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THE EVOLUTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL PARTIES AND GREEN POLITICAL MOVEMENTS IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

Abstract

The following work aims to provide an analytical overview of the development of environmental political parties in Serbia. By relying on the methods of process tracing, as well as on Lipset and Rokkan's and other relevant theories of sociopolitical cleavages, the work examines how political events that occurred in Serbia over the last three decades led to the formation of eco-activist movements and parties, especially within the last several years. More specifically, the fulfillment of the primary aim requires – but is not limited to – an analysis of how green parties and environmental movements formed, shaped, and changed their strategies over time, especially when it comes to their activity planning, decision-making, support-mobilizing, and networking (including participation in broader political coalitions). The study not only includes genuine eco-activist organizations but also focuses on how (and why) decoy and phantom green parties developed and evolved in relation to the activities of their authentic counterparts. The paper concludes that environmental issues became increasingly more important in Serbia during the previous decade, with a more prominent arrival of foreign industry and foreign investors, which consequentially caused a noticeable deterioration of the environment (quality of air in particular). This opened a window of opportunity for opposing movements and

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parties to attract widespread support – and develop their strategies – based on and in relation to this previously less important topic.

Keywords: Environment, Green Politics, Political Parties, Democratization, Serbia.

INTRODUCTION

While developed liberal-democratic states have witnessed a growing trend of shared governance between public actors and citizens within the past couple of decades, with unelected/ordinary people becoming increasingly (and more directly) involved in the processes of decentralized decision-making and public policy implementation, the same cannot be said for many new/fragile democracies. On the contrary – with the rise of ‘stabilocracies’ in Eastern and Southeast Europe during the last ten to fifteen years – ruling elites of this part of the world tended to strengthen their power by centralizing and monopolizing decision-making processes, reversing much of the progress that has been made in democratizing the region in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Bieber 2020). Some ruling parties have gone so far as to create virtually ‘captured states’, i.e., countries in which government officials and state-backed companies actively influence the formation and execution of laws in order to protect and promote their interests (Cvetičanin, Bliznakovski, and Krstić 2023). The Republic of Serbia is a country that represents a prime example in this regard, with many of its institutions – especially those functioning at the regional/local level, where most public-citizen cooperation usually takes place – being practically stripped of their formally warranted governing powers and representative roles (Sotiropoulos 2023).

However, despite the growing democratic deficit and other related challenges that they are faced with at the formal/institutional level of governance, Serbian citizens have found efficient democratic means of making their voices heard. Namely, the need for overcoming the obstacles of residing in a captured state incited a threefold process of bottom-up democratization, where various loosely organized socio-political groups (but mostly eco-activist movements and semi-structured green political parties, bonded around the mutual goal of preserving and safeguarding commons of land and natural resources) began to: a)

successfully influence decision-making and public policy implementation processes by mobilizing ordinary citizens – especially the youth and people who are traditionally far from public action and politics – to support their (primarily environmental) causes and non-institutional political activities; activities such as protests and physical reoccupation of former public spaces that have been sold off to private investors, b) to subsequently secure institutional representation through elections, thus pressuring the captured state and its ruling elite from within, but also c) to democratize internally, by forming deliberative-democratic microcultures within their own ranks, and by developing networks of peer-to-peer sharing of infrastructure, knowledge and ideas with similar organizations; thus striving to abandon the conventional hierarchical and leader-based political party model along the way, which has traditionally been implemented by most established Serbian political organizations. Halting Rio Tinto's proposed lithium mining project in western parts of Serbia – which was fully backed by the Serbian government and the ruling Serbian Progressive Party – perhaps represents the largest of several victories achieved by this innovative mode of activism.

In order to achieve its aim, this paper intends to provide an analytical overview of the above-described threefold mode of bottom-up/grassroots activism, activism which not only aims to safeguard land and natural resources but also fosters a democratizing process along the way by encouraging and resulting in the emergence of vibrant deliberative microcultures (which are centered around these ecological movements and parties). Therefore, the primary research aim is to dissect this process of green party formation and activism vertically, horizontally, and across time by tracing and studying the development of Serbian eco-activist movements and green parties from the initial/formation stages to the present. Hence, fulfilling the primary aim requires – but is not limited to – an analysis of how their activity planning, strategy-building, decision-making, support-mobilizing, and networking (and other activities at various organizational levels of the said movements) have evolved. However, the research also aims to look at how authentic environmental party development was accompanied by the formation of decoy and phantom green parties; those parties (likely) formed by the ruling regime – and actors closely affiliated with the ruling regime – to imitate authentic green parties in order to confuse the electorate.

THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In order to understand the formation and rise in prominence of (green and other) political parties, it is helpful to reflect on prominent cleavage theories. A political cleavage represents a historical/predetermined socio-cultural divide that sorts citizens of particular countries into groups with diverging political opinions and interests. Lipset and Rokkan (1967) developed the most famous cleavage theory. They identified four major social cleavages that were active during their writing and that persisted in European politics for decades until that point, causing parties to form and thrive in popularity due to their existence and importance. These are the cleavages/divides between center and periphery (which they identify as the oldest of the four), between the urban and rural communities and way of living, between the church and the state (resulting in the divide between conservative and progressive parties) and – finally – between owners and workers, that came to prominence during the mid-to-late nineteenth century, with the industrial revolution (giving rise to numerous communist/leftist parties on the one hand and moderate or elitist parties on the other hand).

However, Lipset and Rokkan's theory – although useful for understanding historical sociopolitical divides and traditional party formation processes – does not offer a substantial explanation of the rise of 'single-issue' parties that began to emerge in European countries in the late 1980s and continued to do so in the decades to come, with various green, feminist and 'pirate'¹ movements managing to win electoral seats and sometimes even participate in governments of their respective countries. More recent work has, therefore, looked into the decline of traditional cleavage-based voting. It has been argued that – with the process of globalization and the rise of post-industrial concerns – voters have become less divided when it comes to spatial matters (i.e., the center vs. periphery or the rural vs. urban divide) and when it comes to class matters (i.e., the owners vs workers and the church vs state cleavage), as they became more interested in contemporary issues faced by an ever more so changing world (Inglehart 1990; Beck

¹ Pirate parties deal with e-democracy, lenient copyright and patent laws and argue for the free and open online use and sharing of all software and information, upholding the principle of net neutrality, while opposing mass internet surveillance, censorship and Big Tech corporations.

1992). This explains why ‘frozen party systems’ of Lipset and Rokkan’s epoch have either disappeared altogether or are in great decline today, with the rise of environmental parties and similar single-issue acting as a critical factor in such an outcome (the other factor being the rise of right-wing populist political organizations, within the context of a redefined/globalized center-periphery cleavage, which some define as a new integration-multiculturalism cleavage).

Another explanation for the decline of traditional cleavages and the rise of environmentalists and other initially single-issue parties (that branched out into different domains of interest as they grew) is offered by Ronald Inglehart (1977). In his post-materialism theory, he argues that sociopolitical cleavages develop due to generational gaps. Different generations cherish different values, and younger generations developed more individually-oriented values, concerned with the quality of their own life. Such values can – for instance – account for the rise of political parties and movements such as Die Grünen (Alliance 90/The Greens) in Germany, the Pirate Party UK, or the Feminist Initiative in Sweden. According to this view, it is easy to see why environmental politics came to play such a prominent role in Western societies in the last decades of the twentieth and the first decades of the twenty-first century.

However, why was the case different in Eastern Europe and Serbia *per se*? The apparent answer points to the late arrival of democracy in this part of the world. Green parties could not form within the constraints of a single-party regime. However, certain early forms of environmental activism did occur in Serbia, even during the communist era, dating back to the 1970s (Oštrić 1992, 89–90). However, while Central and large parts of Eastern Europe democratized in the last decade of the twentieth century, it took Serbia another ten years to develop something akin to a democratic political sphere. Being that post-conflict issues and questions concerning democratization and economic liberalization dominated the political arena during the first decade of the 2000s, it is easy to see why there was little to no space for green party politics in this epoch (Тодоровић-Лазвић 2021, 46). However, as the industry started to revitalize through significant foreign investments during the next decade, and as this started to have a greater and more significant effect on the quality of life in Serbia, an opportunity emerged for green environmentalist movements to form. This also led to the formation of decoy and phantom environmental parties and green movements, most likely by regime-affiliated actors, if not by the Serbian government itself. Such a strategy of electorate confusion has been witnessed throughout Eastern Europe, especially with the rise of

authoritarian and hybrid regimes after the initial wave of democratization (Pavlović 2021, 594), and it is therefore not surprising that this strategy is utilized in Serbia as well.

