to conduct a quantitative analysis of panel data that includes national elections in 23 European Union member states in the years 1980-2018. The analysis is based on multivariate linear regression models with fixed country effects, which allows us to control for the specific country-related conditions, which might affect the relationship between Green parties' performance and mainstream parties' environmental agenda.

The findings demonstrate that Green parties' electoral performance has a negative effect on established parties' environmental agenda. Thus, Greens' success in national elections leads to mainstream parties' deemphasising green issues in their manifestoes. Moreover, it is argued that this effect is different for old and new European Union member states.

The study proceeds as follows. The next section presents a brief overview of the literature on issue competition and parties policy agenda shifts as a part of issue competition. Then we continue with the information on the data and methods used for addressing the research question. Afterwards the main findings of empirical analysis are demonstrated and, finally, the thesis concludes with main implications of the results and prospects for further research.

Theoretical framework

Political parties are often primarily associated with elections and competing for votes (Downs, 1957). Even though scholars distinguish not only vote-seeking parties, but also office- and policy-seeking ones (Strøm & Müller, 1999), maximising votes remains an important aspect and, if not always being a primary goal for parties, it at least represents an important

tool to fulfil other objectives, while elections and electoral campaigns present an important stage in parties' political life. Hence, party competition has been on research agenda quite for a long time starting with Downs' (1957) spatial theory of competition. This theory envisages that political parties are distributed along right-left dimension and voters base their decision on the party's ideological proximity. However, it is worth mentioning that parties tend to modify their positions and, in case with spatial theory of party competition, shifts in their ideological positions are important to analyse. Existing literature has studied different circumstances when parties change their ideologies, including shifts in public opinion (parties indeed react to changes in voters' preferences; however, their movements along the left-right dimension occur only when the public sentiment is clearly shifting away from the initial position of the party) and previous electoral performance of parties, where research findings demonstrated that electoral results in the past do not have any effect on parties' ideological shifts (Adams et al., 2004).

Further research has focused on issue competition as another dimension of party competition (see, e.g. Green-Pedersen, 2007; Meguid, 2008; Walgrave, Lefevere & Tresch, 2009; Green-Pedersen & Mortensen, 2010; Spoon et al. 2014). As distinct from the spatial theory, according to issue competition scholars, parties compete by giving their emphasis to particular issues (Budge & Farlie, 1983). More importantly, they do not just highlight the issues they are associated with as having an expertise in (Petrocik, 1996), but respond to changes in a so-called 'party system agenda', which includes all issues at a certain point in time that are expected to be addressed whether parties own them or not (Green-Pedersen & Mortensen, 2010). Therefore, party systems envisage certain interconnectedness and create incentives for parties to address the issues 'owned' by rival parties. Furthermore, the issues emphasised within the party system agenda become politicized, which means that they acquire a high level of salience and become a part of party competition in this political polity (Carter, 2006). It is

worth mentioning that although majority of scholars agree with the fact of parties' having to react to issues emphasised by their opponents (e.g. Green & Hobolt, 2008; Walgrave et al., 2009), Riker (1996) has demonstrated that instead of responding to these issues, parties rather have incentives to deemphasise them. Therefore, the existing literature proves the importance of analysing the relationship between parties within the issue competition dimension.

While parties shift their ideological positions according to the spatial theory of party competition, the main shifts within issue competition occur in the parties' positions on a range of various issues. These positions can be mainly observed in parties' policy programmes, electoral manifestoes and other documents as well as parties' leaders' and members' speeches and statements. Therefore, to understand the party competition process better, it is necessary to study why parties sometimes shift their policy agenda and which factors are the most suitable to explain their shifts.

Various scholars have focused on several possible explanations and particular circumstances that affect shifts in parties' positions regarding different issues. First, the existing literature suggests that public preferences as well as salience of policy issues among voters affect their electoral decisions and create incentives for parties to adjust their policy agenda, while having an effect on attention that parties pay to these issues in their policy programmes (Adams, 2012; Spoon & Klüver, 2014). Moreover, the previous research demonstrates that mainstream parties such as Labour, Liberal, Social Democrats, Christian Democrats and Conservative parties are more inclined into adapting their policy positions as a response towards shifts in public opinion (Adams et al., 2006). On the other hand, it is necessary to remember that the literature also assumes that there is a reciprocal relationship between parties' and voters' preferences, which, in turn, implies that voters' perceptions of contested issues are influenced by parties' positions (Bélanger & Meguid, 2008). Not only the

mean voter's changes in preferences can affect parties' emphasis on one or another issue, but particularly shifts among parties' supporters (Clark, 2014).

A number of authors have tried to analyse if there is an effect of election results and electoral context in general. Their findings imply that parties' performance in previous elections and their electoral defeat, in particular, leads to changes in parties' positions during the following elections more often, than if there was an electoral success (Somer-Topcu, 2009). When it comes to electoral context, Spoon and Klüver (2014) argue that parties prove to be more responsive to the issue preferences among public during national elections, while being less responsive in the European Parliament elections, which are usually perceived as second-order elections. Not only the electoral context, but also transformations in the external environment, such as changes of economic conditions, can also make parties adjust their issue positions (Adams & Somer-Topcu, 2009).

Several scholars have analysed the effect of a party being in government or in opposition on its responsiveness to issues within the party-system agenda. It is mostly argued that parties in opposition tend to be more responsive than incumbent parties, since they do not risk as much as parties in the government. Moreover, when a party gets into the government, it faces a number of challenges that include intractability of certain problems and high political and financial costs of particular policies, which reduces its flexibility in terms of reacting to shifts in the party-system agenda (Carter, 2006). On the contrary, Green-Pedersen and Mortensen (2010) argue that it is opposition parties which more rarely respond to issues they do not own, whereas incumbent parties have to deal with different policies while being in the government and therefore incorporate a broad range of issues in their policy agenda.

