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Chapter

Greece

Greens at the periphery

Nicolas Demertzis

Seen from the outside, there are many reasons why there should be a potent environmental movement in Greece. Yet there is no such movement. Of course, Greece is much less industrialized than most other European countries and has not so far experienced the severe environmental damage caused by extensive or heavy industry. Nor does Greece have any nuclear power plants. Low levels of industrialization and absence of nuclear installations do not, however, mean that there are no serious environmental disturbances which could serve as the basis for the formation of a substantial green movement. The small size of Greece's industrial establishments has not prevented them from littering and polluting the environment, not least because most are equipped with old-fashioned and fuel-inefficient machinery. Moreover, during the last 20 years there has been tremendous destruction of forests, extensive pollution of the sea, disorganized town planning, rapid extermination of the native fauna, dirty cities and, on top of everything, the Athenian smog caused mainly by the concentration of motor vehicles in an already hyper-concentrated capital where almost half the country's population lives.

This is a short extract from a much longer list of environmental problems which might be thought sufficient to provoke collective adversarial reaction. Of the above-mentioned problems, just two – the destruction of forests by yearly repeated fires and air pollution which, especially in summer in the Athens area, is the cause of many deaths and diseases (Gillman 1990) – could logically become the levers for a strong environmental or ecological movement. The fact that there is no such movement does not mean that people are unaware of the problems. On the contrary, the flow of information about them through various media is considerable. The absence of

a systematic and collective response bears witness to the low ranking of environmental problems in people's need hierarchies. For almost 20 years the development of a large and dynamic Greek movement has been hindered by a widespread lack of deep-rooted environmental consciousness among the Greek public. The fact that the environment plays a noteworthy role in agenda-setting procedures is due far more to its having been covered by commercially distributed news and spectacle than to fundamental collective public concern.

This, however, by no means implies that all through this period citizens' environmental initiatives, protectionist associations and ecological organizations were totally absent at both national and local level. On the contrary, it has been calculated that since 1970 more than 200 environmental and ecological clubs, associations, groups and organizations have been formed. Nevertheless, they have not constituted a movement in the proper sense of the word. That is, they have not influenced major parts of the population; they have worked sporadically and in isolation and with limited range and objectives. Where environmental initiatives have taken place, they tend to have been undertaken by largely isolated but frequently enlightened minorities rather than by active collectivities. By comparison with other western European countries Greece has a quasi-movement rather than a well-established and deep-rooted Green movement.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE GREEN MOVEMENT

If, however, one wants to do justice to what I have just called a 'quasi-movement', one should take a closer look at its course through time (Louloudis 1987: 8-21). Its history can be divided into two periods: from 1973 to 1981, and after 1981. In the first period, there were at least eight significant mobilizations regarding environmental problems, among them the cases of Megara (1973), Volos (1974), Pylos (1975) and Karystos (1977-1979). Aiming to prevent the building of new industrial installations, all of them occurred in places away from the capital. They had, therefore, a regional character. These mobilizations included demonstrations, strikes, public debates, propagation of demands and ideas through local media and so on. A common feature was that, since Greece has an overconcentrated administrative structure, these mobilizations could not succeed unless they were, in one way or another,

extended to the central decision-making headquarters of Athens. The transference of appeals to the national level proved in all cases to be decisive and all eight mobilizations ultimately achieved most of their objectives. However, their accomplishments were usually not so much the outcome of their own efforts and dynamics as they were due to the incidental incorporation of regional and local environmental uprisings into the competition between political parties at the central level. In this respect, it should be mentioned that political parties, especially leftist ones, have been reluctant to take part in this sort of mobilization, whose rationale was sometimes entirely different from the parties' own. The leftist parties only came to terms with them either to attempt to absorb the mobilization out of long-term strategic considerations or for immediate political advantages.

