Party-ing. Towards a Political Anthropology of Party Activism in an Age of Individualisation

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<u>Acknowledgments</u>

Introduction

Over the last twenty years my research has focused on the transformations of the ways party activists relate to politics and on changes in political parties. In spite of their efforts to adapt to what they perceived as growing demands for individual participation, many major political parties have faced a spiral of demobilisation.

Political parties have provided a point of entry in order to reflect on the process of individualisation in European societies because, as mass organisations, they are particularly affected by these evolutions. Indeed, one of their roles since their creation had been the integration of the newly enfranchised masses into the polity. They mobilised large social groups that could identify with their political projects and saw them as defending their class interests. We are now far from the time of prescribed identities and my intent is not to add to the nostalgia of a Golden Age – in which I don't believe. On the contrary I try and understand the implications of the process of individualisation on political engagement and how it is compatible with representative government as we know it. The legitimacy of our institutions depends on their capacity to mobilise electoral support. The decline of electoral participation, the growth of populist parties and the multiplication of protest lists signal a crisis of political representation and its key actors. All is not gloomy: the diversification of the forms of politically or ethically motivated participation shows that the issue is not disinterest in politics but distrust in political parties as the teams from which governments are selected – and a search for alternatives.

Through my work, I have contributed to breach some of the disciplinary boundaries that delineate sociology, political science and anthropology in order to shed new light on social change and how it affects politics in contemporary Western societies. The theoretical tools I have mobilised have allowed me to take into account the interdependence between organisations and their cultural, political, institutional and social environments. Comparison has been a useful tool to explore the plausibility of the explanations and interpretations I have formulated in regard to changes to modes of participation and of organisation.

My research has followed two underlying currents: first, an analysis of the ways in which contemporary processes of individualisation affect citizens' conceptions about their place and role in relation to political and social change and thus about their engagement in politics; second, the question of power and democracy in political organisations. There are many ways to think the impact of social change. Political parties have allowed me to reflect on the articulation between different levels of social organisation: activists in their groups (micro)

contribute to social structuration (macro) and invite to reflect on the role of organisations (meso) in the process.

The contradictions between activists' aspirations and the reality of their everyday practices became obvious when I confronted how party members behaved in presence of each other and the rationalisation they provided in private interviews. The variety of ways of being/being seen to be green led me to talk of "*vertitudes*" (the title of my PhD, which has since been adopted by the French greens). The life stories of activists highlighted how "inherited" practices (drawn from primary socialisation) and those adopted later in relation with their social environment required justification and generally derived their significance from their articulation with green thought. The social movement literature focused my attention on the role of interactions – in particular everyday life – in the processes and dynamic of secondary socialisation and in the construction of frames. Why do some individuals consider that their private life is inseparable from their public engagements whilst others strive to maintain a distinction between the two? Such different ways of thinking about the self can be in part explained through the cultural context that frames the ways in which one rationalises one's decisions and behaviours. However, national cultures are complex composites from which actors draw and interpret according to the situation in which they are placed: they do not explain behaviours as such. Beyond the greens, I thus got interested in the articulation of party cultures within a national political culture.

Comparisons of the Labour, Conservative and Green parties with the Liberal Democrats can be found in most textbooks about British politics. Few however pay attention to organisational convergence and the role of institutional, political and systemic constraints in such an evolution. My research has contributed to an analysis of the role of competition in an isomorphic process influenced by the booming industry of public relations and by the now dominant model of the market. The period of time during which I studied British parties was characterised by a rhetoric of modernisation through democratisation that pervaded public policy as well as political parties beyond Labour itself. Party conferences are a British phenomenon. They follow a remarkably similar format and offer a unique vantage point into party organisations, one surprisingly neglected by political and party analysts. They have been profoundly affected by changes in the media and by the political competition. They were the target of a number of reforms and good window into intra-party democracy. They allowed me to analyse not only the particular context of each party but also how each changed. I considered the role of leadership, dominant coalitions and resistance to change. I highlighted how parties strive both to be distinctive, to maintain their identity (change remains usually

constrained by internal traditions and practices) and to adapt to the common frame (parties compete within a system, with a common if contested history) considering their position and prospects (it makes a difference to have no perspective of forming a government or to be desperate to regain power).

The question of causality is complex, much more than wished for by those searching for relationship between dependent and independent variables. To challenge the idea that attitudes or values lead to specific behaviours opens the way to reflections on the effect of social practices. My initial interest for "meaning-making" morphed into an attempt to analyse the role of such practices in social integration. At the micro-level of interactions, group styles are shaped - and shape – the attitudes and conducts of participants. Through these processes, party conferences contribute to produce, and to an extent homogenise, a party culture that nevertheless bears the trace of its social and local components. Party organisers also use ritualised practices to help naturalise and legitimise new procedures, modes of interaction and relationships of authority. Party conferences help the diffusion of new practices (sometimes the "best" ones) in relation for instance to electoral campaign, mobilisation of volunteers, etc. This works primarily through participants, who leave the conference changed by their experience and prepared to tell their local groups. However, television coverage creates an opportunity to work, at the same time, on the image of the party. Thus, rituals are neither indicative of a relationship to something sacred, or of hidden significations, but, rather, are a means to mark practices symbolically and to confer legitimacy onto them. Ritualisation mobilises cognitive, affective and physical dimensions that contribute to the internalisation and naturalisation of ways of doing. Thus, ritualisation (the pump and repetition and global performance of both orators and audiences) creates the impression of consensus (whether or not there is actually an agreement on the interpretation of what goes on) and is an attempt to impose a particular definition of a situation. Rituals are reproduced every year but are also adapted with every performance and thus never strictly identical. Despite the resistance of actors and analysts to the idea of the existence or efficacy of rituals in contemporary politics, I consider that they remain an important dimension of social integration and thus their analysis should not be confined to marginal, non modern or non political groups.

Although French political science, and in particular the sociology of mobilisation, has largely eschewed such trends, it is fair to say that our understanding of collective mobilisations – whether lay or social scientific – is often (at least implicitly) influenced by the premise that individual actors are mostly self-centred and instrumentally rational. It has become common sense to say that those who get involved in politics are motivated by their personal interest.

The attention given to the role of selective incentives contributes to narrow the scope of analysis to perspectives more or less inspired by the market analogy or model. The problem is that it does not suffice to explain the processes of mobilisation anymore than a focus on social structures and heavy variables. Research on the contexts and social enbeddedness of individual actors can enrich approaches taking into account the diverse rationalities grounding and framing decisions and actions. As we know how important others are to humans as profoundly social animals, we need to take into account the interdependence and interactions between actors and the various groups in which they are involved. This also applies to political parties and how what is expected of rank and file members has evolved from regular interactions with local members (or at least the membership secretary delivering monthly stamps) to a merely virtual connection through online membership forms, newsletters and credit card subscriptions. What happens when members have hardly or no interaction with each other because the party leadership fears radicalisation and loss of control over policy and strategy? Without much chance of meeting, members can hardly develop affective attachment with the organisation; they cannot discuss policy options and thereby be educated in the way one expects citizens to be transformed through participation. "Engagement à la carte" if it is primarily a credit card membership might favour loyalty card bonds and therefore a consumerist approach to politics. If party leaderships seek a massive but passive collection of card holders, occasionally mobilised in support of proposals emanating from the centre, it is paradoxical to bemoan the inability of the party on the ground to mobilise voters.

To the extent that the individualisation of party membership has been built on the voluntary erosion of processes of identification and on the focus on individualised citizens rather than on social groups, one can hardly be surprised that new members are less loyal, more transient, and more difficult to mobilise. Parties have tried to behave more like businesses (organising audits, outsourcing activities, incentivising their employees and treating voters like customers). These evolutions are particularly striking in the UK, where the legacy of the Thatcher era has been confirmed and embedded by the enthusiasm of New Labour for the markets, but not limited to the British isles. Europeanisation has contributed to upload national practices and diffuse them beyond their original shores or borders.

There is a widespread concern across Western democracies that the legitimacy of representative regimes is being undermined: concern at the decline of electoral participation are rife and usually combined with an analysis of decline of trust in political – and particularly elected – institutions (Stoker 2006, chap. 2). For instance, during the last thirty years, electoral participation in the UK has declined sharply, from more than 80% in the 1950s to around 60%

today. The decline was slow at first until the precipitously fall of 2001 (59,4%). Although the figure has improved to 65% in 2010, it remains disappointing if one considers that the election was closely fought and the outcome uncertain until the very end. At the same time, partisanship declined drastically over the last half-century (Whiteley 2009, 252), as well as party membership: aggregate party enrolment collapsed from 3.4 million in the 1950s to about 800,000 members in the mid 1990s or a mere 1.3% of the electorate in 2005 (Marshall 2009, 11). The number of citizens involved in political parties has declined steadily in most European countries even when one takes into account the questionable reliability of figures provided by political parties (Mayer 2010, 246–7; Scarrow 2000, 89–90; Scarrow and Gezgor 2010; Van Biezen, Mair, and Poguntke 2012). Citizens show no sign of disinterest in political matters but a good deal of cynicism towards political institutions and actors and conventional parliamentary processes.

Before turning to a detailed discussion of my contribution to social science and the study of political parties and participation, I would like to underline a few traits of my career so far.

- I have tried to debunk disciplines and sub-disciplines and drawn from sociology and anthropology as well as political science in my reflections on changing forms of partisan mobilisation. Efforts to foster dialogues and cross fertilisation have driven my investment in the committee for political sociology of IPSA/ISA since 2006. And my participation in many international conferences and congresses.

- Extended stays in the UK and the US have led me to navigate between different research traditions and in particular to move between a context dominated by positivism and rational choice in the US and a French political science at times bitterly resistant to outside trends. My own research has been inspired by inductive, interactionist and social constructivist approaches. These were choices as well as a product of circumstances. I see my work as an attempt to bridge research traditions, methods and cultures.

- By training as well as by conviction, I am a comparativist. I have compared parties within an ideological family, within a single country, between countries but I have always privileged familiarity with the context over large N, preferring the devil in the detail to the satisfaction of neat models. I also consider that one can, through such comparisons, generate generalisable interpretations and plausible explanations. An anthropological lense, as well as a comparative one, have contributed to challenge my preconceptions and denaturalise what I might have been tempted to take for granted.

- My research has tended to be empirical, in the sense that it has been grounded in field work, but I consider that such grounding is essential for sound theory building. I am sceptical of models derived from second hand information such as expert surveys and overly ambitious datasets. Nevertheless, the issues and theories my work engages with are about social processes and social change and for that matter I also appreciate what quantitative analyses can yield. Political parties and their activists are just ways to understand and analyse these processes rather than ends in themselves.

- From the early days of my career in Oxford and Stirling, I have combined and sometimes alternated periods of research and periods of intense teaching. Half of my career has taken place in an Anglo-Saxon context[1]. I still to date do most if not all of my teaching in English and now contribute to Sciences Po's collaboration with British academic institutions. I have also taken an active role in the coordination, animation and development of research and teaching in the three institutions (and academic system) I have worked for as well as through international research organisations.

In the following pages I discuss my main contributions to the study of political engagement and political parties. I start with a reflection on my trajectory from the early days, its theoretical foundations and methodological choices. I then discuss approaches to activism and mobilisation, contrasting new and old political parties. From there, I reflect on processes of change within organisations. I pay particular attention to the use ritualisation as one of the processes insufficiently analysed in political science. Democratic rituals as performances and performative actions provide good illustrations of the pragmatic and strategic use of symbolic practices in competitions for power. The last chapter explores how the individualisation of political participation needs to be analysed both as resulting from deep social changes (and demands for participation) and as a by-product of public policy and of the offer of participation by parties, governments and associations. I contend that ideas are important because they shape how we talk about, think about, study and thereby classify and construct individuals and how they expect/are expected to relate to politics (Hay 2011).

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[1] Considering how much easier it is to write in my native language I sometimes wonder whether I am masochist or simply obstinate.

Chapter 1

A theoretical and methodological journey

My initial attraction to the newly opened graduate studies programme in Aix-en-Provence was linked to the focus on comparative politics. I intended to work on the emergence of the environment on the political agenda as well as on the electoral scene. By the beginning of the 1990s, green parties had been elected to the European and some national (most notably in Germany) parliaments and had representatives at local and regional levels. Environmental issues had burst on the media agenda and a number of groups were drawing attention to a new array of issues from world solidarity to resource management and interdependence between species and societies on a finite planet. I was interested in the issue attention cycle (Downs 1972) and its new ebb as well as in claims that new organisations, particularly *Les Verts*, were challenging traditional political parties and inventing new ways of "doing" politics. Explanations in terms of sweeping cultural change and a 'silent' revolution (Inglehart 1977) did little to clarify the ways in which claims to be radical and different - and radically different - translated effectively into practices that would change the political system and bring about a sustainable society.

I was a reader of the Terre Humaine Collection and thus familiar with a particular literary genre, lying in between the ethnographic *mémoires* and the *récits de voyage* "à la" *Triste Tropiques* (Levy-Strauss) or *Derniers rois de Thulé* (Malaurie) and therefore interested in exoticising the familiar[2]. Thus, despite studying the West in a programme that retained the then Area studies framework, I was looking forward to core courses in political anthropology. Alongside Ronald Inglehart, Norbert Elias and Stein Rokkan, we read authors from Louis Dumont to Edmund Leach or Clifford Geertz and F.G White, who are rarely part of the mainstream political science curriculum, and discussed the deliberations in the Ancient Orient (Schemeil 1999), attitudes to authority in a *provençal* village (Wylie 1957) or the importance of saving face in Goffman (Goffman 2005) or in Japan (a country interestingly included in the *Occident*/*West* in Aix). This training has been crucial to the later development of my approach to political behaviours and organisations. Throughout my work, I have used insights and perspectives drawn from various disciplines and sub-disciplines. Sociological and anthropological theories and methods have informed the ways I have approached political

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[2] This collection privileges a specific narrative that combines anecdotal evidence, the personal experience of the author with his fieldwork. It may explain some of the characteristic of French fieldwork literature which either develops grand theorising or focuses on personal accounts (Copans 2008, 14)

parties (from the standpoint of their members or as organisations) as well as my reflections on social change. I have tried to analyse the construction and the transformation of partisan cultures in interaction with their political and social environment (Sawicki and Siméant 2009). I also retain from these early days a particular interest to the emergence of the individual through slow historical and social processes. The early reading of *Essai sur l'individualisme*, *Homo Aequalis 2* (Dumont 1991b; Dumont 1991a), *The Society of Individuals* (Elias 2001), *L'Individu, la mort, l'amour* (Vernant 1996) and *Do Kamo* (Leenhardt 1985; Métais 1950) highlighted for me how one tends to take-for-granted contemporary understandings of the relationship between self and society. Questions about the individual thus run as threads through my work and ground my interest in an anthropological perspective that articulates the study of micro-political phenomena to theoretical questions about macro-social evolutions. Green party activism thus provided an opportunity to reflect on new forms of political engagement that placed a particular emphasis on individual agency (Faucher 1999a).

I was fortunate that my attention turned to party conferences as Tony Blair was re-founding Labour with an ambitious communication strategy. Party conferences offered the set for the projection of the image of a renewed professional and united organisation offering a credible alternative to the incumbent government and lead by a charismatic and decisive young leader. British party conferences were not only fascinating political events in themselves but also a means to analyse processes of organisational change, their contingent and strategic dimensions as well as how the institutionalisation of new modes of conduct rests on their incorporation by individual actors (Faucher-King 2005). Whilst parties respond to their environment, they also contribute to shape it through public deliberations, legislation and public policy. The activism of New Labour in government from 1997 contributed to drive through public policies that confirmed, accelerated and radicalised some of the changes introduced by the Conservative, contributing to the emergence of a market society (Faucher-King and Le Galès 2010a). It thus became clear that the policies that promoted the citizen-consumer in British society were manifest in the ways in which parties had changed their attitudes to their members. If one considers that conceptions of the individual are social constructs, then one needs to reflect on the implications that the recent construction of the subject as a consumer or as narrowly instrumentally rational has on the ways in which she makes sense of and gets involved in politics.

There is a degree of contingency in the development of a research career and path and it is important to pay due attention to the choices that we make and that we learn to justify professionally even when their happening also owed to chance encounters (or funding

opportunities). I want to acknowledge the moments that have inadvertently inflected my intellectual journey from an interest in the emergence of a new issue on the political agenda to a career mostly devoted to understanding changing forms of participation in political parties. Two moments were key: first I was fortunate enough to benefit from a speedy introduction to the local group of *Les Verts* in Aix. Then, I agreed with Yves Schemeil that I would use the opportunity to explore questions of political mobilisation through an ethnographic study of their electoral campaign for the regional and local (cantonales) elections (1992). Within a few weeks I started attending the nearly weekly meetings where leaflets were written, newsletters produced and electoral strategies devised. Soon I was on the campaign trail with their candidates, attending public gatherings in the nearby villages, or observing marketsquare interactions.

Another important turning point came with the opportunity to apply for external funding for a PhD to a specific Franco-British CNRS programme. This was all the more attractive as I had explored British politics in an undergraduate dissertation on women and politics in the UK. Most studies of green parties then focused on Germany and the UK seemed at first sight an unlikely country for a comparative analysis of green party development. However, exploratory work highlighted the surprising popularity of the green vote at the 1989 European elections, the oldest green party in Europe struggling against hostile electoral rules, several studies of its electorate and membership (Rüdig 1990; Rüdig, Bennie, and Franklin 1991; Rüdig 1992). In the few existing international comparisons, *Les Verts* and the British Greens were also contrasted to Die Grünen for their "purist" or environmentalist orientations as opposed to the radical alternative offered by the German party. Both parties were also constrained by closed political systems, in which there were few opportunities for them to thrive. After meetings with activists from Canterbury, Croydon and Oxford as well as with specialists of environmental politics and social movements in the UK, I decided to focus on Oxford. The CNRS gave me a grant for fieldwork, which complemented the PhD scholarship. When I started my PhD research in 1992, the objective was to explore institutional and political constraints/opportunities in majoritarian electoral systems and its influence on political strategy (parliamentary, social movement). Although I had already experimented with embeddedness and ethnographic data collection, my initial research questions were in line with a traditional political science focus on political parties in their institutional and political contexts.

The opportunity offered by a lecturship in politics at Stirling University in 1997 contributed in no small part to my deepening interest in British politics. Whilst I had plans to pursue my

cross Channel entreprise through a comparison of party conferences, I found myself spending more time than I had anticipated working on, and in, Britain. What was meant to be a part of a larger project became its core: although I attended several French party congresses, the project I developed increasingly focused on a comparison between British parties. Observations in France played an important role as a "*détour*" and as raising questions about taken-for-granted practices, exoticising the familiar in both France and the UK.

This chapter investigates the methodological choices that I have to answer questions about political engagement and how it is changing in the context of societies that are profoundly affected by the ongoing process of individualisation.

Methodological choices

I had explored during my Masters thesis the motivations of *Les Verts* and tested hypothesis about incentives and instrumental rationality, demonstrating how qualitative work based on observations and interviews could provide in depth understanding about the social construction of activism and the complex motives and ties between party members. Whilst my study was concentrated on a local group, it shed light on the importance of social interactions in the construction and evaluation of what could count as costs or as incentives beyond Aix-en-Provence. The processes analysed were not bound to the particular group, even if some of the tensions between members were. The questions I wanted to answer in my dissertation focused on new forms of political engagement, rather than on ecological discourse, changing values, or the emergence and mobilisation of a new social class (Cotgrove 1982; Eder 1985; Offe 1985). Instead, I wanted to analyse the political and institutional contexts in which a new politics party could be successful in mobilising activists and analyse the extent to which such contexts influenced the modes of engagement and members' worldviews.

I retrace my steps to analyse the combination of theoretical and methodological choices and contingent factors that have shaped over the year my approach and the questions that drive my research.

Immersion

There are always opportunity costs in the selection of a particular method, in terms of expertise and training, availability of the data or access to the field. Luck meant that I was able to start field work as soon as I had decided to focus on the party rather than political ecology as an ideological phenomenon, or the green electorate or the environmental movement. Through a fellow student in the Comparative politics programme, I met the secretary of the local group. He was a recent graduate of the local Institut d'Etudes Politiques

and keen to facilitate a study of his party that would demonstrate how different *Les Verts* were from their political opponents. He was also active at the national level and was happy to act as my informant, guiding me through my first national meetings. He was a close friend of one of the two city councillors elected in 1989, who was the local and regional spokesperson, and stood as a candidate on the regional list as well as for the conseil general, and, in 1993 for the legislative election. This allowed me later on to move my research to the regional and then later national levels quite easily. Of course *Les Verts* and the other green groups that were competing with them in the early 1990s also professed transparency and openness, which meant that attending meetings was never an issue. They tolerated, sometimes at their own expense, the presence of all sorts of observers, in particular journalists who, to no small extent, have contributed to fuel and reinforce the image of amateurism and self inflicted chaos[3]. I attended every meeting locally and many regionally during the 1992 regional campaign, then legislative 1993 campaign and carried on in the following years until the 1995 presidential campaign.

From 1992, I embarked on a comparative study of green parties and I added a new field site. Considering the institutional obstacles to the development of the Green party since the foundation of its predecessor in 1973, its mere existence could be seen as a puzzle from a rational instrumental perspective: the party had only a handful of councillors at the parish level, no foreseeable prospect of ever getting anyone elected at the national other than through a reform of the electoral system. The astounding 15% of the votes it had received at the 1989 European Parliament election had brought instant fame, but the thousands of new members never renewed their membership and internal disputes over strategy and party structure eventually led to a bitter dispute, a reform of the party constitution and finally the secession of the "realists". I intended to start the comparison between the two parties with an exploration of activists' motivations and, following my previous research I was particularly keen to focus on interactions within a group and its influence on perceptions and understandings of politics and the role of green activists. I thus contacted the secretaries of several potential sites, set up meetings in the summer in the Midlands, in Canterbury, in Oxford and in the periphery of London. Oxford soon appeared as an obvious choice that presented many advantages: the cities were comparable in social makeup as well as size and in both cases the local greens were relatively successful and active. Moreover, I was quickly accepted within the Oxford Green party.

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[3] Activists have tended to use the media as external resources in the internal conflict that opposed various factions and individuals, thereby contributing to the image of a party unable to sort itself out, as it did in the early 1990s.

Green activists consider that openness is one of the criteria of truly democratic organisation. They also saw positively the prospect of someone campaigning with them. As in Aix, there was no hostility to social investigation. I rented a room from the party secretary during my first long term stay, and in the following years I house-sat regularly for the then election officer. This allowed me to spend long periods of time in the field between 1993 and 1995, when I moved to Oxford. In both cases, I immersed in the group with relative ease and was able to follow one candidate closely, partly because I volunteered on the campaign trail, delivering leaflets, canvassing and attending meetings. The sociability of the Oxford group (and in particular their tendency to conclude work meetings in a pub) made immersion within the group culture much easier than the slow burning tensions that were rife in Aix-en-Provence.

In 1992, I went to Chambery with a small group from Aix-en-Provence to attend the national general assembly of *Les Verts*. The following year I followed the Oxonians to the Greens' Wolverhampton spring conference. At the time, I wanted to understand what their involvment with the party beyond their local activities meant to them. This was all the more relevant as the issue was hotly debated within both parties. It was a particularly sore point in Oxford where several members had either withdrawn from the party following the resignation of Sara Parkin as party chair (either in support of her or as a protest against the "national party being a waste of time" and "detrimental to the local party "). Observing the ways in which Oxford Greens organised their participation in the plenary debates as well as how they interacted with others on the fringe drew my attention to the role of conference in building a party identity and a sense of belonging through symbolic practices. At the same time, I became aware of the British conference season and the many ways in which it departed from what I expected of party congresses from my experience of French parties. Thus, it contributed to raise questions about political parties, the greens, as well as about democracy, competition and a national political culture. I was still working on the greens when I decided to apply for a pass to attend other party conferences.

Immersion was a condition of success for the type of study I had in mind. I was trying to understand the rationality of their mobilisation and the logic of their strategical and individual choices as well as analyse the forms of participation they were allegedly inventing in an institutionally and politically constrained context. Participant observation allowed me to explore how groups of activists practiced what they considered to be radical and alternative forms of decision making (through the search for consensus) and therefore to ground empirically theoretical reflexions about democracy in a non-experimental setting. Beyond the

concrete case of the greens, and thanks to its comparative dimension, the study of *vertitudes* (greenness) opens up to generalisation about the construction of party identity, the importance of symbolic practices and existence of repertoires or traditions that inform these constructions.

 If I had obtained fairly rapidly as a graduate student entry to parties in opposition, the question of access to the field was asked in a very different setting when I developed a research project on the annual conferences of the three major British parties. Attending green party general assembly meetings had brought up the issue of identity construction and the ritualisation of democratic practices. It had also attracted my attention to the unusual conference season in the UK, which has no real equivalent anywhere (neither the American Party Conventions nor the French Universités d'été can really compare). The paradox, as I soon discovered, was that they were largely ignored or snubbed by party specialists, who dismissed them for their lack of direct influence on party policy or leadership. Only two studies focused on them: Lewis Minkin's exhaustive but now dated analysis of the Labour conference through the 1970s (Minkin 1978) and Richard Kelly's much lighter book on the Conservative conference "system" (Kelly 1989). The conference season intrigued me on several grounds. Nearly a century old[4], the tradition had been maintained throughout with the sole interruption of WW2. It involved every year sending most of the Westminster village (politicians, journalists, lobbyists and hangerson) to the seaside for a week or more. It benefited from remarkably widespread coverage – from verbatim transcripts of the debates in the *Times* to hours of live coverage on the BBC. If the conferences were as useless as some of my colleagues surmised, why would parties spend so much of their resources on these events and why would activists come every year as if on a pilgrimage? To what extent did processes of identity construction, which I had analysed in the case of green parties, take place in well established and instutionalised organisations? Why were they a British idiosyncrasy?

I attended the Labour and Liberal Democrats conferences in 1995, but failed to get entry to the Conservative conference. Luckily, Vernon Bogdanor, who was then tutor at Brasenose College and whose seminar I regularly attended, agreed to recommend me to the Secretary of the National Union of Conservative Associations. At the end of a long discussion where I was quizzed over the purpose of my research, my academic credentials and my connections with the press, the Secretary explained how the conference was the remit of the National Union as well as the odd organisational structure that connected the National Union, Central Office where his office was located, and the Parliamentary party. I then filled a form for security

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[4] The first Conservative conference was gathered in 1867 and the Labour party was founded during a special 1900 congress of trade unions and socialist societies.

checks. The conference pass I received a few weeks later mentioned that I was "Representative for Constituency Party X", in contrast with Labour and the Liberal Democrats where delegates and representatives are clearly differentiated. Good behaviour (I did not create embarrassment for my sponsors) helped secure success in my future applications to the precious conference passes. Access to conference was granted every year through appeals to the party general/national union secretary or conference organiser, usually (though not each time). As I would find out over the years, the hierarchy and nuances of the badge colour meant that in some years I could sit on the floor of conference with the Labour delegations, go into policy seminars closed to observers, but in others I was confined to the Balcony and the public spaces. Once I got a pass that also allowed me access to the back stage, including the pressrooms[5]. As noted by a number of fellow ethnographers of political parties (Aït-Aoudia, Bachelot, and Bargel 2010; Bachelot 2011; Aït-Aoudia, Bargel, and Ethuin 2010; Lefebvre 2010; Bachelot et al. 2010; Bennani-Chraïbi 2010), a number of factors cannot be dismissed when accounting for the accessibility of a field. When I first approached them I was a foreign female PhD student with a temporary research fellowship at Oxford intent on exploring British politics and culture. By the time I started researching party conferences and party change, I was a young lecturer in a British institution but I had already attended 2 or 3 annual conference and seemed to pose little threat.

If the 1995 Labour and Liberal Democrats conferences had allowed me to begin to understand the importance of the events in the internal life of parties of the "left", I came back from the Conservative conference in Bournemouth in 1996 (the last one of the season) convinced that party subcultures also deserved to be taken into account. In the space of a few weeks, I had moved from the Greens (and their attempts to reach consensus at the end of careful deliberations in small groups) to the Blues (where consensus and unity where a key part of the spectacle being staged by a doomed government), via the Reds (convinced that the shades of purple behind their speakers would contribute to change the image of their party) and the Yellows (who had debated the abolition of the monarchy and allowing the sale of pornography to 16 year olds). I had been attending green conferences for years and was familiar with "the fringe". I had listened to many debates about philosophical principles, structural reforms and political strategy as well as specific policies. I had chanted and

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[5] This was a great opportunity to observe how journalists operate, the briefing sessions before and after the main speeches. Work with BBC political journalists on the French political scene also lead to interviews with their colleagues within the Corporation or in other outlets, including the *Sun*, who worked in the lobby on the conference fringe. As I wandered in the coulisses of the Labour conference I interviewed the team that worked with the Chair to preselect speakers and got to try the prompters that help British politicians give effortless speeches without appearing to read.

"ommed" with the pagans. I was not quite prepared for the cultural shock that the 1996 Conservative conference would be: ladies in blue rinse, teenagers in pinstriped suits, a lot of champagne on the fringe and oyster bars for the hungry, stalls inviting participants not to forget the party in their will[6].

Ethnography as a method

Both of my major research projects implied ethnographic work and different use of the material I gathered, particularly notes and interviews. I found inspiration not only in the classics of ethnography (Malinowski 1989)but also in the works of urban sociologists (Whyte 1993; Goffman 1990). I diligently filled notebooks that were not intended to be shared as they contain not only drawings of settings, sitting plans and stage directions sketches, but also dialogues, deliberations, bits of interviews but also doodles and comments on what document or book to look into, frustrated comments about delays and obstacles, etc. (Erny 1988). I took notes during meetings, making sure I noted who spoke, when, how and the reactions of others. I drew the stage and the evolution of settings, the colours and images, the use of lighting, videos, pot plants, wives and family members. I also wrote every evening and whenever there was a chance to do so. I had paid attention to settings when attending green party meetings, in particular sitting arrangements and rules of interaction (who spoke and how) but the very mediatisation of the events that were the object of my conference study contributed to make settings and stage managing particularly sensitive issues (Faucher-King 2005, chap. 6). I had to reflect on them just as conference organisers had to: despite denegations that the set or the choreography of speakers were important, hundreds of thousands of pounds were spent every year on designing lecterns and backdrops, devising the programme and the succession of speakers. Access to key players and organisers allowed to ask some of the key actors what they thought about what they did and why in terms of stage direction.

Many ethnographers have written, in their notebooks[7] or in their published works about their ambivalent relationship with their subjects (Barley 2011; Turner 1970) ; others underline the need for a reflexive analysis (Weber 2009; Rabinow 2007). For that matter, my two fields proved quite different: I was immersed in both green groups, meeting many of them weekly over several years to the point of developing relationships that have evolved beyond the end of the work. I am still in occasional contact with a couple of greens from Oxford[8]. Working

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[6] 43% of members were over 66 (Whiteley, Seyd, and Richardson 1994, 43)

[7] Malinovski's notes were not written to be read by anyone but himself and many ethnographers would be horrified to have theirs so published (Erny 1988).

[8] I kept in touch with Mike Woodin for instance, one of the first elected to the City Council and a fellow in psychology at Balliol with whom I had regular conversations about green politics and questions of democracy and leadership until a few

on conferences was very different and far less personal: although I met a few people every year and interviewed repeatedly some of them I have maintained no connection but with the exception of a couple of informants (one of my former mature students for Stirling in Labour and a Conservative, now a peer)[9]. I interviewed party members and conference participants/organisers about their experiences, their understandings of what went on and of changes but never explored their worldviews or motivations. Many interviews stemmed from discussions in corridors or at the café with visitors, delegates, exhibitors, etc. Others were scheduled across the country with conference organisers, general secretaries, members of national committees, or party staff. My participation in the observations at conferences was limited to crashing receptions in the evenings[10] and eating sandwiches on the fringe, sharing a drink in the bar, queuing for the leader's speech, occasionally standing or clapping when doing otherwise would have exposed me as an outsider. On a couple of occasions, I took part in training seminars for delegates (Labour) or representatives (Liberal Democrats) but felt too ill-at-ease to stay to the end and either perform (for speech rehearsal) or engage in the one-to-one exercises that were sometimes set.

I used ethnographic material for different purposes but in both cases I did not stop at the thick description advocated by Geertz (Geertz 1993) and that sometimes seems to be the primary objective of ethnographic approaches to political movements (Sawicki and Siméant 2009). Although understanding in depth the context, I focused on using this understanding to answer specific questions about changing modes of participation in politics (green parties as alternative organisations offering new modes of engagement and claiming to reinvent politics) as well as within parties (how and why parties such as Labour and the Conservatives created new modes of joining and of taking part in policy deliberation).

I set out to analyse the meaning-making activities of the greens: what it meant for them to be green; how they understood participatory democracy and performed it; how their commitment to authenticity could translate into routinised practices so apparently antithetical to their aspiration to spontaneity. I conducted systematic in-depth and personal interviews with local activists and party members in both groups, asking about their childhood recollections and their dietary habits as well as on their involvement and their views on party strategy and

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months before his premature and sudden death in 2004. See also (Bachelot 2011, 122–4)

[9] I was recently contacted by a Labour party member I had interviewed a couple of times as she was a member of both the National Executive Committee and the National Policy Forum after she had recognised me doing the BBC comments on the French presidential election.

[10] This was part of « doing as the Romans do » : many receptions are by invitation but admittance policy is sometimes loose and could be negotiated with gate keepers. The Saatchi brothers' Conservative receptions were particulary good, as well as their champagne. There are advantages as noted by colleagues to being a young and foreign researcher (Bachelot 2011).

organisational structure. I complemented the work on the local group with interviews of other key national actors met at party conference or at executive meetings. I used direct extracts from my notes and lengthy passages from interviews. On the other hand, my forey into the national organisations and settings remained limited to attending a few meetings per year but I also developed distinct contacts with activists from other regions. The "conference project" implied observations in similar, recurrent though changing (Bournemouth, Brighton and Blackpool) venues, in line with recent debates about the advantages of working on multi-sites in order to follow practices beyond spatially and socially delimited settings (G. Marcus 1995)**.** Ethnography is often criticised for being mostly good at descriptive local analyses, voluntarily embedded in localities or settings, and for its limited ambition at generalisation or its failing to connect the micro-social with historical trends and macro-social evolutions (Sawicki and Siméant 2009, 13). However, this criticism misunderstands research with theoretical ambition that explores social and cultural trends and practices (Eliasoph 1998; Lichterman 2005; Schatz 2009) or sheds light on political processes, organisations and contexts (Nielsen 2012; Walsh 2003; Pader 2006). Although ethnography is not primarily about testing causal chains, it can assist such a process (Bayard de Volo and Schatz 2004). It can be used with a combination of other methods, whether qualitative or quantitative[11]. I used ethnographic data collected at party conferences in order to demonstrate how symbolic practices are an integral part of the process of change rather than immutable reflections of deeply held values. I have not used my ethnographic work to give voice to the voiceless (Beaud and Weber 2010, 7) or as an end in itself, or as bearing-witness to the lifeworld of those I observed but as a good method to gather information on subtle differences in the ways democracy is interpreted and practiced. The peculiarity of the current exercise has required me to take a more central role than I have in any previous writing but my inclination is for a narrative form that do not centre-stage the author (Olivier de Sardan 2000, 442; Geertz 1989, 9).

An interpretative approach

Interpretations are "community affairs and not subjective (or individual ones)" (Rabinow 1986, 256), they are therefore replicable in the sense that subsequent researchers can go to the field and, even if they do not talk to the same people or have different experiences doing so,

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[11] Good surveys such as the Afrobarometers are developed and used in combination with in depth knowledge of the countries, groups and societies. "Surveys are only good for telling you if someone is a man or a woman, and they're not even very good at that" (Gavin Williams, quoted by Nic Cheeseman in « The use and abuse of surveys in Africa », Séminaire Les sciences sociales en question: controverses épistémologiques et méthodologiques, Sciences Po, 15 mars 2012 – Gavin Williams was the politics tutor at St Peter's college in Oxford where I spent two years. I am grateful for his support and advice whilst I was finishing my PhD as well as applying to positions in the UK).

nevertheless be made aware of the range of meanings relevant to a particular phenomenon under study (Wedeen 2010).

Thus, I consider that what one learns about an organisation or a process can shed light on other locales/organisations/behaviours (Joseph, Mahler, and Auyero 2007): focusing on elucidating the meanings embedded in actions and practices (Bevir 2006, 284) is not incompatible with an accumulation of knowledge or with generalisation. For that matter, the conclusions drawn from the work on *Les Verts* d'Aix and the Oxford Greens also apply to other groups and help us understand how greens in general '*bricolent*" forms of participation. Beyond making a difference between a wink and a twitch (Geertz 1993, 6–7), ethnographic data helped me answer questions about the different strategical and organisational choices of French and British greens. Similarly, the analyses of British party conferences were used to reflect on how political parties change the image they try and project to the electorate as well as the ways party members interact and conceive of their role in the organisation and in the polity.

All data "in the human studies (…) are constructs of the process by which we acquired them" (Robert Bellah in (Rabinow 2007, xxxi)) and this applies to qualitative as well as quantitative research. It is important for the ethnographer to be aware of what the subjects expect from cooperation with the study (Weber 2009; Rabinow 2007) just as it is important to avoid priming and other parasitic effects in survey research (Zaller and Feldman 1992). In qualitative work that requires repeated interactions with the subjects, relations can be instrumentalised: the presence of the researcher can be useful in a multiplicity of ways from increased self-worthiness to self-promotion within their group or a wider community, for the information can benefit their own career, their organisation or for their cause. They are also infused with emotions, ranging from dis/trust to friendship, jealousy, solidarity, etc, some of which I have discussed above[12].

