Abstract. Late industrialization as well as political polarization and the rule of military regimes resulted in the belated onset of an environmental movement in Turkey. Environmental movements and green politics developed almost concurrently in the 1980s, while their major events and actors were intertwined. The first green party was established earlier than many countries, in 1988. This first party was short-lived, but afterwards, in the 1990s, green politics contributed to the development and diversity of the environmental movement, which increasingly distanced itself from green politics. The second green party was established in 2008. There are many political and generational differences between the two Turkish green parties. Their main similarity is that neither fulfilled the eligibility criteria for entering the elections. Also, the existing ten per cent electoral threshold has been discouraging. Therefore the most indicative deficit of Turkey’s green politics has been its lack of an electoral challenge.

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Introduction

Modern environmentalism was born in the 1960s as a response to the ecological challenges of postwar industrial development in North America and in Europe. Green political parties in several countries were founded in the 1970s and 1980s. However, in Turkey an environmental movement emerged only in the mid-1980s, gradually developing into a full-fledged movement by the 1990s.¹ Unlike in European countries, the environmental movement developed almost concurrently with the arrival of green politics in Turkey; the major events and actors involved in these two movements were intertwined. There are two reasons to account for the delayed arrival of an environmental movement

¹ Parts of this article refer to my personal involvement in the environmental movement and in green politics, especially during the second green party period. Therefore, some of the information provided here comes directly from my own observations. I am grateful to Barış Gencer Baykan and the anonymous referee for their very useful comments and suggestions. I also thank Megan Gisclon for her careful proofreading.
and green politics in Turkey. A later and somewhat slower process of industrialization than elsewhere postponed the perception of ecological crisis and thus deferred environmentalist responses to the situation. In addition, specific developments such as political polarization, military coups, and the resulting suppression of the freedoms of expression and assembly not only delayed the arrival of environmentalism and green politics in Turkey, but also determined these movements’ various, context-specific directions.

This article analyses the development of the environmental movement and of green politics in Turkey, focusing mainly on the Greens. How and in what specific political circumstances did green politics emerge and evolve? What have been the relations between the green movement and environmentalism? What were the differences between the first- and second-generation green parties? What have been the main political themes of the green parties? And, finally, why have the Greens failed as an electoral political party in Turkey?

What Are the Environmental Movement and Green Politics?

In this article, I use the terms ‘environmental movement’ and ‘green politics’ quite distinctly. Environmentalism broadly refers to a ‘concern that the environment should be protected, particularly from the harmful effects of human activities’.2 This concern can be expressed in a variety of ways, ranging from the adoption of an eco-friendly lifestyle to the support of environmental organizations or green parties. Della Porta and Diani define social movements as a ‘distinct social process, consisting of the mechanisms through which actors [can be] engaged in collective action’.3 They observe that people involved in social movements (including environmentalism)

- engage in political and/or cultural conflicts meant to promote or oppose certain forms of social change;
- are linked by dense informal networks, mostly within the boundaries of specific organizations, although both individuals and organized actors keep their autonomy and independence while engaging in collective action in pursuit of common goals (and no single organized actor can claim to represent the whole movement);
- are part of a process of social advocacy that occurs only when collective identities develop that encompass more than specific events and initiatives.

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Doherty added two characteristics to this definition of a social movement:

– It must act at least partly outside political institutions;
– It must reject, or challenge, dominant forms of power.  

An environmental movement can be defined in the broadest sense as a social movement that engages in activities to promote or oppose social change in order to protect the environment, often challenging policies and practices that exert a negative ecological impact. Members of environmental movements share a collective identity that is an expression of opposition to environmentally destructive practices and advocacy for environmentally friendly policies and behaviour; their actions, however, occupy a wide spectrum spanning private and public spheres, and can have conservative, moderate, or radical features. Most of the actors in environmental movements are involved in specific organizations, but individuals outside organized groups should also be regarded as being part of the movement. And the movement includes green political activists, but, as in the definition, it operates partly (or in some cases, mostly) outside established political institutions.

Green politics can be defined in terms of an ideology and framed mainly around the existence and activity of green parties. Although one can call green politics a political movement, it can be differentiated from other such movements because of its involvement in electoral politics mostly through green parties, and by its broader ideological framework that is not only environmentalist, but also dedicated to grassroots democracy, nonviolence, and egalitarianism.  

The term ‘green movement’ can also be used to refer to a political movement whose political identity is formed around a green ideology. It acts partly outside the orbit of political organizations (namely, the green parties), in particular via grassroots activism and non-party political initiatives, and sometimes cooperates with political organizations that are not necessarily green. It should be noted that some green parties, especially those facing electoral restraints (by electoral systems and high election thresholds), e.g. the British Greens, can be defined as movement-parties.

In Turkey, the terms ‘environmental movement’ and ‘green movement’ are often used interchangeably. This is the case partly because of early discussions among green activists about how to define ‘environmentalism’ as an apolitical term. Some environmental activists define themselves as ‘green’, and thereby declare themselves to be more political, even if they are not members of the Green Party; or they may use ‘ecologist’, a term seen as being more ideologically

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5 Doherty, Ideas and Actions in the Green Movement, 68-69. 
distinct than ‘environmentalist’ or ‘green’; or they may identify themselves as ‘environmentalists’ in the term’s apolitical sense. Also ‘nature conservationist’, ‘nature defender’, and ‘life defender’ have been used in different ideological and political contexts. But there is no clear distinction among these terms—not least because of the electoral challenges that the greens have faced in Turkey. They have been considered mostly a movement, since they have had no chance to be an actor in electoral politics. Therefore, I use not only the terms ‘environmental movement’ and ‘green politics’ but also ‘green movement’, in order to include in my discussion a political movement whose ideological and political views, philosophy, and actions have been closely aligned with those of the two green parties.

A Brief History of the Environmental Movement and Green Politics in Turkey

The Emergence of the Environmental Movement

Turkey’s industrialization began in the republican era with the implementation, especially during the Great Depression of the 1930s, of a series of protectionist and statist economic policies. This limited industrialization was supplanted by an import-substitution system put in place after the Second World War. Planning as a central, albeit disputed, tool of economic management was launched in the 1960s. Hydroelectric dams became the dominant source of the national power supply in the 1960s and 1970s; but Turkish industry, including tourism, and energy demand, although increasing, were still limited until the era when the country transitioned to a free-market economy and opened itself to global markets aligned with the neoliberal order of the 1980s. Developmentalism, on the other hand, encapsulated in the motto ‘çağdaş uygarlık seviyesine ulaşmak’ (‘reaching to a level of contemporary civilization’), has been always the national cement allowing the country’s various political ideologies to coexist together.7

Environmental issues were first mentioned in Turkey’s third Five-Year Development Plan in 1973, which came about in the wake of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972. The plan openly declared that developmentalist efforts could not be compromised by environmental concerns. This approach accorded with a focus on the so-called third world, and it was later replaced by a strategy that regarded the management of

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the environment as a complementary component of development. The current constitution of Turkey was written after the 1980 coup d’état by the military administration. Article 56 declares the ‘right to live in a healthy and balanced environment’ and defines ‘improving the environment and protecting environmental health and environmental pollution’ as duties of the state and its citizens. This constitutional enshrinement of environmentalist goals was followed by the passage of the Environmental Law in 1983 and the founding of the Ministry of Environment in 1991. The National Environmental Strategy and Action Plan was adopted in 1998, and several international environmental agreements have since been approved. Although the contemporary discourse on environmental policies, including talking points about sustainable development and a green economy, has been heard from official sources for some time, Turkey’s formal stance on environmental issues has never really departed from third-world developmentalist discourse. Turkey’s self-image as a developing country and its popular, political, and bureaucratic perceptions of an everlasting need for growth and development have continued to determine not only its economic but also its environmental policies.

