The Electoral Fortunes of Taiwan's Green Party: 1996–2012

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Abstract

The Green Party Taiwan (GPT) represents an important case both for scholars of environmental politics but also Taiwanese politics. Established in 1996, it is the oldest Asian green party and is one of the most active parties in the Asia-Pacific Greens network. The party has enjoyed mixed electoral fortunes. After promising early election results, the GPT virtually ceased contesting elections between 2000 and 2005. However, from 2006 the party began a gradual revival in its vote shares. This process culminated in the January 2012 Legislative Yuan election when the GPT surprised many observers by coming fifth in the proportional party vote. Considering the limited resources at the party's disposal this was quite an achievement. In this study, we examine and explain the changing electoral fortunes of the GPT since its establishment in 1996. We are interested to see whether standard theories for explaining small or ecological party success, that have been developed in western Europe, work well in the Taiwan context. Our research is based on a range of new fieldwork conducted between 2012 and 2014. These include in-depth interviews with campaigners and party leaders, focus group sessions with party leaders and candidates, and interviews with party supporters.

In January 1996, Taiwan's Green Party (GPT) was established and three months later contested its first national election.[1] In that election, the party won over 1% of the

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[1] From the start, the party used Green Party Taiwan as its English name, however for its first two elections its Chinese name was 綠色本土清新黨, literally the Green Localized Fresh Party.

national vote and a National Assembly seat.[2] Many of the other small parties created after Taiwan's democratization have been taken over by the mainstream parties or ceased contesting elections. In contrast, the GPT has continued to nominate candidates and played an important role in the country's environmental movement. A major achievement for the party came in the 2012 Legislative election when it won 1.7% of the party list vote, making it the fifth largest party. The GPT is arguably Taiwan's most international political party.[3] A major component of the party's appeal is that it is part of the international green party movement and after the Australian, and New Zealand GPs, it is the most active of the Asia Pacific Greens parties network.[4]

Although the GPT currently does not yet hold any national seats, the last national elections showed it has the potential to gain national representation and to become a relevant political party. Despite being the oldest green party in Asia, it has received very little academic interest, as the bulk of research on Taiwanese party politics has focused on its main parties, the Kuomintang (KMT) and Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) (Fell, 2005a; Fell, 2005b; Ho, 2005, 2006; Rigger, 2001). If we think comparatively, the GPT has performed quite well electorally in terms of seats and votes. The Green Party of England and Wales took over two decades to win its first national seat in parliament and gained under 1% of the vote in the 2010 parliamentary elections. Despite having similar national level electoral records, the Green Party of England and Wales has received extensive academic attention (Meguid, 2008; Spoon, 2011). The East Asian democracies most often compared with Taiwan politically are Japan and South Korea. Although Japan and South Korea have longer democratic histories, have larger and wealthier populations and economies, their green parties have lagged behind Taiwan's. For example, Greens Japan was not officially established as a political party until 2012. The Korean Green Party was only formed in March 2012, lost its party status after poor electoral performance in April, and was re-established as Green Party Plus in October of the same year. A sign of the GPT's status within the Asia Pacific Greens network is that it sent representatives to events surrounding the inauguration of these sister parties.

The GPT represents a unique case in Taiwan's party politics. The majority of electorally significant smaller parties in Taiwan have been offshoots of the two mainstream parties, the KMT and DPP. Parties such as the New Party (NP) or Taiwan Independence Party (TIP) are what Paul Lucardie (2000) terms purifier parties, in that they base their appeals on core values of the mainstream parties. These can be

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[2] Until 2005, Taiwan held two types of parliamentary elections. They were for the National Assembly and the Legislative Yuan. The National Assembly originally elected the president and revised the constitution, while the Legislative Yuan is the law-making body. The final National Assembly election was held in 2005.

[3] The Democratic Progressive Party is a member of Liberal International, while the Kuomintang is part of the International Democrat Union. However, neither has made this part of its core electoral appeal.

[4] The current Convenor of the Asia-Pacific Greens Federation, Keli Yen, is from the GPT. She is also one of the three Asia-Pacific delegates to the Global Greens Coordination, which is composed of 12 delegates from the four continental Federations. Asia Pacific Greens homepage: http://www.asiapacificgreens.org/.

contrasted with prophetic parties, which concentrate on new issue appeals that have never been given much attention by the political establishment. In Taiwan, the purifier parties have been far more successful electorally than the prophetic challenger parties in terms of winning seats (Fell, 2005b). The GPT ranks as the most significant prophetic party; while other parties in this category tended to only join one or two elections and then disappear, it has continued nominating candidates since 1996. Its potential was revealed by the 2012 national elections in which though the NP had far greater financial and human resources, the GPT gained a larger vote share.

In this paper, we examine how to best explain the changing electoral fortunes of the GPT since 1996. After the introduction, we first review the main theoretical approaches that western political scientists have adopted to explain the success of green parties in Europe. Then after briefly describing the context surrounding the establishment of the GPT, we have a section outlining the impact of the GPT in both local and national level elections. We then make use of our original interview and focus group data collected between 2012 and 2014 with party leaders, candidates, members, and supporters to analyse how we can best explain the GPT's electoral performance since its formation. We are interested to see whether the existing theoretical approaches for explaining green party success work well in a non-European political environment.

Explaining green party electoral fortunes

The study of green parties has tended to be located within the field of small or niche parties in comparative politics. Within this field, a number of perspectives on how to best explain the impact of smaller parties have been proposed. However, these have almost exclusively been based on cases in Western Europe.