Politicians, staffers and public relations professionals are usually good at staying "on-message" (Norris 1999) and have probably become increasingly good at it. Through my research I have used different types of interviews (just as I paid attention to different aspects of interactions and settings when observing). There is often more about a situation or an event or an organisation than actors are prepared to say about what they do and think they do. The interviews I did with the greens in Oxford and Aix explored their life narrative and

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[12] During my first year in Aix-en-Provence, I was occasionnaly greeted as "l'espion qui venait du froid". I felt I was finally accepted after my Masters thesis had circulated amongst them. A number of them admitted how they had laughed at themselves, even though my analysis had also pointed at painful dysfunctions and tensions of the local groups. Interestingly it did not seem to have much effect on their interactions and practices.

worldviews. I paid attention to the settings in which I have conducted them, privileging whenever possible their home or an informal location where they could feel confident and relaxed to talk about their lifestyles and their life story. Such in-depth interviews were thus very different from those I did in relation to the conference project, where we discussed party procedures and reforms and their experiences, as activists, party staff or elected representatives on different internal bodies. I also interviewed political journalists, lobbysts, MPs and political advisors. Not all stayed 'on message' and the source of information they provided was anonymised except when they spoke in their official capacity.

Over the years, my practice evolved as research questions were inductively produced (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2006; Lichterman 2005): the initial impetus for the green comparison was the mobilisation and motivations of activists but I went on to answer theoretically grounded questions about intra-party democracy and its performance, about meaning-making activities and the use of symbols. In a process akin to what has been labelled "grounded theory", my research has involved an interplay of data generation through fieldwork, data inspection during periods and theoretical reasoning in an iterative-cyclical procedure (Strübing 2011). I initially considered conferences primarily as a quintessentially British ritual but later also moved to questions about their uses by modern governmental parties.

Anthropology and theoretical work

Following my study of *Les Verts*, the project on conferences presented several challenges as it focused on institutions at the meso-level. Whilst my work on the greens focused on interactions in local groups and looked to generalise from the micro-level to develop a better understanding of new modes of political activism, I focused here on practices developed at the national level of organisations. Although I observed interactions and therefore retained a micro-social dimension to my analysis, the idea was to reflect on the effects of such practices beyond their immediate context, i.e. on how they could contribute to change group norms. I spent little time with delegates/representatives and how they experienced the event but used the information collected to reflect on intra-party decision-making and power relations as well as on organisational change. As these events are placed under the intense scrutiny of the media, they also present the particularity of being a liminal space, combining front stage politics with an important backstage, where most of the action takes place. Whilst I had followed closely a relatively small group of people in Aix and Oxford, I did not attach myself to any local or union delegation but moved between the different spaces of the exhibition center, the fringe, the backstage of corridors and coffee stands, the auditorium and the

newsrooms. Sifting through years of press cuttings and video clips of conference plenaries and interviews, grey activist literature and factional newsletters commenting on rules, atmospheres, debates, votes and strategy I tried to unpack what rules and routines[13], what rituals of interactions (Goffman 1990)were derived from party tradition, and the influence exerted on them by national political institutions and culture or by the media.

For that matter I would label myself an "anthropologist" more than an ethnographer[14] because I am influence by the British tradition of social anthropology and endeavour to make general claims about structures, social change and political parties as organisations beyond any description (however thick) of practices and social representations. So, whilst I have used ethnographic methods of observation and data collection, I am mostly interested in what we can learn about general political processes than by the idiosyncrasies of local practices, however fascinating[15].

The cross Channel comparison of green parties had involved juggling two sets of literary and philosophical references for thinking about nature and political involvement. I showed that many of the differences between French and British green activists needed to be analysed in relation to the social and political history of each country. A comparison of institutional constraints weighing on the greens, such as electoral rules and the their position in the party system and political spectrum, could only yield partial answers. It was in fact necessary to take into account the genealogy of social movements and the nationalisation of repertoires, the role of religion in attitudes to nature, in conceptions of the individual, and of the separation between the public and the private.

If one takes culture as the framework out of which rationalities emerge, it provides the context in which actors can justify their actions and attribute meaning to them. So, when I turned to other political parties and to the institution of the annual party conference, I was drawn to reflect on the polysemic nature of symbols, taken from national (and ideological) repertoires of practices but performed and interpreted in a variety of ways across organisations.

I reflect in this section on the concept of culture and how social anthropology has inflected much of my research on social processes and political parties.

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[13] I distinguish here rules (explicit and often formal such as party constitutions) and routines (repeted practices that are often unreflexively reproduced but can be justified as analysed by Giddens (Giddens 1986)).

[14] Ethnography, ethnology and anthropology are sometimes taken as synonymous, however they refer to different levels of analysis and research practice. Ethnography focuses on the description of observed practices and thus offers atemporal snapshots, ethnology grants more attention to history of peoples and their cultures. Claude Levi-Strauss and later Balandier have contributed to popularise the Anglo-Saxon use of the term anthropology in France, that is as a scientific approach to cultural and society of humans. One can consider that there is a progression from ethnography (description) to anthropology (theoretical generalisation) (Copans 2010).

[15] See, for instance, the varieties of conducting an electoral campaign (Faucher 1997, chap. 10)

Reflecting on culture

The notion of political culture is both frequent and controversial in contemporary political science. Since the pioneering work of Almond and Verba (Verba and Almond 1963; Almond and Verba 1989), culture is often taken as a system of attitudes and values, which can be quantified, measured and analysed through attitudinal surveys. Going beyond cross national comparisons of political cultures, Inglehart (1977, 1990) identified generational cultural shifts in values and linked broad social, economic and political change with a 'silent revolution', linking new modes of political engagement to the emergence and generalisation of post materialist values amongst babyboomers. Whilst the study by Almond and Verba offered a view of national political cultures that was both static and homogenous, Inglehart sheds light on cultures as internally diverse and dynamic systems. His approach tells us nothing about how these subsets of the population can/are mobilised in the social movements and parties that they are expected to support or supporting.

These approaches rely on the implicit idea that there is a universal underlying means/ends schema that governs actions and that culture shapes behaviours by defining what people want (Swidler, 1986: 274). In other words they start from the premise that there is a clear distinction between beliefs and actions. When it is considered relevant, culture is reduced to "deeply held" values that shape action because they provide the ends towards which these actions are oriented. Cognitive items can be more made explicit and this allows a survey-based approach and cross-national comparisons (Almond and Verba, 1963; Inglehart, 1990). Here, culture is given an explanatory role in comparative politics whilst numbers and regressions provide the impression that results are "objective", that is consistent with scientific standards. At worst, "the analysis of group values or customs such as those associated with the term culture [is] irrelevant to political inquiry" and "symbolic displays and rhetorical practices are epiphenomenal" (Przeworski quoted by Wedeen, 2002: 714). The same need to assert the scientificity of the discipline leads to forgetting that political science offers interpretations of "facts" and data that have been constructed through implicit theories and views of the world.

Against this backdrop nevertheless, a number of political scholars have argued in favour of interpretative approaches to politics and for the need to reassert and renew the methodological and theoretical underpinnings of qualitative social scientific work (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2006; Bevir and Rhodes 2006a; Bevir and Rhodes 2003). These approaches build from Geertz's concept of culture as symbolic action, emphasising the need for a "thick-description"

of events and social contexts (Geertz, 1993; Scott, 2003; Welch, 1993) and reject the dichotomisation between beliefs and practices. They acknowledge that "practices could not exist if people did not have appropriate beliefs; and beliefs or meanings would not make sense in the absence of the practices to which they refer" (Bevir 2006, 284). They reaffirm the need to pay attention to culture as the background on which actors construct meaning. Embedded in theses "webs of signification", individuals are "reluctant to abandon familiar strategies of action" (Swidler 1986) but at the same time are drawn constantly to reassess their interpretative frameworks in sight of their practical experiences. As they act in situation, they draw from what could be seen as a repertoire of prefabricated chains of actions (rather than individual acts) that can be strategically used according to circumstances. If individuals construct their strategies from limited repertoires, we can understand how they appear at times to "cling to cultural values" (Swidler, 1986: 281).

Culture is not an explanatory factor or an independent variable: it needs to be analysed as a set of resources from which actors draw to interpret the world, decide what action to take and how to justify their decision. If anything, it is not simple or homogeneous and the analyst is left to interpret the meanings actors are making as they go along. In most situations, culture offers the social scientist an array of possible interpretations that are not necessarily exclusive of each other as shown by Hay in his discussion of King Canute getting his feet wet (Hay 2009) or by Schemeil highlighting how negotiators in intercultural relations tend to reach agreements because they behave reasonably in the pursuit of their interests rather than stick to predetermined identities and positions (Schemeil 2010, 125–7). As Rabinow writes so well, "culture is interpretation. The 'facts' of anthropology, the material, which the anthropologist has gone to the field to find, are already themselves interpretations. (…) Facts are made (…) and the facts we interpret are made and remade. Therefore they cannot be collected as if they were rocks, picked up and put into cartons and shipped home to be analyzed in the laboratory" (Rabinow 2007, 150).

Literature on new social movement in the 1990s diverged on both sides of the Atlantic. Whilst many American authors focused on access and use of resources (Zald and McCarthy 1979; McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996), a number of others, such as Melucci (1989), reflected on identity construction or, more recently on emotions (Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta 2001; Traïni and Collectif 2009; Berezin 2001; Goodwin and Jasper 2004). Research also developed on the role of framing, biographical narratives and social networks and sociologists of culture advocated a complex understanding of culture as a toolkit, as an element of strategy and power (H. Johnston and Noakes 2005; Benford and Snow 2000; McAdam 1990; Diani and

Eyerman 1992; Diani and McAdam 2003). Far from treating culture as the *deus ex machina* for explaining political behaviours, they advocated taking into considerations other factors where sociological and political explanations were insufficient. Considering political culture does not necessarily imply a static or culturalist approach: it is indeed more interesting to analyse how groups not only locate themselves within political traditions but also how they invest and interpret these tradition to articulate their own position. Although individuals remain to an extent constrained by a cultural framework that structure and oriente the meanings they construct, there is no need to assume that everybody shares the same interpretations of rules, symbols and situations. Culture is both objective (it exists as a social construction beyond the individuals that share it) and subjective. Following Swidler (1986), I am interested in the ways in which culture can be analysed as repertoires of actions and interpretations that contribute to shape our reality in so far as it provides cues or guidelines for action, particularly at times of uncertainty.

I started to think about the influence of political culture whilst comparing how French and British greens organised and invented new modes of doing politics. Greens shared ideals about interdependence and interconnection as well as a critical approach to institutional politics but they referred to different political traditions, conceptions of the civic society and participation, separation of the public and the private spheres of action. Whilst challenging the national tradition in which they evolved, their criticisms were themselves inscribed within intellectual, political and social histories. There have been, for instance, intense debates about what constitutes "greenness". Activists have proposed a diversity of theories of green action or green value, professed beliefs, and discussed experiences. The rhetorical violence of some of these debates have reflected how ideological disagreements at times were combined with strategic thinking about how to affirm one's leadership position within the organisation or the movement. It is one thing for greens to be reticent about the idea of having a leader and to be therefore keen to preserve collegial directions but it is clear that some groups have been better than others at dealing with conflicts associated with the assertion of personal influence or the constitution of groups of followers. One of the lessons of the comparison of both parties involved drawing attention to the processes of learning from experience and drawing from various traditions in order to either deflect confrontation or foster cooperation. The valorisation of the individual at the heart of the green movement can lead to a diversity of practices, more or less competitive and with nuanced conception of what individualism means. In 1992, the British Greens split over the adoption of a party constitution that created an executive committee with the functional position of party chair. In 2008, they elected a

party leader, conforming to the model of organisation that the media could understand and that would help communicate with the British public. Party rules and roles are explicit and detailed. On the other hand *Les Verts* have, through each of their organisational reforms since 1984, maintained or increased the complexity of their structure (most notably with the creation of Europe Ecologie *Les Verts* in 2010. Thus, they have failed to respond to the demands expressed by members and voters alike. Their electoral success has not translated into the creation of a more effective – if not professional or professionalised – organisation.

One of the intriguing contrasts between the ways greens approached every day practices on either side of the Channel related to their disagreements about food(Faucher 1998). It is easy to mock or take as stereotypical the French obsession with regional cuisine or the lack of interest of the British in the quality of their cooking. As a writer or a speaker, one can always get cheap laughs and exploit the proclivity of one's readers and political science colleagues to look down at a not terribly electorally successful and ideologically unfathomable political party. However, everyday practices and diets are particularly interesting if one wants to analyse diverging ways of interpreting individual behaviours in both countries. Through food, one can explore deeper national cultural associations as well as analyse the repertoires of justification, the emotional and rational arguments that can be mobilised by activists. In the 1990s, the French greens could not – for most of them - be seen to be vegetarians. Abstinence from meat was then a stigma, a sign of danger and extremism. The press warned against "Khmers verts" and academics against fascism[16]. Many of the *Verts* I interviewed ate little meat but almost all insisted that they did eat some, particularly when invited to dinner parties, even though they hardly ever bought any for themselves. They consistently toned down such a choice and focused discussions about everyday practices and food on organic and/or local produce. They talked about *terroir*[17] and sensibility towards the plight of farmed animals was rarely voiced. In the UK on the other hand, mobilisation against live export of animals had made front page news and, following the BSE crisis and various food alerts, vegetarianism was relatively popular at the same period of time throughout the country and the official position of the party (Faucher 1998).

In the political science subfield of political parties, precious little attention is devoted to understanding and analyzing the process of change at the level of members. Research on political cultures usually focuses more broadly on the values shared by supporters and voters

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[16] The argument of course stems in part from the fact that Hitler was a vegetarian (Ferry 1992). See also (Bramoullé 1991; Bramwell 1989)

[17] Bess notes in his astute analysis of French attitudes to technology and nature the central role played by the idealisation of the *paysan* and the connection to a *terroir* (Bess 2003).

than on party members (Céfaï 2001) Such a neglect can be explained in a variety of ways. It is important to highlight here the positivist turn in political science at the international level[18], and how it has affected the study of political parties[19]. Beyond claims to scientificity, one can also underline a conviction that governmental parties and competition for the exercise of state power makes these organisations intrinsically different from those that sociologists analyse. The distinction is particularly striking in the US where in many universities political scientists and sociologists barely interact and see clear boundaries between social movements and political organisations.

The work I carried on party conferences allowed me to analyse the cultures of each organisation[20] but also, and probably more importantly, to reflect on the evolution of these cultures, i.e. not to stop with a snapshot. Too often, culture is taken as one stable, if not constant, component, it is at best expected to change very slowly and usually imperceptibly. *Changing parties* on the other hand looks at the ways in which actors use strategically – or not – the formal and informal rules and norms of their respective organisations in order to change the group and its identity. Sometimes the advantage can be individual, sometimes the purpose is better to prepare the party for its competitive challenges. How do old and complex organisations change? Somehow, the most institutionalised and rule-bound (Labour) changed whilst the older but less institutionalised Conservatives (for whom changing rules was easier) resisted changing their practices[21]. What is the role of the leadership and their teams and how does one resist change? Party cultures can be thought of as repertoires of action that are a hybrid between national political culture (a number of practices derived from the need to abide by constitutional rules) and the local traditions within the party: for instance in Labour the unions and socialist societies, regional traditions to name but a few that together are combined to create Labour's culture. The analogy of a melting pot would not be appropriate here since these traditions are not totally subsumed. They persist outside the party and can be seen on the fringes of the annual conference[22].

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[18] This evolution is particularly striking in the United States, notably at APSA and in a number of top ranked political science journals. Debates however have meant that in the last few years, political theory and qualitative approaches have reaffirmed their position. To a large extent, French political science has remained isolated from these developments and exhibit strong resistence.

[19] The evolution is noticeable in the number of publications in comparative politics using statistical treatment, usually with large N. A browsing of recent issues of *Party Politics* offers an excellent example of this development.

[20] I am talking about the culture of party members rather than the culture of the organisation itself, i.e. of its apparatchiks (see (Bachelot 2006a))

[21] The Conservatives thus exhibit far less flexibility than the UMP, a party that changes is rules and shape according to circumstances (Haegel 2012).

[22] For an analysis of a comparable juxtaposition of cultures see Haegel (2012, Chapter 4).

Comparing conferences is a good way to measure the efforts to differentiate each party (actors are keen to underline how different their own tradition is from their political opponents) as well as the common denominators, the national *terreau* one could almost say that persists beyond the variations in practices. One could almost think of conferences as wines: for the neophyte (the foreigner here) British party conferences are strikingly and oddly similar but the connoisseur (and the British voter is for that matter much more of an amateur than s/he would imagine) can see/taste the difference between a Margaux and an Irancy from afar – or could... The variations in practice are influenced by the group's position on the political spectrum. Unable to reach power, the Greens can cultivate their marginality and focus on identity building. Their eagerness to be elected at last meant that Labour was prepared in the 1990s to take an instrumentalist approach, buy the rhetoric of modernisation and change some of its most sacred symbols. If New Labour was established through the repetition, almost the incantation, that it had changed, the adoption of new rules (whether selection of delegates, deliberative procedures, internal electoral procedures) were insufficient in themselves to change the image of the party or some of the modes of interactions. Both the Conservatives and Labour actually changed formal rules in the late 1990s but only New Labour endeavoured to change the party culture. It worked on speech norms (how one calls each other, dropping *comrade* most famously but amongst other things) as well as on symbols (colours, music, dress codes, rhetorical styles for delegates speeches, buffets on the fringe…) and thus affected a number of the ways of interacting at conference. Because the annual conference is an intense moment of sociability as well as strategising, politicking and manoeuvering where activists (delegates, party workers and advisers, ex-officia of all sorts, politicians and hangers-on) converge, it also provides a unique window into appropriate ways of interacting, i.e. in the 1990s how to "behave appropriately <u>as</u> New Labour". Moreover, in this case, resistance to change and to the imposition of "New Labour" was instrumental in demonstrating that there was indeed change (since there was opposition to it): modernisers strategically used the opposition between old and new and the internal debates as public relation opportunity as well as means to measure support for their vision of the party. In contrast to Labour's determined far reaching cultural strategy for change, the Conservatives approached the adoption of a party constitution as a public relation opportunity but had little intention of changing their ways of doing that had been governed informally quite satisfactorily. The rapid succession of leaders, just like the change in rules, did little to convince the public that the party had changed (and it hadn't!), and little to convince activists that the party was indeed changing and that what was a state was more than a cosmetic move (Faucher-King 2005, 67–8).

Social anthropology

Whilst I had read anthropology almost as a hobby, my encounter with Victor Turner's work on structure and counter-structure was something of a eureka moment (1969). My interest was also spurred by the momentary fame his study on liminality and play sparked in French political science. For instance, the first congress of the AFSP I attended devoted several sessions to "*la métaphore du jeu*". I found in his reflections on rituals and symbols, the roles and playfulness of the social drama and the analysis of the polar opposite of structure and communitas, the new theoretical tools with which to interpret the greens' efforts to foster a democratic group that would be bound by the spontaneous commitment of individuals identifying with a greater whole. Anthropology helps us put in perspective the opposition between us 'moderns' and our 'others', to consider how decision making is linked to representations and symbolic practices and thus to relativise power (Schemeil 2006). Indeed we are thus brought to reflect on how power is conditional, controlled, constructed, negotiated. Anthropology underlines the alterity of social moments, the transitions from one state to another and the conversion of resources as well as the rituals that mark such transitions.

Turner's polarity of structure/communitas allows us to contextualise the greens' aspirations to a society of voluntary simplicity, spontaneity and equality. It stresses their ambivalence towards rules and rituals. The former are seen as a way to protect democracy but there is also an acceptance of deviance, the affirmation of individuality as well as a possibility to abstain from applying a decision (in *Les Verts*). The latter are rejected as artificial and superficial but observations of their meetings reveal a tendency to ritualise many of the interactions. Thinking about the communitas as a social form is useful to put in perspective the greens' attitudes to self-expression, individuality, but also to asceticism and identification with the excluded, the downtrodden and the threatened. There is no necessary ideological relationship between a concern for environmental protection and social "downshifting" (Faucher 1999a, chap. 5). The polarity also invited me to reflect on the greens' complex relationships with rules and thus proved more fruitful than the grid-group framework put forward by Mary Douglas and Aaron Wildavsky's "Culture Theory"[23]. Turner argues that that there is a constant movement between the two poles: as rules are brought in to try and institutionalise the effervescence of the communitas it contributes to betray the very ideals that animated the

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[23] See Douglas and Wildavsky (1992). I appreciated Culture theory's heuristic potential, but I also found the categories too rigid and restrictive as well as unnecessarily normative. Food for thought on group boundaries and attitudes to rules, but I only explored it in an article focusing on approaches to internal democracy (Faucher 1999b).

participants of the communitas (Turner 1969). Structure lasts but it needs the appeal of the communitas to renew commitment, drive and the "fall" from the "highs" of the communitas means that there are needs for moments of inversion, challenging if only for a few hours or days of celebration the rules, boundaries, hierarchies and bureaucracies that characterise structure as a social formation. Carnivals – and, to an extent, annual conferences – offer such opportunities for inversion of status (Coulon 1988, 54; Faucher-King 2005, 54).

The cultural exoticism that the anthropological *détour* allows means that I did not take for granted institutions and practices such as the conference season: neither their role in the British political system, nor their importance for the parties themselves was obvious to me. I not only tried to maintain the candid eye of the outsider but also tried to exoticise familiar institutions and forms of political participation. We take them for granted whilst they reveal interestingly diverging approaches to the political. Electoral rituals are striking for that matter, whether one pauses on campaigning (the British habit of putting a poster in their window or canvassing are deeply challenging to the French (Faucher 1999a, 289), who have internalised the secrecy of the vote and the need to keep their views private in a strange extension of laïcité[24]) or on the *isoloir*[25] and the ballot papers themselves (Bon 1991; Déloye 2008; Déloye and Romanelli 1998; Garrigou 1992). Although few French citizens actually do it, it is possible for every registered voter to take part in the counting of the votes, whilst public officers do it behind closed doors in the UK. There are no acceptance speeches in France… If political behaviours are sometimes subjected to ethnographic enquiry ((Treille 2000; Bachelot 2011; Bachelot 2008), anthropological frameworks are far less frequently applied or are limited to the margins of the system: marginal parties and organisations (Kertzer 1996; Faucher 1999a), the rituals and pomp of specific and remote institutions (Abélès 2001; Crewe 2005; Crewe and Muller 2006; Déloye 2008; Fleurdorge 2001).

The conference season is *par excellence* a moment "betwix and between » (Turner 1970), a time of transition noticeable in the media's coverage of the "silly season" (the summer) and the reopening of Parliament. The conference season is a British political ritual that also plays an important role in each individual party: hierarchies are affirmed as well as solidarities. Celebrations and full blown shows, conferences are supposed to impress, to demonstrate the authority of leaders, to instruct activists and viewers about the stakes of the year ahead, the rules of game and the players. They occasionally produce open crises and social dramas

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[24] Note that the legislation on *laïcité* and the banning of ostentatious signs in schools applies to religions as well as political symbols.
[25] The *isoloir* or voting booth totally closed by curtains was introduced to ensure the privacy and secret of the vote (Garrigou 1992).

(Turner 1982) that they also help to resolve: thus they recreate social order, end with the demonstration of the group's unity[26]. Conferences construct party identities and contribute to create specific party subcultures[27]. Their evolution over the years reflects not only the transformations of British society: their decline as a major event of decision making and televisual drama parallels the weakening of political parties and, to an extent, of Parliament itself. The comparison with French congresses allowed me to analyse the British political dimension in rituals that could otherwise pass as idiosyncratic manifestation of political ideologies and tribal politics.

Another British social anthropologist influenced my perspective on the greens and what appeared to be their reverential though critical approach to political power. Douglas's focus on purity and danger (2002), helped me think through the polarity of sacred and profane and therefore to integrate ambiguous and contradictory attitudes and behaviours towards power and politics. According to Mary Douglas, there are no social relationships that do not entail symbolic acts. She suggests that one takes rituals as the basis for such a language. In a classic anthropological perspective, rituals are supposed to be intrinsically linked to myths, as if the former derived from the latter and expressed them in practice. Rituals would then somehow help the anthropologist explore the deeply embedded values and beliefs of a society or a group. As I was influenced by a classic approach to rituals, this is also how I initially reflected on them. Following this approach, the democratic rituals staged by greens invite an interpretation of power as sacred and therefore potentially dangerous and thus taboo. In this approach, the meaning of rituals is not always obvious and can be elucidated by the cunning observer who can extricate values and norms held by the members of the group. Practices reveal the deep-seated values that are expected to frame worldviews and act as a guide to action. I considered that Greens' democratic rituals were a symptom of their attitudes to politics: this was useful in so far as the greens were also at the time learning to deal with the exercise of power at the local level: some of them had just been elected to local councils; they were learning to negotiate and compromise. Whilst they claimed they aspired to reach decisions by consensus, they were confronted with their fear of power as corrupting and the challenges of preserving their radicalism; they were composing with rules just as well as they were organising factions and planning strategies to gain or maintain control within their own

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[26] Interesting examples include the congresses of the parti socialiste, culminating with the synthesis. The importance of this outcome was demonstrated with the Rennes congress in 1990. British conferences are often occasions to plot or unfold plots (for instance against the leader with Iain Duncan Smith and Gordon Brown).

[27] Following Haegel's analysis (2012), it appears that the UMP congress fails to do so as very little opportunity is provided for the mixing of preexisting social groups and cultures and the emergence of a distinctive party style of interaction.

party. Thus, the ritualisation of democracy was all the more important to them. Such a staging of democracy could be found, in different guises at conferences of the Liberal Democrats, Labour and the *Parti socialiste*. If I had followed my initial approach, I would have sought to explore myths of collective decision-making in each party.

Like many social anthropologist I became fascinated by ritual practices (Copans 2010, 87) and approaches disconnecting their analyses from a search for embedded meanings, collective representations – and increasingly from religion (Grimes 1990; King 1999). My foray into anthropological approaches led me from an analysis of ritual as social drama (Turner), key to variability in social forms (Leach), conflict (Gluckman) and eventually Catherine Bell's ritual theory (Bell 1993; Bell 1998). Along contemporary anthropologists, she argues that one takes ritual practices as performances and focus on how the staging and directing of the ritual contributes to naturalise and legitimise procedures and power relations. The meaning of rituals does not lay so much in the symbols that are mobilised but in the very manipulation of these symbols by actors. In this sense, ritualisation should not be taken as referring to a sacred dimension and political ritual as a testament to the sacredness of power. Instead, they invite us to think about how the authority of ritual can confer to a practice the legitimacy of tradition. I moved to an approach of rituals and ritualisation as performance and practice, and about their strategic uses by actors/organisers within conferences and the conference system. This means exploring and taking into account their interpretations in context rather than rituals as immune to change and as revealing deep meanings/values that are not necessarily clear for participants/practitioners.

Beyond anthropologists, a number of political sociologists have been interested in the analogy of the performance as a way to understand and analyse social interactions and in particular contention and social movements (Tilly 2008). If one takes rituals as "performances" then one needs to worry less about what they mean and more about what they do (Polletta and Jasper 2001; Jasper 2005). Rituals mobilise cognitive, affective and physical dimensions that contribute to the internalisation of practices as self evident, natural. Thus, party conference rituals (and in particular plenary debates and the leader's speech) provide great opportunity to create at least the appearance of consensus and to put forward a particular definition of the state of the party. It is not necessary for participants to agree on the content of the consensus: they only need to even temporarily believe in its existence. More than speeches, rituals contribute to create a sense of solidarity, a sense of the existence of the community and its identity. Their impact on participants is emotional and/or physical (through singing for instance) rather than solely cognitive. As Erving Goffman writes, identity is the outcome of

the spectacle, not its cause (Goffman 1979, 238). Rituals can change the mood with which an event is experienced, it can foster a feeling of communion with the group – as do, to various extent, the minute of silence that marks the beginning of Green party meetings or the singing that close conferences or the standing ovations that are customary for party leaders. Rituals are more than representations: they help map power relationships. They are used strategically by actors to try and comfort, establish or challenge positions and perceptions. For that matter, they are more than a means to legitimise or express superiority and domination as they contribute to impress them (without however guarantee of success). Every enactment updates its precedents: it reproduces what has "always" been but actualises it. The performance of a ritual is never a perfect reproduction of an abstract and immutable form[28]. In fact, every performance offers opportunities for innovation. Rituals are constantly interpreted: the performance reproduces and adapts at the same time past ways of behaving.

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In this first chapter, I have retraced my steps, trying to unravel some of the early influences on the research questions, theoretical framing and methodological choices. In the next chapters, I engage in a discussion of some of my main findings and contributions to social research.

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[28] Richard Dirks recalls how he was asked to provide advice on how to conduct a relatively rare ritual he had come to witness. As it was his second time, he was more experienced than most participants (Dirks 1992).

Chapter 2

Making sense of party activism "old" and "new"

My interest in political ecology and green movements stemmed less from questions about the emergence of environmental issues on the political agenda and electoral scene than from the inability of political parties to respond to participatory demands articulated by new social movements (Lawson and Merkl 1988; R. J. Dalton and Kuechler 1990; Scott 1991; Muller-Rommel and Pridham 1990)[29]. These newly founded parties challenged the existing balance in a context of contestation of the bureaucratisation of dominant parties that translated into a rising levels of abstention as well as electoral rivals. Whilst in France the extreme-right entered the National Assembly in 1986, *Les Verts* got their first elected representatives in numbers in 1989 at the city and European elections. This was not an isolated phenomenon as Die Grünen had held seats since 1983 in the Bundestag. On the other hand, the British had the oldest European green party and kept campaigning despite little prospect of electoral gain. The scientific literature explored emerging demands for participation that translated in particular into alternative organisations that claimed they were inventing new ways of doing politics (Kitschelt 1989a; Kitschelt 1990; Poguntke 1993). Some of these studies focus on postmaterialist values (Inglehart 1989; Cotgrove 1982; Betz 1990), identity construction and ideology (McCulloch 1988; Rohrschneider 1988; Eyerman and Jamison 1991), framing, alternative forms of mobilisation (Nedelmann 1987; Edmondson 1997). Another trend looks at the paradox of collective action (Olson 1971; Opp 1986) and mobilisation processes (how do issues such as the environment and democratic participation mobilise (Klandermans 1984; Klandermans 1997)), resource mobilisation (what are the incentives ands organisations that can be fostered (Zald and McCarthy 1979; McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996; Morris 1992)), the sociology of green support (who votes and joins and to what extent is it a new middle class (Boy 1981; Boy and Mayer 1990; Kitschelt 1988; Rüdig, Franklin, and Bennie 1996; Cotgrove and Duff 2003; Muller-Rommel and Pridham 1990)), political opportunities structures (institutional factors that facilitate or hinder success of organisations and can therefore create explain strategic choices (Jenkins and Klandermans 1995; Koopmans 1999; Tilly 2008)) .

My initial project focuses on the paradox of collective action and seeks to evaluate the motives of green activists in Aix. The choice of Aix turned out to be particularly interesting

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[29] Ignazi has analysed how the emergence of the extreme right can be compared and contrasted with what is usually considered as "new social movements" (i.e. ranking from environmentalism to feminism, pacifism, etc) (Ignazi 1992).

not only because the group had two elected representatives in 1989, including one *adjoint au maire*, but also because it was, in the early 1990s a dynamic and relatively effective local group. The idea was to explore on the ground the types of incentives, collective as well as selective, that can contribute to explain the emergence and likely success/persistence of *Les Verts* in Aix and beyond. It starts from Olson's paradox (1971), and the analysis of Gaxie (1977) and sets out to test hypothesis about the rational instrumentality of individual actors. Observation proves a much better tool to explore the diversity of costs of all sorts from membership fees to time and energy devoted to campaigning and organising, to psychological/physical costs of electoral defeat and burn outs. Similarly, rewards proved diverse (Faucher 1992; Faucher 1997).

Fieldwork carried out during the electoral campaigns of 1992 (regional) and 1993 (legislative)[30], underlined the abnegation of some of the activists, involved beyond the call of duty. *Les Verts* activists in Aix did not appear to be rational in an instrumental perspective (Faucher 1992): they worked tirelessly for little or no obvious reward. Neither of the two councillors had hoped or wished to win and the group had actually coalesced to support them in their new official position. One long term unemployed found a part time contract for a year[31]. The electoral success of the 1989 city election list brought a lot of work – attending meetings at the group's office but also following closely city council decisions – the feeling of being endowed with huge responsibilities in relation to their fellow citizens, to the transformation of local political practices, to the future of humanity. Activists were also actively and intensely discussing political ecology, working out what it meant to be green and arguing over the best strategy to promote ecological thinking into policy-making and society. Interviews about their individual trajectory revealed the complex articulation between their personal history, their worldviews, their practices and the role of their fellow activists in shaping all of these. It also appeared that the question of alternative ways of doing politics was crucial for most of them, much more important in many ways than environmental or ecological concerns (which could be pursued through NGOs). At the same time, what participative democracy meant was disputed and the stake of ruthless internal battles within the local group and, more acutely still, at the departmental and regional level. Electoral

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[30] Much more so than for the 1994 (European) and 1995 (presidential) elections.
[31] Twenty years later, Les Verts have been in and out of local coalitions in Aix and there has been a big turnover. One of the two city councillors has been elected to the Regional Council and the other one had left politics – though he worked in the environmental sector. Most of the rank and file of the time had moved on and were no longer members, even if they occasionnally gave a hand or came to an event. The local party group remained fractured by factional and personal disputes, the most recent one involving an appeal to the national party and the exclusion of several members.

success also triggered (sometimes legitimate) anxieties about authenticity and entryism (Faucher 1997, 286n24).

Different institutional and political contexts (Faucher 1999a, 70–74; Kitschelt 1986; Kitschelt 1988; Rootes 1997; Jenkins and Klandermans 1995; Van Der Heijden 2006; Koopmans 1999) shape perceptions of opportunities and constraints, restricts political options and the prospect of political alliances, electoral prospects. The electoral system for instance is a major factor in explaining the "rationality" of the creation of an autonomous political party. Why were the British Greens the first ones in Europe to create a political party when the political system was so hostile to such a route for a small, new group? Why would individuals dedicated to politics and to a specific view of how it should be choose to pursue a political career in an organisation unlikely to provide much support? When I first interviewed Caroline Lucas in 1993 a few weeks after her election as county councillor[32], she asserted her trust in the party against a number of self-labelled "Realists", who had followed Sara Parkin and resigned from the party. The secessionists believed that the Green party was unwilling to accept the organisational changes that would allow it to eventually be integrated within the political system. They believed the Greens needed to adapt their party along the models of their rivals and thus elect a leader with decisive influence over strategy and policy. Indeed, in contrast with the Realists' positions, many party members were arguing for a purely localised or protest-oriented focus and some were willing to abandon the electoral route[33]. Twenty years later, the party has increased its representation with Members of Parliament, of the Scottish Parliament, of the European Parliament, of the London Assembly and in many local government councils. Since 2008, it also elects a party Leader.

With the same criticism of how bureaucratic and undemocratic their opponents were, it was striking how *Les Verts* and the Green party chose rules, forms, that were consistent with their national context: whether the type of proportional representation (with implication on conceptions of representation, role and strength of factions/*sensibilités*, which lose their ideological core to be mostly about *coteries*), or the purpose and form of the national conference/general assembly/congress.

This chapter explores successively different approaches to mobilisation and activism. It first takes stock of the development of surveys of party members and how this method has

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[32] Caroline Lucas was the first green elected at county (district) level in 1993. She became one of the first two green MEP in 1998, the first party leader in 2008 and then the first MP in 2010. In the early days, green elected representatives seemed to approach their new status with sacerdotal reverence (Faucher 1997, 557–60).
[33] The Oxford greens, however, remained committed to an electoral strategy involving intensive campaigning on the ground (canvassing round the year and candidates in every city ward). Their efforts over the years allowed them to gain a pivotal role in the City council.

benefited from technological developments and the creation by parties of national membership lists from the 1980s. The 1990s were particularly fruitful and comparative data was generated for the first time in a concerted way. In order to answer puzzles about mobilisation, it then broadens the lens to include contributions of the sociology of social movements. This makes it possible to reflect on the dialectical processes of identity construction, such as I/We tensions and the role of social interactions in shaping worldviews and lifestyle choices. Finally, it questions the boundaries of the public and the private through an analysis of the greens' search for consistency.

Surveying the field: party organisations and party members

Since the 1950s, the subfield of political parties research has produced a number of models about party organisations, mapping the evolution from *parti de cadres* through a cartel party via a variety of mass party, electoral professional party, catch all party etc (Duverger 1992; Panebianco 1988; Kirchheimer 1966; Katz and Mair 1994; Katz and Mair 1992). Besides large N studies, comparative work on parties either juxtapose country cases (Katz and Mair 1994; R. J. Dalton and Wattenberg 2002; Lawson 1980; Lawson and Merkl 1988; Ignazi and Ysmal 1998; P. Webb, Farrell, and Holliday 2002; Farrell, Holliday, and Webb 2004) or juxtapose parties (McKenzie 1964; Judge 1999; Ingle 2008; P. D. Webb 2000; Haegel 2007; Lefebvre et al. 2009; Delwit, Pilet, and Haute 2011). Smaller organisations are often ignored whilst most attention is devoted to significant or "relevant" organisations. A few works focus exclusively on small parties or on small families (Frankland, Lucardie, and Rihoux 2008; Betz and Immerfall 1998; Muller-Rommel and Pridham 1990). Very few books encompass parties across the political spectrum and fewer still take a diachronic perspective to reflect on organisational convergence and the many factors that contribute to explain it (Seiler 2003). There are on the other hand a growing body of research using datasets to compare convergence on manifestos, candidate selection procedures, responsiveness to public opinion and/or interest groups, access and use of resources, interactions with institutions, etc. Since 1995, the journal *Party Politics* has become the reference in the field. I explore in *Changing parties* how Labour and the Conservatives have innovated, keeping an eye on their competitors (the Liberal Democrats and the Greens) and thus incessantly invoking democracy and participation.

Most works on party organisations have paid scant attention to what is meant to members on the ground. This is often considered as a rather less interesting and political dimension compared to the party in public office or the party in central office (Schonfeld 1976). Of

course any work on the organisation at the level of the party member implied access to the field and it is not until quite late that reliable data on party membership at the aggregate level has become available. Until the 1980s at best, research had to rely on figures provided by a central organisation, which was in some cases, itself very unclear about who was a member or not. Indeed, membership management was controlled at the local level and officers would only pass on upwards the information that was in their advantage. The most striking example being probably the British Conservatives who claimed millions of members, but for whom membership involved in some cases no fee (when membership was through a Conservative social club for instance), no registration of any form. As the General Secretary of the National Union of Conservatives Associations told me when I interviewed him in 1996, a local party chairman may see it as advantageous to his own political career in the party to claim that the local membership is growing at 10% per year and provided his local party could pay the national contribution equivalent to whichever membership level, noone would query his figures.