Before the 1980s, environmental ideas and activism were very limited in Turkey. Earlier forms of environmental awareness were mostly related to forests and green spaces. The first public environmentalist figure in Turkey was Ahmet Bedevi (1899-1963), or ‘Tarzan of Manisa’, as he was called. He was born in Ottoman-era Samarra in today’s Iraq. He participated in the Turkish War of Independence, and afterwards settled in the city of Manisa in western Turkey. He led a very modest life, living in a hut in the forests of the mountainside area (Spil) of the city. All year round, including in the winter cold, he walked around half-naked, wearing only a pair of black shorts. He devoted himself to the protection of the forests and to planting trees. After the 1930s, he gained national recognition as the ‘father of trees’. He was not a man of letters, and he did not leave a written philosophical legacy; however, his name has long been attributed to a variety of anecdotes, stories, and legends. He became popularly known for his odd personality and unconventional behaviour, as well as his somewhat secluded lifestyle and avant-garde ideas. He can be compared to John Muir, a founder of preservationist ideas in the United States. Both Bedevi and Muir saw nature through a kind of early deep-ecologist approach, emphasizing its sacredness and beauty. Bedevi called the trees his ‘young sons’ and preached

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that one should lead a simple life in harmony with nature.\textsuperscript{9} There has been no scholarly research about Bedevi’s alleged impact on Turkey’s environmental awareness, and he was mostly forgotten until filmmaker Orhan Oğuz directed a feature film about his life in 1994.\textsuperscript{10} Yet his environmental activism and cult popularity indicates that he can be recognized as an iconic forerunner of the green movement in Turkey.

Other early environmentalists in Turkey were mainly professionals such as foresters, doctors, and biologists. During the early republican era, the main environmental themes focused on deforestation, wildfires, inadequate urban infrastructure, public hygiene, epidemics, air pollution, and the preservation of Turkey’s cultural heritage. From the 1950s to the late 1970s, attention began to be focused on environmental issues such as industrial pollution and air pollution in the cities due to coal use for home heating, as well as the effects of squatter settlements that had arisen because of an increase in population, rapid internal migration, and urban sprawl. Most environmental organizations were identified as urban beautification associations; a few natural protection and public health organizations, mostly those with close ties to public officials, were also recognized (e.g. the Green Foresters Association, the Turkish Natural Protection Association, and the Ankara Association for Fighting Air Pollution).\textsuperscript{11}

In the 1970s, certain environmental movements began to follow Western examples more closely in terms of their ecological approach and campaigning. The Turkish Environmental and Woodlands Protection Society (TURÇEK) was established in 1972 by a group of engineers, architects, and academics. The Protection of Natural Life Association (DHKD, the forerunner of WWF Turkey) was founded in 1975 by a group of artists and conservationists. The protection of the northern bald ibis (\textit{Geronticus eremita}) against the threat of the bird’s extinction in southeastern Turkey was their flagship campaign. The Environmental Foundation of Turkey (TÇV) was established in 1978 and became an early practitioner of a regulatory environmentalist approach and a sustainable development discourse. The TÇV came to be the main advocate for environmental legislation, the environmental rights article in the new constitution, and the environmental ministry. The foundation organized sustainable development

\textsuperscript{9} Bedriye Aksakal, \textit{Yeşilin Atası Manisa Tarzanı} [Father of Green, Tarzan of Manisa], Manisa 1993; Ertuğrul Dayioglu, \textit{Manisa Tarzani Ahmet Bedevi} [Tarzan of Manisa Ahmet Bedevi], in: Hakki Avan / Mustafa Özkösemen, eds, \textit{Manisa Tarzani Üzerine Yazılar} [Articles on Tarzan of Manisa], Manisa 2006, 31-42.


conferences as well as translated and published landmark books such as Our Common Future. One of the most important civil environmental struggles of the period was the early anti-nuclear movement in the eastern Mediterranean region. Akkuyu, in the Mersin Province, had been selected in 1976 to be the site of Turkey’s first nuclear power plant. But a movement spearheaded by a local activist, Arslan Eyice, and supported by some of the municipal authorities, fishermen, and some other local people—and bolstered by additional support from a several journalists on the staff of the most widely read national newspaper of the time—mounted an effective campaign to oppose the project, which was ultimately cancelled in 1980.

One cannot call these few separate and quite insular groups popular movements, since they were created by elite professionals and were based on the views of a closed community rather than a grassroots organization; their activism was not a part of a widespread public debate. Another approach in the 1970s may have been equally significant for future green movements: left-wing environmental discourse emerging from professional organizations of architects and urban planners. Environmentalist concerns had begun to gain recognition in the cities at that time. The poor planning of urban areas, underdevelopment, and poverty in squatter settlements were considered to be the main environmental issues that needed to be addressed. Early leftist environmentalism was part of (or embedded in) left-wing anti-imperialist discourse. The limited industrialization of the country did not provide all that much of an impetus for widespread, popular ecologism. Rather, environmentalist ideas were shaped within the context of statist, developmentalist, and planning approaches. But the specific dynamics of Turkish environmentalism were also shaped by other factors.

Severe political polarization and violent fighting between revolutionary movements and the state-backed, right-wing nationalist militia in the 1970s further delayed the onset of a genuine environmentalist movement in Turkey. Military interventions had contributed to political instability throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Whereas the first military coup in 1960 ousted a right-wing government and was hailed by many as a Kemalist restoration, the coup d’état of 1971 was a direct response to the rise of left-wing popular movements following the worldwide protests of 1968. Numerous Marxist-Leninist factions fought against the right-wing nationalist coalition governments, against nationalist groups, and

also against one another. The government backed the right-wing paramilitary groups, and although the legal socialist political parties were not supported by a large portion of the electorate, leftist revolutionary groups had significant popular support. Street fighting and daily killings characterized the late 1970s. The 1971 military coup caused a decade of political instability to follow in its wake. I consider this instability to be a distinguishing feature of the development of environmentalism in Turkey, because it occurred during the time of the green political awakening in Western Europe, with which Turkey historically and as a NATO member had close ties. Therefore, neither the country’s political polarization nor the dominance of Marxism in the leftist opposition provided a fertile social or political context to permit the development of ecological ideas in Turkey in the 1970s. Other ideologies such as feminism and pacifism, which were at the root of European green politics, were not present either.

One can provide several examples of how the left’s anti-imperialist discourse has shaped environmental ideas in Turkey. Although Turkey’s history runs counter to the traditional narrative of decolonization, one of the standard anti-imperialist arguments made on the left is based on the assumption that the Western powers deliberately left Turkey underdeveloped. Environmentalism was regarded as one of the tools of the imperialist powers. One of the earliest environmentalist declarations by the left-wing Turkish Union of Chamber of Architects and Engineers (TMMOB), published on World Environment Day in 1978, stated that ‘developed capitalist countries make the propaganda that development and environmental protection contradict each other, but countries that are underdeveloped emphasize the deceit hidden in this dilemma’.  