One popular approach is to examine the role of sociological variables in explaining the impact of smaller parties. Here the link is made between the salience of challenger parties' favoured issues and their electoral impact. For instance, Robert Inglehart (1997) and Ferdinand Müller-Rommel (1998) have argued there is a relationship between higher levels of post-materialism in society and green party success. In Taiwan, the dominant political cleavage since democratization has been national identity and relations with China (Hsieh, 2002). Other issues have been important periodically, but are generally regarded as secondary issues by Taiwanese studies of voting behaviour. However, the salience of environmental issues and rising environmental consciousness should offer greater space for pro-environmental political parties. Nevertheless, the rise in environmental awareness cannot fully explain the impact of the GPT as the party suffered a serious decline after 1998, despite rising environmental salience and consciousness. A number of studies have suggested a relationship between certain sociological variables and green party support. For instance, younger voters, female voters, those with higher education, socio-cultural professionals, and those in the public sector are viewed as more supportive of green parties in Europe (Rüdig, 2012). The relatively high education levels of the Taiwanese electorate, large public sector, and socio-cultural sectors should provide space for the GPT. However, a challenge in testing

these variables is the lack of survey data regarding support for smaller parties such as the GPT.[5]

Another explanation that has been applied to analyse small party fortunes is to focus on institutions, particularly the electoral system. Simply put, single member district (SMD) systems promote the emergence of a two party system, while proportional representation (PR) systems provide greater space for smaller parties (Duverger, 1954; Müller-Rommel, 1998). This institutional effect can be seen in the Green Party of England and Wales winning seats in the proportional European Parliament elections, but repeated failures in the SMD UK parliamentary elections. This approach is important for the Taiwan case as its parliamentary and local council elections use the semi-proportional single non-transferable vote (SNTV) with a multi-member district (MMD) electoral system.[6] In 2005, Taiwan reformed parliamentary electoral system from a semi-proportional MMD system to a SMD and PR hybrid system. The new parliamentary electoral system now consists of 73 SMDs and 34 proportional representation seats allocated based on voters' second party list vote. However, the threshold for party list seats is 5%. Whereas the high proportion of SMDs offers less space for small parties such as the GPT, the PR element provides a whole new chance for the GPT to gain national attention. We find that unlike most other smaller parties, the GPT has actually performed better in the new hybrid system than in the earlier MMD system.

A writer that has been critical of both sociological and institutional explanations of challenger party impact is Bonnie Meguid (2008). She argues that mainstream party strategies are key to understanding the success of smaller parties, such as ecological parties. In this framework, large parties can take dismissive, accommodative, or adversarial strategies on the niche party's core issue. Meguid argues that where the mainstream parties take dismissive or accommodative stances towards new party issues, the small parties will be negatively affected. The more favourable scenario for small parties is where mainstream parties take adversarial approaches. Meguid suggests that small parties will benefit as its core issues will rise in salience and its issue ownership will be strengthened.

Nevertheless, Jae-Jae Spoon (2011) argues that the fate of small parties is not completely determined by the strategies of the mainstream parties. Her agency approach suggests that green parties can survive even in unfavourable institutional environments if they can get the right balance between the sometimes conflicting goals of maintaining their core party ideals and the needs of vote or seat maximization. She employs the comparative cases of the French and British green parties to show how the French greens have been more successful at balancing these goals and thus have a greater political impact.

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[5] Despite coming fifth in 2012, it is not yet included in the party identification surveys by TVBS and the Election Study Center of the National Chengchi University.

[6] The SNTV MMD system is still used for local council elections.

A final approach to understanding the fate of green parties is Paul Lucardie's (2000) hybrid framework that can incorporate elements of a number of the frameworks discussed above. He proposed that green party success can be explained according to three main variables: (1) a political project that addresses problems considered important by much of the electorate, (2) sufficient resources, and (3) the political opportunity structure. We follow Lucardie in understanding the political opportunity structure as the degree to which the political environment (including political institutions, salient issue cleavages, and the party system) is favourable or hostile for new parties. In other words, green party electoral impact depends on their ability to advocate a clear and distinct party appeal that addresses salient political issues; their human, financial, organizational, and media resources; and whether the political environment for small parties is favourable. Initially, Lucardie applied this framework to explain the limited success of the Dutch Green Party. The distinctive element about Lucardie's approach is the emphasis on resources. This is especially significant in the Taiwan case where election campaigns are extremely expensive and the resource poor GPT must compete against one of the richest political parties in the world, the KMT. Moreover, a perennial challenge for green parties is to develop a political project that goes beyond just environmental issues.

Establishment of the GPT: a beautiful accident

The GPT was formally established on 25 January 1996. Thus the party was established almost a decade after the initial wave of party formation immediately before and after the lifting of martial law in 1987. Environmental issues had already become politically salient during the democratic transition period. In fact, party founder Kao Cheng-yen (高成炎) argued that the momentum that had been building up in the environmental movement in the early 1990s was critical to the eventual formation of the party.[7] A close relationship developed between the DPP and the environmental organizations. The closeness can be seen from Ho's (2003: 695) analysis which reveals how the Taiwan Environmental Protection Union and DPP often shared offices and even staff. The issue that especially cemented the relationship between the DPP and the environmental movement was opposition to nuclear energy, with the controversial Fourth Nuclear Power Station (N4PS) particularly important. This also played a key role in the formation of the GPT in 1996, an event described by Kao as 'a beautiful accident'.[8] He argued that a key factor in the formation was because the DPP Taipei mayor Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) had agreed to hold a referendum on the N4PS on the same day as the presidential and National Assembly elections in 1996.[9]

Although the DPP had the reputation as a pro environment or even anti-business party, the relationship between some environmentalists and the DPP began to sour

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[7] GPT focus group, 20 December 2012.
[8] GPT focus group, 20 December 2012.
[9] GPT focus group, 20 December 2012.