In order to analyze the formation and rise in activities of authentic (and decoy/phantom) green political movements and parties in Serbia, this study will primarily rely on the process tracing method. Process tracing is a qualitative research method that attempts to identify the social, political, and cultural causal processes – the causal chain and causal mechanism – between a potential cause or causes and the outcome that they produce (Schulte-Mecklenbeck, Kühberger, and Johnson 2011). It is compatible with the theory of sociopolitical cleavages mentioned above, as it seeks to understand how political processes changed over time in relation to structural factors that influenced their development and their gradual change over time. Regarding empirical data-gathering methods, the study primarily relies on textual analysis, as it uses (online and traditional) news articles and Green Party programs to gather relevant research material.

EARLY ENVIRONMENTAL PARTIES AND GREEN POLITICAL MOVEMENTS IN SERBIA

Earliest traces of environmental activism in Serbia – in its currently recognizable form, if agrarian parties from the interwar period are discounted – date back to the early 1970s. Namely, in preparation for the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment organized in Stockholm in 1972, Yugoslav state authorities popularized the issue by organizing scientific and public debates. Citizens of the country became interested and formed formal organizations dealing with the subject matter. As a result, the Yugoslav Council for the Protection and Improvement of Natural Surrounding of Man (*Jugoslovenski savet za zaštitu i očuvanje čovekove sredine*) was formed the following year in Belgrade, and several similar initiatives, unions and organizations soon followed suit. Although approved by state authorities and overseen by the ruling League of Communists of Yugoslavia (the ruling communist party), the said organizations did enjoy a certain level of autonomy, especially in arranging initiatives and suggesting solutions to existing problems. For instance, the Council managed to motivate the authorities to incorporate the right to a healthy natural environment into the (then new) 1974 Constitution of Yugoslavia (Oštrić 1992, 85).

However, this success also marked the end of serious environmental activism in Serbia for the time being, as the Council for the Protection and Improvement of Natural Surrounding of Man – which managed to hold several vital protests against further industrial polluting – soon fell under stricter state control. The ruling party and state officials adopted environmentalist rhetoric and applied it when appropriate, thus preventing further authentic activism from developing in this political domain. It was concluded that the Yugoslav socialist self-management system would be capable of handling all environmental issues that might arise by respecting goals akin to what we now know as ‘sustainable development.’

It was only with the loosening of communist rule in the mid to late 1980s that new bottom-up ecological initiatives received an opportunity to develop. The central topic of discussion in this period was closely connected to themes promoted by the global anti-nuclear movement, with the rising fears of the potentially devastating effects of nuclear weapons and nuclear energy, as witnessed after the Chernobyl disaster. Leading Serbian and other Yugoslav scientists were the most publicly visible supporters of the anti-nuclear cause, with criticism of nuclear waste-management policies at the core. At the same time, spontaneous protests took place (e.g., like the one that erupted after unconfirmed suspicions that a large industrial smelter was inappropriately disposing of radioactive waste in eastern Serbia), with the first green youth initiatives and even the first Green Party (then still informal) emerging in late 1989 (Oštrić 1992, 89), but the ensuing state collapse and (civil) war halted them from thriving like their Western European counterparts.

Although the Green Party became an official party the following year, its presence was insignificant when it participated in the first post-World War II multi-party elections held in Serbia in 1990 (both parliamentary and presidential). A critical factor that led to its debacle at the elections is that matters concerning Yugoslavia’s future occupied the public sphere, thus largely influencing the voters’ political choices (Тодоровић-Јлазић 2021, 45). With the disintegration of Yugoslavia, the ensuing (civil) war, and the 1999 Kosovo conflict – and its subsequent secession that ensued in 2008 – not much has changed in this regard. Matters concerning state and national issues continued to dominate political discussions and debates. This is why the couple dozen green parties formed two decades after Yugoslavia’s collapse had less than a marginal role within Serbian party politics. Likewise, environmental movements lacked a more comprehensive widespread basis on which to

form, as no particular group of citizens (e.g., the youth, the working class, etc.) had a pressing collective interest in preserving or improving their natural surroundings – being that other issues were more urgent in their character – while the problem was further intensified by internal green party quarrels and divisions (Nadić and Repak 2011, 130; Тодоровић-Лазих 2021, 46).