So long as there was no national membership list, there could only be surveys of party delegates to the national party congress or questionnaires distributed with the party newsletter. A large international project on middle level elite was conducted at the turn of the 1980s (Reif, Cayrol, and Niedermayer 1980)[34]. It highlighted the importance of access to membership data if one was to get any grasp of the evolution of political parties on the ground, to assess their claims to mass membership, measure their popularity and penetration of society. Only in the 1980-90s, did parties start to centralise their membership lists, making national studies a more plausible endeavour. If studies of party organisations had been common in particular in France up to the 1970s (G. E. Lavau 1953; Rimbert 1955; G. Lavau 1969; Charlot 1971; Lagroye et al. 1976; Gaxie 1977; Duverger 1992), interest had waned by the late 1980s and shifted to movements and associations (Pierre Bréchon 2005, 13).

One key obstacle was access, which restricted the scope and ambition of any survey. More importantly from my point of view, what existed mostly focused on socio-demographic and attitudinal characteristics (Lagroye et al. 1976; Rey and Subileau 1991; Bennahmias and Roche 1992), telling us very little about what it meant to be a party member. However, the availability of data and the opening up of access meant that extensive surveys with relatively good returns were conducted in the early 1990s in the UK (Rüdig, Bennie, and Franklin 1991; Seyd and Whiteley 1992; Whiteley, Seyd, and Richardson 1994; McCulloch 1990). Seyd and

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[34] This remains a solution in many cases, in particular in France (Bargel and Petitfils 2009). I conducted with Haegel and Sauger a survey of participants to the 2004 UMP congress (Haegel, Faucher, and Sauger 2005).

Whiteley's works set a new trend in party research and brought precious new information on membership. They spearheaded a number of similar studies in Canada, Belgium, the Netherlands or Norway[35]. Until these coordinated studies, crossnational comparisons presented well known difficulties and particularly frustrating challenges. Disparate datasets simply provided different information or scales and one could only infer trends and generalisation. The more recent surveys, particularly those designed after the pioneering work of Seyd and Whiteley included information about recruitment networks, practices and motivations or focused on testing explanatory models for membership and participation (Whiteley and Seyd 2002), thereby highlighting the concomitance between the decline of social norms as motives for joining/recruiting (Seyd and Whiteley 1992, 203) and the decline of communities that provided the background for mobilisation.

Membership surveys tell us who the members are, how they differ from one party to another and from the majority of voters, who does not join. Indeed, there are traits that tend to be shared by greens and distinguish them from the rest of the population but at the same time, these labels provide very limited indications about the ways in which individuals relate to social groups or about the effect of belonging on political action. We know for instance that green party supporters and members tend to be graduates working in the "non productive" sector and quite often in the public sector (Cotgrove and Duff 2003). According to a survey conducted in 2002, 86% of *Les Verts* had a university degree in 2002 (26% in the general population) and 51%worked in the public sector (29% for the general population) (Boy, Rey, and Subileau 2003). Such circumstances were at the time often linked to what the "post-materialist values" that also characterize greens supporters (Inglehart 1989; Cotgrove 1982)[36]. Despite their ideological proximity, post-materialists never joined green parties en-masse, nor necessarily voted for them (Rüdig, Franklin, and Lynn 1993). There appears to be a drop in post-materialist values in some green parties (particular stark in Belgium) (Rüdig 2009, fig. Table 13) although *Verts* members remain clearly more post-materialists than both the public and their electorate (Boy 2009, fig. Table 3). Greens profess a greater lack of religious affiliation than the general population (65% declare no religious affiliation versus 49% of the public and 78% of their supporters (Boy 2009)). Green parties have "aged" over the years (Bennie 2004). Although they profess to embrace the feminist cause, they remain dominated

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[35] See for instance the spécial issue of Party politics, edited by Seyd and Whiteley and dedicated to the publication of some of the membership surveys that they contributed to coordinate, volume 10, issue 4, 2004 (Seyd and Whiteley 2004; Saglie and Heidar 2004; Pedersen et al. 2004; Cross and Young 2004).

[36] See also (Inglehart 1989; Cotgrove 1982; Bennahmias and Roche 1992; Rüdig, Bennie, and Franklin 1991).

by men[37]. Similarly studies of the comparison on party members have reminded us of how parties have traditionally tended to recruit in specific social groups.

Beyond socio-demographic and attitudinal data, membership surveys provide raw information about how many members take part in leafleting or canvassing, who attends meetings or stuffs envelopes. They bring into light factors linked to joining and leaving (Bennie 2004), such as collective and selective incentives that help or hinder participation. In the case of green parties, surveys have looked into the changes that a short stint in power might have had on the membership (Boy 2009; Rüdig 2009; Benoit Rihoux and Rüdig 2006; Frankland, Lucardie, and Rihoux 2008). Thus, in the early 1990s[38], the British greens appeared far less active than *Les Verts*, who sustained into the following decade high levels of membership of environmental association or of trade union and levels of participation in public demonstration well above the rest of the French public (Boy 2009, Table 2). About 60% of members do not take part in any activity. In 1990, 6% spent more than 2 weekly hours on party matters and 1,5% more than 20 hours (Rüdig, Bennie, and Franklin 1991, 40–43). Surveys of mainstream parties conducted in the 1990s show that 50% of Labour members spent no time on party activities but that 20% of French Socialist and British Labour members devoted about 5 hours a week (Seyd and Whiteley 1992, 88; Rey and Subileau 1991, 183). The succession of surveys that came out in the 1990s taught us much about the socio-demographic differences between parties, the gender balance in each organisation, whether members self described as religiously affiliated or not or their levels of education.

However exciting the findings of these new membership surveys, I had already started working on the ground with greens in Aix and thought the results left many questions unanswered and unanswerable. Even when studies gave us great details about the number of hours devoted to voluntary work or meeting attendance, whether people joined the party of their parents or were chaperoned by a friend, they could not tell us what people attending meetings did there. Did they talk, interact, sit shyly at the back? How effective were interactions between members in changing attitudes, informing about party programmes? What membership surveys (Bennahmias and Roche 1992; Rüdig, Bennie, and Franklin 1991) told us about the greens could not provide any explanation for subtle differences: in the nature of academic degrees (science in France vs liberal arts in the UK) or in political and everyday practices. Scholars who ponder about the decline of membership or the spiral of

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[37] 32% of Les Verts were women in 2002 but 27% in 1989 (Boy 2009, 5).
[38] 9% declared they were not doing anything whilst 50% spent 1 to 10 hours a week and 12,5% over 10 hours a week (Bennahmias and Roche 1992, 134). The French survey was conducted via the party newsletter than by mail and the method may have selected activists whilst the British mail survey covered the entire membership.

demobilisation (Whiteley and Seyd 2002) usually leave unexplored the meaning party activist attach to their involvement and the ways in which interactions and experience shape understandings and therefore attitudes and modes of action. True, this is difficult to measure (not to say impossible). It is not enough to compare the relative representation of women (for instance) in the membership, or at elected position, to understand how a green commitment to parity translates into seats or women-friendly practices or how a commitment to participative democracy can translate into practices that may inhibit participation.

Surveys can underline the heterogeneity of values (Boy, Rey, and Subileau 2003, 124–5) or attitudes towards the leadership and intra party decision making[39] but they also provide crude measures of members' attitudes and motives. If the questionnaires can reveal "four reasons to belong to PS" (Boy, Rey, and Subileau 2003, 132), the extent to which the question meant something for members before being asked is at best unclear. Following from the heuristic implications that "people do not merely reveal pre-existing attitudes on surveys; to some considerable extent, people are using the questionnaire to decide what their "attitudes" are" (Zaller and Feldman 1992, 582), we need to consider how individuals talk about their motives.

Since surveys tell us little about what it means for members to belong to a political party or about the influence interactions with other members have on their political worldviews it is fruitful to complement survey questionnaires with what interviewees say about themselves and about being a party member outside of the categories provided by questionnaires. We need however pay attention to the fact that interview settings are a setting and therefore bear an influence on the discourses that are produced (Eliasoph and Lichterman 2003, 743; Knorr-Cetina and Cicourel 1981). Because it is difficult to take the implications into account, it is tempting to hold the setting as constant but my experience of interviewing green activists tends to support the hypothesis that narratives of the self-as-an-activist are an *ad hoc* production in which the setting influences the cultural vocabularies/narratives selected. Stories collected in the bar of a conference venue, in the office attributed for an elected position and those obtained on the home sofa all differ in what interviewees are comfortable to talk about. At home, French greens open up a little about their interest in homeopathy, yoga, fasting and a dislike for meat[40]. In Oxford, there were very few discussions about

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[39] For instance Sey and Whiteley showed that there was little evidence to support the leadership's fear of activists' extremism (Seyd and Whiteley 1992, 210–5). Later studies focused on attitudes to party reforms and the evolution towards a more plebiscitory organisation (Seyd and Whiteley 2002).

[40] One even offered a demonstration with his pendulum of the effect of Cernobyl and microwave ovens on herbs and plants.

lifestyles and a number of members considered that « as long as it's just me living a green lifestyle then it'll always be a bit of a joke».

My first steps in the field of political party research took place in reaction to the limitations of studies that privileged the socio-demographic traits of members, their political socialisation (Lagroye et al. 1976; Subileau 1981; Subileau and Platone 1976) and to those of a more organisationally focused, institutionalist one (P. Avril 1990; Borella 1990; Seiler 1986; Seiler 2000; Offerlé 1997; P. Bréchon 1999; Charlot 1971; Duverger 1992; Mény 1991; Platone 1996; Ysmal 1998). I took them at the time when socio-historical research and a rediscovery of the rootedness of parties in their local context was leading to the publication of fascinating works on the communist party (Hastings 1991; Pudal 1989). These works were renewing the study of party organisations at a time when most attention was drawn to new social and political movements. From the 1990s, the focus of much party research in France contrasted with international preoccupations for large cross national comparisons and quantitative approaches[41] in favour of a preoccupation for the embedded-ness of parties in local/regional networks (Lefebvre and Sawicki 2006; Sawicki 1997), strategies of actors (Massart on UDF) and how parties "really work" (Haegel 2007; Combes 2011; Aït-Aoudia, Bachelot, and Bargel 2010). The detailed knowledge that is thus developed makes it possible to use experts' surveys and to compile detailed information (Gauja 2010; Hooghe et al. 2010). However, what these monographs get in depth though, they lose in breadth: they offer thick description and an incredible amount of contextualise and nuanced information about a single organisation, sometimes about very localised practices. On the other hand, they sometimes voluntarily fail to engage with international work on political parties, creating isolation that is not so much a testimony of the exceptionalism of French parties as one of the peculiarities of French political science. Thus, they potentially go from one extreme to the other: they shy away from ambitious theoretical questions and prefer empiricism and grounded-ness (Sawicki and Siméant 2009).

Membership surveys leave a lot of unanswered questions. So do, to my eyes, localised, ethnographic and socio-historical monographs. At several points in my career, I considered mixing methods, either through use of existing survey data (collected by Roche and Rüdig for instance) or, in the case of the conference project, through a survey of delegates and participants. For this purpose I coordinated, as first investigator, two grant applications with the ESRC, in collaboration with Paul Whiteley on the conference system (1998) and in

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[41] Gauja notes the apologetic tone with which qualitative research in Noel's methodological chapter of the Oxford Handbook of American Parties and Pressure Groups (Gauja 2010, 8; Noel).

collaboration with Paul Whiteley and Eric Shaw on conference delegates in the three major parties (1999). Failure to obtain the adequate funding for postal surveys of conference delegates and participants meant that I focused on a less expensive but more time consuming research design, involving repeated observation of party conferences between 1995 and 2002 as well as interviews with key actors (party staff at the national and regional level such as conference organisers and party apparatchiks but also MPs, trade union workers and as well as delegates/representatives, journalists and lobbyists).

Indeed, the type of research I have conducted involves data collection over several years and do not lend themselves to quick turn around publications. This is a serious issue for the future of social science research as a large share of the funding available tends to go to project designs requiring heavy equipment or investment for data collection, international or interdisciplinary collaboration and susceptible to yield deliverables, outputs and intermediary reports[42]. It also raises the question of the sustainability of research involving long periods in the field: the structure of academic careers in political science has tended to favour the publication of journal articles. It is not clear whether similar work can be produced by teams of researchers[43] or whether it is compatible with different stages in the private lives of researchers.

Exploring the process of political engagement

In this section, I go back to the work I conducted with green activists to shed light on the processes of political mobilisation. Drawing from sociological approaches, I underline how individuals' narratives of themselves and their "career" are socially constructed and how their behaviours as well as worldviews change through social interactions. Finally, I consider how the concept of group style can help us understand what frames interactions and the extent to which it facilitates or hampers change.

The puzzle of mobilisation

People who explain or justify how they act choose specific repertoires, which are validated by the groups with which they identify or with whom they wish to identify (Wuthnow 1993). There is a multiplicity of possible justifications and individuals unconsciously sift through the repertoires available to them; they tailor the stories to the frames (Benford and Snow 2000; H.

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[42] There are a number of complicated issues related to the storage and sharing of qualitative data. As discussed above there are ethical issues relating to privacy, anonymity as well as with the extent to which the data collected can usefully be revisited by other researchers. The newly funded DIME-SHS (Données, Infrastructures, Méthodes d'Enquêtes en Sciences Humaines et Sociales) includes an exploratory and experimental division focusing on qualitative data and directed by Sophie Duchesne. It is funded as a grand project by the government as part of Équipex 2010 «investissements d'avenir».

[43] There are a few examples of such ambitious projects, see for instance the work of Braconnier and Dormagen's work on voting practices in a housing estate (Braconnier and Dormagen 2007).

Johnston and Noakes 2005) they share with their interlocutors. The existence of a shared language is crucial for the communication and articulation of motives (Wuthnow 1993). Justifications and rationalisation may be "constructed" on the spot, but they use codes that are not randomly selected (Della Porta 1992, 181) but are drawn from narratives that "make sense". Individuals pick a language - and a canvass of arguments - in relation to others and in the process they also assert group belonging (Faucher-King 2010)[44]. These efforts reveal the tension in our social identities: choosing a language to talk about one's experience is a way of showing acceptance of a cultural heritage (Céfaï and Lichterman 2008; Fillieule 2001, 205). It tells others what values we cherish and helps the narrator label and make sense of his/her behaviour. Individuals do not articulate tales of conversion or sudden awareness out of their blank imagination. They pick a language and a canvass of arguments in relation to others and in order to assert group belonging. These repertoires arise as a consequence of interactions and are co-constructed from the experiences and expectations of participants (i.e. from the collective representations and practices that individuals bring from the outside). The languages of political participation have become increasingly dominated by references to self-interest and utilitarianism even when people talk about "altruistic" involvement in charities or civic association (Wuthnow 1993) to the extent that any deviation from this norm is now perceived as hypocritical or "irrational". The "language of motives" may ultimately convince actors that they do, or should, think in terms of their own self-interest (Eliasoph 1998, 253f)[45]. Greens' tales[46] of joining tend to fall into 2 main categories: some admit to a moment of awakening when they understood what they had not fully grasped before (Faucher 1997, 110; Klandermans 1992, 81–82; Snow and Machalek 1984); others claim they have always been green and therefore membership of the party came as a natural move once they discovered its existence (Faucher 1997, 125–132). When they fail to identify the key moment, they point to a succession of events when they "connected the dots". For the first group, there was a moment of "conversion", or rather "alternation" (Berger 1991, 65). They remember a book or a lecture that changed their perceptions of the world and led them to search for like-minded people. For the majority, being green provides the continuity in their narrative of the self: childhood memories, inherited values and affinity with nature lead to lifestyle choices. "When

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[44] Bizeul conducted a similar project within the Front National (2008).

[45] However, when activists are mostly focused on their own feelings, the expression of any motive becomes self-referential and the only common ground for deliberation implies assuming that everyone feels the same. This is a paradox as the focus on the individual is, in part at least, grounded on the belief that individuals are "unique" (and thus presumably all different) (Seligman et al. 2008, 133–4).

[46] The use of life stories can be problematic as they are the ad hoc production of a linear narrative in the peculiar context of the interview.

one looks back, one realises that there must have always been something within. I have always been green, without even knowing it", claims one, "I've always been green, except that the word did not exist", considers another. There is no moment of awakening but a path of discovery, which did not stop with party membership. Indeed, they usually underline how their worldviews have firmed up as they have engaged in political discussions and learnt more about the state of the planet (Faucher 1997, 123–136). We act out routines without engaging reflexively until prompted (by the interviewer, for instance). It is usually easy for us provide a discursive rationale that uses codes that make sense to the group we are identifying with – and sometimes to the interviewer (Giddens 1991; Dubar 1998).

One should not be surprised: people join an organisation based on imperfect information (Rothenberg 1988; Faucher 1999a, 102–6), through some kind of "experiential search" (Morales 2009, 161)[47] or because someone asked (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Klandermans 1997, 67; Faucher 1999a, 91–98). More generally speaking, the sociology of mobilisation has shown how activism should be read as an "individual and dynamic social activity" (Fillieule 2001, 200), a process or even a career rather than a moment (Agrikoliansky 2001; Siméant 2001; Ollitrault 2001) and the product of a dialectic between the individual and the organisation (and the context more generally). This means that a lot depends on the recruitment strategies of groups – and I come back to this question later when discussing the implications of parties targeting the recruitment of particular social groups.

Contemporary society offers a diversity of possible stories and the greens produce a narrative that reflects at the same time their "true" and essential nature[48] and the complexity of their personality. The "masters of doubt" have contributed to a hermeneutic of suspicion bolstered by the pervasiveness of the model of *homo economicus* and the paradigm of instrumental rationality: altruism as a motive is often suspected of hiding other more selfish motives. A body of English language literature on activism is devoted to testing Olson's paradox[49]. The premise of a rational instrumental individual dominates the resource mobilisation approach and limits its ability to explain mobilisation as such (Fillieule and Péchu 1994; Fillieule 2001). There is a scientific as well as a common sense expectation that collective action and party membership needs to be explained through selective incentives that groups can offer

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[47] This suggests that in many cases, new members are looking for information (Faucher 1999a, 102–106), engaging in an experiential search (Morales 2009, 161).

[48] This is how increasingly contemporary Westerners perceive themselves (Lahire 2005; Le Bart 2008). For a neurological perspective on this see the *Self Illusion* (Hood 2012)

[49] On the other hand in France, more attention has been devoted to structural determinants of mobilisation (such as the trajectory of individuals is social space and/or their belonging to social groups) as illustrated in the case of political parties by the (by Ysmal 1998)

their participants. This also applies to party membership, even though the testing of alternative models shows that it is not the best explanatory model for participation (Whiteley and Seyd 2002).

Activists tend to emphasize what maintains their "normalcy". As a consequence, one should not be surprised to see the French greens downplayed anything that could make them appear "sectarian", from lifestyles to ideas[50]. They expressed scepticism, often without knowing much about it, towards "*écologie profonde*" and anything that could appear as diverging from an authorised scientific perspective[51]. Such resistance can be connected to the combination of a French fascination for science and technology and a contradictory romantic attachment to their roots in the countryside. This particular configuration contributes, according to Michael Bess, to the making of a "light-green society". There, love and fascination for technology, progress and growth leads to a degree of self-satisfaction in having considered environmental implications (Bess 2003). Beyond Bess's sensitive and nuanced interpretation of currents of French political culture, one can also underline the social composition of respective green parties at the time. In the early 1990s, 59% of French *Verts* with a degree had studied science, whilst this was only the case for 7% of the UK Greens (Faucher 1997, 69). Several of the French activists I interviewed underlined how scientific training and pursuit was paramount in guiding their political commitment. At the same time, a number of UK activists contrasted ecologists (who study ecology as a science and often in an abstract and a political take), with greens (who have a much wider perspective)[52]. Thus, it is important to bear in mind that political culture is not an explanation by itself but always needs to be contextualised and analysed in its complexity.

I/We questions

Fieldwork (observations and interviews conducted as much as possible at the home of activists) with the greens led me to interrogate the taken-for-granted causal link between attitudes and conducts[53], the existence of a green « faith » of sort and pro-environmental behaviours enhanced maybe by the secondary socialisation of the new party member attracted

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[50] This is a peculiarly French concern as shown in the creation of an Observatoire interministeriel sur les sectes in 1996 (www.prevensectes.com). This is more than a political preoccupation: it is linked to their immersion in a hostile milieu and in particular in one in which there has long been relatively little tolerance for alternative styles.

[51] The concept of deep ecology, proposed by Arne Naess (1973), meant very little to French activists who generally associated it with dangerous radicalism.

[52] In 1985, the Ecology Party became the Green Party in order to follow the European trend but also because "ecology" was considered a technical, difficult – and middle-class – concept for effective promotion of the cause (Dobson 1991, 18; Button 1991, 254).

[53] The direction of this relationship is also questioned by Yves Schemeil in his chapter on « *cultures politiques* » (Schemeil 1985).

to the party by environmental issues and progressively discovering the array of policies and behavioural changes that are supposedly required. In such a perspective, the adoption of green behaviours reduces cognitive dissonance linked to an awareness of the consequences of one's lifestyle. However, some change their behaviours once they have joined out of mimetism or social pressure but later learn the rationale for these behaviours. In many cases though, the life stories of activists reveals how many « practiced » because they had « inherited » ways of behaving, family habits of recycling, reusing, treading lightly that are justified when green arguments bring a rationale that was sometimes sought.

My research has focused on how individuals and groups change, together. Initially, such an approach was justified because the greens claimed they were seeking personal consistency and that the alignment of different aspects of their lives allowed them to be more true to themselves. They translated their political protest in their life choices and bodies (Micoud 2000). Moreover, as I spent several years following the two groups of Oxford and Aix-en-Provence (and a few other individuals in the region or nationally whom I'd met at party conferences), I was able to note how people changed and how the group evolved. In many cases, they had joined the party because they had a particular sensitivity to an issue and had been mobilised around it, sometimes through a triggering event (Cernobyl for instance). The discovery of political ecology was on the other hand a process that was closely linked to social interactions and discussions with other activists or resulted from a desire to learn (and thus read) once they had joined (Faucher 1999a, 106–7). Literature on social movements has explored the importance of social interactions, in processes of socialisation, construction and change of ideational frames (Faucher 1997, 109; Klandermans 1992, 81–2; Hirsch 1990; Goffman 1986; Benford and Snow 2000). If one wants to understand how frames evolve and the evolution of modes of conduct (in particular in relation to lifestyles as in the case of the greens) one needs to look at the influence of a group's particular style or subculture (Eliasoph and Lichterman 2003).

Individuals' identities are multifaceted and complex (in terms of class, gender, nationality, age, education or religion but also parent, amateur musician…). Not only are these facets not all equally salient at the same time but individuals, who move between different contexts of interactions, adapt to their settings in many ways[54]. Mary Douglas thus draws our attention to the multiplication of categories used to study deviance in the 19th century. As the number of labels grew, it became possible to think of oneself in terms of these multiple categories and

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[54] See the discussion of the misinterpretation of Iraqis' response to the invasion in 2003 (Chabal and Daloz 2006, 94–95).

therefore to orientate behaviour in relation to how one conceived of oneself. There is therefore an interesting circular process whereby people create institutions, institutions create classifications, classifications shape actions, actions need names and people respond to these names. Belonging to an institution, and espousing its classificatory system is not a conscious process but it affects the ways we think (Douglas 1986, chap. 8). As individuals move between different contexts, they resort to different logic at different times in their ordinary activities: what makes sense when one acts as an employee may not if one thinks as a parent or a citizen. We know that actors do not think in the same way, let alone about the same things, in different settings[55]. In other words, the cultural context provides a framework for the enunciation of rationality (Chabal and Daloz 2006, 135) or for the *post hoc* enunciation of rationale for action. Similarly, the meaning of activism – be it green or otherwise - is not given but is the product of meaning-making activities. It is formulated and expressed using cultural codes that members of the group use and understand. Humans are social animals: "webs of signification" are spun collectively, interpreted in relation to a group. "Individuals necessarily construe their experiences using theories they inherit. People's experiences can lead them to beliefs only because they are already embedded in traditions" (Bevir 2006, 287). In order to understand activism one needs to look at what it means to those engaged. We need to listen to what activists say about what they do but we also need to interpret their discourse and their actions because what they mean for instance by "participative democracy" or "equality" can in practice be understood or experienced rather differently. Thus, in one sets to to understand the decline in activism in the Labour party (Seyd and Whiteley 1992), one needs to reflect on how the meaning of membership has changed (Faucher-King 2006).

Friendship and congeniality

When I started following *Les Verts* in Aix in 1991, I was told that "*convivialité*" was a key concept for them and a distinctive quality of their party. The reference to Illich was implicit but what most members referred to was quite different from the concept developed by the philosopher and social critic[56] and more akin to a different acceptance of the word, implying sociability and hospitability. There were seldom times when members did not invoke what made, according to them, their party different from others: a way of relating to each other, of respecting individual contributions, of being friends (and therefore equals), of having fun. In contrast with other political groups, *Les Verts* claimed they were welcoming, open and

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[55] Mathematic abilities, for instance, are influenced by the environment in which they are mobilised (Lave 1988).
[56] Illich articulated a non Marxist critique of industrial societies and advocated a (sustainable) society in which tools and institutions would be defined by their use rather than define their users (Illich 1990).

respectful of difference. This was all the more interesting as, in practice, there were few signs that those who attended meetings and events drew that much pleasure from their social interactions. Almost all encounters between members where related to party business. Social events were organised formally. Those who attended described their participation as part of their commitment to green "*convivialité*". If it was not a burden it was not particularly looked forward to either. In fact, in private, some party members complained to me that there seemed to be no joy, no sense of humour (Faucher 1997, 327).

Regularly, a renewed sense of having to foster a more congenial atmosphere emerged when fruit juices left over from a press conference were discovered and were thus shared by members. These were consumed during the meeting rather than at the end or at the beginning of the meeting partly because the group found it difficult to delineate the border between sociability and work. Purely social events were few and far between. Those on the edge of party involvement deplored the situation. The core group never really complained about not meeting fellow members enough and the ethos of the group heavily emphasised work. Indeed endless meetings mostly drained their energies (Polletta 2004, 181).

Les Verts interacted in what seemed to be dominated by an atmosphere that emphasised seriousness. Some members even complained that the party lack a sense of humour and lightness. It is not that they were motivated by a sense of doom and a generally pessimistic approach[57]. Activism for them was a "*sacerdoce*", a vocation - that is to say that the reward was in the dedication itself, not in the enjoyment one could find in it (Faucher 1997, 187). And they showed it! They met each other not because it was fun but because they had things to discuss. There were always on a mission[58]. In some ways, partying with other greens was seen as a chore, an activist's duty rather than a cheerful opportunity. The seriousness with which Aix members envisaged their membership echoes the national organisation's culture (Villalba 1995, 255).

In Aix, the local party was the product of a successful electoral campaign for which two environmentalists had banded together and mobilised their associative networks to put together a list of candidates. This, however, did not help to create or maintain ties between members. For many years, the two networks were juxtaposed rather than intertwined. New members were usually brought to a meeting by someone they knew beforehand. Spontaneous memberships were rare or short-lived. Friendships born out of activism were not the norm. In

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[57] British greens were for that matter much more prone to mention "the end of the world as we know it" as a motivation for their action.

[58] See Daniel Gaxie's revisit of the question of activism's rewards and his discussion of the "sacralisation" of some behaviours and frowning upon others (Gaxie 2005, 164–6)

the 1990s, *Les Verts* informally maintained a tradition of grooming of new members that has been practiced by the Communists and the Socialists for decades (Lefebvre and Sawicki 2006, 163): new members have to be introduced and in some cases had to defend their wish to join in front of a commission. This applied in the 1990s at a time when *Les Verts* were anxious to avoid what they perceived as opportunistic entryism of would-be politicians. (Faucher 1992)

In the absence of social events, did the greens find in business meeting arguments to support their ideal of a convivial green community? How did *Verts* typically meet in Aix? Meetings always started late and many arrived deliberately later and later to avoid wasting their time waiting for others. Not only was there no real time limit but meetings dwindled on until too many members had left to carry on a meaningful discussion. At about 11pm everybody was just too tired to carry on socially with a drink[59]. As a consequence of the lack of unwinding times, there were few opportunities to smooth away disagreements and make sure that they were not taken personally. The implicit rules of the local group did not allow for moments of decompression or simply a break and those who needed it, simply left for a breath of fresh air. There were many occasions were real tensions emerged. They were stirred up by competition between members who wished to stand as candidates or by disputes over electoral alliances at the local or national level[60]. Tensions simmered rather than exploded but were so palpable that women took the habit of leaving the room for a drink, a biscuit and a small chat before re-entering the ring.

Similarly, British greens often enthused about the role of social contacts and interactions in helping them develop and anchor their understanding of green politics. They emphasised conversations and debates, people who were friendly and cared about others[61]. Sociability relied on semi-organised events taking place before/after the official business meeting of the group.

It is important to remember the broader cultural context in which groups operate. When I started meeting British greens I was struck by the ubiquity of the tea and coffee mug (Faucher 1999a, 167–9). No encounter, no interview, no formal meeting even could apparently start without the offering of a "cuppa" (and the choice between soy or dairy milk). This contributed to create an atmosphere that was more relaxed and less formal. In many ways, this is an

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[59] This is by no means unique to Les Verts, as noted by Ion (Ion 1994, 32). Similarly, many meetings start late in France and Mitterrant himself was known for always arriving late (Faucher-King 2005, 83)

[60] In the 1990s, tensions were about the authenticity of alternative green organisations and alliances (1992-3) with the extreme left (1994-5) or the mainstream left (1989 then 1996-7).

[61] Research on social movements has highlighted the role of small groups on collective representations: the more one identifies with a group, the more open discussions with other group members will contribute to shift attitudes and beliefs (Duriez and Sawicki 2003, 151; Duriez and Sawicki 2003, 34). Similarly, there is growing interest in the effect of context on political opinions through a neighbourhood effect (Braconnier 2010).

extension of British practices: meetings have scheduled coffee breaks unless there are so short that participants start the meeting with their mugs and cups[62]. Moreover, in the Oxford group in particular, every effort was made to create opportunities for social interaction and to ease off competition, political disagreements and to diffuse personal hostility[63]. Party meetings concluded with biscuits and tea and this second half of the meeting could last up to an hour. In the UK, pub culture helps create further opportunities for sociability: a smaller group invariably carried on the conversation even further in the local pub, mostly including the most committed members, but quite often also outliers, new or little engaged but interested in pursuing the political conversation. During electoral campaigns, a number of green candidates to the city council meet up after long leaflet-ting or canvassing weekend expeditions in the wards where they are standing[64]. They share a Sunday (nut) roast or a beer and talk about party business.

However, beyond the core groups of activists, even in Oxford most members never met up socially with others and only a tiny minority maintained personal friendships with each other beyond party activities. This is true in many local parties and associations, even when their membership lists counts several dozens of members[65].

The "styles" of groups

The concept of group style provides an interesting lens to analyse patterns of interactions and the diverse shades of green (or any other political party or group for that matter) styles. It is all the more interesting when one then reflects on how these styles create paths and thus constrain the possibilities of change. Eliasoph and Lichterman invite us to consider how groups provide specific contexts in which individual actors understand, think and act out. The "recurrent patterns of interaction that arise from a group's shared assumptions about what constitutes good or adequate participation" (Eliasoph and Lichterman, 2003: 737) can be identified as different "styles" or filters for collective representations. Symbols, stories, vocabularies or codes are shared with the wider community but interpreted and practiced in specific ways (Eliasoph and Lichterman 2003, 782). Three dimensions can "sensitise" the

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[62] An interesting hybrid institution is the Maison Francaise in Oxford, where the tea break was institutionalised by the Director many years ago: all staff and academic residents are expected to attend, to the chagrin sometimes of French students who perceive this ritual (Faucher-King 2005, 8) as an unbearably quaint practice and a waste of time.

[63] Activists expressed in private concern about tensions between activists but collectively the group overwhelmingly managed to prevent these feuds from damaging the atmosphere of meetings or derail the group from its purpose.

[64] Oxford greens do not target seats but stand candidates everywhere. As a consequence most campaign on their own, with the exception of a few winnable wards in the centre of town.

[65] In Scotland 65% of Greens never or rarely meet each other socially and only 13% do this often (Bennie 2004, 197). The survey of Scottish members also reveals that 53% did not take part in any meeting in the year prior to the study and about 22% described themselves as active (very or fairly). My own interviews confirmed that friends and relations played minor roles in joining for the British greens compared to other parties (Bennie 2004, 112; Whiteley and Seyd 2002).

observer and help the interpretation of the implicit norms of interaction in a group (Eliasoph and Lichterman 2003, 784–7): group boundaries (who belongs or not and how does one relate to outsiders, such as political opponents, journalists, members of the wider public); group bonds (solidarity and how members conceive of their relationships with other members and their commonalities) and speech norms. Discourses and deeds are shaped through constant mutual adaptation between individuals involved in the group. Interactionist approaches, such as this one, have received a good deal of attention in French political sociology (Fillieule 2001; Céfaï 2007; Sawicki and Siméant 2009).

Whether at the local, regional or national level, meetings in *Les Verts* never start or end on time, last too long and reach no conclusion (Benoît Rihoux, Faucher, and Peirano 2002). There are few breaks and participants tend to drift in and out of the room according to their need for a "pause-café", "pause-cigarette" or otherwise. When a pause is agreed (in some cases because there are more people outside the meeting than within), it overruns. When there is an agenda, it is neither followed nor carried through, or only remembered several hours into the meeting as it is time to wrap up. Some discussions never reach a conclusion and the facilitator fails to, or is unable, draw a synthesis or a conclusion. Minutes are not taken or circulated. Decisions are not implemented "because they are un-implementable"[66] or they are brought back to the discussion table (and sometimes challenged) because someone who did not attend nevertheless had something to say about it. When a decision has been taken and someone entrusted with the task of implementing it, she runs the risk of being criticised for her actions as consensus disintegrates on what originally was a collegial decision.

Why are some groups not reflectively engaging with their style especially when it makes a number of them unhappy and fails to convince participants that it is "working"? In Aix, a number of attempts were made to improve what was felt a sub-optimal way of acting together. These involve classic rules of conducting meetings and distributing speech, of doing introductory roundtables. One member would ostensibly try to enforce the official code of conduct by raising a hand before speaking. When he moved to a different city, no-one was left to remind the others to take turn. The group discussed whether to change meeting times so that schedules could be more reliable for those with families or coming from out of town, but to no avail. Over the years, the group profoundly renewed itself as many members left and others joined. In 2009, the group's style remained characterised by a rather tense atmosphere,

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[66] Interview, quoted in (Benoît Rihoux, Faucher, and Peirano 2002, 43)

reflected in a history punctuated by personality clash often clad under the veil of ideological and strategic feuds, leading to expulsions and recourse to outside arbitration[67]!

It can be difficult to perceive the filters of group styles outside of the moments when the implicit rules are broken, eliciting awkwardness and embarrassment. These moments are important as they reveal what is out of bounds, or challenging for the *modus operandi*. In 1994, a green from Oxford attended a meeting organised during the European Parliamentary election in Aix, he reported with horror in the local newsletter « No chair, no agenda, no introduction. Most arrived late and left early. A number of those who spoke were not even party members. A red green spoke for half an hour without taking a breath and at some point a socialist city councillor even turned-up uninvited and spoke for 15 minutes. I was told 'if you think that is bad, you should see what happens in Marseille' ». It is interesting to note what shocked the Oxonian, i.e. the many ways in which what he took for granted as the proper way of conducting a meeting (group boundaries, speech norms) were challenged. On the other hand, Aix greens shrugged his comments away. They did not really understand why they were being criticised when they thought it all worked OK. They were not prepared to see their certainties questioned. Organisations, and the individuals within them, can be conservative even when they see themselves as radicals. Moreover, styles of interactions are so taken-for-granted that they are almost invisible to those involved.

Collective identity is (re) constructed in interaction, through doing and meaning-making. Solidarity bonds are created through the performance of verbal and nonverbal acts that draw the boundaries that define 'us' and distinguish a group from another. In many cases, symbols help brush over the diversity of views and values that persist. 'We' is in part the product of such performative practices – that is patterned activities that create a collective identity as they enunciate it or as they act it out. Conferences give an immediate and concrete dimension to the idea of a green community: they are formally opened[68]: "green friends" are greeted[69] or thanked at the beginning of each speech/contribution; participants giggle and laugh[70] when they get in-jokes (about electoral campaigning or the process of deliberation for instance). Sharing emotions creates a bond that is now well explored by the social movements

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[67] I caught up with Aix Verts in 2009 during a 6 months stay in Provence. In 2008, the local party imploded when an outgoing city councillors decided to seek an alliance with MODEM, the centrist party rather than the left. They were expelled by a decision of the national organisation whilst the faction reasserted its influence.

[68] See the interesting opening by a local green councillor, standing in lieu of the Mayor: "Welcome to Liverpool for the 2007 Autumn conference of the green party of England an Wales. I think that's the hard bit over now: we know where we are and we know which political party we are in" http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IF0cENjSR2Y

[69] This would be "comrades", "colleagues" in other parties.

[70] British Greens' conferences are peppered with humour in a way that contrasts with the severity of Les Verts. A notable example is the Conference Review with its songs and comedy acts (Faucher 1997, chap. 7). In the UK, jokes are obligatory in speeches from conferences to wedding banquets.

specialists (Traïni and Collectif 2009; Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta 2001) whilst jokes draw attention to the crossing of boundaries (Seligman et al. 2008, 94) and thus the closure of the in-group.