Another common trait of this period was the protectionist character of mobilizations; the prevailing element was environmentalism rather than deep ecology. The simple environmentalist nature of those mobilizations could be partially explained by the role of intellectuals who were involved during that period. They mostly came from the natural sciences and usually advocated scientific and technical solutions to the various problems. This was not accidental since it was they who, during the 1970s, first taught and brought into Greek universities and other institutions the environmental problematic in a scientific and systematic manner. It is of importance here that those mobilizations were frequently stimulated by sheer economic motivations by vested material interests, glossed up ideologically by appeals to tradition and homeland. The environment was not consistently recognized as a societal value in itself.

Despite apparent similarities, the situation during the second period (1981 to date) is different. Again, there have been mobilizations, among them one in 1988 in northern Greece (Kalamas) which really shook public opinion. Though mobilizations did occur more frequently in Athens (the most prominent of them initiated by Chernobyl in 1986), most took place at regional and local level once again. But, beyond these superficial similarities, one can ascertain new traits: a proliferation of environmental and ecological associations and groups, reinforcement of an autonomous feminist problematic, an increase in humanist intellectuals' involvement in environmental debates and activities and a remarkable growth of environmental and ecological literature. It should also be

mentioned that 'alternativeness' as a vague but adversarial socio-economic project was more apparent than in the previous period. We could, therefore, say that since 1981 there has been a sort of transition from environmentalism to political ecology or from shallow to deep ecology.

This does not imply a clear-cut distinction nor a well-defined collective identity for all those who participate in major mobilizations. Again, what frequently underlies mobilizations at the local level are private and non-organized economic interests which cannot in the first place be mediated by existing political networks. Such was the case with the Kalamas River affair (August–September 1988), the most publicized environmental mobilization ever in Greece. Successive mobilizations have not, however, given rise to a substantial Green movement. Green thinking remains isolated in minority circles, unable to permeate the mentality and everyday life activities of wider social strata (Karimalis 1987: 234–235; Plassara 1987: 284–286; Spanopoulos 1987: 292–293).

By international standards, we still cannot speak of a Green movement in Greece. It is not simply a question of the ambivalences in the identity of many groups which participate in various kinds of mobilizations, nor their deficiencies in defining their foes and alternative projects for societal reconstruction that Touraine (1977: 77–101) identified as the prerequisites for a movement. Something more fundamental is missing, the *sine qua non* for a social movement to develop as such: mass involvement as well as durable support and attractiveness. As it is, the cause of environment or ecology is restricted to small devoted groups whose influence is, and probably will continue to be, quite fragmented and limited. The non-development of environmental social consciousness might be advanced as an explanation of the weakness of the Green movement, but this in turn requires explanation. What makes for this lack of environmental consciousness? A number of factors deserve mention.

The first is the postwar economic development which lasted until the early 1970s (Mouzelis 1978). It was modernization based extensively on small manufacturing, middle range industry, fragmentation of capital and property, as well as on tourism and the massive remittances of emigrants. Non-agricultural production has been concentrated mainly in construction, consumption and the tertiary sector. At the same time, a great deal of economic activity is parasitic and 'grey', recent estimates putting the black economy

at more than 35 per cent of NP. All these factors have led to an unforeseeably rapid vertical as well as horizontal social mobility which has put into question traditional lifestyles and identities. Moreover, social mobility has been accompanied by geographical mobility, the result being rapid and unplanned urbanization buttressed principally by small private property.

Second, this modernization has given rise to very crowded middle social layers whose mentality is highly atomistic and state-oriented. Contemporary orientation towards the state is related to traditional Greek statism (Mouzelis 1986; Lyrintzis 1984: 99–118). For reasons both historical (legacies of the Byzantine and Ottoman empires, the absence of a potent and productively inclined bourgeoisie) and political (the weak civil and human rights tradition, political modernization from above, clientelistic political representation), the state intervenes decisively in societal relations as a powerful distributor of incomes, resources and advantages of all sorts. The western tradition of the state as 'night-watchman' has never appeared in Greece. Nor has state intervention led to a welfare state. From the beginning, the state has been a power and administrative centre for the absorption of potential unemployment as well as for balancing opposed societal interests through non-productive financial, protective and distributive policies. It is precisely these policies which reproduce almost the whole society's dependence on the state. This is essentially the reason for administrative overconcentration and the unusually large and unproductive public sector.