Furthermore, the environmental parties that were present on the Serbian political scene within the first two decades after the fall of Yugoslavia were just that: strictly single-issue environmental parties. They failed to expand their programs and made little attempts to dabble into other critical social issues of the era, even though such an opportunity existed. For instance, framing the issue within the larger discourse of Serbia's process of European integration could have widened their audience and political coalition potentials, but – surprisingly – little effort was made in this regard, even though it was primarily their concentration on non-ecological issues (like multiculturalism, LGBT rights and leftist oriented politics) that helped similar parties develop into mainstream political actors in Western European countries (Тодоровић-Лазих 2021, 46).

With the 2009 reform of the party register in Serbia – which brought about much more demanding rules for registering new parties and keeping old parties registered – most of the environmental parties that were formed up until that point ceased to exist, as many of them were genuinely inactive for years prior to the reform. Only two parties – the 'Green Ecological Party – the Greens' and 'The Greens of Serbia' remained officially present, but their activities resembled those of social initiatives and NGOs more than of genuine political parties, as they were in significant part concentrated with organizing non-electoral activities (Nadić and Repak 2011, 132). The two formed a short-lived coalition in 2016, which was soon dismantled due to their opposing political strategies. The former wished to continue its struggle by securing government representation by supporting the ruling Serbian Progressive Party's presidential candidate, Aleksandar Vučić, at the 2017 presidential election, while the latter strongly opposed such a decision. 'Green Ecological Party – the Greens' soon after became the leading opposition party in Serbia, after being joined by prominent politicians such as Dragan Đilas and Marinika Tepić. However, it was rebranded entirely along the way (both visually and substantially), with its program being entirely rewritten in a way so that, in the end, it essentially only paid lip service to environmental concerns (Тодоровић-Лазих 2021, 47–48).

ACTIVE ENVIRONMENTAL PARTIES AND GREEN POLITICAL MOVEMENTS IN SERBIA

However, just as the only two standing environmental parties seized their independent activities – one due to its blending in with the coalition surrounding Serbia’s ruling party and the other due to its transformation into a mainstream opposition party – new ecological movements started to emerge. Interestingly, unlike the above-described green organizations previously active in Serbia, the new green initiatives differed in two key aspects. First, they were not formed as environmental political parties immediately. Instead, they emerged out of genuine local environmental concerns with the exact goal of protecting local sights that were perceived as important to the community that inhabited them. In other words, they were not only single-issue organizations (in the sense that they were only concerned with the green political agenda) but also very explicitly oriented toward the narrow aims they wanted to achieve. Often, such initiatives were not even formally registered at first.

‘Protect the Rivers of the Balkan Mountain’ (*Odbranimo reke Stare planine*) is an illustrative example of such movements. As can be derived from the name, this social initiative was concerned with preventing small hydro-powerplants from being built on the rivers of the Balkan/Old Mountain, as their construction would inevitably alter the unique micro-ecosystem of the region with little to no benefit to the local community (excluding the business that was ready to make this investment). The organization was first formed as an Online/Facebook group inviting residents to join protests and other forms of social activism to achieve the above-stated aim. The group soon grew in popularity, as it proved to be a handy and practical platform for communicating with and organizing the local community, as well as for drawing attention to the common cause,² and eventually reached a following of up to 145 thousand social media users, before eventually formally registering as a non-governmental organization (ORSP 2023).