15 Earlier, in 1976, a statement by the TMMOB’s Commission of Environmental Problems (issued by the Chamber of Architects) had declared: ‘Developed countries have been trying to ascribe the cost of the solution of environmental problems to the less developed countries and their peoples by bringing the issue to the international level’. Therefore, the ‘imperialist countries and local comprador governments’ were accused of using global environmental problems and related international mechanisms as tools to force Turkey to bear responsibility for environmental pollution and to shoulder its costs.  

Eventually these arguments were partly incorporated into the environmental policies of the state, but the official authorities did not use a leftist terminology. For example, Turkey ratified the Kyoto Protocol twelve years after it was signed


but it has never accepted any responsibility for the mitigation of greenhouse gases, claiming that it is exercising its right to development by emitting as much CO$_2$ as it deems necessary. Interestingly, certain left-wing groups and organizations, including TMMOB, shared the same view during the public debate on whether Turkey should adopt the terms of climate treaties such as Kyoto in 2007-2008. This argument maintains that Turkey is a permanently developing country that has a more or less limitless right to create emissions. This position is the stance of the state and of certain left-wing groups. The difference between them mostly concerns who has power, possession, and control of resources and policies; there are additional distinctions about whether Turkey should be a part of the global capitalist economy or an independent nation with a socialist government.

By far the cruellest military coup d’etat in Turkish history, the 12 September 1980 coup brought the ambitious political struggles of the 1970s to a definitive end. The new military regime banned all political parties, unions, and civil society organizations. Parliament was reconvened when civilian rule was restored in 1983, but the military government’s 1982 constitution institutionalized some of its limitations on political activity. Among these restrictions (still in place) were measures that circumscribe the participation of smaller political groups and parties in political life. Over the past thirty-five years, the following rules have become increasingly significant for green politics in Turkey:

- a ten-percent national threshold for the election of representatives in the general elections, with the same threshold applying to local elections;
- a provision that restricts all political parties from running under an official ‘umbrella coalition’; and
- tight eligibility criteria for the participation of political parties in both general and local elections.

The same political breakdown caused the dissolution of political ties among activists; leaders and activists from the left-wing opposition were imprisoned and often forced to immigrate to foreign countries as political refugees, especially to Europe. The situation also created a temporary disconnect not only among individuals but also among generations. The younger generation in particular was forced to be apolitical. Therefore, the 1980s in Turkey can be characterized as a decade of limited political competition and a weak civil society; however,

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17 Ümit Şahin, Türkiye’nin İklim Politikalarında Aktör Haritası [Mapping the actors in the climate policies of Turkey], Istanbul 2014.
19 The last criterion consists of having branches in at least half of Turkey’s eighty-one provinces, and one-third of the districts in any province. This amounts to a minimum of around one hundred fifty branches.
new political ideas flourished in the void created by the lack of political power struggles. The partial liberalization of political life in the 1980s not only brought back the leftist ideologies of the past but also attracted new constellations of leftist thinking such as feminism, antimilitarism, and environmental awareness. Political liberalization in the Soviet Union (glasnost and perestroika) and the success of the Greens in West Germany were among the most important external factors that helped drive home the changes that allowed for the advent of green politics in post-coup Turkey. As will be discussed below, this influence can be partly attributed to the fact that the main actors in the new flourishing of green politics were precisely those activists who had been disappointed by ‘real socialism’ and were strongly affected by the changes in the socialist bloc, as well as in the European left more widely. Although theoretical debates such as the discussions initiated by Rudolf Bahro in East and West Germany drew little attention in Turkey, green social movements such as feminism and environmentalism began to take on more positive connotations among Turkish socialists. These groups also celebrated the electoral success of the German Greens, which new and reformist left newspapers and magazines regarded as the upsurge of a new leftist political discourse. Involvement in the green movements by people of Turkish origin in West Germany, including political refugees, may also have played a role in the reception of these movements’ success in Turkey.

Greens and the Environmental Movement

The Turkish governments of the 1980s liberalized the economy, and Turkey became a part of the global market. Developmentalist projects such as the electrification of villages and other infrastructural investments, the construction of new roads and highways, urban transformation projects, investment in energy, and tourism became the engines of the new neoliberal economy. The 1980s witnessed the building of Turkey’s first coal power plants, huge hydroelectric projects in the southeastern region, large hotels on the Mediterranean coast, and extensive urban development projects. Natural areas, old settlements, and several historical buildings were allocated to such projects, which were designed on a much larger scale than had previously been the case for prior developmentalist projects, such as those in the 1950s.

Under these circumstances, environmental issues became matters of public concern, and the first popular environmental protests in Turkey were mounted

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20 In 1978, the East German author and intellectual Rudolf Bahro criticized the existing socialist system in a book and was imprisoned. He became one of the leading figures of the German Greens after he was expelled to West Germany in 1979. Cf. Rudolf Bahro, The Alternative in Eastern Europe, London 1978. A Turkish summary was published in the socialist journal Birikim in 1978.
in the mid-1980s. Several landmark movements emerged at this time: starting in 1984, a local protest movement opposing the coal power plant on the shores of the Gulf of Gökova, one of the celebrated natural treasures on the western coast; a popular campaign against a tourism project on an uninhabited beach in Dalyan, known as a major spawning ground for loggerhead sea turtles (*Caretta Caretta*); protests against the environmental pollution caused by a cement factory (Akçimento) near Istanbul; and urban protection campaigns such as ‘Güven Park is not a parking lot’ in Ankara and ‘No to the hotel in Taskışla’, a historical campus of the architectural school at Istanbul Technical University. Other, similar campaigns were also local, but their combined effect over the years that followed was to draw national attention to environmental issues and create a cumulative impact on civil society. The Chernobyl accident in 1986 added a growing awareness of the dangers of nuclear energy, not only because of the magnitude of the disaster but also because the authorities gave an infamous display of their disregard for transparency and accountability by covering up information about radioactive fallout in Turkey.

Environmental issues had received a considerable amount of attention from the well-educated urban elites; however, the growing middle class also contributed to the emergence of large-scale environmental awareness after the 1980s. Some leftist groups (e.g., one of the earliest environmental initiatives, the ‘Group for Spreading Environmental Awareness’ in Ankara) had begun to

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21 There were a few environmental protests in the 1970s against industrial pollution in Samsun, Izmit etc., but these remained local and did not create a movement. Esat Öz, Dünyada ve Türkiye’de ‘Ekoloji Hareketi’nin Gelişimi. Çevre Koruma Derneklerinden Siyasi Partilere [Development of the ‘ecological movement’ in the world and in Turkey. From environmental protection associations to the political parties], *Türkiye Günlüğü* (1989), 327-34.

22 Local protests against the Gökova coal power plant continued until the late 1990s. Media coverage of the Gökova protests was extensive, and the issue received national attention, mostly because the region in question was in the middle of a popular tourist area and the power plant had created a conflict with the growing tourism industry. The Gökova Continuous Action Committee that was formed by environmentalists and greens in the 1990s and their 1994 hunger strike were very popular as well. The Gökova actions had a significant impact on the level of environmental awareness in society. Bülent Duru, *Çevre Bilincinin Gelişim Sürecinde Türkiye’de Gönüllü Çevre Kuruluşları* [Voluntary environmental organizations in Turkey within the period of environmental awareness raising], Master’s Thesis, Ankara 1995; Bahar Öcal Düğören / Koray Düğören, *Ben Devletim Çevreyi Kirletirim* [I am the state, I pollute the environment], Istanbul 1989.

