

This is a self-archived version of an original article. This version may differ from the original in pagination and typographic details.

Author(s): Matero, Risto-Matti

Title: 'Reaching Maturity' or 'Selling Out'? : The Idea of Green Growth in Finnish Green Party Environmental Discourses 1988–1995

Year: 2023

Version: Published version

Copyright: © 2023 White Horse Press

Rights: CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

Rights url: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

Please cite the original version:

Matero, R.-M. (2023). 'Reaching Maturity' or 'Selling Out'? : The Idea of Green Growth in Finnish Green Party Environmental Discourses 1988–1995. In V. Pál, T. Räsänen, & M. Saikku (Eds.), *Green Development or Greenwashing? : Environmental Histories of Finland* (pp. 31-47). White Horse Press. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/jj.7193881.7>

Chapter Title: 'REACHING MATURITY' OR 'SELLING OUT'? THE IDEA OF GREEN GROWTH IN FINNISH GREEN PARTY ENVIRONMENTAL DISCOURSES 1988—1995

Chapter Author(s): Risto-Matti Matero

Book Title: *Green Development or Greenwashing?*

Book Subtitle: *Environmental Histories of Finland*

Book Editor(s): Viktor Pál, Tuomas Räsänen, Mikko Saikku

Published by: White Horse Press. (2023)

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/jj.7193881.7>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



This book is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 2.0 Generic License (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0). To view a copy of this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/>.



JSTOR

White Horse Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Green Development or Greenwashing?*

Chapter 3

‘REACHING MATURITY’ OR ‘SELLING OUT’? THE IDEA OF GREEN GROWTH IN FINNISH GREEN PARTY ENVIRONMENTAL DISCOURSES 1988–1995

Risto-Matti Matero

Introduction

Over the past decades, major shifts have taken place in public environmental discourses transnationally. At the wakening of the global environmentalist movement at the turn of the 1970s, new eco-philosophies emerged, from deep ecology to ecofeminism, questioning, among other things, the deep-rooted connection between wellbeing and growth economics. Environmental grassroots movements, in many ways the successors of 1960s radicalism, aimed to create a new culture separate from growing consumption and market dependence.¹ Starting from the early 1980s, Green parties were formed throughout Europe to represent these alternative social movements. Simultaneously, a more moderate form of environmentalism revolving around the idea of sustainable growth started developing.² By the turn of the millennium, a large chunk of earlier green radicalism had leaned into moderate ideals of greener growth and consumption, more easily adaptable to a free market political system. By the end of the 1990s, the ideals of green growth had bypassed earlier radical attempts at restructuring modernity and growth economics in public environmental discourses and in Green parties throughout Europe.³

1. Guha 2000, Hockenos 2008 and Milder 2019, for example, analyse the development of environmentalist movements.

2. Warde et al. 2018, pp. 69–70; Caradonna 2019.

3. Examined thoroughly in Borowy and Schmeltzer 2019.

'Reaching Maturity' or 'Selling Out'?

This chapter analyses this major shift in the history of environmental ideas from the vantage point of the Finnish Green party.⁴ Traditionally, the history of environmental ideas has been looked at from an eco-philosophical perspective, analysing the thoughts of eco-philosophers, or focusing the analysis on a more grassroots level, such as the environmental movements themselves. While such approaches have value, the examination of how environmental ideas have been put to practice at the level of politics supplements this view while deepening our understanding of the practical implications of environmental ideas. After all, such scholars as Joachim Radkau and William Connolly have noted how ecological ideas have not become visible at the level of practical implementation despite their presence in public political discourse. It is thus worth scrutinising more closely the potential reasons for this lack of implementation.⁵

The Finnish Green party, a middle-sized party in the Finnish multi-party parliamentary system, provides a particularly interesting example of this development. The changes in the Finnish Greens' thinking can also be understood as a case study of a wider phenomenon: the transnational changes in practical implementation of environmental ideas. The Greens first embraced the social movements' radical environmentalist ideals in the late 1980s but, just a few years later, started leaning into market-friendlier environmentalism. By 1995, they had changed their ideological presuppositions thoroughly and, largely due to this, managed to become the first Green nation-level governmental party in Europe.

In its second section, this chapter demonstrates how the Finnish Green party drew ideas from radical environmentalism. Consequently, the Greens wanted to re-conceptualise many presuppositions regarding modernity. These included defining wellbeing in a materialistic manner through the growth of consumption, as well as a midset of mastery over nature that had guided human economic activity and led to the overconsumption of natural resources, as well as human estrangement from a more communal way of living. During the 1990s, the Greens redefined their environmental ideologies through market-friendly and growth-oriented concepts, such as sustainable development or eco-efficiency. Endorsing cooperation with the established political and economic

4. This shift is more deeply analysed as part of my forthcoming dissertation, see Matero 2023. Here, however, the vantage point is studied through the lens of environmental history as William Connolly's model of cultural belonging is applied as an analytical tool. This chapter thus not only demonstrates some of the key themes of the dissertation in question but also provides a particularly environmental historical analysis of it. See also Connolly 2017.