Table 1. *Green Taiwan Party Performance in National Level Elections (National Assembly: NA and Legislative Yuan: LY)*

	1996 NA	1998 LY	2001 LY	2008 LY District	2008 LY Party List	2012 LY District	2012 LY Party List
Total votes	113,949	8089	1045	14,767	58,473	79,729	229,566
Vote share	1.1%	0.1%	0%	0.15%	0.6%	0.62%	1.74%
Candidates	13 District & 3 Party List	1 District	1 District	10 District	4 Party List	10 District	2 Party List

Table 2. *Green Taiwan Party Performance in Local Level Elections*

	1998 County Council	1998 Taipei City Council	2002 Taipei City Council TPCC	2006 Taipei City Council TPCC	2009 County Council	2010 Taipei City Council	2010 New Taipei City Council
Total votes and Vote share	5721 0.1%	22,274 1.5%	1807 0.1%	5381 0.42%	843 0.01%	18,329 1.15%	8321 0.4%
Candidates	4	4	1	2	1	4	1

in the mid 1990s. According to early GPT figure Linda Arrigo, the key reason for the formation of the GPT was 'a general disappointment with the DPP'.[10] A critical moment in the process came in a 1994 legislative vote on funding for the N4PS in which the DPP offered lukewarm opposition (Arrigo and Puleston, 2006: 177). In 1995, the environmentalist Fang Jian (方儉) made the first attempt to establish a GP but this was not approved by the Ministry of Interior. The GPT,s leaders claimed that the social movements had decided to form their own political party as a result of their growing distance from the DPP. Many felt that the DPP had made too many compromises in its efforts to become the ruling party.[11] Similarly, Ho (2003: 701–6) views the formation of the GPT as part of the environmental movement's attempt to assert its autonomy from the DPP. However, at least initially the GPT maintained quite close relations with the DPP. For instance, the DPP chairman actually welcomed the formation of the GPT and its founding member Shih Hsin-min (施信民) suggested the party was inclined to support the DPP's presidential candidate team in 1996.[12]

Electoral fortunes of the GPT

We summarize the electoral record of the GPT in Tables 1 and 2. Table 1 shows the record in national elections and Table 2 shows the local city council elections. These suggest the GPT has gone through three distinct phases in its electoral development.

[10] Linda Arrigo, correspondence with author.
[11] *United Daily News*, 26 January 1996.
[12] *United Daily News*, 26 January 1996.

First is an initial period when the party came close to an electoral breakthrough in its first two and a half years. The second phase lasts from 1999 through until 2005, when the GPT seems to disappear electorally, as it either did not nominate or only nominated a single candidate. The third phase begins in 2006 and features a return to nomination and a gradual increase in the party's vote share through to its impressive party list vote in 2012 and winning its first local council elections seats in 2014.

Less than three months after its formation, the GPT enjoyed an impressive first electoral performance in the 1996 National Assembly election. It gained a total vote share of 1.1% and had one successful candidate, with Kao Meng-ting (高孟定) winning in Yunlin district 1. The party nominated 13 candidates in a range of districts in north and central Taiwan. In addition to Kao Meng-ting, four candidates garnered over 10,000 votes in their districts. The best county for the GTP was Yunlin with 8.8% of the vote, but it also won close to 2% in Taipei City, Taipei County, and Changhua. In fact, in the 13 multiple member districts with GPT candidates, they averaged 2.5% of the vote (Ho, 2006: 193). According to party founder Kao Cheng-yen, 'In terms of elections, that year (1996) was our best performance.'[13]

Although national elections were again held for legislators in 1998, the GPT switched its focus to local council elections. That year it nominated party founder Kao as its sole legislative candidate in Taipei. There were signs that the party had not built on the foundation of its initial election in 1996. The GPT's vote share and actual total votes in Taipei City were almost exactly the same in 1996 and 1998. Another sign of the party's limitations was that it concentrated on Taipei, as it only nominated in Taipei City and County.[14] However, in 1998 the GPT came particularly close to a major breakthrough in Taipei City Council elections, where Peng Yen-wen (彭渰雯) gained 10,501 votes (3.38%), coming just 6,000 votes short of the lowest successful candidate.

Another way we can gain a sense of the visibility of the GPT is from the number of newspaper articles mentioning the GPT in each year. In a United Daily News (UDN 聯合報) database search, the first and third most mentioned years were 1996 and 1998. However, both the newspaper data and the election data suggest the GPT entered a dormant period from 1999 through to 2005. The fact that only ten UDN newspaper articles in 2005 mentioned the GPT shows the party had almost ceased to exist. Electorally, the party barely existed too. While the GPT had managed to gain over 10,000 votes in Taipei districts in 1996 and 1998 with electorally inexperienced candidates, in 2001 its party founder only gained just over a thousand votes. It only nominated a single candidate in the 2001 Legislative Yuan and 2002 Taipei City Council elections. In fact, it did not nominate any candidates in the 2000 National Assembly, 2004 Legislative

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[13] GPT focus group, 20 December 2012.
[14] The one exception to the pattern was nominating Chung Bao-chu (鍾寶珠) who stood for the GPT in the Hualian County Council election in January 1998.

Yuan, and 2005 National Assembly elections.[15] Since the GPT had made its initial breakthrough in a National Assembly election, its absence was especially costly, as of course small parties do tend to have an advantage in second rank elections where voters are often more willing to punish the mainstream parties. For example, in the United Kingdom, green parties have tended to perform better in European Parliamentary elections and the devolved assembly elections in Scotland and Wales. Moreover, the case of the 2005 National Assembly election is especially noteworthy, as that was the one and only time when Taiwan used a pure proportional representation electoral system. If the GPT had nominated that year, it would have been inevitable that it would have won seats. For instance, that year the Taiwan Independence Party, Farmer's Party, Chinese People's Party, and Civil Party all won seats with 1% of the vote or less. According to the GPT's former Convenor (召集人) Chang Hong-lin (張宏林), 'We should say that in this period (GPT) had basically ceased to operate.'[16]

The re-emergence of the GPT can be dated from 2006. That year the GPT nominated two candidates for Taipei City Council and though neither was competitive in their districts, it marked the start of a period of gradual improvement in the electoral performance through until 2012. At least in 2006, it was not entirely yet clear that this was the start of a new era. When Pan Han-sheng (潘翰聲) (2006) compared 1998 and 2006, he noted that despite having more experienced candidates 'the GPT's total vote and vote share had shrunk by two thirds'. The GPT enjoyed its best national election percentage since 1996 two years later in the first legislative election under the new electoral system in 2008. That year it won 0.6% in the party list vote, performing especially well in Taipei city (1.1%), Hualian (0.94%), and Chiayi city (0.81%). This made GPT the sixth most popular party on the party list, but like the other small parties it failed to reach the required 5% for gaining seats.[17] The GPT also nominated ten district candidates and thus for the first time appealed outside of its base of Taipei for a number of elections. However, the new SMD electoral system meant that its district candidates were not competitive. The growth trend continued into 2010 when the GPT nominated four district candidates for Taipei City and one for New Taipei City Council. The vote share in Taipei City saw a three-fold increase, though none was close to winning the election in the MMD. In New Taipei City, Wang Chung-ming (王鐘銘) garnered over 8,000 votes, the highest vote share for a GPT candidate since 1998. The gradual growth in GPT vote shares between 2006 and 2010 is especially noteworthy as this occurred in a period when the other existing small parties were all losing support (Fell, 2014). Another sign of the party's re-emergence was that in 2010 there were more UDN articles about the GPT than any year other than 1996.