There are also studies where the authors try to analyse interactions between different factors and their effects on shifts in parties' policy agenda. For instance, Schumacher et al. (2013) examine a moderating role of parties' internal organisation in parties' position shifts in

response to the following factors that were mentioned above: mean voter change, party voter change and office exclusion (whether a party is a member of cabinet before elections). They come to a conclusion that leadership-dominated parties react more actively to the changes in the mean voter's preferences and being excluded from the office, while activists-dominated parties pay more attention towards shifts in party voters' issue preferences.

An important group of works in the existing literature is presented by studies that address issue competition within the mainstream/niche parties' context, where the niche party concept comprehends parties that focus on a single (or so-called 'niche') issue or, sometimes, on a narrow range of related issues and, therefore are typical 'issue owners' (Adams et al., 2006; Meguid, 2008). The research on interaction between niche and mainstream parties has demonstrated that niche parties may become issue entrepreneurs in case the issue they own ascends the party system agenda and this, in turn, will create incentives for mainstream parties to respond to its increased salience within the party system (Spoon et al., 2014). Moreover, while established parties tend to incorporate niche issues in their programmes, this process mostly features a one-way direction, since niche parties tend to be unresponsive and rarely go beyond the narrow set of issues (Adams et al., 2006).

When it comes to mainstream parties' response, Meguid (2008) distinguishes three strategies that might be applied by established parties to react to issues promoted by niche parties. These are dismissive (implies that mainstream parties disregard the issue therefore reducing its salience within party system agenda), adversarial (incorporating the issue, but taking a position that is different from and in most cases opposite to the niche party's one) and accommodative (incorporating the issue while adopting the position of the niche party). Thus, the last two strategies contribute to increase in salience of the niche issue.

Significant amount of existing literature focuses on Green parties, which constitute one of the most successful niche parties' groups. The emergence of Greens is mainly associated

with postmaterialist value change (Inglehart, 1971). While materialist values comprise economic and physical well-being, postmaterialists are concerned about ‘new’ politics or so-called ‘new left’ issues that include but are not limited to environment, rights of women, promotion of peace. This change took place during the post-war time and created circumstances for arising and further growth in the number of Green parties that have become not only environmental issue owners, but also issue entrepreneurs, leading to emergence of green ‘issue-public’ – voters that consider the environment to be one of the policies they base their decision on (Tatalovich & Wattier, 1999) – and thus posing an electoral threat to mainstream parties. The threat has become even more significant, since a number of Green parties have managed to win seats in national parliaments, while established parties started to incorporate environmental issues in their own programmes and policies (Inglehart, 1997).

It is necessary to mention that according to saliency theory (Stokes, 1963; Budge et al., 2001) the environment is considered to be a valence issue. This envisages that there is an agreement among public regarding what it expects as a result of policies (e.g. everyone would agree that better environment is a desired outcome) and, therefore, parties do not take opposite positions (pro- and anti-environmental), but rather focus on particular aspects of environmental policies. Even though recent research on climate change policies (Carter, 2013; Farstad, 2018) has demonstrated that climate issues as one of environmental dimensions are rather positional (parties can take any position in the range from totally supporting climate policies and rejecting climate change at all), the environment in general remains to be perceived as a valence issue with issue ownership and salience within party system agenda being the important elements of party competition over valence issues (Stokes, 1963; Abou-Chadi, 2014).

Coming back to the issue competition theory, while scholars have greatly focused on analysing the factors that affect Green parties’ performance in different countries (see, e.g. Mair, 2001; Rüdiger, 2012; Grant & Tilley, 2019), less attention was paid to their interaction

with mainstream parties and incorporation of environmental issues into established parties' agenda, especially comparing to quite extensive literature on immigration issues and right-wing parties (e.g. see Adams & Somer-Topcu, 2009; van Spanje, 2010; Alonso & da Fonseca, 2011).

Moreover, the existing literature does not demonstrate agreement on particular aspects of relationship between Green and mainstream parties in the context of issue competition. Time-series cross-section analysis by Spoon et al. (2014) aims at testing of factors that may affect responsiveness to green issues' ownership by established parties. The scholars analyse two dimensions: electoral threat and electoral opportunity. While the latter embraces such components as party size, voters' preferences, institutional context and economic factors, the electoral threat is presented by the electoral strengths of issue owner, namely Green parties' vote share in elections. Their findings demonstrate that non-Green parties emphasise environmental issue, when the issue owner poses an electoral threat by gaining more votes in the previous elections (non-Green party's ideology in this case acts as a moderator and left-wing parties on average incorporate green issues in their programmes more than their right-wing opponents) and when there is a favourable electoral context. It can be argued that mainstream parties prefer accommodative strategy when dealing with niche parties' success according to Meguid's (2008) classification.

However, findings by Abou-Chadi's (2014) study on impact of niche parties' success on established parties' agendas are reverse. The author claims that mainstream parties deemphasise environmental issues as a reaction to electoral success of green parties. Even though there is a slight moderating effect of parties' ideology, all mainstream families act in line with the study's results. Therefore, according to Abou-Chadi (2014), established parties pick a dismissive strategy while responding towards electoral threat posed by Greens.

Hence, there is a clear controversy in the findings that has not been addressed by further research. For instance, Grant & Tilley's (2019) use Spoon's et al. (2014) findings, while their

own findings suggest that the accommodative strategy might be less efficient for mainstream parties as soon as Green parties become more established within the party system. This means that additional research on relationship between Green parties' success and mainstream parties' incorporation of environmental issues in their policy agenda is required. Therefore, this thesis will contribute to the party competition theory and, particularly, the issue competition literature by dealing with this controversy and addressing the following research question:

To what extent and under which circumstances does green parties' performance affect green issues' saliency on mainstream left-wing parties' agenda?