Moreover, interactions contribute to promote routines that members do not necessarily follow in their private lives. It is the repetition of such practices that make them appear less problematic, and ultimately taken-for-granted. Interactions contribute to legitimise and routinise "greenness" in the daily activities of a group: reusing envelopes and printing on recycled paper, vegetarian options wherever meals are provided and soy milk for tea. In most cases, there has been no formal conversation but participants nevertheless realise that somehow to "be" green means that one "acts" as one (Goffman 1990). The spill over into private life can be a consequence (and many British greens for instance become vegetarian or at least eat vegetarian in the presence of other greens)[71]. On the other hand, members clearly felt there were rules to follow when in the company of others. When tea is offered, soy milk is always available alongside dairy. Organisers of any event always cater for vegetarians, usually also for vegans, and the party programme advocates vegetarian diets. When they eat out together (at conference for instance), the greens all order a variety of vegetarian dishes. At home, however, a number of those I had always seen follow a vegetarian diet explained they ate meat occasionally or regularly and complained about the hypocrisy of others. One, who had been vegan and vegetarian in the past but had reverted to eating meat because it was "too socially awkward not to do so" when travelling abroad, mocked the fact that vegetarian food always disappeared faster at green events because omnivores did not dare to come out in public. Neither Oxonians nor Aixois engage in conversations about green lifestyles and exceptions were generally seen as *faux-pas* by an overzealous member.

 These hardly noticeable acts, repeated at each encounter become habits that create solidarity and bonds (Goffman 1990) and are markers of an identity. In the 1990s, British greens systematically reused envelopes two or three times to the point that I started doing the same when writing to them. Symbolic practices have integrative effects because collective performance is rarely just about shared values and sacred symbols. Collective enactments paper over social and cultural divisions. Performing these acts creates the appearance of a common culture without actually needing to create it (Eliasoph, 1998: 112). The collective nature of the performance is what makes the ritual important, not a common set of "beliefs" within. Speech norms frame members' assumptions about how and why they speak to each

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[71] I have discussed lifestyles as identity construction elsewhere (Faucher 1999a, chap. 5)

other. It encapsulates much more than the jargon sometimes used. It is about a corpus of references (from authors to obscure party documents), memories of past battles and personalities or events, images and symbols, ways of addressing "comrades", of sharing ideas, enthusing or criticising. It also includes what can be talked about and thus invites to reflect on self-censorship as well as Lukes' third dimension of power (Lukes 2005).

We will come back to the question of how groups develop their own style and the implications of these in the context of other parties in chapters 3 and 4.

Challenging the boundaries of the public and the private

In the 1980s and 1990s, many European green parties were in a situation not dissimilar to labour movements of the early 20th century and torn by ideological disagreements linked to strategic choices. Whilst "Realists" pleaded for an engagement within the institutional framework and system of political alliances, accepting the risk of compromise for the promise on an influence on policy, Radicals feared that would irremediably damage their role as a political spur and would lead them to losing their integrity (Doherty 1992). The debate took a particular virulent form in Germany but could also be found in other countries. In France and in the UK, the electoral system meant that the prospect of parliamentary representation was remote and their electoral results excluded them from any potential electoral pacts. Nevertheless, the early 1990s where marred in both cases by strife, division and secessions. In France, the creation of a rival, initially more closely aligned with the *Parti socialiste*, contributed to accredit the idea that *Les Verts* were dangerous anti-humanist fanatics who would impose green behaviours. As the 1992 regional elections allowed the greens to win enough seats to hold the balance of power in a few cases, a first *Socialistes-Verts* coalition in Nord-Pas de Calais helped the greens get used to the idea of political compromise. Within 5 years they managed to broker a pre-electoral pact that allowed them to win seats in the *Assemblée Nationale* and portfolios in government. At the same time, the British Greens' success at the 1989 European elections contributed to a flash rise in membership, leading to tough disputes about organisational reforms and a disastrous split in 1992.

Green parties were analysed as the product of a "silent revolution" (Inglehart 1977, 1989, 1990), which was characterised by cognitive mobilisation. Sometimes derided as the "chattering classes", they were seen as cognitively aware, politically competent as well as sceptical towards the failure of traditional politics to solve contemporary problems (Eder 1985; J. Cohen 1985; Cotgrove 1982).

One of the great benefits of research on green parties in the early 1990s was that I explored two subfields of political sociology (political parties and social movements/mobilisation), which references tend not to overlap (Sawicki 2011). At the time, *Les Verts* fancied themselves as a movement and rejected the party label and the Green party was condemned to the political margins and the Conservatives developed repressive policies towards environmental mobilisations that contributed to radicalise the movement. The literature on small parties was limited (Kitschelt 1989a; Muller-Rommel and Pridham 1990; Poguntke 1993; Laurent and Villalba 1997) and provided few tools to analyse the processes of mobilisation through which individuals became cognitively mobilised by political ecology, decided to join a new political organisation, were changed (or not) by their interactions within groups, invented modes of deliberation. On the other hand, new social movements had led to a flurry of English language publications (Melucci 1989; Morris 1992; J. Cohen 1985; McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996; Tarrow 1998; Klandermans et al. 1989; McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996; Giugni 1999; R. J. Dalton and Kuechler 1990; Eyerman and Jamison 1991; H. Johnston and Klandermans 1995; Oberschall 1995; Jenkins and Klandermans 1995; Edmondson 1997) that I started reading in the Bodleian library when taking a break from the Greens[72]. It was all the more pertinent as the Green party was then debating reorienting its strategy. Indeed, many of its members had been involved in protest action (including protest at the Newbury bypass and Twyford Downs[73]) and, frustrated by lack of progress on the electoral front, they advocated a recentring on nonviolent direct action[74].

It is useful, when trying to understand the motivations of political activists, to explore the genealogy of their political movement, the intellectual and theoretical sources, as well as the vernacular of the party. In the case of the greens, one needs to interrogate in particular in attitudes to nature, to animals but also to ecology as a science, and to religious and philosophical roots. It was quickly striking how references and authors are different in both countries whether one focuses on ideological/theoretical sources or on members' worldviews as expressed in long semi-directive interviews. Very early on, I explored the writings of authors who articulated a green political theory (Dobson 1991; Eckersley 1992; Goodin 1992;

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[72] This literature was popularised initially in France by Fillieule and Péchu and has contributed to renew the interest in the political sociology of mobilisations (Fillieule and Péchu 1994; Fillieule 2000; Céfaï and Trom 2001; Céfaï 2007).

[73] One of the members I interviewed at the party conference had been ran over by a truck at Newbury and a vocal supporter of NVDA. Other key figures at the national level were engaged in lifestyle activism: several lived in tepees in Wales, one was very active in Reclaim the Streets, another one organised green summer camps…

[74] This did not happen, partly because the confrontational mood of the Conservatives was replaced in 1997 by a new Labour government that was, initially at least much more conciliatory and open to discussion with environmental organisations.

Dryzek and Schlosberg 2004) whilst reading the magazines and references quoted by activists (Faucher 1999a, chap. 1). The gap between academic thoughts and party members' views was nearly as wide as the Channel, not to mention the mosaic of approaches within each movement (Faucher 1999a, 145; Pucciarelli and Bozonnet 2000). Some of the divergences could be traced back to the influence of other intellectual and ideological currents: feminism, pacifism, vegetarianism, permaculture, third world solidarity, New Age). The connection between the thoughts of the philosophers Arne Naess and Ivan Illich for instance and of party activists (for instance coming from the anti-nuclear movement) sometimes could be found in magazines or through occasional lectures or in discussions around a drink after a meeting. Readers of *Resurgence* (an intellectual, artistic and slightly new age journal) have references that contrast with those who read *Ecologie Politique* ou *Silence*. 94% of the Greens surveyed in 1991 considered that nature had an intrinsic value (Rüdig, Bennie, and Franklin 1991). Those I interviewed a few year later liked, or at least appreciated, the intellectual stimulus of the metaphore chosen by Lovelock to name the fragile system that had provided good conditions for the emergence and the flourishing of life on Earth (Lovelock 2000). At the same time, the mention of the Gaia hypothesis triggered negative and sometimes emphatic reactions among *Verts*. Most only had a vague idea about what it entailed but some feared sectarianism and expressed concern that talking about a spiritual dimension would distract from the political quest. Only one, broadly read but also denounced in Provence as a *Khmer Vert*, could explain why it was both interesting and problematic in the French context (Faucher 1999a, 46–48; Faucher 1997, 160–2). In France, more than in the UK, activists were prone to focus their attention primarily onto practical political and policy issues and to separate private feelings and public action.

Rather than draw me to political theory, the exploration of green ideas and worldviews pointed me in the direction of the diversity of activists' subcultures and their embeddedness within wider social and political contexts and traditions. It also highlighted the need to reflect on the articulation of the public and the private, diverging views about the "good life" and the appropriate way to act and the search for consistency. This was manifested in lifestyles as well as in their political organisations since their very constitutions and practices were meant to implement here and now a miniature of the good society, a sustainable and democratic microcosm that would respect individualities. The meaning that actors attribute to their action is constructed through interactions with others, and in particular within the party.

Some of the differences between the Greens and *Les Verts* are linked to the institutional and political opportunities and constrains on their actions within their respective polities. Others,

however, are more difficult to pin down because it requires exploring historically the construction of modes of thinking about the place and the role of humans in relation to the non human world. Although my research then focused on a marginal political group, it required reflecting on more general political processes and cultures. The comparison in this case allowed me to highlight the influence of national religious history on green conceptions of political activism, such as the complementarity between associations and political parties or the politicisation of private behaviours (Faucher 1997, chap. 13). This was particularly interesting as it forced me to reflect on the specificity of French political-religious articulation. As noted by Claude Dargent, France is unique in the ways in which religion structures political choices to the extent that there is almost a homology between degree of religiosity and Left-right placement (Dargent 2010). There is also a rare antagonism between Catholicism and ir-religiosity. To understand how religion plays on political practices and orientations one needs to go beyond surveys to explore the history of religious and social conflicts. Considering the greens thus allowed me to start unpacking the complex relationship between conceptions of the private and the public and thus to understand how activists could make sense of their engagement through political/spiritual dimensions that were not necessarily strictly distinct in their minds.

Why do some people consider that their private lives (consumption, employment, lifestyles) are inseparable from their political identity and commitment whilst others assert the separation of the private and the public spheres of action? Such differences can be usefully explored through the prism of national political history. In the UK, bishops sit in Parliament and schools have maintained a religious education curriculum. Many universities have religious studies and/or theology departments. Every morning BBC radio 4 broadcasts a short "Thought for the day" slot that is open to members of all religions, including (though rarely) Pagans and Wiccas. At the same time, 50.7% of the UK population considered in 2009 that they had « no religion » (British Social Attitudes Survey 2009). To understand the apparent paradox, one needs to remember how protestant churches learnt to cohabit during the 19th Century and to tolerate Catholics as equal citizens. The legacy of these battles is that the UK now boasts its pluralism and religious tolerance. Religious non-conformism is a legitimate pursuit and a spiritual quest another way to express one's individuality. In contrast, 66 % of the French population surveyed by IFOP for *La Croix*, declared themselves Catholics (though religious practice has dropped to 15% of regular mass attendance [75]– a figure similar in the

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[75] « La France reste catholique, mais moins pratiquante », La Croix, http://www.la-croix.com/Religion/S-

UK[76]). Similarly more Greens (72%) than *Verts* (45%) claimed to be a-religious at the beginning of the 1990s (Faucher 1999a, 79). Although they were just exiting the "neither left nor right" period of their history (1986-1993), *Les Verts* could be seen as influenced by the *laïc* if not anti-religious tradition of the French Left: the Catholics I interviewed rejected the idea that their faith bore much relation with their attitudes to the environment and some were clearly reluctant to talk about religion at all. Whatever their religious affiliation, British Greens did not shy away from affirming their practice: pagan as well as Christian non-denominational rituals were performed on the fringe of the Green party conference. Quakers were over represented in the party and seen as a major source of inspiration for the strong commitment to decision-making by consensus. Many of the British activists I interviewed mentioned the "spiritual dimension" of ecology without being prompted[77] whilst, once back in France I realised I had to raise the question for it to be touched on. Not only did members of *Les Verts* never mention spontaneously a personal connection with nature that could open up to a discussion about a spiritual dimension, a transcendence of any shape or form, but when I brought it up, it often meant that they were even keener to profess moderation in everything from eating organic or vegetarian to their usage of private transport, insisting on their rejection of fundamentalism.

I explored further these puzzles whilst in Vanderbilt through collaboration with colleagues at the Center for the Study of Religion and Culture. Tennessee was everything but *laïc* and bore little connection with the nonconformism of the British green movement. Between 2005 and 2008, the group « *Ecology and Spirituality* » held an interdisciplinary seminar focusing on Southern (i.e. Southern US) attitudes towards climate change. Beyond academic seminars, we organised outreach panels and consultations with local religious leaders (mostly Protestants) in order to explore the resistance of Southern communities to the ideas of climate change and global warming. We interviewed the leader of the Southern Baptists as well as invited a number of prominent theologians and religious studies specialists to talk about theological conceptions of nature and creation in the major world religions. I also seized the opportunity to attend Tennessee green party meetings and briefly considered developing a research project that would extend my work in France and the UK. Whilst the Nashville greens met at the Downtown library and were dominated by academics and urban intellectuals, the state party

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informer/Actualite/La-France-reste-catholique-mais-moins-pratiquante-_NG_-2009-12-29-570979

[76] "Churchgoing in the UK", Tearfund research, 2007 Apr 03. The survey involved 7000 UK adults aged 16 or over, interviewed between 8th February to 5th March 2006.

[77] *Seeing Green* (Porritt 1984) remained a key reference to British Greens much after Jonathan Porritt had left the party but many members considered his book, as well as the 1983 electoral manifesto as a keystone because of its acknowledgement of the spiritual dimension of political ecology.

held its annual congress at the First Unitarian Universalist Church and attracted not only the usual educated middle class (teachers, social workers) but also a number of activists who stood out from the Tennesseans I met elsewhere: Buddhists, pagans, architect specialising in straw buildings, downshifters who had chosen self sufficiency or moved to what used to be the local hippie community[78], midwifes on a mission and many others who had decided to explore alternative lifestyles or become educators on sustainability and survivalism.

These tentative explorations and academic exchanges in Tennessee as well as interactions with Religious studies academics between 1997 and 2010 (notably at Stirling and at Vanderbilt) allowed me to develop a better understanding of the complex implications of diverse national religious histories[79] and cultures. I became aware of the influence of religious education and identification bears on political and lifestyle choices[80]. It also drew my attention to the narrow focus that some political scientists take when they consider the influence of religion on political attitudes and behaviours (Norris and Inglehart 2004). For instance in the French context, according to Boy *et alii* "*la socialisation religieuse n'a d'effets politiques réels que dans les cas où la transmission des valeurs religieuses (ou de l'ir-religion) a effectivement réussi: avoir des parents pratiquants ou agnostiques n'a guère d'influence sur les attitudes politiques des adhérents verts ou socialistes mais se percevoir soi même comme pratiquant ou sans religion (disposition en grande partie héritée n'est pas sans conséquence sur le positionnement politique* » (Boy, Rey, and Subileau 2003, 60). It is striking how the impact of a religious education is assumed to be unproblematically reducible to a simple binary (with or without) rather than in terms of content of the religious message in relation to God's Creation, human dominion, etc. Only the position on the left/right political axis is considered, even though it would be interesting in the case of *Les Verts* to cross check with values ((Boy, Rey, and Subileau 2003, chap. 5) – see table p140). In the same book, women are said to be closer to environmental values. Whilst the influence of social characteristics and education is checked but not the religious background: "*Plus on est éduqué moins on partage 'une certaine mythologie qui entoure les animaux (…) moins on est éduqué et plus on est proche des valeurs environnementales, moins on est critique à leur encontre* » (Boy, Rey, and Subileau 2003, 14). The least pro-environmentally inclined are the better

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[78] http://www.thefarm.org/

[79] The contribution by Mark Stoll (Texas Tech University) on "Religious Roots of France's Light-Green Society" provoked remarkably hostile reactions in the audience of the « Une protection de la nature et de l'environnement à la française ? », organized by the Association pour l'histoire de la protection de l'environnement et de la nature in at the Sorbonne, in September 2010 (http://ahpne.fr/spip.php?article58). His paper explored the influence of protestant and catholic upbringing on key thinkers and actors of the French environmental movement.

[80] Paul Lichterman has worked on the American greens before turning his attention to religious movements and their role in building political communities and action (Lichterman 1996; Lichterman 2005).

represented and are dominant in *Les Verts* (Boy, Rey, and Subileau 2003, 140). Such treatment of the category of religion in surveys is common place, one of the best (or worst as the case may be) was co-authored by Norris and Inglehart (Norris and Inglehart 2004). However interesting it can be to find a correlation between levels of education and "mythological views about animals", one is left to wonder what exactly we have learnt about green conceptions of the environment and what it tells us about the survey questions and the inference that is made by analysts.

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Challenge the idea that previously held values explain actions opens the door to new questions and the ambivalent relationships that greens have to rules and established ways (such as established ways of doing politics). On the one hand, they reject social norms and idealise spontaneity as the proof of authentic commitment. On the other hand, they consider that rules are paramount to avoid the emergence/ or the consolidation of leadership, of bureaucracies and hierarchies. *Les Verts* are remarkable in that they are an organisation paralysed by rules that are impossible to reform but leave most dissatisfied (Benoît Rihoux, Faucher, and Peirano 2002). When my attention turned to "big" parties[81], I was interested in applying the theories and frames I had found useful to analyse and understand the greens.

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[81] As opposed to the "small", "marginal" or "irrelevant", which have all been used to qualify green parties.

Chapter 3

Power games inside parties: change, rules and ritualisation

My second major research project focused on party conferences as a comparable point of entry into major parties that would also allow me to develop an approach to mainstream organisations similar to the one I had tested on the margins of the political spectrum. Despite the competition brought by new parties and alternative forms of participation through NGOs in particular, such an apparently archaic form of party activism persists. As more than one conference organiser told me during the course of my study, these events are primarily an event that pleases the "tribalists" who enjoy meeting regularly with people like them. I knew from working with the greens how important conferences were for the construction of identity and feelings of belonging. I hoped to explore how members develop identification and loyalty as well as develop strategies for their own careers. The British annual party conference is a semi-private meeting, gathering elected representatives, local delegates and middle-level elites. They are the best opportunity to observe and analyse how different strata of the party, different subgroups (whether regional or functional) coalesce and cohabit. Historically, the Conservatives gathered as the National Union of Conservative associations and merely invited the parliamentary party. The leader gave a speech after the closure of the official gathering. The heterogeneity of party cultures transpires in the contrasting staging of the events, the vocabulary, the self-presentation and dress codes, the rituals of opening and closure, the fringe meetings and receptions. At the same time, the existence of a national pattern is clear: periodicity, formalisation, role, place, structure and style of the debates even through the innovations in session formats of the last 15 years, the posturing towards political opponents, the opening of the fringe meetings and the commercial exhibition.

The conferences are a contemporary entertainment show increasingly designed for televisual audiences with very careful attention given to the set (expensively designed and subcontracted every year), the choreography (strictly timed succession of speakers), audio effects (singing, clapping, etc) and to the formal and patently ritualistic elements of pomp and ceremony (awards, opening and closure, leader's speech). They often involve social drama as power balance shifts, careers are influenced (if not determined by conference performance[82]) and a few ballots still take place (most of them though are held at other times). Negotiations go on in the backrooms, the bars and the corridors as factions get an opportunity to meet and debate

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[82] One recalls how Ann Widdecombe's 1998 conference speech transformed her into a media star, a rôle she has kept despite leaving Parliament in 2005.

strategy. If British party conferences rarely have the intensity of the social drama that the French socialists usually play at their congresses (Rennes and Reims being the most prominent examples to date), they nevertheless contribute to the restructuring and renewal of the party's sense of identity and unity – indeed, unity is often a paramount theme at Conservative and Labour conferences.

My interest for the performative role of these national meetings stemmed from an interactionist perspective[83]. With the greens, I had looked at the construction of a green identity through the ritualisation of participatory democracy. But beyond self-presentation, I became increasingly intrigued by politics as theatre that contributes to enshrine and naturalise practices and worldviews. Thus, I not only considered what rituals could mean for the participants but also what they did to them and for the organisation. At the micro level, the style of a group (Eliasoph and Lichterman 2003) derives from what participants bring (in terms of their habitus) but is more than the simple addition of their expectations and ways of behaving. In many ways, the annual conference is where a party culture is constructed through the interactions and rubbing of various subcultures. The outcome is a hybrid of national traits (there is a particular debating style, learnt at school and through debating clubs and societies such as the Oxford Union) and institutional constraints (for instance the programme is to a large extent determined by electoral needs as a response or an anticipation of the conference of political opponents), local/sectional colour (in particular regional character but also the influence of specific groups whose influence may be tangential (Church of England, trade unions, regional groups, the Fabians, increasingly lobbyist and PR specialists…)[84]. The group style that emerges then contributes to shape the party culture with, in some cases, the potential to also influence ways of interacting and influencing what it means to behave like a good party member. I show in *Changing Parties* how New Labour actively worked on the potential of the party conference to transform the party image (through the intense mediatisation of the event) as well as the party culture (through diffusing a sense of responsibility in relation to the party's success and through different speech norms and styles of interaction) (Faucher-King 2005, chap. 3 and 6). This process of internalisation of behaviours rests on the production of a discursive rationalisation of the new practices as well

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[83] Symbolic interactionism has been my main source of inspiration, in particular through the work of Erving Goffman. (Goffman 1986; Goffman 1990; Goffman 2005).

[84] The Greens's minute of silence was introduced on the suggestion of Quakers and Buddhists. The Conservatives discussed doing away with Church of England prayer but feared having to accept a variety of other faiths if they started including other Christian denominations. A symptom of the influence of such groups is the nickname given to the established Church, which used to be called « the Tory party at prayer ». This is still debated (for instance http://archbishop-cranmer.blogspot.fr/2009/03/is-church-of-england-still-tory-party.html). Similarly Haegel shows the influence of Christian subculture in the UMP (2012).

as a ritualisation of new ways of behaving. For that matter, the business language of "best practice", public relations (PR) and bench marking proved particular helpful in a party trying to emulate the model of business to demonstrate its professionalism[85]. Moreover, ir reflects the elites' growing conviction that they need professional tools to measure and deliver on what voters want[86].

Held within a month, British party conferences are a national phenomenon and a political ritual dating back to the time of enfranchisement. They mark the beginning of the new political year and their mediatisation ensures that no party can do without one. Small and new parties mark their launch through such an event, as if no party could exist without partying. They are largely routinised but the political context nevertheless bears on the atmosphere. It leads parties to open or close the proceedings and the allocation of passes, to pay attention to the unfolding of news, occasional demonstrations outside, as well as the life of the city they are temporarily located in. One cannot fully grasp how conferences are interdependent and interconnected through observing one single event; nor the addictive nature that they seem to have for many activists who have come back every year for decades, whether or not they are delegates/representatives. Within each party, the autumn meeting is one key cog in a complex architecture of meetings that structure and punctuate the life of party activists. The rhythm of British conferences contrasts with Continental congresses, held every three years and interspaced with smaller gatherings that attract very little attention. In the French system one can think of *universités d'été* and *journées parlementaires* on the one hand, topical *conventions* and statutory *conseils nationaux* that attract far less attention from the media but contribute to keep communication flowing between different levels of the party, ensuring that leadership positions can be explained, that political demands can be expressed and feedback be voiced) but also that sociability and ritualisation can construct emotional bonds, feelings of belonging and of sharing a history, an identity and values. The influence of factions (however informally structured) as well as the boundaries between these groups fluctuate: some play an active role in writing and submitting policy proposals or organisational amendments, others run slates of candidates or merely act as support networks for officials or would-be officials. They play a role in the allocation of rewards, material, process and symbolic incentives.

Party conferences are important for identity construction and for the mobilisation of supporters ("go back to your constituency and prepare for government" as David Steel

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[85] A similar trend is analysed by Haegel (2012) in the case of the UMP.
[86] See Herbts' study of American Conventions and the contrasts between what staffers, journalists and delegates think public opinion wants (Herbst 1998, 138).

famously urged the Liberal conference in 1981) but they also, though increasingly marginally, play a role in the elaboration of policies (the bases of electoral manifestos). They promote and help the legitimisation of policy options and publicise party activities and key actors (something that is important when the party is renewing its team of frontbenchers as was for instance the case for the Conservatives after 1997). It is striking that party conferences have been consistently overlooked by political analysts when they occupy such a central position on the diary and the agenda of political parties[87]. The transformation of British party conferences since the 1990s is important because it is a reflection of changes in the political system and particularly of the demise of political parties, these venerable (read old) and formerly well respected institutions. One can also track an evolution in the democratic models and the growing use of ballots, consultations and referendums. Conference speeches are dramatic performances but also verbal jousting where individual qualities and potential are judged[88]. Careers are influenced by conference performances not only because of the media impression but also because of the networks that are developed and supports mustered. Thus career paths are chartered and discussed in corridors, especially in parties where executive elections are held at conference.

I start this chapter with a reflection on theories of stability and change in political parties. I highlight the need to go beyond the easy analyses of changes in rules, policies and officials or leaders and I suggest we take seriously the strategic uses of symbolic practices that contribute (through the emotions they stir, the expectations they create and the disbelief they suspend) to change the ways party members think about and experience their organisation. In the second part, I explore examples of ritualisation of intra-party democracy, mostly drawn from my work on party conferences.

Reflecting on stability and change in political parties

Although political parties are central cogs of liberal representative systems[89], they have remained relatively opaque organisations to the extent that, in 1992, Katz and Mair complained that we knew little about their internal power dynamics, structures, modus operandi (Katz and Mair 1992, 3). In the years that followed, a number of comparative

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[87] There are of course two note worthy exceptions by Lewis Minkin and Richard Kelly (Minkin 1978; Kelly 1989). In France, interest in these events is equally rare notwithstanding a conference on conferences organised in 2004 at the Sorbonne and a few articles (Sawicki, Bergounioux, and Serne 2000; Bachelot 2006b; Faucher-King and Treille 2003; E. Avril 2007)

[88] William Hague, leader of the Conservatives between 1997 and 2001, was famous for having been one of the youngest ever speaker at conference (he was then 14 years old). Conservative Ann Widdecombe's performance at the 1998 conference transformed her image.

[89] One knows of course the famous quote by Schattschneider that democracy would be unthinkable without them (Schattschneider 1942, 1).

volumes were published (Katz and Crotty 2006; Mair, Muller, and Plasser 2004; Pelizzo 2008; Poguntke 2002; Ware 1995; Whiteley and Seyd 2002; P. Webb, Farrell, and Holliday 2002; Cain, Dalton, and Scarrow 2006; R. J. Dalton and Wattenberg 2002; Farrell, Holliday, and Webb 2004; P. Webb, Farrell, and Holliday 2002; Lawson 1994; Lawson and Poguntke 2004; Ignazi and Ysmal 1998; Rommele, Farrell, and Ignazi 2005) and *Party Politics* was launched. However, an analysis of articles published in the journal between 1995 and 2010 shows that about 15% of articles only were devoted to empirical studies of party organisations, about 8% tested models and 20% were theoretical (Gauja 2010, 3–4).

In line with comparative politics, the sub-field of political parties has, under the influence of US political science, recently moved increasingly towards large-N quantitative studies and testing general hypothesis (about party systems and electorates, responsiveness and levels of trust, policy orientations) and away from organisations as such. In this respect, the prospect of producing a grand theory of the relationships between parties, civil society and the state has appeared increasingly remote since Katz and Mair's cartel-model (Katz and Mair 1995). Beyond models of party organisations and the rationale to explain how parties adapt to their institutional and political context, ambitious attempts to provide simple and testable hypotheses to analyse a vast diversity of phenomena have mostly failed. The theories that have been the most convincing have also largely remained untested or untestable, sometimes too simplistic or mechanistic to be of much help beyond providing shopping lists of either exogenous (electoral shocks, institutional reforms, change in the party system) and endogenous (change of personnel and in particular in the balance of power and dominant coalition, varying levels of membership or professionalization) stimuli, or reflections on the nature (policies, personnel, organisational structure), pace and degrees of change (contingency, radical or staggered). Some of them (Strom 1990; Harmel and Janda 1994) build on Downs' insight (Downs 1957) on the rationality of internal actors, sometimes neglecting the complexity of systems of actors whose individual rationality may not produce a collective one. Overall, the disappointing outcome of these theories of party change could legitimately lead to give up on a general law (Rihoux 2001, 220). Political organisations are particularly difficult to research (Gauja 2010; Aït-Aoudia, Bachelot, and Bargel 2010); they operate in hugely different and often complex contexts and in competitive if not volatile settings. As a result, analysts may have to contend with useful heuristics. For my part, I have focused on in-depth comparison of how parties have experimented and influenced each other in order to reflect on convergence andF contintgency (Faucher-King 2005; Grunberg and Haegel 2007; Judge 1999)). My interest has lied in the analyses of processes of change, such

as the role of professionalization and outsourcing or resistance to change (Faucher-King 2005, 21; Faucher-King 2009; Faucher-King 2008).

We begin by looking at change in rules and in modes of interaction before we turn to the concept of ritualisation and how it can help us understand the strategic uses of symbolic patterned practices to naturalise behaviours.

Changing rules and changing patterns of behaviour

Analysing change is a more or less subtle affair. It is tempting to focus on the most obvious dimensions, or at least the easiest to measure, i.e. change of leadership and dominant coalition, policy and strategy variations, and constitutional reforms (such as changes in internal electoral rules, whether to party office or as party candidates). The degree of institutionalisation, i.e. the degree of formalisation of rules varies a great deal. My first foray into party change was with the greens, who exhibited specific and ambiguous relations with rules *per se* as they hoped to combine spontaneity (seen as a marker of authenticity) with a stickler's eye for the respect of democratic conventions.

At the national level, *Les Verts* have never really stopped reflecting on their structures and several reforms have been adopted since 1984. In 2002, I contributed to the *Participative audit* (API) of *Les Verts*, an unusual organisational audit conducted upon the request of the then National secretary Dominique Voynet. After a few years in government, Voynet had taken the position at the head of the executive committee and set, as one of her key tasks, the objective of improving the efficacy of the party organisation. Three academics familiar with green parties but external to *Les Verts* were mobilised and the principal investigator was a Belgian political scientist, Benoit Rihoux. Although the decision to audit was largely predicated on the dissatisfaction of party members, resistance was anticipated. To accommodate the participatory inclination of the party and to take into account the ongoing reflections on reform of the organisation, it had been agreed that party members and officials would be playing a key role. Several years after the publication of *Les Habits Verts*, the Audit provided me an opportunity to observe national meetings (including *Collège exécutif*) and to help *Les Verts* reflect on internal malaise. Party members and officers answered questionnaires, took part in meetings, responded to drafts and suggested areas of concern.

Several months of consultations, observations and interviews allowed us to identified structural weaknesses and pointed at debilitating practices (Benoît Rihoux, Faucher, and Peirano 2002, 42–44). The study highlighted the frustration of party members and elites towards dysfunctional practices, such as the party's apparent inability to implement decisions

and its lack of coordination. It was clear that some of the problems were not so much linked to party rules as a consequence of ideological and personal rivalries or of a group style (Eliasoph and Lichterman 2003) allowing decisions to be contested incessantly by those who disagreed with them. The audit (API) then led to a proposed reform (RPI), more meetings (including discussions at the *Journées d'été*) and the circulation of documents highlighting the need to promote "best practices". Even though the initiative came from below, was widely supported by the membership, pushed by key party officers, it failed to transform the party. Minor statutory changes were introduced in 2003 and 2008[90] but the process overall led to very few effective changes in decision-making and no real gain in political efficacy. Although I haven't gone back to measure change, the more recent political developments seem to imply that the group style has not changed and thus remains a major obstacle for the future development of the party.

Such work on procedural experimentation and democratic innovation stimulated my reflections on how major parties chose, in the 1990s, to import some of the practices, or at least some of the rhetoric of new organisations in terms of participative democracy. It also drew my attention to party cultures as a complex system of traditions and practices rather than primarily about ideologies and discourse. Thus, the organisational audit of *Les Verts* contributed much to my reflections on change in political parties and thus to the writing of *Changing Parties*.

I had, for some years already, been regularly attending party conferences and my focus had moved from the conferences *per se* to what we could say about party organisations and change through the particular window of the conference. Comparing Labour and the Conservatives immediately raised the question of institutionalisation and attitudes to rules. Party constitutions and rules can appear as a tempting if not solid ground for a comparative analysis but one is soon confronted with either the absence or voluntary imprecision of rules or simply the disregard of rules (Noel, 57–58). If Labour has been known for its attachment to rules (Drucker 1979), the opposite can be said about the Conservatives (Faucher 2003) and the French UMP (Grunberg and Haegel 2007, 77; Haegel 2007). Both latter parties exhibit similarly contrasting attitudes to rule change: whilst the adoption of *Partnership in Power* in 1998 was the outcome of a long process of deliberation, Conservative William Hague "gifted"

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[90] Of course, the most important change in the aftermath of the Audit is the foundation of Europe Ecologie Les Verts, though the merger of Les Verts with the umbrella environmentalist organisation set up for the 2009 European elections. Sadly though, even this opportunity for radical change does not seem to have resolved the problems we had helped them identified and for which we had offered suggestions for change.

a constitution to his party. Indeed, if rules may in some cases be difficult to amend but they are not the main element at stake.

In this conventional vein of institutionalism, I reflected on the crucial role played by informal rules as well as rule manipulation in the elaboration of the conference agendas in British parties (Faucher-King 2005, chap. 5). If it had been easy for the Conservatives to accept the merger of the three organisations, changing ways of behaving seemed much more difficult and the leadership stopped short of playing with key symbols of party identity, preferring instead to move them to less prominent slots on the conference timetable. Such resistance can also be found in the French socialist party: Lefebvre and Sawicki conclude that failure to reform is linked to the group culture and practices (Lefebvre and Sawicki 2006, 254). Although a lot has been written about the construction of Old Labour as a communication device and a scapegoat designed to construct New Labour (Shaw 2002; Shaw 2007), the Blair years have presided over a number of profound changes and the success of the enterprise is in no small way due to the transformation of party culture (in ways that the Conservatives did not dare to do). Meg Russell identifies new attitudes to rules - and an increasing tendency to either avoiding the adoption rules or in fudging them (M. Russell 2005a) – as a key element allowing increased flexibility and control on behalf of the party leadership.

An important step in my reflection thus came with my renewed interest in the literature on rituals by anthropologists and religious studies specialists. To my mind, one of the key contributions of *Changing Parties* is the analysis of practices in the process leading to party change[91]. Despite the resistance from political scientists (Faucher-King 2005, 5–9) and from actors to the idea of taking seriously the role of rituals, what I tried to do was to demonstrate the strategic manipulation of symbolic practices, that is to say how ritualisation contributed to alter modes of interacting as well as collective identity (Berezin 2001, 93). Ultimately, it also contributed to weaken feelings of belonging, identity and thus loyalty.

Ritualisation

Working with the greens helped me understand the role of symbolic practices in (re)creating a political party's identity. Although they are highly critical of the political rituals performed by their political opponents (because of the failure to live up to the promise of democracy), they invented a whole range of patterned practices designed to allow an "authentic" participation. Eliasoph however reminds us that a distanced attitude to ritual may precisely be the competent performance of it if the group's style affirms distance to rules, conventions and

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[91] One could say these practices are performative in that they create a new situation as they enunciate/act it.

traditions (Eliasoph, 1998: 113). Part of the exercise was to demonstrate (to themselves for a start) that they successfully rejected hierarchies, bureaucracies, and the personalisation of power. I take rituals as performances (Handelman 1998; Bell 1993; Grimes 1990; Turner 1982) that contribute to the naturalisation and legitimisation of power relationships (Bell 1998, 82; Barker 2001) rather than as reflections of deep seated beliefs. Rituals mobilise cognitive, affective and physical dimensions that help the internalisation of practices so that they become a "second nature. Patterned activities give institutions their stability and individuals a sense of "ontological security" (Giddens 1991). Moreover, ritualisation creates the appearance of consensus on values, even in its absence (in other words, not all participants will share the same interpretation of what is represented or acted out). They thus carry out important ideological work as they patch over contradictions that might otherwise break the system apart: they allow people who disagree to bond over practice[92]: greens will fight over strategy or policies but agree to vote on whether a vote ought to be taken.

What do rituals do? They contribute to create an atmosphere, expectations and emotions. They frame the interaction and constrain the behaviours of those who take part in it. The British greens introduced in the mid 1980s a minute of silence to begin any party meeting, at all levels of the organisation. Few people know why or when it was introduced (Faucher 1997, 290–93). Nevertheless they can all venture an *ad hoc* explanation: it is simply something the greens do and whatever it is, it helps meetings start on time. The ritual is invented anew as it happens and its authenticity and power is in its performance not the authority of tradition (Dirks 1992, 237). The attunement is particularly interesting as it is declined in all settings and they all "do it" differently. Some explain they use it to reflect on the objective of "consensus seeking", others look through their papers or choose which restaurant they will got to in the evening. It has a liminal quality (Turner 1987) that marks the beginning of political deliberation and democratic participation. At the annual conference, all the doors are shut and no-one can momentarily come in or out. Activists who were wandering in the hall usually stop moving. At the local level in Oxford, it marks a smooth transition from private conversations around the room to focussed discussion.

Annual national meetings (conferences, *journées d'été*, congress as well as the French CNIR[93]) constitute key ritual events in the life of small parties. They are performative in that they create, as they go, green deliberation and decision-making. They create bonds and group

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[92] When the constructed nature of this collective "common sense" comes into view, it is denaturalised and loses its taken-for-granted status and much of its efficacy.

[93] Conseil National Inter-Regional, the "parliament" of Les Verts, elected now every other year on a regional (3/4) and national (1/4) basis, meets a minimum of 4 times a year to deliberate policies and give instructions to the executive college.

boundaries. They stage social dramas, give meaning to activism and deliberations (Faucher-King and Treille 2003). As activists perform participatory democracy, they learn the rules and the stakes of power games (Faucher-King 2005). As they listen to orators and interact in the hallways, novices discover patterns of interaction. In France, they find out that planning to contribute to a debate does not imply that one listens to what others say. In the UK, they learn that to contribute to a plenary debate, one needs to first attend at least one topical workshop, engage with others' views and be prepared to change one's own.

Physical settings are part of the ritual apparatus: they provide the stage (*l'écrin*) and key clues about what goes on. The centre in which conference takes place, the design of the stage and rostrum, the seating arrangements can intimidate participants or on the contrary suggest intimacy. They can invite serious deliberation or a more passive spectator-like attitude. We have all experienced the qualitative differences in students' participation that comes with moving from a lecture theatre to a seminar room and since the 1980s study circles of all kind have become the craze. The Green party's conference organisers have taken this into account: venues where it is possible to set up round tables in the hall rather than rows of seats are preferred; microphones are installed on the floor of the conference, the rostrum being reserved for keynote speeches. British green deliberations are thus structured around face-to-face discussion: orators address a small group, or can look to a small group of interlocutors. On the other hand, with the exception of the *journées d'été* and small group meetings (local groups or committees), *Les Verts* adopt the classic stage/floor design.