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[15] The 2000 National Assembly election was eventually cancelled; however, party nominations represent an important indicator of how the party system was evolving after the 2000 presidential election and change in ruling parties.

[16] GPT focus group, 20 December 2012.

[17] It would be 7th if we include the Non Partisan Alliance.

The 2012 legislative election represented more of a challenge to the GPT as the election was held on the same day as the presidential election for the first time. Once again, in order to have a party list set of candidates it needed to nominate ten district level candidates. The election showed the GPT's improvement on a number of levels. Firstly, the party list vote was 1.7% (229,566 votes), making it the fifth largest party in terms of vote share and exceeding the NP's vote share for the first time. Unlike in the 2008 election, its party list share was much more evenly distributed throughout the country. Its highest vote shares were in Taipei City (2.7%), Hsinchu City (2.2%), and New Taipei City (2%). While the NP had large geographical variation in its vote share, the GPT gained over 1% in every city and county. One particularly interesting case was the offshore island of Lanyu, where the GPT gained 35% of the party list vote, coming a close second to the KMT's 39%. The GPT also enjoyed a five-fold increase in its district vote share, though half of this was down to the case of Pan Han-sheng in Taipei City Legislative District 7. This was because an informal agreement had been reached with the DPP that it would not nominate a candidate in this KMT stronghold and let the GPT stand against the incumbent KMT legislator. Pan came second with 24% of the vote (43,449 votes), making it the highest ever single GPT candidate's vote share. Nevertheless, this is one of the KMT's safest seats and its candidate won with 63% of the vote.[18]

Despite not winning any seats in 2012, the GPT's vote share and distribution showed it has the potential to win party list legislative seats as well as local council seats contested under a MMD system. This potential was realized in November 2014 when the GPT won its first local assembly seats. Thus, its next big test will be to see whether it can build on this foundation to make a breakthrough in the national parliamentary elections of 2016.

Explaining the GPT's electoral fortunes

The above electoral trends suggest that there are three main patterns needing explaining. The first is the GPT's promising but limited performance between 1996 and 1998. The second is the virtual disappearance of the party as an electoral actor between 1999 and 2005. The third trend is the re-emergence and gradual revival of the GPT between 2006 and 2012.

The initial impact of the GPT 1996–8

The initial promising but limited impact of the GPT between 1996 and 1998 can be explained with reference to a range of variables.

Firstly, the institutional approach is useful as in 1996 and 1998 elections were held using the SNTV MMD electoral system, which offers more space for smaller parties. This is particularly the case for the 1996 National Assembly election. The main parties

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[18] The GPT's vote share could have been higher in 2012 but a rebel DPP candidate managed to gain over 10%. Four years earlier the DPP had only gained 31% and the KMT incumbent 65%.

devoted far less resources to the election as they concentrated on the December 1995 legislative and 1996 presidential election. By this stage, the National Assembly was viewed as a second or even third rank election by the main parties and there were a total of 334 seats up for election. This was evident from the large number of incumbent National Assembly members who chose not to seek re-election. However, the GPT faced a much tougher institutional challenge in 1998 as though these were also using the MMD election system, there was greater competition for legislative and city council seats.

Contextual factors, or what Lucardie (2000: 179) refers to as the political opportunity structure, can also help us understand the opportunities and challenges of the young GPT. Critically important was the growth of Taiwanese social movements in the years after the lifting of martial law. As Chang Chi-huang (張琦凰), the main organizer of the GPT founding period, explained, 'by 93–94 the momentum of social movements had reached a peak and by 95–96 we were starting to have a real effect'.[19] The GPT built on this momentum, as founder Kao Cheng-yen noted, 'when the party was established the core members had already been in the environmental movement in 1994, some were intellectuals and there were also some volunteers from street protests'.[20] In fact, though the GPT's early candidates lacked electoral experience, they had rich experience in social movements, especially the environmental movement. Within these social movements, there had been a growing sense that they lacked true political representation. As Chang recalled, 'At that time there were voices saying Taiwan needed more than just the KMT and DPP, people kept talking about a third force in politics and our third force came a little later.'[21]

The significant earlier attempts at forming a third force had been the Labour Party (工黨) and Chu Kao-cheng's (朱高正) Chinese Social Democratic Party (CSDP), but these had failed as the KMT's organizational campaigning remained strong and the DPP was expanding rapidly (Fell, 2005b: 232). This meant that the Labour Party and CSDP failed to make a breakthrough in the late 1980s and early 1990s elections. Instead, the Labour Party ceased contesting elections and the CSDP merged into the first major third party, the NP in 1994. The NP was made up of defectors from the Chinese nationalist wing of the KMT and concentrated on winning traditional KMT voters, thus was not really competing with the newly formed GPT. The mainstream parties were also considerably different to the early 1990s. By the mid 1990s, the KMT was suffering from competition from the NP and incessant corruption scandals. The DPP's growth had slowed down and this was evident in its disappointing election results in

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[19] GPT focus group, 20 December 2012.
[20] GPT focus group, 20 December 2012.
[21] GPT focus group, 20 December 2012.

1993–6.[22] Moreover, there was a potential for the GPT to exploit the voters dissatisfied with the DPP, as it appeared badly split over its presidential campaign in 1996.[23]

In contrast, the political context had become less favourable by 1998. The two mainstream parties were more united two years later. More of a challenge though for the GPT was the fact that there was greater competition for protest votes against the DPP with the arrival of two DPP splinter parties. These were the New Nation Alliance (NNA) and TIP, both of which nominated widely in the 1998 legislative and city council elections. For instance, the four GPT candidates for Taipei City Council had to compete with one or both these parties in their districts. Another sign of the squeezed space caused by these splinter parties is that the GPT's third highest vote winner in 1996 Kao Chin-lang (高金郎) chose to switch parties and stood for the TIP in 1998.

