



GREEN PARTIES, GREEN FUTURE

*From Local Groups to
the International Stage*

PER GAHRTON

Foreword by

CAROLINE LUCAS

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Green Parties, Green Future

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PREFACE

It has been a thrilling journey full of despair and hope for those of us who began in the early 1980s (some a decade earlier) to establish Green parties and construct an international Green network. I myself initiated the Swedish Green Party after having failed (despite a period as a Liberal MP) in 'greening' the old Liberal Party. I was chosen as one of the first four co-secretaries of the European Greens in 1985. Since the beginning of the 1980s, I have visited Green parties in their home countries and at international Green congresses and gatherings all over the world. I met environmentalists in the crumbling Soviet Union around 1989–1990, visited Greens across the USA and Canada in 1990, reported in 1992 from the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, and visited branches of Partido Verde from Manaus to Porto Alegre, including Brasília where I was received by the first MP of Partido Verde, Sidney de Miguel, in the Chamber of the Parliament. As a Green Member of the European Parliament 1995–2004 I was present at events relevant for Green policy, such as the WTO meetings in Seattle 1999 and Doha 2001, the Johannesburg Rio +10 in 2002 and the Mumbai World Social Forum in 2004. I have participated in innumerable Green national campaigns and demonstrations, from Seville to Tirana, Venice to Tbilisi, Cairo to Baku. During my period as the chair of the China Delegation of the European Parliament 1997–2002, I met with environmentalists throughout China, and in 2006 I visited Japanese Greens in Fukuoka, Kyoto and Tokyo. I have, once or several times, visited at least half of the Green parties presented in this first global overview of Global Green politics. Furthermore, I have been present at all the Global Greens congresses, Canberra 2001, São Paulo 2008 and Dakar 2012, and at most of the major meetings of the European Greens, up until the EGP Council in Istanbul in November 2014.

The aim of this book is to give an overview of the growing global Green political movement, its thinking, ideology, world view, basic values, organisational structure and political strength. I don't claim to have produced a scientific treatise. However, I have made use of my capacity as PhD of Sociology, standing somewhere in between the analytical positivism of Emile Durkheim and the interpretative anti-positivism of Max Weber and George Simmel, in the sense that I reject the notion of social research as a branch of classical physics or mathematics, but still believe that quantitative methods are needed in order *to explain*, together with qualitative methods in order *to understand*. From this perspective I have chosen two types of approach. One is that of reporting as a *participant observer*, using my extensive notes and diaries from more than four decades as a Green activist and politician. Another is that of drawing on my

experience not only as a sociologist but also as a reporting journalist, trying to act as an *external and critical observer*, using documents from Green parties and organisations, media reports, election results, interviews with Green actors and politicians, as well as research reports, memoirs of Green politicians and other relevant literature.

I am biased in favour of the Green political movement and the need for Green politics, but I hope not to be uncritical and blind to weaknesses, flaws, mistakes and hazards.

This book is my own project and does not in any way represent any Green party or organisation. All opinions are mine and the responsibility for the correctness of the thousands of details is mine alone. Nevertheless, it would not have been possible to produce this book without the support of some 30 dedicated Greens, from the international secretaries of individual parties to responsible persons in international Green bodies, from individual Greens with special knowledge to present and former Green Members of Parliaments and Governments.