5. Radkau 2005, p. 294; Connolly 2017.

'Reaching Maturity' or 'Selling Out'?

institutions became the new goal of environmental politics. Environmental political concepts were now derived from economic language, and alternative visions for society were replaced with ideals of green growth.

This chapter aims to understand the argumentation behind the turn to green growth ideals in order to see what the reasons behind these changes were for the actors. In the third section, I investigate this turn from the perspective of conceptual analysis, where the choice to use one concept over another becomes a political act.⁶ It turns out that this ideological change was preceded by an intense contest over reconceptualising the meaning of greenness, as moderate reformist actors brought forth new, competing ideas of how environmentalism should be (re-)defined ideologically. Using newspapers, party pamphlets and party conference minutes as sources, I pay attention particularly to premises regarding wellbeing and its connection to growth-orientation, the often-demonised antagonist of environmentalism. This opens up views on complex ideological questions about how to relate to anthropocentrism and social traditions while endorsing environmental wellbeing, questions that the Greens tackled as part of their political ideological development into a normalised party functioning efficiently within established political structures. From this perspective, the turn to green growth appears as an ideologically significant rift from earlier environmentalism, and was partially caused by transnational development, such as the new political hegemony of economic competitiveness in post-Cold War Europe.

Furthermore, I demonstrate how this moderate reformist turn of the 1990s can be understood through the analytical lens of what social scientist William Connolly calls 'cultural belonging'. Connolly points out how environmental or ecological interventions in business-as-usual politics have typically become dragged down by a deep-rooted human drive for cultural belonging, which is also a prerequisite for meaningful action. Connolly brings attention to a fundamental need for a 'sense of layered fit between self and the world' that seems to guide the possibilities for the kind of action we tend to perceive as meaningful – action that does not drift too far away from the hegemonic premises and models of thought of the cultural paradigm. We might think radically, but in our actions we tend to adapt to our surroundings in order to render our actions meaningful.⁷ Using Connolly's conception of 'cultural belonging' helps explain the paradox the Greens have faced, namely the implicit contradiction

6. Theory for analysing concepts as political acts – see Skinner 2002. How the meanings of concepts are changed in time – see Koselleck 2004; Bevir 1999.

7. Connolly 2017, 9-11, 81.

'Reaching Maturity' or 'Selling Out'?

between radical interventions in the current paradigm, and the need to belong in the system from which one operates in order to be effective in one's actions. It also provides a potential explanatory framework for one of the big questions in the study of environmental history of ideas: why has the half-century-long discussion on environmentalism not led to improving environmental conditions in practice?⁸ The moderate 'reformist' Greens explicitly expressed a need to act more efficiently within the system. I argue that this need for meaningful activity thus drove the change towards moderate growth-oriented thinking – towards a state of cultural normalcy, a state of market orientation, with the previously-detested premises of Western culture now accepted as a given. This change thus provides a more general example not only of how environmental discourses in general have developed over the past decades, but also of how easily radical ideas get drawn back into the contemporary paradigm of thought, particularly on the level of implementation.

Conceptualising Green environmentalism on programmatic level

Since the late 1970s, the Finnish environmental movement had united a wide range of alternative social movements under the unifying aim of formulating alternative visions for society and questioning the materialistic culture of growing consumption, particularly its destructive effect on the environment. The movement united nature protectionists, fair trade advocates, nuclear power protestors, vegetarians and eco-feminists, among others.⁹ These different groups gathered in 1979 to protest about the planned draining of a small Kojjärvi lake in Southern Finland, threatening rare bird species in the area. The activists were not only successful in their attempts to save the lake in question; the event also provided both a symbolic and a practical starting point for the Green political movement in Finland.¹⁰ The Finnish Greens had their first MPs from 1983 onwards. The Green Alliance (Vihreä Liitto) was not registered as a party until 1988, though. Until then, the Greens had believed they would represent the grassroots movement better without a formal party structure, uniting grassroots movements under the umbrella of an alternative vision of society.¹¹

8. Such a question is addressed e.g. by Radkau (2005, p. 294), for whom we have lived in an 'Age of Ecology' for the past half-a-century on the level of environmental discussion while environmental conditions have kept deteriorating.

9. Mickelsson 2007, pp. 250–51; Paastela 1987, p. 15.

10. Paastela 1987, pp. 22–24, 56–60; Aalto 2018, pp. 106–09.

11. Välimäki and Brax 1991, p. 33; Sohlstén 2007, pp. 41–47, 53–55.

'Reaching Maturity' or 'Selling Out'?