Bonnie Meguid's approach focusing on the issue strategies of the mainstream parties in understanding the development of small parties is also relevant for this period in the GPT's development. Firstly, though the KMT had paid some lip service to environmental protection in the 1990s, it retained its old development first ideology. This was apparent over its attempts to ram through controversial development projects in the 1990s, such as the N4PS, the Formosa Plastics Group's proposal for the Sixth Naphtha Cracking Project, and the Bayer chemical plant in Taichung. In other words, it was taking a highly adversarial position towards the GPT's core issue. Moreover, as mentioned earlier the DPP was perceived as having cooled its anti-nuclear stance and social movement relationship. As Linda Arrigo explained, 'Later, when Hsu Hsin-liang (許信良) became chairman for the second time (18 July 1996–28 July 1998), all the "social movement" departments of the DPP (women, labour, indigenous) were changed to "development" departments, i.e. "business development".'[24] This cooling of DPP enthusiasm on environmental issues was again apparent when the issue of whether to hold a referendum on the proposed Bayer plant was raised by the DPP's candidate for Taichung County Magistrate in 1997. The DPP party centre wished to avoid being labelled as anti-business and chose to criticize the referendum proposal of its own candidate (Ho, 2006: 174–6). In other words, both mainstream parties were taking adversarial positions on the environmental issue, which left space for the GPT to develop.

Naturally, the GPT faced a challenge to gain attention or to put the environmental issue on the agenda when the media was focused on the presidential election and the cross-strait tensions of 1995–6. However, as Kao explained, the Taipei referendum on N4PS on the same day as the National Assembly and presidential election helped the GPT by mobilizing social movements behind this campaign and put the environmental issue on the agenda in the capital city.

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[22] The one exception to this pattern was winning the Taipei mayoral election in 1994, but this was partly due to a split in the KMT camp caused by a strong NP candidate.

[23] This was apparent from the DPP's record low of 21% in the presidential election.

[24] Linda Arrigo, correspondence with author.

The election data suggest that by 1998 the GPT was already in decline. In our interviews, the most common factor raised for this and its limited impact was resources. In its early years, the GPT was highly reliant on Kao's fundraising efforts. However, the party's resources became depleted by employing three full time staff and numerous election campaigns. As Kao explained, 'The candidate deposit amount was very high and if you did not reach a certain vote threshold this would not be returned. So we would accumulate resources over a period and then these would disappear overnight. After each campaign the whole party would almost have collapsed.'[25] It was also felt that the party made mistakes in the campaigns it joined and thus expended valuable resources. For instance, Kao felt that the GPT would have been better concentrating its resources on the important Xizhi township mayoral by-election rather than wasting resources on the January 1998 city and county council elections. He felt that even if they had not won, it would have raised the party's visibility.[26] Kao even sold his own property to fund campaigns. Kao's remark shows how desperate things had become by the late 1990s, 'I was the main one fundraising, and I was the one who went in debt . . . I lost millions. So when I went home I was very embarrassed, my wife cursed me all day long.'[27]

Equally damaging were the party's human resource problems. As Ho (2003: 704) notes, 'in its initial recruiting, the GPT was unable to persuade the anti-nuclear pathfinders, such as Chang Kuo-lung (張國龍) and Edgar Lin (林俊義), to jump on the same bandwagon. Despite the fact that the founding Chairperson Kao was on good terms with Chang and Lin, the latter preferred to stay within the DPP.' Even in the 1990s, the GPT faced the problem of mainstream parties poaching its politicians. The best example of this was when the GPT's only National Assembly man Kao Meng-ting was recruited to join the campaign for a KMT allied politician's county magistrate campaign in Yunlin in 1997. The GPT immediately expelled Kao, meaning the GPT only had a member of the National Assembly for one year.

Nevertheless, as Spoon notes, green party agency can play a role in their impact. For instance, Ho questioned why the GPT had not tried nominating in the area with the strongest anti-nuclear sentiment in Gongliao, the location of the N4PS project (2003: 704–6). Instead, this was left as a DPP stronghold.

The case of Peng Yen-wen's almost successful campaign in 1998 for Taipei City Council reveals the scope and limits of agency for GPT candidates. This case is especially interesting as Peng performed far better than other GPT candidates that year. Her campaign manager Calvin Wen (溫炳原) argued there were a number of reasons for its greater impact. One was a young and creative campaign team of students and recent graduates. For instance, a key strategy was campaigning on bicycles, and they were also one of the first to use the candidate's picture on campaign flags. However,

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[25] GPT focus group, 20 December 2012.
[26] Ibid.
[27] GPT focus Group 20 December 2012.

gaining media attention was difficult as both the main parties ignored Peng. As Wen explained, 'They looked down on us and pretended we did not exist.'[28] However, the campaign was able to gain a critical breakthrough in media attention by visiting the KMT's Taipei mayoral candidate Ma Ying-jeou's campaign headquarters. The goal was to protest about one of Ma's campaign team member's comments that it was acceptable for elected politicians to visit hostess bars but government officials should not. The protest and hostile reception from Ma's supporters was covered by the TV news and gave Peng's campaign significant media coverage. However, the campaign eventually failed. Another remark by Wen sums up and the sense of disappointment and the challenges any GPT candidate will face, 'We were so close. Some classmates that had been helping said, it's such a pity. They'd been hoping to write a book on how to win election with NT$1 million; this would definitely have sold well.'[29]

The virtual disappearance of the GPT 1999–2005

During the period from 1999 to 2005, the GPT virtually disappeared as an electoral actor. In our interviews and focus groups, the two most common explanations for this trend were the DPP coming to power in 2000 and the departure of many of the early GPT figures to study abroad. In the next section, we consider how we can best understand the development of the GPT during this period through the lens of political science theories.

