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THE DETERMINANTS OF PRO-ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS OF POLITICAL PARTIES DURING ELECTORAL PERIODS

Abstract:

The electoral process in a democratic country has a significant impact on its economy. Researchers even speak about the emergence of a new concept of "election-year economics" in economic policies, especially for countries with young democracies. Nevertheless, the implications of political factors in the electoral periods don't resume to the economic aspects of the society; they make themselves noticed also on other non-economic issues such as: environmental protection, quality of life etc. If prior to the election period, the focus of the political parties and also of the general public is mainly on primary policies (including fiscal policies, budgetary or exchange rate policies), other secondary policies fade in the picture, among which we include the environmental policy. Nevertheless, during political campaigns prior to elections, some parties and their affiliated politicians may display a kind of pro-environmental behaviour only to convince some of the voters to cast them a ballot.

If the specialized literature has looked well enough into the determinants of citizens' pro-environmental behavior, this is not the case of the drivers that push political parties towards adopting environmental attitudes. The lack of knowledge in this regard is even more pronounced when dealing with Eastern European countries that were, in many cases, excluded from the research (given the inconsistency in and lack of data). The methodological approach consists in a regression analysis between the political parties' tendencies towards environmental decisions and actions, on the one hand, and various economic, social and environmental conditions. Using the data provided by the Manifesto Project Dataset (CMP), the websites and platforms of the Romanian political parties and the input from interviews with politicians as well as ENGO specialists, covering the period 1990-2015, the paper investigates the "greening" of Romanian political parties prior to national election periods and the determinant factors in this regard. The preliminary results suggest that political parties' environmental concern is strongly correlated with their political ideology, but also reveal some specific features that describe Romania's young democratic system. The paper contributes to the existing literature by filling a gap related to the investigated subject (political parties' environmental policy offer) and to the geographical coverage.

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Keywords:

environment, environmental policy, political parties, electoral periods, electoral cycle, political ideology, political greening

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