I especially want to thank Anna-Karin Andersson, International Secretary of the Swedish Greens, for having checked the entire manuscript and contributed hundreds of corrections as well as recommendations for 'killing darlings'. I am also grateful to my wife, Drude Dahlerup, professor of political science at Stockholm University, who read parts of the manuscript from her professional point of view and made crucial recommendations. In addition warm thanks to the following Greens who have checked, corrected and commented on relevant sections: Rikiya Adachi (Japan), Liaquat Ali (Pakistan), Magda Alvoet, former minister (Belgium), Paolo Bergamaschi (Italy), Margret Blakers (Australia), Olzod Boum-Yalagch (Mongolia), Arnold Cassola, former secretary general of the European Greens (Malta), Jacqueline Cremers, former secretary general of the European Greens (Netherlands), Paty Doneau, coordinator of the Federation of American Greens (Mexico), Marina Dragomiretskaya (Bulgaria), Eva Goës, Green Forum (Sweden), Mayis Gulaliyev (Azerbaijan), Frank Habineza, president of the African Green Federation (Rwanda), Heidi Hautala, former minister (Finland), Jesus Hernandez Nicolou (Catalonia), Gerhard Jordan (Austria), Véronica Juzgado (executive secretary Global Greens), Ely Labro (Philippines), Benoît Lechat (Belgium), Lena Lindström (Sweden), Ralph Monö, former secretary general of the European Greens (Sweden), Suresh Nautiyal (India), Laura Nordström (Finland), Sara Parkin, former co-secretary of the Coordination of European Greens (England), Alfonso Pecaro Scanio, former minister (Italy), Liljana Popovska (Macedonia), Margot Soria Saravia (Bolivia), Erzsebet Schmuck (Hungary), Ji Seon (Korea), Mohamed Tounkara (Guinea), Ann Verheyen, European Green Party (Belgium), Ludger Volmer (Germany), Claire Waghorn-Lees, secretary of the Asia-Pacific Greens (New Zealand), Keli Yen, Asia-Pacific Greens Coordinator (Taiwan).

Some of the details in the book (especially in the Appendix) may become obsolete overnight, thanks to a parliamentary election, the decisions of a party congress, or a governmental reshuffle. It is my hope that relevant parts of the book will in due time be available on the web and continuously updated. Readers are welcome to send comments and information directly to me, per.gahrton@gmail.com.

Per Gahrton
Stockholm, Sweden, June 2015

FOREWORD

The extraordinary growth of Green parties around the globe is having a significant impact on the politics of an increasing number of countries, measured not just in terms of the number of votes won by Greens, but by way of their far-reaching influence on public opinion, the media, and indeed the established parties themselves.

From the formation of the first nationwide Green Party in the world, in New Zealand in 1972, to the foundation in recent years of Green Parties in Kenya, Benin, Brazil, Korea and Pakistan, Green influence has been widening and accelerating: more Green parties entering national parliaments, the Green Group in the European Parliament flourishing, and some 20 Green parties having taken part in coalition governments since the early 1990s.

Per Gahrton's compelling overview of the global Green political movement could therefore scarcely be more timely, offering both a unique assessment of progress so far, and valuable insights into how it might evolve in future.

It is a debate that has more than simply academic interest. It is no exaggeration to say that the world is now in a state of crisis as never before – accelerating climate change, deforestation and over-exploitation of natural resources, together with growing inequality, and an increasingly precarious economic model.

We urgently need new thinking, a new sense of realism about the threats we face, and above all, a new way of working together in politics to tackle the things that really matter.

And as it becomes ever clearer that addressing the growing environmental crisis and avoiding catastrophic climate change will require far-reaching changes not just to our economy, but to all areas of policy making, so more people are turning to Green parties for hope and inspiration.

The challenge is to translate such concerns and aspirations into a widespread revolution in attitudes, and to turn fast-growing political support into practical programmes for government.

There seem to be a number of common factors which help determine the degree of electoral success enjoyed by the different Green parties, including the fairness of the electoral system in which they are operating, the existence of state funding for political parties, the level of environmental concern, and the prominence and historical development of other radical social and political movements. But it is also clear that each country provides a very different model for the development of Green politics.

For Greens in the UK, grappling with both a winner-takes-all voting system and no state funding, the challenges have been great – factors which make the recent so-called ‘Green surge’ all the more impressive. In the space of less than a year, membership of the Green Party of England and Wales has soared from a little over 12,000 to nearly 60,000, at the time of writing.

Analysis suggesting that this recent growth is driven at least in part by the Green Party’s opposition to the politics of austerity raises critical questions that are still being worked through in many different countries and contexts: to what extent should today’s Green parties explicitly identify themselves as parties of the left, and to what degree should they cooperate and work with established parties, either in temporary coalitions or via confidence and supply arrangements, in order to achieve at least some level of reform within the system?