In their first two party programmes from 1988 and 1990, the Greens presented their demands to restructure not just the economy, but the entire Western value system supporting economic growth. This included the detested mindset of 'mastery' over nature and people, and the social and ecological unsustainability and inequality that followed from this mindset. Simply put, the Greens demanded a 'fundamental re-evaluation of the premises of Western culture'.¹² A materialistic conception of wellbeing was considered to be the cause of both social and environmental problems of society, as wellbeing was measured merely with increased consumption: the Greens described how the storytellers of old cottages had been removed to retirement houses and replaced with televisions, raising the question of whether increase in material living standards had actually increased wellbeing at all. Instead of material growth, wellbeing needed to be sought in spiritual and social needs. This re-evaluation of our culture was termed the Companionship Movement (*kumppanuusliike*), as opposed to the mindset of mastery over nature and over other humans too, as evinced in capitalist and socialist societies.¹³

In replacing mastery with companionship, the Greens avoided separating the needs of the environment and the needs of humans: when nature was no longer a mere resource, the wellbeing of humans and non-human life could be redefined as interconnected. As the demand of material growth was removed from the equation, wellbeing would also provide opportunities for more real forms of human wellbeing through, for example, deeper communal connections and self-realisation instead of consumption. The Green vision was to 'atone for the broken relationship between human and nature' by finding starting points for interaction between peoples, cultures and all life. The theme of companionship was thus to be understood through a deeper sense of holistic interaction and interconnections instead of competition and mastery.¹⁴ In economic life, this meant that ecological carrying capacity should determine limits for individual ownership, as environmental needs needed to be prioritised over protection of property.¹⁵

The aforementioned radical standpoint based on companionship and growth-criticism had virtually disappeared from discussion by the mid-

12. Green Alliance Party Programme 1990, p. 1.

13. Green Alliance Party Programme 1990, Prologue, 1, 2; Green Alliance General Programme 1988.

14. Green Alliance General Programme 1988; Green Alliance Party Programme 1990, Prologue, 1; *Vihreä lanka* 16.6.1989, pp. 1, 5.

15. Green Alliance Party Programme 1990, pp. 2–5; Woods 2010.

'Reaching Maturity' or 'Selling Out'?

1990s, however. In the 1994 party programme, the Greens noted how it was now time for a green market economy, and explicitly feared a decline in the gross-national product if other countries were to get there first, basing their argumentation on the utility of greenness from a competitiveness perspective. Finns could secure 'better positions in global economic competition in the future' if environmentalism were merged with cleaner technology exportation. The Greens' political goal had turned from revisioning premises of Western society to greening them. Conceptually, this market-friendly change towards greener growth was accomplished in Finland by adopting the new key concept of sustainable development (*kestävä kehitys*), which would be developed further in upcoming programmes.¹⁶

The concept of sustainable development had become widely known by 1987, through the Brundtland Commission, named after Norwegian social democratic prime minister Gro Harlem Brundtland.¹⁷ Having a social-democratic background, the concept merged the goals of growth, social equality and environmental wellbeing, and emphasised global justice in 1987. The emphasis on green growth and green consumption was only later underlined by, for example, the European Commission's interpretation, demonstrating how the meanings of concepts are debated and can change over time.¹⁸ The Green Alliance parliamentary group had criticised the concept of sustainable development in 1988: there would be even bigger ecological problems ahead if economic growth were increased, they claimed.¹⁹

By the mid-1990s, however, the Greens had changed their minds, as they embraced the market-friendlier version of environmentalism through sustainable development. While earlier emphasising, for example, natural protection issues, they now wanted to place emphasis on affecting 'millions of consuming choices' by ecological taxation, eco-labels and voluntary market-guidance for corporations in their new 1994 programme. This would generate green growth through increased consumer demand for eco-friendlier products. Consequently, environmental responsibility was re-allocated to individual consumers. Though it is beyond the time scope of this chapter, it is worth pointing out that, after

16. Green Alliance Party Programme 1994, p. 3.

17. Laine and Jokinen 2001, pp. 64–65; Dryzek and Scholsberg 2005, pp. 257–58; Dryzek 2005, pp. 145–48; WCED 1987.

18. See e.g. Knill and Lieferrink 2007; Collier 1998; European Commission 1993/2005; European Commission 1995. The theme is further investigated by Matero & Arffman 2023 (forthcoming).

19. Vihreä Lanka 9/1988, pp. 1, 6.

'Reaching Maturity' or 'Selling Out'?

spending seven years in government, the 2002 Green programme was even more focused on creating growth markets for environmentally friendly production. Eco-efficiency had become the new practical measure to be used for the greening of economic growth, as the idea of decreasing the amount of energy and natural resources used per produced unit started to seem possible with advancing cleaner technology.²⁰ Intriguingly, the notion of 'rebound effect' – that resource efficiency would increase overall consumption due to lowered production costs – was entirely lacking from public discussion at the time, even though the concept was well known in academic discussion by then.²¹

Most of these concepts stemmed not from the radical environmentalism of the 1970s as the earlier goals of companionship had done,²² but rather from the environmental economics discourse of the same era. Environmentally aligned economics were developed to generate ideas to tackle environmental issues without having to question basic assumptions of modernity such as the growth paradigm. This provided the environmental debates with a much more moderate conceptual cluster of ideas. The developers of such ideas and concepts were typically economists rather than environmentalists.²³