Second, Serbia’s new green initiatives differed from the old ones in that – unlike traditional parties that dominated the political scene since the fall of communism – a significant/leading figure did not initially represent them. Instead, different activists and other people associated

² Interestingly enough, even Hollywood actor Leonardo DiCaprio and the band Manu Chao were reported as having supported the cause of the ‘Protect the Rivers of the Balkan Mountain’ movement (Spasić 2019, 1).

with the cause spoke on behalf of the organizations they represented on different occasions, pointing to the development of a genuine internal deliberative democratic process within these groups. Only as their causes gained traction and wider popularity did certain publicly more recognizable activists take on the spokesperson role. However, even at this point, such organizations tended to have several public representatives at each press conference, as the idea of plurality remained a significant value that they projected to the public. Unlike newer social initiatives and green movements (those that began to form after 2017), the old green parties were – almost as a rule of thumb – single-leader political organizations.

The 2017 seemed to represent a turning point for ecological activism and green politics in Serbia. What occurred at this point and opened the window of opportunity for genuine environmental movements and later political parties to form? It was with the 2017 victory at the presidential elections that the then leader of the Serbian Progressive Party and soon-to-be President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, completely solidified his power at all levels of government – horizontally and vertically – leaving very little to no space for cooperating with local and national institutions on any concerns that would potentially oppose the interests of the ruling elite. This gave rise to people losing trust in the standard modes of political activity, moving the struggle for their interests from the institutions to the public spaces (Cvetičanin, Bliznakovski, and Krstić 2023). This was especially evident when it came to environmental concerns, as in this case, public spaces did not only represent a convenient place for organizing political activities but also the very thing that itself often had to be protected from the interests of the ruling regime and the business affiliated to its political representatives.

At the same time, the ruling Serbian Progressive Party – which strategically acts as a catch-all populist party, one that often even endorses diverging political positions in order to cover all potential political and ideological specters of the public sphere – failed to realize the potential of green politics, being that this domain was up until that point not an essential subject of concern (as was demonstrated in previous parts of this work). Meanwhile, in order to distance itself from the previous ruling elite (which it accused of ruining the country economically through the implementation of corrupt privatization policies and schemes), the Progressive Party promoted a strong rhetoric of economic growth, one which was not in line with the sustainable development agenda, but rather more in line with the progressivist strive for expansion at any cost.

In order to achieve this goal, the Progressive Party-led government started offering large subventions and grants to foreign industrial companies that were willing to move their production to the Republic of Serbia, with Chinese-based companies leading the way. Other than promoting Serbia as a country of cheap labor, another strategy for attracting foreign investments relied on allowing incoming companies to build industrial complexes with little to no regard for environmental conservation and protection, as this gave the government an edge in outcompeting other potential European destinations – regulated by strict European environmental laws – that the investors were also interested in. However, such a policy quickly started yielding its results. Although new jobs and blue-collar positions were opened as promised, they were costly. Levels of air and water pollution rose rapidly and very evidently, with other segments of the environment becoming increasingly endangered as well (Higgins 2021, 1). Mixed with the disregard of municipal authorities for their local environment (often due to corruptive deals that favored the interests of party-affiliated businesses over that of the citizens and their health), the situation gave more than enough cause for green activism.

One such cause – which directly led to the formation of a political movement called ‘Ecological Uprising’ (*Ekološki ustanak*) – came about when the Serbian government permitted an Anglo-Australian mining company (Rio Tinto) to excavate lithium in eastern Serbia. In September 2021, environmental protests began in Belgrade and other cities across Serbia due to the adoption of the amended Law on Expropriation, which was supposed to allow Rio Tinto to invest in a lithium mine in this region. Rio Tinto previously received permission only to explore the mines near the Jadar Valley. However, in 2017, the Government of the Republic of Serbia signed a contract to realize the ‘Jadar Project,’ which would have allowed Rio Tinto to exploit various minerals. The project was initially supposed to start in 2023 (Bogdanović 2021, 1).

The protests from September to January were mainly organized by environmental organizations, of which ‘Ecological Uprising’ and ‘Start-Change’ (*Kreni-promeni*) received the most attention. The protests remained largely peaceful, and their key demand was that the government withdraw the laws on expropriation and that Rio Tinto leave Serbia. The protests continued for several weeks, and soon attracted more attention, as the demonstrators set up a series of roadblocks throughout Serbia. The incidents that ensued involved pro-government activists and armed hooligans trying to remove the roadblocks while the police looked on

without intervening. The protests continued throughout the next two months as tens of thousands of people joined, including the youth, who had mainly been inactive until then. The majority of opposition parties supported the protests, and numerous actors, scientists, athletes, and celebrities supported the protests, as many of them actively participated. The government and its supporters criticized the protests and spread misinformation through state-controlled and government-affiliated media outlets.