Mainstream political parties lack the courage to adopt radical solutions to the social and environmental problems we face. More than that, they are often responsible for those problems in the first place. Parliamentary politics seems incapable of embracing the change that is so urgently needed. But protest, though vital, isn’t enough. We need what Petra Kelly, one of the most famous Greens, has called an ‘anti-party’ – one that would seek power but never sacrifice morality; that would enter parliament but never become part of it; that would always remain, at heart, a party of the people.

It is a compelling ideal; and Petra Kelly helped to bring it to life as a co-founder of the Greens in Germany. As one of the first Green deputies to be elected to the Bundestag in March 1983, she entered the chamber in jeans, bearing armfuls of sunflowers, instantly bringing colour and life into the grey world of traditional politics. Though her political career was cut tragically short in 1992, she remains an inspiration for many in the Green movement and beyond.

And her challenge to us – to do politics differently – is more urgent than ever. With more and more people disillusioned with the political process, the opportunities for the Greens are great. This book, vital reading for both activists and observers, will help to make sure that such opportunities are grasped.

Caroline Lucas MP
Brighton, March 2015

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INTRODUCTION: THE GREENS – TOWARDS HEGEMONY IN THE ANTHROPOCENE

The idea that humanity has recently entered a new epoch, the Anthropocene, having lived through the Holocene era for some 12,000 years, seems to be gathering increasing scientific support. A pivotal step in this direction was taken in January 2015 when a group of scientists defined the starting date of Anthropocene as the summer of 1945, when the use of the atomic bomb illustrated a new and highly dangerous capability of humans to change, and destroy, the basic prerequisites for life on Earth.¹ Even if humans have affected the environment since the beginning of the Holocene, and the first warnings were made already by classical Chinese and Greek philosophers several thousand years ago, the switch from the Holocene to the Anthropocene constitutes such a fundamental change that the need for completely new ideas about the effects of human activity appears to be more urgent than ever.

The Green political movement claims to be the carrier of these new ideas, of Green thinking or ecologism. It is hardly a coincidence that only a few years after the start of the Anthropocene, the first voices were raised questioning all earlier political ideologies, such as conservatism, liberalism and socialism, and that from the 1970s onwards many groups, organisations and political parties were established around demands for alternatives to the dominant models of thinking. As of January 2015 there were almost exactly 100 political parties (representing around 90 countries) affiliated to the Global Greens structure, through the four regional Green Federations: for Africa, the Americas, the Asia-Pacific Region and Europe. In addition there are dozens of other Green parties with the ambition to qualify for membership in the Global Greens structure. There are also parties that claim to be Green but have been denied affiliation to the Global Greens structure because they are considered either politically apart or artificial organisations set up by ruling elites for use against genuine Green efforts. Some of these parties are allowed to send representatives as informal observers at some Global Green meetings, which may encourage them to convert to genuine Green parties.

It is obvious that the Green label and a Green political identity are popular and considered assets in most parts of the world. There are Green parties in about 80% of the states of Europe, about 50% of the states of Africa and the

Americas, and about 20% of the states of the Asia-Pacific region. The trend is upwards, despite sometimes draconian countermeasures: if the power elite doesn't try to pre-empt a genuine Green party by creating a fake one, controlled by the ruling authorities, then new genuine Green parties in some countries are required to pay exorbitant deposits, prove the existence of an almost unreachable number of active members or, if there is nothing else to stop them, are hindered by hurdles in the election system. These types of obstacles, which have hit Greens hard even in countries which otherwise are considered good democracies (for example in Japan by deposits, in the UK, USA and other countries by the first-past-the-post election system), are sometimes defended as measures to guarantee political stability and avoid a devastating fractionalisation of the party system. But the most significant effect of all these factors is that they constitute a barrier against renewal in a time when a number of global crises illustrate that everywhere, even in the best of democracies, there is an urgent need for political renewal to cope with problems which the old parties and established ruling elites have so miserably failed to handle in adequate ways.