23 Akin Atauz, *Çevreci Sivil Toplum Hareketinin Yakın Tarihi* [Recent history of environmentalist civil society movement], in: Vakıf, Türkiye’de Çevrenin ve Çevre Korumanın Tarihi Sempozyumu, 194-220.


25 Rural people became a part and sometimes the leading force of the environmental movement later in the 1990s, after the Bergama protests, and in the 2000s with the small hydropower protests.
lead discussions on green political ideas that were thematically aligned with the concerns of the European New Left in the 1970s, especially its critiques of ‘real socialism’. Left-wing activists of the 1970s in İzmir had also discussed the same issues, and later, as early as 1986, they distinguished themselves by considering the establishment of a green party, calling themselves the ‘İzmir Greens Group’. Certain other green groups—one organized around the Association for Fighting Air Pollution, another called ‘Green Solidarity’—were based in Istanbul. These groups were the forerunners of Turkey’s first Greens Party.

Another Istanbul-based green group, the Radical Democratic Greens (Radikal Demokrat Yeşiller), also aimed to become a political party, but did so from a quite different perspective. The main tenets of this anti-authoritarian group were at the junction of ecology and civil freedoms. The group was the earliest collective in Turkey that worked to defend what has now become known as LGBT rights. Their efforts represented an avant-garde initiative, because they were one of the earliest political groups to defend ecology, antimilitarism, the right to conscientious objection, the rights of atheists, the freedom to express one’s sexual orientation without punishment, and they also addressed the problems of sex workers. This party initiative was pejoratively called the ‘party of homosexuals’. Although the Radical Democratic Greens never supported the Greens Party, and they harshly criticized it as a party of ‘fake greens’ because of their environmentalist priorities, public opinion never categorically differentiated those two different green political groups. The first Greens Party became the target of the same sort of ‘defamation’ as the Radical Democratic Greens although it never became interested in LGBT rights. Consequently, the Radical Democratic Greens never founded an actual political party, and blamed the Greens Party for preventing the establishment of a ‘real’ green party. Yet their courageous

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26 The name of the party, Yeşiller Partisi, can be translated as Green Party, which is the widespread usage in English-speaking countries. But yeşiller (greens) is the plural of yeşil (green) and reflects the inspiration the party took from the German Greens, Die Grünen, which is also plural. It also refers to the ‘movemental’ characteristics of the party, because, as with the early history of the West German movement, the green movement, regardless of whether it would evolve into a political party, used the plural form to refer to itself, namely Yeşiller (Greens). That is why I prefer to translate Yeşiller Partisi as ‘Greens Party’ and depart from the usual usage one finds in English-speaking countries. Melih Ergen, Yeşiller Partisi’nin Olmayan Tarihi [Non-existent history of the Greens Party], İzmir 1994; Aydın Ayas, Türkiye’dede Çevre Korumacılığında Yeşillerin Katkısı [Contribution of the Greens to environmental protection in Turkey], in: Kriton Curi, ed, International Symposium of Environmental Problems. Proceedings, Istanbul 1991, 41-46; Celal Ertuğ, Tarihi Olmayan Yeşiller Partisinin Tarihi [History of the Greens Party without a history], Ağacıklan, 23-24 April 1995, 16-18.
discourse on civil freedoms paved the way for like-minded future groups and later influenced several political groups, including the mainstream greens.\(^{27}\)

The green groups, especially in İzmir and Istanbul, organized public events devoted to building a green party in 1986-1988. There was considerable participation from the public and significant media interest. The struggle over the Dalyan sea turtles, brought to public attention by a group of young activists on the İztuzu coast that carried out a hunger strike in 1987, made green issues very popular among the Turkish public.\(^{28}\) Among the main drivers of public interest were the popular electoral success of the German Greens, a sense that this new movement was an escape from the classical left (both because of the coup d’État and the current crisis of ‘real socialism’), and ongoing limitations on freedom of association in civil society. Ironically, it was easier to register a political party than to build a civil society organization or a union. The limitations set by the military regime on the freedoms of association and assembly had remained in force since the formal restrictions on founding political parties had been rolled back after the first post-coup elections, as part of the normalization of political competition.\(^{29}\) Also, the lack of hierarchy and the anti-party ideas central to green politics motivated people who had negative experiences in the classical political parties or in disciplined left groups.\(^{30}\)

Turkey’s first green party, the Greens Party (Yeşiller Partisi), was established on 6 June 1988, and it quickly became a media sensation. The main actors initiating this party were groups from Istanbul and İzmir. Smaller groups from other cities were also part of the party; however, the Environmental Awareness Group of Ankara did not join. The founding chair of the party was Celal Ertaş from Istanbul. A medical doctor who had been the first person to raise the question of air pollution in Ankara in 1958, he had been the founder of the Ankara Association for Fighting Air Pollution in 1969, as well as a former politician who had served for a brief period in 1977 as the Minister of Health. The leading figures of the İzmir Greens, on the other hand, were mostly former socialist activists, drawn especially from the movement’s Maoist faction. The political distinctions between the İzmir and Istanbul leaderships created tension in the very first days.

\(^{27}\) See the programme of the group and the archive of the monthly newspaper Yeşil Barış [Green Peace], the first issue of which was published in June 1988 by the Radical Democratic Greens, http://yesilbarisradikaldergi.blogspot.com.tr/. Cf. also Tanıl Bora, Türkiye’de Çevreci Kıpırdanış... Devamı Gelecek mi? [Environmentalist movement in Turkey... will it continue?], Şehir 11 (1988), 24-28.

\(^{28}\) Some of the mainstream magazines—e.g. Milliyet Sanat, Yeni Gündem, Gökyüzü, Şehir, etc.—dedicated cover stories or special issues to the rising green movement in 1987-88.

\(^{29}\) The reform was, to be precise, mostly directed towards the founding of new parties. Only thirty founding members and a postal address were needed to register a political party. However, bureaucratic formalities and legal difficulties complicated the enlargement and survival of small parties.

\(^{30}\) Ergen, Yeşiller Partisi’nin Olmayan Tarihi.
after the party’s foundation. While those from İzmir represented a more radical ecological wing and espoused antiparty ideas, the Istanbul group was a more mainstream faction of environmentalists.\(^{31}\)

Despite this internal split, the party was still able to create branches in forty provinces and districts within one year and registered almost two thousand members. Political ties with European and especially West German Greens were established as early as 1988. The İzmir group members were invited to speak at the West German Greens Convention in 1989. However, despite this sort of international cooperation and support, the development of the party could not be sustained. By its first anniversary it had been beset by a host of problems, including the drafting of two counter-declarations sent from both İzmir and Istanbul on several issues such as the roles of the chair and of party bodies, political agenda, environmental issues, activism, enlargement strategy, etc. Despite these internal discussions, the Greens Party, led by the İzmir branch, mounted in 1990 Turkey’s most successful environmental protest campaign, which was directed against the Aliağa coal power plant project. İzmir’s MPs of the Social Democratic People’s Party (the party of the mayor of İzmir) were among the partners who helped organize local people for the protests. On 31 May 1990, Turkey experienced the biggest environmental action in its history when a seventy-kilometre long human chain of nearly one hundred thousand people stretched from İzmir to Aliağa. Within a few days of the action, the government cancelled the project. The unwillingness of the local people to support the project was clearly stated as the reason for the cancellation.\(^{32}\) But in spite of this victory and other successful environmental campaigns, the first Greens Party survived officially only until 1994. By September 1990, two wings in the party had gathered separately in competing conventions on the same day in two different regions of the country, marking the start of an actual split.\(^{33}\) The last popular chairperson of the party, Bilge Contepe, was an eco-activist, but she served only nine months;\(^{34}\) therefore the unofficial dissolution of the Greens Party can be traced back to as early as 1991, when the final party convention