Not only actors are embedded in culture but they also, through their social interactions, contribute to change it. If one takes seriously the agency of actors and their need and ability to construct meaning and rework their interpretations, one needs to take a closer look at the process of change within political parties. The extent to which New Labour departed from "Old" Labour has been discussed and disputed but few have looked from the bottom up at the ways in which party members have understood and adapted to the intense push for change brought by the New Labour team. Moreover, once decisions are taken, the process through which it is accepted and implemented within the organisation has received little attention. Indeed, the alleged "re-foundation" of the party and its overnight transformation was never formally approved or even debated within the party. Thus, the success of the rebranding of Labour can be understood as a successful imposition of a particular narrative that turned a slogan into evidence[94].

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[94] The dispute over the name helped the advocates of new Labour in that it created an opposition to the change who could

It might be useful here to reflect on rituals, which I define, following anthropologist Catherine Bell, as embodied practices. Although they may have conscious or explicitly cognitive dimensions to them, what gives ritual acts their 'affective' power lies in the fact that they operate at a largely 'unconscious' level. They are constitutive elements in the performative production and re-production of internalised values (Bell 1993). Performance analogies allow us to focus on what the ritual does, rather than what it means, and to highlight the extent to which symbolic activities are "part of a historical process in which past patterns are reproduced but also reinterpreted and transformed" (Bell 1998, 83). They "enable people to appropriate, modify, or reshape cultural values and ideals" (Bell 1998, 73). Despite what is often assumed, they are less about conforming to immutable rules than they are about the "strategic reshuffling of cultural categories in order to meet the needs of a real situation" (Bell 1998, 78). For that matter, they incorporate the possibility of change.

In his studies of ritual in modern Italian politics, David Kertzer suggests that ritual "discourages critical thinking" (1988: 85) because it plays a major role in conferring legitimacy through the "naturalisation" of ways of behaving. "Through ritual, as through culture more generally, we not only make sense of the world around us, but we are also led to believe that the order we see is not of our own (cultural) making, but rather an order that belongs to the external world itself" (Kertzer, 1988: 85). This was particularly efficiently used during the period. As we are going to discuss, New Labour used the capacity of rituals to naturalise and legitimise particular interpretations of the party, its past practices, what it needed to become, or its environment. How can rituals be organised to manage change? The need to abide by rules, be they formal or informal, have often been frustrating to modernisers and in this case a number of the changes that were sought had to be voted by conference, the very body which powers would be limited. At the same time, such a constraint and the symbolic weight of the conference would confer legitimacy and contribute to eliminate dissenting narratives. Other changes could also come to be taken for granted if sanctioned informally by their performance at conference. Through the gentle manipulation of what seems to be immutable, untouchable, essential to the very identity of the party, new routines of interactions (such as conference debates) could *de facto* contribute to the introduction of new beliefs and values (in democracy as essentially about empowering self-affirming and choosing individuals). Another interesting perspective lays in a reflection on how rituals work, that is in the creation of a world of "as if" (Seligman et al. 2008): as if the party were

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thereby be labelled archaic.

united behind a charismatic and uncontested leader, as if all agreed on policies, as if plenary debates were transparent democratic deliberations. To an extent, the ways in which Conservative representatives have tended to bemoan elites' divisions illustrates this, as does the wilfulness with which Labour delegates maintain the illusion, and sometimes self-delusion of internal party democracy and conference sovereignty, that had, for a long time, been so central to Labour identity. This "world as if" is stimulated through the sharing of emotions. Although the recent decades' obsession with rationality has tended to eclipse the role of emotions, there is renewed interest in them in the social movement literature (Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta 2001; Jasper 1998; Traïni and Collectif 2009; Polletta 2006; Goodwin and Jasper 2004)as well as in the growing subfield of political psychology. Emotions create mental states that facilitate bonding, partisanship or looking for more information[95].

"Each ritual event is a patterned activity to be sure, but it is also invented anew as it happens. (…) The authenticity of the event [is] inscribed in its performance, not in some time and custom sanctioned version of the ritual" (Dirks, 1992: 237). It is important to bear this in mind when one considers a contested process of change such as the one that led to the creation of "New" Labour. In British political parties, national gatherings such as the annual conference play a central role in the definition and construction of cultural codes, and they are only the culmination in a series of regional and national gatherings where practices, interpretations, and beliefs are reproduced and constructed. They weave public and semi-private events that contribute to the "objectification" of practices (Bell 1993): not only do they help confer performances the aura of tradition but they also naturalise them. The first mention of the new label was at the 1994 conference and the new leadership team made great use of the visibility and pomp of the event.

It is common for conference organisers to denigrate or deny rituals. Their resistance reflects how they aspire to use the annual event as the staging of a 'modern' organisation – and thus as a public relations opportunity with clear instrumental objectives. They resent what they perceive as the archaic constraints of tradition because it restricts their ability to innovate. The conference cannot be designed solely for the purpose of political communication and electoral campaigning. It cannot be effective, practical or functional.

For instance, in the late 1990s, New Labour organisers were often contemptuous towards useless rituals, which were unfortunately preserved to "please activists"[96]. They were

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[95] George Marcus, paper presented to the seminar "Les sciences sociales en questions: grandes controverses épistémologiques et méthodologiques", Sciences Po, June 2011. See also(G. E. Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen 2000)
[96] In a way, contempt for party conferences as ritual is widely shared. The majority of political journalists I interviewed on

convinced that these practices and symbols were pointless or counterproductive. They were therefore initially happy to eliminate or modernise what they could: red was replaced by purple, the *Red Flag* gave way to pop music, etc. Their objective was to demonstrate to the public that the party had changed, that Labour was henceforth 'new'. With the help of public relations specialists, this was largely successful and the conference became, in the image of its Conservative equivalent, a well choreographed and rehearsed show. However, some of the New Labour elites were determined to use symbolic acts to transform not only the party image but also its internal culture. I interviewed Tom Sawyer (General Secretary of Labour, 1994-1998) twice. When we met after he had stepped down, he explained how changes were justified in the name of efficiency and outside pressures (cost reduction, rationalisation, expediency, media pressure). "Once it's done it's done: nobody thinks about it"[97] and the new practice can be reproduced in the future, even when what precipitated the change no longer applies. Because Tony Blair "had an acute understanding of the links between politics, culture and organisation" (Sawyer, 2000: 12), symbolic changes were carefully picked to foster the creation of a "New" Labour party[98]. But with the benefit of hindsight, he also considered that disrespect for tradition profoundly hurt sections of the party and contributed to erode a sense of belonging (Faucher-King 2005, 61–62). The demobilisation of members who feel they no longer belong because their organisation has changed is certainly not surprising and has been well researched (Fillieule 2005; Klandermans 2005). One can certainly consider that part of New Labour's project was to convince "old Labour members" that the party had radically changed. A decline in membership and activism should thus have been anticipated if not welcome.

I come back in chapter 5 on the implications of the party targeting different social groups. It is only when new recruits failed to compensate satisfactorily for the "spiral of demobilisation" that party officials rediscovered the importance of an attachment to the party that goes beyond instrumental considerations (Ware 1992) but before doing so it is necessary to analyse how

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the conference circuit considered conferences as largely useless in terms of news content (see also Stanyer (2001): there are few policy debates and decisions worthy of real coverage and these "tribal" meetings (i.e. self-referential and identity building) are mostly a catwalk. Indeed, conferences are not so much interesting for their role in decision or policy-making or for their impact on public opinion but because they are a window into party organisations and political networking, processes of mobilisation and identity construction.

[97] Sawyer, interview, House of Lords, May 2002.

[98] If the reform of the policy-making process was probably the most noticeable change (and the outcome of years of discussions and experimentation taken to a new scale rather than solely an instrumental and strategic changeattention given to internal and external communication. The reforms were the. Sawyer admitted that the effect of new practices (such as making mandatory and equal representation of men and women in the conference delegation or introducing a centralised membership system) were not all well anticipated.

the staging of conference illustrates the uses of symbolic practices by mainstream (as opposed to marginal) actors.

Staging party democracy

My research shows that the ritualisation of democratic deliberation is a way to create a consensus and a collective identity (Faucher 1999a, chap. 8; Faucher-King 2005, chap. 3–4 and 9)[99]. Whilst what it implies is unclear and sometimes quite contrasted if one take only parties of the left who consider this to be key to their organisation (greens/verts, socialists, labour, liberal democrats) and what participants are prepared not to question. It is important to reflect on what is at stake for internal and external audiences, for the participants and how traditions is used as a resource that can be used for strategic purposes. There is a suspension of disbelief that comes with the habituation of ritual: the expectation of familiarity can help construct internal legitimacy, loyalty and solidarity. Conferences and congresses provide the ideal setting in which to analyse how ritualisation can be used by parties to serve a variety of purposes such as constructing identity, building solidarity, staging unity, competence and purpose, energising supporters[100]. British conferences are unique in many ways (their age, their regularity, their agenda and the structure of their time table, their length, their geography, the media coverage they receive…). In contrast with the party congresses that European parties hold every two or three years, they have provided British parties opportunities that escape others, or rather, opportunities that may not be fulfilled as well elsewhere. It is therefore probably no surprise if until recently political parties remained the uncontested centre of the UK representative institutions. Although it is impossible to establish a causality link, there is an interesting concomitance between the growing distrust of parties and parliamentary politics (Schmitter and Trechsel 2004), the recent changes within party organisations that are visible through the evolution of these conferences (Faucher-King 2005) and the social experimentation undertaken by New Labour in government (Faucher-King and Le Galès 2010b; Crouch 2004; Leys 2003; Clarke et al. 2007; Power 1999; Hay 2007)

For most contemporary parties, internal democracy is a tricky issue. It contributes to external and internal legitimacy so that even parties that do not consider that members should play much role in policy-making want to pay lip service to the parliamentary procedures and stage

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[99] The paradox is that New Labour largely contributed to the destruction of the Old Labour identity and contributed to replace it with something that seems in a way less about "collective" identification and more about a readiness to use the party as a means to an end, as a marketing product, a logo or trade mark. It is only when they realised what had been lost that New Labour reintroduced some of the symbols and rituals that had been discarded (colours, hymns) and returned to (just) Labour.

[100] This remains true even though most members never (ever) go to conference, in part because of conferences (and to a much lesser extent congresses) are media event (Dayan 1994).

some form of debate. Most of my research and writing on conferences and ritualisation has focused on British parties, even if I have also observed French meetings, as counterpoints and implicit comparative references. One can deconstruct the annual conference as composed of many ritual elements, encapsulated within a larger setting. To use Mitterrand's phrase, the congress is "*la Pâque des socialistes*", a key calendar ritual celebrating a renewal, faith affirming and enthusing.

In the following pages I analyse how political parties use ritualisation to create emotions and practices that contribute to bolster the legitimacy and the authority of the leader as well as to demonstrate to themselves and others that they are, as they claim, democratic organisations. I then analyse the strategic use of the annual conference to create New Labour as a platform to rebrand the party as well as melting pot in which to transform how members thought they ought to act and interact.

Leadership: legitimacy, authority

When thinking about ritualisation at party conferences, the first thing that comes to mind is probably the leader's speech[101]. To date it remains the crucial moment for the media and the party and is probably the most important (and most watched) speech for the party leaders. It is a unique opportunity to spell out party policies in detail and the best opportunity for free publicity when launching an electoral campaign. It is also a defining moment for the incumbent. Leaders have explained how important or even how terrifying[102] the event is. I analyse in *Changing Parties* how the event is ritualised, staged, placed in a historical perspective as well as adapted to the needs of the organisation and those of the leader, the timing in the electoral calendar (Faucher-King 2005, chap. 4).

Whilst everything is set to ensure the success of the event, the stirring of the right emotions, and the construction of a legitimate, unifying, enthusing leader, there is, like in any such event, the potential for challenge and for failure – whether mishap, coup or poor performance. Not all rituals of legitimisation work (Faucher-King 2005, 84–86)[103]. One could for instance take the (in)famous speech in which Iain Duncan Smith, then leader of the Conservative party, thought he would use to his advantage his well-known lack of charisma and the media

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[101] In the last decade, the leader's speech has been supplemented in all three main parties by other stage appearances of the leader, for Question and Answer session for instance. This reflects an attempt to capture more of the waning media interest in conferences but probably reflects also a banalisation of the event, almost a desacralisation of the leader.

[102] Interview with Neil Kinnock at the party conference 2002. See (Faucher-King 2005, 80).

[103] Humour is a necessary component of speeches in Britain (and contrasts sharply with the French or the American style for that matter). Self-deprecatory humour is all the more welcome for a leader (and Prime Minister) mocked for his messianic style. In 1998, Blair famously made fun about his ability (or lack thereof) to speak French: he had allegedly put his foot in it when talking to French journalists with Jospin. Such an example illustrates how conference temporarily suspends hierarchies and rules and can be likened to a ritual of inversion as analysed by Victor Turner (Turner 1970).

platform to fight off the plots against his leadership that were rumoured. He was then the first party leader ever elected by the entire party membership and hoped that the legitimacy derived from the procedure by appealing to the party representatives in the hall and TV audiences. In 2002, the stage was set to give the impression of a man rising above the surrounding crowd of members and his speech structured around the idea of the "determination of a quiet man". The following year, the tactic changed and IDS adopted a much more aggressive style: "the quiet man is here to stay, and he's turning up the volume." Although the practice was by no means new, the press reported for the first time how stooges where standing in the crowd to cheer during and after his speech. Because there is so much at stake, the masters of the ritual work on the setting and the play. They also produce *post hoc* interpretations, in order to ensure as much as possible the desired effect in a media saturated aged. The culture of PR and spin that developed during the New Labour years brought for instance a systematic debriefing of the leader's speech between the journalists and the Prime Minister's Press secretary (Faucher-King 2005, 81).

All political parties have to deal with the opportunities and the constraints presented by the system in which they operate, whether or not they agree with the rules or demand that they be changed. One of the characteristics of the greens is their opposition to the presidentialisation or personalisation of power and their preference for collegial decision-making. Their reluctance to elect a party leader means that they have tended to be extremely uneasy about creating the space – and particularly the space on stage – for individual personalities. Rather than leaders, greens have several spokepersons and a secretary or chair of the national executive. Individuals tempted to take centre stage and receiving more attention from the media than judged acceptable by activists have often been viciously attacked (Faucher 1999a, 216–20). On the other hand, they have had to adapt to the constraints of the political systems in which they operate and the pressure of the media to find reliable sources has been relentless. They have given up rotation for their elected representatives in the European parliament; they have fiddled with their rules about multiple office holding and found ways to allow devoted activists to move about official positions to go around the rule about not holding on to internally elected positions for more than a couple mandates. The biggest constraint for the French is of course the presidential elections. They have presented candidates on their own since 1989 (the party did not exist in either 1974 or 1981 when Dumont and Lalonde respectively stood on political ecology platforms) with mixed successes and a lasting unease about selecting one of their own. Despite their resistance to the personalisation of politics, the British decided to elect a party leader in 2008. Caroline Lucas,

first county councillor, then MEP became leader and eventually the first – and to date only – green MP in 2010. Once they accepted the institutionalisation of the position, British greens also followed in part the standards for the staging of the leader's speech imposed by their political rivals.

Comparing British parties on the other hand highlights the national debating styles and tradition. Moreover, the presence of television cameras has contributed to a particular style of smooth delivery, of apparent dialogue with the audience rather than elaborately written speeches. Microphones have eliminated the need for a booming voice and cameras allow TV audiences and now those in the hall itself to see close ups of the orators – and sometimes of selected individuals in the audience (wives, parents or colleagues on the frontbench), who can look straight into the camera. We find a fascination for an illusion of spontaneity and authenticity. For some time, the ability to perform as-if-not-reading was helped by devices such as prompters and mirrors, used now across UK political conferences. The art of conference rhetoric has evolved from the harangue that was still prevalent in the late 1980s. In the last decade, the fashion has been for politicians to deliver their speeches without notes (Faucher-King 2005, 90), as if talking to the audience and to free themselves from the rostrum. On the other hand, French politicians are sticking to humourless and often comparatively pompous style, historical and literary references. They come to the rostrum with their (sometimes handwritten) speeches, that may have been circulated to the press but mostly have not –nor will be[104].

Pluralism, debate and dissensus

Individuals are always in part restricted by the context in which they evolve and which provides filters through which to make sense of the world. However, one need not assume that all individuals will necessarily draw the same interpretations of rules, collective representations or situations. Lively political debates within green parties themselves (or any other) illustrate how cultural change emerges from the frictions between different interpretations and the efforts of actors to align experience with interpretations and to promote and assert their own sets of theories and beliefs[105]. Thus, one can understand the culture of any given organisations as the product of complex and imperfect weaving between a variety

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[104] Note that in the UK, speeches by members of the frontbench teams are all cleared with party leadership, usually sent (and embargoed) to the media as bullet points on the eve of the event, as full texts on the morning and trailed after the event by debriefing. Stanyer has analysed in detail the rise of the news media at conference (Stanyer 2001).

[105] See the discussion on how greens are changed by governmental experience (Benoit Rihoux and Rüdig 2006; Frankland, Lucardie, and Rihoux 2008). Bevir and Rhodes suggest the concept of "tradition", understood as "a contingent product of struggles over different ways of conceiving of and responding to constructed dilemmas" (Bevir and Rhodes 2006b, 79).

of threads brought by individuals, themselves socially embedded in a variety of groups. It is not difficult to conceive how the "tradition" or the "group style"[106] can be complex and pluralist at the same time: political parties are the product of decades of debates and internal conflicts, of successive periods of revision and transformations; they are also composed of a plurality of factions or *sensibilités*[107], regional and local organisations with their own way of interacting with their local environment (Eliasoph and Lichterman 2003; Sawicki 2011, 6) and sometimes contrasting views over strategy or organisation[108]. What party conferences do is create a space for interactions and therefore the collective production of a "style", a culture that is more than the addition or the juxtaposition of the threads brought by local, sectional or social groups.

Party conferences are at a critical juncture as they are semi-open, or semi-private, meetings. They are by excellence the place for internal debates but the presence of the media means that controversies are likely to be portrayed as signs of division, and thereby proofs that the party is divided, the leader unable to lead his organisation, let alone the country. The question is particularly tricky for parties of the left attached to internal diversity, deliberation or structurally organised around "*courants*", such as the *Parti socialiste* or *Les Verts*[109]. Transparency is a central tenet of green conceptions of democracy (Faucher 1999a, 181–6) but it has also been the source of some of their poor image in the media. However, other parties have actually benefited from such transparency, such as the parti socialiste or *die Grünen*, others like British Labour have grown paranoid about it since the 1992 defeat and the relentless attacks from the press. There is a fine line between staging diversity and internal strife, between a healthy debate and open warfare, between controlling the party image and letting factions or individuals use the media as resources to gain advantage in the internal competition. In the 2006 closed presidential primaries, the televised debates exposed the ideological divisions (Grunberg and Haegel 2007, 70). Experience with such risk is one of the explanations for the moderation and good tenure of the 2011 open left presidential primary.

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[106] Bevir and Rhodes use Gadamer to articulate the concept of "tradition" (Bevir and Rhodes 2003). Eliasoph and Lichterman are inspired by Bourdieu in their research on social groups and thus in their elaboration of the concept of "group style" (Eliasoph and Lichterman 2003; Lichterman 2005; Eliasoph 1998). Both are efforts at narrowing and defining precisely something usually quickly labelled as "culture", with all the problems associated with the use of a vernacular concept. The sociology of culture and cultureal studies remain a primarily anglo-saxon academic field (Mattelart and Neveu 2008).

[107] This is the preferred label in Les Verts to describe the fluid factions that come together as groups of signatories of a general assembly motion. The British greens have not had stable factions since Green 2000 in 1992. In Labour, it would be interesting to contrast for instance the style of what was dubbed the "prawn cocktail tendency" (Ramsay 1998) with traditional "old" Labour ethos (Drucker 1979).

[108] Whilst the British greens have adopted a national strategy of targeting key constituencies, the Oxford group has followed a different route presented candidates in every ward at every local election every year (city council renewed by third for a 4 year mandate, district council every four years).

[109] Factions within Les Verts have called themselves Verts Pluriel, Vert ouvert… and green ideology be seen as a camaieu, a mosaic or a kaleidoscope (Faucher 1999a, 60).

National meetings[110] illustrate this. At the *Assemblée générale*, the main item on the agenda is a general policy motion that will guide the work of the *Collège exécutif* for following years. Prior to 1997, the annual national conference attracted hundreds of members but few spoke. The constitutional reform aimed at remedying this lack of participation thanks to the organisation of decentralised general assemblies. These were thought to be less intimidating and of easier access. However, whether at the regional or the federal level, time for discussion is still usually split between the motions in proportion to their electoral result and this is where factions, however fluid and informal, play a crucial role. For the French greens, pluralism is about the preservation of a balance between factions[111].

Although only 15% of members are involved in them (Benoît Rihoux, Faucher, and Peirano 2002, 1.1.1.32), *sensibilités* structure debates and effectively restrict participation. Each group of motion signatories is then free to choose its representatives, often allocating more time to "celebrities"[112] than to novices or grassroots members[113]. Contributions to debates are occasions to express a personal take in line with the motion one is supporting. It is thus not surprising if debates rarely amount to a deliberation in which participants engage with the ideas of others with the objective of coming to a consensus that could imply a modification of their initial position. They are delegates, defending the positions decided in a prior "*reunion de motion*". In other cases, when the debate is open to the floor, would-be speakers are asked to register their names at the beginning of the debate[114]. They then queue until they are called to the microphone - quite often they do not listen to speakers who precede or follow them as they are busy discussing in the hallway. Orators are nominally called after they put their name down on the list. When open debates are organised, there are sometimes contributions taken from the hall without such a list. There is no attempt to pretend not to know who's who. Rather than deliberations in which contributors are prepared to engage with others' ideas, these debates often end up as a succession of monologues: orators want to express their personal views and will do so, irrespective of whether it is relevant to the discussion topic. In the process, what comes out is the staging of one's personality and her and ideas with little consideration for understanding the positions of others and the search of consensus.

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[110] This applies in particular to the general assembly, at the national or regional level. Debates in the CNIR tend to focus on more specific policies and discussions focus on articles and amendments rather than general orientations.

[111] This echoes how the Socialists and Labour approach pluralism (Faucher-King and Treille 2003).

[112] That is, activists with a national profile, acquired through their work in national committees, through participation in the CNIR, as elected representatives or as historical figures in the movement. Despite *Verts'* commitment to equality, alphabetical order is not always adopted to list all the signatories of a motion.

[113] Activists always describe themselves as "grassroots" or "de base", even when to the hilarity of the assembly a cheeky member in IT, added to the name of the orator on the large screen "*conseiller regional de base*" (AG 1993).

[114] They are then and are organised as much as possible alternating male and female contributors. Parity is also sometimes called "*chabada*" because of the famous tune in the film by Lelouch, "*un homme une femme*".

Interestingly, this model of debate is imported from the Socialists, who adopted proportional representation with lists in 1971 in order to protect the various groups that were merging for the foundation of the party at Epinay. In the PS, the valorisation of debates creates new opportunities for the expression of individuals and contributes to undermine sources of unanimity and homogeneity that helped the construction of a collective "we". Debates challenge faith and the ability to construct meaning together as individual interpretations are valorised (Lefebvre and Sawicki 2006, 184).

International comparison within a party family provides interesting insights into party traditions, for instance on the subject of how policy and strategy debates are understood and practiced. In the article I published with Eric Treille, we compare different approaches to deliberation. We show the Socialists' reliance on the written word, proportional allocation of time, a hierarchical understanding of factional organisation and of the legitimacy of expression. The flowery and very literary speeches of the French socialist congress would sound terrible at the Labour conference. There, speeches tend to have become policy oriented, fact-based with a grounding in individual experience. They also usually eschews intellectualism in favour "common sense"(Faucher-King and Treille 2003).

Internal democracy is a central tenet of the partisan identity of social-democrats as well as greens. Therefore, members' contributions to policy-deliberation (in one fashion or another) is of crucial importance[115]. Interestingly, individual members' knowledge of internal politics, their pragmatism about electoral strategy or their own realistic ambition means that they experience varying degrees of cognitive dissonance when their normative ideals are confronted with existing practices (Faucher-King 2005, 153). The staging of random selection of speakers seems to be an important part of the ritualisation of intra-party democracy in the UK and is a peculiar way to demonstrate equality of party members as contrasting in particular with the succession of keynote speakers and front bench politicians. Hierarchies thus appear momentarily suspended but it is a world 'as if' (Seligman et al. 2008; Turner 1969). As I explored in *Les habits verts*[116], the staging of participatory democracy is largely an exercise in identity building: it contributes to convince the activists of how they are distinctive from their political opponents – and it is actually a common trait across conference goers on the left: whether greens, liberal democrats, socialists or Labour, they all claim that

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[115] If the Conservatives have no expectations about the impact of conference debates on party policy – and mostly expect the leadership to get the pulse of the party (Kelly 1989; Faucher-King 2005, 113, 149).

[116] Thanks to Colin Hay for pointing to me the interesting potential double-meaning/cross cultural pun of *habits verts*. The book explores green habits/habituations (*Vertitudes*, which was the title of my PhD) more than clothes. The habit, in this case, makes the Green/ l'habit fait le vert, if not the monk.

their very own party is the "democratic-est of them all". Thus, despite the double-speak and somehow the manipulation of the credulity of first-time conference goers, the Labour party machines performs through the ritualisation of spontaneity and chance an important service to its members who want to believe in what is presented but also want their party to present the best image of itself.

Thus, following Goffman, one can fruitfully reflect on the metaphore of the stage when thinking about the show that is put together at conference, in a way just as the conference organisers do. The metaphor of the front and the back stage has been acutely understood by the parties most exposed to media intrusion (which is also a great public relation opportunity) and they play on the tension to convince conference participants to behave in the most appropriate way (Bachelot 2011, 128). In the case of New Labour, it was seen as paramount in the mid 1990s to demonstrate and stage the united party. Delegates, including those most sceptical about the leadership's ideological orientations, were keen to play their role in the presence of journalists (Faucher-King 2005, 134).

Strategic uses of the annual conference

I now want to turn to a particular example in which the conference was used strategically and an instrument, amongst others to transform the party: that is to introduce new ways of interacting, new modes of thinking, facilitate the career of individuals exhibiting qualities different from those that had been preferred previously. My contention is that the ritualisation of conference contributed to insure that change was more than cosmetic.

The rebranding of Labour was a success but it was not solely an exercise in image management. Nor was it a smooth and uncontested process. Modern communication strategies make great use of the endless repetition of the message, to the point were audiences can almost believe it is "fact"[117]. The New Labour team used marketing techniques to promote a narrative that suited the image of a political party radically transformed, thoroughly modernised, professionalised and fit to govern. For this purpose they made full use of a whole array of means of symbolic communication. They registered the logo, developed the strategy of a brand and reflected on the various dimension of their product. They ensured everyone was "on-message"[118] and centralised campaigning. For several years, officials and politicians used a Manichean rhetoric emphasising the opposition between good (new) and bad (old) and

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[117] The juxtaposition of clips of various mainstream media repeating ad nauseam the same expressions and clichés is used to great comic effect by the American satirical news program, the Daily show by Jon Stewart http://www.thedailyshow.com/
[118] They demonised (sometimes vilified in the press through unnamed leaks) those who did not abide despite the combination of incentives and punishment.

applied to various aspects of the organisation, depending on the audience and the objective. "Old Labour" became a scapegoat charged with all the evils from which the party wished to distance itself. Self-labelled modernisers considered that a reform of the organisation was necessary to convince voters that the party was different from its earlier unelectable incarnation. "The past [was] recreated to serve the present's strategic needs. To the modernisers the central problem was the inability of the Party - 'Old Labour' - to obtain the trust and confidence of the public. (...) To maximise the public impact of the new name, the contrast with the old had to be as stark as possible" (Shaw 1996, 217).

Clearly, to a large extent, the strategy was directed at the electorate and the "hostile press" but it also served to convince the party base. Change cannot be imposed from above. It is usually met with some resistance because organisations are conservative and actors strategic (Crozier, Friedberg, 1981). Those who understood how to use the system worked and could manoeuvre within it were understandably reluctant to see their influence wane (even though they would in time find ways to work under new rules). They also had to be convinced that they wanted a "New" Labour rather than a new leader and a strategy to win the elections. Hence, one must not neglect the fact that a good deal of the rhetorical force was directed at party members and affiliated organisations, who were bombarded with a discourse presenting change as a necessity. Tony Blair has many times expressed a vision of change that combines fatalism and voluntarism and denies any other alternative: "The issue is: do we shape [change] or does it shape us? Do we master it, or do we let it overwhelm us? That's the sole key to politics in the modern world: how to manage change. Resist it: futile; let it happen: dangerous. So - the third way - manage it"[119]. This voluntaristic attitude to change was often associated with another leitmotiv of the New Labour team, that is "modernisation". Because it merges teleological undertones, the idea of ineluctable progress and positive connotations of technological developments, "modernisation" is a highly ambiguous and thus powerful rhetorical tool (Finlayson 2003). It also served as an argument in the contest over the nature of the Labour party under the new leadership.

A perspective from below can help us understand the processes through which individual members understood and adapted to the introduction of new organisational rules and norms of conduct. "In rendering tacit knowledge explicit, [interpretive work] makes silenced discourses speak, thereby engaging questions of power" (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2006, xx). How did members respond to the barrage of propaganda that suddenly confronted them and that

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[119] Speech at Tübingen University, 30 June 2000.

challenged, derided and rubbished the organisation they loved and thought they belonged to? Did they change their beliefs about what the party stood for or about their role in response to assertion from the leadership that the party had changed? How did they react when their practices were denounced as archaic? How did they accept the leadership's claim that the party needed to be modernised, its policy-making process transformed.

In the following section I analyse some of the narratives that were spun in a reflexive process of change and adaptation. Large organisations, such as political parties, are made up in a variety of local and regional contexts (Sawicki 1997; Hastings 1991), which have a considerable influence on their practices, each associated with its own styles of interaction. Despite the existence of a strong industrial history linked to car manufacturing West Oxford Labour constituency party (CLP) contrast with the Scottish mining Stirling CLP. Members are likely to both recognise each other as "colleagues" and to note differences in the ways they interact within their local group that go beyond the way the Scottish accent some of them are likely to have. Indeed, speech styles and intonations as well as dress codes and demeanours have long been social and class markers in the UK. They operate similarly transparently in organisations that pride themselves in creating a brotherhood or a family that transcends outside classifications (Faucher-King 2005, chap. 3).

A group's culture is built from the experience of members and the embedded-ness of the group within a wider social framework. People instinctively recognise different group settings and adapt their thoughts and behaviours to them, thereby reacting on occasions differently in different contexts. They navigate constantly between different settings, which does not imply schizophrenia or instability[120] but an ability to juggle with the nuances of encased identities. The relative success of Scottish Labour compared to its English counterpart would contribute to shape members' perspectives on the party. This meant in particular, that it is likely that the message about the urgency of modernisation sounded far less convincing North of the Border. Stories about the failure of the internal policy process to respond to voters' demands or the outdated local management structures were also likely to be perceived differently by passive members or activists. Did they know how the compositing process worked? Had they ever submitted a motion or been a delegate for the party? How ready were they to take part in policy forums? Actors may interpret loosely new norms of behaviour, or chose not to comply. As organisations composed of volunteers, they may be particularly vulnerable to either voice

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[120] See also Douglas (1986).

or exit (Hirschman 1990) if they felt the organisation they belonged to had moved beyond themselves.

What makes regional and national party meetings so interesting is that they draw together participants from diverse territorial and social horizons. They interpret what they see and what they are expected to do according to their traditions. They are sometimes forced to reassess their beliefs in light of new information that pose a dilemma. In such situations of co-presence, practices are both reproduced and co-created. Participants are changed by these experiences and take back to their local settings changed beliefs and expectations about what the appropriate way to behave is. Conferences not only objectify the continuity of the organisation but they also create seeds of change for a variety of party contexts.

Conferences are one of the key arenas, beyond the local group, in which activists get first hand experience of what it means to belong to the organisation[121]. British party conferences offer a useful illustration because in the space of a few weeks, each party enact its own interpretation of what it means to them to organise democratically, debate political ideas and policies[122]. In each case, conference goers behave largely according to what is the accepted/anticipated practice in their group of choice. This work remains largely below the surface of consciousness as we learn to check out what others do in order to pick up the explicit and implicit norms that structure interactions. This of course also means that new comers are mostly unaware of past habits. New Labour used the influx of conference novices (brought about by new rules regarding their selection) to promote new routines and rules of interactions, with a visible impact on party culture (Faucher-King 2008, 140).

Face-to-face meetings contribute to the incorporation and the institutionalisation of social norms because they allow individuals to "walk the path" (Eliasoph and Lichterman 2003; Giddens 1986). Although speech is the main dimension of communication, we also need to take into account what Goffman called the "rituals of interaction" (Goffman 1990), that is the non-verbal means used by actors to convey, and reinforce, an impression. Such practices reveal different levels of self-reflexivity and awareness of constraints. Little of what we do in daily life is actually specifically thought through: we act out of habit and we follow routines. When placed in a new situation, we transpose what we have successfully done in the past. We act out of a competence that is embodied rather than discursive. Embodied practices exceed the limits of rational discourse and are not straightforwardly accessible through reflexivity.

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[121] Only a small fraction of the membership attends conference even though the number of participants inflated during the period of my study, to reaction 25000 participants at the 2003 Labour conference. Many pass holders were journalists, lobbyists and exhibitors in the conference fringe. Nevertheless, the number of visitors' passes has great greatly increased.

[122] A great deal goes on at these conferences as I have explained elsewhere (Faucher-King 2005).

This does not mean that we are unable to provide *a posteriori* justification, only that calculations about costs and benefits do not bear on these micro decisions because we are influenced by our *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1974) or act within a tradition. In a new context, we also check out what others do in order to pick up the, often implicit, norms that structure interactions. Such structural guidelines give institutions their stability and individuals a sense of ontological security (Giddens 1991)[123]. Such patterns are not enforced as such but it is striking to witness the caution of "freshers", be they new members or long time ones who are attending their first meeting and are careful to avoid blunders (Gellner 1991). Most first comers observe the ways more experienced members behave in order to fit in. "Doing what the Romans do" is a condition of social integration.

Conferences and forums provide the context in which to observe the dynamic construction of a party culture. Whilst a large number of participants are seasoned activists, such events also swarm with newcomers. In some cases, these "freshers" have been party members for years but never had the opportunity to attend, if only because most constituencies and parties used delegation as rewards for dedicated activists. Regional and local policy forums were created not only to increase participation and inclusivisity, as was the official rationale, but also as efficient arenas in which to diffuse favoured interpretations and practices. In other words, members could be "educated". Ministers and senior party figures have been encouraged to attend these policy events because they provide opportunities to present pedagogically governmental policies. Study circles have also been shown to enhance the participants' ownership of ideas.

How do novice delegates encounter the intimidating circumstances of the annual conference, with its thousands of delegates, visitors and ex-officio – and more recently its bewildering crowd of media and lobbyists (Faucher-King 2005)? Constituency and trade union delegates sit close to each other in the hall but do not really mix. The former, are mostly left to their own devices - unless they come from a very large constituency or benefit from the presence of experienced friends or colleagues who attend as visitors. Novices are often confused by the process and sometimes struggle to follow debating and voting procedures. Keen to do well, they sometimes spend hours listening to plenary sessions before rushing to a fringe meeting[124]. They are also often surprised to discover how different the conference is from

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[123] See Balsiger as well as O'Brien, Penna and Hay for a criticism of the empirical basis of Beck and Giddens' theories of the modern individiual (Balsiger 2011, 38; O'Brien, Penna, and Hay 1999).

[124] Luckily for her, the success of the party means that many fringe events now include a buffet or at least refreshments, thanks to the generous support of commercial sponsors. In the mid 1990s, Labour discovered that the conference could be a major fundraising exercise(Faucher-King 2005, chapter 10).

what they have been reading in the press or from what they imagined – in particular in relation to spontaneity and democracy. A number of novices I spoke to had been shocked to discover that delegates wishing to speak were given advice on how to dress and how to prepare their speech. On the other hand, few experienced activists seemed to volunteer information that could reveal how the apparently spontaneous and authentic event is carefully managed, sometimes scripted.

On the other hand, union delegates are chaperoned: they receive instructions on how to vote and explanations about what happens. Even though the block vote has been abolished, meetings help them coordinate votes. "I cannot vote according to my conscience, but it is better because there is accountability," explains a UNISON delegate who attends her first conference. Often integrated in large delegations, they are given a readily available frame to make sense of the procedures and the implications of ballots and conference decisions. Regular discussions provide fresh interpretations, ways to solve dilemmas and conflicts between beliefs and practice. They hang about in groups and go to union sponsored parties. The interactions of such a diverse membership produce a common culture that nevertheless also preserves distinct traditions.

In 1995, the Labour party adopted a number of rules that changed dramatically the composition of the national conference, boosting considerably the proportion of inexperienced participants[125]. The unions' share of the vote at conference was reduced to 70 per cent in 1993, then to 50 per cent when direct membership rose above 300,000 members in 1995 and at the same time, conference votes were to be announced in percentages rather than millions, as it was the custom. Parity and rotation were made compulsory by 1996[126] and the process of selection also changed, so that delegates were elected by members rather than selected by the members of the constituency party general management committee. As women had been rare in delegations, the new rule necessarily brought first timers in the following years. in 1996, 80 per cent of delegates were first timers. They brought their dress codes[127] and their norms of interaction, their expectations about a modern political party or a democratic process. As a result the group style was adjusted, reflecting an obvious "*embourgeoisement*" of the Labour conference[128]. In the 1990s as in the past, the leadership hoped that the "humility [of new

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[125] If only because delegations needed to abide by the rule of parity: unions and constituency parties had to select women, who in many cases had often not gone to conference before.

[126] Where only one delegate is appointed, this must be a woman at least every other year (Rulebook, section 3).