The President of the Republic of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, who initially stated that the parliament would not repeal the controversial laws, finally agreed to allow his governing coalition to withdraw the Law on Expropriation. Subsequently, the Assembly of the City of Loznica – which is responsible for the territory on which future mines would have been located – repealed the spatial plan that included Rio Tinto’s investment in the mines, thereby delaying the start of Rio Tinto’s plans until further notice (Tatalović 2021, 1).

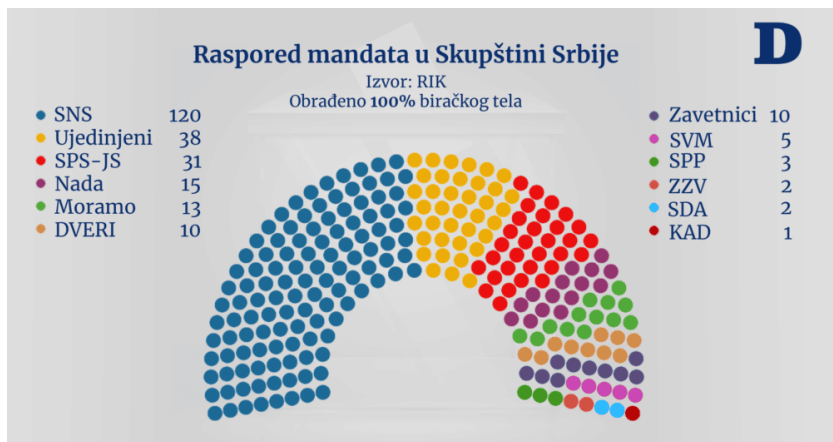
However, whereas the Ecological Uprising movement came into existence semi-spontaneously – relying on confrontations with the government, the president, and their allies as a strategy for winning public support in order to achieve their environmentalist goals – various other green organizations took on a more traditional institution-oriented approach, which involved careful activity planning, strategy-building, decision-making, and support-mobilizing. For instance, the ‘Do not let Belgrade D(r)own’ movement first came into existence in 2014, resembling more of a semi-anarchist/anti-urbanist group than an environment-oriented organization, with its primary goal being the prevention of the development of the Belgrade Waterfront apartment and business complex. However, having not succeeded in realizing this goal, it slowly shifted its agenda to green-oriented politics, using a careful networking strategy to ally itself with similar activist groups in Serbia. Accordingly, its decision-making processes remained highly decentralized even after it rebranded itself in 2023 into a fully established environmental, political party called ‘The Green-Left Front’, merging the various activist movements into one organization. Still, even after this transformation, it aimed to present itself not as a traditional political organization but as a movement without a single clearly-profiled political leader (NDBG 2023).

Likewise, the ‘Together for Serbia’ party (*Zajedno za Srbiju*) – which initially did not act as an environmentalist organization, decided to rebrand itself as a result of the rise in ecological activism and protests in

Serbia in order to try and steer more of the popular votes in its direction. Its networking strategy was also quickly reoriented towards other similar parties and social movements. With Do not let Belgrade D(r)own and the Ecological Uprising movements, the organization formed an electoral coalition entitled ‘We Must’ (*Moramo*) to raise its chances of success in the 2022 Serbian parliamentary elections. The strategy proved helpful, as this coalition won 13 out of 250 parliamentary seats, the most won by any ecological organization in Serbia up until that point.

However, subtitle tensions arose quickly after the elections were over, and the coalition did not manage to transform into one big cohesive political organization, as many predicted that it would do. Do not let Belgrade D(r)own continued forming a political party on its own (together with its allies from other Serbian cities and towns). In contrast, the Together for Serbia party and the Ecological Uprising movement merged – with one more political movement – into a new political party called ‘Together.’ This party also kept its highly decentralized structure – inherited from the coalition it emerged from – intact. At the same time, it also chose to avoid electing a single party leader, having three prominent copresidents represent the party leadership. Furthermore, the party actively attempted to branch out and focus on environmental issues and broader social problems.