In an introduction to a book about the first 20 years of the European Greens, which I co-edited with Arnold Cassola in 2003, I had to admit that while I was sure that the Greens 'have a bright future', 'quite a few Greens from the first generation have difficulties recognising the Greens they fell in love with some 20 years ago'.² This is probably even more true to-day, some 50 years after the establishment of the first Green parties, in the UK and New Zealand. The major changes are both vertical – Green parties are entering parliaments and governments and taking part directly in the ruling of countries, regions and local assemblies – and horizontal – the number of Green parties is growing and spreading all over the world.

Some of the Green parties I have visited have been groups of enthusiasts without parliamentary representation, like in Peru, Egypt, Albania and Azerbaijan. Others have been large and growing mass-parties with tens of thousands of members, like in Germany, the United Kingdom, Brazil and my own Sweden. Some have consisted mostly of amateurs, others have already become professionals. But as I hope will be made clear in this book, most of the amateurs have the ambition to become more professional in order to be able to push Green issues more efficiently, while most of the professionals are aware that if they were to discard all vestiges of amateurism and grassroots democracy they would be cutting away the branch they are sitting on. And, most importantly, as I believe is proven in this book, most Greens, whether amateurs or professionals, share a very large number of values, principles, basic convictions and concrete proposals, to an extent that is unlikely to be found in any other 'political family' today. The many party programmes and platforms I studied for Chapter 4 are all nationally adapted variations upon one basic theme: We are one humanity, we are destroying the conditions for life on Earth,

we must cooperate globally in order to stop the destruction of our common Gaia, and we must share the enormous richness of our Earth equitably to ensure that every living creature gets its fair share of the environmental space available.³

Chapter 1 gives an account of the background for and the process of the Green awakening in the 1960s and 1970s. Chapter 2 offers a presentation of and a discussion around Green philosophy. Chapter 3 gives a general overview of the emergence of Green parties. Chapter 4 presents and discusses several concrete Green proposals and policies, based upon an extensive analysis of Green programmes and platforms. In Chapter 5, the history of Green parties in government is related and analysed, based upon the relevant political science literature as well as interviews with former and present Green ministers. In Chapter 6 my vision of a Green future is outlined. In the Appendix some 100 Green parties from across the world are introduced, described and analysed.

Green ideas require testing and development. New and fledgling Green parties need support. This is already happening but could be developed much further. The Global Greens structure needs strengthening. In a world where a great deal of the real power has moved to global economic players, often operating outside democratic political systems, Greens must strive to secure positions of power in all democratically based institutions, from local communities to the United Nations.

1

THE GREEN AWAKENING

The 1960s was a turbulent decade. After a period of relative calm following the end of the Second World War everything began to change. Colonies fought for and achieved independence. The USA's aggressive attempts to contain communism with the mass bombing of Vietnam, isolation of Cuba, military interventions against progressive regimes and support for the fascist junta in Chile, mobilised enormous protests all over the world; the apartheid regimes of Southern Africa also triggered worldwide dismay and protest. At the same time socialism didn't have a much better reputation following the Soviet interventions in Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, and Afghanistan in 1979. A 'new' left arose, still anti-imperialist, but without blinkers in relation to communist one-party dictatorships. Women's liberation advanced. Oppressed people everywhere rose to demand equal rights. Even in the assumed-to-be well-organised Western European welfare societies, discontent emerged and developed into political movements. The new generation demanded personal liberation from old traditions and superstitions. In Europe a 'sexual liberation' changed lifestyles and partly transformed into the student revolts of 1968. In some places, especially in France, links were made between student demands for more individual freedom and workers' and trade unionists' demands for improved working conditions, including 'industrial democracy'. A few years into the 1970s, however, some basic flaws of the 1968 movement could be observed: it was deeply split and had failed to organise into a powerful political organisation with leverage in the decision-making political system; despite its feminist rhetoric, it also remained predominantly male in its structures. Above all, it was driven by a materialist (often Marxist) outlook and was unable to understand and fight against the causes of the destruction of the environment and the quality of life.