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\(^{33}\) Ergen, Yeşiller Partisi’nin Olmayan Tarihi.

deeper the split. Afterwards, the last chairperson, Aydın Ayas, tried to revive the party through ‘eco-liberal’ ideas, but his efforts were unsuccessful.\textsuperscript{35}

The short life of the first Greens Party was due to several factors, the first being its premature formation. The party did not have sufficient ideological preparation. Several books on green politics were translated and published only after the party had already been established. Apart from some bulletins and newspapers, the first green political journal \textit{Ağaçkakan} (\textit{Woodpecker}) began publishing in 1992, four years after the party’s founding. The party programme was written by a handful of intellectuals. Many people in the party did not have a clear idea what green politics actually were, and the very concept of ideology for leftist parties was questioned because of the crisis of socialism. Many greens acknowledged learning through action rather than through the absorption of established ideas and ideologies. Thus, while many green parties around the world were formed later in the 1990s, the Turkish Greens Party of the late 1980s and early 1990s paid the price for its lack of preparedness.

A second factor that contributed to its short life was the varying understandings, at the time, of what it meant to be a political party. The concept of ‘not fighting for power’ was enjoying a vogue among the greens and certain other leftist political activists. Greens were rejecting the idea (or necessity) of power, but for some this repudiation was equal to implying that the parliamentary system should be rejected altogether. Although such a renunciation of the parliamentary system was compatible with protest against the political system’s limitations towards the smaller parties, such as the ten-percent electoral threshold, it still created controversy around the question of the difference between a political party and a civil society organization. The immediate outcome of this discussion was personal quarrels among the leadership on the issues of party discipline, hierarchy, and political agenda.

Last but not least, the unresolved relationship between ecology and politics was an ideological obstacle that caused disputes among members over how the party would become a ‘real’ party. Talking only about ecological issues and taking actions solely in environmental conflicts was considered apolitical by some in the party. Some leading party members tried to establish that ecological issues were real systemic issues; making an impact on the political agenda of the country was deemed crucial by many, in fact.\textsuperscript{36} The media, on the other hand, were expecting more environmental actions from the party.\textsuperscript{37}


\textsuperscript{36} SOS Akdeniz, Güneydün Dünya! Çevre ve Ekoloji ve Yeşiller Üzerine [Good morning world! On environment, ecology and the Greens], İzmir 1991.

\textsuperscript{37} Demet Soysal, Medya ve Yeşiller [The media and the Greens], \textit{Ağaçkakan} 5 (1993), 17.
The Environmental Movement in Turkey

The first Turkish Greens Party was closed down by the Constitutional Court in February 1994. The reason cited for the party’s closure was its lack of accountability concerning some bills that involved very small amounts of money. The real reason seemed the remaining members’ reluctance about the party’s continuing: the party did not even submit a plea for its own defence. On the other hand, one can regard the folding of the party as a product of its political era. In the early 1990s, closing down parties was a regular practice of the state establishment: eighteen parties were shuttered between 1983 and 1999. Most of these were left-wing parties who were accused of defending the rights of the Kurdish people. Although the accusation directed at the Greens was not political, it was noted that the establishment may have used the simple lack of accountability as an excuse to disband a green party with progressive ideas and ties with European political forces. In brief, the political instability of the 1990s contributed to the dissolution and banning of the first green party; however, the subsequent boom in diversified green and environmentalist groups would not have come about without the Greens Party, despite its failure.

The Environmental Movement after the Greens Party

Several new environmental groups began to flourish in the early 1990s. Two struggles became essential rallying points for these groups: the Bergama movement and the antinuclear campaign. The Bergama movement protested the construction of the country’s first gold mine near İzmir. It was originally set up as a local movement, but it became nationally visible and influential when several efforts to cancel the mine’s license were brought to court, scientific reports were issued by professional institutions about the harmful effects of gold mining with cyanide, and direct-action movements, such as the peasants’ ‘naked protest’ demonstrations, were organized. The Bergama movement is still considered to be the starting point for popular environmental resistance in Turkey. The antinuclear movement, on the other hand, which had its origins in the 1970s, had a new start in 1992 after the newly elected government announced that it

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38 Personal communication of the author with several former Greens Party members.

39 Türkiye’de Kapatılan Siyasi Partiler [Political parties that were closed down in Turkey], Wikipedia, http://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/T%C3%BCrkiye%27de_kapat%2C%B1lan_siyasi_partiler.

40 Personal communications with several former Greens Party members.

would renew the Akkuyu nuclear power plant project that I have already discussed. The antinuclear movement created a platform and assembled a national antinuclear congress to oversee its activities; some groups tried to use this spurt of action as the beginning of a united environmental movement or even a new green party. Furthermore, many other environmental or green groups were established in the 1990s, such as Greenpeace Mediterranean, the Social Ecology Group, SOS Mediterranean, the Ecological Action Group, the TEMA Foundation, WWF Turkey, and other, regional environmental associations.

These movements, groups, NGOs, and grassroots organizations, along with new green journals, magazines, books, etc., were clear signs of an environmentalist and green awakening in the 1990s. Interestingly, this green boom followed the dissolution of the first Greens Party. It is not entirely clear whether one can say that the members of the defunct Greens Party directly created the new environmental movements that arose in the 1990s, but one can see that at least some of its members were among the new constellations of eco-activists, especially in the antinuclear movement, the SOS Mediterranean group in İzmir, several local environmental groups such as the Bergama movement, and among the writers and editors of the *Agaçkakan* journal. Also, some groups who referred to themselves as ‘Greens’ in Istanbul and Bodrum continued their activism. For these groups, it was essential to protect the name ‘green’ by also making a political claim. Istanbul Greens resumed relations with the European Greens in the late 1990s, and thereby the Turkish Greens were involved in the Green East-West Dialogue and the Green Balkan Network meetings that were both held in Istanbul in 1999. Several attempts by former Greens Party members and groups to recreate the party failed, but the quantity and the popularity of environmental initiatives and NGOs increased. The decade ended with a victory for the antinuclear movement in 2000. Although the cancellation of the Akkuyu nuclear power plant project by the government was mainly due to economic reasons, the final decision to abandon the project which was announced by Prime Minister Ecevit followed a visit between him and the representatives of the antinuclear movement. In his statement, Ecevit said that some of the antinuclear arguments, such as his support for renewable energy, were among the motives for cancelling the project. The persistence of the antinuclear movement thus has had a clear impact on public awareness of environmental issues in Turkey. The failure of the nuclear project gave the green movement another push for a new start.