Graph 1: Serbian 2022 Parliamentary Election Results



Source: Danas 2022.

Nevertheless, the former election was not only marked by the participation of genuine green parties and movements, as some phantom organizations also took part. The appearance of phantom organizations, movements, alliances, and political parties in Serbia, especially in the heated atmosphere before the elections, is not new. Using similar names or symbols, these organizations resemble the authentic ones, but their goals differ. The main aim of these phantoms is to discredit political opponents (by making unfavorable statements that pro-government media outlets then associate with all environmentalist parties) and to confuse their potential voters by taking on very similar names and symbols. In 2022, this strategy was directly aimed at the *Moramo* coalition. Several dubious organizations resembling members of this coalition registered as environmental movements just a few months before the campaign. Still, they ran an active campaign, one that was well funded, pointing to the fact that they were in one way or another supported by pro-government allies (Mirilović 2022, 1).

Among the first phantom parties that started to utilize the mimicking strategy was Coalition90/Greens of Serbia, which registered just one year before the election. The name was directly copied from the Green Party participating in the German government (*Bündnis 90/Die Grünen*). That is why the European Green Parties immediately distanced themselves from it. However, the party was not the only decoy green party that appeared before the 2022 parliamentary elections. ‘The Green-Left Coalition Movement,’ ‘The Alliance of Environmental Organizations of Green Serbia,’ ‘The Green Action Movement,’ and ‘The Green Revolution Movement’ are phantom parties that emerged on the Serbian political scene in this period. While some of these organizations tried to unsuccessfully join the single authentic green coalition that participated in the election, *Moramo*, others led an open smear campaign against its leaders (Mirilović 2022, 1). However, this strategy only served as a mild deterrence, as none of the decoy parties managed to make an essential impact on the election results; all of them staying below the electoral threshold.

CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE OF SERBIAN ENVIRONMENTAL PARTIES AND GREEN POLITICAL MOVEMENTS

From the analysis offered above, it is evident that since the new epoch of ecological activism began in Serbia – one which can roughly be determined as starting in 2017 – environmental movements and green parties managed to (on occasion) successfully influence decision-making (through protests), secure institutional representation (through participating in elections) and democratize internally (by keeping their highly decentralized organizational coalition-like structures after merging from several movements into single parties), thus offering hope not only for the resolution of environmental issues that Serbia faces but also for the development of a more democratic party system in the country. Whether they achieve these goals will mostly depend on their capability to increase their political support by dealing with issues that extend further than environmental activism and, on their capability, to form larger (not strictly environment-oriented) coalitions. The transformation of Do not let Belgrade D(r)own into the Green-Left Front and the branching out of the Together Party in relation to the political topics it covers seem to represent steps in the right direction.

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РАЗВОЈ ЕКОЛОШКИХ ПАРТИЈА И ЗЕЛЕНИХ ПОЛИТИЧКИХ ПОКРЕТА У РЕПУБЛИЦИ СРБИЈИ

Резиме

Следећи рад има за циљ да пружи аналитички преглед развоја еколошких политичких партија у Србији. Ослањајући се на методе праћења процеса, као и на Липсетове и Роканове и друге релевантне теорије друштвено-политичких расцепа, рад испитује како су политички догађаји у Србији у последње три деценије довели до формирања еко-активистичких покрета и партија, посебно у последњих неколико година. Тачније, испуњење примарног циља захтева, али није ограничено, на анализу како су зелене партије и еколошки покрети формирали, обликовали и мењали своје стратегије током времена, посебно када је реч о планирању активности, доношењу одлука, мобилизацији подршке и умрежавању (укључујући учешће у ширим политичким коалицијама). Студија не обухвата само праве еко-активистичке организације, већ се такође фокусира и на то како (и зашто) су се фантомске зелене странке развиле и еволуирале. Закључује се да су еколошка питања у Србији током претходне деценије постала зажнија него раније, уз све израженији долазак стране индустрије и страних инвеститора, што је последично изазвало приметно погоршање животне средине. Ово је омогућило еколошким покретима и странкама да привуку већу подршку грађана и да боље развију своје стратегије.

Кључне речи: животна средина, зелена политика, политичке странке, демократизација, Република Србија

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