Firstly, in Meguid's terms the DPP switched to a more accommodative approach to environmental issues during the 2000 presidential campaign and in the year after winning the election. For instance, during the campaign it came out firmly against the N4PS and the controversial plan for a dam project in Meinong. Following the election, it appointed the veteran anti-nuclear figure Edgar Lin as its first Environment Minister. Then in October 2000, it announced the halting of the N4PS project (Arrigo and Puleston, 2006: 176–80). This accommodative strategy can be seen in Tsui Shu-hsin's (崔愫欣) documentary *How are you Gongliao* (貢寮你好嗎?). In the film, there is a scene where the Gongliao anti-nuclear protestors confront the three main presidential candidates outside the TV station before the presidential debate. Of the three, only the DPP's Chen Shui-bian came out unequivocally for stopping construction. Thus in the public's eye, the DPP was able to regain ownership of the environmental issue.

The coming to power of the DPP with its pro-environment image thus radically changed the political context for the GPT. It was initially harder for the environmental movement to attack the government. As Peng Yen-wen explained, 'The early generation of the GPT tended to be much closer to the DPP, they were much more similar in their outlooks.'[30] After being excluded from the policy-making process under the KMT, environmental groups could get access to government ministers. One of the key impacts

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[28] Interview, 2 January 2014, Kaohsiung.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Interview, 2 January 2014.

of the DPP coming to power was how it recruited from social movements in search of election candidates and political appointees. As GPT figure Robin Winkler explained, 'the DPP came to power in 2000. So that really collapsed the social and environmental movements. I've heard from reliable sources and I am sure there is a way to verify this that there are about 6,000 government appointees every time the government changes. 6,000 political appointees. We kept hearing the DPP needs talent and where do they get the talent? They get it from the social and environmental movements.' [31] In other words, the DPP coming to power hollowed out the human resources of many social movements and undermined their autonomy.

Thus, a key factor undermining the fortunes of the GPT in this period was a shortage of resources. Financially, this was a severe problem in the aftermath of 1998 because of the party's over-dependence on Kao Cheng-Yan's fundraising in the initial period. Equally damaging was the departure of a number of the younger party activists and candidates who had stood in the 1990s elections such as Peng Yen-wen, Chang Shu-mei (張淑玫), and Chen Kuang-yu (陳光宇) to study abroad. This meant that when the next round of elections arrived in 2001 and 2002, the party had almost no candidates. As Calvin Wen explained, 'The GPT is mainly young people. My feeling is everyone went to study abroad or had disappeared.'[32] As none of the post 2000 GPT candidates (until 2008) had pre-2000 election experience, a huge amount of campaign experience was lost. As Wen explained, 'Our experience was we suddenly got 10,000 plus votes and then stopped joining elections. Later I went to work in the Legislative Yuan and discovered this was such a waste.'[33] The fact that some core members' career choices played such havoc upon the party illustrates just how un-institutionalized the GPT was at this time.

Re-emergence and growth of the GPT 2006–12

In our interviews and focus groups, the most commonly raised reason for the re-emergence of the GPT was the return from abroad of graduates. As Robin Winkler explained, 'I think (Peng) Yen-wen and Bin-yuan (Calvin Wen) came back in I think 2004 or 2005. They started reorganizing the Green Party.'[34] As Peng explained, 'I felt it was my responsibility, I felt guilty . . . we'd let the GPT fall into decline. I did not really rebuild the party. We hired a part-time assistant. Then we looked for some good people to come to the GPT. I tried to bring in many people from the environmental movement.'[35] Representative figures in the new era included Pan Han-sheng, Robin Winkler, Chang Hong-lin, Hsu Wen-yen (徐文彥), Wang Chung-ming (王鐘銘), Wan-ju Yu (余宛如), and Dinna Hsu (徐蟬娟). This was the start of a recruitment drive that allowed the GPT to once again contest elections. A major consequence of

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[31] Interview, 27 July 2013.
[32] Interview, 2 January 2014.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Interview, 27 July 2013.
[35] Interview, 2 January 2014.

the new human resources was a much more diverse set of figures that enabled the party to engage with new audiences and issues. Thus, for instance, gay rights issues have become a prominent appeal since the 2010 city council elections. While other parties have offered mixed messages on gay marriage, the GPT has been the only party strongly in support. This new approach can be seen in the incorporation of the LGBT pride colours in the GPT's party badge and the nomination of openly gay candidates.[36] However, the new diversity of the party membership also sowed the seeds for some of the internal clashes between activists closer to the DPP and the new intake.

A sign of the richer resources was that the GPT party finally nominated more extensively with serious candidates for Taipei City and New Taipei City council in 2010 and then island-wide in 2012. Nevertheless, finding candidates remains a challenge. Party co-convener in 2011 Yang Chang-ling (楊長苓) explained, 'Until July, because of the election in the end of the year, we had to find out some candidates. Time was running out, so I participated in the activities very hard since August and also detected it's hard to find the candidates. We tried to convince others but were always rejected.'[37]

The shift to a new predominantly SMD electoral system meant that the institutional environment for small parties was becoming less favourable. This contributed to the overall decline in smaller parties from 2004 to 2010, as the purifier parties suffered severe erosion of votes, seats, and politicians going back to the mainstream parties. However, the GPT bucked the trend by showing progressively improved election results between 2006 and 2012. In addition to the new human, organizational resources and financial resources, changes on the political opportunity structure and the interparty relationship all played a role in the GPT's improved fortunes.

Firstly, there became more space for the GPT to develop on environmental issues as the DPP government took a more adversarial position in the second DPP term (2004–8). The failure of the DPP to halt the N4PS and remove nuclear waste from Lanyu seriously undermined its credentials with the environmental movement. Ho Tsung-hsun (何宗勳) explained how the Taiwan Environmental Protection Union began to reorganize and rebuild autonomy and effectiveness of the scattered environmental groups (Arrigo and Puleston, 2006: 172). It carried out large-scale forums in 2004 and 2005, youth training camps, and environmental public education programmes in schools.