It is worth mentioning that this thesis focuses solely on left and centre-left mainstream parties, while both Spoon et al. (2014) and Abou-Chadi (2014) included all mainstream families and used the ideology only as a control or moderating variable. This choice is based on the previous findings which confirm that even though Inglehart's (1997) postmaterialist value change theory assumes emergence of 'new politics' that would not be associated with left-right political dimension anymore, scholars tend to put Green parties on the left and in general associate their policies with ones of traditional left parties (Owens, 1986). Moreover, findings demonstrate that Greens pose major threat to mainstream left parties, whereas during elections they mainly benefit from voters of established left or centre-left parties (Carter, 2006; Rüdiger, 2012). Therefore, choosing left and centre-left mainstream parties for this analysis might lead to more relevant and consistent results.

Even though performance of Green parties is still worse in terms of vote share in elections compared to that of established parties, the situation is different when it comes to a so-called 'potential vote' (Mair, 2001). This concept is an indicator of how many voters consider the probability of ever voting for a particular party and Greens demonstrate high levels of potential vote, which does not differ from ones of mainstream parties. This implies that Green parties pose an electoral threat for their opponents and mainly for left parties as it was

mentioned before. On the other hand, according to Meguid (2008), that mainstream parties are more likely to act responsively towards niche issues when issue owners are perceived as an electoral threat. Therefore, we would assume left and centre-left mainstream parties to react at the shifts in Green parties' electoral performance. The following hypothesis can be derived based on the existing literature:

H1: Green parties' performance has an effect on mainstream left and centre-left parties' emphasis on environmental issues.

Basically, the existing literature more or less demonstrates a consensus regarding the fact that there is an effect of Greens' performance on the mainstream parties' environmental agenda. However, this hypothesis is different, since we focus on a specific party family and, therefore, need to test this relationship again. Moreover, the abovementioned debate mainly refers to whether this effect is positive or negative. Since our main goal is to address this controversy, we do not create a separate hypothesis that would indicate sign of this effect, but we will come to conclusion after conducting the analysis itself and afterwards discuss why it might be this or that way.

Environmental issues in this case are regarded to be valence and, therefore, we do not analyse change in positions (e.g. from pro-environmental to anti-environmental), but consider only salience of these issues within mainstream left parties' policy agenda, similarly to approach by Spoon et al. (2014).

As for the possible circumstances that might alter the relationship of interest, previous studies have demonstrated that the state of economy in the country may also affect issue competition, starting with Inglehart's (1997) observations of voters focusing on materialist issues during times of economic crises and coming back to post-materialist issues in times of economic strength. More recent research is consistent with these findings and suggests that voters tend to reduce their support of environmental issues when economic situation is not

satisfying (Kayser & Grafström, 2016). Moreover, voters tend to punish incumbent parties associated with green policies during the times of economic recession, while rewarding them during the times of economic prosperity (Abou-Chadi & Kayser, 2017). Therefore, a favourable economic situation may create conditions for environmental issues to win more votes and therefore enhances the level of electoral threat posed by Greens for left mainstream parties. Thus, the following hypothesis is to be tested:

H2: The better the state of economy is, the stronger impact of Green parties' performance on mainstream left parties' emphasis on green issues is.

The previous studies mostly focused on the Western European countries or developed world democracies (e.g. Canada, Australia). However, including newer Eastern European countries might allow us to control for country-related factors. Most of these countries have a communist past and heavily depend on industry. This, in turn, led to a late emergence of Green parties and environmental discourse in these states. Moreover, some studies demonstrate that there is a lower trend among the population of post-communist countries to focus on postmaterialist values and less public saliency of Green issues in general, which also leads to lower levels of Greens' electoral gains in these countries compared to their counterparts from Western democracies (Tranter & Western, 2009). Therefore, we would assume that there is a different effect of Green parties' performance on mainstream parties' environmental agenda in these two regions. Since we are focusing on the European Union states, the following hypothesis can be derived:

H3: The effect of Green parties' performance on mainstream left parties' emphasis on green issues is stronger in older EU member states than it is in newer EU member states.

Research design

To address the research question, quantitative analysis of panel data was chosen, while a unit of analysis is presented by an individual party and time dimension is presented by years

when national elections took place. Panel data is a combination of longitudinal and cross-sectional data, which allows us to use the advantages of both approaches and not only take into account differences across parties contributing to external validity of the findings, but also control for changes related to various points in time.

Since our main interest lies in the parties' policy agenda, the Manifesto Project database (previously known as Comparative Manifesto Project) serves as the main source of data. This dataset comprises data based on the content-analysis of political parties' manifestoes by splitting them into quasi-sentences related to a range of policies, including welfare, economic development, multiculturalism and other issues and counting the amount of emphasis devoted to each of them compared to the volume of the whole manifesto. The issue of interest for this thesis is environmental agenda of mainstream parties, and to measure our independent variable – particular emphasis given by each of these parties to green issues, dimension 'per501' of the Manifesto Project dataset is used. This parameter demonstrates how much attention a party gave to support of environmental policies within its programme during concrete national elections.

While Abou-Chadi (2014) perceives environmental issues as positional issues and, therefore, adds item 'per410' that indicates a party's support for economic productivity as a negative attitude towards environmental policies, we assume that the environment in general can be treated as a valence issue (Stokes, 1963) and do not include dimension 'per410' in the analysis, while measuring parties' emphasis on green issues solely based on the values of 'per501' variable of the Manifesto Project dataset. The variable is marked as 'MP_environment' in our dataset.

Moreover, as it was mentioned in the previous section, this analysis focuses on left and centre-left established parties, which were chosen based on the values of 'lrgen' variable of the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (that measures where a party is located on the left-right dimension

by giving it a score from 0 to 10, where 0 is extreme left and 10 is extreme right), while their 'mainstreamness' was checked picking social democratic and liberal party families in the Manifesto Project dataset. Afterwards, some parties were excluded if the data on 'per501' dimension was absent or was given only for one or two elections, which would make it impossible to control for the time factor. Altogether, the data includes 26 left and centre-left mainstream parties.