Over the 1990s, the Greens' understanding of wellbeing and human relationship with non-human nature thus changed dramatically. Having earlier derived their conceptualisations of these ideas from radical environmental grassroots movements, the Greens were now drawing concepts from moderate sustainability-discourse. Meanwhile, restructuring basic premises of Western culture was no longer in their political toolbox, as wellbeing was now understood within the framework of green growth and consumption, bringing the Green party discussion back to normalcy, within the cultural norms of economic vocabulary. It is worth looking at the Green public debates taking

-
20. Green Alliance Programme of Principles 2002, *Kestävä kehitys todeksi*; Green Alliance Party Programme 1990, p. 2. As for *eco-efficiency*, see also Schmidt-Bleek 2000, which was widely discussed among the Finnish Greens.
 21. Akenji 2019, pp. 1–2; also addressed by Schmidt-Bleek (2000) who influenced the Finnish Greens.
 22. The background of the *Companionship movement* can be traced back to ecofeminist philosopher Riane Eisler, whose book *Chalice and the Blade* was translated into Finnish by Green MP Satu Hassi. See Eisler 1988.
 23. Warde et al. 2018, pp. 69–70; Caradonna 2019, pp. 155–57. The conceptual cluster of environmental economics did not automatically promote business-as-usual growth; e.g. Friedrich Schmidt-Bleek (2000) warned that it would only work in a more prudent value system. Nevertheless, these concepts were used in political discussion within the framework of green growth.

'Reaching Maturity' or 'Selling Out'?

place simultaneously to understand how, why, and under what contexts these changes took place. It turns out that the need for 'cultural belonging' – a need for efficient action in collaboration with the rest of society – was at the core of this ideological change.

Arguments behind the change

The changes above need to be understood within a wider domestic and international context. Changes were taking place in the early 1990s, with the end of the Cold War, and a harsh depression, with mass unemployment hitting Finland, causing the growth-critical ideals of the Greens suddenly to seem questionable. In Central Europe, media emphasis was on the unification of the Germans. A power shift was taking place within the most famous Green party in Europe, the German Green Party, who declared themselves a 'reformist' party in 1991. This change, led by political leader Joschka Fischer and reformist thinker Hubert Kleinert, was partly due to a devastating election loss in 1990. Blame was placed on a radical programme and uncompromising refusal to cooperate with the established political and economic order. Being a trustworthy party in the eyes of the electorate had become a new premise for reforming the radical environmental German Greens into a reformist civil rights party that could even participate in government work.²⁴ Hubert Kleinert pointed out a contradiction between 'efficiency' and 'legitimacy' in green radicalism: as efficient ways to make politics through parliamentary participation required ideological compromises and cooperation, radicals did not consider such means to be legitimate.²⁵

This was the context the Finnish Greens faced in the early 1990s. They gained massively increased support in the 1991 elections with their radical programme, raising their seat number in the 200-seat Finnish parliament from four to ten. Unlike their German counterparts, the Finnish Greens had in fact gained more votes with their radical growth-critical thinking, despite the depression. However, they ran into trouble when participating in government negotiations: it was soon made clear by bigger parties that no growth-critical party could make it into government during a depression. Reformist ideas had been well known among Finnish Greens but, after 1991, they were for the first time supported by party leadership, partially because reformist Pekka Sauri became party Chair and started guiding the party towards a more moderate

24. Die Grünen 2019, pp. 44–47; *Der Spiegel* 50/1990, pp. 28–29.

25. Die Grünen 2019, pp. 44–47; *Der Spiegel* 23/1991, p. 35.

'Reaching Maturity' or 'Selling Out'?

direction that would perhaps enable participation in governmental work. Chief ideologist Osmo Soininvaara demanded politics without dreams (*haavetonta politiikkaa*), because 'all-or-nothing politics would result in the outcome of nothing', following in the efficiency-oriented footsteps of the German Greens. With Finland plunging into depression and the Greens remaining involuntarily in opposition, anti-growth idealism understandably started to seem outdated for many moderately-minded Greens.²⁶

A couple of years before these 1991 events, discussion on reformism had already started to take shape in the pages of *Vihreä Lanka*, the independently-run newspaper of the Green Party. In 1988, the most widely discussed issue in the newspaper was traditional forest and water protection questions. In 1989, reformist ideals of market-friendly green consumerism suddenly got wider attention. New Chief Editor Pauli Välimäki hoped to keep ideologically pluralistic discussion present in the pages of the magazine, consequently giving more space to the reformist opposition, while himself often calling for more pragmatic approaches to Green politics in his editorials. German Reformist leader Joschka Fischer was quoted demanding the Greens to appeal to more middle-class voters.²⁷ Osmo Soininvaara was especially often quoted in the magazine among Finnish reformist thinkers, demanding for example environmentalism that utilised 'the power of market forces'.²⁸ He also supported the idea of correcting market flaws of overconsuming resources with proper price control.²⁹