Consequently, the mode of domination has been deeply embedded in clientelism and populism rather than in contractual and institutionally guaranteed parliamentary and democratic procedures. This is related to the weakness of civil society in Greece, both as a relatively independent public sphere and as a setting in which various social movements can emerge. Together with other dimensions of the social and political system, the weakness of civil society leaves room for a ubiquitous individualism, fostered by small private property that often makes difficult the articulation of collective consciousness. Given this individualism, rapid upward social mobility has brought about a raising of expectations, a reorientation of reference groups and an intense sense of relative deprivation (Demertzis 1990: 70–96). These have been expressed through an ever-moving stream of consumerism and greedy material prosperity which make it difficult for the environment to

be protected and accorded a central place in public interests. Under such circumstances, the natural environment is not conceived as a public good or as something endowed with its own inherent value but as a field and means for maximum economic exploitation.

Another important factor that has contributed to limited environmental consciousness among the Greek public is the priority given to the democratic cause over other political and social concerns, especially during the years immediately after the abolition of the military dictatorship (1967–1974). Whereas for most European countries the 1970s was the decade of Green movement formation, intellectuals and other radical groups in Greece were primarily concerned with the restoration of democratic institutions rather than with the critique of an environmentally calamitous model of socio-economic modernization.

Since 1974, political parties have been the primary agents for the mediation and articulation of societal demands, including those concerning the environment. The 'partyiness' of Greek society conducts interest aggregation from above (Papadopoulos 1989: 66–67). Thus, even if there have been environmental demands, they have been for the most part addressed to the traditional parties and, consequently, were deprived of their ecological as well as radical potential.

All in all, disorganized economic development, speedy urbanization and upward social mobility, statism and poorly articulated civil society, have co-ordinated historically to make a well-rooted environmental consciousness unlikely in Greece. Underdevelopment of societal environmental consciousness has not, however, prevented Green parties from emerging out of the various environmental groups and associations.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE GREEN PARTY

Ecological and environmental groups started thinking about forming a unified political body as early as 1984. This, however, proved to be more difficult than it might have seemed, partly because other parties could absorb relatively easily environmental demands into their programmes and policies, and because the numerous groups and associations were dispersed over the country, making co-operation and communication difficult. Moreover, the quite deep differences and divisions among these groups made unified

action almost impossible, as did their adherence to 'anti-systemic' activism and their scepticism of electoral politics.

A number of meetings did take place where possibilities for constructing a unified Green party were explored, but it was not until autumn 1989 that a federation of more than 100 groups and associations was set up. Meanwhile, some of them had participated in the 1986 local elections. Results were rather disappointing in terms of votes and seats, but it was at least a first step. Two years later a loose eco-political scheme was founded under the title Enosi Politon (Citizens' Union). This proved short-lived both because only a small number of groups and intellectuals was involved and because of its self-declared preliminary organizational character; for the majority of the participants, the Citizens' Union was meant to be the forerunner of a much wider political-ecological organization.

In February 1989, through close co-operation with German Greens and the contribution of some extra-parliamentary leftist groups, members of the Citizens' Union decided to participate in the June 1989 election for the European Parliament, and to postpone setting up the Green federation until the end of that year. In the meantime, other political agents took part in elections under 'environmental' or 'ecological' banners. These were ephemeral, did not constitute parties in any proper sense of the term and had minimal significance in terms of votes, organization and programme.

Although the conditions for a substantial environmental movement were lacking, Greek ecologists did participate in three successive elections under the title Ecologists-Alternatives.

Though the European election coincided with the general election of June 1989, Ecologists-Alternatives decided to take part only in the former, mainly because it was reckoned that, given the intensity of national party competition, their chances in the national parliamentary election were extremely limited, whereas the European election was relatively neglected by the major parties. In the event, they narrowly failed to reach the threshold of 1.36 per cent necessary to win a seat.

The Greens were ambivalent about the 1.1 per cent they actually got. It was interpreted either as a negative sign that environmental ideas and political ecology needed to be further cultivated at ground level before being tested in the political arena, or, alternatively, it was seen as a first doubtful but primarily positive and encouraging message for further political involvement. The second

interpretation prevailed in the meetings and debate that followed that election. Thus when the Federation of Ecological Organizations was formed in October 1989, it was decided to participate under that banner in the national election of November 1989.