When it comes to our main explanatory factor, namely the performance of Green parties in national elections, the ParlGov dataset includes data related to this predictor. The ParlGov database comprises data on elections and governments, while two variables are retrieved to measure Greens' performance: vote share and seat share (these variables are named as 'vote_share' and 'seat_share' in our dataset respectively). We assume that the more votes and seats Green party manages to acquire during the elections, the better its performance is and therefore the bigger electoral threat it poses for the established party in the future. Certainly, these two variables are interdependent, but we use both of them in our analysis to check if the results are different and see if one of them is more suitable than the other one. Mostly there is one Green party in each country. However, if there are more than one Green party, the vote and seat shares are being summed up as in the Abou-Chadi's research (2014), to account for the total electoral pressure put on a mainstream party.

It is also worth mentioning that both vote share and seat share are taken at the point of time (t-1) meaning national elections previous to those for which the emphasis on environmental issues is taken (t). This goes in line with theoretical model, since, according to the literature, mainstream parties react at success or failure of niche parties in previous elections by introducing changes in their party programmes before the next elections and this also allows us to ensure that the independent variable precedes the dependent one in time.

The data is collected for the European Union countries¹ for national elections that took part during the time period between 1980 (Green parties mostly started to appear and compete in elections around that time) and 2018. Time periods may differ across the countries due to availability of the data, while exact points of time also vary due to the fact that national elections are held with different frequency and are not synchronised. The final sample includes 24 country-cases². The following countries were excluded from the sample: Latvia and Romania (due to the lack of data on left and centre-left mainstream parties in the Manifesto Project database); Portugal, Poland and Lithuania (Green parties in these states mostly perform in coalitions with bigger parties and in case of Poland Green party participates in the coalition with mainstream left party itself, which, therefore, makes it impossible to calculate the electoral performance of Greens in these countries).

The final dataset is divided into two separate datasets, where the first one includes only 'old' EU member states (which were the members before the enlargement of 2004) and comprises 188 observations, while the second one covers all the states and includes 230 observations. The division is based on two reasons. First, due to the historical circumstances, the data on the newer member states does not cover as long time period as the one on the older member states and, therefore, the number of the observations per party is much lower for these countries. Therefore, to get more statistically correct results we first analyse the dataset with the older member states. Second, by adding new member states we can control for the

¹ The sample of states is limited to the European Union member states only, because at the beginning of the research, salience of environmental issues among population was to be included in the analysis and Eurobarometer was supposed to serve as a source that would allow us to measure salience in the same way across the countries, that, in turn, includes the results of public surveys only in the EU members. However, at the end, due to a small number of observations that included the data on this variable and also complicated reverse causality of relationship between saliency and voting results, this parameter was excluded from the analysis.

² In this study Belgium represents two different cases due to its regional specificity as there are two different Green parties that compete with two different mainstream left parties in Flemish and Walloon regions respectively. Therefore, the Flemish Green party (Anders GAan LEVen) presents an electoral threat to the Flemish left-wing mainstream party - Socialistische Partij Anders, while the Francophone Ecologists (Écologistes Confédérés pour l'Organisation de Luttes Originales) presents an electoral threat to the Francophone Socialist Party (Parti Socialiste).

differences between these two groups of states and check if the results are different for both datasets.

Apart from the dependent and main independent variables, the state of economy is included in the analysis as a possible alternative explanation for a greater emphasis on environmental issues by mainstream parties. This can be explained by the postmaterialist theory (Inglehart, 1971), according to which once the country does not face issues of materialist (e.g. economic) nature anymore, it starts focusing on postmaterialist values that include but are not limited to welfare and environmental policies. We use two variables that indicate the state of economy: annual GDP growth that is extracted from the OECD database for the year that precedes each elections and is named as 'GDP' in our dataset (GDP growth is chosen over GDP value, since it demonstrates more clearly if there was an economic upturn or economic recession before elections); and unemployment rate (the number of unemployed people as the percentage of the total labour force, which, in turn, is the total number of employed people plus the unemployed) that is extracted from the International Monetary Fund database for the year that precedes each election and is named as 'unemployment' in the current analysis.

Moreover, a number of control variables are included in the analysis. First, 'pr_vote' that measures the performance of the established parties in the previous elections (t-1) and, as in the case with Greens' performance, this data is retrieved from the ParlGov database. Moreover, based on the same database, a dummy variable 'government' was created to indicate if the mainstream party was a part of the government ('1', if yes, and '0', if no) at the time of current elections (t). We also include variable an 'MP_environment_pr' variable that measures emphasis on green issues in mainstream parties' programmes in previous (t-1) elections to control for the possible effects of our main dependent variable across time. Finally, in the second dataset we also include a dummy variable 'new_old' that takes the value of 1 if a country is a new member of the European Union and the value of 0 if the country is an older

member of the European Union. As it was mentioned above, a time point for such a division is the year of 2004, when the Big Bang enlargement took place in the EU.

As it was stated at the beginning of the section, quantitative approach is applied, and we conduct statistical analysis of the panel dataset using 'Stata15' software. To address the research question we run a number of multivariate linear regressions with fixed effects (to control for effects that might affect the statistical model due to the differences between the states and remove omitted variable bias) and clustered robust standard errors. Some of the models include interaction terms that provide us with a possibility to evaluate moderating effects of some variables. When it comes to our hypotheses, the statistically significant effect of 'vote_share' and/or 'seat_share' on the 'MP_environment' variable would thus confirm our H1 hypothesis, while the absence of statistically significant effect would reject it.