Another important political factor influencing green politics in the 1990s was the establishment of a united leftist party, Freedom and Solidarity (Özgürlük ve

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Ümit Şahin, Bir Sivil Toplum Teması Olarak Çevreçilik. Ekoloji Hareketlerinin Siyaset Dışına İtilmesi [Environmentalism as a theme of civil society. Pushing the ecological movements out of politics], *Sivil Toplum* 5, no. 20 (2007), 77-89.
The Environmental Movement in Turkey

Dayanışma Partisi, ÖDP), in 1996. The ÖDP was the ultimate result of long efforts to unite the former communist, socialist, and revolutionary parties and groups. The new party gained national attention as it claimed to be a party representing not only left-wing groups but also the smaller political and social movements, including ecologists and greens, in order to create a ‘rainbow coalition’. The ÖDP initially even claimed to be a ‘non-party’. Some prominent members of the former Greens Party were among its founders and committee members. Thus, the new party provided for some time a political platform for politically oriented ecologists and greens. The ÖDP pretty much came to dominate left-wing politics during the late 1990s, but its star began to wane after the 1999 elections, in which it received less than one percent of the vote. The existence of such a supposedly pluralistic left-wing party was one of the factors preventing the formation of a new green party, although former members of the Greens Party and even the Radical Democratic Greens made several attempts to do so.43

The 1990s was an era when civil society and small radical groups flourished concurrently in Turkey, and this is one of the decade’s most important characteristics. Civil-society participation in the United Nations Habitat Summit in Istanbul in 1996 gave impetus to the NGO sector; several organizations prepared NGO almanacs. Most significantly, post-disaster mobilization after the 1999 Marmara earthquake organized by grassroots organizations and NGOs created a new expansion of social movements. Environmental movements built on this development by implementing international mechanisms such as Agenda 21. This societal change, coupled with Turkey’s EU accession preparations after 1999, began to normalize professional environmentalism. New, larger environmental NGOs such as TEMA and Greenpeace also entered the stage during the 1990s, creating a drastically different situation from that of the 1980s for the environmental movement and green politics. The environmental movement was rapidly expanding in terms of membership, public outreach, and popular support.44 And if one considers quite diverse groups, from the radical ecologists to the mainstream environmentalists, to be part of this environmental movement, ignoring the ideological differences between them, one sees how they were now able to distance themselves to a greater extent from green politics.45 Groups and activists who named themselves ‘green’ became smaller and more homogenous politically. In sum, the environmental movement and green politics were born together in the 1980s; however, the diversity of the former in the 1990s was a consequence of the dissolution of the first party, the Greens Party,

43 Personal communications with several former Greens Party members.
44 The most popular environmental organizations in Turkey are TEMA and Greenpeace. TEMA eventually gained more than five hundred thousand volunteers, and Greenpeace has had tens of thousands of supporters.
45 Ümit Şahin, Bir Sivil Toplum Teması Olarak Çevrecilik.
a few years after its establishment. Both movements started to separate in the late 1990s, and a new Greens Party was born out of this development.

**Turkey’s Second Greens Party and the Environmental Movement in the 2000s**

A small group named ‘Greens’ started to become visible in 1999. A green manifesto, declared on 5 June 1999, marks the starting point of this new period. A group of activists from the environmental movement and the former Greens Party gathered in several meetings between February and May 1999 to discuss the ‘general principles of the green movement of Turkey’. From these conversations the Green Manifesto was drafted, and it was declared that ‘the green movement is an alternative which is not originated from any other ideology or political structure’, and that the movement aimed to create a common platform for these activist groups. Although this manifesto did not launch the second Turkish Greens Party as an immediate outcome, it spurred much activity: international green meetings were organized; the group presided over conferences and summer gatherings taking up a green, but not exclusively environmental, political agenda, including a discussion of whether Turkey should become a member of the European Union; and it also participated in some actions with banners reading ‘The Greens’. Finally, in 2002 a small group of independent activists announced a new declaration to recreate the Greens Party with their signatures on an ‘Initiative for Greens Anew’. Among the first to organize them around this slogan were former Greens Party members, a group of well-known leftists, and environmentalist-ecologist activists. The recent split in the ÖDP was among the triggering causes of this action.

The group organized its first large gathering in Bodrum in April 2002 with around forty participants. They adopted a text of ‘ten green principles’ as the foundation of their programme. Afterwards, the group adopted the name ‘The Greens’ or ‘Greens Party Initiative’ and later on referred to itself as the ‘Greens of Turkey’ and ‘Coordination of the Greens’. Preparations for a new party continued for six years under the coordination of a secretariat. The group held regular meetings and annual conferences with international participation (Green Dialogue Meetings), established local offices, and collaborated with local environmental groups, newspapers, and journals. The Greens nominated two independent green candidates in Bursa and Izmir in the 2007 general elections and supported the left’s umbrella coalition elsewhere. Finally, the new Greens Party was established on 30 June 2008. The group had communicated with many leading members of the former Greens Party and had organized meetings to

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46 Celal Ertuğ, Yeşilden Griye Adım Adım Türkiye [Turkey step by step from green to gray], Istanbul 2001, 239-242.
re-establish these connections; however, most of the first-generation Greens did not join the new initiative. Only a few of them were among the leading figures and founders of the second party, the most notable being one of the first co-spokespersons of the new party, Bilge Contepe, who had been the second chairperson of the first Greens Party. The new party had offices in five cities, but its maximum number of members was only a few hundred people.

The second Greens Party was never able to participate in an actual election, but it was able to nominate independent green candidates in several regions for the local elections in 2009 and became a part of an umbrella coalition together with the ethnic Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party (Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi, BDP) and several other left-wing parties in 2011. Finally, in 2012, the second Greens Party merged with the libertarian left-wing Equality and Democracy Party (Eşitlik ve Demokrasi Partisi, EDP), which was a party established out of the split in the ÖDP. This new party took the name ‘Greens and Left for the Future’ and figures as Turkey’s third green party, but it should be noted that it is also slightly different from the first and second Green parties as it is the first green-left party of Turkey. However, as soon as it was formed, the new party immediately became a part of the People’s Democratic Party (Halkların Demokratik Partisi, HDP), a left-wing coalition party of the ethnic Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party and several other leftist parties and groups, which was established around the same time. The HDP was formed essentially to construct an election coalition; hence, the constituent parties did not dissolve. In the contested and violence-ridden June 2015 general elections it passed the ten-percent threshold and ran fourth.

**Differences between the First and Second Greens Parties**

The second Greens Party defined itself as a successor of the first one, although several political differences existed. The first main difference was its political programme. The first Greens Party had a brief platform, written by a few intellectuals that reflected the political difficulties of its time: not only the limitations imposed by the state and the transitional nature of the period but also the heterogeneity of the party’s founders. It contained many unique elements relevant to its time, such as an emphasis on participatory democracy, civil society, decentralization, the forging of a new relationship between humans and nature, the impact of environmental issues, energy and urban policies, and peace and disarmament issues. It stated clearly that ‘the party did not see any problem of contemporary civilization—e.g., exploitation of labour, the question of women, human rights, etc.—to be more important than the others’, and supported neither a statist nor an explicitly market economy, so as to assert its difference from the socialist and liberal parties. On the other hand, in spite of its
ecological concerns, the party platform still recognized ‘industrialization using modern technologies’ as a prerequisite for achieving the ‘level of contemporary civilization’. The party platform of the first Greens Party had not included any statement about the Kurdish question or LGBT rights, and had very little to say about workers’ or feminist issues, though it did state that it supported the independent struggle of the women’s movement.\footnote{Yeşiller Partisi Program ve Tüzüğü [The Greens Party programme and statute], Ankara 1988.}