Expectations and predictions that the Greens would double their vote in the general election proved unfounded, but the 0.58 per cent they did get was sufficient to win them a seat in the national parliament. As a result, they started to get more publicity because this was the first time in more than half a century that a non-traditional leftist party had entered the Greek parliament. That single parliamentary seat was reckoned by Ecologists-Alternatives to justify their taking part in the next national election a few months later. Again, expectations triumphed over reality; in April 1990 they managed to increase their votes only marginally but retained their single seat.

In local elections the Greens have fared rather better. In October 1990 they managed to multiply their votes in many regions and cities and secured a number of seats on municipal councils. The relatively small-scale problems of local communities and the highly personalized character of local political communication made it feasible for Green candidates to exercise personal influence more easily. Yet with few exceptions, the numbers and percentages concerned were still very small.

Since their official introduction to the political scene, Ecologists-Alternatives have not penetrated the boundaries of the Greek party system but remain on its thresholds. Potential influence has not yet been converted into positive voting. It is characteristic that although a few months before the 1990 election 8 per cent of the population ranked the environment first in their issue preferences, Ecologists-Alternatives received only 0.77 per cent of the votes. This means not only that the existing party system is capable of appropriating the ecological problematic, but also that the low development of environmental consciousness affects Green Party performance. The formation of a Greek Green party, late though it was by comparison with most European countries, does not appear to have met or represented any widespread new post-materialist needs, values or demands.

Although there are no systematic calculations, all the indications are that Ecologists-Alternatives were, like Green parties in western Europe, mostly preferred by the young and the new middle class as well as by the more highly educated. It has to be noted that

although most groups participating in the Ecologists-Alternatives came from various regions and constituencies, in the 1989 European election the Green vote in urban areas was double that in semi-urban ones, and more than double that in rural areas; 41.4 per cent of Green votes were concentrated in Athens. The same held true for the next two national elections: Athens accounted for 47.2 and 44.4 per cent of Green votes in the November 1989 and April 1990 elections respectively.

A closer inspection of the results of those polls shows that the Green vote in the wealthier, well-preserved new middle-class areas is much greater than in low income and environmentally damaged areas and districts. It seems that there is a disconnection between the areas and constituencies confronted with serious environmental problems and the electorate's preference for the Greens. It is characteristic that in the constituency of Thesprotia, where the great mobilization over the Kalamas River took place, the Green candidate got only 0.36 per cent in the 1989 poll and 0.49 per cent in the 1990 election. Results were similarly meagre in all the other places where environmental mobilization had occurred, as well as in other constituencies with extensive environmental problems. Although the Greens polled more strongly in local elections, the disconnection between environmentally burdened areas and the Green vote still remained. For example, in Elefsis, reckoned to be the most ecologically damaged city in Europe, the Greens polled only 2.9 per cent.

The Federation of Ecological Organizations formed in October 1989 accommodates nearly 100 groups and associations which range from pure conservationists to extra-parliamentary far leftists. Since October 1989 something like a dozen of the founding constituent groups have withdrawn. Most of the constituent groups come from various regions and provincial cities and towns. The decentralized character of the federation continues to contrast with the concentration of Green votes in Athens.

The Federation has a loose organizational structure consisting of a 45-member co-ordinating secretariat, a nine-member presidency and committees on specific issues such as the parliamentary support of their delegate and the ethnic minorities. According to the rotation principle, members of both the secretariat and the presidency are supposed to change every three months, but this has not happened because of acute organizational problems, the unwillingness of ordinary members to undertake official tasks and

the personal squabbles between some prominent members. Like their counterparts elsewhere, the Greek Greens espouse acknowledged 'new politics' means and goals, yet, as far as their organizational structure is concerned, neither the members of the secretariat nor the members of the presidency have ever been elected. Instead, they are appointed by the major constituent groups.