Already in the 1970s many of the activists of the 1968 and similar protest movements became disillusioned with political slogans and other types of primarily verbal action. One alternative option was to define the enemy – be it the state, big business, the military-industrial complex, or just all those who held power – as deadly foes whom it would not be possible to affect or defeat by normal non-violent methods. Those who chose this option took up arms

in what they considered a legitimate war of liberation. 'If it's right in Vietnam and Palestine, why not in Frankfurt, Paris and Stockholm?' One of the most well-known examples was the German Red Army Faction (or Baader-Meinhof Gang), but there were similar groups in other democracies: Action Direct in France, the Communist Combatant Cells in Belgium, the Red Brigades in Italy. Spain, Portugal and Greece, with their history of recent fascist dictatorship, also saw the emergence of violent groups. Even Northern Europe, with a reputation for stability, saw an eruption of terrorist violence. The Danish 'Blekinge Street Gang' (*Blekingegadebanden*) robbed banks in the 1970s and '80s, sometimes with deadly results, giving as a motive their wish to support the Palestinian resistance against the Israeli occupation.¹

It is symbolic that the most well-known figure of the 1968 revolt, Daniel Cohn-Bendit – who later turned Green and was a member of the European Parliament from 1994 to 2014 – in a book commemorating the fortieth anniversary of the '68 revolt, already in the title urges readers to *Forget 68* (the book is in French, despite the English title).² When telling the story of the Greens, however, to forget '68 completely would be going too far. Undoubtedly some inspiration was taken from this upheaval by the Green pioneers in the 1970s, not least from the fact that quite a few of the activists who had been



Figure 1 A Green congress in Catalonia in 1985. One poster (far right) is a reminder of Green roots among peaceniks, feminists and other alternative movements. Another (far left), with text in six European languages, illustrates the limited expansion of Green parties in 1985 compared to 30 years later. At the microphone, Paul Staes, MEP of the Flemish Greens, Agalev. Photo: the author.

involved in the revolt switched to Green groups and parties. But perhaps it could be said that the main impact of '68 on the Green awakening came from its failure. The fledgling Greens in the 1970s had to realise that even if tough opposition to the existing political system was necessary, it was not enough; the Greens also had to propose alternatives and set the rules of the game, that is, participate in making political decisions on all levels.

EARLY WHISTLE-BLOWERS

One early whistle-blower was the Chinese thinker Meng Zi (Mencius), who lived 372–289 BC. He observed environmental destruction on a mountain, wrote about the causes of deforestation, and gave advice on the planting of new trees. Most of the early alarm-bells, however, come from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Some lists of forerunners of Green thinking mention the Swedish biologist Carl von Linné (1707–1778) because he stated that animals have a soul. The French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) has also been interpreted as a Green pioneer for his belief that human beings are basically good: the evil of the world isn't the result of wickedness inherent in humans, but rather of their distance from a natural condition. Others mention Johann Wolfgang Goethe (1749–1832), because of the basic conflict in his major dramatic work, *Faust*, around civilisation and the meaning of life. The American Henry Thoreau (1817–1862), in his book *Walden, A Reflection Upon Simple Living in Natural Surroundings*, appears as a model for the 'green wave' people, who choose to withdraw into a more or less 'primitive' rural lifestyle.³ Another example is the speech given in 1854 by the Native Indian Chief Seattle to a gathering of white settlers, demanding respect for the rights of indigenous people and their ecological way of living. Aldo Leopold (1887–1948) took a similar line in his posthumous bestseller *A Sand Country Almanac*, which has its place in Green history for its pioneering elaboration of an ecocentric and holistic ethic regarding Nature.⁴ The Ukrainian biochemist Vladimir Vernadsky (1863–1945) is often mentioned as a founding father by ecologists in the former Soviet Union, because of his book *The Biosphere* and his theory of the noosphere (human cognition) as the third stage of the Earth's development, after the geosphere (inanimate matter) and the biosphere (life).⁵ Just as the emergence of life has transformed the geosphere, the noosphere will, according to Vernadsky, transform the biosphere – which, it could be argued, is exactly what is going on at the beginning of the twenty-first century, with the shift from Holocene to Anthropocene.