These ideas raised immediate controversy: for Green thinker Olli Tammilehto, green language was being overrun by market ideology. Social needs and a real search for meaning were being replaced with hollow materialism, he thought, as the Greens were entering the paradigm of 'our system'. He also saw new tension rising between the party and the environmental movement, that the party supposedly represented. The so-called reformists of the party were aiming at more effective action through parliament, which practically meant 'shutting out the citizens' movement from the map'.³⁰ There were understandable reasons for Tammilehto's concerns: Osmo Soininvaara had noted at the 1989 Green party spring conference how the party should move towards a reformist rather than radical direction. *Vihreä Lanka* magazine went so far as to claim that the Greens were indeed developing into a 'reform party' – although no

26. *Vihreä Lanka* 21 Mar. 1991, p. 2.

27. *Vihreä Lanka* 5/89.

28. *Vihreä Lanka* 8/89, p. 2; *Vihreä Lanka* 12/89, p. 2.

29. *Vihreä Lanka* 7/89.

30. *Vihreä Lanka* 27/89, p. 2; *Vihreä Lanka* 2/89, p. 4.

'Reaching Maturity' or 'Selling Out'?

such statement was made on a programmatic level. Green Party chair Heidi Hautala fiercely opposed this claim, calling the Green movement an inherently anti-capitalist one, while ridiculing the naïve progress-believers for thinking that development could ever be truly sustainable within this kind of system. Hautala was not willing to join the celebration around the German reformist Joschka Fischer either. For her, society needed 'no growth of gross-national product, but growth of political imagination'.³¹ As this discussion demonstrates, the ongoing German Green discussion was also closely followed in Finnish discussion, giving transnational dimensions to the reformist debate.

The new moderate green ideology was represented in the Green ABC Book 2 (*Vihreä ABC-kirja 2*), published in 1995. The first Green ABC Book had demonstrated radical green ideals a few years earlier but, in the second, the Greens were seeking compromises with the prevailing culture, beliefs and institutions. The Greens set out to become a party among others that represented a larger electorate than merely the alternative movements. They wanted to appeal particularly to young well-educated voters of the cities who were known to readily vote Green.³²

The head of the argumentative spear was thus aimed against the ineffective outcome of radicalism: the Greens needed to get legislation done, cooperate with institutions in order to make it to government, and create credibility for voters. The similarity in argumentation with the German Green reformists in striking. These themes were encapsulated in the argumentative tool of 'maturity', presented time and again in Green ABC Book II. By setting pragmatic political goals (instead of ideological ones) and thus overcoming the 'children's disease' of radicalism, the Greens had now 'matured' for many of the reformists who were thus rewriting the story of Green party development from naïveté to responsible adulthood. The antithesis of this newly-found maturity was the 'naïve' innocence of youthful radicalism. The critique of radicalism was thus not thoroughly critical, as such innocence had its place when growing up, but it nevertheless did not belong in the lives of adults; there was a hierarchy and perhaps a sense of condescension present in the reformist perception of radicalism.³³

31. Green Alliance Spring Conference Minutes 1989, §5; *Vihreä Lanka* 22/89, p. 2; *Vihreä Lanka* 37/89, p. 7.

32. Välimäki 1995, p. 73, in *Green ABC Book 2*; see also Aalto 2018, pp. 377–81; Remes 2007, pp. 91–92; Isotalo 2007, p. 143; Ylikahri 2007, pp. 186–88.

33. Välimäki 1995, pp. 69–71, 117–18.

'Reaching Maturity' or 'Selling Out'?

At the 1994 party conference, the new programme draft had by then been presented by former chair of the party, Pekka Sauri. Conference minutes reveal that Sauri presented the programme as one that was 'structured to bring the entities of economy and ecology closer together'. A more sustainable direction for society would thus be achievable with the methods of the market economy.³⁴ A debate followed, but no major changes were made to Sauri's draft proposal. The ideological change to reformism was thus finalised on a programmatic level after roughly five years of debating. A year later, the Finnish Greens joined the national government as the first Green party in Europe, providing evidence of the utility of reformism.³⁵

The ideals of green growth were thus deployed as a political tool to get things done, and to change the Green course away from the ideological foundations of the radical grassroots environmental movements. Practical sacrifices were necessary in order to become efficient in the political game. In the words of Pekka Haavisto, who became the first Green minister in Finland, they would not have got anything done with the attitude of the environmental movements.³⁶ For the radical anti-modernists, meanwhile, parliamentary politics was only another forum where the ideals and new foundations of an alternative future could be laid, with little attention paid to actual legislative processes. Giving up on those ideals was considered morally questionable, even wrong. Former party vice chair Ulla Klötzer called it a betrayal. Some – like Klötzer – left the party altogether, but others stayed and continued to work from within the now-reformist party. Martti Lundén, for example, became one of the founders of the Eco-Greens Association in 1995 to serve as an ecological opposition from within the party after becoming disappointed with the increased anthropocentric emphasis. This dissident association still exists.³⁷