The founding Congress was postponed four times. First scheduled for December 1990, then for April 1991, June 1991 and autumn 1991, it eventually took place in January–February 1992. The main reasons for these postponements lie in the inner discords of the Federation. Apart from the 'deep versus shallow ecology' and the '*fundi-realo*' disputes, a devastating debate took place in the Federation concerning its organization. On the one hand, it was argued that there should be a balance between the centre and the periphery, namely, between the Federation as a co-ordinating centre and the local constituent groups; on the other hand, an argument was raised against the very co-ordinating character of the Federation and in favour of the autonomy of the constituent groups. This disagreement was amplified not only by the above-mentioned discords and divisions, but also by the lack of preparation of the Greek Greens to enter the political arena.

All these antitheses were intensified during the founding Congress in February 1992. That Congress ended in total failure since a considerable number of far left activists withdrew both from the Congress and the Federation. One of the immediate consequences was that their single parliamentary representative declared herself independent from the Ecologists–Alternatives, thus depriving the Federation of an important means of political action.

THE POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURE

The weak electoral profile of the Greek Greens cannot be explained entirely by the atrophy of environmental consciousness and the consequent enfeeblement of a Green movement. The inertia of the Greek political party system also plays a major role. In analysing the structure of the party system in Greece and the position of the Greek Green Party in it, one can rather better understand its relatively late formation and its limited electoral base as well as its future prospects.

Despite various extra-constitutional interruptions, the Greek party system has been characterized by remarkable continuity and

stability. It has deep historical roots inherited from two periods which determined the political cleavages of the country: the National Schism of 1915–1922, and the Civil War of 1945–1949. The first gave rise to right and anti-right coalitions, the second to a communist left and anti-communist division. In the years after the Second World War the two cleavages overlapped so as to allow the non-right-wing camp to overtake the right.

Alongside these cleavages, a tri-polar political system has been constructed which corresponds to three clear-cut political camps with their respective identifications and loyalties: the left, the centre and the right (Mavrogordatos 1983a, 1983b: 70–94; Diamandouros 1983: 43–69; Papadopoulos 1989: 58–61; Nikolakopoulos 1985: 65–85). Before 1981 none of the poles corresponded to a particular single party. Thus, although there was usually a multi-party system, it was actually run according to a tri-polar logic. With the restoration of constitutional democracy in 1974 this system gradually started to fade. The outcome of the 1981 election marked its end. Three distinct major parties now represent the three political families; in recent elections they have between them won almost the sum total of votes cast in national as well as European elections.

Most students of the Greek party system agree that it is 'frozen' (Mavrogordatos 1984; Nikolakopoulos 1989: 100–108; Papadopoulos 1989: 62–64; Paschos 1984: 192–211). Party loyalties and identifications based on traditional cleavages remain intact and voting volatility is extremely low (Verney 1990: 131).

Party systems and electoral systems feed on each other. Changes to the electoral law to suit the governing party are typical of the Greek political system. At various times since the early 1950s, electoral laws have been designed so as to exclude the left from participation in government. Most national elections have been run by a system of 'reinforced' proportional representation (Featherstone 1990: 105–106; Verney 1990: 131–133) which always provides a working parliamentary majority to the major party by depriving lesser ones of several seats they would have gained under a strictly proportional system.

In order to secure its future position, shortly before the general election of June 1989, PASOK introduced a hybrid system intermingling reinforced proportionality and 'pure' PR (Pridham and Verney 1991: 50). In the new system, 288 of the 300 seats are filled from 56 constituencies. The remaining 12 go to 'Deputies of State'

ected on a nationwide PR basis. The 288 seats are allocated by means of two distributions. In the first, allocation in each constituency is calculated by dividing the number of valid votes cast by the number of seats plus one. Any remaining seats are allocated on the second distribution in which the country is divided into 13 constituencies, this time without the 'plus one' clause (Pridham and Verney 1991: 55-56). Single parties or coalitions which field candidates in at least three-quarters of all constituencies and get at least 2 per cent of the total vote are granted at least three seats from the second distribution provided that they have not won any on the first. Parties with 1 per cent of the total vote are entitled to one parliamentary seat. This electoral system is much more open and permissive than any since 1974. Yet, though it has operated through three successive polls, the party system has exhibited remarkable inertia. Contrary to predictions and positive opinion polls, Ecologists-Alternatives have barely managed to win a single seat.