The second Greens Party, on the other hand, was launched via a declaration of its political and ideological principles. These ten principles included ecological wisdom; a struggle against neoliberalism, industrialism, and consumer society; a rejection of patriarchy; nonviolence; antimilitarism; stances against authoritarianism and other forms of domination; direct democracy; localization;\footnote{Localization is defined as ‘a process which reverses the trend of globalization in favour of the local’, cf. Colin Hines, Localization. A Global Manifesto, London, 2000, 27. In the party programme, the Greens Party emphasized its support for local economies, local cultures, and local democracy.} and the recognition of cultural, religious, ethnic, sexual, and ideological diversity. Before the party’s founding, the party initiative put a special emphasis on pluralism. Out of this predominantly oppositional minimum programme, the party initiative prepared a quite long and comprehensive platform that was debated more than one year before it was officialised. It was drafted by several members, discussed, and finalized by a party convention, the scene of vigorous arguments and voting amendments. The party programme started by asserting the necessity of a new constitution and a restructuring of the state. It emphasized human rights and freedoms, including LGBT rights, put forth a series of detailed ecology policies including responses to climate change as well as policies addressing energy, agriculture, food, and the economy as a whole, and it advocated for social justice within the system. However, labour policies were not emphasized. The party platform drew a general framework also for the Kurdish question, including the recognition of Kurdish identity and the rejection of military interventions against the Kurds.\footnote{Yeşiller Partisi Program ve Tüzük [The Greens Party Programme and Statute], Istanbul 2011.} But a comprehensive policy on the Kurdish question was not written into the party’s policy programme until 2009. It was only then that the aim of a ‘nonviolent, peaceful, and democratic solution to the Kurdish question’ was spelled out; the party moved closer to the Kurdish movement by stressing a right to Kurdish-language education, decentralization, and the necessity of negotiations between the Kurdish movement and the Turkish state, including dialogue with its imprisoned leader Abdullah Öcalan. It is important to note that although the Greens Party supported the Kurdish movement, it clearly stated its opposition to any armed struggle between...
Kurdish groups and the state. Regarding economic policies, the party took an explicitly anti-neoliberal stance, opposing privatization and deregulation, but it is also asserted that it did not advocate statist policies. It rejected industrial development, and it did not even use that most common of environmentalist phrases, sustainable development. The most distinctive difference in the political platforms of both Greens parties centred on political maturity: the second iteration of the Greens Party had reaped the fruits of two decades of green/ ecological political debate and activism.

Although the varying approaches to the Kurdish question mark an important difference between the first and second Greens parties, the Kurdish issue did not come onto the green political agenda only during the period of the second party. Some documents show that members of the first Greens Party deliberated the Kurdish issue, too; however, it did not publically become one of its major political issues. The armed conflict between the Turkish army and Kurdish guerrillas accelerated in the early 1990s, and the last flagship campaigns of the first-generation Greens were launched in 1994, during this bloody period. The Peace Tree Campaign was planned just after the party was shut down by some of its former members during one of the first post-party gathering of the former Greens and ecologists, the so-called Utopias Meeting in Daşça. The Peace Tree sign with a green tree bearing one apple and one pear symbolized living together with differences as well as the importance of ecology. The campaign included a visit to Tunceli (Dersim) in the Kurdish region, but the authorities did not allow the activists’ bus to enter the province, so they had to plant the peace tree sapling on the other bank of the river that marks the border. An illustrated Turkish-Kurdish alphabet was published as a part of the campaign. Some of its leading figures became candidates in the lists of the ethnic Kurdish party in elections during the 1990s. It is important to consider that this wing of the Greens included some of the pioneers of the second Greens Party, and their position on the Kurdish question (although not explicit) prevented those environmentalists whose beliefs aligned with official state ideology, Kemalism, and nationalism from joining the party. This became one of the dividing lines.

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50 Yeşiller Partisi, Kürt Sorununda Şiddetsiz, Barışçı ve Demokratik Çözüm [Nonviolent, peaceful, and democratic solution to the Kurdish question], Brochure Series, no. 1, Ankara 2011.
51 SOS Akdeniz, Günaydın Dünya!
52 The Kurdish question is one of the foundational issues of Turkey, rooted in the founding years of the republic, when Kurdish rebellions had already begun. The contemporary armed struggle of the Kurdish political movement, however, started in 1984. When the first Greens Party was established, the problem had already been one of the issues at the top of the nation’s political agenda.
53 Kemalism has been the official ideology of the Turkish republic, and was particularly dominant until the 2000s. It is defined as the ideology with its sources in the ideas and values of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder and first president of the Republic of Turkey. Although there are rightist and leftist interpretations of Kemalism, its main features are Turkish
between the first-generation Greens and environmentalists who did not join the second party.\textsuperscript{54} Similarly, some prominent members of the first party had already chosen to abandon their green identity because of ideological differences that emphasized their anti-imperialist ideas and Kemalist values. One of the leading figures of the first-generation Greens, Savaş Emek, stated that after the Yugoslav wars and NATO’s intervention in Kosovo in the 1990s, he realized that ‘the German Greens were the front wheels of German imperialism’.\textsuperscript{55} Coming from one of the most prominent figures of green political thought in Turkey, his views can be considered to be representative of one of the influential wings of the Turkish green movement, although clearly not of the majority.\textsuperscript{56} Also, some leading figures in the formation period of the second Greens Party had left the party immediately before its official foundation, criticizing the movement for not creating the sort of ‘green-left’ party that they had envisioned it would.

The second main difference between the two Greens parties concerns generational distinctions. The first Greens were composed predominantly of former socialist political activists.\textsuperscript{57} This was an era that saw the end of ‘real socialism’ but this collapse had not yet been absorbed. The formation of the green movement was produced by internal discussions about the future of the left, while disappointment after the coup d’état was still fresh. The pursuit of green ideas emerged not only from increasingly important environmental questions or neoliberal policies, but also from the failed promise of revolutionary leftist ideology. Most of the second-generation Greens, on the other hand, were from the post-coup generation. Although some of them were also ex-leftist activists

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nationalism and secularism. Left-wing Kemalism puts more emphasis on secularism, and also on one of its less important principles, statist economy policies. Left-wing Kemalists also consider the Turkish War of Independence led by Atatürk to be an anti-imperialist war, and stretch this reading so as to make it one of the core values of their interpretation, combining it with a leftist form of nationalism.

\textsuperscript{54} The Kurdish movement, on the other hand, never became closely involved with green politics. The ecological politics of the Kurdish movement in the 1990s were limited to protesting against the use of bushfires as a counterinsurgency practice by the Turkish army. Jacob van Etten et al., Environmental Destruction as a Counterinsurgency Strategy in the Kurdistan Region of Turkey, \textit{Geoforum} 39 (2008), 1786-1797; Semra Somersan, \textit{Türkiye’de Çevre ve Siyaset} [Environment and politics in Turkey], Istanbul 1993, 291. Turkish Greens also protested against this military strategy several times. Only in the 2000s did the Kurdish movement gradually become more ecologist, especially thanks to their imprisoned leader Abdullah Öcalan’s engagement with the ideas of Murray Bookchin. Cf. Rojava, \textit{Capitalism Nature Socialism} 26, no. 1 (2015), 1-15, DOI 10.1080/10455752.2015.1006948.

\textsuperscript{55} Şahin / Mert, Savaş Emek ile Söyleşi.

\textsuperscript{55} Another example is İbrahim Eren, the leading figure of the Radical Democratic Greens. He, as the leader of a radical movement, also defends Kemalism, as it provided a background for democracy in Turkey. But he adds that his politics did not adhere to the methods of Kemalism. Cf. interview with İbrahim Eren, \textit{Yeni Gündem} no. 68 (1987), 14.

\textsuperscript{57} Ergen, Yeşiller Partisi’nin Olmayın Tarihi.
from the 1980s, the majority were individuals whose political identities took shape directly within the green movement. The younger generation had closer ties to European values because of Turkey’s position as an EU candidate country. Ideologically, anti-imperialism and Euroscepticism were less significant.