As for hypothesis H2, the statistically significant effect of interaction between 'GDP' and/or 'unemployment' and 'vote_share' and/or 'seat_share' would confirm this hypothesis. Finally, to confirm hypothesis H3, we need to observe that interaction term between 'new_old' and 'vote_share' and/or 'seat_shate' variables is significant. It is worth noticing that interpretation of interaction terms coefficients is not as straightforward as interpretation of coefficients in a standard linear regression and, therefore, further analyses including the use of 'margins' command and plotting of the results in several graphs are conducted in order to see the relationships more demonstrably and make final conclusions regarding confirmation or rejection of hypotheses H2 and H3.

Results

The descriptive statistics of the main variables for both datasets is presented in Table 1. Our dependent variable takes its values across the range from 0 to a maximum of 22,814 (Social Democratic Party of Germany in 1990). When it comes to the vote share, its values extend up to 12.4, which was acquired by the Green Party in Austria with the same party

representing the highest value of the seat share variable. Also, it is worth mentioning that vote share mean is higher than the seat share mean, which can be explained by the specifics of electoral systems and also by the fact that Green parties may manage to get a low percentage of votes that does not entitle them to seats in the national parliaments.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics

	Variable	Observations	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Dataset with old member states	MP_environment	188	5.25	3.85	0	22.814
	vote_share	188	3.19	3.1	0	12.4
	seat_share	188	2.52	3.18	0	13.1
	GDP	188	2.01	2.88	-9.1	25.2
	unemployment	185	8.19	4.61	1.4	24.9
Dataset with all countries	MP_environment	230	4.9	3.76	0	22.814
	vote_share	230	2.94	3	0	12.4
	seat_share	230	2.22	3.05	0	13.1
	GDP	228	2.13	3	-9.1	25.2
	unemployment	227	8.4	4.58	1.4	24.9

After running the Hausman test we reject the null hypothesis and, therefore, come to a conclusion that the model with country fixed effects is more relevant for dealing with our panel data, than the one with random effects, and it also addresses omitted variable bias. Moreover, we use clustered standard errors technique, which allows us to account for heteroscedasticity and is perceived to be a more practical approach to deal with clustered observations in panel data (Primo, Jacobmeier & Milyo, 2007). Altogether, the results of five multivariate linear regressions based on two datasets that we have created are presented further.

Table 2 demonstrates results of several models that were run based on the first dataset, which includes only old member states. Here we test both vote share and seat share as the indicator of our main independent variable. Apart from this variable, Model 1 and its variation (Model 1a) include alternative independent variables as well as controls. Based on the results, it can be observed that share of seats acquired by a Green party during the elections (t-1) has a statistically significant negative effect on the emphasis put on environmental issues by a

mainstream party in its manifesto. That is, an increase in 1 percentage point in Green party's share of seats at previous elections leads to 0.4 decrease in green issues' saliency in an established party's programme for the current elections.

When it comes to the vote share, it also has a negative effect on the dependent variable, but it is not statistically significant for $\alpha=0.05$. However, if we take into account confidence intervals of its coefficient, the p-value that is not much bigger than α level and the number of observations, we can still assume that there is an effect of vote share on mainstream parties' environmental agenda. Altogether, we can confirm hypothesis H1, since one of the two parameters (seat share) demonstrates a statistically significant effect. Apart from this, we have separately run additional regressions (are not included in the table) where we also added 'MP_environmental_pr' variable to check if there is an autocorrelation effect. As a result, both vote share and seat share featured statistically significant negative effects on the dependent variable, while results of other variables did not change. To simplify the further explanations, only models with seat share variable are demonstrated.

Table 2. Results of multivariate linear regressions with country fixed effects (Dataset 1)

	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 1a</i>	<i>Model 2</i>
Vote share (t-1)	-0.36* (0.17)		
Seat share (t-1)		-0.4** (0.11)	-0.48** (0.2)
GDP	0.16 (0.11)	0.16 (0.12)	0.1 (0.1)
Seat share (t-1) * GDP			0.05 (0.07)
Unemployment	-0.2 (0.12)	-0.22* (0.11)	-0.23** (0.1)
Government	0.05 (0.77)	0.16 (0.74)	0.15 (0.75)
Vote share of a mainstream party (t-1)	-0.04 (0.03)	-0.04* (0.02)	-0.04* (0.02)

	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 1a</i>	<i>Model 2</i>
Constant	8.84*** (1.62)	8.85*** (0.74)	9.08*** (1.46)
R ²	0.26	0.29	0.28
N	184	184	184

Note: Clustered standard errors are in parentheses

*p<0.1 **p<0.05 ***p<0.01

As for the other variables, none of them demonstrates a statistically significant effect in any variation of this model. However, it is worth mentioning that GDP and unemployment demonstrate significant effects when only one of them is present in the model. In this case, GDP growth has a positive effect on the dependent variable (the better GDP growth before elections is, the more emphasis mainstream left parties put on green issues in their programmes), while unemployment demonstrates a significant negative effect (thus, the higher unemployment rate before elections is, the less space mainstream left parties leave for environmental issues in their agenda). Both results imply that the state of economy affects the main dependent variable. As for their insignificant effects in the model presented in Table 3, it can be caused by the fact that both these variables are correlated with each other, since usually when a country features economic well-being, both high GDP growth rate and low unemployment rate are present.

Model 2 includes an interaction term that aims at testing hypothesis H2 whether the state of economy also acts as a moderator and has an impact on relationship between Greens' performance and mainstream parties' environmental agenda. The regression output envisages that the seat share has a statistically significant effect on the dependent variable if GDP's value is '0' (it is worth mentioning that the same regression model was run with the unemployment variable instead of GDP and results were similar). At the same time, when the value of seat share is '0', the GDP growth rate has a positive effect on the dependent variable, which is not significant though. Finally, the interaction term coefficient shows the unit change in the effect

of the seat share on the dependent variable associated with a unit increase in the GDP growth rate and is not statistically significant either, which would imply that moderation effect of the GDP growth rate is not present. However, in case with interactions, p-values sometimes appear to be inaccurate, while it is hard to make a conclusion about statistical significance of moderation effect based only on the regression output. Therefore, we used ‘margins’ command to check how the GDP growth rate alters the relationship between our dependent and main independent variables in a more detailed way.