[127] Delegates wishing to speak may not only increase their chances by wearing a tie, they also often want to present well for their few minutes of celebrity: they dress up and wear suits.

[128] The rise of the "prawn cocktail" tendency has been criticised (Ramsay 1998). Indeed, an urban professional style increasingly prevails over the union dominated working class atmosphere. In the absence of statistics of the social

delegates] could be turned into conformity" (Minkin, 1978: 163) or that they would be impressed by the governmental power and more likely to assent[129]. They believed that they would not dare challenge the leadership or would not know how to use the rulebooks to their advantage. They also thought that women would to be more malleable and less confrontational. The promotion of women was both a political commitment and a promotional argument (with the election of "Blair babes" in 1997 and the nomination of more women in positions of power).

A concern over the need to manage better plenary debates is also linked to another constitutional change, brought about in 1993: the end of the trade union domination of conference votes. Whilst delivering the votes had been a simple task, mapping delegates' position mobilised a growing number of party staff because constituency members could be more easily swayed by powerful orators[130]. It was important for the success of the New Labour transformation that conference delegates understood that a good party member would talk positively about the government and articulate a concise argument illustrated with an anecdote or a story demonstrating the authenticity and personal dimension of the point raised. Delegates determined to speak are encouraged to ask for help from the regional staff. "I was asked to produce a draft and to state how I would be dressed. The draft came back with very helpful comments and dressing tips: a tie and blue shirt. I bought both but it still did not work and I wasn't called," explains Samuel who adds tongue in check: "is it because others had nicer ties?[131]" Delegates react in various ways to the discovery of this informal system of speaker selection. Most newcomers initially take at face value the appearance of chance selection by the Chair that is given when "the woman with a green jacket and a yellow folder" is called to the rostrum. Julie was shocked to discover that she had been groomed to speak on education because her views were on-message. She thought debates reflected spontaneity and authenticity but was invited to attend a workshop on how to speak in public and given suggestions on how to best present herself. Other activists are given helpful figures, encouraged to bring to the fore the human, the individual, the emotional connection.

Both on and off the platform, the general group style has evolved and its effect was visible not only to journalists but also to participants. Effectively, what was attempted was a remodelling of the imagined community (Anderson 1991). In 1995 and 1996, a number of the delegates I

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background of activists, evidence can only be derived from the transformation of the conference atmosphere.

[129] The idea that activists are more radical than ordinary members as well as elected representatives and voters is not novel. It was theorised in 1973 by John May in his "law of curvilinear disparity".

[130] The media are not the only one to blame for the stage management of debates.

[131] 1997 conference.

spoke to considered with a mixture of suspicion (the democratic process was being tempered with and the leadership wanted control over the party) and fatalism (the media brought a deleterious influence that restricted the possibility of genuine debate). Five years later, they were more sanguine about it but there was also a clear distinction between participants. The ambitious and the experimented (PPCs for instance or officers and visitors such as trade union workers, former NEC representatives etc.) took for granted the staging of debates or the fact that party staff had been politicised[132] and that their role was no longer to merely help delegates find their way around conference. Their job also involves offering "on-message" advice and supplying the party organisers with information about the political leanings and reliability of delegates.

<p style="text-align:center">* * *</p>

This chapter has explored how political parties change by looking not at rules, policies or leaders but at the ordinary and often overlooked and taken-for-granted practices that contribute to shape how party members think about what it means to them to belong to their party and how their identity as Greens, Conservatives or otherwise informs how they interact with each other. It underlines how these practices can be strategically reoriented and the impact these apparently unimportant changes potentially have. It highlights how modern organisations (so keen to demonstrate how professional and rational their processes are) remain on-going social constructions.

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[132] This trend was nevertheless seen as a worrying development by several.

Chapter 4

Processes of "democratisation" in political parties

A substantial part of my research on political parties has focused on the question of democratic processes and democratisation. My interest in the question stemmed from the greens' claim that they were inventing new ways of doing politics: they would resist the iron law of oligarchy, avoid the emergence of a leader and work towards participatory democracy. They believed green politics was about giving all members of the political community the opportunity to take part in the decisions affecting their lives. These aspirations were not particularly new - since parties of the left had shared similar aspirations in the past and were still proclaiming their belief in the ideal. However, greens considered that their party should function as a micro-cosmos of the sustainable and democratic society they aspired to. The analysis of their efforts to innovate and experiment has proven fertile ground to reflect on democratic practices and the difficulties of implementing them for all parties engaged in electoral competition.

Confronted with the early successes of new parties (whether right populists or left libertarians), more established parties felt challenged to respond and embarked in what they presented as processes of democratisation. This move departed from the competitive model of democracy, which disregards internal processes as distractions from the main scene, i.e. competition between parties. In this view, activists are considered with suspicion because their presumed radicalism (May 1973; Kitschelt 1989b) and their expectation to have a say in decision-making could be detrimental to the party's ability to adapt and compete. And indeed, it has been tempting to blame activists[133]. In this context, it may seem paradoxical that parties from all sides have since the 1990s proclaimed they were deepening, broadening, widening participation and internal democracy. On the Left, such claims could appear as a move to reassert their founding ideals but parties of the Right had not previously shown much interest in the sacred grail of internal democracy (Scarrow 1997; Faucher 2003; Haegel 2012). Nevertheless, democracy (like excellence in other fields) is difficult to oppose and therefore a useful rhetorical argument in the electoral competition.

On the surface, the reforms are not very dissimilar: direct ballots are now organised for the selection of key positions[134]; internal referenda are organised on manifestos or policy

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[133] As the PS could after the 2005 referendum on the European Constitutional Treaty or as the Blair government did whenever the party conference voted against its proposals (Faucher-King 2005, 281n23).

[134] Following the success of the 2011 primaries on the Left it is likely the right will follow suit in 2016.

positions; some decisions are decentralised or devolved[135]; parties make a point to be seen to listen and consult their members and their potential voters. Moreover, they share a concern for the promotion of individual participation at the expense of intermediary groups. In a way they respond to a perceived expectation that every citizen wants/ought to be consulted, empowered and to have her personal views taken into account. They thus somehow depart from a vision of political parties as mobilisers, educators, agents of political integration or preference-shapers, to present themselves as preference-accommodating (Maor 1997, 217; Hay 1997; P. D. Webb 2000), as responsive to demands expressed by the public. To what extent are these reforms in line or in tension with party traditions marked by participative democracy (greens), representative practices (social democrats) or by a philosophy of strong leadership (Gaullists, Conservatives)? To what extent have these changes democratised political parties and transformed their decision-making processes? Recent years have brought organisational reforms claiming to empower the individual member but as they have granted very little power to a very large membership, the alleged democratisation may amount to a re-centralisation of power in the hands of those who organise the consultations (Mair 1997).

In this chapter, I analyse how the empowerment of individual members was at the heart of the green alternative party organisation project and built on the emergence of "new politics". I then explore how the themes of participation, deliberation and individual empowerment have inspired its' opponents' rhetoric of democratisation. The multifaceted and ambitious reforms of the Labour party provide a point of entry to reflect on the tension between conceptions of democracy and the role of individual citizens and party members.

"Empowerment" and participatory aspirations

As I have shown previously, sociability is highlighted by greens as a key aspect of their political community – as opposed to the perceived bureaucracy and hierarchical nature of other party organisations, participative democracy appears as a far more essential principle of organisation, a defining trait of "being green". Green parties have been characterised by their critique of representative institutions: they condemn the professionalisation of politics and the role played by traditional parties in subverting representative democracy. Even in the UK where parties retained until the 1990s a certain aura as the key actors in a parliamentary system, the greens complained about the development of internal hierarchies, the disciplining of individual members (in particular in Parliament through the whip system but also on the

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[135] Of course, democratisation sometimes entails central coordination, for instance for the selection of candidates reflecting the diversity of the electorate (in gender and ethnic terms, etc) or electoral pacts with other parties.

ground[136]), the emergence of bureaucratised organisations. Thus, green parties developed procedures that were designed to limit the institutionalisation of their party. They adopted complicated rules enshrined in their constitutions as well as complex procedures to change these very constitutions (Rihoux 2001). These included rotation of elected representatives (only possible when elected on a proportional list system and abandoned in the case of French MEPs as early as the second term), a point system to limit the number of offices (internal and external) an individual could hold at the same time, strict parity rules, a collegial executive, frequent meetings of the general assembly of members (then provisions for the selection of representatives to the assembly) exercising close checks on the executive, a body for the representation of regions, etc.

Observers, in particular journalists, are often mystified by green decision-making processes. Efforts to maintain openness have greatly contributed to a negative image, fed by the fact that competitors have used the media as external resources to weigh in on internal disagreements[137]. The transparency that greens contributes to expose debates that other parties are at pains to hide for fear that they might appear divided. The press also enjoys reporting "newsworthy" items[138]. Members themselves do not hesitate to express criticism towards party structures and organisation (Benoît Rihoux, Faucher, and Peirano 2002) and splits have several times threatened to turn them from marginal to irrelevant parties[139]. Some of the rules that greens have adopted, and their enforcement, may appear counter-productive if one considers that a political party is seeking either votes, office or policy implementation (Strom 1990)[140]. Green parties have limited access to resources and cannot afford to offer much to their members in terms of material selective incentives (such as elected positions). If one takes for granted the instrumentality of actors, the dedication of activists is problematic and can lead to a circular arguments concluding that activists find "something in it" and the rewards of activism must therefore be psychological. Even if one considers that the ultimate

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[136] A similar criticism was made of mainstream environmental associations such as Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace by a former member.

[137] A similar issue plague the Labour party and contributed to the public relation revolution introduced by New Labour in the mid 1990s (Faucher-King 2005, 129). Coverage of conferences and *assemblées générales* often dwells on divisions. A recent example relates to the 2007 presidential campaign of Dominique Voynet and discussions within the CNIR on the destructive behaviour of unlucky competitors for the position who criticised her in the press.

[138] In 1995, the *Guardian* and the *Independent* wanted to covered a fringe meeting on "politically correct hugging". The event was cancelled for lack of participants, but the greens were convinced to stage it as means to obtain coverage of their conference.

[139] Key examples are the 1992 resignation of Sara Parkin and many others or in France, the disputes around Génération Ecologie in 1993, the selection of a presidential candidate in 1995 and 2002.

[140] Rules about rotation and/or limits to the number of mandates, internal and external, held simultaneously or consecutively has been abandoned or amended. In France and the UK, representatives are sent to the general meeting, only held every three years in Les Verts (since 2008).

goal of the greens is internal democracy (Harmel and Janda 1994)[141], the ways in which they are seeking to reach such a holy grail can be puzzling if one does not attempt to understand the meaning they attribute to some of their arcane rules.

Green parties have worked hard to facilitate participation. In the British Green party, concerted efforts at the local and the national level contributed to a more inclusive and participatory organisation. On the other hand, a desire to facilitate self expression occasionally lead to cacophony. Despite the obvious drawbacks in terms of efficacy of decision-making, greens initially tended to resist the temptation to institutionalise procedures that might increase electoral efficacy. Some of their procedural rules appear unnecessarily arcane, combining measures destined to maintain internal pluralism, a superposition of rules leading at times to proceduralism. Greens, just as the Liberal Democrats, are known to vote on the opportunity to vote. They also count "ayes", "noes", "abstentions" as well as those who refuse to vote! The many and complex rules designed to guarantee pluralism and democracy are all the more the more important as diminishing levels of trust between members render participative democracy more cumbersome. Indeed, the practice of decision by consensus requires open-mindedness from participants and a willingness to be swayed or to change one's mind in light of deliberation. In social movements, friendship is a good way to compensate for de facto inequalities and it greatly helps smooth communication. But friendship is ineffectual in the face of stark ideological differences or strategic disagreements on electoral alliances. Thus, group styles might be crucial to explain party developments and success but also very difficult to change (Faucher 1999c; Faucher-King 2007).

Greens usually use a very personalised language: "*I'm gonna do what I feel right doing and what I feel is good and if I have the energy to go out and to speak to a hundred people and try and encourage them*" but, as Lichterman has shown in the case of the US Greens, their very understanding of individualism is conducive to mobilisation (Lichterman 1996) as their emphasise individual's role in producing both problems and solutions[142]. "*People know best*" comes back as a leitmotiv in many interviews and texts: "*the people have to be involved in the decision making because if that's the case then they will make the best decisions for them and for their community and everything following from that you'll have the best social decisions for all, the best decisions for education, people basic needs will be satisfied and the environment will look after itself*". "Every human is responsible for the fate of humanity (…) because only individuals can say what their aspirations, desires or rejections are" (Waechter

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[141] This has been debated (Goodin 1992; Dobson 2007; Bramwell 1989; Faucher 1999a; Ferry 1992).

[142] "If you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem".

1990, 213). This is important because *"people are so educated to believe that someone out there is going to make the decisions for them and that they can have no control, the people don't know how to take responsibility, people don't know how to make choices*!" Indeed, greens insist on the need for each individual to stop delegating her powers to politicians (Faucher 1997, 284) and to take action – at whichever level is deemed appropriate to give/take back power. If both French and British greens value participation, their approaches differ in the ways in which they understand how their respective parties will play a role in helping individuals take responsibilities.

In Britain, the emphasis is on empowerment because, as one puts it: "*I feel powerlessness [is] outrageous*". Therefore, as much as possible, local endeavours focus on harnessing the goodwill of newcomers. A number of activists are enthusiastic about the ways in which their good will was welcomed, fostered, harnessed and supported when they joined. It has long been a practice of voluntary organisations to entrust roles and responsibilities to new recruits as a means to cement their participation. "*I don't know who's been more motivating: me coming along – enthusiastic and wanting to do something (…) or the local party saying 'will you do this?' and me sort of saying, well OK if you think I can*". This is easier when local groups have a core of active members and therefore regular activities. In Oxford, the yearly electoral cycle creates a clear routine and dominates the group's calendar (candidate selection, fundraising and leafleting and canvassing, celebration of the end of the cycle and new beginning).

The determination to enrol and foster a sense of competence, initiative and self-realisation is also found at the national level, where a number of greens have invested their energy when lack of members made their local group wanting. It is likely that these efforts have been reinforced by years of campaigning in the wilderness[143]. The desire to increase participation was at the heart of their annual general meeting, which were open to the entire membership. They only reluctantly moved to the selection of representatives from local organisations: in 1992 in the UK, in 1997 in France with the creation of a two tier system combining AGM at the regional level and delegates to a national gathering[144]. Because they were interested in developing innovative means of including members in deliberation, the Green party set up a group to reflect on ways of working in the 1980s. Its remit was broader than constitutional

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[143] Although the British green party was created in 1973 (under the name of People), its first district level councillor was elected in 1993, first MEPs in 1999 and first MP in 2008 (in each case, Caroline Lucas). It also gained representation to the Scottish Parliament and the London Assembly in 1998. By comparison, Les Verts (founded in 1984) entered city councils and the European Parliament in 1989, regional councils in 1992, Parliament in 1997 and government in 1997.
[144] In keeping with mainstream French parties, Les Verts have also reduced the frequency of their meeting to every other year. From 2011 Europe Ecologie Les Verts will only organise a congress every three year.

rules (on which it had little say) but its legacy is nevertheless still palpable. It introduced many of the small details of organisation, many of the rituals that effectively foster a sense of empowerment in many participants. It created a state of mind that permeated the party and resisted the divisions of the early 1990s.

It is interesting to contrast the twice a year gathering with the every other year French *Assemblée*[145]. British activists dissect contributions and amendments in small groups and report their conclusions to the plenary sessions where the debate is short, strictly structured around pros and cons and leads to a vote[146], reproducing the structure of parliamentary debates. When deliberations get tricky or heated, they are broken up into small groups. Workshops tend to select novices as their *rapporteurs*. Facilitators are asked to ensure that all participants have had a chance to talk and have been invited to contribute (sometimes, the facilitator solicit contributions from individuals who have not spoken yet to ensure they are not hindered by shyness or a difficulty in joining an ongoing discussion). Plenary orators are called to the rostrum by the session chair in an anonymous way that erases party ranking (the executive chair wishing to speak could be called "the man with a beard and a green jacket). Booklets are now regularly produced for conference-goers[147] as well as for new party members[148]. They include not only the timetable and the motions on the agenda but they explain the minute of silence, how to speak in plenary session or how to be selected as conference chair, a job description for positions as elected officers, schedule of fringe meetings[149] and panel discussions.

Green party workshops were introduced in the 1980s in an effort to promote decision-making by consensus. Even though they mostly fail – decisions are taken by a majority vote – the rituals that have been developed contribute to create a style of speech-making that draws from the British party conference tradition but also adapts it to the Green's ideal of empowering individuals: "*if people are to participate you have to find ways of encouraging them to participate.*" A great deal of attention has been devoted to a process that allows for the expression of dissent in "*quite small groups so that people can hear each other*". In this case, what is seen as a green way of doing politics relies on paying attention to the differentiated individual, to what makes her contribution unique. The myriad of individual viewpoints is

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[145] Every three year from 2008.

[146] Plenary sessions are short, rarely over 2 hours This was designed in order to ensure maximum concentration and facilitate the participation of the least policy-minded (Faucher 1999a, chap. 8)

[147] http://www.greenparty.org.uk/conference/spring-09 for the 2009 online edition. Similar documents were already produced in the early 1990s.

[148] The first one was produced in 1992.

[149] Not officially organised by the party but by various groups and individuals associated to the party. I discuss the conference fringe phenomenon elsewhere (Faucher-King 2005, chap. 10)

considered as a complexity that can be boiled down into a radically different proposal. The argument is that small groups makes it possible to express *"what really matters and* [to] *listen to that communication at all levels, spiritual, emotional, physical, the whole lot,* and [the process] *is enabling people to cherish and value their unhappiness"* so that they can reflect on the views they are prepared to change[150].

Being inclusive and empowering is easier to say than practice: a declaration of intention is not enough. The difficulty appears more clearly through comparison: even though *Les Verts* proclaim a similar commitment to participation, their practice focuses more on creating the conditions of an equal participation than on ensuring that all members do indeed pick up on their chance to contribute. During electoral campaigns, would-be supporters or members turn up. In many cases, when this happened in Aix, they never came back. I have seen a number of them: shy and looking for clues about the rules of interaction, standing awkwardly and lonely whilst party members chatter amongst themselves, searching eye contact and indications about where they should sit and whether they should introduce themselves[151]. A number of members express frustration that their goodwill and energy had met no response, that no-one came to talk to them, or offered them a chair. Individuals join because of the need to "do something" but the enthusiasm for equality paradoxically restricts the ability of newcomers to fully join in.

The lack of pro-active and gentle pressure on newcomers can be read through the green filter of respect for individual participation coupled with a strong antipathy towards hierarchical structures. Aix-en-Provence *Verts*, like many others[152], have an explicit aversion for would-be leaders or anyone telling them what to do[153]. No one presses anyone and one should only do what one wishes to be involved in[154]. A *faux-pas* consists in making suggestions for actions that one cannot personally implement: the more the worse, of course. When this happens with a new member, the offender is not told off but faint smiles appear on the faces of experienced activists, they exchange oblique looks. It is not necessarily hostility, merely annoyance or maybe condescendence. After a few months, if not weeks, the *modus operandi* has been

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[150] Small groups discussions have been introduced in the Labour party through the reform known as *Partnership in Power*, adopted in 1997. I analyse culture shifts in Labour and the policy-making reform in *Changing Parties* (Faucher-King 2005).

[151] The local party has expanded according to the flux of membership usually triggered by electoral campaign and the need to find a large number of candidates for the city election... and retracted after rows, disappointments and expulsion. Half of the local group, including several former city councillors, were expelled in 2008 after the other half appealed to the national organisation for breach of electoral strategy. DD ??

[152] Considerable energy has been devoted to the question over the years even if maturity seem to have contributed to sidelining the issue (Carter 2008).

[153] They have clearly been sufficiently convincing as scholars of political parties have sought to explain them by adding to vote, office and policy a fourth goal of internal democracy (Harmel and Janda 1994).

[154] Anti leader sentiments as well as a reluctance to "proselytise" come up often in interviews.

learnt: the offender has either adapted to the norm or given up. This shows how the issue with suggestions was not so much their nature but the fact that they were unlikely to be born to fruition because of the lack of time and volunteers and because the person who was making them was unlikely to carry them through. In this sense, he breached the implicit rule of the group (Eliasoph and Lichterman 2003, 773): only propose what you can /are prepared to do by yourself and maybe get the individual help of someone else. Aix activists limited their suggestions to what was "realistic", in other words they used three filters: what they felt needed to be done, what they felt could be done, what they could themselves do. They often did what they had taken upon themselves to do (because of their official position for instance) on their own. If they asked for help, they were likely to solicit the support of a close friend rather than other activists. Paradoxically the group's style ran against the participatory ideals of *Les Verts*.

In Aix, some activists (and passive members) had the feeling that understanding what is going on meetings was the preserve of a select caste, i.e. people elected to positions at the departmental or regional board or as members of the CNIR. In order to limit the unreliability of commitments, that is individuals turning up, decisions being made that exceeded the capacity of regular participants the Aix group decided to formalise these roles. After a couple of years, such a formal structure was abandoned. Even at the local level, where meetings were open to the entire membership and everyone could talk, members felt diminished that they did not have the right to vote unless they had been elected as representatives at the annual gathering and had therefore committed themselves to a minimum of a monthly meeting. The *Participative Audit* revealed that many activists within the party felt alienated by factional developments (Benoît Rihoux, Faucher, and Peirano 2002). In France, respect for the individual and cherishing of participation does not translate into efforts to empower but in creating opportunities to participate. Little effort is made to ensure that meetings are not dominated by a handful and to invite the quietest to contribute and the focus is more on debate than deliberation. Occasional activists explain that they only attend meetings where they know they have something to say.

Each party's style combines and recombines traits from other contexts to produce its own interpretations of codes. Valorisation of individual participation is practiced in the British green party as an ongoing effort to be inclusive and empowering – allowing members to feel useful and valued – whilst *Les Verts* rely more on the sense of initiative of individual members: whilst equal participation is possible, it requires a certain self-confidence.

One of the puzzles associated with the emergence of green parties[155] relates to what quickly appeared like counterproductive or ineffective processes of decision-making. Observers sometimes sneer at a party prepared to expose its internal disagreements, convoluted voting procedures and lengthy debates. From the point of view of instrumental rationality and if one takes for granted that political parties can be defined by a primary goal (maximisation of votes, office or policy), such behaviours do not make sense. Lest one is prepared to write off green party followers as being mad, one needs to take into account alternative logic to explain collective behaviours. Internal democracy has been at the nexus of debates about the creation of autonomous green parties[156].

The research I conducted for my PhD took seriously the aspiration to increased political participation that were articulated by new social movements. I carried on in this direction by looking at the impact these demands had on established and governmental parties. Indeed, from the 1990s internal democracy, deliberation and participation were not only buzz words: they were translated practically into organisational reforms.

Democracy as the new panacea

Measured in terms of seats in parliament or ministerial portfolios, the successes of green parties are fairly limited. However, their mark on the political scene could also be measured by how much of their agenda their rivals have adopted or gestured toward. Experiences with participatory democracy have had echo beyond their ranks and beyond academic circles of political theorists. Most major parties were structured around the model of representative or delegatory democracy but references to deliberative and participative democracy have become commonplace.

Whilst most attention, including mine, has been devoted to parties of the left for which internal democracy as an identity issue, the evolution of parties of the right is equally interesting. Indeed, parties, such as the Conservatives or the UMP, that did not focus much on internal democracy (Faucher 2003) have felt the need to adopt the rhetoric, prompting interesting questions about power and competition, public relation and isomorphism (Meyer and Rowan 1977).

The Conservatives had never demanded more power to members but had kept rather carefully the autonomy of local associations in relation to the procedure of parliamentary candidate

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[155] Whilst the British greens adopted the party label from their start in the mid 1970s, the French remained reluctant to use the term and kept referring to themselves as a "movement" into the 21st century.

[156] It has been the source of vivid internal controversies and in some cases, such as France, slowed down considerably the foundation of such parties. Although the forbear of the British greens originally avoided such discussions when it was founded in 1973, the question became prominent in the 1980s.

selection. Their conference had never been a big player in policy-making. However, the creation of a unitary organisation implied a degree of power loss for local party officers whilst the ballots organised thereafter confirm that members considered them of little political efficacy (Faucher-King 2005, 205–6). Internal ballots were organised to give credence to the idea of internal democratic accountability but the membership proved all the more difficult to mobilize than very little was at stake (Faucher-King 2005, 208): the 2005 ballot on the statement of aims and value mobilised only 27% of party members eligible to vote (Bale 2008, 273)[157]. This contrasts starkly with the UMP where turnout is high (81% in 1998 with Seguin, 70% in 1999 with Michèle Alliot-Marie, 71% with Juppé 2002 and 53% Sarkozy in 2004)[158].

In the 1990s saw many major European parties, from left and right, adopt new rules regarding the election of party officers, candidates or in relation to policy consultation. With the benefit of hindsight we can now also contrast the rhetoric of democratisation with its practice. Indeed, some of the reforms introduced in 1998 by the newly appointed leader of the Conservative party could be seen as a good marketing strategy at a time when its main rival benefited from a democratic aura gained through the well publicised leadership election in 1994, followed by the organisation of several internal referenda (on clause 4 in 1995 and on the manifesto in 1996) and the adoption of new policy making procedures (1997). In most cases, democratisation has been synonymous with granting power to individual members. The introduction of "One Member One Vote" in British Labour was the eventual and contingent outcome of the conflict between Neil Kinnock and the left of the party. It was seen as a good way to help contain the influence of activists, whilst it was difficult for them to resist arguments about democratisation and empowering members against unpopular trade unions. The PS has also multiplied ballots of its members and opportunities for consultations with the broadening of the selectorate for the presidential elections to members, then to new members (2006) and finally to the citizens' primaries (Barboni and Treille 2010; Olivier 2003; Lefebvre 2011).

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[157] For example, 27 per cent of the Labour individual membership took part in the key 1995 vote on clause 4 and 25 per cent in the internal elections for the National Executive Committee in 2000 (Faucher-King 2005, 207–8). When participation is higher, the parliamentary leadership secured support after excessively expensive internal campaigns. In these conditions the party leadership preferred to keep the old rules (giving greater weight to the unions), particularly for the election of the national leader. It is ironic that a procedure that was seen as maintaining leadership control thanks to union support led to the surprise election of Ed Miliband as leader in 2010.

[158] Turnout is also relatively low in the parti socialiste (Barboni and Treille 2010). Haegel shows that there is a plebiscitory tradition in the UMP that needs to be taken into account to explain such disparities (2012).

Internal reforms granting new powers to the membership can be found in many European parties and one can note a substantial rhetorical move from representative to other forms of democracy, be it participative or deliberative.

The promotion of individual members' participation

Most of my attention has focused on the evolution of the Labour party during the New Labour years, at a time when the party had made "modernisation" its motto (Faucher-King and Le Galès 2010a). The New Labour leadership promoted narratives of democratisation and empowered individuals. Opening up the black box of party reform unearths conflicting objectives, strategies, as well as normative models of democracy and participation. Agency (exercised through reforms and rhetoric) combines with contingency.

One could compare the power of "democratisation" to "modernisation", a potent "*mot valise*" used by the promoters of New Labour (Finlayson 2003). When the modernisers won the leadership of the party with Tony Blair in 1994, many were convinced that communication was key. They decided to use the annual conference as the main shopwindow to convince audiences that the party had changed, that it had freed itself up from the archaic control of trade unions. It was now united behind its leader. In the space of a few years, the party built an effective and offensive communication strategy around a new team and the argument of democratisation was to attract voters to a "new" labour party and to reassure activists about the rhetoric of modernisation. The analysis of the effect of new procedures over the years invites scepticism because it focused primarily on party image and centralised control of policy and strategy.

Initially, avoiding debates where disagreements could be portrayed by the media as internal strife was paramount. As it has been noted in many cases, the presence of camera and journalists may be consistent with an ideal of transparency but it also favours the dramatisation of conflicts, the use and abuse of external resources for internal disputes (Lefebvre 2011; Faucher-King 2005, chap. 6; Stanyer 2001). The (increasingly invasive and very visible) presence of journalists at the annual conference and the exposure of conflicts through the 1980s has thus contributed a great deal to the conviction that the policy-making process could no longer happen as it had under media scrutiny during an event that tried to combine two radically divergent role: publicity for policies and politicians and serious policy deliberations. By 1997, most Labour members had accepted the idea that the conference projected a negative image and were also ineffective in terms of effective and democratic policy-making.

One member one vote

These narratives provided rationales for the reforms but also resonated with the post – Thatcher context of late 20th century British politics. This rhetoric would not have encountered the same success a decade before as illustrated by the saga of the introduction of One Member One Vote procedures. Kinnock, who hoped that it would reduce the influence of the left in internal bodies, had tried and failed in the 1980s[159]. At the time, it clashed with the party tradition of representation and delegatory democracy. OMOV was adopted ten years later, under Smith. The reform was again promoted in the name of democracy but trade unions had lost a great deal of their assurance during the Thatcher years. Moreover, individualism was no longer the preserve of the Conservatives: their governments had developed public policies inspired by public management theories based on the idea that individuals were "naturally" rational and instrumental. The figure of the consumer had become the reference for policy makers (Faucher-King and Le Galès 2010a; Needham 2007; Leys 2003). Selfishness was a virtue thanks to the invisible hand of the markets. OMOV initially produced the intended effect in the party and the modernisers were elated. It was expanded in the early years of Blair's leadership: direct democratic procedures were to replace archaic representation. Ballots were organised to demonstrate the membership's support. OMOV became so popular as to be irresistible to those who had opposed it and became the benchmark for intra-party democracy (it was even copied by the Conservatives in their 1998 reform).

The individualization of party relations was above all conceived as a way of creating a base that was simultaneously "massive" and "passive"—that is, supportive of leadership initiatives when called upon (Faucher-King 2005, 201). Disappointing levels of participation were therefore scarcely a cause for surprise: internal elections regularly involved only a small fraction of members, in fact favouring the left of the party[160]. When participation was greater (as in the internal 1996 referendum on the election manifesto), the parliamentary leadership secured more clear-cut support, but at the cost of a very expensive internal campaign. In these conditions the party leadership preferred to keep the old rules, particularly for the election of the national leader, and the Welsh and Scottish leaders, and for the selection of candidates, which make it possible to influence the results thanks to union support. "When the party moved to OMOV it became impossible to control elections but the NPF is probably the only

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[159] Kinnock, Blackpool, 2002.
[160] This allowed mobilised factions to elect their representatives against government sponsored slates as in the case of the Grassroots alliance in 1998.

major one they can control," explains a representative: "you need nominations from 5 Constituency Labour Parties then conference delegates vote by region at conference. You can go round delegates, you can phone, you can exert pressure".

With the failure of direct democracy to deliver the expected effects, the leadership turned to yet another way to involve individual members: deliberative procedures and "consultation".

A touch of deliberative democracy

The membership – and the conference – reacted positively to most of the changes that were initially proposed (M. Russell 2005a). The most noticed and anticipated reform concerned policy-making. An alternative system to the conference and its compositing process was debated throughout 1996 and the party leadership dedicated a great deal of energy to "selling" the reform through documents as well as workshops, fringe meetings and plenary conference debates[161]. In 1997, the Policy Unit headed by Matthew Taylor endeavoured to explain to conference delegates how the idea of *Partnership in Power*, which was to be adopted the next day by the conference was to move to a deliberative process no longer dominated by majority votes but instead seeking consensus and involvement throughout the year. Delegates were concerned that policy documents submitted for discussion would not emanate from local groups but were assured that a national though grounded deliberation on the same topics would be more effective. Women were particularly sensitive to the need to make the meetings convivial enough so that all participants could feel confident to speak. The reform was supposed to create a "new party culture, at the centre of which would be a genuine 'partnership' between different levels of the party". The promotion team insisted on inclusivity and deliberation, the need to maintain direct and permanent contact between the government and its party base. The new policy process was thus adopted by the 1997 conference during the "honeymoon" following Labour's electoral victory[162]. It built on years of debates within the party (M. Russell 2005a; Faucher-King 2005) and the New Labour team worked hard to convince that in modern Britain, individuals expected more than a representative or direct democracy. This highlights how organisational change needs to be analysed as the outcome of complex factors that are not only endogenous and exogenous but also impact the party at different levels: micro (individuals' personal career strategies and

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[161] A similar approach was taken later for further internal reforms such as 21st Century Party.
[162] There was a greater pliability in Labour's eagerness to win in the 1990s and loyalty was probably a more prevalent strategy to dissenters than a few years later. The collapse in membership figures illustrates well enough the use of exit (Hirschman 1990).

interactions), meso (organisational dynamics and history) and macro (the enthusiasm for deliberative democracy as well as the process of individualisation of European societies).

The existence of general agreement on the problems inherent with the old compositing process predates New Labour and reflection had been conducted for some time. It did not mean that all partners in the process interpreted the changes in the same manner. From the point of view of "modernisers", this partnership was to be based on members recognising the "fundamental truth" that leaders have "ultimate responsibility for policy-making" and that members could not act as "watchdogs" (Fielding 2003, 130). Beyond the space allowed for "genuine, if non confrontational, discussion", explains Matthew Taylor, who played a key role in the conception of the reform, there is "the real politics perspective which is that ministers control the proposals and therefore there is consensus"[163]. During fringe meetings dedicated to the promotion of *PiP*, his tasks was to assure activists that "changes will effectively 'empower members' because policy forums would be like 'brain-storming' sessions and would serve as permanent sounding boards for government policy". Many grassroots supporters of the reform, and, some of its architects, had a more idealistic and egalitarian perspective on the relative role of each "partner" than what was initially developed.

The organisational changes did not stop at conference but focused on an overhaul of policy-making and deliberation processes in the party. The creation of a National Policy Forum was accompanied by the organisation of local ones. These were however met with some scepticism as activists questioned their influence on policy[164]. This meant for instance that local parties were required to put on policy forums, triggering either enthusiasm or resistance and varying degree of success[165]. Former NEC member Diana Jeuda considered that the success of regional forums in London and the South rather than the North of England was "a reflection of machine politics: northern organisations remained "not very engaging" so that it took longer for a culture of political discussion to go through"[166]. Despite encouragements (and orders) from above, the organisation of local forums depends on the good will, individual strategies, ideological orientations to the New Labour project so that activists with political ambition would be keener than others to satisfy the requests of national headquarters.

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[163] Interview at the Institute for Public Policy Research London, January 1999.
[164] At the same time, constituencies strapped for cash also renounced the idea of funding the participation of conference delegation.
[165] In a number of cases constituencies organised in clusters (for instance in Edinburgh or in Yorkshire), to save on costs, energy and help weaker local groups. Hazel Blears was one of the early convert to policy forums. As she organised the events in her constituency, she was picked up as a rising New Labour star.
[166] Interviewed at conference in 2002.

It could be anticipated that the reality of the new party policy-making process would create tensions and disappointments. This is probably even truer with further attempts to reform the organisation and in particular to do away with GMC[167]. Further "modernisation" projects followed *Partnership in Power* and each time a similar maieutic process helped create at least the appearance of a consensus. In that sense, activists were never taken for granted. The strategy involved repeating *ad nauseam* that the changes had wide-ranging support from the membership thanks to consultation and the publication of reports that emphasised all-round dissatisfaction with old structures. "Women see Labour party politics as being adversarial and not sufficiently focused on practical achievements" (Labour, 1999: 34). There were indeed many women, and many men who agreed that the compositing system no longer worked satisfactorily. The leadership promoted relentlessly narratives contrasting "dull", off-putting "outdated", "arcane" and "non democratic" procedures with new, inclusive and outward-looking "forums". Declining numbers of activists at the local level were a sign that the traditional format of meeting was no longer popular but whether members shared the "logical" solution that was proposed in the *21st Century Party* is a different question[168].

Drucker (1979) has argued that the Labour culture showed a particular fondness for rules and linked this to the ethos of working class members. Having little experience of them in their ordinary lives, they therefore held them in great respect[169]. Nevertheless, many practices (such as voting procedures or "compositing") were defined by customs (Minkin, 1980: 148) and informally passed down over the years. Ways of doing were learnt from experience and knowing either rules or norms were essential for anyone keen to exert any kind of influence[170]. As experienced activists are more likely to be aware of the rules, the swell of novice delegates makes conference management much easier as they were more likely to accept as given what is presented to them as the appropriate ways to behave[171]. However, as noted by Minkin "it would be highly unusual for the Labour party if (…) rules were fully observed" (1980: 135). The election of Blair to the leadership created the opportunity to update some of the unobserved rules. At the same time, innovation was viewed much more positively than in the past, so that a good deal of uncertainty predominated for a while the introduction of the system of policy forums. Moreover in this case, many of the rules

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[167] General Management Committees that had been the stronghold of "old Labour" activists are described as an obstacle to the "modernisation" and the "democratisation" of the party.

[168] It suggested in particular abolishing general management committees and opening up local meetings to the membership and the community.

[169] Interestingly it was combined with pragmatism as in the case of the leadership position.

[170] Exceptionally, the 1995 Conference Handbook stated that card votes should be granted whenever asked. Such useful advice disappeared in the following years.

[171] At the beginning of each day of conference, the NEC gives recommendations on how to vote.

remained sketchy and a number were amended in the subsequent years. "As a mover of the amendment on House of Lords Reform," I should have moved it but I did not want to be on national television, because of my job as an academic and working in the field, so they made up the rule at the time that you could nominate somebody else. It's an indication of how the rules are made up these days, very ad hoc," noted Meg Russell[172]. Under Blair however, the dominant view among party managers seemed to be that rules prevent the full blossoming of an entrepreneurial spirit. Rulebooks were "modernised" to be "in line with current practices"[173] but a large number of grey areas subsist, in particular as far as the National Policy Forum is concerned. "There is no rule for how policy commissions work (…) and with no rule it is easier to control". Members of policy commissions, or of the NEC "or the like" usually chair NPF workshops: people from Head Office just ring somebody they think should facilitate[174]". In spite of claims that it would ensure the connection between the national organisation and the grassroots, no formal channels were conceived to allow representatives to report to their constituents. As many other NPF representatives, Ann Black expresses her disappointment about the failure of the policy process to fully engage members: "they haven't got a clue who [their representatives] are and don't get a chance to talk to them"[175].