These distinct conditions prompted differing approaches to international politics, the third main difference between the two Greens parties. Although the electoral success of the West German Greens had been an important motivation for the foundation of the first Greens Party in Turkey, they never became as involved with the European Greens as the second party did. The insufficient Europeanization of the early green movement was mainly due to the country not yet being fully open to the outside world, and Europeanization was not a popular issue in the 1980s. In contrast, the first documents that were translated during the launch phase of second Greens Party in 2002 and 2003 were the Global Greens Charter and the Principles of the European Greens. The second Greens Party was clearly pro-EU, and they were in close contact with some of the European green parties and were supported especially by the Dutch Green-Left.58 International politics were addressed in a larger segment of the political platform of the second party, which was established during the post-Seattle so-called alter(native)-globalization period after 1999, and indeed the party defined itself as being ‘a part of the global struggle’. Some of its initiators were also among the activists in Turkey’s social forum movements.

A final difference concerns variation in the parties’ organizational principles and bylaws. Horizontal organization, criticism of hierarchy, and participatory democracy were among the important motives for the first Greens, but the party nonetheless had a single chairperson and did not require a quota of women or a defined rotation principle. The party’s statutes accorded with the tight rules of the Political Parties Law (PPL). Although in 1991 the final party convention of the first Greens changed some of the articles, these changes could not be implemented. The second Greens Party, by contrast, challenged the PPL and followed detailed rules about a quota of women and rotation principles. Also, a two co-spokesperson principle (stipulating as well that ‘at least one must be a woman’) was implemented, although it was clearly illegal under the terms of the PPL. It can be said that the innovative principles of the second Greens Party were not only copied from the European Greens but were also a continuation and finalization of discussions among members of the first party that carried over into the intervening period between the two parties.

I have outlined several differences between the parties, but of course there were also many similarities. The main similarity was that neither party could meet the eligibility criteria for entering elections; therefore, the Greens in Tur-

58 The second Greens Party was adopted as an observer member of the European Green Party in 2005, i.e., before the official foundation of the party.
key never submitted their own candidates for election, and could only submit independent candidates or become part of unofficial umbrella coalitions in the case of the second Greens Party.

Consequently, the differences between both Greens parties were mainly about the global and national political circumstances and the different characteristics of the relevant generations related to the political backgrounds of the actors.

**Conclusion**

The most indicative deficit of Turkey’s green politics is the lack of any sort of electoral presence. Neither of Turkey’s Greens parties were tested in front of a substantial constituency because neither party could fulfil the major eligibility criterion (which offers evidence that a particular party is a nationwide party) for general or local elections. The election system has continued to be discouraging for small parties because of the ten-percent threshold. While the first Greens Party did not survive long enough to even consider entering any election, the second Greens Party came onto the political scene with ambitions to meet the eligibility criteria. Local elections took place nine months after the foundation of the party, and an election campaign with a group of independent green candidates was run directly by the Greens Party. Although this campaign was a clear sign that the Greens intended to participate in the next general election, the party could not increase its membership and subsequently supported the Kurdish-left umbrella coalition instead. This was also a political choice—and this decision was the beginning of the party’s transformation into a green-left party and the origin of its recent identification with the new Kurdish-left umbrella party.

Green parties can be evaluated by electoral performances or the social characteristics and political values of their voters and supporters. However, the history outlined above indicates that it is not possible to make such an evaluation for green politics in Turkey. Because of circumstances described above, the Greens in Turkey never faced an electorate. Also, the centralized administrative system and the absence of regional parliaments and governments reveal another difference when compared to federalist countries such as Australia, where the green parties can succeed even within a two-party system. There is reason to believe that the failure of the Greens parties in Turkey cannot be aptly explained by their relations with the environmental movement or the impact of environ-

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mental problems in national or local politics. These kinds of analyses overlook the predominant role of unfavourable political conditions. One important reason for the steady rise in support for the German Greens is generational. The total absence of a green emblem in the ballots in Turkey, however, caused there to be no such generational component to buoy the green political movement. Instead, green politics in Turkey can be considered to represent a challenge to the political system itself.

The concurrent histories of the environmental and green movements, as well as the specific development of green politics after the 1980s, reflect particular characteristics of the Turkish political context. One of the prominent features of this history concerns the country’s relationship with the outside world and globalization, which can be understood along a spectrum running from nationalism to internationalism, from leftist anti-imperialist ideology to the views of the libertarian left, from Euroscepticism to a pro-EU stance. Although the ‘think globally, act locally’ motto gained recognition in the environmental movement in Turkey, national sovereignty debates remained a primary focus within Turkish politics as a whole. As Murat Belge stated, the main ideology of Turkish modernization is nationalism (its reactionary form), and its main carrier is the military. Turkish modernization is based on a top-down model with the state at its centre. The first Turkish Marxists even rose from among a group of intellectuals who were known for their nationalist beliefs. Consequently, Marxism entered into the realm of Turkish political thought as a ‘national independence’ and ‘national development’ formula. As I stated above, the environmental movement partly stemmed from the revolutionary left of 1970s, as Turkish environmental and green movements have always placed themselves in the left wing of the political spectrum.

Developmentalism, on the other hand, has always been the main nexus of the right and left ends of the political spectrum in Turkey. Therefore, the main difference between the Turkish environmental discourses and those of the West centres on third-world considerations. Marc Williams correctly wrote that five shared interests across a number of environmental issue areas can be identified as distinguishing developing countries from developed states. These are: an insistence on linking the environment with development, the provision of additional financial resources for environmental programs, the provision of technology, the provision of capacity building, and the allowance of the neces-

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61 Rüdiger, The Perennial Success of the German Greens.
sary period of time in which to implement any new regulations.\footnote{Marc Williams, The Third World and Global Environmental Negotiations. Interests, Institutions, and Ideas. Global Environmental Politics 5, no. 3 (2005), 48-69.} All of these five areas of emphasis appear in Turkey’s environmental political discourse, and this approach has been shared by the state and by some of the left-wing environmental movements. The combination of anti-imperialist third-world discourse and Euroscepticism can partly explain why green politics has never been a unifying tool for Turkey’s environmental movements.

This last decade has brought new challenges for green politics and the environmental discourse in Turkey. Higher growth rates and the developmentalist success stories of the ruling Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP) have exacted the heavy price of greater environmental destruction.\footnote{The AKP, which is a conservative, right-wing party with origins in Islamist ideology, has ruled Turkey since it came to power in 2002.} Environmental challenges have become so widespread that it is no longer possible to mention just one or two symbolic movements taking place within the environmental movement of recent years. A variety of issues and conflicts—small hydropower plants, gold mines, urban transformation, highways, coal power plants, nuclear energy, etc.—have all contributed to the creation of a more pluralistic environmentalism. Ecological transformation movements, on the other hand, such as permaculture, eco-communities, back-to-the-land movements, lifestyle ecologism, etc., provide examples of continuing grassroots dynamism in both the urban and rural domains. It has become more difficult to discover any ideologically unifying political or social movement that might bring together contemporary environmental movements. Despite these developments, the Greens’ change into a green-left party and their support for Kurdish politics makes me think that new opportunities will arise for the greens in Turkey. However, whether the future results in a stronger or a weaker green politics, one standard must be kept in mind for all democracies—the normalization of democratic politics is more important than the electoral success of any green party.

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