The space for the GPT was expanded as the DPP tried to make compromises with big business to deal with the perceived sluggish economic growth. The tensions were highlighted in the Environmental Impact Assessment Committee term between 2005 and 2007 when the EPA Minister Chang Kuo-long appointed a number of GPT members or sympathizers such as Robin Winkler and Li Geng-jheng (李根政). As Winkler explained, 'We did get in and all that pent up energy, it expressed itself. I was a pretty acerbic commissioner. I would cut people off and let the environmental groups

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[36] See GPT homepage: http://www.greenparty.org.tw/.
[37] Interview, 20 December 2012.

in.'[38] The clashes between the government supported development plans and this committee served to raise the visibility of environmental issues and widened the split with the DPP. As Winkler explained, 'We had such a negative experience with the DPP.'[39] By the end of the DPP era social movements, including the environmental movement were once again attempting to regain their autonomy from the DPP. However, if we consider how unpopular the DPP was by 2008, the GPT's electoral performance in 2008, though an improvement, still has to be regarded as disappointing.

Ironically, it has been the return to power of the developmentalist KMT that has provided a more fertile environment for the environmental movement and the GPT to develop after 2008. The KMT at both the national and local government level has tended to take a clearly adversarial approach to environmental issues, leading to a series of large-scale protest movements in which GPT figures, such as Pan Han-sheng, have often played a prominent role. An example of this was the Miramar Resort project (美麗灣), where the KMT run Taidong County government colluded with developers to ignore environmental laws, indigenous rights, and court rulings.[40] On an even larger scale was the proposed Kuokuang Petrochemical plant in Changhua. This was initially strongly backed by KMT national and local government, but eventually the scale of the protests movement led President Ma to fear it could undermine his and the KMT's re-election plans in 2012. Ma's decision to halt the project represented a major victory for environmentalists.[41] As had been the case in the mid 1990s, the rejuvenated environmental movement benefitted the GPT's development.

The anti-nuclear movement, particularly the movement against the N4PS has been a constant feature of Taiwan's environmental movement. However, it regained prominence in the aftermath of the Fukushima Dai-Ichi nuclear disaster in March 2011. This meant that nuclear power was again on the agenda for much of the 2012 election campaign. The GPT was able to benefit from this; although the DPP's presidential candidate included Nuclear Free homeland as a slogan, the DPP had disappointed environmentalists while in power. In other words, the adversarial KMT stance on nuclear issues and a marginalized DPP gave the GPT space to develop.

In contrast, the KMT remained adamant on pushing the N4PS into operation. The consistent anti-nuclear position of GPT was able to attract the growing number of voters with anti-nuclear views. Indeed, one interviewee who voted for GPT in the 2012 national election suggested that GPT should concentrate all its efforts on anti-nuclear issue because 'this is a big issue, and its impact is huge!'[42] She also criticized the main parties for their shallow position toward environmental issues: 'The two main parties are just interested in votes. They change policies all the time to get votes. They say the

[38]   Interview, 27 July 2013.

[39]   Ibid.

[40]   Wild at Heart Legal Defence Association: The Miramar Story, http://en.wildatheart.org.tw/story/109/7194.

[41]   Shelley Shan and Mo Yan-chih, 'Taskforce equivocates on naphtha plant', *Taipei Times*, 23 April 2011.

[42]   Interview, 27 July 2013.

East coast needs development and then say we must conserve the East coast. They say we need nuclear power, then say we don't. That is why we do not want the GPT to become like a real party. Because once you become a real party, you'll just get politicians. We hope that by becoming strong, the GPT can protect us.'[43] In almost all our supporter interviews, we were told of how they had switched to the GPT after having become tired of the choice of two bad apples (mainstream parties).

Nevertheless, the GPT's expanded support in 2012 is not solely due to its anti-nuclear appeals. From our interviews with party supporters, we found many had been attracted by the GPT's advocacy of issues generally ignored by mainstream parties, such as gay rights and animal rights. In fact, some interviewees even said that they were not so concerned about the anti-nuclear issue. As one supporter explained, 'Of course it's best to be nuclear free, but I feel it's a very hard objective to achieve. To tell you the truth, I don't really care whether you support or oppose nuclear energy.'[44]

In the GPT's 2012 core policy proposals, it clearly called for 'Respect for multi-culturalism, an anti-discrimination law, legal status for cohabiting couples. Animal protection to be written into the constitution and establishing an animal protection agency.'[45] Such appeals are starkly different from mainstream parties. As one new GPT supporter explained, 'I had always been interested in ecological protection issues, and when I discovered a party that pays special attention to animal rights, I was deeply moved.'[46] Thus, the GPT has used its unique political project to attract new voters that have specific niche issue interests. For example, since 2008 the GPT has nominated the openly gay candidate Wang Chung-ming to contest seats in Taipei County. Wang has been one of the GPT's highest vote winners and his candidacies have served to attract the attention of the gay community. The new type of party supporters that the GPT has been attracting fit well into the characteristics of post materialists (Inglehart, 1997). Like the case of the New Zealand Green Party in 2011, the GPT was able to expand its support base by broadening its issue appeal beyond its core environmental policies (Lees-Marshment, 2014: 54–6).

The relationship between the GPT and the DPP has however remained controversial and a severe challenge for the GPT. This was highlighted in the case of Pan Han-sheng's campaign in Taipei City in 2012 where the DPP gave Pan a free run against the KMT's candidate. According to Pan's campaigner Hsiao Yuan (蕭遠), there were other tangible benefits such as extensive media coverage of Pan and the GPT and how the DPP taught Pan campaigning methods.[47] Nevertheless, the majority of party activists in our focus groups were extremely unhappy about this informal alliance. This reveals how the majority of the new generation activists prefer to make a clearer

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[43] Interview, 27 July 2013.
[44] Interview, 21 July 2013.
[45] See GPT policy listing on 2012 Legislative Yuan Election Gazette, available at Central Election Commission Election Gazette database http://www.cec.gov.tw/zh_TW/index.html.
[46] GPT Supporter focus group, 5 January 2014.
[47] Interview, 20 December 2012.

distinction between the GPT and the DPP. This was made clear in a recent online GPT ad slogan: 'GPT is not the DPP, say it ten times.'