From 1998, policy forums were set up to deliberate policy proposals through the year in smaller and private settings. The leadership had promised that effective means would allow a two-way communication and guarantee that members' concerns would be better heard. In practice, the forums also served as instruments of legitimisation of governmental policies and as forums to educate the membership (Faucher-King 2006). Interestingly, one can consider that New Labour elites were so convinced that their policy proposals, inspired by "fact-based social science", were the best ones that they could only envisage that they only needed to "educate" their base and that any disagreement would be resolved with pedagogy and better communication. If members' representatives to the National Policy Forum were invited to take an active part in deliberation, the means they had to interact with those who had elected them remained insufficient. Members were also encouraged to submit individual contributions to the policy process but the lack of responsiveness from the party machine contributed to convince members that their participation was probably pointless. Such a feeling of political inefficacy is likely to have played a role in demobilisation, as hinted in membership surveys

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[172] Interviewed in 2003, London.
[173] Some of the changes were discreetly brought in, such as the extension to two years of NEC members' mandate adopted in the subdued conference atmosphere following the 2001 terrorist attack on New York.
[174] NPF representative, March 2002.
[175] Interviewed in Oxford, 2002.

(Seyd and Whiteley 1992; Seyd and Whiteley 2002), just as activists have expressed concern that the forum had primarily served to neutralise them. Playing down internal debates and reducing overt conflict could thus be ultimately detrimental to participation. Democratisation as the empowering of members through deliberation was promoted to a good compromise allowing the expression of members whilst keeping power firmly in the hands of the party central office.

Despite proud announcements of widespread participation in policy forums[176], there was, a few years down the line, few illusions amongst senior officers and activists about the personal efficacy of forum participation. "People go [to policy forums] and we tell them it makes a difference to policy-making but they don't actually believe us. In fact, it is probably true to say that it does doesn't make a difference on the way Gordon Brown for instance will develop his policies" but it does bring something: for instance, at the last election, people had told us how there was a lack of access to NHS dentists and we paid attention to that, so it really changed government policy[177]". Because they distrust the system, local parties were reluctant to waste resources and energy on policy forums. Attempts to get them set up by regional organisations also faltered on lack of resources. The tension lies in the yet to be fully thought through conception of a democratic intra-party policy process. Most of those who have taken part in policy forums had a positive experience: meetings were "very open and very courteous meetings", "very professionally run". – if sometimes "too deferential, especially when Cabinet ministers are present". As Eddie Morgan, then Assistant General Secretary, admitted "we are desperately keen for people to get involved. Ministers attend many more party meetings than they used to" and it is an "opportunity to hold [them] accountable"[178].

"There is a democratic process and mostly it works,"[179] is the comment that a number of "loyal but free thinking" members are prepared to utter when they are pressed to articulate a view on the policy process. This, however, comes at the end of interviews recalling stories about tough negotiations with ministers over amendment to NPF documents, coaxing and bullying when "the problem with this is that 'it is not in line with government policy', or 'it costs too much, won't you accept a new form of words?'" Such bargaining can be "very intimidating" because it takes place in the "intimacy" of a private meeting with a minister, party staff from the policy unit and commission members. Although New Labour has often

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[176] « In 2002, four times more submissions to the NPF than in 1998 and the aim in 2003 is to get 60 per cent of constituencies involved", Morgan, Party HQ, May 2002.
[177] Former NEC and NPF member, September 2002.
[178] Idem.
[179] Diana Jeuda, September 2002.

been criticised for its heavy handed techniques, the use of bullying and threats, most analysis of party policy overlook the face-to-face situations and the contingency of decision-making that pepper what can sometimes appear seamless. "I have heard terrible stories about the minister strutting around the room outraged, which is terrifying for CLP representatives," explains an NPF representative, rather proud to have maintained her amendment. Another one mentions the efforts to which politicians can go: "two young men where invited to lunch by Gordon Brown who wanted to convince them to withdraw their amendment, and they did. They can be very persuasive". A member of a policy commission admits "sometimes you receive documents before meetings, sometimes you are told the way it is and that is basically it".

The introduction of *Partnership in Power* was justified with arguments pleading for better deliberation and empowerment of individual members in the process. The promoters talked about a more inclusive organisation. At the end of the New Labour period, more pragmatic interpretations dominated the interviews I conducted and conversations in the bars of conference. One of the mature students I had at Stirling was a Union and Labour activitst. We remained in touch long after he had graduated and have had many conversations about the party over the years. He invited me to meetings I could not have attended otherwise and helped me decode power relations, individual and collective strategies around reforms, policies and internal elections. He worked for the promotion of New Labour in Scotland and was thus part of the "machine". Later, he was a representative in the NPF and took his distance with the modernisers, shifting his political commitment (and employment) to related causes outside of the party. He summarises what I have heard from many of the activists I spoke to in the last couple years of my field work: "The system has been abused but I haven't given up on that and I still think it is a better system than the old fixing methods. If you are known to be taking a position, which is not aligned with the leadership, it is likely there will be a sanction: they will rubbish you and block you from any position. The major incentive in Labour is office. It is more a sanction than an incentive: if you toe the line you'll get support. However, I worked for them and I know they are not as powerful as a lot of people think they are"[180].

The democratic project implied by *Partnership in Power* came into direct conflict with a very different model for party organisation, one inspired by the market an a belief in the supremacy of competition over all other considerations.

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[180] Willie Sullivan, interviewed in 2002.

Motivating and mobilising stakeholders

To gain a proper understanding of how British political parties have changed, one must consider broader trends within British society. Deference has been eroded through social mobility and the decline of class-based politics. The Thatcher revolution facilitated the development of a new kind of entrepreneurial individualism, challenging traditional hierarchies and communities. Information technologies and mass media culture have contributed to a further individualisation through mass-marketing techniques. The ascendency of the market model started under Thatcher but was continued under Blair (Faucher-King and Le Galès 2010a) to the extent that it has become the reference for making sense of social organisations and collective action. Individuals are seen as consumers and treated as such in all sectors of life from private businesses to universities, social services and local government (Faucher-King and Le Galès 2010a; Power 1999; Newman 2001; Lascoumes and Le Galès 2005).

Thus, if *Partnership in Power* is the most visible of the many changes introduced during the New Labour years, one should also pay attention to the new interpretative framework that was promoted by the team around Tony Blair. In their determination to take their party back to power, they accepted the cultural inheritance of Thatcher and contributed to further naturalise a specific vision of individuals, their interactions and motivations. Whilst Labour had been created as the political arm of trade unions, the modernisers worked to shrink (if not eradicate) the association of the party with the working class and its organisations. Until 1918, one could not be an individual member of the party but by the end of the New Labour period, the era of "collectivist" Britain (Beer 1982) was well over: the party was focused on social entrepreneurs (Leadbeater 2004) and aspiring middle classes (Gould 1999). The vision of the party that was promoted was that of a collective enterprise, serving its stakeholders and striving to do so with the highest business and professional standards.

Tom Sawyer took over as General Secretary in of the Labour party in 1994 and, as he proudly records, he presented the first ever party business plan to the NEC within 10 weeks of being appointed (Sawyer, 2000: 8). Less than a year later, he sent the NEC to workshops at the Cranfield School of Management. Under his management, a "'cultural' change i.e. new ways of working, relating and behaving together" was explored in order to prepare the party for government. It was deemed as "more difficult to achieve but also more fundamental to the process of change"[181]. Inspired by new management techniques, the plan was ambitious as it

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[181] Note by General Secretary on the party in power, 31/1/1996.

included "improving democracy" and "building a healthy party" through the development of a "listening and responsive culture (…) and a review of methods and styles of communications". In a party, which organisation had sometimes been chaotic and influenced by trade unions, the objective was no less than the importation of the private sector model and the creation of a "professional" organisation (Faucher-King 2008).

Party managers discovered quality control and sought new ways to motivate their staff, which were largely inspired by a vision of the individual as instrumentally rational and selfish. New Labour's modernisers were convinced that the culture of the party had to change because, like a business, the members (staff) who promote (sell) the organisation and its policies (products) have to share the values of the company to be properly convincing as "ambassadors in the community". The motivational frameworks of private business were thus introduced[182]: staff were given targets to achieve; "team-building away-days were organised to "improve communication and provide opportunities to revisit our mission statement"[183]. The war room interior design had proven very effective during the 1997 general election campaign, and the entire headquarters were thus designed with the move from Smith House to Millbank. The work atmosphere was radically transformed. Contingency over the ways in which reforms are interpreted is also manifest in the leadership style of General Secretaries. Whilst Sawyer introduced many symbolic changes and contributed unwittingly to an erosion of Labour's tradition of suspicion of the business world, his successor remained famous for her ferocious enforcement of discipline. The party transferred services that had for years been organised at the London headquarters to the North of England. They also outsourced tasks, such as membership services for the cost of about £6 per member per year. "We cannot get out of the contract for a while, but at least the system works quite well in this area"[184]. As the party was becoming a "professional" organisation, its management of human resources also came under criticism, notably from long serving loyal staff members who suddenly faced radically changed working conditions. From 1995, a paper trail was developed to establish "benchmarks" for accountability and ensure efficient delivery of objectives. All levels of the party were required to produce action plans. Local and area parties are bound to "performance indicators"[185]. Party structures were audited, consultations were organised, task forces were created and "turn around teams" tackled moribund local parties. The naturalisation of new

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[182] They relate closely to the policy reforms introduced by New Labour governments in the country. The first reports on delivery published in 1998-1999 (Labour Party, The Government's Annual Report, Stationary Office).
[183] Labour party (1996), NEC report, p.9
[184] NEC member, May 2002.
[185] Diana Jeuda, Blackpool, October 2002.

management approaches within the party can be illustrated by the ceremony of "Best practice awards"[186]. Participants in forums or at conference in the following years could regularly hear self-congratulatory speeches on the improvements brought through "best practice training sessions". Similarly, the language of the business world progressively seeped through and Labour delegates, who were still interacting as "comrades" in 1995, became "colleagues" and "friends". The occurrence of collective terms, such as "Conference" decreased in delegates' speeches.

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This chapter analysed how the rhetoric of democratisation translates in practice in political parties. If the British Labour party is, in many ways, exceptional by the speed and depth of the changes undertaken during the reforms implemented under the leadership of Tony Blair, it is not the exception that proves the rule. It is also a party which success has inspired many of its sister organisations across Europe: a number of its core ideas (and its success, at least temporarily) have impressed actors in other organisations and other countries so that they have quite widely exported.

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[186] Awards have been distributed for years, along with medals for longest membership or most successful CLP, what is new however, is the language, directly inspired by business motivational practices.

Chapter 5

The process of individualisation and mass political participation

I have a long standing interest in the process of construction of modern individuals, as we now understand them in the contemporary West, forgetting sometimes how our predecessors and our contemporaries in different societies think about their self. It stems from early on readings of Norbert Elias, Louis Dumont and Jean-Pierre Vernant (Dumont 1991b; Elias 1991; Vernant 1996) and was fuelled over the years through reflections on divergent ways of understanding individuality in narratives of political engagement. Analysis of this process has repeatedly led some to worry about individualism as undermining social integration (Durkheim and Neuburger 2008; Durkheim and Paugam 2007; Le Bart 2008, 120–1; Macedo 2005; Bellah 1991). In different ways, analysts of collective action have also been concerned by the "selfish individual", as seen through the language of "what feels good to me" or "what's in it for me" (Bellah 1991). However, my objective is not here to bemoan the good old days.

Moreover, over recent years analytic lenses that have sometimes tended to take the instrumentally rational actor as the norm (as the archetypal individual rather than a convenient abstraction allowing modelling in a way that would not be possible with a more realistic, and therefore complex, understanding of human behaviour) have gained greater purchase. These conceptions are not dominant in France, but I have spent the past twenty years observing, analysing and, some of the time, living and working in countries where governments have actively sought to encourage consumerist behaviours (including in relation to politics[187]) and/or where more or less narrow rational choice approaches have dominated political science. It has been also striking to see how the language of self interest has become dominant to the point that Americans involved in collective action cannot publicly articulate their motives for joining the cause safe in terms of themselves or their close family (Eliasoph 1998) or that the paradigm remains central even when such assumptions are insufficient to explain mobilisation (RFSP, 2001, volume 51, numéro1-2).

Similarly, a degree of cynicism is taken for granted in politics, in particular among political elites (Bachelot 2011, 123; Hay 2007; Stoker 2006; Hay and Stoker 2009). In contemporary

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[187] I have analysed with Patrick Le Galès the public policies that have, thanks to a series of rewards and punishment, contributed to normalise such calculating (individual and collective) behaviours (Faucher-King and Le Galès 2007).

discourse "politics is synonymous with sleaze, corruption ad duplicity, greed, self-interest and self-importance, interference, inefficiency and intransigence" (Hay 2007, 153). One needs to reflect on what we (analysts, observers, citizens) project onto political practioners as well as how politicians have internalised an instrumental conception of their roles (Hay 2007). It is important to note here how the heuristic analogy of the market and its language of demand and supply has come to dominate political science in the last 20 years. However useful and effective this has proved in explaining political participation, the logic of collective action and the focus on the individual actor may lead us to miss alternative insights or to contribute to the construction of the phenomenon we are trying to explain. Indeed, the attention given to selective incentives and instrumental motivations by academics is matched by the interest devoted to them by organisations (Jordan and Maloney 2007) and more recently by political parties. In the latter, recent reforms have focused on the individual member/supporter and how to attract her. Her integration within local groups has comparatively tended to be neglected, in large part because there were suspicions that new recruits could be put off by activists or because the onus was on numbers rather than retention. However, sociability has tended to play an important role in drawing members into activism as well as in providing networks of recruitment and means of socialisation and political education (Diani and McAdam 2003; Klandermans and Oegema 1987; Recchi 2001). When they do not meet fellow partisans, members are indeed less likely to be politicised and implicated in factional politics. How do credit card members become more than loyalty card supporters?

The notion of a "citizen-consumer" (or any variation of it)[188] means little to French audiences and tends to be understood primarily, if not exclusively, as politically motivated consumer and thus the object of economic sociology (Dubuisson-Quellier 2009). As such, it is usually taken as a positive category reflecting the blossoming of new forms of participation. This is at odds with Anglo-Saxon political science where the citizen can be understood as a consumer of political goods and where the market analogy has become embedded. One can hope that French political science's unease with the vocabulary of the "citizen-consumer" reflects the fact that there is a greater resistance to the ideology of the market society in a country with either a republican tradition or a strong anticapitalist/antiglobalisation political history (or

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[188] In the UK, on the other hand, the New Labour governments have talked about the citizen- consumer, consumer-citizen and citizen as consumer and academics have embraced the term (Scammell 2000; Scammell 2003; Lees-Marshment 2001; Micheletti and Peretti 2006)or challenged it (Clarke 2004; Clarke 2005; Clarke et al. 2007; Newman 2001; Newman, Janet 2007; Soper and Trentmann 2008; Needham 2003)

both). One can be a little sceptical when one considers how political parties have adopted the rhetoric and the practices of the business world and of new public management[189].

In the following sections, I explore how changing forms of political participation need to be analysed not only as the result of citizens' growing desire to find ways to express their individuality but also as political organisations' specific targeting of social groups and promotion of certain forms of participation over others. The analytic distinction between the demand and the supply side may thus here find one of its limits. Indeed, I contend that a causal relationship is impossible to demonstrate as they are two sides on a spinning coin. Nevertheless, the crisis of representative government cannot, in my view, be attributed solely to citizens withdrawing into the private sphere and self-centred pursuits. One also need to take into account the ways in which governments have outsourced the delivery of public services, demanded more responsibility and autonomy from citizens.

Changing forms of political participation

It can be tempting to idealise the second half of the XXth century as the Golden Age of representative democracy, a period during which political parties boasted mass memberships, penetrated civil society through a range of ancillary organisations and campaigned on clearly defined program that defended the interests of their electorate (Katz and Mair 1995). The legitimacy of representative institutions was high and so were levels of (electoral) participation and of trust in politicians and their organisations. To do this would be to forget much of what European societies were like in terms of social and economic inequalities, social mobility, respect for individual rights. It involves overlooking the weight of prescribed identities, political and electoral alignment. Rather than bemoan the end of this mythic era or consider the following period marked by the emergence of new social movements and the banalisation of what used to be labelled "non conventional forms of participation" (S. Barnes and Kaase 1979; Klingemann and Fuchs 1995), I want to focus in this section on forms of participation that involve not the generic individual representative of her category (the citizen, the trade unionist, or even the post-materialist) but the reflexive and choosing "individualised" individual (Kaufmann 2007; Giddens 1991; Strenger 2011; Elliott and Lemert 2009)

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[189] Florence Haegel analyses how the UMP has become influenced by a social category (the world of business, marketing and public relations) whose ascendency within the organisation has considerably grown and who now influences its the ideology and practices and (Haegel 2012).

The "personalisation" of political participation

The greens I worked with expressed that they were feeling personally challenged by the contemporary ecological crisis and believed that they could – and should –contribute to social change. They considered that other parties were failing to offer adequate solutions, partly because they did allow the full participation of citizens and therefore relied on bureaucratic structures and closed elites unable to take into account radically transformed global environment. They were determined to use their citizen's prerogative to influence political decisions at all level of their political system. They claimed that they were different from their environmentalist competitors because of their commitment to "new politics" and in particular to alternative ways of doing politics, more inclusive and respectful of individual abilities to contribute (Faucher 1997, 346–8).

Fairly early on, it became obvious that the classic figure of the devoted activist, all absorbed in the « we » did not work for the greens. This idealised if ideological altruist was partly built from the Republican ideal of separation public/private but, as pointed out by scholars of mobilisation has become increasingly irrelevant (Ion 2005, 73). In the traditional picture the ego is a hate figure that needs to be educated and the "I" can only be tolerated in so far as it belongs to a 'we' (Ion 2005, 74–75). Fusion in the group (the communist ideal-type) no longer works as an attractive mode of engagement (Ion 2005, 79) partly because the contemporary individual looks for a link to others that allows her to remain herself within the group - or even to find herself (Singly 2003, chap. 4).

The greens, for instance, could barely tolerate that someone speak in their name and we have discussed earlier their opposition to the emergence of a party leader, often justified by a belief in "everybody" having leadership qualities in some area (Faucher 1999a, 217–20). The greens were also hostile to the thought of being "*encarté*" and therefore expected to be loyal to a group or organisation (Kitschelt 1990). On the contrary, they were keen to affirm that they could make their own mind up and were not prepared to toe any party line. They were even reluctant recruiters (Faucher 1997, chap. 2). They have imagined party rules allowing dissent and some of the problems of *Les Verts* came from members being allowed to contest any decision they disagreed with. Despite their ideal of consensus-seeking, some of them came to meetings to win the argument rather than be changed through deliberation but no expected loyalty meant that they would feel the need to comply. This is in line with many new social movements demand, such as feminists. Although British greens understood differently the ways in which their sense of individuality played into their partisanship, there was in both

countries a contrast between the green activists I interviewed and those I met at the Socialist and Communist congresses or at Labour and Conservative conferences.

One of the ways in which greens claimed to be different was that they aspired to be consistent in their private and public identities and behaviours. This was what I ended up labelling "*vertitude*"[190]. Instead, the ideal of a "good" green encompasses private choices beyond those expected from communists[191]. Daily life practices are important constituent of a community feeling, of a feeling of lived conviction. Beyond expressivity, there is also social and sociability dimension to the choice of shops and leisure pursuits. Greens argued for consistency between private and public behaviours without however implying that both were equally effective in bringing about the social change they aspired to. To understand such nuances, surveys are of little help. One of the most recent one found that pro-environmental behaviours were not very common among *Verts* members and primarily defined by "values" (Boy, Rey, and Subileau 2003, 144)[192]. These studies do not link up with the growing literature on "*consommation engagée*" (Cherry 2006; Dubuisson-Quellier 2009; Allen et al. 2000; Boström and Klintman 2009; M. Cohen, Comrov, and Hoffner 2005; Hobson 2004; Soper and Trentmann 2008). Across the Channel, greens talked and understood consistency differently: *Les Verts* tended to be discrete about their lifestyle choices and usually prioritised public action over private commitments; the Greens rejected what they would almost perceive as split identities. According to them, private changes were also potentially politically efficacious, if only through example. One could argue that the British greens cautiousness in relation to partisan political efficacy could merely be a sign of their good judgement about the prospect of their party on the political scene. In Oxford, the group had presented candidates every year at local level without success. The breakthrough eventually came in 1993. The institutional/political context thus also explains the temptation for party members to turn inwards and towards *communitas* but one cannot reduce the British greens politicisation of their lifestyles merely through the marginality of their party.

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[190] The label was picked up by Verts after the publication of les *Habits Verts*.

[191] The ideal figure of the good communist activist also extended outside of the cell, in the exemplary behaviour of the good neighbour, trade unionist, etc. but did not encompass lifestyle choices as it developed in a context of ascribed identities, particularly class identity.

[192] The same survey of members came up with 7% vegetarians (Boy, Rey, and Subileau 2003, 142) against less than 2% in France, according to the Centre d'information des viandes (http://sante.lefigaro.fr/actualite/2009/03/17/9470-vegetariens-sont-moins-touches-par-cancer). There were 3% vegetarians in the UK in 2009 and also 5% of partial vegetarians according to figures from the Food Standard agency (http://www.vegsoc.org/page.aspx?pid=753). A figure down from ten years ago, when it was estimated at about 7% (Pollard, Kirk, and Cade 2002, 382). Surveys usually do not allow to discriminate vegetarians from partial meat eaters very easily. Boy, Rey and Subileau thus add that 45% of Verts eat little meat and 3% none at all. It is rarely clear whether "none at all" covers vegan (no dairy, no honey) or merely people not eating meat but eating fish. One cannot make green lifestyle/engagement choices something idiosyncratic, a personal choice as they would themselves argue. It is much more interesting to trace socialisation processes as Traini does when comparing animal rights activists (Traïni 2011). On can also take into account the influence of groups (Cherry 2006).

Indeed, Lichterman's work on the American green movement underlines similar articulation of public/private identities (Lichterman 1996). Contrasting with concerns over individualism and collective mobilisation, Lichterman shows how people who engage in such movements sometimes also invest their individual identity, without the selfish motivation that is often presumed. Some activists concerned with sustainability have articulated traditional political action with private lifestyle choices and individual responsibility. Does it reveal a particular form of individual engagement, one that insists on individual consistency and the search for a holistic understanding of the individual's participation in social life? "Personalized" politics involves, for those concerned, a politicized lifestyle and the conviction that solution to global social problems will be resolved through personal responsibility and individual empowerment (Lichterman 1996; Faucher 1999a). If our lifestyle reflects our identity, it may be tempting to see them as a source of social distinction (Bourdieu, 1979) rather than as political engagement. What are the motivations for pro environmental behaviours (PEB) (Hobson; Berglund and Matti 2006)? Greens, in particular, have often been accused of adopting holier-than-thou attitudes or self-centred preoccupations on a path to individual enlightenment (Faucher 1999a, 159–164). To what extent does self-righteousness contribute to give green lifestyles negative connotations? The small, if growing, interest in voluntary simplicity as an important personal step towards a sustainable society (Etzioni 2004; M. Cohen, Comrov, and Hoffner 2005) is a challenge is societies preoccupied with growth and consumerism to the extent that politically and ethically motivated consumption becomes easier to envisage than other forms of private modes of action. As ultra-modernity is seen as challenging the prescribed identities that we could derive from our spatial and social location, flexible individuals are supposed to be free to define ourselves according to our aspirations and our actions; ontological security is supposed to be derived from the narrative of ourselves we can spin. As a consequence, lifestyles and life choices have become important ways to assert and understand who and what we are (Giddens, 1991). It is probably not surprising that the idea that everything the self does is politically and ethically relevant is expressed in the US and, to an extent in the UK. The puritanical history of both countries has left traces in the ways one conceives the self (Ehrenreich 2010). As noted by Jean-Paul Willaime, "*pour les évangéliques, l'idée reste qu'être croyant, cela doit se voir*"[193], a similar logic is somehow at play: one is what one is seen to be doing. Also interesting is the focus on the unique self and its responsibility (Kaufmann 2007; Le Bart 2008).

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[193] Jean-Paul Willaime http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2012/02/03/pour-les-evangeliques-l-idee-reste-qu-etre-croyant-cela-doit-se-voir_1637267_3224.html#ens_id=1637398

"Individualised" forms of participation?

A number of studies have emerged that argue that the decline in collective forms of engagement (such as membership of political parties, forming a group, or taking part in activities such as strikes, public meetings and rallies) is matched by the emergence of new, "individualised" collective action and often have a predilection for politically or ethically motivated consumption. What we are witnessing thus is the transformation of modes of political engagement rather than a wholesale rejection of politics (Mayer 2010, 271–283). Russell Dalton for instance argues that a generational shift needs to be taken into account as younger US citizens no longer hold citizenship norms based on duty and the vote. On the other hand, their vision of a good citizen encompasses engagement and direct or civic action (R. Dalton 2006; Zukin 2006; R. Dalton, Van Sickle, and Weldon 2010). His study has been replicated in Canada (Raney and Berdahl 2009) and Australia (Aaron Martin 2011).

The process of individualisation raises questions about the representative institutions of liberal democracies that have relied on the political integration of the masses through collective organisations such as political parties and trade unions (Birnbaum and Leca 1991). What is beginning to sound like a *lieu commun* of political comment nicely chimes with the idea of a rational instrumental individual. A key argument is that citizens are seizing the opportunities offered by markets to influence politics. Consumption is analysed as one of the many forms of participation in which highly educated and politically motivated individuals engage (Forno and Ceccarini 2006; Stolle 1998; Micheletti, Follesdal, and Stolle 2006) and the high politicisation of consumers (Balsiger 2011, 43) is seen as a criteria for the construction of consumption as a new object of political analysis[194]. Ironically though, political science appears less sceptical about the existence or the efficacy of a political consumer than marketing specialists (Balsiger 2011, 38–46) to the point that one finds normative invocations of political consumerism as a taken-for-granted future form of political participation (Micheletti 2010; J. Johnston 2008)[195]. The "political consumer approach" tends to approach politically motivated consumerist behaviours as if they were carried by autonomous subjects, free from idiosyncratic political convictions or immune from the web of factors constraining their choices[196]. However, sociologists show that political consumption is given meaning and

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[194] Note that many studies seem to use the same European Social Survey (Bozonnet 2010; Pattie, Seyd, and Whiteley 2004). As the question on political consumption was not asked previously, how can one note whether it is rising or not.

[195] It is worth noting that political consumerism seems mostly common in countries with protestant heritage (Bozonnet 2010), where public choice approaches have played a crucial political role (Hay 2007) and where policies are increasingly targeting individual behaviours as a way to get leverage (Hobson 2004; Hobson; Balsiger 2011; Rumpala 2009; John et al. 2011; Thaler and Sunstein 2009; Gladwell 2002).

[196] The sociology of consumption has tended to focus more on the social stratification of choice, taste as a marker of

effectivity by the social movements that define it (Dubuisson-Quellier 2009) and by the many actors that try and weigh on it (Balsiger 2011, 49–51).

I have approached these questions through the prism of political parties and, to a large extent, of British politics. The UK presents many specific characteristics, linked to the succession of governments convinced by the superiority of the market model and therefore keen to press to promote attitudes to politics akin to an idealised vision of the consumer as a rational and instrumental actor[197]. Nevertheless, the evolutions that I have analysed in this particular context also shed light to similar processes of individualisation in other Western countries and the challenges these raise for representative liberal politics as we have practiced it in the last century.

The proportion of British people who believe that 'citizens have a moral duty to engage in local political life' has fallen from 70 per cent in 1959 (Almond and Verba, 1963) to 44 per cent in 2000 (Pattie, Seyd, and Whiteley 2004, 272). In 1959, only 6 per cent of those questioned in the UK declared themselves in favour of passivity; in 2000 the figure was 18 per cent. Attitudes have changed as regards the areas where government is supposed to intervene and where citizens can make a difference. The traditional influence of groups on political behaviours seems to have waned as processes that used to be eminently social or marked by collective identities such as social class, family, neighbourhoods… (R. Johnston and Pattie 2006) have been dis-embedded (Sanders 1998) and are to be understood as stemming from individual choices[198]. Detailed information about political participation can be found in the studies *2004 Citizen Audit* (Pattie, Seyd, and Whiteley 2004) supplemented by surveys tracking civic participation at the local level conducted every other year since 2001 (http://www.communities.gov.uk) or by the Hansard Society's *Audit of Political Engagement*, a time series conducted since 2004 (Hansard Society 2009)[199]. In contrast with the morose account of a general decline in political participation, the authors of *Citizenship in Britain*

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[198] distinction (Josée Johnston 2010; Bourdieu 1979). The sociological literature on the topic shows that consumption tends to flow from a social logic and is highly routinised. This is often glossed over in political science literature on political consumerism.

[197] David Miliband recognised the problem of New Labour treating citizens too much like consumers : "Default statism turns citizens into consumers and makes government a giant problem solver, which only increases our technical managerialism. This meant that our response to the Big Society was not to engage with its weaknesses, its lack of a political economy, its refusal to allow the society to challenge the market as well as the state, and this undermined our socialism. A life fit for a human being is about more than money and benefits. It's about, responsibility, love, loyalty, friendship, action and victory, values that used to be engraved upon the Labour heart but which we have carried too lightly of late. (…)We renewed schools and hospitals throughout the land, we improved public services but people felt like consumers and not partners in the services they received. We talked about 'we' but it meant us not them, so the workforce often felt neglected and citizens the same; the drive for managerial efficiency became seen as managerial arrogance. " (http://davidmiliband.net/speech/keir-hardie-lecture-2010/).

[198] See however (Heath and Andersen 2002) for an analysis confirming class de-alignment but disputing the individualization of the vote. Braconnier offers an interesting argument in favour of ecological approaches to the vote (Braconnier 2010).

[199] See http://hansardsociety.org.uk/blogs/parliament_and_government/pages/audit-of-political-engagement.aspx

present a picture that is neither a decline in interest in politics (in the broad sense) nor a wholesale reduction in participation (Pattie, Seyd, and Whiteley 2004)[200] but an evolution of the forms of engagement (Henn and Weinstein 2006; Henn, Weinstein, and Forrest 2005). Indeed, over a period of 12 months (2000-2001), 3 out of 4 people in Britain performed at least one type of action aimed at influencing rules, laws, and public policy. In fact, Pattie *et al.* found both a decline in collective forms of participation and a rise in forms of political action involving little or no contact with others. These mostly individualistic political acts purposefully oriented to affect the decisions and actions of representatives of state institutions include not only voting and signing petitions (42%), but also financial donations (62% of respondents) and politically motivated consumption (29%) (Pattie, Seyd, and Whiteley 2004, 78). The *Citizenship Audit* reveals that there is a potential growth in indirect forms of participation (or micro-politics), whereby individuals attempt to influence indirect actions of the state (such as the numerous service providers, be it the NHS, schools, etc). These usually imply personal contact and individualized forms of political action (Pattie, Seyd, and Whiteley 2004, 266).

As in the US, giving money had become the most popular activity (Pattie, Seyd, and Whiteley 2004; Skocpol 2002; Macedo 2005). The evolution is confirmed by research on the evolution of interest groups in the UK (Jordan and Maloney 2007). On the other hand, 45% of Britons were, in 2004, members of an association (Pattie, Seyd, and Whiteley 2004, 78) and many of them did little else than pay an annual membership fee. Although, financial contribution are included in the list of forms of participation, one must remember that many 'visa card' members mostly sub-contract their political involvement to bodies created and led by political entrepreneurs[201]. Research on charitable donations over time gives a slightly more pessimistic picture in terms of participation trends; if amounts given by individuals increased almost three-fold (most notably since 2000), the number of people contributing has fallen 1978, so that the proportion remains stable in terms of share of the GDP. Recent studies note a decline in donations to Charities and political parties since a peak in 2005 (44% of Britons gave to Charities in 2005 compared to 37% in 2009 – the figures are respectively 6 and 3% for political parties (Hansard Society 2009, 25). The biggest change relates to methods of giving as direct debit and other forms of automatic payments have become more prevalent. Although poorer household give proportionally more of their income, most of the expansion is linked to

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[200] 38 per cent of people felt in 2007 that they could influence decisions in their local area and one-fifth that they could influence decisions affecting Great Britain (Communities and Local Government 2008). This shows a sharp decline in feelings of personal political efficacy since the 1960s (Verba and Almond 1963).

[201] See for instance http://38degrees.org.uk/.

increased donations by the richest 50% of the population. Moreover, financial participation is also higher among older generations and the better educated (Cowley et al. 2011)[202].

Interestingly, the authors of the *Citizenship Audit* consider that individualistic participatory practices "makes it meaningful to talk about 'consumer citizenship'" (Pattie, Seyd, and Whiteley 2004, 267). Politically motivated consumer action is not new (Micheletti 2010, chap. 1; Dubuisson-Quellier 2009) and may be increasingly relevant as corporations have expanded their role in globalised societies. It has tended to provide avenues of participation for political minorities such as women and ethnic groups who felt illegitimate or ill-equiped on the political scene[203]. In the UK, people increasingly use their purchasing powers: 31% have boycotted a product whilst 28% have purchased something for political or ethical reasons (Pattie, Seyd, and Whiteley 2004, 77). This reflects a general pattern across European countries where one finds political consumerism similarly associated with interest in politics and engagement in a diversity of forms of action, in other words, boycotting and buy-cotting are not substitutes but rather the "pursuit of political participation by other means" (Neilson 2010; Whiteley 2011). Micheletti looks with great optimism at the political efficacy derived from "individualized forms of collective action" (Micheletti 2003), which also reflect a great sense of creativity and a need for self-expression loosely connected to a collective endeavour (R. Dalton 2006). Social networks and blogs are used to give a collective dimension to isolated acts of political protest[204]. The very positive figures on politically motivated consumption choices established in the early 2000s may be an artefact: the most enthusiastic studies seem to use data collected during the same period[205]. The Hansard Society found in 2009 that only 18% of those surveyed had boycotted products for political reasons.

The 2001 study of British Citizenship also revealed fluctuations in British potential for protest. High in the 1970s and very low after the lost battles with the Thatcher government, it appears to be experiencing a new lease of life (Pattie, Seyd, and Whiteley 2004, 279). In 2001, 23 per cent of British people were ready to demonstrate and 81 per cent believed that demonstrations were a legitimate way of making one's voice heard by government (Sanders et al. 2003). During the latter part of the New Labour years, large demonstrations became

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[202] The European Social Survey shows that new forms of participation reverse inequalities in gender and age but increase those based on education (Marien, Hooghe, and Quintelier 2010).

[203] It appears that women are much more likely than men to engage in such behaviours, particularly as far as food consumption is concerned (Boström and Klintman 2009; Forno and Ceccarini 2006).

[204] See for instance the one-woman protest relayed and amplified through testimony blogging in relation to UKUncut.org.uk, a loose campaign coordinating protest events targeting business suspected of tax avoidance. http://bryony.posterous.com/my-one-woman-top-shop-protest-4th-december-20.

[205] For instance the European Social Survey (Bozonnet 2010; Micheletti and Stolle 2008; Stolle, Hooghe, and Micheletti 2005)

routine in British political life, mobilizing numerous intermediate groups. The record for turnout had long been held by demonstrations against the poll tax[206], which at the start of the 1990s attracted around 100,000 people and eventually cost Margaret Thatcher her job. Demonstrations have been both more frequent and larger. Demonstrations by the Countryside Alliance in the streets of London mobilized 250,000 participants in 1998 and 400,000 in 2002; 200,000 marched against poverty in Scotland in 2002. The largest protest marches were prompted by the military intervention in Iraq: 400,000 demonstrated in October 2002 and then in March and April 2003. The march of 15 February 2003 brought together more than one million demonstrators. On the eve of the 2006 Labour Party conference, 60,000 marched in the streets of Manchester against the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, budgetary constrictions in the health system, and to demand Blair's resignation.

With a long-lasting Labour government and an ineffectual parliamentary opposition, the right turned to protest (to defend rural life, against homosexuals, and against fuel taxes) thereby contributing to the banalisation of such a form of mobilization. Not only did the Conservative leader march, but so did Labour ministers, protesting decisions of their own government (Faucher-King and Le Galès 2010b, 185), and thus demonstrating the erosion of the category of "non conventional forms of participation" (S. Barnes and Kaase 1979). The tactics used now usually combine mass mobilization, lobbying, and carefully planned media strategies, the articulation of competing discourses and the sponsorship of celebrities. Appetite for protest is not abated by the election of a Coalition government, and may on the contrary be bolstered by policies aiming at a rapid reduction of the public spending and a reluctance to negotiate with the affected groups.

On the other hand, although direct action has been on the rise (Schwedt 2007), it is the prevail of a small minority of about 10% (Pattie, Seyd, and Whiteley 2004, 80). It contrasts with large demonstrations because of its confidential appeal, both in terms of participants (Doherty, Plows, and Wall 2003, 678) and of media coverage. Qualitative studies of environmental groups have insisted on participants' assertions of their identity, personal coherence and determination to take control over their own lives without the need for mediation (Plows 2002; Faucher 1999a). The growing use of anti-terrorism legislation and the sometimes heavy-handed police interventions used to control such protest explains its relatively confidential appeal (Faucher-King and Le Galès 2010b, 193). Whilst the expression of individual needs has been encouraged by policies placing the consumer at the heart of its

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[206] This was a residential tax per capita (and hence not proportional to living space) introduced by the Thatcher government in 1990.

reforming agenda, New Labour also developed an apparatus of controls and sanctions designed to ensure that actors behaved responsibly and rationally (Faucher-King and Le Galès 2010a, 59).

Beyond direct action, a wide variety of action could be included if one tried to list examples of individualistic political protest (Reed 2005). New technologies have given rise to opportunities for engagement and they have sometimes been presented as a means to foster participation, deepen and broaden democracy to include the private sphere and the market. One of the early examples is the "Nike Sweatshop email" (Micheletti and Peretti 2006). New technologies have contributed to the emergence of a culture of self-expression (Stanyer 2005) potentially open to everyone as the costs involved are minute in time, energy or resources. Indeed, signing online petition only requires a few seconds, very low commitment and the presence of noone else.