Figure 1. Testing moderating effect of the GDP growth rate

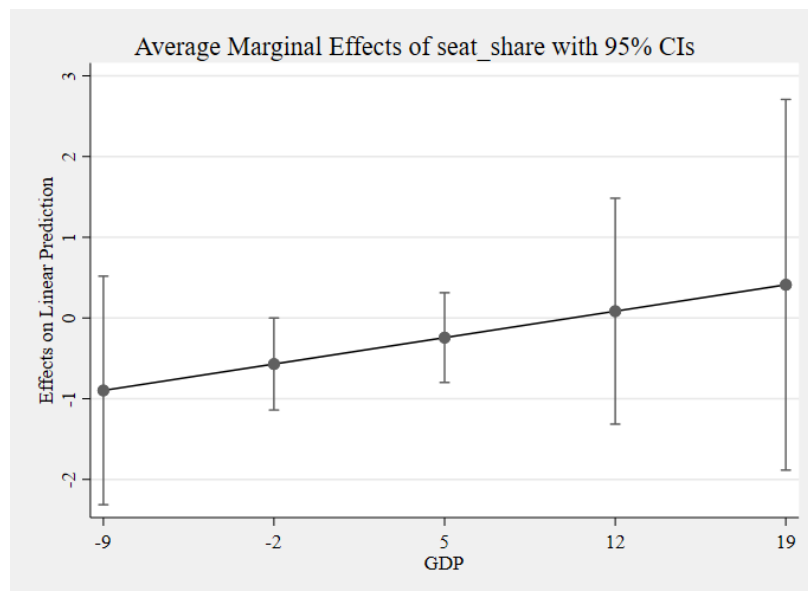


Figure 1 demonstrates the estimated marginal effect of the seat share variable across different values of the GDP growth rate. At first sight it may seem that GDP has an effect on relationship between the seat share and the dependent variable, which can be interpreted in the following way: the higher the GDP growth rate is, the less mainstream parties deemphasize green issues in their programmes as a response to Green parties electoral success and, in case with high GDP growth levels, even begin to emphasize these issues more. However, if we look at the confidence intervals at this graph, moderating effect of the GDP growth rate does not seem to be a significant one, especially at the higher levels. This is also confirmed while plotting predicted values of the dependent variable depending on the values of seat share across

various values of GDP growth (is not present here). Therefore, we have to reject hypothesis H2, while GDP growth rate has proven to be statistically significant as an independent variable in the previous model (if we exclude the unemployment variable). However, it is also worth noting that we cannot totally exclude the possibility that there is an effect of the GDP growth rate value on relationship between Greens' seat share and mainstream parties' environmental agenda, since our results imply that the data we use for the analysis identifies this effect in an imprecise way, so that we cannot be certain whether this effect is positive, negative or zero.

Table 3 shows the results of regressions run based on the second dataset, where observations from the newer member states were added. First, we test the regression model with all the variables (Model 3) to see if there are any differences between both datasets. The seat share (t-1) acquired by Green parties has a statistically significant negative effect on mainstream parties' emphasis on environmental issues, which is a bit less than in Model 1a, but nevertheless contributes to confirmation of our main hypothesis. As for the other variables, none of them demonstrates a significant effect on our dependent variable, but it is worth noting that, as in Models 1 and 1a the GDP growth rate and unemployment feature significant ($p < 0.05$) positive and negative effects respectively as soon as one of them is excluded from the model, which again can be related to a correlation between these two variables. Moreover, we ran this model including the lagged dependent variable (MP_environment_pr) to control for autocorrelation and all effects remained the same.

Table 3. Results of multivariate linear regressions with country fixed effects (Dataset 2)

	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>
Seat share (t-1)	-0.34** (0.15)	-0.39** (0.15)
GDP	0.1 (0.09)	0.11 (0.1)
Seat share (t-1) * New/old		0.52 (0.31)

	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>
Unemployment	-0.2* (0.1)	-0.2* (0.1)
Government	0.02 (0.66)	0.09 (0.66)
Vote share of a mainstream party (t-1)	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.03 (0.03)
Constant	7.75*** (1.28)	7.92*** (1.23)
R ²	0.26	0.3
N	223	223

Note: Clustered standard errors are in parentheses

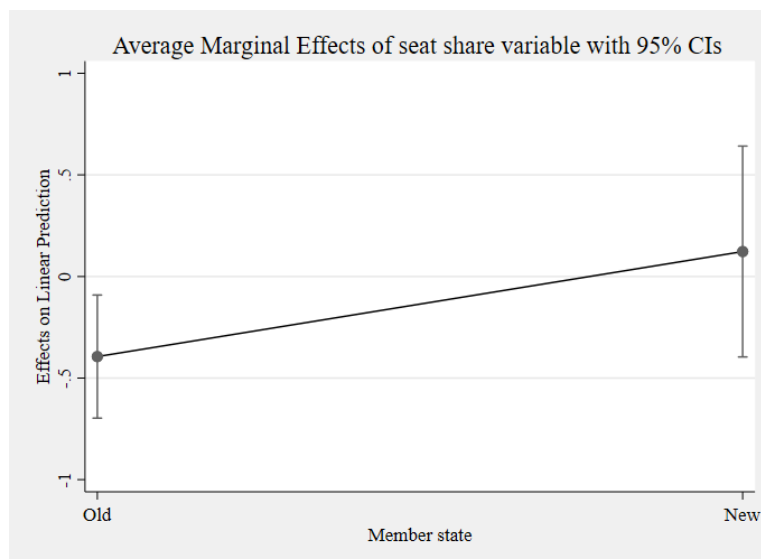
*p<0.1 **p<0.05 ***p<0.01

In Model 4, the interaction term between our main independent variable and a dummy variable `new_old` is added to the model. It is worth noting that usually, while introducing an interaction in the regression model, the main effects of all the variables that are included in this interaction should also be added in the model. However, in our case we deal with the panel data and country fixed effects. Thus, our dummy variable that indicates whether a country is a new or an old member state remains constant within each panel over time and is collinear with a panel indicator (in our case, country). This means that if we include the main effect of this variable in our model it will be dropped from the analysis due to above mentioned collinearity issue. Therefore, under these circumstances we need to omit the main effect of the ‘`new_old`’ variable and include only the interaction term itself.