It should also be noted that the relationship and development of other small parties also remains a challenge for the GPT in the post 2000 period. For instance, the TSU, like the TIP in the 1990s, has attempted to take an anti-nuclear and pro-environment policy line to appeal to a similar constituency dissatisfied with the DPP. Similarly, the TSU has tried to poach GPT politicians. For instance, in 2008 the TSU placed Chen Yu-feng (陳玉峰), who had been a key figure in the environmental movement and supporter of the GPT, on the top of its legislative proportional party list. More recently, the former GPT office manager Li Yi-chieh (李宜潔) switched to the TSU and stood unsuccessfully in the New Taipei City council election in 2014.

In addition to the interparty relationship summarized above, the PR element to the new electoral system does offer some space for small parties. However, this only became clear in the second election held under this system in 2012. Not only did the TSU and PFP win party list seats, the GPT gained a quarter of a million votes and became the fifth largest party. This growth in support even surprised some GPT activists. The GPT tried to make its potential voters aware how the new PR vote worked.[48] Our interviews with GPT supporters found that after the experience of 2008, many voters had understood the significance of the two vote system and adopted split ticket voting. As one respondent explained: 'I do not want to see someone I hate getting elected, so I will be strategic. So in order to prevent the person I don't like, I'll vote for the opposing camp. Later we got a party list vote, I'll give my party list vote to the GPT. The reason for voting GPT is simple, because I really don't like the two big parties. Why won't I vote for a GPT candidate in a district? First, I don't think they had a candidate in my district. Second, voting for a GPT candidate (in SMDs) is like an invalid vote, I don't want to waste my vote.'[49]

A final element that has contributed to the development of the GPT has been changes in the media environment. A common complaint among our interviewees has been how hard it is to gain attention in the mainstream media, which has grown increasingly partisan. The GPT does not have the finances to compete with the mainstream parties in buying TV or newspaper ads, huge stadium rallies or vote buying. However, the rise of the internet and social media use have served to lower political communication costs. As Hsiao Yuan explained, 'Overall the internet helps the GPT, as too many people are not aware of the GPT.'[50] For instance, in 2010 the GPT had a number of innovative TV ads that were only shown on YouTube.[51] Generally, it

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[48] For instance, GPT activist Wu Mingxuan (吳銘軒) imitated the *Story of Stuff Project* style to create a video called the *Story of the Party List Vote*「政黨票的故事」which had over 3,000 facebook shares and 17,000 likes.

[49] Interview, 21 July 2013.

[50] Interview, 20 December 2012.

[51] For instance, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ZjoS5k3QJY&feature=plcp (accessed 29 November 2014).

has not been the GPT's official sites that have been particularly effective but those of its supporters and candidates. For instance, in the initial revival stages, blogs such as those run by Huang Shu-wei (黃書瑋) and Pan Han-sheng were especially effective in gaining attention. The widespread development of social media has clearly been even more effective. This can partly explain why the GPT vote was so well distributed in 2012 compared to the concentrated nature in 2008. Our GPT supporter interviews also reveal the party has benefitted from the rise of the internet and social media. There appeared to be two main ways that voters were being persuaded to vote GPT. These were through involvement in the rising environmental movements and exposure to messages on social media. We can get a sense of the effectiveness of social media for the GPT from the I-Voter studies led by political scientist Liao Da-chi (廖達琪). Out of their sample of 538 respondents who had voted in the 2012 party list, the GPT was actually the most popular party with 35.5% (Liao and Chen, 2013). In fact, if Facebook likes can be considered a mark of party support levels, then the GPT is now the third most popular party in Taiwan, with 62,000 likes.[52]

Conclusions and prospects for the GPT

This study has attempted to track and explain the changing electoral performance of the GPT since its establishment in 1996. We have shown that we need to consider a mixed hybrid approach of political science frameworks to best understand the GPT's development. Meguid's mainstream party approach is extremely useful. It would appear that the best scenario for the GPT to develop is a highly developmentalist KMT in power and the DPP marginalized on the environmental issue. A variation on Meguid is that the relationship with smaller parties must also be considered both in terms of poaching members and issue appeals. The resources approach is also extremely useful for understanding the GPT's fortunes. Taiwanese elections are extremely expensive when run traditionally and thus the lack of financial resources has been a constant problem throughout the GPT's history. The supply of human resources has actually been an even more useful explanatory variable in terms of losing activists to the DPP and leaving to study abroad. The active recruitment of Kao, Peng, and Pan was critical in the party's recovery and growth periods.

The case of the GPT offers some challenges to the institutional approach. Although theory would expect MMD to benefit smaller parties, the GPT's lack of resources prevented it from making a major breakthrough and limited its visibility. In contrast, though the new electoral system is unfavourable due to it being predominantly SMD, the high candidate deposits, and the need for ten SMDs to allow a PR listing, the new PR element has allowed the GPT to gain a greater national visibility than in the past. Our interviews revealed that many voters are willing to give their party vote to the GPT and do not see it as a wasted vote.

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[52] At the time of writing, the DPP was well ahead with almost 500,000 likes followed by the KMT's 129,000.

Lucardie's political opportunity structure is also helpful in answering our question. Key variables include the strength of the overall environmental movement and its relationship with the GPT, the salience of environmental issues, and the development of a new media environment. Lastly, a key lesson from this study is the need for the GPT to have a convincing platform that stresses the environment but is much broader. The environment will always be the top issue for green parties; however, the GPT has attempted to win support through broadening its appeal through niche issue appeals such as gay rights, tree rights, and animal protection.[53]

When we consider the above lessons regarding the GPT's development, it would appear that the GPT faces its most favourable environment to date. If this is the case, then what are the prospects for its development in the near to medium term future? The fact that the GPT won its first local council seats in 2014 reveals its growing support. The next critical test will be the 2016 legislative elections. Given the growing strength of social movements, the unpopularity of mainstream parties, lower campaign costs of the internet, and the salience of environmental issues, the GPT has a historic opportunity to make a further breakthrough. However, much will depend on its ability to concentrate its limited financial, organizational, and human resources on winnable seats.

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[53] Our supporter interviews did show that some of these new appeals could actually be damaging. For instance, a number of GPT supporters we interviewed were uncomfortable with its opposition to the death sentence.

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