There were thus two stories in play here. The reformist story was one of maturity, where responding to pragmatic needs with green growth ideals would lead to more efficiency; the radicals meanwhile saw these changes as selling out the ideals that the Greens were meant to represent, that is, the radicalism of the alternative movements. A materialistic conception of wellbeing based on economic growth was either critiqued and re-defined in a more holistic way

34. Green Alliance Party Conference Minutes 1994. 11–12 June 1994, §8–9.

35. The German Greens had already been a state-level government party in the 1980s, though.

36. Isotalo 2007, pp. 162, 179.

37. Helsingin Sanomat 28 May 1998; Lunden 2019.

'Reaching Maturity' or 'Selling Out'?

(as the radicals did) or accepted as a political reality that needed to be adapted to in order to cooperate efficiently within the system (as the reformists did).

Retreating from green radicalism to within the established growth paradigm can be understood as a case study of a larger phenomenon that has been typical for environmental discourses. Connolly's notion of 'cultural belonging' as prerequisite for meaningful action seems particularly believable as the ineffective radical standpoints faded from discussion altogether. They would, of course, have been impractical obstacles to effective action within the paradigm in which the Greens felt it necessary to operate. As mentioned earlier, attempts at radical paradigm shifts have typically been pulled back by the need for cultural belonging – that is, locating oneself in such a way in relation to contemporary institutions that meaningful action becomes possible, even at the possible expense of urgent paradigmatic changes. Thus, the Finnish Greens become an example of a wider, global phenomenon – one which, for example, the aforementioned German Greens had already faced before their Finnish counterparts.

Along with the influence of Die Grüne, the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Eastern Bloc provide context for these changes. The *Zeitgeist* had changed in just a couple of years, claimed the German newspaper *Der Spiegel*, and capitalism had emerged victorious.³⁸ However, even without the collapse of the Eastern Bloc, consumerism and simplified regulative practices were a rising global political theme due to increased globalisation and increasing emphasis on economic competitiveness. Even in the EU, strict environmental standards had already caused bigger costs for production, which meant disadvantages in economic competition. As Knill and Liefferink point out, the themes of sustainable development were used as a conceptual tool at the EU level to replace harsh industry regulation that was hurting industry competitiveness in a globalising world. Member states soon found themselves in a regulatory competition to create favourable competitive conditions for industries, and this meant reallocating environmental responsibility to the consumer.³⁹

There was thus harsh pressure for the Greens to adapt to the competitiveness paradigm by the early 1990s – to a 'hegemony' of neoliberalism, as conceptual historian Niklas Olsen has called the so-called 'market democracy', where regulation is loosened and responsibility reallocated to consumers in order to enhance competitiveness. Paradoxically, state regulations that had earlier protected the consumer against market forces were now perceived as limits

38. *Der Spiegel* 50/1990, pp. 28–29.

39. Knill and Liefferink 2007, pp. 103, 163–64; See also Collier 1998, p. 25.

'Reaching Maturity' or 'Selling Out'?

to consumer agency.⁴⁰ Greenness needed to be adapted to this new political paradigm through the ideals of green growth if the Greens were to participate in government under this framework. It needs to be noted, though, that the reformist Greens would certainly not have considered themselves part of this hegemony of neoliberalism, as Olsen calls it, but nevertheless felt compelled to embrace the new standard for practical reasons, adapting their ideology to the prevailing political realities. Thus, when the growth-critical discussion of companionship faded from Green public discussion, the Finnish Greens were indeed taking part in a transnational turn, adapting to the new paradigm of global competitiveness.

Conclusions

Originally, the Finnish Green party ideology had originated from the environmentalist discourses of alternative movements. As changing political realities – such as the hegemony of consumeristic politics – compelled them to adapt, reformist-led Greens of the 1990s gave up on these supposedly naïve ideals. Nature was again something that needed to be used for resources to ensure human wellbeing, guided by such political practices as eco-labelling that would help consumers choose more environmentally-friendly products in the free market, while not hurting industry competitiveness in the process. From the perspective of the history of ideas, this can be understood as a major turn in Green party environmental thinking, as the mastery mindset was no longer critiqued nor was a deeper sense of companionship with nature demanded.

This change can be understood in terms of pulling back to normalcy, caused by the need for cultural 'belonging' and efficient action in the terms of William Connolly. The radicals had been faced with a crippling inability to 'get things done' – that is, to break free from the constraints of anthropocentrism and socio-centrism on the level of institutional action while maintaining efficiency in the political field. Eventually, the Green party in Finland solved this paradox between efficiency and legitimacy by drawing concepts from an entirely different tradition of thought, that of environmental economics, helping them turn their environmentalism towards a more moderate, culturally acceptable direction. Thus, the reformists were bringing the Greens to the ideological sphere of 'cultural belonging' and consequently marginalising the more radical environmental language. It remains an intriguing question (although an unanswerable one) whether both forms of greenness could have co-existed in

40. Olsen 2019, pp. 251–55, 261–63.

'Reaching Maturity' or 'Selling Out'?

political discourse, had the radicals perhaps been less eager to fundamentally reject cooperation, or had the reformists been more willing to maintain long-term radical environmentalist ideals, despite making compromises on the short term.