The results demonstrated in Table 3 can be interpreted in the following way: the seat share has a statistically significant negative effect on the dependent variable when the ‘`new_old`’ variable takes the value of ‘0’ or, namely, when the country is an old member state. The interaction term does not demonstrate a significant effect, but to make more reasonable and accurate conclusions we need to apply ‘`margins`’ command.

First, we measure the estimated marginal effect of our main independent variable across different values of our moderating variable. The results of plotting this effect can be observed as a graph in Figure 2. Here, we can see that at the value '0' of the new_old variable the effect of the seat share variable is negative and statistically significant, which was confirmed by regressions run based on the dataset that included only old member states. As for the new member states, the seat share coefficient turns into a positive one, but it is not statistically significant, and we can see that its confidence interval includes '0' value as well as negative values.

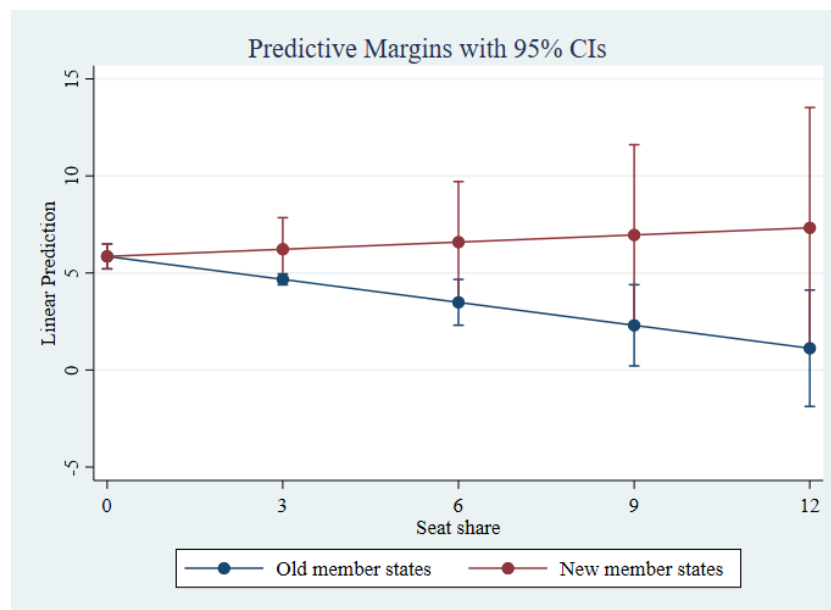
Figure 2. Testing moderating effect of the 'new_old' variable



Let us now look at the estimated values of the dependent variable and effect of the seat share based on the values that the 'new_old' variable takes. Figure 3 demonstrates predicted values of the 'MP_environment' variable plotted using margins command. On the one hand, one can assume that the fact whether a country is an old or a new EU member state indeed acts as a moderator, since the slopes are headed in different directions. On the other hand, confidence intervals of both slopes are intervening, which means that the moderating effect cannot be totally confirmed. However, the area that is intervened is quite small compared to the case with the moderating effect of the GDP growth rate, so we can partly confirm

hypothesis H3, meaning that the ‘new_old’ variable seems to act as a moderator of relationship between the seat share variable and the dependent variable and, while the effect of the seat share variable on mainstream parties’ emphasis on green issues is indeed statistically stronger for older member states, the dataset based on which our analysis is conducted does not allow us to make a conclusion regarding the direction of this moderation (whether it decreases the effect, removes it or changes its direction). The latter can also be due to a relatively small number of observations from the newer member states, which, in turn, is related to a later emergence of Green parties in these countries and political circumstances that have developed historically.

Figure 3. Predicted values of MP_environment based on seat share for different values of the new_old variable



Overall, the results of our statistical analysis imply that the performance of Green parties in elections (t-1) measured by share of seats acquired by these parties has a statistically significant negative effect on emphasis on green issues by established parties in their manifestos in national elections (t). Moreover, the state of economy also has a significant effect on mainstream parties’ environmental agenda when it is measured either as the GDP growth rate or unemployment rate. Finally, such characteristic of a country as it being an older or a

newer EU member state has an impact on the main relationship of our interest. Thus, while the seat share effect is negative and significant for old member states, its effect cannot be properly measured for newer member states and can be either less compared to the older ones, zero or even positive.

Discussion

Being one of the components of party competition in general and, particularly, issue competition, the way parties make changes in their political programmes have been researched quite extensively, while different possible factors that lead to parties' emphasising or deemphasising certain issues or policies in their manifestoes have been tested. Nevertheless, some debates and controversies can still be found in the existing literature on party competition and remain unsolved. One particular controversy refers to the relationship between electoral performance of niche parties and reaction in form of mainstream parties' emphasis on the issues owned by those niche parties. This debate is related to environmental issues and Green parties that are perceived to be not only owners of environmental issues, but also green issues entrepreneurs. While some authors argue that Greens' success leads to established parties' raising saliency of environmental policies in their political programmes in order to regain votes lost due to Green parties' electoral results (Spoon et al., 2014), other research shows that mainstream parties tend to deemphasise these issues in response to Greens' electoral gains (Abou-Chadi, 2014).