Given that in 1988-1989 the political scene was torn by scandals and obvious political corruption (Featherstone 1990: 103-105; Pridham and Verney 1991: 49, 54), observers and students of Greek politics predicted a decisive rupture in party loyalties. It was precisely this assumption that persuaded the Greens to enter electoral politics. But the assumption was proved wrong; the party system stood still. More particularly, though there were shifts in voters' allegiances, they took place within the three camps rather than disengaging voters towards new options. The right achieved its best result but PASOK's populism averted severe losses even though it was PASOK's leadership which had been accused of much economic and political corruption. Recent upheavals in eastern Europe had thrown the traditional left into crisis and many of its voters moved towards either PASOK or New Democracy. The proportion of the left vote which transferred to the Greens lagged far behind predictions. Given the low ranking of the environment in the public's need hierarchies, as well as the stormy political arena of the time, it may well be that a considerable part of the Ecologists-Alternatives' votes were not actually Green but protest votes.

CONCLUSION

The formation of the Green Party in Greece can be attributed to: a voluntaristic compensation for the green movement's low profile; activists' incomplete understanding of the Greek party system;

contingent circumstances such as the uneasiness of the political scene; the exceptionally permissive electoral law of 1989. This appears to contrast sharply with the experience of western Europe where, in most cases, Green parties have been the outcome of a deep-rooted set of social needs expressed through potent movements and ruptures of political cleavages.

What, then, are the prospects for the Greens in Greek politics? To answer this question one has to take into account some nascent dimensions of the political and party system which, for the first time, have faintly appeared during the last few years in Greece. It is increasingly recognized that the mode of domination in Greek society, based principally on clientelistic politics and populist practices, is an impediment to economic success and modernization in general. Various voices have been raised against this mode of domination and in favour of a reorganization of representation structures. This does not imply that such a restructuring is immediately at hand - the party system is still well buttressed by traditional political practices which lead modernization processes into blind alleys - but it is an important tendency which may be realized in the long or even medium term. Arguments against the continuation of the current mode of domination are supported by a slight dislocation of traditional political cleavages.

This dislocation does not come principally from a transmutation of values in a post-materialist direction (Inglehart 1977, 1981). It is stimulated by the inability of the existing party system to meet the requirements of administrative and economic rationalization. The Greek public is generally unaffected by post-materialist priorities, although one can trace such trends among the young and the educated upper middle class. Hence, whereas in the mid-1980s the distance in Greece between right and left on the respective axis was the largest in Europe (Papadopoulos 1989: 63), by the end of the decade it had diminished. The opposition between the two extremes has thus been reduced and one can observe a certain convergence towards the centre. It was precisely this leaning to the centre that made possible the six-month coalition between right and left in 1989.

It is premature to assume that this convergence is going to last. On the contrary, some indications in recent government policies point to its contingent character. The alteration of the electoral law is one instance. Once again, the party in government has altered the terms of political competition in its own favour: the October

1993 general election was conducted by the familiar reinforced proportional representation system, but this time with a 3 per cent threshold. This, and the renewed fragmentation of the Greens – the Federation having disintegrated almost a year before the election and many Greens having subsequently attached themselves to other parties, notably the Left Alliance – robbed the Greens of any chance of parliamentary representation.

For the time being the issue is open, but the modernizing imperatives of European integration may determine future developments. With the restructuring of traditional political cleavages, Greens, either alone or in coalition with other parties, might yet win a better place on the left of the Greek party system. This presupposes their reforming into a 'systemic' political force (Katsoulis 1990: 40–42) and their resolving their internal inconsistencies. The Federation lacked specific rules for its organization and decision-making. It also lacked an articulated alternative programme founded on political ecological principles. To overcome their difficulties, Greek Greens would, among other things, have to bridge the gulf between *Fundis* and *Realos*. So far they show no signs of doing so.

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