This division of thought between radicalism and reformism has been articulated either as 'naïve adolescence' that will not accomplish anything practically, or as 'selling-out' of key green principles on the all-consuming altar of the growth economy, thus giving up the alternative vision of the future that the Greens had longed to represent. While understanding both sides of the debate, I believe it is worthwhile to look beyond these simplistic forms of argumentation. For an environmental historian, the interesting question should be focused on overcoming the obstacles that social movements seem to face when dealing issues that need to be addressed quickly and often radically: how can an environmentally legitimate paradigm shift be advanced without either operating from within the destructive practices, or resorting to ineffective radicalism that has little to no effect? How is this paradox to be tackled without such immense sacrifices one way or another?

I opened this chapter by asking why ideas from the environmental movements seem to have trouble getting implemented. The case example of the Finnish Green Party demonstrates how difficult it is to bring new controversial ideas to established structures such as party politics without having to make compromises in order to find meaningful ways to 'belong'. From a political perspective, it made a lot of sense: after all, the doors to government were opened to the Greens by such decisions. When looking at these ideological changes through the lens of environmental history, however, they become yet another example of why and how environmental ideas tend to get dragged down to anthropocentric premises, at worst even devoured by economic interests. Party politics thus becomes a prime example of this drive towards cultural belonging that we, as humans, all possess.

'Reaching Maturity' or 'Selling Out'?

Bibliography

- Aalto, Sari. 2018. *Vaihtoehtopolue: Vibreän liikkeen tie puolueeksi*. Helsinki: Into Kustannus.
- Akenji, Lewis. 2019. *Avoiding Consumer Scapegoatism: Towards a Political Economy of Sustainable Living*. Doctoral Dissertation. University of Helsinki.
- Bevir, Mark. 1999. *The Logic of the History of Ideas*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Caradonna, Jeremy L. 2018. 'An incompatible couple: A critical history of economic growth and sustainable development'. In Iris Borowy and Matthias Schmelzer (eds), *History of the Future of Economic Growth. Historical Roots of Current Debates on Sustainable Degrowth*. London: Routledge.
- Collier, Ute. 1998. 'The environmental dimension of deregulation: An introduction'. In Ute Collier (ed.) *Deregulation in the European Union: Environmental Perspectives*, pp. 3–22. London: Routledge.
- Connolly, William. 2017. *Facing the Planetary: Entangled Humanism and the Politics of Swarming*. Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press.
- Daly, Herman. [1977] 1991. *Steady State Economics*. 2nd Edition. Washington D.C.: Island Press.
- Der Spiegel* newspaper issues: 50/1990; 23/1991.
- Die Grünen 2019. *Zeiten Ändern Sich. Wir Ändern Sie Mit. Bündnis 90 / Die Grünen*. https://cms.gruene.de/uploads/documents/GRUENE_Chronik_1979-2019.pdf
- Dryzek, John and David Schlosberg (eds). 2005. *Debating the Earth: The Environmental Politics Reader*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dryzek, John. [2005] 2013. *The Politics of the Earth: Environmental Discourses*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Eisler, Riane. 1988. *Malja ja miekka: Historiamme ja tulevaisuutemme*. Helsinki: WSOY.
- European Commission 1993/2005. 'Towards Sustainability': the European Community Programme of policy and action in relation to the environment and sustainable development, *Official Journal of the European Communities C138*.
- European Commission 1995. Comments of the Commission on the Report of the Independent Experts Group on Legislative and Administrative Simplification. SEC95 2121 Final.
- Freeden, Michael. 2006. 'Ideology and political theory'. *Journal of Political Ideologies* 11 (1): 3–22.
- Fressoz, Jean-Baptiste and Christophe Bonneuil. 2018. 'Growth unlimited. The idea of infinite growth from fossil capitalism to green capitalism. In Iris Borowy and Matthias Schmelzer (eds), *History of the Future of Economic Growth. Historical Roots of Current Debates on Sustainable Degrowth*. London: Routledge.
- Green Alliance Programme of Principles. 2002 (*Vibreän Liiton periaateohjelma*). POHTIVA Archive: <https://www.fsd.tuni.fi/pohtiva/ohjelmalistat/VIHR/855>
- Green Alliance Party Programme. 1990 (*Vibreän Liiton puolueohjelma*). POHTIVA Archive: <https://www.fsd.tuni.fi/pohtiva/ohjelmalistat/VIHR/884>
- Green Alliance Party Programme. 1994 (*Vibreän Liiton puolueohjelma*). POHTIVA Archive: <https://www.fsd.tuni.fi/pohtiva/ohjelmalistat/VIHR/885>

‘Reaching Maturity’ or ‘Selling Out’?