This thesis, therefore, contributes to the existing literature by dealing with the controversy and analysing to what extent and under which circumstances green parties' performance affects environmental issues' saliency on mainstream parties' agenda. Unlike academic works mentioned above, this study focuses on left and centre-left mainstream parties, since these parties are the ones that experience direct electoral threat from Greens, according to the literature (Carter, 2006; Rüdig, 2012), and this focus may lead to more concrete results.

Moreover, the research is based on the quantitative analysis of panel data. Like in the previous studies, we use the Manifesto Project and the ParlGov databases as the main data sources, but, while previous research took into account only older member states or developed democracies, our dataset includes elections in 23 European Union member states covering the time period of 1980-2018, which adds observations from new member states, which allows us to control for certain country-related factors, and also from more recent elections.

After conducting statistical analysis of our panel data, the main conclusion is that the performance of Green parties has a significant negative effect on mainstream parties' emphasis on environmental issues in their manifestoes, while the effect remains robust across various regression models. This finding is in line with the results of Abou-Chadi's (2014) study and also implies that established parties use dismissive strategy according to Meguid's (2008) classification. Therefore, in response to electoral success of Greens, they deemphasise the issues owned by these niche parties and in this way try to reduce its saliency. Moreover, the results demonstrate that the effect differs for older and newer member states, although further research is needed to establish the exact moderating effect of this country-related factor.

Before analysing possible reasons of such a relationship, it is worth mentioning that we used two parameters as a measurement of Green parties' electoral performance in the analysis: vote share and seat share acquired by Greens, while both of these parameters are lagged (therefore, while measuring the emphasis of established parties on green issues in their manifestos in current elections, we measure Green parties' performance in previous elections, to ensure that our independent variable precedes the dependent one in time). As a result, the seat share demonstrates stable statistically significant negative effect on the dependent variable across different models, while the effect of the vote share is not always statistically significant, although it does not differ a lot from the one of the seat share in terms of coefficients. This may happen due to the fact that different countries feature different electoral systems, thresholds

and, therefore, different mechanisms of seat allocation. Moreover, Green parties sometimes manage to gain a vote share that is really low, but is still counted in the analysis, while not having any effect on the results of elections. Therefore, in some cases Greens may represent electoral threat when they actually gain the seats in national parliaments, rather than just getting a certain number of votes, which can lead to a higher significance of the seat share variable in our regression models. Moreover, previous research mostly used vote share as an indicator of Green parties' performance, while in fact seat share may be a better measurement of this factor.

When it comes to the question of why mainstream parties deemphasise environmental issues as a reaction to Green parties' electoral success, we next discuss some of the possible reasons for that. Abou-Chadi (2014) in his work suggests that since Green parties are clear owners of environmental issues, established parties would always have an incentive not to compete with them in this area. Moreover, Walgrave et al. (2012) emphasises that Greens are not just issue owners, but archetypical 'associative' issue owners, meaning that voters immediately build associations between environmental policies and Green parties. Moreover, according to Riker (1996), as soon as a party starts to dominate political discourse in a certain policy area, other parties tend to drop this issue, which is pretty much similar to Abou-Chadi's (2014) arguments. We should also remember about the fact that environmental issues are valence issues, which, in turn, dismisses a possibility for mainstream parties to pick an adversarial strategy from Meguid's (2008) classification, that envisages mainstream parties incorporating the issues owned by another party and taking an opposite position regarding this issue, while such a strategy can be applied, for instance, in case of the issues of multiculturalism and migration and far-right parties. Therefore, taking into account Greens' strong ownership of environmental issues and also the valence nature of green issues, their success would lead to established parties deemphasising these issues and decreasing their saliency, while this

strategy would also allow mainstream parties to emphasise other topical issues and increase their saliency even more.

Since we focused only on left and centre-left parties, we might also think about possible reasons related particularly to these party families to demonstrate the results which we obtained. First, some left parties have quite strong ties with trade unions and working-class population, which, in turn, envisages that it might be complicated for them to abandon their support of productivity growth as a trade-off for environmental policies' support. Second, since Greens and left-wing parties are located not far from each other at the left-right dimension, they sometimes participate in electoral or governmental coalitions together. Therefore, in this case Green parties' success might not be perceived as electoral threat, but as a gain for office-seeking mainstream parties, while deemphasising environmental policies in their electoral programmes may be seen as a sign of non-competition with Greens and also as a way to embrace more voters by emphasising other salient issues.

As for limitations, the fact that Green parties and environmental issues are quite new phenomena in party competition can be perceived both as an advantage for the research and as a limitation. On the one hand, it allows us to analyse the development of relationship between niche and mainstream parties from its emergence to its current state, while, on the other hand, it leads to the numbers of observations that are not that big. Moreover, the Manifesto Project is sometimes criticised for its inconsistency in coding of quasi-sentences and, therefore, may lead to some inaccuracies in the analysis. However, it is the only available source for extracting information on parties' emphasis and position on various issues, while coding manifestoes manually would take up too much time.

Finally, some avenues for further research can be defined. First, more attention should be given to the differences across countries that might affect the relationship between Green parties' performance and established parties' emphasis on green issues, which can be addressed

via within-case studies. Second, while this paper omitted factors that are related to internal organisation of mainstream parties, it does not mean that they act as unitary actors. Therefore, the effect of mainstream parties' organisational factors on the relationship between their policy agenda and niche parties' performance seems to be an interesting line for further research. Moreover, Green parties are not solely focusing on environmental issues, while more and more of them become so-called 'rainbow' parties embracing issues including, but not limited to, peace, women's rights, animals' rights. Thus, further research on how mainstream parties react at promotion of different issues by a 'single-issue' owner may become an advanced study. Last but not least, the priming theory and role of media in relationship between niche and mainstream parties also presents an interesting avenue for further research, since media has lots of tools that allow them to twist saliency of various policy issues.

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