Are these new modes of political expression broadening the social make-up of participants? The answer is clearly negative: not only is the use of new technologies for such political use limited to the highly educated (Ward, Gibson, and Lusoli 2003, 665; Milner 2010) but the public involved in online activity tends to be non-cumulative and only engages in one or two activities (Lusoli, Ward, and Gibson 2006). Cyber-activism and other new forms of participation offer alternative to activism in a local group: they diversify the options of those who would mobilise anyway, without opening up participation to new categories of the population (Marien, Hooghe, and Quintelier 2010). People getting involved in individualized actions tend to be mostly recruited amongst the middle aged, those in professional and managerial occupations, the rich, the highly educated and those living in London and the southern counties (Pattie, Seyd, and Whiteley 2004, 85). The highly educated are three times more likely to engage in these forms than those who left school at 15 (Pattie, Seyd, and Whiteley 2004, 86–88). Although the individualisation of political participation, through information technologies and the multiplications of opportunities to express choice through voice, seemed to promise greater broadening democracy, it has delivered little. It is correlated with the reinforcement of the role of the middle classes, more likely to engage in political participation whatever its form (Pattie, Seyd, and Whiteley 2004, 79), and the social categories that participate the least are those whose interests have the least chance of being taken into consideration. Protest occurs because individuals can mobilize rather than because they have a grievance to do so. Thus, the higher levels of protest among the socio-economically advantaged challenges the principle of equality supposed to be at the heart of democratic regimes (R. Dalton, Van Sickle, and Weldon 2010, 72).

What are the consequences of a system in which participation is socially structured to the detriment of the least advantaged, and where public decisions tend to favour groups that can defend their interests? The widening of inequalities that began during the Thatcher years scarcely decreased under the Blair governments. So the more there is an encouragement of individualized forms of participation, the more one is likely to discriminate against categories of population that tend to not engage in such acts and the more policies are directed towards the publics that engage in them (Pattie, Seyd, and Whiteley 2004, 109). People "who lack education, have little political knowledge and are not interested in politics favour state action to provide jobs, housing and to fight against poverty". On the other hand, "cognitive engagement motivates a sense of obligation to volunteer while at the same time inhibiting the demand for state action to support economic rights (Pattie, Seyd, and Whiteley 2004, 173–4). Demands for individual rights, which stress the importance of the state interfering less (Pattie, Seyd, and Whiteley 2004, 184), do exist but they need to be analysed with precaution. Those who see participation as costly and who recognize few benefits from involvement want the state to intervene on their behalf even if they do not want themselves to be involved (Pattie, Seyd, and Whiteley 2004, 176). However, one may want to take into account suggestions that lack of involvement is linked to feelings of exclusion and alienation in response to inadequate opportunities to express voice (Li and Marsh 2008, 248) rather than free riding or apathy. Solutions therefore may lie in devising procedures that do not exclude lay people, the young (O'Toole et al. 2003; O'Toole, Marsh, and Jones 2003), those without economic social and cultural resources to feel they can meaningfully contribute (Li and Marsh 2008, 271).

Let us now look through the looking glass and at what we find there.

Changing opportunities to participate in politics

One can argue that, in order to understand political participation, one needs to go beyond the individual characteristics that have largely and mostly been studied to focus on the political context and in particular on "the opportunities for participation that mobilisation processes and political institutions grant to citizens" (Morales 2009, 210). If the political context is taken into account it may be more difficult to blame the lack of engagement on citizens (Morales 2009, 206; Hay 2007, 157). The discussion of individual forms of political participation contributes to their normalisation and their social construction. The availability of the data creates the object.

From the 1990s, it looked like demands for political participation changed. Established political parties felt the pressure of the participatory enthusiasm of the "new politics" and of

the preference for mobilisation "à la carte" (Ion 1997; Ion 2001) and considered for a while that they might do better without members (Scarrow 2000) or at least without activists. Apparently more radical than their party's electorate (May 1973) and annoyingly demanding some form of control on politicians and policies, the latter could be seen as a hindrance at a time when the professionalization of PR and marketing techniques meant that activists seemed no longer as necessary as foot soldiers in electoral campaigning (Nielsen 2012; Pedersen et al. 2004; Denver, Hands, and MacAllister 2004). Parties could wonder what the point of having members was. However, members provide financial resources, legitimacy in numbers and some free labour that has proven not to be as tokenistic as thought in the 1980s (J. Fisher and Denver 2009). A "massive but passive" membership (that could be mobilized on specific issues or campaigns but would otherwise leave most of the decision-making to the leadership) was advocated in a pamphlet (Labour Coordinating Committee 1996) that marked a shift in party's attitude to members. The idea was based on distrust of radical activists within the party a keen interest in the growing strength of associations involved in "protest business"[207]. However Labour, like most European parties, justified the organisational reforms in the name of individual participation. The rhetoric of democratisation is difficult to resist and an argument in the electoral competition but the reality of practice might diverge if only because the individualisation of participation refers to particular models of democracy. Whether newly acquired members' rights have indeed led to parties being more responsive to them or their supporters is a different matter to which I turn now.

Marketing approaches to membership

A great deal of research on political behaviour and changing patterns of participation has focused on the demand side (citizens' attitudes and behaviours) but the crisis of participation in representative democracies maybe more than a free-rider problem, that is to say linked to rational actors benefiting from citizenship without bearing its costs (Bang and Sørensen 1999), or "rights without responsibilities" (Giddens 1998, 65). It seems fruitful indeed to consider also how opportunities to participate have changed. Although recent research on electoral mobilisation has demonstrated the importance of personal contact in mobilising voters or the vote as collective process (J. Fisher and Denver 2009; Braconnier and Dormagen 2007), there is precious little on how political organisations recruit members and supporters.

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[207] The analyses of the protest business sector in the UK (Jordan and Maloney 1997; Jordan and Maloney 2007) echoes equivalent research in the US (Skocpol 2004; D. Fisher 2006)and in France where, according to *Valeurs 2008*, preference for intensive participatory forms of political mobilisation stalled at the beginning of the millennium (Magni-Berton 2009, 247).

New individualized forms of participation may be a product of the opportunities that are offered to citizens as much as a symptom of changing demands.

The last few decades have seen a dramatic increase in membership of charitable organisations and assoiations thanks to the adoption of pro-active and targeted strategies of recruitment imported private sector (Jordan and Maloney 2007, chap. 1; Duriez and Sawicki 2003, 20; Haegel 2012). Large figures are indeed seen as a source of legitimacy and credibility as well as funding and a number of associations and unions are now turning to members as financial contributors rather than as activists (Duriez and Sawicki 2003, 25). Competition for the finite resources of donors has encouraged an escalation in direct mail recruitment as well as door-to-door canvassing (D. Fisher 2006; Nielsen 2012). Both techniques increase the ability of groups to target audiences with great precision (Havard-Duclos and Nicourd 2005; Sawicki and Siméant 2009, 19). The increased dependency of associations towards their funders (sometimes as suppliers of public services) has an impact on their activities, their members and what they do, hence a greater interest in their profiles (Smith and Lipsky 1995; Sawicki and Siméant 2009, 19). Although the clear advantage for groups is the improved efficacy of their recruitment efforts, it restricts the pool from which future members are drawn just as reliance on networks did – and this evolution is manifest in the skewed social stratification of individualized forms of political participation (Pattie, Seyd, and Whiteley 2004, 109). However, they are also more capable of altering the level of demand for membership, of shaping the construction of attitudes that lead to membership and thus of choosing the sort of member they prefer (Jordan and Maloney 2007, 83–85). In recent decades, they have "evolved into low cost/low demand organizations to increase the likelihood that rational individuals will join" (Jordan and Maloney 2007: 83). One should not think, argue the authors, that chequebook contributions are spontaneous. It is a social constituency that is well identified, thoroughly exploited through a regular flow of direct mail, and the price of fierce brand competition (Jordan and Maloney 2007: 118). The phenomenon is by no means unique to the UK but also affects other European countries as well as the US (W. A. Maloney and Deth 2008; Beyers, Eising, and Maloney 2008; Jordan and Maloney 1997; W. A. Maloney and Deth 2010; D. Fisher 2006; Smith and Lipsky 1995; Prouteau and Collectif 2004; Kleidman 1994). The sociology of mobilisation has much to gain from a reflection on the logics that contribute to influence the offer of political participation and the social transformations that affect social and political movements (Sawicki and Siméant 2009, 21–22; Boltanski and Chiapello 2007).

Contrary to the expectations of most of the social movement scholarship, groups offer participation in the deliberative process. Rather, they underline as a selling point the few demands made on their membership in organizations that are often run as businesses and are usually controlled by paid staffs and by oligarchies (Jordan and Maloney 1997; Jordan and Maloney 2007). It is therefore not surprising that selective incentives (Jordan and Maloney 2007: Chapter 5) are privileged over ideological ones as. The marketing strategies focus their efforts on members who are likely to content themselves with selective benefits (bird feeding tables for the RSPB, access to parks and monuments for the National Trust, hiking maps for the Ramblers, etc.) and with preferential information on the lobbying activities conducted in their name. Even though there are clear provisions in many groups to accommodate the small proportion of the membership who might prefer a more active involvement, the vast majority of their supporters do just that – they support financially the policies developed by the permanent staff/elite (W. Maloney 2009). In the United States too, citizen's readiness to contribute financially favours groups for whom the issue of participation is not relevant, because they are content to mobilize supporters financially (Skocpol 2004). Such groups launch campaigns according to the prospects and constraints of political marketing by appealing to various professionals (Skocpol 2002).

The aim of large groups is not to offer their members a forum in which to discuss the policies to pursue; deliberations are minimal. Far from seeking participation, the most visible groups now focus on media campaigns, lobbying, and expertise. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds for instance maintains bird reserves, staffed with ornithologists, but also permanent officers in Westminster and in Brussels[208]. In fact, political debate is restricted to a dialogue between professional lobbyists, elected officials, and civil servants. However, integration into policy networks allows large activist organizations (particularly multi-national ones, like Greenpeace or Amnesty International) to offer their members an apparent guarantee of effectiveness. The only democratic check on organizational leaders is the threat of exit (Hirschman 1990). It is ironic that the expansion of the voluntary and charitable sector has led to the creation of audit agencies that claim to offer the generous actors of British public life ways of assessing and comparing the supply of charitable activity on the ultra-competitive market of good works[209]. Because it is always possible in case of dissatisfaction to find different organizations supplying comparable services and more appropriate selective

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[208] Like many Charities, the RSPB sent lobbyists and exhibitors to the three main British party conferences.
[209] See for instance the conference "*Associations, action publique et évaluation*" organised by the GIS (http://www.participation-et-democratie.fr/fr/node/1020) and the Société française de l'évaluation (http://sfe-asso.fr/sfe-evaluation.php?menu_id=937), May 2012.

incentives, groups ensure they keep track of the political wishes of their supporters through again professionalized techniques such as surveys, polls and focus groups and thus offer them the policies and orientations that are most likely to satisfy them.

Not-for-profit organizations are presented as important factors in democracy in the United Kingdom not because they are themselves democratic, but because they contribute to an image of pluralism and personalized participation tailored to individual demand. Thus, they participate in the discourse that place individual choices as a central aspect of a democratic system – in fact they have also embraced the promotion of their role as essential actors in the co-production of public services that lies at the heart of the communities praised by New Labour (Faucher-King and Le Galès 2010a, 112–115). Encouraged by both Conservative and Labour governments, the "third sector" has grown significantly in terms of the number of paid jobs and hours of voluntary work in social, cultural, sporting, or health sectors (Kendall and Knapp 2000). On account of this growth, a number of organizations are involved in commercial activities or have entered into contractual relations with the state, so as to reduce their dependence on members and less regular contributors. For these organizations, patronage and expertise offer routes to influence that are much more rapid and effective than mobilizing members. They help facilitate access to the status of co-opted into policy networks linked to Whitehall. In effect, non-governmental organizations play a role in the formation of public policy as well as its delivery. 'Quasi non-governmental organizations' (Quangos) and agencies have helped to involve individuals in public policy networks without necessarily ensuring openness and transparency. As the new coalition government is setting to reduce costs, it is scrapping quangos and looking carefully into its relationship with the third sector. It is not clear yet how these organizations will adapt to the coalition government's rapid reduction in public expenses. The termination of their contracts (at a time when the economic crisis is likely to further affect the resources they draw from volunteers and individual donors) may challenge their ability to respond to the expectation of the Big Society that they will be able to provide services from within the community.

The rise of the individual party member

As we have seen group membership is largely constructed through the targeting of particular categories of supporters. Similarly, the evolution of party membership and activism can be thought of as the product of an active strategy by party organisations. Indeed, after many years of neglect of their membership, during which activists were suspected of being dangerous radicals, British political parties rediscovered the importance of "ambassadors in

the community" (Alan Martin and Cowley 1999, 43). The success of large campaigning groups was evident on the party conference circuit (Faucher-King 2005, 221–227) where the RSPB celebrate its millionth member in 1997. The Labour party's fascination for the success of not-for-profit-organisations was intense at a time when it was also trying to boost its base. Since the mid 1990s, parties have sought to emulate what seemed to work so well elsewhere and endeavoured to recruit members who would be happy to let leaders lead and would provide legitimacy in numbers as well as through donations and (occasional) voluntary work.

By the mid 1990s, a number of the new Labour elites brought to the party their experiences from a first job in lobbying or PR firms, in the media or in think tanks (Faucher-King and Le Galès 2010a, 47–49). They shared few of the working class hang-ups about money and business. They were prepared to follow the example of the Conservatives and to introduce new management practices within the party. This evolution, which had implications throughout the organisation, needs to be placed in the context of the transformation of relationships between business and government since the 1970s. As Thatcher's government withdrew from direct ownership and became primarily a regulator, lobbying appeared as the best way to influence political decisions (Harris 2002; D. Miller and Dinan 2000). Moreover, ideas about how to "reinvent government" spread from the US thanks to influential consultants (Saint-Martin 2001). Whilst analysis of the decline of the vote has paid a great deal of attention to the paradox of collective action, others point to the decline of direct (such as personal contact and canvassing) and indirect mobilization (through ancillary organizations and networks) of their voters by political parties (Green and Jennifer Smith 2003, 327). With the professionalization of campaigning, parties have become increasingly concerned with attracting floating voters and winning the election. Building lasting relationships on the ground was far less of a concern and even 'getting out the vote' was clearly less important than getting out the right kind of voter (Green and Smith 2003). Marketing techniques used to attract voters beyond the traditional constituency of a party contributes to break down the relationship between the organisation and its members and loyal supporters (Lilleker 2005), probably because voters who do not fit the target profile are less likely to feel engaged by political parties (A. Russell 2005, 559). The intense competition in a declining number of marginal constituencies in the UK may further accentuate the disconnection.

If legitimacy is in numbers, it is important to recruit large memberships and compensate a decline in identification with effective loyalty schemes and regular recruitment drives. A number of parties in Europe, such as the PS (Barboni and Treille 2010), have thus opened up their membership through incentives, discounted rates and new forms of affiliation. The

evolution over the next few years was towards campaigning organizations (Farrell and Webb 2000). From the late 1990s, many parties changed the ways in which they appealed to voters as well as new members.

Labour's new focus on recruiting individuals implied a radical evolution in a party that did not accept individual members until 1918. Within the party, the role of intermediary groups (the Constituency party, the socialist society or the trade union)was successfully downgraded through the transformation of the role of the annual conference, the creation of the National Policy Forum or efforts to transform the role of local parties (M. Russell 2005a; Faucher-King 2008), the focus on personal stories (Faucher-King 2005, 158) rather ideological arguments[210]. A key argument was that a supportive mass organization could be used to increase the legitimacy of the organization through the staging of a vibrant internal democracy (contrasting with the Conservative party). The membership could be granted "a lot of very little powers" as incentives for participation whilst providing a large body of potential volunteers, stirred from the national level for campaigning activities.

The narrative of the empowered individual and instrumentally rational actor is also associated with the vast recruitment campaign, launched in 1994 using new marketing methods. The aim was to attract managers and members of the liberal professions and of the middle and upper classes from outside traditional Labour networks. Procedures for joining were simplified, thanks to the centralization of applications (it was no longer necessary to go through a local section), the creation of a national membership list, and the use of payment facilities (especially debit and credit cards)[211]. They also created new incentives for joining: new members had the right to vote during internal elections for the leader and for party posts, as well as for the selection of candidates; they also had a right to information thanks to the creation of personalized mail and magazines for members. Finally, they enjoyed a new right to participate in forums presented as a way of contributing directly to policy formation. These "rights" received abundant publicity and were presented as proof of the party's democratization. In truth they represented very little in the way of concessions, and activists perceived them as a dilution of their (already meager) influence. To begin with, the recruitment strategy was effective and it made it possible to move away from a working class and trade union culture characterized by activist contact, local anchorage, sociability, and

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[210] It is as if, the need to demonstrate that politics is not remote involved staging the personal dimension of policy and to develop narratives of individual experiences.

[211] A comparable evolution took place at the same time in the voluntary sector

identification with a tradition—a culture that was in the process of disappearing in the Britain of the 1990s, especially in the south of the country.

In the past, contact with the local party was essential: the secretary collected membership fees on a yearly or monthly basis and passed on to the national organisation information as well as fees. For many parties, this contributed to maintain a social network and grid that facilitated mobilisation[212]. Such a system not only granted a great deal of power to local activists but also explains why parties were unable to provide reliable membership figures. In the run up to 1997, Labour launched a recruitment campaign with new marketing methods, aiming to attract managers, members of the liberal professions, and of the middle and upper classes from outside traditional Labour networks. The strategy worked as the membership rose to over 400,000 members. Direct debit members were sought, partly in an effort to limit contact between the local activists organization and new members for fear that they would either intimidate and scare them away or contaminate them ideologically (Faucher-King 2005, 208).

The new recruits were barely encouraged to make contact with the existing local sections, out of a fear that they would be put off or, alternatively, "contaminated" by the archaisms and the jargon of Old Labour activists. Such (atomized) members would only be connected to the national organisation, thereby avoiding the nuisance of "anoraks" who might put them off. From the point of view of activists, their very isolation meant that they could not appreciate how the party ought to be run and were likely to be supportive of a more centralised organisation[213] and of plebiscitory decision-making (Whiteley and Seyd 2002, 214). On the other hand they were invited to take part in forums and could identify with the suited-up delegates giving polished speeches at the conference rostrum.

The reforms were presented as a guarantee of genuine consultation, the process of individualization was also a way of creating a base that would be more likely to be supportive of leadership initiatives when called upon.

Members, campaigners and supporters

Many parties across Europe have simplified procedures for joining, thanks to the centralization of applications, the creation of a national membership list and the use of electronic payment facilities. They also offer selective incentives such as access to regular and exclusive information, opportunities to take part in a variety of consultation efforts or to attend party events (conferences, fundraising and campaigning events with opportunities to

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[212] As the French communist and socialist parties have given up on the regular neighbourhood work, they have been succeeded by the Front National (Tristan 1987).
[213] This was the case for instance when Green 2000 was adopted in 1991.

meet ministers or senior politicians) themselves professionally organised and often outsourced. Some of these incentives met expectations (Granik 2005)[214]. Strikingly though, "supporting the left" was the most popular response (76%), hinting at an ephemeral and conjectural commitment. The influence granted by some of these new rights was limited[215] that it is not clear to what extent they indeed played a role in recruitment or retention.

British parties have adopted the language of rights and incentives and now focus on the individual member at the expense of intermediary bodies with the idea that there should be a direct communication link between the leadership and the members (Routledge 1999, 277–78; Faucher-King 2005, 210).

The idea of an instrumental individual looked all the more attractive as both party leadership had by then accepted the premise of the superiority of the business model as a form of organization (Meyer and Rowan 1977) and Labour was looking to demonstrate that it had become "modern" and "professional". Politicians have in fact mostly adopted the dominant consumerist language and talk about the nature of their 'offer' in a political 'marketplace' (M. Russell 2005b).

The *Parti socialiste* created in 2006 a discounted rate membership at 20 euros and Labour announced in 2011 that it would create one at £1. Whilst the PS attracted a host of new recruits (up 60000 to 218000 members), it proved unable, and to an extent, unwilling to retain them (Grunberg and Haegel 2007, 56). If members are not representative of the electorate (Grunberg and Haegel 2007, 62), there could be good reasons to open the membership or at least consultations beyond their ranks. The success of the semi open primary of 2006 provided arguments to advocates of French socialist primaries. Despite the mixed consequences of American primaries, European parties are likely to import a practice that is attractive to their supporters and promotes a positive image of democracy and transparency. The Conservatives adopted a party constitution and provisions for party membership in 1998. Until then, one joined local associations or clubs, which "National Union of Conservative Associations" was informally linked to the Parliamentary party and Central Office. Although gaining some control over the membership has made it possible to organise ballots, one can hardly say that members have gained much power. If anything, centralisation has limited the autonomy of the volunteer branch.

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[214] When asked what they aspired to, new socialists recruits responded that they wanted to vote for selection of candidates (65%), to debate political issues (51%), to take part in local political life (48%) (Grunberg and Haegel 2007, 54).
[215] And underused as seen in the turnout at internal ballots.

Despite these initiatives, both Labour and the Conservatives have seen their numbers dwindle down. Studies of party members have been extensively conducted in the UK in the 1990s (Seyd and Whiteley 2002; Whiteley, Seyd, and Richardson 1994; Whiteley, Seyd, and Billinghurst 2006) and we know now a lot about who the members are, what motivated them to join or to leave their party. As they discuss competing explanatory models of activism, Whiteley and Seyd conclude that a rational choice approach, based solely on individualistic motives, fails to explain high levels of participation within political parties because it neglects social norms and affective attachments (Whiteley and Seyd 2002, 217–9). As parties have shown a lack of trust in their members and dismantled what contributed to give meaning to party membership[216], can one be surprised that they are facing a spiral of demobilization (Whiteley and Seyd 1998)? The failure to take these dimensions into account could be an underestimated explanation - amongst several (Whiteley 2011).

A "sense of belonging" is crucial for membership retention. Those who do not get it tend to be less stable members[217]. Eventually, Labour party officials in London linked declining levels of activism to lack of opportunities to interact at the local level, to bond and to share interpretations[218]. Substituting contacts with activists suspected of being dangerously radical with information directly provided by the centre had been a way of controlling internal pluralism and internal dissent; moreover, local parties had been encouraged to "abandon boring matters such as policy and become more fun places" (Fielding 2002, 141). It is unclear whether efforts to faciliate socialising that will be enough to give meaning to party membership and activism for those who are not primarily motivated by selective incentives and a political career.

When faced with decline in membership and the need to demonstrate their embeddedness within society, many parties (including the British ones) have created opportunities for members of the public to join the party as 'friends' or 'supporters' (Barboni and Treille 2010; Gauja 2009). Similarly to campaigning groups, there are few efforts to stimulate supporters' active participation beyond electoral campaigns[219] and consultations via referendums or policy forums. Most communication seeks to provide them with information about national

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[216] Such as the belief (however delusional) in policy efficacy through conference deliberation in Labour or identification with the imagined community of the party as a family of brothers and sisters (Faucher-King 2005).

[217] A survey of Labour leavers show that 16% of those who lapse after a year intended to do so but 30% would have changed their minds if locally involved (Granik 2003). Avril offers an excellent analysis of Finchley's local party (E. Avril 2008). See the edited volume on disengagement (Fillieule 2005).

[218] The paradox is of course that New Labour itself worked to limit such interactions for fear that new members might be put off by "anoraks".

[219] Successive studies have demonstrated the importance of local (and traditional) campaigning in delivering votes, hence the renewed interest in voluntary workers (J. Fisher and Denver 2009; Denver, Hands, and MacAllister 2004).

policies and campaigns, or sometimes involve special offers from insurance companies or from businesses providing a wide selection of goods and services (Faucher-King 2005).

If examples of individualised political behaviours seem to confirm the idea of politicians condemned to being responsive to the political demands of their target electorate, one can also highlight how political organisations have sought to mobilise instrumentally rational individuals and how public policies have rewarded such behaviours. When all actors are expected – and encouraged – to seek the satisfaction of their needs and desires, it becomes difficult not to read with suspicion the actions of those who claim they are driven by a collective purpose and a vision of the public good. Considering the crucial role of political parties in representative regimes, there are reasons to be concerned about their apparent inability to reconnect with potential members. It seems unlikely that more individualised rights and incentives will be enough to solve the problem.

Depoliticisation and outsourcing government

New patterns of individualised political participation or of disengagement should be interrogated in the light of a political discourse that has become dominant over the years and has actively sought to produce new subjects, i.e. entrepreneurial and competitive individuals (Andersson 2010, chap. 8). Doubting that their members were anything but representative of the electorate, parties have sought to outsource deliberation and policy-making through new technologies as well as a flurry of political forums and focus groups. They justified their initiatives through a discourse of participation and/or deliberative democracy – which also revealed their lack of trust in their own members and the belief that they needed to look for legitimacy outside the party (Routledge 1999, 277–8; Lefebvre 2011; Lefebvre et al. 2009), as well as through the necessity to be responsive to demands of the electorate.

Again, I will take examples in the UK, though this evolution is by no means exclusive to that country. In fact, consultations and forums have developed so much that have contributed to the emergence of a new sector of commercial and non commercial activities with consultants specialising in the organisation of events(C. Lee 2008; C. W. Lee 2011). Consultations of different format and purpose have now been held on public services, GMOs, the state of the BBC, nano-technology, or services for the elderly, amongst many others. Sponsors (be they political parties, local or national government, Quangos) usually outsource the organization of these forums to a new range of professionals. Foundations, think tanks, charities and universities have thus participated in the creation of groups facilitating consultative events. One of them, Opinion Leader Research, boasts about the organization of the largest "listening

study ever to take place in England on behalf of the NHS" in 2005 (Opinion Leader Research 2006). E-petitions were initially launched for Number 10 but Parliament and other governmental institutions were urged to follow (L. Miller 2009). In 2004, the *Big Conversation* invited individuals to submit comments and suggestions on the issues of their choice to the government by internet or e-mail, text-message, letter or telephone. Despite its limited success, it was followed up by *Let's Talk* three years later. This exercise allowed ministers to respond to public questions without really providing an opportunity for participants to engage. Because it failed to reach the definition of a "conversation" it opened up all the more to criticism and cynical views of being a manipulative gesture (Coleman 2004).

Whilst the British public has more than ever been "listened to", it is not clear how these new processes indeed "empower" them. Consultation exercises are instruments of choice when assessing which public expense can be disposed of with the least protest. In such cases, the process usually starts from the "common sense" assumption that a cut is inevitable. Similarly, they rarely challenge existing social hierarchies (M. Barnes, Newman, and Sullivan 2007). They have also been seen as helpful to move along public debate but in fact, the government has, at times, adopted positions different from the conclusions reached by Citizen juries or tried to manipulate the proceedings[220]. Such situations echo the attitude adopted by the New Labour leadership in relation to the party's policy forum (Faucher-King 2005, 185): they simply believed that they their approach was "post-ideological" and based on "facts" and could therefore provide indisputable technical solutions and deliver the "best" policies, because (Finlayson 2003; Andersson 2010). Ironically, where there has been a lively public debate (on the war in Iraq for instance), it has been largely ignored and bypassed by government (Beetham 2003). Up to what point can processes for legitimating policy decisions prolong the illusion of democracy without undermining trust in political institutions?

The press itself may now act as stirring agent for protest, according to Kirsty Milne (2005). Increased competition leaves the media dependent on providing coverage of popular mobilization. She demonstrates how 2000 mobilisations (anti hunt/pro hunt and Clause 28, paedophile hunt and fuel protest) were partly orchestrated by newspapers, rather than by political parties. Political cynicism and the crisis of political representation have contributed

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[220] In 1999 the polling institute MORI revealed that 73 per cent of British people rejected GMO agriculture and 60 per cent also doubted its safety but in 2003, Food Standards Agency used a citizens' jury to demonstrate how an informed public would welcome the availability of GM food in the UK. The full report can be found at http://www.food.gov.uk/gmdebate/citizens_jury/?view=GM%20Microsite. The government was itself condemned in 2007, following a complaint from Greenpeace about a consultative forum on renewing the nuclear energy stock, for having deliberately supplied incomplete and partial information to the participants: Tony Blair hastened to confirm that his government's policy would nevertheless not be changing.

to encourage the press enthusiasm for direct democracy as an excuse to mount campaigns and organize mock up referendums. Transparency has provided another argument for a new style of investigative reporting through the exposure of views expressed off the record, and sometimes in private, blurring the boundary of the public and the private. In the age of mobile phone equipped with cameras, few can escape the scrutiny of the web, whether they are being cruel to a cat or taking part in a public demonstration. The media have surfed on the promotion of the individual and the valorisation of the consumer-citizen in a context of intense competition. However, one could see them as barely filling in the void left by political parties in the organization of political mobilization. In this context, the professional organization of campaigns by interest/campaign groups and the media are one of the few offer of political participation open to citizens.

Most of these initiatives discussed above stem from the assumption that the problem is one of costs/benefits ratio and that the solution lies in lowering barriers to individual participation. However, where they have been introduced, possibilities of voting by email or by post do not increase the participation of those targeted, that is the poor, depoliticised and uneducated (Braconnier 2010, 134): this disappointing outcome comes from an erroneous understanding of what voting means. Far from being an individualised act, it is all the more collective as the citizen is less politicised. Therefore, stripping the vote from its rituals (when voting at Tesco) or delocalising it (through postal ballots) may remove whatever collective stimuli remain when it is embedded in the local context (Braconnier 2010, 135). As Johnston and Pattie demonstrate, the influence of the social context involves more than conversations with strangers and needs to be understood in terms of a complex neighbourhood effect (R. Johnston and Pattie 2006, 143).

There has been a growing interest in participatory forms of democracy as an addition to representative institutions. In France, experiments at the local level have been conducted, in Poitou-Charente (Mazeaud 2012) and other regions (Gourgues 2010). In academic terms, a new journal (Participations) and a series of conference organised by a *Groupement d'intérêt scientifique Démocratie et Participation*[221] have maintained the issue at the top of the agenda and it has become and extremely dynamic field of research ranging from theoretical perspectives to ethnographic studies of processes and quantitative assessment of achievements (Bernhard and Bühlmann 2011).

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[221] The GIS is presided by Loïc Blondiaux. http://www.participation-et-democratie.fr/fr/node/507

This last chapter explored changes in forms of political participation and turns to more general questions and social processes. It engages with social theory and reflections on processes of individualisation. It starts from an empirical analysis of the ways in which greens think about their political commitment and from changes in the types of members sought for by political parties. It departs from fieldwork to venture in the direction of the formulation of hypotheses about the self-fulfilling prophecy of a crisis of mobilisation when the normative models for representative democracy and participation no longer match the ways individuals are encouraged to think about their place in society and their role in political and social change. Rather than nostalgia for a so-called Golden Age of mass democracy it invites self-reflection on the social impact of political science research and the need to think through how political institutions and norms evolve with social processes.

Conclusion

The reflexive work conducted in this volume involved articulating and exploring my intellectual and methodological trajectory over the last twenty years as well as reflecting on some of the results of my research. This exercise has allowed me to insist on the importance of the *détour* (geographic, linguistic, disciplinary, culturally) in stimulating new research questions, bringing new perspectives and exposing as idiosyncrasies what one could otherwise take-for-granted. Although the objects of my research have been political parties and their members, my ambition has been to contribute, through this particular angle, to our understanding of the process of individualisation pervading our societies. There are many other avenues of enquiry as the changes that it entails are multifaceted and by no means univocal, simple, circumscribed or predictable. As a political scientist I am particularly intrigued by the implications of how one thinks about one's role in social change on political participation.

It has been argued that the modern state and capitalism built individuals in the name of social integration, focusing on the emergence of generic individuals, autonomous and responsible for themselves but disciplined into social roles, socialised into values and perspectives centred around the collective, the nation state or the public good. Generic individuals were mobilised to take part in political processes through the relentless work of organisations largely dedicated to the task. Over the years, these individuals gained autonomy whilst being increasingly motivated by economic self-interest and reason rather than passion but they remained defined by their social roles (the citizen, the doctor, the patriot…) (Le Bart 2008, 91–95). Such a social construction of the individual in relation to a collective that gave her meaning constrained for a while alternative forms of individualisation, focusing on differences and on a core, authentic, often psychologised self (Le Bart 2008; Elliott and Lemert 2009). In recent decades, indeed, the focus has tended to be placed on the unique individual and the need to tailor services to her needs and choices, conforting the "illusion" (to use the expression of neurologist Bruce Hood) or one could also say the social construction of the choosing, self-centred and instrumentally rational individual[222].

Although involvement in civic life is usually taken into account in studies of political participation (Pattie, Seyd, and Whiteley 2004; Skocpol and Fiorina 1999), surprisingly little attention has been paid to institutions as determinants of political participation. The role of

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[222] This is of course no more a social construction than at any previous stage of the process of individualisation {Citation}

organisations is now better accounted for by specialists of social movements than by psephologists. However, literature from a different subfield of political science suggests that we reflect on feedback loops and the effect of ideas and social practices. In a key 1993 article, Pierson considered that political scientists were at pains to analyze and understand systematically the politics impact of policies (Pierson 1993). Ten years later, Mettler and Soss assessed the, by then, wider body of research that considers the ways in which public policies can contribute to shape the subjective experience of what it means to be a citizen (Mettler and Soss 2004). These works invite us to take into account how policies influence the resources of the people they target as well as affect their interpretations of their role in society. They show how policies define the political community and contribute both to the determination of group membership and the eventual activation of such groups. Policies have an effect on civic participation through material incentives, distributing social skills, creating resources for mobilization, creating processes of learning and patterns of beliefs about government and their roles. Therefore, they predispose individuals or groups to participate in civic and political activities – or refrain from it (Mettler and Soss 2004, 62). A number of studies of policy feedback focus on welfare (Soss 1999; Lister 2007; O'Toole et al. 2003; Mettler 2005) and their effect on recipients' learning about how politics responds to their needs. "By shaping citizens' encounters with government, the design and implementation of public policy constitute important forces shaping citizen's orientations toward the institutions and policies of government" (Mettler and Soss 2004, 62).

There are many policy developments that would be worth investigating when considering the evolution of social norms. I have explored the topic in a book co-authored with Patrick Le Galès, in which we analyse the UK as an object of social and policy experimentations (Faucher-King and Le Galès 2010a). In the UK, since the Thatcher era, consumer choices have been construed as inherently liberating in as much as they confer power on individuals. They became a leitmotif of draft policies and synonymous with liberalization and democratization. The ultimate objective was the creation of a classless society offering opportunities for upward social mobility and success to the most deserving. These projects took concrete shape in public policy encouraging the individualization of relations to the political and lauding the merits of the pursuit of individual self-interest. Tony Blair, for one, frequently used the language of enlightened individualism as a justification for his policy proposals[223]. This approach, which he regarded as democratic and non-ideological, in fact

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[223] Tony Blair, World Economic Forum, Davos, 27 January 2005.

challenged traditional forms of political action and rested on faith in an 'invisible hand' regulating economic and political conflicts (Hay 2007, 57). For New Labour, the egoism of the citizen-consumer engaging in decisions that concern him/her personally makes it possible to encourage individuals to take responsibility, and to exercise their freedom (as consumers) by intervening on the supply-side or mobilizing in a community framework. If one thinks in terms of policy feedback into politics, it is particularly interesting to note how New Labour governments can be characterized by their social-engineering approach and their concerted efforts to develop a whole array of incentives and punishments designed to help individuals to act instrumentally (Faucher-King and Le Galès 2010a).

It is not easy to analyze the chain of causes and effects, the extent to which a policy responds to popular demands, anticipates them or becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy that creates the attitude it was supposed to respond to[224]. However, there are good indicators that point to the emergence of the "citizen-consumer" as a good example of a product of social engineering (Clarke 2004). The "citizen as consumer of public services" was promoted during the Thatcher years alongside the taxpayer (who seeks to maximize the efficiency of her taxes) and the scrounger (who lives off various benefit). The Citizens' Charters of the Conservatives created a distance between the government and the delivery of public services, the former as the champion of the public against the interests of providers. Far from being rejected by New Labour, this approach was generalized from 1999 as the party distanced itself from the trade unions (Faucher-King 2005, 196).

I hope to have shown how an effort to understand the logic behind culture as it emerges through interaction can offer promising avenues for research on activism. When symbols are challenged and landmarks moved, when interactions far and between, it becomes difficult to justify one's action to oneself and others. Could this help us understand the profound transformation of British Labour over the last 15 years The logic of membership and of activism within a group remains tied to the meanings about their own identity or about their role in the political world that individuals can derive from their engagement. An exploration of meaning-making activities within mainstream parties may lead to a better understanding of demobilisation and demoralisation[225]. Could this alter our perception of the evolution of

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[224] For instance, attitudes towards the poor changed between 1994 and 2003: the percentage of those who thought that poverty was a question of social justice declined from 30 per cent to 19 per cent; in 2007, 28 per cent of British people thought that the poor were shirkers – the figure stood at only 15 per cent in 1994 (Faucher-King and Le Galès 2010a, 115). At the same time during this period, public policies have targeted "scroungers" and "cheaters".

[225] Could this contribute to explain how the French socialists have gone from soul searching exercise to collective therapy (Treille 2000; Lefebvre and Sawicki 2006) but failed to engage their members?

British politics over the last 30 ? Could this make us ponder how isolated these developments are? Could this shed light on the changes in attitudes to, and in particular declining levels of trust in, political parties, parliamentarians and representative institutions? There are connections to be made between the emergence of an "anti-political" and sometimes populist anti-establishment culture and the promotion of a particular model of human behaviour.

While there are on the whole few indication that European citizens are "avoiding politics" (Eliasoph 1998), there are interrogations about the implications of "consumer citizenship" and the growing popularity of forms of political participation that do not require joining up with others (Pattie, Seyd, and Whiteley 2004, 275; Micheletti 2010). Are these changes the consequence of a withdrawal to self-actualisation in the private sphere (Hirschman 2002), a rejection of representative institutions or the avoidance of responsibility? The rhetoric of governments, left and right, in recent years has involved an insistence on balancing rights and responsibility and public policies have targeted individual behaviours (Borraz and Guiraudon 2010, 15; Faucher-King and Le Galès 2010a). It is important to interrogate the link between the current challenge to the collectivist age (when membership of a trade union was the norm and engagement was based on a strong sense of collective action and solidarity) and the relentless promotion of *homo economicus* as the "normal" and appropriate way to behave in all fields of life including politics.

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