- Green Alliance General Programme. 1988 (*Vihreän Liiton yleisohjelma*). POHTIVA Archive: <https://www.fsd.tuni.fi/pohtiva/ohjelmalistat/VIHR/883>
- Green Alliance Party Conference Minutes. 11–12 June 1994.
- Green Alliance Spring Conference Minutes. 27–28 May 1989.
- Helsingin Sanomat* newspaper issues: 28 May 1998.
- Hockenkos, Paul. 2008. *Joschka Fischer and the Making of the Berlin Republic: An Alternative History of Postwar Germany*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Isotalo, Merja. 2007. ‘Hallituspuolueeksi EU-maahan & Vihreät vallan kahvassa’. In Tanja Remes, Tanja and Jemina Sohlstén (eds), *Edellä! Vihreä Liitto 20 vuotta*. Helsinki: Vihreä sivistysliitto.
- Knill, Christoph and Duncan Liefferink. 2007. *Environmental Politics in the European Union: Policy-making, Implementation and Patterns of Multi-level Governance*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Koselleck, Reinhart. 2004. *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Laine, Markus and Pekka Jokinen. 2001. ‘Politiikan ulottuvuudet’. In Yrjö Haila and Pekka Jokinen (eds), *Ympäristöpolitiikka*. Tampere: Vastapaino.
- Lundén, Martti. 2019. Alkuvaiheet: <https://www.ekovihreat.fi/yhdistys/alkuvaiheet/> Accessed 22 Sept. 2019.
- Matero, Risto-Matti and Atte Arffman. 2024. ‘An economic tail wagging an ecological dog? Well-being and sustainable development from the perspective of entangled history’. In Kortemäki et al. (eds), *Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Planetary Well-being*. Oxon & New York: Routledge. Forthcoming.
- Matero, Risto-Matti. 2023. From Companion with Nature to Green Growth. Competing Conceptualisations on Well-being and the Environment in Finnish and German Green Parties, 1980–2002. Doctoral Dissertation. University of Jyväskylä. Forthcoming.
- Mickelsson, Rauli. 2007. *Suomen puolueet: historia, muutos ja nykypäivä*. Tampere: Vastapaino.
- Milder, Stephen. 2019. *Greening Democracy: The Anti-Nuclear Movement and Political Environmentalism in West Germany and Beyond, 1968–1983*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Naess, Arne. 1997. ‘Pinnallinen ja syvälinen, pitkän aikavälin ekologialiike’. In Markku Oksanen and Marjo Rauhala-Hayes (eds), *Ympäristöfilosofia*. Helsinki: Gaudeamus.
- Olsen, Niklas. 2017. *The Sovereign Consumer: A New Intellectual History of Neoliberalism*. Copenhagen: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Paastela, Jukka. 1987. *Finland’s New Social Movements*. Tampere: Tampereen yliopisto.
- Radkau, Joachim. 2005. *Nature and Power: A Global History of the Environment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Radkau, Joachim. 2011. *Die Ära der Ökologie: Eine Weltgeschichte*. München: Verlag C.H. Beck.
- Remes, Tanja. 2007. ‘Kohti “tavallista puoluetta”?’ In Tanja Remes and Jemina Sohlstén (eds), *Edellä! Vihreä Liitto 20 vuotta*. Helsinki: Vihreä sivistysliitto.
- Schmidt-Bleek, Friedrich. 2000. *Luonnon uusi laskuoppi: ekotehokkuuden mittari MIPS*. Helsinki: Gaudeamus.

'Reaching Maturity' or 'Selling Out'?

- Skinner, Quentin. 2002. *Visions of Politics I: Regarding Method*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sohlstén, Jemina. 2007. 'Liikkeen voima & Vihreää valoa puolueelle'. In Tanja Remes and Jemina Sohlstén (eds), *Edellä! Vihreä Liitto 20 vuotta*. Helsinki: Vihreä sivistysliitto.
- Taylor, Bron. 2010. *Dark Green Religion: Nature Spirituality and the Planetary Future*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Warde, Paul, Libby Robin and Sverker Sörlin. 2018. *The Environment: History of the Idea*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins.
- WCED. 1987. *Our Common Future: Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development*. United Nations.
- Vibreä Lanka* newspaper issues: 9/1988, 2/1989, 5/1989, 7/1989, 8/1989, 12/1989, 22/1989, 27/1989, 37/1989, 21 March 1991.
- Woods, Kerri. 2010. *Human Rights and Environmental Sustainability*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- Välimäki, Pauli and Anne Brax (eds). 1991. *Vibreä ABC-Kirja*. Helsinki: Vihreä Liitto.
- Välimäki, Pauli (ed.) 1995. *Vibreä ABC-Kirja 2*. Helsinki: Vihreä Liitto.